

# THE SOCIETY

The Annual General Meeting in 1973 was held on 14th April with the President in the chair. Mr. J. F. Head was elected an additional Vice-President in recognition of his many services to the Society. Mr. Max Davies was elected to fill the vacancy on the Council following the resignation of Mr. Charles Fay. The remaining honorary officers and members of Council were all re-elected.

**OUTINGS.** The six outings in 1973 were generally successful and were very well attended. We were grateful to many owners of private houses not normally open and their names are given below.

- 14th April Dinton Hall (Mr. Hamish Currie) and church, Stone church, and a perambulation of the village of Haddenham, still, despite much new building, one of the most interesting in the county.
- 19th May Fulham Palace (the Lord Bishop of London). We were probably the last visitors to the Palace in its historic state. On the retirement of Bishop Stopford two weeks later it ceased to be an episcopal residence after a continuous ownership by the Diocese of London of over one thousand, three hundred years.  
Tower of London (The Resident Governor and Keeper of the Jewel House). The Bell Tower, the Chapel Crypt and the Governor's residence, none of which are normally shown.  
Chiswick House. The Earl of Burlington's Palladian Villa, built by William Kent in 1729.
- 7th July Rockingham Castle (Commander L. M. S. Watson).  
Kirby Hall. The ruins of the great Elizabethan mansion.  
Cotterstock Hall (Mr. Lewis Sturge). A 17th-century manor.  
Oundle. A perambulation of one of the least spoilt small market towns of the limestone belt. Masters from the public school acted as guides and the school gave members a magnificent and well-earned tea at the Tuck Shop.
- 28th July **BEDFORDSHIRE.** Wrest Park. Mainly of interest for the great formal garden laid out by Henry Grey, Duke of Kent in 1710; this was followed by a visit to the private mausoleum of the Greys in Flitton church (Lady Lucas of Crudwell).  
Ampthill Park. (A Cheshire Home). A fine house of 1694 altered by Chambers in 1770.  
Dunstable Priory.
- 11th August **NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.** Sulgrave Manor.  
Eydon Hall (Sir Edward Ford). A late Palladian villa.  
Canons Ashby (Mr. Louis Osman). The interesting manor, built in 1560, but added to in the 17th and 18th centuries, has been the home of the Dryden family since 1551 and is being extensively restored by the present tenant.  
Thenford Roman Villa (Sir Spencer Summers). The 1973 excavations revealed a large mosaic pavement in fine condition.
- 8th September **BUCKS. CHURCHES.** Seven of the more notable churches in the north-west of the county were visited—Leckhamstead, Lillingstone Dayrell, Maids' Moreton, Biddlesden, Hillesden, Twyford and Quainton. This very happy outing, in perfect weather, was much enhanced by the President's illuminating commentary at each church.

# NATURAL HISTORY SECTION

THE survey of the boundary hedges of the ancient Manor of Monk's Risborough continued during 1973. The Waldridge area was visited and on another occasion Committee members formed a small party to look at the northernmost part of the Black Hedge which had not been visited before. They also examined the boundary hedge in the Green Hailey area. We have to thank Mr. Arnold Baines for his guidance on each of these occasions and Mr. Aubrey Woodward for recording the species of trees and shrubs found in the hedges. A summary of the findings is being made and will be published later.

There has recently been much interest over the whole county regarding the conservation of roadside verges of special interest, a project in which the County Council has been most co-operative. Our Natural History Section has made a contribution by visiting several lengths of verge in Dinton and on the Bishopstone road. Recommendations will be sent to the County Council asking that cutting on certain sites should be left as late as possible in the year so that seeds may have a chance to set. More sites will be visited in 1974.

Outings and lectures in 1973:

27th January. "The Natural History of Beetles", a talk by Dr. David Halstead of the Pest Infestation Laboratory, Slough.

24th February. The Natural History of Wotton Railway Cutting, an illustrated talk by Mr. A. Woodward.

24th March. The Victorian Fern Craze, talk by Mr. David Allen, a member of the Council of the Botanical Society of Great Britain.

29th April. Field meeting at Stowe School Nature Reserve led by Mr. Antony Lloyd.

19th May. Further survey of the boundary hedges of Monks Risborough, led by Mr. Arnold Baines.

8th-10th June. Insect Natural History—a weekend course at Missenden Abbey directed by Dr. D. Halstead and Mr. P. Tyler.

8th July. Outing to Moor End Common, led by Dr. Wyatt.

29th July. Visit to Warren Bank, Nettlebed, to see green fritillary and green hairstreak butterflies. Led by Miss Phyllis Gardiner.

26th August. Visit to Dancers End Nature Reserve to see the Chiltern Gentian, led by Miss Dorothy Eyre.

30th September. Fungus foray at Stockgrove Country Park led by Mr. Victor Scott.

28th October. A visit to Tring Reservoirs led by Miss Dorothy Eyre.

17th November. Visit to Tring Museum.

8th December. Poisonous plants, an illustrated talk by Mr. Aubrey Woodward.

The following notes have been received:

A report from Mr. Ray Shrimpton on bats.

In recent years there have been very few records of bats in this county. It is evident there is a decline in their numbers, possibly due to the disappearance of their roosting places and the effect of insecticide in the places where they feed—it is

interesting to note that at a farm near Radnage, where no artificial fertilizers are used, there has been an abundance of bats.

Over the past two years four species have been detected in the county. They were the Noctule, the Pipistrelle, the Longeared and Daubenton's bat, which was seen on one occasion only.

The following report has come from the county bird recorder, Mr. R. E. Youngman.

To the non-birdwatcher the word wader may conjure up a picture of small shore-birds busily feeding at the edge of sandy beaches. He may not immediately think of the more familiar Lapwing and Woodcock as waders and he would almost certainly be surprised to know that one can expect to see most of the thirty or so commoner British species in an average year even in an inland county like Buckinghamshire.

Oystercatcher, Grey Plover, Whimbrel, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot and Sanderling are scarce but regular passage migrants.

Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover, Snipe, Woodcock, Curlew and Redshank breed in the County every year and, with the exception of the Little Ringed Plover which migrates to Africa, are present in most other months also.

Ringed Plover have bred in some years and may still do so from time to time. They are common passage migrants both in spring and autumn as are Common Sandpiper. Spotted Redshank, Greenshank and Dunlin are most frequent on autumn passage.

Golden Plover come from their northern breeding grounds each year to spend the winter with us. They tend to occur in the same areas each winter and the flocks may consist of several hundreds of birds. Jack Snipe also winter but as singletons or in groups of not more than ten birds. Ruff have become more common as winter visitors in the county as indeed they have in the whole of Britain and small flocks may now be seen every year. Green Sandpiper may be seen at almost any time but are principally winter visitors to our smaller rivers and more mature gravel workings.

All the above species were reliably reported from the county during 1973. One may also expect to see Turnstone, Wood Sandpiper and Little Stint from time to time.

Common Whitethroat, whose recent decline is now thought to be associated in some way with the southern spread of the Sahara into their African wintering area following a series of very dry years, showed almost no recovery and it seems possible that this formerly common species may remain rather uncommon. Very few Barn Owls were reported but Sparrowhawk numbers were almost certainly up though the species remains uncommon.

Mr. Brian Walbank has sent the following report:

Grey Squirrel control.

Although the grey squirrel population in the Chilterns has declined over the last two years it is still high enough to cause considerable damage to trees.

Dutch Elm Disease.

The disease continued to spread in 1973. A survey showed that 80,000 of the 401,000 elm trees in Buckinghamshire are either dead or dying.

Research on fungicide injection has continued with detailed experimental work on *Ulmus hollandica* at the Greater London Council's tree bank at Hershams. This has involved using MBC (a benomyl derivative) in hydrochloric acid and the results are encouraging.

The best known means of dispersal of Dutch Elm Disease is through the activity

of the elm bark beetle. However, it has become evident during these studies that the fungus can also spread from tree to tree through the connecting roots.

This has led to experimental work being done on mechanical root severance as well as chemical treatment. These are expensive treatments and can only be justified in certain cases.

There have been encouraging results in the use of contact insecticide sprays for the protection of healthy elm trees. Although the protection only lasts for two months this may be a suitable method for protecting particularly valuable trees.

Mr. Edward Byrne has provided the following list of ferns and plants he has seen during 1973:

<i>Lycopodium clavatum</i> Stag's-Horn Clubmoss	Lodge Wood, Prestwood, 4 possibly 5 plants scattered on woodland floor under open mature beech, along with <i>Calluna</i> .
<i>Equisetum telmateia</i> Great Horsetail	Wavenden Wood, Bow Brickhill, abundant on boggy ground by drainage cut on wood edge.
<i>Blechnum spicant</i> Hard-fern	Wavenden Wood, Bow Brickhill, sparse on bank in conifer stand.
<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i> Hart's-tongue	Recorded other than from walls as follows: Near Turville Heath, well established on side of deep shaded ditch; Idlecombe Wood, Turville, on steep bank in woodland.
<i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i> Black Spleenwort	On old walls, railway brickwork etc. as follows: Ilmer; Quainton Road Station; Fawley; near Verney Junction; Town End, Radnage; Wycombe Marsh; Loudwater; Holtspur; Tylers Green; Bolter end; Wendover Dean; Prestwood; Long Crendon.
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i> Maidenhair Spleenwort	Recorded from similar situations to the previous species as follows: Lee Bridge, Quainton; East Claydon; Gt. Missenden; Wycombe Marsh; West Wycombe Road; Long Crendon; Chilton; Ilmer.
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> Lady Fern	Not infrequent in woods in the Brickhills (Back Wood, Wavenden Wood, Stockgrove etc.); Woods north of High Wycombe (North Dean, Naphill Common, Speen); Colemans and Mantle Woods, Little Kingshill; Fleet and Egypt Woods, Burnham Beeches; Penn Street etc.
<i>Ceterach officinarum</i> Rusty-back Fern	Quainton Road Station; Wycombe Marsh; Fingest; West Wycombe Road; Amersham Old Town; High Wycombe; near S. Leonards.
<i>Dryopteris spinulosa</i> Narrow Buckler-fern	Bollards Wood, Stokenchurch (recorded here in 1883—Druce, <i>Flora of Bucks</i> ); Piggots Wood, North Dean; Churchfield Wood, Turville; Whittington Park, Lane End; Common Wood, Hazlemere; Rushbeds Wood; Nunn Wood, Whiteleaf; <b>Oak Wood, Stockgrove. Generally in small quantity, usually on dampish north or east facing woodland slopes.</b>

- Polystichum setiferum*  
Soft Shield-fern  
Bledlow Gorge, one plant on moist shady slope; Boss Lane, Hughenden, two plants but probably planted.
- Polystichum aculeatum*  
Hard Shield-fern  
Oakley Church, sparse by side of drainage gutter, presumably planted; near Turville Heath, 100 mature plants and numerous young ones scattered along steep west facing bank of drainage ditch. Near Chesham, 2 plants in shady hedgebank.
- Thelypteris oreopteris*  
Lemon-scented Fern  
Near Gt. Brickhill, 20 plants scattered along edge of drainage cut in woodland; Penn Street Wood, 6 plants in restricted area on the edges of tractor ruts formed within the past two years, colonising.
- Polypodium vulgare*  
Common Polypody  
Long Crendon, on old limestone wall; Turville, on brickwork; Wycombe Marsh, on railway brickwork; Gt. Brickhill, on sandstone wall; Heathfield and Hollybush Woods, Dropmore, not infrequent on ditch banks; Tythrope Park, Kingsey, epiphytic on *Salix* in old duck decoy.
- Ophioglossum vulgatum*  
Adder's Tongue  
Near Hell Coppice, Worminghall, in damp pasture.
- Corydalis claviculata*  
White Climbing Fumitory  
Back Wood, Gt. Brickhill; Oak Wood, Stockgrove.
- Diplotaxis muralis*  
Wall Rocket  
High Wycombe, on coping of railway bridge.
- Erophila verna*  
Whitlow Grass  
Lodge Hill, near Princes Risborough, scattered on ant hills.
- Dentaria bulbifera*  
Coralroot  
Spring Coppice Wood, Lane End, abundant in woodland.
- Oxalis corniculata*  
Sleeping Beauty  
Gt. Kingshill, on tarmac path in garden.
- Ornithopus perpusillus*  
Birdsfoot  
Back Wood, Gt. Brickhill, on borders of sandy track.
- Saxifraga granulata*  
Meadow Saxifrage  
Bradenham, in long grass in churchyard.
- Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*  
Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage  
Moor End Common, on wet shady ground by rivulet; Oak Wood, Stockgrove, near Gt. Brickhill, very abundant on boggy ground in woodland.
- Erica tetralix*  
Cross-leaved Heath  
East Burnham Common, abundant in restricted area among birches.
- Gentianella anglica*  
Early Gentian  
Ivinghoe Beacon, 30 plants in open chalk turf.
- Vaccinium myrtillus*  
Bilberry  
Back Wood, Gt. Brickhill; Wavenden Wood, Bow Brickhill, abundant in woodland rides and conifer stands.

<i>Erinus alpinus</i> Fairy Foxglove	Tylers Green, on boundary wall of churchyard.
<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i> Lousewort	Back Wood, Gt. Brickhill, scattered in wet pasture.
<i>Betonica officinalis</i> Betony	Hell Coppice, near Worminghall, in and along banks of drainage ditches.
<i>Legousia hybrida</i> Venus's Looking-glass	Bradenham, frequent along borders of chalky arable field.
<i>Filago minima</i> Slender Cudweed	Back Wood, Gt. Brickhill, several hundred plants along edge of sandy track.
<i>Achillea ptarmica</i> Sneezewort	Hell Coppice, near Worminghall, abundant on damp ditch banks.
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i> Butcher's Broom	Grendon Underwood, several shrubs in hedge near churchyard; Bledlow Village, abundant in hedge by churchyard, presumably planted.
<i>Ophrys apifera</i> Bee Orchid	Near Town End, Radnage, scattered in open chalk turf.
<i>Platanthera chlorantha</i> Greater Butterfly Orchid	Near Town End, Radnage, sparse in open chalk turf
<i>Carex Pendula</i> Pendulous Sedge	Back Wood, Gt. Brickhill, frequent along drainage cut.