

SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF NATURAL HISTORY
c/o BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY)
CROMWELL ROAD, LONDON SW7 5BD

NEWSLETTER 33

SEPTEMBER 1988

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SOCIETY NEWS

1. Dates for your Diary

27 October 1988 Evening meeting in the Natural History Museum, London. See item 2.

12 November 1988 One-day conference 'A Century of British Ecology'. See item 3.

21 & 22 April 1989 Two-day conference and Annual General Meeting at London Zoo. See item 4.

13 & 14 October 1989 Two-day conference at the National Zoological Park, Washington DC. See item 5.

25-27 April 1990 Three-day international conference and AGM at the Natural History Museum, London. See item 6.

**** Non-members are welcome to all our meetings ****

2. AN EVENING MEETING will be held at the Natural History Museum on Thursday 27 October 1988, when two papers of ornithological interest will be presented. The programme will be as follows:

6.00 Coffee

6.30 The Dartford warbler: historical notes. by
Rev. J.H.K. Dagger (Fawley)

7.15 John Latham. by Mrs Mary Thornton (Romsey)

8.00 Buffet dinner

After its showing at the Hunt Institute, the exhibition will travel to the Smithsonian Institution, New York Public Library, the Missouri Botanical Garden and the Chicago Botanic Garden.

NOTES AND QUERIES

13. DIRECTIONS TO CAPTAINS. Can anyone locate copies of either of the first two editions of Directions to Captains of Ships, Officers and Travellers; particularly to those engaged in the South Sea Fishery, written by John Mawe (1766-1829), although perhaps anonymous? The third edition (1821) is the well-known Voyager's Companion or Shell Collector's Pilot (copies in the British Library, Derby Public Library and Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution). Copies of the fourth edition, 1825, are in the British Library and the BM(NH).

This book provides almost the only evidence of Mawe's fifteen years at sea, probably from 1776 to 1794, before he became a mineral dealer, traveller and mineralogist. If the first two editions could be found and their dates established, more light might be shed on this part of Mawe's life, on which any other data would be equally welcomed.

H.S.Torrens, Lowermill Cottage, Furnace Lane, Madeley, Crewe CW3 9EU

14. ENCYCLOPAEDIA LONDINENSIS. In 1867 John Cassin drew attention to this English encyclopaedia, because it was shown to contain a large number of new scientific names of birds (Proc Acad Nat Sci Philadelphia 19: 212-221). During my present research relating to the birds described by Francois Levaillant at the beginning of the 19th century, I had reason to study this issue again. No progress had been made since Cassin. The work in 24 volumes (1795-1829) was entitled: Encyclopaedia Londinensis; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature... It was 'compiled, digested and arranged, by John Wilkes, of Milland House in the county of Sussex, Esq.'. Very little appears to be known about this John Wilkes, except that he lived in Milland and that he died in 1811. He was credited with the new scientific names, because it is not known who

contributed to the various subject areas. The Catalogue of the British Library and the National Union Catalogue both say the volumes 1-22 were edited by J. Jones and volumes 23-24 by G. Jones. My questions are as follows:

1. Who was John Wilkes of Milland House?
2. Who contributed the articles on ornithology, especially in the earlier volumes?

Kees Rookmaaker, Dokter Guepinlaan 23, 4032 NH Ommeren, Netherlands.

15. THE CORRESPONDENCE OF FERDINAND VON MUELLER is being prepared for complete publication by an international team of botanists and historians. Mueller (1825-1896) was Australia's leading scientist in the 19th century, being largely responsible for the international recognition given to Australian scientific endeavour. He was also a prolific letter writer, claiming more than once to have written over 3,000 letters in a year. His surviving letters constitute a precious historical and scientific resource. In their present scattered state, however, they are little known or used, yet they are the basis of most Australian botany, and so remain of fundamental importance to present-day science. They are also potentially of great significance for the light they shed on the social and scientific institutions of 19th century Victoria.

The proposed edition will include the full text of all letters to or from Mueller, appropriately illustrated, annotated and indexed. The publisher will be Melbourne University Press in conjunction with the National Herbarium of Victoria. If you know of any letters to or from Mueller, or any items of Muelleriana, please contact one of the following: Prof. R.W. Home, History and Philosophy of Science, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3052 Australia; or Prof. A.M. Lucas, Education Studies, King's College, 522 King's Road, London SW10 0UA, England.

16. THE FLORA AND VEGETATION OF COUNTY DURHAM. Some years ago Rev. Gordon Graham asked me if I would write a section for the Durham Flora relating to the history of botanical recording in the county, and provide brief sketches of the botanists. This I have done, and the "historical" section features as a short introduction to Gordon Graham's comprehensive and informative work. Although the Durham Flora itself has an extensive "acknowledgements" section, I