

As for Kenneth Mellanby, he was never really forgiven for writing **Pesticides and Pollution**. His colleagues saw it as theft. The work on pesticides had been done by Norman Moore and his colleagues, not by Mellanby, although he took the credit for it. Nor would they have endorsed Mellanby's compromising approach to the subject. "He was a great sitter-on-the-fence", recalled Derek, "and cleverly played up to the agro-chemical establishment. He claimed later to have been the first to warn of the dangers of global warming. But what he actually said in the book was: 'This may be a completely false alarm!' I think it is a very sketchy and inadequate book in some ways".

The people he most admired were field men. His first mentor was Ernest Blezard, curator at Carlisle Museum, who was penciled in as the author of a regional New Naturalist on the Lake District (Blezard finished his bit, but some of his colleagues did not; his replacement was, ironically, Pearsall, but he never finished it either). John Mitchell (**Loch Lomondside**) was a lifelong friend whom Derek first met when they were both on national service at Catterick. But among the New Naturalist authors his greatest friend was probably Desmond Nethersole-Thompson (**The Greenshank**; a friendship which in due course passed on to his son, Des Thompson). He obviously appreciated Nethersole's outrageous remarks and rebellious streak (and could mimic him perfectly). He certainly admired his nest-finding skills. They must have made an odd couple, the one slight and wiry in his trademark beret, the other huge, bearded and duffle-coated. It was Nethersole-Thompson that set Derek on to looking at egg collections for signs of pesticide-related damage. In due course, this led to a scientific breakthrough: proof that shells had grown thinner and more fragile, and that the cause was DDT and related pesticides.

Derek might have made a coruscating foe, but he made a very good friend. He was the best New Naturalist editor one could have hoped for, and a request for some comment or other often resulted in a long and invariably

hand-written letter. It was largely through Derek that I came to write **The New Naturalists**. We had discussed the series, notably during a visit to Thorne Moors in 1992 and in the bar afterwards (Derek didn't drink much and was probably nursing a diet coke or something). A year later he joined the New Naturalist Board and had clearly put in a good word about me. Quite independently I had asked to inspect whatever New Naturalist archive might exist at Collins, and, to my great surprise, received a reply saying that although there wasn't much of an archive, my name had been mentioned with regard to a possible 50th birthday volume. Would I like to pop in sometime soon? This was another example of Derek's generosity. He was the obvious choice for such a book. Had he written it, the book would probably have taken the form of a review of nature conservation, its triumphs and disasters. But, having helped to prepare the ground, he stepped aside and ensured me a free hand in what I did. The least I could do was to dedicate my second New Naturalist, **Nature Conservation**, to him, although he could not have read it without reflecting on how he would have written it, and almost certainly better.

We no longer celebrate quiet, mild-mannered people who do not appear on television. A Ratcliffe biography of sorts is in preparation although it seems a long while in coming. Des 'son of Nethersole' Thompson managed to scrape some funds for an appreciation of Derek by some of his friends that should chart the main aspects of his life. We also have Derek's own account of his early years, characteristically focused on what he saw rather than what he felt. That is how he might have wanted it. He would be the first to say that what matters is not what we are but what we did. Derek, it seems to me, did rather a lot. More than most, he embodies the soul of the New Naturalists, the "inquiring spirit" wedded to "modern scientific research" and above all, to "a concern for the flora and fauna, and their conservation".

Peter Marren

Sales and Wants

FOR SALE

Original pencil drawing by Robert Gillmor for the jacket of **Mosses and Liverworts**. Originally acquired at the Pinkfoot Gallery in Norfolk, the artwork is beautifully mounted and framed and measures 47 x 60 cm. £275. Please contact Fred Rumsey: f.rumsey@nhm.ac.uk work: 0207 942 5692 Mobile: 07971 405 802

FOR SALE

NN 96 **Fungi**, first edition 2005. Mint condition in mint dust jacket. £50 including postage.

Please contact Christopher Nissen, Bâtiment F2, Appt. 271, Résidence Beauséjour, 46 Av. Clémenceau, 77100 Meaux, France. Tel. 00 33 1 60 09 49 31.

FOR SALE

A Complete set of the New Naturalist library from NN 1 **Butterflies** to NN 116 **Plant Pests**. A good tidy set, mostly first editions, all in dust wrappers. £12, 500 or near offer.

Also a complete set of NN Monographs from NNM 1 **The Badger** to NNM 22 **The Mole**. A good set in dust wrappers. £2,700 or near offer. Please contact Howard Green on 07771 993 267 or e-mail: howardgreen1@btinternet.com

FOR SALE

The following books are all in mint un-read condition and have been stored in a dark cupboard since their publication dates. Postage and packaging will be extra. Please contact the Club for further details.

82b **The New Naturalists** (2nd edition) £75 • 87 **Amphibians and Reptiles** £150
88 **Loch Lomondside** £120 • 89 **The Broads** £100 • 90 **Moths** £120
91 **Nature Conservation** £100 • 92 **Lakeland** £120 • 93 **British Bats** £170
94 **Seashore** £80 • 95 **Northumberland** £90 • 96 **Fungi** £60
97 **Mosses and Liverworts** £80 • 98 **Bumblebees** £60 • 99 **Gower** £60
100 **Woodlands** £70 • 101 **Galloway and the Borders** £50

102 **Garden Natural History** £60 • 103 **The Isles of Scilly** £45
104 **A History of Ornithology** £45 • 105 **Wye Valley** £45 • 106 **Dragonflies** £45
107 **Grouse** £45 • 108 **Southern England** £45 • 109 **Islands** £45 • 110 **Wildfowl** £45

FOR SALE

ART OF THE NEW NATURALISTS

We have a few copies of the rare 'first state' Art of the New Naturalists available which are signed by both authors Peter Marren and Robert Gillmor. These are copies with the incorrect blue title band in which the accredited authors are Peter Marren, Robert Gillmor and Clifford and Rosemary Ellis, and with different author information on the back. £60 each plus postage and packing. Please contact the Club for further details.

FOR SALE

NN70 **The Natural History of Orkney**, 2nd state in fine condition (sensible offers invited) also soft back. Most of the Monographs and many Main series titles, first editions in fine/very good condition. Please contact David Clugston by e-mail d.clugston06@tiscali.co.uk or phone 0141 881 2867

FOR SALE

NN 41 **Dragonflies**. First edition. A Very good copy in very good jacket which is very slightly frayed at the top of the spine. Pencil signature of Michael Hardy (son of Alister Hardy) on front endpaper. £300

NN 75 **Freshwater Fishes**. Paperback in excellent condition, slightly faded on the spine. £40

The Butterflies of Britain and Ireland. Jeremy Thomas and Richard Lewington, Dorling Kindersley/National Trust, 1991. This much sought-after book is an excellent and beautifully illustrated guide to the butterfly species of Britain and Ireland. Hardback (no D/W) in very good condition and slightly faded on the spine. £35

 **The New Naturalist Collectors Club and Archive**
30 Botley Road, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 5AP | Tel: (01794) 320464
e-mail: tbernhard@btinternet.com | www.thenewnaturalistcollectorsclub.co.uk

© The New Naturalist Collectors Club 2011. New Naturalists and the New Naturalists' logo are Trademark HarperCollins Publishers and are used here with kind permission.

Editor: Tim Bernhard
Designed by: Pangea Design | www.pangea-design.co.uk

The New Naturalist Collectors Club

50

Newsletter N° 50

Spring 2011

Dear Member,

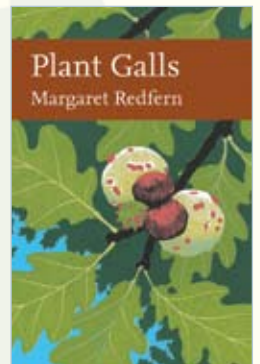
Welcome to our special 50th newsletter. I am sure that Bob Burrow, the club's founder, would have been proud that his club is not only still running but continues to grow from strength to strength. For this special edition, I am delighted that Peter Marren has written a fascinating article on the great NN editor and author Derek Ratcliffe.

Recently I have been in discussion with the Linnean Society of London and they are very interested in acquiring the New Naturalist archive which I have been building for the past ten years or so. A number of distinguished NN authors have kindly donated their manuscripts and correspondence and this will all be part of what I hope will become the official New Naturalist archive. The archive will eventually be donated to the Linnean Society and will then be permanently and safely stored, available for anyone to view or for research. If any member has any interesting items which they would like to add to the archive, I would be delighted to hear from you.

Plans for the 2nd **New Naturalist Symposium** on Monday 6th June are coming together very well and it should be a superb day. We have a wonderful selection of speakers including Trevor Beebee, Richard Griffiths, Ian Newton, Ted Benton, Tim Roper, David Goode and Peter Friend. Michael Hardy will also be giving a talk about his father Sir Alister Hardy (author of the two **Open Sea** volumes) and the recently published biography 'God's Biologist – A Life of Alister Hardy' by David Hay. Copies of this excellent new book will be available to buy on the day. The first talk will be given by Clem Fisher (daughter of James Fisher) and John Gittins and will consider Arnold Whitworth Boyd – author of **A County Parish**, covering his importance as a naturalist, author and Country Diarist. This year the lectures will be held in a marquee and guests will be able to relax and enjoy the beautiful gardens of Wallsworth Hall. There will also be a number of second hand book sellers attending with opportunities to browse the book stalls during the frequent tea and coffee breaks between the lectures. The Club has commissioned Robert Gillmor to design a superb new linocut based on his first New Naturalist jacket for **British Warblers** and this will feature on the cover of the symposium brochure and on the special limited edition mugs which will only be available on the day. There are just a few tickets left for this prestigious event. Please contact the club as soon as possible if you would like to attend.

The release of this newsletter will coincide with the slightly delayed publication of the second New Naturalist title of the year **Plant Galls**

by Margaret Redfern. This interesting new book will look at the ecology of plant galls, their evolution and distribution and the long tradition of the uses of plant galls in herbal medicine since ancient times. The book has a bold and striking jacket design by Robert Gillmor which contrasts beautifully with the previous title NN 116, **Plant Pests**. The final New Naturalist title of the year will be **Marches** by Andrew Allott and will look at the rural, sparsely populated borderlands between England and Wales. Publication date is expected to be 1st September 2011.



For the first time in over forty years, the long out-of-print New Naturalist Monograph volumes will now be available as print-on-demand editions.

Alongside the main New Naturalist series, a total of 22 monograph volumes on single species were published by Collins between 1948 and 1971. While the main volumes were intended to deal with broader subject areas such as wild flowers, insects or National Parks, the monographs were shorter books, usually published in a smaller format. These POD editions will be available through the HarperCollins website this summer.

The New Naturalist publication schedule for next year includes three very exciting additions to the library. We hope to have more information on these new titles later in the year.

Scotland by Peter Friend, January 2012

Grasshoppers and Crickets by Ted Benton, April 2012

Vegetation in Britain and Ireland by Michael Proctor, September 2012

Congratulations go to Bob Daniels from Ipswich who correctly identified the four NN jacket designs in the Christmas competition. Bob wins a pair of tickets to the 2nd New Naturalist Symposium on 6th June.

Please send in any articles or advertisements for the summer/ autumn newsletter to arrive by the end of July. Newsletter No 51 will be a symposium special edition and will include a review of the event and a selection of photographs.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a great summer and I will look forward to meeting many of you at Twigworth in June.

Best wishes and happy collecting

Tim Bernhard

The Hepburn Music Competition at Oundle School

The Easter Quarter at Oundle School sees the annual Hepburn Music Competition, spread over two weekends in January and February, when pupils compete for the school's most prestigious music prize in sections including piano, singing, guitar, strings, woodwind and brass. Parents, friends and members of the public are invited to all the preliminary competitions and the Final in the Great Hall. The competition is of course named after New Naturalist author Ian Hepburn (NN24 *Flowers of the Coast*, 1952), who taught Chemistry at the school from 1925 until his retirement in 1964. 'Hep' is remembered with affection and gratitude by colleagues and old boys alike ~ for his energy, enthusiasm, enjoyment and exuberance, and for his many and varied interests, each keenly pursued, combined with an infectious sense of humour, and the ability ~ to an astonishing degree ~ to encourage and to make others want to share and enjoy everything that he did so well and enjoyed so much.

After his own education at Gresham's, Holt, and Lincoln College, Oxford, Ian Hepburn arrived at Oundle and by the age of 26 he was Housemaster to Laxton House. He encouraged all new boys to join as many school societies as they could, and to set an example he joined them all himself. His own interests ~ music, architecture, botany, gardening, mountaineering and travel in general ~ were all increasingly stimulating within the House. His aged Vauxhall motor car could often be seen at weekends, as he led expeditions to nature reserves or interesting old buildings. Twice a year he travelled abroad ~ on one occasion as far as Lapland, where he collected specimens for Kew. In the classroom he is remembered as a superb teacher of Chemistry. Lessons were never dull, and it is said that his terrible jokes haunted the old Science Block for years after his departure. As the years went on, a source of particular delight to him was to add up in his mind how many old Laxton boys became Cambridge dons - five at the last count, with subjects ranging from Archaeology to Animal Behaviour.

During the war Ian Hepburn assisted at many farming camps, and at one of them at nearby Lyveden, he met Miss Phyllis Champ, who had been teaching music at Malvern School for Girls for ten years. They married in 1947, after he had retired from his Housemaster duties, and they settled in Oundle. He was then appointed Second Master, and while he continued to teach Chemistry, Phyllis Hepburn became a well-known figure at the school, working regularly in the Music Department as a teacher, an accompanist, and an acclaimed soloist on the piano and viola. Together they entertained guests, both official and unofficial, at their home, and many a newcomer to Oundle had reason to be grateful for their friendship and hospitality.

'*Flowers of the Coast*' belongs to this period. Peter Marren has suggested that Ian Hepburn probably did not volunteer for the job of writing the book, but was perhaps talked into it by James Fisher, whose father Kenneth was headmaster at Oundle for part of the time 'Hep' was there. Whatever the truth, it is a fact that the book is ~ to borrow one of the Anglo-French phrases that coloured Hep's conversation ~ his 'piece of resistance' ! It is an important book, and one in which he ~ an amateur by status ~ proved himself of equal rank with professional experts. Only much hard work could have made this possible. The first edition of 6,000 was followed by reprints in 1962, 1966 and 1972, and today collectors still hanker after a nice clean first edition, with those elusive pink numerals on the spine of the jacket still bright. The affectionate dedication is 'To Phyllis, who loves the sea but is sometimes uncertain of her botany.'

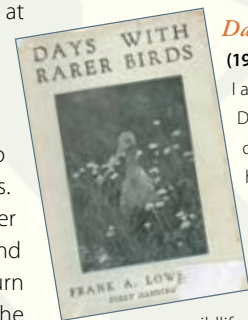
The Hepburns continued to live and work in Oundle until 1964. They both actively supported school music. Ian Hepburn had earlier regretted one strange omission in the school calendar ~ there was no music prize. That was put right in his time, and everyone at the school and the wider community now enjoys the annual Hepburn Music Competition. Ian and Phyllis Hepburn would take great pleasure in hearing how so many boys (and latterly girls) have gained encouragement and recognition from taking part in, and even winning, the Hepburn Prize over the years.

After retirement in 1964, the Hepburns moved to Cambridge, where their lives continued to be filled with music, accompanied by visits from friends old and new, and frequent returns to Oundle to take part in concerts. Ian played an active part in 'Cambient' ~ now the Cambridge Wildlife Trust ~ and edited their newsletter. He died ten years later in 1974. Phyllis attended the Memorial Service held in the Chapel at Oundle School, where friends, colleagues and old students recalled him with warm, vivid and affectionate reminiscences. 'He was', said one former pupil, subsequently a Fellow at a Cambridge College, 'an admirable schoolmaster, and an admirable man.'

Hep's friend Ian Thomas recalls how colleagues on the staff and their wives would sometimes present Hep with a piece of plant or flower for identification, with the question 'Is it rare?' His reply would be 'It's a great deal rarer now that you've picked it!'

Ken Davies

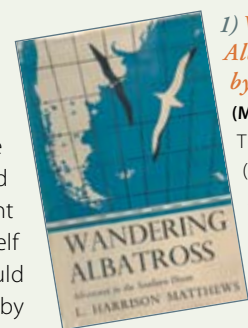
In previous newsletters Ken Davies has written about some of the books which have a New Naturalist connection, including biographies, novels and children's books. Here he continues his quest of New Naturalist spin-offs and miscellanea with part three of the never-ending series.



Days With Rarer Birds, by Frank A. Lowe (1934)

I am very happy to record my gratitude to fellow club member Dick Seamons, who kindly sent me a jacket for this book, which I described in Newsletter 49. The front flap confirms the opinion I had already formed after reading the book for the first time last year: 'Dainty Avocets, gale-blown St Kilda Wrens and many other rare birds have been watched at close quarters, and the author brings to notice many sidelights on these unfamiliar creatures. This little book will appeal to every Britisher (sic), who loves the wildlife of his native land, for birds are described not as specimens but as living things, fellow denizens of Britain's soil.' These sentiments were of course picked up in 1945, with the launch of the New Naturalist series.

Three more 'New Nat Spin-offs'



1) *Wandering Albatross - Adventures among the Albatrosses and Petrels in the Southern Ocean* by L. Harrison Matthews (MacGibbon & Kee, 1951)

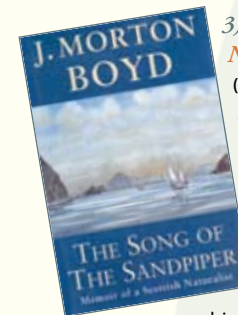
The author of two New Naturalist volumes on **British Mammals** (NN 21 and 68), Leo Harrison Matthews (1901 - 86) was also a great traveller, explorer and voyager 'in the spirit of Sir Joseph Banks and Charles Darwin' (Peter Marren). In the 1920's he spent four years in the South Seas, and this book describes his adventures. The dedication sets the tone: 'To Bird Lovers, especially those who love them piping hot, well-browned, and with plenty of bread sauce,' and it's not long before we are reading how the crew on board 'Discovery' (Scott's old ship) rode out storms, drank, smoked, and enjoyed roasted albatross in the cosiness of smoky saloons. Vivid, unsentimental, and amusing too.



2) *The Badger Man - Memoirs of a Biologist* by Ernest Neal

(Providence Press, 1994)

Badgers figured largely in both Harrison Matthews' books for the series, and indeed it was he who first brought the attention of Billy Collins to a schoolmaster at Rendcomb College near Cirencester, who was doing some pretty remarkable work on badgers with his sixth-form students. This was Ernest Neal (1911 - 1998), and of course the final result of his work at Rendcomb and later Taunton was the classic monograph *The Badger* (NNM1, 1948). Towards the end of his life, Ernest Neal brought out this slim volume of memoirs, a charming reminiscence of a man totally fulfilled in his life and work. Over sixty years after the first appearance of *The Badger*, Timothy J Roper wrote in his foreword to the new book on badgers in the series (*Badger*, NN114, 2010) '... he (Neal) was one of the kindest and most modest people one could ever hope to meet - a real authority, but one who wore his erudition lightly and was always willing to share it...' 'The Badger Man' will not disappoint; find it and read it if you can.



3) *The Song of the Sandpiper - Memoir of a Scottish Naturalist* by J. Morton Boyd

(Colin Baxter, Grantown-on-Spey, 1999)

John Morton Boyd was co-author of two New Naturalists - *The Highlands and Islands* (with Frank Fraser Darling, NN 6A (1964)) and *The Hebrides* (with his son Ian, NN76 (1990)). Amongst my favourite designs, these two wrappers, by different artists, feature striking right-facing heads of iconic birds ~ *The Black-throated Diver* and the *Gannet* - arresting images fully in keeping with the books' subjects. Morton Boyd died on 25th August 1998 while he was walking near his home in Edinburgh. He had almost completed this book of memoirs by that stage, and it was published just a year later. Explorer, artist, poet, scientist, ardent defender of wild places and their fauna and flora ~ his was a life from a time when service, dedication and passion were all seen as vital prerequisites for a career in conservation ~ I hope they still are! And why 'The Song of the Sandpiper'? When you next get the chance to watch and listen to the call of a Common Sandpiper by the side of a rippling stream, you'll know why...

And finally...

As we celebrate the 50th edition of our society's Newsletter, perhaps we should pay tribute to the three editors who have kept producing it over the past decade and more. The late Robert Burrow began Newsletter No. 1 by saying 'We currently have just under twenty subscribers, but we need about forty to be effective as a group.' Numbers increased over the years, and newsletters arrived from time to time - sometimes after a long gap, occasionally two at once - to keep us up to date with latest news on publication, second-hand prices and all sorts of other topics. Bob produced 32 newsletters altogether. The news of his death in April 2006 was a tremendous shock. I really missed his breezy 'phone calls, often on a Sunday morning, when he would recount his own recent experiences with the books, and ask what prices were like 'over there', as he called these parts of Eastern England. Many of us feared the Club would not survive the loss of Bob, but Roger Long bravely undertook to carry on with the books and the newsletters, and issues 33 - 39 were duly produced. These were the heady days of the first ballot for the leatherbound editions of NN100 **Woodlands** - good or bad memories depending on your success or otherwise! And then, with Newsletter No. 40 (Christmas 2007) responsibility for the Club was accepted by Tim Bernhard, the present incumbent and current editor, to whom all members are extremely grateful.

Derek Ratcliffe and the New Naturalists



Derek Ratcliffe, Breckland in July 1972 (photo by John Mitchell)

It is nearly six years since Derek Ratcliffe died. His sudden death from heart failure came as a great shock to his many friends and admirers. He had only recently put the finishing touches to his second New Naturalist, *Galloway and the Borders*, and was on the way to Lapland and a season of watching and photographing arctic birds when he passed away in his sleep. I had known him for twenty years, on and off, but mainly in the past ten when we corresponded a good deal over books and conservation matters. He was, in my opinion, the greatest all-round naturalist of his generation. As well as being an authority on upland ecology, on birds of prey and breeding waders, and on bryophytes, he left his mark on most of the great home conservation crusades of our time - pesticides, nature reserves, afforestation, and a proper say for nature within the civil service. I doubt we will see his like again.

Derek was a very quiet man. At meetings he seldom spoke unless it was to the point, and then no more than was strictly necessary. In public at least his voice seldom lifted much above a murmur, in his slightly flat, northern monotone. I remember once making a presentation on how we proposed to manage a particular nature reserve. After making one's pitch, one expected to be assailed by lengthy, often loud, notions to the contrary, but from Derek all I heard, by straining my ears, was something like, "very good, carry on". I cannot tell you how unusual this reticence was in what was then the Nature Conservancy Council, the government conservation body in which Derek was Chief Scientist and effectively number two. Meetings routinely went on all day and into the next while one jobsworth after another poured forth, quite unstopably. If the NCC was a sailing ship, its combined wind would have taken it to the Indies (though it would have been too busy to notice). Derek stood out from the crowd, partly because he tended to work on his own. He got a deputy, first David Goode, later Derek Langslow, for the day-to-day administrative chores to which he felt unsuited, leaving him to concentrate on the bigger picture. His own outpouring of papers, designed in the main to stiffen the NCC's corporate backbone, amounted to a philosophy of nature conservation in practice.

In the formative days of nature conservation, lasting from, say, 1945 to 1965, the New Naturalist series was almost a guiding text. Derek was among the first to receive a nature conservation bursary for his doctorate, in this case on mountain vegetation. To obtain it he had to impress a panel on which there sat at least three Fellows of the Royal Society, including E. B. Ford (Butterflies), who Derek remembered "fixing me with a penetrating stare and firing staccato questions".

He fell foul of W. H. Pearsall (**Mountains and Moorlands**), and never forgave him for interfering with the publication of the monograph on mountain vegetation which Derek wrote with Donald McVean. "Pearsall was not interested in mountain vegetation", claimed Derek. "He was a biochemist and his interest was largely in processes. Did you know he was a keen train-spotter?" Pearsall might have been the greatest upland ecologist of his day, but Derek didn't think much of him. "Part of his appeal to his acolytes was his 'lifemanship' style. He had a great capacity for making ex cathedra pronouncements and making other people into supplicants for knowledge at the feet of the master".

For the same sorts of reasons, perhaps, he was not a fan of Fraser Darling (*The Highlands and Islands*) either. Derek had been told he had wriggled out of war service by displaying "his great flat feet". Darling liked living in some style, and Derek did not think much of that. "He took refuge in the Home Counties where he lived in a minor mansion house and drove around in a vintage Bentley, or maybe it was a Rolls. Somewhere in **The Highlands and Islands** he describes himself as 'the senior author'. That tells you something about Darling".