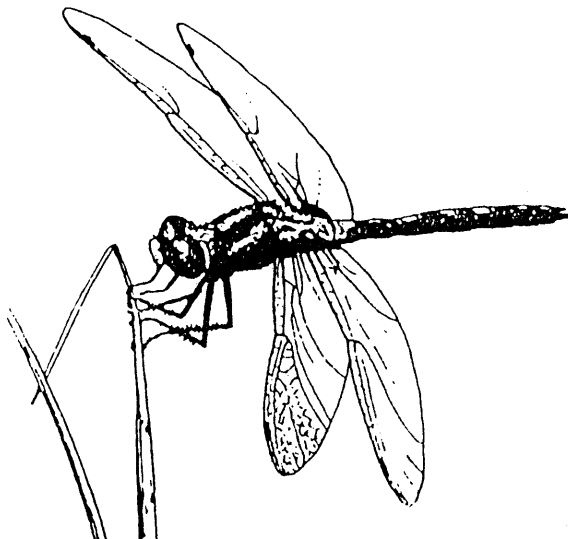

The CARLISLE NATURALIST

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The White-faced Darter, logo of the Carlisle Natural History Society (drawing by David Clarke)

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Reports on Field Meetings 1993

5th May 1993: Denton Side, Sebergham

Leader: Barry Marrs

Seven members gathered at Sebergham for this evening meeting. The route followed the river upstream to the meeting of Cald Beck with the River Caldw. Birds seen along this stretch, included Goosander, Dipper, Mallard, Redstart, Blackcap and Garden Warbler.

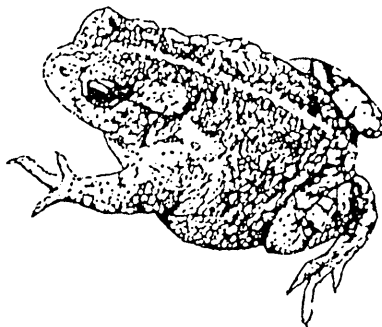
The return trip brought us back through the coniferous woodland much higher up the slope. As dusk fell we saw some of the nocturnal wildlife including Fox, Rabbit, Noctule, Pipistrelle and Tawny Owl. The cars were reached just as darkness fell with a total of 26 species of bird, 4 mammals and many flowers, including Early Purple Orchid, having been seen.

Barry Marrs

26th May: Mawbray Bank

Leader: Frank Mawby

Eleven members turned out for this meeting on a wet, windy and bitterly cold evening. Although the Oystercatchers were on eggs and the Ringed Plovers were clearly holding territories, it appeared that the Natterjacks had thought better of it this year as neither adults, spawn nor tadpoles could be found. The general consensus of opinion was that the pools looked as though they had been inundated by some high tides and become too brackish for the spawn to survive. Further searching revealed little more than a pair of Lapwings with chicks, before a freezing deluge encouraged a rapid retreat.



Natterjack Toad

Stephen Hewitt

Richard Little returned the following weekend and saw two adult Natterjacks as well as four pairs of Little Terns breeding on the shingle bank.

Ed.

6th June: River Caldeu, Dalston to Cummersdale

Leader: Barry Marrs

The weather was warm and sunny for the twelve people who attended this meeting. The walk began at the White Bridge and followed the east bank downstream to Cummersdale. The first stretch through Ikes Wood was very interesting with a good view of a Kingfisher, and the nest of a Common Sandpiper, among other birds, and some good insects (well I think so anyway - Ed.) such as the bugs *Calocoris alpestris* and *Scolopostethus affinis* in the nettle beds and *Saldula c-album* on the shingle banks in the river. The longhorn beetle *Rhagium bifasciatum* was found, as was the woodland hoverfly *Xylota segnis*. The next stage took us along the high bluffs above the river which are good for flowers (hundreds of Common Spotted Orchids) and butterflies - disappointingly only Orange Tip, Wall, Large White, Green-veined White and Small Tortoiseshell on this occasion.

The return walk up the west bank was less interesting as the path passes through fields for much of the way. However there are some good areas for plants and birds behind Dalston School.

All in all a good day was had, with 47 different birds seen including Goosander, Redshank, Sparrowhawk, Sand Martin, Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, Bullfinch and Heron as well as the Kingfisher and Common Sandpiper already mentioned.

Barry Marrs

9th June: Engine Lonning, Carlisle

This evening meeting was cancelled due to a heavy thunderstorm, but has been rescheduled for this summer.

23rd June: Wreay Woods

Leader: David Bailey

There was a good turnout to this evening meeting, including an impressive array of insect nets. The first good discovery of the evening was a roost of seven Daubenton's Bats (*Myotis daubentoni*) under the arch of the old bridge across the Petteril. The walk across the fields to the CWT Reserve was hindered by the slow progress of us net-wielding entomologists! However David was very patient and eventually we caught up, having found one or two interesting things on the way, including the bright-green Tortoise Beetle *Cassida viridis*, the leaf-beetle *Hydrothassa marginella*, and the rove-beetle *Tachyporus solutus*.

The Reserve itself provided many more finds and the range of interests of the people present, including birds, plants, beetles, snails, bugs and moths, made for a very interesting and enjoyable evening.

Stephen Hewitt

10th July: Birdoswald

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

After an unpromising start to the day, the weather improved so that the seventeen people who met at Birdoswald Roman Fort had a fine sunny afternoon.

A wet bank "came to life" with insects as the warmth of the sun took effect. Common Blue, Meadow Brown and Ringlet butterflies were all on the wing, while those people who had attended the workshop on the Identification of Grasshoppers at Tullie House in the morning, were busily catching and identifying Common Green Grasshoppers (*Omocestus viridulus*) and the Common Groundhopper (*Tetrix undulata*).

The trip continued down to the River Irthing and beneath a sandy cliff with a large colony of Sand Martins. The woodland beyond is a nice piece of semi-natural deciduous forest and although the shingle of the river was perhaps a little too shady there was nevertheless scope for the entomologists. Hoverflies seen included the bee-mimicking *Eristalis intricarius* and the large *Volucella pellucens*, the larvae of which live in bees' nests. The common Forest Shieldbug (*Pentatoma rufipes*) was seen and Magnus Sinclair recorded 21 species of beetle, including *Brachypterus glaber*. Magnus found the latter, a rather local species in the borders, abundant on nettles.

Birds seen included Dipper, Tree Pipit and Bullfinch, while for the mammals Brown Hare, Red Squirrel and Roe Deer were noted.

Stephen Hewitt

Birdoswald has been the subject of a wildlife survey by the Society on behalf of the County Council; a brief report appears later in this Newsletter. Ed.

25th August: Gelt Woods

Leader: David Clarke

A party of sixteen met at Low Gelt car park on a cool August evening to examine the bat boxes. One of the first to be examined contained bat droppings which, from their size, indicated the box had been occupied by Noctules.

Also in one of these boxes was a large moth which unfortunately escaped before it could be identified. However, later on another, almost certainly the same species, was found and was unfamiliar to any of the moth "experts" present. David Ellis did suggest Copper Underwing which he knew from 30 years ago in the south of

England, and indeed on reference to the collections in the Museum it proved to be so. In fact it was Svenson's Copper Underwing (*Amphipyra berbera*) which was recognised as a separate species 25 years ago. The previous most northerly record appears to be Grange-over-Sands, so this may be a new vice-county 70 (Cumberland) record.

Two or three Pipistrelles were found in two other boxes, but the highlight of the evening (to those not interested in moths) were two Brandt's/Whiskered Bats which were noticeably more noisy and ready to bite our intrepid leader than were the other species.

Geoff Naylor

Brandt's Bats were only separated from Whiskered Bats in 1970 and the two species are extremely difficult to tell apart, particularly females which I believe these were. It is often wiser to record them as "Brandt's/Whiskered" unless identification is certain.

Ed.

3rd October: Fungus Foray, Miltonrigg Wood Leader: Geoff Naylor

A fine Autumn day (for once!) encouraged eighteen members to turn out. This Woodland Trust site near Brampton has a good range of trees, including plenty of oak and other deciduous species. We were lucky that a new "flush" of fungi was under way. The final tally of species was a remarkable 80 - the highest number of any recent foray. The most notable species was *Thelephora palmata*, a kind of Earth Fan, which Geoff Naylor had previously discovered here.

Birds included a fine Buzzard, and the large new pool had the remnants of dragonfly activity, which included both Southern Hawker (*Aeshna cyanea*) - a new 10km square record - and Common Hawker (*A. juncea*), with the Emerald Damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*).

David Clarke

The Centenary Conference, 25 September 1993

The Society's Centenary Conference, held in the Lecture Theatre at Tullie House, proved to be a highly successful event, with many complimentary comments from participants.

Attendance was high with around ninety people attending both morning and afternoon sessions. As well as our own members, there were quite a few 'visitors' from local official and voluntary organisations, including English Nature, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and other local Natural History Societies.

The published programme of seven topics ran very smoothly and lived up to its promise of interest. The local contributions were from Steve Hewitt, John Webster, Geoff Naylor, Geoff Horne and myself.

We were particularly pleased to be able to welcome distinguished speakers from further afield - Geoffrey Halliday from Lancaster University, Roger Key from English Nature, Peterborough, and Derek Ratcliffe from Cambridge. Derek's review of wildlife conservation in Cumbria was a fitting conclusion to the day.

The various contributions will appear in a special issue of the *Transactions* of the Society to be issued later this year.

Thanks to the generosity of our speakers, including Derek's gift of his new *Peregrine* volume to the raffle, the event made a modest and unexpected profit, which will help to fund the publication.

David Clarke

Notes and Records

The White-faced Darter Dragonfly Leucorrhinia dubia at Claife Heights, Windermere.

It is good to note that a new and potentially more stable breeding site for this nationally scarce insect was discovered by Stephen Hewitt and myself on 13th July 1993 at Brown Stone Moss (SD39). The traditional site on Claife has become increasingly unsuitable in recent years, with fears of extinction of this population. This new site is cared for by Forest Enterprise, who have shown welcome interest in managing their Claife sites for dragonflies.

David Clarke

I only went out for a sandwich, but came back with a hoverfly new to Cumbria.

30th July was a warm and sunny day. Geoff Naylor and I decided to take a walk down to the Sheepmount (NY3956), by the River Caldew in Carlisle, during our lunch-break. My eye was taken by a dark hoverfly basking on a leaf, and instantly recognisable as belonging to the genus *Xylota* from its narrow, parallel-sided abdomen. Fortunately I had my pooter with me, and was able to poot the insect directly off the leaf. On returning to the Museum I identified it as *Xylota tarda*, a scarce hoverfly with a disjunct distribution in Scotland and south east England, not previously recorded from Cumbria.

Stephen Hewitt

Red Kite near Aglionby Grange

A single bird was seen near Aglionby Grange by John Miles on 16th December, and was apparently also present on 30th December.

As many as four Buzzards have also been seen in this vicinity, with another reported regularly at Carlisle Airport.

Geoff Naylor

A notable hoverfly Xanthandrus comtus from Middlesceugh.

During an afternoon visit to Middlesceugh White Ground (NY401410) on 23rd August 1993, I took a female of this distinctive black-and-orange species from an umbel of Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, among sparse scrub at the edge of oak woodland. The species, which interestingly feeds as a larva on the caterpillars of micro-moths, is something of a rarity, with only 30 post-1960 records for Britain, mostly from the south (Falk 1991).

My thanks to the Hon. Christopher Vane for permission to collect insects on Middlesceugh Estate.

John B. Parker

John has very kindly donated this specimen, along with several other hoverflies, to the Museum. The only other local specimen in the collections was taken by James Murray in his garden at Gretna in 1938. Only two other records are known for Cumbria; the first is an old record for Grange-over-Sands taken by A.E. Wright and the second is from 1989 when it was found at Hale Moss by Mark Shaw. I am grateful to Dr N.L. Birkett for the information on the last two records - Ed.

Red Alpine Catchfly on Hobcarton Crag

The actual site of this very rare alpine plant, *Lychnis alpina*, which has only one other British site (on serpentine outcrops in moorland above Glen Clova in Scotland), is well enough known, and not just to professed botanists, since even Wainwright mentions it in his description of the Grasmoor range (" . . . the place is silent, save for the croak of the Raven, and the occasional thud of a falling botanist . . ."), and Raven (John, this time, not the bird) describes where in the gullies it might be seen, in the New Naturalist *Mountain Flowers*.

In fact getting anywhere near the plant, let alone finding the 150 plants which one literature reference gives for the site, is something of a struggle, and after several visits over a period of twenty years, I had never seen the plant in good flower, nor any more than six clumps or so. The only date Raven mentions - July 5th (in 1955) - does seem a late date for it to be "in full flower", at least for more recent years, and the four of us hoped, on our trip there on 22th June 1993, to find it in good condition.



Lychnis alpina

(Jeremy Roberts)

exposures of another plant, rather less rare, in the shape of the blackish moss *Grimmia atrata* is also very suggestive of the presence of this metal. Whether the plant *needs* the metal, or whether it simply *tolerates* it, so growing where other plants cannot, is not clear.

I have access at work to a private herbarium, collected as recently as the fifties, which has a sheet with three mounted specimens on it. One hopes that today's visitor would have greater regard to the conservation aspects of any visit to such a rare plant.

Jeremy Roberts

Interrupted Clubmoss on Bowfell

A useful maxim in natural history, which has served me well enough over the years, is that *there's always more of it than you think*. This was borne out nicely over the winter. I had always thought that the only extant English site for this plant, *Lycopodium annotinum*, was the same as that pictured in Wilson's *Flora of Westmorland*, which is in the Crinkle Gill area of Langdale.

I had in fact seen the plant in this locality on a few occasions, with the help of a guide in the first instance, and very little of it there is left here. Growing at a very low

altitude, down in the bracken zone, there seemed no chance for its continued survival. In fact it was astonishing that a plant I had had to search hard for at high altitude in the Cairngorms should *ever* have survived so low down in the Lakeland hills, at least into recent times.

It was even more astonishing to be told that a group of botanists from out of the county knew of the plant at a quite different site under Bowfell, about a mile away, and beyond a ridge. In February 1994, I managed to stumble upon nine plants in this "new" site, all of them stronger than the best at the first site, and it seems that other plants also exist in the general area. So the plant is less immediately threatened than I had thought.

It is a very vexed question, and with no good answer, as to whether the spreading of precise information on sites of rare plants - such as happens with rare bird migrants - works in the interests of the plants themselves. It depends. I feel that in cases like this, the local botanists should be aware of all stations for local rare plants, so that threats to the sites can be countered. There have been all too many cases where wildlife sites have been destroyed, when with wider knowledge there might have been a chance of saving them.

Jeremy Roberts

Interesting moth-trap records from Milton (NY556606)

My garden moth-trap produced some goodies in October, the highlight being Brindled Ochre, *Dasypolia templi*, on the 10th. Other good finds included Merville de Jour, *Dichonia aprilina*, on October 9th and Sprawler, *Brachionycha sphinx*, on November 4th. Earlier in the season, in June, I had an Alder Moth (*Acronicta alni*) in the trap. This species has been very infrequently recorded in the north of Cumbria.

Geoff Naylor

The Ground-bug Eremocoris plebejus new to Cumbria

I took a specimen of this rare bug at Whinfall Forest on 5th May 1993. The insect was found beneath a dead stick among pine needles at the edge of the path (NY577278). Subsequent to this discovery I have found the bug at three other sites, all beneath Scots Pine growing on sandy soils in the Penrith area.

Stephen Hewitt

Polecats in Cumbria?

A number of reports and road casualties from Cumbria of possible Polecats have been coming into the Museum over the last two or three years.

These animals are notoriously difficult to separate from feral Ferrets which are

generally similarly marked. Some of the specimens brought into the Museum do have the bold face markings typical of true Polecats. This is not a definite character however, and it is necessary to take measurements of the skull to be more sure. Even then it is only possible to be 95% sure of the identification, and DNA testing is perhaps the only sure means of telling a true wild Polecat from its domesticated form - the Ferret. Information collected at Tullie House is passed to the Royal Scottish Museum which is researching the Polecat nationally.

Any updates on the local situation will be reported in this Newsletter. In the meantime please bring any dead Polecats/Ferrets found, to the Museum.

Recent road casualties of "polecats" have come from Hayton, Michael Nodder; Penrith and Ravenstonedale, John Webster; Bassenthwaite, Stephen Hewitt; Lamonby, John B. Parker; Staveley, Faith Billington and Brampton, Roy Atkins.

Stephen Hewitt



Polecat

(Roy Atkins)

Giant Lacewing Osmylus fulvicephalus at Uldale

On 22nd June 1993, while examining the bridge at Uldale (NY246367) for signs of roosting bats (which proved negative), I noticed five specimens of this insect 'roosting' on the roof of the bridge arch. Previously recorded from the county by F.H. Day, this insect is something of a rarity today. This distinctive species is worth looking out for in similar situations by water.

Stephen Hewitt

Mammal Survey

The Museum is conducting a survey of the mammals of Cumbria with the aim of producing up-to-date distribution maps for all species.

We already have reasonable data for some groups such as bats, but others, including very common species such as Rabbits, Moles and Hedgehogs, are very poorly covered at present.

Please keep a record of *any* mammals you see in Cumbria on the form enclosed with this Newsletter.

Marsh Fritillary Survey

An initiative to conserve this butterfly in Cumbria has been set up by English Nature, Butterfly Conservation, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, the National Trust and Tullie House Museum.

The aim is to establish the current state of the populations of species through survey and monitoring and to actively encourage the management of existing sites for the benefit of the butterfly. Areas of good habitat will also be identified as potential sites for introduction/re-introduction.

Anyone wanting to help survey for new sites or monitor existing sites should contact me.

Stephen Hewitt

Butterfly and Dragonfly Information Line

Yes, now you can twitch for insects too! 0891 446 862 is the new premium rate number to call for information on butterflies and dragonflies in the North West.

Woodpecker Survey

Cumbria Bird Club are conducting a survey of woodpeckers and nuthatches in the county this year. **Roy Atkins** is coordinating the survey locally, and would be pleased to receive any reports - or offers of help - from members. Please contact him if you would like to help, on Wetheral (0228) 70661.

I must apologise for the non-appearance of last autumn's issue, which would have made Volume 1 number 2. Although the present issue includes some of the material which would have been included last autumn it seemed sensible to keep the volume numbers in step with the year of issue. Consequently this is Volume 2 number 1 and the next Newsletter issued in Autumn this year will be Volume 2 number 2. There never was, and never will be, a Volume 1 number 2 - sorry! -

Editor

Birdoswald Survey

At the request of the County Council the Society undertook a survey of the wildlife of the land at Birdoswald Roman Fort.

The area is interesting, with semi-natural woodland growing on the steep slopes of the gorge carved by the River Irthing. Several members of the Society have visited the site over the last year, studying various groups of invertebrates, flowering plants, mosses, liverworts, lichens and birds. Some 428 different species were identified. A report has been sent to the County Museums and Heritage Officer, a copy of which is available for reference at Tullie House.

Late News

Toothwort, an unusual parasitic plant, was found by Stephen Hewitt and myself in large quantities in mid-April close by the junction of the rivers Caldew and Eden in Bitts Park, Carlisle. This plant is perhaps most typically found parasitising the roots of Hazel, but in this case it was under three very large Poplar trees.

Ron Groom, the recorder for this area for the forthcoming *Flora of Cumbria*, says that the plant has not previously been reported to him from this tetrad (2km square), and in fact it has not been reported in the whole 10km square (NY 35) within which the tetrad lies, at least in the years of the survey, although there is an older record in the *Atlas of the British Flora* (1964). (Information via Jeremy Roberts.)

Geoff Naylor

The Annual Dinner

This event, organised on 26th November 1993 to celebrate the founding of the Society on 30th November 100 years earlier, was a great success. Thirty members and their partners attended the meal at Dalston Hall. Thanks are due to David Clarke for finding the venue and making all the arrangements.

It is hoped to make this an annual event on, or around, the date of the Society's foundation. The date of this year's dinner will be announced in good time: please come if you can.

Skeletons in the Cupboard - Museum News

Recent additions to the Museum's collections include the late John Ingham's collection of local minerals. Containing around 1000 specimens this is a valuable addition to the Museum filling some gaps and adding depth to the existing mineral collection. We are very grateful to John's widow for her generous donation.

Another six important 19th century Cumbrian mineral specimens were purchased in 1993, two of these having passed through the hands of the renowned Victorian dealer Bryce Wright of Hesket Newmarket. We are grateful for financial support towards this purchase from the Friends of Tullie House and the PRISM Fund administered by the Science Museum.

The failed clutch of Golden Eagle eggs which Geoff Horne removed, under licence, from the Haweswater eyrie in 1993, have just been received back from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology where they were sent for analysis.

Work on improving the storage and documentation of the collections continues with invaluable help from volunteers. Edna Marper, Will Higgs, Peter Hutton, Tony Rigby, John B. Parker, Keith Clark and Alastair Spencer have worked on the botanical, mammal, mineral, diptera and photographic collections over the year.

A temporary summer exhibition on the Red Squirrel, supported by the Forest Authority and NPI Red Alert North West, is currently in preparation and will open on 28th May.

Work on the biological records database has progressed well thanks to the hard work of Geoff Naylor and John Martin. The database now holds more than 34,000 records of butterflies, moths, flies, dragonflies, grasshoppers, bugs, snails, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Distribution maps have been produced for butterflies and grasshoppers and will shortly be available for dragonflies, amphibians and reptiles. Please keep records of your wildlife sightings over the summer to add to the database.

Stephen Hewitt

Stop Press: New Zealand flatworm turns up in Carlisle!

*The Cumberland News and Radio Cumbria both ran items on May 6th about this so-called "killer worm". The flatworm **Artioposthia triangulata** kills and feeds on earthworms and is believed to have been introduced to Britain with plants from New Zealand, and distributed via garden centres. There is particular concern about this recent addition to the British fauna because of the damage it can do to earthworm populations. One of the first reports from the country was in Carlisle almost thirty years ago. Recent survey work shows it to have become widespread in Central and Southern Scotland. The re-discovery at Denton Holme shows that the species is still present locally, and has perhaps been here for the last thirty years but gone unnoticed.*

It is important to monitor the present distribution and spread of this species which should be looked for under stones and plant pots in gardens.

Any recent records should be sent in to the Museum. The animal is earthworm sized, but leech-like and without rings, and uniform brown or grey.

Summer Programme 1994

All field meetings depart from Carlisle College, where those without transport may obtain a lift in members' cars. Secondary meeting points are described for those travelling independently.

23rd April (Saturday)

BORROWDALE (Birds of Prey)

Leader: Geoff Horne

Depart 9.30am. Meet Great Wood Car Park (NY271212) 10.30am.

7th May (Saturday)

SOUTH SOLWAY (Migrant Birds)

Leader: John Hamer

Depart 12.30pm.

21st May (Saturday)

FISHGARTH WOODS

Leader: David Clarke

Depart 1.30pm. Meet at Cumwhitton Church (NY505522) 1.45pm.

12th June (Sunday)

IDENTIFYING SEDGES (Workshop and Field Trip)

Leader: Jeremy Roberts

Come along and discover a whole new world - or brush up your existing knowledge.

Meet at Tullie House Museum 10.00am. (Please book in advance with the Museum). Outing in the afternoon to sedge-rich areas in the Irthing Valley.

25th June (Saturday)

MEIKLE ROSS

Leader: Brian Spencer

Depart 9.00am.

9th July (Saturday)

SMARDALE/WAITBY-GREENRIGGS

Leader: David Clarke

Depart 9.30am. Meet Smardale Reserve entrance (NY739082) at 10.15am.

23rd July (Saturday)

CUMWHITTON MOSS

Leader: David Clarke

Depart 1.30pm. Meet Cumwhitton Church (NY505522) 1.45pm.

6th August (Saturday)

ENGINE LONNING, CARLISLE

Leader: Stephen Hewitt

Depart 1.30pm. Meet top of Clift Street 1.45pm.

10th September (Saturday)

GRUNE POINT

Leader: Geoff Naylor

Depart 12.30pm. Meet at Skinburness (NY125561) 1.15pm.

Dates for your Diary

Winter Meetings:

**Wednesday evenings, every fortnight ,
from: 5th October to 14th December 1994;
and from: 4th January to 1st March 1995**

Credits

General editor

*Stephen Hewitt **

Word-processing

Stephen Hewitt and Geoff Naylor

Layout and D.T.P.

Jeremy Roberts

As CNHS Newsletter takes shape, we need much more input from members. Please submit your observations, findings, notes, requests, views, drawings, to the editor for inclusion. Also please make sure we know your views on what you would like to see included.

***It is your mouthpiece: make sure you use it!
Deadline for the next issue: October 31st 1994***

*(*Contact address:*

Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle CA3 8TP; tel (0228) 34781)

WILLIAM RAYMOND LAIDLER 1918 - 1994

Ray Laidler, Vice-President of this Society, died recently in a nursing home in Hampshire. He was born in the Carlisle area and educated at Carlisle Grammar School, which he left in 1934 to start his career as an Electrical Engineer.

He joined the Society in 1933, and his formative years as a naturalist were spent in the woods and on the mosses around Carlisle. However he had a deep and lasting affection for the beautiful hills of Galloway in south-west Scotland. This area he came to love. In the company of like-minded friends, he would take his cycle on the train to Gatehouse of Fleet and spend many days searching out and studying the Golden Eagles and Peregrine Falcons of the area.

During the second World War he served in the Border Regiment and was severely wounded in the Western Desert campaign. He was evacuated to South Africa to recuperate and taught himself to write again with his left hand. He carried shell shrapnel in his body for the rest of his life.

After the war he resumed his career with the Central Electricity Generating Board, becoming a Senior Distribution Engineer, a position he held until his retirement in 1978.

He married Sheila Atkinson, who died in 1985 after a severe illness. They are survived by two sons Tony and John, both of whom were members of the Society and became expert naturalists in their own right under the guidance of their father.

Ray first served on the Council of the Society in 1961, assuming the duties of Secretary the following year. Over the next decade he served the Society variously as Secretary, Treasurer and Vice-President, before being elected President for three years from 1970. He remained an active member of the Council until his illness in 1988.

He was one of the first people to notice the decline in raptor populations in the 1950's and 60's as a result of environmental poisoning by organo-chlorine chemicals. His work for the Nature Conservancy Council, monitoring the Peregrine Falcon and Sparrowhawk populations of Cumbria and south-west Scotland through the decline and the recovery, was invaluable. Ray's interest in natural history went much deeper than birds of prey; he became one of the local experts on European butterflies, moths, dragonflies and orchids.

Ray, a fine naturalist, will be very sadly missed by his family, and by his friends, and by the writer, who became a best friend and has many fond memories of some wonderful days in the Galloway hills learning his field craft from the expert.

Geoff Horne
23 April 1994