

In Memoriam

John HEATH (1922-1987) (*)

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John HEATH died on 6 July 1987 at the age of 65. He was one of the founder Members of SEL, on 19 September 1976, and was our vice-President from that time until 1986. During that period he served the Society with devotion : in addition to organising the Third SEL Congress in Cambridge in 1982 and making it a memorable occasion, he was responsible for the finances of the British membership, from the collection of subscriptions to their use in paying for the production of our *Bibliographia*.

(*) A full list of the publications of John HEATH will appear in a future issue of *Nota lepid.*

John was born at Worcester in 1922, but educated at King Edward VI School, Southampton, where he was taught French by that eminent Hampshire entomologist, William FASSNIDGE. According to John, FASSNIDGE once remarked that although his success in turning him into a French scholar appeared to have been limited, he had nevertheless produced "not a bad" entomologist! It is certain that John's interest in entomology, and Lepidoptera in particular, began at school, and the fact that his first published note, at the age of 18, was on one of the Psychidae is an indication of FASSNIDGE's influence, for it is rare for a teenager to get beyond the butterflies and larger moths without a mentor.

During the War, John found himself working with electronic equipment in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), and later in life his familiarity with such equipment resulted in his easy mastery of data processing at the Biological Records Centre where he began to make his name among entomologists. In the meantime the informal credentials he had picked up in entomology and electronics led to successive appointments first with the Biological Research Department of Pest Control near Cambridge, with a year in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and then at Merlewood, the Nature Conservancy Research Station in Cumbria, where he did good work for the next 14 years, not only with Lepidoptera but with other invertebrates. He developed a special interest for the Micropterygidae, and it is in regard to this group that John made his greatest impact as a scientific lepidopterist, indeed a world authority.

John made a contribution to practical collecting when he designed a small, portable, but highly effective moth trap which uses an actinic tube powered by a battery and bears his name – the Heath trap.

In 1967, John set up the Insect Distribution Maps Scheme at the Biological Records Centre at Monk's Wood, where he remained until retirement in 1982 as head of the Centre. From the mapping scheme was born his most ambitious project, the 11-volume treatise on "The Moths & Butterflies of Great Britain & Ireland". Despite setbacks that would have deterred a lesser man, John's enthusiasm remained undiminished. He withstood the occasional snarls of his authors, this writer included, with tact and good humour that made him such a pleasure to work with... and got him his way in the end! Alas, John only lived long enough to see four of the volumes published, and those who remain are determined to see the work completed as a memorial to the great man.

Another unfinished project which John helped set up, this time with Professor LECLERCQ of Gembloux in Belgium, is the European Invertebrate Survey, and again the future of the project appears to be in safe hands.

John was made President of the British Entomological and Natural History Society in 1982, an office he filled with distinction, but we like to think that it was his vice-Presidency of SEL that gave him most pride. Our Society has lost one of its pillars, and our members a genial and stalwart friend. To his wife, Joan, who was his constant companion and practical help, and their son Nigel, we offer our sincere condolences while sharing their happy memories of a kind and eminent colleague.

VI. European Congress of Lepidopterology San Remo 5-9 April 1988

The Societas Europaea Lepidopterologica (SEL) kindly invites all lepidopterists to attend the VI. European Congress of Lepidopterology in San Remo from Tuesday 5th - Saturday 9th April 1988.

Main topics are :

- Biochemical and ecological adaptations in Lepidoptera.
- Bionomics of endangered species.
- Genetical and cladistical approaches to the phylogeny of butterflies.

For more information please contact the Congress Secretary: Prof. E. Balletto, Dipartimento di Biologia animale, Via Academia Albertina 17, I-10123 Torino (Italy).

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