

PROFESSOR WILLIAM S. LACEY, B.Sc., Ph.D., D.Sc., F.L.S., F.G.S.

When Professor W.S. Lacey (Bill, as he likes to be called) retired from his post at the School of Plant Biology, University College of North Wales, Bangor, last autumn, he had served on the academic staff for thirty-six years.

Born near Leicester, and educated at Wyggeston Grammar School, the flora of nearby Charnwood Forest attracted him even as a schoolboy and when he went to the University of Reading, in 1936, it was to read Botany. From his very first year there he came under the influence of Prof. Tom Harris, F.R.S., a distinguished palaeobotanist, and it was to prove a decisive influence, for it set Bill's feet firmly on the course of his future career.

Graduation and a year studying for the Diploma in Education were followed, in 1940, by a move to Lancashire, where he was directed into a temporary wartime post at the Royal Ordnance Factory in Chorley. In 1943 he was appointed to a part-time lectureship in Biology at the Wigan and District Mining and Technical College; and then, in 1944, he became a fulltime lecturer there. Shortly afterwards he was active in establishing the Wigan and District Field Club and it was he who led its first field excursion (a Fungus Foray) in 1945. At this time, too, his active interest in field work led to the publication of his Flora of Chorley and District, a work which remained a principal source of records even when Travis's Flora of South Lancashire was published thirty years later.

Palaeobotany, however, was neither forgotten nor neglected, and the Millstone grit quarries, as well as the waste heaps of the collieries around Burnley attracted his interest. So did the Carboniferous Limestone quarries in North Wales, to which he made a cycling trip in 1945. In many ways this was an auspicious visit, for in 1946 he was appointed to the post of Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Botany, University College of North Wales, Bangor, where he was to remain for the rest of his working life, being made Lecturer in 1949, Senior Lecturer in 1965, and Reader in 1969. In 1976 the University of Wales awarded him a Personal Chair in recognition of his distinguished research record.

Soon after taking up his post in Bangor he began research on the fossil flora of the lower Carboniferous of North Wales for which his old University later awarded him a Ph.D. From then onwards throughout the 1960s and 1970s he published numerous papers on the Carboniferous floras of England and Wales and the Permian floras of Southern Africa. His international reputation as a palaeobotanist was duly recognised by the University of Wales when, in 1967, he was

awarded a D.Sc. More scholarly papers were yet to follow, for in subsequent years he extended his research interests to the Devonian of Eire.

The move to Bangor was to prove eventful not only for himself. His love of plants (and indeed of all aspects of wild life) was coupled with a deep concern for their conservation. When the North Wales Naturalists' Trust was formed in 1963 he was one of its founder members and became its first Honorary General Secretary. So began an active involvement with wildlife conservation in North Wales which was to take up much of his spare time over a long period. In its formative years, in addition to being Secretary, he edited the Trust's News Letter and served on the management committees of some of the reserves which the Trust was soon to acquire. In 1974 he relinquished the post of Hon. Sec. and became Chairman of the Trust, a position he still holds.

Because of his enthusiasm for nature conservation, his voluntary committee work has been concerned with various aspects of the countryside and wildlife: in 1972 he became a member of the Snowdonia National Park Committee, on which he served until 1982; he also served for some years on the Nature Conservancy Council's Advisory Committee for Wales. In 1970 he edited the book 'Welsh Wildlife in Trust', which was published to celebrate European Conservation Year. For his voluntary conservation work he was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee medal in 1977.

Bill has been a member of the B.S.B.I. for thirty years. He has made a valuable contribution to the Welsh Region Committee from its inception, serving as its first Chairman, and for a time as its Representative on Council. He has also contributed articles and notes to the B.S.B.I.'s journals, to the Welsh Bulletin, to Nature in Wales and to Transactions of the British Bryological Society on topics ranging from the spread of Galinsoga in Britain to Marsh-orchids, the flora of Ynys Seiriol (Puffin Island) and the appearance of a moss (Campylopus introflexus) new to Anglesey. He has written reports for the Nature Conservancy Council on the small but botanically rich and important fens of Anglesey and the Lleyn peninsula, and has continually pressed and worked for the conservation of these fragile remnants of Welsh wetlands. His enthusiasm for their wild life remains undiminished: whether on his beloved Cors Goch, in Anglesey, or Cors Geirch, in Lleyn (where he recorded Narrow-leaved Marsh-orchid (Dactylorhiza traunsteineri) for the first time in Wales in 1953); or in an oak woodland in Merioneth, amongst luxuriant mosses, lichens and Filmy Ferns, he is equally at home.

We wish him many happy years of retirement in the land of his adoption.

R.H. Roberts

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