
Brecknock County Naturalists' Trust Ltd.



FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

February, 1965.

Southey, Printers, Merthyr.

Brecknock County Naturalists' Trust

Patron : Captain N. GARNONS-WILLIAMS

President : Sir WILLIAM L. PARKER, Bart., O.B.E.

Vice-President : County Alderman TUDOR E. WATKINS, M.P.

Chairman : Dr. D. KYLE, M.A., M.B., B.Ch.,
'Glasfryn,' Alexandra Road, Brecon.

Vice-Chairman : Major R. D. RAIKES,
'Treberfydd,' Bwlch, Breconshire.

Hon. Treasurer : E. S. MICHELL, Esq.,
Barclays Bank, Brecon.

Hon. Secretary : J. O. EVANS, Esq.,
Brynheulog, Cefn Coed,
Merthyr Tydfil.

Members of First Council :

Officers of the Trust and Mr. J. A. Blackham, Col. R. S. Cresswell, Mr. C. Tren Davies, Rev. J. Jones-Davies, Dr. T. L. Davies, Mr. R. Dean, Mr. Russell Evans, Dr. C. M. Fenn, Mr. John Griffiths, Wing-Commander R. Haworth-Booth, Mrs. H. G. E. Knox-Thomas, Mr. F. L. Loveridge, Mr. E. Morgan, Miss Winifred Phillips, Major Gen. Sir Geoffrey-Raikes, Mr. J. P. Sankey-Barker, Mr. E. C. J. Selwyn.

Standing Committees :

Executive :

Officers of the Trust and J. A. Blackham, Col. R. S. Cresswell, C. Tren Davies, Rev. J. Jones-Davies, Dr. T. L. Davies, Wing-Commander R. Haworth-Booth, F. L. Loveridge, Mrs. H. C. E. Knox Thomas, Miss Winifred Phillips, Major-General Sir Geoffrey Raikes, J. P. Sankey-Barker, E. C. J. Selwyn.

Scientific :

Officers of the Trust and J. A. Blackham, R. S. Cresswell, Dr. T. L. Davies, R. Dean, Russell Evans, C. M. Fenn, John Griffiths, F. L. Loveridge, E. Morgan, Miss Winifred Phillips, Major-General Sir Geoffrey Raikes, J. P. Sankey-Barker, *Keri Williams, *E. Bartlett.

* Denotes Co-opted Member.

Chairman's Report

I have pleasure in presenting the Annual Report of Council to the first Annual General Meeting of the Brecknock County Naturalists' Trust.

As this is the first report, I propose with your indulgence to exceed slightly my strict terms of reference, and to survey the scene which extends in time from June 1963, when the idea of a Naturalist Trust was first born, until the present day, which is officially its first birthday.

The report falls naturally into four parts. First, the preliminary work of the Sponsoring and Formation Committee, secondly the work of the first Council and its committees, thirdly an account of the achievements of the Trust in 1964 and finally a look into the future.

The first seed was sown in June, 1963, when a number of people whom it was thought would be interested were circulated by a small group of members of the Council for the Preservation of Rural Wales.

It was pointed out that every county in Wales except Monmouthshire and Breconshire already had a Naturalist's Trust, and it was suggested that the time was ripe for these counties to form a Trust, either jointly or separately. To this end a public meeting was organised in Abergavenny, attended by about 100 people from Breconshire and Monmouthshire. After an instructive talk on Nature Trusts as a whole by Mr. A. E. Smith (Secretary of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves) the meeting was opened for discussion. It soon became clear that the meeting was in favour of forming a Trust, but was divided on whether there should be one or two Trusts. It was finally proposed that each county should form a Sponsoring Committee chosen from members present at the meeting and that each committee should go home and discuss the matter quietly among themselves and report their decision to each other within a short period.

The Sponsoring Committee met at the Brecon Museum in July 1963 under the chairmanship of Sir Geoffrey Raikes. It was decided that Breconshire should have a Trust of its own, and a letter to this effect was sent to the Monmouthshire Committee. A list of names of potential members was made, and a circular letter

was sent out. To determine what support the proposal would have, both financially and numerically, a tear-off slip was attached at the end which contained the "teeth" of the letter. This read :

- (a) I am interested in the formation of a Naturalist's Trust ;
- (b) I am prepared to become (1) a Life Member at £10 0s 0d. ;
or, (2) An annual subscriber at £1 0s. 0d. per year.

The response to this letter was satisfactory and from those replying a number were invited to serve on a Formation Committee, about 20 in all. At the first meeting of this Committee at the end of August, 1963, under the chairmanship of Sir Geoffrey Raikes, it was learnt that 150 letters had been sent out, the return being 14 Life Members and 45 Annual Subscribers. With the financial support thus assured, it was resolved to go ahead with the formation of a Naturalist's Trust. This involved drawing up a Memorandum and Articles of Association, and a sub-committee was appointed for this purpose. In addition, a Publicity Leaflet was to be got out, leading up to an Inaugural Meeting in due course.

At a second meeting of the Formation Committee held in October, 1963, a banking account was established with the subscriptions that had already come in, much to the relief of the Secretary and Treasurer. The Publicity Leaflet was discussed in greater detail, and it was decided to print 1,000 of these, as well as an application form for membership.

At a further meeting in November, 1963, the Publicity Leaflet and membership forms were approved in their final form. Arrangements for the Inaugural Meeting, to be held on January 25th, 1964, were further considered, and a Ladies' Committee was formed to arrange a Buffet Tea after the meeting.

The Inaugural Meeting was well-attended, about 100 people being present. There was an address of welcome from the Mayor, and the Officers and Council of the Trust were elected. This was followed by an interesting and informative talk on the work of Naturalist's Trusts by Mr. J. C. Cadbury, the President of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves. The meeting broke up for tea and informal discussion, while the Secretary and Treasurer went around hopefully waving membership forms.

With the Inaugural Meeting behind us, the Trust proper was now in being.

The first meeting of the elected Council was held in February, 1964. It was a great disappointment to members to learn that

Sir Geoffrey Raikes, who had been Chairman of the Formation Committee, did not feel able to take on the Chairmanship of Council. Sir Geoffrey, who had been the moving spirit behind the formation of the Trust, had done more than anyone else to bring it into being. He seemed the obvious choice for the job of Chairman—a man of great distinction in his profession and in the public life of the county and the principality, used to committee work, with a life-long interest in natural history and the conservation of nature. Any cause that he embraces is advanced by the very fact that he has embraced it, and we count ourselves fortunate that we still have the benefit of his wisdom and experience on the Council and its committees. Every member of the Trust, all your colleagues on the Council, and I, your unworthy successor, say "*Thank you, Sir Geoffrey.*"

Other business at the first meeting concerned the membership position—the Secretary reported the total was now 80 members, 16 of them Life Members. The internal organisation of the Trust was discussed, and a sub-committee was formed to study this and report at the next meeting.

This was held in March, 1964, and after discussing the report of the sub-committee, it was decided to establish two Committees, each responsible to Council. The Executive Committee would run the day-to-day business of the Trust, and deal with finance, legal matters, publicity, news-letters, etc. The Scientific and Advisory Committee was to be concerned with preparing lists of sites in the county with natural and scientific interest, with advising the Council on these matters, and with recording the natural history of the county.

Two other matters of more than passing interest were decided. First that the Trust should produce a News-letter 2 or 3 times a year for distribution to members, and that the Secretary should be responsible for its production, and secondly that the Bulletin on Breconshire Birds (which had already been published for a few years by its Author, Mr. John Griffiths, at his own expense) should be taken over by the Trust. The Trust would pay for its printing, and it should be sent out to members at the same time as the News-Letter.

Two meetings of the Scientific Committee were held in April and November. The question of acquiring Nature Reserves was on the agenda. The first area considered was at Tarren-yr-Escob, near Capel-y-Ffin, on the Breconshire-Herefordshire border, and it was decided to get in touch with Lord Hereford, who owns

the property. Talybont Reservoir was also considered, and the County Council are being approached. Stretches of disused Railway tracks were also mentioned in this connection as possible Nature Reserves.

Five Specialist Groups were formed, in Ornithology, Mammals, Botany, Entomology and Geology (including Caves). Leaders of the groups were appointed, to organise its activities, and to choose its members. If any specialist advice is needed, it will be the duty of the particular group concerned to provide it.

The Secretary reported that many Trusts have emblems on their News-letter, brochures, etc. Members were asked to bring forward suggestions at a later meeting, and a design with a Buzzard as the central theme was finally chosen.

Suggestions were also sought for further areas of the county to be designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Already one area has been so designated and two or three others may be scheduled by the Nature Conservancy for their Biological interest.

A meeting of the Council was held in July, and there were also three meetings of the Executive Committee, in May, October and December. The Memorandum and Articles have been received, the Trust being incorporated on 27th October, 1964. Many discussions were held on membership, publicity, finance, lectures, expeditions and other possible activities, and these matters will come up again later in this report, and in the Secretary's Report, as well as on the Agenda for this meeting.

This concludes the account of the work of the various committees, and leads on to a short consideration of the other activities of the Trust, which forms the third section of my report.

First, the News-letter. Two News-letters were produced last year, and were sent out to every member, together with the Bulletin of Breconsire Birds and other literature. Their excellence is a tribute to the hard work of the Secretary who had to find time among all his other duties to collect the articles and to collate the smaller items into a seemly whole. The original articles, of which there were three in the last year, are of especial value because they are of local and county interest, and I would appeal to members to see to it that the supply does not dry up. It is the local material which will be of lasting value, because it cannot be obtained anywhere else. In time to come, when facts and figures on the natural history of Breconsire are required, it will be in the files of our

News-letter that the searchers of the future will find the treasure which they seek, the local knowledge of modest unknown men and women which finds its way only into small local publications such as ours. For these reasons I make no apology for giving the News-letter, with all its potentialities, pride of place (so far) in our list of achievements.

Another very important part of our work is the acquisition of Nature Reserves, where Mother Nature may, under our benevolent supervision, proceed in her wisdom along her own accustomed and often devious ways. We already have our first Nature Reserve at Tymawr Pool, Llanfrynach, and for this we have to thank Mr. John de Winton and Mr. Jocelyn de Winton. The official handing over of the agreement, signed and sealed, will take place later today.

Negotiations for a second Nature Reserve at Tarren-yr-Escob (which was mentioned previously) are well advanced. In September 1964 members of Council visited this site which had already been surveyed by the Nature Conservancy and is of outstanding botanical interest. In addition it is a magnificent stretch of country and it was considered that it would be a valuable and spectacular addition to our assets, and one well worth preserving.

As well as Talybont Reservoir, there are prospects also of two other Reserves within a few miles of Brecon. but it is not yet the right time to give further details. We travel hopefully and trust that one day we will arrive.

We also have an obligation in the field of education, and here too, we made a start in September, 1964, when a Week-end Naturalist course was held at Tyn-y-Cae Youth Hostel for 13 Boy Scouts from Ystradgynlais. The Specialist Group in Botany, Ornithology and Entomology rallied to the flag. A mist-net was set up and a number of birds were ringed. Methods of collecting and preserving butterflies and moths were demonstrated, and one day was devoted to the study of Fresh Water Life on Tymawr Pond and the Brecon-Newport Canal near Pencelly. A full account is given in the second News-letter.

I have here the Trust Emblem, already briefly described, which was selected from a number of designs submitted by Mr. E. Morgan, a member of the Council. We are very grateful to him for the trouble he has taken and the skill he has shown. It will be used not only on note-paper and newsletters, but will also appear on the notice-boards which will be erected to mark our Nature Reserves.

Three weeks ago an experimental social afternoon with a cinema-show and tea to follow was organised on a small scale for members of Council and their wives. This was made possible by the kindness of Mrs. Morgan of Llandefaelog House, Brecon, who supplied not only the room and the chairs, but also a most magnificent tea. Four short nature films were shown, lasting in all about an hour. The Secretary, with an almost Scottish canniness, had been able to obtain the films free of charge, and Mr. E. Morgan was the cinema-operator, bringing his own projector and screen. It was, from every point of view, a most enjoyable afternoon, and I must say once again how grateful the Council is to Mrs. Morgan for suggesting the idea in the first place and for going to such trouble to ensure that it was a successful event.

This pleasant occasion leads on naturally to the fourth and final section of my report, which deals with plans for the future. Up to now, the news-letter has been the only means of communication between the members in the periphery and the Council in the centre. It is doing a good job, and in the first few months of the Trust's existence it was difficult to do more. But the Council feels very strongly—and I hope this meeting will feel the same—that the time has now come to devise some form of corporate activity for the Trust as a whole, so that members may meet together on an occasion such as I have just described. This could be a film show, or a lecture, or a demonstration or an exhibition of this or that, followed by time for discussion and general talk, the whole being topped off by some light refreshments, even if this amounts to no more than tea and a biscuit. In this way the Trust will really come to have a life and existence of its own and will develop first a sense of purpose and a personality and ultimately, some influence in the affairs of the county. Otherwise it will be nothing more than a number of well-meaning but ineffectual individuals.

We are hoping for suggestions from the meeting later, but we are already arranging a short series of lectures, under the auspices of the Department of Extra Mural Studies of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire. Not only will the lecturers be provided, but they will be paid for as well. This is a most generous gesture, for which the Trust is extremely grateful. The first lecture will be at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, February 24th. It will be given by Dr. Mary Gilham, whose subject is "Plants in South East Wales," and will take place in the Lecture room in the new Rural Technical Institute, Brecon, by the kind consent of the Principal.

Apart from these more formal lectures, smaller informal meetings might be arranged by local organisers in centres throughout the county ; for instance in Crickhowell, Talgarth, Sennybridge, Builth Wells, Ystradgynlais, or anywhere else where there was a sufficient number of members. These meetings could be either for Trust members only or could be arranged in conjunction with the Women's Institute, the Boy Scouts, or any other interested bodies.

In the summer expeditions can be mounted to places of interest in the county and plans are already being laid for a Trust outing to the Dan-yr-Ogof Caves in the summer. It is hoped to have a geologist or a caver in charge to describe the points of interest and answer questions. Tea can be obtained at the restaurant at the end of the outing. Members may think that I have some sort of fixation about tea and refreshments, but I am convinced that the friendly and relaxed atmosphere they engender tends to create a real bond among those of similar interests, and to foster the pleasant feeling of "belonging" which is what gives an organisation its strength.

Our responsibilities in the way of furthering education in the field of Natural History and of the conservation and preservation of nature must not be forgotten. The successful course for Boy Scouts last year has been already mentioned and a further similar course has been arranged at the request of Brigadier Napier for members of Youth Clubs. The Trust will always be pleased to help in this field whenever it can and hopes that anyone who requires such help will not hesitate to ask for it. Members in their ordinary social contacts may have the opportunity, from time to time, of bringing forward this aspect of the Trust's work.

As the work of the Trust increases and its scope widens, money will be necessarily needed if this is to cover its increasing expenses. More members must be found and in addition to members' subscriptions, it would seem advisable to form some sort of capital fund, so that if any project requiring money should turn up, such as the acquisition of some very desirable Nature Reserve, the Trust would have some reserves on which it could draw. The Secretary will give consideration to these problems in his report and I hope the meeting will have something to add later.

One more aspiration for the future which will also require money. Somehow, somewhere, premises of some kind must be found, preferably in Brecon, to store all the brochures, all the literature, all the reports and all the other impedimenta that are presently

cluttering up the house of our Secretary and his long-suffering wife. If a suitable room could be found, it could also act as a sort of club-room and reading-room for the Trust. It could be used as a repository for various records, for collections of local flowers and insects, etc., arranged for educational purposes, for photographs, for a library, for colour transparencies and slides for lectures, and many similar things. It would seem, if the Trust is to become a really active body, that such premises must ultimately be found. If any member, either now or at any time, has any suggestion to offer, we will be very glad to hear it.

That, ladies and gentlemen, concludes my report.

DAVID KYLE.

