

## OBITUARY

WALTER WATSON

1872-1960

In the *Report of the Lichen Exchange Club of the British Isles* for 1911 the distributor, J. A. Wheldon, wrote, "Mr. W. Watson was good enough to contribute 38 specimens without desiring anything in return." This sentence briefly summarizes the character of the late Dr. Walter Watson. He was always willing to help others with their problems, as many of our members know, without thought of recompense. It is interesting to note, too, that he was one of the original members of the Lichen Exchange Club, which was founded in 1908 by the late A. R. Horwood, of Leicester Museum.

In his early years Walter Watson lived with his parents in Greenfield, near Oldham, and helped in his father's business whilst attending night school in the evenings. His real interest, however, was in the natural sciences, and he became a student at London University, where he took his B.A. degree. He taught biology for a short time at Larne and then he obtained a post at Sexeys, Bruton, Somerset. From there he went as biology master to Taunton School, and in 1925 he became head of the science department. The quality of his teaching was such that it placed the school in high repute in this field of education. He once told me that he found Somerset such an interesting and satisfying county botanically that he had decided to remain there for the rest of his life, and so he continued to live in Taunton after his retirement in 1939. His knowledge of the county and its botany was very wide, and he became president and recorder for the Botanical Section of the Somerset Natural History and Archaeological Society, and he served for many years on the council of the Society. He wrote numerous papers, and naturally these included the lichen and bryophyte floras of Somerset. Being born a Yorkshireman, he was invited to become President of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union, and in the *Transactions* of that Society he published a lichen flora of Yorkshire in 1946. Of great importance were his papers on the ecology of cryptogamic vegetation published in the *Journal of Ecology*. For his researches he was granted the degree of Doctor of Science by London University in 1922. He was elected an associate of the Linnean Society *honoris causa* in 1918. His botanical work was also noticed abroad, and in 1950 he was elected a vice-president of the Cryptogamic Section of the Seventh Botanical Congress, held in Stockholm.

BRITISH Mycological Society, was his last publication and forms the basis of this Society's work on the distribution of lichens in Britain. It was shortly after the publication of this work that he realized that his memory was failing him, and his strong character enabled him to make the courageous decision to cease all critical work. This Society will long be in his debt for holding together the remnants of British lichenology during those years when the study of this branch of botany was at its lowest ebb. Its present resurgence would have been a source of great pleasure to him.

Those of us who have had the pleasure of staying at his home in Taunton will have quickly realized his interest in painting and sketching, at which he was no mean amateur. He also found time to follow the fortunes of the Somerset County Cricket Club, of which he was one of the oldest members.

He leaves a widow, Mrs. Adela Watson, and one daughter by a former marriage. His collection of flowering plants is in the County Museum, Taunton, whilst his lichens went to Kew. The British Museum is to have his bryophytes and library.

F. A. SOWTER.

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### Notice to Contributors

Contributions on any aspect of lichenology are welcomed. They should be sent to the Editor or Assistant Editor. Drawings should be in Indian ink on Bristol board. References should be given in the Harvard system—that is, name and date in text, names in alphabetical order at end.