

The Journals of the Botanical Society of the British Isles

This is the first issue of a journal formed from the amalgamation of the Society's two previous journals, *Watsonia* and *Proceedings of the Botanical Society of the British Isles*, but continuing under the former title and with continuity of volume number. The new journal will be published twice a year, in January and July, and there will be four parts per volume. Abstracts from Literature, formerly published in *Proceedings*, will appear separately and annually as *BSBI Abstracts*.

J. G. Dony *President, 1967-9*

In the early years of the Society, which dates back to 1836, its journal consisted of an annual report of plants collected during the year as the *Botanical Exchange Club and Society of the British Isles* (the name used by the Society for very many years). Slim reports of a few pages increased in size as critical botanists, critical in more senses than one, made longer notes on each other's gatherings and determinations. In the course of time the exchange reports took second place to longer supplementary items which included a wide variety ranging from purely domestic matters, such as lists of members and accounts of meetings, to valuable papers of a taxonomic and topographical nature.

In 1947 the name of the Society was changed to its present one, by which time the exchange of specimens had diminished to such an extent that its end was certain and near. The next major change in the journals came in 1949 with the separation of the domestic items from the rest. This was done in a *Year Book* which was published for four years during which period the exchange reports lapsed. At the same time a new journal, *Watsonia*, was launched under the distinguished editorship of E. F. Warburg who was to remain its editor for fourteen years. It was originally intended that this should contain Plant Notes, Plant Records, Book Reviews, Obituaries and Abstracts from Literature, as well as papers on the taxonomy and distribution of British plants. It was, in short, to reflect all those facets of the study of the British flora which must for ever be associated with the pioneer work of H. C. Watson and with which the Society was mainly concerned.

Botanical studies were, however, going through a period of transition which could be met only by another change in the Society's journals. In 1953 the page size of *Watsonia* was increased to allow for larger diagrams and tables, so necessary in papers on the cytogenetics and experimental taxonomy of British plants, the number of which was steadily increasing. Indeed, *Watsonia* was at that time mainly intended for such papers. In the same year *Proceedings of the Botanical Society of the British Isles*, an entirely new journal, was launched with D. H. Kent as its editor. His skilled editorship was to last for twelve years. It was intended that *Proceedings* should contain all that had previously been included in the *Year Book* as well as such items as Plant Notes, Plant Records, Obituaries and Abstracts from Literature. In addition it would contain papers dealing with plant distribution. It seemed a very clear division of the material the Society would need to publish and for a time it worked exceedingly well.

In recent years the study of the British flora has once more changed as no doubt it will change again. Cytotaxonomy is no longer favoured to the extent that it was twenty years ago with the result that a clear-cut division of papers is no longer so easily achieved. Papers have appeared in one journal which could with equal justification have been included in the other. If there had ever been a claim, which is doubtful, that *Watsonia* was a medium for the professional botanist and *Proceedings* for the amateur, it has long since passed. Indeed, some of the more valuable scientific papers have come from the pens of amateurs whilst lighter and more discursive articles have not infrequently been contributed by professionals. A further problem arises from the recent increase in Abstracts from Literature, which are of great value to some readers but are only of passing interest to others.

The editors of the two journals and the Publications Committee of the Society have given considerable thought to the future of the Society's periodical publications and have reported that they can see no justification for continuing to have two periodicals. The needs of today could be served more effectively with only one journal, an amalgamation of the present two, to be called *Watsonia* and subtitled *Journal and Proceedings of the Botanical Society of the British Isles*. To this change the Council of the Society agreed. The new journal will contain all that has previously been included in the two previous ones and will appear twice a year. In addition Abstracts from Literature will be published under a separate cover annually and in this form may prove to be even more useful to those members and subscribers who now value it.

As all contributions will now appear in one journal, it is hoped that an increasing number of amateur botanists will be encouraged to be more ambitious in the projects that they undertake. Their intimate knowledge of growing plants is an essential complement to the laboratory techniques of research workers. Such collaboration between amateur and professional botanists has been a unique feature of the history of the Society and has led to the British flora being the best understood in the world.

March, 1969.