Presidential Address, 1994

FRANKLYN PERRING

DRUCE IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

"In rising to address you . . . , after a study of various objects of scientific interest for more than half a century, it would seem mere hypocrisy if I told you I felt at all nervous in doing so". Thus Miles Berkeley began his address at the inaugural meeting of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society in 1876. He is one of the characters in the tale I am about to tell and I could find no better way to express my own feelings today: after 42 years as a member of the Society which has given me so much pleasure and has for much of my life been at its centre I do not feel nervous, I feel amongst friends and I am hopeful that you will be indulgent towards the incompleteness of what I have prepared for this occasion.

I decided to concentrate my address on Druce in Northamptonshire when I realised that the choice of Oxford for our A.G.M. this year would mean that, as a resident of Northamptonshire for the last 23 years, I would be following the path which Druce took when he left the county for Oxford in 1879. Druce's move brought him into the mainstream of British field botany and ultimately to the position where he was effectively the full-time, unpaid coordinator of the Society's affairs. But by further happy coincidence I find myself arriving in Oxford from Northamptonshire at the very moment that the Society is taking steps to appoint a coordinator of its scientific affairs. I will touch upon this briefly at the end of my address because I believe the consequences for the Society could be as important as those which Druce brought about here in Oxford nearly a century ago.

George Claridge Druce (Fig. 1) was perhaps destined to be a great botanist from the day of his birth, 23 May 1850 – the same day as Linnaeus, 143 years his senior– and, incidentally, of my colleague and past-President Max Walters. But in other respects his birth was not so fortunate. He was the illegitimate son of Jane Druce and no father is named on his birth certificate: there is some speculation that his second name Claridge links him with a local family where his mother might have been a maidservant. Druce writes later of "his patrimony" (Druce 1930), so his father's family were surely people of substance. He was born in Potterspury, a village in the south of the county which had other connections with the Druce family – a Phoebe Druce married Thomas Woodward at Potterspury on 14 October 1813. Although he made no secret of his birth elsewhere, towards the end of his life, in writing the introduction to his *Flora of Buckinghamshire* (1926), he fudges the issue a little: "Death early deprived me of paternal care, but in an unlimited degree there was showered on me the devotion and love of an all too unselfish mother." He added that his father's family were Northamptonshire people but "my mother's family were natives of and farmers in Buckinghamshire". Their area appears to have been around Woughton-on-the-Green, about 14 km to the S. E. "where my botanical baptism was received".

Soon after his birth the family moved 3 km to Old Stratford, on the county boundary with only the River Ouse between him and Buckinghamshire. There he spent the first five or six years of his life and, as he records in both the *Flora of Buckinghamshire* and the *Flora of Northamptonshire*, the river on the one hand and the nearby Whittlebury Forest only 3 km to the west on the other were wonderful areas in which to become 'turned on' by wild life. "Whittlebury Forest . . . with its myriads of Primroses, and the four kinds of Violets which I grew in my tiny garden, the glossy leaved Spurge Laurel, and Bluebells" (Druce 1926). The Ouse "had the White and Yellow Water Lilies; the banks were fringed with the sweet *Acorus* and canary-yellow anthered Sedge, and its meads were fragrant with Meadow Sweet or silvered with Lady's Smock, and the hedges shaded the beautiful *Geranium pratense*" (Druce 1926).

When Druce was five or six (he gives 1855 in the *Flora of Buckinghamshire* and 1866 (sic) in *Flora of Northamptonshire*) the family moved 3 km N.W. to Yardley Gobion into 13 Chestnut Road (fide

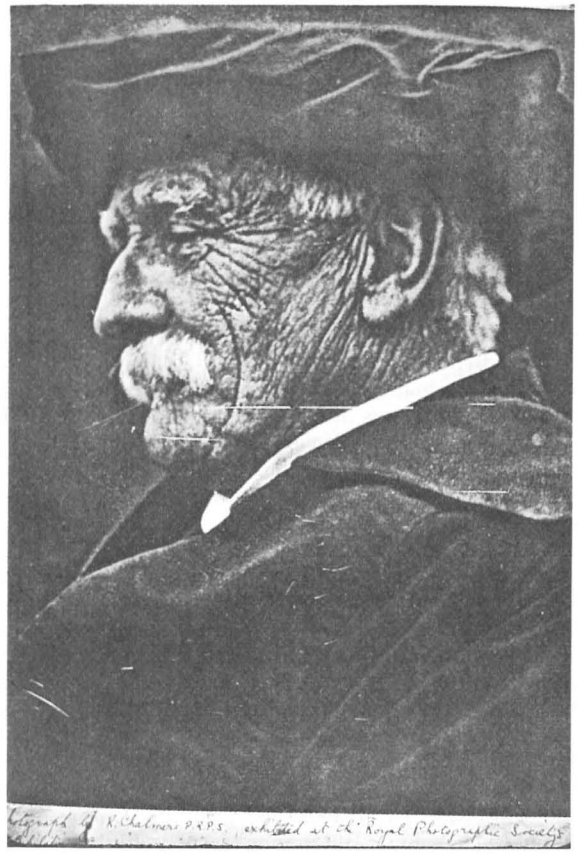

FIGURE 1. Photograph of George Claridge Druce by Robert Chalmers F.R.P.S.

Andrew Robinson, Northamptonshire botanist who lives in the village) which runs into the rather pleasant Chestnut Green. Here he lived with his mother and an aunt, Ann Blunt, according to Sylvia Chandler who has looked at the 1861 Census where they are described as:

Blunt, Ann Widow 63 Fundholder born Wollstone, Bucks
Druce, Jane Niece 33 born Woughton on the Green, Bucks
Druce, George Nephew 10 Scholar born Potterspury

But, still close to Whittlebury Forest, his interest in wildlife expanded and he developed an interest in entomology. He recalls (Druce 1926) "by the age of fourteen a very representative collection of its lepidoptera was made, including an *Antiopa* [Camberwell Beauty] and plenty of *Sinapis* [Wood White], *Paniscus* [Chequered Skipper] and rare clearwings. Pupae were dug for and larvae bred, so that the various Sallows, Poplars, Buckthorn, Verbascums, etc., were familiar objects". Wood White is still a feature of the area and some of the finest colonies in Britain occur in Salcey Forest 5 km N.E. of Yardley Gobion. The Chequered Skipper sadly no longer occurs at Whittlebury, or in the N.E. of Northamptonshire around its former stronghold in Rockingham Forest or indeed anywhere in England. The only sign of it now to be seen in Northamptonshire is the pub sign at Ashton, the estate village developed by Charles Rothschild, founder of the Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (S.P.N.R.), at the beginning of the century and where his daughter Miriam Rothschild still lives. Druce's friendship with Charles Rothschild, which I shall return to later, was surely based on their mutual interest in butterflies.

Druce regarded Yardley Gobion as his home village. He named his house in Oxford Yardley Lodge and even 'Lodge' may have local connections as houses at the edge of forests in

Northamptonshire are often so called and the school in the village of his birth is called Potterspury Lodge School. His mother probably kept her connections with Yardley for the rest of her life. In the 1881 Census (fide Sylvia Chandler) Jane Druce is listed as a Visitor at the Potterspury Union Workhouse, which is in Yardley Gobion, and she is described as a housekeeper. Druce (1930) said that his mother went to live with him in Oxford in 1879 and that ". . . much of my after success was due to her energy help and cheerfulness". Perhaps she continued to help until he was well established but may then have returned to Yardley from time to time, though she was living with her son in Oxford at the time of the 1891 Census where she is described as a widow! Druce erected a memorial tablet to her in St Leonard's Church, Yardley and gave a burial ground to the village in her memory in 1924.

Druce was privately educated "under my guardian. Since he had little foresight a public school education was debarred" (Druce 1926) but at an early age "Two ministers of the Independent chapel at Potterspury, J. and T. B. Slye took an interest in the boy and his education" (*Dictionary of National Biography Suppl.*). But despite his love of nature and his ability to recognise 400 species of plants by the time he was 16 (though he did not know their names) his "desire was to be a chemist

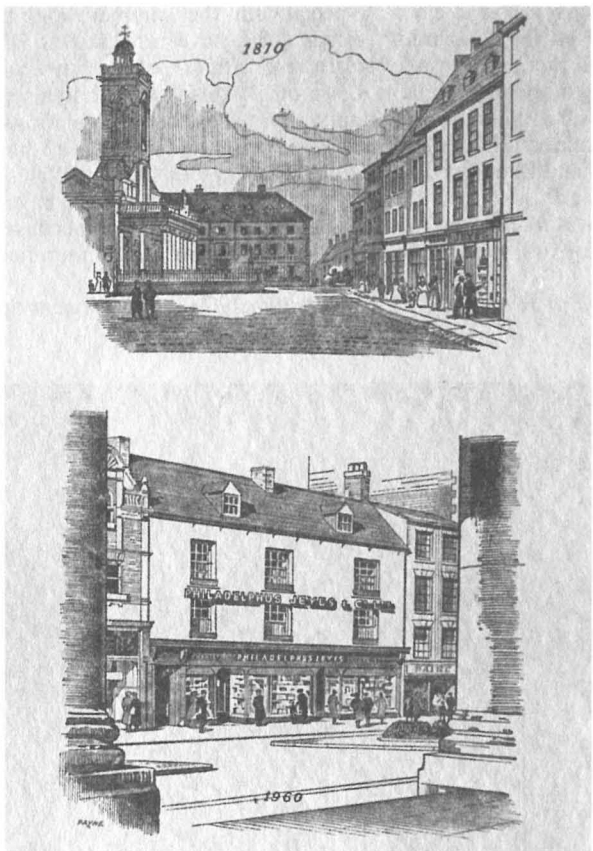

FIGURE 2. Philadelphus Jeyes' shop at 6, The Drapery, Northampton where Druce worked for 13 years (1866–1879). Above: at the firm's foundation in 1810. All Saint's Church is to the left. Beneath its portico Druce, as a boy, saw John Clare. Below: at the celebration of the firm's 150th jubilee in 1960. View from beneath the portico.

. . . thanks to the generosity of my aunt, the rather heavy premium was paid and I became duly apprenticed to a large wholesale and retail business in Northampton" (Druce 1926).

The business was Philadelphus Jeyes of 6, The Drapery in the centre of the town, close to the market place and opposite All Saint's Church which was largely built after the fire of 1675 (Fig. 2). It was under the portico of the church incidentally that Druce (1930) recalls seeing, as a boy, Northamptonshire's treasured poet/naturalist John Clare. Clare spent the last 22 years of his life in the Northampton Asylum but was occasionally allowed out and would sit in the portico watching children at play or, as Druce recalls, as a little, pathetic, distraught figure, gazing at the sky.

Druce was obviously very good at his work. An assistant left after he had been there only a year and he was promoted. At the end of his second year he became senior assistant and, when he was still only 19, the manager left and he was given that post temporarily, but he held it for the next eleven years.

He lived on the premises. At the time of the 1871 Census of Northampton 6, The Drapery was recorded as a boarding house providing 'digs' for young pharmacists (Fitzhugh 1985; Fig. 3). They were under the care of the housekeeper, Sarah Foll and Druce's three companions were Frederick Branson, Edmond Cooke and Anthony Chibnall. The first named came from Hanslope, Buckinghamshire, just across the River Ouse from Yardley, and Druce was still in touch with him in 1920 when he visited him in Leeds (letter from Frederick Jeyes to 'Betsy' Jeyes 25 January 1920).

At this time the owner, Philadelphus Jeyes II, lived in a splendid Victorian folly he had built for himself at Boughton 6 km to the north called Holly Lodge and Druce records (1905, 1930) how he used to visit him rising at six o'clock, especially in the summer, and taking his Lindley's 'Introduction' to read on the four miles' [6 km] walk, have breakfast at 7.30 a.m., discuss the business of the day and then either walk back or ride with one of the boys, who went to school in Northampton, in time to open the shop at 8.30 a.m. By this time he had also studied Latin in the evenings sufficiently well to pass his preliminary pharmaceutical examinations.

Mr Jeyes not only promoted Druce the chemist but promoted Druce the botanist. In 1868 he gave £15 for one of his sons and Druce to take a 13 day walking tour through Wales where they climbed Snowdon, Moel Eilio and Cader Idris. Though the main interest seems to have been castles, Druce noted ferns and golden rod and they even brought back some change because he suggests (Druce 1926) hotel-keepers were over generous – the bill for two at Harlech (dinner, bed and breakfast) was four shillings.

The next year, 1869, Mr Jeyes gave the two young men £20 and they went third class on wooden

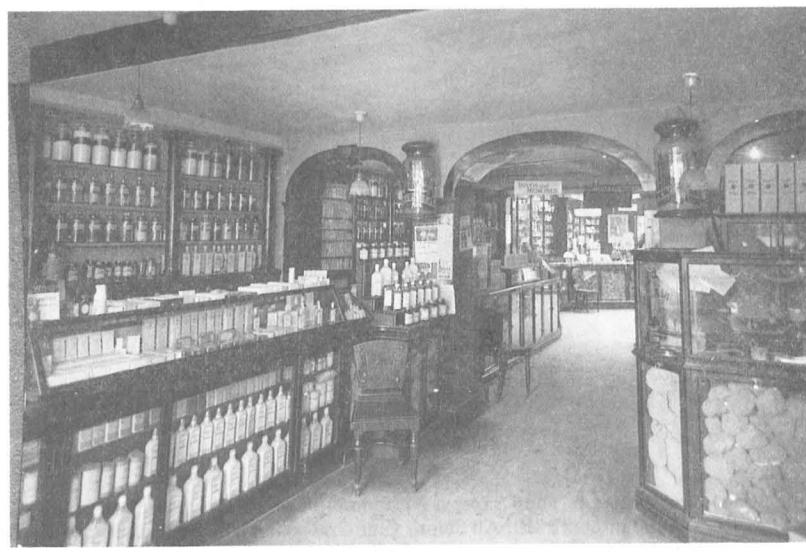

FIGURE 3 Interior of Jeyes' shop, 6, The Drapery much as it was in Druce's day.

seats to Edinburgh where they climbed Arthur's Seat: they then went to Blair Atholl and climbed Ben-y-Gloe. The next stop was Kingussie from which they went by 6.00 a.m. train to Aviemore, walked to the top of Cairngorm and back, reaching Inverness at 10.00 p.m. "more dead than alive, for we had little to eat all day". They also climbed Ben Nevis and passed through Glasgow on their way back to Edinburgh. The overnight train took them to Blisworth where, with sixpence left, they bought some buns and walked the 6 km into Northampton (Druce 1926).

Strangely, although Druce refers to these important formative journeys on several occasions he never identifies the son by name. Now, however, thanks to the help of a direct desendant of Philadelphus Jeyes still living at Holly Lodge, Mr Anthony Jeyes, we have evidence that this was almost certainly Theophilus Frederick Jeyes who was two years younger than Druce. Druce (1905) says he was about his age. He was a problem child, violent at times, who terrorised the village (A. Jeyes, pers. comm.) so perhaps Philadelphus' generosity in sending the two boys off to Wales and Scotland was not entirely altruistic.

Letters in Anthony Jeyes' possession between Frederick and his elder sister Betsy show that, after the First World War, Frederick was living in Oxford [at 97 St Aldates] and frequently met Druce taking tea with him [at Yardley Lodge?] – so they were still on friendly terms after 50 years.

Philadelphus Jeyes not only stimulated Druce's interest in plants by giving him the means to explore Britain but, when his apprenticeship was complete in 1870, he gave him a £20 microscope "selected by Henry Deane of Clapham, which is still before me" (Druce 1926).

Before following Druce during the third and last decade of his life in Northamptonshire, which was to be his most significant scientifically, a small digression about Philadelphus Jeyes and the family which influenced Druce so extensively seems timely: and for what follows I am much indebted to Anthony and his nephew David Jeyes and their families.

Philadelphus Jeyes II was the son of Philadelphus I who, with a John Perrin, founded the business in The Drapery in 1810. Philadelphus II was born in 1814, one of two surviving brothers; the other, John, was two years younger. During their early years both boys studied botany encouraged by a Mr Dickens, a local nurseryman and, in the late 1830s John entered into partnership with James Atkins – a nurseryman regarded as one of the most prominent in the provinces.

Philadelphus' father died when he was 14 and he eventually decided to follow him into the business. Having qualified and become one of the earliest members of the newly formed Pharmaceutical Society in 1842 he seems to have bought out John Perrin and taken over the business in 1846. He was a successful business man and became a prominent radical non-conformist politician and was Mayor of Northampton in 1852 when he was only 38. His knowledge of local politics was undoubtedly invaluable to Druce in the 1870s when he was thinking of forming a local natural history society. Druce (1918) says himself that at this time Northampton was divided into many sects comparable with the situation in other Midlands towns described by George Eliot in *Scenes of clerical life*.

John Jeyes was not a great businessman but he was a competent and inventive chemist. He left Northampton in 1859 for London where he registered a total of 21 patents covering a variety of subjects one of which, in December 1877, was his most famous and effective 'Jeyes Fluid'. Though Philadelphus may be translated as brotherly love and it is clear that they were the best of friends, after their deaths, at the beginning of the century, the John Jeyes branch of the family considered that a new product of the Philadelphus Jeyes branch called Carbocide was being sold to the detriment of their Jeyes Fluid and a 13 year legal battle ensued.

The business at The Drapery continued under the name Philadelphus Jeyes until 1969 when it was bought, gutted and run by two national multiples in succession and finally closed as a chemist's shop in the mid 1980s: today it is a sportswear shop though the building itself, parts of which predate the great fire, is now protected by a conservation order.

Happily, however, the name of Jeyes was not lost to pharmacy in Northamptonshire for ever. In 1981 David Jeyes, great grandson of Philadelphus II, opened a chemist's shop in Earls Barton 13 km east of Northampton taking with him relics of the old shop in The Drapery.

Though as a boy Druce had been equally attracted to botany and entomology his choice of profession now tilted the balance in favour of the former. In 1871 he helped found the Pharmaceutical Association, "the members of which had many botanical walks. Indeed, its Field Botany was its most successful branch" (Druce 1918).

Botany was one of the subjects for his final pharmaceutical examinations in 1872 and he clearly

excelled in this and all the other subjects with the result that he won a special prize which included Sowerby's *Plants of Britain*, Carpenter's *Microscope*, and Francis' *Ferns* (Druce 1926).

So at the age of 22 he was fully qualified, acting manager of the leading chemist's shop in town, possessor of a microscope and some essential botanical books – what was this energetic, resourceful young man to do next? The answer came "One night in the autumn of 1872, as in a feverish cold I lay awake waiting for sleep that would not come, I determined that in the following year I would begin a Herbarium, and commence a Flora of my native county. . . . These feverish thoughts, instead of melting like a morning mist into nothing, crystallised into action, and in 1873 I collected over 700 species . . ." (Druce 1930). In the next six years he visited almost all the numerous villages in the county and he records (Druce 1918) that he and fellow members of the Northampton Pharmaceutical Association had the use of a room in Jeyes' shop rent free: in 1879 it was a well-fitted laboratory with a good collection of Materia Medica and specimens.

Sometime in 1875 he dined with Charles Jecks, a "local gentleman of independent means, and a strong Darwin supporter" (Druce 1918), and discussed the formation of a natural history society. The problems of dealing with the many factions in the community at that time have been referred to earlier. However, with advice from influential people like Jecks and Jeyes and with the ability to involve people of distinction and with titles which was to be his forte throughout his life, he went ahead. By 7 March 1876 the rules of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society had been formulated and Lord Lilford had agreed to become its first President. (Lilford was the county's leading ornithologist, publishing *The birds of Northamptonshire* in 1895: Lilford Hall, sadly now empty, stands beside the River Nene 5 km south of Oundle.)

Miles Berkeley became an honorary member and President of the botanical section with Druce as Secretary. Berkeley was born at Biggin 3 km west of Oundle (Druce 1930) and became a priest serving as Curate of Apethorpe and Woodnewton nearby. But he also became an international authority on fungi. He was in touch with Henslow and Darwin at Cambridge in the late 1820s and, when Henslow retired as Professor of Botany in 1860, Berkeley was encouraged to apply for the Chair but did not do so. Seven years later he did however apply for the Chair at Oxford but was turned down because he was in Holy Orders (Ramsbottom 1948). In 1868 at the age of 65 he was transferred to the more valuable living of Sibbertoft near Market Harborough. Druce first met him at the inaugural meeting of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society on 21 April 1876 and he later (1930) described him as "my botanical godfather, for he proposed me for the Linnean Society". Druce was elected on 17 April 1879 when he was only 28 and those who recommended him in addition to Berkeley were Lord Lilford, J. G. Baker, Henry Trimen and E. M. Holmes – a distinguished group.

The Society had 60 members at that inaugural meeting, when Lord Lilford spoke against gamekeeping and in favour of birds-of-prey, and it clearly flourished (Druce 1918). In February 1877 Druce read a paper, "Contributions towards a Northamptonshire Flora" which was printed in extenso in the Northampton Mercury. Druce took over as Hon. Secretary in 1878 on the resignation of Charles Jecks who left the town. The following year at a meeting in Leicester on 20 May 1879 he was appointed as one of the two Hon. Secretaries of the Midland Union of Natural History Societies. On 16 June the Northamptonshire Natural History Society decided to start its own journal and Druce, with Sanders and Scriven, became the editorial committee. Yet only two weeks later Druce had left Jeyes and bought a chemist's shop at 118 High Street, Oxford (Druce 1930).

The reasons for this precipitate departure when he was becoming ever more deeply involved in local affairs in Northamptonshire and in the Midlands are recorded by Druce somewhat ambiguously. In one place he writes "It was my wish to also save enough money from my salary to enable me to purchase a business out of my own earnings, and not to touch my patrimony. Having once visited Oxford and the Thames valley in search of *Orchis militaris*, the county so attracted me, that in 1879 a pharmacy in the celebrated High Street of Oxford was purchased for £400" (Druce 1926). But elsewhere (Druce 1930) he confesses "It had been a great desire of mine to acquire the business of my employer, which he had led me to believe would take place, but private matters made him loathe to sell it, so on June 30, 1879, I left a town in which I knew "every one", and a county which I dearly loved. . . .". "The undulating, well-wooded country from which I drew my birth and infant nurture and in which I spent my early years . . . will be an abiding memory" (Druce 1918).

The truth probably lies between the two. Philadelphus had eleven children all but one of whom showed no interest in following their father into the business. However the one, Arthur Albert

Jeyes, younger brother of Frederick, studied at Guy's Hospital and subsequently qualified as a chemist. He was old enough in 1879 to join his father and, towards the end of the century, he succeeded him as head of the firm (Fitzhugh 1985). So Druce was passed over in favour of Jeyes' son and, as a document in the possession of Anthony Jeyes suggests, he was probably forced to leave the Northampton area by the terms of his employment. In an agreement with another employee dated 10 March 1876 it states that if he leaves Jeyes' employment he may not for three years enter into business of chemist and druggist in the town of Northampton or within 30 miles [50 km] thereof with a fine of £100 if he did so. This explains why Druce, once he knew there was no future for him in Northampton, looked as far afield as Reading and Oxford (Druce 1930).

Moreover there are no indications that he left with anger and cut his connections with the county or his employers. He began to publish the *Flora* which he started in 1873 in the first issue of the *Journal of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society* in 1880, completing it in eight parts in 1893–1894: and he contributed other articles to it until the mid-1920s. He continued to botanise in the county: many parts were especially worked "some owing to the generous kindness of the Hon. N. C. Rothschild, who was my kind host on several occasions" (Druce 1930). This friendship was evident in 1912 when Charles Rothschild formed the S.P.N.R.: Druce was not only a member of the Council but one of a select group on the Executive (see Rothschild 1987). And, when Rothschild died in 1923, Druce wrote an extensive appreciation (Druce 1924). However it is also clear that he concentrated his field work for almost all of the next 50 years in preparing Floras of other areas, notably the three B.B.O.N.T. counties, Berks, Bucks and Oxon, and that he did not return to serious work on Northamptonshire until he had finished the last of these, Buckinghamshire, in 1926. Over the following four years he rewrote the 'Flora in Parts' and it was finally published, as a rather colourless paperback, in 1930, in his eightieth year. Apart from the Introduction, which is marvellous and a mine of historical information (much of it used here), it is the least satisfactory of his great quartet of Floras and I am sure we are all looking forward eagerly to the publication of the new Flora, in about a year's time.

That Druce kept in touch with his home area is evident from the plaque in the church at Yardley Gobion in memory of his mother, already referred to. The connection with the Jeyes family continued, as we know, with periodic meetings with Frederick in Oxford. But it went further than that and I was delighted to be shown by Mr Anthony Jeyes, grandson of Arthur Jeyes who had stood between Druce and his ambitions for the business in Northampton, his 'Baptismal Book' recording his christening in 1930 where Dr Druce appears as one of his godfathers and in Druce's will, in the library of the Department of Plant Sciences in Oxford, appears "to Master Jeyes 20 guineas"!

In preparing this part of my address I am sincerely grateful to those who have been so generous in lending me their time and knowledge: I am especially indebted to Sylvia Chandler for notes about Druce's early years; to Andrew Robinson for local knowledge about Druce around Yardley Gobion; to Ioan Thomas for access to his researches, particularly on Miles Berkeley; to Gina Douglas in the Linnean Society library for helping locate Druceana; and finally to Anthony and David Jeyes and their families for access to their family history and other papers and for their hospitality in Boughton and Earls Barton.

Though Northamptonshire would undoubtedly have had a better Flora if Druce had not moved to Oxford the botanical world and the B.S.B.I. in particular has every reason to be grateful. His impact was immediate and decisive. Within a year, despite the demands of building up his new business, he had helped start a natural history society which held its meetings in the Lecture Room in the Botanic Garden (Druce 1930): already a demonstration of the energy and drive which was to take him to the pinnacle of success, not only in Botany, but in the Pharmaceutical Society and in local politics.

Druce was so successful in business that he was able to retire in 1905, 18 months after he had been made Secretary of the Botanical Exchange Club, and devoted the remaining 27 years of his life to changing it from an Exchange Club with a membership of just 42 into a national botanical field society with a sixfold increase in numbers. He personally approached every amateur and professional botanist. Moreover many of the new members were men and women of substance (Allen 1986). There is little doubt that the Club was known to all those who would benefit from membership. I fear that the same cannot be said of the B.S.B.I. today.

Clive Stace's *New Flora of the British Isles* has sold over 6000 copies since it was published three

years ago: the *Atlas of the British Flora* and our Sedges Handbook have sold similar numbers, yet the membership of the Society stands today at only 2683 and, if family members are removed and we assume that every member has a 'Stace', only one in three of those who bought it (and how many more are using it in libraries?) are members of the Society.

Mary Briggs has kindly provided some figures on the changing membership of the Society since 1955, appropriately the year after the launch of the Distribution Maps Scheme from which the *Atlas* flowed. What the figures show, alarmingly (Fig. 4), is that whereas for the 21 years from 1955–1976 the annual increase in membership was 60/annum and our junior membership rose to at least 116 (7%), between 1976–1988 recruitment had dropped to 33/annum and the juniors to about 80 (3·5%), and that today our membership growth is negligible (1988–1994 mean of c.13/annum) whilst the juniors with 43 are under 2%. These figures are reinforced by the results of the Membership Survey we carried out in the autumn of 1993 in which we asked respondents to indicate their age class. For the 728 who answered this section the figures were:

Under 18	1	0%
18–24	6	1%
25–34	66	9%
35–44	144	20%
45–54	167	23%
55–64	165	23%
65+	175	24%
Don't know!	4	

Even allowing for some bias because older, retired members may have more time to fill in a questionnaire (though I do not find that to be true for me or most of my friends!) there can be little doubt that, taking the membership figures and the survey results together, we are a static, ageing Society which is failing to attract the young. Yet this has been happening at a time when there has

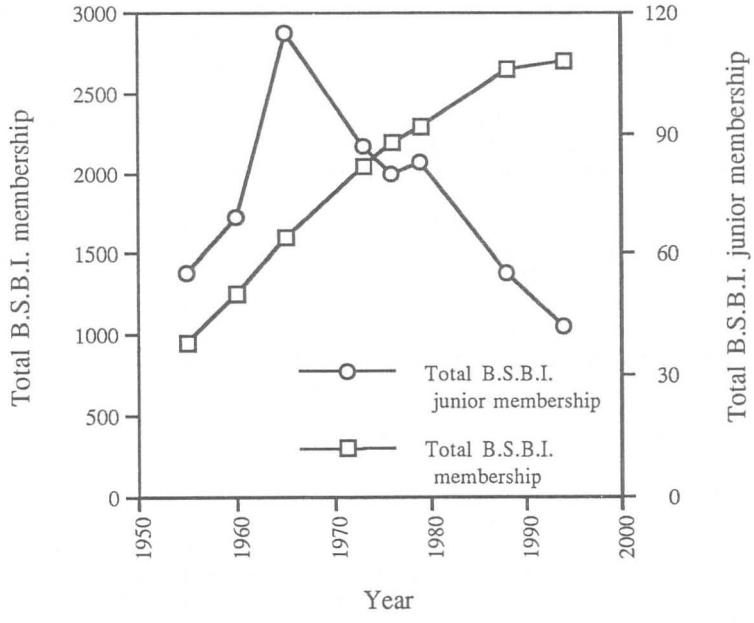

FIGURE 4. Membership levels of the Botanical Society of the British Isles over the last 40 years.

been an enormous increase in the number of posts for field naturalists in the Nature Conservancy Council and its successor bodies, in wildlife trusts, national parks, environmental agencies and the like, and whilst the British Trust for Ornithology has risen from 2000 in 1951 to over 10,000 today, with more than 2000 of this increase in the last three years.

Yet you and I know that the Society is very much alive: we are involved in a range of activities of vital importance to the botanical community of the British Isles – and further afield – with publications like the Handbook series, the *List of vascular plants* and the *Scarce plants in Britain*. I am sure this latter will become the most widely quoted B.S.B.I. publication since the *Atlas* of 1962, and we have the new Atlas project yet to come. We also have the enormously impressive database at Leicester which will shortly produce the long-awaited successor to Druce's *Comital Flora* of 1932 (typically published in the week that he died) – and much, much more. Then there is the amazing series of local Floras produced by members of the Society (ten in the last twelve months) increasingly backed by computerised databases of immense and growing importance to national and local conservation agencies which, together with up-to-date field work, are the basis for national and county Red Data Books and lists.

The B.S.B.I. is indispensable and the need for our expertise grows rapidly. In the last few months there have been significant developments which suggest that in future the Country Conservation Agencies – English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales – will be looking increasingly to voluntary organisations like the B.S.B.I. for the information they need about the changing flora of Britain and will be prepared to pay for it. It is in the light of this, and three or four individual offers of contracts, that your Council has taken the decision to appoint a coordinator. We must surely now appreciate, and make others appreciate, that we are the vascular plant equivalent of the B.T.O. and, though I am not suggesting we need to aim for the staff of 60 and the impressive H.Q. they inhabit at Thetford, we should at least acknowledge that in determining what is happening to the fauna and flora of the British Isles, birds and vascular plants are the two groups which provide the greatest opportunities for detailed study – and that the number of plant species is an order of magnitude greater than the number of birds. We must devise a policy for monitoring change, engage the minimum staff needed to carry it through, and aim for that objective.

I suggest that policy shall be:

The study of the vascular plant populations of the British Isles in respect of distribution and numbers and of the ecological factors, including those of human origin, affecting them. It shall be one of the principal objects of this policy to answer the following questions:– In what way is contemporary man affecting wild plants and, in particular, how are changes in forestry, agricultural and horticultural practice influencing plant populations?

I hope this does not seem too avant-garde: it should not as it is a paraphrase of the B.T.O.'s policy published in its Annual Report for 1962 (Hickling 1983), the year we published the *Atlas* and were leaders in this field.

The functions of the coordinator were admirably summarised by the indefatigable David Pearman in a statement sent to members in April, 1994. A primary function will be to ensure that all the organisations which could benefit from the B.S.B.I.'s expertise, at national and local level, are aware of the Society and act as an interface between them and the membership. But he or she cannot be effective working alone. I am convinced that, if the Society is to achieve its full potential and attract to its membership all those who would benefit from its resources in publications, meetings, identification services, etc., the coordinator must be supported at the county level by voluntary members prepared to give time to promoting the Society. For them I have coined the term 'Link People'. They would be additional to that remarkable, but overworked, band of county recorders in most cases, but would work in close collaboration with them whilst having a special responsibility to bring the Society constantly to the attention of the changing botanical staffs of universities, colleges, wildlife trusts, local authority ecologists and so on.

One bonus of our age structure is that we must have nearly 1000 members who have retired or are about to retire who might have time to act as 'Link People'. Once these two elements, Coordinator and 'Link People', are in place and the *New Atlas* project gets under way, I predict that we can, and should, achieve a membership of 5000 by the end of the century. I strongly urge the Society to move in that direction. Perhaps in honour of Druce and of the place from which he laid the foundation of the Society at the beginning of the century, it might come to be known as the Oxford Movement.

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