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EDWARD HEARLE RODD (1810-1880) - PROBLEM SOLVED

Having just received Roger Penhallurick's "The Birds of Cornwall and the Isle of Scilly" (1978, Headland Publications, Penzance, 478 pages) I now find that several question marks in the previous note (BCG Newsletter, Vol. 2, p.56) are resolved.

E.H. Rodd's Collection apparently numbered at least 45 cases with 270 specimens mostly obtained in Cornwall and mounted by W.H. Vingoe (1808-1888), credited with being the most skilled of Cornish taxidermists. Francis Rashleigh Rodd (1839-1922), a nephew of E.H. Rodd, inherited the collection. The notes on the destiny of this collection are supplied by Roger Penhallurick (in litt., 24 April 1979). Trebartha Hall, North Hill, Cornwall (F.R. Rodd's home) was systematically demolished in 1949. There probably was no fire as mentioned on page 68 of Birds of Cornwall and the Isle of Scilly. The collections had been disposed of in or about 1940, some seem to have gone to the Truro Museum though there is no accessions record of this. During the war things may have been chaotic and neither is there any record of how the Rodd manuscript notes came to the museum. In the collection there are many 'Edwardian' birds mounted by Vingoe which may be ex Rodd. There could be a connection here with W. Dodd of Barrow-in-Furness as the probable dates of disposal of the Rodd collection match or pre-date the period when Dodd was selling off his books.

As some of the birds originally mentioned in Rodd's lists are preserved at the Royal Institution of Cornwall in Truro and possibly elsewhere but bearing in mind the fact that much of both the Rodds' manuscripts are preserved in Truro, the annotated copy which arrived at Bolton Museum has been passed to them.

Penhallurick's book deserves a full review by an ornithologist but I must say that I am impressed by the depth of coverage achieved and the quality of not only presentation, printing and binding, but also the back up information. This is not just another county list of birds but a full faunistic survey and historical review of Cornish ornithology. Chapters are included on the county, its landscape and habitat structure, past ornithologists and their work, a systematic list of the birds and full delineation of authenticated records. There are appendices on Rookeries, Falconry, Dovecotes and an analysis of Churchwardens' accounts. A supplement gives an updating of the author's previous Birds of the Cornish Coast (1969) and there are 10km square maps being an atlas of breeding records for Cornwall.

The cost price is £11.75 which in the light of the cost of many much poorer books on a variety of subjects presently being published, would seem to be a relative bargain. Copies can be obtained from

R. D. Penhallurick, Royal Institution of Cornwall, County Museum
and Art Gallery, River Street, Truro.

E. G. Hancock
Bolton Museum

DECOMPOSITION OF THE NEW ECOLOGY GALLERY OF THE
BRITISH MUSEUM (NATURAL HISTORY) or (REAL LIVE ANIMALS
IN THE NEW BRITISH MUSEUM DISPLAYS)

On a recent visit (4. 4. 1979) to this new gallery, with which I generally
approve, I was interested to see that the small section devoted to
decomposers was very appropriately itself decomposing!

The unprotected "Letraset" labels were not unexpectedly being erased
by one type of animal Homo sapiens L. (larval form). However, much
more exciting was the end module of this section showing a dead rabbit
being currently decomposed by the Clothes Moth Tinea biselliella L.
(larval form). To be honest I was first struck by the skill of the
model maker at constructing such amazingly realistic insect droppings
and the wonderful lifelike setting of the adult moth when a wriggling
in the pile of frass gave the game away (or has the silicon chip struck
here as well as in the last interactive unit of the gallery).

Incidentally I thought that the role of detritus as a foodsource e.g.
for filter-feeders or as a primary energy source for some food chains
would have been made at other places in the gallery as well. Perhaps
its just a personal bias but after collecting marine life in the Mersey
Estuary one does tend to be impressed by the importance of detrital
particles - one way or another.

Ian Wallace
Merseyside County Museums
