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FOUND H.M.S. SYLVIA

A previous note in the Newsletter (1981, 2 (9); p.432) surmised that there were two ships named Sylvia. Tizard (Chronological list of officers conducting British Maritime discoveries and surveys, 1900), confirms this and details the surveys which the two ships undertook.

The first H.M.S. Sylvia was a cutter engaged almost exclusively in surveying home waters. Between 1841 and 1843 she was based at Spithead under the command of Comm. W. L. Sheringham. In 1844 she came under the command of Commander (later Captain) G. A. Bedford who for the next fifteen years used H.M.S. Sylvia and a variety of boats and hired vessels to survey the coasts of Ireland.

The replacement H.M.S. Sylvia, a screw sloop was employed away from British Waters. Her first surveying commission was in 1866 surveying the coasts of China under the command of E. W. Brooker. In 1868 she was transferred to the seas around Japan where she spent the following eleven years under the command of Commander (later Captain) H. C. St. John, Commander P. Aldrich (previously Lieutenant aboard H.M.S. Challenger during her famous oceanographic voyage) and Captain Bonham W. Bax. This was followed by two years from 1882 around the coast of South America under the command of Capt. J. C. Wharton who was recalled to be appointed Hydrographer to the Navy. His replacement, Captain Aldrich, joined the ship to survey the Cape of Good Hope. The last recorded surveying commission was between 1885-1888 along the coasts of Africa under the command of Capt. L. S. Dawson.

It would appear that the foraminifera at Bolton (B.C.G. Newsletter (1980) 2 (8); 393-4) dated 1872/3 and 1886, were taken while H.M.S. Sylvia was en route to her main area of operations i.e. Japan and Africa respectively.

P. F. Lingwood.

At a time when great interest is being evinced in the records of our older natural history societies, the following extract from a publication issued from London in 1795 will appeal to our readers. It is sent by Mr. R. Muschamp, of Radcliffe.

Page 229. OLDHAM SOCIETY.

Getting the right priorities !

There is a society of botanists in Oldham, established about 20 years ago, begun originally by Dr. Haulkyard, George Hyde, and John Newton.—The society meets nine months in the year, and each member contributes six pence a month (the present members are all artificers), two pence of which is reserved for the purchase of books, and the remaining four pence spent in liquor.—They have purchased by this means about twenty volumes, and are possessed of 1,500 specimens of plants, properly classed.

The time by many devoted to pastime, or sometimes to worse purposes, is by the members of this society usually employed in the pursuit of their favourite amusement of either selecting or arranging their specimens.

In collecting plants different members have gone as far as Liverpool, Lancaster, Chester, Nottingham, Hull, &c., and one of the members has undertaken a voyage, and to proceed as far as the western parts of America, to botanize under the patronage of John Lee Philips esquire of Manchester.—On the 21st of June, in the present year, one of the members being upon the mountains near Oldham, discovered for the first time *uva urfa*.

Lancashire Naturalist, 3; (1910)