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**REVIEW: The Scientific Names of the British Lepidoptera - their History and Meaning**

by A. Maitland Emmet.

Published by Harley Books.

Price £49.95 (hardback); £24.95 (paperback).

This is not an easy book to review. It has entries for every scientific name, both genera and species, of all British **Lepidoptera**. Each word has been extensively researched to provide an explanation of its meaning. At first glance, this list of names seemed very indigestible and was difficult to enthuse about. However, the book sat by my desk for several weeks and became well thumbed as I repeatedly referred to it. Various scientific names would spring to mind and beg to be explained; it can become addictive! Some are obvious; *albicolor* causes no problems, but how many people know that *Ephestia* means 'of the hearth', a reference to its occurrence in domestic situations.

It is fascinating to see how some names were obviously chosen after much thought. Others, such as many of Walker's were given little thought or have no real meaning. There are also fascinating insights into misspellings, misidentifications and other errors now irreversibly accepted by the ICZN. Others have stories associated with them. *Euclementia woodiella* was named by Curtis after R Wood, who supplied him with a specimen for figuring. Unfortunately this failed to acknowledge the discoverer, a Mr. Cribb, who was not impressed!

The bulk of the book consists of the definitions; names being in updated Kloet and Hincks order with Bradley and Fletcher's 'Log Book' numbers. A thorough index is provided as well as lists of those names derived from peoples' names and geographical names. There is also a table listing errors identified in definitions given by Macleod in his 1959 book *Key to the Names of British Butterflies and Moths*.

The introductory chapters provide a useful explanation of the history of scientific nomenclature and a very straightforward explanation of modern rules of nomenclature, Law of Priority, Homonymy and other problems. If *sensu auctt.* in a checklist means nothing to you, read this chapter.

Finally, Colonel Emmet has not been completely successful. Appendix 3 lists thirty-five names for which he has found no satisfactory explanation. A strangely large number of these are generic names, but if you like a real challenge . . .

Steve Garland