

## Anecdotal notes about our British predecessors

**W. S. Bristowe**

The Mill House,  
Whatlington,  
Battle, Sussex

These notes should be read in conjunction with my 'Introductory Chapter on British Araneologists and their Work' in Locket and Millidge's *British Spiders* Vol. 1. That was written in the form of a historical tribute to their work. The present notes are supplementary, personal, and chiefly anecdotal.

### Dr Thomas Muffet (alias Mouffet), 1553-1604

Muffet's reputation rises and the Rev. E. Topse's falls after finding that the latter obviously made extensive use of the former's manuscript in writing his book on four-footed beasts and serpents in 1607. Muffet, moreover, gains reflected glory from his daughter, Patience, who seems to be the only possible Miss Muffet of Nursery Rhyme fame. Tuffet is not a word in every day usage so it was probably introduced to rhyme with Muffet. Muffet is not a common surname and Dr T. Muffet was the only Muffet who reached eminence enough to be included in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. What is more, he was a great spider enthusiast. Patience was his only daughter and who can blame her if she grew up with a loathing of spiders resulting from her father's belief in their medicinal qualities for most ailments. Patience was probably dosed with spider pills and potions!

Eight living Miss Muffets whose addresses were extracted from British telephone directories were delighted to hear about Patience Muffet but they had no family traditions.

When at Caius College, Cambridge, I light-heartedly reported that my bedroom door had a strange habit of opening suddenly with a bang when I was working late at night. A don told me later that this particular room had the reputation of being haunted and some research revealed that these rooms in Caius Court, in which I lived from 1922-4, had been occupied by Muffet some 250 years earlier! I was left wondering whether he wished to thrust his presence on another spider enthusiast or to continue his protest at his expulsion from the college for non-conformist views.

### Joseph Dandridge, 1664-1746

Dandridge was a silk designer of some eminence who came from Buckinghamshire and lived in Jewin Street, Moorfields. After John Ray's death he was the outstanding all-round naturalist in Britain but as he helped everybody without publishing anything, he had been forgotten until I published two papers on his life and work (*The Entomologists Gazette*, 18, 1967). Besides being a delightful man he advanced our knowledge of spiders considerably after Martin Lister's book had appeared. Working on a hunch I was ultimately to prove that Eleazor Albin owed *everything* in his book of 1736 to Dandridge although he did not acknowledge the fact. Thus, after about 250 years, I was able to prove Albin's gross plagiarism.

Dandridge's beautiful paintings and copious notes were found in the British Museum (Sloane 3999). These had all been copied by Albin, the notes so exactly that scarcely a word was changed except the omission of the personal pronouns in the tract.

### John Blackwall, 1788-1881 and the Rev. O. Pickard-Cambridge, 1828-1917 and some of the lesser collectors of their time.

First Blackwall and then Pickard-Cambridge, the giants of British arachnology, followed in superb majesty of achievement. *Dr R. H. Meade* must be blessed more for introducing them to one another than for his own useful spider work.

Had I but known it at the time, I might have met Pickard-Cambridge in his old age when I was at a preparatory school-barely eight miles from his parish in Dorset.

One of Meade's grand-daughters, Monica, married an uncle of mine, Alex Johnston, with whom I spent a happy month in the Canary Islands when recovering from a serious rugger accident in 1922.

Perhaps it should be mentioned here that the Ray Society minutes show their Council's acceptance of Pickard-Cambridge's offer to write a supplementary volume to Blackwall's work and he employed the deaf and dumb A. T. Hollick to make the illustrations. Finance failed before these were completed so he wrote *The Spiders of Dorset* instead. In March 1896 a letter to F. Maule Campbell in my possession says: 'We want now badly a new work on British spiders up to date. It is only a question of

finances. My nephew will do it if we can get a guarantee of costs beyond what the book will pay of itself. Have you no 'millionaires' who could be squeezed in so good a cause?

For half a century the illustrations were lost sight of, so it provided me with delight when I found them in a brown paper parcel in the Hope Museum at Oxford. Twentyfour of the coloured plates were reproduced in my little King Penguin (*Spiders*) and another at my suggestion by Locket and Millidge (*British Spiders*, Vol. 1, Ray Soc.).

Another of Pickard-Cambridge's collectors had been the dark bearded *Rev. C. W. Penny* after whom he had named a *Cheiracanthium*. The *Rev. C. W. Penny* was a master at Wellington College who had joined the staff in 1861, two years after the College was founded. He became the staunch right hand man of his headmaster, the *Rev. E. W. Benson*, who was afterwards to become Archbishop of Canterbury, so why we boys were called upon to pray for his soul every Sunday we never understood! The *Rev. Charles Kingsley* of *Water Babies* fame was a friend of Penny and often came from his nearby parish to attend meetings of the College natural history society founded by Penny in 1871.

Penny's extensive list of spiders in the area was published in the College natural history society's proceedings after being verified by Pickard-Cambridge. It included *Uloborus walckenaerius*, *Dolomedes fimbriatus* and *Micrommata virescens*, all of which I also found in the district, though *Cheiracanthium pennyi* (described in 1872) had to await rediscovery in Britain by *D. J. Clark* and *G. H. Locket* nearly ninety years later.

#### The Collectors during my young life.

Collectors of the generation which preceded mine all revered Pickard-Cambridge both as a man and as an arachnologist, but my early problem was to find someone who could help me in my precocious studies which had started in 1906 when I was only five.

By the time I could read 'popular' books, I was shocked at the mistakes of the grown-ups who had written them and by the omissions of what I had seen by watching spiders, in the more serious books written by *Blackwall*, *Miss Staveley* and *Pickard-Cambridge*. The truth about their habits became my spur, the writing of a book to correct the

mistakes and to provide fresh information my ambition, while I was still in my early 'teens'.

Natural history was in my blood though I never showed special interest in my father's hobbies of lepidoptera, birds or wild flowers or my uncle's which had made important contributions to the mammals and birds of Africa. This uncle, *Sir Harry Johnston*, had even had the *Okapi* named after him.

My earliest 'researches' may have sprung from another hereditary interest in competitive games. I had watched *Araneus diadematus* wrapping large bluebottles and *Theridion tepidariorum* miraculously defeating huge *Tegenarias* by delicately trussing their legs and biting each in turn, before I had come to matching different species in jamjars borrowed from the cook. These were often gruesome spectacles I witnessed at the ages of six to nine but I had learned quite a lot and have been dubious ever since of those dear kind people who speak of the harm done to children in an endeavour to censor *Jack the Giant-Killer*, etc. I reckon I have grown up with peace and kindness in my heart! I had learned, for instance, that *Araneus umbraticus* (a) was nocturnal, (b) shammed death and (c) had considerable fighting stamina. That *Amaurobius similis* always bit an opponent's leg and that its venom seemed to be considerable. That *Drassodes lapidosus* did a lightning side-step and fastened down the legs of an opponent with a wide band of silk before biting it fiercely from the side or rear. That, in contrast, a *Xysticus* would confront an opponent with legs outstretched and await the right moment to plunge its jaws into an approaching enemy. That *Dysdera* was an indomitable aggressor which would advance with huge jaws wide open. That *Trochosa* and *Tarentula* raised their legs and cephalothorax high in a menacing attitude before lunging forward with bared fangs. I had even noticed that ants were not merely formidable, but also distasteful to most spiders as well as wood lice and plant bugs.

My first great thrill was to meet the *Rev. H. P. B. Chubb* of neighbouring Cobham in 1913 and to be introduced to *Atypus* at Oxshott. In his younger years he had collected many rarities, including *Synageles venator* at Yaxley Fen, but his active interest had now waned owing, he said, to the confusion of their names since those of *Blackwall* had been outmoded. His special contact during his active

years had been the meteoric F. P. Smith whom he described as a cocky little Cockney from London, for whom he had considerable affection. Chubb was unable to help me much in the identification of spiders because he still spoke of *Neriene* and *Epeira* which I knew to have been abandoned.

My next hope rested in the British Museum.

#### Stanley Hirst.

I had penetrated to Stanley Hirst's layer by about 1915. As a schoolboy of fourteen he puzzled and at times alarmed me with his voice and laughter which had a way of breaking into high falsetto when he got excited. I have since learned he had chronic asthma. This was particularly upsetting on one occasion when we were walking in unlit underground vaults and he shone his hand torch on a monkey preserved in a large formalin jar stored in a shadowy cupboard. His torch flickered as he went into convulsions of falsetto laughter, which echoed through the vaults, and my acclimatisation to shock had scarcely been assisted by an earlier description of Frederick O. Pickard-Cambridge's suicide!

Hirst was a slight, clean-shaven, insignificant man with spectacles. I always found him kind, much too humble and ready to regard *me* as the expert. It was I who was seeking help but, unfortunately, he was not interested in British spiders.

On one visit in 1918/19 I found him with bleeding knuckles. He had been chipping flakes from a block of Rhynie Chert from Aberdeen to examine the fossils it contained. He had just made the important discovery of the world's earliest known Devonian spider and he even sought my valueless opinion as he showed it to me under a microscope.

#### R. I. Pocock, 1863-1947.

My next disappointment came with Pocock. Despite all the good work he had done on the larger arachnids of India and Africa he knew little about the British fauna. Nevertheless he proved to be of great importance to me in a different way.

My father had taken me to see him at the Zoo in 1917 with an introduction from my uncle. The impressions with which I was left were of a bald head, walrus moustache, glasses magnifying some penetrating deep-set brown eyes and a severe expression. My father needed advice about my future and was told that jobs for naturalists were few and

mostly cooped up in museums. On Pocock's advice he decided to send me to Cambridge so as to learn general science and widen my choice of a job. In gratitude I sent him *Micrommata* and *Dolomedes* for the Insect House.

Pocock was to return later to the British Museum to work on mammals but he seems never to have forgotten the precocious school-boy, for he sent congratulations after I had published my monograph on the Liphistiid spiders of the East in 1933.

The librarian at the Zoo was a kind little man called *Martin Duncan* who had written one of the earliest books I had read about spiders. He was, however, primarily a photographer and general nature lover. Before I joined the Zoological Society he allowed me to read books in the library.

Hopes of help from an entomologist called *Oswald Latter*, a schoolmaster from Charterhouse, with some interest in spiders, were not fulfilled but he did start a chain of events which proved to be vitally important. He had been called in to judge the essays for a natural history competition at Wellington College in 1918. I had taken endless trouble with mine in (and outside) our limited spare time. So much so that I had been caught and beaten for writing after lights were supposed to be out, under a contraption like an old fashioned photographer's hood comprised by an overcoat and dressing-gown hung over my wall light. Some chinks of light shining on the ceiling had betrayed me. In due course I was not only awarded the prize but was specially sent for by the headmaster to express his amazement at my achievement. I never explained about my hard-earned over-time!

With some of the prize money I had bought an old plate camera and, with photographic ingenuity that I've never shown since, fitted a microscope objective in place of the camera lens. *Mirabile dictu*, good photographs of *Marpessa muscosa*'s eyes emerged which I sent to *Country Life* with an accompanying article. Thus I was to see myself in print for the first time in 1919 and to get an encouraging letter from *Bernard Darwin*, grandson of the great Charles and famous golf correspondent. I sent another on *Argyroneta* and that was accepted too.

Bernard Darwin then put me in touch with Cecil Warburton and he in turn passed me on to Dr Randell Jackson in 1919 which at last enabled me to get expert identification of all the doubtful species in

my collection.

I do not think this saga of Bernard Darwin's part in helping me should close without mentioning the only occasion on which I met him. It was in 1922 when I was dithering with nerves while waiting to run in my event against Oxford at Queen's Club. He took the trouble to seek me out and encourage me. His interest in sport had led him to follow my career in cricket, rugby and athletics which touched me immensely, and I referred to it in a letter I wrote to him twenty or thirty years later after reading a gloomy article he had written on the absence of gratitude.

#### **Cecil Warburton, 1854-1958.**

When I went to Cambridge in 1920 I found that a courtly bearded old demonstrator in the zoological laboratories was none other than Warburton. He was working on ticks in the Molteno Institute and arrived each morning, from the home he shared with a sister at Grantchester, still wearing his bicycle clips. Although he welcomed talks about spiders his personal interest had waned after writing a small book and contributing the section on Arachnida in the *Cambridge Natural History*

Our last encounter was twenty-six years later on holiday at Polzeath in Cornwall when he was 92. We played hoop-la together at a village fête. He still remembered the rare species he had collected in his youth and showed interest in hearing of those that I had recently found.

When Warburton reached his hundred years, the Sunday Times gave an account of the dinner at Christ's College to commemorate the event and referred to his lively speech. A week later a correspondent called the Editor's attention to the fact that in another part of the paper it had been announced, on a separate page, that Cecil Warburton had won the paper's crossword puzzle competition.

#### **Dr Arthur Randell Jackson, 1877-1944.**

After Jackson's death I wrote two obituaries expressing my utmost admiration (*Nature*; *North Western Naturalist*). My affection and admiration always remained, despite a rift which caused me immense sadness towards the close of his life. My letters to him at this time were bequeathed by him to the British Museum (Nat.Hist.) so I presented those from him to me in order to complete the record. My

recollections of events which caused me such distress are still so vivid after more than thirty years that I give an account later without the aid of these letters, which I never wish to read again.

When Jackson had been young he had formed a tremendous admiration for the gentle southern culture of Pickard-Cambridge. So much so that Pickard-Cambridge had become a model whose attitude and behaviour had to be emulated. Pickard-Cambridge was kind and generous to younger enthusiasts; so was Jackson, to the point of allowing this to interfere with writing his own book in his limited spare time. Pickard-Cambridge was accepted as the supreme authority and so was Jackson later. As holder of this position Pickard-Cambridge annually published all new and rare species discovered by himself or others, even when this involved repetition of anything they had just published themselves (including Jackson). This, I believe, is where Jackson went wrong. Time prevented him from publishing frequent papers like Pickard-Cambridge, which gave him a feeling of frustration and a resentment against others with more time who wanted him to record their new species in a hurry or else to do so themselves. Even when they acknowledged his authority, a niggling feeling that circumstances were contriving to leave him out seemed to develop.

After I first wrote to him in 1919, parcels rapidly passed to and fro and I learned the identity of all my doubtful specimens – provided they were mature. At first I may have been a tiny bit disappointed on finding that all my immature specimens had been thrown away on arrival, even when I felt sure I knew their identity. I was also surprised that only two were new to Britain – *Oonops domesticus* and *Euophrys lanigera*. This distrust only lasted a few months. Two other disappointments were to follow. The first was his lack of hurry in recording two such discoveries, as well as his irritation when I myself described them with illustrations after lapses of four and ten years from the dates on which I had collected them. It seemed to me that he had overlooked the impatience that a young collector naturally feels after making his first important discoveries and I was to encounter the same delays after finding other species new to Britain. (*Physocyclus simoni*, *Agroeca lusatica*, *Aulonia albimana*, *Trichoncus affinis*, the first female *Centromerus incultus* and an immature *Micaria* near

Cambridge which he agreed was of an unknown species). The second big disappointment was that he would neither publish nor supply me with a greatly needed list of known British species with their modern names. The reasons he gave were perfectly valid though it would have helped me enormously to have had even a provisional list as a guide to what my own extensive collection still lacked. His reasons were threefold: he was too busy; he must wait until L. Berland had completed his supplementary volume to Simon's *Arachnides de France*; and he feared that a rival (the Rev. J. E. Hull) was poised to publish a list himself or criticise anyone else's.

I met Jackson first in 1921 when he invited me to join him for a collecting holiday in Ashdown Forest. In appearance he was quite different from my expectations and did not resemble my picture of a doctor. He was large, coarse-skinned, thickset and untidy. His brow was wide, his eyes were set widely apart and his smile displayed toothless gums. His mind and manner greatly belied his looks and I found him to be a delightful and extremely well-informed conversationalist on many subjects. He could speak with the confidence of knowledge about insects in general, garden plants, art and artists, antiques, books, poetry and the 1914-18 War. His diagnosis of Lewis Carroll's sources of inspiration in 'Alice' struck me as being both brilliant and original.

Jackson had enjoyed the 1914-18 War, in which he was awarded an M.C. but he was still smarting at his partner's action in giving him the poorest part of the practice when he returned.

Jackson's knowledge of British spider's taxonomy was complete but he needed mature specimens and a microscope. As a teacher he disappointed me by knowing all the species by their genitalia under a microscope, but not how I could narrow my task of identification first by reaching the genus of a linyphiid. In the field he proved to be a far more mechanical collector than I expected and would spend hours beating every bush in sight into an umbrella or concentrate meticulously on small sample areas to turn every stone or sift every grass clump. Obvious young were rejected and the rest preserved in bottles of alcohol for sorting at home.

By contrast I favoured a less mechanical approach because I liked to see spiders in their webs or in situ if possible before bottling them. Through an association

of species with particular habitats it often took me a little time to search for the exact places I wanted to examine, but the result from our different hunting methods was interesting. There was not much difference in the number of species we collected but each had a lot the other had not found during our fortnight together.

In one instance my method led to an important find. I knew that young lycosids which resembled *Lycosa lugubris* were nothing I had ever seen before so I concentrated on finding an adult, which Jackson confirmed to be the second recorded occurrence in Britain of *Xerocylosa nemoralis*.

After this holiday we drew much closer and in the years which followed he came to visit me in my changing homes at Stoke d'Abernon, Highgate, Holland Park and Ranmore while I went several times to his home in Chester. As the years passed by I fully came to realise the difficulties which caused frustration and noticed with anxiety a growing embitterment. His practice was not earning him enough to make it likely that he could ever afford to retire. This meant that he was unlikely to fulfil his ambition of a book on British spiders, and he would not listen to my suggestion that he should abandon his time-absorbing examination of spiders from numerous correspondents (myself included) in order to concentrate on what I considered to be his most important task.

Jackson's difficulties had multiplied. His beautiful and charming wife was paralysed from the waist downwards and was utterly dependent on him. He had had to employ a maid to help run the house. Family ties and money considerations denied him opportunities to go on collecting holidays.

I also had had my ambitions, since schooldays, of writing a standard work on British spiders but knew that this must never be contemplated in Jackson's lifetime. Nor did I ever venture to voice it to Jackson who would have poured scorn on the idea and resented it bitterly. The fact that I had gone to the expense and trouble in 1928 of having sheets specially printed for each British species and was busy reading everything ever written or in manuscript to record the known distribution of our spiders was ridiculed. And in 1933 I had incurred his displeasure for encroachment on his preserves by publishing a little paper which eliminated from the British list two

species of *Atypus* (*A. piceus* and *A. becki*) included by Pickard-Cambridge. His sharp reaction confirmed the ban he wanted to place on any contribution which trespassed on his position as supreme authority. More and more this attitude had restricted me to spider behaviour in Britain, so I turned to the systematics of foreign spiders only (Arctic regions, Madeira, Greece, Brazil, Malaya, etc.) as I wished above everything to preserve loyalty and gratitude to him by so doing.

Now we come to the critical year of 1934. Dr W. T. Calman of the British Museum approached me with a request from the Ray Society to write a book on British spiders. My reply was immediate. Much as I would like to do so, Jackson's knowledge was far more advanced and he was the person who ought to be invited to write such a book. Calman refused to do this and repeated his request. Again I explained that I could not accept in Jackson's lifetime. After further pressure from Calman, I agreed to approach Jackson about a revised proposal. The proposal was that we should combine, he of course as senior author; that he would write all or as much of the systematic side as he could find time for; that I would write the biological side (in which Jackson had never been interested) and render any help he needed on the systematic side — consulting the literature not easily available to him in Chester, making drawings (which had always been a burden to him) and supplying my completed distribution list of all British species. The two sections on systematics and biology could be kept quite separate if he wished so that his book on systematics would appear under his name.

I had thought that this proposal would help Jackson to achieve his ambition, his last opportunity to do so perhaps. Instead of this, the response shocked and appalled me.

It was a gross insult, Jackson said. Why had Dr Calman not approached him, the obvious authority? What right or expertise had I got to offer him help? Anything I might know about taxonomy had been learned from him. The whole idea was unthinkable.

Although I told Jackson that I had done nothing that had not been intended to help him and that I would withdraw completely, he failed to be mollified. Nor would he undertake to do the book by himself except in his own time after he had retired.

In these circumstances I told Jackson that I would leave the field entirely clear for him but that I would

write a book on biology. This might not be finished for five years so I hoped this would give him time to publish at least the list of British spiders which I had been begging him to produce since 1919. This would enable me to use his proper names and to refer to his list in my book. I would need a list for my various studies of geographical and environmental studies which had never come within his field.

Gradually Jackson forgave me and in 1938 we went on expeditions to the West Country and to Box Hill. In the former he was particularly delighted to be introduced to *Aulonia albimana*, *Segestria florentina* and a male *S. bavarica*. At Box Hill, the last occasion on which I was destined to meet him, I got a sad insight into his feeling of desolation. His beloved wife had died. His rivals, Hull and Falconer, were regarded by him as menaces (the latter for going to Wicken Fen in advance of Jackson and describing several new species from there many years earlier). He had quarrelled with the Oxford Museum, to whom he had intended leaving his collection, and was not satisfied with the British Museum as an alternative.

The first volume of my biological work '*The Comity of Spiders*' was published in 1939. He appeared in the Dedication, and the Preface contained warm appreciation of his help in identifying my spiders. I had kept to my word in excluding the systematic side but the response to a copy I sent to him was an announcement that our friendship was at an end.

Jackson's only son was killed in the Air Force in 1943 and he died a lonely man a year later with his book no nearer completion than it had been twenty years previously.

Directly the shock of Jackson's death had passed and the need for a self-imposed abstention from writing a book describing all known British spiders no longer existed, A. F. Millidge and I decided to undertake the task and to dedicate it to Jackson. Millidge had developed a particular skill with the difficult Linyphiidae but as spare time enthusiasts we realised that it would entail a lot of work. To our delight, my old friend G. H. Locket agreed to join the project. The general form the book was to take and the division of labour were soon worked out, and the Ray Society, on whose Council I sat, agreed to publish it in two volumes.

By the time I had written the introductory chapter

on the history of British Araneology, and others on the Atypidae, Oonopidae, Dysderidae and Scytodidae, certain demanding domestic events in my life, too sad to relate, had occurred which made it impossible for me to continue. I withdrew from the happy partnership in full knowledge that the work would continue without me. Locket and Millidge's *British Spiders* came fully up to the standard of excellence I had hoped for and expected of them. I have mentioned this as an epilogue to the Jackson saga, though I had not intended to speak of anybody of my generation, and only of myself as a vehicle for introducing others of an earlier period.

### The Rev. J. E. Hull, 1862-1960

Although I had heard much about him from Jackson and knew of his excellent earlier work on spiders, I did not meet him until 1931 when I went to collect on the Farne Islands. These were near to his home in Northumberland so I went to see him before and after my intrusion on his territory and received a friendly welcome. At the first meeting this small bearded clergyman gave me a list of the spiders he had collected on the Farnes. On the second he loaned me a shirt and trousers while mine were dried after I had been caught in a drenching thunderstorm. As he was nearly a foot shorter than I he joined in the laughter at my appearance! He showed me his manuscript illustrated book for which he had been unable to find a publisher and I, began to understand why Jackson had been fearful lest he should upset doctrines accepted by others. Two things in particular: the use of cheliceral teeth for the classification of Linyphiidae and the loyal adhesion to what he claimed were Blackwall's lost species.

There was no reference on either side to his criticism of me in *The Vasculum*, a few years earlier, after I had published an observation that the *Xysticus* male fastened the female down with silk before mating with her, an observation since confirmed in America, Germany and elsewhere. The naughty old man had not only said that this was 'fishy' but that he had seen it done 'otherwise'. He certainly did possess some of the puckishness which Jackson had alleged, because in spite of providing me with his list of captures on the Farne Islands before my visit, he could not resist a slight dig after my paper was published by saying in *The Vasculum* that I had failed

to find a number of other species which he claimed to have found there.

### W. Falconer, H. St. J. Donisthorpe and others.

*W. Falconer*, 1862-1943. Of Falconer I remember little except that I once visited him and left with a warm impression. In correspondence he was kind and cooperative, despite failing eyesight, up to the time of his death.

Another collector known to Jackson and with whom I corresponded was *D. R. Pack Beresford*, 1864-1942, of Ireland. Jackson spoke of him with awe. He was a country gentleman of the old school who hunted, fished and shot besides running his estate in Carlow and becoming High Sheriff. As a correspondent he was always most helpful and his contribution to our knowledge of Irish spiders was considerable.

Included amongst collectors who had spiders named after them and with whom I had contact were *W. Evans*, *H. Britten*, *R. Hancock*, *L. A. Carr* and *H. St. J. Donisthorpe*. In several cases their new spiders have since been reduced to synonyms.

*Evans* and *Britten* were outstanding all round entomologists of Scotland and England respectively. Health had forced the bearded Evans to retire from insurance work at an early age which gave him time to collect spiders in Scotland extensively. Britten did less on spiders but I once met him at the Verral Supper and some interesting correspondence followed. By my standards at the time he was an old man doing extremely wide and valuable work in a northern museum despite no background of academic advantages beyond being descended from a gamekeeper father. I admired his success in the face of these disadvantages intensely and in one letter praised him somewhat effusively, in the belief that praise was too often reserved for a man's obituary after his death. Back came a letter accusing me of being a "soft-soap southerner" and asking what favour I was leading up to. This misunderstanding hurt me so much that I wrote back saying northerners had gained renown for being blunt and outspoken but that I had come to the conclusion that their outspoken comments were reserved for occasions when they wanted to criticise. I, a southerner, tried to balance praise, where praise was due, with criticism where I believed criticism was warranted. His apology

followed and we remained good postal friends for the rest of his life.

*Hancock* was a plumpish auctioneer from Birmingham who was less a naturalist than a collector of many things varying from Japanese sword hilts to natural history objects. He offered to sell me F. P. Smith's collection of spiders, microscope and lantern slides for £100 in 1928. Ultimately he bequeathed all his collections, I believe, to a Birmingham Museum.

*Carr* was an extremely energetic spider collector with an uncle, a professor at Nottingham, who had inspired his interest. Jackson went collecting with him and regarded him as an amusing enigma with a hardware shop in Lichfield which, he said, stocked a lot of useless objects for sale. My contacts with Carr were in my university days when he offered to exchange a collection of northern spiders for my stamp collection.

*Donisthorpe* struck me as being rather a lonely and friendless individual in his old age who was devoting his later years to work on beetles at the British Museum when I met him. He had been the leading

authority on British ants and in searching their nests for myrmecophilous insects he had made an important contribution to the spiders associated with them.

*H. Wallis Kew* worked in a bank and made himself the leading authority on pseudoscorpions. Occasionally he collected spiders, including *Hyptiotes* in Ireland. By the time I corresponded with him in the late 1930's he had not only retired but expressed himself as having completely lost interest in arachnids. He had even destroyed all his own records. His valuable work, he felt, had been outdated by the discovery of fresh characters which he had overlooked.

Looking backwards, we should surely be grateful to the distinguished amateurs who have given us such a splendid basic knowledge of British Spiders. J. Blackwall, O. Pickard-Cambridge, A. R. Jackson, G. H. Locket and A. F. Millidge in succession have spanned more than a century with their major works.

## The use of glass beads when examining spiders

C. G. Butler  
Harpenden,  
Hertfordshire

It is often difficult to keep spiders in suitable positions when examining them in spirit. Recently I tried using some of the glass beads that are used in chromatography with what I considered to be very satisfactory results. However, before writing a note for the Bulletin, I asked several arachnologists to try them. All found them useful and Mr G. H. Locket wrote:— "They seem to work splendidly. You can sit a spider on its tail and look at its eyes, you can deal easily with that type of specimen (which occurs very often) which has its legs stretched out and upwards, which is otherwise very tiresome to get into position. In order to see if there was any grinding effect, resulting in the removal of hairs, I carried three

*Pocadicnemis* about with me in a tube half filled with beads for a couple of days. No hairs, spines or trichobothria seem to be missing. Sometimes beads will get lodged in awkward places, but hitherto I have always succeeded in removing them easily. This is a very useful tip . . .". Mr. J. R. Parker wrote:— "The beads are excellent for the use you describe. I have used them to examine very small spiders which can be gently pushed down into them in any position, where they stay without any tendency to float away or fall out of the desired position. When looking for the position of the trichobothria on the metatarsus of one of the first pairs of legs, the beads reflect the top lighting so that visibility is actually improved".

The glass beads for chromatography, approximately 80 mesh, cost £1.80 for a bottle of 500 g and were obtained from The British Drug Houses Ltd., B.D.H. Laboratory Chemicals Division, Poole, England.