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A left-handed slug

Slugs are rarely referred to in funeral orations, but featured prominently in the tribute from the pulpit to our late member Stella Madeleine Davies [1927 – 2008] whose obituary appeared in our *Bulletin* 135 (2009), 8–9. Stella was a recognised and respected authority on land mollusca in general, and slugs in particular. Slugs and snails are, biologically, much of a muchness. However, slugs have either no shell at all, or only a small rudimentary scrap of shell embedded in the soft tissue of the back. Sub-fossil slug ‘shells’ can be found in chalky hillwash on the North Downs.

Slugs and snails do not of course have hands, or indeed feet as commonly understood. Nevertheless, shell or not, slugs’ and snails’ internal organisation is (as is ours) asymmetrical, the great majority being right-handed, a feature readily appreciated in snails but far less obvious in slugs. The easiest way to tell is to note the position of the genital pore (most British slugs and snails are hermaphrodite) which is almost always found where you would expect the animal to have its right ear (if it had ears at all). There follows an extract from Stella’s report on a left-handed slug:

Sinistral individuals may occur in slugs, as in other normally dextral species of snails, but perhaps they are more likely to escape observation. No records of sinistral slugs have been found, and a photograph published without comment is likely to have been reversed inadvertently.

The subject of this note is a sinistral *Arion intermedius*, which died in late August, at the age of 13 months, without breeding. It originated in an unintended domestic culture as follows. A single slug was picked up near Kirkby Malham in Yorkshire, in September 1969, and forgotten. In October it made itself obvious by laying eggs. The progeny were neglected too but before they needed cleaning out or throwing out they drew attention to themselves by starting to breed at the beginning of January. The next generation started to lay in June, and the sinistral individual was one of those hatching in July 1970. Some of its generation were breeding in October, so that three generations were actually completed in one year, but others took longer, some not breeding until a year old. Most of those which had not bred,

including the sinistral one, spent June and July in cells which they chambered out in damp moss. They emerged and started to feed again normally, but many failed to breed. The culture continues, since it thrives on neglect but sinistrality has not appeared again.

Reference:

Davies, S.M. (1972). A sinistral *Arion intermedius* Normand. *Conchologists' Newsletter*, **40**, 251.

A school's industrial visit: Gillett & Johnston's bell foundry, Croydon, in 1936

The late George Collins [Geoffrey Bernard Collins [1920 - 2007] of our Entomology Section was a pupil at what was then called the Whitgift Middle School (now the Trinity School of John Whitgift). Whitgift Middle had in the early 1930s moved into the North End premises vacated by Whitgift School when the latter moved to its then new buildings at Haling Park.

George's early interest in natural history was signalled by short articles by him published in the school's magazine, although he went on to university to qualify as a chemist. *The Mid-Whitgiftian* also published the following note of his, describing a visit to Gillett & Johnston's bell foundry at Union Road, off Whitehorse Road. The most memorable feature of the foundry, to most Croydonians, was the large bell tower.

A party from the school, including the headmaster and Mrs. Clayton, visited Messrs. Gillett & Johnson's [*sic*] Bell Foundry, on the occasion of the casting of the new bells for the Croydon Parish Church. One of these is to be named the Whitgift Bell.

The bell metal, we were told, was an alloy of copper and tin. The presence of the tin gave the bell a better tone, but too much would cause it to be brittle, and crack easily.

The red-hot metal was run into a large crucible, from which arose clouds of pungent smoke. The crucible was then raised by a travelling crane, and suspended over each mould

in turn. When the moulds were full, the metal was stirred with iron rods, to make it solidify evenly. After the casting, we were shown some finished bells, which were to be the chiming and striking bells of a large clock.

Before we left, we were kindly entertained to a most enjoyable tea.

Tea laid on for schoolchildren on industrial visits was still encountered in the 1960s. Paul Sowan recalls his pupils from what was then Norbury Manor Secondary Boys' School enjoying cream buns and doughnuts after numerous visits to the old Croydon Gasworks on Purley Way. Other establishments visited by Norbury Boys, such as the power station, the waterworks at Purley, the sewage works at Beddington, and the railway repair shops at Selhurst were not so generous!

References:

- Collins, G.B. (1935). The story of the fly, *The Mid-Whitgiftian*, **10**(6), 119–120.
- Collins, G.B. (1936). The 'assembling" of moths, *The Mid-Whitgiftian*, **10**(10), 215–216.
- Collins, G.B. (1936). The Whitgift bell, *The Mid-Whitgiftian*, **10**(10), 221.
- Collins, G.B. (1937). Insects in summer. *The Mid-Whitgiftian* **10**(12), 273–275.
- Collins, G.B. (1937). Nature III. The garden spider, *The Mid-Whitgiftian*, **10**(11), 246–348.

Seen in passing

Brewers of Croydon

At a meeting of the Trustees of Morden College, Blackheath, held at 15 Lombard Street, London EC on May 4th 1876, the Surveyor (George Barnes Williams) reported that 'Messrs Crowley, brewers of Croydon, who are in treaty for the purchase of the leasehold interest of the Beershop (The Banshee) Lewisham Road, ask if the Trustees will grant an extension of lease. This forms a portion of other property included in the same lease, and as also there are yet about 5 years unexpired, he could not advise the Trustees to agree to the application.' His report was accepted by the Trustees.¹

In the minutes of a subsequent meeting of the Trustees, held at the Guildhall on October 3rd 1901, a pasted-in plan, prepared by the Surveyor (Thomas Barnes Williams), of properties with recommendations for their refurbishment shows the “Banshee” B[eer].H[ouse]. sited on the southern corner of the junction of John Penn Street and Lewisham Road.²

22 Budge Row

At a meeting of the Trustees of Morden College, held on January 7th 1897 at the Guildhall,³ the Surveyor (Thomas Barnes Williams) reported that ‘he had carefully surveyed the Freehold premises No. 22 Budge Row in the City of London with a view to advise the Trustees as to the suitability of the same for the investment of their funds and that the premises consisted of a substantial modern building situated at the East end of the north side of Budge Row, but just shut off from a direct view into Cannon Street. The building was ill designed for its position in a narrow street, the windows in the front not being formed to advantage for the purpose of securing the maximum of light, and the premises being very inadequately lighted at the rear owing to their being hemmed in by other buildings.’

‘The property was situated close to the premises formerly occupied by the Liberator Building Society and the disastrous termination of that Society had prejudicially affected the property in the immediate neighbourhood and that he was of the opinion that, that though this effect would wear off in time, it still had a depressing effect upon the neighbourhood. ...’

The Liberator Building Society was a vehicle by which Jabez Spencer Balfour and his colleagues defrauded thousands of investors, it failed in 1892.⁴ A Liberal MP, Balfour had been the first Mayor of Croydon when it was awarded Borough status. Also, he had been a member of our society, at that time the Croydon Microscopical and Natural History Club, having been elected, along with His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, in December 1883.⁵

The depression of the property can be traced in London directories – in a Trade Directory of 1891 the Liberator Permanent Building & Investment Society is listed at 20 Budge Row under ‘Land & Building Societies’,⁶ by 1895 the main occupants of No. 20 appear to be Ruston, Proctor & Co. Limited, Engineers,⁷ and in 1899 they have been replaced by Lyons J. & Co. Limited, café.⁸

I thank the Trustees of Morden College for permission to reproduce extracts from their Minutes Books and

acknowledge the valuable help of Elizabeth Wiggans, the College Archivist, in providing access to and information about the archives.

John B Greig

References:

1. Morden College Archives, 4 May 1876, *Trustees' Minutes Book*, Volume 6, pp. 106-108.
2. Morden College Archives, 3 October 1901, *Trustees' Minutes Book*, Volume 7, pp. 404-411.
3. Morden College Archives, 7 January 1897, *Trustees' Minutes Book*, Volume 7, pp. 174-181.
4. McKie, D. (2005). *Jabez – The rise and fall of a Victorian rogue*, paperback edn, London: Atlantic Books.
5. Anon. (1884). Ordinary Meeting, December 12th, 1883, *Proceedings of the Croydon Microscopical and Natural History Club*, 2(4), cxliv-cxlv.
6. Post Office (1891), *The Post Office London Trades' Directory for 1891*, London: Kelly & Co., p.1852b.
7. Post Office (1895), *The Post Office London Directory for 1895*, London: Kelly & Co. Limited, p.234b.
8. Post Office (1899), *The Post Office London Directory for 1899*, London: Kelly's Directories Limited, p.252c.

Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet ...

Who was Miss Muffet? And what is a tuffet? Some light is thrown on these questions by an article, written rather in the style of John Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, published in the Bulletin of the British Arachnological Society, from which the following account of Dr. Thomas Muffet (or Mouffet) [1553 - 1604] is extracted:

Muffet's reputation rises and the Rev. E. Topsel'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.

Curiously, 'tuffet' seems to have failed to be included in the Oxford English Dictionary, but Collins' in 1986 suggests it is 'a small mound or low seat' and a 16th century alteration of tuft.

Source

Bristowe, W.S. (1973). Anecdotal notes about our British predecessors. *Bulletin of the British Arachnological Society*, 2(9), 193–200.

Obituary

Dr. Derek Alfred Wheeler HILL [1925 – 2009]

Derek Hill, a member since 1960 and a former member of our Council, died on 22 December 2009, aged 84. He served as a Director of our Society from January 1968 to 22 March 1968 and from 25 April 1979 to 1 March 1984.

Professionally, he was an industrial and consulting chemist, specialising in paints and varnishes. To us, he was first and foremost a botanist, but with wide interests including especially the industrial history and archaeology of Colley Hill at Reigate, at the foot of which he lived.

He was the second son of Charles and Madelaine Hill, and was born on 4 February 1925, younger brother of Rodney. As a child, he lived at 5 Purley Park Road, but fortunately was evacuated to North Wales during part of World War II: the family home suffered hits by two enemy bombs, the first of which demolished Derek's bedroom, the second then destroying the entire house.

He was educated at St. John's, a small private preparatory school in Pampisford Road. From there he went on to the Purley County School for Boys where, in the Summer term of 1939, then aged 15 years two

months, his school report rated his chemistry 'Good'. When he sat the School Certificate examinations in the summer of 1942, his chemistry was graded 'Very good'. After school, he received a Certificate of proficiency in glass-blowing at Regent Street Polytechnic, was awarded BSc (Intermediate) by the University of London in 1944, and full BSc in 1946. He married Pamela Mary Yeo on 7 September 1951, a fellow student. After this he studied at Birkbeck College, and was awarded his PhD in 1959, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chemistry in 1960.

His many interests included, as a youngster, plane spotting and, later, glass-blowing and bee-keeping. His was an active bee-keeper until the last year or two.

He was a member of numerous other societies than our own, amongst which were the Botanical Society of the British Isles (which he and Pam joined in 1981), British Beekeepers' Association, British Bryological Society, British Pteridological Society, Surrey Botanical Society (of which he was an Honorary Member), Surrey Wildlife Trust, and the Wild Plant Conservation Charity.

He was also a member of the Colley Wood Syndicate Ltd, a company incorporated in 1925 by local residents to protect by purchase the land around their homes at the foot of Colley Hill. The company owns Colley Wood and Colley Field, the latter, at the foot of Colley Hill, being managed in conjunction with the National Trust, owners of the hill. Derek took a great deal of practical interest in the conservation of Meadow Clary, which grows on the hill. His garden, almost backing onto the Colley Hill hearthstone mine (closed in the early 1960s), was inhabited by a population of Roman snails, each of which he numbered, and weighed from time to time. Shortly before he died he suggested to the author of this obituary that we might exchange such snails from our gardens, to strengthen the stock by cross breeding.

Derek and Pamela acquired a plot of building land in Colley Way in or about 1959, with permission to build, and at first lived there in a caravan. They were familiar with Surrey's last miners employed at the hearthstone mine by Reigate Mines Ltd. Pamela managed to photograph the small surface processing works, in course of destruction by fire, shortly before the concern closed for good: her photograph of this event was published in the Surrey Mirror. With the author, he pursued the industrial history of Colley Hill, notably the several works of George Taylor [1840 – 1912]

including a short-lived small local water supply undertaking, a whitening works, and of course the mine for hearthstone, a mineral pigment used to whiten steps, stone floors, and the like. Members of the Taylor family are also noted for their photographic business.

In the recent past Derek purchased the former hearthstone mine and works site, with the intention of protecting its wildlife. It was his stated intention to pass ownership of this small plot of land either to the Colley Wood Syndicate or to the National Trust.

He is survived by his wife Pamela, his daughters Alison and Rosemary, and his three grand-children.

Jane McLaughlin and the writer represented the Society at a celebration of Derek's life at Reigate Manor Hotel on 30 January 2010.

Paul W. Sowan

100 Years Ago

Report of the Botanical Committee for 1910

The Fungus Hunt took place on Sept. 17th; when a party visited Wimbledon Common, under the guidance of Mr. C.D, Olive and Dr. Parsons.

The topography and physical features of Wimbledon Common were described last year in connection with the botanical ramble on May 20th, 1909.

The part visited on the present occasion was the wooded western slope from near Caesar's Well to Queen's Mere and the Windmill. Fungi were only moderately plentiful, September being almost the only dry month in a wet year. About twenty-six species were recorded, the fresh finds being *Agaricus (Lepiota) gracilentus*; *A. (Mycena) strobilinus* var. *coccineus*, a small scarlet species growing on decayed tufts of *Molinia caerulea*; *Agaricus (Omphalia) hydrogramma*, and *Sporodinia grandis*.

Anon. (1911). Report of the Botanical Committee for 1910, *Proceedings of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society*, 7(2), I-Ivi.

Alfred Russel Wallace's home in Dorking identified

Alfred Russel Wallace [1823 - 1913], a former member of this Society and unsuccessful campaigner (in the 1880s) for the admission of ladies to our meetings, was with Charles Robert Darwin [1809 - 1882], the co-author of the theory of evolution by natural selection. Their joint paper outlining the supposed mechanism for the origin of new species was read at a meeting of the Linnean Society in 1858.

Wallace, like Darwin, travelled extensively, and on his return to Britain authored a number of books on his travels, and on his zoological observations in foreign lands. Some of these, in whole or in part, were written at Croydon.

He lived with his wife and children in a series of (seemingly generally rented) houses at Grays (Essex), Dorking, Croydon, and Godalming (Surrey) before settling finally in Dorset in 1902, where he died in 1913.

Wallace had two Croydon addresses during his residence in our town. The first, a house called Waldron Edge at Duppas Hill Lane, he lived at from some time in 1878 until some time in 1880. This house stood near what is now the western end of Croydon's flyover. At a date between 9 January and 11 October 1880 he moved to a second home, Pen-y-Bryn, in St. Peter's Road. This has been identified as the present 44 St. Peter's Road, and at this Society's suggestion a GLC blue plaque was attached to the property. He left Croydon in May, 1881, but while here was an active member of the Croydon Microscopical and Natural History Club (our Society's name from 1877 to 1901).

Wallace's residence in Dorking has now been identified by Michèle Kohler, an antiquarian book dealer of that town, at what is now 12 Rose Hill. He lived in that house, which still stands, from July 1876 to March 1878. It remains, now, to identify his exact addresses in Grays, and in Godalming.

The identification of the Rose Hill address, and some accounts of Wallace's residence in Croydon, and membership of this Society, can be found in the following published papers.

Paul W. Sowan

KOHLER, Michèle (2009). Rose Hill: Alfred Russel Wallace's house in Dorking has been re-discovered. *Geoscientist*, **19**(10), page 5.

SOWAN, Paul W., and Jean I. BYATT (1973). Alfred Russel Wallace [1823 – 1913]; his residence in Croydon [1878 – 81] and his membership of the Croydon Microscopical and Natural History Club. *Proceedings of the Croydon Natural History and Scientific Society*, **15**(5), 81–100.

SOWAN, Paul W. (2001). Alfred Russel Wallace and the grass roots of natural history and social justice. *The Linnean*, **17**(1), 17-18.

William Henry MILLS [1869-1951] — historian of Addington, Coombe and Shirley

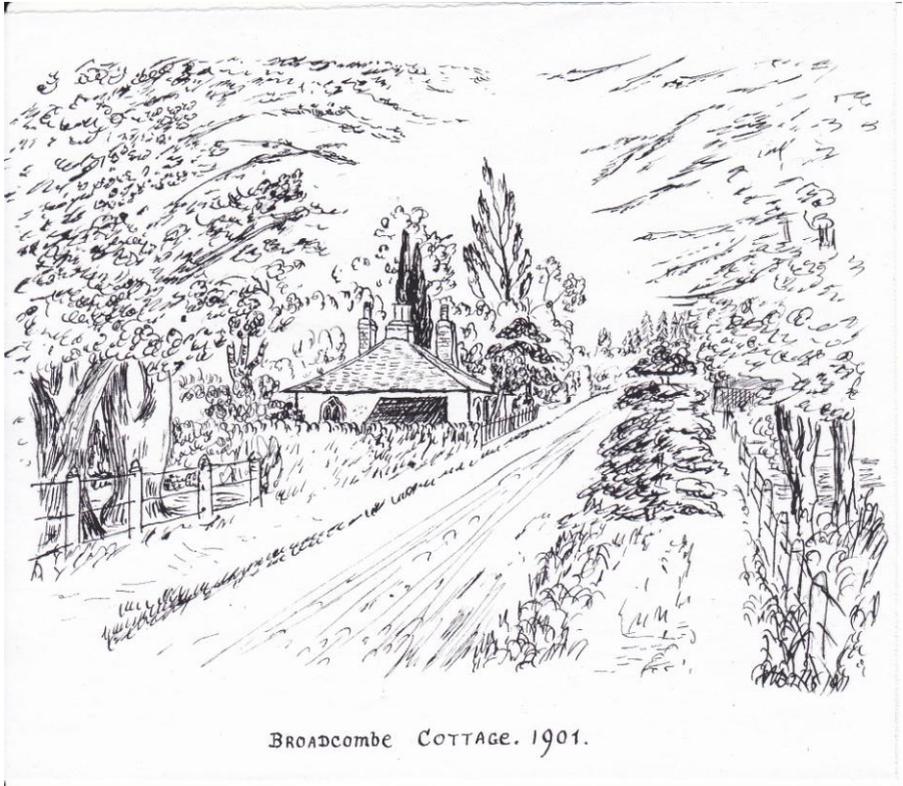
William Henry Mills, known familiarly as Peter, was a member of this Society from 1912 to his death in 1951. The short obituary notice of him in our Proceedings erroneously states him to have been born in 1870. He was a diligent collector of local historical information, from printed sources, unpublished written documents, and conversations and correspondence with people living in and around Addington, Coombe, and Shirley. His papers, constituting 24 boxes of documents, are in the London Borough of Croydon's Archives (AR 109), although as yet only partially catalogued. They have been drawn upon by local historians including Brian Salter, Lilian Thornhill, and Frank Warren.

The Mills family

Mills was one of the first three children admitted to the Addington Hills Infants' School. His older brother, Mark Edwin Mills, had been born in 1864, and both men earned their livings as gardeners at one or another of the three great houses at Coombe. Mark was at Coombe House, the home until the death of Frank Lloyd [1854 – 1927] after whom Lloyd Park is named. W.H. Mills also worked at Coombe Lodge as a boy, aged about 16 - 17 (1885 – 1886), and later at Coombe House (1888 – 1932).

W.H. Mills married Emma Cullum (born 18 April 1866) of Diss (Norfolk) at Croydon Parish Church on 14 January 1893. They had three daughters: Elsie Gladys (born 31 December 1894), Hilda Winifred (born 17 October 1899) and Agnes Dorothy (born 28 March 1910). All three married and had children of their own.

From 1901 to his death W.H. Mills lived at Broadcombe Cottage (now demolished), which stood just within the southern boundary of Addington Hills, at the extreme edge of the old parish of Croydon. The site of his cottage garden fronting onto Coombe Lane is still recognisable from the prolific growth of snowberry (*Symphoricarpus racemosus*), a short way up Coombe Lane, opposite the grounds of Coombe Wood.



The cottage has subsequently been demolished, but the site is still clearly recognisable from the prolific growth there of snowberry, a garden plant introduced from North America or Mexico. His papers note this shrub as being present in his garden.