

923. SULPHUR THORN	<u>Opisthograptis luteolata.</u> L.
928. SWALLOW TAILED ELDER	<u>Ourapteryx sambucaria.</u> L.
935. PEPPER AND SALT	<u>Biston Betularia.</u> L.
941. MOTTLED BEAUTY	<u>Alcis repandata.</u> L.
946. EARLY ENGRAILED	<u>Ectropis biundularia.</u> Borkh.
964. HEATH LATTICE	<u>Chiasmia clathrata.</u> L.

MAMMALS

Mole Talpa europaea. The numerous runs of this species were very evident throughout the spinney.

Rabbit Oryctolagus cuniculus. As a result of suppressive measures taken against this species the vegetation of the wood was enhanced.

Brown Hare Lepus capensis. Several were seen during the year disturbed from their 'forms' in the undergrowth.

Grey Squirrel Sciurus carolinensis. Only an occasional one was seen but there was evidence of their destructive habits.

Wood Mouse Apodemus sylvaticus. A few visited the new mammal traps.

Red Fox Vulpes vulpes. There was no real evidence that this species had visited the spinney during the year.

Putnoe Wood, 1972

During the first three months of the year working parties took place in the wood at five week-ends. These included a number of our junior members and were chiefly engaged in felling and burning some of the smaller diseased elms and unwanted sycamores in area A at the north-western edge of the wood.

A number of members acted as voluntary wardens during the bluebell season, calling the attention of those using the wood, when necessary, to the by-laws forbidding the picking of flowers.

Two further plant species were added to the existing list. Two specimens of the Hound's-tongue Cynoglossum officinale appeared unexpectedly in the clearing at the middle of the wood, but were picked within a few days of being first noticed. The plant is plentiful enough on nearby Mowsbury Hill although it is generally associated with disturbed open ground rather than with woodland habitats. The other new record was that of Bearded Couch Agropyron caninum which is a common grass of damp woodlands.

The small pond on the north side of the wood has proved a disappointment. It disappeared completely as a result of the dry weather of the summer and autumn and, for the same reason, there was insufficient water in the adjacent stream from which to replenish it by pumping. It is clear that only in normally wet winters, or in abnormally wet summers, will it be possible for this pond to maintain its existence without artificial assistance.

The laying of the north hedge, approved by the Borough Council in 1970, was completed during the autumn, although one cannot be happy with the result; the hedge had grown too tall and there were too many weak places and gaps which would have taxed the skill of even the most expert hedgers.

There was an unfortunate occurrence during the summer when a drift of herbicidal spray was carried into the southern ditch with disastrous results for a number of the plants in it. Willow-herb, Teazels, Figwort and various Docks were affected in varying degrees and the incident illustrated all too clearly how easy it is for these chemicals to get out of control.

During the late autumn, the authorities continued the replanting of the southern hedge, a measure strongly advocated by the Society nearly three years ago, and a split chestnut paling fence will be erected along the whole of the southern boundary of the wood to protect the quickthorn sets until they are fully established.

Action has been taken within the southern edge of the woodland itself to block some of the numerous tracks which have been recently formed by the growing reluctance of some people to restrict themselves to the existing foot-paths. This is being attempted by laying a number of overgrown hawthorns which will eventually form impenetrable living barriers in certain parts of the wood.

The future of Putnoe Lane gives cause for considerable anxiety. The Society has, from the first, pressed for the retention of this old green lane, with its rich grassland and hedge flora, but our satisfaction that its survival has been accepted by the authorities has been more than offset by the treatment which it is now receiving. Hundreds of tons of soil have been dumped on it during the year in an effort to raise and camber its surface prior to re-seeding, and there are plans to clean out the ditches on both sides. This tidying-up will, no doubt, eventually produce a pleasant grassy lane, but one quite different from the rutted and overgrown track we once knew and devoid of much of its natural history interest. It is unlikely that such uncommon species as the attractive little Grass Pea will have survived the current upheaval.

Mowsbury Hill 1971-2

Mowsbury Hill forms the extremity of a long narrow ridge which extends south-south-eastwards from the north Bedfordshire plateau for nearly two miles. Its National Grid Reference is TL 066532 thus bringing it into tetrad 05/R. It lies about three hundred yards south-east of the summit of Cleat Hill on the Bedford-Kimbolton road, B. 660, which here crosses the ridge, and is about five hundred yards north of Putnoe Wood. The summit is slightly in excess of 200 feet A.O.D. and hence about 100 feet above the surrounding countryside, but this apparently slight super-elevation is sufficient to make it a superb view-point to the east and south and must have given it considerable strategic value in earlier times.

The present name is a corruption of 'Morinsbury', since it was the site in the early 13th century of a moated manor-house owned by Ralph de Morins. That the site was an important one in the Iron Age has now been demonstrated by the excavations carried out by Mr G. Dring during the summer of 1971 along the southern ramparts. Remains have been found of a ditch and of a double wooden stockade which had been destroyed by a fire of sufficient intensity to turn the clay infilling of the walls into brick-like fragments. The later moats in the interior, which enclosed the medieval manor, are now overgrown with dense scrub, while at the eastern end of the hill there is a derelict orchard.

Although outside the present Borough boundary, the land lying between Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hill is the property of the Bedford Corporation, having been bought in the mid-nineteenth century with the proceeds of the sale of the site of the present Midland Road station to the railway company. This land is in process of being laid out as a municipal golf-course, but this will not affect the actual Mowsbury Hill enclosure of about seven acres, which is, of course, scheduled as an ancient monument and will be left untouched.

From a botanical point of view the site has long been known for various unusual plant species which favour the chalky Boulder Clay of which the hill top is