OBITUARY

EDWARD RONALD BUCKELL

Ronald Buckell, son of the late Dr. Edward and Mrs. Buckell, was born in Romsey, Hampshire on 8 April 1889 and was educated at Bedales school, Petersfield, and Caius College, Cambridge, where he obtained a B.A. degree. His family came to Canada in 1911 and settled at South Canoe on Shuswap Lake. Ronald arrived a year later and helped on his father's fruit farm until the outbreak of World War I when he enlisted on 21 September 1914 with the B.C. Horse, but transferred to the First Canadian Artillery Brigade at Valcartier. He was severely wounded on the Somme in 1916, sustaining a split left shoulder blade followed by ankylosis of the left shoulder from which he suffered great pain for several years. He returned from the war on 7 September 1917 and was offered a post with the Provincial Department of Agriculture working on the control of codling moth at Walhachin and later, on grasshopper control in the Chilcotin. After three years he transferred to the Dominion Entomological Branch with which he worked for the next 19 years in charge of the laboratory at Vernon and later at Kamloops until he retired in 1949. In 1936 he was sent as the Canadian delegate to an International Grasshopper Conference at Cairo, Egypt, where the control programme that he had initiated in the Dry Belt of B.C., was adopted by the Conference.

When he was at Vernon, he and his staff of Alec Dennys, A. D. Heriot and Peter Venables, discovered that perennial canker which was destroying the apple orchards in the Okanagan, was caused by wooly aphis and that control of the aphis also controlled the canker, thus saving the apple industry of the Province.

Ronald himself was inclined to systematics and he collected extensively and, over a period of years, published in the *Proceedings* of our Society, distribution records of the orthopteroid insects, some solitary wasps, the social wasps, bumble bees, dragonflies and sarcophagid flies, of British Columbia. His collections of all these groups are in the National Collection in Ottawa and the Laboratory at Kamloops. At the University in Vancouver are his synoptic collection of bumble bees and his large collection of dragonflies in alcohol which the National collection did not want.

Ronald was a man's man, passionately fond of the outdoors and adept at camping, hunting and fly-fishing. His love of nature began very early in life. When he was only eight years old he made detailed notes on each page of a large book on English birds, of the species he found and their nests. His completed collection of eggs was given to the British Museum when he moved to Canada. His eyesight was keen and his perception of objects was truly remarkable; when driving a car, his eyes ranged ceaselessly from side to side and he could spot the head only of a pheasant in a field of clover in flower at fifty yards and a deer in scrub or amongst trees, up to 200 yards away.

His eating habits were irregular and he never spared himself in the field; this strenuous life affected his heart and he retired from government life in 1949, to spend three

months of each winter in Victoria playing eighteen holes of golf every day, and the summers at Salmon Arm or on Shuswap Lake at Celista. In November 1962 he wrote saying that he felt extremely fit but a month later he died suddenly from a heart attack within sight of his house as he was walking home from Salmon Arm—just as he always said he wanted to go. He was buried 21 December 1962 in a peaceful little cemetery in the woods below Mt. Ida, near Salmon Arm.

He is survived by one sister and two nieces to whom are willed his house just outside Salmon Arm and his hillside property at Celista; his books were donated to men friends and to the Library in Salmon Arm and his splendid collection of mounted game heads and skins, to a museum to be founded in Salmon Arm, together with two other collections.

—G. J. SPENCER

BOOK REVIEW

Wasp Farm. H. S. Evans, New York, Natural History Press, 1963. Pp viii and 178. $4.75.

If there were more books like this there would be more entomologists, for biology is contagious when it is presented by an enthusiast like Dr. Evans. Despite the title the book is entirely on wasps: spider, digger, mud, sand, and social wasps. The farm, an agriculturally unproductive 8 acres in upstate New York, was kept as a sort of insect refuge and is really only the point of departure.

Probably none of the information is appearing for the first time. It is compiled from the immense literature and largely from the experience of the author and his students, as presented in scientific journals and in publications such as Natural History and Nature Magazine. The level of writing falls somewhere between these types. It is lucid, factual, unsentimental, non-technical, graced with a deft use of words, and tailored for swift, effortless reading.

Dr. Evans (b. 1919) earned his Ph.D. in Insect Taxonomy at Cornell University, and is currently Associate Curator of Insects at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University. He is thus a taxonomist *par excellence* and also a student of live insects. All taxonomists should follow suit.

He does not experiment with wasps, believing that experiments often merely pose situations which wasps never encounter in nature. ". . . the urgent need is to know precisely what wasps and other creatures do . . . until our understanding of animal behavior is on a very much higher plane than it is now . . ."

In discussing the *Ammophila,* wasps that use tools to close their nest holes, much of his own observation is used to give a reasonable slant to the much-discussed problem of instinct, intelligence, and behavior patterns. He puts the matter neatly in describing a spider-hunting *Priocnemis,* which emerges from pupation "ready to enact a script which is already largely codified in its nervous system". And again in outlining the vestigial instinctive behavior of *Microbembix,* which goes through the motion of stinging the dead, dried insect detritus with which it stocks its nest. This is a recent development from *Bembix.* In fact, the evolutionary history and arrangement of the