

WILLIAM SYER BRISTOWE, 1901-1979

William Syer Bristowe, who died on 11 January 1979, had been a prominent and in many ways a unique figure in the history of arachnology in Britain. Being a man well known for his many interests and hobbies it was fortunate that his interest in spiders, which began at the age of five, persisted throughout his life. His numerous papers on spiders and insects (mostly pompilid wasps) spanned a period of more than half a century and of these the majority were published before 1941, the year in which he reached the age of forty and in which the second volume of *The Comity of Spiders* appeared.

He was born at Stoke d'Abernon in Surrey on 1 September 1901 and his childhood and early school days were happy ones. His father and relations on both sides of the family were keen naturalists, and fostered his interests in animals and animal behaviour. He developed an interest in spiders at an early age, and it was during his period at Wellington College during the 1914-18 war that he determined to write a book eventually on the habits of spiders. In 1920 he went up to Cambridge, at Gonville and Caius; initially he read medicine but soon switched to science (chemistry, physics, zoology and botany). In the long vacations of 1921 and 1923 he joined expeditions to Jan Mayen Island and central Brazil, and from these came two early papers on spiders. At university, athletics claimed much of his time: he was elected President of the University Athletics Club, was a member of the joint Oxford and Cambridge team to Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Austria in 1924 and captained the team to the Pennsylvania Relays in the U.S.A. It was on this last tour that he went down with rheumatic fever, which put an end to his chances of being in the 1924 Olympic team. Rugby football upset his last year. He had played for the Harlequins and occasionally Cambridge and in one game suffered bad concussion and a serious ear injury, and this caused his absence from work for a term in his examination year, with the result that he reckoned an academic career would be ruled out. After coming down from Cambridge in 1924 he joined Brunner Mond, later to be incorporated in I.C.I., and with them he spent the rest of his working life, retiring at the end of 1962 after 14 years as head of the Central



Staff Department. His work involved trips to Malaya, Thailand and Indonesia to establish a subsidiary company, and it was during the period when he was head of the Far East Department in London that he rediscovered *Liphistius desultor*, a spider which had not been seen since 1875. He also visited Krakatoa and the Batu caves and studied the habits of *Desis*.

In the meantime he was producing a steady stream of papers, some dealing with distribution, for example on the spiders of islands such as Madeira, Jan Mayen, Scilly, Lundy and the Western Isles of Scotland. Another series bore the title "Notes on the biology of spiders"; some of these papers are now classics and are all extremely interesting to read. His pioneer contributions to the subject of courtship and mating, now well known and universally quoted, were made at this time, and his knowledge of spiders was then unrivalled by anyone of his generation in Britain. He was the first to admit that this was due in no small part to the help and encouragement he had

received over the years from his old friend Dr A. R. Jackson, and like Jackson he was himself always generous with the encouragement and practical assistance that he gave to aspiring younger arachnologists. One particularly interesting paper during this period was his "Classification of spiders" (1938), written primarily as criticism of Petrunkevitch's conclusions; it displays as perhaps no other his cautious well-balanced method of argument, and was something of a landmark in its day.

The publication in 1939 and 1941 of the two volumes of *The Comity of Spiders* may perhaps be held to mark the peak of his work and to constitute his most abiding contribution to British arachnology. In this work he brought together his thoughts and results of observation on every aspect of the lives and habits of spiders. Capture of prey, the nature of their food, their enemies, courtship and mating are described and discussed with a straightforward simplicity and clarity that characterised all his writings, and with an authority that could only have sprung from his great first-hand experience and knowledge. In the first volume the three chapters on "Distribution by environments", "The dispersal of spiders", and "The spider population" contain the first significant contributions in this country to many ecological problems, and he must be considered in fact to have been our first spider ecologist. In addition he brought together here in permanent form so much of the knowledge scattered throughout the literature by our predecessors; his list of species, their known distribution and the synonyms of their accepted names were themselves contributions for which everyone has cause to be grateful. The award of an Sc.D. by his University on the publication of this work was a notable distinction to have been attained by an amateur.

In the early 1940s, the only arachnologists in Britain who were competent to identify the more difficult species, and particularly the Linyphiidae, were W. Falconer, J. E. Hull and A. R. Jackson, all of whom were amateurs who in their youth had overlapped with O.P.-Cambridge. Falconer died in 1943, Hull was already old, and consequently Jackson's death in early 1944 dealt a serious blow to the taxonomic branch of British araneology. It had been clear for some time that what was badly needed was a modern textbook describing all the British species in

sufficient detail to permit their identification by any competent naturalist. At a meeting in the summer of 1944 in wartime London, Bristowe was a prime mover with us in instigating an immediate start on this project. The work had not progressed very far, however, when he found it necessary, for domestic and professional reasons, to retire from the venture, to the profound regret of the remaining authors of *British Spiders*.

After 1945 he published fewer papers having much scientific interest, but others appeared on biographical and historical matters, and these reflected his wide interests and make very good reading. He continued however to work on liphistiids and published his last paper on these in 1976. He also rediscovered *Lycosa ingens* on the Desertas near Madeira. *The World of Spiders* in the New Naturalist series, illustrated by Arthur Smith, appeared in 1958. This attractive book is too well known to need much comment, but it contains a number of original observations and thoughts and because it deals with behaviour in a lively style and is well illustrated has probably done more than any other work to promote the wider appeal of arachnology in Britain. In 1962 he was presented by the Duke of Edinburgh with the first of the Stamford Raffles Awards, then newly established by the Zoological Society of London in memory of Sir Stamford Raffles, who with Sir Humphrey Davy was one of its founders. These awards are given annually to an amateur zoologist for distinguished contributions to zoology.

After retirement he was able to devote more time to some of his other interests and hobbies including antiques, stamps, gardening, gipsy caravans, archaeology (often in company with his friend the late Dr T. C. Lethridge), and not forgetting Sherlock Holmes. In all these activities he set himself a certain excellence and often made original contributions. He continued to travel nearly every winter to places in Europe and, in spite of a stroke in 1971, paid visits to Thailand (for a book on its history) and also to Sri Lanka, Kenya, Malaysia, Sumatra and Borneo, during which he resumed his search for and study of *Liphistius* species. A paper in the *Journal of Zoology* (1976) gave a list of the ten known liphistiids, produced after he had sorted out the synonyms and rediscovered *L. sumatranus*. In 1977 he communicated his final views on these spiders at the Inter-

national Congress of Arachnology at Exeter, and it gave him great pleasure to be elected Honorary President of the Congress.

Opinions will vary about the relative value of his many remarkable contributions to arachnology. A good memory, inexhaustible patience and a cautious well-balanced logical mind fitted him well for the studies he undertook. He had moreover a rare gift for observing living creatures and seeing the significance of what he observed, facts often missed by those without this special facility. Always a loner, even in Cambridge days, he seemed sometimes to be the last of those outstanding figures he so much admired and whose lives and thinking he did so much to elucidate. Some have regretted that in the years since the war he had not made more contact with workers in other countries. Be all that as it may, we shall miss the company and writings of a very charming friend.

G. H. Locket and A. F. Millidge

List of publications on arachnids by W. S. Bristowe

- 1922: The insects and arachnids of Jan Mayen. *Proc. Camb. phil. Soc. biol. Sci.* **21**: 38-43.
- 1923: Spiders found in the neighbourhood of Oxshott. *Proc. S. Lond. ent. nat. Hist. Soc.* **1922-23**: 1-11.
- 1923: A British semi-marine spider. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (9) **12**: 154-156.
- 1924: A bee-eating dragonfly and a spider-eating asilid fly. *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* **60**: 150-151.
- 1925: Notes on the habits of insects and spiders in Brazil. *Trans. ent. Soc. London* **1924**: 475-504.
- 1925: Spiders collected by the Shackleton-Rowett Expedition in the island of Madeira. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (9) **15**: 331-334.
- 1925: The spiders and harvestmen of Wicken Fen. In J. S. Gardiner, *The Natural History of Wicken Fen*, Part 2: 104-115.
- 1925: The fauna of the Arctic island of Jan Mayen and its probable origin. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (9) **15**: 480-485.
- 1925: The spiders of Mt. Everest. *Countryside* **1925**: 103-105.
- 1926: The mating habits of British thomisid and sparassid spiders. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (9) **18**: 114-131.
- 1926: (with G. H. Locket): The courtship of British lycosid spiders and its probable significance. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1926**: 317-347.
- 1926: (by G. H. Locket with notes by W. S. Bristowe): Observations on the mating habits of some web-spinning spiders. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1926**: 1125-1146.
- 1927: The spider fauna of the Western Islands of Scotland. *Scott. Nat.* **1927**: 88-94, 117-122.
- 1928: A few spiders collected on the Camber sandhills. *Hastings E. Suss. Nat.* **4**: 20-21.
- 1928: Some notes on the biology of hunting wasps. *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* **64**: 7-11.
- 1928: Inhabitants of Processionary caterpillar nests. *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* **64**: 31.
- 1928: Facts and fallacies about spiders. *Proc. S. Lond. ent. nat. Hist. Soc.* **1928-29**: 12-23.
- 1929: The spiders of Cambridgeshire (including harvest spiders and pseudoscorpions). *Camb. nat. Hist. Soc. Fauna List No. 2*: 1-25.
- 1929: The spiders of the Scilly Islands. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1929**: 149-164.
- 1929: A contribution to the knowledge of the spiders of the Channel Islands. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1929**: 181-188.
- 1929: The spiders of Lundy Island. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1929**: 235-244.
- 1929: The mating habits of spiders, with special reference to the problems surrounding sex dimorphism. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1929**: 309-358.
- 1930: The spiders of Skomer Island (S. Wales). *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1929**: 617-622.
- 1930: The distribution and dispersal of spiders. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1929**: 633-657.
- 1930: A supplementary note on the mating habits of spiders. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1930**: 395-413.
- 1930: The distribution and origin of the spider fauna of Great Britain. In Contribution à l'étude du peuplement des Iles britanniques. *Publs. Soc. biogéogr.* **3**: 45-55.
- 1930: Notes on the biology of spiders. 1. The evolution of spiders' snares. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (10) **6**: 334-342.
- 1930: Notes on the biology of spiders. 2. Aquatic spiders. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (10) **6**: 343-347.
- 1930: Notes on the biology of spiders. 3. Miscellaneous. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (10) **6**: 347-353.
- 1931: A contribution to the knowledge of the spiders of South Wales. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (10) **8**: 173-177.
- 1931: Notes on the biology of spiders. 4. Further notes on aquatic spiders, with a description of a new species of pseudoscorpion from Singapore. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (10) **8**: 457-463.
- 1931: Notes on the biology of spiders. 5. *Theridion ovatum* Clerck, its habits and varieties. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (10) **8**: 466-469.
- 1931: Notes on the biology of spiders. 6. Spitting as a means of capturing prey by spiders. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (10) **8**: 469-471.
- 1931: Notes on the biology of spiders. 7. Flies that triumph over spiders. *Ann. Mag. nat. Hist.* (10) **8**: 471-474.
- 1931: A contribution to the knowledge of Scottish spiders. Kirkcudbrightshire. *Scott. Nat.* **1931**: 153-155.
- 1931: A contribution to the knowledge of the spider fauna of south-west Ireland and, in particular, the islands off the coast. *Proc. zool. Soc. Lond.* **1931**: 17-29.

- 1931: The spiders of the island of Grassholm, and some additions to the Skomer Island list (South Wales). *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1931**: 111-113.
- 1931: The spiders of the Orkney and Shetland Islands. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1931**: 951-956.
- 1931: The spiders of the Farne Islands. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1931**: 1383-1385.
- 1931: The migration of spiders. *Entomologist's mon.Mag.* **67**: 206-208.
- 1931: A preliminary note on the spiders of Krakatau. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1931**: 1387-1400.
- 1931: The mating habits of spiders: a second supplement, with the description of a new thomisid from Krakatau. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1931**: 1401-1412.
- 1931: Spiders collected by the Discovery Expedition with a description of a new species from South Georgia. *'Discovery' Rep.* **3**: 261-266.
- 1932: *Mantispa*, a spider parasite. *Entomologist's mon.Mag.* **68**: 222-224.
- 1932: Insects and other invertebrates for human consumption in Siam. *Trans.ent.Soc. London* **80**: 387-404.
- 1933: Notes on the biology of spiders. 8. Rare spiders and the meaning of the word "rare". *Ann.Mag.nat.Hist.* (10) **11**: 279-289.
- 1933: Notes on the biology of spiders. 9. The British species of *Atypus*. *Ann.Mag.nat.Hist.* (10) **11**: 289-302.
- 1933: Notes on the biology of spiders. 10. British cellar spiders, with the description of a species new to Britain. *Ann.Mag.nat.Hist.* (10) **11**: 509-514.
- 1933: The new volcanic island, Krakatoa. *Nature, Lond.* **132**: 860.
- 1933: The spiders of Bear Island. *Norsk.ent.Tidsskr.* **3**: 149-154.
- 1933: The liphistiid spiders. With an appendix on their internal anatomy by J. Millot. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1932**: 1015-1057.
- 1934: The spiders of Ramsey and Bardsey Islands, with notes on others from Montgomery and Merioneth. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1934**: 1-9.
- 1934: *Introductory notes* to E. Reimoser, The spiders of Krakatau. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1934**: 11-12.
- 1935: The spiders of Greece and the adjacent islands. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1934**: 733-788.
- 1935: Spiders from the Isle of May. *Scott.Nat.* **1935**: 27-28.
- 1935: Further notes on the spiders of the Scilly Islands. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1935**: 219-232.
- 1935: The spiders of Skokholm (S. Wales) with notes on a phalangid new to Britain. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **1935**: 233-239.
- 1937: Spiders which feed their young from their mouths. *Countryside* (N.S.) **11**: 167.
- 1938: Some new termitophilous spiders from Brazil. *Ann.Mag.nat.Hist.* (11) **2**: 67-73.
- 1938: The classification of spiders. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* (B) **108**: 285-322.
- 1938: Arachnida. In *The Victoria history of the county of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely* **1**: 206-212.
- 1938: A supplementary note on the liphistiid spiders. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* (B) **108**: 661-662.
- 1939: *The Comity of Spiders* **1**: 1-228. Ray Society, London.
- 1940: The Arachnida of Suffolk. *Trans.Suffolk Nat.Soc.* **4** (3): 156-164.
- 1941: *The Comity of Spiders* **2** 229-560. Ray Society, London.
- 1944: Dr A. R. Jackson. Obituary. *Nature, Lond.* **153**: 613.
- 1944: Dr A. R. Jackson. Obituary. *North Wales Nat.* **19**: 189-192.
- 1944: A foreign spider, *Argyope bruennichi* Scop., established in England. *Ann.Mag.nat.Hist.* (11) **11**: 829-834.
- 1945: Spider superstitions and folklore. *Trans.Conn.Acad. Arts Sci.* **36**: 53-90.
- 1945: Spider miscellany. *J.QUECKETT microsc.Club* (4) **2**: 63-67.
- 1945: Notes on the spiders of Dorset. *Proc.Dorset nat.Hist. archaeol.Soc.* **66**: 144-146.
- 1946: The spiders of Lundy. In M. G. Palmer (ed.), *The fauna and flora of the Ilfracombe district of North Devon*, 63-65. Ilfracombe Field Club.
- 1946: Some notes about the American black widow spider, *Latrodectus mactans*. *Entomologist's mon.Mag.* **82**: 54.
- 1947: *A note in* O. W. Richards, Observations on *Trypoxylon placidum*. *Entomologist's mon.Mag.* **83**: 53.
- 1947: *Spiders* 1-34. King Penguin, London.
- 1948: Spiders from the Arctic island of Jan Mayen. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **118**: 223-225.
- 1948: Notes on the habits and prey of twenty species of British hunting wasps. *Proc.Linn.Soc.Lond.* **1948**: 12-37.
- 1948: Notes on the structure and systematic position of oonopid spiders based on an examination of the British species. *Proc.zool.Soc.Lond.* **118**: 878-891.
- 1949: The distribution of harvestmen (Phalangida) in Great Britain and Ireland with notes on their names, enemies and food. *J.Anim.Ecol.* **18**: 100-114.
- 1951: An introductory chapter on British araneologists and their work, and Atypidae, Oonopidae, Dysderidae and Scytodidae. In G. H. Locket & A. F. Millidge, *British Spiders* **1**: 1-14, 46-48, 73-91. Ray Society, London.
- 1952: The arachnid fauna of the Batu caves in Malaya. *Ann.Mag.nat.Hist.* (12) **5**: 697-707.
- 1952: The spiders of islands. *SEast Nat.* **57**: 34-43.
- 1954: The chelicerae of spiders. *Endeavour* **13**: 42-49.
- 1958: *The world of spiders* 1-304. Collins, New Naturalist, London.
- 1961: Obituary. The Rev. J. E. Hull. *Nature, Lond.* **190**: 489.
- 1963: Notes on rare spiders and courtship as a clue to relationships. *Proc.S.Lond.ent.nat.Hist.Soc.* **1962**: 184-190.
- 1963: Hunt for a wolf spider. *Animals* **2** (14): 369-372.
- 1963: The cave-dwellers. *Animals* **3** (3): 78-79.
- 1964: Spiders. In *The natural history of the garden at Buckingham Palace*. *Proc.S.Lond.ent.nat.Hist.Soc.* **1963**: 48-54.

- 1965: Hazardous courtship. *Animals* 7(5): 139.
- 1967: The life and work of a great English naturalist, Joseph Dandridge, 1664-1746. *Entomologist's Gaz.* 18: 73-89.
- 1967: More about Joseph Dandridge and his friends James Petiver and Eleazar Albin. *Entomologist's Gaz.* 18: 197-200.
- 1971: A Portuguese pompilid wasp which captures trapdoor spiders. *Entomologist* 104: 56-58.
- 1973: Anecdotal notes about our British predecessors. *Bull. Br.arachnol.Soc.* 2 (9): 193-200.
- 1973: A new lycosid spider in the Seychelles and an endemic eumenid wasp which stores spiders. *Entomologist* 106: 220-222.
- 1974: A living fossil among spiders. *Wildlife* 16 (7): 318-319.
- 1975: A family of living fossil spiders. *Endeavour* 34: 115-117.
- 1976: A contribution to the knowledge of liphistiid spiders. *J.Zool.,Lond.* 178: 1-6.
- 1976: Rare arachnids from Malaysia and Sumatra. *J.Zool., Lond.* 178: 7-14.
- 1976: Spider quest. *Wildlife* 18 (4): 164-167.
- 1978: The primitive Asian liphistiid spiders as a Suborder (abstract). *Symp.zool.Soc.Lond.* 42: 495-496.
-