

Fred Fincher 1901 – 1995

MERVYN NEEDHAM

My knowledge of Fred is mainly second-hand, although I did meet him on odd occasions when he visited my mother-in-law Ruth Meredith, herself an accomplished natural historian. They also used to meet at Bromsgrove market, which he attended on his bike and later an 'L'-plated moped (I don't think he ever passed his test!) He did his little shopping in the market where they discussed topics of natural history. This tribute mainly results from reminiscences written by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust members after his death in 1995.

Fred came with his parents from Tipton to Randan Wood in 1934 to start an egg and poultry business in 12 acres within the wood where they lived in the bungalow they built themselves. Fred remained a bachelor for many years after his parents died and in fact he only married Mrs. Gill in 1995 shortly before his death. Fred and his long-term friend were able to share companionship in their twilight years.

Fred had kept nature notes for 10 years in the wilds of Tipton even before he came to Worcestershire. This he continued to do all his life, writing numerous diaries and notes in very small precise form so neat it could have been written with a pin! After the war and the death of his parents he turned more to writing, teaching and lecturing. In fact he wrote a weekly article in the Bromsgrove Messenger for 30 years. His knowledge of the flora and fauna of Worcestershire was immense. He was also a born educator and he was willing to share his knowledge with anyone who showed interest, especially children. He was modest, quiet, gentlemanly and very polite. Fred was a founding father of the West Midlands Conservation Trust around 1958 and the Worcestershire Nature Conservation Trust in (now known as the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust) in 1968 together with Christopher Cadbury and others.

There is an interesting link over time, as Fred in his early years met and listened to Carlton Rea who wrote the 'Botany of Worcestershire' with John Amphlett in



Fred Fincher leading a Fungus Foray in Pepper Wood 1983 John Bingham

1909 and Rea had attended field meetings with Edwin Lees who was born in 1800 and devoted his adult life to Worcestershire natural history. So we have a continuity of nearly 200 years spanned by three of Worcestershire's most eminent natural historians, especially in mycology and botany.

We are indebted to Fred for giving Randan Wood (which became the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's first nature reserve) and all his notes and books to the Trust. These are now housed at the Smite headquarters although some of his Wyre Forest notes are now in the hands of the Wyre Forest Study Group.

Fred spent many hours in the Wyre Forest and recently many of his notes have started to be computerised and when this is completed we shall have many more records from a very special Worcestershire natural historian.

"The life of one we love is never lost, its influence goes on through all the lives it ever touched". A note of Fred's sense of humour was – 'It's a comic tern if you cannot identify Arctic from Common!'



Fred Fincher on his 80th birthday in Randan Wood Harry Green