

OBITUARY

WILLIAM REID (1888-1977)

His many friends will have heard with deep sorrow, the news of the passing of Willie Reid, at his home on the outskirts of Sheffield on 16th December, 1977. He had been in failing health for some time, and only survived his 89th birthday by a few days. They will indeed miss his perennial cheerfulness, his quite jaunty manner and his great enthusiasm for the chase, as he was one of the leading and best-known lepidopterists in the north of England.

Born as far back as 1888 at Lockferry in Cheshire, he was educated at Rossall School, where he became keen on birds and on natural history in general. His engineering career, started in Canada, was interrupted by the 1914-18 war. He was one of the first to join the Royal Flying Corps, and was shot down in 1915 by the famous German ace Max Immelmann and taken prisoner. He was later invalided to Switzerland, and returned to this country where, after the first conflict was over, he was associated with several firms. Just before the second war, he set up his own steel business in Sheffield, which was to be his permanent home. It was in 1947 that his early flair for our lepidoptera returned to him, and for the subsequent thirty years, he devoted a great deal of his spare time to the study and pursuit of these insects over most of the British Isles. He made many visits to the Highlands and a few to Eire, whence he bred some fine series, especially of the local forms of *Hadena caesia*. He did some collecting in Europe and also on a visit to Kenya. But it was round his home on the western side of Sheffield that most of his prizes came. Melanism seems to be very prevalent in that vicinity, especially among the Dagger moths. He used to find regularly on his beloved home moors, the deep grey form of *Apatele menyanthidis*. The darkest form *steinarti* of *A. alni* was plentiful at his light, while he took several examples of *A. megacephala* with completely black forewings, and very dusky forms of *A. leporina*. But his most outstanding capture was in 1951, when an ab. *totinigra* of the Buff Ermine graced his trap. It is unique for this country, and the most melanic form of this insect. It is indeed fitting that his fine collection should now find a permanent resting place among the national insects at South Kensington. It was a happy occasion too when he celebrated his Diamond Wedding at the end of September 1977, surrounded by a large family extending to the fourth generation, and with a telegram of greetings from the Queen.

All sympathy goes out to his widow and many descendants. They have indeed lost a good friend and a fine example of kindness and courage to all who knew him. — C.G.M. de W.



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