

## O.M.H.

The auto-obituary of the late P. B. M. Allan appears here—under having just come to light from beneath a collection of dry *leaves* eminently suitable for pupation.

## BENEATH THIS TREE LIE

## THE EXUVIAE

## OF

## AN OLD MOTH-HUNTER

## WHO WENT TO EARTH

The 31st Day of December 1973.

From earthly cage by *Atropos* set free  
His hope is pinned to Immortality;  
*Mors pallida* Hor. caught him in her net;  
The bush no more he'll beat; for here he's set.  
His nights with sugar, lamp, and sheet all past,  
Now, box'd securely, lies relaxed at last.

## READER!

## DIG NOT HERE

## BUT PONDER ON THE

## METAMORPHOSIS

## THAT AWAITS YOU

## Obituary

## FRANK HENRY LEES (1883-1973)

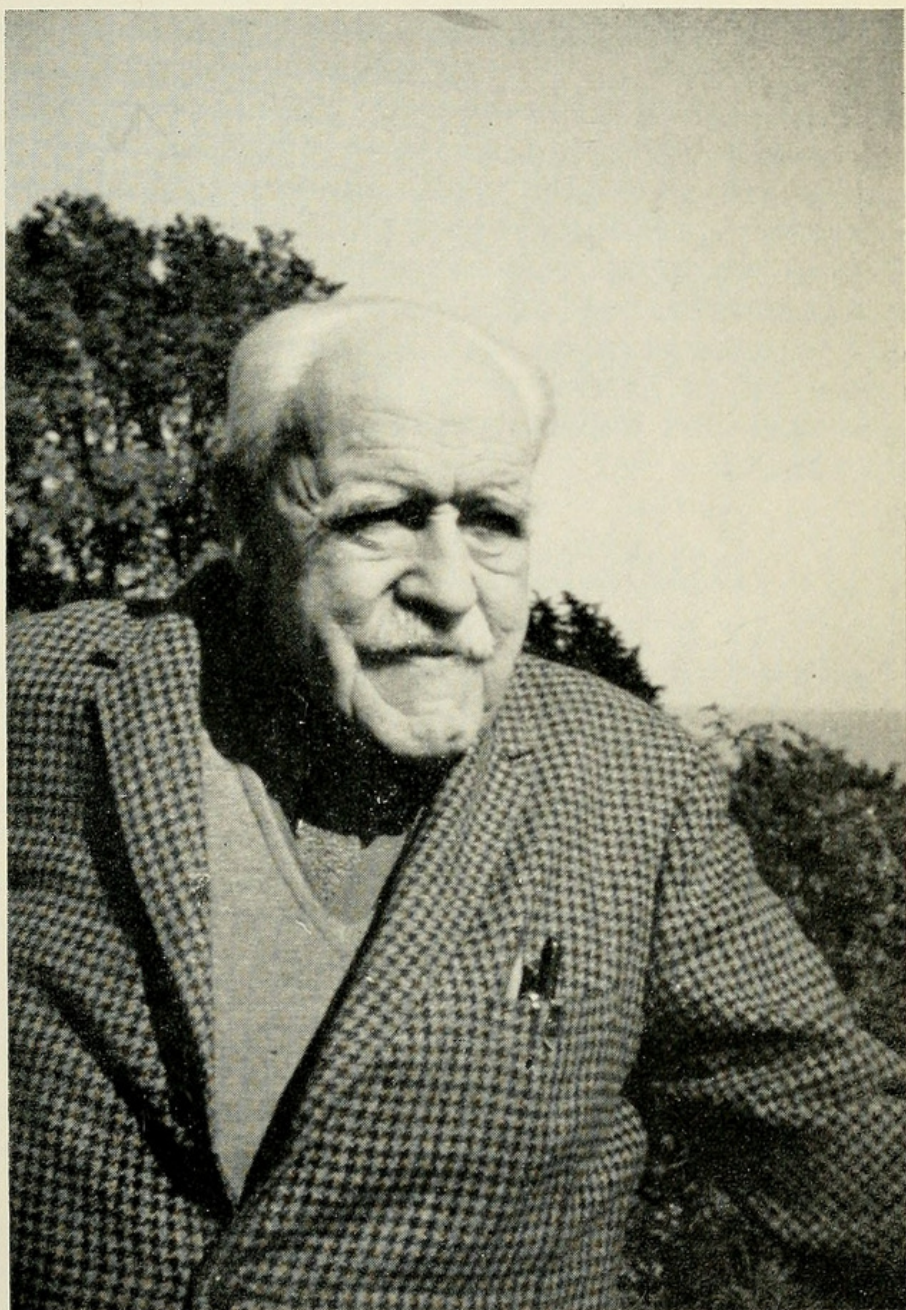
On November 18, 1973, there passed away at Torquay one of the most successful and fortunate collectors of our macrolepidoptera. For during his long and rewarding life of 90 years Frank Lees not only made a most erudite study of this group of insects, but had himself taken probably more rarities than anyone else has ever done, especially among the moths.

Born on May 16, 1883 in Birmingham, he spent his first 55 years in that famous cradle of field collectors and was a contemporary of such eminent sons of that city as the late Professor Sir Beckwith Whitehouse and Colonel W. Bowater who also died recently at the age of 90. In company with these and other well-known entomologists of that region he built up over the years an exceedingly fine collection of the lepidoptera of the Birmingham area as well as from other parts of the British Isles.

It was while at King Edward's Grammar School that Frank Lees was first instructed in the pursuit and study of butterflies and moths by his uncle, Richard Wakefield. His nephew found it a relaxing pastime in later years especially those just before and after the 1914-18 war when he was running his own brass foundry firm and became a Government contractor for a special lamp he invented. Just before he retired from his business in 1935 he was lucky enough to accompany Sir Beckwith Whitehouse to Dungeness during that fabulous late summer of 1934. He records how on September 18 that year he spotted part of a moth protruding from a hole in one of the upright sleeper posts and from its hindwings he at once realised it was the Alchemyst (*Catephia alchymista* Schiff.) of which another specimen was taken near Deal the previous August. Only two days previously he had taken at sugar one of five examples of the Scarce Arches (*Apamea zollikoferi* Freyer) in this wonderful locality which also produced for him a Red-headed Chestnut (*Conistra erythrocephala* Schiff.) on September 29, yet another great rarity. Almost exactly a year later he was present with Sir Beckwith this time in the Ham Street woods when a Conformist moth (*Lithophane furcifera* Hufn.) came to the sugar patch, altogether surely an unsurpassed sequence of rare captures.

In the year of his retirement in 1935 Frank Lees moved to Maidencombe just east of Torquay which was to be his permanent home for the next 37 years. His house was set fairly high on a cliff overlooking a small bay and it was indeed in a most strategic position for attracting rare migrant insects. During the 1939-45 war two such species which came to his light were the Golden Twin-spot (*Plusia chalcites* Esp.) and the Slender Burnished Brass (*Plusia orichalcea* Fab.). He was also fortunate there during the great invasion of the Striped Hawk (*Celerio livornica* Esp.) which was prevalent in southern England during the early summer of 1943. In 1947 he took a female Ni moth (*Plusia ni* Hübn.) from which he bred out a superb series. Hardly a year passed without his obtaining some species of special interest, especially when he started running a mercury vapour trap. In that remarkable early immigration in the spring of 1952 the first British example of the Levant Blackneck (*Tathorynchus exsiccata* Led.) came to his light on March 20, while six years later on October 1, 1958, he took the second British specimen of Stephen's Gem (*Plusia biloba* Stephens) a species emanating from North America.

PLATE XII



**FRANK HENRY LEES**



Worms, C. G. M. de. 1974. "Frank Henry Lees (1883-1973)." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 86, 171–173.

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