

OBITUARIES

SIR ROGER CURTIS (1886-1954).—Sir Roger Colin Molyneux Curtis, 4th Baronet, of Gatcombe, was born September 12, 1886, and succeeded to the Baronetcy in 1898. He was educated at Keble College, Oxford, where he graduated B.A. in 1910, and he became one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools, Board of Education, first in Surrey, and subsequently in Staffordshire and Derbyshire.

He joined the Botanical Society and Exchange Club of the British Isles in 1915 and was a member for 25 years. For a period he was keenly interested in the alien plants which appeared in the vicinity of the breweries at Burton-on-Trent from the use of foreign grain. He was joined in some of his visits there by Dr. G. Claridge Druce, and this work culminated in a useful paper (*Rep. B.E.C.*, 9, 465-9, 1931). At that time Dr. Druce, who had been the sole officer of the Society for many years, was making arrangements for the continuance of the work after his death and he named Sir Roger as a member of the "Advisory Committee" charged with making appropriate arrangements. Following preliminary work by this Committee it was decided to place the affairs of the Society on a democratic basis, and at the Annual General Meeting called in May 1932, Sir Roger became a member of our first elected Committee. In 1934 he was elected Honorary Treasurer, and he served in this capacity until 1937 when he resigned on being asked to make a long visit to South Africa to study education methods there.

In his last years he lived in a delightful cottage overlooking the lake at Melbourne, a locality well known to Derbyshire botanists. There he always had a warm welcome for his friends, and particularly for those of botanical inclination. Botany to him was a recreation and, although he knew his plants well, he never had the opportunity, nor perhaps the taste, for intensive work. He threw himself with great energy and enthusiasm into many things. During the war he greatly assisted in the collection of material from our hedgerows for wartime needs, emphasising always its educational value in helping children to appreciate better the interests in the countryside. Later he helped in the organisation of field investigations for the new Flora of Derbyshire. He was also greatly interested in boys' clubs and annually took a large number of boys on a camping tour on the continent. He was a governor of Trent College.

Sir Roger was a genial companion on a botanical ramble and found delight and much of interest in even the commonest flowers. He had a great sense of humour. He resigned from the Society in 1940 and died on January 11th, 1954.

R. W. BUTCHER and J. E. LOUSLEY.

RALPH HOWARTH (1889-1954), who passed away on February 8, 1954, after a long illness, will be remembered by those members who attended the Isle of Man meeting in June, 1950. His eagerness on that occasion to show the party the most interesting parts of the island, and to take members in his car to areas that would otherwise have been inaccessible was characteristic of his kindly nature.

Born in Yorkshire, and engaged in the textile trade all his life, he first came to the Isle of Man in 1916 in connection with the manufacture of airship fabric. After the war he made his home in the island, living first at Peel, and later at Sulby. After his retirement he acted as wool valuer for the Manx Government. He was a member of the island's Education Authority and of Lezayre Parish Commissioners, a Steward of Sulby Methodist Chapel, an ardent freemason and rotarian, a Trustee and valued helper of the Manx Museum, and an ex-President of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society, whose natural history activities he had fostered over many years.

A life-long lover of the country, he was first drawn to the study of ornithology, but latterly his enthusiasm had been directed more and more towards botany. He joined the Botanical Society of the British Isles at the end of the 1950 meeting and shortly afterwards became Local Secretary for Man, in which capacity he established contact with all the island's botanists, enlisting their help in the preparation of the Flora which had been commenced in 1949. As Recorder I found in him a perfect collaborator, ever ready to search for any plant that he could persuade me to mention. He never pretended to be an expert botanist, but his hospitality to botanical visitors was unflinching, and I shall never forget the days that we spent together exploring the northern half of the island—especially the pond near Jurby where we found four plants new to the Manx flora in as many minutes.

He leaves a widow and two sons, to whom we extend our deepest sympathy.

D. E. ALLEN.

KARL RONNIGER (1871-1954) was born at Gmunden, Upper Austria, on 13th August 1871, and died in Vienna on 5th February 1954. His father, Ferdinand Ronniger, was Manager of the publishing house Hölder in Vienna, and a member of the Zoologisch-Botanische Gesellschaft, and his love of nature was evidently inherited by his son who showed a keen interest in plants from early childhood. Ronniger was educated at the lower and middle schools in Vienna, and in 1889 joined the staff of the Finanz-Landes-Direktion. Later he was transferred to the Finanzministerium, where he remained until he retired as the head of the Rechnungsdepartment IV in 1925. He married Gabriele Haas in 1902; there were no children.

Ronniger was one of the most distinguished Viennese amateur botanists of the older generation, and made many excursions through all the former Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. He also travelled extensively

in the Mediterranean, southern Europe and the Balkans. He was of a cheerful disposition, and a keen and extremely careful collector. His herbarium contains about 60,000 sheets, mostly of plants collected by himself, including more than 80 large parcels of *Thymus*; certainly the most complete collection of this genus ever assembled.

Ronniger's later years were devoted to the study of *Thymus*, his favourite genus, though unfortunately he did not publish a monograph. In recognition of his papers on British Thymes he was elected an Honorary Member of the Botanical Society and Exchange Club of the British Isles in 1924.

The following is a list of Ronniger's most important publications:—

- 1924 : Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Gattung *Thymus*, 1. Die britischen Arten und Formen, *Fedde Repert.*, **20**, 321-332.
Contributions to the Knowledge of the genus *Thymus*. The British species and forms, *Rep. Bot. Soc. & E.C.*, **1923**, 228-239.
- 1928 : The Distribution of *Thymus* in Britain, *Rep. Bot. Soc. & E.C.*, **1927**, 509-517.
- 1930 : *Thymus*, in Hayek *Prodr. Fl. Penins. Balcan.*, **2**, 337-382.
- 1932 : Die *Thymus*-Arten des Kaukasus und der südlich angrenzenden Gebiete, *Fedde Repert.*, **31**, 135-157.
Thymus, in Grossheim *Flora Kawkasa*, vol. **3**, 334-347.

A complete list of Ronniger's botanical papers and notes will be published in *Verh. Zool.-Bot. Gesellschaft Wien*, together with a longer obituary notice.

K. H. RECHINGER.