

REVIEWS

Downs and Dunes: Their plant life and its environment. SIR EDWARD SALISBURY, C.B.E., LL.D., V.P.R.S.
Pp. xiii + 328, 100 text figures, 32 plates. G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., London, 1952; £2 5s.

The association of accounts of the vegetation of chalk downs and of sand dunes within the covers of a single volume has a great deal to commend it. The two types of habitat have important features in common, and contrast and comparison of their floras and ecological conditions offer scope for interesting conclusions. Sir Edward Salisbury's choice of subject is thus a happy one; there is plenty of room for a book combining the two topics.

Downs and Dunes is, in effect, two books. The first deals with chalk and limestone areas, and the second, of equal length, is an account of coastal dunes. The two are treated quite independently but treatment in both includes discussion of various ecological aspects, biological notes on, and phyto-geographical relationships of, the species represented, and brief notes on the animal life. The writer has had long experience in lecturing on his two subjects and many of those who have heard his lectures will be glad to have the subject matter and illustrations available in book form.

The book is most expensively produced, and it is a pity that some of the statements about distribution and habitats, and certain of the maps, need modification, and that there are a number of misprints. The illustrations and diagrams are lavish and most carefully reproduced. All but six are the work of the author and must evoke lively admiration of his versatility. Those of root systems and seedlings are particularly valuable and the 74 photographs include some of a very high standard.

J. E. LOUSLEY

Studies on British Beechwoods. J. M. B. BROWN, B.Sc. Forestry Commission Bulletin No. 20, London. Her Majesty's Stationery Office; 12/6.

This bulletin contains a great deal of valuable information which will interest not only foresters but also ecologists. Mr. Brown has made a wide survey of British Beechwoods during the last ten years and therefore has obtained at first hand a knowledge of the community as it exists in these islands in planted and in semi-natural state. It is of great value that an account which considers the effects of forest management on these woodlands should be available, for there is, perhaps, a tendency amongst ecologists of an academic sort to omit to consider adequately the effects of man even on British communities. The survey of some two hundred woodlands and the collection of information on the performance of the beech with respect to climate, soil, site and associated plants would alone be of great interest. In this bulletin the author has been enabled to consider much of the relevant literature on the beech together with a first-hand field knowledge to give a balanced account of the beech in these islands.

The appendices included in the Bulletin summarise in shorthand form the information gained by the field work and to many ecologists and foresters these will be of first-class value. Some parts of the account, especially those on the borders of the subject, which are unlikely to be in the forefront of interest to ecologists and foresters, are somewhat lightly passed over – for example the history of the beech as a native tree and the physiological work. Such omissions do not detract from a bulletin of this kind and this one is, for its size, excellent. It is well illustrated by fine and in some instances very artistic photographs.

J. L. HARLEY

Key to the Names of British Plants. R. D. Macleod. 8vo., pp. ix + 94. London, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd., 1952; 12/6.

This book is largely a careful compilation from previous works dealing with the derivation and meaning of the scientific and popular names of British Flowering Plants and Ferns and is intended not for botanists but for the use of flower-lovers who have little or no knowledge of Greek or Latin. The author's botanical horizon is sufficiently indicated by his statement on page 1 that "as regards scientific names, Bentham & Hooker's list is certainly the most authoritative one available."

The main body of the book consists of three lists, the first of which includes the explanation and derivation of the generic names and of those scientific "names" (i.e. epithets) which are nouns in apposition to their generic name and are commonly spelt with a capital initial letter. The second list comprises the remaining scientific "names" and the third the common names followed by their scientific equivalents.

The first list is the one most open to criticism, since the author has endeavoured to supply derivations for all Latin plant names, confessing defeat in only a few cases, e.g. *Blechnum* and *Draba*. Some of these derivations are, to say the least, highly conjectural: no evidence is given in support of the statement that *acer*, the Latin name of the Maple, is cognate with *äcer*, sharp - Lewis & Short (1924) say "kindred with German Ahorn." The author suggests (pp. 3, 27) that *Armeria*, the generic name now used for the Thrifts, may be derived from "ad mare," near the sea, with reference to the habitat of some of the species. Actually, the name *Armeria* or *Armerius* first appears in the sixteenth century and was applied primarily to certain species of *Dianthus* with aggregated flowers, namely to *D. barbatus*, *D. carthusianorum*, *D. armeria* and *D. prolifer*, also to *Dianthus arenarius*, *Silene armeria* and *Lychnis flos-cuculi*. Clusius included the plant now known as *Armeria maritima* under the name *Armerius montanus tenuifolius major*, probably because of its superficial resemblance to *Dianthus prolifer*. Caspar Bauhin (1623) states that the name *Armeria* or *Armerius* is derived from the French words "armoires" (wardrobes) and "Armoiries," (coats of arms) but this seems very far-fetched. The origin of the name *Armeria* is quite problematical. Undue importance is attached by the author to the fanciful derivations supplied by Pliny in his Natural History.

The introduction is attractively written and the book is one which should appeal to the large non-botanical public interested in wild flowers and using Bentham & Hooker's *Handbook of the British Flora* as a text-book.

T. A. SPRAGUE