

Fifty Years of the Sorby Record 1958-2008

Derek Whiteley

This year, 2008, is the 50th birthday of the **Sorby Record** – a time to look back and celebrate our achievements, reflect on our disappointments, and look forward to the next fifty years of publishing.

The origin of the **Sorby Record** and the struggle to get it established is well documented (Sarjeant 1989) and is a good read. It tells the story of how Bill Sarjeant came up with the idea and the name, supported by his geological chums and overcoming some resistance from the Sorby botanists. They convinced the Society's Council that an annual journal could be produced at an affordable price. The maximum budget for the first issue was just £10. On 1st October 1958 the first edition of **The Sorby Record** was revealed to the world.

This paper takes up the story and follows the journal's fortunes to 2008.

Numbers One to Four “The Orange Ones” 1958 to 1962

These are all quarto-sized pages (approx. 254 x 204mm) prepared from stencils on a duplicator and stapled under a much larger (approx. 294x230mm) orange cover. They are not labelled as Volume 1, but actually carry consecutive numbers *Number One*, *Number Two*, *Number Three* and *Number Four*. The cover bears a crest designed by Harold Sarjeant with a Magpie, geological hammer and a rose representing the main interests of the Society. This became known as the “magpie cover”. In 1960 a steeple with a weather cock was added to the crest on the title page to represent the Meteorological Section. On the title page of Number One the editorial team give their full names.

William Anthony Swithin Sarjeant (Editor) also edited Number Two, left Sheffield in 1959, and later emigrated to Canada, eventually becoming Professor of Geological Sciences at the University of Saskatchewan. He died in 2002 but always maintained an interest in the **Sorby Record**, was a frequent contributor, and very proud that his ‘baby’ had grown into maturity. In 1988 he wrote “*Yet I can claim proudly that, by attaining its present quality and importance as a focus for Sorby Society research activities, it has achieved all I ever dreamed.*” (Sarjeant 1989). In his last letter to me, dated 29 March 2001, he said “*It is a real privilege to have started a journal that has lasted so long and become so impressive! Congratulations on keeping the Sorby's flag flying.*”

David Alan Edwin Spalding (Biological Editor) became a leading figure in the Society, and editor of the **Sorby Record** in the mid 1960s but emigrated to Canada in October 1967 to take up a post with Alberta Museum. He now lives on Pender Island, British Columbia and is still actively researching and publishing (information from Google 2007).

David Ronald Wilson (Ornithological Editor) moved south to work for the BTO but is still a member of the Society living in Aylesbury, Bucks.

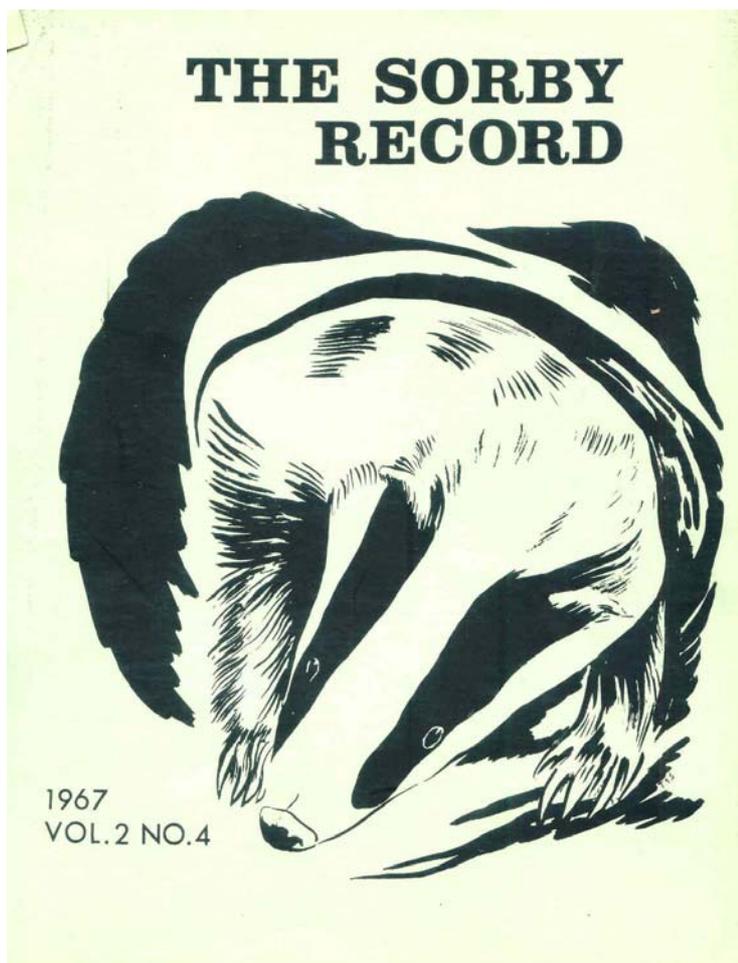
Michael Eric Smith (Technical Assistance) a geologist, stayed with the journal for several issues. He later left Sheffield but continued as a geologist. He died in 1996 (Sarjeant 1998)

Denis Price took over as editor of Number Three and Number Four with Alan Critchlow as Biological Editor and Ray Hawley as Ornithological Editor.

Volume 2 “The Green Ones” 1963 to 1967

Someone made the decision that Number 5 was to become Volume 2 Part 1. The size remained the same but these issues were bound in stiff green card that was trimmed to the size of the pages giving them a very solid look. The last three parts were substantially thick and had bold cover illustrations of mammals by Timothy Sands. Altogether they have a very pleasing appearance and are packed full of information.

However, Volume 2 did not start well. The new editor Derek Anderson wrote in his editorial “*the journal of any Society is bound to reflect the liveliness and activity of that Society and the Sorby Natural History Society is at this moment at a low ebb*”. Indeed this



was the only issue produced between 1962 and February 1966. Then David Spalding re-appeared on the scene, took over the editorial pen with enthusiasm and optimism. He wrote in his first editorial in Vol.2 Part 2 “*despite a certain amount of justifiable editorial gloom in the past, the last issue was larger than any proceeding ones, and the present issue is the largest yet*” [112 pages] Vol.2 Part 3 was bigger still – a whopping 176 pages! Most of the production work appears to have been done at Weston Park Museum with the support of Directors, Raymond Singleton succeeded by Geoffrey Lewis. The editor’s address is given as The City Museum, Sheffield and Miss Lynda Beecroft typed the stencils.

David Spalding emigrated to Canada in October 1967 and his assistant at the museum Timothy S. Sands took over as editor for the 1967 issue, producing another bumper 108 pages.

Volume 3 “The Pale Blue Ones” 1968 to 1973

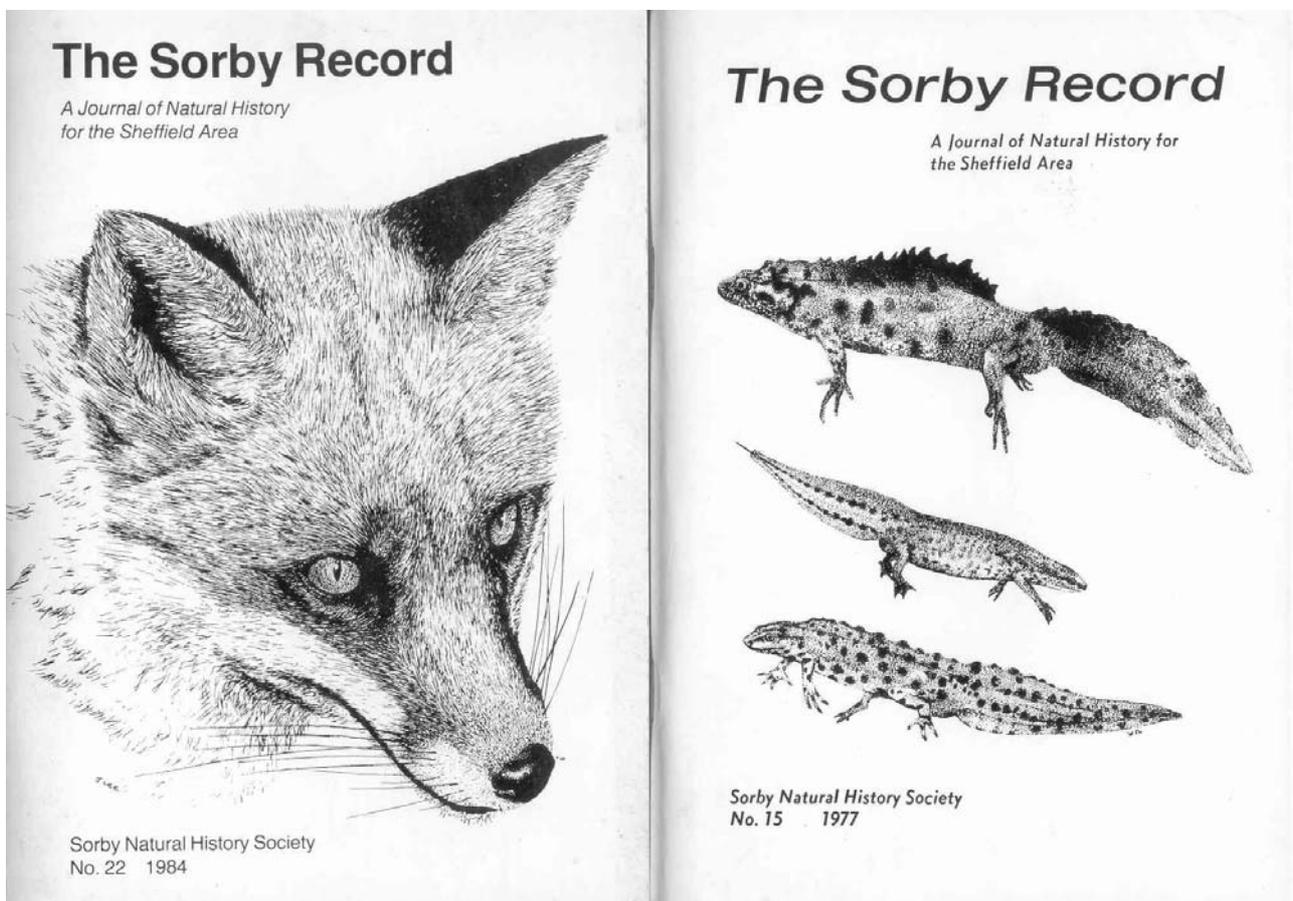
Well actually Volume 3 Part 1 (1968) has a plain white cover but is a major departure from earlier issues. Tim Sands was the editor who made the switch from duplicator stencils to professional typesetting by Hawthornes of Nottingham, with a reduction from the old quarto size to modern A5. It was late (issued in March 1970) and rather slim, but nicely produced and very interesting. It was also the first issue that I received as a new young member in 1970. Tim Sands then left Sheffield for a job with the S.P.N.R. in Lincolnshire.

There is no **Sorby Record** for 1969 or 1970. A new editor, Martin Spray came to the rescue and produced the next edition a year later followed by two more in the famous pale

blue livery. Those three issues amounted to 202 pages of interesting material including some classic papers, in a very agreeable format. Production was assisted by members Mrs. Hughes, Mrs Marshall and Mrs Singleton and Cheltenham students Suzy Ford and Jenny Simpson. Colin Marsden acted as a sub-editor for the final part. The Society was a bit over-enthusiastic with the print run for Vol. 3 No.2 (1971) and we still have a large stock today. Martin's final Editorial came from a Cheltenham address in February 1974, when he announced that Colin Marsden would be a co-editor for the next issue.

"The White Ones" 1974 – 1988

By September 1975 the **Sorby Record** was back in the doldrums. Martin Spray had moved to Gloucestershire and was remote from Sorby affairs, and Colin Marsden at the Sheffield end was a reluctant co-editor because he was busy editing the monthly Newsletter and a dozen other things. I offered my services as editor and it was agreed that I would do one issue jointly with Martin. I had just started work at the City Museum where John Bartlett, Director of Museums supported me and allowed one of the museum typists, Elaine Callery to type some scripts. Margaret Shaw typed the botanical papers, which included deciphering Charlie Waite's handwriting and long lists of scientific names.



No.22 1984 and No.15 1977 with cover illustrations by Jeremy Lee

It was Martin's idea to change the numbering system, so that Vol.4 No.1 became No.13. It was my idea to change printers, as I was impressed by the Derbyshire Ornithological Society Annual Report, printed by Higham Press at Shirland near Clay Cross. My colleague at the museum Jeremy Lee, did some pen and ink drawings including the Harvest Mouse cover. The original was much smaller, and as a novice editor I had not grasped the principle that illustrations are drawn larger and reduced, rather than the other

way round. We got it right next time with No.14 (1976) and even better with the three newts on the cover of No.15 (1977).

Although it came out in 1976, we gave No.13 a 1974 publication date to maintain continuity and in the hope that we would catch up. It wasn't to be and there is no **Sorby Record** for 1975. No.14 was given a 1976 publication date and included the journal's first set of distribution maps using grid squares – Derek Cawthorne's dragonfly maps which were completed before the mammal maps in the same volume. By now I had gone solo as the editor.

I received many letters of congratulations for these two issues. I think members were just relieved that the Society and the **Sorby Record** were back on track after a difficult period following the formation of the Sheffield Bird Study Group in 1972.

The next ten years was a golden era for the **Sorby Record**. There was an abundance of good material, resulting from an active Society, some very motivated members, a proactive museum, and some competition from the SBSG to keep us on our toes. Most of the production side was done at the City Museum. Jeremy Lee and Steve Garland shared the front covers, and their wives Julie Lee and Belinda Garland did a lot of the typing, with Margaret Shaw tackling most of the botanical stuff, and museum typists preparing scripts for staff contributions. We had a good working relationship with Norman Wall at Higham Press and the new Director of Museums, Philip Broomhead was very enthusiastic about publications. It was a very exciting period. Arrival of the galley proofs was always a red-letter day when Jerry, Steve and I would stay late at the museum to proof read the long rolls of paper. Publication day was often celebrated by a long lunchtime drive down to Shirland, followed by a pint in a local pub while we avidly had our first read of the finished book. In 1985 Steve Garland left Sheffield for Bolton and in 1986 Jeremy Lee left for Exeter.

No.23 (1985) heralded our first full colour cover – a photograph of a Leisler's Bat to promote National Bat Year 1986 – thanks to a financial donation. No.23 also had a supplement on **The Insects of Thorne Moors** supported by Nature Conservancy Council funding. Both parts together ran to 154 pages. In 1986 Steve Toher took over as cover artist.

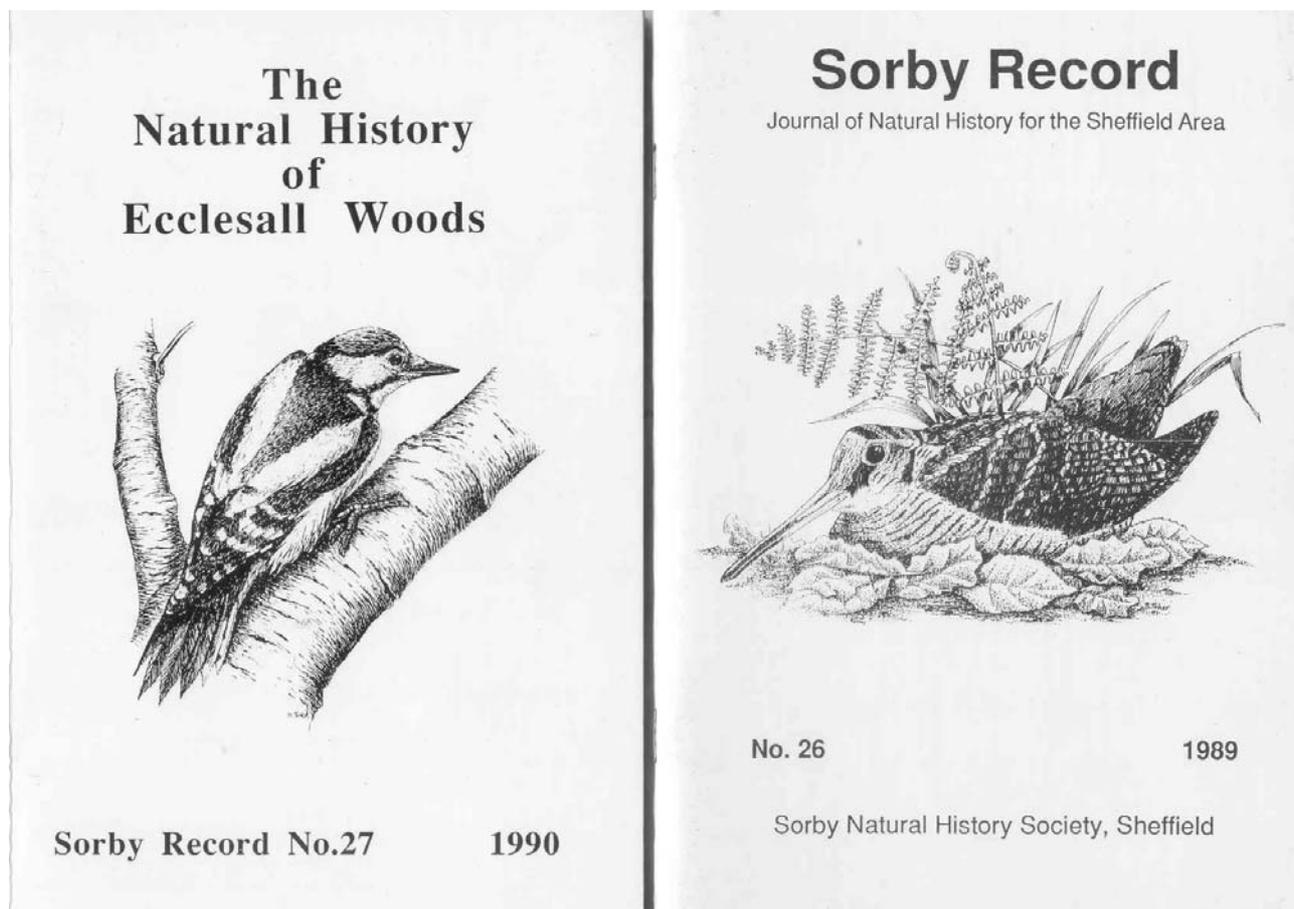
The double issue No.25 (for 1987 and 1988) was dedicated to Sheffield's Urban Wildlife and ran to 104 pages plus a colour cover and colour plates. The Society had been unfairly criticised for spending too much time in "the green leafy suburbs" as opposed to downtown Sheffield, and this issue was a reply to our critics. It was packed full of good scientific studies demonstrating the Society's recording activities in urban areas since the 1970s. Furthermore the Nature Conservancy Council supported it financially. George Barker (Urban Programme Co-ordinator) was an enthusiastic supporter and wrote to me on 5 May 1989 *"The Director-General was also impressed and pleased that the NCC was associated with the project. I had made the point to him that as a scientific organisation we did not support good natural history societies as much as we ought."*

Despite all this, Sorby Council was shocked by the printing costs, even though I argued that No.25 should have a double budget, as it covered two years. I was instructed to shop around to find a cheaper printer, and Council appointed a "minder", Barbara Croxton to make sure that I stayed in budget. I was disappointed by Council's lack of support and preference for money in the bank. Fortunately, Barbara was a keen supporter of the journal and she took over as Honorary General Secretary in 1989, so the problem never

arose again. No.25 was the last issue to be typeset by commercial printers. New technology had arrived just in time, but it came with new problems.

The “Low Budget Ones” 1989 to 2003

It took two years to produce the 1989 issue, as we made the change from typescripts to camera-ready copy produced by word processor, and find a commercial printer at a budget price to satisfy the financial restrictions of Sorby Council. Quacks of York came to the rescue with their booklet printing service, working from A4 camera-ready copy to produce an A5 booklet. Most of the word processing was put out to a professional typist with access to a laser printer. The 1989 issue, No.26, came out in early 1991. It really was a cut and paste job, using real scissors and real paste. Steve Toher’s illustrations were literally glued on to A4 sheets and page numbers added with Letraset. Compared to previous issues the pages looked rather grey and washy, but the cover was nice.



No.27 1990 and No.26 1989 with cover illustrations by Steve Toher

It was followed by No.27 – a series of papers on Ecclesall Woods produced in-house at Sheffield City Museum by the word processing team Pauline Wood, Christine Redfern and Irene Lally. Again camera-ready copy was prepared using a state of the art (for 1991) laser printer (but still with limited fonts), and page numbers added by hand. It was dedicated to the memory of Richard Doncaster (who died in 1991) and was also co-published with the museum. It has some excellent papers but again, low-cost printing and lack of fonts did not do them justice. We just did the best we could with the tools available at the time.

No.29 (1992) was mainly about butterflies for which we made a brief return to Higham Press. Financial input by the museum paid for a full colour cover, but the colour plates

were actually donated by Bill Smyllie, ready printed for the journal *The Entomologist*, but bound and trimmed by Higham Press. Hence the weird numbering system and comments in the text. This really was a hybrid issue on a small budget. Unfortunately we ran out of colour plates so a batch of No.29s don't have any, but those issues were held back.

No.30 (1993) was guest edited by Bob and Val Clinging while I took a break to concentrate on the Presidency. It was a Sorby Council decision to use JM Documents of Rotherham to produce this issue. No.31 (1995) is a double issue for two years and a return to in-house layouts and Quacks printing. There is no **Sorby Record** for 1994.

No.32 (1996) was printed by Quacks and bound into a stiff full-colour cover, printed separately by a low-cost colour printers specialising in calendars. Quacks' staff were able to fold, staple and trim the covers from flat untrimmed originals. This was the last issue published with the assistance of Sheffield City Museum, which was transferred to a Trust in 1998.

No.33 (1997) saw a brief return to Higham Press for the Mammal Atlas Edition, followed by a return to Quacks of York for the years 1998 to 2003. These six issues are all perfect bound with colour spines that look nice on the bookshelf, and were edited on my computer at home mainly from word-processed copy provided by authors then printed onto A4 paper using a Brother monochrome laser printer. They have some very nice cover illustrations by Cate Wildman and Paul Richards. I experimented with different covers –a splash of red, green or purple with black, sometimes with tinted Astralux card, and even a mottled green card for 2001. No.39 (2003) was the last edition printed from camera-ready copy in a paper format. Future editions would take advantage of digital media.

Recent Issues 2004-2008

In 2006 we switched to Whittington Moor Printing Works in Chesterfield. I had been impressed by the quality of production for Bob Merritt's *Atlas of the Water Beetles and Water Bugs of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire*, and received a very competitive quote for printing the **Sorby Record** with full colour covers. No.40 (2004) was first off the press and was the first issue printed from copy submitted on a CD. No.41 (2005) followed soon after.

The 2006 bumper issue (84 pages) includes a supplement *How Green is Sheffield?* It was originally submitted as a paper to the **Sorby Record**, but we decided to issue it under a separate cover and print 200 extras so that Adrian Middleton's detailed analysis of environmental statistics could be made available to a wider readership. The 2007 edition was also a bumper 80 page issue thanks to financial support from Sheffield Museums and Galleries Trust. It was the first issue printed from copy supplied on a memory stick. I simply visited the printing works and plugged in the USB memory stick.

And so we reach 2008 and the 50th birthday of the **Sorby Record**, the 90th birthday of the Society and 100 years since the death of Henry Clifton Sorby in 1908. How things have changed. Copy is now supplied mainly by authors in a digital format and the editor's job has turned full circle to actually editing texts and working on page layouts on screen. Proof reading is mostly done before the issue goes to the printing works.

In future the **Sorby Record** could become a web-based journal but for the time being there is still much support for the printed page, and long may it live! However, plans are afoot to provide back issues on the Society's website as a permanent digital archive available to the world. A giant leap from 1958.

The Sorby Record Special Series

The **SRSS** was started in 1979 to deal with single papers that were too big for the main journal, yet could stand alone as financially viable monographs. At the time Steve Garland was putting the finishing touches to his work on *The Moths of Sheffield*, the bird ringers were working on a publication and we were looking at ways to publish the results of an intensive Sorby mammal survey. The Sheffield Flora project had been running for 11 years and Sorby botanists were wondering how it could be published. All this was happening in 1979. So we started the **Sorby Record Special Series**, which would be sold at a commercially viable price on a break-even basis. (the **Sorby Record** itself was, and still is, free to members as part of the subscription package). The **SRSS** could be published jointly with other organisations making a financial input. In fact the first eleven volumes (with the exception of No.8) were published and funded jointly with Sheffield City Museums and sold in the museum shops. If they made a notional profit –all the better. Funds could be ploughed back into future publications.

No.1 *The Moths of Sheffield*, (1979) was an easy one to start with because it was produced in-house at the museum, by a single author Steve Garland, working closely with the editor from the start. It was a subject that was crying out for a local reference book and it sold well.

No.2 *Ringing and Recoveries in the Sheffield Area*, (1980) was quick to follow. Geoff Mawson approached me about a publication he had drafted with Alan Crabtree, and with a minimum amount of editing it became No.2. The maps were reproduced as monochrome photographs in the museum dark room with captions added in Letraset.

No.3 *Mammals of the Sheffield Area* (1980) by Valerie Clinging and Derek Whiteley was the result of a decade of mammal recording. The dot maps were hand plotted onto larger base maps, then reduced photographically in the museum dark room. We didn't have a good quality reducing photocopier in those days. At the time it was the only book on local mammals and sold well.

No.4 *Freshwater Invertebrates of the Sheffield District* (1981) edited by Krys A. Zasada and Eluned H. Smith was the result of an intensive survey undertaken by museum staff, financially backed by the Manpower Services Commission. Krys and Eluned did most of the fieldwork and sorting, and sent voucher specimens to specialists for identification. The final publication was 80% funded by the museum and brings together chapters authored by each specialist. Tim Riley was really the production editor for this one. I did all the maps at the museum. Letraset dots were applied to large printed base maps and reduced photographically in the dark room, producing a sharper looking map. Krys Zasada came from Eckington (of Polish descent) and Eluned Smith came from Wales but lived in Sheffield for a number of years, and both were also active members of the Society at the time. They were both great fun to work with. Krys went on to work for Sheffield Environmental Health Department for some years before moving to Manchester. Eluned later moved to Worcester. This publication has been consistently popular, especially with students and schools. It sold well in the museum shop. Even now, it is still in demand but copies are rarely available.

No.5 *Butterflies of the Sheffield Area* (1981). Steve Garland's masterly review of local butterflies, again with hand-plotted maps. A splash of colour graces the cover for the first time in the **SRSS**. Steve wrote the text, drew the maps and illustrations and designed the cover. Belinda Garland did the typing and draft maps.

No.6 *Hoverflies of the Sheffield Area and North Derbyshire* (1987) by Derek Whiteley Well, it was my turn to write one and hoverflies had become very popular. This was the first **SRSS** to have a full colour cover thanks to extra funding from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Austin Brackenbury's photographs were reproduced by Higham Press from 35mm transparencies. I am very proud of this book and thoroughly enjoyed writing it and working with contributors Eileen Thorpe, John Coldwell, Simon Hayhow and Austin Brackenbury. Surprisingly it has sold out and I need to write a revised edition.

No.7 *Birdwatching in the Sheffield Area and the Peak District* (1984) was actually a revised edition of an earlier publication by David Herringshaw, Roy Frost and Paul Leonard that had gone through several reprints and was at the time out of print. It was my idea to revise this title, improve the production quality to do justice to Paul's fabulous illustrations, and get the Sheffield Bird Study Group on board as joint publishers (something that would have been unthinkable ten years before). Of course I could see that it was a good financial earner, but mainly, as my editor's postscript states "*it would have been tragic to let this book remain out of print*" as it was so well written and so readable. It sold like hot cakes.

No.8 *A Flora of the Sheffield Area* (1988) was the big one. Margaret Shaw, Ida Sollitt and their colleagues had been working on this project since 1968. Margaret and Ida were given office space at the City Museum for several years leading up to publication. Margaret wrote and edited the text, selected fonts and layout, selected the cover photographs (by Lynn Burnet and the late Charlie Waite), and chose the title. Gerry Firkins, Gaynor Boon and I drew the maps under Margaret's supervision. Each map was hand plotted. Most of the work was done over lunch, with delicious food provided by Margaret and Ida creating a happy party atmosphere. Higham Press did the typesetting, Margaret and Ida did the proof-reading and Gerry Firkins prepared an index (which I must say, over the years, I have used hundreds of times to check plant names). A biography of Margaret, who died in 2008, appears elsewhere in this issue. Sorby Council decided on the print run - 2000 paperbacks and 200 hardbacks and a few very rare leather bound issues. Twenty years later it has not been surpassed in print, although new Floras for Derbyshire and South Yorkshire will be going to press soon, to be published by other organisations.

No.9 *Butterflies of the Doncaster District* (1992). Ted Rimmington was having trouble finding a publisher for this scholarly review. Doncaster Museum had offered to publish a smaller version, but we were able to offer publication of the entire text. It is now 16 years old but still remains an authoritative historical reference for today's army of butterfly enthusiasts. Again, Sheffield City Museums was a joint publisher, causing a little embarrassment in some quarters.

No.10 *Millipedes Centipedes and Woodlice of the Sheffield Area* (1997) by Paul Richards. The colour covers were printed in advance as a low cost "calendar" and supplied to Quacks of York as untrimmed flat sheets. Paul Richards prepared the book as A4 pages at Sheffield City Museum and he thanks "*Irene, Jo and Sue for typing while their skin crawled*". Paul and I took a batch to an international Myriapod conference in Poland in 1999 and did some brisk business. It has now sold out and we are trying to persuade Paul to write a new edition.

No.11 *Reptiles and Amphibians of the Sheffield Area* (1997) by Derek Whiteley. My turn again! The colour covers were printed in 1990 with sponsorship money, and stored by Higham Press. It took ten years to write this book and it became a standing joke on

Sorby Council, particularly with the Treasurer, Mike Benton. Members would place bets on what would come first – this book or the 21st Century. I had such fun writing it – messing around with fonts and boxes and illustrations. (probably a result of being sent on a Microsoft® Word training course at the museum). It was criticised by academics for being bitty, but that was how I wanted it. Herpetologists gave it some good reviews and I still get some nice compliments eleven years later. I must update it one day.

No.12 *Insects of the Barnsley Area* (1999). John Coldwell had produced several drafts of this work over the years, each time printing just a few copies for private circulation. I suggested that we run it in the **SRSS** and John did the rest. 190 pages. Over 3500 species. What more can you say? It has provided the stimulus and template to produce an ***Insects of South Yorkshire*** as a future publication.

No.13 *Common Trees in the Peak District* (2001) by Leonora Dobson. Published mainly as an aid to identification. It includes some of the earliest digital photographs, which these days look a bit pixillated but that's how it was in 2001. Criticised for being produced in monochrome. Of course it would have been better with some colour but funding was not available. It has proved to be popular and sold well. Only a few are left now.

No.14 *Atlas of the water beetles (Coleoptera) and water bugs (Hemiptera) of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire, 1993-2005.* (2006) Bob Merritt was an active member of the Sorby Invertebrate Group at the time, and originally intended to publish his work privately. I thought it would make an excellent addition to the **SRSS** and he agreed. Bob did all the work himself; text, maps, photographs, covers, layout, organising grant aid and other funding, liaison with the print works and transport. I agonised over the title but could not come up with anything better. You get what it says on the tin. A classic piece of work and an example to the rest of us. Absolutely fabulous.

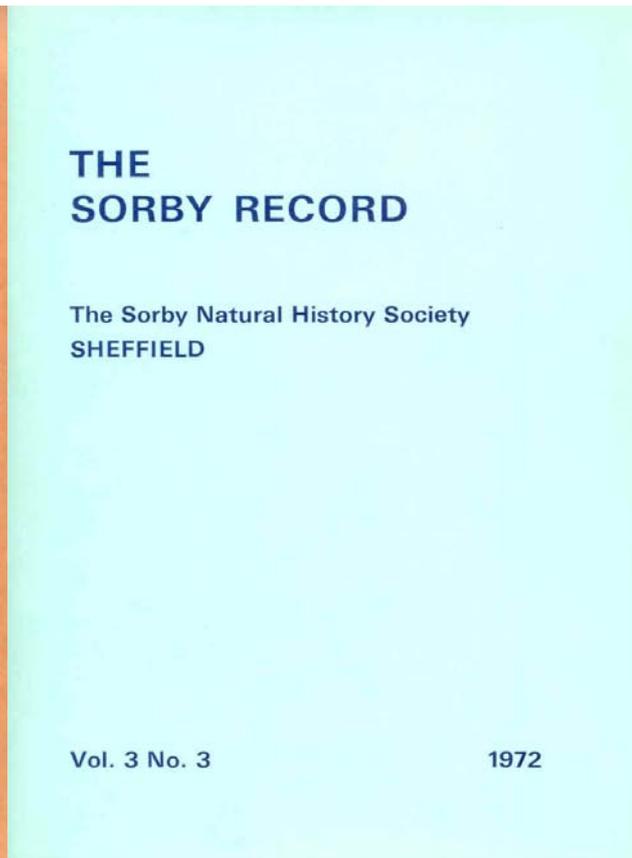
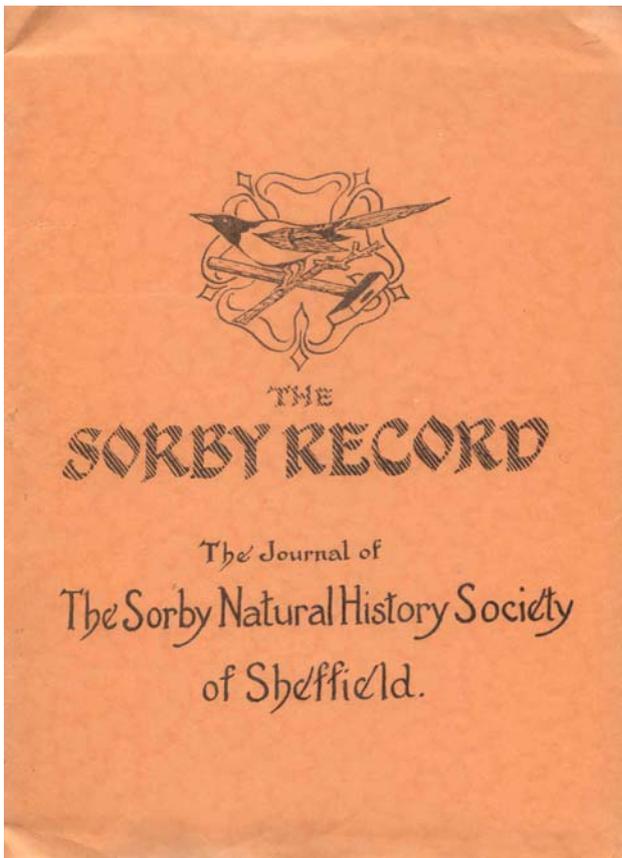
And finally....

To conclude, in fifty years we have published 60 issues of the ***Sorby Record*** including supplements and *Special Series*. Together they form a significant body of work on the natural history of Sheffield and its region and remain a source of pride for the Sorby Natural History Society. If the Society were to fold tomorrow, it has left its mark on Sheffield and the surrounding areas. Many people have been involved in the process and the main players are mentioned above. My thanks go to all those above, and all those unnamed artists, authors, typists, helpers, salespeople, and distributors over the years. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Bill Sarjeant, who, I'm sure, would still be very proud of his baby, now in middle age.

Sitting right here, right now, the future looks good. We have an active Society with a commitment to an annual journal, and a whole string of special publications at various stages of preparation. Something to look forward to in the coming years. Here's to the next fifty!

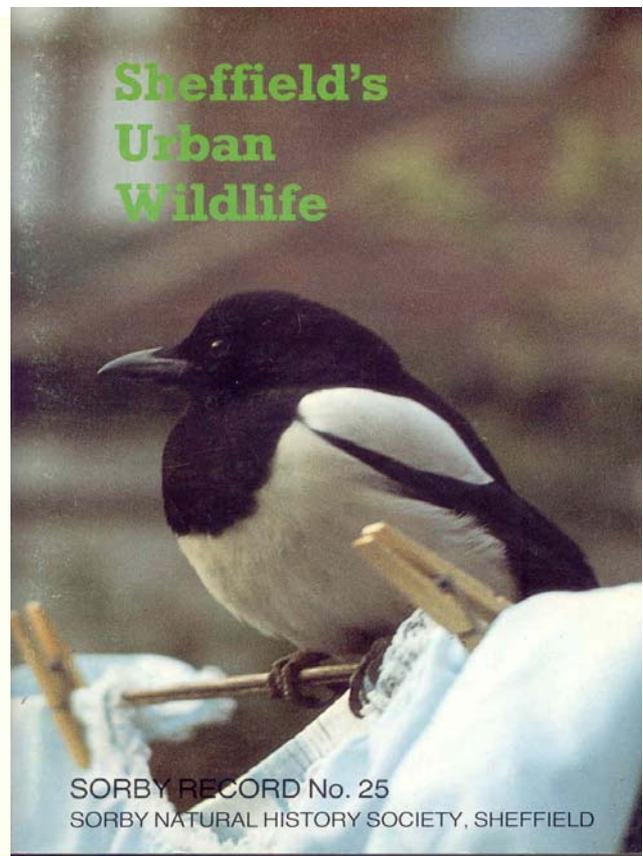
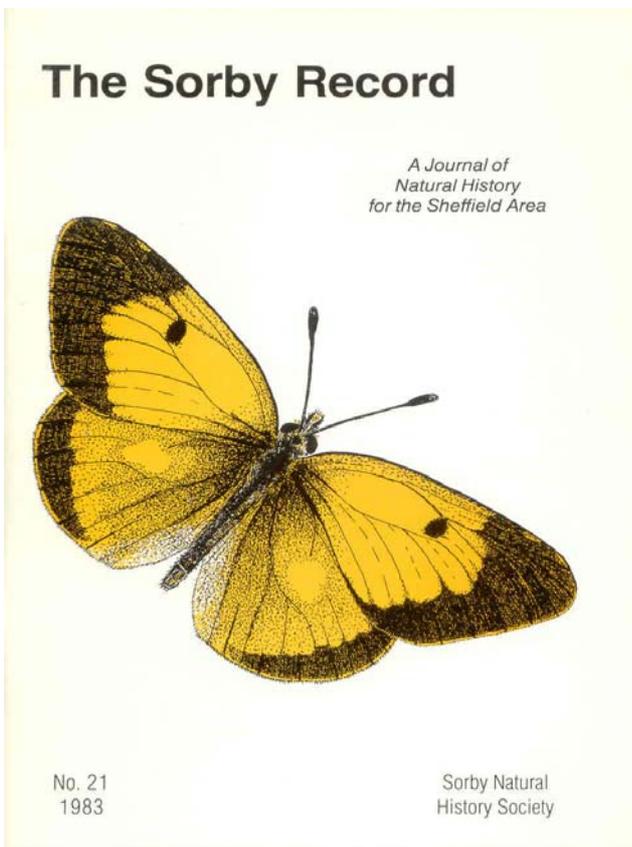
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Sarjeant W.A.S. (1998) Obituary: Michael Eric Smith. **Sorby Record No.34** 67-68



Sorby Record Number One 1958

A "Pale Blue One" Vol.3 No.3 1972

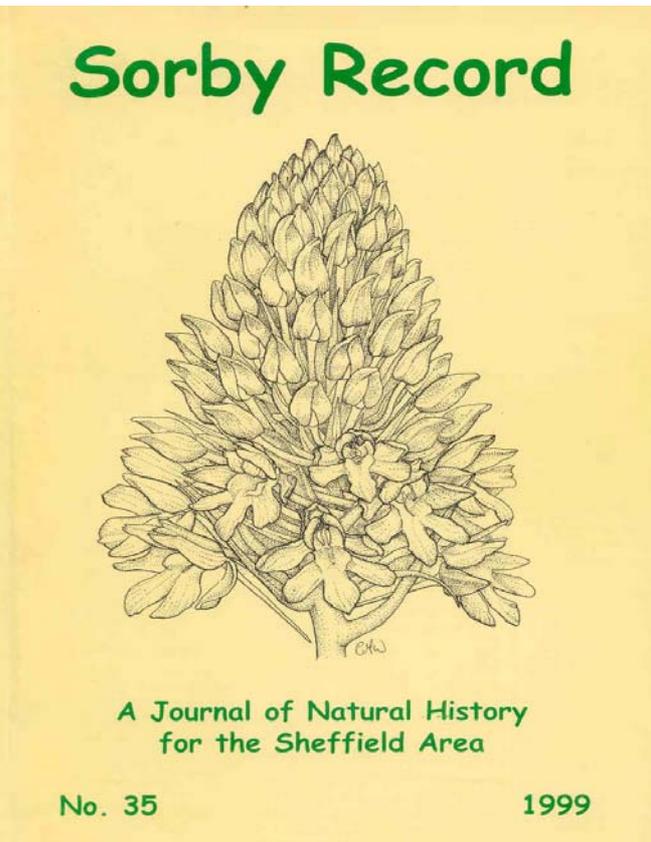


One of the "White Ones" No.21 1993 with a single splash of colour by Steve Garland

The Urban Edition No.25 1987/88



No.32 1996 A low budget edition bound in a “calendar” colour cover.



No.35 1999 with a Cate Wildman cover



No.42 2006 with a stunning photo by Steve Furness
 No.42 Supplement 2006 *How Green is Sheffield?* both printed by Whittington

