

## **HONORARY MEMBERS**

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### **Introduction**

In 1998, with the approaching anniversary of the first decade of the Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum, the Executive Committee gave some thought to the idea of honouring the achievements of prominent workers in the Hulmerhead Levels. It was felt that the best way of doing this was by invitations to accept Honorary Membership. The Executive Committee proposed that such membership be offered to Dr Peter Skidmore and Dr G.D. Gaunt. This proposal was ratified at the Forum's Quarterly Meeting of 12th December, and contact was made with Dr Skidmore and Dr Gaunt. Both were pleased to accept Honorary Membership as a recognition of their contribution to the conservation, documentation and understanding of aspects of the Humberhead Levels. The following accounts are necessarily selective, focusing largely - but not entirely - on the Humberhead Levels.

### **G.D. Gaunt**

Geoff Gaunt was born in 1930 in Bradford but, as he puts it, he "left as soon as he could walk", living for a few years in Galloway and then for longer periods in Morecambe and Cleveleys. In these western coastal areas, within cycling distance of the Lake District and the Pennines, he developed a keen interest in landscapes, and an insatiable curiosity about their origins and influence on human settlement. This led to lifelong enthusiasms for geology, archaeology and history. Cricket was another great enthusiasm, but two disastrous trials for Lancashire convinced him that his future lay elsewhere! After National Service in the RAF Air Traffic Control Branch, much of it working in collaboration with the USAF during the Berlin Airlift, he went to Leeds University, gaining a first in geology in 1955.

Geoff then joined what is now known as the British Geological Survey, and was posted to Newcastle upon Tyne. Fieldwork in southern County Durham gave him his first experience of, and a strong interest in, Quaternary research, which was to become his specialist field in the years ahead. Some of this work is included in the relevant memoir (Smith & Francis 1967). There then followed several years in the northern Peak District, which much later resulted in an account of the fossiliferous rocks in Edale (Ramsbottom, Stevenson & Gaunt 1967) and the appropriate memoir (Stevenson & Gaunt 1971).

Meanwhile, early in 1962 and by then based in Leeds, Geoff was instructed to start work in the southern part of the Vale of York. Commencing in the south-west near Tickhill, he worked eastwards to just beyond the Trent and northwards to between Selby and South Cave. He was then detailed to continue eastwards along both sides of the Humber as far as Kingston upon Hull and Goxhill, and nearly as far south as Scunthorpe, completing the fieldwork in 1977. Geoff was on Hatfield Moors in the spring of 1963, and on Thorne

Moors at various times in 1964-65. These years are recalled as the happiest of his geological career. The weather was much better than in the High Peak fieldwork was less exhausting than clambering over Kinder Scout and adjacent hills, and most of all (and despite the initially unpromising flattish topography), the region proved to be a veritable treasure house of (as Geoff puts it) "Quaternary goodies."

These years were also a time when Quaternary research in Britain was becoming a more integrated multidisciplinary study. During a Yorkshire Geological Society field meeting at a large ironstone quarry near Scunthorpe early in the 1960s, Geoff was part of a small group of Quaternary enthusiasts which split off from the main party and began studying the superficial deposits above the solid rocks. This was much to the mock disgust of Sir Peter Kent who was explaining the intricacies of Liassic biostratigraphy some 60 feet below. A lively correspondence between those in this splinter group ensued, and culminated in the first meeting of the Quaternary Field Studies Group at Birmingham University in 1964. This group, soon to change its name to the Quaternary Research Association, is now the authoritative body for Quaternary studies in Britain. Its meetings have provided the inspiration for much of the subsequent research in this field, particularly where interdisciplinary collaboration is beneficial.

In the meantime, Geoff was working northwards and eastwards. He encountered a plethora of Quaternary deposits, some glacial, others interglacial (Gaunt *et al.* 1972; Gaunt, Bartley & Harland 1974), and several associated with Lake Humber and its relationship to the Devensian ice limit in the region (Gaunt, Jarvis & Matthews 1971; Gaunt 1974, 1976a). He started to use periglacial phenomena as chronological indicators, and also to use some deposits to elucidate Flandrian (*i.e.* Holocene) sea-level changes (Gaunt & Tooley 1974). This 16-year mapping project culminated in a series of one inch and metric scale geological maps, a doctoral thesis (Gaunt 1976b), the Quaternary chapter in Sir Peter Kent's regional geological guide (Kent 1980), a regional Quaternary history (Gaunt 1981) and two memoirs (Gaunt, Fletcher & Wood 1992, Gaunt 1994 - wherein other relevant references are listed). Several Quaternary aspects outside the mapping region were also investigated, notably concerning the 'Oxbow' mammoth (Gaunt, Coope & Franks 1970) and the struggle to date the 'Leeds Hippopotamus' (Harkness, Gaunt & Nunney 1977).

Besides Quaternary deposits, there were also landscape historical features in the mapping region. Geoff soon became aware of warped ground and, although not part of his duties, he collected as much information as possible on it. The results are included in his thesis, in the two memoirs, and in a further account (Gaunt 1987). Geoff realised also on geological evidence that there had been artificial drainage alterations in the region long before those of Vermuyden, notably along the lowest stretch of the Derwent (Gaunt 1994) and along the Don north of Thorne (Gaunt 1975). Somehow, time was found also for an occasional look at solid rocks (Gaunt *et al.* 1980, Ivimey-Cook *et al.* 1980).

Geoff has many memories of his time in the region. He was twice arrested by RAF Police for allegedly "lurking in woods near RAF Finningley, on one occasion having my trousers slightly chewed by an RAF alsatian of vexed disposition." He had a happier

relationship for about three weeks with Jack Lyon's dog, from Lindholme Hall, which insisted on accompanying him around Hatfield Moors. This was useful, too, for as Geoff says, "If I got lost the dog always knew its way home." Geoff eventually arranged to meet William Bunting at the latter's home in Thorne but, having been warned that Bunting was "agin the government" he was, as a government employee, careful in what he said. It was perhaps just as well, as Bunting had recorded the entire conversation on a hidden tape recorder. Nevertheless, the two became good friends. At about the same time Geoff also made friends with another local character, Johnny Burtwistle, who lived at Limberlost Farm on the edge of Thorne Moors, and whose pride and joy was his collection of Rockingham Ware. Burtwistle was helpful and generous with his local knowledge, and they met on numerous occasions. Some years later Geoff went to interview Major A. Empson, who had carried out the last warping in the region in 1948-49, near Blacktoft (Ferro 1949). To Geoff's consternation the Major's manservant, described as "a big lad with a scowl", stood alongside the Major's chair with a large cosh in his hand, obviously suspecting that Geoff was "up to no good."

Following a heart attack, Geoff took early retirement from BGS in 1984, but has worked almost continuously since as a geoarchaeological consultant for projects and organisations such as Wharram Percy, Winterton Villa, West Yorkshire Archaeology Service and York Archaeological Trust (Anon. 1996), mainly on the lithology and provenance of stone artifacts and building stones. This work has resulted in contributions to a number of recent archaeological publications, such as Milne & Richards (1992), Stamper & Croft (2000), Mainman & Rogers (2000), Roberts, Burgess & Berg (2001), Roberts (2002) and Ottaway & Rogers (2002). Geoff holds an honorary research fellowship in the Archaeological Sciences Dept at the University of Bradford, where he has built up geologically related collections. A hallmark of Geoff's approach to his work has been a willingness to share his knowledge and experience at several different levels. For the Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum, he contributed to *Thorne Moors Papers* (Gaunt 1987) and had significant input into the first *Monograph* (Smith 2002). More widely, he has contributed geological accounts to popular publications (*e.g.* Cory 1985, Taylor 1987, Garner 1997).

Geoff's wife Ann has provided a source of great support to him in his work, even perilously standing half way up a high sand-pit face as an appropriate photograph scale (Gaunt 1994, p.109, plate 3). They share an interest in archery, combining both shooting and historical research. Geoff was Yorkshire Champion in 1966, appropriately winning the title at Cantley near Doncaster. He is a member of several archery societies and clubs, including the Royal Toxophilite Society, and was archivist to the Society of Archer-Antiquaries for ten years. Geoff has advised the TV programme *Trans World Sport* on various worldwide aspects of archery history, and appeared on one of their programmes, shooting for the Scorton Arrow, one of the oldest sporting competitions in the world, having been continuously contested since 1673. Much to Geoff's delight, he adds that Kevin Costner and Laurence Olivier (as Robin Hood and Henry V respectively) were also featured on the programme, another example of multidisciplinary collaboration!

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### **Peter Skidmore**

Peter Skidmore was born in Manchester in 1936, but moved to Dog Hill on the edge of Crompton Moor, near Shaw, in 1939. In these semi-rural surroundings he quickly developed an interest in natural history, and later wrote a paper on the Moor (Skidmore 1964). It was a seminal publication, marking the beginning of Peter's major research into both cow dung ecology and, as a dipterist, the biology of the Muscidae (*q.v.*). Peter joined the Oldham Natural History Society in 1947, and the Manchester Entomological Society c.1950. At Christmas 1951, his sister Mary gave him Colyer & Hammond's *Flies of the British Isles* in Warne's 'Wayside and Woodland Series'. Peter has described this as "the touch-paper to ignite an entomological career" (Skidmore 1996d), with his first steps in studying Diptera guided by Leonard Kidd of Werneth Park Museum, Oldham. His other main entomological interest lay with the Coleoptera. Peter was studying at Oldham Art School for an Art Teacher's Diploma when, in 1954, a friend from the MES and professional entomologist, Baron Alexis de Porochin, offered him work as his assistant at the firm of microscopist and biological suppliers, Flatters & Garnett Ltd of Manchester. As a result "a traumatic change from arts to science took place within a week!" (Anon. 1995). However, Peter's art training was to serve him well for future entomological illustration. Peter's duties at 'Flatters' consisted of obtaining insects and producing collections of specimens for educational establishments. Alexis de Porochin, of Finnish descent, was a remarkable character, remembered with affection and gratitude by Peter (1996c). He recalls, beyond de Porochin's ability as a coleopterist and linguist, that his loves were "bad language (in any tongue), anything German (especially bad language), pilchards (or sardines), insects, philately and Sibelius; in approximately that order of priority"! (Skidmore 1996c). It was also through de Porochin that Peter joined the Raven Entomological and Natural History Society. However, de Porochin's most lasting influence was perhaps to imbue Peter with a willingness to embrace foreign language identification keys; " ..thanks to him, I learnt my Coleoptera not through Joy or Fowler,

but through Reitter's *Fauna Germanica*" (Skidmore 1966c). Fellowship of the Royal Entomological Society and membership of the Verrall Association of Entomologists followed. An early and significant work, written with Colin Johnson of the Manchester Museum, appeared in 1969. This was the first major account of the Coleoptera of a Welsh county, 'A Preliminary List of the Coleoptera of Merioneth' (Skidmore & Johnson 1969).

For Peter, his practical involvement with Thorne and Hatfield Moors began in 1966. This was soon after he had moved to Yorkshire to take up the post of Assistant Keeper of Natural Sciences at Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery. He became Keeper in 1967, and remained until retirement in 1994. At the time of Peter's removal to Doncaster, the Director was the coleopterist E.F. Gilmour and the Keeper was T.M. Clegg. Peter also began a long involvement with the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union, eventually being the President for 1995 (Anon 1995). His Presidential Address centred on Thorne and Hatfield Moors (Skidmore 1996a). Within the Entomological Section, he served as both Chairman and Secretary, and for many years was the Recorder for Diptera. The above interests underpinned his involvement with the Humberhead Levels and nearby areas, especially Thorne and Hatfield Moors, but also other sites, including Blacktoft Sands, Shirley Pool/Rushy Moor, Denaby Ings, Potteric Carr and Rossington Bridge where he took the ladybird *Exochomus nigromaculatus* (Goeze), unrecorded in Britain since the early 19th century (Skidmore 1985a, Muggleton 1999). Peter's interests have remained with Diptera (especially the immature stages of Cyclorrhapha) and Coleoptera, though his recording and collecting, embracing organised excursions (*e.g.* Skidmore 1970b), Field Studies Council tutoring (Skidmore 1991b), commissioned work (*e.g.* on *Phaonia jaroschewskii* Schnabl for English Nature), and museum fieldwork, have covered many insect orders.

Even before removing to Doncaster, Peter had become involved with conservation issues. The first, in 1962, was to initiate the campaign for the conservation of Moccas Park in Herefordshire (Harding 2000), one of the richest 'old forest' (*Urwald*) sites in the UK, but initially dismissed by the former Nature Conservancy as unimportant parkland. Peter's arrival at Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery coincided with increasing concern at habitat degradation and change in parts of Yorkshire, and with direct threats to some important sites. In 1968, Thorne Moors was identified as a suitable site for the tipping of pulverised fuel ash by the Central Electricity Generating Board. Thus began Peter's long and unflagging commitment to the campaigns to defend the headlands from destruction. In 1969, the natural history staff at Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery joined the Thorne naturalist William Bunting to establish beyond doubt the natural history importance of Thorne Moors, to counter the CEGB and future proposals to exploit the moorland. Peter has written about his involvement with William Bunting (Skidmore 1970a, 1992, 1996a). The collaboration in 1969 led to the production of a substantial report (Bunting *et al.* 1969), with Peter as one of several co-authors. Though initially restricted to 11 copies, the report was of importance as the first summary of the growing data relating to Thorne (and Hatfield) Moors. It clearly showed the significant elements of Thorne Moors, as then understood, and was influential at several levels. In the following year, Peter augmented this with an equally formative paper, 'Fifty Years Later - Another Look at Thorne waste' (Skidmore 1970a). This outlined the contemporary campaign to preserve

Thorne Moors, and provided basic documentation of the scientific importance of the site. It also reviewed the ecological state of Thorne Moors a half century after the pioneering review by Rev. E.A. Woodruffe-Peacock (Woodruffe-Peacock 1920-21). Peter's Presidential Address to the YNU (Skidmore 1996a) provided a retrospective foil to his 1970 paper, a quarter of a century on.

Closely linked with Peter's commitment to conservation has been his endeavour to help provide its scientific justification. This has been especially relevant to an understanding of how both Thorne and Hatfield Moors should be managed to ensure the survival of their biodiversity. It was largely due to his diligence that the true invertebrate significance of Thorne Moors was realised in a national context (*e.g.* Ball 1992). The first major review of the entomofauna of Thorne Moors had Peter as its principal author (Skidmore, Limbert & Eversham 1987). In that same year, a programme of malaise trapping by the Nature Conservancy Council warden, W.A. Taylor, led to a mass of specimens, most of which (excluding only Hemiptera and aculeate Hymenoptera) were examined by Peter. He prepared a summary of all the worked orders, and these data he is now incorporating into a new list.

In the major invertebrate survey of Thorne Moors (and to a lesser extent Hatfield Moors) undertaken in 1990 on behalf of the newly-formed Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum, Peter contributed by identifying specimens from several important families of flies. His detailed 'Report on the Diptera Cyclorrhapha taken in the 1990 Entomological Survey of Thorne & Hatfield Moors', appeared as Appendix 1 in the second volume of the survey report (Heaver & Eversham 1991).

Peter was one of the strongest advocates of the ecological distinctness of Hatfield Moors from Thorne Moors. He consistently criticised the attitude, sometimes expressed, of 'trading' Hatfield Moors to the peat industry for the better survival of Thorne Moors. He undertook an entomological survey of Hatfield Moors, on behalf of Doncaster Museum Service, in 1991-92. His belief in the importance and distinctness of Hatfield Moors was substantiated by the results. This has since been underlined by the work on the subfossil insect assemblages by Nicki Whitehouse and others. Indeed, Peter's results indicated how significant the insect fauna of Hatfield Moors must once have been, with a number of important survivors, and indications of further potential. All have given the Moors a much higher national status. Peter was able to conclude that the total insect fauna of Hatfield Moors, with a greater range of habitats than Thorne Moors, must have been the richer of the two. These findings were discussed in a later paper (Skidmore 1997), followed by the publication of a provisional list of the insects of Hatfield Moors (Skidmore 2001).

Peter's other relevant published work has included two papers (Eversham & Skidmore 1991, Skidmore 1992) on the changing invertebrate faunas of Thorne and Hatfield Moors, the second having an interesting autobiographical slant. Particularly important Diptera discoveries have led to specific papers. For example, Peter's recognition of female specimens of *Aenigmatias franzi* Schmitz (Phoridae) in the 1987 malaise trap material led to the first formal description of them by Disney (1993). Peter added

*Eutaenionotum guttipennis* (Stenh.) var. *?olivaceum* Oldenberg (Ephydriidae) to the British list from Thorne Moors, and then found it on Hatfield Moors (Skidmore 1996b). He took two females of the anthomyiid fly *Zaphne proxima* Mall. on Thorne Moors, otherwise only known in the Palaearctic from Swedish Lapland (Ackland 1996). An entomological survey of Thorne and Hatfield Moors in 2000, focused on areas possibly harbouring the *Zaphne*, was undertaken by Peter and R.J. Marsh. It was commissioned by English Nature, and although the target species was not found, the report produced (Skidmore & Marsh 2001) is full of other valuable records. Perhaps Peter's most surprising addition to the list of Thorne Moors Diptera was *Stomorhina lunata* (Fab.) (Calliphoridae), an occasional vagrant to Britain, with one of the specimens appearing somewhat teneral, adding to the significance of the record.

However, as a specialist in the Muscidae, Peter has been especially interested in the extremely rare *Phaonia jaroschewskii* Schnabl, which he discovered on Thorne Moors in 1985 and on Hatfield Moors in 1991. Currently, it is only otherwise known from Strensall Common, near York, and a site at Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire. He wrote about the species in Appendix 1 of the 1990 survey report (*q.v.*) and in *The Naturalist* (Skidmore 1991a). In 1995, he was commissioned by English Nature to ascertain its status and distribution on Thorne Moors. His unpublished report, *Phaonia jaroschewskii* ("The Hairy Canary") (*Dipt. Muscidae*) on Thorne Moor during 1995, with notes on other insects collected in the survey, appeared towards the end of that year. Its title betrays the fact that the report also contains a list of all other insects identified, which is significant in its own right. Further survey work on the *Phaonia* was undertaken in 1996, which again resulted in an unpublished collateral list of other insects.

A distinct facet of Peter's entomological interests has been his appreciation of the importance of palaeoentomology in understanding not only the British insect fauna, but also the environmental history of headlands and archaeological sites where organic deposits have survived. Peter had demonstrated an early awareness of the significance of subfossils, especially Coleoptera, in his paper 'The Insect Fauna of a Bog Oak Found near Askern' (Skidmore 1971). He was accompanied on the site visit by Paul Buckland. The latter undertook a doctoral thesis in the same decade, on the use of insect remains in the interpretation of archaeological environments in the Vale of York. From this was published *inter alia* a pioneering palaeoentomological study of Thorne Moors (Buckland 1979). Such work has continued on the local headlands by Paul Buckland, Peter Skidmore, Nicki Whitehouse, Gretel Boswijk and Tessa Roper. With the support of the University of Sheffield, and specifically of Paul Buckland, Peter's palaeoentomological work on Diptera remains has now embraced sites in several European countries, Greenland, Egypt and Canada. He has shown that such material can be regarded as an interpretative tool comparable with Coleoptera specimens and pollen. Peter became an external tutor in the University's Department of Archaeology & Prehistory, and also worked on a doctoral thesis, *A Dipterological Perspective on the Holocene History of the North Atlantic Area*, completed in 1995. His publications in this field have been numerous. One fundamental result of the work on subfossil and living insects of Thorne and Hatfield Moors has been the conclusion, unavailable from any other source, that the Moors are western outliers of a mire type otherwise typical of sites in Poland, Germany

and the Baltic states. This, combined with the very low rainfall of eastern England, suggests that the Moors are better regarded as the sole surviving British examples of a largely non-British biotype, rather than damaged and impoverished 'Atlantic' mires such as occur frequently in western Britain (Eversham, Skidmore & Buckland 1995).

Inevitably, this appreciation of Peter Skidmore is highly selective, focused on his involvement with Thorne and Hatfield Moors. His other work and activities are numerous, but there is little space to devote to them. Peter's leisure interests can also be barely referred to. They include family and general history, astronomy, philately and classical music. I remember his amusement on learning of the derivation of his surname and his family history research still continues. However, two publications have to be referred to. The first is his long-term study of the ecology of cow dung (Skidmore 1991b), entertainingly described by one of his Field Studies Council students (Tate 1994). However, his most important work, extending to 550 pages, is *The Biology of the Muscidae of the World* (Skidmore 1985b). This began as a master's thesis from the University of York, and was described by one reviewer (Disney 1985) as "a most scholarly book... a resource for specialists for years to come."

It is gratifying that Peter has maintained his links with the Moors and the Forum. In recognition of over three decades of dedicated endeavour and support, the Forum is pleased that he has accepted Honorary Membership, as one of the region's most notable entomologists and conservationists. Peter is one of those rare naturalists who have provided the scientific basis and inspiration for what the Forum and others seek to achieve today. It is fitting to close by adding that Peter would be the first to acknowledge his debt of gratitude to Heather, his wife. The muscid tome is dedicated to her, and her continued support is appreciated by many more than Peter alone.

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*Phaonia jaroschewskii* (Peter Skidmore).

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