This Bulletin reports on the last Annual Meeting and gives the date for the next meeting, and has details of field meetings to be held in 1982.

Annual Meeting October 1982

This important date for your diary is Saturday 30 October 1982. The meeting will follow the traditional pattern, being held at the British Museum (Natural History) with talks in the morning, discussions and exhibits in the afternoon and the Dipterists Supper in the evening. Details of the programme will be included within the next Bulletin.

Report on the 1981 Annual Meeting

The varied and interesting talks in the morning session were followed by discussions in the afternoon on two major topics.

(a) The proposed journal. By an overwhelming majority it was decided to shelve this idea.

The following suggestions gained approval.

(i) Recorders will continue to receive the Bulletin on a similar basis (arranged at NCC) to cover general matters. Additionally each scheme (or at least the larger ones) will produce its own annual newsletter, to be issued by the Biological Records Centre at Monks Wood. The meeting was grateful for Paul Harding's statement confirming the willingness of BRC to help our schemes in this regard, financial resources permitting of course. Thus the flow of information and feedback to recorders should be improved.

(ii) An editorial panel will be set up without a journal - see the separate item by Tony Irwin (below). It was felt that there should be sufficient page space for Diptera papers within the existing journals. It was noted, for instance, that both the EMM and Brit. Ent. Soc. now have new editors who are dipterists, and local journals have plenty of scope for items on Diptera.

(iii) The bibliographic service will be improved via the Bulletin and Newsletters - also see the note by Tony Irwin (below).

(b) Site Evaluation. A very lively discussion ensued on this subject. There was clear support for the principle of testing quantitative methods, as developed by Henry Disney and his team of amateurs. Henry Disney introduced the subject with a presentation of his method using water traps and counts of species richness, and he then presented preliminary results from his trials. Since Diptera are abundant and there are so many species with diverse life histories, they can be regarded as an ideal group for site evaluation for conservation purposes. If a rapid and reliable method for comparing sites of a similar nature can be devised, then this has obvious application in presenting the conservation case for 'the best' site. The procedure adopted currently by Henry Disney is to deploy water traps simultaneously at the sites to be sampled for a period of several days, and then to count the number of Diptera species trapped (excluding certain sections such as the calyptrates which are not readily separated into species when preserved in alcohol). The material is retained so that the observed species present could be identified and named subsequently if required. The criticism was expressed that conservation

bodies such as NCC are currently presenting very inadequate site assessments to planning authorities such as the Yorkshire Dales National Park with which Henry Disney is associated. There was a lack of numerical data which could be analysed statistically to evaluate, for example, woods within the boundaries of the National Park.

In the ensuing discussion reservations were expressed over the practical application of such methods except in certain limited circumstances. Relative species richness was only one factor in site assessment, the quality and ecological relevance of a particular fauna was important, and some structural features of a site may not be recognised on the basis of trap samples from one part of a site. Some practical difficulties were pointed out, finding sufficient dipterists to deploy traps and sort the resulting catches on a national basis, and the need for site information at short notice with only limited time available, which is when walking over the greater part of a site using a sweep net for sampling can give a good insight into the value of a site. There was a danger in leading planning authorities to expect statistical analyses, which may be imperfect, when a more pragmatic approach to site evaluation is all that is possible.

In reply to Henry Disney's criticism on NCC's lack of preparation, it was pointed out that staff resources are very small and heavy reliance must be placed on the limited amateur time where available. To give some reassurance Alan Stubbs said that in 19 years in NCC as a geologist and entomologist he had never lost at a public inquiry, including one in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

This debate could have continued for hours without complete agreement. Mercifully the chairman cut us short. Two points did seem beyond controversy. Firstly, there is a strong need to collate the conservation case for sites of known importance via NCC's Invertebrate Site Register. Secondly, the feasibility of using trapping techniques giving quantitative results which can be statistically analysed deserves further development and testing - those interested in this aspect are invited to contact Henry Disney.

"Editors Anonymous"

At the annual meeting in London it was agreed to establish an editorial panel (without a journal) to help anyone who wants advice about writing and submitting papers for publication. The panel would examine draft papers, suggest improvements where necessary and advise about suitable journals. In this way inexperienced authors may avoid the disappointment of having papers rejected by editors who consider them unsuitable for publication. Of course most journal editors will make suggestions about how to improve papers and where to submit them. The advantage of first approaching this panel is that the members have little or no other editorial committment so that turn around time should be much shorter. Hopefully the system will encourage more dipterists to publish their observations.

The panel members are Peter Chandler, Peter Skidmore, Ian McLean, David Henshaw and Tony Irwin. Tony is acting as distributor, so papers or other correspondence should be addressed to him at the Castle Museum, Norwich. Only one copy of a paper need be sent. He will then send copies to each of the panel members and will assemble the comments and suggestions, which will be passed on to the author. Two points must be made clear about this :-

1. No-one should feel obliged to use this service or to heed the panel's advice. If you want to submit papers directly to a journal, then do so. There is no arrangement between the panel and the journal editors. They will consider and accept (or reject) papers oblivious of the panel's existence.

2. The editorial panel feel it improper that they should receive acknowledgement in published papers. You know who they are, but try to think of them as "editors anonymous".

FIELD MEETINGS

Bookings for the summer field meeting in Scotland are needed by the end of March at the latest, so that the booking for accommodation can be confirmed with the field centre.

Summer Field Meeting in the Spey Valley, 12-20 June 1982

This is an excellent opportunity to explore the classic area for boreal Diptera in Britain. From the early years of this century Dipterists have discovered additional British species in many families from the wide range of habitats in the Spey Valley region. The large blocks of Caledonian Pine Forest at Abernethy, Rothiemurchus and elsewhere have the best Diptera fauna for this habitat in Britain, and the Cairngorms have the best mountain-top assemblage of species. There are outstanding wetlands such as the Insh Marshes, and fine birch woods such as Craigellachie, while the wooded river bank habitats of the Spey at Aviemore and Grantown, and the Darbach Burn sand banks and shingle beds are unsurpassed for their associated highly specialist fauna.

The booking of 20 places has been made with the Abernethy Outdoor Centre at Nethy Bridge, which is itself located amongst good habitat. The booking is for 8 nights, arriving Saturday 12 June and departing Sunday 20 June. There is a deposit of £5 per person which should accompany your booking and arrive before the end of March (cheques should be made payable to 'Abernethy Outdoor Centre'). The cost is £6.90 per person per day, that is £55.20 for the full 8 days, which includes bed and breakfast, packed lunch and evening meal (this is exclusive of VAT, currently 15%). If for any reason you have to withdraw your booking within 8 weeks of the start of the meeting (ie. after 16 April 1982) you are liable for 60% of the full cost of your booking, including VAT. The accommodation is in 4-bedded rooms within the main house, and a room with tables and chairs will be available for our exclusive use as a laboratory for sorting, pinning, identification etc.

In addition to boosting the coverage for the recording schemes, the field meeting gives a chance for the beginner or less experienced Dipterist to pick up hints on field techniques, identification tips etc. from other Dipterists. So if you haven't come along before don't feel that you need to be able to find rarities or be proficient with identifying what you catch, all participants will be very welcome.

Some people have expressed an interest in staying on for up to a week after 20 June somewhere in Scotland outside the Spey Valley. If you would be interested in joining such a group please write in when booking for the Spey Valley meeting. All bookings and enquiries should be sent to Ian McLean, Nature Conservancy Council, 19/20 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PY.

BENHS Breckland Field Meeting, 31 July and 1 August 1982

A weekend meeting at Cavenham Heath and Tuddenham Heath will be led by Ian McLean for investigating a variety of Breckland habitats on these two National Nature Reserves. If you wish to attend please contact Ian McLean in advance of the meeting for details of the timing and location. No accommodation has been booked for this meeting.

Autumn Field Meeting, October 1982

The venue for the Autumn Field Meeting has yet to be arranged, details will be included in the next bulletin. A day or weekend trip to Epping Forest is also planned for the Autumn period.

Malham TarnField Centre, Settle, North Yorkshire BD24 9PU, 30 June - 7 July 1982

FLIES, MIDGES AND GNATS - A Course run by Dr Henry Disney. The Course will be primarily concerned with identification and will give particular attention to the smaller species that tend to be ignored by the novice dipterist. (All in fee £94.50 - or £96.50 for non-members of the Field Studies Council).

Report on the Autumn 1981 Field Meeting

Despite cold and at times wet weather, this was a very successful meeting which produced several good records. The Caer Llan field centre had some of the best cooking we've encountered in our travels in search of flies, and was remarkable value for money (we even had salmon one evening!). A total of 55 species of cranefly and 110 species of fungus gnats were found. Dicranota gracilipes, Tipula holoptera, Erioptera diuturna were particularly notable craneflies and Pseudorymosia fovea (hitherto only known from Scotland) was among the good fungus gnats found. The banks of the River Monnow produced Campsicnemus marginatus, Lonchoptera meijeri and L. nigrociliata, while two woods overlooking the River Wye yielded a male and female of a short-winged Philygria (Ephydridae) new to Britain. For the Sciomyzidae, Pherbellia scutellaris was an interesting late record. Dixella filicornis also turned up in the Forest of Dean.

New Forest Recording Group

A number of entomologists have joined together to record the insect fauna of the New Forest. Ivan Perry will be acting as the recorder who will collate the Diptera section, so if you already have data on the New Forest, or would like to contribute in the future Ivan would be very pleased to hear from you. The New Forest has an assemblage of Diptera breeding in dead wood (particularly beech) second only to Windsor Forest, and also has outstanding bogs and river margin habitats which are currently under pressure from agricultural and amenity groups. A permit from the Forestry Commission is needed to record insects in the New Forest, details of how to apply can be obtained from Ivan Perry, 27 Mill Road, Lode, Cambridge CB5 9EN.

A new key to the families of British Diptera

One of the major difficulties with identifying flies can be correct family placement, this particularly applies to many of the Acalypterate families where earlier keys have relied heavily on the use of the number and position of costal breaks which can be difficult to see. The new key to families of British Diptera by Dennis Unwin recently published in Field Studies 5: 513-533 is therefore very welcome, especially as the characters used are well illustrated alongside the key couplets. If you haven't yet got your copy write to Dennis Unwin, 11 Carlton Rise, Melbourn, Royston, Herts SG8 6BZ.

Key Works Bibliography.

One unpublished chapter of the Dipterists Handbook was a list of key works for British Diptera. I have been trying to keep this list up to date, and am happy to provide bibliographies for specific families, if anyone has difficulty finding keys. It might also be prudent to contact the specialists mentioned in the accompanying "specimens wanted-help offered"list for their opinions about the value and accuracy of the keys, before spending a lot of money on photocopies.

Tony Irwin.
Castle Museum, Norwich.

BARBER'S FLUID: the answer to a Dipterist's prayer

If you are having trouble with rigor mortis in your flies, especially if you are experiencing difficulties in attaining relaxed genitalia, then Barber's fluid is for you(!) A mixture of easily obtainable chemicals - recipe below - Barber's fluid can be made up in the home and stored without problem, so long as it's left out of the reach of children. One dab with a small brush on the offending parts induces their relaxation in about 5 minutes, such that they may be manipulated with ease and without damage to the rest of the abdomen. Total immersion (for c.10 minutes) of dried out and even quite aged specimens renders them sufficiently pliable to be remounted or set in new positions. The Barber's Fluid subsequently evaporates, leaving specimens seemingly by unaffected by the wetting.

The male genitalia of many Diptera are not normally adequately visible to enable their use in determination, yet their morphology is frequently used in keys etc. to help distinguish species one from another. Laborious preparation methods or lengthy relaxation procedures inhibit many Dipterists from undertaking genitalic examinations. The ease with which fly genitalia can be manipulated and examined so soon after application of Barber's Fluid could well dispel these inhibitions, making determination of many "critical" species a much more certain and less onerous undertaking.

Ingredients of Barber's Fluid (to make up 900cc.): 95% alcohol, 330cc.; distilled water, 300cc.; ethyl acetate, 150cc.; ether, 120cc.; acetic acid, 10-20 drops.

The beneficial properties of Barber's Fluid were brought to my attention by Loic Matile earlier this year. I have now used this "magic potion" extensively myself and find it extremely reliable.

Martin C D Speight

Microvials Again.

In bulletin no.9 a comparison was made between cork-stoppered glass vs. rubber-stoppered polythene microvials, used for storing genitalia in glycerine. Since then there has been an increase in the price of polythene vials and an increase in the efficiency of H.M. Customs & Excise. The result is that the polythene vials are now more expensive than the glass which are still £4.00 p.100(+VAT).

Recently John Deeming has been advocating the use of home-made PVC microvials, which do not suffer the disadvantages associated with corked glass ones(breakage of corks,leakage of glycerine causing increased humidity, corrosion of pins and blurred data labels etc.) They also cost about £1.00 p.100,excluding labour. The technique of producing PVC microvials is described by Van Doesburg (1980, Genitalia vials from PVC tube. Entomologische Berichten 40:177-178). The 3mm diameter tubing is heat sealed at one end and plugged with a solid PVC rod at the other. Transparent PVC tubing is readily available from plastics suppliers (use your Yellow Pages) but the PVC rod is proving difficult to obtain in this country. Van Doesburg cites Joh.Pütfeld,Amsterdam as a supplier. If anyone finds an alternative scource or a suitable alternative material, please tell John Deeming (Dept. of Zoology, National Museum of Wales, Cathays Park, Cardiff,CF1 3NP) or myself. John has kindly offered to supply photocopies of Van Doesburg's article to anyone interested.

Tony Irwin.

Light-touch Forceps.

Those of us who sort large quantities of unpinned material (wet or dry) know the value of fine pointed, light-touch forceps. Bob George,8 St.Peters Street,Duxford, Cambridge CB2 4RP, has a number of these for sale at £2.50 each (including postage), which is considerably less than the current price from the other equipment suppliers.