

## BRITISH MYCOLOGISTS

### 25. JOHN RAMSBOTTOM (1885–1974)



Dr Ramsbottom spent the greater part of his life at the British Museum of Natural History (1910–50) where he finally became Keeper of Botany. 'JR' was the best known British mycologist of his day and for many recent members of the BMS 'JR' and the 'British Museum' were synonymous.

After a somewhat restricted childhood and education and a few years as a pupil teacher in Manchester he entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge, from where he graduated in 1905. This was followed by another two years at Manchester University where he held a scholarship under Professor Weiss. During the First World War he served as a protozoologist in Salonica, attained the rank of captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and was awarded the military O.B.E.

In the early days at the Museum Ramsbottom published useful lists of British phycomycetes and discomycetes (and with Frances Balfour-Browne a revision of the latter in 1951).

Ramsbottom may be said to have 'collected' societies many of which elected him as president and his presidential addresses were frequently valuable summaries of some aspect of mycology. He was particularly loyal to the Linnean Society (when his presidential address in 1944 was on the history of mycology), the BMS (president 1924, and again in the jubilee year 1946) and he was president of Section K (Botany) of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1936 (when his presidential address was on the uses of fungi). He also had many continental contacts. He rewrote for the Museum *A Handbook of the Larger British Fungi*, 1923, which sold in quantity during the next 3–4 decades. In 1953 he published the well-known *Mushrooms & Toadstools* in the Collins 'New Naturalist' series, a volume which splendidly reflects the range of his erudition.

Dr Ramsbottom regularly attended BMS forays, often arriving late at night, and he was prominent in the field by his dark city clothes and black boots, and his tolerance of tiros.

For many years he was General Secretary of the BMS and to visit the General Secretary on Society Business was daunting. If the matter under discussion was never reached it did not greatly matter for the visitor was rewarded with a wealth of anecdote and reminiscence.

On retirement he travelled widely, usually accompanied by his daughter, Mary.

G.C. Ainsworth

### SLUGFEAST!

There is a well-known, and surely carefully posed, sequence of pictures showing a toad crawling onto a toadstool. They are reproduced in John Ramsbottom's *Mushrooms & Toadstools* p. 287. We were delighted to receive from the Executive Editor of *Mycological Research* another fast-moving all-action sequence, guaranteed genuine,

which he unaccountably failed to place in that august journal.

He reports that in the course of little more than 15 minutes of a July evening this slug demolished half the pileus and most of the stipe of a fruitbody of *Coprinus micaceus*.

Your editor, ever the news hound, only regrets that the *Coprinus* isn't eating the slug.

Photos by D. & E. Moore

