

## EDITORIAL

Unlike the habit of lichens, the growth of the British Lichen Society has been encouragingly rapid since the inaugural meeting two and a half years ago. As this issue of the *Lichenologist* goes to press, the membership is nearly 200. Thus one of the aims of the Society, which was to bring together those people with a common interest in the Group, is now being satisfactorily realized.

In the British Isles this has re-stimulated an interest both in the collecting of material and in the critical study of the taxonomy of the group. The field meetings have been well attended and have assisted beginners and professionals alike either to obtain or to master a clearer understanding of the many difficulties attending the study of lichens. Particularly in the case of field work, the amateur can, besides merely collecting specimens, amass habitat and sociological data relating to his material and study the ecological associations of the area in which he is collecting.

There have been four issues of the *Lichenologist*, and in each we have tried to improve the format and style of the lay-out; this issue sees the introduction of line-drawings, which we hope will prove a useful adjunct to the textual descriptions.

We welcome especially our oversea members and hope that they will derive benefit from the Society's activities, not least when they may be visiting the British Isles. It is hoped, too, that they will contribute to this journal; articles on lichens from any part of the world will be considered sympathetically for publication.

The effort required for the conservation of the lichens of the British Isles and elsewhere in the world cannot be overstressed. Evidence from early collections in herbaria suggests that many species were once far more abundant than they are to-day. In the British Isles this is particularly true of the Midlands and eastern England, where the rapid growth of towns and industry, with the consequent felling of trees, the increase in smoke pollution, and the improvement of roads have all depleted much of the lichen flora. Furthermore, the growth of lichens is very slow—even in favourable habitats—and it would be a further tragedy if our uncommon species, which now exist in a few favoured localities, were exterminated altogether by unscrupulous collecting.