

Appreciations

On January 29th 1962 the death occurred in Neuchâtel (Switzerland) of Mr. Jacques J. Richard who had farmed in Solai for sixteen years; although he retired from Kenya with his family ten years ago he had left many friends in the country who esteemed him and who remember him for his sterling qualities, as a loyal friend as well as a successful farmer.

Jacques Richard had other merits, known only to his closest friends, for he was essentially modest and rarely mentioned his deep and active interest in a very specialized branch of science: Volcanology. He was an authority on the world's active volcanoes, a subject to which he devoted a great deal of his time and which he pursued with the drive and energy characteristic of the man.

Before arriving in Kenya in 1936 he had spent ten years in Java as a planter and it was there that the many active volcanoes and craters aroused his interest; he visited and explored all those which were accessible, accumulating a wealth of invaluable data, often risking his life in perilous investigation during active eruptions.

In East Africa Jacques continued his volcanological studies, and when in 1947/48 the memorable eruption of Kitura in the Congo took place, he was one of the first on the spot. His magnificent colour films of these repeated eruptions - including the birth of a small new volcano which he showed to his fellow members of the East Africa Natural History Society and subsequently in Europe, are unique documents.

But his interest extended also to the less dramatic aspects of volcanology. He studied the extinct and dormant craters in East Africa, in the first place Mt. Kilimanjaro which he climbed many times; he was, indeed, the first European who spent the night in the crater itself, where he discovered and filmed active fumaroles and found deposits of pure sulphur.

Suspecting a relationship of local rainfall with hidden volcanic activity, he placed permanent raingauges on the mountain at various altitudes at his own expense and organized readings at regular intervals, an initiative which was subsequently continued by the Tanganyika Meteorological Service.

A full account of his surveys of Kilimanjaro was published in the East Africa Natural History Society's Journal.

Shortly after its eruption in 1940/41 Jacques climbed Lengai, the most active of the East African volcanoes in order to study its significance in the overall volcanic formation of the Rift Valley; these observations too were published in the Society's Journal.

After leaving Kenya in 1952 Jacques Richard continued his volcanological research. The eruption of Mt. Etna in Sicily a few years ago was an opportunity not to be missed; his film, taken at great personal risk, is outstanding. He made his last important

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expedition in 1959 when - with a Belgian collaborator - he visited an active volcano in the New Hebrides on behalf of the Condominion's Government, to assess its potential danger to the indigenous population and to submit proposals for eventual precautions to be taken for its safety. After completion of this task he spent two months on a survey of the volcanoes of the entire island-group, to be included in the "Catalogue of the Active Volcanoes of the World" published by the International Association of Volcanology. His most important contribution to the "Catalogue" was a comprehensive account of the volcanoes of East Africa which appeared in 1960.

For his numerous and valuable contributions to science Jacques Richard was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Geographical Society as well as the Membership of the "Société des Explorateurs" in Paris.

He leaves a widow and three daughters, all married in England. It was only two days after he had given away his youngest daughter in marriage when his fatal illness overtook him. He will be remembered and deeply missed by his friends who extend their deepest sympathy to his widow and to his children in their loss.

P.R.O.B.

Mrs. Sybil Albrechtsen (1877 - 1961)

Around the years 1930-34 several ladies were collecting plants for the Coryndon Museum Herbarium, then in the charge of Miss Napier (later the Hon. Mrs. Evelyn Molony) who died some years ago. These specimens are well-prepared and duplicates of most are in the Kew Herbarium; as a consequence, the names of these ladies are frequently seen in lists of citations in botanical literature. Quite a few of the plants added to the collection during this period were collected by Mrs. Albrechtsen. Exactly how many she collected could only now be ascertained by working through the entire herbarium but one receives the impression that it must be several hundred, since the name is frequently seen on labels as material is worked through during the course of routine naming.

Mrs. Albrechtsen was born in 1877 in Devonshire, into a family with a strong Swiss background, and in her early twenties went to Scale Howe at Ambleside to train as a teacher. It was here, mainly as a result of the influence of the College's founder, Charlotte Mason, that Mrs. Albrechtsen's interest in natural history began to develop.

She came to Kenya in 1910 and lived successively at Limuru, Nakuru and in the Rift Valley. In 1927 she went to live on the South Kinangop and it was there that she made the collection now in the East African Herbarium. A keen teacher, she opened a school at Naivasha in 1934 but was forced to close it in 1941. She also lived in Nairobi and at Eldoret. She continued to teach until the

eve of her 80th year, a remarkable effort, but was obliged to retire through ill health though retaining her great interest in everything going on around her until the end of her life. She died on the 15th. September 1961. Her very interesting diaries have been presented to the library of the Coryndon Museum.

B.V

(Note. I am much indebted to her daughter Mrs. P. Jeffreys for most of the above information and also to Miss J. Ossent for her help in obtaining it.)

Dr. Vernon D. van Someren, M.B.E., B.Sc., Ph.D.
(1915 - 1962)

Dr. Vernon D. van Someren, M.B.E., B.Sc., Ph.D. Died suddenly at Jinja on March 28th.

He was a member of an old and distinguished East African family, his father Dr. R.A.L. van Someren and uncle- Mr. V.G.L. van Someren arrived in Kenya in 1905.

Vernon was born at Jinja in 1915 and later went to Scotland with his family where he was educated. He returned to Kenya in 1939, when he joined the Veterinary Department. He later transferred to Fisheries and his detailed studies at Sagana of trout under tropical conditions was the first in this field and led to many new discoveries. In more recent years he was Director of the Freshwater Fisheries Research Organisation, and studied the indigenous fish of East Africa.

Vernon was always keen on Natural History, and was a noted Ornithologist. During the war he served with the East African Medical Corps and any spare moments he had were spent watching and photographing birds. His study of the birds of Madagascar was a noteworthy contribution to the knowledge of the species of that island.

Later he wrote on the behaviour of Fiscal Shrikes, Jackson's Whydahs, and Oxpeckers.

His book "A bird watcher in Kenya" is delightful and informative and much appreciated by bird watchers.

For many years Vernon was a member of the East Africa Natural History Society Committee and he later became a Trustee of the Coryndon Museum.

Vernon will be sadly missed by his many friends and to his wife and family all members of the Society wish to express their deepest sympathy.

W.P.L