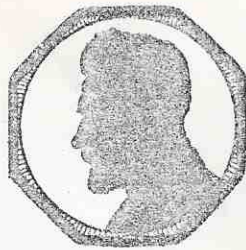


# THE BRODIE CLUB



ROYAL ONTARIO  
MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY  
BLOOR ST. AND AVENUE RD.  
TORONTO 5.

THE BRODIE CLUB -- C. H. D. CLARKE

(Address at the 750th Meeting of the Brodie Club,  
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A University, even one as small as Toronto when I was there (total staff and students between 7,000 and 8,000) is a vast, amorphous soulless agglomeration, unless you find a cell somewhere into which you fit. When I came in 1927, I found such a cell. It was not in the faculty in which I was registered, though that was one of the smallest. It was with some people at the R. O. M. and their associates -- called the Brodie Club.

I met some museum people at a "conversazione" in the old Biology Building shortly after I came. We had a class there, or I might not have seen the notice. Do you know what a "conversazione" was? You lined up to be tested for color blindness. You looked through microscopes at Amoebae, Paramoeciae and Hydra. Fourth year girls boldly stuck needles into the medulla of frogs, so they would not feel anything -- the frogs, that is, and then opened them up so you could see their hearts beat. Muscle spasms were stimulated electronically.

The star of the show was the biology live animal man, Bill LeRay, a Brodie Club member. He had just come back from the Bruce with about 30 live rattlesnakes. Off to the side of all the action were the museum people, L. L. Snyder, Jim Baillie, Shelley Logier and Horace Stovell, who had just completed a summer of field work in King Township at a place I shall mention later. I quickly got into conversation. When it became evident that I could identify the stuff, they asked my name. My bibliography had already started so they recognized my name, at once.

I was invited to visit their quarters in the basement of the original building, now the west wing. You can bet that I was there in my first free time. I remembered the circumstances later when Cliff Hope, the exuberant one, later preparator replacing Horace Stovell, told me how in a talk to Upper Canada College students he issued a similar invitation to some who were obviously interested. When next Saturday morning came (before the five-day week), there was young Johnny Speakman pacing up and down on the steps before the Museum opened.

In my case, one of my early visits was on a Tuesday afternoon, and at the last moment the lab was swept and cleaned and tables and chairs arranged in preparation for a meeting that night -- the Brodie Club. I was invited. You may rest assured that I showed up. I was registered thereafter for two years a visitor at almost every meeting before I became a member. Membership was limited, prized and some one had to die, leave town, or get kicked out before a new man could get in.

The Club was a lineal descendant of the first Natural History Society in Toronto, started in 1878 by a dentist, Dr. William Brodie, an inspired amateur naturalist. Natural History was popular and prestigious in educated circles. The first Biology professor at the U. of T. was Prof. Hincks, appointed in 1853, and he assembled a museum collection, aided as years went on by discards and duplicates from the British Museum. There were competent taxidermists all over Ontario, incidentally.

Dr. Brodie encouraged young people. He was competent in all fields. In his office the pain of extraction was relieved by the fascination of live snakes. The young people held their meetings there, until it got to be too much and two of them, still in their teens, John Edmonds, who later married Dr. Brodie's daughter, and Herbert Brown, whose plant collection in time became a prize accession to the University herbarium, were deputed to find a room suitable for meetings which could be rented at a reasonable price. Both were members of the Brodie Club when I first attended. John Edmonds told

me that as they were about to close the deal for the place they chose, the stern old boarding-house lady stood silently staring at them and then said, "Can you assure me that you do not want this room for immoral purposes?"

The new club had several elements. One was surviving members of Dr. Brodie's old club, Edmonds, Brown, Richards (a friend of Brown), Rippon, Deacon, Dr. E. M. Walker, Charles Nash (gone by my time), Stuart Thompson (nephew of Seton, an old Brodie associate) and John Townson, of the old Toronto "Globe". Townson was the senior man. He was born in 1856 and used to describe how he hunted passenger pigeons in the Toronto ravines in his youth. History crowds you more than you think. When I first went west, I met Indians who were 25 years old before hunting buffalo and going on the warpath went out of style. W. E. Saunders knew a number of people who were in the war of 1812, and pointed out to me where things had happened that never got in the history books -- sites now forgotten.

The next, and more important, element in the Club were Museum staff members, without whom the Club would not have been started - or revived if you prefer, and who were interested in the good it could do the Museum. I can name Snyder, Baillie, Logier, Stovell (and later Hope), Edmonds, Kurata (spiders), Sternberg (fossils), Corfe (insects), Dymond (the Director) and Terry Shortt (who came along early). Then there were University Staff -- but they had to be keen and regular attenders, every two weeks -- Walker, Ide, Craigie, LeRay, Cross, Tommy Taylor (botany), Harkness (fish lab), and in time Profs. Coventry and McIlwraith. Next you can mention biology students, but again they had to be regulars and genuine naturalists -- Oughton (molluscs), Ricker (fish), Louis Milne (now a writer of text books), Al Allin. Milne once brought an uncle from the west who had contributed an article on the puma in Ontario to the old Biological Review. Of course I leave people out. The last group were rank amateurs -- some to become pros, like Cliff Hope, Stu Downing, Dunc MacLulich and myself, and others in the Stu Thompson tradition -- and the original Brodie tradition. Bob Lindsay and Herb Southam are still with us. Russ Rutter was

secretary.

Stu Thompson was an interesting character. A good naturalist (like Hoyes Lloyd, he was trained by Nash) but a prima donna type. He loved to give lectures, and lead hikes -- also give radio talks, which Cliff Hope mocked mercilessly, as Cliff also did Jim Baillie's early, rather florid Telegram columns. Stu was invaluable in his own way. Who else could get a hundred people out to Sunnyside on a cold morning at 6 o'clock? He was not as popular with his peers as with his disciples. He was as penurious as Seton describes his own father, and students who relied on him for transport had to pay for the gas. Duncan and I were dumped at the Museum, wet and dirty, one Sunday evening at church time -- I without the money that should have bought my supper, Duncan to ride the Bloor car to the west end draped with cameras and collecting gear like a Christmas tree, and carrying a shotgun.

In time the Club picked up Dr. Hadwen, a research veterinarian of enormous experience, and another vet -- Archie Campbell, director of the Toronto Zoo -- a lovable old scamp. A meeting held in the Riverdale Zoo one Tuesday night was memorable. George the chimp shook hands all around, and was duly seated. When a member, Delamere Black, fell over backwards on some obstacle, George cackled with unmistakable laughter. His mate, Josephine, the first lady ever to attend the Brodie Club, went round and round on her tricycle and swore loudly every time she passed Doc Campbell, who had recently removed an ulcerated tooth.

There were of course Corresponding Members, Kay from Port Sydney, Muskoka, came several times. Dr. Brodie used to walk from Toronto to visit him. Dr. Hurlburt, an aviculturist from Vineland, came regularly. Another was Saunders, an old Brodie friend. Saunders also enjoyed being in the centre of the stage -- skinning mice in a railway chair car, or an hotel lobby, surrounded by people, but he was warm and generous and never grew old. My family for a while lived in London, and he checked with them regularly to find out when I would be home so that he would have company for excursions. On one

occasion he got a shipment of mammals, including a least weasel, from a trapper north of Cochrane, on December 31; so I went to his house and we skinned the old year out and the new year in. There was a back road where we often went, with a steep hill leading down to a very narrow bridge over the Cut-off Creek. My relatives owned nearby property. Saunders invariably coasted down out of gear, to thread the needle at the bottom. His first specimen was, I believe, collected in 1870.

He was an accomplished musician and an enthusiastic follower of sports. Mooney Gibson, manager of the Pittsburg Pirates, lived two doors away. Saunders grew Iris and hybridized them. Squirrels dug them up and he got the squirrels -- hundreds of them. His garden had a top layer of cinders and the Iris all had bags over the flowers.

Another regular visitor was a retired missionary from the east side of James Bay -- Reindeer Walton so called because he continually petitioned the government to start a reindeer industry there. He was available to busy Club members, starting with Townson.

Some members who came along after the '20's were past, should be remembered. There was Garnet Bell, Terry Shortt's father-in-law, who boasted that he could collect a feed of mushrooms any day in the year. Does any one remember Lew Owens, the tree man, who worked in Mt. Pleasant, the best arboretum in Toronto?

The museum crew, all underpaid and without cars, used to go regularly to a shack they had built in a woods near Pottageville, close to the old radial line that ran from city limits. Brodie Club field days were originally held there. Some non-museum Brodie members also belonged. One was an amateur who had been accepted at his face value but had dropped out. A couple of years later, members were horrified to see their "Klub" featured in "Hush", the Toronto scandal paper. Wallace Young obviously still had a key, and had used the shack for mid-week philandering. You who knew Cliff Hope can imagine the spate of raunchy limericks and doggerel verse sung to popular tunes. A new padlock was

bought, and sundry mysterious hairpins and other things were explained. Snyder in time built his own cabin, and Boggs, an oil man and Brodie Clubber who started out collecting for the Museum in the faraway places he visited, built one nearby. A Snyder neighbour in Leaside was Alan Outram, who became a naturalist, a Brodie member and a museum volunteer as a result of this association.

I was never around for early Club excursions, but came a time when I graduated without a job -- a blessing in disguise -- and I was free to go. By this time people had cars, and the venue was Minesing swamp, the favourite area for an ornithologist dentist and Club member, Dr. Paul Harrington. My graduation party was on Friday night, and Saturday noon, after work, we took off. On Friday afternoon, I bought a flask at the Woolworth's at the Bloor and Yonge n. e. corner, and I shall never forget the look on the face of the young lady, who had smirked at the sale of the flask, when on Saturday morning, somewhat bleary-eyed, I bought from her a dozen mouse traps.

Dymond slept in Garnet Bell's tent, and Harrington had some people at his Wasaga cottage. The rest of us slept under the stars. I had an eider-down. I suspect that Hope and Shortt were too cold to sleep because they were up all night. Just before daybreak, tree swallows started to chatter aloft, a noise that does not suggest swallows. I registered something like crossbills, but said nothing. Cliff and Terry discussed the options, and then turned to Stu Thomson who was rolled up nearby and Cliff roared as only he could, "Stuart, what birds are those?" Loud snores, and more snores. Finally it was light, while the birds were still up and calling.

Dymond said he would never forget the excursion he was on. On Sunday morning the progress of the younger members into the swamp was marked by a receding roll of gunfire. Everyone was a collector in those days. I, for example, beat Rutter to a yellow-throated vireo. He was too slow on the draw, which may be why in his age he vituperated against collectors and collecting. The museum had just acquired an artist -- Shortt -- and had a list of plumages they needed. Everyone had seen the list. Years later I was with Shortt on

the terrace of the Macdonald Hotel in Edmonton when we surprised some clay-colored sparrows just out of the nest in the shrubbery. "It's on the list", said Terry, and he got one. Dymond worried about game wardens, but they went to church on Sunday mornings, and the swamp dwellers, bootleggers to a man, could not have cared less about shooting.

On one excursion, on the Saturday night, Jim Baillie and Bill Ricker planted a bird from the old British Museum duplicates in the top of a spruce near the sleeping place. I think they wanted to use a hoactzin, but those all had data, so they had to settle for a data-less kookaburra - laughing jackass to you -- a battered relic of the University Museum fire of 1890, when Hubert Brown and perhaps others of Dr. Brodie's disciples had helped rescue the specimens. Cliff Hope and Stu Thompson spotted that bird simultaneously. Cliff was instantly on the move. Stu, a few paces behind, cried "Don't shoot, Cliff. I'll get it with my game getter!" The Marble's Game Getter, known also as the Sunday gun, was a collapsible (and illegal) combination rifle and shotgun. Cliff shot first and after a fusilade both knew they were had, Stu the worse. In birding disasters are more memorable than triumphs.

There came a day, though, when a lot of academic professionals on which the Club depended, were not naturalists. The senior professors when I was in Biology, were immensely erudite naturalists, classical scholars and gentlemen, graduates to a man of the great German universities -- Walker, for instance, of Karl University in Prague. There are no people like that any more, and scholarship at those universities sickened with the Kaiser and died with the advent of Hitler. It became possible to get a degree through the process of learning more and more about less and less, and such people are ill at ease in the presence of naturalists, and scared of such things as Brodie Clubs. Fortunately, there are enough real naturalists to carry on.

When I joined, I was still a teen-ager. To-day, the Club's joints are creaking. It should undercut the T. O. C. and Field Biologists, and let them grow old. What about a maximum age for new members (say 25)? Also

programs that are real natural history, and <sup>not</sup> processions of experts. If half of the members were under 30, you could get it.

When I say that naturalists are scarce, I do not include under that title the host of sentimental dilettantes that threaten to discredit nature clubs. If they take over what you lose is credibility. Fanatics have taken over the R. S. P. C. A. in Britain, which now has an official policy dedicated to the suppression of all "blood sports" -- including angling, which Isaac Walton called the contemplative man's recreation. The fanatics in the U. S. have taken over the Defenders of Wildlife (on whose board I used to sit) and even the Arizona Audubon. I hope it could not happen here. Brian Davies has, fortunately, much less credibility and charisma than the humblest Newfie sealer. Greenpeace has lost credibility, more's the pity. The F. O. N. was first proposed, and its founding organized, in the Brodie Club, and the Club took an active interest in its welfare. The F. O. N. could get off course quite easily and the Brodie Club should contribute to keeping it on course.

We did go activist, once only, about the time I first started attending. It was when Jack Miner was in his heyday, and papers were full of his campaign for the slaughter of hawks. He was both emotional and plausible, in the same sense that Davies is. Davies is arrogant and ignorant; Jack was arrogant and ignorant but appeared humble and sympathetic. Davies' sympathy is fragile. The Brodie Club had access to the Globe, thanks to John Townson, and produced a series of well written, factual accounts of hawks. They carried the names of individuals. Jack was furious. Who were those ignorant fools whom nobody ever heard of, who dared to contradict the great Wild Goose Jack, who, in his own words, had the love and respect of everybody in North America. Jack produced a booklet "Facts about Hawks" and sent it, postage paid by friends, to anyone of any influence all over Ontario. It was full of easily exposed errors, and non-sequiturs capable of being made obvious to anyone of even modest intelligence. The Brodie Club in a moment of weakness took up the challenge, and produced its one and only publication "The Brodie Club Examines Jack Miner's Facts About Hawks".



This time the fat really was in the fire. The trouble was Jack's lawyers never could find any Brodie Club. It was not corporate, it had no tax exemption, or even a mailing address or a telephone number. However, the Museum people were afraid that they might trace it to its basement lair and get Jack's political friends to starve the Museum of Zoology to death.

This was, I think, a factor in the Club founding the F. O. N., which could take stands on issues without the Museum being vulnerable. When the F. O. N. was announced it met with approval all over Ontario, but people just did not understand why Jack Miner was not automatically elected patron saint. I would hesitate to say that there was a risk take-over, but F. O. N. Vice-president Dymond did have to chair Jack's annual visit to Massey Hall and sit on the platform while Jack and his sponsor, Magistrate Jones, sang a duet a capello. Jones may be remembered as the author of booklets on plants illustrated, involuntarily I think, by D. A. MacLulich. Dymond said the experience was excruciating, meaning especially the duet.

Dr. Brodie's original group could not have lasted much more than 30 years. This modern Club is pushing 60 years, and I hope it comes alive. People used to treasure Club membership. If you did not attend every other week without a good reason, you were kicked off the list. I remember Doc Allin, who went to Fort William after he got his Public Health Diploma. He was a top-notch all-round naturalist, proficient in many fields, a hunter, angler, collector. He was fiercely proud of his connection, and signed his articles in various journals, mostly on cold-blooded vertebrates, not too well looked after by others, with the words "Member of the Brodie Club" after his name, as though no further credentials were needed. He became a member as a student about the same time I did, and the Club of those days justified that kind of pride.