

BOOK REVIEW

Quercus in Britain. In 1973 the Botanical Society of the British Isles held a symposium devoted to the two species of oak which occur in the British Isles. The papers given at that meeting are now brought together under one cover.*

A total of twenty-one contributions cover such diverse topics as: the Flandrian history of oak in the British Isles; uses of oak, past and present; physiology of the oak tree; the macrofungi in the oak woods of Britain; oak as a habitat for insect life; the birds of oak woodlands. One can also read about cytology, annual rings, nutrient cycles, defoliators and fungal pathogens. As this selection of subjects shows, the organisers of the symposium cast their net wide.

For anybody interested in *Quercus* in Britain this is clearly a very useful reference work which contains a great deal of up-to-date information from many different disciplines of biology. It is unlikely that the general botanical reader will want to read it from cover to cover but there are bound to be at least some chapters that interest and inform him. Although there is little to criticise about the individual contributions which are all clearly presented, and well edited, one can perhaps question the overall unity of the volume. In several parts one has the impression that the topics are but tenuously linked by the common factor—oak. A summation paper at the close of the book would at least have helped to give an impression of unity.

A final comment concerns the absence of anything about the oaks outside Britain. After all, the oak is no more British than is the Scots Pine only Scottish. Both *Quercus petraea* and *Q. robur* are widely distributed throughout most countries of Europe and, at least in the case of the former, reach eastwards to Turkey. It is in the east of their overall range where many of their most intractable problems occur and where their closest relatives grow. A chapter on the British Oak abroad would not have been out of place.

I. C. HEDGE

* Morris, M. G. & Perring, F. H. (eds). *The British Oak; its history and natural history*. Published for the Botanical Society of the British Isles by E. W. Classey Ltd. Berks. 376 pp. £6.00.