

Kenneth Bowman, Alberta Lepidopterist, part 2

or, What was left out of the Blue Jay article

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This is not a conventional biographical paper on Kenneth Bowman as was written for the Blue Jay,¹ but rather a collection of further facts about his life and a number of recollections of him by my primary sources, his sister Alice Bowman, his daughter Isobel Bowman Elias, and his wife Eva. I have given the sections headings that will allow them to be linked easily to the main stages of his life as described in the Blue Jay article. For those interested in Kenneth Bowman, I hope that this paper will shed further light on his life and character.

Descent and Kin

Kenneth Bowman's roots, as far back as I have been able to trace with certainty, lie in the lovely castle and market town of Richmond, Yorkshire, to which his great grandfather Thomas Bowman moved in the late 1790s. It is likely that the family were farmers in County Durham before that but this has yet to be proved. Thomas Bowman was one of the main printers and stationers in Richmond and he and his family were very active in the political, administrative, church, social and cultural life of the town.

His second son, Robert Benson Bowman,² who was Kenneth's grandfather, moved to Newcastle around 1824, starting out as a chemist's assistant and eventually becoming a chemical manufacturer in his father-in-law's business in Washington, Durham. His father-in-law was the metallurgical chemist Hugh Lee Pattinson, whose three daughters married respectively Robert Benson Bowman, Isaac Lowthian Bell, the iron master, and Robert Stirling Newall, who founded a wire rope making company. Newall's company manufactured and laid many of the world's first submarine cables and also provided the wire rope used to haul Cleopatra's Needle from Egypt to London in 1877. All members of this extended family were deeply interested in various branches of natural history.

Robert's eldest son Henry was Kenneth's father. Henry married the eldest daughter of Thomas Bell, brother of Isaac Lowthian Bell, and it was Thomas who guided Kenneth's knowledge of butterflies and collecting from childhood through young manhood. This same Bell family produced the distinguished traveller, diplomat, mountain climber, archaeologist and writer Gertrude Bell, who helped form Iraq into the country that it is – well, isn't any longer – today. She was the granddaughter of Isaac Lowthian Bell and she and Kenneth were second cousins.

I think Kenneth was very proud of his background and kinship even though the family's wealth had steadily declined from the peak times of Robert Benson Bowman – but this was true of many families that had risen precipitously during the Industrial Revolution. This family background would have contributed to his standing in Edmonton society and he was certainly very much part of the English and Scottish expat circles and clubs there. He wore, until he lost it, a ring with the Bowman family crest that his grandfather had designed for bookplates. His house on Wadhurst Road was full of old family things from England – silverware, chinaware, beautiful antique oak furniture, prints and books – all much treasured.

Siblings

Kenneth had six siblings, Beatrice, Harry, George Simonds, Alice, Catherine Elsa and Hugh Brymer. George Simonds died in infancy before Kenneth's birth. Catherine Elsa, the youngest of the sisters, converted to Catholicism around the age of 20 and worked as a Sister of St Vincent de Paul in the U.S.A. and elsewhere for many years before withdrawing into seclusion as a Carmelite nun in Rome. Her family never really got over the shock of the conversion and the loss of this much-loved sister. Kenneth and Eva wrote to her in Rome but I don't think the family saw her again after her mother's death. Of all his siblings, however, Kenneth was closest to Alice, who was a year and a half older than he was. After his death, my mother Isobel wrote to Alice asking her for her memories of Kenneth and, then aged 83, she responded with a twenty-eight page letter. She began with this:

My first remembrance of Kenneth is seeing something in the beautiful dress babies wore in those days ... I don't think I knew what it was, for I was barely two, & I remember nothing more of him till some years later, when we went to live in my Grandfather's house in Yorkshire. It was a large, old house in a large garden, fields and a wood, – quite safe I imagine as we were allowed to roam about it as we liked, and expect if we went back now it would be much smaller than I remember it.

¹ HENDRA, L. 2005. Kenneth Bowman, Alberta Lepidopterist. *Blue Jay*, Dec 2005. v63 no. 4.

² HENDRA, L. 2005. Robert Benson Bowman – An Early Newcastle Botanist. *Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria*. July 2005. v64 part 3.

There was a robin who used to fly in at the window, & help himself to Kenneth's porridge, much to his delight. In front of the house was a large field, called the "Park," & golden with cowslips in the spring. A path across it led to a stile, & then another field to the farm ...

Quite an idyllic portrait of Victorian childhood, this describes the place where Kenneth first began his study of butterflies. It was Thomas Bell's estate, Crosby Court, and today it is still surrounded by beautiful, unspoiled North Yorkshire countryside.

Clapham (ca 1884–1899)

By about 1884, the family had moved from the northeast and settled in Clapham, South London and the children were attending nearby schools. This was the happiest period of their young days, according to Alice Bowman. She wrote,

The house was in a broad road, & there were a pink may & a laburnum in front. The back, with windows led onto a terrace which led down by two or three steps to a long garden, where Mother, who had "green fingers" (inherited by Kenneth) made a delightful garden with a succession of flowers. As it happened there was one of those cycles of hot, fine summers, when we sat in the garden till bed time, made engagements for picnics for a fortnight ahead, & it kept fine, & finally ended in a spectacular thunder storm at night, which began in front of the house, passed over it & on to the river. As soon as we were sure it was worth watching Harry & Kenneth would come into Beatrice's & my room to watch it, & stayed till there was nothing more to watch.

Kenneth would continue this tradition of storm-watching in Canada, but for a different reason. His daughter Isobel recalled,

Very early I know I loved thunder and lightning storms. We all did, or so I thought! Dad loved these noise and light shows and so did I. We all got up and had tea and watched. Little did I realize 'til quite into teens that Mum was terrified – had been from a little child – and we were together with the teapot and cups and buns, not to enjoy the storm, but to provide her with cheer and normality. She never let me know when I was in childhood. What I took for thrill in her was sheer shaking terror. The tea party was Dad's idea. I hear my mind saying to myself right now, 'What a kindly, personal con-artist my father was!'

Cats

This may seem an odd topic to include but, as Alice wrote, 'I will give the history of the cats, as no account of Kenneth would be possible without it!' In her words,

Cats were always a feature in our family, & whoever was their owner they considered Kenneth as their special property. The first at Clapham was "Jack" christened by the cook, who fed him when he came thin & hungry & having evidently been ill treated. It was not long before he came upstairs & was a member of the family – a large, handsomely marked cat, with the scars of many battles on him, & a firm conviction that he was the owner of the garden, & no other cat would be tolerated! He & Kenneth adopted one another, & held long conversations. One day we were in the drawing room & the two of them on the balcony, & we heard Kenneth: – "a beautiful cat, a most beautiful cat, – perhaps the most beautiful cat in the whole world"! while Jack purred & preened himself & obviously believed it all.

Then one day, a kitten walked into the house & said it intended to stay – a lovely little kitten the colouring of a tiger, though mottled, not striped & long haired. We put it out twice terrified for fear Jack should see it, but the third time they met face to face, – Jack looked at it, & it boxed his ears, so we realized it was a lady & safe! We called her Fuzzy (short for Fuzzy-Wuzzy) & she took possession of the house & ruled us for 16 years, when she died "honoured & beloved" to our great grief ...

When we left Clapham Kenneth went to live with our Grandmother, & after Jack's bitterly regretted death, had a large, yellow son of Fuzzy's, who was so devoted to curry – very hot curry – that we had no peace till he was helped. Like all the other cats he was devoted to Kenneth, & if he were out late would go up to the top of the road & wait. When Kenneth came he would jump off the wall, Kenneth would say: – "Come along Kitchener," & they would trot down the road together.

His love of cats never diminished, as can be seen from the well-known picture of him taken in his last years with a white cat on his knees.

Dulwich College (1889–1893)

In March 1889, at the age of fourteen, Kenneth entered Dulwich College as student number 3565. As you probably know, Dulwich is not a college in the North American sense but a secondary school. Among Alice's memories was this.

Kenneth went to Dulwich, one of the few Public Schools which only took day boys & stayed till he had finished his education. He & various other boys went by train, & were excused Prayers, as there was barely time to get to the school, even if the train were not late. Then an obnoxious prig found that by jumping out before the train stopped & running the whole way he could just manage it. This was intolerable, & the rest of the gang took measures! They put him forcibly under the seat, & when the guard came to inspect tickets they said: – "There is another, but he prefers travelling under the seat." The indignant guard hauled him out choked with dust & indignation, & he decided not to be a martyr to duty!

Kenneth's studies included Latin, Greek, ancient history, literature and other academic subjects but Alice noted,

I think Kenneth was better at games than work, & there was one term when his report was not good & Mother was not pleased. She did not go to the prize giving & when he came home, asked him sarcastically: – "Well, did you get a prize?" on which he blandly produced "The Seven Lamps of Architecture," – prize for drawing, & moreover claimed the 10/- which Father gave for winning a prize! Little devil!!!

Perhaps one thing of which he was proudest was being one of the Shooting Team of eight, who first won the Shield from all the big public schools. His aim was very accurate & his nerve steady & he was always called on to kick goals in his football days.

He remained at Dulwich until July 1893, when he left the Remove form after the first of two years of Upper School.

London Stock Exchange (1897–1904)

The family moved again in about 1899, this time to Bearsted, a village near Maidstone in Kent. The health of Kenneth's mother Kate Bowman had become a source of concern. Kenneth, however, remained in London and lived with his grandmother Ellen Pattinson Bowman in Clapham but he returned to Bearsted on the weekends. Already working since 1897 as a clerk to Blyth and Teesdale on the London Stock Exchange, Kenneth applied to become a Member of the Exchange for the year commencing 25 March 1900 and was admitted on 2 April, although he was not authorised to transact business until 1901-02. The 1901 Census shows Kenneth at home with his family in Roseacre Lane, Bearsted and records his profession as Stock Broker.

After three years in Bearsted, the family moved to Walmer, Kent at the wish of Kate Bowman, who was longing for the sea, and there she died of heart failure on 3 July 1903. According to Alice, Kenneth would never have left his mother while she was alive and she had the pleasure of his company to the end. Alice said, 'I think, if Mother was more devoted to one of us than the rest he was the one, & he certainly was to her.' Less than a year after Kate Bowman's death, Kenneth was aboard the *Lake Manitoba* heading for Canada. His motive for emigration was the poor economic outlook in the U.K. at the time and it was thought that his prospects would be much better in Canada. In addition, favourable immigration terms were being offered to those who agreed to work the land, which is no doubt why he was described on the ship's passenger list as a 'Farmer.' He fulfilled this agreement by working as a ranch hand in the Red Deer area for a number of years. I believe he never took Canadian citizenship but remained a British citizen to the end of his life.

Railway bridge (1907–1908), with a digression

After his stint of ranching, he was employed to work on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway Bridge at Clover Bar as a labourer. When the manager died, however, the auditors Blythe and Baldwin came out from Edmonton and asked the men if any knew bookkeeping. Kenneth Bowman, as a former clerk and broker on the London Stock Exchange, shot up his hand and was promptly put in charge of the office and

the payroll of more than 200 men. Eva noted that the men were very superstitious and when there were two deaths, they said there would be a third and refused to go to work. Her notes mention that one man fell from scaffolding to the ice below, the second man was warming a stick of dynamite, put it too near fire and it exploded, and the third man – so there was indeed a third – fell through thin ice on the part of the river that was last to freeze over and the swift current pulled him under and away.

In later years, Kenneth took delight in relating the story of the stolen payroll. Despite the presence of a cricket bat behind the office counter to repel trouble, thieves managed to seize the company payroll and escape, heading for Edmonton by the main road. Quick-thinking Kenneth fetched a horse-drawn cutter and he and his boss raced up the frozen Saskatchewan River to Edmonton. They arrived there ahead of the thieves and were waiting with the North-West Mounted Police to arrest them on their arrival, to their complete surprise. Isobel said, 'I think he was very pleased with the quick-thinking. I sensed a lot of this in the elation of his telling this story.' She added,

Quick-thinking was something he was very good at. Another example was Mum's story of her and Ken coming home from Jasper in the car. They were climbing a steep hill, nearing the top when confronted by an approaching truck in the other lane and a fool in their lane passing on a hill and dead in front of them. Ken, to avert a head-on crash with the car, steered into the path of the trucker who had the wit and time to brake. The bet on the trucker was the safer bet. The car missed them – by very little – and kept going with the speed of acceleration needed to pass. The highway was only the width of two vehicles, sheer wall on one side, sheer fall the other. What a choice in split-second timing! Ken was correct, but I bet he shook after. The trucker was in awe as well as agreement. I've always remembered this as a lesson, though the situation has never occurred for me: You bet on the driver who is most likely to have control, and add: You never pass on a hill.

To return briefly to the railway bridge, I have more than 100 photographs of its construction taken by Kenneth, some showing the men and woman on site and even the company dog. Unfortunately, only one shows Kenneth himself. A few photographs of the bridge under construction have been mounted and were probably displayed in Kenneth's home at some point so it is clear that he was proud of his involvement with this project.

Jack Hornby (from ca 1907)

In Calgary, in 1907 or 1908, Kenneth was introduced to the English adventurer Jack Hornby.³ This northern explorer and survivalist was already a legend by then and was welcome in the homes of various English expats when he visited Edmonton and Calgary. With Kenneth he shared an interest in natural history and they met a number of times after their introduction to exchange information and stories. Hornby gave Kenneth two photographs of himself – in one, he is dressed in skins and standing outside the cabin he had built himself – as well as three photos he had taken of water buffalo and one of a nest of Blue Goose eggs. Kenneth told Eva and Isobel later of how Hornby would come down from the Barren Lands of the Northwest Territories almost inarticulate from long solitude and of how tales of what he had seen and done would slowly emerge. Like many others, Kenneth was greatly shocked by Hornby's horrific death from starvation in 1927, with the added sadness of having known and liked him.

The Bank Boys (from ca 1909)

By 1909, Kenneth was working for the Merchants Bank in Edmonton and sharing with other young male bank clerks a house they called Updown on the corner of 102nd Street and Victoria (I believe that was the address) above the river valley. In the winter, Kenneth and several of his colleagues formed a team to man a sleigh they had constructed themselves. With Kenneth steering, they practised on a street near Updown, careering madly down the steep but fortunately deserted slope into the river valley. I have two photos of them on their sleigh and one of Kenneth and the bank boys on the verandah railing of Updown.

Vera (1912–1926)

I have found more information about Kenneth's first wife Florence Vera Bleasdel since the Blue Jay article. She was born on 20 April 1883, the third of eleven children of William H. Bleasdel and Agnes McCuaig of Toronto. Vera's father was born in Manchester, England around 1848 but emigrated to Ontario and was eventually married in Toronto on 13 Aug 1879. He remained in the city till his death on

³ see POWELL-WILLIAMS, C. Cold Burial. Viking, 2001. biography of Jack Hornby

22 April 1910. His profession was variously described as merchant, fancy goods merchant, commercial traveller and broker.

I don't know how Kenneth Bowman and Vera met but they were married on 6 June 1912 in Toronto and afterwards returned to Edmonton where Kenneth lived. She did not flourish but became an invalid. How long after their marriage her ill health became apparent I do not know but there was a rumour that her family may have known she was ill when she married Kenneth and that they purposely passed her care on to someone else. I cannot vouch for this and it may be malicious, but in any case her condition probably saved Kenneth's life. He had signed up as a private in the Canadian Infantry at the start of World War I but because he was the sole support and carer of a bedridden invalid, he was exempted from active service.

Vera died in 1926. His second wife Eva was a complete contrast. Healthy, active and much younger, she was a good skater, swimmer and golfer and Kenneth himself enjoyed golf, tennis, skating, cricket, swimming and walking. Isobel, their only child, said he didn't speak of his first wife in the presence of Eva, even though the two women had known each other, but that when she asked her father once, 'What was Vera like?', he replied, 'Oh, she was a lovely person.'

Gardening

The front lawn at Wadhurst Road ran in a gentle slope from the house to the street and was enclosed by tall hedges and trees. Kenneth created two rock gardens and some border gardens, all very much on the English model. The upper rock garden was an alpine garden and had a spreading juniper bush and many flowers and plants graded in size from the highest to the lowest point of the rockery for maximum effect. The middle bed was for gladiolas only and Kenneth sent away to England for the bulbs. Visitors to the house were frequently given cut gladiolas to take home. Besides these, there were phlox, scented stock, mignonette, bachelor buttons, cosmos, Canterbury bells, lily of the valley and extraordinary blue poppies that had been grown from alpine seed brought back from Banff. Even with very special treatment, it was three years before the poppies flowered and they were a special point of delight and pride. It is not surprising that, with such a variety, butterflies would be drawn to Kenneth's garden.

One more feature was a garden swing. Isobel described it thus:

A neighbour in the next block was getting rid of it and did a deal with Dad (likely income tax help) so we got a 2-chaired swing, with a foot platform between the 2 "seats" (or bench-widths), a frame to hang them by and the anchored four "legs" or "feet." Dad could sit in it and quietly rock and smoke and watch his garden in the evening.

Finances

Kenneth became a Chartered Accountant on 1 August 1914. For a time, he was in partnership with two other men but after suffering some business reversals – a few family sources have said he was cheated due to his gentlemanly sense of honour – he struck out on his own as a freelance accountant. He made enough money in subsequent years to scrape by and Eva supplemented this with small investments and some help from her eldest sister, the latter contributions perhaps unknown to Kenneth.

It must be said that Eva's sisters, both in Edmonton and in Scotland, passed on rather negative impressions of Kenneth to their families. He was viewed as lacking energy, not being a go-getter and not providing for their sister sufficiently. Of course the former two were not true as he was very busily occupied with natural history – but he was definitely not a businessman. The significance of what he was doing wasn't understood at the time nor was the single-minded passion and persistence of the collector, which by its very nature often demands sacrifice. It is only very recently, with a greater knowledge of Kenneth's contribution to lepidoptery, that he has come to be viewed in a different light by the descendants.

I should mention as well that it was found out, after his death, that he had regularly been sending money to his sisters Beatrice and Alice, who were living in somewhat reduced circumstances in England – another reason that his financial situation had been so tight. I think this speaks for itself.

Belmore Browne, Banff (1930s-50?)

Kenneth was a friend of the 'artist of the North American wilderness' Belmore Browne, who lived with his wife in California during the winter and in Banff during the summer. Browne was not only an artist, but a naturalist, mountaineer, explorer and hunter, obviously a fascinating man. Kenneth used to drive to Banff to visit him, sometimes accompanied by Eva and Isobel, and the families regularly corresponded. At some point, Kenneth was given a painting by Browne, which is now in the possession of the writer.

Isobel wrote of one visit to Banff:

Dad and I went in the car "up the mountain" to an alpine meadow and it was covered with wild flowers of different colours, and alive with butterflies! (now I realize this was his motive). My memory is still crystal clear on the view! The valley had the Banff Springs Hotel off to lower left – mountains around the background of the valley – winding water ribbon below and elation on a mountain meadow in the heat of the sun, temperature perfect! Dad got specimens, while I wandered abroad above the world and then sat agaze, marvelling at my fortunate position! Finally we must have descended to the more banal levels of holiday. Nothing stands out. Dad was a companion for the special, the extraordinary, the fascinating, the small sensual adventures of living – in his shadow, loving his light on small aspects of nature.

His character

Although his character runs through these writings and is apparent from his tireless work, I would like to end with the words of those who knew him best, a few stories that reveal different aspects of his personality ...

This is Alice, talking of their days in Clapham:

There is one more silly little thing; a friend of mine, Frances, & I were going upstairs, & (Kenneth) was jumping up to catch my ankles through the banisters, when he put his foot through the glass which was supposed to – but did not – light the kitchen stairs. Mother came in just then, & asked how it had happened, on which he said, with the air of a noble martyr, "Say it was me, Frances"! to which she scornfully replied "I certainly shall"! – & it was not till some days later that Mother asked how Frances had managed to break the window!!

And this is Isobel, with one of her earliest childhood memories of her father:

Once in fever I saw gremlin-type beings on my curtain and howled in fear and distress – Dad came in to my noise, took in the situation, asked me to point them out and one by one, calmly picked them off! A man of certainty, humor and practical imagination. I saw them go (in my clear memory of this event) and felt so grateful and at peace.

Because of Kenneth, Isobel said, she knew songs that her friends didn't – London music hall songs from the turn of the century and popular songs up to the 1920s. When she was five years old, she took singing lessons and one day Eva decided impulsively to let her sing for some visiting ladies. Her first number was well received and when the ladies asked for an encore, she sang this, her favourite song:

*Oh we'll go to Mrs. Murphy's and we'll have a glass of gin
And we'll all sit around until the tide comes in
Oh we'll go to Mrs. Murphy's and we'll have a glass of stout
And we'll all sit around until the tide goes out!*

'It was a great surprise for everyone!' she wrote, 'except for Dad and me!'

As well as teaching his daughter racy songs, he introduced her to the natural world with sometimes humorous consequences. This is one of Isobel's fondest memories:

I didn't like snakes. So with Dad – while Mum golfed – I walked around the golf course edge where it lay along the top of the river valley. And he saw a snake, basking in the sun's heat. A garter snake. And it began to move as we approached closer. Dad said "See if you can catch it" and true to his words, off and over the hill's edge I went. And caught it! Shouted partly in panic "I've got it! – oh, God!" He called calmly down over the edge, "Well bring it up and we'll have a look at it" (very matter of fact tone). So I did. And we did. And it was, I saw, very beautiful. So we'd take it home! In the car. We shut it in and went in for tea at the clubhouse with Mum and her friend,

Gertrude. We gave Gertrude a ride home. Halfway there, Gertrude began shrieking and Dad nearly went off the road, which made him irritable with her – (hysterical type anyway). We'd forgotten about our snake and he'd come out from the back of the back seat. So I was told to hold him and he rode home in front with me while Gertrude gasped and ranted in squeaks and whispers 'til let out at her door.

The snake was eventually returned to the wild.

Another time, during a formal dinner at the house in Wadhurst Road, with guests seated around the table, Kenneth brought in the roast of beef on a silver salver and when the cover was lifted, there was revealed not a roast but Isobel's teddy bear. Eva was utterly mortified but the bear was saved, the roast followed and the dinner became a novel success, often talked about by those who had attended.

Kenneth was outgoing and acknowledged to be a witty conversationalist at parties. His son-in-law Roy Hendra said Kenneth could also cook a mean Welsh Rarebit and used to prepare a highly effective cocktail made from one bottle of French vermouth, one bottle of Italian vermouth and one bottle of gin mixed in a large punch bowl. A touch of ginger ale could be added to the glass – but that was purely optional.

To go back to the long letter that Alice Bowman wrote to Isobel after Kenneth's death, she ended it thus:
I hope it will give you a better idea of your Father. On re-reading it I wonder whether I have dwelt too much on the "foolish things" & not enough on his sunny good-temper, his kindliness, his goodness & the unexpected puckishness which made life so cheery & the remembrance so happy, but you know them!

And now I hope you know something of them as well.

London, England
September 2007

Notes to Greg Pohl

His methods, equipment, etc.

1 Light bulb

He used a very large light bulb with a clear glass (unfrosted) globe and a clear, bright filament (incandescent?) and put it in an ordinary socket located outside the verandah in the back of the Wadhurst Road house, overlooking the ravine. There was a wooden walk that ran up and down outside the verandah and he would walk up and down this walk. Every so often, he would stop, catch something and put it in the bottle and the next day he would set it out. He was looking for missing or damaged specimens in his series of duplicates (six? eight? anyway, a set number) and he always knew exactly what he needed. Across the ravine his friend was doing the same thing and they could see each other's lights [This friend was primarily a bird man and was not Donald Mackie]. The ravine was full of evergreen and deciduous trees with lots of undergrowth and dead leaves under every bush. There were somewhat precariously cut steps going down to the bottom of the ravine with a run-off creek at the bottom and a huge culvert about 6 or 7' in diameter.

Isobel has no memory of Kenneth using kerosene lanterns. When he went on his trips, he collected mostly in the daylight. He usually stayed with friends, being very welcome anywhere, so he could have used a bulb at their houses. He could have taken one with him or bought one somewhere. However, Isobel says how he collected while he was first establishing the foundations of his collection is unknown to her. By the time she was around, he was perfecting the collection and filling in missing or damaged specimens using the light bulb method. As a child, she saw him as a reflection in the window from her bed, out every evening in the summer. 'He's out in the dark with the light all around his head and the moths coming — dun coloured ones and colourful ones.'

2 Net

He used a black net, perhaps made of silk because it was very fine and soft. He preferred black because he could easily see the specimens through it both in the sunlight and at night. It was a folding net and easily fitted into his jacket pocket.

3 Poison bottle

He had a poison bottle, a small jar about 4 or 5 inches tall, which sat high up on a ledge in the porch. It had a disc made of cork or cardboard, which fit about a quarter of the way up from the bottom of the jar. Under it was the potassium cyanide and there were pin holes in the disc to let the fumes out. The rest of the jar was empty and a lid fitted on top. The poison was quick and effective so the insects were immediately overcome and didn't fly around damaging their wings and losing dust. He caught moths at night directly in the jar, not by net.

In the day, he would swing his net and capture a group of flying things, gather up the folds of the net gently, identify a desired specimen and then separate it within the net. He would insert the poison bottle into the net, capture the insect, slide the bottle to the top and put the lid on afterwards.

4 Hatching tin

He hatched insects as well. He had a hinged tin box, about 1 1/2" deep in the bottom and in the top. It held water in the bottom and the top folded over. The water was needed for moisture and he hatched the butterflies or moths from pupae when he wanted to get a perfect specimen, one that had never flown. He didn't do this often as he regarded it as cheating nature. He preferred to catch specimens naturally, freshly hatched and before their first flight – butterflies during the day, moths at night.

5 Setting board

He had a setting board and thin pins and he set each insect carefully. He would stretch out one wing, put thin paper over the top to hold the wing in place, stretch out the other wing, repeat the process and then the butterfly was held by the paper to the board.

6 Cedar boxes, glass cases, no mothballs

He used cedar cigar boxes lined with cork at first and then later ordered special, expensive glass cases – from England, Isobel believes. She wonders how he paid for them. He didn't spend much on clothes or shoes but put a lot of money into cases. She said it was one expense Eva didn't complain about as the cases made him so happy. The cigar boxes were very safe because they were made of cedar so they didn't get infested. She has no memory of his using mothballs – although Eva used them for woollen clothes.

He sent most of his stuff to McDunnough in the East and also to New York and he used the cedar boxes for mailing the insects, which were pinned inside. The boxes were light and strong but even so, they were bundled heavily with packing. Isobel doesn't remember him sending specimens to Cincinnati or of him mentioning a woman entomologist there.

7 Collecting areas

Unfortunately we have no record of the exact mountains, hills or meadows he collected from. However, he certainly did not confine his collecting to towns but climbed at least one mountain near every town he visited – Banff, Jasper, Nordegg, etc. – to the alpine meadow level. He would drive as high as possible and then climb from there.

He would also always stop by the road wherever the family drove in Alberta to check what was around. He especially loved the muskeg / fen area about five miles west of 127th Street, out Stony Plain Road.

8 Literature, contacts

He did have a collection of papers and books on butterflies and moths. After his death, they may have been given to friends or possibly to the University of Alberta along with his collection. He didn't have many books, but only what he needed. They were large books with descriptions necessary for identification and very few illustrations other than segments of wings, etc. The titles, authors, dates and countries of origin are not known.

Isobel Bowman Elias doesn't remember any contacts he had other than McDunnough but says there were frequent visitors to the house from various fields of natural history. They often brought slides from their trips up north and elsewhere, which were shown in the living room. She also has no memory of him visiting other collections. She does remind us, however, that his collection was fairly complete by the time she was born and that he may have travelled and corresponded with other lepidopterists in earlier days.