

13: ANIMALS

In general terms, Wilfred's war was very quiet; luckily [for him; not for the unfortunate victims] 'The Blitz' started on a Saturday, September 7th 1940, so it is probable that he will have been at home, and the damage was concentrated on the central part of the capital [1]. Although Victoria Street was at the heart of the city, it appears to have escaped virtually unscathed [2]; one minor incident was noted in the LPAVS Executive Committee Meetings Minutes for October 1940, early in this period of bombardment [see Chapter 12, note 59] but otherwise, Wilfred's work appears to have continued uninterrupted during the war. 'Outer London' also 'copped it' subsequently, but there is no evidence that Wilfred and Nellie's home in Ruislip Manor suffered any damage [although see below, with reference to the nearby Northolt Aerodrome]; however, for the total period of the war, nearly 30,000 civilians [which included Civil Defence workers] were killed by enemy action in the London Civil Defence region, against 60,595 who were killed over the same period in Great Britain, including Northern Ireland, overall [3]. There is no obvious or automatic correlation in these figures with the number of people made homeless, however [see note 2]. The implications for domestic pets, notwithstanding the 'September Holocaust' [see also Chapter 12, note 59] and, indeed, animals of all sizes, which were liable to vivisection, can only be guessed at, but the LPAVS, personified by Wilfred Risdon and his colleagues, continued with its admirable work, despite the war which will, understandably as well as inevitably, have been a totally absorbing matter for most people, into which such relatively insignificant topics as vivisection will not readily have intruded.

As detailed at the end of Chapter 12, by early in 1941, if a Special Branch report is to be believed, Wilfred was Assistant Secretary at the LPAVS. The news that "Mr. Armstrong had got a very good job which he was starting on March 5th" [4], as reported by the Secretary at the March

ECM, must have come as something of a relief for Wilfred; not only would he have been pleased for his erstwhile colleague and partner in adversity, but it meant that there was no longer a question mark hanging over his position on the staff of the LPAVS. He was already having articles that had been written by his *alter ego* of W. Arr printed on a regular monthly basis, sometimes more than one per issue, which will have boosted his income modestly. In May that year, he represented the Society at a “successful” debate “where a vote of 13 to 5 was registered ‘That Vivisection should be abolished’.” although unfortunately, details of the debate and its venue were reported neither in the ECM Minutes nor the Society’s *News-Sheet*.

A serious matter arose in August 1941 that called into question the integrity of his titular superior Dudley Elam, and the validity of his continuance as Acting Secretary of the Society: when Norah Elam was arrested the previous year, on the same day as Wilfred, it had been assumed by the remaining Executive Committee members that she would return to her duties when released; sooner rather than later, all being well; consequently, the Committee had agreed to pay her an annual retaining fee of £150, payable monthly, “in consideration of her agreeing to resume her duties with the society at the earliest possible moment if called upon to do so”. Curiously [and, arguably, displaying a distinct lack of fairly common knowledge] it was assumed that she would be able to continue her editorial work while incarcerated: “She to make up the proposed monthly News Sheet and to act generally in a non-consultative capacity without further remuneration this engagement to be subject to review by the Society.” The Society’s solicitor, Geoffrey Gush, over whom there was also a question mark, was instructed to inform Mrs. Dacre Fox [by which name the Committee referred to her] accordingly [5]. At the ECM of the 2nd of July, 1940, the question of her resignation was raised by the President, Dr. Fergie Woods [6], but a decision was deferred until the next meeting, when the matter was settled by the appointment of her ‘husband’ provisionally “as Acting Secretary and as Editor of the News Sheet, and to deal generally with the business of the Society”. After this, the Society’s affairs continued smoothly for just over a year, but in August 1941,