**Meat for Mice –** **A vet’s diary of the London**

**Natural History Museum 1962 Expedition to**

**Northern Rhodesia**

**Ian Keymer**

Romney Publications Ltd, £45.00

In 1962, Ian Keymer set out with

museum staff from the London

Natural History Museum for

Northern Rhodesia (now known as

Zambia) to collect specimens. As a

vet and pathologist, his main job was

to carry out post-mortems on the

animals, checking for zoonoses and

animal diseases communicable to

humans, though at times he also

acted as unofficial doctor to

expedition members and others.

Based on diaries kept by the

author, there is remarkable detail

on the people, dates and places

involved in this expedition, which

was primarily a hunting safari.

The idea of killing animals for

research specimens mostly belongs

to an era long gone, and as attitudes

towards animal welfare have

changed, some of the activities

described are disturbing.

Although the author addresses

issues to do with apartheid in his

introduction, some terminology

used in the book is also controversial

e.g. “piccaninnies”. Nevertheless,

this provides a historical vignette

into how these kinds of expeditions

were once run.

Over 90 photos, sketches and maps

make this a well-illustrated account.

Considering most of the photos were

taken over 50 years ago, their quality

is good, but be warned not all are

pretty pictures: for example, the

puka deer being skinned.

Appendices include a list of the

specimens collected, including

stomach contents and external

parasites, from 516 mammals of at

least 79 different species; the results

of examinations for protozoan and

viral diseases; a list of government

and university departments;

and people mentioned in the text

and a glossary.

Students of tropical medicine

and anyone curious about east

African natural history might find

this of interest.

Sue Howarth FSB