EVOLUTION AND ENVIRONMENT
IN THE
LATE SILURIAN AND EARLY DEVONIAN

EDITED BY:
W.G. CHALONER, F.R.S., AND J.D. LAWSON

The relationship between evolution and the environment is of fundamental importance in our understanding of the evolutionary process. About 400 million years ago, in the late Silurian and early Devonian geological periods, there were major changes in the geography of the world involving the development of very extensive land areas and high mountain ranges. Over the same time span some of the most important steps in organic evolution were taken. Vascular plants colonized the continents and diversified. The vertebrates moved from the sea into the fresh water of rivers and lakes, a pathway that was ultimately to lead to their adaptation to terrestrial life. The invertebrates, particularly the arthropods, developed adaptations for air-breathing.

The papers in this volume describe these dramatic evolutionary and palaeogeographical changes and discuss their possible interrelationships. The contributions were originally presented at a Discussion Meeting of the Royal Society in May 1984.

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Plants and many invertebrates grow by iterating units of construction, ‘modules’, and as a consequence develop characteristic architectures and life history patterns that differ markedly from those of unitary organisms. A Royal Society Discussion Meeting was held in June 1985 to bring together botanists and zoologists who find common ground in analysing the form and behaviour of modular organisms, and the invited papers at that meeting are published in this volume. Themes that recur in the various papers are the ecology of cloning, the evolutionary consequences of the failure of these organisms to segregate their germ plasm, the effects of branching pattern on form and the evolution of life histories in organisms whose reproductive value may increase exponentially with age. Contributors included specialists on corals, bryozoans, salps, trees, actinomycetes and fungi. A feature of the meeting was the number of poster presentations, and to supplement this book a number of them have been published in *Proceedings of the Royal Society*, series B, volume 228, pages 109–224. (See below)

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