

## R. DESMOND KIME – A BIRTHDAY APPRECIATION

Paul T. Harding

Centre for Ecology and Hydrology Wallingford, Crowmarsh Gifford, OX10 8BB  
E-mail: pha@ceh.ac.uk

Address for correspondence: 60 Boxworth Road, Elsworth, Cambridge CB23 4JQ



Photo: Paul Richards

Des Kime was a founder member of the British Myriapod Group in 1970 and he is still actively involved with its successor, BMIG. This brief “appreciation” celebrates Des’ 80th birthday in April 2012 and the contribution he has made to myriapod studies in Britain and continental Europe. With the full agreement of his family, Des chose to spend this notable birthday at the BMIG Spring Meeting at Wentworth Castle near Barnsley – a true sign of his dedication to myriapodology! Fortunately, BMIG provided birthday cake (see image, left) and a (faltering) round of “Happy Birthday”.

Born and brought-up in Lincolnshire, Des’ interest in natural history was fostered by his grandfather and he went on to study zoology at the University of Durham, where his post-graduate research on hole nesting birds included work on fleas (Kime, 1962). Since 1968 his main research interest has been in soil fauna, especially millipedes. With a postgraduate Diploma in Education, he went on to teach Biology, Botany and Zoology at the Royal Grammar School in Guildford, where he was joined by fellow teacher Tony Barber in 1964. That led to a division of labour in myriapod

fieldwork, with Tony covering the centipedes and Des the millipedes, for recording in grid squares rather than the then traditional vice-counties.

In April 1970, Des and Tony joined 10 other myriapodologists at a field meeting in North Devon, at which the British Myriapod Group was formed (Anon, 1972). The British Myriapod Survey was launched in 1971 by Colin Fairhurst and Tony Barber.

In 1974 Des was appointed to the European School in Brussels, which gave him the opportunity to widen his interests in the ecology and distribution of millipedes in Europe. His work on millipedes was usually confined to his spare time and school holidays, but through active links with museums and university departments, mainly in Belgium and France, Des has been able to collaborate widely, as his publications demonstrate. Since his retirement in 1993, and subsequently going to live permanently in central France, these collaborations have increased and extended. With a natural gift for languages, Des has been in communication with almost every active myriapodologist in Europe.

At the 4th International Congress of Myriapodology at Gargano, Italy in 1978, a decision was made to set up the European Myriapod Survey, modelled on the British Survey. Des was, and remains, the contact point for this project, which has never had any form of official financial support. In his paper

announcing the European Survey (Kime, 1985), some ambitious aspirations were expressed, but by then Des was mapping European distributions of millipedes, by hand, on paper maps. Remember, this was the dawn of computerised information technology in biogeography. I remember seeing piles of “work in progress” maps in Des’ study at the top of the house in Linkebeek that he and Kathleen occupied for many years. On each visit, the amount of information had increased and tantalizing distributions were beginning to emerge. Although, interim maps for 50 species were published (Kime, 1990), the difficulties of getting the data from original hand-plotted maps into a form suitable for publication has delayed the project, but it has allowed Des more time to collate records.

Des worked with Henrik Enghoff on the Fauna Europaea project to collate the European list of Diplopoda (Enghoff & Kime, 2004). This led to their further collaboration on the European Atlas, the first volume of which (Kime & Enghoff, 2011) covers 492 species. The subsequent two volumes will cover more than 1000 further species (and the list keeps growing). The Atlas is a magnificent tribute to all concerned, not least to the perseverance of Des Kime in collating records for more than 25 years (and to Kathleen for putting up with it!).

Always affable and ready with an anecdote, Des is excellent and generous company at any time. He has taken part in BMIG excursions to under-recorded parts of Europe – Hungary (Korsos, 2006) and more recently twice to northern Spain and Portugal. His enthusiasm is truly inspirational, as he demonstrated at the recent BMIG meeting with news: of his forthcoming atlas of the millipedes of France, of progress with Volume 2 of the European Atlas, and of prospects for further surveys in Spain. I have had the pleasure of his company at many European Invertebrate Survey and Council of Europe meetings and conferences at various locations on the continent. Des has an unerring eye (and nose) for good food and appropriate alcoholic refreshment. Only once have we been unlucky, in a remote village in Finland where we shared execrable pizzas (the only food available after 6pm) in a gloomy bar full of morose-looking foresters.

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