

Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group 2 (1984)

OBITUARY

It is with sadness that we report on the loss of three British scientists who have made important contributions to Myriapodology.

Dr. SIDNIE M. MANTON (Mrs. J.P. Harding) was already a zoologist of world-wide repute, with an impressive body of published work on Crustacea, Onychophora and corals, co-author of the most respected text of Vertebrate Anatomy and Fellow of the Royal Society, before she turned her attention towards myriapods. Having already achieved what most of us would regard as a good life-time's work she began one of the most ambitious and exciting research projects in the history of Zoology. The first part of the now classic series of papers on the Evolution of arthropod locomotory mechanisms was published in 1950 when she was 47; the final part (number 11) appeared in 1973. The series covered 1,000 pages and almost as many superbly executed drawings gathered into 250 compound text figures. Seven of the eleven parts treated myriapod groups; much of what we now know of the functional significance of myriapod characters was revealed by her work. Dr. Manton died in hospital in January 1979 at the age of 76. She had just published a major book on Arthropoda (she had corrected the proofs in hospital) and was in the middle of writing a new text book on the group. Dr. Manton was still at the height of her powers; we can only attempt to fill the gap by following her example of meticulous accuracy.

The Rev. Canon Dr. STANLEY GRAHAM BRADE-BIRKS and a fellow graduate of Manchester University, Dr. HILDA K. BRADE-BIRKS had begun to study British Myriapoda long before any of the present members of BMG were born. Graham Birks and Hilda Brade published the first of their 'Notes on Myriapoda' in 1916 (on the varieties of what we now call Melogona scutellare). It is difficult to imagine what courage was needed to begin work in a field with hardly any literature in English and even before the great German and French texts had appeared, but they were in correspondence with Brolemann, Attens and Verhoeff

and acknowledge the help they received from them and from Jackson and Pocock in England. Their active work culminated in Dr. Graham's Bibliographical Check List of 1939 (and where would we have been without this?), but B-B, as he was affectionately known, still retained an interest whilst busy with his Parish, writing books on soils, farming, and an Encyclopaedia, and engaging in geneological research. In 1972 he presided over the second International Congress of Myriapodology at Manchester at the age of 84, welcomed guests in three languages and generally made the meeting hum. On a visit to the Radio Telescope he was asked about luminous centipedes; he immediately started to rumage amongst the soil and litter at Jodrell and within minutes produced a couple of Geophilus carpophagus to show his questionner. B-B died peacefully in a nursing home on 28th January 1982 at the grand old age of 95. Dr. Hilda survived him but died a year later.

Dr. CHARLES HILARY BROOKES was one of the founder members of the British Myriapod Group. To say the least, he was well-liked and was good company, whether commenting on the soccer scene or on world events generally. He was respected for his distinguished contributions to the ecology of millipedes. His study of the life-cycle of Proteroiulus fuscus, along with those of Maia Rantala and Maia Peitsalmi presented at the Manchester Congress were among the highlights of the meeting. At this time Charles was developing the School of Biology at Manchester Polytechnic into an excellent group which later became the Department of Biological Sciences with Charles at the head. Despite the considerable administrative and teaching loads which this entailed, he still managed to initiate new work on Blaniulus guttulatus which he and his student presented to the Hamburg Congress in 1975.

In 1980 Charles was appointed Assistant Director of the Manchester Polytechnic with overall responsibility for the academic staff. We only had a short time to wait to discover which Polytechnic would be directed by our esteemed colleague; he was mainly concerned to bring an understanding of the Biological Sciences to as many of his countrymen as possible. Tragically, this never came to pass; Charles died as the result of a rail accident on 21st January 1983 at the age of 44. He was approaching the peak of his achievements. We shall always remember his friendly and lively presence amongst us.

Longer notices of these three colleagues have appeared in the Annuaire Mondial des Myriapodologistes for 1979, 1982 and 1983 respectively and, for Dr. Manton, in the Proceedings of the Gargnano Congress Myriapod Biology Academic Press and in Nature 278: 490-491 (1979).

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