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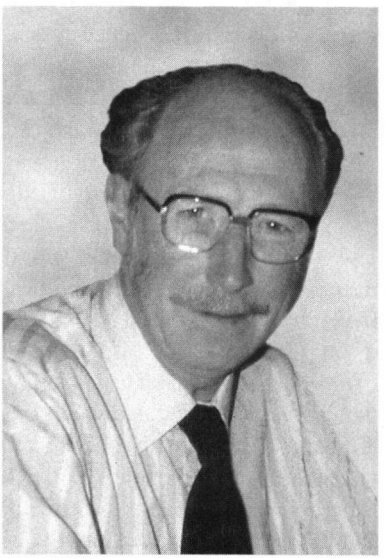
OBITUARY

DAVID ALLEN LEWIS DAVIES

A short biography of Prof.Dr D.A.L. Davies (18 March 1923-2 March 2003), professional biochemist and immunologist, and one of the world's leading odonatologists, is followed by his odonatological bibliography (1954-2003; 41 titles).



Allen Davies sadly died on 2 March 2003, just a few days short of his 80th birthday. He will be missed by his many friends in the odonatological world. He was one of those really talented people who seem to be successful in most things they do. He was a professional research biochemist who developed an interest in dragonflies primarily as an amateur, but as his career was drawing to a close, he effectively started a second professional life with the study of Odonata. He believed in the ability of the natural world to enrich the human experience. Like so many of us, he retained into adulthood a childlike excitement with insects and especially dragonflies: their colours, shapes, diversity, behaviour and habitats all fascinated him. He believed that much of this would be lost due to human greed, unless steps were taken to conserve what we have. However, he believed that conservation could only be based upon sound taxonomy and faunistic knowledge. He was fascinated by odonate evolution, and the puzzles that it presented; the survival to the present day of ancient relics, usually adapted to very specialised habitats ('bizarre niches'), under-utilised by modern and successful taxa, needed explanation. He was prepared to travel to distant regions to rediscover a 'lost' species, or to find an undescribed female specimen. He was a great collector of dragonflies and he made every effort to obtain representatives of as many of the world's genera as possible for his synoptic collection. By the end of his life, he probably had obtained representatives of about one half of the world's species, mostly collected by himself personally. If he

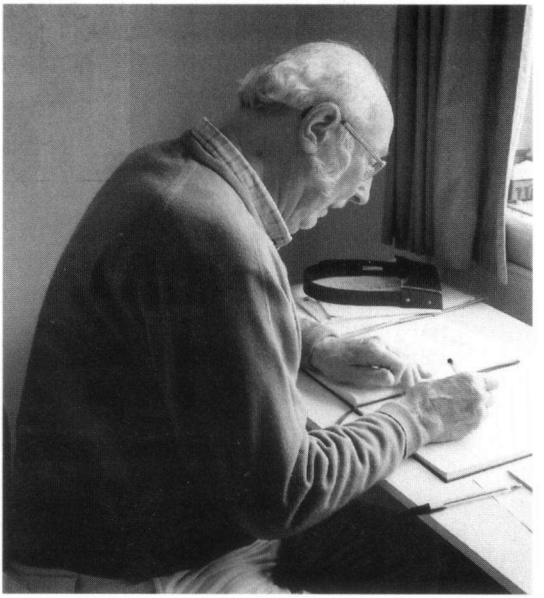


Fig. 2. Professor D.A.L. Davies, at his desk, making notes for his New Caledonia paper (Summer, 2002).

was unable to obtain a species himself he was always very adept at exchanging material with someone who had just returned from a successful expedition. He had an exceptionally keen eye for habitat and behaviour, and he had a great talent to 'think like a dragonfly' and predict where the different sexes would be at any particular time and weather condition. He was very adept with the net, having the natural ability to 'follow through' with a stroke as an insect flew up and went off at an unpredictable angle. He was an exceptional field worker almost to the end of his life; I believe he was unarguably the best of his generation in Britain, and possibly one of the best in the world. He was also physically fit into his mid-70s, and he was quite happy to trek up a tropical mountain in near 100/100 conditions as he used to say (i.e.100% humidity and temperature of 100°F) almost to the end of his days.

DAVID ALLEN LEWIS DAVIES was born on 18 March 1923 at Newport, Pembrokeshire, Wales. He was always very proud of being Welsh, and it was his wish that he should be buried in the principality. He attended local schools, until he won a scholarship to Elles-mere College in Shropshire, England. He took School Certificate in 1939, with distinctions in sciences; and went on to Higher School Certificate in 1941 with principal subjects zoology and botany. He won an open exhibition to Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge in 1941, but he did not take up the place until after completing his wartime service.

Allen volunteered for military service at the age of 19 and joined the Royal Armoured Corps in May 1942. He had wanted to fly but this had not been possible, so he decided that tanks were the next best thing. He was soon selected for officer training at Sandhurst and commissioned in 1943 when he joined the Royal Tank Regiment. He was promoted to lieutenant in the Green Howards in 1944, and then as a captain in the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment in 1945. He was at the Normandy landings, on Juno Beach, on D-day and commanded his tank company to Arnhem and the Rhine. Many of his comrades were killed. He always felt very lucky; he used to tell the story of his batman being shot by a sniper when he, Allen, was pouring him some tea, the assumption

being that the batman was the senior soldier.

After the German surrender, Allen worked as a staff officer in intelligence; and then he was asked to advise the German Defence on military law at the Nuremberg Trials. Incredibly he was 23 at this time. Returning to civilian life, he took up his place at Cambridge in 1946. He obtained first class honours in preliminaries, in Part I and Part II of the Natural Sciences Tripos, reading biochemistry and chemical microbiology in the latter. He took the BA in 1949, automatically qualifying for the MA in 1953. On going down from Cambridge, he read for a PhD at the University of London, studying the antigens of *Shigella dysenteriae*. In 1959, he was awarded the degree of DSc in biochemistry based upon his work in bacterial immunochemistry. He obtained a third doctorate, ScD, in 1975 from the University of Cambridge, and he was professor of immunology at Queen Elizabeth College, University of London from 1975 to 1980.

Allen worked at Porton Down, the government's microbiological research establishment near Salisbury, Wiltshire from 1949 to 1963, where he settled with his wife Ilse and their three children. Initially, he worked on chemical microbiology but after 1961 he changed to the immunochemistry of mammalian tissue cell membranes. From 1963 to 1966, he was based at East Grinstead studying transplantation antigens in relation to tolerance for human organ transplants. He played a major part in the understanding of tissue rejection and this contributed enormously to the development of techniques for human organ transplants which nowadays almost seems to be routine. After 1966 he was director of research at Searle & Co. in High Wycombe. Finally after 1980 he worked for the Medical Research Council in the Department of Surgery, at the University of Cambridge Clinical School, Addenbroke's Hospital, until retirement in 1988.

Allen had been interested in natural history as a boy growing up in the Welsh countryside. In his vacations from Cambridge, he visited the River Severn in Montgomeryshire. He was delighted to find *Gomphus vulgatissimus* so commonly and he found 19 species in the area, not the two listed by Cynthia Longfield in her 1937 text on the British Odonata. He wrote to her and he was enthused by her response. He experimented with vacuum and freeze drying in 1948 and published his findings. During the 1950s and 1960s, he developed various interests: Roman coins, fossils, fungi, his beloved Aston Martin and especially a general interest in natural history, but he did not specialise in Odonata until 1968 when he had a week off in Michigan between two immunology meetings. He acquired Needham & Westfall's manual on North American Anisoptera, and enjoyed the experience of collecting in a much richer area than Britain. Thereafter, he took his net to many parts of the world which he visited in his work, mainly participating in conferences and congresses in microbiology. For example, in 1976 he was in Japan; in 1977 it was a 6-month placement in Australia. He acquired more literature, and he was most fortunate to acquire the entire Cowley odonatological library in the late 1960s. As his collection and knowledge grew, he felt that someone needed to produce a synopsis of the world's genera, using the monumental contribution of Fraser and Tillyard as a foundation. His target was a world list of species; but first it

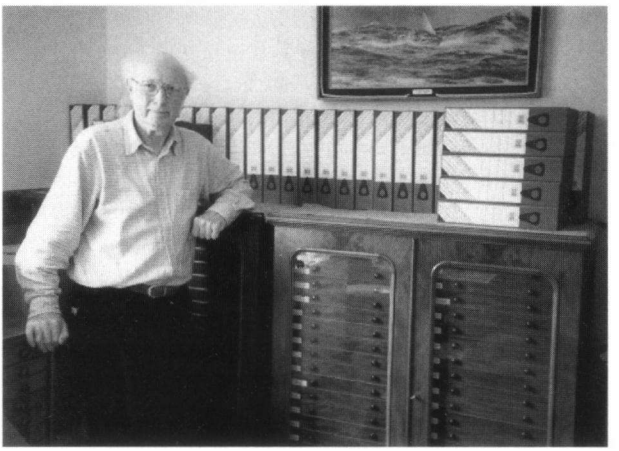


Fig. 3. Professor D.A.L. Davies, with the first part of the collection that went to the Zoology Museum of the University of Cambridge, in 2000.

was necessary to list the genera. He was in the Netherlands visiting his friend Lieftinck, when he saw Montgomery's handwritten list of species. Lieftinck encouraged him to go ahead. When he was away in Australia, his then partner, the late Pamela Tobin, had worked on the list and it was starting to take shape. He wrote to many of the leading experts of the day for their opinions. He also obtained further information from the species lists of John Cowley that were in the British Museum. Eventually, he had something that could be useful, and he decided to go ahead and publish. At this time, many of the world specialists were reluctant to publish such a work. There would be errors and the classification used by Fraser was clearly unsatisfactory in many cases. However, Allen and Pam went ahead, producing firstly the generic synopsis in 1981, and secondly the species lists of Zygoptera, Anisozygoptera and Anisoptera in 1984 and 1985. He knew the taxonomic treatment needed revision, but it was essential to catalogue the world fauna if progress was to be made with conservation on a global scale. These listings were ground-breaking in their day. This was of course before the appearance of the fuller work of Bridges.

Although Allen had travelled widely and visited most parts of the world, he has perhaps made the greatest contribution to our knowledge of the Odonata of Australia and New Caledonia. He studied the petalurids during his 1979 extended stay and on several visits since, with his companion Pat; he eventually published his field observations on the family and made critical observations on their conservation status in 1998. He believed that *Petalura hesperia* was the most critically endangered species of the family. He made interesting discoveries in the 'top end'; he visited Tasmania and he rediscovered *Hemiphlebia mirabilis* in Victoria, publishing an important paper in 1985. He had a life-long interest in biogeography and he was fascinated by the fauna of New Caledonia, an island missing many 'traditional' elements but with an extensive synthemistid radiation into other niches. He visited the island with Pamela Tobin in 1983 and they discovered *Ischnura pamelae* which was named for her. Allen visited the island several times, described further new species, and completed a faunistic review in 2002.

The fauna of south-east Asia was also an interest of his, and he was especially fascinated by the centre of diversity on the borders of Thailand, Burma and China and he made a number of visits, tackling the region first from Thailand, and later from southern China. He believed that the area was the centre of origin of both the calopterygids and euphaeids. He collaborated with B. Yang and they produced important papers on Yunnan and southern China in 1993 and 1996. He also published as single author a description of a new *Rhipidolestes* in 1998. After a month of searching in the Darjeeling area of India, in the early 1990s, with his friend Pat, he successfully found *Epiophlebia laidlawi*: '...we chose to penetrate with difficulty a dense bamboo forest at 11000 ft and above the clouds and rain we found a clearing where, to our amazement, several Bleriot-like, not very manoeuvrable dragonflies circled about the treetops, looking like *E. superstes* but with much longer bodies. What a sight - thrill - surprise. Our quarry at last !'.

He was delighted when Maurits Lieftinck in 1977 named *Somatochlora daviesi* from the Khasi Hills of north-east India in his honour, and again in 1993 when Matti Hämäläinen described the species *Neurobasis daviesi* from Palawan.

He was a member of the editorial board of a number of journals connected with his professional life in biochemistry, immunology, and transplantation science; he was also a member of the expert advisory panel for immunology for the World Health Organisation, and a referee and assessor for the Medical Research Council. He was a member of Societas Internationalis Odonatologica from the beginning, and he found time to be a member of the editorial board of *Odonatologica* and made a considerable, and necessarily undeclared, contribution to the preparation of many papers published therein.

Allen was always one who was prepared to think originally and he often held controversial views. Many of his friends have spent hours with him arguing about one or other of his hypotheses. He was a strong devotee of the 'expanding earth' theory and believed that it explained many enigmas in dragonfly biogeography, such as petalurid distribution. As a Gondwanaland enthusiast, he was eager to collect and observe Odonata in Madagascar. He visited the Seychelles with his partner Eunice the year before he died. He also held very original views on the causes of the cattle disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), and he spent several years towards the end of his life fighting to open up the debate which seemed to be stifled by government policy.

Above all, Allen was a great raconteur and he spoke with great knowledge and sparkle on such things as dragonfly biogeography to the British Dragonfly Society. He encouraged many younger embryonic odonatologists to stretch their wings overseas, and expand their interests beyond the confines of the county survey. A number of enthusiasts, especially in Britain, owe a lot to Allen's lively and enthusiastic encouragement. On the global level, Allen will be best remembered for his generic and specific lists, and his work in New Caledonia and Australia. He also offered his considerable assistance and advice to Jill Silsby when she was preparing her 'Dragonflies of the World'.

We all extend our sympathies to his children, Peter, Detlef and Juliet; and to his partner Eunice who enjoyed his company to the full and gave him such support and encouragement with his dragonfly work and other interests in his last years. His collection and literature has, according to his wishes, been given to the Cambridge University Museum of Zoology.

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Portrait on p. 295 dated August 1981 (6th Int. Symp. Odonatology, Chur, Switzerland; Photo M. Kiauta)

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