

OBITUARY

DOUGLAS ERIC KIMMINS died on 30th August, 1985 at the age of 80. He was born on 4th August, 1905 and his scientific career began in 1923 when he became personal assistant to Professor H. Maxwell Lefroy at the Royal College of Science, a post he held until Lefroy's death in 1925. In September of that year he entered the British Museum (Natural History) to begin work on the "Neuropteroid" groups of Insects, which at that time included all the "Neuroptera" in the Linnean sense as well as the Apterygota. During his long career at the museum he served under six Keepers of Entomology, in fact the first six since the Department was formed. His early papers were mainly on the Odonata, Plecoptera, Ephemeroptera and Neuroptera (Planipennia), and after M.E. Mosely's death in 1948 he also became an authority on the Trichoptera. The "Neuropteroid" collections at the BMNH were small and neglected when Kimmins began work on them, and there is no doubt that their considerable size and importance today is due largely to his influence and hard work over the 45 years that he was associated with the museum.

Like many other specialists in the museum at that time he was employed as an Unofficial Scientific Worker, and received an annual grant of £100 per year, at the rate of 3/6d an hour. This covered three working days a week, and the rest of his time was spent in preparing scientific drawings for other entomologists, for which he received some extra grants from the museum.

When war broke out in 1939 he was responsible for evacuating most of the "Neuropteroid" collections to the Freshwater Biological Association at Wray Castle in the Lake District. He stayed at the F.B.A. until early 1943 (together with the Hemipterist W.E. China, also from the BMNH) and despite the difficulties of working without all the necessary literature he did a great deal of collecting around Lake Windermere and the surrounding area. As an example, he collected over 4000 specimens in the summer of 1941, including several species new to Britain, and altogether he found 91 species of Trichoptera in the Lake District, deliberately building up a large collection in case of damage to the main British collection which remained in London. Throughout these years at Wray Castle he still received only his annual £100 grant from the museum, although he managed to obtain an extra £50 each year from the Godman Fund. His enthusiasm was unaffected by these financial difficulties, however, and it is noteworthy that he maintained his unbroken record of publishing at least one paper (and usually several) throughout all the war years. Indeed, his first two papers on the Lake District fauna were sent for publication only three months after arriving at Wray Castle.

He joined the Home Guard in 1942, and in September of that year received his call-up papers. Both W.E. China and E.B. Worthington (then Director of the F.B.A.) wanted to keep him at Wray Castle, even to the extent of trying to get him a job with a local timber production department of the Ministry of Supply (which was a reserved occupation) so that he could keep an occasional eye on the BMNH collections. But by February 1943 he had passed his medical examination, and then in the following month he heard of the chance of a job in Photographic Interpretation in the Intelligence Branch of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, for which his experience with the microscope was good training. Several months of waiting followed, during which time his collecting and writing of papers continued unabated, and he finally enlisted in the RAFVR in September 1943. During the next few months he attended several training courses at various RAF camps around the country, including some tours of duty in France and Belgium, but still managed to collect insects almost everywhere that he went, and even spent his periods of leave back at Wray Castle, writing up notes for publication. In June 1944 he heard that his house in Penge, S.E. London, had been destroyed by a flying-bomb, luckily without injury to his parents and sister. In 1945 he was posted to Bengal, and collected several Ephemeroptera with Dr S.L. Hora, the Director of Fisheries. In December he went to Calcutta, and hoped to get to Singapore, but a sudden illness forced him to return to England in early 1946, and in September of that year he resumed his work at the BMNH.

Kimmins finally became an established member of staff at the museum in March 1948 as an Experimental Officer, and over the next few years was rapidly promoted to finally become Principal Scientific Officer in 1958. He was one of the first (and one of the few) to

be promoted from the Experimental to the Scientific Grade, which was a considerable step at that time, especially for someone with no academic qualifications. His publications continued in an unbroken stream right up to his retirement in 1970, and he was one of the most prolific workers the Entomology Department of the BMNH has ever known, writing a total of 259 papers, and describing 39 new genera and 648 new species. His official retirement came in October 1970, at the age of 65, but he remained part-time at the museum for the next couple of years, continuing the editing work which he had begun several years earlier, and his connection with the museum eventually ceased in March 1973.

Kimmins was one of those fortunate people whose work is also their hobby. He was always a keen naturalist, with as much interest in plants as in animals, and photography had been one of his major hobbies since childhood. He loved walking, and enjoyed holidays in Scotland and Ireland, and the resulting photographs were often shown to local natural history and photographic societies. Both he and his wife Nancy were members of the British Naturalists' Association for many years, both holding various offices in the London branch, and Kimmins himself particularly enjoyed leading local rambles. He was always a quiet and reserved man, not particularly easy to get to know, yet always courteous and willing to help the beginner. He was a distinctive figure at the museum, being very tall with a mass of white hair even as a young man. The photograph reproduced here was taken in the museum in the mid-1930s; two later photographs were published by R.M. Gambles (1975, *Odonatologica* 4: 61-64).

Kimmins will long be remembered by many grateful workers all over the world for his sound taxonomic work on a wide variety of insect groups. Both within the museum and outside, the Orders under his care were known affectionately as the "Kimminsoidea", and there can be few other entomologists to have had a Superorder named after them, even in fun. As well as his impressive list of publications, a further measure of his influence on the Neuropteroid groups is the fact that three genera of Neuroptera were named after him (*Kimminisia*, *Kimminsiella* and *Kimochrysa*) as well as numerous species called *kimminsi*. Towards the end of his career he did wonder if he had spread his interests too broadly, yet immediately realised that if he had specialised more he would have made fewer contacts throughout the world. In fact he never met many of his correspondents unless they came to London, as he never travelled abroad on museum business, yet it is clear that "Kim", as he was affectionately known to many of them, will be sadly missed. — P.C. BARNARD.

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DOUGLAS ERIC KIMMINS
(1905-1985)

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