

**TO MISS C.E. LONGFIELD, F.R.E.S.,
WHO CELEBRATES HER 79th BIRTHDAY DURING THE SUMMER OF THE THIRD
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF ODONATOLOGY AT LANCASTER**

R.M. GAMBLES

Windings, Whitchurch Hill, Reading RG8 7NU, United Kingdom

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A short biography of CYNTHIA E. LONGFIELD, Honorary Associate of the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), is followed by an appreciation of her odonatological work and by a list of her odonatological publications (1929-1974).

CYNTHIA LONGFIELD was born in Ireland on August 16th, 1896. She commenced working at the British Museum (Natural History) as a "Visitor" in 1927. Before this, she had made a start to her scientific career by joining the St. George Expedition to the Pacific, 1924-25, accompanying and encouraged by Miss Evelyn CHEESMAN. Without that lady's august chaperonage, her family would never have allowed her to take part in what was for those days such an unheard of escapade for a young lady as an expedition to the Islands of the South Seas. The expedition visited Coiba, Cocos



Island, the Galapagos, the Marquesas, the Tuamotu Archipelago, and Tahiti. She soon excited the admiration of all, not only by her entomological zeal but also by her practical seamanship. On her return in 1925 she was elected to the Royal

Entomological Society of London, and quickly became a recognised expert on the Odonata. She was elected to the Council of the Society from 1932-34, and served as a member of the subcommittee on the Neuropteroid groups of the Committee on Generic Nomenclature. Their report, "The Generic Names of the British Odonata, with a check-list of species" was published in 1935. She was elected to the Council again from 1946-48, and served as Vice-President 1947-48.

During her career at the British Museum, she published a steady series of papers, broken only during the War years. During this period she served with the fire-fighting services, and when an incendiary bomb fell on the Botany Department of the Museum she at once realised the gravity of the threat, and was in a position to divert all resources to controlling the fire, and her prompt action probably saved the whole Museum from destruction. After the War, the flow of papers was resumed. She was made an Honorary Associate of the Museum in



Fig. 2. Miss Cynthia Longfield at her desk in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), in 1948 – nine years before she left.

1948, and her output continued until she retired in 1957, to return to Ireland, and live on the family estate at Castle Mary in County Cork. Here she kept up all her old interests, not only the Odonata but also Birds and Wild Flowers.

Another major expedition in which she took part was organised by the Museum from January to April 1934, during which she visited Kenya, Uganda, the Congo, and Southern Rhodesia. This resulted in a major paper, "Studies on African Odonata", 1936, in which as well as describing ten new species, or ones which were named as new in subsequent papers, she unravelled the tangled synonymy of the species then incorrectly known as "*Trithemis distantii*" and the other species with which it was confused.

Another genus in which she cleared up considerable confusion and described new species was *Ceriagrion* (1952).

The largest collection on which she was asked to report, or at least which led to the longest paper, was one from the Dundo Museum in N. Angola. This paper appeared in two parts in 1955 and 1959 respectively, the first taking the form of a Monograph of all the African species of *Orthetrum*. Her grouping of the species was based among other things on the external morphology of the accessory genitalia of the male, and on the anatomy of the endjoint of the penis. On the strength of this, she split off *O. farinosum* to form a separate genus, *Nesciothemis*. Older workers found her grouping unorthodox, and at least one found himself in violent disagreement. What they probably did not know was that the grouping had been worked out on the basis of external morphology alone, and only at a later stage did she decide to make use of penile characters. This fresh criterion, far from modifying her new grouping, confirmed it to the full.

As well as these publications of such value to specialists, she also wrote for a much wider circle, and in 1937 produced the first definitive book on the British Dragonflies since Lucas's 1900 volume, which had long been out of print. A second, enlarged, edition followed in 1949. These brought her hosts more friends and disciples, and with two of these – Drs Philip S. CORBET and Norman MOORE – she produced in 1960 the volume "Dragonflies" in Collins New Naturalist series.

Retirement has not lessened her interest in her subject, nor will her admirers allow her any respite. A great deal of correspondence from those still seeking assistance, advice, and encouragement still follows her to Ireland. The good wishes of all of us go with her.

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