

## OBITUARY

### A.E. GARDNER

A short biography of A. ERIC GARDNER (born: May 22, 1913; died: Feb. 11, 1976, Banstead, England; travelling representative for a firm making window blinds, and well-known entomologist) is followed by a list of his odonatological publications (1949-1968), most of which are devoted to the European fauna, and many of which describe the developmental stages of British species.



On February 11, 1976 A.E. GARDNER died in his sleep at Banstead, Surrey, after an active, happy life from which both entomology and entomologists benefitted greatly. He was a recognized authority on the British Coleoptera, Orthoptera and Odonata; he served as Editor and Assistant Editor of the *Entomologist's Gazette* and as Curator of the collections of the British Entomological and Natural History Society (of which he was an Honorary Life Member); and he provided a rich source of encouragement and advice for other entomologists. Throughout his working life

he was employed as a travelling representative of Dean's Blinds of Putney, a job which (as he once remarked) gave him "plenty of scope for entomology". (An entry in his appointment book for a summer's day often showed the name and address of a client, coupled with the name of a dragonfly and the location of a nearby habitat in which it was likely to be ovipositing!) Among those who were privileged to know Eric Gardner personally, he will be remembered also for his cheerful disposition, infectious enthusiasm and generous nature: he was a delightful person, and his many friends regarded him with affection and respect.

The following account refers to his contributions to odonatology. I thank Mr E.W. CLASSEY for providing the photograph (taken by him on the island of Porto Santo (Madeira) in February 1963) and biographical and bibliographical information.

Eric Gardner's first entomological paper, a description of the egg and all larval instars of *Sympetrum sanguineum*, was published in 1950. It heralded a series of similar papers, relating to nine other species, that appeared during the next four years. This work constituted a milestone in the progress of British odonatology, and was Gardner's principal contribution to the subject. Until 1950 there had been only one published account of all the larval instars of any British dragonfly: the paper of 1909 by F. BALFOUR-BROWNE on two species of *Coenagrionidae*. Gardner was well equipped to change this situation by virtue of his experience as a collector, his consummate skill in obtaining eggs and in culturing larvae, his patience and regard for detail, and his accomplishments as an illustrator. These 'life-history' papers rapidly attained a high standard and constitute models of their kind: especially noteworthy, perhaps, are those dealing with *Coenagrion hastulatum*, *Leucorrhinia dubia* and *Libellula depressa*. In the course of this work he reared additional species (accounts of which remain unpublished) and thereby acquired an intimate knowledge of larval taxonomy which enabled him to produce definitive keys for the identification of larvae of British species. These keys consolidate and extend the pioneer work by W.J. LUCAS, a British odonatologist to whom Gardner was a worthy successor. At the time of his death, Gardner was the recognized authority on the taxonomy of British Odonata larvae, identifying hundreds of specimens annually for students, and he was planning to write the section on larvae for a prospective book on British dragonflies.

Although Gardner's principal contribution was to the taxonomy of the larval stages, odonatology benefitted in other ways from his talents as a keen observer. His writings contain useful information relating to the behaviour of larvae and of adults (feeding, mating, egg-laying) and to fecundity and mortality. With R.M. GAMBLES he discovered and described the elaborate current-resisting structure on the egg of *Lestinogomphus africanus*; and in an excellent study published in 1955, Gardner showed that (contrary to the prevailing view) *Sympetrum nigrifemur* is a distinct species, thus requiring recognition as a constituent of the British fauna.

During the last ten years or so of his life Gardner gave more attention to beetles than to dragonflies, a reflection both of his great friendship with the late A.M. MASSEE, and of the discouraging effects of "bad summers and the lack of Odonata through pollution." But in a letter he wrote to me shortly before his

death he affirmed that he had never given up his love of dragonflies and was returning to active work on them, being about to describe a new species from Uganda.

Eric Gardner made contributions of great value: as an entomologist, and as a human being.

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\* It is not certain that this bibliography contains all Gardner's papers on Odonata, although it may do so. He also wrote several book reviews which are not listed here.

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