

OBITUARY

ROBERT MOYLAN GAMBLES

With reference to the biography published in *Odonatologica* 9(1980): 279-283, the life and work of R.M.G. is briefly outlined (born: 16 March, 1910; deceased: 11 Dec., 1990) and his odonatological bibliography is updated. He served as President of the International Odonatological Society during 1985-1987; a group photograph of the participants (identified) at "his" last Int. Symp. Odonatol. (Paris, 1985) is appended.

ROBERT MOYLAN GAMBLES, B. Sc., M.A., M.R.C.V.S., F.R.E.S., F.Z.S., F.L.S. died on 11 December, 1990 aged 80. He was born on 16 March 1910.

For many years he had been the undisputed world authority on West African, and especially Nigerian Odonata. In his latter years he had not enjoyed the best of health and the loss of his wife, Margaret, in 1986 seemed to accelerate his physical decline. Robert and Margaret married on 28 June, 1945 in Cyprus and they enjoyed a long and happy time together. It was always a great pleasure to call on them at their home in south Oxfordshire, Robert enthusiastically talking dragonflies and Margaret dispensing in abundance her marvellous home-brewed ale.

A biography and appreciation of the odonatological work of Robert Gambles appeared in *Odonatologica* 9(1980): 279-283, to mark the occasion of his 70th birthday. Since the publication of that article, Robert undertook the onerous task of editing the majority of the papers presented at the Sixth International Symposium of Odonatology held in 1981 in Chur, Switzerland. That collection of papers was published as Volume 1 of *Advances in Odonatology*, and appeared in 1982. The publication of *Advances in Odonatology* marked the first occasion that an attempt had been made to gather together in a single volume most of the suitable papers read at an S.I.O. Symposium. The hard and careful work Robert undertook in connexion with the first *Advances in Odonatology* is made evident by the very high all-round standards of that publication, which became a model for subsequent *Advances*.

In 1982 Robert was awarded the prestigious Sir Stamford Raffles medal by the Zoological Society of London. The award is made for outstanding contributions to zoology by someone working in a non-professional capacity. Anyone familiar with Robert Gambles' career will know that, in fact, he was a very professional

zoologist, but his professional work was orientated entirely towards veterinary science. Although Robert retired from veterinary work while based at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Cattle Breeding Centre, Reading in 1971, he maintained his veterinary interests until the 1980's, submitting, in his words, "...nostalgic articles to Tropical Animal Health and Production". He also gave an entertaining personal account of the extermination of the cattle warble flies (*Hypoderma* spp.) in Cyprus during the 1940's in his Presidential Address to the Reading and District Natural History Society for 1979. However, it was for his other outstanding work, in odonatology, that he received the Sir Stamford Raffles medal.

Another award Robert received was in 1974 when he was appointed an Honorary Associate of the British Museum (Natural History) in recognition of his valuable work over many years on the Odonata collections in the Museum.

A further honour was bestowed on Robert when he was elected to the Presidency of S.I.O. for the years 1985-1987. During this period he had hoped to apply to the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature for formal nomen conservandum status of *Calopteryx*, but his poor health prevented the matter going forward.

In 1987 Robert published his last odonatological paper, the subject of which was Hagen's tubercle, a potentially useful taxonomic character in gomphids. He points out that Hagen's comments on the shape of the ventral surface of the first abdominal segment in males of the Legion *Lindenia* have been overlooked by most later authors, but that in *Diastatomma* particularly, the tubercle is a valuable character for separating species. This last paper of his is a classic example of Robert's careful, detailed and penetrating work which will be of value to odonatologists for generations to come.

Viewed in terms of published papers, Robert Gambles' odonatological output was not so extensive as many other authorities'. It was in the nature of the man to be exceedingly painstaking in searching out all relevant details and to be sure of his bases for conclusions drawn. Others may have produced many more published papers, but we may be confident that errors of fact and interpretation are very rare in Robert Gambles' work.

Taxonomic work dominated his output with some eight papers being devoted to descriptions of new species and a further four papers being concerned with revision of groups (*Macromia* and *Lestes* species) and other aspects of taxonomy. His broad interest in dragonflies is reflected in other papers covering such diverse subjects as migration, egg structure, larval stages, roosting behaviour, distribution, history of odonatology, a check-list of Nigerian species, and appreciations of fellow odonatologists.

But it is Robert Gambles' unpublished work which is at least as important as that which he published. He was a very good correspondent, inspiring teacher, and reliable solver of taxonomic problems, especially to those of us working in

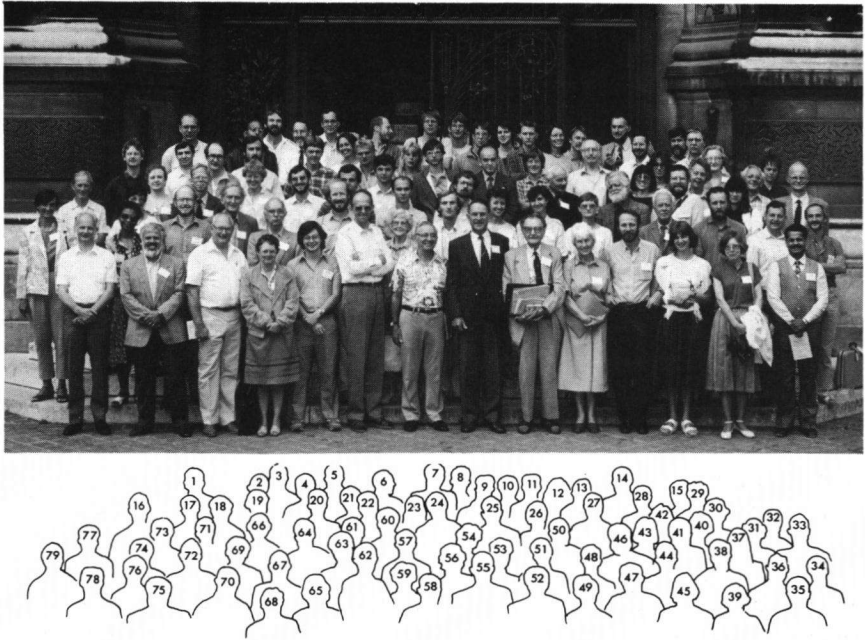


Fig. 1. Robert, as the S.I.O. President, with some of his "Family" at the Eighth International Symposium of Odonatology, Paris, 18-25 August, 1985: (1) L.M. Kempe, — (2) M.T. Siva-Jothy, — (3) G. Pritchard, — (4) M.J. Parr, — (5) J.K. Waage, — (6) M. Wolf, — (7) H. Verhaar, — (8) A. Wendler, — (9) P. Goffart, — (10) K. Soeffing, — (11) W. Banham, — (12) O. Fincke, — (13) A. Poethke, — (14) B. Kiauta, — (15) M.L. May, — (16) G. Cleland, — (17) M. Masseau, — (18) M. Hämäläinen, — (19) E. Castella, — (20) L. Beukeboom, — (21) A.K. Miller, — (22) J. Lempert, — (23) K. Verspui, — (24) D. Verschuren, (25) S. Mielewczyk, — (26) A. Anselin, — (27) D.A.L. Davies, — (28) H. Kaiser, — (29) B. Sigwalt, — (30) M. Gambles, — (31) R. Silsby, — (32) U. Beckmann, — (33) W.G. van den Broek, — (34) C. Utzeri, — (35) B.K. Tyagi, — (36) E. Schmidt, — (37) C. Blois, — (38) P. Machet, (39) I. Kastrowsky, — (40) J. Silsby, — (41) R. Jödicke, — (42) M. Verdonk, — (43) U. Krüner, — (44) D.C. Geijskes, — (45) M. Kiauta, — (46) P.S. Corbet, — (47) J. Legrand, — (48) M. Lachaise, — (49) J.M. van Brink, — (50) E. Pinhey, — (51) H. Legrand, — (52) R.M. Gambles, — (53) D. Bonora, — (54) P. Crowley, — (55) F. Schaller, — (56) R.C.P. Lee, — (57) A. Gauthier, — (58) M.J. Westfall, — (59) C.W. van den Broek-Lieftinck, — (60) N. Michiels, — (61) K. Conrad, — (62) L.R. van den Broek, — (63) S. Cannings, — (64) A. Maibach, — (65) E. Caron, — (66) S. Walenius, — (67) A.B.M. Machado, — (68) D. Pilon, — (69) N.W. Moore, — (70) J.-G. Pilon, — (71) J. van Tol, — (72) R.A. Cannings, — (73) J. Masseau, — (74) A. Cloarec, — (75) J. Moens, — (76) R.E. Gopane, — (77) P.L. Miller, — (78) P.J. Mill, — (79) H. Perrin.

West Africa with little published work for reference. His numerous letters to me when I worked in Nigeria contained masses of valuable information, diagrams and mini-keys to aid identification of the dragonfly fauna with which I was

surrounded. Specimens which could not be identified in Nigeria were sent to Robert, who responded swiftly in coming to my aid. Unfortunately he was unable to complete his major work on the Odonata of Nigeria, although he fully intended to do so. In a letter dated 13 October 1982, and writing about the problems of getting manuscripts ready on time he said "I have certainly had to abandon projects which in their beginnings were optimistically intended as the beginnings of D. Sc theses, and occasionally look back a little wistfully at those chunks of cold mutton which could not possibly be reheated. (The dragonfly book is not one of them, however. I often look at it and wonder if it couldn't be converted into hot roast beef!)". Most of his papers, notebooks and unpublished work are now in the care of the British Museum (Natural History). These sources and all his letters to odonatological colleagues constitute a veritable treasure house of information. It is to be hoped that ultimately Robert Gambles' accumulated writing might be able to be made available in a form which could be used by odonatologists worldwide.

For almost two decades, Robert was also a much appreciated reviewer of the manuscripts submitted for publication in *Odonatologica*, though he was not a formal member of the Referee Board. He served on the Editorial Board of *Notulae odonatologicae* from the very inception of the journal, in 1978, until his death.

Robert Gambles was a man of many interests which were reflected in his Fellowships and keen attendance at meetings of the Linnean Society of London, The Zoological Society of London, and the Royal Entomological Society of London. His classics background at Westminster School, London, where he was a King's Scholar, proved useful throughout his later entomological studies. Robert's knowledge of ancient Greek and Latin enabled him to be particularly authoritative on many aspects of the origin and syntax of nomenclature. In this connexion he frequently helped the S.I.O. Central Office in various editorial matters, particularly those requiring a knowledge of Greek.

Throughout the years Robert was very ably supported by his wife MARGARET, whose talents for botany, gardening, brewing and organising the family home complemented his own many interests. Their two sons JONATHON and ROBIN both have families of their own. Jonathon followed his father and qualified in veterinary medicine, working in Swindon, and Robin has a law practice based in Reading.

Robert Gambles will be very sadly missed by all who met him and who benefitted from his excellent scientific work, his great spirit of friendly co-operation and the ability to inspire and stimulate.

I acknowledge with grateful thanks the assistance of PHILIP CORBET, JONATHON and ROBIN GAMBLES, BASTIAAN KIAUTA and GRAHAM VICK in preparing this final tribute to Robert Gambles.

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