

PROFESSOR ALAN MYERS—AN APPRECIATION

Professor Alan Myers is one of the most distinguished zoologists to have worked in Ireland. Based at University College Cork for the last three decades, he worked in the pharmaceutical industry for a while after leaving school, but found routine work on anaerobic vaccines uncongenial, so studied at the Regent's Street Polytechnic (now the University of Westminster) for a part-time evening External University of London Zoology degree in the mid 1960s. That difficult degree had an elegantly simple syllabus—"A general knowledge of Zoology will be acquired". Alan has lived up to that requirement magnificently. From 1965–68 he conducted PhD research on amphipods at University of Wales Swansea under the supervision of Professor Ernest Naylor. Almost all of his thesis on *Microdeutopus* was published. From 1968–70 he lectured at University College Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, then briefly at the Regent's Street Polytechnic, before moving to Cork in 1971. At University College Cork he has had heavy teaching and administrative commitments for many years, yet has sustained a phenomenal research output. The quality of that research was recognized by the award of a DSc by the University of Wales, Swansea in 1990.

Internationally Alan Myers is generally recognized for his wide experience in marine biology with particular reference to intertidal ecology, crustacean taxonomy and analytical biogeography. However, his range is far wider than this: not only is he a specialist amphipod taxonomist (he is the world's acknowledged authority on the taxonomy of the Aoridae, one of the most difficult amphipod families), he is also no mean lepidopterist, specialising in noctuid moths whilst still at school—to the extent that he had the best collection in the UK. This interest in lepidopterans had been stimulated very early in his life by seeing what he has since found out was a huge migration of Clouded Yellow butterflies in south east England in 1946. I am told that lepidopterans also brought Alan and his wife Pamela together while he was a PhD student in Wales. Pamela has been a great support to Alan's career, helping him with collection of taxonomic material and enthusiastically supporting a lifestyle that includes the constant presence of live animals and amphipod collections around the house.

Alan is also an expert herpetologist, having moved from a childhood fascination for snakes, through work on chameleons in Tanzania, to his present focus on the biology, captive breeding and biogeography of geckoes. He has even published on seal biology—what more could be asked from a zoologist? He has published over 170 refereed papers, monographs and books. His former PhD students are legion and many now occupy senior research and teaching positions. The combination of amphipod and gecko taxonomic research has involved much travel and international collaboration; he is holder of senior research positions at the University of the South Pacific and the Australian Museum in Sydney. He holds Senior Fellowships at the Christensen Research Institute, Papua New Guinea, the Phuket Marine Biological Center, Thailand, and ORSTOM New Caledonia. Within Europe he is renowned for his contributions to international workshops, particularly on amphipods.

Taxonomy, though an unfashionable discipline, is crucial to understanding of biodiversity and evolution. Alan Myers has been, and continues to be a taxonomic pioneer; at present he is involved in programmes to devise interactive electronic keys that can be published on the world-wide web to facilitate identification. Taxonomic studies of the quality produced by Alan Myers demand tremendous painstaking effort. When asked how he managed to produce such voluminous quantities of beautiful amphipod drawings, he said that he used to spend all his lunch-hours drawings amphipods (even when he was up to his eyes in administration and teaching). That speaks volumes for his dedication.

In writing this appreciation I have relied heavily on Alan's many scientific friends for input. Without exception they refer to his great kindness and unselfishness in his professional and personal dealings. I too can testify to these qualities, which have so enriched the Department of Zoology, Ecology and Plant Science of University College Cork.

John Davenport

