

Keith Murray Harris: 80th Birthday

Keith Murray Harris, an important international entomologist, formerly a Director of the Commonwealth Institute of Entomology, London, United Kingdom, and an active member of the British Plant Gall Society, celebrated his 80th birthday in November 2012. It is a good time to review the major contributions that he has made over the past fifty years to the study of gall midges and of other insects in the United Kingdom, Europe, Africa and other parts of the world.

Keith Harris was born at Bargoed, in the coal mining valleys of South Wales, UK, on 26 November 1932. From 1943 he was a pupil at the local grammar school, Lewis School Pengam, and in 1951 he went to the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, to study chemistry, botany and zoology. He graduated in 1954 with a BSc degree in Zoology and was awarded a Colonial Agricultural Scholarship for postgraduate study, spending one year at Cambridge University, for a Diploma in Agricultural Science, and the other at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture, Trinidad, West Indies, for a Diploma in Tropical Agriculture. In August, 1956, he was appointed as a research entomologist in the Federal Department of Agricultural Research, Nigeria, where he was based at the Regional Research Station, Samaru, Zaria, in Northern Nigeria. His main research projects were on pests of cereal crops, especially grain sorghum, bulrush millet, maize and rice, with particular emphasis on gall midges and lepidopterous stem borers. It was during this period that he started to specialise in the taxonomy and biology of the gall midges (Diptera: Cecidomyiidae), initially under the tutelage of Dr H F. Barnes, an enthusiastic expert who was based at Rothamsted Experimental Station at Harpenden in the UK. The first priority was to assess the importance of the sorghum midge, *Stenodiplosis sorghicola* (Coquillett), in Nigeria and to clarify the complex of species that had been named from different continents. Research soon indicated that only one species was involved; that it was almost certainly of African origin and that it had been spread by human activity from Africa to Asia, the Americas, Australia and even southern Europe, to the extent that it had become an important pest of grain sorghums almost everywhere they are grown. His work on other cecidomyiid pest species at this time included studies of the African rice gall midge, later described as *Orseolia oryzivora* Harris et Gagné; on the benniseed gall midge, *Asphondylia sesami* Felt and on the millet grain midge, *Geromyia penniseti* (Felt). Research on lepidopterous stem borers of cereal crops included studies of the biology and control of the millet stem borer, *Coniesta ignefusalis* (Hampson), of the maize stem borer, *Busseola fusca* (Fuller) and of various species of *Sesamia*. In addition, he was responsible for the identification, reporting and control of locusts, mainly the desert locust, *Schistocerca gregaria* Forskål, which occasionally migrates into Northern Nigeria and sometimes breeds there.

At the Regional Research Station, Samaru, he met and worked with Elizabeth Harrison, a plant pathologist employed by the Northern Nigerian Ministry of Agriculture. They married in 1957 and returned to the UK in the early 1960s. By this time, Dr H F. Barnes had died and his collection of Cecidomyiidae had been bequeathed to the British Museum (Natural History) in London. Keith was then awarded a three-year research fellowship to work on the Museum's collections of Cecidomyiidae, and this involvement generated a long and continuing flow of publications, starting with an account of gall midges of economic importance and a systematic revision and biological review of the many cecidomyiid species that are predators on scale insects and mealybugs.

At the end of this fellowship, in 1966, he was appointed Entomologist and Senior Scientist to the Royal Horticultural Society, based at the RHS Garden at Wisley in Surrey, UK. This involved

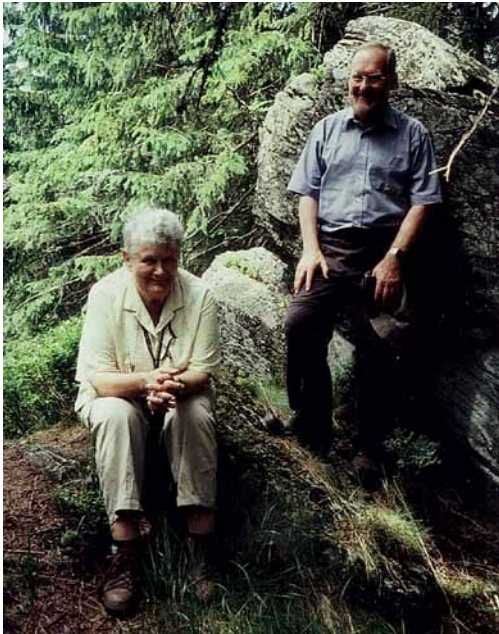
a much wider remit, covering many different vertebrate and non-vertebrate pests, ranging from eriophyoid and tarsonemid mites, through the many groups of insects and other invertebrates, to birds and mammals, including moles and deer. Studies of gall midges continued, including research on the aphid midge, *Aphidoletes aphidimyza* (Rondani), and other species whose larvae are specialised predators on many different species of aphid. In addition to providing advice directly to members of the Society, he also wrote many articles for journals and books; contributed to radio and television programmes, and produced exhibits for the scientific section of the annual Chelsea Flower Show in London, and for other horticultural shows.

In 1974 he returned to the British Museum (Natural History) to take up an appointment as a taxonomist in the Commonwealth Institute of Entomology (CIE), which was one of the constituent Institutes of the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux (CAB). Here, with considerable support from colleagues, he provided identifications and advice on harmful and beneficial Diptera, worldwide. He developed expertise on phytophagous Agromyzidae and Tephritidae and also on parasitic Tachinidae. Research on Cecidomyiidae also continued and, in 1983, he was awarded a Doctorate in Science (DSc) from the University of Wales, on the basis of published work, which included co-authorship, with S. T. Buczacki, of a book on *Pests, Diseases and Disorders of Garden Plants*, first published in 1981 and with the fourth edition currently in preparation for publication in 2014.

In 1985 he was appointed Director of the Commonwealth Institute of Entomology, later renamed the International Institute of Entomology, and he remained in that position until his retirement in November 1992. Administrative duties during this period, which included managing the computerization of the Institute's functions and the development of UK-based and overseas training

courses in insect taxonomy, reduced the time available for research on Cecidomyiidae but during the following twenty years in semi-retirement new opportunities have arisen, from consultancy work and also as a result of increasing involvement with the British Plant Gall Society, resulting in publication of many articles on gall midges in the Society's journal, *Cecidology*. International collaboration has continued, and has been considerably assisted by the development of the internet, which provides efficient international communication with colleagues and easy access to relevant literature.

Our contacts with Keith Harris started many years ago, in summer 1965, when I contacted him as the curator of the collection of Cecidomyiidae in the Diptera Section, British Museum of Natural History in London, with my request to borrow type material that I needed for my studies of Cecidomyiidae. He kindly met my request. At that time we also started our exchange of reprints on Cecidomyiidae. I highly appreciated his help in the course of preparing the manuscript of the family Cecidomyiidae for the Catalog of Palaearctic Diptera in the 1980s. Keith kindly sent me many xerocopies



Liz and Keith Harris resting on rocks during the trip in the Šumava National Park (Czech Republic) in July 2002 (photo by Václav Skuhrový).

of papers published in journals that were not accessible in the libraries of Czechoslovakia at that time. He also helped me to solve some very complicated taxonomical problems that had to be solved before publishing this comprehensive work. Since that time we accepted his kind offer to help us as the English adviser and corrector of our papers on Cecidomyiidae that we have written mainly in English.

Although our correspondence is rich, including hundreds of letters and later e-mail messages from both sides, we met personally with Keith Harris only a few times: for the first time during the First International Congress of Dipterology in Budapest in summer 1986 and then during the Fourth International Congress of Dipterology in Oxford in 1998. Keith and Liz Harris visited us in Prague in June 2002 and then we spent together a week travelling through southern Bohemia and the Šumava Mountains. In September 2006 we visited Keith and Liz in their house in Ripley, Surrey, in southern England and spent with them a nice week travelling in the surrounding countryside and searching for gall midge galls.

Since 2012 Keith Harris is a member of the Editorial Board of the journal *Acta Societatis Zoologicae Bohemicae*. We hope that his broad entomological and zoological knowledge and experience will help the Editorial Board to increase the profile of this journal and to generate a better impact.

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Keith Harris in conversation during the evening ceremony at the First International Congress of Dipterology held in Budapest, Hungary, in August 1986.

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Keith Harris standing in the middle of the row of participants at the Workshop on Cecidomyiidae during the First International Congress of Dipterology in Budapest, Hungary, in August 1986. Edvard Sylvén (Sweden) is to his left, followed by Romano Dallai (Italy); and to his right are Prabha Grover (India), followed by Marcela Skuhrová (Czech Republic), and Ravindar Sandhu (India). Mario Solinas (Italy) is squatting in front.

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