

IN MEMORIAM
DR PATRICK ASHE (1954–2022)

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Dr Patrick Ashe died on 19 June 2022 after several months in hospital. Also known as Paddy, or Pádraig, he was one of the most productive members of the small entomological community in Ireland and his passing is a great loss. Born in Dublin on 18 March 1954 and educated at Templeogue College, at the age of 19 in September 1973 Paddy enrolled in the Faculty of Science, University College Dublin. At that time Carmel F. Humphries (who had undertaken research during 1936-39 at Plön in Germany with August Thienemann, a doyen of Chironomidae systematics), was Professor and head of the Department of Zoology and the senior author (whose Ph.D. research had been directed by Humphries) was a member of the academic staff. During the second year of his studies Paddy exhibited a particular interest in zoology, and frequently sought information additional to course content. He exhibited a particular interest in freshwater ecology and in the senior author's ongoing research on insect taxonomy - it was then that he first heard the term *Chironomidae*.

An attentive and diligent student, Paddy achieved high standards in his examinations and easily qualified to enrol in the honours zoology degree course. On entering year 3 of the 4-year B.Sc. Honours course in September 1975 he opted to join the team investigating the freshwater insect fauna in southwest Ireland, where the Limnology Research Unit of the Zoology Department was coordinating a major multi-disciplinary project on the rivers and lakes in the Killarney National Park. Paddy indicated he would particularly like to be involved with the studies led by the senior author on the chironomid fauna of the River Flesk. He was aware that several unusual species had been discovered there, including the second record in Europe of *Buchonomyia thienemanni*, as well as exuviae of several undescribed pupal morphotypes, including *Eurycnemus crassipes* and other Orthoclaudiinae of taxonomic interest. He joined this

small research group. This introduction to ecological studies on chironomids in 1976 was the beginning of his lifelong taxonomic interest in non-biting midges.

He prepared his undergraduate thesis based on collections made in 1976 at the site on the River Flesk where *B. thienemanni* had been found. He graduated in September 1977 and, after graduation, commenced Ph.D. studies with the senior author as mentor, on the ecology and taxonomy of the Chironomidae of the River Flesk. His study was largely based on specimens he collected by drift net during 1978 and 1979, at several locations on the river from its source in the Kerry Mountains to its point of entry to Lough Leane, at Killarney.

It was during this period of Paddy's research that the 7th International Symposium on Chironomidae was coordinated by the senior author on the campus of University College Dublin in August 1979 when Paddy helped with organising and running of the event. The gathering of international experts in Dublin had a significant impact on the direction of Paddy's research as it provided valuable opportunities for him to mingle and discuss his work with the visiting leading eminent researchers of that time that included Lars Brundin, Bernhard Lindeberg, Sepp Fittkau, Freidrich Reiss, Selwyn Roback, Ole Sæther and many others. From these interactions Paddy developed a broader outlook on chironomid research and he became increasingly absorbed with taxonomic and nomenclatural issues in the Chironomidae. He went on to acquire a comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. With this knowledge the scope of his doctorate research was expanded into two parts; Part I to give an account of his studies in the River Flesk with Part II being a literature-based study on taxonomic and nomenclature issues in the Family Chironomidae by compiling an up to date Catalogue of chironomid genera and subgenera of the world. He submitted his doctoral thesis in November 1982. The external examiner of Paddy's thesis commented "*Part I is a very valuable faunistic work and Part II is of very high importance for Chironomidae research in general....for a long time we have needed such a catalogue of Chironomid genera – everybody in the world dealing with aquatic insects will be thankful of this basic contribution to make systematics in Chironomidae more comprehensible*". Paddy was conferred with the degree of Ph.D. in Spring 1983. The catalogue, Part II of his thesis, was published as Supplement **No. 17** of *Entomologica scandinavica*.

After graduation Paddy held a three-year post-doctoral position in Trinity College Dublin and during this time he became a frequent visitor to the nearby Natural History Museum on Merrion Street, working on the collections and using its extensive library. During his post-doctoral studies in 1984 his ankle was badly damaged in a road traffic accident while traveling home following fieldwork at a bog site in Donegal on a project sponsored by An Taisce. He spent several weeks in hospital and he suffered from this injury for the rest of his life.

As he was recovering from the accident he received an invitation to join the Royal Entomological Society of London sponsored expedition “*Project Wallace*” in Sulawesi, Indonesia. He accepted the invitation and soon after participating at the 9th International Symposium on Chironomidae in Bergen in 1985, he travelled to Indonesia and spent almost six months researching the diversity of the chironomid fauna in the Sulawesi rainforests. On his return to Ireland he spent a temporary research period in the Zoology Department of University College Galway studying Chironomidae on Lough Corrib where he discovered a population of the Arctic relic species *Corynocera ambigua*. At this time he established himself as a freelance entomologist and commenced consultancy work for State Institutes and commercial businesses in Ireland. The Irish Forestry Service regularly called on his expertise. He also spent a period, employed by the National Museum, rearranging part of the foreign insect collections. He continued to be a regular visitor at the Natural History Museum until the Covid 19 epidemic in 2020 when the Museum had to close.

Throughout his working career as a freelance consultant entomologist Paddy was never distracted from his main interest in chironomid studies. He maintained lasting contact with similarly minded colleagues throughout the world and becoming a world authority, in cooperation published regularly - with numerous contributions on taxonomy, phylogeny, zoogeography and systematics and describing species and genera new to Science. He also acted as extern examiner for Ph.D. theses of candidates at the University of Bergen, Norway.

Having participated at the 7th International Chironomid Symposium in Dublin and since he loved traveling abroad, he was an enthusiastic and active participant, both as a scientist and socially, at subsequent Symposia in Talahassee, U.S.A. 1982; Bergen, Norway, 1985; Debrecen, Hungary, 1988; Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1991; Canberra, Australia, 1994; Freiburg, Germany, 1997; Madeira, 2006; Nankai, China, 2009; Trondheim, Norway, 2011, Čescké Budějovice, Czechoslovakia, 2014 and Trento, Italy 2017. He chaired scientific sessions at many of these events. Having accompanied the senior author on a few occasions to the Zoologische Staatssammlung, Munich, he became a regular visitor, maintaining contact with his friend Martin Spies and carrying out research. Paddy had another trip planned to go to Munich in September 2022 before his untimely death.

Paddy’s entomological research went well beyond the chironomids. He was interested in related Diptera (Nematocera) including the crane flies (Tipulidae) and mosquitoes (Culicidae) and authored or co-authored numerous works, including Irish checklists, of these fascinating insects. He also worked on the higher Diptera, Coleoptera and Hymenoptera. He was a great collector and visited many countries abroad to obtain material. Following his participation in “*Project Wallace*” in Sulawesi in 1985 he visited Malaysia and while in Indonesia and Malaysia he collected specimens from variety of insect taxa, other than the Chironomidae, which resulted

in descriptions of new species of Trichoptera and Hymenoptera. He was a frequent visitor to France where he undertook field-work with his friend Joel Moubayed-Breil over the Eastern Pyrenees, Auvergne Region, Maritime Alps and the French and Italian Alps.

Paddy's work as a freelance consultant entomologist suited him as it gave him time to look after his elderly parents in their later years. He became interested in pest insects and was frequently employed by pest control firms. With this expertise he was co-author (with J. P O'Connor) of the very successful book *Irish Indoor Insects – A popular guide* that was mostly written in the snug in Toners of Baggot Street and is commemorated there. He also worked on site surveys for Irish Forestry with his late friend Stuart Wistow, frequently taking the opportunity to collect plant galls.

He was a superb artist, spending hours drawing intricate insect genitalia and wings with wonderful accuracy. His drawings greatly enriched scientific papers not only in the Chironomidae but also other Diptera and Hymenoptera groups. Sometimes, these illustrations were used on his iconic Christmas cards which he spent hours designing.

He visited the Museum every Friday afternoon for over thirty years and later more often after the death of his mother. Several years prior to his own death, he had donated his large collection of chironomids, meticulously mounted on slides, to the Museum and subsequently he continued to add more slides. He enjoyed meeting various entomologists who visited the Museum and became a close friend of many of them. A tradition developed that on a Friday evening, there was a small gathering in Kennedys of Westland Row for drinks after the Museum closed to share opinions on ongoing "projects" and discuss (or argue about) taxonomic issues. The manager Pat Brogan had built a snug for meetings of the Irish Biogeographical Society there and this was used also for these Friday gatherings. Paddy thrived in this environment as it was the ideal forum to test out his ideas and puns on friends. Loving company, he was in his element there. At the annual Christmas gathering, he would bring in a lovely baked cake to share with his friends and the bar staff for he was an excellent cook. It was in this snug, that he came up with many innovative ideas including that of *A world catalogue of Chironomidae (Diptera)*. Being a perfectionist, he could be stubborn and delay completing a final draft of a publication until he was fully satisfied. This characteristic resulted in remarkable contributions such the work on chironomids associated with Trichoptera but the downside was that, when he died, a number of manuscripts remained unfinished. While two volumes of *A world catalogue of Chironomidae* have been published, sadly, the other two volumes are incomplete and in manuscript form. The authors plan to complete the fossil volume as per Paddy's dying wish.

Paddy valued his involvement with the Irish Biogeographical Society and contributed many papers to its *Bulletin*. He served as Chairman from 1987 until his death and also acted as the Honorary Secretary from 1999-2022. He enjoyed the Society meetings held in Kennedy's snug,

taking the minutes and thriving on the convivial conversations afterwards. He also faithfully posted out the *Bulletins* to members each year.

Apart from his incomplete entomological manuscripts he had unfinished work on a book dealing with his illustrious ancestor Dr Barry O'Meara who had been Napoleon Bonaparte's physician during his exile on St Helena. Paddy did remarkable research on O'Meara and had visited his former home in London. There he charmed the current owner of the private house into giving him a tour of the interior. Another passion was his buying and selling of paintings. He frequently attended auctions and was able to value works of art with the aid of his extensive library.

Paddy was enjoyable company, full of ideas including his invention of a Malaise trap for use in the forest canopy while in Sulawesi. Prior to his illness, in order to fill in gaps in the biogeography of the Chironomidae, he had planned to collect in Madagascar and islands in the Pacific, including Hawaii. He was held in high regard by the entomological community and merited the international reputation he achieved through cooperation with his colleagues in Ireland and abroad in Australia, France, Germany, Norway and the U.S.A.

Paddy has authored or co-authored more than 180 publications. A bibliography of his entomological publications is given below. We are indebted to him for these significant contributions, sadly abruptly cut off. Some photographs that capture memories of happy times with Paddy are given in Plates 1-7.

Paddy Ashe has been a good friend and colleague; he has left a notable legacy, as a person, a researcher and in what he achieved. He is greatly missed by the authors and a large circle of friends in Ireland and abroad.

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PLATE 1. During the 7th International Symposium on Chironomidae, University College Dublin, August 1979: Lars Brundin, Declan Murray, Paddy Ashe. Photograph: Matt Foster.



PLATE 2. During the 9th International Symposium on Chironomidae, Bergen, Norway, July 1987: Brian Hayes, Paddy Ashe, Declan Murray. Photograph: C. C. Omoku.



PLATE 3. At Bodensee, during the excursion following the 13th International Symposium on Chironomidae, Freiburg, Germany: Frieder Reiss, Samantha Hughes, Declan Murray, Paddy Ashe and Peter Langton. Photograph: Freddie Murray.



PLATE 4. At the banquet during the 16th International Symposium on Chironomidae, Funchal, Madeira, Portugal, 2006: Uni and Ole Sæther, Freddie Murray, Peter Cranston, Jim O'Connor, Paddy Ashe (looking backwards). Photograph: Declan Murray.



PLATE 5. Committee meeting of the Irish Biogeographical Society during the 16th International Symposium on Chironomidae, Funchal, Madeira, Portugal, 2006: Jim O'Connor, Freddie Murray, Paddy Ashe. Photograph: Declan Murray.



PLATE 6. Social gathering of committee members following a Committee meeting of the Irish Biogeographical Society in the snug of Kennedy’s of Westland Row, Dublin, October 2015: Freddie Murray, Declan Murray, Jim O’Connor, Paddy Ashe, John Walsh (sitting), Tom Bolger, Mark Holmes. Photograph: anon - staff member at Kennedy’s.



PLATE 7. Paddy Ashe, cheers! in the snug at Kennedy’s of Westland Row, Dublin, after a Committee meeting of the Irish Biogeographical Society, December 2016. (IBS publications visible in the display case). Photograph: Declan Murray.