

## OBITUARIES

### ZAKARIA ERZINÇLIOĞLU



Dr Zakaria Erzinclioglu, Britain's leading forensic entomologist over the last quarter century and tireless campaigner for better forensic science and the victims of incompetent or fraudulent forensic science, was known to police and courts alike as Dr Zak. He was born on 30 December 1951 and died of a heart attack 26 September 2002.

Zak obtained his B.Sc. in Applied Zoology at Wolverhampton Polytechnic in 1975. From 1976-1981 he worked for the Zoological Society of London as a compiler for the *Zoological Record*. His spare time interest in blowflies led to his involvement in forensic work. The need to identify blowfly eggs and larvae of the different species, and to determine their ages, is essential in helping to decide the post-mortem interval from the insects present in a corpse. In 1981, he therefore moved to Durham University to study for a Ph.D. with Dr Lewis Davies. He produced an impressive thesis on blowfly eggs and larvae and their development and a subsequent series of papers derived from it. In 1984 he moved to Cambridge University, in the employ of the Field Studies Council, to work for six years with myself. Among other publications this resulted in his book *Blowflies* (volume 23 in the *Naturalists' Handbooks* series). He was then funded by the Home Office to research forensic entomology before being appointed Director of the new Forensic Science Research Centre at Durham University; but problems with its funding caused its closure in 1995, shortly after the Royal Army Medical College had awarded him their John Grundy Medal for Medical Entomology.

His contributions to entomology were focussed on blowflies in relation to forensic applications. Thus he did excellent taxonomic studies of eggs and all instars of species encountered in corpses. He did detailed work on the duration of development; and an especially noteworthy study of the effects of low temperatures, as the result of a case in which the earliest stages had been subjected to a short spell of cold weather. He was interested in exploring new ways of determining the age of larvae and pupae, in what attracted blowflies to a corpse and in any aspect of blowfly biology that might help in the interpretation of the significance of specimens from a case.

After leaving Durham the second time, he returned to Cambridge and continued doing case work for the police, mainly involving murder victims, until May 1997 when he announced that from then on he would only carry out forensic work if paid by the judiciary. Otherwise all work would be undertaken *gratis*, as a means of highlighting and solving one of the problems he saw with the Justice System. He continued writing scholarly articles, books and entomological papers. He also wrote for a wider readership, notably his acclaimed *Maggots, Murder and Men* and *Every Contact Leaves a Trace*.



In pursuit of his desire to raise standards in forensic science, and to rid the field of charlatans, he not only wrote articles for scientific journals (such as *Nature*) and newspapers, but he also wrote well argued submissions to the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology when it considered Forensic Science, to the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, to the Working Group on Forensic Science chaired by Lord Lewis of Newnham and to the Council for the Registration of Forensic Practitioners. Increasingly he became more and more involved in cases of wrongful imprisonment due to flawed or fraudulent forensic science. His practical steps to try to remedy this situation included a conference in July 2003 in Cambridge and a proposal to found the Solon Institute for forensic sciences. This is planned to be devoted to research in forensic science and casework undertaken free of charge and disclosed to both sides. This is an imaginative concept that deserves to be implemented. Indeed it would be a fitting memorial to Zak.

Zak is remembered by all those of us who were privileged to know him as a man of immense integrity, compassion and courage in standing up for what he believed to be true or just. He was also a devoted family man, and deepest sympathy is extended to his wife Sharon and three children, Tanya, Larissa and son, Aksel.

Henry Disney

### DENNIS O'KEEFFE



It was with a feeling of the deepest regret and sadness to Kent entomologists to learn of the death of Dennis O'Keeffe on 19 October 2002 after a brief, unexpected illness. So sudden was this that an eagerly anticipated visit to the Scilly Isles had to be cancelled at very short notice. He was born on 9 September 1935 at Peckham, in south-east London. Luckily, the family moved to Sidcup, Kent shortly before the house in London was destroyed in an air raid. By that time, however, even Kent was not considered safe anymore so the family packed their bags and moved to Blackpool. On their return to Sidcup in 1943, Dennis attended the local convent school and completed his education at St. Mary's College in 1953.

National Service in the RAF followed and a serious interest in long distance running occupied his spare time.

The move to Sidcup was to a house adjacent to open fields and here his passion for butterflies and moths was established; according to his sister Theresa starting as early as thirteen years old. His parents would allow him to put a bedside lamp close to an open window so that he could look at the moths that came to the light. At the same time, he put together a small collection of butterflies and moths. The funds that he needed to finance his hobby came from paper rounds and Saturday meat deliveries. He was close to L. Hugh Newman's butterfly farm at Bexley and was a frequent visitor there.



Disney, Henry John de Suffren. 2003. "Zakaria Erzinciloglu." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 115, 19–20.

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