

Eric Classey

Entomologist and publisher who travelled widely on field trips and discovered a new species of moth.

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Eric Classey, who died on September 6 aged 91, was an entomologist, publisher and bookseller.

Eric William Classey was born on November 2 1916 at Queen's Park, London, the son of a watchmaker who worked for the the Queen's jeweller, Garrards. Eric's interest in natural history began in childhood, and at Essendine Road School in Queens Park he was known as "Bugs".

He left school at 14, to work as a biological assistant at St Mary's Hospital Medical School, before moving to the Natural History Museum, where he helped to organise the display of the insects which had been collected from all over the world. He was to remain involved with the museum for the rest of his life. On the outbreak of the Second World War he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, working at the Entomological Laboratory at Mytchett in Surrey, where he studied the malarial mosquitoes that endangered the troops, and giving new doctors a crash course in medical and forensic entomology.

When the war ended he became manager of the naturalists' supply business Watkins and Doncaster, in The Strand, bringing him in contact with many other entomologists.

Although he had no experience of publishing, in 1949 Classey became a co-founder of *The Entomologist's Gazette*, aimed at revitalising amateur entomology in Britain. He was the first editor of the magazine, which proved popular for its lively and accessible style. He remained editor until 1960.

In 1949 Classey discovered, in Co Galway in the Irish Republic, a moth called the Burren Green, a coup about which he wrote in *The Entomologist's Gazette*. The following year he began a new business from his home, trading in antiquarian, new and second-hand natural history books and publications. EW Classey became a limited company in 1959, and his catalogues were a source of invaluable material for libraries, universities, museums and research institutions across the world.

Classey travelled widely during his life, accompanying other entomologists on expeditions as far afield as Nigeria, Borneo, the Dominican Republic, Japan, the United States, Singapore and eastern Europe.

He was president of the British Entomological Society, a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society, president of the Amateur Entomologists' Society and vice-president of the Lepidopterists' Society US.

In 1983 he was elected a member of the Entomological Club, the world's oldest entomological society, which is limited to only eight members (Miriam Rothschild was a member during Classey's time).

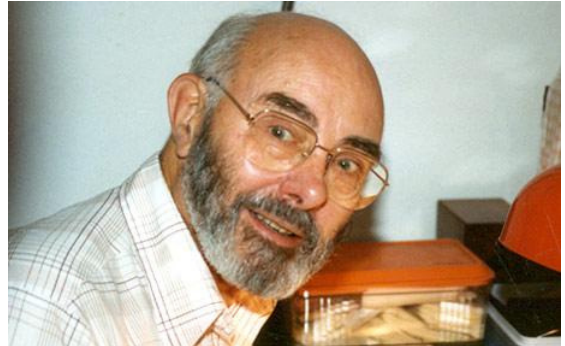
A generous man, Classey would often give away books from his prized collection, and he opened his house to visiting scientists from across the globe.

Away from his work, he was a talented linguist and ballroom dancer. He enjoyed crosswords, Scrabble, Gilbert and Sullivan, classical music and photography.

Just two weeks before his death he purchased a Greek dictionary to help him further his research into the origins of the English language. For many years he served as a JP in Middlesex.

Eric Classey married, in 1939, Ivy Ash. She died in 1982, but her name lived on in her husband's publishing company, Hedera Press (Hedera being the scientific name for ivy), through which he published many natural history works.

He is survived by their three sons and one daughter. His eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren knew him as "Butterfly Grandad".



Eric Classey: studied mosquitoes

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