

Derek E. G. Briggs was born on the beautiful Emerald Isle of Ireland but was soon attracted to the academic environment of Great Britain, where he studied and was awarded his PhD at Cambridge University in 1976. It was about this time when he first came into contact with the exceptional arthropod fauna of the Cambrian Burgess Shale.

Who knows if he already knew then that he would be one of only a handful of scientists to work on this material? Through the years, he returned to this famous locality many, many times for his scientific research.

For the next seven years after his studies in Cambridge, Derek and his wife Jenny settled in London. Derek's scientific research was still characterised by the work on Paleozoic arthropods, mainly from the Burgess Shale, but he also worked on trace fossils and taphonomic issues.

After London, Bristol was his next academic stopping point, again for another seven years. This was when Derek was appointed Professor of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Bristol. By this time, Derek's research interests had become so all-embracing that a brief summary is hardly possible.

For the outstanding quality of scientific research, Derek was honored with the Lyell Medal from the Geological Society of London in 2000. A year later, the Royal Dublin Society awarded him with the Boyle Medal for his excellent research.

Derek and his family then crossed the Atlantic, and after one year as a visiting Professor in Chicago, Derek moved on to Yale University in New Haven, where he became Professor of Geology and Geophysics and Director of the Yale Institute for

Biospheric Studies in 2003. Most recently, he was appointed as the Director of the Peabody Museum of Natural History.

Derek has served the palaeontological community as President of the Palaeontological Association, and he is currently President of the Paleontological Society.

Four books – *Evolution*, *Paleobiology I + II*, *The Fossils of the Burgess Shale* – are only a few of the contributions Derek has been involved in. All of these books have become mandatory reading in palaeontological courses at many German universities.

Derek has made fundamental contributions to our understanding of the Cambrian explosion, the phylogeny of arthropods, the vertebrate nature on conodonts, the controls on soft tissue fossilization, the preservation of organic molecules, the work on diverse invertebrate taxa, and the interface between palaeontology and biochemistry (and this listing is bar far not complete). In addition, he has also investigated nearly all of the major Lagerstätten in Germany. These include Enspel, Nusplingen, Willershausen, Messel, and, of course, the Hunsrück Slate.

Derek became involved in the Hunsrück Slate research in the late 80s and worked with Jan Bergström and Wilhelm Stürmer on understanding the preservation of its fauna. Later, in 1991, Derek first met Christoph Bartels for the first time, to get some trilobite material from the Hunsrück Slate. Their book on the *Fossils of the Hunsrück Slate* is another milestone in palaeontology which arose from this collaboration.

This year, Derek Briggs was honored by the Humboldt Foundation with the Humboldt research award and spent half a year at the Steinmann Institute, Division of

Palaeontology, in Bonn. During his stay in Bonn, he worked with the research group of Prof. Jes Rust on the spectacular arthropods from the Hunsrück Slate. Derek's enormous knowledge, enthusiasm, and sense of fun made collaboration with him a very positive experience.

Although Derek had been a regular member of the Paläontologische Gesellschaft, his contribution to the understanding of palaeontology in Germany was honored with the Corresponding Membership at the annual meeting of the Paläontologische Gesellschaft in Erlangen in September 2008.

Gabriele Kühl