

Roland McHugh (1945-2025)

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Abstract: The community of people who work with myxomycetes lost one of its members late last year. Roland McHugh spent his academic career at the University of Dublin. Working in collaboration with Bruce Ing, the two men greatly expanded what was known about the myxomycetes of Ireland. McHugh also collected and studied the myxomycetes of Nigeria. In addition to his interest in myxomyucees, he became an authority on the writings of James Joyce, especially the latter's book *Finnegan's Wake*. McHugh regularly attended the international congress on myxomycetes, held every three years.

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Figure 1. Dr. Roland McHugh (image from an online post by the *The James Joyce Centre Dublin*).

Roland McHugh (Fig. 1) was brought up in Newhaven, a Channel Port on the south coast of England. In the inland countryside he developed his love of all things natural. He studied sciences at Imperial College, London, and it was here that he became interested in myxomycetes. He would often come to my office nearby to talk about them! In 1962 he was a member of the university's expedition to northern Nigeria. Among the specimens he brought back were the types for *Metatrachia horrida* and *Comatracha* (now *Paradiacheopsis*) *erythropodia*. The following year he went back on the second part of the expedition and added more records, which we published together.

For his doctorate research Roland studied the acoustics and songs of grasshoppers, carrying out his fieldwork in the Calais region of France. Unsurprisingly, he became fluent in French! His first post took him to the Republic of Ireland, where he taught biology at the Dublin College of Dairying, now part of the University of Dublin. Ireland was relatively unknown for slime molds, but Roland soon changed that. Together we updated the records that David Mitchell and myself had put together in the past. He married one of his students, and they set up home in the delightful Jonquil Cottage in the little town of Greystone in the Wicklow Mountains, south of Dublin. Nearby was a fine ancient oak wood and Roland, with his usual attention to detail, studied the distribution of the uncommon *Clastoderma pachypus*. He also added *Physarum squamosum* to the Irish list. (Apart from Germany it is only known from one site in Scotland.) He also collaborated with David Mitchell on some new species of *Licea*.

Soon after he arrived in Ireland, he became fascinated by the writings of James Joyce, especially *Finnegan's Wake*. He became something of an authority on the language used by Joyce and toured Europe and America giving lectures as well as writing his book, *Annotations to Finnegan's Wake*. As the conservation of fungi became more important, Roland worked with other Irish mycologists, concentrating on waxcaps; Ireland has some of the best grasslands in Europe as habitats for these fungi!

Not long after Roland retired, he developed a severe form of Parkinson's Disease and had to give up his scientific activities. He died late last year and leaves a wife, Elizabeth, daughter Lydia and son Christopher. He will be missed for his quirky sense of humor and his wide-ranging intellect.