

Louis Felix Henri Audcent and his contribution to British Diptera

GEOFFREY D. AUDCENT

Editorial summary

An account is given of the life of the Bristol dipterist Henri Audcent and of his work on Diptera, based on a biography of Henri and his wife Henriette, written by his great grandson Geoffrey Audcent. A manuscript of the full biography is deposited in the Bristol City Museum, where his collection is held. An account of the collection by Rhian Rowson of the City Museum and a bibliography of papers and notes written by Henri Audcent are also included.

Introduction

Louis Felix Henri Audcent (1875 – 1951) was a well-known dipterist, who was actively researching and publishing on the Diptera fauna of the Bristol area for the last 35 years of his life. He is perhaps best known among dipterists for the series of publications listing the Diptera species known from that region, but he also made substantial contributions to the taxonomy of Tipulidae and Ptychopteridae, and latterly Tachinidae. Although Henri, as he was known, was born near Bristol his parents were French, as was his wife Henriette. He also collected in France and was in frequent contact with Eugène Séguéy of the Paris Museum, whose keys were so widely used for identification here in the days before there was much written in English on most families of Diptera. Henri's working career was as a teacher, initially of French but later also of biology. The Audcent collection, including most families of Diptera, is preserved in the Bristol City Museum.

The early life of Henri Audcent

He was born on 7 June 1875, at 'Chambord Cottage' (today No. 12), Dapps Lane, Dapps Hill, Keynsham - a small town in northern Somerset. Henri was the eldest child and only son of a brandy merchant (and former sailor) named Louis 'Arthur' Henri Felix Audcent, and his wife Hélène Marie 'Blanche' (née Pinot de Moira). His parents were first cousins and had settled in the United Kingdom only a few years before Henri was born, having emigrated from France; they were married in Taunton in 1874. In 1871 Arthur (aged 32) was already resident at Prior Park RC College, Bath, where he was a teacher; some years later his son was to follow in his footsteps and become a teacher for a short while in that school. Some time before 1870 Arthur's uncle Hippolyte 'Henri' Pinot de Moira (Comte de Rochepaule), his wife Hélène and their younger children emigrated to England and settled in Taunton, Somerset, his profession being stated as Professor of Languages. When he married Arthur's address was 45 Baldwin Street, Bristol, where he set up a company called Audcent A and Co., Brandy Merchants, in 1875.

Henri's birth was registered with the local registrar as well as with the French Consulate, thus confirming his French citizenship and giving him dual British and French nationality. He had for godfather his maternal uncle Charles Henri 'Jules' Pinot de Moira. Henri spent his earliest years in Keynsham, until around 1878 the family moved to nearby Bristol, residing at Berkeley Villa, North Road in the St Andrews district of the city.

Orphaned at the age of five

Unfortunately, exactly one week after his fourth birthday, in June 1879, Henri's mother died. This trauma was compounded when his father died less than two years later, in February 1881, leaving as orphans five-year-old Henri and his two younger sisters Louise and

Marguerite. Fortunately the three orphans had maternal grandparents and several aunts living nearby in Taunton and Bristol, who were prepared to take care of them and ensure their upbringing within a stable and loving family environment. Another consequence of being orphaned so young was that Henri remained unaware of several shameful family secrets - in particular that his father had died from syphilis at the Bristol lunatic asylum (Henri was told that his father had died from injuries sustained in a railway accident whilst travelling in France); that his paternal grandfather had died in the Paris poorhouse; and that his much-loved maternal grandfather was actually a twice-convicted high society confidence-trickster and fraudster who (as far as we can tell) was still on the run from the Belgian police.

Following his father's death Henri went to live with his maternal grandparents (Henri and Hélène Pinot de Moira) at 26 Bath Place in the centre of Taunton. He is listed there (as 'Louis') in the 1881 census, together with his elderly grandparents, his aunt Hélène Pinot de Moira and the family's general servant.

Henri's education and early academic career

Henri received a good education, but the details are sketchy. It seems that he attended a private day-school at Haygrass, near Taunton. In December 1882, seven year-old Henri wrote to his Aunt Margaret (Alix Marie Marguerite Pinot de Moira, known as "Ta Guite") from Haygrass, referring to school. This was probably the Weir Field House School, a small private secondary school in North Town, Taunton, where his grandfather had been a schoolmaster in the late 1860s. Henri left Taunton in 1887 and, with his grandparents, returned to live in Bristol. The family occupied a substantial Georgian terraced house at 3 Clifton Wood Road, which they named "Corazon". The property was initially rented until Henri's aunt (Ta Guite) purchased it in 1905. The 1891 census lists Henri at this address with his grandparents, his two sisters, his aunt (Ta Guite) and the family's general servant.



Henri Audcent aged 14 in 1889

Although the family could afford to employ a servant, it was necessary for them to manage their finances carefully, and several bursaries and scholarships assisted Henri's continued progress in education. Henri passed the Oxford Senior examination, and then in May 1890 (aged 14) he sat exams set by the Department of Science and Art of the Committee of Her Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council, achieving a 2nd class pass at the elementary level in the subjects of Sound, Light and Heat, Magnetism and Electricity, Inorganic Chemistry (Theoretical), and in the first stage in Mathematics. In April 1891, he followed this with a 2nd class pass in Theoretical Mathematics. On the basis of these results, Henri was granted in 1891, a free studentship by the City of Bristol to attend University College, Bristol.

Thus, at the age of 16 he was one of the first students, perhaps the first, in Bristol to receive such a grant, and he continued to study at the College until 1895. In 1894, he passed the intermediate Batchelor of Science exams, and later in the year sat and obtained the John Stewart Scholarship for the academic year 1894-95. In May 1895 he obtained a 2nd class pass in the advanced stage of Inorganic Chemistry (Theoretical).

Unfortunately Henri was unable to complete his university education. He became ill and suffered a nervous breakdown shortly before he was due to sit the final examinations that would have earned him a Bachelor of Science degree. This illness was caused by overwork, and the pressure he felt under to win scholarships to alleviate the financial burden on his elderly grandparents (letter dated 23 March 1951 to his widow from his sister Marguerite).

Without a university degree, but with an excellent grasp of the French language and a love of the natural sciences, Henri embarked on a teaching career in 1895. He was offered and accepted a position on the staff of Hanley Castle Grammar School, near Upton-on-Severn in Worcestershire, for a year in 1895 to 1896. He then taught at Prior Park College, Bath, for three months in 1898 before obtaining a permanent appointment there from 1899 until 1903. This was a Catholic boys' school within the diocese of Clifton, and was the same school at which his father (Arthur Audcent) had briefly been the French master in the 1870s. At the prize giving ceremony in 1901 the headmaster thanked Henri for kindly lending some valuable botanical specimens to the school museum. For a month in the autumn of 1907 he taught at the Roman Catholic Institute in Liverpool, before finally obtaining a position that enabled him to return to Bristol. This was as French Master at Fairfield Secondary School, where he joined the staff on 14 October 1907. In later years he was also to teach Botany and Biology at the same school.

Marriage to Henriette Marie Angèle Ferney

Henriette was born on 27 February 1881 in the lock-keeper's cottage at Montreux-Chateau, in the Territoire de Belfort, France, less than a mile from the German border. Although her parents were from humble stock Henriette was brought up in comfortable surroundings, first at Versailles and then at St Cloud, a genteel suburb on the outskirts of Paris and within sight of the Eiffel Tower.

As she grew older Henriette became a gifted singer and pianist, and attended the Conservatoire de Musique at Versailles, but while there she suffered an injury to her vocal cord and was told that she would never sing again. With her ambitions to become an opera singer dashed, and with no alternative career plans, it was decided that she should be married, and a match was arranged through mutual relations. Plans were made for Henri to travel to Paris to meet his prospective fiancée. The first meeting did not go well - Henriette was horrified when Henri stepped off the train at the Gare du Nord in a very shabby suit (the trains in France were filthy and careful people did not travel in their good clothes). However, their relationship recovered from the initial set back and they were soon engaged.

They were married on 14 May 1910 at the Church of the Holy Apostles (Pro-Cathedral), Clifton, Bristol, in the presence of Jules Pinot de Moira (Henri's uncle and godfather) and Joseph Ferney (Henriette's father who made the journey from Paris for the occasion). The newly married couple initially lived at 25 Mervyn Road in Bristol. This was a small end-of-terrace house in the Horfield district of the city, which they named "Le Repos". They continued to rent the property until around May 1914. By May 1915 they had moved to the St Andrew's district of the city, renting a semi-detached villa (which they occupied in full) at 34 Belvoir Road. Not only was this a larger property, but it was also closer to Fairfield School where Henri taught. They would continue to live there until at least December 1918,

when they moved a short distance to a property at 45 Belvoir Road, on the opposite side of the same road, where they rented the first floor flat.

Henri and Henriette had three children: Gerard Arthur Joseph, born 14 June 1911; Jacques Louis Alexis, born 8 July 1912; Bernard Henry Robert, born 24 February 1918.

Henri's teaching career at Fairfield Secondary School

Henri joined the staff of Fairfield Secondary School in Montpelier, Bristol on 14 October 1907 as a French master. He would later teach botany and biology as well. The school began its life in 1898 as Fairfield Secondary and Higher Grade School, in an imposing new building by the architect William Larkins Bernard, and was described as having a "towering collection of gables". When it opened it had 180 pupils; there were fees of £1 per term, but a quarter of the places in the school were available to non-fee-paying students, who were selected by an annual competition. Coeducational from the beginning, it was intended for children who would stay at school until the age of 16 or 17. It aimed to give "a methodical and progressive course of education, physical, mental and moral, of a wider scope and more advanced degree than that given in Elementary Schools, combined with workshop and laboratory practice in general, scientific and commercial subjects".



Henri, who was nicknamed "Oak" by the pupils, was clearly a much admired and greatly loved teacher and mentor (Gilkes 1998). Writing in the Golden Jubilee edition of the School Magazine, Ella Hatt, who, as Ella Thompson, had been one of his pupils, recalled meeting Henri after his retirement (Hatt 1948), describing him as having "thick, snow-white hair (we all helped to change its colour!) and eyes of intense cornflower blue (we never noticed these in the days of avoir, ayant, eu !)" and having "an indefinable luminosity and

graciousness that are now inseparable from "Oakys" countenance and bearing ... part of those elements in his make-up that we appreciate more and more as years go by - attributes of a scholar, near-saint, and gentleman, including human sympathy, modesty, integrity, a just sense of values, and humour inherited from the two most subtly humoured nations in the world". She added: "We made great jokes about the insects he captured in bottles - his "flies in school jerseys" - and liked to pretend that when lost on a botany ramble, he could always be found chin-deep in nettles, in quest of some pinhead-sized beetle. But we were very proud of his real achievements and his standing in a sphere of science beyond our comprehension."

Another former pupil, writing after Henri's death (Anon 1951), expressed similar sentiments: "His gentleness, humility and quiet, persuasive manner, and his smile that would transform a somewhat sad expression into one of radiant joy and appreciation, will not soon be forgotten by those who knew him. His greeting, *Bonjour, mes enfants*, as he started each French lesson, and our reply, *Bonjour, Monsieur*, echo strangely back from a courteous past and evoke memories of spacious and gracious living."

Between 1915 and 1918 one of Henri pupils was a young lad named Archie Leach. Archie was a far from model pupil, perhaps because, like Henri, he had lost his mother at a young age. Archie Leach was expelled from Fairfield in 1918 and embarked on a show-business career, ending up as the famous Hollywood movie star 'Cary Grant'. Ironically, it later transpired that Archie's mother had not died but had instead been committed to a lunatic asylum, which by co-incidence was the same asylum in which Henri's father had died in 1881. 'Cary Grant' never forgot his old teacher and renewed his acquaintance with Henri on at least one visit to England. Henri is mentioned in a number of Cary Grant biographies, including one written by Lionel Godfrey (Godfrey 1981). Henri met Cary Grant when the star visited his old school in 1933.

Gilkes (1948. pp 96-97) includes the following passage:

"In the Summer Holidays of 1937, further work was carried out to improve the facilities in the Science Labs, Art Room and Woodwork Room. The Biology Lab., which had only come into being in 1909, had already been completely transformed in 1934, so much so that one wonders how there could still be room for any pupils. 'The lofty end wall is no longer bare; on it are displayed fourteen fine heads of antlers, including a magnificent Koodoo, a fine springbok, gazelle, eland, reindeer, and red-deer. Above the blackboard is fastened, securely we hope ! an enormous buffalo head weighing over half a hundredweight. Over the door crawls a small, but fearsome, alligator. All along the top of the cupboards and balance room there are cases of birds: birds of prey, seabirds, woodpeckers, ruffs, corncrake, and others. A huge case containing 22 birds of the seashore stands on the slate slab. Three large new cupboards just inside the door contain a library of over 500 books on natural history and hundreds of specimens of all kinds: complete skeletons of rabbit, bat, pigeon, frog; eggs and nests of birds; fruits and seeds; ferns, mosses, etc.' For these aids to teaching, then considered so necessary in a town school, the School was indebted to past and present Fairfieldians and friends of the School: the alligator was given by Miss E. White, while the antlers and some 20 cases of birds came, so M. Audcent explained later, from the estate of Mr. A. Ford of Yatton, the other birds, the 90 nests and more than 3,000 eggs from the estate of Mr. James Stone of Bristol. Some of the collections were kept in the Upper Hall, where a large spread of buffalo horns remained fixed to the wall over the Headmaster's study well into the 1950s. Sadly for these collections, built up by M. Audcent over the course of his 31 years on the Staff, changing fashions in the approach to Science teaching saw no merit in cases of stuffed birds, their nests and eggs, sets of antlers and cabinets of shells, butterflies, and assorted insects. A good few glass cases of birds were banished to the room above the Prep. Room, at the top of

the iron newel staircase. Over the years, they and the rest of these collections, gathered so lovingly, and some the product of a lifetime's enthusiasm and study, have disappeared or, simply been destroyed – if M. Audcent knew, how he would weep.”

The First World War

On 1 June 1914 Henri was registered with the Teachers' Registration Council (No. 2247), and his career seemed mapped out as that of a schoolmaster. However, just as Henri was approaching his fortieth birthday Europe was plunged into the turmoil of the First World War. Like everyone else, Henri and Henriette would be affected by the War. Henriette's brother served as a sergeant in the French Army and was wounded, and one of her cousins was tragically killed in 1917. Henri and Henriette played a more modest role in the war effort.

Henri volunteered for enlistment in the British Army on 12 November 1915 (when aged 40) and again on 9 August 1916, but did not meet the required medical standard. Nevertheless, he contributed to the war effort in other ways. In October 1916 he helped to set up a War Savings Association at the school. As Secretary, Henri oversaw the collection of hundreds of pounds from teachers, staff and pupils. Henri and Henriette also established a home for Belgian refugees in a large house in Belvoir Road, funded by gifts of money and materials, and supported by labour on the part of boys, girls and staff outside of school hours. The Belvoir Home was an exercise in compassion, as well as in charity, and could not have succeeded without the School's active and constant involvement. “Fairfieldians,” wrote Henri “may well be proud of the share they have taken in this work, and in the knowledge that they are continuing by their charity and self-sacrifice the noble traditions of the British race” (Gilkes 1998, pp 63-64).

Henri's entomological pursuits

Henri had always been interested in the natural sciences, since as he later wrote (quoted from his hand-written lecture notes entitled “The Beauties of Nature” (undated):

“nature study appeals to all, learned and illiterate, young and old. It needs no preparation, merely the use of our five senses. It has infinite beauties to suit all tastes and nothing is ugly.... Beauties of nature are not merely in colour and form; they do not appeal solely to our five senses. What about the marvellous and beautiful devices and contrivances of animals? What about their instinct, intelligence, yea and even affection?”

He joined the Bristol Naturalist's Society before the First World War, serving as the Society's Honorary Reporting Secretary from 1909 to 1911 (stated in the Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalist's Society for the years 1909, 1901 and 1911). Henri was initially a botanist until his interests shifted towards entomology. His interest in entomology was sparked during a holiday on the borders of Devon and Somerset in August 1916, whilst he was convalescing from an illness. During the holiday Henri assisted a friend and fellow member of Bristol Naturalist's Society - Mr H.J. Charbonnier - in catching and mounting insects, and from that moment entomology and insect taxonomy (the study and classification of insect species) became his passion, and Henri's life's work was to become the order Diptera which had previously been studied by his mentor. This trip was the subject of his first published note on Diptera (Audcent 1917); in this he commented that the locality was very rich, with nearly 100 species recorded, of which 16 of the more interesting were mentioned. He concluded by saying that Charbonnier had identified his captures.

Henry Julius Charbonnier (c.1849 - 1931) published a list of the Diptera of Somerset in four parts (1915-1919), in which he attributed a number of records to Henri Audcent among other collectors. Little appears to be known of how Charbonnier's interest in Diptera had developed. He was born at St Helier, Jersey of French parents, so their shared French heritage may have influenced his friendship with Henri Audcent. Charbonnier was living in Bristol by 1871, and appears to have been professionally a taxidermist. In 1901 he was at 15 Cranbrook Road, Bristol with his wife, daughter and elderly mother, and was described as a "naturalist (bird preserver) on his own account at home". By 1911 he had remarried and moved to Shepton Mallet and, then aged 62, describes himself as a "retired naturalist (bird stuffer etc)". In the 1851 Jersey census, when he was aged 2, his father Theodore is listed as a naturalist, so it seems that he followed in the family business.

For Henri Audcent the Diptera, an important component of all ecosystems, and many of which can only be identified by expert study under a microscope, were a fascinating and challenging topic for amateur academic study. In the 1920s there was little literature in his field of science and Henri therefore set about remedying the situation with relish. He prepared his own classification tables or keys to the genera and species that were not satisfactorily catered for, and then (typically for him) selected two of the most difficult and neglected groups to specialise in, namely the Tipuloidea in the Nematocera, and the Tachinidae (then Larvaevoridae) in the Brachycera. His contributions to the literature for these groups have taken their place amongst the classic works on Diptera.

The work of insect taxonomists is exacting, as the identification requires library research, painstaking record-keeping, careful comparison of specimens and hours of study at the microscope. Over the next 35 years Henri assembled a large personal collection of Diptera, containing specimens of some 3,000 species of fly. These he collected on numerous field trips around Bristol, Gloucestershire, Somerset and further afield. His papers on 'Bristol Insect Fauna (Diptera)' published between 1928 and 1934 - see below - give a good indication of number and destination of his field trips during these years. His visit to Shapwick in Somerset on 6 July 1927 must have been especially satisfying for on that day he identified a rare crane fly *Dicranomyia danica* Kuntze, 1919 (Limoniidae), which had never previously been recorded in the British Isles. He also collected specimens during family holidays in England and France.

Henry W. Andrews (1940) stated: "In connection with my note in the July-August number of this magazine, I have had the following interesting confirmation from my friend Mr Audcent, who wrote to me as follows: "My experience confirms what you say, though I cannot give precise details except in one case. In 1919 we spent part of a summer holiday at Tickenham, close to Clevedon. The place was swarming with *Asilus crabroniformis*; I have seen as many as six at a time on a patch of cow-dung. My sons, lads of 7-9 years of age, caught them by hand and our host, a market gardener, brought them to me in numbers. Since then I have re-visited the spot and have seen either none or just an odd one. Last August I called on the market gardener, and he said "Do you remember them big waspies. I dunno as I have seen one since ?".

H.W. Andrews (1876 – 1955) was a close contemporary in the study of Diptera. Although he lived in Kent they collected together on at least one occasion; Chandler (2009), in an account of Andrews' life, noted the reference by Andrews (1932) to an excursion to Matley Bog in the New Forest, in the company of E. Rivenhall Goffe, F.H. Haines and H. Audcent, when he remarked that it was "a rare sight of four dipterists collecting together". They were searching for the rare syrphid *Eristalis cryptarum* (Fabricius), of which only one

was seen on that occasion; this species was last recorded in the New Forest in 1951 and is now known in Britain only from Dartmoor.

Henri and the Bristol Naturalist's Society

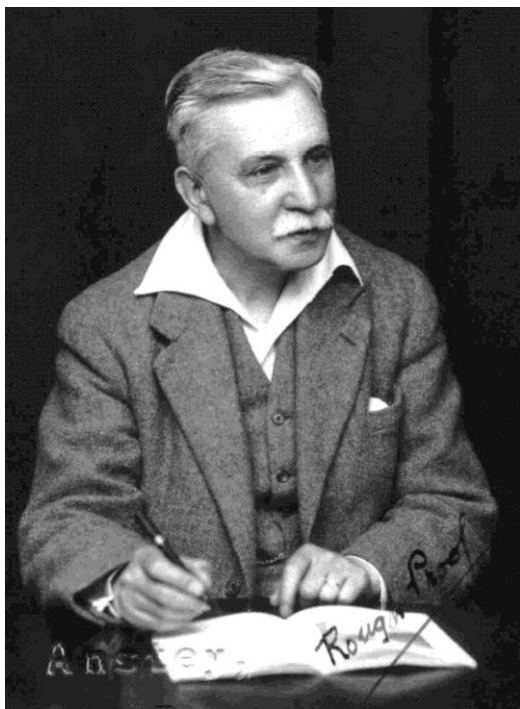
Henri was a stalwart of the Entomological Section of the Bristol Naturalist's Society, contributing to both the *Proceedings* of the Society and to its meetings over many years. In 1946 he was elected an Honorary Member in recognition of his long and valuable work. Annual reports of the Entomological Section frequently mention Henri and the encouragement he gave to others. In the Section's Annual Report for 1933 Henri is mentioned thus: "At the end of 1932 a discussion on mimetic colouring led to a suggestion for a survey of comparisons and contrasts in colour and pattern of related and unrelated insects. This was considered at the January meeting, when most members had to admit inability to deal adequately with the subject, but, with his customary thoroughness, Mr H. Audcent

tackled it so far as the *Diptera* were concerned. He exhibited sets of compared insects, each set consisting of two or more species belonging to different families (in one case, different orders) and with dissimilar biological histories, yet closely alike in form and colour. Only a few related insects showed marked contrasts. After referring to, and criticising, reasons that might be advanced to account for the facts, Mr Audcent was of opinion that no satisfactory explanation was yet available".

In 1928 it was recorded that "for *Diptera* a special meeting was held, by kind invitation, at the house of Mr H. Audcent, where the gentleman's extensive collection was inspected." Likewise the 1931 Report records that on 10 March "Mr and Mrs Audcent entertained the Section at their house. Mr Audcent showed members his large and growing collection of *Diptera* and explained his methods of

cataloguing, labelling, preservation and examination." That same year, on 10 November, Henri gave a talk on Collecting *Diptera* in Southern France.

The 1934 Annual Report records that at the meeting on 9 October Henri spoke about his holiday in France, with special reference to *Diptera*, whilst on 11 December his "collection of 2,500 species of *Diptera* (one of the best in the country) was open to inspection, together with books, apparatus, etc, which were explained". It was also mentioned that Henri had read through, on behalf of the author, the large and exhaustive work by Monsieur Séguay on the 'Faune de France' *Diptera*.



In 1928 Henri published Part 1 of his 'Bristol Insect Fauna (Diptera)' in the *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalist's Society*, and a further six instalments were published annually in the *Proceedings* up to 1934. These provided an account of the occurrence and distribution of *Diptera* in Bristol, Gloucestershire and Somerset. When the final part of the series was published in 1934 Henri ended in characteristic fashion with the words:

"The list of the records of *Diptera* for the Bristol District, begun in these *Proceedings* in 1928 and completed in this number, contains about 1,750 species. A rough computation gives about 4,000 known species of British *Diptera*. There should be at least 3,000 species in this district, so favoured with various habitats (moor, marsh, woods, meadows, seashore). The compiler of this list is the only collector of *Diptera* domiciled in this district. He would welcome colleagues, and would be delighted to help collectors in every possible way. Flies can be sent him for determination, and for that purpose he appends his address: 45 Belvoir Road, St. Andrew's Park, Bristol, 6."

Henri then updated 'Bristol Insect Fauna' (*Diptera*) with the publication of supplementary lists every two or three years until 1947 at which point the lists were revised, new records made by himself and friends added, brief diagnostic characters of families and genera inserted and the whole republished in the *Proceedings* during 1948 and 1949 (Audcent 1949, 1950b), with the aid of a grant from the Royal Society. This was believed to be the most extensive and informative regional list of *Diptera* in existence at the time, containing records of more than 2,200 species.

Henri and the Society for British Entomology

In 1931 he was elected to membership of the Entomological Society of the South of England, which soon afterwards became the Society for British Entomology. He wrote a number of papers, which were published by this Society. Henri made a special study of the families Tipulidae (as subfamily Tipulinae) and Ptychopteridae (as Liriopeidae), and his papers on these groups were published in *Transactions of the Entomological Society of Southern England* and *Transactions of the Society of British Entomology* in 1932 and 1934 respectively. His son Jacques drew the illustrations to 'British Tipulinae' and 'British Liriopeidae'. These two works established Henri's reputation as a first-class dipterist, both in the UK and abroad. Later Henri turned his attention to the Tachinidae, a family of flies that are mainly parasitic. In 1942 he published a paper in the *Transactions* entitled 'A Preliminary list of the hosts of some British Tachinidae (Dipt)'. This contained the results of an immense amount of observation and research.

Although submitted to the Society of British Entomology, Henri's last work was unpublished at the time of his death. This was a paper on 'British Larvaevoridae (= Tachinidae) sensu lato' and was accompanied by a large number of beautiful drawings. This was based on years of careful examination, comparison and study, not only of the insects themselves but of European literature - no doubt his knowledge of the French language would have been of great assistance. This work provided a key to the identification of these insects and would have been of great assistance to students of the group.

Collaboration with others in the field of entomology

During his years of entomological research Henri collaborated with other experts in the field, at the local, national and international levels. He encouraged the work of local entomologists thorough his involvement in the Bristol Naturalist's Society, but also corresponded and

collaborated with entomologists overseas. In 1932 he attended the International Congress of Entomology in Paris and played an active role as a member of a special committee to consider a question of nomenclature practice (reported in *Proceedings of Bristol Naturalist's Society*, 1932, p. 323).

Amongst colleagues and associates who collaborated with Henri were Mr E. Rivenhall Goffe (who wrote Henri's obituary in the *Transactions of the Society of British Entomology*), Eugène Séguéy of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris (45 rue de Buffon, Paris) and Professor Charles P. Alexander of the Massachusetts Agricultural College in the United States. Henri corresponded with the latter on several occasions from 1933 onwards and his letters are now preserved in the archives of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC (Smithsonian Institution. Record Unit 7298, Collection - Charles P Alexander Papers c1870-1979. Division 1 General Correspondence 1906-79 (Box 3, Folder 12: Audcent Henri, 1933-1940, 1947-1951, 1955, 1958). Division 2 (Box 59, Folder 7 Audcent Henri, Biographical information and photographs). Professor Alexander would later name a species of crane fly - *Indotipula audcentiana* - after Henri (see below).

In his British Tipulinae (1932a) Henri acknowledged co-operation from Dr F.W. Edwards, Mr C.A. Cheetham, Mr H. Britten, Mr A.H. Hamm, Dr M. Goetghebuer, Herr M.P. Riedel, and Dr P. Lackschewitz. Likewise in his British Liriopeidae (1934b): Mr A. Cheetham, Monsieur A. d'Orchymont (Brussels Museum), Monsieur E. Séguéy (Paris Museum), Dr F.W. Edwards, Dr C.P. Alexander, and Herr P. Riedel. His work on 'British Tachinidae' (1942b) acknowledges the assistance of staff and the use of records from the collections at South Kensington, Tring, Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester, Leicester and Bristol. Over the years and commencing (according to the records in the family's possession) in 1929 up until 1950, the year before his death, Henri donated various specimens, collections and volumes to a number of institutions, including Bristol University, the British Museum, and the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff.

Henri also lectured at various establishments and prepared other papers. The family have his lecture notes on the following subjects: 'The Aims and Scope of Nature Study', 'Nature Study', 'A chat on Plants', 'The beauties of Nature', 'La Mouche' (this one all in French). He also wrote minor papers such as: 'Hints on the Mounting of Diptera' and 'Parasites determined by H. Audcent and hosts determined by breeder'. Henri's other great interest was stamp collecting.

The University of Bristol, at the Degree Congregation held on 1 July 1939, awarded him the honorary degree of Master of Science, in recognition of his entomological work. He therefore finally obtained a degree from the University, which was some recompense for his inability to complete his undergraduate studies forty years before.

Madame Henriette Audcent and her interests

Henriette also led an active life and like him was to be publicly honoured for the contribution she would make. However, her interests took her in a very different direction to her husband. She joined the 'Cercle française de Bristol' and eventually became its President. At the same time, she was Vice-President of the Bristol University French Circle, and Vice-President of the West of England Branch of the Modern Language Association. She acted as a hostess in Bristol during the British French week in 1930 and was involved with the United Associations of Great Britain and France.

She was President of the Cercle française de Bristol for the period 1933-35 (the Society was founded in 1905). The three years of her Presidency were very busy, and during that time she lectured, arranged visits to France and generally assumed a high profile and active role in

promoting French culture and custom to the English, as well as English culture and custom to the French. The highlight of the period was her visit to France on 8-10 June 1934 with a large contingent of mayors from many towns including London, Bristol, Dover and Hastings as well as officials of various organisations. The party was welcomed first in Rouen, and then La Havre. They were given a fantastic welcome, occupying two days of celebration. She obviously held a position of high regard in the Bristol contingent, being photographed sitting close to the Mayor of Bristol and his counterpart the Maire of Rouen on board the Saint Briac, the steamer that transported the visitors to Rouen.

Henriette, throughout her life was to maintain an active interest in affairs beyond her family, particularly in matters relating to Anglo-French relations.



Retirement in Clevedon

The year 1939 would prove to be an eventful year for Henri and his wife, and not just because of the start of the Second World War. In March, their first grandchildren were born and later in the year Henri retired from teaching. In June he was awarded an honorary degree by Bristol University. Sometime after March 1939 they left 45 Belvoir Road, Bristol (which had been their home for many years) and moved to Clevedon, a sea-side town in north Somerset. There they took on the lease of the top flat at Selwood House in Hill Road, and appear to have occupied the property from July 1939. They were to remain there until Henri's death.

During the Second World War Henriette was no supporter of the Vichy regime, and on 26 October 1940 she registered with the Free French authorities at the Consulate de la France Libre in Bristol. Henri also played his part in the war effort and returned to work, as an employee of the Ministry of Labour and National Service. His appointment was terminated on 21 December 1944 following his continued absence on sick leave, although he was thanked for the services he had rendered to the Department.

In retirement Henri continued his entomological studies, publishing a number of papers (as mentioned above). In 1949 he was approached by the British Museum's Department of Entomology, to assist in the translation of a work on lycaenid Butterflies by the French author Stempffer. Henri mainly liaised with N.D. Riley, a Keeper in the Department, who from his letters appears not to have been a sympathetic, kindly or likeable character. The project was supposed to have been a simple translation but appears to have turned into a major exercise. Whether it contributed to Henri's illness and death, we shall never know, but within a month or so of completing the work Henri fell ill. The last letter from Riley amongst Henri's papers is dated 8 January 1951. Henri replied the following day, and within a month was dead. It is clear from Riley's last letter that the work was basically complete and Riley was tying up the

loose ends. A letter written by Riley to Henri's widow following his death, dated 23 July 1951, is not that of a sympathetic collaborator or friend.

Henri became ill and was taken to Clevedon Cottage Hospital, where he had a fall, following which he died on 9 February 1951. After a funeral service at the local Franciscan church, in Clevedon, on 13 February, he was buried at the churchyard of St. Andrew's, overlooking the Bristol Channel. His grave stone reads "*In loving memory of Henri Audcent MSc who died February 8 1951 aged 75 years. Also his wife Henriette, died October 10 1966. RIP.*" The stone is a horizontal slab with a large crucifix on its upper half (the wording on the grave stone is now almost completely illegible, but the grave can be found in the north west corner of the churchyard, in the seventh row back from a stone wall, and the twelfth grave in from the boundary with the coastal footpath.

Following Henri's death there were published several obituaries in the local and entomological press. Eugène Séguy, of the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (and author of 'Faune de France'), wrote to Henri's sister Marguerite to pass on his condolences and added that "we were extremely sorry to hear of your great loss in the person of your brother. Please be assured that we share in your sorrow and prayers in this sad circumstance. May I also express the regrets of a scientist at this great and probably irreparable loss in one of the most difficult areas of the natural sciences." (letter dated 7 March 1951 from Marguerite Audcent to her sister-in-law Henriette Audcent).

In his will, Henri left his entire estate, valued at £880-11-9 (net), to his widow. The family decided to donate his collection of Diptera, and related literature, to the University of Bristol and his stick insects were given to Bristol Zoo. The 'Audcent Collection' of Diptera was transferred to the City of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery in the 1980s after suffering from an infestation by museum beetle (*Anthrenus verbasci*). The collection was therefore fumigated and has been free of such problems since. Although some specimens were lost as a result of the infestation the collection still contains around 3000 British and European species and fills more than 160 store boxes (Ray Barnett *pers. comm.*). A great many specimens are local to Gloucestershire, Bristol and Somerset, and provided the source material for the Audcent lists of Diptera published in the *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists Society*, and even after sixty years it is still regarded as an excellent reference collection. For example, the record from Clevedon by Henri Audcent (Audcent 1942a) of a species of horsefly (*Tabanus bovinus* Linnaeus) was queried in 1998 during the research for a new book (Stubbs and Drake 2001). The only other confirmed records for the species in Britain were from the New Forest and in the 19th century. Henri's specimens were still in the collection and these proved that his original identification was indeed correct.

Henriette continued to live in their flat in Hill Road, Clevedon. Henriette was never an easy person to get on with. She was a very strong-willed character, and it was probably only by shutting himself away in his study with his flies and stamps, that her husband was able to put up with her ! Two of their sons moved away from Bristol - one to Scotland and the other to Canada, leaving only her son Jacques and his wife Sylvia nearby. Over the years Sylvia gradually came to admire and respect her French mother-in-law.

Postscript – species named after Henri Audcent

In 1966 a newly-discovered species of crane fly was named in Henri's honour by the renowned American entomologist Charles P. Alexander (with whom Henri had corresponded). *Indotipula audcentiana* (Alexander, 1966) occurs in the Philippines and was "named for Henri Louis Felix Audcent (1875-1951), capable student of the Diptera of Bristol,

England, including the Ptychopteridae and Tipulidae”. *Indotipula audcentiana* has an orange thorax with brownish-black legs and yellowish-brown wings (Alexander 1966).

John Bowden (1984) described the bee-fly *Bombylius audcenti* (Bombyliidae) from Morocco, commenting: “The species is named in memory of H.L.F. Audcent, my tutor in the study of Diptera.” This species is said to be very like the British species *B. canescens* Mikan, but easily distinguished by its yellow femora.

David Gibbs (2004) described *Agromyza audcenti* (Agromyzidae) from the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire, presumed to be a leaf or stem miner like other members of its family but the biology of this species is as yet unknown. It was named in commemoration of Henri Audcent’s contribution to knowledge of the local Diptera fauna, with the comment: “He was a very popular dipterist, known for his wide knowledge and willingness to help others in their pursuit of entomology. In the final years of his life he published the first comprehensive list of the Diptera of Somerset and Gloucestershire, which has yet to be superseded.”

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