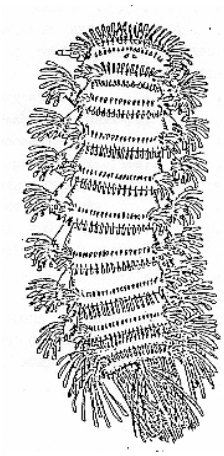
British Myriapod and Isopod Group



Autumn 2005 **Newsletter number 11** **Editor: Paul Lee**

BMIG business

The 2005 AGM weekend at Durham was a great success and this was due in no small part to the organisational skills of Val Standen to whom many thanks. There was a pleasing influx of new blood, the welcome return of seasoned campaigners Dick and Jo Jones and our colleagues on the continent were represented by Des Kime returning to his alma mater. For those of you that did not get there you can get a taste of what you missed by reading the two reports included below. For those of you that did attend the meeting, or at least some of you, a little reprimand is in order as there are still many records outstanding from Durham (and even from earlier meetings). I appeal to all members who have attended recent meetings to follow the example of a certain Sheffield based recorder and finally get around to ensuring your submission of records is up to date.

With this issue you will have received a booking form inviting you to attend the 2006 AGM weekend from 6-9 April 2006 at the Scottish Agricultural College in Auchincruive to the east of Ayr. You should note the departure in timing from our traditional weekend after Easter. You have until the end of February to book your place but as always prompt responses are much appreciated, especially if you are interested in the possibility of financial support for long distance travel. As at Durham this year, the opportunity to use the College's lab facilities will allow identification workshops to be run on the Saturday evening. There will be plenty of scope for new discoveries during fieldwork as the area is so under-recorded.

The publication of the first descriptions of the new species collected during the BMIG expedition to Galicia last year is imminent. I am reliably informed that a paper by Jean-Paul Mauriès describing the new genera *Tectosphaera* and *Cantabroglomeris* is in press and should appear in *Arthropoda Selecta* before the end of this year.

Whilst reading through this issue you may notice that the editor's name appears after a significant number of the pieces. I am grateful to Tony Barber, Kelly Inward and Glyn Collis for their contributions this time but I need more of you to submit material in future. The newsletter will soon cease to be the vibrant publication I am sure BMIG wants if members leave it to the editor to write the whole thing. Now is the time to put pen to paper, or finger to keyboard, and send me those observations you never got around to submitting after the last issue of the newsletter.

Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group Volume 21

Readers will have noticed that the Bulletin did not appear this year. This was due to a lack of sufficient material even by the extended deadline announced in the last newsletter. The editors aim to produce Volume 21 in 2006 but this will only be possible if you submit your papers and other contributions in good time and in sufficient volume.

Myriapods from the Eden Project, Cornwall

Early in 2005 during a visit to the Tropical Biome at the Eden Project, a greenhouse displaying vegetation from the humid tropics, a number of specimens of a whitish juliform millipede were collected. These were sent, via Helen Read, to Henrik Enghoff who identified them as *Paraspirobolus lucifugus*. This species has been seen previously in the botanic gardens in Copenhagen but represents the first record of the order Spirobolida in Britain. The animals are pale yellow in colour with a thin mid dorsal stripe. The male gonopds are very simple and completely enclosed within the body wall. This species probably originates from the islands of the Indian Ocean such as the Seychelles and/or Mauritius and is known to be fairly easily transported, being recorded from several other places including Germany and Brazil.

A subsequent visit, in the company of representatives of Plymouth University and the Natural History Museum, allowed further specimens to be collected along with a number of other myriapods, some of which had been collected before but not fully identified.

The millipedes found were:-

- *Paraspirobolus lucifugus* (previously known as *P. dictyonotus*)– well established in several areas;
- *Oxidus gracilis* – widespread in the glasshouse;
- A small reddish flatback that has not yet been identified.

The centipedes found were:-

- *Tygarrup javanicus* (name questionable) – a small mecistocephalid, extremely common and apparently all females (*T.javanicus* has been recorded from Kew also);
- *Mecistocephalus* cf *guildingii* Newport – two specimens of this larger mecistocephalid described under *M.maxillaris* in Brolemann's Faune de France monograph;
- *Cryptops* sp - definitely not one of our three "native" species;
- *Lamyctes coeculus* (*Lamyctinus coeculus*) – a tiny eyeless lithobiomorph, widespread in the glasshouse.

It appears that all of the invertebrates collected in this greenhouse are exotic species including the worms, ants and woodlice; there are large numbers of cockroaches present. I have also collected *Lamyctes coeculus* from the large Mediterranean glasshouse at the National Botanic Garden of Wales, Carmarthenshire (18.07.05).

My thanks go to Helen Read and Henrik Enghoff for notes on *Paraspirobolus*, to Lucio Bonato for identification and comments on the mecistocephalids and to John Lewis for looking at the *Cryptops* sp.

Further details will, hopefully, be published in the Bulletin.

Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

A definite new British species from Kew (and Sheffield)

Having reported the discovery of a possible new British millipede in the last newsletter I can now confirm that a population of *Cylindrodesmus hirsutus* is definitely present at Kew Gardens. Following my last note Drs. Enghoff and Jekeel suggested independently that the species I had found was probably *C. hirsutus*. Henrik Enghoff kindly sent a copy of a paper by Golovatch *et al*. (2000) describing the species for the first time from Europe. From this I was able to confirm the identity of the Kew specimens I collected in 2004 and of further specimens collected from the Palm House at Kew when I revisited on 26 June 2005. These latter specimens were found in a mixed colony with *Prospodesmus panporus*. Barely had I managed to sort out these specimens than Paul Richards sent me further examples collected along with *Poratia digitata* from the Tropical Butterfly House at North Anston near Sheffield (SK 531846).

Reference

Golovatch, S.I., Gruber, J.. Adis, J.. Knapinski, S., Zerm, M. & Hansen, B. (2000). Parthenogenetic populations of the millipede *Cylindrodesmus laniger* Schubart, 1945 to be recorded in Europe for the first time (Diplopoda: Polydesmida: Haplodesmidae). *Arthropoda Selecta*, **9** (3): 193-198.

Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

The triumphs of *Porcellio scaber*

In the Spring 2005 Newsletter, a piece by Julie Curl passed on by Colin McLeod recommended woodlice in general, and *Porcellio scaber* in particular, for de-fleshing specimens of small mammals etc. This brought to mind observations on *P.scaber* in a recent paper by Grassberger and Frank (2004) who studied the succession of arthropods in two medium sized pig carcasses as they decomposed over several months. There was a forensic motivation for this experiment – to provide better means of estimating time of death in humans and whether a body had been moved. Accordingly, the pigs were clothed as a human might be, and the experiment took place in an urban environment - the middle of Vienna, in the summer months! Unsurprisingly, arthropod species found in the corpses were mainly Diptera, Coleoptera and Hymenoptera. Apart from some unidentified Acarids, the only non-insect taxon to be found was – you guessed it – *P.scaber*, which appeared in both carcasses from fairly early in their decomposition.

P.scaber also featured in a Californian study on the dispersal of a nematode which parasitises and kills the larvae of a local Ghost Moth. These larvae feed on the roots of the native Tree Lupin, but the root systems of this plant form a very patchy habitat, raising the problem of how nematodes disperse from one plant to another. *P.scaber* also inhabits the soil around the roots of the Lupin, so Eng, Preisser and Strong (2005) wondered whether the nematode larvae could hitch a lift on *P.scaber* which, unlike the nematode or its larvae, could move fairly readily over distances between plants. The results of laboratory experiments indicate that the nematode larvae probably could disperse by riding on the outer surface of the woodlouse.

From first reading about Woodlice a long time ago in Stephen Sutton's book, I have been struck by how much American research, like Eng, Preisser and Strong's, uses familiar British species that have been transported to the Americas by humans. I was therefore pleased to find that Leistikow and Wägele's (1999) checklist of New World woodlice is now freely available on the internet, so it is easy to see just how many of our own species have made it across The Pond.

References

Eng, M.S., Preisser, E.L., & R.Strong, D.R. (2005). Phoresy of the entomopathogenic nematode *Heterorhabditis marelatus* by a non-host organism, the isopod *Porcellio scaber*. *Journal of Invertebrate Pathology*, **88** (2): 173-176.

Grassberger, M. & Frank, C. (2004). Initial study of arthropod succession on pig carrion in a central european urban habitat. *Journal of Medical Entomology*, **41** (3): 511-523.

Leistikow, A. & Wägele, J.W. (1999). Checklist of the terrestrial isopods of the new world (Crustacea, Isopoda, Oniscidea). *Revista Brasileira de Zoologia*. **16** (1): 1-72. (7.5Mb pdf file available at http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/spezzoo/wwaeg/publiww.htm)

Glyn Collis, Seasgair, Ascog, Isle of Bute, PA20 9ET,

A further update on *Trachysphaera*

Over the summer there has been further work undertaken on the specimens of *Trachysphaera lobata* collected during the EN supported visit by BMIG members to the Bembridge, IOW site back in January. Closer examination of the males collected raised doubts as to the identity of the species present at Bembridge. When I examined the telopods of one of the Bembridge specimens they appeared to differ significantly, especially in the shape of the medial syncoxal lobe, from those figured in the original paper describing the species (Ribaut, 1954). From this specimen Dick Jones then

drew some diagrams that clearly showed the differences and I sent them to Jean-Paul Mauriès in Paris for his comments. He agreed that there was a distinct difference between the published diagrams and the Bembridge specimen but pointed out that the range of variation of the male telopods within *T. lobata* was unknown. The only published diagram is that of Ribaut. Even worse, the telopods of some species are unknown. A revision of the genus based on the examination of many more specimens is needed. At this stage Jean-Paul considered it best to assume the Bembridge specimen represents an individual or geographic variant of *T. lobata.* Initial examination of further specimens suggests the population on the IOW is at least a geographic race of *T. lobata* and future research may yet prove there to be an endemic species there.

Thanks to Dick Jones for his excellent drawings of the dissected specimen and to Des Kime and Jean Paul Mauriès for their comments.

References

Ribaut, J. (1954). Nouvelle Espèce Francaise du Genre *Gervaisia. Bulletin de la Societe d'Histoire Naturelle de Toulouse.* **89**: 239-240.

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BMIG meeting 2005 in Durham; a new girl's view

I have worked in the Entomology Department at The Natural History Museum for nearly 15 years, but it is the work I have been doing for the last four years that has bought me into contact with myriapods and isopods. I am studying patterns of soil invertebrate assemblages of the different kinds of British woodlands represented in the National Vegetation classification. I collect all orders of invertebrates by sieving fifteen $1m^2$ samples along a 100m transect, and then extract the invertebrates by hanging the samples in Winkler bags. So, earlier this year, I thought it about time that I joined the BMIG, as this includes three of my seven target orders. I joined just before the yearly meet-up for members, so I thought it would be a good idea to go along to the Durham meeting.

Now, I am usually a little apprehensive of being the new girl at such events, but luckily I had already met Helen Read through my work at the museum. On going to dinner that night, I realised that I had had nothing to worry about, as almost straight away, I was made to feel a part of the group. It seems to be that around 15-20 'regulars' attend these meetings, all of whom were really friendly and welcoming, and immediately I felt at ease. I was not the only new member to go along to the meeting, so it was good to have a range of experience.

I was very much looking forward to the field days as I was hoping for a chance to learn how to collect the groups in a targeted way, as opposed to my more general collecting method. The field days were very well organised, with people dividing into groups to go to the range of different sites on offer to sample in. The sites ranged from seashore to woodland and quarries and it was really great to get a feel for the different kinds of habitats that the groups occur in. I had also hoped to pick up some general information from the people I spent the day with and the wealth of knowledge was terrific. Unsurprisingly for a myriapod/ isopod conference, we continued with this kind of conversation well into the evenings as well.

One highlight of the trip for me was the evening spent going through a few of my samples which I had brought with me from the museum. I was fortunate enough to get some much needed help and advice from the experts. It was not how I envisaged spending my Saturday night but there I was, surrounded by like-minded people with tubes of millipedes, centipedes and woodlice and having a great time. I would like to thank once again Tony Barber and Steve Gregory for taking the time to look over my samples, but particularly Paul Lee, who very kindly went through all of the tubes that I had bought with me. Paul was great, and very patient with all the questions I had, going through everything very clearly, and definitely earned the beers that I bought him later that night!

As a very new member, I am definitely planning to attend next year's meeting, to catch up with the people I met this year, look at some more fantastic beasties and learn from the experts on collecting this way or that for particular groups. I can absolutely recommend to anyone thinking about coming along to give it a try as it is a great way to spend a weekend.

Kelly Inward, NHM, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD

Millipedes from Durham

Although this is not a full report (that should appear in the Bulletin) this note gives some details of the millipede highlights from the 2005 AGM weekend in Durham. It is based on my own records and those I received from Tony Barber, Des Kime, Helen Read and Paul Richards. I hope this means that everyone else has sent their records directly to Val Standen!

A visit to Gibside on the first field day failed to produce the near mythical *Eumastigonodesmus boncii* allegedly collected there by Bagnall. Des Kime had more luck returning to his old stamping grounds to find *Cylindroiulus londinensis* in Crimdon Dene and on the coast further south towards Hartlepool. Several people also saw a large population of the species further inland in Trimdon Grange Quarry. At the other end of the size scale the usual array of little white jobs were found at several sites including *Archiboreoiulus pallidus* in Crimdon Dene and on Raisby Hill; *Blaniulus guttulatus* in Castle Eden Dene, in Crimdon Dene, in the grounds of Collingwood College, in woodland near Coxhoe Quarry, in Hasleden Dene and in Trimdon Grange Quarry; *Boreoiulus tenuis* at Blackhall rocks, in the grounds of Collingwood College and at Great Chilton Farm; *Brachychaeteuma bagnalli* in the grounds of Collingwood College; *Macrosternodesmus palicola* at Blackhall rocks, in Castle Eden Dene, in the grounds of Collingwood College, in woodland near Coxhoe Quarry, at Great Chilton Farm and on Raisby Hill; *Melogona scutellare* in the grounds of Collingwood College and at Gibside; and *Ophiodesmus albonanus* in the grounds of Collingwood College. More unusual were the number of records of *Geoglomeris subterranea* which was collected in woodland near Coxhoe

Quarry, on Raisby Hill near Kelloe and in Trimdon Grange Quarry. As appears to be the norm for millipedes this year, the most interesting find was from a hothouse. On the morning of the final day I ventured into the glasshouses of the botanic garden next door to our accommodation at Collingwood College. It was rather disappointing as the only species I collected was *Cylindroiulus latestriatus* but I later found out that this was because Paul Richards had been there before me. He had already collected *Oxidus gracilis* and the star find of the weekend, *Poratia digitata*, so adding Durham to the select list of botanic gardens from which this last species has been reported.
Paul Lee, Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX

A *Polydesmus* hot spot in Suffolk
It may not be quite as exciting as a new species for the country but earlier this year (24 April 2005) I was collecting in Hintlesham Great Wood, part of a newly acquired RSPB woodland reserve in Suffolk, and added *Polydesmus testaceus* to the county list. The following month (15 May 2005) I collected further specimens of the same species from the adjacent Ramsey Wood, part of the same RSPB site. The find was even reported in *Birds* magazine; it is not often that a millipede manages to steal the limelight from our feathered friends.

Hintlesham appears to be the most northerly European record for the species (other than an introduction to a cultivated site on the coast in Sweden) and is also notable in that it is a record from ancient woodland rather than the more open calcareous grassland sites that are typical of most British records. In this way it appears to resemble some of the European records, especially the other northern records from Nordrhein-Westfalen. However, even on the continent it is mainly a species of more open habitats usually on sedimentary rocks. The Hintlesham woodlands also contained the other four native British *Polydesmus* species; only the introduced *P. barberi* was missing! I know of no other British site that supports this diversity of *Polydesmus*. As if that was not enough the male *P. denticulatus* that I collected had a number of biramous limbs. Four or five legs on each side exhibit this condition and others are abnormally thickened. One leg has clearly been damaged as it is just a blackened stump but it shows no bifurcation. There are no obvious signs of the other legs having re-grown after damage.

Thanks to Des Kime for providing information on the habitat and distribution of *P. testaceus* in Europe.
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In the journals
The following two recent papers on crustaceans and centipedes may be of interest to newsletter readers:

Camur-Elipek, B. and Kirgiz, T. 2004. A Preliminary Study on the Intersexes of *Asellus aquaticus* (Isopoda: Crustacea). *Acta Zoologica Bulgarica.* **56** (1): 105-108.
This short communication reports the first observation of intersex forms of *Asellus* from Turkey. Diagrams of the first and second pleopods of each of the three intersex specimens (from a total sample of 3008 specimens) found are included.

Lesniewska, M. and Taborska, M. 2003. The centipede community of a beech forest in Magura National Park, Poland. *Fragmenta Faunistica.* **46** (2): 109-119.
This paper describes a rich centipede fauna from a Polish beech forest and compares it with the faunas of other forests in Central Europe. Of the 24 species collected in the study, 18 are species on the British checklist and of the 35 listed from Polish beech woodland 25 species are on the British list. However several of these are synanthropes in the UK e.g. *Dicellophilus carniolensis*, whilst others are of doubtful status e.g. *Lithobius erythrocephalus*, and yet others would not be considered forest species in the UK e.g. *Lithobius lapidicola*.

Return of the Flatford Myriapod and Isopod course
Following the success of the 2004 course on "Identifying Centipedes, Millipedes and Woodlice" at Flatford Mill and the equally successful 2005 course that was reported in the last Newsletter the course is being offered again from 3-6 March 2006 and early booking is recommended as places are limited. To book or for further details contact: Flatford Mill, East Bergholt CO7 6UL. Tel: 01206 298283.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Spring 2006
Please send your contributions to reach the editor by 28 February 2006

Supplies of record cards and additional copies of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter can be obtained from the Biological Records Centre.

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The British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter is printed and distributed for the British Myriapod and Isopod Group by the Biological Records Centre, supported by funding from the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.