THE BRITISH ISOPODA STUDY GROUP

NEWSLETTER OF THE ISOPODA SURVEY SCHEME

No. 13 June 1980

INTRODUCTION

The year since the last newsletter reported the progress of the schemes appears to have been a comparatively quiet one for the Group. An additional British species was discovered on the coast of South Wales in 1979 by Graham Oliver and Alison Trew and we look forward to seeing their account of it in print. Two field meetings have been held and the future of the non-marine scheme has been considered.

PROGRESS REPORTS

Marine Scheme

Roger Lincoln has been in New Zealand since September 1979, he is returning to the BM(NH) later this summer. In his absence Joan Ellis has been looking after the running of the scheme - she reports that there has been little progress in the last year. A provisional atlas of distribution maps is expected soon.

Woodlice

Geographical coverage has continued to improve and considerable progress has been made in Ireland (where coverage is now almost complete) and in north-east England. Despite these improvements, parts of Britain still need surveying. The poorly worked areas are essentially the same as shown on the coverage map, dated May 1979, circulated with Newsletter No. 12.

An atlas of Irish woodlice is being prepared by Declan Doogue and Paul Harding. This will be published, probably in 1981, by the Irish Biological Records Centre.

Asellus

The intention was to circulate preliminary maps of the Asellus spp. in late 1979. Coverage is still very patchy and the preparation of the maps has been delayed until 1980 in the hope that coverage can be improved.

THE FUTURE OF THE NON-MARINE ISOPODA SCHEME

by Paul T. Harding

The present scheme was launched publicly in 1969 but the recording card was not made available until 1970. The scheme has therefore been running effectively for 10 years. In those 10 years enormous progress has been made with the study of the distribution of woodlice and with the accumulation of data on their habitat preferences in the British Isles. Our knowledge of Asellus spp has also improved considerably, not so much for the accumulation of new data but more by the gathering together of already existing data.

Much remains to be learned. One need only consider the results of the intensive surveys made by Adrian Rundle in Bedfordshire (see BISG Newsletter No. 12) to realise that, at least in southern Britain, it may be possible to find over 15 species of woodlice in every 10 kilometre square. However, to get such results it is necessary to devote almost prohibitively large amounts of time and effort to the survey. The scheme does not have the manpower to attempt such surveys in a reasonable time scale. Clearly a compromise must be reached. The potential of the existing scheme has not been exhausted but I suggest that it is perhaps time to consider ending the recording scheme in

its present form and to examine the possibilities of setting up some form of revised scheme to look at the occurrence of woodlice from a different viewpoint.

I am proposing to terminate the existing recording scheme at the end of 1981 and to cease to have the responsibility for running the scheme from that time. I will, however, continue to involve myself with the preparation of the records for inclusion in a data bank and for analysis, doing the analyses (in collaboration with Dr Fairhurst) and the summarising of the results for a final "atlas" of distribution maps and accounts of habitat preferences, etc.

Proposals have been made for some form of recording scheme to follow on from the existing scheme. It is hoped that these proposals can be discussed in the light of reviews of the progress and results of the present scheme at a Colloquium to be held in the spring of 1981 (see below).

An appeal for records

The end is in sight! I would like to ask all contributors to the scheme to make a special effort in the remaining half of 1980 and in 1981 to cover the under-recorded parts of Britain and to survey in a wide variety of habitat types. Above all, please let me have your records.

B.I.S.G. COLLOQUIUM, APRIL 1981

A weekend colloquium is to be held at Leeds University on 11th and 12th April 1981. The main purpose of the meeting will be to review the non-marine scheme and its progress, and to formulate plans for a further recording scheme organised in the light of recent ecological research on isopods and, in particular, the analysis of the processes leading to the distributions of species and the possible use of a recording scheme to determine biologically decisive factors which limit the distributions of the terrestrial species in the British Isles.

Residential accommodation will be available and the weekend will include a number of short papers, discusions and a conversazione.

Further details are available from: George Fussey, Department of Pure and Applied Zoology, Leeds University, Leeds, Yorkshire, LS2 9JT.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

by George Fussey

I was stimulated to write this short note by a recent article in the newsletter of the British Arachnological Society by J.R. Parker (27: 1-7), which gave the literal meanings of most of the generic names of British spiders. I have tried to repeat the exercise for most of our terrestrial isopods because the binomial system of classification, usually derived by transliteration from Latin(L) and Greek (Gk), often conveys a considerable amount of information. This can often describe the animal itself (size, colour, form or resemblance) or its habitat.*

---

* Some names can be positively misleading - Oritoniscus flavus (Latin, flavus = yellow) is, in life, similar in colour or even darker than Trichoniscus pusillus. However, in alcohol the pigmentation is lost leaving specimens that are yellowish-white in colour. Clearly the species was described from preserved material.

The specific epithets of several species commemorate eminent biologists eg couchi = J. Couch, patiencei = A. Patience, rathkei = H. Rathke, sarsi = G. O. Sars, stebbingi = T. R. R. Stebbing.

Ed.

CLASS CRUSTACEA L. Crustaceus, having a shell or rind.

ORDER ISOPODA Gk isos, equal or similar
Gk pous, a foot.

GENERA and SPECIES

Androniscus	Gk. andros, a man; oniskos (see below);
dentiger	L. dens, a tooth
Armadillidium	Spanish armado - armed man from L. armatus, armed;
album	L. albus, white
nasatum	L. nasutus, large-nosed
pictum	L. pictus, painted
pulchellum	L. pulchellus, beautiful
vulgare	L., usual, common
Asellus	L., a little ass
Cylisticus	Gk. Kylistos, fit for rolling
convexus	L., vaulted
Eluma	L. ex, out or beyond, not having. L. lumen, light
purpurascens	L., purplish
Halophiloscia	Gk. halos, salt; philos (see below)
Oniscus	Gk. oniskos, an ass
Oritoniscus	L. oritis, a precious stone; oniskos.
Philoscia	Gk. philos, 'having an affinity for'.
muscorum	L. muscus, moss
Platyarthrus	Gk. platys, flat, wide; arthron, a joint
Porcellio	L., a woodlouse
dilatatus	L., spread out, dilated
laevis	L., smooth
scaber	L., scabia, rough
Trachelipus	Gk. trachelos, the neck.
Trichoniscus	Gk. trich, a hair
pusillus	L., very small, weak
provisorius	L., conditional
pygmaeus	L., dwarfish

Reference: Jaeger, E. C. (1955) A source-book of biological names and terms, 3rd edn. Thomas: Illinois

A SECOND RECORD OF ELUMA PURPURASCENS IN BRITAIN

by George Fussey

The Armadillidiid Eluma is distinguishable from the more familiar Armadillidium, which have compound eyes, by having eyes composed of a single ocellus. E. purpurascens has been recorded for only the second time in Britain by N. A. Newman of Kent. Previous records have come from several sites in Co. Dublin* and a single site at Overstrand, near Cromer, Norfolk (NGR 63/252406, Harding, 1976).

Five specimens were taken on 2.2.80 from flood refuse on the banks of a small stream from near the seashore to just over a kilometre up-stream near Whitstable, Kent (NGR 61/156673). Armadillidium nasatum and Haplophthalmus danicus occurred in the same habitat. It seems worthwhile to record some colour polymorphism in this sample: 1 animal was brown, while the others were shades of brownish purple.

With such a widespread distribution, it seems likely that Eluma is waiting to be found at other coastal locations throughout Britain!

Ref: Harding, P.T. (1976). Trans. Norfolk Norwich Nat. Soc., 23, 267-8.

* Also recorded from Co. Kildare (Doogue, Reardon & Harding (1979) Ir. Nat. J. 19: 343-7)

Ed.

THE CRUSTACEAN SOCIETY

"A formal society organized to enhance information exchange among those interested in the study of any aspects of the biology of Crustacea, was initiated at the American Society of Zoologist' meeting in Tampa in December, 1979. One of the Society's goals will be the prompt publication of member's shorter manuscripts dealing with any aspect of crustacean biology".

Details about the Society are available from:

The Crustacean Society
c/o R. B. Manning
IZ-NHB-W323
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC 20560
USA

The first issue of the Society's journal is expected to appear in 1981. Potential contributors to the journal are warned that, in common with an increasing number of journals, page charges will be made.

Information about B.I.S.G. has been sent to the Society.

"WOODLICE" BY S. L. SUTTON

Contrary to rumour, Dr Sutton's book "Woodlice" is not out of print. Pergamon has bought the remaining stock from Ginn & Co. and are selling it through booksellers at £4.90. Get your copy whilst stocks last!

Copies of the offprinted key are available from Dr Sutton, Department of Pure and Applied Zoology, Leeds University, Leeds LS2 9JT at £1.00 each.

FIELD MEETINGS

Monks Wood, October 1979

A weekend meeting, led by Adrian Rundle, on recording uncommon woodlice. It was attended by 9 people and we were favoured with good weather and a carefully chosen (if exhausting) itinerary of collecting sites in Bedfordshire which provided 15 species of woodlice. The evenings were occupied with discussions, identifications and an illustrated talk by Paul Harding on the habitats of some uncommon species that were not encountered over the weekend. Sunday morning was spent on Woodwalton Fen National Nature Reserve where 2 species new to the site were found. 16 species of woodlice were recorded over the weekend, plus 2 species of Asellus.

Leeds, April 1980

A weekend course for beginners was organised by George Fussey and Douglas Richardson under the auspices of the Yorkshire Naturalists Union.

Newsletter editor: Paul T. Harding
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology
Monks Wood Experimental Station
Abbots Ripton
Huntingdon
Cambs PE17 2LS

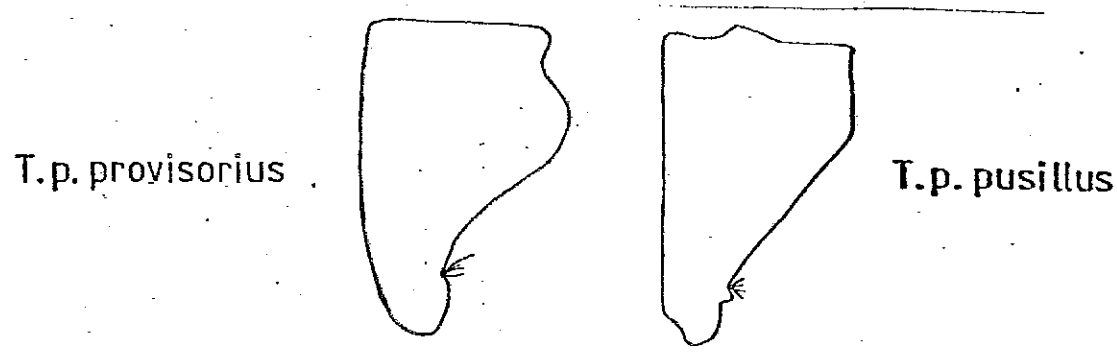
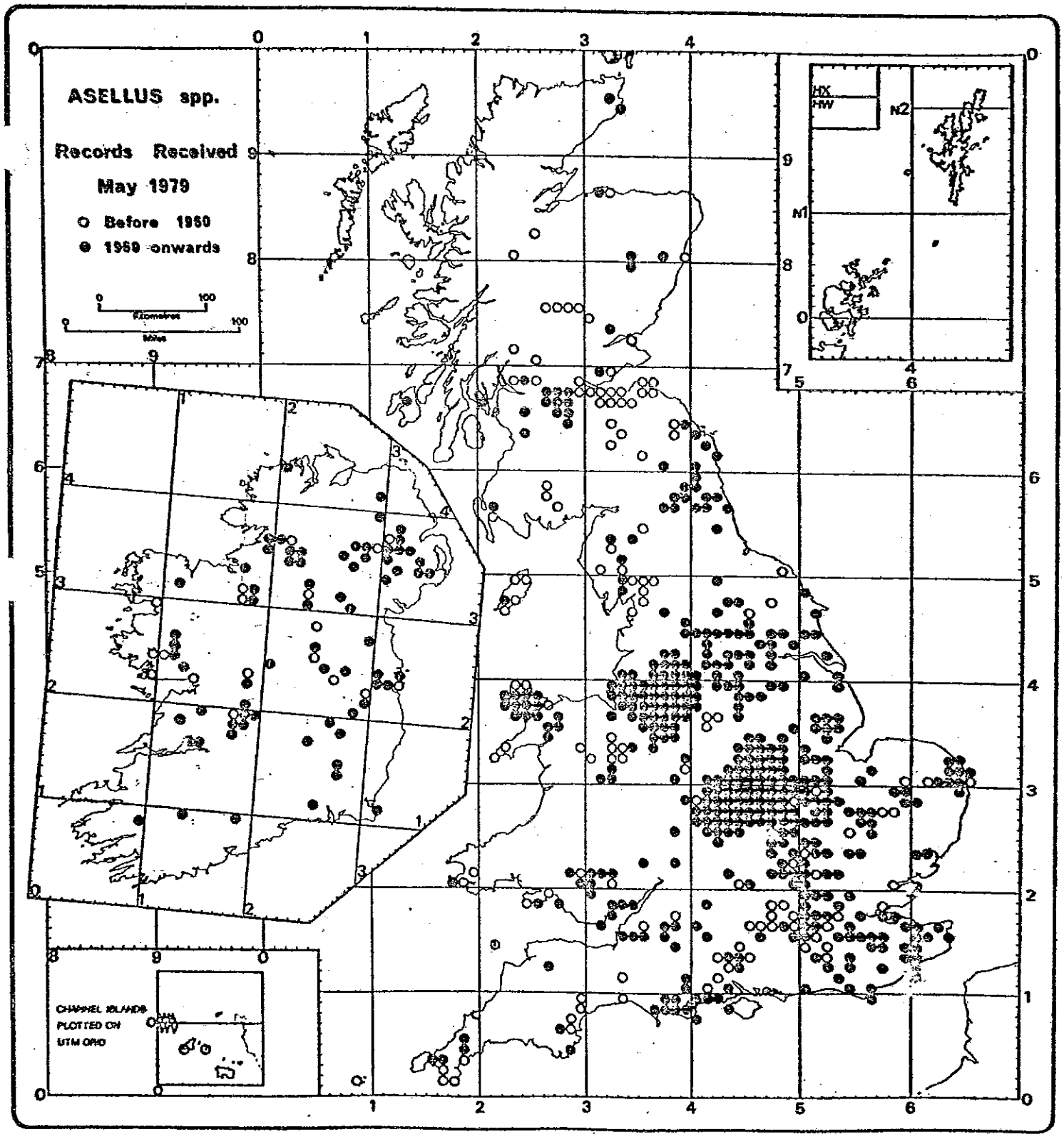
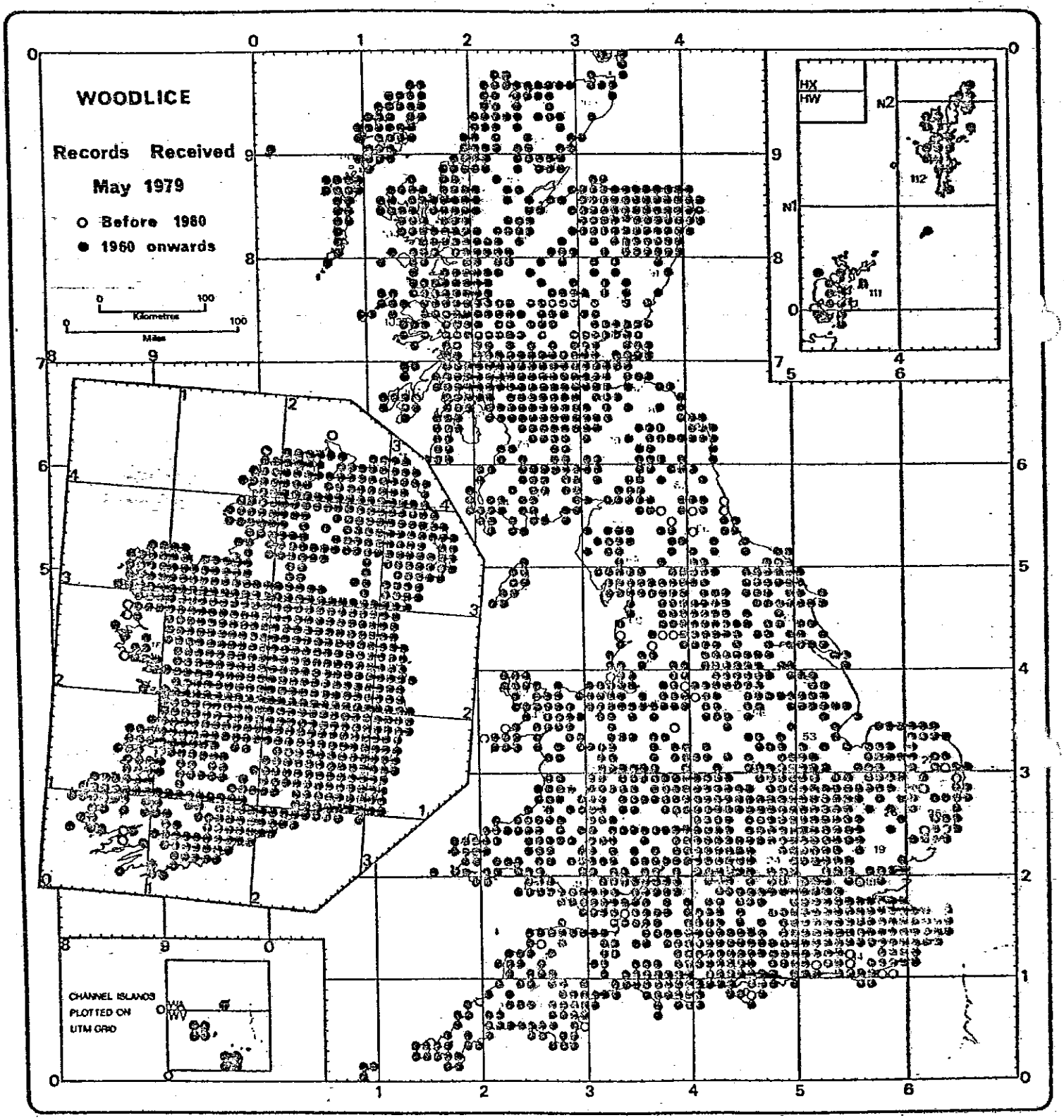


Fig. 1 : Exopodite of the first right pleopod in male Trichoniscus pusillus.




WOODLICE
Records Received
May 1979
Before 1960
1960 onwards
0 100
Kilometres
0 100
Miles
HX
HW
N2
N1
112
111
53
19
CHANNEL ISLANDS
PLOTTED ON
UTM GRID
WA
WV