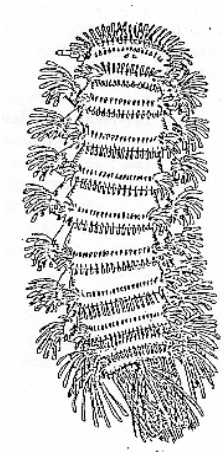
British Myriapod and Isopod Group



SPRING 2001 **Newsletter number 2** **Editor: Paul Lee**

BMIG business
Thank you to all those who returned the membership form included with the last newsletter. If you have not yet joined then there is another form enclosed with this issue. There is no membership fee to join the Group and the mailing list for future newsletters will be based on the formal membership list so you have nothing to lose and a lot to gain by returning the form. The BMIG Handbook is now close to completion and will be sent free to all BMIG members in the very near future. The Handbook includes introductory chapters on the myriapods and isopods, tips on collection and preservation of specimens, up to date checklists, a bibliography and much more. So you have yet another very good reason for posting your membership form to the Secretary as soon as possible.

The 2001 Annual Field Meeting has had to be postponed due to the foot and mouth crisis. Derek Whiteley reports that the minibus was fully booked and over 20 people had booked beds at the hostel so this news was a great disappointment. Rather than abandon all hope of getting to Ireland, Derek is now looking into the possibility of re-arranging the visit and AGM for the Autumn. Provisional dates are 11-14 October. If you had booked to go to Ireland please let the Secretary know whether you are able to get to an autumn meeting. If you are unable to attend the meeting in October your deposit will be returned. If you are able to attend the revised meeting, your booking deposit will be retained unless you let the Secretary know that you would prefer it was returned.

On a more positive note, the Bulletin will still be produced in April. Tony Barber will be sending copies to those who regularly receive them and copies will also be available at the field meeting in the autumn. If anyone would like one prior to the field meeting and is not on the mailing list please contact Tony.

Also, the BMIG now has a web site. The address will be www.bmig.org.uk but if you have problems accessing this initially try www.salticus.org.uk/bmig.

Help! - A plea for contributions
Your contributions for both the Bulletin and this newsletter are urgently required. Any short notes or articles about centipedes, millipedes, other myriapods, woodlice, water slaters, etc would be gratefully received. Examples could be tips on locating elusive beasts, notes of species in unusual habitats, notes of species found outside their known range, brief updates on county surveys or whatever. If you are uncertain whether your contribution should go in the newsletter or Bulletin send it any way. The editors will decide on the best place for publication and may even put a piece in both publications – remember that Newsletter articles have not been officially published. Whatever they may be, use this newsletter to keep your colleagues informed of your fieldwork and related activities.

Millipede Recording Scheme news
Scotland has grabbed the "diplopodological" headlines yet again. As reported below, the known range of *Chordeuma proximum* has been extended a considerable distance to the north by Gordon Corbet's discovery of the species at Kinloch on the Isle of Rum. *Nopioiulus kochi* has also been recorded from Scotland again. A male and two female specimens were collected by John Harper from Hirsel (NT835395) during the Forde Castle meeting in April 1999. John only recently submitted his records and it would be great to hear from anyone else who may still have such "goodies" lying around unidentified from previous field weekends.

Looking ahead to the next field meeting what should we be looking for in Ireland? Of course there is the Irish speciality *Adenomeris gibbosa* but we are perhaps more likely to find additional species to the Irish list rather than further locations for this pill millipede. Just glancing through the distribution maps there are a number of species that we could realistically expect to find in Ireland for the first time. *Brachychaeteuma melanops* and *B. bagnalli* are both known from Ireland but there is no reason why *B. bradeae* should not also be there. *Allaiulus nitidus* could well turn up in the urban sites recorders seem to relish. There are a few older records of *Melogona gallica* and *Melogona voigtii* would perhaps not be expected to occur in the area we are visiting but nevertheless it would be useful to confirm which species is present in Ireland. It is also worth looking out for those species we associate with the south west of England. *Leptoiulus belgicus* has already been recorded but *L.*

kervillei could well occur as could *Chordeuma sylvestre* and maybe even *Polydesmus barberi*!

Another draft account for the atlas is included below. There was only space for one this time but your feedback and comments are still appreciated.
Paul Lee, 155 Corton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk.

Observations on *Platyarthrus hoffmannseggi* and some other less common woodlice in NW England

My main interest is in bees, wasps and ants and it was through finding the eyeless, white woodlouse, *Platyarthrus hoffmannseggi*, in ants' nests, that I began to pay some attention to isopods. I was surprised by the comment in Sutton and Harding (1985) that, "like *Lasius* spp., *P. hoffmannseggi* seems to be restricted to coastal sites in the north". This comment about ants is presumably based on the BRC Atlas, which I am afraid simply reflects a woeful absence of recording away from popular entomological honeypots on the coast. *Lasius flavus*, a common host of this woodlouse, occurs widely inland on undisturbed grassland and extends into the uplands where I have found it at an altitude of 311m. However, I have only found *P. hoffmannseggi* so far on limestone sites near the coast in the Arnside-Silverdale ANOB (10km square SD47). This includes parts of Lancashire (VC 60) and Cumbria (VC 69). I have found it in the nests of *Formica rufa, F. fusca, L. flavus, Myrmica ruginodis* and *M. sabuleti*, but it is extremely localised. On some sites, e.g. Trowbarrow Quarry LNR (SD 4875) and the NT site at Heathwaite, Arnside (SD 4476), it is present in almost every ants' nest that one looks at, whereas there are some sites that I visit regularly, e.g. Gait Barrows NNR, where I have never seen it at all. Peter Burton, NT warden at Sandscale Haws NNR, has found it on the Cumbrian coast at Plumpton (SD 3178) and Dunnerholme (SD 2079) but not at Sandscale. To the south, Jeremy Steeden has found it at Lytham St Annes LNR (SD3030) and in other coastal sites including his own garden. The distribution map in Sutton and Harding (1985) indicates that it is known from the Sefton coast. All of this suggests that in the north west of England *P.hoffmannseggi* is indeed confined to coastal sites but this is not related to the distribution of its hosts.

Whilst looking under stones, I have found both *Haplophthalmus danicus* and *H. mengei*. The uncommon pill woodlice, *Armadillidium pulchellum* and *A. pictum* are well known at Gait Barrows NNR (SD4977), under moss on the limestone pavement. *A. pulchellum* seems to be locally common on limestone sites within the AONB and Dr Jennifer Newton has found *A. pictum* in gritstone block scree at Birk Bank, Clougha, Lancaster (SD5360). This year she found *Trichoniscoides saeroeensis* in strandline litter on the RSPB Morecambe Bay reserve (SD4773). Peter Burton has made some interesting finds at Sandscale Haws (SD1975) including *Cylisticus convexus* under strandline debris on the beach and *Armadillidium album* in the same microsite above the saltmarsh. *C. convexus* has also turned up in his garden in Askham-in-Furness and in somebody's cutlery box – the ultimate in synanthropy?
Neil A. Robinson, 3 Abbey Drive, Natland, Kendal LA9 7QN

Upcoming review of the Irish centipedes.

Readers of the BMIG Newsletter may be interested to know that I am currently working on a review of the Irish centipedes. I would imagine that this work is 80% complete, and would hope to submit it for publication within one year. The article comprises a short history of the study of this much-neglected group in Ireland, species accounts, and comparison with British etc faunas. I hope to check all Irish museum material later this year: With a bit of luck this will allow me to throw some light on Johnsons' old record for *Lithobius agilis*. I also hope to include a comprehensive bibliography and have so far tracked down approximately 60 relevant publications.

The following table summarises the current state of centipede recording in Ireland at the 10km square level.

Species	No. of 10km square records in Provisional Atlas (1988)	No. of additional 10km square records of M. Cawley (1990-2000)	Total no. of Irish 10km square records*
H. subterraneus	33	73	108
H. submarina	1	1	2
S. nemorensis	28	31	61
S. peyerimhoffi		7	7
B. dentata		1	1
H. brevis	1	3	4
S. crassipes	7	5	12
S. maritima	33	25	60
G. carpophagus	19	16	35
G. electricus	9	13	29
G. osquidatum	1	2	3
G. fucorum seurati	1	8	9
G. pusillifrater		2	2
G. insculptus	25	66	95
N. flavus	54	66	127
B. truncorum	27	69	109
C. anomolans		1	1
C. hortensis	16	23	42
C. parisi	3	5	8
L. variegatus	110	113	231
L. forficatus	120	143	272
L. melanops	54	51	108
L. macilentus		1	1
L. lapidicola ???		1	1
L. borealis	13	36	54
L. pilicornis		1	1
L. muticus ???		1	1
L. crassipes	5	10	15
L. microps	54	106	164
L. fulvicornis	18	20	38
TOTAL	632	899	1601

*includes all available plottable records

No less than six species, *Schendyla peyerimhoffi, Brachyschendyla dentata, Geophilus pusillifrater, Cryptops anomolans, Lithobius macilentus* and *L. pilicornis*, have been added to the Irish list over the last few years. I also have a probable *Lithobius lapidicola* and an unconfirmed *L. muticus*. Clearly despite recent work much remains to be done.

My own interest in myriapods has been greatly facilitated by the generous help given by Dick Jones, Tony Barber and Andy Keay.
Martin Cawley, 26 St Patrick's Terrace, Sligo, Ireland.

Great expectations

It has been a bit of a long-standing tradition for the recording scheme organisers to risk their credibility by predicting what will turn up at the annual field meeting. This year's meeting is in south-west Ireland, so I really haven't the faintest idea what to expect but I'll start with a safe bet. *Porcellionides cingendus* is known to be very widespread and occurs far inland in this part of the world. *Oritoniscus flavus* is another possibility. Rather like a bigger and faster *Trichoniscus pusillus* it is mainly confined to the more southeastern parts of Ireland. Coastal species could prove interesting (as always!). *Miktoniscus patiencei* is more than probable and *Halophiloscia couchi* has been long known from Howth, near Dublin. This later species has proved much more widespread on the English south coast than previously thought, so why not the Irish coast? Another outside possibility is the pill-bug *Eluma purpurascens*, which also occurs around Dublin and along the English south coast, and what are the odds on *Metatrichoscoides celticus* or even something new turning up? Of course, if no interesting woodlice come to light there is always the spotted Kerry Slug or wild Strawberry Trees to look out for! It should prove a very interesting weekend.

Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon.

Update on the Woodlouse Recording Scheme: recorder activity or global warming?

As usual, things have been fairly quiet with the recording scheme. Is there anybody out there? I've had a large batch of records from David Scott-Langley who has taken over as the Gloucestershire recorder. I noticed a few goodies, including *Trachelipus rathkei* from several sites in the Severn Valley. As far as I know these represent the most western records for this predominantly southeastern species (though it is locally common in the Thames Valley in the adjacent county of Oxfordshire). It is also becoming apparent that another 'south eastern' species, *Ligidium hypnorum*, extends it range much further south west than previously thought. It is well known from old woods along the Cotswold scarp in Gloucestershire. Back in the early 1990's I took a specimen from the Somerset Levels some 30km further to the southwest. Recently John Hunnisett has identified the species from pitfall traps (perhaps the easiest way to catch this beast) located in tall herb fen and wet woodland at several sites in West Dorset another 50km away. The big question is, are these two species expanding their respective ranges or has nobody looked in these areas before? Personally I think the above records reflect increased recorder activity in these areas, rather than an expansion. However, I do remember many moons ago someone (was it Steve Hopkin? - the years take their toll!) speculating whether *Trachelipus* would expand its range across Britain in response to global warming. If the Long-winged Conehead (a bush-cricket) and the Wasp Spider can do it then why not a woodlouse? Watch this space.

Finally please note that I have a new e-mail address: steve.gregory@northmoortrust.co.uk

Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon.

Some Rum millipedes

During an invertebrate survey on the Isle of Rum, Inner Hebrides (a National Nature Reserve) in late August 2000, I found three immature millipedes that appeared to be *Chordeuma* sp. They were in deciduous leaf litter / top soil at the foot of mortared walls in the "policy" woodlands of Kinloch Castle. This was built in 1900 when huge amounts of soil were imported from Ayrshire for the garden (and plants were imported from many sources). Through the good offices of Malcolm Whitmore and Kathie Sayer I was able to get two batches of litter / soil from the same spot in November and December 2000. The first included four adult female and one immature *Chordeuma* (and one *Polydemus inconstans*, new to the island); the second included only one adult millipede, but miraculously it was a male *Chordeuma* and clearly *C. proximum*. This appears to be the first record of *Chordeuma* from Scotland.

Two of the immatures (26 rings) collected in August have a peculiarity of the dorsal setae that I have not seen before. On rings 23 – 25 in one and 19 – 24 in the other, one of the dorsal setae in each ring has a triangular tooth on the anterior face near the base (see Figure 1). When examined with higher magnification, one appeared to have a second tooth at right angles to the first. The setae increase in size from ring 14 with those on rings 17 –25 about equal in length (c. 0.2mm) and spinous. The adults and the other two immatures show no sign of these toothed spines.

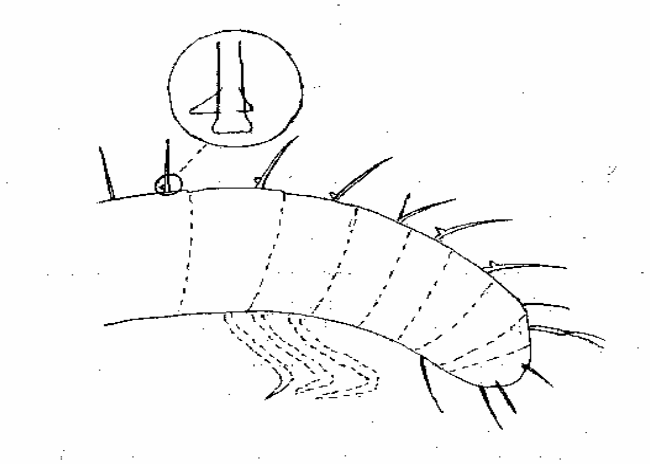


Figure 1: Terminal segments of immature specimen of *Chordeuma proximum* collected from Isle of Rum, August 2000.

Can anyone offer an explanation?

Gordon Corbet, Little Dumbarnie, Newburn, Upper Largo, Leven, Fife KY8 6JG

Just in case you can't help poking about on holiday!

Many readers of this newsletter may not realise that the Isopod Study Group originally included marine isopods – a separate recording card was produced (Holdich, D.M. & Lincoln, R.J., 1974, The distribution and habitat preferences of British marine Isopoda: a survey scheme. *Field Studies* 4: 97-104.), and expeditions were mounted to far off places like northern Scotland by myself and Roger Lincoln of the Natural History Museum, London! However, unlike the scheme for the non-marine isopods, the impetus was never kept up due to other interests, although a lot of records were collected.

Despite having mainly worked on freshwater crayfish for the past 20 years I still retain a love for isopods, particularly the intertidal sort, and many a happy hour is spent on holiday cracking opening crevices and dead barnacles to find my specialist group the Sphaeromatidae. In many ways these are very like some woodlice. For one thing they roll up in a ball to avoid desiccation and predators and those from the upper shore have a remarkable tolerances to aerial exposure. Some are virtually terrestrial.

Although the upper shore habitat in Britain is well worked it is not elsewhere in the world and I have found a number of new species occupying empty barnacle shells and crevices, even relatively close to home in the Canary Islands and the Atlantic coasts of Europe and North Africa. My latest find from the above habitats on the Canaries concerns a new species of isopod that does not easily fit into any of the known families and it is the first time the group has been found outside of New Zealand!

As many of you I am sure can't resist collecting isopods and myriapods on holiday this short article includes a request. Should you venture onto an upper rocky shore have a look in empty barnacle shells and crevices and you may well find your preferred 'pods, but you may also find sphaeromatid isopods rolled up in a ball about the size of one to two pinheads. If you do I would be very grateful if you could collect some and send them to me – if you e-mail me then I can tell you my address. Specimens are best preserved in alcohol (brandy will do!) but can be kept alive in slightly damp tissue.

I have recently taken early retirement from the University of Nottingham and a major problem I faced was what to do with the huge collection of isopod reprints I had amassed over the last few decades. David Bilton at Plymouth University offered to take the ones on woodlice (ecology, evolution, zoogeography, taxonomy, life-cycles, digestive physiology etc), although those relating to water balance went to Nia Whiteley at University of Wales, Bangor. With the exception of those relating to my current interests on upper shore sphaeromatids those on marine isopods have gone to Wolgang Waegele in Germany. So you know where good collections of isopod literature are!

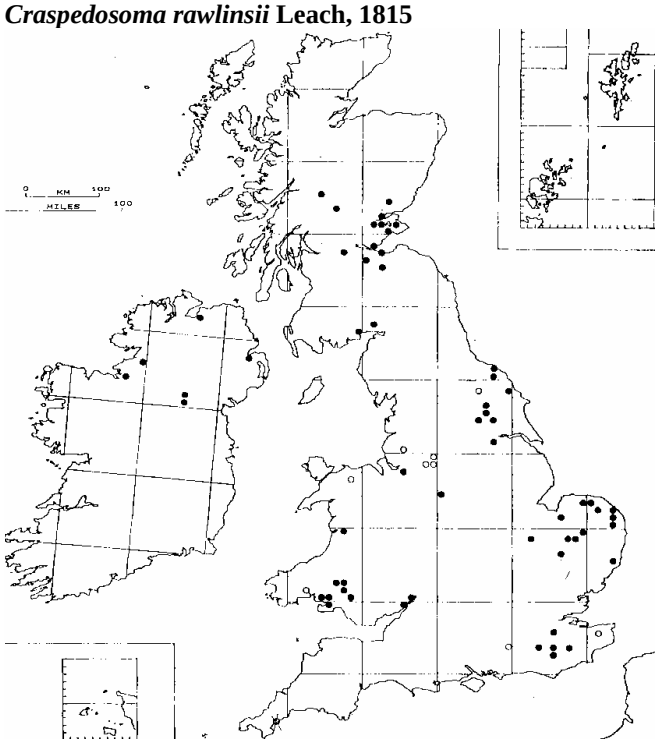
David Holdich (e-mail: david.holdich@ntlworld.com)

The Dr Edward Eason collection

The British myriapod collection of the late Ted Eason was recently donated to the Hope Entomological Collections, Oxford University Museum of Natural History by his daughter, Mrs Daunt. There are approximately 1000 spirit preserved specimens in addition to a large archive of reprints, manuscripts and original artwork. The Museum also houses other collections of interest to myriapodologists including the material of R.S. Bagnall and G. Newport. Anyone wishing to visit or use the collections can contact me using the details given below:-

Tel: +44 (0)1865 272957 Fax: +44 (0)1865 272970
e-mail: darren.mann@oum.ox.ac.uk
Darren Mann, Hope Entomological Collections, Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PW.

***Craspedosoma rawlinsii* Leach, 1815**



This species is widespread but local with clusters of records from particular regions reflecting high recorder activity in those areas. It is associated with moist microsites, most frequently in woodlands but also in fens and alongside watercourses. It has no preference for base rich soils, being found in sites with acidic, sandy soils. Harding & Jones (1994) noted its presence in East Anglian woodlands subject to considerable summer drought and considered it likely the animal would survive such conditions by burrowing deeply in the light soils. In Europe it is known from all countries along the western fringe, from France north to Sweden (Blower, 1985). The species has been recorded throughout the year but adults are typically found during the winter months. Most records are the result of specialist collecting employing sweep netting or pitfall trapping.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Autumn 2001
Please send your contributions to reach the editor by 30 September 2001

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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