

ON SOME MYRIAPODS NEW TO WALES

John Harper

4 Fairhome, Gilwern, Abergavenny, NP7 0BA

With the proliferation of regional and local Biodiversity Action Plans and other instruments of conservation in Wales today, the accurate and independent reporting of authentic records of little-known or rare species is increasingly important; all too often species appear in lists with inadequate validation.

On 2.11.2001 Mike Kilner introduced me to a site in the Cwmbran area, Church Wood Fields ST284959 vc35 (Monmouthshire), ostensibly looking for spiders; on that first visit a millipede and a centipede new to Wales were collected, though the latter had to wait two years for a male to allow identification with certainty. This was a memorable day as the afternoon visit to a limestone quarry at Abersychan produced another two species new to Wales, *Lithobius piceus* and *Haplophthalmus montivagus*, already reported in the Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group 18.

At Church Wood Fields, among several Polydesmids, was a male *Polydesmus testaceus*. A further visit on 29.3.2002 to the Fields produced no more specimens, but at the nearby Church Wood ST286961 nine males and five females were collected. The Fields are on land reclaimed from industrialisation and the flora suggests some basic soil was used to “sanitise” the area which might explain the suitability of the site for this species. However the majority of the specimens were found in riverine woodland along one of the many streams that drain off the mountain above, although there are exposures of limestone all over the area.

On 2.11.2001 at the Fields site mentioned above, three female centipedes were collected which keyed out to *Lithobius muticus* in Barber’s (1996) key; two more females were taken on 29.3.2002 but I did not have sufficient experience of the species to make a positive determination. Finding *L. muticus* at Delamere Forest on the 2003 BMIG field excursion was eventually a spur to look for more specimens at Cwmbran, proving successful on 27.1.2004; a mature male had the distinctive broad head and a very clear setose swelling on Tibia 14 which confirmed the species; plus three more females. Reference to the centipede atlas (Barber & Keay, 1988) showed a dot SJ17 in Wales but not one for SJ57 Delamere Forest. Wondering if the Delamere Forest record had been plotted at SJ17 in error, I approached Henry Arnold at BRC who kindly confirmed my suspicion; there was no record for the species at SJ17 on the BRC database.

However, the Cwmbran collection continue to provide some interest. A comparison of the specimens (only females until recently) with the description given by Eason (1964) suggested caution for these reasons:

1. The forcipular teeth are small as Eason indicates, but almost level in all the nine specimens; Eason draws the outer teeth well forward of the inner.
2. Eason suggests that “spine VpT on 14th and 15th legs is often found in *L. muticus*, a very unusual spine in *Lithobius*”; none of the Cwmbran specimens show it; females usually have 15DpF and 15DpT but it only occurs once in five specimens at Cwmbran.
3. The typical habitat given for the species is woodland but the Cwmbran specimens occur under stones in open rough grassland on a reclaimed site; none were found in the nearby woodland with the *Polydesmus testaceus*.

The above differences suggest that it is just possible that the Cwmbran population has originated from a source elsewhere in Europe, transported by the agency of Man as the whole area is greatly modified by mining, industry, trading and housing.

A singleton of *Brachyschendyla dentata* was found under a lump of tufa within the ruins of Llanthony Abbey in the Vale of Ewyas, Black Mountains, Abergavenny - SO288278 vc35 (Monmouthshire) 25.3.2002 John Harper leg. The species may have been introduced to the area at almost any time in the past, perhaps by monks from the strongly connected Llanthony and Tintern Abbeys, or down the ages to tourists today.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

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