

***HENIA VESUVIANA* (NEWPORT) (DIGNATHODONTIDAE), THE LATEST ADDITION TO ALIENS AT MOUNT STEWART, CO. DOWN, IRELAND.**

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The grounds of the National Trust property of Mount Stewart on the Ards Peninsula of Co. Down appear to be greatly favoured by alien invertebrates, a wide range of which have now been recorded.

The Italian anthroleucosomatid millipede *Anamastigona pulchella* (Silvestri) is abundant in many areas of the estate which comprises arable farmland, pasture, and broadleaf or mixed woods close to the sea at Strangford Lough. It occurs particularly where leaf litter is stable and deep, as under beech, or where rhododendron shades the soil surface but can be found in winter along field margins and on the upper shore. It was first recorded in the Sea Plantation on 24 December 1999 among ivy and leaf litter of a small promontory protected from encroachment of the sea by a long and recently reinforced bund. *Cylindroiulus truncorum* (Silvestri) was added to the Irish list from the same area on 13 September 2003 when a large colony was discovered tunnelling into flaky white rot of a large beech log which had fallen prey to salt water incursion and winter gales. With it was a New Zealand ironclad beetle of the genus *Pycnomerus* which has yet to be added to the British Coleoptera List. About 30% of *C. truncorum* males in the colony had much thicker than normal metazonite plates with more numerous flutings which gave them a characteristic glistening, slightly matt, stiff appearance quite unlike other British *Cylindroiulus*.

On 9 April 2010 I was visiting an area about 100m to the south of the Sea Plantation, on the coast at the entrance to Mount Stewart. This has the local name of The Gasworks, relating to a Victorian attempt at self-sufficiency – the ruins of the gasworks still occupy part of the site. Centipedes were not the object of the visit but before returning home I decided to turn over a few stones by the carpark. The very first was a boulder lying under a large sycamore and about 15 feet from the upper shore. Underneath were two large geophilomorph centipedes. The first impression was of a coil or knot of greenish bodies with lighter, more orange, extremities. Later, these were identified using Tony Barber's excellent new key to British centipedes (Barber, 2008) as *Henia vesuviana* (Newport). The grey or olive-greenish ground colour with darker sides and orange extremities, plus a white line along the dorsum are striking in the field. This and the slightly transverse head capsule are diagnostic. The Mount Stewart specimens were 28 and 34 mm long respectively. This species has hitherto been confined to southern counties of England, between London and Bristol.

There have been some unlikely finds at Mount Stewart but this is one of the most surprising. Ireland has a rather poor centipede list, not so much due to under-recording as to the cool, formidably wet, climate. One of the reasons why Mount Stewart gets more than its fair share of alien introductions must be its relatively favourable climate with low annual precipitation, closer to that of southern England than the rest of Ireland, and the close proximity of the sea, making heavy frosts uncommon and snow rare. I don't expect to find this species anywhere else in the northern part of Ireland although similarly warm and protected east coast sites such as the Hill of Howth at Dublin, may prove suitable.

REFERENCE

Barber, A.D., (2008) *Key to the identification of British centipedes*. Field Studies Council, Shrewsbury.