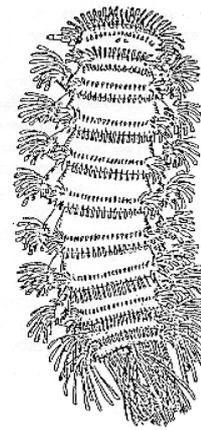




British Myriapod and Isopod Group



Autumn 2010

Newsletter number 21

Editor: Paul Lee

BMIG business

AGM notice

All BMIG members are invited to attend the AGM to be held at 8pm on Friday, 15th April 2010. The venue will be the University of Kent, Canterbury Campus.

The present committee welcomes nominations for officers and ordinary committee members from any BMIG member. Ideally nominations would be communicated to the secretary beforehand but they can also be made from the floor at the AGM.

The future of the Bulletin has formed an important discussion item on the agenda of the last few committee meetings. In particular there has been much debate about the increasing trend to electronic publication of journals and whether BMIG should go down this route. Aside from any financial implications for the Group we are keen to hear from all subscribers regarding their preference for paper or electronic copies in future. There is no plan for any immediate changes but we will be discussing the issue again at our meetings in October and April so please let us know what you think by sending an e-mail to the Hon Secretary Helen.read@dsl.pipex.com

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

2011 BMIG AGM and Field Weekend

The 2011 meeting will be held from Thursday 14th to Sunday 17th April 2011 and will be based at the University of Kent, Canterbury Campus. Note that on this occasion we are meeting the weekend before Easter.

One of the main purposes of the meeting will be to systematically survey sites for two UK BAP species, which occur mainly in Kent – the millipedes *Polyzoniium germanicum* and *Metaiulus pratensis*. BMIG has obtained a grant to undertake the survey work which will allow us to subsidise the costs for members booking for the whole weekend and taking an active role in the species surveys.

Due to the need to confirm the booking with the University details have been pre-circulated to members who have

regularly attended meetings in recent years. Of the rooms provisionally booked for BMIG five standard singles remain available (N.B. No ensuite or double / twin rooms are available). These are on a bed & breakfast basis but dinner and packed lunches can also be provided for those that book. The full package (B&B, 3-course dinner, packed lunch, use of meeting room) will cost approximately:
Daily rate: £45 (standard room),
Full weekend rate: £135 (standard room).
Subsidised weekend rate: £110 (standard room).

Please let **Paul Harding** know AS SOON AS POSSIBLE if you want to attend the field meeting – his contact details are below. Bookings for University rooms must be received by Paul Harding by 5 January 2011. Because a limited number of rooms are available, priority will be given to those booking for the whole weekend.

Of course members are also welcome to make their own accommodation arrangements and join us for the field work etc. However, you should still let Paul Harding know that you plan to attend so that we can provide details of meeting times etc.

Paul Harding, 60 Boxworth Road, Elsworth, Cambridge CB23 4JQ.
Tel: 01954 267218. Email: pha@ceh.ac.uk .

Myriapod and Isopod courses

On 17th October Tony Barber will be leading a one day course covering identification, sampling and biology of centipedes, millipedes and woodlice. The course will be held at Treborth Botanic Garden, Bangor and costs just £5.00. To book or for further details contact: Richard Gallon@cofnod.org.uk
Tel: 01248 672603

Following a break of several years the FSC course led by Paul Lee, “Identifying Centipedes, Millipedes and Woodlice” is being offered again from 29th October - 1st November 2010 at Flatford Mill. Early booking is recommended as places are limited. To book or for further details contact: Flatford Mill, East Bergholt CO7 6UL. Tel: 01206 298283

Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group Volume 24

Volume 24 of the Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group is now available from Paul Harding. The cost (including postage) is:

UK individual members £5 (cash or cheque payable to BMIG)
UK institutions £10
European members €10 (cash)
 or £9 (sterling cheque / bank transfer)

Worldwide costs by agreement with Paul.

Remember that back issues can also be purchased from Paul.

His contact details are:

Paul Harding, 60 Boxworth Road, Elsworth, Cambridge CB23 4JQ.
Email: pha@ceh.ac.uk .

BMIG autumn 2010 meeting in Kintyre

This was the meeting that nearly did not happen. We had applied to use accommodation on a reserve owned by the Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation, near Skipness in Kintyre, but unfortunately we did not get the go-ahead until after the last newsletter was distributed, so arrangements were somewhat ad hoc. Six of us spent a week there, 11-18th September, in weather that was almost always windy. Catering was provided by Dawn Collis.

On a wet day trip to Arran, some of us visited Brodick Castle Gardens, which provided the highlight of the meeting – the discovery of *Chordeuma sylvestre*. This is the fourth confirmed locality for the species in Britain, and the second locality in Scotland – the first being Culzean Castle Gardens visited during the BMIG Ayr meeting in April 2006. Both localities are owned by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) so we wonder whether that provides a connection. For all of us, the route home passed another NTS property, Crarae Gardens on Loch Fyne, but an intensive search there yielded no sign of the species. This line of enquiry will continue, so watch this space!

Full lists of myriapod and isopod species found during the meeting will appear in a future Bulletin.

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

International Congress of Myriapodology

The 15th International Congress of Myriapodology will be held at the Womens College at The University of Queensland, St Lucia, Brisbane, Australia from 18th -22nd July 2011 Brisbane in July is sunny, mild and dry: mean minimum 10°C, mean maximum 20°C.

The conference website (<http://www.15icm.org>) provides details of the programme (including an optional pre-conference tour), costs, registration and advice on travel. Conference proceedings will be published in a special issue of the open access journal *ZooKeys*.

By arrangement with the Queensland Museum, conference delegates can work in the Museum's excellent myriapod collection on a roster basis. Note that specimen collecting in Queensland is by permit only. See conference website for details.

For more information, please visit the conference website, or email the organisers:

Bob Mesibov (mesibov@southcom.com.au), CIM Councillor
Megan Short (mshort@deakin.edu.au), CIM Councillor
Sally Brown (sally.brown@uq.net.au), 'Conference Connections', conference manager

Leptoiulus in Yorkshire

On 12th August 2010, I found a good population of *Leptoiulus belgicus* at Wentworth Castle, near Barnsley (SE3103). They were predominantly under plastic compost bags and sheeting in the old plant nursery area of this stately home. I have recently seen this species on BMIG field meetings; in another stately home garden at Erddig, Wrexham and the old colliery site in Glyndwr, Swansea. The Wentworth site was very similar in character to the two Welsh ones, in that there was a lot of broken building debris and human impact. The two stately homes also presumably share a long history of plant exchanges with other sites around Britain. The Erddig site contained the national collection of Ivy and Wentworth has part of the national Camelia and Rhododendron collection, along with other plant collections. I suspect that while Glyndwr mine wasn't known for its horticulture, it is well placed between the sea and a railway depot to have experienced much commercial traffic.

Lee (2006) proposes that previous suggestions of a coastal distribution for *Leptoiulus* may be due to other factors such as temperature rather than a real maritime connection. Both the Erddig and Wentworth sites are a good distance from the coast and show a more synanthropic association. It is suggested that *L. belgicus* breeds in the spring and that few adults will be found in the summer, but this site supported numerous adult males and females in mid August.

This species could have been easily overlooked among records of *Julus* and *Ophiulus* which have the same downturned (ventrally concave) tip to the telson. The obvious distinguishing feature of *L. belgicus* is the single pale stripe down the length of the back. However, this is not always as distinct as keys might suggest and all black individuals are not uncommon. Observed in alcohol, when lying on their side, I am often more struck by the almost exactly halfway division between pale lower and dark upper half, while the central stripe is harder to observe. The stripe itself is sometimes a vague, broad lightening of the cuticle, but can be very thin and sharply delineated. It is not as distinctive as those of *Ommatoiulus sabulosus*. The combination of pale stripe and pale sides in *L. belgicus* can occasionally even give an appearance of two longitudinal dark bands. Male specimens are easily separated from those of *Ophiulus/Julus* on the basis of the distinctive shape of the first legs. In *L. belgicus* these are blunt, crochet-shaped.

The other British *Leptoiulus* species, *L. kervillei* is a more slender beast without the stripe. Males have a distinctive coxal lobe at the base of each of the second pair of legs. In May 2010 I found a possible juvenile of this species, at Dolgoch quarry, near Oswestry. Paul Lee has subsequently

visited the site and found similar juveniles, but adults are yet to be confirmed.

At the time that Blower's synopsis was published in 1985, *Leptoiulus belgicus* had only been recorded from Devon and Cornwall. *Leptoiulus kervillei* was also a scarcity from the south-west, plus, Kent, Surrey and Bedford. Lee (2006) shows a wider southern spread. These recent finds, suggest that we need to be more vigilant in the north for the possibility of *Leptoiulus* species.

Lee, P. (2006) *Atlas of the Millipedes (Diplopoda) of Britain and Ireland*. Sofia; Pensoft

Paul Richards, Museums Sheffield, Weston Park, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TP

Diary of a Lapsed Myriapodologist

I met J Gordon Blower over a battered Russian microscope in the late summer of 1977 at the Manchester University annual 1st year Zoology field trip in Swansea. The overpowering smell of tobacco, a penetrating gaze beneath wild eyebrows and an almost hypnotic way of engaging random students drew me in to the scene under the objective lens to a view of the backside of two arthropods. "Now then Henk (how the hell did he know my name?) if you count the hairs on the tails of these two millipedes you will be able to see that they are two distinct species. The interesting thing is that they appear to occupy much the same habitat - but they must be making their living in slightly different ways - they cannot occupy the same niche don't you agree?" 'Buggedger if I know' I thought, but I was captivated. Why would this exotic human want to discuss anything at all with me? Mr Blower was showing me two snake millipedes of course, and from then on I was hooked. I had been shown the secrets of the universe and they possessed many legs!

Mr Blower reminded me of the caterpillar in Alice in Wonderland - smoking No 6. filter-tipped rather than a Hookah - each subsequent interaction with him - there were many as he became my supervisor - was like having a layer of fuddled thought stripped away from my cortex. Long discussions about inductive and deductive reasoning, the merits of Hume and Wittgenstein, the design of experiments and the limits of statistical analysis gave me a Carrollean introduction to logical thought.

So what did I do with this fabulous education? When I started my own journey as an academic I abandoned all things Myriapodological thinking it might be a bit embarrassing to serious zoologists. In order to make a living I utilised the tools I had acquired under Mr. Blower's tutelage to solve the problems posed by other scholars, thus I spent two years trying to get termites to pee themselves to death and eight years sorting out wiring diagrams of locust brains. The product of this graft was to draw the conclusion that undertaking postdoctoral research is a bit like signing up to the 'oldest profession in the world'. It pays well but leaves one unsatisfied and faintly shop soiled. Later I turned to secondary school teaching - thinking that having done a bit of science I might be able to enthuse a few youngsters in the way that I had been inspired by my mentor - besides, the mortgage needed paying. After ten years of this and after,

what might euphemistically be called a serious change of mind, I concluded that I needed to go back to first principles.

'Who am I and what do I like?' I was asked. Well, I admitted to being a maker (furniture), an educator, a thinker and an observer and, most of all, that I liked doing all these things outside in the fresh air. The advice was to look at conservation as a career.

So now I work as a countryside Ranger, and introduce folk, young and old to natural history, the pattern of nature, the rhythm of the seasons, and yes, frequently, millipedes and centipedes, beetles and woodlice under the logs which way mark our walks together. I am not motivated to stick these creatures in 70% ethanol + 5% glycerine, nor am I compelled to try to identify them beyond what I can see with a lupe and a glass holding tube. The fact is they are there, inhabiting the darker recesses of the woodland and parkland, benign and reassuring in their 'multi-leggedness', waving their antennae, pointing out our own fragile niches.

Henk Littlewood

A weekend woodlousing in the Rainforest (and the Mediterranean)

A number of woodlice collections have been made at The Eden Project in Cornwall, including those by The British Museum, Tony Barber, and more recently by various BMIG members in April 2009 during the Cornwall field meeting. I have been fortunate to be able to examine many of these samples and, unsurprisingly, there were a number of unfamiliar woodlice therein. Unfortunately, there were few specimens of most species and males had not been collected for many. More material was required. Thus, on 17th-18th April 2010 myself, Mark Telfer, Darren Mann and others made a return visit armed with fine sieves, pooters and plenty of empty tubes.

In the Tropical Biome the three most numerous species we found were the pill-woodlouse *Venezillo parvus* (discovered new to Britain here in 2005), its 'bumpy' relative *Reductoniscus costulatus* (also known from Kew) and *Trichorhina tomentosa* (a widespread tropical glasshouse species). Prior to the BMIG visit of 2009 *V. parvus* and *T. tomentosa* were the only two woodlice to have been identified from the Tropical Biome. The highlight of the 2009 and 2010 visits were a small pallid pill-woodlouse with a single reddish ocellus, and a small white philosciid with 4-5 reddish ocelli. The former is thought to be a new species of *Gabunillo*. About 50 females have been found so far, all by sieving litter or by litter extraction. This species may be parthenogenetic, but the absence of males does not help identification. The philosciid, probably in the genus *Pseudotyphloscia*, also appears to be new to science and many male specimens were collected in 2010 so hopefully we can make sense of this one. Other species we found at Eden have been previously recorded from heated glass-houses elsewhere in Britain. These include the porcellionid *Agabiformius lentus* (which has not been seen in Britain since 1980) and two trachelipodids, *Nagurus cristatus* and *Nagurus nanus* (this latter looking very much like a miniature *Trachelipus rathkii*). The only 'native' species

recorded from the tropical biome so far are the pygmy-woodlouse *Haplophthalmus danicus* and the pill-woodlouse *Armadillidium nasatum*, both of which are frequently recorded in association with greenhouses.

The Mediterranean Biome was not so prolific for exotic woodlice, but in 2005 Tony Barber had collected females of an *Armadillidium* sp. and a *Chaetophiloscia* sp. (looking rather like a narrow *Philoscia*), both new to Britain. In 2010 we found males of both species, by heaving out large embedded rocks (much to the puzzlement of the passing public). The former has been provisionally identified as *A. assimile*, and the latter as *C. sicula*. As a bonus, we also added 'new to Britain' the porcellionid *Lucasius pallidus* from beneath the same rocks. The only other common woodlouse in the Mediterranean Biome was the ubiquitous *Porcellio scaber*.

Although the identity of some species remains uncertain, 16 'species' of woodlice have been recorded from Eden Project's two indoor biomes. Of these seven woodlice are new to Britain (of which 2 may be new to science) and only three species are known British 'natives'. It could be argued that studying introduced species within a greenhouse (albeit of several hectares in extent) is of little academic interest, but to quote Mark Telfer's blog "this is about as close as I have come to my unattainable dream of being the first naturalist to step ashore on some undiscovered land, seeing species that no-one has laid eyes on before. And yes ... I have seen undescribed species". For a more detailed summary of the work-in-progress on the species found at Eden Project see Mark's blog at: <http://markgtelfer.co.uk/2010/07/24/a-weekend-in-the-rainforest/>

I thank Marc Mappley for allowing access to the biomes, various individuals who let me examine their specimens and to Stefano Taiti for help with determinations. Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Hill Farm, Little Wittenham, OX14 4QZ

OPAL grant

BMIG have been awarded an OPAL (Open air laboratories) grant for a project called, "Myriapod & Woodlouse identification skills sharing". The grant will fund the publication of three ebooks available on a CD (or as downloadable files). The ebooks are richly illustrated with colour images and line drawings and offer simplified keys to many British species and describe biological and ecological aspects of the animals' natural history. They offer a basic introduction to field skills, recording and identification. They will be suitable for either individual study or for use as group presentations.

The funding will also subsidise the retail cost of this material to make them accessible to a wider audience. While there are good quality taxonomic guides available for these groups, there is a gap between basic beginners' introductions to invertebrates and the more specialist literature used for identification. This project aims to bridge this gap and maintain BMIG's work in popularising these groups and resourcing newcomers.

It is hoped that the grant, together with limited funding from BMIG would also contribute towards circulation and promotion of the material to local groups and conservation organisations at a much reduced cost. BMIG members are encouraged to undertake recording and skills sharing events across the country. The CDs can be used to promote the study of our groups and get more people involved without the associated time commitment of preparing a talk. This ongoing membership involvement is part of our 'in-kind' contribution to the project, so please do let the BMIG committee know of events of any size where you are promoting Myriapods and Isopods and can encourage beginners with these ebooks. The project end date is October 2011, by which time we hope to have the CDs published and available for any events that you may wish to put on.



LOTTERY FUNDED



Paul Richards, Museums Sheffield, Weston Park, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TP

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Spring 2011

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by
24 February 2011

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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