

# NEWSLETTER

Number 26

Spring 2013

## AGM notice

All BMIG members are invited to attend the AGM to be held at 8pm on Friday, 12 April 2013. The venue will be Brook House Barn and Cottage, Scamblesby, Lincs.

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.

## 2013 BMIG AGM and Field Weekend

Although booking for accommodation at Brook House Barn and Cottage, Scamblesby is now closed, it is still possible to arrange accommodation at one of the nearby guesthouses or B&Bs. A list of such establishments is available to assist any members with finding somewhere to stay. Imogen Wilde and Jim Flanagan have been organising permits to visit a wide range of sites in Lincolnshire and we should be able to significantly improve knowledge of the myriapods and isopods of the county during the weekend. Scamblesby is a central location for exploring Lincolnshire and there will be opportunities to visit a variety of under-worked habitats. Amongst the sites we are likely to visit are Kirby Moor SSSI and Moor Farm SSSI, two Lincs Wildlife Trust reserves that are part of the once extensive heaths near Market Rasen and Woodhall Spa; Candlesby Hill Quarry SSSI and Red Hill SSSI, chalk grassland sites in the Lincolnshire Wolds and again LWT reserves; Bardney Limewoods NNR, a series of Forestry Commission woodlands; and Gibraltar Point NNR and Saltfleetby NNR with coastal sand dunes, salt marsh and mud flats. Few of these sites have any records of myriapods from the last decade and most have only one or two records in total, some have no records whatsoever. One 'blank canvas' that is sure to prove a magnet for many is Lincoln University's Riseholme Park which in addition to farmland, woodland, deer park and lake also host greenhouses, stables and a churchyard – a veritable Steve Gregory paradise! Hopefully this has whetted your appetite and we will see you in Lincolnshire even if you can only manage one day in the field.

## Future field meetings

Many of you will have read the article 'Promoting biological recording – a developing conundrum' written by Roger Morris for *British Wildlife* (Vol.24 No.2 Dec.2012). On

organizing residential field meetings, Roger refers to the increasing difficulty of finding suitably priced venues as cheaper venues have closed and daily rates for any that can be found usually exceed £50 per day. This is a difficulty that the BMIG committee are continually struggling with when planning the AGM and field weekend. We are aware of a split in opinion amongst members, some of whom would like to attend the field weekend more often but feel the cost is too high and others who are prepared to pay a higher price for the extra comfort of a single room. An enormous amount of time was taken up with finding a venue for the 2013 meeting and we really need to give the organizers of future meetings more guidance on the type of venue they need to be looking for. Therefore the issue of future venues and in particular lower cost bunk house type accommodation versus pricier single rooms will be an agenda item for discussion at the AGM. Clearly there is a risk that those attending the meeting will be members willing to pay for more expensive accommodation and it is important that everyone gets an opportunity to put their point of view. If you are unable to be at Scamblesby this year, for whatever reason, please make sure you get involved in this discussion by contacting one of the officers with your opinion and preference for future meeting accommodation.

Paul Lee, 33, Lawford Place, Lawford, Manningtree CO11 2PT

## Obituary: Eric Philp

I grew up in a nearby village and went to school in Maidstone so I knew Aylesford well and also recall dropping in to Maidstone Museum to look at the Natural History galleries. However, it was in the late sixties, when I was teaching at RGS Guildford, that I became interested in working on myriapods and, having family in Kent, obtained some records from the county which I sent to Eric. I have just come across a first letter from him dated 19th June 1968. We kept in contact both by mail and through occasional visits to the museum with him sending me specimens and me sending him records. This continued after I moved to Nottinghamshire and later Devon.

Our contacts were intermittent but with my parents-in-law living in Maidstone I tried to drop into the museum for a chat whenever I visited and we continued to exchange specimens/records. In his latter working years I used to drop into the museum and ask at Enquiries as to "whether Eric Philp was still here" to be reassured he was. Finding my way

to his office, I was, as always, offered a stool, a coffee (or was it tea?) and a natter.

On a few occasions I went on field work with him and during these times I became aware of his enormous love and knowledge of so many aspects of natural history. In 1975 he was involved in setting up the biological records centre for the county. I still have copies of his atlases of wild flowers and butterflies for Kent.

Eric did, naturally, become competent in identification of myriapods himself and, as I recall because of his involvement in woodlice recording, came along to meetings of what is now the British Myriapod and Isopod Group. He also did some work on myriapods in Kent with Adrian Rundle. He served as chairman of the group for a couple of years and the last time I saw him was at a BMIG meeting in Canterbury in 2011.

He seemed ageless although we were all aware he had had health problems but his heart operation certainly seemed to give him a whole new lease of life which he grasped with characteristic enthusiasm. It was good to know he was still out doing work even in late 2012 and it was good to know him as an individual. He will be certainly missed.

Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

## Courses

### Woodlice Identification

Date: Saturday, 6 April, 2013

Withymead Nature Reserve, Goring-on-Thames

Steve Gregory will lead a classroom session in the study centre at Withymead. This will be followed by a walk around the nature reserve putting theory into practice.

Booking is required - see <http://www.withymead.co.uk/index.html> or email [info@withymead.org](mailto:info@withymead.org). Cost £25.00. Limited to 8 participants. Tea, coffee, and biscuits provided.

### Introduction to Isopods and Myriapods

Date: Friday, 17 May, 2013

Preston Montford - Field Studies Council

Paul Lee will lead this free, one day introductory field workshop for FSC Biodiversity Fellows. The Preston Montford grounds will provide the ideal location for introducing the techniques of finding and collecting woodlice, centipedes and millipedes. You will also be introduced to the key features used in identification of the species and given the opportunity to develop field identification skills.

The course is being offered as part of the new Biodiversity Fellowship project. By becoming a Biodiversity Fellow with the FSC you will be able to apply to join this and other courses either free or on reduced fees and you will also be kept in touch and contribute to the research the organisation is undertaking on biodiversity training. You can apply to become a Biodiversity Fellow and book a place on the course by contacting the project officer Pete Boardman at [bio.fell@field-studies-council.org](mailto:bio.fell@field-studies-council.org)

### An introduction to woodlice, millipedes and centipedes

Date: Saturday, 12 October, 2013

Dinton Pastures, Reading - BENHS

Steve Gregory will lead a free, introductory workshop to the identification of woodlice, millipedes and centipedes. After a presentation on the characters used to identify these groups, participants will have the chance to name their own material or specimens made available on the day from the BMIG reference collection housed at Dinton Pastures. For full details see: <http://www.benhs.org.uk/portal/node/17>

### **Bulletin of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group Volume 26 (2012)**

The latest volume of the Bulletin will be published on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013. Copies will be sent to all usual subscribers during March, with an invoice. Anyone wishing to order additional copies, or to subscribe for the first time should email Paul Harding [pha@ceh.ac.uk](mailto:pha@ceh.ac.uk)

Prices, including postage and packing:

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Contents include:

R. Desmond Kime – a birthday appreciation;

Woodlice (Isopoda: Oniscidea) collected from northwest Spain and northern Portugal in 2004 by the British Myriapod and Isopod Group;

Centipedes from the Fylde coast (Lancashire) and adjacent areas;

The altitudinal range of *Polyxenus lagurus* (Linné) in Britain;

The occurrence of two elusive woodlice, *Metatrachoniscoides leydigii* (Weber, 1880) and *Trichoniscoides sarsi* Patience 1908, in semi-natural habitat in Kent;

Millipedes from North Wales: a report on the BMIG 2010 field meeting.

### **Centipede records**

Centipede records are now all but a handful with Biological Records Centre, Wallingford so thanks to everyone who has sent them in. Those who were at the Wentworth meeting will recall that there were problems with missing data and wrongly coded records at the time. Work on going through the records and locating missing files has been going ahead since the end of last year and problems are being resolved towards a new set of provisional maps and I am most grateful to Stephanie Rorke for all her work on this.

After this, the next step will probably to circulate a few draft maps for view e.g. in the Newsletter (which may flush out some more records), check for obvious errors and omissions

and start to process the data. Work has begun on some of the text for the rare species where there are so few records that comments can be already made.

I have received data sets from several people for the 2012 year but if there are more out there, please do send them in. We can continue to input records for a while so do keep sending them if you make them either at meetings or during personal field work.

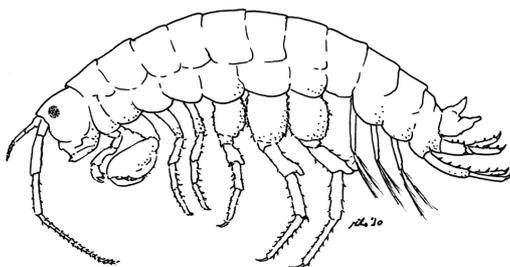
Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

#### **More on (semi-)terrestrial amphipods: *Orchestia cavimana***

In the previous newsletter (Newsletter 25, *Significant new records for the Landhopper Arcitalitrus dorrieni*) I reported the occurrence of terrestrial amphipods in Sunderland, north-east England and in Norwich, Norfolk. Following examination of voucher specimens the Sunderland specimens appear to be a genuine *Arcitalitrus* sp., though more detailed examination is required to rule out the possibility of other congeners. However, the specimens from Norfolk are of a different species, *Orchestia cavimana*. This highlights the importance of retaining voucher specimens of species collected from atypical sites and/or locations.

*Orchestia cavimana* is thought to have originated from the Mediterranean/Ponto-Caspian regions and now occurs around the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts of North Africa and Europe. It was first recorded in Britain in 1942 but remains locally distributed in England. Typically, it inhabits saline, brackish-water or freshwater habitats and is able to penetrate far inland along the estuaries of rivers, but rarely occurs far from watercourses.

It is similar in size and shape to *A. dorrieni* (although slightly paler in colour), and occurs in similar situations (although it never occupies truly terrestrial habitats). Males are readily distinguished from *A. dorrieni* by the conspicuously swollen, almost circular, terminal segments to gnathopod 2 (second 'leg-like' structure), giving a characteristic 'boxing-glove' appearance. Gnathopod 2 is not sexually dimorphic in *Arcitalitrus* sp. and in both sexes has the general appearance of a 'normal' walking leg. The long slender pleopods are also very conspicuous in *O. cavimana*, hanging freely beyond the last pair of pereopods (walking legs). See image below.



The Freshwater Biological Association (FBA) has produced a guide to 'identifying invasive shrimps and isopods', from

which the image above has been taken. This guide can be downloaded at: [http://www.fba.org.uk/sites/default/files/InvasiveFWShrimps&Isopods\\_Dec2012.pdf](http://www.fba.org.uk/sites/default/files/InvasiveFWShrimps&Isopods_Dec2012.pdf)

Steve Gregory, Earth Trust, Little Wittenham, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4QZ

#### **Centipede bites**

Everyone is familiar with the idea that the large *Scolopendra* centipedes of the tropics such as *S. morsitans* can give you an extremely disagreeable experience should it manage to get its poison claws into your finger but even our smaller temperate centipedes can, if large enough, penetrate the skin and give what appears to be a "sting" which wears off after a short while. Indeed there was a case in the French literature where someone, seemingly bitten by *Lithobius forficatus*, went into anaphylactic shock.

It would be interesting to gather together anyone's experience of having been bitten by a British species. Steve Hopkin told a tale of holding up a specimen in front of a group of students and explaining none of our species could bite. At which point it bit him. On being asked which species it was he said that he dropped it quickly so had no idea (or a somewhat more forceful expression meaning the same thing).

I can recall being bitten by *Cryptops anomalans* many years ago and assumed that both *Lithobius pilicornis* and larger *L. forficatus* would be able to bite. To these I now add *Lithobius variegatus* on a wet and windy day on Lismore Island, Scotland in September 2012. Perhaps it was as fed up as I was with the weather. It bit the fold of skin alongside a nail and the experience was distinctly noticeable although soon went away.

Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

#### **New BMIG Website**

Yes, if you have not yet found it, as of 18<sup>th</sup> January typing [www.bmig.org.uk](http://www.bmig.org.uk) into your browser would have taken you to the new BMIG website. With a great deal of assistance from Jim Bacon at BRC and a great deal of effort from Steve Gregory and Helen Read we now have a website we can be proud of. There are still improvements to be made and information to add but it is a much improved introduction to BMIG than has been available for some years. Thanks to Paul Richards we have been able to illustrate many species but we hope to cover more in future. If the site is to fulfil its function it also needs to be regularly updated, people need to expect to see something different each time they visit. BMIG needs the help of all members to keep the site fresh. If you have news of relevant courses, workshops or other events; information on myriapods or isopods appearing in the media; or anything else you think might be of interest then please forward it to Steve, Helen or me in the first place.

Paul Lee, 33, Lawford Place, Lawford, Manningtree CO11 2PT

#### **Some Scots millipede records.**

On a recent visit to Scotland in the Appin area and on Mull during September 2012, I was able to record one or two of the more unusual millipedes. Although the records do not

extend the range of the species concerned, they probably fill in a few gaps and complement records from the Oban meeting. Paul Lee kindly confirmed or identified some of the specimens.

*Leptoium belgicus* - under some roadside waste in a lay-by by Loch Feochan (NM8423). Already known from Eigg (see Millipede Atlas), Mull (Craignure & Torosay) and Seil Island (Oban meeting see Bulletin 23). Unlike some examples seen, this particular specimen had a very clear pale longitudinal stripe. It also thrashed about very actively when disturbed, behaviour which I have seen with the same species on Jersey.

*Allajulus nitidus* - amongst debris by pathside on edge of town, Tobermory (Mull) (NM5055), garden of heritage centre, Iona (NM2824). The Millipede Atlas shows two records from the west coast, the most northerly being a graveyard at Lochcarron whilst the Oban meeting had found it at Benderloch

*Cylindroiulus londinensis* - Tobermory (Mull) (NM5055), under old paving slab by roadside. Known from Skye and two west coast locations but not found during the Oban meeting.

Tobermory also yielded a *Chordeuma* sp, *Nanogona polydesmoides*, *Blaniulus guttulatus*, *Ophiulus pilosus*, *Cylindroiulus brittanicus*, *C.punctatus* and *Brachydesmus superus* whilst Iona had *Blaniulus guttulatus*, *Ophiulus pilosus*, *C.punctatus* and an immature polydesmid.

Millipedes were not abundant, no doubt due to the inclement weather, centipedes even scarcer and only common woodlice were found. We did, however, record *Oniscus asellus*, *Porcellio scaber* and *Lithobius forficatus* from Staffa!

Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

### In the journals

Ivan Antonović, Andreja Brigić, Zorana Sedlar, Jana Bedek & Renata Šošarić (2012) Terrestrial isopod community as indicator of succession in a peat bog. *ZooKeys* **176**: 171–188. Sampling of the Dubravica peat bog and surrounding forest in northwestern Croatia was conducted using pitfall traps over a two year period. One of the two most abundant species amongst the 8 species captured was *Trachelipus rathkii*. The study found that species richness did not differ significantly between bog, edge and surrounding forest. It was concluded that high species richness at the bog is most likely the result of progressive vegetation succession, the small size of the bog and interspecific relationships such as predation.

Ferenc Vilisicsa, Povilas Ivinskis & Jolanta Rimšaitė (2012) Terrestrial isopods (Crustacea, Oniscidea) at the Baltic Sea coast in Lithuania. *Zoology and Ecology* **22 (3-4)**: 226-232. A survey between 2004 and 2010 yielded 2434 individuals of seven terrestrial isopod species – *Cylisticus convexus*, *Oniscus asellus*, *Trachelipus rathkii*, *Porcellio scaber*, *Porcellio spinicornis*, *Porcellium conspersum*, along

*Ligidium hypnorum* – along the Curonian Spit and in various woodlands in Lithuania. The data on the Lithuanian fauna of all terrestrial isopods are presented for the first time. Isopod richness was the highest in woody habitats (dune pine forests and old mixed forests) where common European and Holarctic species (*O. asellus*, *P. scaber*, and *T. rathkii*) formed the majority of isopod assemblages. Additionally, more specialized isopods (*L. hypnorum*, *P. conspersum*) were also found in mixed and deciduous forests. *Porcellio scaber* and *T. rathkii*, the species tolerating human and natural disturbances, were the only isopods found in sand dunes at the coast.

Monica A. Farfan, Hans Klompen (2012) Phoretic mite associates of millipedes (Diplopoda, Julidae) in the northern Atlantic region (North America, Europe). *International Journal of Myriapodology* **7**: 62-91. Introduced millipede species in the family Julidae are common in the U.S. but little is known about how they interact with other organisms, such as mites. To start to determine the nature of the relationship, millipedes were sampled from across the eastern U.S.A. and the United Kingdom in 2008–2009. Sixteen morphospecies of mites (Acari: Astigmata, Mesostigmata) were collected from these millipedes, 12 of which from a total of 13 species of julid millipedes. None of these 12 species was restricted to a single host species. However, 12 of the 16 mite species collected were restricted to either the U.S.A. or the U.K. These results are consistent with locality, rather than host, specificity.

### NEXT NEWSLETTER: Autumn 2013

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by  
30 September 2013

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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Data Protection Act 1998

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