



British Myriapod Group

Spring 1998

Newsletter No. 28

Editor: Dick Jones

PHEW!

New Millipede Scheme organiser

When I wrote that I was thinking of handing over the scheme to another stalwart myriapodologist I did not think that there would be anyone daft enough to take me up on the deal. But there was, and so I shall hand over the reins officially at the Field Weekend (16-19 April). Paul Lee will become the Scheme organiser from then.

It will be ten years since I agreed to take over from Yorkshireman Doug Richardson and now it is going back to a Yorkshireman, although Paul lives in Suffolk at the moment. In my era there has been one *Preliminary Atlas* produced and work towards assembling the data for a full-blown *Provisional Atlas* (with text) is well advanced, with much of the data now computerised at BRC.

No longer will I sit in front of a blank computer screen and have to think what to put into the next Newsletter. My various holidays will no longer have to be relied on to fill up the page or my medical emergencies ransacked for copy. I shall sit back and let someone else do the worrying. I shall hang up my green eyeshade and it will be Paul's job to inspire you all now. Over to you Paul! His address is

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Dick Jones

Thanks Dick! Welcome Paul!

We all owe Dick Jones an enormous debt of gratitude for keeping the Millipede Scheme on the road, against all the medical odds, for a full decade. As Dick has noted, his medical adventures have been good copy for the Newsletter, but his determination has shown through time and again. You deserve a rest Dick, but we shall still be expecting you to contribute records of myriapods.

Presumably Paul Lee knows what he is letting himself in for; he has seen how others have suffered over the years! He has been systematically mopping up millipedes and many other groups in Yorkshire, Suffolk and other areas for many years. His myriapodological pedigree is impeccable, with a sound base from his early years with the Doug Richardson field recording boot-camp of West Yorkshire.

Paul Harding, BRC

Centipede Scheme

By my reckoning, Tony Barber has been running the scheme since 1970 - which must be some kind of record! As some of you may know, Tony has taken partial early retirement from work, but fortunately not from the Scheme. Keep up the good (centipede) work Tony, please.

For details of the scheme, contact:

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Rathgar

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Paul Harding, BRC

What may we meet (or miss) in Cornwall?

Thirty-six millipedes have been recorded from the Scillies and East and West Cornwall. Thirty-five if you don't count *Cylindroiulus vulnerarius* which was found by Paul Pratley on a trip we made to the Isles of Scilly. I have made several trips to Cornwall to look for myriapods and, despite having the old localities of several species, they have not all revealed themselves as yet. There are numerous big gardens in the county and they have turned up at least one species such as *C. londinensis* to my searching. What will the combined power of the BMG find?

There are two chordeumids to be found, *Chordeuma proximus* and *sylvestri*, which makes finding males a priority as females look similar. I found *C. sylvestri* on a road side just by chance and it happened to be at the same site as Gordon Blower had found it many years before. *Allajulus nitidus* has not been recorded since the late F A Turk found it in *Tehidy Woods* in 1943. Will someone find it again on the weekend? Both *Leptoiulus belgicus* and *L. kervillei* occur and they should enable a comparison to be made between these species and also *Ophiulus pilosus* which is very similar. *Enantiulus armatus* has also been found in the area so for northern visitors there should be a good chance to meet this species as well.

Polydesmus testaceus is another species that has not been seen in the county, in fact the whole of the south western peninsula, since it was recorded by Turk in 1943. We must look at *Reskadinnick* and *Polbathic*, near St Germans to see if it is still in its old haunts. *P. barberii* may even be found in Cornwall as it is just over the county boundary in Plymouth and even *Anthogona britannica* could possibly occur.

There are several species that do not occur on the county list like *Nopoiulus kochii* and *Macrostemodesmus palicola* which probably do occur if we are in the right place at the right time. Also, Turk recorded

Craspedosoma rawlinsii found by Cocks in 1853 near Falmouth. Now wouldn't that make a good find for the weekend!

About 32 centipedes (that may be a rough figure as I don't have a complete list to hand) have been recorded from Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Some like *Brachyschendyla monoeci* were probably an introduction which has not been seen since. Knowing how difficult it is to find a *Brachyschendyla* even when it is known to be resident in an area shows that we probably won't find it again. Then there is *Nesoporogaster souletina brevior*, which we know where it was found, but nobody has seen it again. The two Scilly centipedes, *Arenophilus peregrinus* and *Nesogeophilus turkii* could be somewhere on the mainland and there are lots of coastal centipedes, *Schendyla peyerimhoffi*, *Hydroschendyla submarina*, *Geophilus fucorum seurati*, *G. osquidatum* and *G. pusillifrater* which have all been found with careful looking. *Henia brevis* has been found and in 1941 Turk found *Clinopodes linearis* in *Tehidy Woods*.

Turk in 1945 found two specimens of *Lithobius tenebrosus* at *Reskadinnick* which we must look for and the *L. crassipes* that were found on the *Lizard* by Adrian Rundle have been queried by certain people and we shall see, possibly, who was right!

This month we seem to be concentrating on *Lithobius pilicornis* courtesy of Chris Fenton and Paul Richards. It's funny, I have found a lot of things in Cornwall but I have never come across *L. pilicornis*. I wonder why? Maybe this time.

Dick Jones

Lithobius pilicornis in Cornwall Part 1

It might be of some interest to note that on 2 July 1966 I found at least eight dead specimens of *Lithobius pilicornis* Newport at intervals along a 50 metre length of the cliff footpath at *Cligga Head, Perranporth*, North Cornwall, SW7353. Apart from being stiff

and desiccated all were intact and bore no sign of injury. A live example in the same spot, which appeared sluggish as it walked over the bare ground, was easily caught.

It is a mystery to me why these centipedes lay dead in this situation. Perhaps it was due to adverse weather, although I noted in my diary that the previous two days had been reasonably sunny and mild.

***L. pilicornis* Part 2**

On 9 July 1996 when I was in *St Clements Wood, near Truro*, Cornwall, SW8349 I found *Lithobius pilicornis* Newport, apparently common under logs, stones and in litter. As I had only seen a single specimen of this, our largest *Lithobius* species before, I decided to collect a few to take back to Liverpool Museum.

The first specimen that I picked up (26 mm in length) reacted by immediately plunging its fangs into the skin on the outside of my left thumb below the nail. The fangs had a very strong grip and I feared that they would remain in the skin as I tried to remove the centipede. However, I managed to detach it and place it in a tube for subsequent examination. What I found surprising was the sharpness of the pain that followed the bite, perhaps recalling that of a nettle or bee sting. The puncture area showed as a small red mark surrounded by a 2 mm white halo and an outer, diffused, red-flushed area. The pain continued for at least two hours and, even after it had stopped, the affected area was still sore when it was squeezed. The puncture mark persisted for two weeks, by which time it had turned a brown colour and before it disappeared, there was a slight peeling of the skin around it.

***L. pilicornis* Part 3**

Whilst on holiday near *Bolingey, Perranporth*, North Cornwall in 1997 (SW7653), I visited a section of a disused railway embankment here on 12 July. I worked on the top and sides of this well-vegetated embankment, primarily collecting spiders and harvestmen, but also other Orders including centipedes and millipedes. The following species of the latter were

Cylindroiulus punctatus, *Ommatoiulus sabulosus*, *Proteroiulus fuscus*, *Nanogona polydesmoides*, *Ophiulus pilosus* and, new to me, two specimens of *Leptoionulus belgicus*.

Centipedes were *Lithobius pilicornis*, *Cryptops hortensis* and *Haplophilus subterraneus*.

Whilst here, especially in the more heavily shaded part of the embankment, my attention was drawn to "things" jumping and scurrying about in the leaf-litter which I thought were fleas. Eventually I discovered that these were *Arcitalitrus dorrieni* (Hunt) of which there were hordes. However, I did notice that hardly any were evident where the tree canopy was broken and the sun shone directly on the ground litter.

The only other invertebrate of interest found on this site was a specimen of the harvestman *Anelasmacephalus cambridgei*.

All the specimens mentioned above are now in the Liverpool Museum.

Chris Fenton

***Lithobius pilicornis* in Sheffield - again and again!**

After the initial discovery of *L. pilicornis* in 1992 and the subsequent discovery of another in 1996 I am now beginning to get quite familiar with them. In December 1997 another large male specimen was collected from a cellar in the city centre. A huge (50mm, inc. legs but not antennae) female was also captured alive from the same site in January 1998. All four specimens so far recorded have been healthy, mature and very active; two males and two females. They are recorded across an area of one square kilometre of Victorian factories and houses in the heart of *Sheffield*. With a wealth of damp cellars and overgrown works yards to take up residence I suspect these centipedes have been quite happy here for some time. I now consider them to be a resident species and fully expect to encounter them with some regularity.

Three out of four records were from cellars so it might be worth checking these in your own locality for large Lithobiids lurking in the dark. I have been lucky to have the assistance of a local builder and entomologist who has greater access to such sites than myself. I recommend that everyone should actively cultivate an interest for creepy crawlies with the local building fraternity. They see things the rest of us can only image!

My next job is to conserve the old cutlery quarter of Sheffield in the local Biodiversity Action Plan on the strength of a Cornish centipede. Wish me luck.

Paul Richards

***Cylindroiulus salicivorus* - again**

Gordon Corbet has found the "spaghetti millipede", *Cylindroiulus salicivorus* from *St Andrews*; the second time it has been found in Scotland and again in a hot house. (BMG Newsletter Nos 9 & 10). Hopefully we can get it drawn and written up this time. It was apparently found by **Adrian Rundle** in the first place so if he is reading this perhaps he can let me have the facts.

Dick Jones

Record cards and BMG Newsletters

Supplies of record cards and additional copies of the British Myriapod Group Newsletter can be obtained from the Biological Records Centre (BRC). Changes of address should be notified BRC. If you no longer wish to receive the BMG Newsletter, please notify BRC (or Paul Lee) in writing.

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Surf the Net with myriapodologists!

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Steve Hopkin has an interesting home page on the web with some pictures of springtails at <http://www.rdg.ac.uk/AcaDepts/sa/AMS/staff/hopkin/sphome.html>

Perhaps we should get a web site of our own. A BMG site with photos and maps etc. would be good. Any ideas?

Next BMG Newsletter

This will be out in the autumn. Material for inclusion should be sent to **Paul Lee** (see page 1). And remember, **you** can contribute to it with your notes and comments.

Next BMG Bulletin

The 1998 issue should be out soon. For details of this issue and how to get back numbers, contact **Tony Barber** (see page 1).

Erratum

Who, if anybody, spotted my mistake in the "Plum in the centre" piece in the last Newsletter? A hybrid millipede x centipede, *Glomeris carpophagus* was mentioned in it! No one apparently noticed except me and then only after it had been printed. Not even my wife, who is a fantastic spell checker and proof reader, spotted it.

Dick Jones

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