

Early years of the British Myriapod Group

Anthony D. Barber

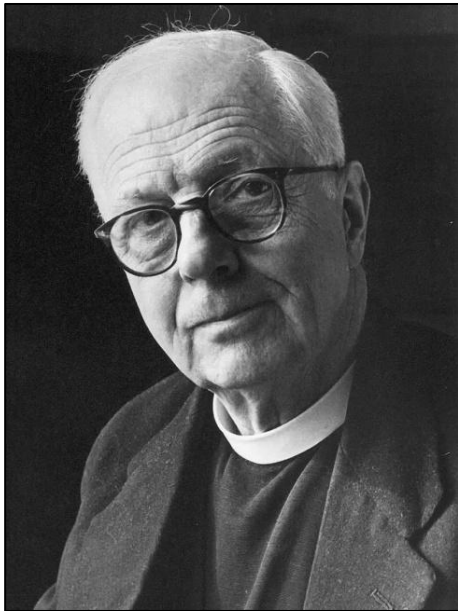
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Introduction

More than twenty years ago the British Isopod Study Group (BISG) and the British Myriapod Group (BMG), after informal collaboration since the early 1980s, amalgamated to form the present British Myriapod and Isopod Group (BMIG). An account of the earlier years of BISG was given by Harding (2018). A retrospect on myriapod studies and recording in Britain and Ireland up to 2003 was given by Barber (2003) and there are also accounts in the both the millipede atlas (Harding, 2006) and in the more recent centipede one (Barber, 2022) and elsewhere.

This present account describes some of the activities and personalities involved in the foundation of BMG and its work up until roughly the mid-1980s. Many hundreds of individuals sent in records to the



Rev. Canon S.G. Brade-Birks,
Manchester Congress, 1972
[Photo Dr Hilda Brade-Birks]

two recording schemes over the years, many attended the BMG and the subsequent joint BMG/BISG annual field meetings or workshops and so on. It would be impossible to list them all but some of the results of their efforts can be seen in the Atlases, Newsletters and Bulletins that have been produced and their contributions are very much appreciated.

Amongst important names for the first half of the twentieth century were R.I. Pocock (Natural History Museum), A.R. Jackson (NW England), H.K. & S.G. Brade-Birks (NW England, Kent) and R.S. Bagnall (Northumberland & Durham). By the 1930s it would have been possible to draw up species lists for Britain (and Ireland) with some indication of where the species had been found. In his last few *Notes on Myriapoda* S.G. Brade-Birks ("BB", 1887-1982) had covered both nomenclature (1934) and sources for description (1939), a valuable base for later studies. There were also published keys to French centipedes and part of their millipede fauna in the *Faune de France* series (Brolemann, 1930, 1935) but, as yet, none in English for our species.

The scene is set

In a review of the Zoological Society symposium volume *Myriapoda*, J.L. Cloudsley-Thompson (1975) wrote "When the reviewer began a Ph.D. thesis on the sensory physiology and behaviour of millipedes in 1947, under the supervision of Sir Vincent B. Wigglesworth, nobody in the British Isles, apart from Gordon Blower, was carrying out active research on myriapods, and there were only a couple of British zoologists then living who had previously studied these animals at all seriously".

Almost certainly, a key step in the progress of myriapod studies in these islands and in the formation of BMG was the publication of good identification keys. In 1958, Gordon Blower's *British Millipedes* was issued as a Linnean Society Synopsis (Blower, 1958), being a readily available, relatively easy to use, modern key including excellent quality illustrations. Edward Eason's *Centipedes of the British Isles* (Eason, 1964) was of similar quality but published as a hardback volume by Warne. A new and much

revised version of the millipede key was produced in 1985 (Blower, 1985a). Not only did we now have identification keys/descriptions with high quality illustrations but the two authors were both incredibly approachable and helpful to those of us who sought information or verification of specimens.

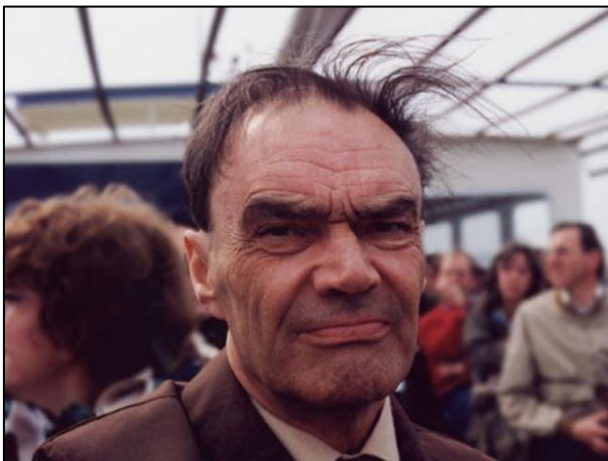
The 1970 Meeting

a) People

During the afternoon and evening of 15th October 1970, a dozen people assembled at Millslade Guest House, Brendon, North Devon (under the hospitality of Mr Brealey) for a meeting convened by Gordon Blower to talk about, and search for, myriapods. The location was found by John Lewis (recently back from Nigeria) and was deliberately chosen to be one in, what was, at the time, a poorly recorded area. Also present were Adrian Baker (Brooms Barn Experimental Station), Tony Barber (Notts), Charles Brookes (Manchester), Edward Eason, (Moreton-in-the-Marsh), Colin & Joan Fairhurst, Desmond Kime (Guildford), Peter Miller (Manchester), Sholto Rolfe (ADAS) and Richard Williams (UMIST). An account of the meeting and of a subsequent one at Kington, Herefordshire in 1971 was given in the first volume of the *Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group* (Blower, 1972a).

S.W. (Bill) Rolfe was a link to what might be called the Brade-Birks era (though BB himself was still around for the 1972 Manchester Congress). Bill, originator of some interesting discussions, was soon to retire and did not come to the 1971 meeting. He was author of a series of *Notes on Diplopoda* published just before the Second World War and co-author with Gordon Blower of the description of *Metaiulus pratensis* (Blower & Rolfe, 1956).

J.G. (Gordon) Blower (1923-2001) became, via Bolton Municipal Technical College, Manchester University and 18 months as a Sub-Lieutenant in the Royal Navy Mobile Malaria Control Unit successively a Demonstrator, Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer and finally Reader in Ecology at Manchester University, retiring in 1982. John Cloudsley-Thompson (Read, 2002) tells how he first made contact



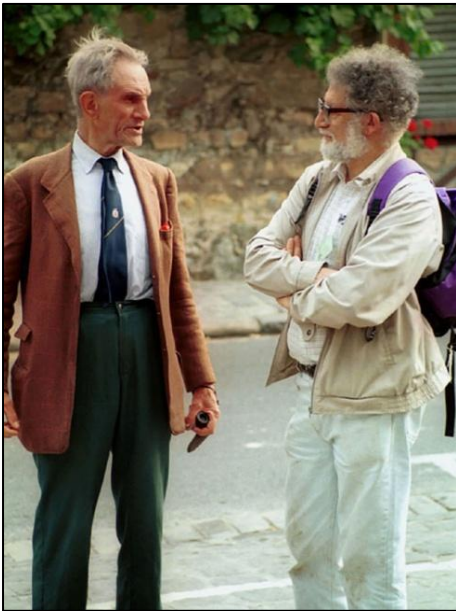
**Gordon Blower. 6th ICM, 1984,
Amsterdam** [Photo Jean-Jacques Geoffroy]

with Gordon who was then completing his MSc and how they agreed that Gordon would work on millipedes and he would stick to centipedes but that he (Cloudsley-Thompson) subsequently switched to activity rhythms in woodlice. Gordon went on to publish his first myriapod papers, on the cuticle of centipedes and millipedes in the early 1950s (Blower, 1950, etc.), and continued his studies on millipedes, looking at both the ecology and life histories of these animals, amongst other topics. His papers on Yorkshire millipedes and centipedes (Blower, 1952; 1955), both of which listed species not just from that county, represented an update on the Brade-Birks work and a valuable list of references.

Gordon and his research students, including those named here, became effectively an informal “school of myriapod studies” at Manchester and, as described in his obituary (Read, 2002), for many, he was “the father of modern myriapodology in Britain”. It is interesting to recall that when Miss H.K. Brade MSc and Rev. S. Graham Birks MSc, as they then were, began their *Notes on Myriapoda* (Brade & Birks, 1916) more than 25 years or so before Gordon started his degree course there, gave their address as the Victoria University of Manchester. A special memorial version of this *Bulletin* (Volume 19) for

Gordon and Ted was published in 2003. A list of the myriapod publications by Ted was given in Blower (2000) and those by Gordon in Read (2002).

E.H. (Ted) Eason (1915-1999) was born at Holmes Chapel, Cheshire and was keen on natural history from an early age (Blower, 2000). He attended Malvern College where he came under the influence of

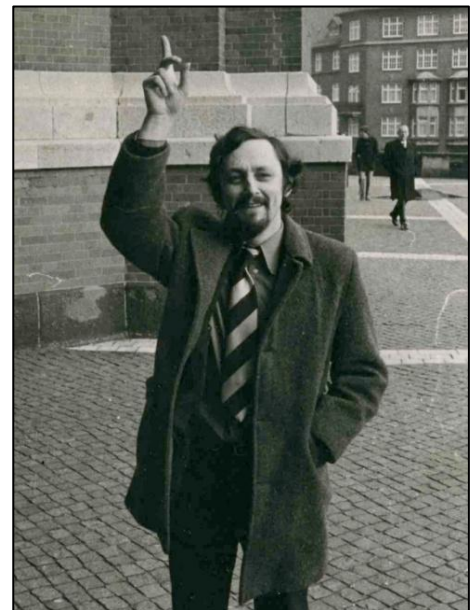


**Ted Eason and John Lewis,
Innsbruck Congress, 1990**
[Photo Zoltán Korsós]

Theodore Savory, the biology master, well known naturalist and student of Arachnida. Reading medicine at Cambridge and completing his studies at London University, he served in the RAMC in India and Burma during the Second World War and afterwards worked as a pathologist. His deafness, exacerbated by his wartime experiences, precluded general practice and in 1948 he took up farming at Bourton Far Hill in the Cotswolds. Continuing his interests in natural history, he also began publishing myriapod work in the early 1950s with a paper on the centipedes of Warwickshire and Worcestershire (Eason, 1951). He went on to author further articles on British centipedes, on type specimens described by various authors and on collections from various parts of the world. Gordon Blower was first in touch with Ted soon after the latter published his account of the discovery of *Lithobius aulacopus* (now known as *L. macilentus*) from the Lake District (Eason, 1953; Blower, 2000). In 1980 Ted was awarded the Stamford Raffles Prize by the Zoological Society of London for distinguished work on the taxonomy of centipedes.

J.G.E. (John) Lewis's postgraduate studies were on the littoral centipede *Strigamia maritima* on the Sussex coast. He published accounts of three centipede species new to Britain and on *S. maritima* life-history and ecology, halophilic centipedes and his studies of *Lithobius forficatus* and *L. variegatus*. Going on to work in the Sudan and in Nigeria, by 1970 he was back in Britain. John became a leading expert on the Scolopendromorpha and in 1981 published his *Biology of Centipedes* (Lewis, 1981). He had worked in Khartoum with Cloudsley-Thompson who had authored a number of papers referring to myriapods and several books including *Spiders, Scorpions, Centipedes and Mites* (Cloudsley-Thompson, 1958). Now more or less retired from myriapod work, a list of John's British related publications is found in Barber (2021)

C.P. (Colin) Fairhurst (1942-1994), who had been one of Gordon's research students, was a man of many interests and great enthusiasm and very encouraging to others. He studied schizophylline millipedes, and worked with the British Isopod Study Group on the design and establishment of the centipede, millipede and woodlice recording schemes. He established the millipede scheme (and, indirectly, in a number of ways, that for centipedes also) placing the millipede scheme on a firm footing and acting as its organiser until 1983 when pressure of work forced him to hand this over to Doug Richardson. As well as millipedes, his research interests included tropical disease vectors, tree disease (including Dutch elm disease) and environmental survey and education. After teaching in Manchester, Keele and Stockport he went on to Salford. His



Colin Fairhurst
Possibly Berlin in the 1980s
[Photo courtesy Joan Lewis Jones]

wife Joan had also been one of Gordon's students.

C.H. (Charlie) Brookes (d. 1983) another of Gordon's former research students, Charlie had a special interest in blaniulids. Taking his PhD in 1963 and working in various higher and further education colleges, he became Assistant Director of Manchester Polytechnic in 1980 but was unfortunately killed in a rail accident in 1983.



Des & Kathleen Kime. Hamburg Congress, 1975 (John Lewis in background) [source unknown]

R.D. (Des) Kime (1932-2023) had been a biology teacher at the Royal Grammar School Guildford since 1954 when in 1964 he was joined by recently-qualified A.D. (Tony) Barber who shared his interest in ecology and general natural history. Tony had already known of centipede studies carried out some years before by two research students, H. Roberts & S. Vaitilingham, at Southampton from his time as an undergraduate there – but, as he admits, his notes from that time were not helpful and unfortunately neither of the two studies were formally published although John Lewis made reference to them in his book (Lewis, 1981). With shared interests in soil animals, Des concentrated on millipedes starting with a short note in *Entomologists' Monthly Magazine* on the presence of *Entothalassinum italicum* (*Stosatea italica*) in Surrey (Kime, 1967) and his work on these blossomed after he left RGS in 1974 to join the

European School in Brussels. He presented a paper on the distribution of millipedes in southern England at the Hamburg 3rd International Myriapod Congress of 1975 (Kime, 1978) and his subsequent work on diplopods, which included the three volumes of the European millipede atlas, has been immensely important (Kime & Enghoff, 2011; 2017; 2021).

F.A. Turk (1911-1996) and P. Langton were unable to attend the meeting in 1979 but sent their apologies. Dr Turk published several papers on myriapods including an account of those of Cornwall (Turk, 1944) and also worked with the Cave Research Group. He and his wife Stella were both active in Cornish natural history and in establishing biological recording in the county. One of his previously unsorted collections, from the Isles of Scilly, proved to contain a specimen collected by Stella in 1948 of an, at the time unidentified, small geophilomorph, which we now recognise as *Nothogeophilus turki* Lewis *et al.*, 1988. F.A.T., as he was often known, tended very much to stay in his home county and played no real role in the formation of BMG although I was made most welcome when I visited and he proved a most interesting person to talk to. Peter Langton, amongst other publications, reported on centipedes and millipedes in Buckingham Palace Garden (Langton, 2001) as well as other myriapod contributions.

b) Progress

The 1970 meeting was marked by much useful discussion about myriapodological topics and field work carried out yielded, amongst other species, a centipede apparently new to Britain in several sites. Using a handwritten copy of the Brolemann (1930) key that someone had brought along, it was tentatively identified as *Chalandea pinguis* (*Eurygeophilus pinguis*) subsequently confirmed by Ted Eason. Later studies indicated that it was seemingly confined to the North Devon area (as well as the Alps, Pyrenees and Picos d'Europa) although it has now also been found in West Cornwall. There was agreement to the

formation of a group and of having further meetings, and after some discussion as to what the group should be called, the British Myriapod Group was formally established.

Colin Fairhurst described the discussions he had been having with the British Isopod Study Group (BISG) from 1969 on for the use of a common recording system (card based at that time) which, unlike most other biological recording schemes then current, not only recorded location, date, grid reference, collector, determiner, etc. but attempted to capture habitat information in a systematised way making additional use of the capacity of the IBM 80-column punch cards then used for computer input. There was agreement for using separate cards with common location and habitat data collection for both millipedes and centipedes (as well as woodlice). The design of the record card was such as to match the use of the IBM cards and it was agreed that Colin Fairhurst (millipedes) and Tony Barber (centipedes) should be the organisers and would work in co-operation with the Biological Records Centre (BRC) (then at Monks Wood).

This system was, in due course, agreed with BRC on the basis that it was a logical extension to the 10km square system, was experimental and did not imply that they would be prepared to support habitat studies on other groups. It was also subject to approval of the habitat classification system by the soil zoology section at Merlewood Research Station. Cards and instructions were issued in due course with a design that allowed a number of species in a particular situation to be record on a single card. The habitats and sub-categories were chosen with the three groups specifically in mind and with the hope that the lists would encourage collectors to look at more than the most obvious habitats and microsites. Recorders were encouraged “to fill in what they could”, but the forms were perhaps a little daunting, certainly at first.

A report on the recording scheme was given at the Manchester Congress by Barber & Fairhurst (1974) and subsequently by Fairhurst *et al.* (1978) and Fairhurst & Armitage (1966) with some discussion of it by Barber (2005). Atlases incorporating aspects of the habitat information were, in due course, published for woodlice (Harding & Sutton, 1985), centipedes (Barber & Keay, 1988; Barber, 2022) and millipedes (Lee, 2006).

In 1971 a second BMG meeting took place at Kington near the Welsh border with a total of thirteen members present and collections made in the counties of both Hereford and Radnor. A 1972 field meeting, as such, was not planned as the Second International Myriapod Congress was to take place in Manchester that year.

Symphyla & Pauropoda

In addition to centipedes and millipedes, R.S. Bagnall had also looked at both Pauropoda and Symphyla (and other groups) and had included them in a number of reports. A key to British Symphyla was published by C.A. Edwards (Edwards, 1959) but despite efforts by the late Steve Hopkin to kickstart studies on this group (see Hopkin & Roberts, 1988) studies and publications about them remain limited. As far as Pauropoda are concerned, there has also been limited work in Britain, but there now seems some more interest currently. The late Ulf Scheller of Sweden had expertise in both groups, especially the pauropods, and contributed to studies of British species including describing a new one, *Trachypauropus britannicus* found by Gordon Blower. Much of our current understanding of these animals in Britain derives from Ulf's work (see Scheller, 1990; Barber, *et al.*, 1992). A similar problem seems to exist elsewhere in Europe for both of these myriapod classes.

International Congresses

In April 1968 the First International Congress of Myriapodology had taken place in Paris (Demange, 1970). Papers presented included contributions from J.G. Blower, E.H. Eason, C.P. Fairhurst and J.G.E. Lewis. The meeting also saw the setting up of the Centre International de Myriapodologie (C.I.M.,

International Society for Myriapodology) under whose auspices subsequent international congresses continue to take place.

The second Congress took place as planned at Manchester in April 1972, organised by Gordon Blower assisted by Charles Brookes. Rev. Canon S.G. Brade-Birks attended as president and his address was on “Retrospect and Prospect in Myriapodology” (Brade-Birks, 1974). As well as the British participants, members from all over the world were welcomed.

The subsequent *Zoological Society Symposium Myriapoda* (Blower, 1974) contains lists of participants as well as the papers presented. For some of us this was, maybe, the first time we presented work at such a meeting, indeed maybe the first time we attended such a meeting, and were inspired to further myriapod studies. The congress also saw the first, and for a number of years, the only, volume of *The Bulletin of the British Myriapod Group* (Blower, 1972b).

The British Myriapod Group “Quiet Years”

The years that followed were quiet in the sense that there were no formal meetings or publications of the British Myriapod Group. However, work on the recording schemes progressed and new contacts and new recorders were added to the list and various members attended international congresses in Hamburg (Germany), Gargano (Italy) and Radford (Virginia, USA).

Two of the recorders who joined us during these years were D.T. (Doug) Richardson and A.N. (Andy) Keay. Doug, an enthusiastic (and outspoken) Yorkshireman with a flair for organisation, was active in the Yorkshire Naturalists’ Union in organising recording of non-insect arthropod groups. Also known as “Compo”, after a character in a television series of the time, Doug took over the organisation of the millipede recording scheme from Colin and was also the first editor of the BMG Newsletter (1983). He was involved, with Paul Harding, in producing the first (preliminary) millipede atlas (British Myriapod



Andy Keay, Roger Key & Paul Lee. BMG Langford (Mendips) meeting, 1987. [Photo Helen Read]

Group, 1988) and also introduced Paul Lee to the group at the meeting in 1987. The latter went on to become, in due course both millipede recorder, author of the millipede atlas (Lee, 2006) and chair of BMIG for a number of years.

Andy Keay took a particular interest in centipedes, initially on the Isle of Wight where he found both *Lithobius pilicornis* and *Henia vesuviana* to be widespread. He also collected *Nothogeophilus turkii* on the Island as well as the millipede *Trachysphaera lobata* and was co-author of the *Provisional Atlas of the Centipedes of the British Isles* (Barber & Keay, 1988) for which he played a major part in organising data.

Revival

By a coincidence, a biologist at Plymouth Polytechnic (now University), R.H. (Ron) Daniel, had been away working on an MSc at Manchester and had been with Gordon Blower. A slightly larger than life Cornishman who had experienced early contact with Frank & Stella Turk, he arrived in Tony’s then “office” in the Polytechnic to announce that he had “met a friend of yours”, Gordon Blower. We talked myriapods on a number of occasions both face to face and on the telephone – made a little more difficult by Ron’s deafness – and jointly published a short note in the *Entomologist’s Monthly Magazine* on *Chaetechelyne (Henia) vesuviana* and *Leptoilulus kervillei* (Barber & Daniel, 1973). In due course, Ron

began to talk about organising a BMG meeting in Plymouth. He negotiated with the polytechnic authorities to arrange accommodation, etc., and, working with Peter Smithers in identifying potential field-work sites, organised the 1982 BMG Plymouth meeting. Amongst those attending was another of Gordon's students with an interest in millipedes, H.J. (Helen) Read who was to become a key person in the activities and continuity of BMG and later BMIG both as Honorary Secretary and a *Bulletin* editor. She was also co-author with S.P. (Steve) Hopkin of *Biology of Millipedes* (Hopkin & Read, 1992).



Some participants at the BMG Easter 1982 Plymouth meeting

Left to right: Tony Barber, Ron Daniel, Pete Smithers, Doug Richardson, Helen Read, Des Kime and Kathleen Kime [Photo thought to be by Gordon Blower]

Steve Hopkin (1956-2006) first appeared in BMG notes when he contributed a note on being bitten by a geophilomorph centipede in the second *BMG Newsletter* (Hopkin, 1983). He was present, as were Helen and others, at the 6th International Congress in Amsterdam in 1984 where both read papers. Steve had worked on heavy metal tolerance in woodlice, etc. and went on to become a lecturer in zoology at Reading University. He had a wide range of interests and, as well as attending both British and International myriapod meetings, was co-author of *Biology of Millipedes* (above), author of the



Steve Hopkin & Wolfgang Dohle with ice-creams, Vittoria Veneto Congress, 1987

[Photo Helen Read]

of the AIDGAP woodlouse key (Hopkin, 1991), of *Ecophysiology of Metals in Terrestrial Invertebrates* (Hopkin, 1989) and, for some years, organiser of the woodlouse recording scheme. He became interested in a wide range of soil fauna and was also author of the posthumously published AIDGAP key to Collembola (Hopkin, 2007) as well as numerous other publications. He was organiser of the BMG/BISG meeting at Bangor in 1985 and went on to make many contributions to myriapod & isopod studies and elected chair of BMIG just prior to his untimely death in a road accident. This was a very sad loss of this unassuming, bright and likeable biologist both to myriapod and isopod studies and, almost certainly, to natural history in Cornwall, to where he had relocated just prior to his death.

In 1983 another BMG meeting took place at St. Marks College Lancaster at a date when British Isopod Study Group members were also able to be present. From that year onwards, joint BMG/BISG meetings took place and the collaboration and exchange of ideas and identification skills was immensely productive. Not surprisingly, the two groups finally amalgamated, with a formal constitution and election of officers to form BMIG in 2000 at the meeting at Audley End, Essex.



Dick Jones & Steve Gregory. Collecting trip to Hungary, 1994. [Photo Helen Read]

The 1984 meeting was at Brancaster on the Norfolk coast, organised by A.G. (Tony) Irwin and R.E. (Dick) Jones and remembered by some who were there as one of the coldest spots BMG/BISG had ever met at. Dick, as well as being associated with the discovery and description of the centipedes *Arenophilus peregrinus* and *Nothogehilus turkii* also worked on Australasian *Tuoba* (a worldwide, largely maritime geophilomorph genus) and was at various times editor of the BMG Newsletter and co-ordinator of the Millipede Recording Scheme. His garden and its environs are still notable as the only known British site for the millipede *Unciger foetidus*.

A glance through the pages of the Newsletter and Bulletins on the BMIG website will show the names of many others who have contributed to the organisation in various ways. These include Keith Alexander (National Trust ecologist, subsequently independent), Eric Philp (Kent), Glyn & Dawn Collis (Bute), Charles Rawcliffe (a retired exciseman from Edinburgh), Gordon Corbet (ex-Natural History Museum, London & Fife), David Bilton (now at Plymouth), Noel Jackson (Co. Durham, remembered for his songs in the bar at the Mendip meeting), Ian Morgan, David Boyce, Adrian Fowles, Greg Jones and others from Wales. And not forgetting Adrian Rundle, a sharp-eyed chemist from Kew, who was well known for being able to collect interesting millipedes from the most unlikely places such as the dust and litter at the edge of a street.

One consequence of the collaboration & eventual amalgamation of BISG and BMG was a letter that the present author received in 1990, “Having tried with some success with Isopods, I thought I would attempt centipedes as well”. It was from S.J. (Steve) Gregory who went on to make contributions to our knowledge of woodlice, centipedes and millipedes (and also terrestrial amphipods), to discover a millipede new to Science in 1992 (*Anthogona britannica*), to take over the woodlouse recording scheme and produce *Woodlice and Waterlice (Isopoda: Oniscidea & Asellota) in Britain and Ireland* (Gregory, 2009) and in 2023 relinquish the woodlouse recording scheme to take on that for centipedes. At a similar time to that when Steve started to look at centipedes, J.P. (Paul) Richards, known for his most useful little book *Centipedes millipedes and woodlice of the Sheffield Area* (Richards, 1995), a subsequent CD and for his photography, became an active member of the group and continues to be so.

Paul Harding, (Head of BRC, 1982-2003), originally a “woodlouse man” though also credited with a number of myriapod records, offered much support and encouragement to BMG and to myriapod studies in Britain and Ireland over the years and continues to do so in his present role as treasurer of BMIG. The two myriapod recording schemes, like the woodlouse one, have always run in association with BRC and been supported by it. BRC, had, itself, been established following the success of the BSBI vascular plant recording and atlas (Perring & Walters, 1962). It has been a pioneer of what is now termed “citizen science”, working in “synergistic partnership” with recording schemes (see: Pocock *et al.*, 2015; Roy *et al.*, 2015). Of course, we would like to think of BMIG as more than just running recording schemes. We should also note support received over the years from colleagues in The Nature

Conservancy Council/English Nature/Natural England and their parallel Welsh and Scottish organisations. Roger Key, invertebrate specialist at English Nature, was very supportive and helped secure some funding for projects on rarer species such as *Trachysphaera lobata* and *Nothogeophilus turki*. Roger attended several meetings as did John Bratton and Ian Morgan.

The *Bulletin* reappears

Whilst the BMG Newsletters and the annual joint BMG/BISG meetings kept members in touch, it was felt by some that a revival of the *Bulletin* would provide a focus for news, reports of meetings, updates on new species recorded and myriapod studies in general in Britain and Ireland. Preliminary work on a second volume was begun by Gordon and Colin but a bookseller's catalogue a few years later, offering a copy of Volume 1, was able to describe it as the "only one published". However, with Gordon's name as editor on a simple white cover, a relatively thin Volume 2 did appear in January 1985 (Blower, 1985b). It included articles by Paul Harding, Gordon Blower, Andy Keay, Des Kime, Colin Fairhurst and Tony Barber with humorous contributions such as "*Pollution Rhymes*" and *Anamorphosis of a Diplopod* from Wolfgang Dohle of Berlin. Sadly, it also contained three obituaries, Rev. Brade-Birks, Charlie Brookes and Sidnie Manton.

Volume 3 appeared the following year bearing both a drawing of the recently-discovered *Trachysphaera lobata*, and an ISSN number (Barber & Blower, 1986). Production in these early days usually involved typing up by friends, pasting in drawings, duplication by a local printer and binding by hand. Copies were then made available at annual meetings or sent out by mail to contacts in Britain, to copyright libraries and contacts elsewhere in Europe. One impact of this was the variety of styles of these various issues as we tried to keep costs down - at one stage, a grant/loan from BISG helped to keep us going.

Recording in Ireland

Although there were quite a number of published accounts of Irish myriapods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, recording virtually ceased after the First World War right through to the 1960s and 1970s (Barber, 2022). There were records being contributed in the 1970s by Declan Doogue and Carmel Mothersill and others (including Don Cotton, Lesley Gibson, Des Higgins) along with several visitors from Britain. In 1978 Carmel published a progress report on recording harvestmen, pseudoscorpions and centipedes (Mothersill, 1978).

The present author collated published and other records including data from the National Museum of Ireland (thanks to Jim O'Connor) and published an account of Irish centipedes (Barber, 1984). However, he was only able to report about a hundred records made in the previous ten years. The provisional centipede atlas (Barber & Keay, 1988) had only 631 plottable Irish records. Doogue *et al.* in due course (1993) published a review of Irish millipedes. By the end of the twentieth century, sterling work by Roy Anderson, Martin Cawley and others had massively increased the number. Martin published a review of Irish centipedes (with distribution maps) in a decade later (Cawley, 2010).

The BMG Ethos

BMG (and BMG/BISG) meetings and their organisation in the early years were relatively informal. At one stage, so as to be able to have a BMG bank account, officers, including a named Treasurer, had to be elected/appointed from those present at an annual meeting. What was very much a feature of the gatherings was the mixture of participants, academics and amateurs, experienced and beginners from all sorts of background and they were marked by openness in the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience both in the field and over a glass or two in the evenings. I am sure this must have been due very much to the influence of Gordon Blower. In some meetings visitors from elsewhere in Europe or beyond were welcomed as well and the existence of C.I.M. also provided a valuable basis for international contacts and literature and to prompt us to see the British myriapod fauna in a wider context.



Later Years: BMIG Committee at Cambridgeshire in 2009

Left to Right: Glyn Collis, Peter Nicholson, Paul Harding, Helen Read, Steve Gregory, Eric Philp, Paul Richards, Jo Smith, Tony Barber, Paul Lee

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to Helen Read and Paul Harding for their comments, information and refreshments to my memory and to both and to Steve Gregory for research into available photographs. Also, of course, to the Biological Records Centre and all those many people who have contributed to our knowledge of British and Irish myriapods and to the work of BMG and BMIG.

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