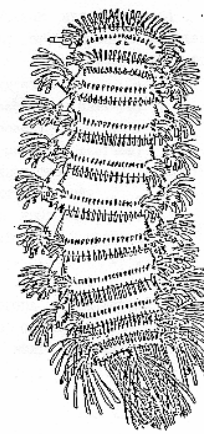




British Myriapod and Isopod Group



SPRING 2003

Newsletter number 6

Editor: Paul Lee

BMIG business

By the time you read this newsletter the booking deadline for the field weekend at Reaseheath College will have passed. I understand from our secretary, Helen Read, that a good number of people are planning to attend the meeting but if you are one of those who have left it too late and are disappointed at the thought of missing this exciting event then do not despair. It may still be possible to secure a place if you contact Helen directly but you do need to do it now. Even if you are unable to attend the whole weekend, the colloquium in Manchester on Friday 25 April promises to be an unforgettable experience. Again, if you are reading this after the booking deadline (1 April) it may still be possible to get a ticket provided you contact Helen immediately. Her postal and e-mail addresses are given at the end of the newsletter.

The 3rd AGM of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group will also be held at Reaseheath College, on the evening of Saturday 26 April at 8.30 pm.

Agenda

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Apologies | |
| 2. Minutes of the 2 nd AGM held in Youlgreave, Derbyshire, on Friday 5 th April 2002. | |
| 3. Secretary's Report. | Helen Read |
| 4. Treasurer's Report | Paul Harding |
| 5. Woodlouse Recording Scheme Report | Steve Gregory |
| 6. Millipede Recording Scheme Report | Paul Lee |
| 7. Centipede Recording Scheme Report | Tony Barber |
| 8. Newsletter Report | Paul Lee |
| 9. Bulletin Report | Tony Barber/Helen Read |
| 10. Election of Officers | |
| | Chairman |
| | Vice-chairman |
| | Secretary |
| | Treasurer |
| | Librarian |
| | Ordinary Members (up to three may be elected) |
| | (Recording Scheme Organisers are <i>ex officio</i> members of the Committee if not otherwise elected) |
| 11. Appointment of financial adviser | |
| 12. Future meetings | |
| 13. Any other business | |

Address changes

If you need to contact Steve Gregory he now has a dedicated e-mail address (Oniscidea@bopenworld.com) for woodlouse and BMIG correspondence. His work e-mail address (steve.gregory@northmoortrust.co.uk) remains valid but he is aware that BMIG messages tend to get lost amongst the abundance of 'work stuff'.

When you send in your contributions for the autumn newsletter, or your millipede records from 2002, you also need to be aware that I have a new postal address (Oakdene, The Heath, Tattingsstone, Ipswich IP9 2LX) but my e-mail address remains unchanged.

Centipede Key

Tony Barber is currently working on an AIDGAP key to centipedes in collaboration with the Field Studies Council. He would very much appreciate any observations or thoughts from anyone who has used any draft versions of his keys in the past or from anyone who currently uses Ted Eason's book.

Report of Derbyshire field meeting, Easter 2002

(A full version of this report will be published in the Bulletin next year – Ed.)

The meeting incorporated the usual site recording visits and evening talks including an introduction to Millipede identification for non-myriapodologists. The limestone dales of the White Peak received the most attention from collectors. The upland acid gritstone of the dark peak was visited by only 5 collectors. Access had kindly been granted to both Haddon Hall and Chatsworth House gardens, which were both delightful venues and turned up some of the most interesting records. The weather was very mild and sunny which made for a particularly pleasant weekend of collecting. In total, 253 millipede, 155 centipede and 218 woodlouse records (plus over one hundred other invertebrate records) were submitted.

(Steve Gregory comments on the woodlice records elsewhere in this newsletter –Ed.)

Amongst the millipede records *Archiboreoilus pallidus* was previously un-recorded from the White Peak despite the suggestion in Blower's Linnean Soc. Synopsis that it has a preference for calcareous soils. This anomaly was rectified

with four of the six new records for this species coming from limestone dales. Unfortunately all eight specimens of *Brachychaeteuma* examined were either immature or female but were assumed to be *bradeae/bagnalli* agg. based on previous records. Assumptions cannot be made about their identity as both species are known in the vicinity. *Cylindroiulus latestriatus* cropped up once just to remind us that, sadly, we still do have to do those genitalia preparations on tailless cylindroiulids!

Much attention was paid to searching out *Geophilus easoni/carpophagus* particularly in the upland areas of moorland. All of the specimens collected proved to be *G. easoni* and subsequent checking of local voucher collections has confirmed that *G. carpophagus* is actually un-recorded in the Sheffield area. Two *Geophilus electricus* records represent a first for Derbyshire. The credit for the first goes to Paul Lee in Lathkill Dale, two days before Steve Gregory unearthed it by Cromford Canal. The widespread but uncommon occurrence of this species reflects its subterranean habits but this discovery also demonstrates the paucity of centipede records locally. Surprisingly *Lithobius borealis* was first recorded in the Sheffield area as recently as March 1998 from Bretton Clough (with *Armadillidium pictum*). Two new records were from remarkably similar steep sided ancient woodlands on landslip of shale grit and sandstone. This high altitude (250m/833ft), rocky, acid environment is consistent with the characteristic habitat for this species.

Finally there was a single pauropod record. *Pauropus lanceolatus* was collected by David Scott-Langley at Chatsworth (SK264705) on 5 April. The specimen was determined by Ulf Scheller. Based on the information in local databases this is a new county record for an entire class of arthropods.

Paul Richards, Sheffield City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield.

The 12th International Congress of Myriapodology Mtunzini, South Africa. July 2002

A relatively small British contingent of five attended the first International Congress to be held in Africa. The total number of people attending (around 50) was also somewhat fewer than previous Congresses but as everyone was staying in chalets, hidden in amongst woodland, and meeting for all meals under the simple straw roof of the Boma it was a very friendly and convivial atmosphere. The usual scientific presentations covered myriad topics from parthenogenesis to *Peripatus* and from egg membranes to elephants (yes really!). Animals from beech forests and beaches were discussed and the geographical range covered was from Crete to Tasmania via KwaZulu-Natal. The formal talks were supplemented by two workshops, one on conservation led by Bob Mesibov and the other on systematics led by Roland Shelley. The first General Assembly of the Centre International de Myriapodologie was held on the last afternoon when John Lewis was elected President.

We had plenty of time to relax and chat informally during a barge trip on the local river (when not being distracted by the colourful kingfishers and other birds) and on a safari trip

on our 'day off' where some of us were treated to an extremely close encounter with a bull elephant (too close for Zoltán to take a picture of much more than his eyes!).

As usual it was a time to catch up with old friends and meet new people; it was especially good to meet colleagues from Africa and Asia. The organisers, Michelle Hamer and Rob Slotow worked extremely hard to make the week a great success and even had the stamina to spend a few days after the congress with a multicultural group of Onychophoran hunters! My South African experience was made complete by successfully finding the tiniest little delicate pink Onychophoran in its natural habitat (with just a little help from Hilke Rühberg!). We look forward to the next Congress in 2005, to be held in Bergen, Norway.
Helen Read, 2 Egypt Wood Cottages, Egypt Lane, Farnham Common, Bucks. SL2 3LE

Non-marine Isopod Recording Scheme news

Paul Richards sent me a copy of his report for the BMIG field meeting held in Derbyshire last April. Perhaps the most significant find was the discovery of the nationally rare pill-bug *Armadillidium pictum* within three new 10 km squares. In addition to its usual tree-bole habitat, it was also collected from shady grassland and on moss covered rocks. This species, first discovered in Derbyshire in 1998, has clearly been under-recorded and probably occurs at many other similar sites across northern England and Wales. Paul quite rightly queries its inclusion in the British Red Data Book that lists rare and vulnerable species. Interestingly *Porcellionides pruinosus* and *Porcellio dilatatus* are reported as new county records. Had nobody ever thought to look at a compost or manure heap before?

I mentioned in the last newsletter that David Scott-Langley had sent me a *Haplophthalmus* from a coastal site in Devon. David Bilton informs me that the specimen was *H. mengei*, which is what would normally be expected from this habitat, and not *H. montivagus*. However, do keep checking those male specimens.

After my comments in the last newsletter regarding *Oritoniscus flavus* in South Wales, Paul Harding informed me that he has some of the original specimens collected from Carmarthenshire in the 1990's. Apparently these, like Greg Jones' specimen, have retained much of their original colour despite around a decade in alcohol. More critically Prof. Daelens, an expert in the genus, had confirmed the identity. Recently Greg sent me some live *O. flavus* that I've kept in culture. They seem to be quite at home in a pot amongst moss and debris from the 'Manor' compost heap. Judging by the pile of moulted skins they are thriving.

Despite the odd foray into Carmarthenshire Greg Jones has mainly concentrated on Glamorgan. Here Greg and Simon Warmingham have found plenty of species, including *Armadillidium album*, *Porcellionides cingendus*, *Trichoniscoides saeroeensis* and the land-hopper *Arcitalitrus dorrieni*. I'm sure there must be much more to find in this part of South Wales and I'm interested to see what else they turn up.

Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

BMIG library and reference collection

Over the years BMIG has acquired a considerable number of books, papers and other publications relevant to the group. Currently, these are scattered about with various people and I suspect nobody is really sure who has what. Ideally we would like to have a centralised library that is accessible to all BMIG members. Now that BMIG is to be formally affiliated to the British Entomological and Natural History Society (BENHS) we have been offered a shelf (or two!) within the BENHS Library at Dinton Pastures in Berkshire. They also have a computerised database that will make it much simpler to search for publications covering a specific topic. I have arranged to meet their Librarian, Ian Sims, to discuss details and will keep you updated.

BENHS also have a substantial entomological collection that I have frequently used to check my doubtful Diptera determinations against their reliably named specimens. BENHS are keen to include a reference collection of myriapods and isopods. Again a centralised collection would benefit BMIG members and this is another task I hope to get under way this year. I may be making requests for specimens!

Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

Some south London myriapods

A few hours' searching in the general area of Carshalton and district, London Borough of Sutton one day in March 2002 revealed an interesting selection of Myriapods. Sites examined included wasteground, cemetery, churchyard, parkland, nature reserve and domestic garden. All were from the 10km square 51/26.

Chilopoda : *Haplophilus subterraneus*, *Schendyla nemorensis*, *Henia vesuviana*, *Necrophloeophagus flavus*, *Cryptops anomalans*, *C.hortensis*, *C.parisi*, *Lithobius forficatus*, *L.melanops*, *L.microps*

Diplopoda : *Polydesmus coriaceus*, *Brachydesmus superus*, *Stosatea italica*, *Ophiodesmus albonanus*, *Brachychaeteuma melanops*, *Blaniulus guttulatus*, *Tachypodoiulus niger*, *Brachyiulus pusillus*, *Ophiulus pilosus*, *Cylindroiulus caeruleocinctus*, *C.punctatus*, *C.britannicus*

The centipede *Clinopodes linearis* has also been recorded from the garden concerned in 1996.

Once again, this illustrates the diversity of types often found in suburban locations by hand searching. Similar exercises in other areas of London would be of interest and a comparison with those species pitfall trapped by B.N.K.Davis a number of years ago from London gardens would be worthwhile.

A number of the millipedes were identified or confirmed by Paul Lee

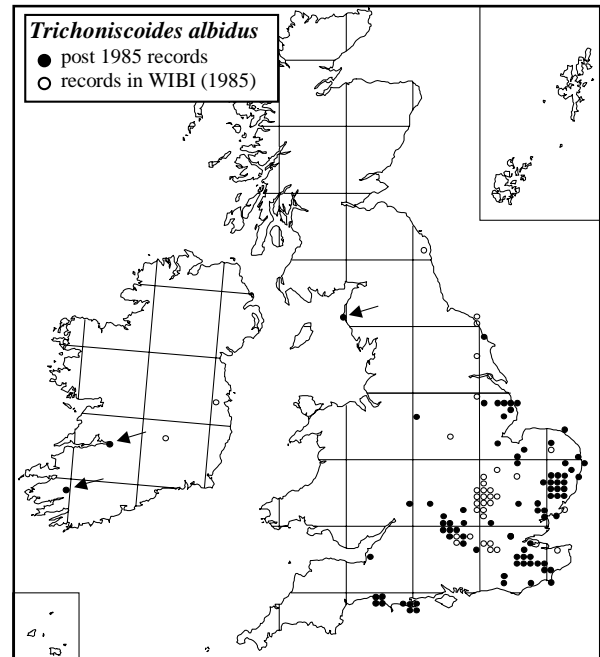
Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

Updated distribution maps

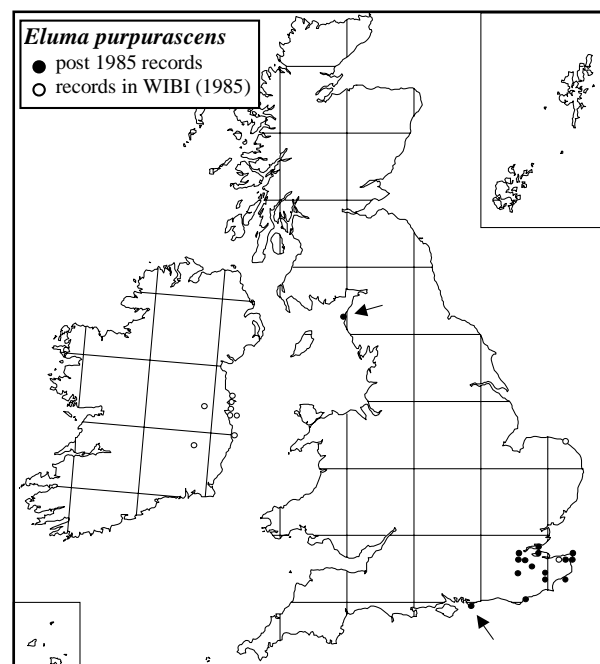
Since the publication of Woodlice in Britain and Ireland (WIBI) (Harding & Sutton, 1985), the known distribution of

many species has been revised considerably. By popular demand I have reproduced some up-to-date maps below. Records given in WIBI are indicated by open circles, whilst subsequent records are shown by solid dots.

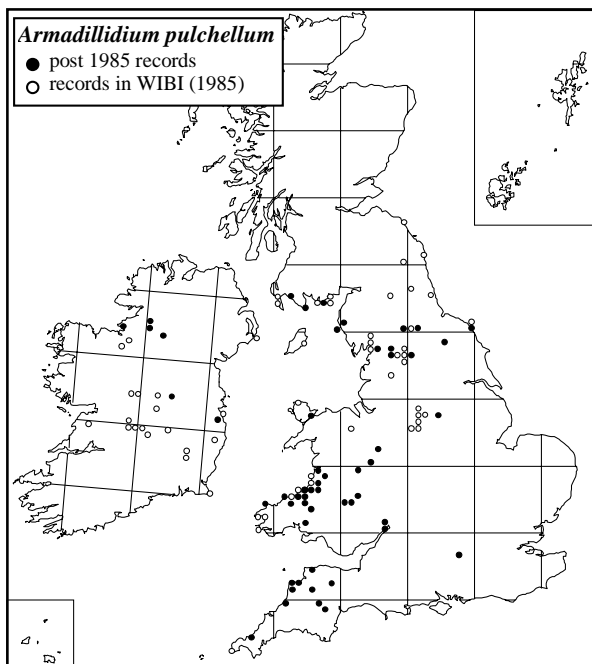
Trichoniscoides albidus: Although genuinely rare west of a line from Dorset to Lincolnshire, the real reason for the patchy distribution of species is that most recorders don't actually recognise it when they find it! The map simply illustrates areas where the few recorders experienced with this species have been active.



Eluma purpurascens: This species has long been known from eastern Ireland, but has subsequently proved to be well established in south-eastern England. Outlying populations have also been found on the Cumbria coast.



Armadillidium pulchellum: This pill-bug has proved to be widespread across Ireland, south-western England, through Wales and northern England to the Scottish borders. There is also an outlying site in Hampshire suggesting a yet wider distribution.



Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

Desiccation tolerance of *Armadillidium depressum*.

In a student experiment, performed last year, 6-10 woodlice of different species were kept at different humidities for 24 hours using various strengths of potassium hydroxide solution in the bottom of desiccators.

Percentage changes in weight were calculated as follows:

Humidity	100%	75%	50%	25%	15%
<i>P. scaber</i> (sample 1)	-0.06	-0.09	-0.3	-0.22	-0.46
<i>P. scaber</i> (sample 2)	-0.05	+0.50	-0.15	-0.39	-0.30
<i>A. depressum</i>	-3.3	-5.8	+1.9	-13.9	-15.9
<i>O. asellus</i>	-4.5	-6.0	-12.2	-20.1	-29.6

Allowing for experimental error, student practical competence and the fact that only one sample was taken, the results suggest that *A. depressum* loses water much more rapidly than *Porcellio* at most levels of humidity. This fits with its preference for dampish conditions and its SW distribution and would seem to contrast with *A. vulgare*, well known for its desiccation tolerance.

More controlled experiments on the desiccation tolerance of the various species of *Armadillidium* would be of interest.
Tony Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

A massive concentration of *Polyxenus lagurus*

While surveying the National Trust's Hatfield Forest property in North Essex I came across a large concentration of bristly millipede on an old open-grown horse chestnut tree. The living tree had sustained a small area of damage on its trunk at about 1m above the ground. The bark had been knocked away on an area of about 15cm by 15cm, exposing the underlying heartwood. I estimated a little over 200 millipedes actively exploring the bare wood surface, presumably browsing on microscopic plant life. The tree is on Woodside Green, TL522184; the date was 8 August 2002. *Polyxenus* is plentiful within the main Hatfield Forest area (TL51 and 52) and is especially readily found in exposed red-rotten heartwood on old hawthorn trunks out on the plains, although I have never found such a large concentration there.

Keith Alexander, 14 Partridge Way, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 1BQ.

And finally!

It may be morphologically incorrect but for what it is worth here is Chris Tarrant's favourite joke as reported in The Sunday Telegraph Magazine of 20th October 2002.

Question: What has fifty legs but still can't manage to walk?
Answer: Half a centipede.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Autumn 2003

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by 30 September 2003

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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The British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter is printed and distributed for the British Myriapod and Isopod Group by the Biological Records Centre, supported by funding from the NERC Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

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