

THE COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER

May 1986

Number 24

At the time of typing the stencils for this issue I am not at all sure if we will be getting the usual installments of the Biographical Dictionary. Possibly many readers saw Michael Darby being interviewed on the BBC's 9 O'Clock News up to his knees in water. A disaster of that magnitude and the attendant extra work makes the "Newsletter" look very small beer. I am sure readers will join me in a message of sympathy and hope as the V & A gets slowly back to order that future Biographical information will once again be produced.

FIELD MEETING based at LLYSDINAM, POWYS, June 6th - 8th

This looks as though its going to be a big success with 34 people booked up so far, about 66% opting to stay in the Field Centre. Apologies to those of you who tried to book at the New Inn, Newbridge-on-Tye. It appears we have clashed with a big gathering of ornithologists who have pipped us to most of the nearby accomodation. We may also end up sharing the dining room with them at the Coleopterist's Dinner on Saturday night. This will cost £6-25p (+ wine) for a choice of starter followed either by pork fillet in wine and mushroom sauce or duckling in orange sauce and a choice od sweet. I am reliably told that the cuisine is excellent and the New Inn is within walking distance of the Field Centre.

With so many going I will have to diversify the number of places to visit as most of my original destinations would be unlikely to survive the ravages of a visit by 34 Coleopterists! I will send a list of alternatives to those who have booked closer to the time. The sad news is that the most likely site where the kanikasi Pyrrhidium that landed on my shoulder in 1983 might have been breeding has been clear felled during the winter and the timber removed. There is still plenty of good habitat in the area though.

There are still a number of places at the Field Centre if anyone wants to make a late booking and I can supply a list of local accomodation on demand (Disserth Farm on the list has been suggested as an excellent substitute for the New Inn). I can expand the number of sites to visit further if numbers make it necessary. If you have lost your original booking form please get in touch and I will send another. Let's all hope for a flaming June... !

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AERIAL PLANKTON ?

The article by P. Whitehead concerning House Martins feeding on the aerial fauna (Col. Newsletter No.23) prompts me to record the following observation. On the evening of May 15th 1985 whilst walking in the south west corner of Blackmoorfoot Res., W. Yorkshire (SE095123) I noticed a small concentration of the ladybird Coccinella septempunctata L. Closer inspection revealed the presence of other beetle species. On collecting and later identifying, a total of 47 species were found to be involved.

The beetles were all confined to a 40ft long parapet, and rather surprisingly none could be found on an adjacent wall only 8ft away. By the following evening all had departed and not a single specimen was in evidence.

During the previous few days and also at the time the weather was warm and humid with a light southerly wind. However, during the early hours of the 15th a violent thunderstorm with heavy rain ensued. Had this thunderstorm been responsible for bringing the beetles down to earth from the aerial plankton above ?

Although at the time the reservoir could boast a total of 351 species of beetle from within the confines of its walls an amazing number of species were found to be new for the locality.

The species found on the 15th are listed below, the additions to the site list have been indicated by *

<u>Elaphrus cupreus</u> Duft.	<u>Tachyporus chrysomelinus</u> L.
<u>Bembidion aeneum</u> Germ.	<u>T. hypnorum</u> F.
<u>B. dentellum</u> Thunb.	<u>T. pusillus</u> Grav.
<u>B. guttula</u> F	<u>Tachinus marginellus</u> F.
<u>B. obliquum</u> Sturm	<u>Cypha laeviuscula</u> Mannh.
<u>B. quadrimaculatum</u> L.	<u>Aloconota gregaria</u> Er. *
<u>Agonum fuliginosum</u> (Pz.)	<u>Atheta fungi</u> Gr.
<u>Amara plebeja</u> (Gyll.) *	<u>Agriotes obscurus</u> L. *
<u>A. familiaris</u> (Duft.)	<u>Meligethes aeneus</u> F.
<u>Hydrobius fuscipes</u> L.	<u>Coccidula rufa</u> Hb.
<u>Oxytelus laqueatus</u> Marsh. *	<u>Coccinella septempunctata</u> L.
<u>Stenus boops</u> Lj.	<u>C. undecimpunctata</u> L. *
<u>S. junco</u> Pk.	<u>Anatis ocellata</u> L. *
<u>Philonthus decorus</u> Grav.	<u>Adalia bipunctata</u> L.
<u>P. marginatus</u> Ström	<u>A. decempunctata</u> L.
<u>P. varians</u> Pk.	<u>Chilocorus bipustulatus</u> L. *
<u>P. varius</u> Gyll.	<u>Exochomus quadripustulatus</u> L.

<u>Corticarina fuscata</u> Gyll. *	<u>Apion carduorum</u> Kirby
<u>Phaedon armoraciae</u> L. *	<u>A. dichroum</u> Bed.
<u>Lochmaea suturalis</u> Thom. *	<u>Phyllobius pyri</u> L.
<u>Phyllotreta undulata</u> Kut.	<u>Sitona striatellus</u> Gyll. *
<u>Altica oleracea</u> L. *	<u>Ceuthorrhynchus contractus</u> Marsh.*
<u>Chalcoides fulvicornis</u> F.	<u>C. erysimi</u> F. *
<u>Chaetocnema concinna</u> Marsh.	

It will be noted that several of the newly added species are to be found only in association with conifers ie Anatis ocellata, Chilochorus bipustulatus and Exochorus quadripustulatus. No habitat for these species exists at Blackmoorfoot, the nearest locality being the conifer plantations at Yateholme. This locality is some 8km to the south, and it is suggested that these species have been induced to fly by the humid conditions and were drifted north by the southerly wind, afterwhich they were grounded by the thunderstorm and rain.

The above is pure speculation, and readers opinions regarding this particular incident would be appreciated.

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TWO COUNTY LISTS - A CONTRAST OF APPROACH.

Not many people are prepared to undertake the compilation and writing of an atlas or county list of coleoptera. Those who do are rightfully proud of the results of their labours. However I sometimes wonder whether the end result fulfills the requirements of future workers. Two of the lists which I received last year presented a marked contrast of approach.

1. An Atlas of the Water Beetles of Northumberland and Durham. by M.D.Eyre, S.G.Ball and G.N.Foster, 1985. Special Publication No.1, Hancock Museum, Barras Bridge, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Price £2-00p

This is essentially an alternative version of "A Revision of the Aquatic Coleoptera of Northumberland and County Durham" by Mick Eyre and Garth Foster (Entomologist's Gazette 35(2): 111-135; 1984) with the addition of computer-generated maps produced by Stuart Ball. However, it is essential to have both publications because some species are rejected as ever having occurred in the area, despite earlier references, and the reasons for their exclusion are only explained in the 1984 revision paper. Thus the atlas only includes those species accepted, in the author's opinion, as having occurred, or occurring in the study area. Unfortunately, the study area as defined in the text is not that represented in all of the maps, but is said to be the vice-counties 66, 67 and 68. All the species so listed are given a cursory, single sentence comment and a distribution map is presented for each species occurring in 10 or more tetrads. Inevitably it is difficult to think of a suitable comment for all 156 species and the agony shows with the comment to Agabus paludosus: "A slow moving water species found in lowland areas." I can think of two interpretations. Are there any more offers? There is little text in all and most of that introduces the collectors and their territories, which I find frustratingly brief. The errors seem to be mostly in this section and therefore do not detract from the work as a whole.

There can be no doubt about the effort expended by various workers over many years, especially since 1950, in gathering the field data. Records are presented from an impressive 492 tetrads, about 25% of the study area. One wonders about conclusions drawn from a survey of only 25% coverage but even that achievement is worthy of praise. I would have preferred to see a map showing the distribution of known water bodies. Otherwise one is left to assume that some occur in all tetrads which is not necessarily so. The survey shortfall is probably much less than the apparent 75%.

There are two major faults in this atlas. Firstly, there

is no index of any kind, not even a contents page. Secondly, there are no acknowledgements. The collectors are mentioned in the text, but the source of the unpublished data, diary holders, transcribers, museums, repositories, even the Balfour-Browne Club, are not mentioned by way of thanks. More seriously, if not illegally, the surface geology map is copied, but no source or acknowledgement is quoted.

There is an extensive bibliography, but numerous errors in the dates of publication.

One the whole, this modestly priced work summarises a vast amount of effort in fieldwork and in the gathering of literature and archive data. It emphasises what has been achieved rather than what still needs to be done.

2 An Atlas of Oxfordshire Ladybirds. by J.M. Campbell.

Occasional Paper No.8, Oxfordshire County Council; Dept. Museum Services, Fletcher's House, Woodstock, Oxon., OX7 1SP
£1-50p.

In this work, the Oxfordshire boundaries are those of the administrative county and hence include parts of the old vice-counties of Buckinghamshire and Berkshire as well as old Oxfordshire. Data are presented for 40 species of Coccinellidae and there is a clear and admitted bias towards the large and brightly coloured species. A brief summary of occurrence is given for each species; 13 are mapped at tetrad and 13 at 10km level. Three date classes are used where appropriate and the distributions are summarised in tabular form at the end. It is a pity that there is no summary map of all records. This is always useful for showing which areas have not been investigated.

There is no index, but there is a contents page. The introductory text is brief and to the point and there is no attempt at an historical review. Previous lists are mentioned and other sources are acknowledged. It falls short of expectations in species coverage and in background research but to quote from John Campbell's introduction "The maps in

this atlas are no more than a revision of our present knowledge, which is woefully inadequate. Hopefully this atlas will encourage readers to help fill in some of the gaps."

This atlas presents the data which has been collated by the Oxfordshire Biological Records Centre. It understates the old existing data but emphasises what still needs to be done.

Both of these atlases are cheap and useful and both are lacking in some respects. Having criticized both, I must now construct what I consider to be an ideal composition for a county list and this I shall attempt to do in the next Coleopterist's Newsletter.

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A CALCIPHIL AMONG THE CAULIFLOWERS.

I have read with interest the remarks of my friends Messrs Alexander and Allen on the choice of beetle indicators of ancient chalklands for I am facing a similar problem in trying to find reliable indicators of ancient pinewoods. Having spent more time there than on the downs, I can add little to what has appeared in the "Newsletter" so far, though I would make one point. My encounters with Amara montivaga, one of the species proposed as an indicator of unimproved calcareous habitats, have been almost exclusively on our allotment. True, the soil there could aptly be described as "chalk with flints" but my wife and I would be just a little offended to have it rated as "unimproved".

My problem, in parallel, is that traditional native pinewood beetles such as Dictyoptera aurora, Thanasimus rufipes or Magdalis duplicata seem quite prepared to occupy

and breed in pinewoods planted by foresters. Native pinewoods may be a romantic concept to naturalists but they are nothing special, it appears, to many pinewood beetles. I begin to think that the best way to tell an ancient pinewood may simply be to look at the trees. Perhaps when we have got ancient chalkland beetles straightened out, the editor will allow us to consider equivalent pinewood species.

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("The Editor" does allow readers and contributors to consider what ever they fancy. Perhaps John puts too much lime on his brassicas ? - J.C.)

INUNDATION OF THE WARWICKSHIRE AVON VALLEY WITH REFERENCE TO COLEOPTERA.

In January 1986 floods in the Avon Valley reached high levels. The peak of flooding is thought to have been reached at about 1300hrs GMT on January 12th. In the lower reaches of the valley, for instance at Bredon's Hardwick, the river is thought to have risen to about 12 feet or more above normal and the flood plain was inundated. The damming effect of the Severn is noticeable here, and large amounts of debris are stranded on the floodplain. A large proportion of this consists of old lignified stems of Graminae and Umbelliferae (principally Conium), and bouyant fruits of Polygonaceae and Umbelliferae.

This strand is spread in varying widths depending on the topography of the valley, and visits were made to Bredon's Hardwick on a number of occasions when the strand was examined in the field, and some counts of the invertebrates undertaken. Given more time and experience, work on small staphs would have extended the list.

Coleoptera found active in thin strand, Bredon's Hardwick,
(32/903354) 14.i.1986, back of floodplain, floodplain totally
inundated.

Patrobus atrorufus Str.

Trechus obtusus Er.

T. quadristriatus Schk.

T. rubens F.

Bembidion dentellum Thun.

B. femoratum Sturm.

B. aeneum Germ.

B. biguttatum F.

B. guttula F.

Stomis pumicatus Pz.

Pterostichus cupreus L.

P. melanarius Ill.

P. nigrita Pk.

P. strenuus Pz.

P. vernalis Pz.

Agonum albipes F.

A. assimile Gyll.

A. dorsale Pont.

A. marginatum L.

A. micans Nic.

A. moestum Duft.

A. obscurum Hb.

Badister bipustulatus F.

Cercyon haemorrhoidalis F.

Stenus juno Pk.

S. tarsalis Lj.

Paederus litoralis Gray.

Xantholinus longiventris Heer

Tachyporus hypnorum F.

Tachinus rufipes Dg.

Atheta sp.

Tytthaspis sedecimpunctata L.

Coccinella septempunctata L.

Thea 22-punctata L.

Oulema melanopa L.

Hydrothassa marginella L.

Plagiodera versicolora (Laich.)

Altica lythri Aube

Apion dichroum Bedel

Notaris acridulus L.

Rhinoncus castor F (1 dead ex.)

One Pterostichus strenuus seemed rather unusual, apart from being very brown, in having the elytra no longer than the head and pronotum. Variation in Apion dichroum seemed greater than all keys allowed for in a number of respects.

Pterostichus anthracinus Pz. (with Helophorus grandis Ill., a rare bright orange form of the isopod Oniscus asellus L., and the diplopod Enantiulus armatus (Rib.)) was found only amongst thick strand in a ditch deposited on the humified remains of earlier debris.

Field counting on the thinner spreads of strand was confined to Carabidae and indicated an average in excess of 6 per sq.ft. Of these Agonum obscurum produced 34.9%, Bembidion biguttatum 23.0%, Agonum albipes 18.2%, Trechus quadristriatus 5.5%, Bembidion guttula 4.7%, Pterostichus strenuus 4.7% and P. vernalis 2.8% over about 100 sq.ft.

A further visit on January 19th, with the flood plain clear of water, showed the three most frequent Carabids in the strand line debris reduced by up to 70%. Other taxa, like the isopod Trichoniscus pusillus form, were assembling into groups. Hydrothassa was absent.

Immediately upstream in a rough lightly grazed managed meadow grazed by Canada Geese, Bewick Swans and Widgeon with rushes and tussock forming grasses such as Deschampsia, and it is from here that many of these terricolous beetles originate. They have no option but to move with the water, and can recolonise rapidly. Notaris are probably flooded from the hollow stems of Conium. Upstream at Eckington and Birlingham, on much more intensively managed floodplains the variety and quantity of the fauna was much reduced. Strategies to combat population destruction vary. At Birlingham (32/942418) on January 17th close to normal river level, I was surprised to find, under a log in perennial nettles, aggregations of Scolopostethus tomsoni Reuter, Stenus bimaculatus, rogeri and latifrons. They must have survived long habitat loss by climbing up or in the dried stems of the nettles.

At Breton's Hardwick overwintering adults of Carabus granulatus L. and Amara similata Gyll. were transported downriver deep inside logs of saturated willow.

As time passes and the strand line plant material succumbs to micro-organisms, new colonists will arrive. By the end of January Lesteva heeri Fauv. and Lathrobium elongatum L. seemed more evident. Old stranded logs on the floodplain are favoured by overwintering Tytthaspis, where they often cluster in thousands. P.F.Whitehead, Moor Leys, Little Comberton, Worcestershire.

THE COLEOPTERA OF CIRENCESTER PARK WOODS, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

The three constituent woods of this site - Hailey, Oakley and Overley Woods (all in grid square SO 90) are ancient woodland sites. Oakley Wood is named as part of a Royal Manor in a Charter dated 1133, and was subsequently used as a deer park - the old "Park Pale" is still visible, and the fallow deer still about. The present appearance of the three woods dates from the 1714-1775 period when the estate was landscaped in the Paroque style.

Oak and Beech are the main large trees, and old pollards of the latter are frequent along the boundaries. Other tree species include ash, field maple, wych elm (now mostly dead), common lime, sycamore and horse chestnut. Over the past few years I have been investigating the beetle fauna, particularly the dead wood species, and Ian Carter has also visited. Some of the more interesting species found so far are as follows: Sinodendron cylindricum, Prionocyphon serricornis, Selatosomus bipustulatus, Dirhagus pygmaeus, Ctesias serra, Pediacus dermestoides, Silvanus unidentatus, Diplocoelus fagi, Mycetophagus atomarius, Cicones variegata, Bitoma crenata, Pyrochroa coccinea, Orchesia undulata, Mordella villosa, Ischnomera caerulea and Xyloterus domesticus - all in the list used by Paul Harding as "old forest" species - and Agrilus laticornis, Anthocomus fasciatus, Cryptolestes ferrugineus, Malthodes fibulatus, Rhagonycha translucida, Clytrea quadrimaculata and Orsodance cerasi.

The site is clearly an important one, and I have been trying to interest the owner, the county trust, and NCC in its conservation. Unfortunately the owner only wants to make money from his woods, and is managing them commercially. The total acreage is around 2000, but already 60% of this has been seriously damaged through clear-felling and replanting mostly with conifers, and much of the remainder is degraded - hence NCC's and the County Trust's reticence in trying to protect the site. The more information we have, the more we are likely to convince the conservation organisations that the site is

important. So I hope that anyone reading this who has collected there will send me details of their records. If you have not been there, and could easily call in, then please do - it may not be there much longer! The woods are open to the public although, strictly, collecting does require a permit from the Estate Office.

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A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"

The "Newsletter" tells us what coleopterists are doing today. To view the coleopterist's world of 1886, we need to look at Volume 22 and 23 of the Entomologist's Monthly Magazine.

The first issue for the year features Canon Fowler re-establishing Harpalus calceatus Duft. as a British species on the basis of a single specimen he had taken at Bridlington. There was a previous record for Swansea in 1830. Some of us might want further records before going this far.

In the February issue, Mr. W.G. Blatch records Plectophloeus nitidus (Fairm.) (then Euplectus nubigena) as British on finding specimens at Sherwood Forest. Field work since has added only three other sites for this species - Windsor Forest, Blenheim Park and Moccas Park. It was the only member of the genus recorded from Britain until Mr. Colin Johnson discovered Plectophloeus erichsoni (Aube) here in 1983.

In March, Mr. J.W. Ellis reports that Herr Reitter had returned to him a beetle collected by Mr. R. Gillo of Bath as Amara montivaga Sturm, a species new to the British List. He omitted to state that he had previously sent it to Canon Fowler who named it Amara nitida Sturm, also new to Britain. The Canon reveals this in an editorial footnote to Mr. Ellis' letter and gives his reasons for disagreeing with Herr

Reitter but the argument looks like a draw. Not for long, however, for Mr Ellis writes again stating that he had sent the much travelled Amara to H. Bedel of Paris, who pronounced it to be nitida. Canon Fowler wins 2-1, or did he? - see Mr A.A. Allen, EMI 1950.

On the 7th April, Canon Fowler shows members of the Entomological Society a specimen of Agonum (Anchomenus) sahlbergi Chaud. recently found by Mr Henderson on Clydeside, and for comparison, a specimen of A. archangelicus Sahlb., to show the differences between the two. Many years later, Mr G. R. Coope of Birmingham University showed from sub-fossil studies that A. sahlbergi, in fact, has had a very long history as a British beetle, occurring in deposits laid down 42,000 years ago. Later still, Prof. C.H. Lindroth (EMI 1960) compared a series of each and showed that sahlbergi and archangelicus are really the same. Fowler loses that one.

Commander J.J. Walker RN describes in the May issue some interesting collecting at Falmouth while on leave from HMS "Cherub". He records Aepus marinus Sturm, Actocharis readingi Sharp and several other seashore species. Caulotrupoidea (Phloeophagus) aenopiceus was evidently abundant in the local hedgerows and he offers unset examples to anyone wishing the species.

In the next issue, the Commander describes how to find Acritus punctum Aube. You walk along the sand on a warm afternoon in a suitable locality and an hour later retrace your path, picking the beetles out of the little pits formed by your footsteps. If you are not energetic enough to walk, you just dig little pits in the sand above the high tide mark.

A sad note in July records the death of Dr. John Arthur Power, one of the most energetic and successful British coleopterists of all times. His obituary records that he added many species to the British List and that his "perseverance in the field" was only equalled by his generosity." For more about Dr. Power, see Mr. C. MacKechnie-Jarvis, 1976, Proc. Brit. Ent. Nat. Hist. Soc., 8:91.

In the August issue Rev.H.S.Gorham describes how Dr. Sharp Mr. Champion and himself had two months previously discovered new to Britain Eucnemis capucina Ahrens in an old beech tree at Brockenhurst in the New Forest, He writes "We have secured enough specimens to supply most of the collections with a representative" and asks that the tree and its contents be left in peace for the rest of the season.

September, sees Theodore Wood in his garden at St. Peters, Kent, digging up old seed potatoes and finding Langelandia anopthalma not previously recorded in Britain, together with other subterranean species such as Aglenus, Bathyscia (Adelops), and Oxytelus insecatus.

In the October issue, Mr.C.W.Dale describes taking a single example of Scybalicus longiusculus at Portland. Alas, this was one of the last specimens to be found in Britain. and the species has not been recorded here for many years.

Additions to the list of beetles from Sheppey are described by G.C.Champion in the November issue. He had spent "the greater part of the month" of August there. He had been visiting the area, often with Commander Walker, for 18 years and had recorded over 900 species including Philonthus pullus, Bagous frit and Macrolea mutica (Haemonia curtisi). He laments the facts that Baris scolopacea appears to have become extinct. The South London Entomological Society then in its 14th year holds its Annual Exhibition on 25th November in the Bridge House Hotel, London Bridge but, as in recent years, there is a great preponderance of lepidopterist exhibitors and few exhibits by coleopterists (some things don't change yet).

The last issue for the year holds a note from Mr.R.Gillo of Bath listing some beetles found in the neighbourhood, including Bradycellus distinctus, Copris lunaris and "eighty specimens of Gyrinus urinator."

Well, thats how it was in 1886. What will our successors think of us a hundred years from now ?

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