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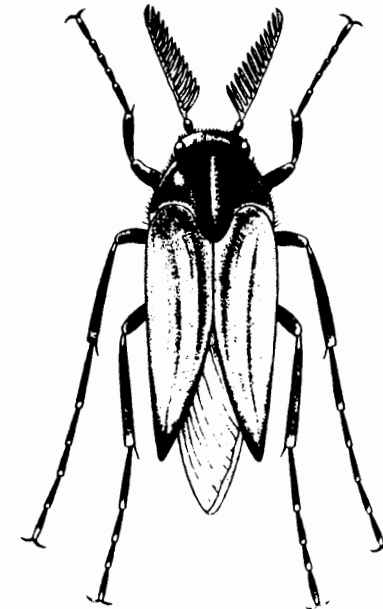
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# THE COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 1990

NUMBER 41



*COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER*

ISSN 0959-9711

Annual subscription (1990) £3.00p. Please send cheque, payable to  
*Coleopterist's Newsletter* to:

Mr. P. Hodge,  
8 Harvard Road,  
Ringmer,  
Lewes,  
East Sussex,  
BN8 5HJ.

Items for publication should be submitted to the Secretary/Editor:

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in Britain, uses ethyl acetate as a fumigant - this causes the print on photocopied labels to disintegrate. Needless to say, NZAC does not use photocopied labels, but a note of caution on this point would have been welcomed; especially to people building up collections which one day might be bequeathed to a museum. This section, packed with detail, describes the standardised system covering all aspects of collecting and curation. An impressive list of standardised abbreviations occupies most of pages 38 and 39 - an idea we could usefully adopt in Britain, and perhaps could be worked out through discussion in the *Newsletter*. The New Zealand collecting areas (figs. 48 and 49) bring to mind Praeger and Woodward's 'Typomap' system so favoured by, for example, F. Balfour-Browne.

The NZAC make wide use of the 'unit tray' system of storage as indeed do several of the larger museums in Britain, otherwise store-boxes are preferred. Supplementary material such as galls, microscope slides, leafmines, documentary and photographic records, are also mentioned.

With the health hazards associated with paradichlorobenzene and naphthalene now recognised, it is interesting to note that NZAC use unrefined camphor to deter attack by insect pests.

Pages 54 and 59 cover loans and their dispatch, again full of sound advice drawn from practical experience. Entomologists, professional and amateur, should learn by heart the entire contents of page 59.

Much of the following pages are much more aposite to museum work, but can be read to some advantage by the amateur. The section dealing with chemicals, especially their hazards, is most welcome, as are the various formulae for fixatives and solutions. The list of suppliers is, as one might expect, aimed at the New Zealand/Australasian market.

There can be few books so full of sound, proven-by-practice, information, relevant to both amateur and professional alike. This slim book should become a standard work of reference.

J.C.

# THE COLEOPTERIST'S NEWSLETTER

December 1990

Number 41

## *CERCYON ALPINUS* VOGT AT BRAEMAR

On a visit to a pinewood near Braemar during the third week in August 1990, we spent a short time extracting beetles from deer dung. Among these were a male and female of a *Cercyon* which proved on later examination to be *C. alpinus* Vogt - the first examples, as far as we are aware, to be recorded from Britain.

*Cercyon alpinus* resembles *C. melanocephalus* (L.) in size, shape and colouring except for elytral colouring. In *C. alpinus*, the elytra are black with obscurely reddish areas at the apices whereas, in *melanocephalus*, they are orange or red except for a black triangle around the scutellum. Other differences between these two species are described by Vogt in Freude, Harde and Lohse (1971, *Die Käfer Mitteleuropas*, Vol 3, Goecke & Evers, Krefeld). Of these, the longitudinal keel present on the mesosternal lamella in *alpinus* but not in *melanocephalus* and the shape of the aedeagus would seem, from our admittedly limited experience, to be the most useful. In *alpinus*, the central lobe of the aedeagus has the appearance of being abruptly drawn out in its apical third into a narrow, parallel-sided, pointed shaft whereas, in *melanocephalus*, it is wider and tapers gradually to the apex.

Those who do not already have access to the *Cercyon* key of Freude, Harde and Lohse (1971) may be able to use the English translation of the key which was published in the Balfour-Browne Club Newsletter No. 7, March 1978.

We are grateful to Mr Peter Hammond for confirming our identification of these specimens.

J.A. Owen,	and	H. Mendel
8 Kingsdown Road		c/o The Museum,
Epsom,		High Street,
Surrey KT17 3PU.		Ipswich IP1 3QH

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#### MORE ECOLOGICAL NOTES IN *QUEDIUS* SPP (STAPHYLINIDAE)

I thought it might be worthwhile to follow up some of my friend Paul Whitehead's interesting notes on the ecology or habitat preferences, of certain species of *Quedius*, with a few observations of my own on (Mostly) the same species; but relating to different parts of the country and in large measure to an earlier period when I was collecting more actively than now.

First let me say that my overall experience of the species he deals with is very similar to his, any differences being probably accountable to the two factors just mentioned. *Quedius aridulus*, *boopoides* and *nitipennis* can be dismissed at once, as my acquaintance with them in the field is virtually nil.

*Quedius cinctus* (Payk.) I have had mostly in compost, grass heaps, at carrion and dung, and on the wing, in gardens and open country; but only casually, or at least, never in any numbers. It is one of the species I would regard as having declined in my home district, in contrast to, for example, *Q. mesomelinus* (Marsh.) or members of the *Q. fuliginosus* group.

#### BOOK REVIEW

*The preparation and curation of insects* by Annette K. Walker and Trevor K. Crosby, 1988.

ISBN 0 477 02519 6 ; 92 pages.

Entomology Division, Department of Science and Industrial Research, Auckland, New Zealand. Obtainable in the UK from E.W. Classey Ltd., P.O. Box 93, Faringdon, Oxon. SN7 7DR. £8.50 incl. postage.

This compact, concise book describes the methods and techniques employed by the staff of the New Zealand Arthropod Collection (NZAC). It is divided into several main sections: abstract; contents; introduction; acknowledgements; killing and initial storing; handling specimens; preparing and preserving specimens; specimen labels; organisation of the collection; loans, packing and posting specimens; sending specimens to specialists; identification of specimens; restoration of specimens; ultrasonic cleaning; insects for display; basic use of the dissecting microscope; dissecting specimens; hazardous properties of detergents; hazardous chemicals; checklist of supplies; formulae of fixatives; fluids etc.; references; further reading and index. Clear text figures illustrate various techniques, label formats, forms and equipment.

The overall impression is that the NZAC is run on exemplary lines - a model for others to follow and adapt to their specific needs. Much of the book is quite relevant to the amateur entomologist, and although covering all insects, the coleopterist will find the book very useful indeed. The New Zealand fauna is not so well known as the European fauna, and as a result, some of the techniques employed differ between the two; for example micropinning and carding is commonly used in New Zealand, but hardly ever used by British workers.

The section on specimen labels takes up 13 of the book's 92 pages (pp. 31-43), and begins with the often ignored truth: "Because labels can last as long as the specimens, it is important to take great care to write legibly, using good quality paper and durable ink". With this in mind, it is well to note that NZAC, in common with many entomologist's

SCOTTISH ENTOMOLOGIST'S GATHERING, GALASHIELS, 12-14 JULY 1991.

The tenth meeting of the group will be based at the Scottish College of Textiles, Galashiels. The main interest of this area of the Borders lies in the Whitlaw Mosses National Nature Reserve and in more than a hundred other pockets of rich fen in all stages of the hydrosereal succession to natural woodland and raised bog. There are also some of the finest rivers and streams in Britain, with large tracts of exposed gravel bed. The less recorded habitats are for those inclined either to walk (the submontane heaths of the Tweedsmuir/Moffat Hills) or to drive (the coastal cliffs of Berwickshire). There are also hanging valley woodlands locally that require more entomological work. The local NCC officers are keen to help us, in particular by arranging access to some of the lesser known sites.

Accommodation is in individual bedrooms and the cost, inclusive of breakfast, packed lunch and dinner from Friday evening to Sunday midday, is likely to be around £45. Space will be provided for identification work but participants must bring their own equipment. For those without cars, it is important to note that there is only a bus service (no trains) to this part of the Borders. However, transport will be arranged once participants arrive.

Those wishing to attend should contact

Dr G.N. Foster,  
The Scottish  
Agricultural College,  
Auchincruive,  
Ayr KA6 5HW.

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I last saw *Q. cinctus* (a single example as usual) in 1985.

In *Q. maurus* (Sahlb.) and *Q. mesomelinus* we have a pair of very closely allied species separated to a considerable extent by micro-habitat; the former rather strictly subcortical, the latter nearly always larger, and far more eurytopic, occurring in a variety of situations. *Quedius maurus* is always much rarer but has periods when it is less rare, notably about 1930-1950; I have met with it only in N. Somerset (1931-32) and twice in this district (last about 1955). *Quedius mesomelinus*, on the other hand has increased as *Q. maurus* has decreased, and is one of the commonest and most general of *Quedius* spp in my area at the present time. It is a species of compost and rubbish heaps but is equally a woodland insect, found at sap, in rotten wood and fungi, etc.; only quite seldom under bark (the typical *maurus* habitat).

As Mr Whitehead suggests, *Quedius microps* Grav. appears genuinely scarce and in my experience has the same habitat as *Q. ventralis* (Arag.), viz. wet, very rotten wood, often with dense, clay-like, blackish mould, in tree holes and hollow trunks; it is unusual though to find the two species together, a suitable habitat generally yielding one or the other. I have never found *microps* hereabouts, whereas *ventralis* occurs in the Shooters Hill woods. *Quedius brevicornis* (Thoms.) is occasional in the same situations, especially where a bird's nest has recently existed.

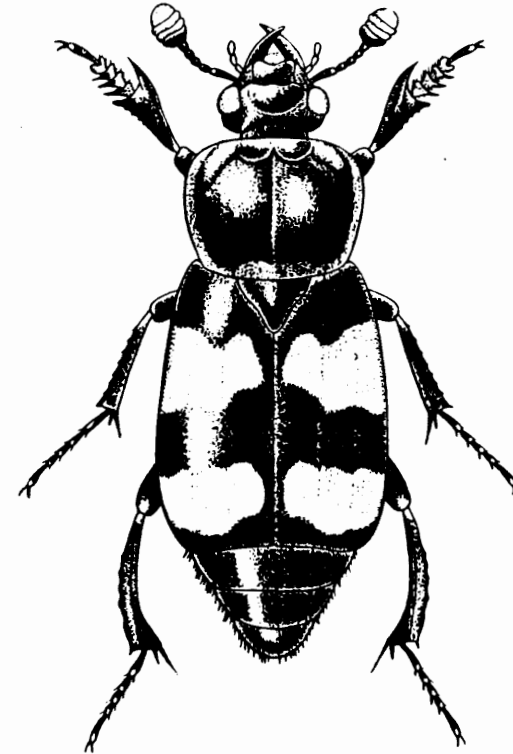
I agree too about *Q. nemoralis* Baudi, except only that to me it is almost invariably a woodland beetle (and so is well named), inhabiting the damp-leaf layer often with *Q. nigricaps* Knecht or *Q. fumatus* (Steph.) - though I have taken one or two in a haystack bottom (not too dissimilar to a compost heap). The very closely allied *Q. obliterated* Er., on the other hand, is a species of open grassland with an apparent liking for the coast, but also seen general inland without ever being common. [Incidentally, a profounder intellect than mine might, perhaps, be able to explain how *Quedius humeralis* Steph., with which *obliterated*

is synonymised in the current *Checklist* (Pope, A D, 1977, *Handbk. ident. Br. Insects*, Vol IX, pt 3), can at one and the same time belong to two quite different subgenera: *Microsaurus* (Williams, 1928, *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* 64 : 53, by study of the type) and *Raphirus* (very nearly all literature and catalogues from Fowler (1888, *The Coleoptera of the British Islands*, Vol 2, London) up to the present, British and foreign). To me, however, it passes all understanding. Meanwhile, pending such a rationalisation, I suggest we follow Hudson Beare (1930, *A catalogue of the recorded Coleoptera of the British Isles*: 16, London), ignore the perverse and unexplained current synonymy, and continue to use the name *obliteratus* Er. for the species next to *memoralis* in the current *Checklist*.]

*Quedius scitus* (Grav.), taken by Mr Whitehead in woodland leaf-litter, is, in my experience, a rare old-forest species living under bark. I have found it only in two Berkshire localities.

*Quedius schatzmayri* Grid. and *Q. semiaeneus* (Steph.), in this part of the country and I believe far more widely, show decided ecological differences. The former I find general and not uncommon (though scarcer latterly) on grassland, such as my old garden at Blackheath, in the usual varied situations; the second far more restricted, its occurrence here governed by the proximity of the Thames. *Quedius semiaeneus* has a distinct coastal bias but evidently spreads up the tidal rivers to quite far inland, where it may be accompanied by *Q. schatzmayri*. I have taken one on maritime dunes in N. Devon, but have not found it in damp places. I consider its occurrence in a wet ride in a Midlands wood to be quite untypical - perhaps comparable to that of *Emus hirtus* (L.) in a Gloucestershire wood.

Mr Whitehead suggests that *Q. fuliginosus* (Grav.) may be a rarity. While this may possibly be so in his district and in others, it is certainly not the case generally (here for instance), nor was it



*Necrophorus investigator*  
Zetterstedt 1824

(Col., Silphidae)

[An original drawing by John Read]

## SOMERSET RECORDS WANTED

An updated list of the Coleoptera of Somerset is now in active preparation and anyone with records for the old county of Somerset (i.e. including what is now south Avon, or V.C.s 5 and 6) is urged to send in their records. Within each species records are being sorted by 10km grid squares in order to make the finished work of maximum use to the various national recording schemes, and because it can be very difficult for someone unfamiliar with the county to locate a particular place or name. Records which cannot be located within a particular grid square will still be listed but with an approximate grid reference. Details of time and place of capture are also required. Casual records are wanted as well, as there are still many gaps in the recorded distribution of our most abundant species. All contributions will be gratefully received.

A.G. Duff,  
4 Amberley Close,  
Keinton Mandeville,  
Somerton,  
Somerset,  
TA11 6EU.

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RECORDS OF *AGATHIDIUM* SPP. AND *ANISOTOMA* SPP. (LEIODIDAE) WANTED

Records are required of species in the above genera from anywhere in the British Isles but particularly the north and west i.e. Wales, northern England, Scotland and Ireland. Specimens for identification should be sent with records to J. Cooter at the the address below.

All communications will be acknowledged and the records obtained will be included in a current revision of the Palaearctic species of *Agathidium* and *Anisotoma* being undertaken by Fernando Angelini.

J. Cooter  
19 Mount Cresc.,  
Hereford,  
HR1 1NQ.

regarded as so by the late H. Britten or W.O. Steel (who knew it as *Q. subfuliginosus* Britten). This species and the very closely similar *Q. curtipennis* Bernh., which do not seem to differ ecologically, first appeared in my district some 20 to 25 years ago and remain not uncommon, competing with the similarly eurytopic *Q. tristis* (Grav.) which became very much rarer about that time, but just maintains its hold.

It would be interesting to know if others share my view of *Q. fulgidus* (Fab.) (= *assimilis* Nordm.) as a rare or very rare species in the present era. I have only ever met with it twice, singly, in rotting herbage at Cheshunt, Herts. (Allen, 1953, *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* 89: 155). In Fowler's time its incidence must have been very different indeed, for he mentions it (*ibid.*: 230) as the commonest of the group of *Microsaurus* with red elytra. For all I know this may still be the case in distant parts of the country as it is or was very widespread.

A.A. Allen,  
49 Montcalm Road  
Charlton,  
London SE7 8QG.

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FURTHER REMARKS ON THE GENUS *QUEDIUS* STEPHENS

On reading the article by Paul Whitehead on the *Quedius* subgenus *Raphirus* Tottenham 1945, I think some of the difficulties of identification would be greatly lessened by reference to Tottenham's revision (1948, *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* 84: 241-258). May I pay a small tribute to the Rev.C.E. Tottenham with whom I enjoyed some thirty years friendship and who in my opinion was one of the world's leading staphylinologists of his time. In his revision he gives several figures of the male aedeagus, which is often essential for accurate determination. He gives a key to the species of *Arphirus* and another

based on the male sexual characters. He also deals with the 'boops complex'.

My records of some of the species Paul Whitehead mentions are as follows:

*Q. aridulus* Jan. I have specimens from the Shetlands; mid-Devon; Isles of Scilly; and Jersey, Channel Isles.

*Q. mallius* Tott. (= *aridulus*)\* Llanfrothen; Merioneth; Greatstone, Kent.

*Q. arestor* Tott. (= *boops* (Grav.))\* Nethy Bridge, Invernesshire; Ranceby, Lincoln; Perth; Cromer; Skiddaw, Northumberland; Banstead, Surrey

*Q. boops* (Grav.) Aviemore, Invernesshire; Elgin, Morayshire; Breckon, Channel Islands.

*Q. semiaeneus* (Steph.) *Q. schatzmayri* Grid. Both species from many localities from the Channel Islands to Aberdeen.

*Q. brevicornis* (Thoms.) I have never taken this species from Gt. Britain. My solitary specimen is from Denmark.

*Q. nitipennis* (Steph.) Dalkeith, Edinburgh; Ranceby, Lincoln; Cardiff; Ashtead Wood, Surrey.

*Q. maurus* (Sahl.) Nethy Bridge, Invernesshire.

*Q. microps* Grav. Banstead, Surrey; Epping Forest, Essex [debris inside an oak].

*Q. mesomelinus* (Marsh.) ssp. *skorayewskii* Korge This is not uncommon on the continent. I have specimens from St. Wolfgang, Austria, Arosa and Chateau D'oex Switzerland and Zadiel, Czechoslovakia. There are other named ssp. separated mostly by the shape of the paramere.

Many years ago at a farm in Devon on a very cold day I lifted some empty sacks which were stiff with frost and found in the folds a dozen specimens of *Q. mesomelinus*, all very active, in fact two were in copulation. Paul Whitehead mentions a reddish form with the abdomen bright as in *Q. ventralis* (Arag.). It would appear that red is associated with black in several staphylinid species. I have a specimen of *Philonthus rectangulus* Sharp from Japan with the right elytron red.

said as my companion peered through a window.

"There are some marvellous objects here ....."\*

P.F. Whitehead,  
Moor Leys,  
Little Comberton,  
Pershore,  
Worcs.

\* The opening comment on entry into Tutankhamen's tomb.

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#### RECORDS OF *CIS BILAMELLATUS* WOOD (CISIDAE) WANTED

I am trying to find out whether there are any further unpublished records of the Australian fungus beetle, *Cis bilamellatus* Wood, especially in the following regions:

- (i) N. Devon and N. Cornwall
- (ii) Mid-Wales on the Welsh border country, or the west coast of Wales (except Cardiganshire where I have collected it near New Quay)
- (iii) England north of a line roughly from Morecambe to York to Warter
- (iv) Scotland, either N. or S. of the central Glasgow - Edinburgh region and the east coast (where Roy Crowson has collected it at a number of localities.
- (v) Ireland - there appear to be no records.

I am trying to update a map I made of its distribution 30 years ago and would like to publish this alongside a map showing the distribution in its native Australia.

Please send records to

Dr K Southern,  
89 Bainton Road,  
Oxford OX2 7AG.

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public eye. They have striven to achieve excellence, and provide support for innumerable individuals and organisations.

Since the trustees of any national museum are responsible for fund allocation within it, they must indirectly be responsible for the morale of the staff and wellbeing of the collections. Potential evidence for the trivialisation of that responsibility warrants scrutiny. Ten years ago the world's finest collection of bird skins (NHM: Tring) had a staff of 11 to maintain it; if this collection now survives without the aid of a professional ornithologist (as I am inclined to believe it does) we can take little pride in the fact.

It must, however, be remembered that numerous academic institutions have suffered savage cuts in funding during the past decade. Many of our finest scientists have been subjected to intolerable pressures and loss of facilities. In some cases known to me and more widely, their treatment has been a scandal. Our most hallowed centres of learning have leant heavily on the patronage of private benefactors. Attempts to 'monetarise' centres of scientific excellence must be open to question, the moreso at a time when commercial business itself is being deflected by monetarism.

In the recent past, NHM trustees have been advised by so-called visiting groups, which may be composed of people from other countries in the developed west. Which is interesting.

Encouraging trends at a number of our major museums demonstrate the relevance of their role in society, which one accepts as crucial. The museum-visiting public, however, is neither homogeneous nor amorphous, and it has to include those like myself, who value the role of NHM in taxonomic research.

*Last night I had a dream. We went to the Natural History Museum but the doors were closed. We rang the bell, but no-one came. "What is it?" I*

*Philonthus intermedius* (B&L) var. *donisthorpei* Dollm. has bright vivid red elytra. The bronze-green pronotum and clear red elytra makes this form a beautiful and distinctive one. It is represented in the BMNH collection.

H.R. Last,  
"Woodville",  
Hillside Walk,  
Storrington,  
West Sussex,  
RH20 3HL.

[\* Editor's note - the synonymy as given in the current checklist (Pope, 1977)]

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#### *APION DISSIMILE* GERMAR (APIONIDAE) IN HAMPSHIRE

While searching for weevils among the sand dunes on Hayling Island, (NGR SZ6899), Hants., I found five specimens of this very distinct *Apion* on 20th September 1989. The weevils, two males and three females, were found on bare sand at the base of the hostplant, *Trifolium arvense* (haresfoot clover) growing on the edge of a low dune slack.

According to M.G. Morris (1990, *Handbk. Ident. Br. Insects*, 5(16): 62) *A. dissimile* is rather a local weevil in Britain and uncommon though widely distributed. It is known from various counties in England and Wales, but is absent from Scotland. Michael Morris has recently informed me that this is a new record for Hampshire and is the first for V.C. 11, South Hants.

I wish to thank Paul Hyman and Michael Morris for kindly providing me with information regarding the present status of the weevil in Britain.

R.W.J. Read,  
43 Holly Terrace,  
Hensingham,  
Whitehaven,  
Cumbria CA28 8RF.

A FURTHER FOODPLANT OF *PHYTOBIUS QUADRITUBERCULATUS* (FAB.)  
(CURCULIONIDAE)

In answer to Mr R.W.J. Read's request for a note of any foodplants of the above weevil besides *Polygonum* spp., *Rumex* and *Glaux*, I can add *Peplis portula* (water purslane). *Peplis* belongs to the Lythraceae and thus is not particularly closely related to any of the other recorded hosts. Prof. J.A. Owen, myself, and others have found the *Phytobius* on this diminutive plant, on which also the extremely similar *P. olssonii* [sr. has occurred more rarely, in a Sussex locality within the last few years.

A.A. Allen

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STAPHYLINUS AND OCYPUS

I should like to draw attention to an apparently overlooked but important paper by J.H. Frank (1978, *Entomologist's mon. Mag.* 114: 235-237) on the larval morphology and classification of *Staphylinus sensu lato*, which clearly shows that the old genus *Ocypus* (attributed to various authors) is taxonomically valid on larval features, both morphological and biological, and should be restored in its traditional sense. As such it comprises in our fauna, four subgenera. This involves following Coiffait (1956, *Les Staphylinus et genres voisins de France et des régions voisines, Mém. Mus. Nat. d'Hist. nat.* A. 8 : 179-224) and Lohse (1964, *Die Käfer Mitteleuropas* vol. 4, pp 195-202, Goecke & Evers, Krefeld) for the group in question, rather than the current British checklist (Pope, 1977) which was published a year too early to incorporate the revised usage corroborated by Frank.

This change, or rather restoration, results in a more natural arrangement reflected in the 'habitus' of the beetles themselves.

*Staphylinus (sensu stricto)* thus becomes a very uniform genus with three British species, as does *Platydracus* if the anomalous *S. pubescens* Deg. (which hardly seems to belong to either) be taken out. Here too it will probably be best to follow Lohse in placing it in a genus *Trichoderma* Steph. with another European species.

Further, there appears to be no doubt that the name *Ocypus compressus* (Marsh.) for a familiar British species must give way to *O. morsitans* (Rossi) with twelve years' priority - a change already made by Steel in his 1948 paper cited by Mr Last in the August Newsletter (p.14) but not generally taken up.

A.A. Allen

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THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM AND ITS STATUS

When I read the Natural History Museum press release in the Newsletter No. 40 it was both with a tinge of sadness and a clear sense of déjà vu. This is not the first occasion on which the NHM has found itself faced with staff cuts, and the attendant problems associated with it. The slow attrition of quality of one of our proudest institutions is torturous.

Although the facade of the NHM was revitalised by the programme of cleaning, the vigour, vitality and heart of the edifice is maintained by the general wellbeing of the individuals who represent, maintain and promote it.

I have come to know personally a number of past and present members of NHM staff. Their labours and difficulties are often unseen by the