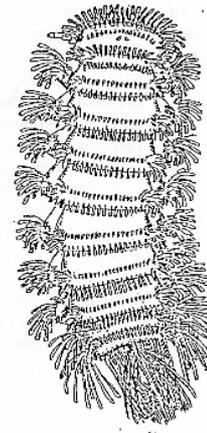




British Myriapod and Isopod Group



AUTUMN 2000

Newsletter number 1

Editor: Paul Lee

Notes from the Editor

Welcome to the first issue of the new British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter. The very successful Easter 2000 meeting in Saffron Walden included the inaugural meeting of the BMIG and the discovery of another location for the rarely seen woodlouse *Stenophiloscia zosteræ* (see the piece by Steve Gregory below). As if that was not enough it looks like we will finally get that trip to Ireland that has been discussed at every Easter meeting I can remember. Derek Whiteley proved to be the catalyst we needed and he gives some details below of the meeting proposed for Easter 2001. Enclosed with this newsletter is a membership form for BMIG. At the inaugural meeting it was decided there would be no membership fee, at least to start with, but we do need a formalised membership list. Therefore please complete and return the form to the BMIG Secretary to confirm that you wish to join the BMIG.

Progress with the millipede atlas is slow at the moment, mainly because other pressures have prevented me from devoting the necessary time to the job. I had a scare in the summer when a batch of checked record cards I posted to BRC failed to arrive. Fortunately, for reasons known only to them, the Post Office managed to deliver the cards to Peter Harvey, the Spider Recording Scheme organiser, so they eventually arrived at BRC. Following publication of some draft accounts in the last BMG Newsletter I received comments and records (especially for *Polyxenus*) from several recorders including Gordon Corbet and Ray Barnett. Several more draft accounts are included in this newsletter so let me have your comments.

Please continue to send in your records to all the scheme organisers, we urgently need any outstanding records from the Easter 1999 meeting in Northumberland and the Easter 2000 meeting in Essex. Reports of the field meetings for the Bulletin cannot be published without your records.

Inaugural meeting of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group, April 2000

The inaugural meeting of BMIG was held at St Mark's College, Audley End, Essex on 28 April 2000 as part of the annual weekend get-together. Fourteen members of the former British Myriapod Group or British Isopoda Study

Group were present. Tony Barber reported on the draft Constitution and By-laws, and the draft BMIG Handbook, which were the main results of the Working Party that was set up at the annual joint BMG/BISG meeting in April 1999. The meeting accepted the draft prepared by the Working Party, subject to a few minor amendments. Tony Barber will produce the final version of the Constitution and By-laws for distribution to BMIG members later in the year.

The following officers and committee members were elected

Chairman	Tony Barber
Vice-chairman	John Lewis
Secretary	Helen Read
Treasurer	Dick Jones
Ordinary members	Wallace Arthur, Paul Harding and Derek Whiteley

National scheme organisers Steve Gregory and Paul Lee (the scheme organisers are *ex officio* members of the Committee if not already elected to it).

The Working Party advised that a membership fee should not be levied, at least until BMIG had become established as a national society. BMIG could decide to levy a membership fee at some later stage, but should work to attract external funding from grants and sponsorship for its activities. A formal membership list is needed and a reply slip requesting to become a member of BMIG is enclosed with this newsletter.

The recording scheme organisers gave brief verbal reports at the meeting. During the year Steve Gregory took over from Dave Bilton as organiser of the Non-marine Isopoda Scheme (see below). Progress with work towards the Provisional Atlas of Millipedes was noted. Tony Barber said that he hoped to work towards a new atlas of centipedes in 2-3 years. Tony expressed concern about records going to Local Record Centres without adequate taxonomic vetting.

The draft BMIG Handbook will be revised in the light of comments and Tony Barber and Paul Harding will then edit the Handbook for production and distribution by BRC free of charge to all BMIG members. The Bulletin will become the BMIG Bulletin with the next (2001) issue, and will publish articles on Isopoda.

Ken Hill was thanked for arranging the Easter 2000 meeting at a very pleasant venue. Derek Whiteley is organising the 2001 meeting for the weekend following Easter 2001 in south-west Ireland, based on a hostel near Dingle, Co. Kerry (see below). He has also agreed to examine the possibility of the 2002 meeting using a field centre at Youlgreave in south Derbyshire.

Paul Harding, BRC, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton

Non-marine Isopod Recording Scheme

Some of you may already be aware that David Bilton has stepped down as organiser of the Non-marine Isopod Recording Scheme. This is essentially because increasing work commitments meant that he could not give as much time to the scheme as he wished. David has been running the scheme since 1991, a period which has seen a considerable advance in our knowledge of the distribution and biology of many of the more elusive beasts occurring in the British Isles. As of April this year I have officially taken over as scheme organiser. I am prepared to check specimens for people and am willing to undertake small amounts of identification work for individuals (anything is negotiable). On behalf of all isopod recorders I extend thanks to David for running the Scheme so successfully for the past nine years.

So what has happened over the last year? Of particular interest to isopodologists is that the Bulletin, previously produced by the BMG (but now by the BMIG), will include articles about woodlice and related beasts such as water-slaters (*Asellus*) and land-hoppers (*Arcitalitrus dorrieni*). So if anyone wants to write such an article (I have been badgered to submit one on the woodlice of Oxfordshire!) then please do.

In the near future it is hoped to produce updated distribution maps for all species of woodlice. I have received very few completed record cards in the last year, though there has been a huge batch of Suffolk records from Paul Lee including the Shingle Street *Stenophiloscia* record amongst all those made by Jon Daws for 1994-95.

Otherwise it's been very quiet. There must be more records out there. For example, the only records I have received for the Essex field trip are from Tony Barber and Helen Read. (I must confess I am guilty of this too - my millipede and centipede cards are still waiting to be posted). If anyone does have any woodlouse records could they please send completed cards to me at the address below. All records, even for 'common' species are useful if we are to build up a true picture of the distribution of woodlice throughout Britain and Ireland.

The scheme also covers the aquatic water-slaters (*Asellus* spp.) of which four species occur. *A. aquaticus* and *A. meridianus* are both widespread. *A. cavaticus* is scarce and mainly associated with subterranean waters (anyone fancy taking up caving?). *A. communis* is introduced and (I believe) only known from the Lake District (anyone going on holiday?). The land-hopper (an Amphipod) has also been

adopted by the scheme as an honorary Isopod (see below). Any records for these species would be gratefully received by the scheme.

Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon.

Easter 2001 Field Meeting and AGM

The Easter 2001 field weekend is planned for 18-22 April to be based in Dingle, Co. Kerry. This is an ideal location for field trips to the Killarney National Park, coastal sand spits at Inch and a variety of habitats on the Dingle Peninsula. There is basic accommodation in a comfortable hostel with some twin rooms and those wanting more deluxe accommodation will be able to find plenty to suit their needs in Dingle. A minibus will run from Sheffield via Oxford, Bristol and Pembroke, by ferry to Rosslare, and then on to Dingle. We can take advantage of group travel by ferry but participants can make their own travel arrangements if they wish. There will be an opportunity to meet some of our Irish colleagues and explore new areas and the AGM will take place during the weekend. Booking forms will be sent out in January once the final details have been agreed so make a note in your 2001 diaries NOW.

Derek Whiteley, 6 Pancake Row, Cressbrook, Derbyshire.

Centipede Bites

At the BMIG inaugural meeting, Tony Barber asked about people's experiences of being bitten by a centipede. I related my own experience of an attack by *Lithobius forficatus* on the inside of the fourth digit on my left hand. This caused a sensation similar to a pinprick, sufficient to cause me to open my fist and allow the animal to drop and escape. The bite left two red marks that were visible for 2-3 days although the needle like sensation I felt disappeared after a couple of hours.

During a visit to Bulls Wood, Suffolk the next day (29 April 2000), I grabbed a pinch of damp leaf litter in my left hand. As I stood up a tiny pinprick caused me to open my fingers. A small *Lithobius*, possibly *L. crassipes*, hung onto the soft skin between the fourth and fifth digits. As with the *L. forficatus* previously, it dropped to the ground and escaped. This time the bite felt like a prick from a small rose thorn but the sensation lasted for a few seconds only and no red marks were visible.

Ken Hill, 93 Elmhurst Drive, Hornchurch, Essex.

FSC Myriapod and Isopod Course at Flatford Mill

As announced in the last newsletter, I ran a weekend course on centipedes, millipedes and woodlice at Flatford Mill at the beginning of September this year. Although the 1999 Field Studies Council course at Slapton Ley was cancelled due to lack of interest this course attracted five enthusiastic participants including both old hands and newcomers. Aside from laboratory and classroom work, over the weekend we visited three sites in Suffolk for fieldwork and although no rarities were found a good range of species were seen (9 species of woodlouse, 10 millipede and 6 centipede) including *Ligia oceanica*, not at all common on the Suffolk coast. As a result of the course I would like to welcome Gillian Davis, Gary Farmer and Stephen Woodward to our

ranks and to welcome Peter Nicholson back into the fold after an absence of many years. Oh, and I should not forget Ken Hill who also came along to the course (you know what they say about a bad penny Ken!). I am hopeful the Field Studies Council will be interested in running a similar course in future years based on the success of this one. Paul Lee, 155 Corton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk.

***Stenophiloscia zosteræ* re-found in North Essex (in good numbers!)**

The highlight of this year's field meeting weekend was the discovery of *Stenophiloscia zosteræ* at Colne Point NNR by Imogen Wilde, Derek Whiteley and myself. This site lies at the mouth of the Blackwater estuary some 20km away from the Goldhanger site where Adrian Rundle collected a specimen in 1976. The species was quite frequent over a large area towards the top of a shingle beach (conveniently just below a fenced off Tern nesting area). One or two specimens were seen under most pieces of driftwood examined.

I have to confess that initially I didn't know what it was. It clearly wasn't *Halophiloscia*, as there was no need to adopt the 'demented gerbil method' of rapidly scooping shingle between ones legs in order to keep up with the rapidly disappearing specimens. In contrast they made an almost casual amble for the nearest convenient cranny.

Superficially it looked like a pale *Porcellionides cingendus* (an outlying population does occur on the adjacent grazing marshes), or a large pale *Trichoniscus pusillus*, (which also was present in small numbers). However the antennae were wrong for either option and I thought I could see three flagella segments through my steamed up handlens! This only really left *Stenophiloscia*, which at first I couldn't believe, as this species has only been hand-collected twice, as single specimens on each occasion. We popped a few specimens into a tube, which thankfully included two males, and the identification was confirmed back at base. Perhaps, as suggested in Harding and Sutton, the species is normally elusive rather than rare. Will more sites come to light? Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon.

The land-hopper (*Arcitalitrus dorrieni*) in Britain

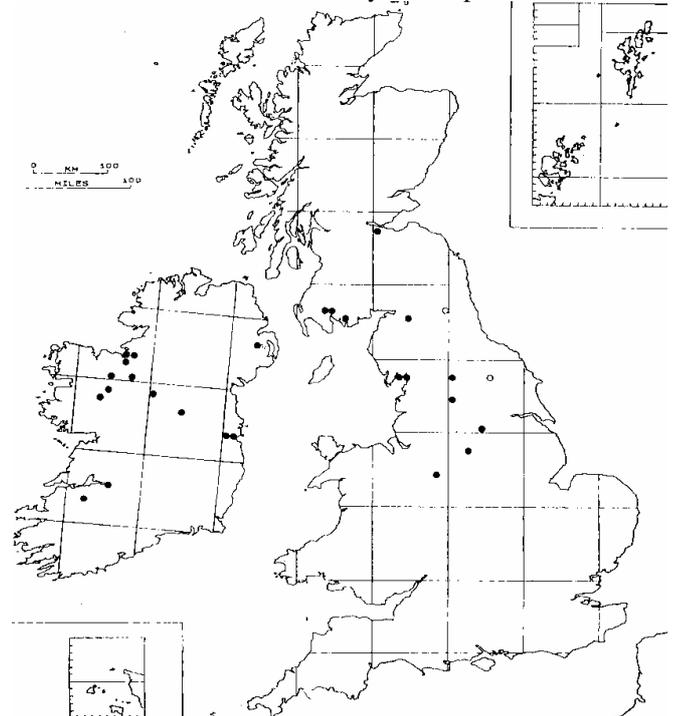
It is widely known that the land-hopper, *Arcitalitrus dorrieni* is widespread and common in parts of southwestern Britain. It has been long known at Kew Gardens and in western Scotland (South Ebudes). Gordon Corbet has recently sent me additional records for this terrestrial amphipod from sites in East Sussex (1988 and 1994) and in western Scotland (Kintyre 1990 and Wester-Ross 1998). It is clearly worth looking out for this species in gardens and similar sites anywhere in southern England or in western areas (warmed by the gulf stream?). There is only one dark coloured amphipod known to occur inland in Britain. Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon.

***Brachychaeteuma bagnalli* Verhoeff, 1911**

Notable / Nb

This species seems to occur within a band across Britain and Ireland stretching north from Stoke-on-Trent to Edinburgh.

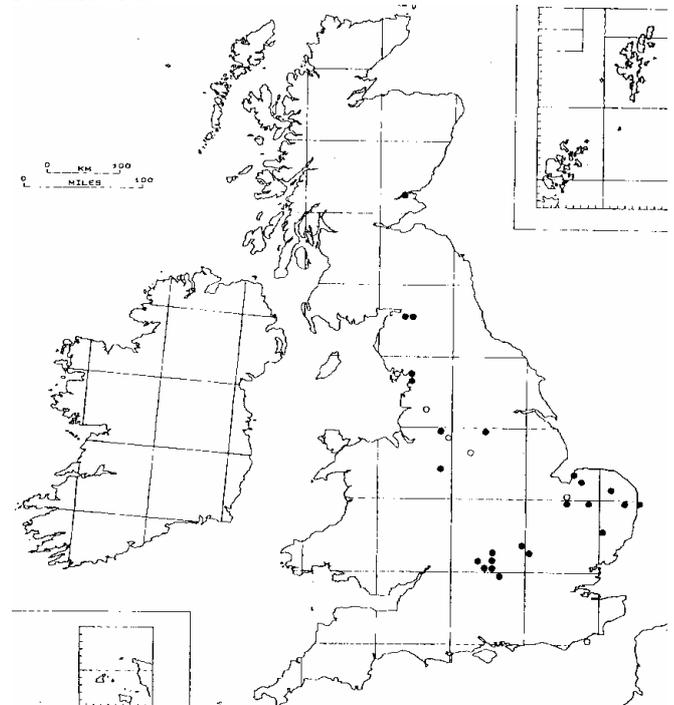
This range overlaps with that of *B.bradeae* in the northwest of England and southern Scotland and the two taxa may yet prove to belong to a single, variable species. It is a soil dweller with most records from synanthropic sites. In



Europe the species is known from caves in Belgium and NW Germany (Blower, 1986). Adults of this annual species are only found in winter and early spring.

***Brachychaeteuma bradeae* (Brolemann & Brade-Birks, 1917)**

Notable / Nb

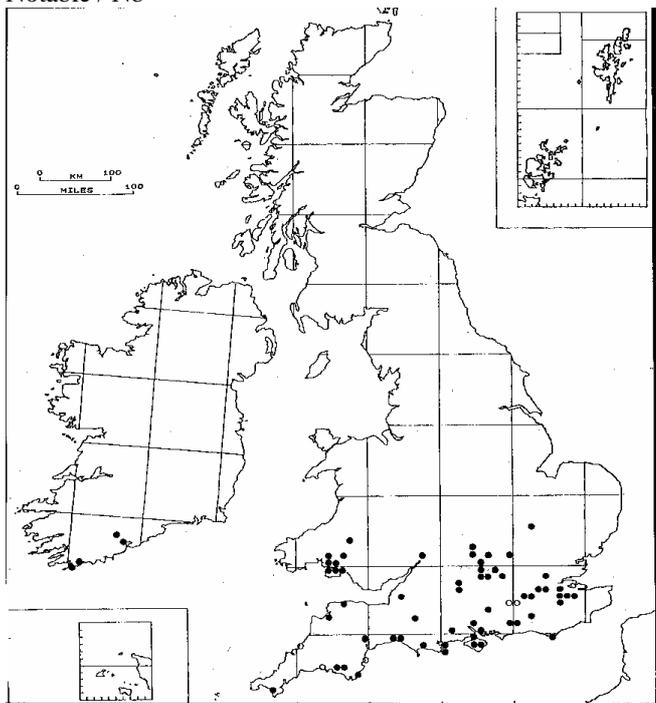


Although its range overlaps with that of *B.bagnalli* extending northwards to Fife, this species has been recorded most frequently in the Home Counties and East Anglia. It is apparently absent from Ireland. A soil dwelling species,

most of the records are from agricultural or synanthropic sites but Gregory & Campbell (1996) typically found it in ancient woodlands on clay in Oxfordshire. In Europe a number of varieties of this species have been recorded from France, Germany and Sweden (Blower, 1986) and it may be that *B. bagnalli* and *B. bradae* belong to a single, variable species. Adults of this annual species are only found in winter and early spring.

***Brachychaeteuma melanops* Brade-Birks, 1918**

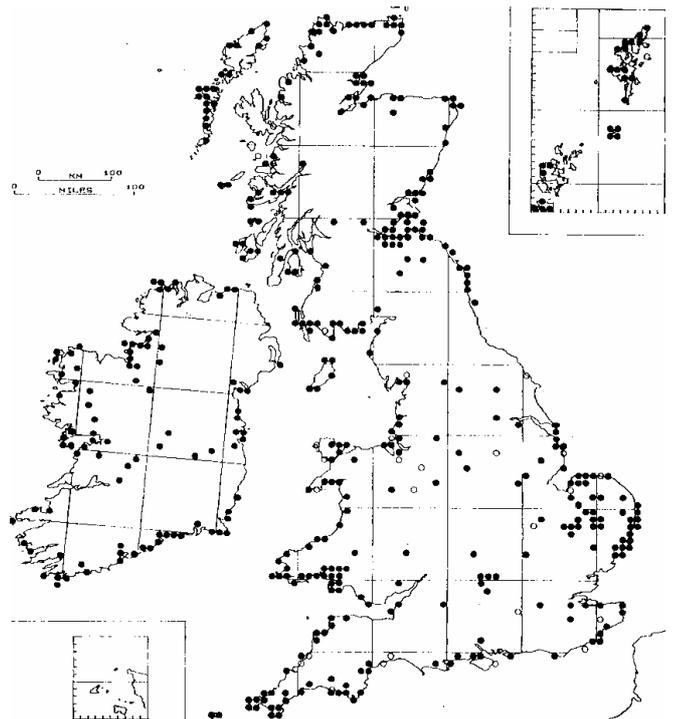
Notable / Nb



This species is widespread but local in the south of England and south Wales. It has also been found in the south of Ireland. It is recorded most frequently from base rich soils and is typical of disturbed synanthropic sites in Britain. In Europe it has only been found in the milder parts of western France (Kime, 1995) where most of the records are from caves (Blower, 1986). An annual species, Gregory & Campbell (1996) note adults are found in Oxfordshire from November to April.

***Cylindroiulus latestriatus* (Curtis, 1845)**

A widespread and common species, this animal can be encountered on dunes and sandy areas all around the coasts of Britain and Ireland. It also occurs inland on sandy soils, most commonly in the East Anglian brecklands, and in disturbed synanthropic sites. In Europe it shows a similar pattern of distribution along Atlantic and North Sea coasts. As a synanthrope it occurs eastwards to Russia and outside of Europe has been introduced to places as remote as Easter Island and Antarctica (Kime, 1999). Adult females are present throughout the year as, although males die after reproduction, the females survive for three or more years after reaching maturity (Blower, 1985). Blower & Gabbutt (1964) found that animals from Devon took two years to reach maturity but Desmukh (1974) found that animals from Scotland required three years.



BMG Bulletin No 16

BMG Bulletin No 16 (April 2000) is available from Tony Barber at £4.00 per copy. Contents include a key to *Cryptops* species, a couple of articles on Irish myriapods, a report on the 1998 meeting and Ted Eason's obituary. Tony also has back numbers of some issues available.

NEXT NEWSLETTER: Spring 2001

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by 28 February 2001

Supplies of record cards and additional copies of the British Myriapod and Isopod Group Newsletter can be obtained from the Biological Records Centre. Please notify either Paul Lee or BRC of any change of address. If you no longer wish to receive the BMIG Newsletter, please notify BRC in writing.

Centipede Recording Scheme Organiser:

Mr A.D. Barber, Rathgar, Ivybridge, Devon PL21 0BD

Millipede Recording Scheme Organiser:

Mr P. Lee, 155 Corton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4PR

Non-marine Isopod Recording Scheme Organiser:

Dr S. Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

Biological Records Centre, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Monks Wood, Abbots Ripton, HUNTINGDON PE17 2LS

Tel: 01487 773381 Fax: 01487 773467 E-mail: pha@ceh.ac.uk

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