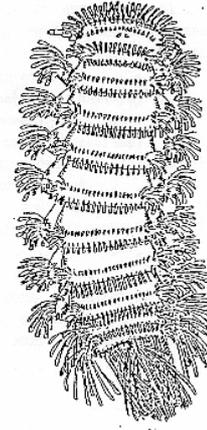




British Myriapod and Isopod Group



SPRING 2002

Newsletter number 4

Editor: Paul Lee

BMIG business

Hopefully you will be reading this Newsletter prior to the AGM and Easter field meeting at Youlgreave. At least fifteen people are booked in for what promises to be an interesting meeting. Away from the field visits and formal business the Friday evening will be devoted to what the locals down here in Suffolk call a mardle, an evening of reminiscences about Gordon Blower and Ted Eason celebrating their contribution to Myriapodology and their personal influences on members of BMIG. A more formal memorial meeting for Gordon Blower is being planned. It is likely to be held at Manchester Museum and should attract colleagues from overseas. The details of the meeting will be discussed at Youlgreave and further information should be available in the next newsletter.

Haplophthalmus montivagus new to Wales

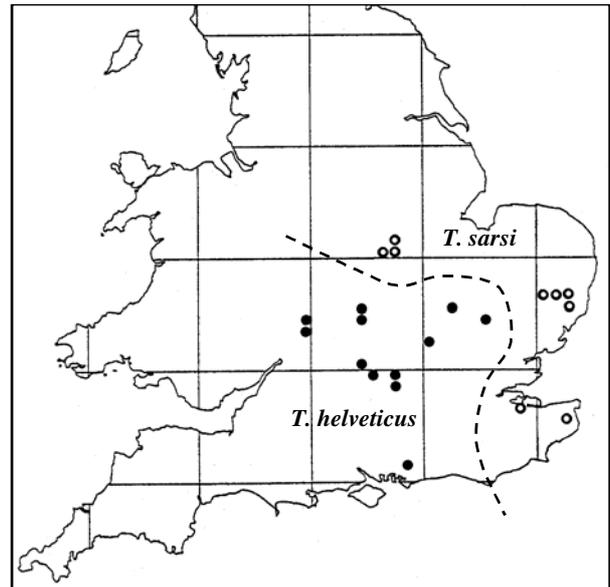
John Harper has successfully settled in Monmouthshire, South Wales and is beginning to make some important discoveries. Easily the most exciting woodlouse find to date (there are tales of centipedes and millipedes too!) is from an old quarry 'somewhere in deepest south Wales' to quote John. Here he has found literally hundreds of *Haplophthalmus montivagus* – a species new to Wales. This is an important extension of the known range of this elusive woodlouse, previously only known from about a dozen sites in southern England. Apart from a single locality near Bath all previous records are clustered around Oxford (surely no coincidence that Steve Hopkin, David Bilton & myself have all worked this area!) and a scattering across the southern chalk. However, the real surprise, to my mind, is that he found all three British species of *Haplophthalmus* living in perfect harmony at this one site. Typically *H. montivagus* (which was only recognised in Britain as recently as 1987) and its close relative *H. mengei* are mutually exclusive – either one species is found or the other. Little Wittenham Wood, near Oxford, is the only site I know of where all three occur together. Here *H. montivagus* inhabits deciduous woodland on high ground whilst *H. mengei* inhabits an adjacent riverside meadow. Between these habitats there is a narrow overlap where both can be found. *H. danicus* occurs throughout the entire site. But this is in southern England where *H. montivagus* is supposed to live! John has compiled a brief note for the BMIG Bulletin in which he

outlines some very useful tips on how to separate the two m's (*montivagus* and *mengei*). Obviously it is essential to check male specimens (presently females cannot be separated), but those within, or near, ancient woodland sites on chalk or limestone are (on current evidence) more likely to be *H. montivagus*.

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

Exclusive *Trichoniscoides*

Whilst on the subject of mutually exclusive species I thought the following map might be of interest. On current evidence



it is apparent that the British ranges of *Trichoniscoides helveticus* (solid dots) and *T. sarsi* (open circles) do not overlap. The few Irish records, unfortunately, do not distinguish the two. Both are soil dwelling woodlice, but they do occupy different habitats. *T. helveticus* has a strong preference for calcareous grassland, scrub or open woodland, whilst *T. sarsi* typically occurs in gardens or churchyards. However this does not explain the observed distribution. Why has *T. sarsi* not been found in Oxfordshire where around 200 churchyards and many gardens have been carefully surveyed? Tiny and notoriously elusive species, such as the centipedes *Brachyschendyla dentata* and *Henia brevis*, have been found at several such sites – but not a hint

of *T. sarsi*. Yet in the local chalk and limestone areas *T. helveticus* has been widely (albeit rarely) recorded. In Leicestershire and Suffolk the opposite has found to be the case. Answers please on a post card....
Steve Gregory, Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. OX14 4RA

Millipede Recording Scheme news

I have received few records over the winter but in a recent letter John Harper gave details of some important finds he made in Wales towards the end of last year. In October he recorded *Cylindroiulus parisorum* from a rotten beech beside the River Usk, south east of Abergavenny. Doug Richardson made the first Welsh record from Buckland House during the 1988 Newbridge-on-Wye field meeting but I am not aware of any other Welsh sites for the species. In November John went one better and found a new species for Wales. His discovery of *Polydesmus testaceus* from calcareous spoil near Cwmbran in Torfaen extends the known range considerably to the west of Steve Gregory's Oxfordshire site. The presence on a brownfield site of such a scarce British species begs the question of how it got there. Was it imported from another site along with the spoil? Did it colonise the spoil, a suitable calcareous substrate, from a, as yet undiscovered, colony nearby? Or has the species been imported after the spoil was spread and found the habitat to its liking? Any of these options suggest that there other colonies of *Polydesmus testaceus* around still awaiting discovery. Going for the hat trick, John collected *Stygioglomeris crinata*, from Mynydd Llangatock above Crickhowell in December. Although there are previous records from the Gower and Anglesey, the third Welsh record of this elusive species is an important find.

Congratulations John on a very productive end to 2001!
Paul Lee, 155 Corton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4PR

Autumn Field Meeting to Kew Gardens

Have you ever found *Prosopodesmus panporus* or *Reductoniscus costulatus*? Well on 13 October 2002 you could have a chance to do so! A one-day visit has been arranged to Kew Gardens specially to allow members to search for Myriapods and Isopods. Staff from Kew will accompany us so we will be able to access all the glasshouses and the outside areas we wish to. The entrance fee will be waived but note that you will still have to pay for the car park unless you park on the street nearby or travel by public transport to the gardens. We will meet at the entrance in the morning; the exact time is still to be arranged. All members of the group are welcome to attend what should be a very interesting meeting but please contact me before 1st October to let me know that you are coming. Final details of the arrangements will only be circulated to those who have notified me of their intention to attend.

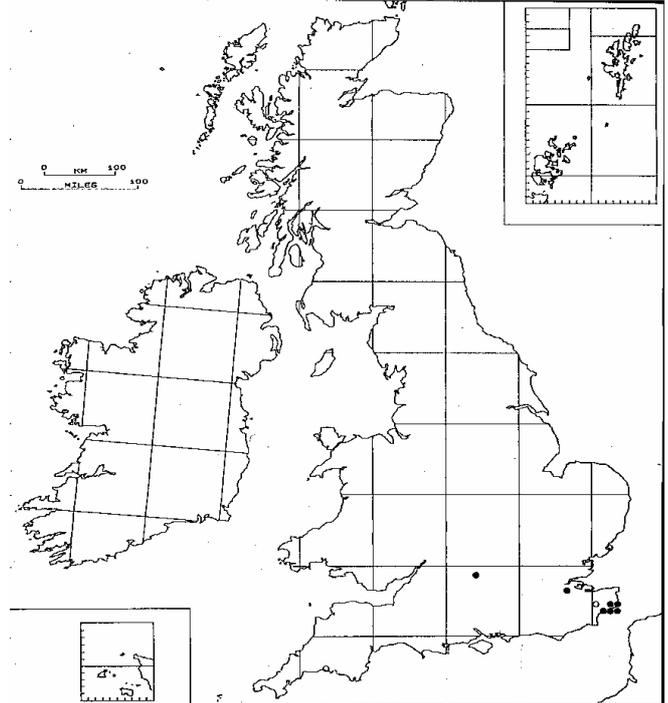
Helen Read, 2 Egypt Wood Cottages, Egypt Lane, Farnham Common, Bucks. SL2 3LE. Tel: 01753 645791 E-mail: h.j.read@btinternet.com

Polydesmus testaceus C L Koch, 1847

Notable / Nb

The first British record of this species was from Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex (Pocock, 1903). It has not been found in Essex since, nor in Cornwall where it was later noted (Turk, 1944). Almost all of the modern records are from Kent with a single record from chalk downland in Oxfordshire

(Gregory & Campbell, 1996) and, most recently, two specimens were found in Monmouthshire by John Harper (this record is not yet shown on the map). In contrast with its



scarcity in Britain Kime (2001) reports collecting large numbers of specimens by pitfall trapping in Belgium and Luxemburg. Jeekel (2001) also found the species to be common in the limestone area of Limburg in the Netherlands. It is a thermophile (Kime, 2001) with a clear preference for calcareous soils and has been recorded from quarries, caves, dunes, grassland and allotments in Britain and from woodland in Europe (Kime, 1995). The species appears to reach the northern limits of its European range in Britain and Germany (Kime, 2001). It is recorded south to the French Riviera and east to the Czech Republic. No data is available on the life cycle.

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NEXT NEWSLETTER: AUTUMN 2002

Please send your contributions to reach the editor by 30 Sept. 2002

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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