

NEWSLETTER 21

September 1998

Ten years on – and still here!

With this issue of the Society's Newsletter, we start our second decade as a group dedicated to the investigation of the status of invertebrates in VC55!

Over that time we have had a wide range of articles covering, not only the more popular groups (moths, butterflies, beetles) but also those with only a few followers in the county (spiders, woodlice, harvestmen, dragonflies, hoverflies).

Like other invertebrate study groups in the country, we have our fair share of members who reside outside of the county but who are, nevertheless, interested in watching our activities and hopefully putting them in to a national context. Occasionally some drop us a line to let us know what is happening in their part of the world.

As part of the Society's publication record we have specific site and invertebrate group reports with the annual lepidoptera reviews by Adrian Russell being of particular interest. Jane McPhail's microlepidoptera Atlas remains

the only baseline against which present day recording can be compared – an updated species list may be an idea to keep the Atlas topical?. Several other studies are currently being put together (although apologies must be given for the delay of one or two of them).

The publications of the Society are the only permanent record of many studies carried out by its members and more reports are not only wanted but will be most welcomed! Even short reports of observations are valuable as many disappear into the BRC archives and only rarely carry annotations that put the record into context. The LES publications allow expansion of such "bald" observations!

Where the Society will be in another ten years remains open to speculation but without doubt it will only survive by the continued interest and support of existing members together with the recruitment of new members (both experienced and less so, young and older).

Ray Morris

Next copy date: January 15th 1999

Jack Ward

Members will be saddened to learn of the death, after a long illness, of one of Leicestershire's well-known lepidopterists. Jack Ward, one of the founder members of the LES, recorded lepidoptera at his home in Glenfield and elsewhere throughout the county (usually in the company of his friend Peter Gamble) for over thirty years. He always had time to talk to anybody of like interest and his friends and colleagues in the Society will miss him. Our sympathies go to his wife and family on this untimely loss.

Wildlife Trust to improve water levels at Narborough Bog NR seems to be paying dividends. On 10.viii.98, the Brown-veined Wainscot (2371 *Archanara dissoluta*) was recorded in much higher numbers than during the previous survey work in 1991. Even more interesting it now appears that a colony of Fen Wainscot (2351 *Photodes brevilinea*) is established at the same site

But the news from Misterton Marshes was even better! Alan Main and David Taylor had also recorded the same two species there together with the Southern Wainscot (2197 *Mythimna straminea*). Then to cap it all, on 4.ix.98, Jean Harvey lead a moth trapping session in the reed beds of Rutland Water. Relatively good numbers of both the Twin-spotted Wainscot (2370 *Archanara geminipuncta*) and Brown-veined Wainscot were recorded. In addition, it seems likely that the session gave the first county record of the nationally scarce pyralid, *Schoenobius gigantella*.

Adrian Russell

REED BED MOTHS

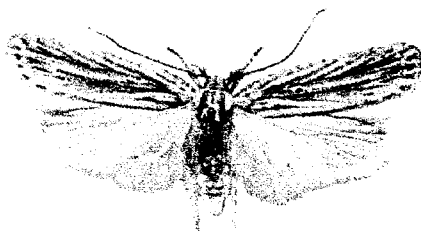
There has been encouraging news about the status of some of our local reed bed moths. Recent work by the Leicestershire & Rutland



New micro for county?

Whilst light trapping at Charnwood Golf Course with Lenny Holton on 18.ix.98, a micro was taken for further examination. It turned out to be *Agonopterix ulicetella* (an oecophorid) which is new to VC55 (identity confirmed by Adrian Russell and to be displayed at the LES meeting in October). The moth is usually associated with sandy heathland and dunes with its distribution seeming to be limited in Western Europe to Britain and the Netherlands. The egg is reported as being laid on gorse with the larva feeding from a silken tube spun on young shoots. The imago is on the wing from late summer until early spring.

Glenn McPhail



Agonopterix ulicetella

Ashby Canal throws up rare beetle

In the early evening of Saturday 30.v.98, I stopped off briefly at the Wellsborough Bridge at Far Coton (SK386017) in the west of the county to walk a little way along the Ashby Canal. I had in my pocket a few collecting tubes from some fieldwork done in north Warwickshire earlier that day. I was there for only about 10 minutes or so but I was fortunate to see a *Chrysolina oricalcia* (a nationally Nb beetle) clinging to the stem of Cow Parsley. I tubed it to take home for closer examination since I had been searching for this beetle in north Warwickshire for several years without success. I did, however, sweep in July 1995 a larva at a site within Tamworth Borough which I had assumed was that of *Chrysomela aenea* since I saw it in the net after beating Alder. Attempts to feed it on Alder leaves failed and I believe that this larva was that of *C oricalcia* for I had been sweeping *Anthriscus* along the pool edge.

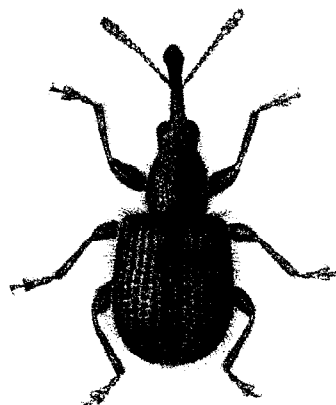
On the strength of the discovery of this beetle at Far Coton, I took my sweep net out of the car and tapped some of the old flowering Hawthorns nearby. To my delight, not only did two specimens of the ubiquitous longhorn *Grammoptera ruficornis* drop into the net but also three of the rather more local *Tetrops praeusta* amongst several Scaptids and Meligethes species along with the weevil *Rhynchites aequatus*. The next day I returned the *Chrysolina* to the same area and while there noted a Cardinal beetle, *Pyrochroa serraticornis*, on the umbellifers.

I checked the Leicestershire Red Data Book of Beetles (Derek Lott, 1995) to find that there was only one recent record of *C oricalcia* from a grassy verge in Grace Dieu Wood. Later, I was pleased to receive confirmation of this from Derek who also stated that my find was only the second record since the 19th century. The Warwickshire distribution as given in "A Provisional Atlas of Leaf Beetles in Warwickshire" (Steve Lane, 1994, Warks BRC) regards it as "very local" being known only from five sites and only from two of these in the 1990s. However, I know that Steve has recorded it at least once since then in 1995. However, larvae were swept rather than the adults which are believed to be primarily nocturnal.

New site – a chip shop!

With the prospect of another wet day in June, I decided to stay indoors on Saturday 27.vi.98. My only journey was to the local chip shop at Baddesley Ensor. Sitting in the car parked by the side wall of the shop, I looked through the driver's window towards the tall lath gate at the rear of the shop, a couple of yards to the front and right of the car. At about two feet off the ground on the thin side of one lath, I could see what could have been a knothole, shieldbug or beetle. Once out of the car and crouched down,

I was delighted to find a *C oricalcia*. On the other side of the drive was part of a common covered with *Anthriscus*, which was by this time past its best!



Rhynchites aequatus

Brian Mitchell

LES-BC joint meeting

This joint meeting between the LES and Butterfly Conservation East Midlands Branch in the west of the county was fortunately blessed with warm and sunny weather – and a very good turn-out! One of the main aims was to look for the presence of the White Admiral which had been recorded in the area of Shackerstone Park Coverts. Setting off from Snarestone, the walk followed the Ashby Canal towards Shackerstone for about two miles.

Twelve species of butterfly were recorded generally reflecting those commonest in 1998's poor summer. There were plenty of Green-veined White and Gatekeeper with smaller numbers of Small and Large Whites, Large and Small Skippers, Holly Blue, Ringlet, Speckled Wood, Meadow Brown and a single Small Tortoiseshell. Perhaps the most rewarding butterfly species recorded was the White-letter Hairstreak, several of which were observed flying around the tree-tops on the opposite bank of the canal. As for White Admiral regrettably none were seen.



Prochoreutis myllerana

A few moths were also recorded including one micro subsequently reared from spun-up leaves of Skullcap and provisionally identified as *Prochoreutis myllerana*. This moth is closely related to *Anthophila fabriciana* (the distinctive nettle-feeding micro) and it is most probably under-recorded in the county. (MBGBI vol 2 states that the national status of this species is confused because of previous use of an unreliable wing character so that the map shows apparent widespread occurrence but with the majority of records needing confirmation).

Dragonfly feast

However, the most enjoyable part of the visit was the wealth of dragonflies that could be seen along the canal. Banded Demoiselles were seen



White-letter Hairstreak

in profusion together with a range of other species: Blue-tailed, Azure and Red-eyed damselflies, Common Darter, Brown Hawker and Southern Hawker. Some of the more adventurous members took a detour on the return route and followed the course of the disused railway line which was found to support a good colony of the Six-spot Burnet moth.

After lunch, a somewhat reduced party made the short journey to Shenton Cutting and walked from the station to just past the canal. A similar range of butterflies were recorded here with the addition of Comma and a handful of Purple Hairstreaks flying around the top of a large Oak tree.

Adrian Russell



Mating Banded Demoiselles

Wasp Atlas - volunteers needed!

It is 20 years since the last full scale survey of wasps in Britain and, with provisional atlases due to start including the more familiar social wasp species, a second national vespidae survey is underway.

There are some important questions that need answering. Is *Vespula vulgaris* declining as has been suggested? What is the current position of *Dolichovespula media* and *D. saxonica*? Have their brood parasites *D. adulterina* and *D. omissa* reached our shores yet? Is *Dolichovespula norvegica* retreating northwards?

Adrian Price of the Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Entomological Society (DNES) has volunteered to act as a contact point for the East Midlands and is willing to act as a clearing house for records and specimens (preferably very dead!) for identification. If you want to take part in this national survey contact Ray Morris for further details – and don't forget to let us have your records as well!

{The above is based on an article in the Journal of the DNES Spring 1998 – thanks go to Adrian Russell for drawing my attention to it – Editor}

New entomological supplier

It is always a worry trying to get hold of entomological supplies – there are so few suppliers and they are not exactly cheap! Recently a new trader, *Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies* (ALS) has appeared run by two amateur mothers. They are currently only stocking essentials but are interested in expanding their range in response to enquiries. Their prices are claimed to be substantially better than other suppliers (a copy of their price list has been requested). They also construct light traps to your requirements and offer a postal macro-dissection and identification service. Their address is –

Anglian Lepidopterist Supplies
PO Box 370, Cambridge CB4 1ZT
(SAE essential for price list)
Tel: 01263-862068 (answering machine)



A familiar autumn scene!

Unwanted crayfish pest!

[From *Wildlife News* (Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust, Autumn 1988)]

A major new project for the Rutland Water Volunteers is the eradication of the Red Signal Crayfish illegally introduced into the upper reaches of the River Gwash ten years ago. Their aim is to prevent them from entering Rutland Water and doing untold damage to both the ecosystem and to the bunds because of their burrowing activities.

"This is a two year assignment which involves the volunteers working in the river, netting and digging out the crayfish – a very wet and dirty job!" says RW Senior Warden Martyn Aspinall. "So far we have removed about 1,500 and if you saw the size of some of those claws, you might think twice about paddling in rivers!"

The problems of introduced animals, including invertebrates, is all too real. Why are non-native species introduced? Is it for sport, money (i.e. greed) or is it just sheer vandalism?

Ray Morris



LES members Graham and Anona Finch contemplating exhibits from Belize at a meeting of the British Entomological & Natural History Society in their Dinton Pastures headquarters 1996

Can we expect a tropical talk sometime in the future?

[Photograph originally from the British Journal of Entomology & Natural History, vol 10, 190]

New leaf-miner to Black rustics on the keep an eye open for! increase?

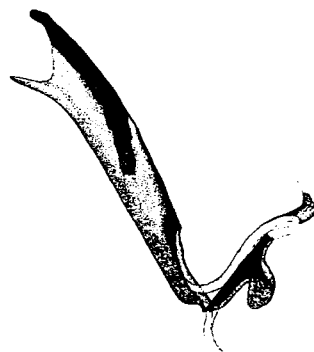
Phytomyza pedicularifolii Hering 1960 (Diptera: Agromyzidae), a leaf miner of *Pedicularis sylvatica* L new to Br and Scandinavia – KP Bland & M von Tschirnhaus, *Ent Gaz*, 49, 63-65 (1998)

This leaf-mining dipteran was first noted in mid-September 1995 as two inconspicuous whitish semi-linear mines in the vegetative leaves of lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*). The fly had been previously trapped in water-filled coloured dishes in Sweden in 1991 with 23 males in 170 white dishes but only one male in simultaneously exposed 170 yellow dishes.

The food plant occurs in Leicestershire but it is probable that it no longer occurs in Rutland because of drainage of preferred damp habitats. Yet another leaf-mining species to keep an eye open for!



Leaf mines



Aedeagus

Following on from last year's report of a Black Rustic (*Aporophyla nigra*) at my Barwell garden light trap (*LES Newsletter 19*), four more have been recorded from the same site during three trappings over a seven day period 17-24.ix.98). What is even more encouraging is the report, from about the same time, of Black Rustic at Rowden Gorse (near Higham on the Hill, a few miles west of Barwell) by Alan Main and co. According to Adrian Russell this moth is definitely increasing in the county but, at the moment, seems to be limited to the south west.



Skinner reports the species as being locally widespread over much of England, Wales and Scotland although less so in the eastern counties of England. However, he does report that it is becoming more widespread even there. The larva feeds on a variety of low herbage including dock, heather and grasses. It is anticipated that more records will be forthcoming as the species increases its range.

Ray Morris

Hoverflies and sawflies from the archives

It is always worthwhile keeping in mind that collectors in the past ranged far and wide over, not just Britain, but the rest of the world. Accordingly their collections are cosmopolitan to say the least. Many of these collections are now in museums where, with a bit of luck, there has been time to sort them out and catalogue the collection. This requires time, inclination and the availability of expertise. Fortunately, this has been possible in some areas.

Recently I came across two such catalogues produced by the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum in Coventry which I had purchased some years ago (about 1993/4 I think – the catalogues themselves are undated). Two insect groups are covered – the hoverflies and the sawflies. Perusal of the catalogues identified some of the specimens in the collections as having been made at several Leicestershire locales by John William Saunt.

Saunt was a well respected entomologist who was born in Nottingham in 1881. He moved to Coventry in 1915 by which time he had transferred his interests from Lepidoptera to the Diptera. He became a prominent member of the Coventry & District Natural History & Scientific Society and in 1925 was elected an honorary Associate of the Linnean Society. In 1937 he moved to the Isle of Wight where he died in 1958. The Museum purchased his collections from his widow later that year. Saunt's syrphid collection contains 1,482 pinned specimens collected 1911-1956 whilst his sawfly collection is almost 3,500 specimens.

Amongst the collections the following Leicestershire records have been found (f = female; m = male):

Hoverflies

Platycheirus clypeatus – Rothley 2.viii.1919 f
Dasysyrphus venustus – Quorn 20.vi.1925 f
Scaeva pyrastris – Croft 20.viii.1930 f
Sphaerophoria scripta – Croft 30.viii.1930 m
Syrphus ribesii – Swithland 26.vi.1920 f
Cheilosia pagana – Quorn 20.vi.1925 m
Cheilosia variabilis – Quorn 21.vi.1924 f

Chrysogaster solstitialis – Swithland 20.vi.1925 2m 1f
Neoascia podagrica – Willesley 1.viii.1920 f
Volucella bombylans – Swithland 20.vi.1925
Volucella bombylans f plumata – Quorn 20.vi.1925 m
Volucella pellucens – Quorn 20.vi.1925 f
Xylota segsegnis – Quorn 21.vi.1924 m,f

{Source: *Hoverflies (Diptera: Syrphidae) in the Collections of the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, UK* – Chris Palmer}

Sawflies

Cephus pygmeus – Croft 8.v.1948 f; 12.v.1948 f
Calomeuta pallipes – Quorn 21.vii.1924 2f
Zaraea fasciata – Quorn 23.vi.1925 f

Stromboceros delicatulus – Quorn 25.vi.1927 f

Strongylogaster lineata – Bradgate Park 26.vi.1922 f

Aneugmenus padi – Bradgate Park 27.vi.1922 f; Quorn 25.vi.1927 2f

Dolerus aeneus – Croft 28.v.1948 f

Dolerus aericeps Badby 22.vii.1928 m; 14.vi.1930 2f (hind legs with different colours)

Dolerus picipes – Croft 28.v.1948 f

Athalia glabricollis – Shilton 15.viii.1930 m

Pama tenella – Quorn 20.vi.1925 m

vi.1925 m

Tenthredopsis nassata – Quorn 26.v.1927 f

Tenthredo atra – Quorn 21.vii.1924 m

Tenthredo scrophulariae – Badby 15.vii.1923 f,m

Macrophya albicincta – Croft 28.v.1948 m

Priophorus ulmi – Rothley 2.ix.1917 f

Two queries from this list – where is Badby? The location Shilton is unclear – is it possibly Earl Shilton (known as Shilton locally) or elsewhere?

{Source: *Sawflies (Hymenoptera: Symphyta) in the Collections of the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, UK* – Adam Wright}

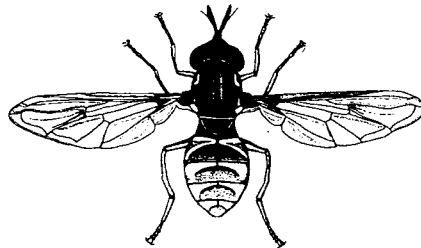
If you know of similar publications of museum catalogues please let us know so that any “stray” Leicestershire and Rutland records can be located.

Ray Morris

HOVERFLIES

(Diptera: Syrphidae)

in the collections of the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry, U.K.



— Dr Christopher J. Palmer Keeper of Natural History —

Winter programme 1998-9

All meetings during the winter season are held at the Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre, Holly Hayes, Birstall starting at 7.30 p.m. Coffee included. Members are encouraged to bring along specimens for display/discussion/identification at any meeting. Visitors are encouraged!

Thursday October 15th 1998 **Members' Evening**

Exhibits by members for discussion or identification or just to show off what you have found during the year!

Thursday November 19th 1998 **Foreign Invaders**

Jan Dawson of New Walk Museum will relate tales of all those little things that managed to illegally enter the country over the years. This talk is a must!

Thursday December 3rd 1998 **Annual General Meeting**

Once this "arduous" task is out of the way we will have a round table discussion based on the premise that "***Insects are declining in Leicestershire***". Up to date information will be provided by several members and discussion of the experiences of others will be encouraged. To include coffee and mince pies!

Thursday January 14th 1999 **Spiders**

Nick Gordon, the new Curator of Biological Sciences at New Walk Museum, will take us through this fascinating group. Nick comes to Leicestershire from Aylesbury Museum.

Thursday February 18th 1999 **Nature Conservation in Leicestershire**

Michael Jeeves (Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust) will describe moves to protect our county's wildlife and, hopefully, will indicate how entomologists can play a role in this. The LES is now affiliated to the LRWT.

Thursday March 18th 1999 **Hoverflies**

Darwyn Sumner of the Leicestershire Environmental Resources Centre will describe his long experience with this group of flies.

Thursday April 15th 1999 **Looking for Butterflies in Britain and Europe**

Mike Webster needs no introduction to LES members being the archetypal natural history enthusiast with particular knowledge of the Charnwood Forest. His butterfly slides are excellent!

The Leicestershire Entomological Society is grateful to the Environmental Resources Centre, Leicestershire County Council for provision of facilities and encouragement of its activities.