

Some Notes on collecting Lepidoptera at Repton 1920.

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THE remarkably fine weather of March and April was no doubt responsible for the appearance of several hibernated specimens of *Gonopteryx Rhamni* (the Brimstone Butterfly) a very scarce visitant to our county of recent years. It was reported in March from Barrow-on-Trent by Dr. St. John, and a specimen was seen by myself in Repton village on the 31st of that month, whilst two specimens appeared in a Repton garden early in April, and finally two specimens were seen by Mr. W. H. Sankey in the *Via Gellia* as late as the 24th of May. I do not find any earlier records of its occurrence so far north in the county, the most northerly being of a specimen seen at Kirk Langley in 1903.

A very careful look-out was kept throughout May and early June for *Syricthus Malvae* (the Grizzled Skipper) in both the localities in which it appeared last year, but no specimen was seen, and it looks as if the species may have failed once again to establish itself within the county borders. The abundance of *Vanessa Atalanta* (the Red Admiral) that has been reported from so many localities in the autumn of this year was very marked also in Derbyshire and attracted the attention of numerous observers; it is of particular interest to note that presumably hibernated specimens were observed in Repton Shrubs in May.

The Tortrix *Coccyx Fimbriana* was found to occur in the Shrubs, and by dint of hard work over a dozen specimens were secured in March and early April. The species had not previously been recorded from Derbyshire, but from its early appearance and retired habits it is one that may very easily have been overlooked. Quite the most remarkable occurrence of the year, however, was the discovery of *Eupithecia Pusillata* (the Dwarf Pug) in considerable numbers in the Shrubs. The first specimens were taken on May 1st and it was subsequently found about a group of old spruces in numbers that suggest that it is thoroughly well established in the wood and by no means of quite recent importation. Not only is it remarkable that it should have escaped previous notice in a wood that has been the hunting-ground of so many collectors, but it is a far cry to Derbyshire from the known haunts of this very local insect. Meyrick gives its range as from Kent to Devon and Barrett records that it has been taken rarely in Suffolk, but I have heard of no intermediate localities. It is true that I had not personally paid much attention at the right time of year to the particular group of trees that appears to be its headquarters, but I came across numerous stragglers in the wood this year about other spruces that had been regularly searched for other species in previous years. Presumably a small colony must have long existed there, possibly introduced when the trees were planted, and an exceptional increase in their numbers resulted from the favourable season. No spruces have recently been planted to my knowledge and the trees in the group are all of considerable age. Besides these two species three *Tineids* not hitherto recorded for Derbyshire were taken: *Perittia Obscuripunctella*, *Ornix Scoticella* and *Elachista Gleichenella*. *Argyresthia Aerariella* was also taken, but I believe that this insect, to which specific rank is accorded in some lists, is more properly regarded as a variety of

A. Conjugella, first recorded for the county by me in 1916. *Dichrorampha Saturnana*, for which the only record, from the neighbourhood of Burton, was accompanied in the *Victoria County History* List by a query, was also taken, thus confirming the doubtful record.

Considerable interest attaches to the capture of another *Tineid*, of which the history is rather complicated and requires to be set out at length. In 1916 I took in the Shrubs two small *Argyresthid* moths, which I sent to Messrs. Watkins and Doncaster for identification. They reported that they had got them named at South Kensington as *Blastotere Glabratella*, an insect not mentioned in the ordinary British Lists, but previously recorded by Lord Walsingham from Norfolk in 1906. After some correspondence these insects were sent to Mr. F. N. Pierce, F.E.S., who accepted them as *Glabratella* and exhibited them under that name. I had kept a look-out for the insect ever since, but it was not until this year that I took further specimens, securing about half a dozen of what I took to be the same species. Some of these were sent to the Rev. J. W. Metcalfe, and by him submitted to Mr. Meyrick, who named them *Argyresthia Illuminatella*. Upon hearing this I communicated with Mr. Pierce and asked Mr. Metcalfe also to send to Mr. Pierce the specimens he had received from me for comparison with the original 1916 specimens in the hope of clearing up the difficulty. Mr. Pierce found that the 1920 specimens were, as I had supposed, identical with those of 1916, and he kindly went into the whole matter with Mr. Hartley Durrant of the South Kensington Museum and sent me their conclusions on this difficult group. Mr. Meyrick in his Handbook, published in 1895, divides the *Argyresthia* group into two sections: A, in which veins 7 and 8 of the forewings are stalked; and B, in which they are separate. The generic name *Blastotere* is used by some writers to include the former

group, and it is to this that the species concerned belong. They are three in number: *Illuminatella*, *Atmoriella* and *Glabratella*.

(1) The species *Illuminatella* was first recorded as British by Walsingham in 1894, but this proved to be an error, for the specimens so named, which were taken by Mr. Salvage, a professional collector, in Moray, were subsequently found to be forms of *Praecocella*, a well-known species of the group. The record in Mr. Meyrick's Handbook was apparently based upon this error, but true *Illuminatella* was recorded as British by Meyrick in 1905, after the publication of the Handbook, and the species has also been taken more recently at Kew, amongst foreign trees.

(2) In 1896 Banks differentiated and described a new species to which he gave the name *Atmoriella*, in honour of the collector Mr. Atmore, by whom the insect had first been taken in 1893 at King's Lynn. It was found that Zeller's series of *Illuminatella* in the Stainton Collection contained three specimens of *Atmoriella*. Mr. Meyrick in his Handbook adds Norfolk (?) to the Moray record of *Illuminatella* and it is presumably to these specimens of Atmore's that he refers. All the Repton specimens were found to belong to this species, which appears to be widely distributed in England, though local. It has been taken in Kent, Surrey, Gloucester, Devon, Lancashire, etc.

(3) *Glabratella* was recorded as mentioned above by Walsingham in 1906, from specimens taken in Norfolk. I am not aware of any further records, now that the Repton record of 1916 has been proved to be erroneous. Some specimens labelled *Illuminetella* in the late Dr. Mason's collection were found to be *Glabratella*, but these were foreign specimens. *Argyresthia* (*Blastotere*) *Atmoriella* may therefore be added to our Derbyshire List, *vice Glabratella* dethroned.

Scoparia Ulmella is another interesting insect that was taken freely in the Shrubs this year. A casual specimen of this species had been secured in 1917 and another last year. Mr. W. G. Sheldon, who had kindly confirmed for me the identification of these, had drawn my attention to a note published by Mr. John Sang in the E.M.M. for 1883, in which he wrote: "I had the pleasure of taking this, the latest addition to our *Scoparias*, near Burton this summer. They were taken in the beginning of August, and many of them were as fine as if freshly bred." Mr. Sheldon suggested that the locality indicated was probably Repton Shrubs and I had paid a good deal of attention to the groups of wych elms in the wood in the hope of finding the headquarters of the insect, but without success. This year however, I noted in July a small group of three old wych elms in a remote part of the wood which I had previously overlooked, and to my surprise and delight found *Ulmella* upon the trunks of these trees in some numbers. Upwards of fifty specimens were obtained, all of them within a space of some 50 yards on the trunks of these three trees and some adjacent oaks, but although I searched carefully all the other and far larger groups of elm in the wood, I saw no specimen outside this restricted area. This is the species of which three specimens were taken by Dale in 1844 in Hants, which remained unique apparently until Mr. J. B. Hodgkinson discovered the species in Westmorland in 1881 and announced it under the name of *Conspicualis*. Dr. Mason of Burton-on-Trent was able some years later to establish the identity of these insects with Dale's original specimens, but it does not appear that the species has ever been obtained again in Hampshire or indeed anywhere in the south of England, with the possible exception of a record in Berkshire. In addition to the species already mentioned as new to the Derbyshire List, the following five species were taken that had not pre-

viously been reported from the Repton area: *Tischeria Marginea*, *Elachista Megerlella*, *E. Nigrella*, *E. Atricomella* and *Nepticula Argentipedella*, whilst the doubtful record by Mr. Garneys of *Glyphpteryx Thrasonella* was confirmed by the discovery of this species in abundance in a damp meadow.

I reported last year the unusual occurrence of *Sesia Cynipiformis* (Yellow-legged Clearwing) in a stump of birch riddled with the burrows of *Culiciformis* (Large Red-belted Clearwing), and this spring, with the assistance of Mr. A. P. Wilson, the small birch stump in question was uprooted and brought home for observation. The result was a fine series of *Culiciformis* but no *Cynipiformis* and the presence of these latter in a birch stump remains a mystery. No stump of oak was near enough to the birch to make it reasonable to suppose that the fullfed larvae had crawled from one to the other.

The fine spring was naturally accompanied by an abundance of *Phigalia Pedaria* (Pale Brindled Beauty) and amongst them was one specimen of the extreme melanic type, the first that I have known to occur here, though I believe that the form had been taken in the immediate neighbourhood of Burton.

The very wet July was unfavourable for collecting, and insects were scarce and late. *Paedisca Solandriana*, for example, had not put in an appearance when I left Repton in early August, and I was unable to repeat the attempt to obtain ova from these and the form or species *Sinuana*, in the hopes of proving definitely the specific distinctness of the two. The attempt to rear these last year was unsuccessful, a few ova only being obtained from a female of the extreme black and white type, though numerous *Sinuana* females were kept for the purpose. The ova were sleeved on birch, but only one larva was reared to maturity and this reproduced the extreme form of the parent.

Mr. Sankey sent me an interesting record of the occurrence of *Zeuzera Pyrina* (the Leopard Moth) in a garden in the middle of Derby, a specimen being taken freshly emerged upon a trunk of lilac on August 8th. On the whole most collectors seem to have found the season unproductive and sugar has been an almost total failure.
