

Some Notes on Lepidoptera, 1926 & 1927.

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1926.

THE very mild weather in the early spring of this year was responsible for the unusually early appearance of many species. *Hybernia marginaria* was observed as early as February 5th and later in the month *Apocheima pedaria*, *Hybernia leucophaearia* and *Cheimatophila tortricella* were out on the woods. Two specimens of *Ectropis bistortata*, not a common species here, were taken in Repton Shrubs towards the end of March, when *Chimarache fagella* and *Microptery unimaculella* were also observed and by April 14th *Ectropis crepuscularia* and *Eupithecia abbreviata* were out and a single specimen of *Ectropis punctularia* was seen on a birch trunk, a remarkably early date for this species here, where it is usually not to be found till well on in May. The early part of May proved to be wet and cold and fresh specimens of *E. punctularia* and *E. crepuscularia* were about as late as the 25th. Some empty pupa cases of *Sesia culiciformis* were found in May protruding from birch trunks at Willington; in order to secure this species in any numbers it is desirable to find a birch tree that has been cut down, or of which a limb has been lopped, two years previously, when pupae may often be found under the bark at the edges of the cut portion; in some seasons pupae of the allied *Sesia asiliformis* may be found in large numbers in Repton Shrubs in similar situations under the bark of two-year-old stumps of oak. Towards the end of May the fine dark *ferrugana* forms of *Tortrix ministrana* were

commoner than usual in the small spinney they affect at Willington; it is curious that this form does not appear to occur in Repton Shrubs, where typical forms are common enough, but it used to be taken freely at Little Eaton by the late Mr. Hill. *Melanippe hastata* was again seen in Repton Shrubs and this attractive species may now be regarded as a well established resident there. An attempt was made this year to determine the proportions of the fine melanic form, *ab. liverana*, of *Cacoecia costana* occurring in this locality. When I first discovered the species here, four or five years ago, the larvae in a large colony were much infested with a species of hymenopterous parasite, which I have been unable to name, but which is quite distinct from any that I have found in other Tortricid larvae. This year the large bed of *Epilobium* in which these larvae fed proved to be entirely void of the species, so that apparently the parasites had succeeded in wiping out the whole colony. Two other colonies were however found, three or four miles apart and equally distant from the first and from these 74 larvae were collected. The results gave 39 specimens of typical coloration 20 *ab. liverana* and 11 intermediates. In the larger colony, from which 50 moths were bred, no parasites appeared; in the smaller one four out of 24 larvae were destroyed by an ichneumon, but not of the same species as proved so destructive to the original colony. The larvae collected this year gave therefore as large a proportion as 28 per cent. of *ab. liverana*, but I suspect that this result is above the normal ratio in this locality. It was interesting to observe once more this year a specimen of *Hesperia malvae* in the same spot at Willington as on previous occasions and a single specimen was also taken by Mr. H. W. Daltry in Dovedale, from which it had not been previously recorded. A visit to the Via Gellia in early June produced *Chlidonia subbaumanniana* in fair numbers, a few *Scoparia dubitalis* and *Pyrausta cingulata* and a

single *Hypochalcia ahenella*. No *Procris geryon* and no *Pyrausta aurata* were seen and these two species were apparently not yet out. A few *geryon* were still flying in the same locality a month later, when *Stenoptilia bipunctidactyla* was abundant and *Epiblema brunnichiana* and *Epinotia hypericana* occurred in numbers a little further up the valley. On June 7 amongst other larvae collected from birch at Willington was one of *Phycis betulae*, a scarce species here, and a number of *Astasia solandriana*, from which some good forms were bred, though none of the comparatively scarce type form. Larvae of *Astasia semifuscana* were far less common than usual but some unusual forms were bred from the few that were collected. A careful search for *Commophila rugosana* towards the end of June in hedgerows where the White Bryony grows yielded a very few specimens, but the species is evidently not at all common here. In July *Olindia ulmana* was found in abundance in its very restricted locality in Repton Shrubs and *Scoparia ulmella* was also much more common than usual. A fine *Euchloris pustulata* was taken in the Shrubs on July 17th and a few *Laspeyresia ianthinana* were netted flying over hawthorn. This species is mentioned in the Burton lists, but had not previously been recorded at Repton. Throughout the first fortnight of August numbers of *A. solandriana* were taken at Willington and in Repton Shrubs, including some particularly fine varieties of the type form, and *Pandemis corylana* and *Epiblema nisella* were common in the Shrubs. On August 28th, a single specimen of *Scoparia angustea* was taken in Repton village, a species new to the county lists and very scarce generally in the Midlands. In October a fine freshly emerged specimen of *Acherontia atropos* was taken in Derby. The micro-lepidoptera of the more northern portions of the County have been so little investigated that probably many fresh discoveries might be made among them. I have received from Mr. H. W.

Daltry, who has published a list of the Micro-lepidoptera of North Staffordshire, a number of records of species observed over the Derbyshire border, six of which are new to our County list. These include two Plumes, *Marasmarcha microdactyla* and *Pterophorus baliodactylus*, one Tortrix, *Ancylis siculana*, and two Elachistids, *Elachista triatomea* and *E. luticomella*, whilst *E. magnificella*, recorded only with a query from Burton, is also included in his list. But by far the most interesting and important of his records is that of a species new to Britain, *Hyponomeuta stannella*, Thnb., of which he took four specimens on July 2nd of this year in a locality in North-west Derbyshire, which he is naturally anxious not to specify more particularly at present. The specimens have been determined by Mr. E. Meyrick, and it is interesting to note that the species is of Scandinavian distribution, as are so many of our northern species, a fact which probably points to its existence in Britain from very early times, before the North sea intervened between Britain and the continent. A small type collection of Derbyshire Lepidoptera, exclusive at present of the Tineidae, has been formed for the Derbyshire Entomological Society and will be housed, by the kind permission of the Curator, at the Derby Museum, where it will be open to the inspection of the public upon application. From considerations of space it is confined to a single type of each species, except where there is any conspicuous difference between the sexes or in cases of striking variation, and it is restricted to specimens taken within the county borders. Inevitably with this restriction there are at present many gaps, particularly amongst the butterflies, e.g., the Fritillaries and Satyrids, once common in the county, but now extinct or very rare. Almost the only chance of getting Derbyshire specimens of these insects is from old collections, and particularly juvenile collections, as more advanced collectors have probably filled their series of these common

insects from more favoured localities. If there are any readers of these notes who could help with such specimens and would like to do so, I should be very grateful if they would communicate with me. The collection contains a number of insects of which only a single specimen has been recorded within the county, *e.g.*, *Limenitis sibilla*, *Deileptenia abietaria*, *Hadena leucostigma*, *Leucophtalmia annulata*, *Scoparia angustea*, *etc.*, and specimens of *Deilephila nerii*, *D. galii*, *Agrotis agathina*, *Acronycta alni*, *etc.*, of which only a very few specimens have been recorded for the county.

1927.

The miserable summer of 1927 was not calculated to encourage a large amount of field work, but it does not seem to have been so prejudicial to insect life as might have been expected. Usually an early season is a prolific one and when the emergence of insects is delayed by unfavourable weather conditions, smaller numbers may be expected when the emergence does take place. This however does not seem to have been the case this year, to judge particularly by an experience, not indeed in Derbyshire, but at Wicken Fen in the few hot days of early August. Insects were indeed amazingly late, early July, and even some June species being still on the wing, but many good species were about in quite unusual numbers, and a list of captures was compiled as a result of quite a short visit that is sufficient to make any good collector's mouth water. At Repton also, when the weather permitted any collecting to be done, insects were by no means scarce, and, in the larval stages particularly, in some cases unusually abundant. The spring moths were early on the wing, as was to be expected from the general mildness and dryness of January and February, but it was startling to find *Panolis piniperda* in Repton Shrubs as early as March 4, and unusual to see hibernated *Vanessa io* in a

Repton garden as early as March 19. In late March and early April a determined attempt was made to re-discover *Pammene fimbriana* in the Shrubs, where it was taken in some numbers in 1920, but entirely without success, though the attempt proved that the method of tapping the oak branches over an umbrella was quite the best way to secure the elusive females of *Cheimatophila tortricella* (*hyemana*) which are usually hard to get, but were taken freely by this means. On May 19 a visit was paid by the Derbyshire Society to Breadsall Moor, but the weather proved wretched and little could be done except to collect larvae of various Tortrices from the whortleberry, which proved to hold larvae of *Eucosma urticana* in large numbers, a few *E. sauciana* and a considerable number of *Tortrix viburniana*, a species that I had not observed there before, though it is common enough on the high moors above Matlock and elsewhere. The members of the Society who attended this meeting were entertained at tea by Mr. Sale, at Coxbench, and the delphiniums in his garden were found to be tenanted by large numbers of larvae of *Plusia moneta*. Throughout May indeed, larvae of many species were abundant. *Cacoecia costana*, *Tortrix paleana*, *Astatia solandriana* and *A. sordidana* were all obtainable in numbers and many *Phycis betulae* were taken, which I had hitherto regarded as a very scarce species here, whilst towards the end of the month the Shrubs produced an unusual plenty of *Polyploca flavicornis*, *Operophtera boreata*, etc., and some full-fed *Geometra papilionaria*. A visit to Holymoore on June 5, produced one imago and several larvae and pupae of *Eucosma mygindana*, not at all a common species in the county. The pretty little White Wave, *Acidalia candidata*, used to be fairly common in Repton Shrubs, but for more than a dozen years it had not been seen and appeared to have died out. This year however, it reappeared and quite a number of specimens were noted. More remarkable still

was the occurrence there of two specimens of *Lobophora halterata* on June 6, both of them taken by a visiting collector. For over twenty years the aspens round which these were taken have been regularly worked in search of other species without a single specimen of *halterata* having been seen, though a careful lookout had been kept for it, as it is mentioned as occurring at Repton in old records previous to 1880. It is strange, and instructive, that so comparatively conspicuous a species could maintain itself unobserved for so long a time in so well-worked a locality. Some nice forms of *Enarmonia pinicolana* (*occultana*) were bred from larvae collected from larch and among insects bred from birch were some handsome forms of typical *Astasia solandriana* and two specimens of the very scarce parallel form of *A. sinuana*, the capture of two of which was recorded in these notes for 1925. Several larvae of *Hygrochroa syringaria*, a scarce species here, were obtained from honey-suckle. These larvae were unusually dark compared with southern examples, indeed almost black, but the resultant imagines were entirely typical. In early June some small Tortricid larvae of an unrecognised form were found feeding upon plum and pear in my garden, and these, emerging in October, proved to be *Exapate congelatella*, a species I had never taken here. The larva is recorded as feeding between the united terminal leaves of privet, and occasionally of blackthorn, sallow or willow, but these larvae fed under a slight web on the underside of the leaves and in no case were found between leaves joined together. The pupae were exceptionally lively and mobile, and of very elongated form for a Tortrix.

On July 15 a large female *Bombyx quercus* just emerged from pupa was found at Willington; the northern race, *Callunae*, is of course abundant on the Derbyshire moors, but *quercus*, the race with a one-year life cycle, to which I take this specimen to belong, occurs only rarely in the south of the county. On the same day a specimen of

Hecatera serena, a comparative new-comer to our county lists, was observed on a gatepost. The pretty little *Dichrorampha politana*, which used to be common on the railway banks, but had been scarce or absent for some seasons, was again present in numbers, flying round the plants of yarrow.

Amongst other interesting captures recorded this year are *Acherontia atropos*, taken in September in Derby by Mr. R. Gwinery and *Chaerocampa elpenor* recorded in the Entomologist for July, as obtained at Matlock, by Mr. K. H. Chapman.

Through the kindness of Mr. H. W. Daltry, of Madeley, I have again six additions to the county list to record this year, all from Dovedale and all amongst the Tineidae. They are the following: *Ochsenheimeria bisontella*, *Gelechia politella* and *G. sequax*, *Ysolophus semicostellus*, *Stephensia brunnichella* and *Pancalia leuwenkoekella*. Mr. Daltry has kindly presented specimens of these to the type collection housed at the Derby Museum, which has now been extended to include the Tineina, and has also presented specimens of *Hyponomeuta stannella*, the species new to Britain discovered by him in North Derbyshire last year, and recorded in last year's notes.