



NatSCA

Natural Sciences Collections Association

<http://www.natsca.org>

Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Terrestrial Invertebrate Section

Author(s): Nash, R.

Source: Nash, R. (1981). Terrestrial Invertebrate Section. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter, Vol 3 No 1*, 26 - 27.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1858>

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

TERRESTRIAL INVERTEBRATE SECTION

HISTORY

The Belfast Natural History Society was formed in 1821 and its collections amalgamated into a museum formally opened on 1st November, 1831. From what evidences are available we may presume that the founding collections of invertebrates and those acquired in the early part of the last century were comprehensive and well maintained. Certainly the early Belfast naturalists properly enjoyed a high reputation. The same may be said of the naturalists of the daughter society, the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society, whose collections came to the, then, Belfast Museum in 1910. At this time the land invertebrate collections were at least as well established as those in any other provincial city of similar size and importance. The word provincial has a special significance since in the hey-day of collecting Dublin was the capital city and Irish material had largely been placed in the National Museum: to a degree this continued after the partition of Ireland in 1921. It seems that after the natural history collections in Belfast passed from the hands of the committed into institutional care a not infrequent decline began and this especially affected the collections of insects and molluscs which, excepting occasional forays by the interested, received scant attention (in which they may have fared better than those which did receive some).

Since the change of status from corporation to national museum and the advent of trained staff the entomological and molluscan collections have received a more proper attention. The work has been largely remedial and has fallen into the following categories.

1. Interpretation and curation of what historic material remains, for instance the George C. Hyndman insect collection of c.1825 and the Hyndman and William Thompson Mollusc collections of c.1840.
2. The acquisition of collections to enable general museum functions to proceed and in particular to enhance understanding of the Irish fauna.
3. Documentation and publication of the collections - and eventually computerisation of contained data.

THE ENTOMOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS

1. IRISH

There is an extensive material of Diptera, Coleoptera, Hymenoptera and Lepidoptera most collected in the last ten years from all faunistic areas excepting the south-east and considerable general collections from two nature reserves, Murlough (sand-dunes) and Rostrevor (oak forest). The material comprises pinned and carded dry imagos. Spirit collections of early stages are very poorly represented.

The surviving early collections are these:

JOHNSON, W.F. (1852-1934) IRISH COLEOPTERA

A comprehensive collection which is extensively cited in the only summary in this century of the Irish beetle fauna - Johnson, W.F.

and Halbert, J.N. 1902. A list of the beetles of Ireland. Proc.R.Ir.Acad. (3)6:535-827. The collection is being overhauled, revised and will be computer catalogued in due course.

CRAWFORD, W.M. (1872-1941) IRISH COLEOPTERA

A small collection of Irish beetles with excellent data, many determined by K.G. Blair.

STELFOX, A.W. (1883-1972) IRISH ACULEATE HYMENOPTERA

A small duplicate collection of Irish aculeates many cited in Stelfox, A.W. 1927 Hymenoptera Aculeata (sensu lato) of Ireland Proc.R.Ir.Acad. (B)37:201-355.

HYNDMAN, G.C. (1796-1867) GENERAL

One of the first known collections of Irish insects, the others being the James Tardy and Mary Ball collections in Trinity College and the early parts of the Alexander Henry Haliday collection in the National Museum. The Hyndman collection is the best documented of all, however, being accompanied by a chronologically arranged acquisitions book.

WALKER, F. (1809-1874)

A small collection of aphids mounted on micro-slides including some type-material

BRITISH

A substantial British material is held mostly in the Irish systematic collections but two collections have been kept as separate entities. These are:-

A large collection of British and some European Ichneumonidae assembled by J.P. BROCK between 1963 and 1975. Some 1,100 species are contained and these include a large number of rare species several as yet unrecorded from Britain and a few Kasparyan paratypes.

A.P. Gainsford's collection of butterflies from S.W. England.

FOREIGN

There is a considerable collection of Palaearctic insects especially from Roumania, Spain, Portugal and a fairly comprehensive collection of world Lepidoptera. This latter contains some types and many rare species some poorly represented elsewhere. It is well catalogued on cards and, once funds are available, the catalogue will be computerised. Presently the collection is being overhauled and arranged systematically in available cabinets. Three of the more important collections will be kept discrete. These are

1. Parts of the Stoffel collection of Agrias (Nymphalidae) containing Le Mout types.
2. H.M. Peebles collection of Parnassius (Papilionidae) which includes material collected by Avinoff, Grum Grshmailo, Bang-Haas, Fruhstorfer, Oberthur, Turati, Verity, Rothschild, Elwes, Bryk and Eisner. Much of the material is type.
3. P. Wilcox collection of butterflies from Malaya notable for exceptionally complete data and comprehensiveness.

Robert Nash