

autumn of 1976 she was about to go to bed when she noticed a huge insect at rest by the fireplace in their living room. It was duly captured and contact was made with Haslemere Museum who pronounced it to be a Death's Head; but it later transpired that its arrival, probably down the chimney, was due to a wild bees nest being lodged in it. Doubtless this insect had in some way been attracted to this source of sweetness which has often been recorded in the literature, but this is the first time I have had direct evidence of this phenomenon. It has even been said that the high-pitched whistle which the moth emits, has a mesmerising effect on the bees, but this theory is very problematical. Incidentally, the specimen in question had its portrait in the *Surrey Advertiser*, and it is still preserved by its captors. — C. G. M. DE WORMS, Three Oaks, Shores Road, Woking, Surrey.

A NOTE FROM DOVER. — I was pleased to find one male *Lithophane leautieri* Boisd. in my trap last night. It is certainly spreading. Also of interest is a *Palpita unionalis* Hbn. that came to my trap on 11th October, the first I have had here for ten years. On the 19th October last, a *Dioryctria abietella* D. & S. came to my trap. This species has always puzzled me. It is usually out in July/August; the latest date I have previously recorded it being 26th August. This latest specimen is a small one, al. ex. 2.21 cm. — G. H. YODEN, 18 Castle Avenue, Dover, CT16 1EZ, Kent, 22.x.1977.

SOME REMARKS ON *LYTTA VESICATORIA* L. (COL.: MELOIDAE) IN BRITAIN. — Apropos of the Editor's record of this striking beetle in Kent some 40 years ago (*antea*: 198), it may be worth recalling that there was an "outbreak" of the species, likewise in the Canterbury district (Stourmouth), in July 1948—as reported by the late Dr. A. M. Massee in the annals of the Kent Field Club (ref. not to hand). The beetles swarmed on a privet hedge enclosing a tennis court, and were, I understand, in such numbers as to cause annoyance to the players, in consequence of which Dr. Massee's professional advice was sought. A year or so later they had quite disappeared. This is the last British occurrence of the "Spanish fly" in quantity that I know of, though there have since been one or two isolated captures elsewhere.

Although it is generally assumed that the status of *Lytta vesicatoria* in Britain is that of a casual visitor from the Continent which occasionally breeds very freely for a season or two in a particular locality, it seems never to have been noted in the act of immigration despite its very conspicuous and unmistakable appearance. On the other hand there is some evidence that a minimal resident population may persist year after year—perhaps indefinitely—in certain localities favoured by the insect, where it has appeared often at long intervals but sometimes in profusion. There seem to be two main areas, a southern and an eastern, in which the outbreaks have mostly been concentrated: S. Hants. (including Isle of Wight) west-

ward into Dorset, and N. Essex through Suffolk into Cambs. The latter of these areas of distribution now evidently requires to be extended southward to N.E. Kent. It further seems very possible that during periods of scarcity the beetles live rather high up—beyond the reach of the ordinary beating-stick—in some of the larger ash trees*, so that only stragglers, at most, would probably ever be seen; and that only after a build-up in their numbers do they spread to related shrubs such as privet and lilac, where, naturally, they soon attract attention. The larva has been found here perhaps only once, in Suffolk, but as an inhabitant of the underground nests of certain solitary bees it would in any event be seldom observed. — A. A. ALLEN.

* The late Horace Donisthorpe told me that he obtained his series in an East Anglian locality where it had occurred in the past, by spreading very large sheets under a suitable-looking ash and jarring the boughs and foliage with a long pole.

LASIOCAMPA QUERCUS SSP. CALLUNAE PALMER (NORTHERN EGGAR) ATTRACTED BY CITRONELLA? — On the 12th July I took a lady visitor to the top of Tallabrig on the low hill on the island of Sanday to see the view of other islands and also inspect the *Z. purpuralis* colony nearby. Being stockingless, she had anointed her ankles with citronella to repel the midges. To our surprise a male *L. quercus* (*callunae*) came up, circled around and landed on her feet, around which it fluttered, apparently attracted by the odour of the citronella. — J. L. CAMPBELL, Isle of Canna, Scotland.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE PUPAL STAGE OF THE PURPLE HAIR-STREAK (*THECLA QUERCUS* L.). — In 1976 and 1977 I reared a small number of Purple Hairstreaks (*Thecla quercus*) from larvae collected on Inchcailloch, part of the Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve. Particular attention was paid to the length of the pupation period, as there is a general lack of agreement in the entomological literature on this aspect of the butterfly's life history. As examples: "a fortnight or so" (Rowland-Brown, 1912), "20 days" (Acworth, 1947), "about 30 days" (Frohawke, 1934), "about 36 days" (Sanders, 1939). It is noteworthy that most of the early standard works are silent on the subject.

Just prior to the onset of metamorphosis, all of the captive larvae went beneath the surface of the pupating mixture provided, there taking about 2-3 days to achieve the final pupal state. Following a cool June/early July in West Scotland during 1976, the butterflies emerged 22 days after the larvae had begun the pre-pupal stage, but with much warmer weather over the same period in 1977 the complete metamorphosis from larva to butterfly was unexpectedly prolonged by a further 4-5 days. Similar observations have been made by Dr. C. J. Luckens of Southampton, who also reared a number of *T. quercus* in 1976 (*Ent. Rec.*, **89**: 170) and 1977. In southern Britain, however, the weather pattern during the pupation



Allen, Anthony Adrian. 1977. "Some remarks on *Lytta vesicatoria* (Col. : Meloidae) in Britain." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 89, 345–346.

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