

Oxygastra curtisii (Dale, 1834) (Odonata: Corduliidae) in Bournemouth, an Historical Note

By S. C. S. BROWN*

The first specimen of this dragonfly was taken on Parley Heath, Dorset, by J. C. Dale on June 29th 1820, but was not named and described by him until 1834. It was then lost sight of for a period of 45 years, when in 1878 H. Goss took six examples on a heath to the north of Pokesdown, near Bournemouth. He visited the locality again in 1882 and 1890, and made further captures. On August 13th 1900, he returned and made a sketch-map of the area. He did not say if he saw *curtisii* that year, but from the lateness of his visit, it would have been almost certainly over. Copies of the map were sent to a few interested entomologists, and acting on the information supplied, the locality was visited and a number of the insect secured. The heath in question was known as "Poor Common", and was situated close to Pokesdown Railway Station. It consisted of a marshy valley, with a small pond at its western end. This valley bore a stream which ran eastwards for about a half mile, where it entered the river Stour, at a place called "Sheepwash", so named from the time that sheeprearing was carried on in the neighbourhood. The locality had much in common with the one at Parley, where the West Moors river joins the Stour. The distance between the two places is about 2 miles.

The land was purchased by the Bournemouth Corporation in 1900. In 1904 a considerable portion was converted into a public park and playing fields. At a later date the remainder was built over and the pond and stream filled in. The banks of the river at "Sheepwash" have been considerably altered by the dredging and straightening of the Stour.

In the Hope Department at Oxford, are specimens from Bournemouth in the Dale, Lucas, Robertson and Nevinson collections, totalling 26 in all. The dates, when known, range from 1892 to 1905. One male, taken by Lucas, is labelled: "Christchurch, Hants". Another, also a male, captured by C. W. Dale, has a label: "Iford, June 10th 1892 (C. W.)". There is some significance about these two, for it would show that both were taken on the banks of the river Stour, and not on the heath at Pokesdown. Iford is about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile down stream from "Sheepwash". In the British Museum (Nat. Hist.), are three specimens from Bournemouth, taken by R. B. Robertson in 1905, and one in the Gardiner collection labelled: "Pokesdown". I have been unable to trace the *curtisii* taken by H. Goss, who died in 1908.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Marcus de V. Graham, of the Hope Department, Oxford: to Mr. S. J. Brooks of the Department of Entomology, British Museum, and to Mr. P. C. Ensom, Assistant Curator of the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, for their assistance in answering my queries.

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References

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A STRANGE METHOD OF CAPTURING A LEPIDOPTERON. — I have caught many sphingids and other Lepidoptera in various parts of the world, but never by a stranger method than that employed recently.

I was fishing, singularly unsuccessfully, for black bass at the Ebenezer dam in northern Transvaal (near Haenertsburg) and in the fading light of a summer evening decided to attach a white float to my line. A moment after my first cast using the new "rig" I was rewarded with a sharp impact and the rod came alive in my hands — but lo and behold my float bobbed quietly on the water and there was no fish on the hook. It took a few moments to realize that a sphingid had flown full tilt into the "eye" at the end of my rod where it had wedged itself, its wings beating furiously but helplessly, and causing the rod to vibrate as if I had hooked an ESCOM power-line.

Having freed the "monster" and sent it on its way, I retrieved my line and prepared for another cast. A sphingid dived past me and hovered over an upturned bottle top glowing whitely in the grass behind me. Its "tongue" was out and if ever I saw a moth licking its chops it was that moth. As I cast, the sphingid turned and zoomed after the white float as it looped through the air. And when the float smacked down on the water the moth hovered over it predatorially, before darting off over the marshes and tree-lined banks in search of more rewarding "flowers".

Thereafter, hardly a cast was not investigated by some passing moth, and if there had been a butterfly-net, instead of a hook attached to my line, I've a feeling that my "bag" would have been a good deal greater. Now I know that attracting insects to u.v. lamps at night is old hat, and that *Morpho* and other butterflies are lured within net-reach by placing a dead specimen on the ground, but has anyone ever thought of luring sphingids to a "flower sized" white disc placed conveniently on the lawn (perhaps a moving disc is even more attractive), or else placing a white plastic ball inside your net and letting the beasts fly right in? — M. J. WELLS, Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria.

BLAIR'S SHOULDER-KNOT IN CORNWALL. — With reference to the record of this species in Wales (*Ent. Rec.*, 91: 322), I wish to report the capture of a single male in an actinic light trap at Veryan, Cornwall. The trap was situated on the beach in wait for migrants on the evening of the 23rd October 1979. — COLIN HART, 86 Brighton Road, Hooley, Coulsden, Surrey.