

Some new insect species for the Medina Valley 2003

D T Biggs

A mite *Vasates quadripedes* (Acari:Eriophyidae)

This mite is common and widespread in the USA on Silver Maple, *Acer saccharinum*, where it causes the Maple Bladder gall. It was not found in Britain until the year 2000. The fourth British record came from the arboretum at Fairlee, where I found many examples of the gall and its mites on 29th September 2003 on the one tree of this species present. The galls are raised pustules up to 5mm high on the upper leaf surface, with an opening on the underside. They are yellowish green at first, later becoming dark red, and then black. This is still the only Island record so far.

A true bug *Eurygaster testudinaria* (Heteroptera:Scutelleridae)

The 10mm long Tortoise bug looks very similar to its larger namesake, its back being completely covered by an extension of its thorax. It is variable in colour and a deep purple female and a mid-brown male were found at Seaclose on 7th June 2003. There have only been a few previous records from the Island. It is found in The Fens and The Broads and throughout most of southern England. It is a pest of wheat and other cereals on the Continent, but in England it feeds on rushes and sedges, liking damp habitats where the grass is tall and the vegetation rank.

A gall-midge *Dasineura acrophila* (Diptera: Cecidomyiidae)

The gall induced by this fly is a pod, formed by the upward folding of the thickened edges of a leaflet of an ash leaf. It is the communal feeding activity of the white larvae that causes the overgrowth of the leaf tissue resulting in the gall. This acts as a source of food and protection for the developing larvae, as well as isolating the rest of the leaf from the feeding activity of the larvae. This gall is not common on the Island, although reported to be widespread and common in England. The first example for the Medina Valley was found on 7th June 2003, at Seaclose.

A gall-wasp *Andricus aries* (Hymenoptera:Cynipidae)

This gall-wasp was unknown in England until its appearance in Berkshire in 1997, and was first recorded on the Island at Osborne on 8th February 2003. The second Island record came from the grounds of the old Fairlee House two days later on 10th February 2003. The female wasp lays her eggs in the buds of oak (*Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*). The feeding of the larvae produce what is known as a ram's horn gall because of its spherical base, about 5mm across, surmounted by two long curved horns up to 50mm long. . Before 1990, the wasp and its gall were rare and only known from Hungary and Siberia. Since then it has suddenly expanded its range north-westwards across Europe for reasons which are not known. In England, it is now found in the Home Counties but it has not been reported from Hampshire and Sussex. It is still uncommon, but now widespread across the Island.

A gall-wasp *Andricus grossulariae* (Hymenoptera: Cynipidae)

This is yet another gall-wasp which has invaded Britain recently, being recorded, again from Berkshire during 2000. In this species, it was the previous season's acorn cups that were galled. It has been named the sea anemone gall because arising from a cuboid base, about 10mm by 15mm, are numerous sturdy arm-like projections, about 6mm long. The whole starts green, turns deep pinkish-red and finally becomes brown or even black. The wasp is native to south and south-eastern Europe but extends into the Iberian peninsula. Up to spring 2002, it had not been recorded outside Berkshire and Surrey. The first, and so far only Island record was of galls found on 10th February 2003, on the same oak at Fairlee that hosted the previous species.

A micro-moth *Coleophora flavipennella* (Lepidoptera: Coleophoridae)

This is a very small yellowish moth of 10mm wingspan, the larva of which produces fleck mines on oak leaves. It lives in a case constructed from leaf fragments and silk. The head of the larva projects from the case and extends into the substance of the leaf through a tiny hole. It eats out the leaf mesophyll, leaving only the upper and lower epidermis, resulting in the characteristic fleck mine with its feeding hole. The features of the mine, the case and the contained larva enable identification to be made. A case with a larva was found on 20th April 2003 at Hurst Stake. There are only four other records from the Island, although the moth is reported to be locally common throughout England and Wales and is found across Europe.