

Hazards of butterfly collecting – “I am a tiny man”, United Kingdom, 1973

As the creaky Middle East Airlines, Boeing 720 approached Heathrow, London, I felt sure I should like Lionel Higgins. While I had been preparing my book on the butterflies of Lebanon over the past few years, he had patiently endured a torrent of letters. I was wholly without library facilities and had no experience in writing seriously about butterflies, so his help was a *sine-qua-non*. He had invited me to stay with him a few days while I was in London on a business trip. He had even offered to pick me up at Heathrow, with the words, “I am afraid that someone unfamiliar with this country might find the journey from Heathrow to Wokingham rather daunting”. But it was his last letter that made me quite certain I would like him, “I shall be waiting for you at the MEA counter. I am a tiny man, and I shall be wearing the very caricature of an English tweed suit. You cannot possibly miss me”. With words like that, he just had to be likeable.

We met, and he was. I was somewhat over-awed at being with one of the authors of the best-selling butterfly book ever (*Field Guide to the Butterflies of Britain and Europe*, Collins), but Lionel had a fine line in de-awe-ing people like me. We had a most pleasant weekend together, and I think I learnt more in those 48 hours than I have ever learnt in such a short time. Fortunately, being a physician, Lionel was also interested in my work with family planning in the Middle East.

In 1975 I moved to the UK, and Lionel's comments on daunting journeys were proved right when he said that I must come down for a weekend, post haste. I looked at a map. It seemed simple enough; to find Wokingham, go to Heathrow and turn generally south-west. I had not bargained for British signposting. Between Heathrow and Wokingham there was no information on anything more than two miles further on, and my only map was 1:1,000,000. Lionel was sufficiently experienced with foreigners not to be nonplussed by a late arrival.

He had a huge, extremely well-organised collection of Palaearctic butterflies, which could give immediate answers to most problems. He had collected many himself during visits to places which at the time were most inaccessible, like Kurdistan, obscure parts of Turkey, and Lebanon. His first major scientific revision of the Hesperiid genus *Spialia* Swinhoe dates from 1924, and his monograph on the Nymphalid genus *Melitaea* Fabricius from 1941 is a classic. His 1964 paper on Turkish butterflies remains the only real attempt to give an overview of the Turkish butterfly fauna, though much more collecting has since been done.

While he was proud of his collection and freely gave interested colleagues access to it, Lionel was even more proud of his wonderful library of rare entomological books, which he had amassed since his youth. Nothing gave him more pleasure than showing off the splendid hand-coloured plates in books like Hübner's or Hewitson's. He thought their combined value was more than that of his lovely old home, “Focclesbrook Farm”.

During a discussion in early spring, 1978, when he was well into his eighties, he suddenly declared, "Do you mean to say you have never seen the early stages of the Riordinidae? Let's go!". He donned a pair of gumboots, and off we went in his trusty VW Golf, through twenty miles of winding country lanes, to a wood where *Hamearis lucina* L. flew. There was a doctor's sign on the windscreen, for Lionel still did a bit of doctoring. "Helps with parking as well", he remarked.

I last visited Lionel a few days before moving to India in 1984. He was by now 93, and despite attempts at being his old self, the loss of his wife, Nesta, a few years earlier clearly dampened his spirits. His final words to me were, "You know . . . this whole business of electrophoresis . . . you might want to look into that . . . but then, perhaps, India is not the place to start". Lionel's mind was obviously open to the very last.

A few months before his death, in October 1985, at the age of 95, he wrote to me, "I find that my concentration is slipping a bit, but I still manage to get things on paper".

Lionel may have been tiny, but he was a great man.—TORBEN B. LARSEN, 358 Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 9PL.

***Coleophora therinella* (Tengst.) (Lep.: Coleophoridae) and *Monochroa hornigi* (Stdgr.) (Lep.: Gelechiidae), new to Wiltshire**

On the evening of 29 June 1994 my brother and I operated our m.v. lights in Savernake Forest SU2167 (VC 7). Amongst a fairly modest catch we secured one *Coleophora* sp. and one *Monochroa* sp., both of which defied immediate identification. In due course Dr John Langmaid from Southsea provided invaluable assistance in that direction.

During the following winter my brother prepared a slide of the genitalia from the *Coleophora* sp., and from that slide John Langmaid had no doubts in confirming the identity of the specimen as *Coleophora therinella*.

The *Monochroa* sp. engaged John's interest and he very generously offered to dissect the specimen, and in due course confirmed its identity as *Monochroa hornigi*.

The larval foodplant of *C. therinella* has only fairly recently been discovered. The plant, black bindweed *Fallopia convolvulus* has been known for several years by the scientific name *Bilderdykia convolvulus*. Prior to that it was apparently *Polygonum convolvulus*, now, as a result of fairly recent changes in nomenclature, it is known as *Fallopia convolvulus*. A point of interest is that this recent classification places "black bindweed" adjacent to Japanese Knotweed *F. japonica* and Russian-vine *F. baldschuanica*. An examination of the latter shows several strong physiological similarities to black bindweed *F. convolvulus* and it is becoming a very commonly grown cultivar and it would not be beyond the realms of possibility that



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