

New Data concerning James Dutfield's *New and Complete Natural History of English Moths and Butterflies* (1748-49)

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Dutfield's colour-plate work on the English moths and butterflies, which seems never to have been completed, is known only by six fascicles and two duplicate numbers in the British Museum (Natural History). It is thus among the rarest of entomological books, and any new information about its publication must be of bibliographical interest.

Lisney (1960) and Wilkinson (1966) have summarised the little that has previously been known of Dutfield and his elusive publication. The six fascicles, each containing two plates and two leaves of text, were published irregularly by M. Payne, London. The wrappers of the first four fascicles are dated 1st June, 1st July, 1st August and 1st September 1748 respectively. The fifth fascicle lacks wrappers, but the two plates are dated 1748 and 1748/9, the old style date suggesting publication (or at least preparation of the second plate) before 25th March. The sixth fascicle has the printed date 1748, but the plates are both dated 1749, indicating issue at the end of March or later.

A previously unrecorded notice was placed in the *London Daily Advertiser* to announce the appearance of the first and second fascicles of Dutfield's book. The notice was first published on 16th June 1748, and was repeated *verbatim* on 20th June:

"This Day is publish'd, (Containing two Plates, printed on a superfine Royal Paper, and beautifully colour'd) Number I. of A New and Complete Natural History of English Moths and Butterflies; considered through all their progressive States and Changes; drawn and colour'd exactly from the Life: Together with the Plants, Flowers, and Fruits, in their Seasons, on which they feed, and are usually found. By JAMES DUTFIELD. Printed for M. Payne, at the White Hart in Pater-noster-Row. Number II. (which will be publish'd the 1st of next Month) is ready to be deliver'd to those who have subscrib'd for the four Numbers."

The advertisement suggests that at least in the case of the first fascicles, the date of publication on the wrappers may not have coincided with their actual appearance. No notice of publication of the first number appeared in the *Daily Advertiser* before 16th June, although the wrappers are dated 1st June. This alone is not wholly conclusive, because as seen from the reprinting of the "This day is publish'd" notice four days later, and many similar cases of other titles advertised in the newspaper, one cannot accept these notices literally unless confirming pre-publication notices are also found. In any case, the fascicle dated 1st July seems to have been ready for distribution in mid-June.

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The advertisement indicates that despite the wide scope of the proposed book, the first subscription was for *four* numbers only, not six or more. This explains the regular dating of the wrappers of the first four. No prospectus is known, if one was ever issued, and we do not know in which of the usual methods Dutfield or his publisher solicited subscribers. The very irregular dating of the fifth and sixth fascicles suggests that Dutfield and Payne were able to sustain interest, but that the projected edition became increasingly delayed from the proposed monthly schedule. It would at least appear that interest collapsed after the sixth fascicle, and the work was discontinued.

This may be so, but since we have only the BM(NH) copies for reference, it would be dangerous to make such a definite conclusion from such meagre data. It is at least possible that other sets of Dutfield's work have survived. One of the problems in dealing with these matters is that as yet we have nothing even approaching a central record of antiquarian books. Pre-eighteenth century books printed in the British Isles and British America, and English books printed in other countries, have been surveyed and located in many major Western libraries by the short-title catalogues and their supplements. Perhaps the most intensive survey of its kind, now approaching its five hundredth volume, is that of the pre-1956 imprints in many North American libraries. But none of these help us with Dutfield where more copies of his book are likely to be found, in the British Isles. We can only say that six fascicles are *known* to have been printed, and hope that the projected short-title catalogue of eighteenth-century imprints will reveal more evidence.

Was Dutfield's vast project terminated because of the simultaneous appearance and competition of Benjamin Wilkes' *The English Moths and Butterflies*? New facts about the printing history of Wilkes' publications appear in my introduction to the recently advertised reprint of Carington Bowles' edition of Wilkes' *Twelve New Designs*, in press. It is certain that *The English Moths and Butterflies* was complete at the beginning of July 1749, at which time Wilkes had recently died and Dutfield's work appears to have been discontinued. Perhaps there was not yet enough of an entomological "public" in the mid-eighteenth century to support *two* extensive and simultaneous works, especially as Wilkes definitely had the head start. This is the most logical explanation of the failure of Dutfield's book; if it is the true one, then Wilkes' "deathbed victory" was Pyrrhic indeed. Fortunately, interest in entomology increased enough in the next eight decades so that the surveys of John Curtis and James F. Stephens could be published at the same time, and a large number of subscribers could be attracted to each.

The lives of many of our early entomologists still lie in relative obscurity, and the case of James Dutfield is an example. Except for a few facts regarding his collecting and rearing, and his apparently lone venture into entomological

publication, we know nothing about him. Hopefully, some future historian will seek him out in the primary sources of the eighteenth century.

References

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PARAMESIA GNOMANA (CLERCK) (LEP., TORTRICIDAE)
CONFIRMED AS A BRITISH SPECIES. — In August 1977, five specimens of *Paramesia gnomana* (Clerck), (Lep.: Tortricidae), were caught at this address. Bradley, Tremenwan and Smith (1973, *British Tortricid Moths*, 133-134) record four old specimens, three noted by Barrett (1872) without exact locality data but possibly coming from the north of the country, and a fourth specimen found by Huggins in 1932 in J. C. Melville's collection, again without exact locality data. Doubts have been cast on the authenticity of these specimens (now in the British Museum (Natural History)) and this species has usually been considered as only possibly British.

On 5th August, 1977, two moths turned up in the garden Robinson mercury vapour moth trap which I took to be pale *Clepsis spectrana* (Treitschke). These were followed by further single specimens on the 8th and 18th in the trap and one at electric light on the 29th. As the moths resembled the illustration of *P. gnomana* in Bradley *et al.* (*op. cit.*) better than those of *C. spectrana*, I looked at the venation. In *C. spectrana*, forewing veins 7 and 8 are separate whilst in *P. gnomana* they are stalked from the middle. My specimens had the veins stalked and keyed down to *P. (Capua) gnomana* in Meyrick (1927, *Revised Handbook of British Lepidoptera*). I thus took the moths to the British Museum (Natural History) where Dr. J. D. Bradley kindly examined the genitalia and confirmed the identification. Bradley *et al.* (*op. cit.*) describe and illustrate the species, but my specimens are marginally more strongly marked than the one they illustrate.

The area in which the moths were caught includes gardens, agricultural land and a small birch wood with odd lime, oak, pine trees, etc. This is typical scenery for this part of the country and there is no reason to suppose that *P. gnomana* only occurs in this restricted locality. The life cycle in this country is unknown but on the continent it feeds on a variety of trees and plants. — H. C. J. GODFRAY, Pinehurst West, Swiffe Lane, Broad Oak, Heathfield, Sussex.



Wilkinson, Ronald S. 1977. "New data concerning James Dutfield's New and complete natural history of English moths and butterflies (1748-49)." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 89, 272–274.

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