This suggestion is supported by previous records of ladybirds attracted to moth traps (Majerus, 1990. Ladybirds at light. *Bull. Amat. Ent. Soc.*, **49**: 197-199). Majerus notes that *Halyzia sedecimguttata* is more strongly attracted to light than other British ladybirds. I am grateful to Dr Mike Majerus for his helpful comments, via the Editor, on the initial draft of this note.– C. M. EVERETT, Wolfson College, Cambridge CB3 9BB.

The ladybird as a twinkle in the eye of an angel

The Orange Ladybird *Halyzia sedecimguttata* (L.) was once regarded as rather uncommon and, although it is now known to be quite widespread, it is nevertheless a handsome insect and not one to be come across every day. It is a striking yellowish orange, with pale creamy white spots and has a strange transparent rim at the sides and front of the thorax, extending out over the head.

Fowler (1889. *The Coleoptera of the British Islands* **3**: 166) and Joy (1932. *A practical handbook of British beetles*, p. 522) both describe the Orange Ladybird as "local", unusual for a ladybird since most species are very common and widespread. A tentative list of scarcity statuses put about by Hyman (1985. *A provisional review of the status of British Coleoptera.* Invertebrate Site Register Report **60**: NCC), suggested that it might even be considered as nationally scarce (Notable B, i.e., recorded from between 31 and 100 of the ten-kilometre squares of the National Grid). However, during the 1980s, *Halyzia* seems to have been recorded more often. Provisional Notable status was not confirmed when the final review of scarce and threatened beetles was produced by Hyman and Parsons (1992. *A review of the scarce and threatened Coleoptera of Great Britain.* UK Nature Conservation **3**: JNCC).

There is no doubt that some of this increased recording was due to the fact that a specific association with sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* trees was first noticed at this time. The Orange Ladybird is a mildew (mould) feeder, rather than an aphid predator, and sycamores seem to be particularly prone to mildew on their leaves. Once this fact was known the ladybird was much more often recorded.

The Orange Ladybird's over-wintering habits are usually described as in leaf litter, on tree trunks or in ivy clumps, especially near sycamores (Majerus, 1994. *Ladybirds.* New naturalist **81**: Harper Collins), and although small aggregations of over-wintering Orange Ladybirds are recorded they are not frequent. I was intrigued, therefore, to find several specimens huddled together on various gravestones and, in particular, on a stone angel, a delicately carved and gently lichen-encrusted Victorian headstone, in Nunhead Cemetery, south London, on 1 January 2000.

Six of them, together with a specimen of the Pine Ladybird *Exochomus quadripustulatus* (L.) were snuggled together in the angel's hairline, others were resting under her ear and on her neck, and one was tucked into her eye socket.

Ladybirds are steeped in myth and metaphor. From signs of good luck to omens of imminent matrimony, from the gardener's friend to the child's delight, these pretty beetles are welcomed and celebrated by all. But has anyone ever thought to describe a ladybird as a twinkle in the eye of an angel?– RICHARD A. JONES, 135 Friern Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 0AZ.