

<i>Issoria lathonia</i> L.	Queen of Spain Fritillary. Occasional, Auvergne and Provence.
<i>Thecla betulae</i> L.	Brown Hairstreak. One female, fresh, Auvergne 7th October.
<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i> L.	Small copper. Occasional throughout.
<i>Celastrina argiolus</i> L.	Holly Blue. Occasional in Auvergne and Provence, worn.
<i>Aricia agestis</i> Schiff.	Brown Argus. Occasional in Provence, fresh.
<i>Polyammatus icarus</i> Rott.	Common blue. Widespread, mostly worn.
<i>Lysandra coridon</i> Poda.	Chalkhill blue. Widespread where suitable country, going over.
<i>Carcharodus alceae</i> Esp.	One on Presqu'île de Ghiens, 12th October, fresh. The only skipper seen.

## William Vernon, Entomologist and Botanist

By RONALD STERNE WILKINSON

The early Cambridge naturalist, William Vernon, has been remembered by historians of entomology for two feats. He was the first to capture *Pontia daplidice* (The Bath White) in England, and the story is told that on one occasion he pursued a butterfly for nine miles before catching it. While conducting research for a study of his friend, James Petiver, I have endeavoured to collect enough information about Vernon from the manuscript sources of the period to present at least a brief sketch of his activities. Vernon's contemporaries testify that in fact he made a notable contribution to knowledge of the English *Lepidoptera*; in addition to *daplidice*, he was the first to record *lucina* and *lathonia* as English, and he shares the honour of *edusa* with John Ray<sup>1</sup>.

Vernon, a Hertfordshire man, was born in either 1666 or 1667 and received his early education at the public school of Hertford. He was admitted pensioner at Peterhouse College, Cambridge, in April 1685; after taking his B.A. in 1688/9 he proceeded M.A. in 1692 and became a Fellow of the College in the same year<sup>2</sup>. While a student he seems to have developed an interest in the natural history of Cambridgeshire which resulted in extended study of *Bryophyta* and *Lepidoptera*. Vernon formed an early friendship with the great naturalist, John Ray, and visited him occasionally at Black Notley; the two corresponded frequently although their early letters have not survived. Writing in 1694 to the Oxford botanist, Edward Lhwyd, Ray commended Vernon's efforts in collecting mosses; he had "been more industrious in searching out, & more successfull in finding the species of that Tribe" than any other in memory, and had sent Ray many plants previously unknown to him<sup>3</sup>. These gifts were acknowledged in the second edition of Ray's *Synopsis Stirpium Britannicarum* where Vernon was praised: "Rei Botanicae, reliquae, que Historiae Naturalis peritissimus, inque stirpibus, praesertim Anglicis, exquirendis, colendis, observandis industrius admodum & curiosus"<sup>4</sup>.

By 1695 Vernon had met the apothecary-naturalist, James Petiver, and was mentioned in the *Musei Petiveriani Centuria Prima* of that year as a collector of mosses "who hath been very curious in the discovery of this minute Tribe of Plants"<sup>5</sup>. Petiver was eager to encourage any young



investigator who might be able to add specimens to the Museum, and it may well have been through his introduction that Vernon became a member of the Temple Coffee-House Botany Club, an organization composed of several of the leading botanists and entomologists in England; Petiver, Hans Sloane, Adam Buddle, Nehemiah Grew and Martin Lister were a few of those who met on Friday evenings and made occasional collecting excursions into the country round London.

Although Vernon's attendance at Club functions was limited to his visits to London, his correspondence shows that his connection with the Temple Coffee-House group greatly sharpened his enthusiasm for natural history—and, through the efforts of certain members of the Club, Vernon was enabled to undertake a collecting venture to the American colony of Maryland. Late in November 1697, the American naturalist and diarist, William Byrd, suggested that the Royal Society find "a Fitt person to be sent over to Virginia<sup>6</sup> in order to make observations and Discriptions of all ye Natural products of those parts". Passage and £25 per annum would be provided by Francis Nicholson, governor of Maryland, who was anxious to promote study of the natural history of the New World<sup>7</sup>. Petiver and his fellow Club members had already procured the appointment of one of their friends to Nicholson's project; the young Oxford matriculate, Hugh Jones, was at that time sending back collections of curiosities to enrich Petiver's cabinet and provide topics of discussion at the Temple Coffee-House<sup>8</sup>. The prospect of further revelations and additions was not unattractive, and through the recommendation of Sloane and Petiver, Vernon was examined at several meetings of the Royal Society and found adequate for the appointment<sup>9</sup>.

While preparing for his journey Vernon explained to Petiver that his aim "was to improve Natural Phylosophy particularly ye discovery of American Mosses & Butterflies". Petiver claimed his "zeal was so great he has often over a Commemorating Glass wisht to arrive their before ye Moss-cropping Season"<sup>10</sup>.

After procuring a four years' leave of absence from Peterhouse "to travell unto ye West-Indies"<sup>11</sup>, Vernon set sail for Maryland promising Petiver "as many Plants, Shells[,] Insects, Fossils[,] Serpents &c as will take up our Botanick Club & Royall Society a Twelve month ye looking over"<sup>12</sup>. Petiver's correspondence shows that Vernon arrived early in the spring of 1698 and became an unknowing pawn in the feud between the Temple Coffee-House group and John Woodward, author of the *Essay toward a Natural History of the Earth* (London, 1695). Through Woodward's endeavours Vernon seems to have lost favour with Governor Nicholson, and in July 1698 Petiver reported to Ray that the Cambridge naturalist would "return for old England this winter, he not liking those parts so well as he expected"<sup>13</sup>.

Despite Vernon's bad luck in the political arena of late seventeenth-century natural history, he was able to collect widely during his short stay in Maryland. He wrote to Sloane in July 1698 that he had "met severall Curious parts of Naturall knowledge" which he would rather communicate "in ye Temple Coffe-House, yn in *Scriptis*". There was a collection of plants for Sloane, and upon return in October ample material would be supplied for the Friday evening discussions<sup>14</sup>. Vernon brought "near a thousand" insects from America, "very fine and beautifull"<sup>15</sup>, and almost immediately laid plans for a further expedition to the Canaries.

This latter venture was partially subsidized by the Royal Society,



which voted twenty pounds to Vernon in January 1698/9<sup>16</sup>. In February he was at Margate, collecting local plants and awaiting passage; he reported to Sloane that although no vessel had been found, he had "all things ready to Sail" and was equipped with a baroscope<sup>17</sup>. But Vernon never departed. The Sloane MSS. contain a series of letters written from Deal and Canterbury revealing that he remained, ostensibly unable to secure passage, until August when the expedition was abandoned. All the Society received for its investment was a quire or two of coastal plants and an account of an unusual beetle, which is of interest as Vernon used an early microscope in his observations<sup>18</sup>. The particulars of his failure have not emerged, although Vernon was ready to blame his enemies for sabotaging the venture. Although certain members of the Royal Society suggested action to retrieve the money, legal proceedings were not initiated and Vernon seems to have lost little face. Nevertheless Sloane wrote many years later that his "friends and self" had been "very much disappointed and losers" by the failure of the expedition to the Canaries<sup>19</sup>.

As most of Vernon's interesting captures of *Lepidoptera* were not furnished with the quality of data required to-day, it is difficult to determine precisely when they were made. His greatest period of activity seems to have been from 1696 to about 1704; he presented John Ray a Cambridgeshire specimen of *Parasemia plantaginis* in 1696 which furnished a first record<sup>20</sup>. Petiver recorded *Nemeobius lucina* (The Duke of Burgundy Fritillary) in 1699 as "Mr. Vernon's small Fritillary," but his explanation indicates that this first published English capture was made in 1697 or earlier<sup>21</sup>. Vernon's specimen had been taken in Cambridgeshire, and later examples were captured near London. By 1704 *lucina* had been discovered in a number of localities, but Ray gave Vernon credit for the first capture<sup>22</sup>.

We do not know when Vernon took the first English *daplidice*. In the series of native butterflies described by Petiver in *Musei Petiveriani Centuria Quarta & Quinta* (dated 31 August 1699) it is included as "*Papilio Leucomelanus subtus viredescens marmoreus*. The greenish marbled half-Mourner". Petiver explained that the only one he had "seen in England, Mr. Will. Vernon caught in Cambridgeshire"<sup>23</sup>. Although many of Petiver's English butterflies still remain in the first of the two bound volumes of his *Lepidoptera* preserved in the British Museum of Natural History, there is no *daplidice*, and it is possible that the first specimen went not to Petiver but to Ray. In the *Historia Insectorum* Ray calls *daplidice* the "greenish marbled Half-mourner", noting that "*A D. Vernon habui, qui in agro Cantabrigiensi eam invenit*"<sup>24</sup>. At any rate Petiver had seen a *daplidice* taken by Vernon before the last week of August 1699, and as Vernon could hardly have been "in agro Cantabrigiensi" from December 1697 to August 1699 it is likely that the capture was made in 1697 or earlier.

Vernon took this rare insect again in 1702. A female was illustrated by Petiver on the first plate of *Gazophylacii Naturæ & Artis Decas Prima*; the author explained that "I know not of any that hath met with this in England, but Mr. Vernon about Cambridge, and there very rare"<sup>25</sup>. Luckily this specimen has been preserved and is now in the Hope Department of Entomology, Oxford<sup>26</sup>.

The Cambridge naturalist seems to have been responsible for another notable 'first', *lathonia*. Ray explained in the *Historia* that *Argynnis lathonia* (The Queen of Spain Fritillary) was first sent him from Riga,



but afterwards "à D. Vernon, D. *Antrobus*<sup>27</sup> & aliis circa Cantabrigiam inventa est"<sup>28</sup>. We cannot say whether Ray or Vernon was the first to take *Colias edusa* (The Clouded Yellow); Ray's words in the *Historia* are "In *Essexia* non procul à *Bocking* oppido in agro Lino fato invenimus, Eadem à D. Vernon in agro *Cantabrigiensi* capta, & ad nos delata est"<sup>29</sup>.

Apart from these notable achievements which indicate Vernon's skill in observing and collecting, we know relatively little about the results of his long interest in the *Lepidoptera*. Petiver tells us that he collected with Vernon<sup>30</sup>, and at least one young naturalist—Robert Antrobus, who merits a study to himself—owed much to Vernon's influence. The Peterhouse scholar returned to his college after the abortive Canaries attempt, making regular trips into the country to collect specimens. Nothing has been found to date the incident which prompted the oft-repeated story that "Mr. Vernon followed a butter-fly nine miles before he could catch him"<sup>31</sup>. There was a short journey abroad at the end of 1701<sup>32</sup> and occasionally a visit to London to attend meetings at the Temple Coffee-House. At one of these reunions in 1703 Vernon wrote Ray that he had "met with every body very diligent in carying on Naturall Philosophy" with the exception of Woodward who seems never to have been forgiven for his rôle in the Maryland affair<sup>33</sup>.

Britten and Boulger state that Vernon became a F.R.S. in 1702, but a search through the Society archives indicates that the matter is not as simple as it seems. The Journal-Book states that on 6 May 1702 a Mr. Vernon was "proposed, ballated for and chosen"<sup>34</sup>, but nothing else remains and as Mr. Vernon did not sign the Obligation-Book we do not know his given name. Perhaps our Vernon was able to regain the confidence of the Society to the extent that he was elected a Fellow, but this is only conjecture.

Vernon's surviving letters are especially numerous from this period; in the first decade of the new century he corresponded regularly with Sloane, Petiver, Lhwyd, the Yorkshire naturalist Richard Richardson, and several others. Specimens were sent to all these friends, especially mosses and insects. A long series of letters to Petiver outlines Vernon's attempts to secure subscriptions at Cambridge for the *Centuriae* and *Gazophylacii*<sup>35</sup>. He was apparently a vigorous salesman, and on one occasion suggested that Ray should take two or three copies of the latest number instead of one<sup>36</sup>. There was a last visit to the ailing Ray in 1704; Vernon found him "very old and infirm in body" although his mind was still "very vivid"<sup>37</sup>. The precise date of Vernon's death is unknown, and perhaps some Cambridgeshire investigator will have the leisure to trace his final days. Although William Vernon was hardly the most illustrious of the remarkable group of English entomologists flourishing at the close of the seventeenth century, he deserves more notice than he has received.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For Vernon's botanical career see James Britten and George S. Boulger, *A Biographical Index of Deceased British and Irish Botanists* (London, 1931), 311, and Charles E. Raven, *John Ray, Naturalist* (Cambridge, 1942), *passim*. Some of his plant specimens still exist, as in the Sloane herbarium. The genus *Vernonia* was named after him; Philip Miller, *The Gardener's and Botanist's Dictionary* (London, 1807), II, part 2, article "Vernonia". There are brief notices of him in J. Byrne Leicester Warren, *The Flora of Cheshire* (London, 1899), xc; Hermia Clokie, *Account*



of the Herbaria of the Department of Botany in the University of Oxford (Oxford, 1964); M. J. Van Steenis-Kruseman, *Malaysian Plant Collectors and Collections* (Djakarta, 1950), 541, and a host of other sources. Vernon collected botanical specimens with Richard Davies, also a Fellow of Peterhouse College, Cambridge; see Raven, *op. cit.*, 257.

<sup>2</sup> John and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part I, Vol. IV (Cambridge, 1927), 300. T. A. Walker, *Admissions to Peterhouse* (Cambridge, 1912), 177, records that Vernon, "Hertfordiensis, in Schola publica Hertfordiensi educatus, annum autem aetatis suae 18 jam agens", was examined by the proper authorities and after admission was the recipient of several scholarships. As a Fellow he demonstrated his ability in poetry; see the verses by him published in *Threnodia Academiae Cantabrigiensis in immaturam obitum Gulielmi Ducis Glocestrensis* (Cambridge, 1700). The pedigree of the Vernon family is recorded in Robert Clutterbuck, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Hertford* (London, 1821), II, 199-201, and Henry Chauncy, *The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* (London, 1700), 272.

<sup>3</sup> Ray to Lhwyd, 16 August 1694, in Robert W. T. Gunther, ed., *Further Correspondence of John Ray* (London, 1928), 250. Ray describes one of Vernon's visits in a letter of 15 August 1696 to Hans Sloane; Edwin Lankester, ed., *The Correspondence of John Ray* (London, 1848), 302. There are occasional references to Vernon in the Ray correspondence.

<sup>4</sup> John Ray, *Synopsis Stirpium Britannicarum* (London, 1696), xxxiv; see also Ray's section on mosses.

<sup>5</sup> James Petiver, *Musei Petiveriani Centuria Prima* (London, 1695), 13. There is an account of Petiver in the *DNB*: see also Raymond Stearns' survey of his rôle as patron of overseas collectors, "James Petiver, Promoter of Natural Science", *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings* LXII (October, 1952), 243-365.

<sup>6</sup> Here used in its generic sense to include the Maryland settlement.

<sup>7</sup> Royal Society Journal-Book IX, 70. I am indebted to Mr. I. Kaye and his staff for assistance with the Society records.

<sup>8</sup> For Jones see Stearns, *op. cit.*, 297ff.

<sup>9</sup> Brit. Mus. MS. Sloane 4068, f. 16 is a certificate showing the results of the examination.

<sup>10</sup> Petiver to Adam Buddle, 21 April 1698, Sloane 3333, f. 125v.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, *Admissions to Peterhouse*, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Petiver to Hugh Jones, undated but after 6 October 1698, Sloane 3333, ff. 170v-171r.

<sup>13</sup> Petiver to Ray, 16 July 1698, Sloane 3333, f. 149r. Woodward's dislike of Sloane, Petiver, Lister and their friends is well documented in the Sloane MSS; see also Raven, *op. cit.*, 449-51 and the account of Woodward in the *DNB*.

<sup>14</sup> Vernon to Sloane, 24 July 1698, Sloane 4037, f. 102 r-v. In his *Sketches of the Progress of Botany* (London, 1790), II, 57-8, Richard Pulteney states that Vernon went to America with Dr. David Krieg. Raven, *op. cit.*, 257, repeats this error. The Petiver correspondence demonstrates that Krieg and Vernon travelled on different ships. Although they surely met in America and may have collected together, their itineraries were quite distinct.

<sup>15</sup> Vernon to Richard Richardson, 28 January 1701/2, in D. Turner, ed., *Extracts from the Literary and Scientific Correspondence of Richard*



Richardson (Yarmouth, 1835), 37.

<sup>16</sup> Royal Society Council Minutes II, 140.

<sup>17</sup> Vernon to Sloane, 15 February 1698/9, Sloane 4037, ff. 209-10.

<sup>18</sup> Vernon to Sloane, 23 May 1699, Sloane 4037, f. 274r-v; 8 August 1699, Sloane 4037, ff. 313-14.

<sup>19</sup> Sloane to Richardson, 28 November 1721, in E. St. John Brooks, *Sir Hans Sloane* (London, 1954), 182.

<sup>20</sup> John Ray, *Historia Insectorum* (London, 1710), 317, hereafter cited as Ray. The description was first recognized as *plantaginis* by A. Werneburg, *Beiträge zur Schmetterlingskunde* (Erfurt, 1864), I, 76.

<sup>21</sup> James Petiver, *Musei Petiveriani Centuria Quarta & Quinta* (London, [1699]), 35.

<sup>22</sup> Ray, 122. Petiver had figured *lucina* in *Gazophylacii Naturæ & Artis Decas Secunda* as Plate XVI, Fig. 10, stating that it "hath been caught about Cambridge" (p. 25) but Vernon's name was not mentioned. In *Papilionum Britannicæ* [London, 1717] Vernon was given his due; *lucina* was described as "the least of all the *Fritillaries* yet known".

<sup>23</sup> Petiver, *Musei Petiveriani Centuria Quarta & Quinta*, *op. cit.*, 33.

<sup>24</sup> Ray, 117.

<sup>25</sup> Petiver, *Gazophylacii Naturæ & Artis Decas Prima* (London, 1702), 3, and Plate I, Fig. 7.

<sup>26</sup> The insect was probably given to Petiver by Vernon. Its data label indicates that it was taken in May 1702; see E. B. Ford, *Butterflies* (London, 1945), 9-10, and Plate I, Fig. 4. In his *Papilionum Britannicæ* Petiver figured ♀ *daplidice* as "Vernouns greenish *Half-Mourner*", adding that it had "also been found about Hampsted in July or August". The ♂ had been taken by 1717, for Petiver figured it as a different species, "The slight greenish *Half-Mourner*". By the time William Lewin figured it on Plate XXIX of his *Insects of Great Britain* (London, 1795), *daplidice* had acquired the name 'Bath White', as Lewin explains, "from a piece of needle work, executed at Bath, by a young lady, from a specimen of this insect, said to be taken near that place" (p. 29). Lewin had examined the insects purchased at the Duchess of Portland's sale; in her collection he found *daplidice* mixed with ♀ *cardamines* and postulated that it had escaped detection for so many years through this confusion. Haworth knew of only one specimen of *daplidice* extant in 1803, that taken in Cambridgeshire in June 1802; *Lepidoptera Britannica*, I (London, 1803), xxvii. Later captures may be traced in C. W. Dale, *The History of our British Butterflies* (London, [1889]), 19-21.

<sup>27</sup> Vernon's protégé Robert Antrobus, also of Peterhouse, Cambridge.

<sup>28</sup> Ray, 120. These captures of *lathonia* seem to have been the only English records for many decades. The history of *lathonia* in the eighteenth century is similar to that of *daplidice*; investigators began to doubt its existence in Britain. See Haworth and Dale, *op. cit.* Petiver mentions the early captures in *Papilionum Britannicæ* where *lathonia* is called the "Lesser Silver-spotted or *Riga* Fritillary."

<sup>29</sup> Ray, 113. Most subsequent authors recognized *edusa*.

<sup>30</sup> Petiver, *Gazophylacii Naturæ & Artis Decas Quarta* [London, 1704], 53.

<sup>31</sup> William Broome to Thomas Rawlins, 14 June 1735, in *Letters written by Eminent Persons in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1813), II, part I, 100-1. The poet Broome (1689-1745; see the DNB) was



at St. John's, Cambridge, at the time of Vernon's Peterhouse fellowship and was in a position to hear the 'gossip'. Vernon's pursuit of the insect is used by Broome as an example of supreme folly.

<sup>32</sup> Vernon to Richardson, 28 January 1701/2, in Richardson, *Correspondence*, *op. cit.*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> Vernon to Richardson, 12 February 1702/3, in Richardson, *Correspondence*, *op. cit.*, 73.

<sup>34</sup> Royal Society Journal-Book IX, 308.

<sup>35</sup> These are in Sloane 4067, ff. 179 *et seq.*

<sup>36</sup> Vernon to Richardson, 12 February 1702/3, in Richardson, *Correspondence*, *op. cit.*, 73.

<sup>37</sup> Vernon to Richardson, 20 January 1704, in *ibid.*, 79-80. Ray died in the following year.

## An Entomologist at War

By Major General G. C. LIPSCOMB, C.B., D.S.O.

Entomological expeditions to the Continent and beyond are commonplace nowadays and every year the Record contains accounts of collecting trips abroad conducted in safety and comfort.

My first experience of the entomological possibilities of the Continent was somewhat different. It started when I landed on the beach at Arromanches in Normandy in mid-June 1944 and finished some eighteen months later when I left Germany. Throughout this time I commanded a battalion of my Regiment, the Somerset Light Infantry, and although in war, particularly at the sharp end, one can't go looking for butterflies but must take them as they come, the opportunity for making interesting observations is always there even if the conditions are somewhat unusual.

We landed as part of a 'follow up' Division, so that by the time we got ashore the fighting had moved some miles inland. As we marched off down a country lane, I was rather astonished to see farm workers unconcernedly going about their jobs in the fields and paying no sort of attention to the streams of vehicles and troops. I remember noticing that there had evidently been a big emergence of *A. urticae* Linn. as there were great numbers of the butterflies feeding in the clover fields near the roadside and I was fairly sure I caught a glimpse of a fine melanic variety. It was a most cheering and homely sight and my only regret was that I was not able to stop and examine them properly. Further on we passed a potato field that had recently been fought over. What was left of the potatoes was a mass of Colorado beetles, both larvae and adult insects. I had never seen this pest before and noticed that there were few leaves left on the potato haulms.

Our first proper contact with the enemy was made when our Brigade was given the task of clearing the woods of Germans west of Caen and establishing ourselves on the Caen-Baron road.

These woods are divided by the deep valley of the Odon and in those days contained many blackthorn thickets amongst the oak and other deciduous trees. At one stage, while we were being heavily shelled and mortared, I was cowering in my slit trench when a lovely fresh *S. pruni* Linn. came and shared it with me, sitting on the newly dug earth. Later that evening, when we had gained our objective, I went round visiting the various company positions. My route took me through several clearings





Wilkinson, Ronald S. 1966. "William Vernon, entomologist and botanist." *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 78, 115–121.

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