



Figure 2. *Hogna ingens*. © James Dunbar.

This has had a dramatic affect on the spiders. When they were last surveyed in 2012 it was found that their area of occupancy had decreased by 81% since 2005, less than a decade earlier.

The species was granted Critically Endangered status by the IUCN in 2014 and a group of stalwart conservationists set out to save the species from extinction, meeting in Madeira in May 2016 to create a strategy for saving the spiders from extinction. As part of this, a team from the Bristol Zoological Society led by Mark Bushell has started an *ex-situ* conservation programme to save the spiders. The plan is simple; set up a captive-breeding population of the spiders in a number of zoos in Europe, and also engage in field-work to try and restore the habitat on Desertas together with colleagues from Madeira.

Carefully managed captive breeding and release programmes can be very successful with invertebrates as long as they are done well. As we all know, Helen Smith managed the Fen Raft spider conservation programme from her kitchen in Norfolk and now Fen Raft spider numbers are increasing. A quote from Helen's website www.dolomedes.org.uk: "Summer 2014 saw record breeding numbers in all three of the fen raft spider populations established in the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads since 2010."

The Desertas wolf spider programme structure has its roots in the initial work carried out by Helen and it has already started. At the time of writing, a number of Desertas wolf spiders are already living in Bristol Zoo (do go and see them if you can!) where they will hopefully serve to start up a successful captive programme.

Where do I fit in? I am a wildlife documentary filmmaker with a good track record of filming endangered spiders. I worked with Helen Smith several years ago to make my first film about Fen Raft spiders and now I'm turning my attention to these lovely creatures, as well as the people working to save them. Through this film we hope to learn as much as we can about their behaviour, providing insights to scientists and conservationists alike and producing a beautiful film in the process. I wanted to share all this with the British Arachnological Society. If you are interested, please have a look at my previous films by visiting www.youtube.com/teamcandiru!

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BOOK REVIEW

The Story of Alderley. Living with the Edge.

Edited by A. J. N. W. Prag

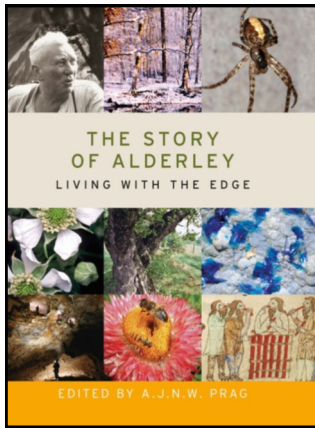
2016. Manchester University Press, Manchester, xxxii + 984 pp. 65 colour plates. Hardcover, ISBN: 978-0-7190-9171-1. £50.00. 31 chapters, 13 appendices, 3 glossaries, references and index.

*Drink of this and take thy fill
for the water falls by the Wizard's will*

This Victorian inscription accompanies a (probably older) carving of a bearded wizard's face on the rock adjacent to a natural spring and horse trough: the Wizard's Well. The legend behind this place concerns a man travelling from Mobberley to the fair at Macclesfield to sell his white mare. Along Alderley Edge, he encounters an old man who offers to buy the horse. He thinks he will get more money at the fair, so refuses but, unable to get a sale at Macclesfield, he finds the old man waiting for him on his return. The old man turns out to be a wizard who takes him and his horse into a deep cavern, where an army of 140 sleeping knights in silver armour is assembled, all but one with a white horse. The army is waiting to fight the last battle of the world, and the wizard is to wake them when that moment comes. The man sells his horse and is promised a reward of gold and jewels but, on turning round at the iron gate to the cavern, the wizard, his horse, the cave, and all the warriors have disappeared. A likely story! Nevertheless, the legend forms the basis of the children's novel *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen* by local author Alan Garner.

Geologically speaking, the Cheshire Basin resembles a pile of saucers, with flat-lying Permian and Triassic rocks curving upwards at the perimeter, where harder sandstones form eroded ridges such as at Helsby, Frodsham, and Alderley Edge. The ridges are not continuous because numerous faults expose much softer beds to form low-lying pastureland. At Alderley Edge, the faults also created conduits for copper and other minerals to be deposited, and the region has been mined since Bronze Age times. At the Wizard's Well, one such fault brings permeable sandstone against an impermeable shale band, resulting in a natural spring. The Edge, now a National Trust site, is criss-crossed with faults and riddled with copper mines which were worked up until the 20th Century. Indeed, many a person (or their horse) is likely to have fallen into one over the centuries when attempting to traverse the Edge at night (or while intoxicated).

Alderley Edge today supports a sandstone flora of oak and pine woods with heathery scrubland, greatly modified by Victorian planting and mine tips. The views across the Manchester Plain to the Pennines are spectacular, and the Edge provides lovely walks. Indeed, when I lived in the village, at the bottom of the hill, it was a regular Sunday morning stroll up to the Wizard café for brunch. The Director of the Manchester Museum, Tristram Besterman, was looking for a project in which all departments could be involved. He hit upon a survey of Alderley Edge: its archaeology, botany, zoology, geology, local history, etc. (only Egyptology found no place!). This enormous book is the culmination of that survey: the result of many years of work by the museum staff and their assistants, headed by John Prag, Professor Emeritus of Archaeological



Studies and Classics, and Editor of the book.

After introductions by John Prag and the author Alan Garner, the first chapters concern geology, mineralogy, and the landscape of the Edge. Other sections of the book cover Natural History, Human History, and there are many Appendices. It is within Natural History that we find Chapter 13 *The*

insects and other invertebrates of Alderley Edge by Dmitri V. Logunov & Roger L. H. Dennis, and inside that is Part G. *Invertebrates other than insects* by Dmitri V. Logunov. Dmitri's comprehensive contribution covers all arachnids and other non-insect invertebrates, including spiders (pp. 279–285), harvestmen and pseudoscorpions (pp. 285–286), Acari (p. 286), other litter and soil invertebrates (myriapods, molluscs, woodlice, worms, pp. 287–289), and aquatic invertebrates (molluscs and platyhelminths, pp. 289–291). Common arachnids of the Edge (*Metellina merianae*, *Arctosa perita*, *Tegenaria gigantea*, *Amaurobius fenestralis*, *Salticus scenicus*, *Pisaura mirabilis*, and *Megabunus diadema*) figure on seven plates and the front cover.

One hundred and thirty-seven spiders have been recorded from Alderley Edge, which amounts to 21% of the spider fauna of the British Isles. This is a goodly diversity, and reflects the many different habitats to be found on the Edge, ranging from typical Cheshire woodland, through grasslands and scrub, to old, sandy mine tips. Nevertheless, Dmitri reckons that the area is still woefully under-recorded and, given the habitat types, we should expect to find mimetids, hahniids, oonopids, and more species of agelenids. He estimates that only 70% of the Alderley Edge araneofauna has been found so far. Unsurprisingly, 60% of the species recorded belong to Linyphiidae. There are some notable species, however; the Edge has provided the most northerly records of *Entelecara congenera* and *Crustulina guttata*. In the heather areas, the rather local and scarce *Minyriolus pusillus* and *Saaristoa firma* have been found. *Metellina merianae* is a common inhabitant at the entrances of old mines, and *Arctosa perita* occurs on the old waste tip area known as the Sandhills. Not surprisingly, there is even more recording to be done for the other arachnid orders.

Previous studies resulting from the Alderley Edge surveys have appeared as technical reports on archaeology and local history. This book is the popular account of the work, and thus more eminently readable. Indeed, the text is written with the lay person in mind. In the arachnid section, while Dmitri does not shy away from Latin nomenclature, and gives good plugs for the British Arachnological Society and the Spider Recording Scheme (thanks!), much of the writing concerns the habits and

exciting lives which spiders lead, the habitats where they can be expected to occur, and how to find them. This book will appeal to anyone living within easy reach of the Cheshire and south Manchester areas, who wants to explore the incredible geology, mining history, legends, and natural history of this small but fascinating area. For the arachnologist, there are many more species to be found, quite likely some rarities too. £50 seems a lot, but most university textbooks are twice that, and slim paperbacks at that; this massive tome works out at only two pence per page! It provides reading over many years; a book for dipping into and re-reading, as well as (in the invertebrate section) encouragement to go out there and record some more species!

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Second circular

Please note that a second circular about this meeting, jointly organised by the University of Nottingham and the B.A.S., is now available at: www.european-arachnology.org/wdp/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ECA_2017_second_circular.pdf

2017 FIELD WEEKEND & AGM

Millport Field Studies Centre, Isle of Cumbrae.
Friday 2nd to 4th June 2017.

Weekend layout. Subject to change, depending on local weather conditions.

- Friday – arrival time 4pm onwards, dinner, AGM*, details about local sites for fieldwork, bar.
- Saturday – breakfast, fieldwork/workshop, dinner, two talks, bar.
- Sunday – breakfast, fieldwork, end of weekend.

£149 per person sharing; £169 single occupancy.

To book contact: Jan Beccaloni (Meetings Secretary): j.beccaloni@nhm.ac.uk

*For the AGM agenda, please refer to the separate flier.

B.A.S. Newsletter Article Deadlines

Spring: 1st February
Summer: 1st June
Autumn: 1st October

Please send articles/submissions to the Newsletter Editor by the dates indicated above. However, please note that the Editor reserves the right to hold material back for future issues, but where possible will always try to publish in the next available issue.

ARTICLE SUBMISSION

Please send B.A.S. Newsletter articles to the Editor: Richard Gallon, 23A Roumania Crescent, Llandudno, North Wales, LL30 1UP, United Kingdom; e-mail: newsletter@britishspiders.org.uk

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