

ISLE OF WIGHT MARINE BIOLOGICAL REPORT FOR 1987

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The exceptionally severe winter appeared to have little visible effect on intertidal marine life and by April signs of spring were as evident on the shore as inland. Notable records this year include the following species (nomenclature according to Howson 1987).

Porifera (Sponges)

Polymastia mamillaris (Muller)

Colonies of this orange sponge were found to be common in the fast flowing estuarine creeks under the quay footbridge at Newtown. A new record for the Isle of Wight.

Cnidaria

Medusozoa (Scyphozoa – jellyfish)

Chrysaora hysoscella (L.) (compass jellyfish)

Between 100 and 200 were found washed up at Totland by Dr. David Biggs in July. Also found washed up at East Cowes.

Rhizostoma octopus (L.)

This very large species was commonly found in the Solent and washed up during the summer. Dr. Biggs found 30 enormous specimens at Totland in July.

Anthozoa (sea anemones)

Nematostella vectensis Stephenson (starlet anemone) (fig. 1 & Plate 1)

This species which was new to science in 1929 and named by Stephenson (1935) has been rediscovered at its type locality in Bembridge pond by Dr. Martin Sheader of Southampton University. It was also found at an adjacent brackish lagoon close to Bembridge Harbour and in another lagoon at Yarmouth. Although first described from Bembridge *Nematostella vectensis* ('Isle of Wight thread-star') has been found in a few other sites in south-east England, and also in North America! (Williams 1987 and Williams *in press*). Despite being widespread in its distribution it is of strictly local occurrence, and is considered to be an endangered species in the IUCN Red Data Book (Williams 1983). The anemone is now a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. At Bembridge Harbour lagoon the anemone is particularly abundant and despite its small size is readily distinguishable by its bright white oral disc and white spotted tentacles against the brown flocculated mud into which it burrows.

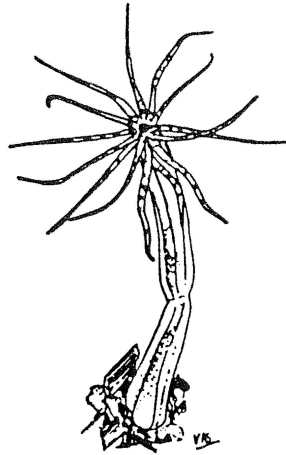


Figure 1. *Nemostella vectensis* Stephenson; length about 15mm.

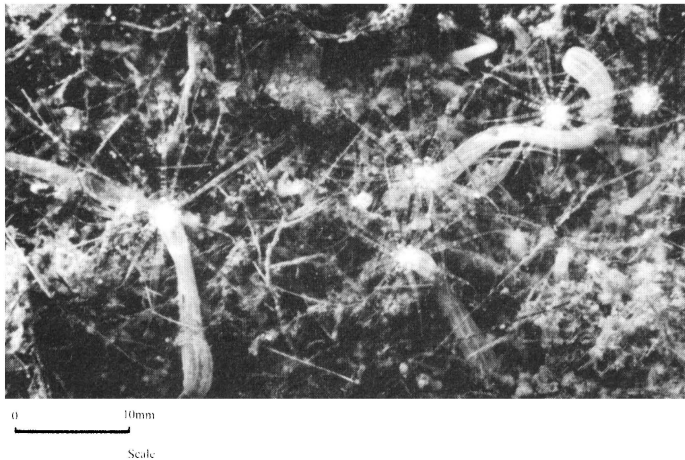


Plate 1. *Nemostella vectensis* Stephenson from Bembridge Harbour lagoon.

Anthopleura ballii (Cocks) (the red-specked pimplet)

This beautiful species which is rather sparsely distributed around the coast of the British Isles was found at Bembridge in October at ELWS just south of the Lifeboat station. It is mentioned (*Bunodes ballii*) in Morey (1909: 219) as being found at St. Helens, Ventnor, Freshwater Bay and Shanklin. Stephenson (1935) and Juniper (1963) record it from Bembridge.

Metridium senile (L.) (plumose anemone)

Both white and pink forms were found to be common at the base of the piles on Ryde

pier at ELWS. A species not recorded intertidally from the Island before though it is almost certainly found sub-littorally around the coast.

Annelida

Polychaeta

Scoloplos armiger (D.F. Muller)

Found at Newtown in sandy mud near the quay footbridge. Recorded by Withers (1979b) from Ryde and Bembridge.

Crustacea

Amphipoda

Gammarus insensibilis Stock

This species was found at Newtown quay lagoon by Dr. Sheader of Southampton University. This is a rare brackish water lagoon species and is now protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Decapoda

Pinnotheres pisum L. (pea crab)

Found to be common in live mussels on the Chalk platform of Culver Cliff at MLW and in mussels washed up at Hanover Point. The species was mentioned in our *Proceedings* for 1922 from Sandown Bay and is recorded by Barnes *et al.* (1973) from the E. Solent.

Palaemonetes varians (Leach) (prawn)

This prawn was found to be highly abundant in the scrape at Newtown in mid September when the salinity was 11‰. This species has been recorded before from the Medina estuary (Withers 1979a). Its abundance in the scrape would seem to represent an important food resource for visiting waders such as Greenshank.

Maja squinado (Herbst) (spiny spider crab)

A large individual of this species was found washed up at Bembridge in the summer. Recorded by Morey (1909) and is mentioned in the Isle of Wight marine fauna list (James & Marshall 1954).

Chelicerata

Pycnogonida (Sea spiders)

Nymphon gracile Leach

Found at Bembridge and St. Catherines Point in rock pools during the autumn. The only previous record is in the Isle of Wight Marine Fauna List (James & Marshall 1954).

Anoplodactylus pygmaeus (Hodge)

Found in intertidal mud amongst filamentous algae at Newtown close to the quay footbridge. Previously recorded from the Medina estuary by Withers (1979a).

Mollusca

Gastropoda

Gibbula umbilicalis (da Costa) (purple topshell)

Recorded as being frequent at Freshwater Bay by Morey (1909) and by Crisp & Southward (1958), though only 11 specimens were found by six members of the Society during a 20 minute search on the western side of the bay in September. This species is very occasionally found at Bembridge.

Gibbula magus (L.)

A recently vacated shell found on the E. Spit at Newtown. There are no records of living animals since the mid 1960s. Prebble (1969) mentions the 1963–64 winter and the dismantling of the submarine boom as being responsible for the disappearance of the Seaview colony.

Opisthobranchia (Sea slugs)

Facelina coronata (Forbes & Goodsir)

Found at Bembridge in May laying eggs at MLW. The taxonomic status of this slim blue iridescent species has been confused in the past though *F. auriculata* (O.F. Muller) has now been separated into two distinct species, *F. coronata* and *F. bostoniensis* (Couthouy).

Alderia modesta (Loven)

This tiny sea slug, about 0.5cm long, was found in estuarine mud within a saltmarsh creek near the quay footbridge at Newtown. It was also found in the quay lagoon by Dr. Sheader of Southampton University. This species has not previously been recorded from the Island.

Berthella plumula (Montagu)

A single individual of this yellow species was found on rocks at Bembridge, just south of the lifeboat station at MLWS. Previously recorded by Morey (1909:268) as *Pleurobranchus plumula* from St Helens and mentioned in the Isle of Wight marine fauna list (James & Marshall 1954).

Haminoea navicula (da Costa)

Found to be common in muddy gravel in fast flowing creeks at Newtown below quay footbridge. This species has not previously been recorded from the Island though records of *H. hydatis* from Medina estuary, Gurnard, Thorness and Shanklin (Morey 1909:267) and Ryde (Prebble 1965) must be viewed with caution as the two species can only be reliably differentiated by dissection and it is not known whether this was undertaken.

Chordata

Pisces (Fish)

Balistes carolinensis Gmelin (trigger fish)

Caught off Compton Bay in June and kept alive at Fort Victoria Marine Aquarium. An uncommon species though mentioned by Colin Pope in Brough *et al.* (1986) from the same locality.

Spinachia spinachia (L.) (fifteen spined stickleback)

Found to be common amongst Japanese seaweed *Sargassum muticum* at Forelands, Bembridge.

Gadus morhua L. (cod)

In December Mr. A Newnham of Ventnor Angling Club caught a fine specimen of weight 42 lb 7oz, a new record for cod caught off Island waters.

Algae

Chromophycota

Padina pavonica (L.) Lamouroux. (peacocks tail)

Common in pools at MLWS at Hanover Point and at Bembridge just north of Lifeboat station. Also found at Horse Ledge at Shanklin.

Acknowledgements

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