

**NOTES ON ‘IRISH’ SPIDERS (ARACHNIDA): *ATYPUS AFFINIS* EICHWALD (ATYPIDAE) AND *ENTELECARA ERRATA* O. P.-CAMBRIDGE (LINYPHIIDAE) REMOVED FROM THE IRISH LIST; *CRYPTACHAEA BLATTEA* (URQUHART) (THERIDIIDAE) NEW TO IRELAND**

Myles Nolan

4 Leinster Square, Rathmines, Dublin D06 E2N2, Ireland.

e-mail: <mylesnolan@hotmail.com>

**Abstract**

Evidence for the presence in Ireland of the tarantula *Atypus affinis* Eichwald, 1830 rests upon a single web found in County Offaly in 1896. Novel information suggests that the web was very likely imported by a plant-nursery business implying that the species was never established here. In the absence of evidence of establishment, the spider should be removed from the Irish checklist. Re-examination of the only Irish male specimen of the minute linyphiid spider *Entelecara errata* O. P.-Cambridge, 1913 shows it was mis-identified and the only other specimen, a female, cannot be located. Females of this genus have proven difficult to separate and there is also a lack of congruence between the species’ preferred habitat and that in which the Irish specimens were found. Given this, it is felt appropriate to remove this species also from the Irish list. The first Irish records of the theridiid spider *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886) are noted on the basis of specimens found in and around buildings at two locations in Dublin in 2019 and 2020. Most of the records from both Britain and continental Europe are from the last 12 years and it is spreading through both landmasses in synanthropic situations. It is established in at least one location in County Dublin.

**Key words:** Arachnida, Atypidae, Linyphiidae, Theridiidae, *Atypus affinis* Eichwald, 1830, *Entelecara errata* O. P.-Cambridge, 1913, *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886), Irish list, deletions, addition.

**Introduction**

However enjoyable it might be to add clarity to an understanding of the Irish spider fauna it is unfortunate to have to remove a species as interesting and unusual as *Atypus affinis* Eichwald, 1830, the purse-web spider. Its glossy, black colouration, massive jaws and fangs, unusual predatory habits, and the fact that it is probably the only ‘tarantula’ that might occur naturally in Ireland make it a fascinating spider. However, the evidence adduced here explains why the spider has not been seen since 1896 and provides reasonable grounds for excluding it. This is preferable to exclusion solely on the grounds of the elapse of a significant, if arbitrarily chosen,

period of time. Its Irish status should probably have been questioned more substantially long ago.

The matter of *Entelecara errata* O. P.-Cambridge, 1913 underlines the importance of the existence of voucher specimens. Were it not for the deposition in the Manchester Museum of some Irish material collected by David Mackie, the species would potentially hover uncertainly on an Irish checklist for decades to come. Attempting to find a small, cryptic species in its favoured habitat can be difficult at the best of times, but is far more difficult if it is not there in the first place.

It is obviously of interest to be able to note the earliest possible occurrence of novice species. First Irish records of a number of spiders published over the last 16 years have included a high number from the family Theridiidae and *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886) is yet another: it is noted here for the first time from Ireland where it is breeding in at least one area of County Dublin.

#### ***Atypus affinis* Eichwald, 1830 (Atypidae: Mygalomorphae) removed from the Irish checklist**

The presence of *Atypus affinis* Eichwald, 1830 in Ireland was first noted on the basis of “the discovery of the tubular nest of a female *Atypus* by Rev. Canon Russell of Geashill, near Tullamore.” (Carpenter, 1896). No spider was found with the nest but it did contain a caterpillar of the ghost moth *Hepialus humuli* (Linnaeus, 1758), a species known to occur in Ireland at that time. The progeny of the nest was authenticated by the eminent British arachnologist, the Reverend Octavius Pickard-Cambridge, to whom Carpenter sent it for examination. While the absence of a spider meant a doubt could be expressed about the species involved, the nest itself was at very least evidence of the presence in Ireland of a species of *Atypus* Latreille, 1804. A subsequent note added that “the *Atypus* tube from King’s Co...was found by Mrs. Reamsbotham (sic.)” (Anon, 1896), confirming the nest was found in County Offaly (then King’s County) and a later summary provided a more authoritative summary noting “The presence of this spider in Ireland was made known by the discovery of its tubular nest at Geashill, King’s County, by Mrs. Reamsbotham (sic.) in May 1896.” (Carpenter, 1898). Carpenter nominated the species as *Atypus piceus* (Sulzer, 1776) on the basis of this being the commoner species known from Britain, however, it was later clarified that the only *Atypus* species occurring in Britain is *Atypus affinis* Eichwald 1830 and this name appeared against the Irish record in later publications (Bristowe, 1939; Locket *et al.*, 1974; McFerran and Ross, 1993; Helsdingen, 1996) in spite of a specimen never having been found.

The web in question is still held in the collection of the Natural History Museum, Dublin (NH:2008.104.32) and a re-examination and comparison with a British sample kindly supplied

by Richard Burkmar (collected from Caswell Bay, Swansea, U.K., 29 September 2018) showed that it was clearly of *Atypus* type. In a functioning nest much of the spider's web is completely concealed underground, however the long emergent section, the sock, may be set prostrate on the ground, elevated amongst vegetation or set nearly vertical against a tree root or stone. The Geashill web consists only of the exposed section and is 10mm wide and 75mm long.

The possibility that *Atypus* might be established in Geashill seemed to be enhanced by the fact that substantial areas of esker run through and beyond the village and it was felt these relatively light, insolated soils might be favourable to the spider given that such conditions are preferred by all of the European species (Řezáč *et al.*, 2007). A hand-search of the Castle Hills and the quarry in Geashill was carried out by the author on 12 October 2007 and the Castle Hills were examined again on 29 May 2019 as part of a Bioblitz. Twenty-five areas of calcareous grassland, often with similarly insolated soils, were surveyed using pitfall traps in 2006 and hand collections were carried out at six of these sites in July of the same year (Nolan and Regan, 2008) and no evidence was seen of the species' presence. Burkmar (2019) provides a useful synopsis of the species' biology and preferred environment in Britain showing that the spider occurs there in soil and habitat types that are found in Ireland, so it is not unreasonable to consider that the spider might occur here.

Nevertheless, in spite of a significant renaissance in spider related research in Ireland over the last 20-30 years, and much collecting, no evidence that *Atypus* is resident in Ireland has been found. It seems unlikely that the relatively large web would be repeatedly overlooked by the arachnologists, entomologists and botanists alike who are frequently searching for specimens possibly orders of magnitude smaller than the exposed 'sock'. It needs to be explained also how adult males, who leave their nests to search for a female-occupied web especially from September to November, would be repeatedly missed by either a practised or casual observer.

The lapse in time since the original find is justification alone for excluding the species from an Irish checklist. However, it can be proposed that *Atypus* is not and has never been resident in Ireland on basis of the novel information that Mrs Reamsbottom (entries in the *Irish Naturalist* spell the name wrongly) and her husband were in 1896 running a plant nursery from their residence at Alderborough, Geashill, a fact of which I was made aware during a short trip to the village in 2019 to participate in a Bioblitz. I would suggest the web involved was extracted from plant-nursery products e.g. a root-ball of soil and that it was not found in the wild. Biographical information can be adduced to verify the identity of Mrs Reamsbottom and Canon Russell and to show there is little likelihood that other individuals might be involved.

The 1901 Census shows that the only Mrs Reamsbottom in Geashill at that time was Mary Reamsbottom who is noted as a married gentlewoman aged 38 and living in the townland of Alderborough with her husband William and children. He is described as a "nurseryman",

originally from Tipperary, and amongst the other residents at their address were a number of workers - a manager, a foreman, a packer, an apprentice and three pupils - signifying the scale of the business. Going back in time we meet William Reamsbottom, travelling in Britain in 1881, who is noted in the U.K. census of that year as an unmarried boarder aged 21, a “Nursery Man and Bulb Importer” originally from Nenagh (the original of the enumerator’s form seems to read Menagh which I suspect is an error), County Tipperary, Ireland. His name appears in an advertisement of bulbs etc. for sale in *The Gardener’s Chronicle* of January 21<sup>st</sup> 1882 when his business was based at the Deanery in County Armagh. In 1890, according to their marriage certificate, while resident at Twickenham House in Ballycumber, County Offaly he married Mary *née* Mary Maude Enraght Moony from The Doon, Athlone at Liss Church, near Ballycumber. In a letter advertising his business in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (3 September 1896), William states that his nursery business was established by 1891 in Alderborough House (less than a mile from Geashill centre) and that in 1896, he had over 30,000 customers on his books. He is listed as a commercial florist located there in 1894 (Slater, 1894) and Mary’s name appears in the account of rents paid to the Digby estate for the year ending March 25<sup>th</sup> 1894 (Digby, 1895). In 1907, they exhibited at the Irish International Exhibition, part of the World Fair joint-hosted by Britain and Ireland in that year. A publication associated with the same Exhibition observes of the Geashill Farm “Six statute acres...densely covered with every hue and shade.” (Anon., 1907). A 1907 trade catalogue alphabetises in over 50 pages the various plants available for purchase (Reamsbottom and Kenyon, 1907). It is inevitable that even by 1896 the scale of their business meant small invertebrates would be occasionally imported or exported.

Canon Russell, to whom Mary brought the web, we learn from the 1901 Census was Charles Dickinson Russell (aged c. 61 in 1896), then resident at 2 Glebe East in Geashill (Plate 1), Russell was a Clerk in Holy Orders and an amateur naturalist; he died in Geashill and is buried in a family plot in the grounds of St Mary’s Churchyard in the village (Offaly Heritage Services, 2020). He collected liverworts with David McArdle of The Botanic Gardens on field trips in 1890 and 1891 to Counties Offaly and Laois (McArdle, 1892); collected mosses on a bog near Geashill (Lett, 1893) and, published an observation of Common Toothwort *Lathraea squamaria*, also from Geashill (Russell, 1896). He was involved with the Dublin Microscopical Club, sending a fungus for exhibit (Anon., 1893) and himself exhibiting the wing of a chalcid fly and sections of a leaf (Anon., 1897, 1899). Given that Russell and the Reamsbottoms were undoubtedly acquainted, Russell would have been an obvious first port of call for Mary with her curious find.

Given the situations in which *A. affinis* occurs in England and Wales, there is little reason why it would not survive in Ireland should it make it here. It can live even on relatively

managed grasslands, with notable recent records from urban grasslands near Hastings, England (Price and Burkmar, 2016) and at the base of an ornamental garden pot in Jersey (Grant, 2019). Examinations that I have made of plausible habitats in the hope of finding the spider, I now suspect were made in vain.

Given the only evidence of the spider's Irish status, the Geashill web, and the strong likelihood that a functioning plant nursery operating on a large-scale will import invertebrates, I think sufficient doubt can be raised about an Irish provenance for the web as to exclude *Atypus* from future checklists of Irish spiders. Where the web might have come from remains in question.

### ***Entelecara errata* O. P.-Cambridge, 1913 removed from the Irish checklist**

The published record suggests that *Entelecara errata* O. P.-Cambridge, 1913 has been twice collected in Ireland. The first record, a female, was collected by David Mackie and Frank Millidge from the Burren in May/June 1969 (Mackie and Millidge, 1970). Mackie subsequently collected and noted a male specimen of *Entelecara media* Kulczyński 1887 from Barley Cove in County Cork, probably from Marram dune (Mackie, 1972). The two species were for a period of time considered synonymous by British authorities (see below), hence that of *E. media* would be now considered to represent *E. errata*, unless *E. media sensu stricto* were shown to occur in Ireland.

It is necessary to clarify the status of the name *E. media* which appeared in Mackie (1972) since it has travelled somewhat in the Irish literature. The taxon made its first appearance as a British spider only when *E. errata* was identified as a synonym thereof (Lockett and Millidge, 1963), which meant that specimens of *E. media* should be identified using the illustrations of *E. errata* in Lockett and Millidge (1953). It was not until some years later that examination of type material led to the deletion of *E. media* from the British checklist (Lockett *et al.*, 1974) and the recognition of *E. errata* as the valid British species. The Irish record of *E. media* was then attributed to *E. errata* and was mapped under this name in Lockett *et al.* (1974), as was the earlier County Clare record of *E. errata*.

One might question why *E. errata* was noted by Mackie and Millidge in 1970 when *E. media* was understood to be the correct name for that species at the time? It might be suggested that the authors by then understood the necessity of reviving *E. errata*, however that would surely have meant that *E. media* would have been avoided in the 1972 note? Before making things knottier than they need be, I think we can accept that as a co-author of the 1974 publication which revived *E. errata* and which mapped the Irish *E. media* specimen under that name, Millidge no longer regarded the specimen of *E. media* as representing anything other than *E. errata*.

*E. errata* subsequently appeared as Irish in an “imperfect” checklist (McFerran and Ross, 1993) which sought to update that of Carpenter (1898). The taxon *E. media* was not included in this list, presumably on the advice of the British experts consulted, the authors not indicating a source for the taxonomy that they follow. *E. media* was revived, however, as an Irish species when van Helsdingen (1995, 1996) seems not to have noticed that the taxon had been transferred to *E. errata* in Lockett *et al.* (1974). He thus listed both *E. errata* and *E. media* in his 1996 compilation of Irish county records (Helsdingen, 1996) treating the record of the latter species as *E. media sensu stricto*. He had previously raised a question-mark against this species’ Irish status (Helsdingen, 1995) but did not suggest the name may have been an error of synonymy in either publication. Both McFerran and Ross (1993) and Helsdingen (1996) acknowledged that their lists were not based on a critical review of specimens.

On foot of the reappearance of the name in van Helsdingen (1996), Cawley (2004) deleted *E. media* from the Irish list, accepting the opinion expressed in Lockett *et al.* (1974) that it represented a record of *E. errata*. Cawley had earlier inquired of Dmitri Logunov at the Manchester Museum about the Mackie specimen of *E. media* but was told there was no specimen of that name in the Mackie collection. I sent an inquiry to Dmitri Logunov in late 2005 regarding a number of Mackie records and was able to borrow some Irish material and vouchers of other species. These included a specimen of *E. errata* and the label carried the following details “*Entelecara errata* Barleycove, Co. Cork, 21-6-1971 ♂ (at sea level) (Det. By A. F. Millidge)” “G. 6181” (while the label would seem to indicate that Millidge had identified the specimen as *E. errata* it is possible that it was simply relabelled on basis of the synonymy of that species with *E. media*). Given the coincidence of collection data, and the synonymy of *E. errata* and *E. media* in Britain, it is accepted here that the Manchester Museum specimen of *E. errata* from Ireland is in fact that listed as *E. media* by Mackie (1972). Re-examination of this specimen however showed it to be clearly referable to *Entelecara erythropus* (Westring, 1851), the commonest *Entelecara* species in Britain and Ireland. Cawley’s search was thus possibly unsuccessful because the specimen had been re-labelled as *E. errata*. A negative response to inquiries by myself and Cawley about the female from the Burren suggest it was not deposited in the Manchester Museum.

Logunov very kindly loaned also specimens of *E. errata sensu stricto* collected in Scotland, “*Entelecara errata* O.P.C. ♀♀♂♂ Cairnwell, Perth No135773 3059 3650 19-6-66 coll. det. J. Crocker” and “*Entelecara errata* Cairnwell, Perths. 1-8-70. 2♀-♂ over 3000’ (Det. A.F.Millidge)”. The 1966 records were published (Cooke, 1967). It was possible thus to compare the Irish male specimen of “*E. errata*” with a number of British males leaving no doubt whatsoever that it had been misidentified in Mackie (1972). It was also possible to examine a large number of females and compare these with Irish specimens. In my experience,

epigynal features of teneral specimens of *E. erythropus* could sometimes very closely resemble those of *E. errata* (Roberts, 1993) but examination of the British specimens cleared my mind of any doubt that I might have misidentified Irish specimens of *E. errata* as *E. erythropus*.

Thus, examination of the male specimen of *E. errata* collected in Ireland in 1971 shows it to be a mis-identification. The voucher of the female specimen recorded in 1969 possibly no longer exists and females of this species can be difficult to distinguish from some of their congeners. These factors in conjunction with the taxonomic uncertainties noted around the time the Irish specimens were collected and the small likelihood that this rare, strongly northern and strictly montane species (Nentwig *et al.*, 2020) would be found at sea-level in Ireland, together suggest that *E. errata* should be excluded from future Irish checklists.

### ***Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886) new to Ireland**

#### **Records**

**DUBLIN:** Solomon Gallery, Balfe Street, Dublin City (O158337), 4 September 2019, 1♂ crawling up a wall about 80cm from the ground. Leinster Square, Rathmines, Dublin City (O155317), 25 April 2020, 1♀, 1 submature ♀ collected from webs c. 60-100cm from the ground set into the corners of abutting garden walls; 21 July 2020, 1♀ collected from a web set within a recess on a hose-pipe reel; 12 September 2020 1♀ with an egg-sac in a lightly disguised web in a corner of abutting garden walls 90cm off ground (Plate 2); 1♂ with two egg-sacs (no female was present) from another similarly disguised web 40cm above, under a shallow eave; 1♀ and egg-sac from a similarly positioned web 2 metres away; 1♀ with a retreat set under a door hinge, 25cm from the ground.

The first specimen collected was spotted crawling on the gallery wall above a number of stacked paintings, part of a consignment of artworks that had just been delivered from London, U.K. It had the appearance of a male theridiid spider and while a number of species from the family Theridiidae regularly occur on and within buildings/built structures in Ireland e.g. *Theridion melanurum* Hahn, 1831, I felt it did not quite resemble any of these so collected it. Later, a closer look with a hand lens revealed an adult male and substantiated my suspicions that it was something ‘different’; a microscope examination on the 8 September revealed a strongly protuberant and rounded tip to the cymbium of the palp which alone differentiated it from all other Theridiidae known from Ireland to date (Roberts, 1993; and see below). Aware that a number of Theridiidae species had been described over the last decade as new to Britain, possible candidates were examined and I was eventually able to identify the specimen as *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1881) using Wunderlich (1992) and Vink *et al.* (2009). Peter Harvey kindly confirmed the identification of the male, as did Barbara Knoflach-Thaler from a photograph.

The artworks had been gathered from various locations around Britain, brought to a Gallery in central London and then taken to another location in London W3 in August for wrapping and packing (almost everything when wrapped went into a single very large, open-topped, card box). They were collected on 27 August and delivered to Dublin on 4 September 2019. Thus, the spider might have hitched a ride from any one of a relatively large number of locations and given that it appears to be spreading around Britain with some speed (see below), it did not seem productive to attempt to trace the origin of all the artworks. I did not find any other specimens in the gallery over the subsequent few months and commenced composing a note assuming it was an introduction whose presence suggested the spider had potential to establish itself in Ireland had it not done so already.

In April of 2020, I noticed a number of small webs built into the corners of abutting garden walls in Rathmines, the webs' presence revealed by elements of trapped detritus such as leaf fragments (see Plate 2). Mindful by then of *C. blattea*'s habit of decorating its web with such materials, I investigated and an examination with a hand-lens of the abdomen of the first specimen collected revealed a small protuberance on the rear of the abdomen, white on its posterior face, a character strongly diagnostic of *C. blattea*. I spotted and collected another specimen shortly afterwards and a microscope examination later that day confirmed that both specimens were female, the first collected being sub-mature and the second mature.

Over the following months, despite COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, it was possible while walking to casually inspect webs built into corners on the front of garden walls and pillars at a wide number of locations in the vicinity of Rathmines (and further afield as lockdown restrictions eased), however no other specimens were collected.

In later July, a number of walls (amongst other elements) were examined at Leinster Square for webs and their occupants and another adult female was found in the same area as the sub-mature female found in April. Further specimens were found in the same locations in early September including another adult male and egg-sacs in three different webs indicating that the species is breeding. The fact that the population is breeding and that males are present in September suggests the possibility that I may have transported the male specimen into the Gallery but transport from London cannot be discounted.

The first British record was from a garden on the Isle of Wight in 2011 (Marriott, 2012) and it is now known from over 25 hectads, the furthest north being Lanarkshire, Scotland (SRS, 2020). The earliest European record was from Albania in 1994 (Deltshev *et al.*, 2011). All other continental records are very recent and it has spread widely over the last 12 years: Germany 2008 (Sühlig, 2010), Britain 2011 (Marriott, 2012), Switzerland 2013-2014 (Hänggi and Straub, 2016), France 2014 (Le Divelec *et al.*, 2018) and the Netherlands 2014 (Bink, 2014). It was also recorded from the island of Porto Santo, Madeira in 2008 (Crespo *et al.*, 2009).



Marriott (2012) suspected that the first British specimen may have found its way to the garden *via* the Chelsea Flower Show because the garden's owner was a long-time participant. Other first European country records were from such situations: a shrub and tree nursery in Germany (Sührig, 2010); plant nursery greenhouses in Switzerland (Hänggi and Straub, 2016); the Jardin des Plantes (Botanic Gardens) in Paris (Le Divelec *et al.*, 2018); a garden centre in the Netherlands (Bink, 2014). A number of the British records are also from gardens: the Wildlife Garden of the British Museum of Natural History, London (Thomas, 2015); a garden in Gloucester (Killick, 2016); a number of gardens in Cornwall and the South Wales coast (Berry, 2019) and most recently in north Wales (Gallon, 2019, 2020). The only known Irish breeding location is thus very much in keeping with these records.

The spider regularly makes use of anthropogenic artefacts e.g. garden furniture, plants pots etc. to set its webs. It establishes a small retreat, often suspended aurally, composed of silk to which the spider attaches debris, against or amongst which the spider can be almost invisible (Berry, 2019). Berry (*op. cit.*) noted between one and four egg-sacs in a retreat from April to July and these were usually covered with debris and incorporated into structure of the retreat. It is of interest then that I saw no egg-sacs earlier in the summer and that the species breeding season would seem to be quite long.

This is the second species from the genus *Cryptachaea* Archer, 1946 to occur in Ireland. *Cryptachaea riparia* (Blackwall, 1834) (previously in *Achaearanea*) is known from only a handful of Irish sites (Nolan, 2016) and is found predominantly amongst embedded boulders on the strongly sloping sides of eskers and other glacial deposits. *C. blattea* was first described from New Zealand but is considered to have a Palearctic origin. It has been spreading globally for more than a century, probably from the Macaronesian archipelago or the Azores and apart from Europe, it is also now established in China, Chile, Hawaii and the west coast of North America (Vink *et al.*, 2009). The species' appearance in Ireland would seem to be part of a general trend of rapid expansion through a broad band of central and southern Europe.

## **Discussion**

A number of spiders from the Theridiidae have been recorded from Ireland for the first time, or had doubts about their Irish status resolved, over the last sixteen years, amongst them the now well-known large or noble false-widow *Steatoda nobilis* (Thorell, 1875) (Nolan, 2000). That species is largely confined to built environments but well able to survive outdoors in such situations. Two species were fairly recently confirmed for Ireland: *Simitidion simile* (C. L. Koch, 1836) and *Platnickina tineta* (Walckenaer, 1802) (Cawley, 2004). The first seems to be confined to heathlands and bogs with *Calluna* while the latter has since been found in a number of broadly anthropogenic situations (Cawley, 2008; Nolan, 2016). While *Crustulina guttata*

(Wider, 1834) is confined to natural sea-cliff habitat (Nolan, 2014), a number of other Theridiidae recently recorded here for the first time are also largely associated with built environments: Cawley obtained the first records of *Enoplognatha latimana* Hippa & Oksala, 1982 (Cawley, 2004) and these and subsequent records were usually from anthropogenic situations (Cawley, 2008; Nolan, 2016). The first Irish records of both *Episinus maculipes* Cavanna, 1876 (Nolan, 2012) and *Theridion hemerobius* Simon, 1914 (Nolan, 2013) were similarly found on buildings or built structures albeit in the case of the latter on the edges of rivers and canals. In a paper assessing alien (non-European) spiders recorded in Europe, Nentwig (2015) found that the largest number was from the Theridiidae, indicating perhaps both an ability for dispersion in this family and also a proneness to human-assisted transport. This general rule would seem to be reflected in changes in the Irish fauna also.

A checklist of spiders of Britain and Ireland published in 2019 (Lavery, 2019) listed 419 species as established in Ireland. The present note deletes two names from that list and adds one more. As such the current Irish spider fauna stands at 418 species.

### **Acknowledgements**

Sincere thanks are due to the following: Anne O'Rourke supplied much of the documentary evidence on Alderborough plant nursery and the Reamsbottoms; Amanda Pedlow, Heritage Officer, Offaly County Council initiated and funded the Bioblitz at Geashill; John Kearney permitted use of the photograph of Canon Russell; Richard Burkmar provided a specimen of an *Atypus* purse-web; Dmitri Logunov arranged the loan of specimens from the Mackie collection at the Manchester Museum; Peter Harvey and Barbara Knoflach kindly confirmed the identification of *Cryptachaea blattea*. Thanks also to Tara Murphy of the Solomon Gallery, Pat Foley of Geashill, Nigel Monaghan, Keeper of the National Museum of Ireland - Natural History for access to laboratory facilities and to Martin Cawley who very kindly commented on an earlier draft of this note.

### **Manuscript sources**

#### **General Register's Office: Ireland**

Births, Deaths and Marriages

#### **National Archives of Ireland**

Census of Ireland: household returns 1901

#### **National Archives of the United Kingdom**

Census of 1881

#### **Offaly Archives**

<<https://www.offalyarchives.com/index.php/image-1900>>

## References

- Anon. (1893) Proceedings of Irish Societies: Dublin Microscopical Club. *Irish Naturalist* **2**: 26.
- Anon. (1896) *Spiders. Atypus* in King's Co. *Irish Naturalist* **5**: 213.
- Anon. (1897) Proceedings of Irish Societies: Dublin Microscopical Club. *Irish Naturalist* **6**: 47-48.
- Anon. (1899) Proceedings of Irish Societies: Dublin Microscopical Club. *Irish Naturalist* **8**: 21.
- Anon. (1907) Bulb farming in Ireland. In McCartney-Filgate, W. T. (1907) *Irish Rural Life and Industry with suggestions for the future*. Issued in connection with the Home Industries Section, Irish international Exhibition 1907: 246-248.
- Berry, T. (2019) *Cryptachaea blattea*: an explosive expansion or an overlooked habitat? *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **145**: 27-29.
- Bink, J. (2014) *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886) (Araneae, Theridiidae) voor het eerst waargenomen in Nederland. *Nieuwsbrief SPINED* **34**: 11.
- Bristowe, W. S. (1939) *The comity of spiders* **1**: i-x, 1-228, 19 plates. Ray Society, London.
- Burkmar, R. (2019) The Pursweb Spider: a very British tarantula. *British Wildlife* **30**: 399-406.
- Carpenter, G. H. (1896) *Spiders*. Discovery of the genus *Atypus* in King's Co. *Irish Naturalist* **5**: 167.
- Carpenter, G. H. (1898) A list of the spiders of Ireland. *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* **5**: 128-210.
- Cawley, M. (2004) Some further records for uncommon spiders in Ireland (Araneae), including four species new to Ireland. *Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* **28**: 207-228.
- Cawley, M. (2008) More records for uncommon spiders (Araneae) including four species new to Ireland. *Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* **32**: 69-83.
- Cooke, J. A. L. (1967) A noteworthy collection of mountain spiders from Scotland *British Spider Study Group Bulletin* **36**: 5-7.
- Crespo L. C., Cardoso, P., Henriques, S. and Gaspar, C. (2009) Spiders (Araneae) from Porto Santo (Madeira, Portugal): additions to the current knowledge. *Boletín de la Sociedad Entomologica Aragonesa* **45**: 471-475.
- Deltshev, C., Vrenozzi, B., Blagoev, G. and Lazarov, S. (2011b) Spiders of Albania - faunistic and zoogeographical review (Arachnida: Araneae). *Acta Zoologica Bulgarica* **63**: 125-144.
- Digby, R. (1895) Report, Accounts and Rental of the Estates of the Right Honourable Lord Digby, situate in the King's and Queen's Counties, for year ending June 1<sup>st</sup> 1895.
- Gallon, R. C. (2019) *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886) recorded for the first time in North Wales. *SRS news* 93. In *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **144**: 33.

- Gallon, R. C. (2020) British Arachnological Society A.G.M. and Field Weekend at Rhyd-y-creuau, North Wales 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019. *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **147**: 2-6.
- Grant, H. (2019) *Atypus* on my Doorstep. *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **145**: 7-9.
- Hänggi, A. and Straub, S. (2016) Storage buildings and greenhouses as stepping stones for non-native potentially invasive spiders (Araneae) - a baseline study in Basel, Switzerland *Arachnologische Mitteilungen* **51**: 1-8.
- Helsdingen P. J. van (1995) The spider fauna of Ireland. In Růžička V. (ed.) *Proceedings of the 15th European Colloquium of Arachnology 1994, Institute of Entomology, Czech Academy of Sciences*. České Budějovice. 238pp.
- Helsdingen, P. J. van (1996) The county distribution of Irish spiders, incorporating a revised catalogue of the species. *Irish Naturalists' Journal Special Zoological Supplement*.
- Killick, T. (2016) Fourth record for *Cryptachaea blattea* in the UK. *SRS news* 86. In *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **137**: 16-17.
- Lavery, A. (2019) A revised checklist of the spiders of Great Britain and Ireland. *Arachnology* **18**: 196-212. <<https://doi.org/10.13156/arac.2019.18.3.196>>
- Le Divelec, R., Courtial, C. and Rollard, C. (2018) *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886) and *Pseudomaro aenigmaticus* (Denis, 1966): deux araignées nouvelles pour la France (Araneae: Theridiidae, Linyphiidae). *Revue Arachnologique* **25**: 2-6.
- Lett, H. W. (1893) *Sphagnum austini* (Sull.) in Ireland. *Irish Naturalist* **2**: 22.
- Locket, G. H. and Millidge, A. F. (1953) *British spiders II*: i-vii, 1-449. Ray Society, London.
- Locket, G. H. and Millidge, A. F. (1963) The identity of *Entelecara erythropus* (Westring) and *E. media* Kulcz. [Araneae]. *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* **5** (1962): 433-434.
- Locket, G. H., Millidge, A. F. and Merrett, P. (1974) *British spiders III*: i-ix, 1-314. Ray Society, London.
- Mackie, D. W. (1972) The distribution of some Irish spiders and harvestmen. *Irish Naturalists' Journal* **17**: 234-237.
- Mackie, D. W. and Millidge, A. F. (1970) Spiders and harvestmen from the west of Ireland. *Irish Naturalists' Journal* **16**: 334-338.
- Marriott, D. (2012) *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886) a theridiid new to Great Britain. *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **123**: 9-10.
- McArdle, D. (1892) Hepaticae of the King's and Queen's Counties. *Irish Naturalist* **1**: 68-70.

- McFerran, D. and Ross, H. C. G. (1993) Checklist of the spiders of Ireland. *Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* **16**: 32-51.
- Nentwig, W. (2015). Introduction, establishment rate, pathways and impact of spiders alien to Europe. *Biological Invasions* **17**: 2757-2778.
- Nentwig, W., Blick, T., Bosmans, R., Gloor, D., Hänggi, A. and Kropf, C. (2020) *Spiders of Europe*. Version 9.2020. <<https://www.araneae.nmbe.ch>> (accessed on 12 September 2020). <<https://doi.org/10.24436/1>>
- Nolan, M. (2000) Three spiders (Araneae) new to Ireland: *Bolyphantes alticeps*, *Oonops domesticus* and *Steatoda nobilis*. *Irish Naturalists' Journal* **26** (1999): 200-202.
- Nolan, M. (2012) First Irish record of *Episinus maculipes* Cavanna, 1876 (Araneae, Theridiidae). *Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* **36**: 26-32.
- Nolan, M. (2013) First Irish records of *Theridion hemerobius* Simon, 1914 (Araneae: Theridiidae). *Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* **37**: 45-55.
- Nolan, M. (2014) First Irish records of *Crustulina guttata* (Wider) with notes on Irish occurrences of *Crustulina sticta* (O.P.-Cambridge) (Araneae: Theridiidae). *ulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* **38**: 285-290.
- Nolan, M. (2016) Records of some rare and uncommon Irish spiders (Arachnida: Araneae) *Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* **40**: 142-163.
- Nolan, M. and Regan, E. C. (2008) *Drassodes pubescens* (Thorell) (Araneae, Gnaphosidae): a spider new to Ireland from calcareous grassland. *Bulletin of the Irish Biogeographical Society* **32**: 128-131.
- Offaly Heritage Services (2020)  
<<https://www.offaly.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Documents.pdf>>  
(accessed September 2020)
- Price, R. and Burkmar, R. (2016) An extensive urban Colony of the Purseweb Spider *Atypus affinis*. *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **137**: 4-7.
- Reamsbottom, W. M. and Kenyon, R. H. (1907) *A price list of Anemones, early Chrysanthemums and Dahlias etc.* Geashill SL.
- Řezáč, M., Řezáčová, V. and Pekar, S. (2007) The distribution of purse-web *Atypus* spiders (Araneae: Mygalomorphae) in central Europe is constrained by microclimatic continentality and soil compactness. *Journal of Biogeography* **34**: 1016-1027.
- Roberts, M. J. (1993) *The spiders of Great Britain and Ireland*. Compact edition. I-III (2 volumes). Harley Books, Colchester.
- Russell, C. D. (1896) *Lathraea squamaria* in King's Co. *Irish Naturalist* **5**: 167.
- Slater, I. (1894) *Royal National Commercial Directory of Ireland*. Manchester.

- SRS (2020) Spider Recording Scheme <<http://srs.britishspiders.org.uk/portal.php/p/Summary/s/Cryptachaea+blattea>> (accessed 11 September 2020)
- Sührig, A. (2010) *Cryptachaea blattea*, eine weitere nach Deutschland eingeschleppte Spinnenart (Araneae: Theridiidae). *Arachnologische Mitteilungen* **39**: 1-4.
- Thomas, T. J. (2015) *Anyphaena sabina* and *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart, 1886) at the Wildlife Garden, the Natural History Museum. *SRS news* 83. In *Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society* **134**: 10.
- Vink, C. J., Dupérré, N., Paquin, P., Fitzgerald, B. M. and Sirvid, P. J. (2009) The cosmopolitan spider *Cryptachaea blattea* (Urquhart 1886) (Araneae: Theridiidae): redescription, including COI sequence, and new synonymy. *Zootaxa* 2133: 55-63.
- Wunderlich, J. (1992) Die Spinnen-Fauna der Makaronesischen Inseln: Taxonomie, Ökologie, Biogeographie und Evolution. *Beiträge zur Araneologie* **1**: 1-619.



**PLATE 1.** Photograph of C. D. Russell and others with the original caption. The photograph appeared in John Kearney's *Killeigh and Geashill, a pictorial record* and is reprinted here with his kind permission.



**PLATE 2.** The retreat of *Cryptachaea blattea* ‘disguised’ with fragments of *Cupressus leylandii*, Rathmines, Dublin City, 12 September 2020. A single greyish egg-sac can be seen sandwiched between two fragments of vegetation on the left (behind which the spider is hidden) and the desiccated remnants of a woodlouse are suspended in the bottom of the web. Photograph © Myles Nolan.