

Shield & Land Bug Identification Course Report

On the 7th September 2013 Treborth Botanic Gardens played host to the Cofnod Shield & Land Bug identification course. In total 15 people attended the event, guided through the day by hemipterists Tristan Bantock and Joe Botting.

Tristan started off by introducing us to the Heteroptera, giving us an overview of the

British groups, species and their biology. It was interesting to hear that the British fauna is relatively fluid, with many previously rare species now extending their ranges – taking advantage of new host plants and a more favourable climate.



Trays of pinned reference specimens were provided, giving everybody the opportunity to work through identification keys and see the

characters used to separate the groups in the flesh. We also got to see many of the more unusual ‘southern’ species which have yet to be recorded in North Wales. A particularly impressive species was *Leptoglossus occidentalis*, an introduced species from North America which feeds on conifers. We were told to look out for this distinctive species turning-up in moth traps!

Joe introduced us to the Auchenorrhyncha and psyllids. His enthusiasm for psyllids was infectious, and so the quest to see one of these enigmatic creatures took us into the grounds of the botanic gardens.

Vegetation was vacuumed, beaten, swept and grubbed in the search for bugs. And

with Tristan and Joe to hand, specimens were soon identified. Psyllids eluded us until Joe managed to secure a specimen from a hawthorn bush. The specimen was passed around the attendees for closer examination with a hand lens, so as to see its finer detail.



All in all, this was a fantastic introduction to the British Land Bugs, and everybody left Treborth with a much greater appreciation of this group of insects.