
ON THE PRESENCE OF *MEGATREMA ANGLICUM* (SOWEBY, 1823) (THORACICA: BALANOIDEA) IN MALTESE WATERS

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ABSTRACT

A single individual of the acorn barnacle *Megatrema anglicum* (Sowerby, 1823) is recorded from a maerl substratum off the Maltese Islands.

Keywords: Barnacles, maerl, Pyrgomatidae, *Megatrema anglicum*, Malta.

INTRODUCTION

The species of thoracican barnacles present in Maltese waters have been revised by Rizzo and Schembri (1997). Mifsud (2006) confirmed some of these records and added other species to the list. More recent material from research cruises and from fishery by-catch has revealed the presence of other species of barnacles in Maltese waters (Mifsud, DiGeronimo, Buhl Mortensen unpublished).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A specimen of the acorn barnacle *Megatrema anglicum* (Sowerby, 1823) was found in coralligenous sand and maerl brought up by a fisherman with his nets from off north-eastern Malta from a depth of 80-100m. The specimen was empty but looked fresh. It was attached to a fragment of the skeleton of *Caryophyllia smithii* Stokes & Broderip, 1828.

Megatrema anglicum has a conical shell on a circular cup-shaped base and can reach up to 6mm in diameter. It is pinkish-brown in colour and the shell is sculptured with vertical longitudinal ribs crossed by numerous growth lines. The opening at the top of the opercular plates is depressed and the whole organism has a vase-like appearance (Fig. 1).

Megatrema anglicum lives in association with scleractinian corals and attaches to their calcareous skeletons. It is found mainly on *Caryophyllia smithii* but it has also been found on other genera (Relini 1980). In the Mediterranean it is rare and is usually found on maerl substrata. In the North Atlantic it is known to live in low light intensities to depths of 50m, and less often in sheltered waters. The species was earlier placed in a number of genera including *Pyrgoma* and *Boscia* (Relini 1980). The distribution of *Megatrema anglicum* extends from southern England to the NE Atlantic and into the Mediterranean.

CONCLUSIONS

The single specimen recorded was dead and it came from the sediment collected accidentally by the fisherman. The present record is only indicative that the species may occur live in Maltese waters and this has yet to be established.

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Fig.1. *Megatrema anglicum* (Sowerby, 1823) – Size: 6mm x 6mm attached to fragment of the skeleton of *Caryophyllia smithii* (arrow)