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Occurrence of the Land nemertine, *Geonemertes dendyi* Dakin, in Wirral, Cheshire.

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While collecting in woods at Bromborough, Cheshire, in October 1943, and in the same month of 1944, I found *Geonemertes dendyi* Dakin (Fig. 1) and also the planarian, *Rhyncodemus terrestris*, beneath the bark of logs. The occurrence of the nemertine is sharply localised. I have since found it at all times of the year, but most easily from October to March.

Egg cocoons (Fig. 2) were frequently collected in December and January at Bromborough. The gelatinous cocoon, which is often invaded by nematode worms, contains from eight to twelve eggs. These hatch three weeks after the cocoon is laid (also Pantin, 1944) at a room temperature of approximately 50° F. The eggs perform irregular expanding and contracting movements during their development and the newly hatched nemertines, 1 mm. in length, are for some time enclosed within a transparent "test" ; the final stage in the escape from the gelatinous cocoon.

My specimens of this nemertine varied in length from 2 to 5 mms. (Pantin, 1944, records one 15 mms. long) and were grey in colour each with a brown longitudinal stripe along each side of the rhyncocoele, while, anteriorly, eight pairs of eyes were distributed laterally in two groups. All the specimens were females. These characters agree with the descriptions of the external features given by Waterson and Quick (1937), and Pantin (1944). The internal anatomy has been described in some detail : (Dakin, 1915; Waterson and Quick, 1937 ; Pantin, 1947).

An adult which had been kept in the laboratory for three months in a tin containing damp bark and moss was found one morning feeding on a Myriopod, a member of the Geophilomorpha, which appeared to be already dead. The head and mouth of the nemertine were inserted in the integument of the Chilopod while only the contents of the haemocoele were imbibed. The feeding continued for several hours. Waterson and Quick (1937) have recorded *G. dendyi* feeding on delicate Collembollids. In general, nemertine worms are carnivorous, devouring any prey either living or dead which comes their way.

The distribution of *G. dendyi* is of considerable interest. It was originally found in Western Australia (Dakin, 1915). In Europe it was found in greenhouses at Breslau (Stammer, 1934) but Waterson and Quick (1937) were the first to identify it in Britain, from woods near Swansea, S. Wales. Pantin (1944) recorded it from S. Devon where he discovered it along with terrestrial Planarians in September 1943.

It is not easy to explain the spasmodic occurrence of *G. dendyi* in Britain through direct importation of Australian soil, as with the discovery of the nemertean at Breslau, although its appearance so far always in the hinterland of ports might give support to this theory. However, it is possible that this land nemertine is widely distributed in Britain, and that only its size and delicacy prevent it from being found more often.

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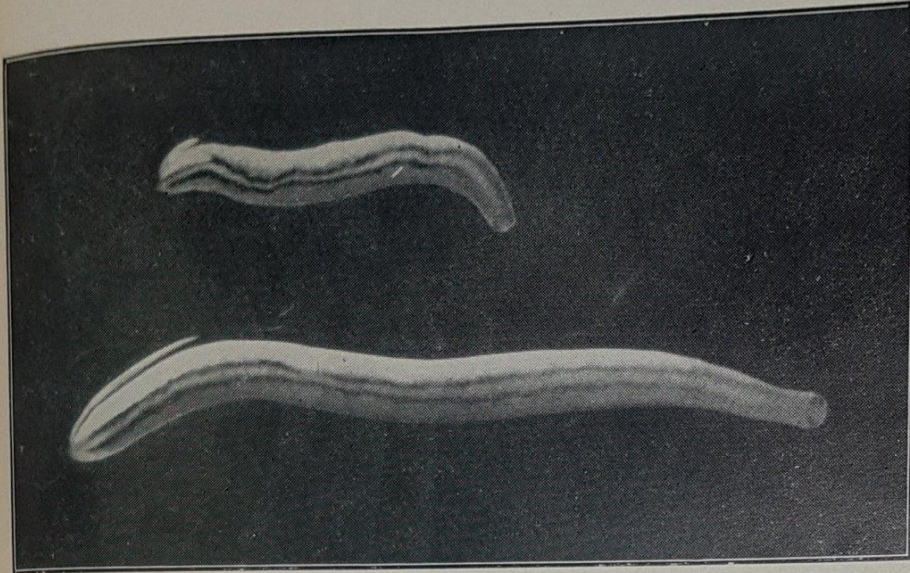


Fig. 1. *GEONEMERTES DENDYI* Dakin. $\times 5$.
(By kind permission of Dr C. F. A. Pantin.)



Fig. 2. EGG COCOON OF *G. DENDYI* Dakin. $\times 12$.