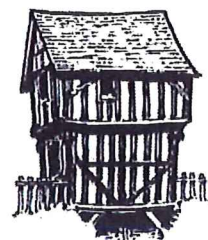


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INTERNATIONAL TIMBER DECAY
AND DAMP CONSULTANTS
ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING
RESEARCH



WASP INFESTATION AT THE MARKET HOUSE AND COUNCIL OFFICES, LEDBURY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Further to e-mailed instructions dated 17th July 2019 from Olivia Bundy, of Ledbury Town Council, we visited Ledbury on the 19th July 2019.

The purpose of this visit was to inspect insect infestation that resulted in a fine dust at the bases of pillars at the Market House and along the sole plate of the nearby Council Office.

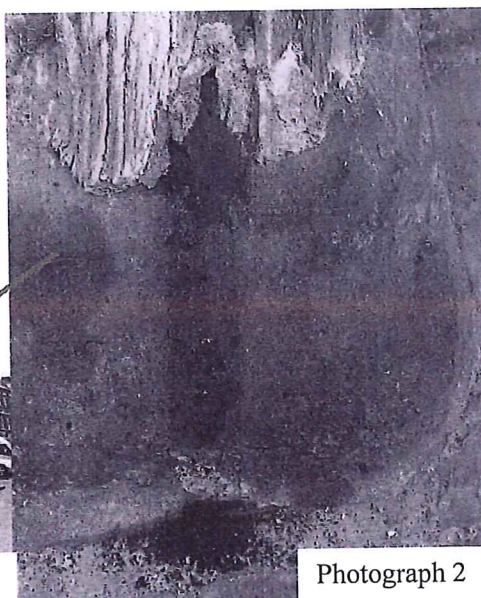
2.0 OBSERVATIONS

3.1 Market House

Fine dust was found erupting from holes that were about 1cm in diameter in the following locations (photographs 1&2, 3&4).



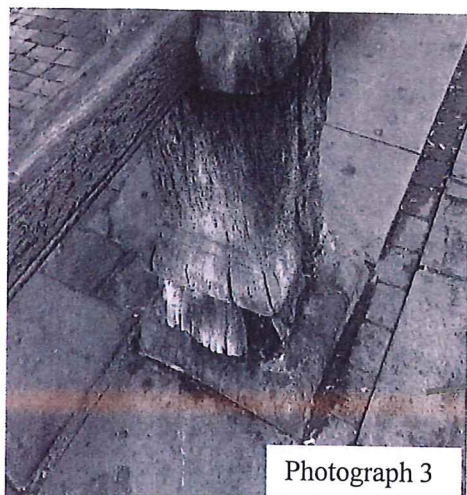
Photograph 1



Photograph 2

Directors: Dr. B.V. Ridout & Dr. E.A. Ridout.

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Photograph 3



Photograph 4

3.2 Council Offices

Dust was similarly apparent along the length of the sole plate (photographs 5 & 6) of the Council Office. Microscopic examination of dust from both buildings showed that it was chewed fragments of decayed timber and not wood-boring insect frass.



Photograph 5

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Photograph 6

This damage was caused by wasps. We managed to find some dead specimens in debris along the sole plate and found it to be *Ectemnius cavifrons* – a solitary crabronid wasp (photograph 7).



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3.0 SOLITARY WASPS

These insects are called solitary wasps because individuals do not cooperate in nesting behaviour unlike the familiar wasps that produce large paper nests. They may, however, favour a particular site so that a population becomes established. Each female will construct a burrow in which to lay eggs and this will be provisioned with paralysed insects.

Ectemnius cavifrons makes nesting galleries in decayed wood where she forms perhaps 12 – 14 individual chambers each provisioned with about 6 paralysed flies. The wasps are active hunters during the day and may be very curious, but they are not aggressive like normal domestic wasps.

The dust is discarded from the construction of the gallery and the wasp is not able to burrow into sound wood. These wasps are therefore living in decayed timber and not causing fresh damage.

Eradication would be difficult because the wasp galleries are probably deep in the timber. It is also likely that the population has colonised other buildings where post bases or sole plate undersides have partially decayed over the centuries. The localised application of a contact insecticide paste might control the problem if the insects become a nuisance.

Dr Brian Ridout

23rd July 2019

Directors: Dr. B.V. Ridout & Dr. E.A. Ridout.

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