

# A short biographical account of the life of John Walton, naturalist and entomologist, together with an annotated list of his publications on coleoptera.

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## Introduction

John Walton (1784 – 1862) was a British entomologist and coleopterist who specialised in the family Curculionidae. Very little is known about his life and work. However, two quite detailed obituaries are provided by (Anon 1863a) and (Anon 1863b), and Michael Darby in his online Biographical dictionary of British Coleopterists gives a brief account of his life. Rye (1874) in his annual report on British coleoptera provides a list of all Waltons publications on beetles which were published in the Annals and Magazine of Natural History. Walton was born in Knaresborough, Yorkshire on the 23rd of July 1784. His early life was spent in the counting house of his uncle who was a sugar refiner in Rupert Street, Whitechapel, London. During his early years in residence in London he became a member of the Mathematical Society of Spitalfields and studied chemistry and botany with great enthusiasm; the former he used practically to great advantage and success in the refinement of sugar. In 1832 Walton eventually retired from the sugar industry and with his family went to live in the small village of Mickleham, Surrey. Some years later after retiring he started to take an interest in entomology and in particular Lepidoptera which he collected in Norbury Park which was not far from his residence in Mickleham. He later went on to take a more serious interest in coleoptera. In 1837 Walton turned his attention to the study of the family Curculionidae, which he pursued with great vigour and enthusiasm for the next 25 years. In 1838 He published his first paper which dealt with the genera *Sitona*, *Polydrosus* (now *Polydrusus*), *Phyllobius* and *Apion*. More papers on the family appeared at regular intervals, and between 1838 and 1854 Walton published a total of 20 papers. He also produced a separate booklet titled *List of British Curclionidae with synonyma* in 1856 which was published by order of the Trustees of the Natural History Museum. Many of Walton's publications include the descriptions of new species to Britain. They also contain the revision of many genera, and of the 88 known from Britain at the time, he published a total of 23 revisions altogether. It is not known if Walton ever visited Cumbria, however a number of his papers do include records of various beetles from the county. A number of these are from around the Carlisle area and are those of the well known Cumbrian naturalist and entomologist T. C. Heysham (1792 - 1857). Over the years while studying coleoptera Walton corresponded with a number of eminent contemporary coleopterists, which included, among others L. A. A. Chevrolat (1799 – 1884), E. F. Germar (1786- 1853) and C. J. Schoenherr (1772 – 1884). He acquired numerous specimens from these coleopterists, but it is unfortunate that in his

collection he did not indicate from whom the various specimens were received. Many of these specimens were purchased by the Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London in 1863 and are kept in two separate drawers with the then original labels (Waterhouse et al 1906). His insect collection was eventually sold by Stevens auction on the 24th of March 1863 (Chalmers – Hunt 1976), and also at this time the Hope Department of entomology, Oxford bought several lots, which included a box of Staphylinidae (Smith 1986). The Natural History Museum also purchased a large number of his specimens which included many species that were the subject of his various papers on coleoptera. Walton was a fellow of the old Entomological Society of London (now the Royal Entomological Society) from 1833 – 1863, and was Vice – President from 1840 -1841, and served again from 1846 – 1847. He was also a fellow of the Linnaen Society of London and was elected in February 1845. Walton died on the 3rd of January 1863, in his native town of Knaresborough.

## Annotated list of publications on coleoptera by John Walton

- 1834.** Art. XXV. – Entomological captures at Mickleham and neighbourhood. The Entomological Magazine **2**: 277 – 280.
- 1837.** Art. Notes upon the genus *Sitona*, *Polydrusus*, *Phyllobius*, and *Apion*. The Entomological Magazine **5**: 1 – 21.
- 1838.** Art. XXV. – Additional notes on the genus *Apion*. The Entomological Magazine **5**: 254 – 257.
- 1844a.** X. – Notes on the coleopterous genus of insects, *Rhynchites* of Herbst. Annals and Magazine of Natural History **13**: 81 – 87.
- (Reference to *Rhynchites cupreus* page 87: one pair found on mountain – ash (*Pyrus acuparia*) in June and given to Walton by T. C. Heysham (Carlisle)).
- 1844b.** XXIX. – Notes on the British species of the genus *Bruchus*, with descriptions of two species not hitherto recorded as indigenous. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **13**: 206 – 212.
- 1844c.** L. – Notes on the synonymy of the genus *Apion* with descriptions of five new species, etc. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **13**: 444 – 457.
- 1845a.** XXIII. – Notes c. On the genera of insects *Oxystoma* and *Magdalis*. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **16**: 221 – 227.
- (Reference to *Magdalinus carbonarius* (now *Magdalis carbonaria*) page 225: two specimens taken from a hazel tree near Ambleside, 19th June 1845 by John Curtis, and one specimen given to Walton by T. C. Heysham (Carlisle), page 226).
- 1845b.** XLVIII. – Notes on the synonymy of the genus *Apion*, with descriptions of six new species, &c. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **15**: 331 – 342.
- 1845c.** LVI. – notes on the synonymy of the genus *Apion*, with descriptions of six new species, &c. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **15**: 392 – 401.
- 1846a.** III. – Notes &c. On the genera of insects *Phyllobius*, *Polydrusus* and *Metallites*. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **17**: 12 – 20.

- 1846b.** XXXI. – Notes on the genus of insects *Sitona*, with descriptions of two new species. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **17**: 227 – 235.
- 1846c.** XXXIX. – Notes &c. On the genera of insects *Cneorhinus* and *Strophosomus* with descriptions of two new species. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **17**: 304 – 310.
- 1847a.** XXV. – Notes on the genus of insects *Trachyphloeus*, with descriptions of new species. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **19**: 217 – 223.
- 1847b.** XXXIV. – Notes on the genus of insects *Omiias*, with descriptions of new species. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **19**: 314 – 317.
- 1847c.** XLVI. – Notes on the genus of insects, *Otiorrhynchus* with descriptions of new species. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History **19**: 445 – 453.
- (Reference to *Otiorrhynchus maurus*, now *Otiorrhynchus nodosus*, page 451: ‘specimens taken on the sides of Skiddaw by Mr. Marshall’).
- 1848a.** XXX. – Notes, &c. On the genera of insects, *Pissodes*, *Hypera*, &c.; with descriptions of several new species. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History (second series), **1**: 295 – 303.
- 1848b.** XLIII. – Notes, &c. On the genus of insect *Anthonomus*; with a description of one new species. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History (second series) **1**: 416 – 419.
- 1848c.** XVII. – Notes &c. On the genera of insects *Eriirhinus*, *Notaris* and *Procas*; with descriptions of new species. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History (second series) **2**: 166 – 169.
- (Reference to *Procas granulicollis*, page 169: one specimen found amongst moss and decayed vegetable matter in a wood near Carlisle in December by T.C. Heysham).
- 1851.** XXXII. – Notes on the British species of Curculionidae belonging to the genera *Dorytomus* and *Elleschus*. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History (second series) **7**: 310 – 318.
- (Reference to *Dorytomus tremulae*, page 311: Found near Carlisle by T. C. Heysham. *Dorytomus majalis*, page 314: Found near Carlisle by T. C. Heysham).
- 1852.** XVII. - Descriptions of two new British genera of insects, and of two new species belonging to the family Curculionidae. The Annals and Magazine of Natural History (second series) **9**: 204 – 206.
- (Reference to *Trachodes hispidus*, page 205: one specimen near Carlisle, T.C. Heysham).
- 1856.** List of British Curculionidae with synonyma. British Museum 46pp.

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