Two Wenlock crinoids, one registration number and a monograph: a tale

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FEARNHEAD, F.E. & DONOVAN, S.K. (2012). Two Wenlock crinoids, one registration number and a monograph: a tale. Proceedings of the Shropshire Geological Society, 17, 4–6. Specimens of two species of flexible crinoid from the Much Wenlock Limestone Formation at Dudley, Lecanocrinus bacchus (Salter) and Icthyocrinus pyriformis (Phillips), in the collections of the Natural History Museum, London, were erroneously given the same registration number by a curator in 1871. This mistake has only just been recognised. Previous confusion caused by this error is indicated by the series of changes to the handwritten entries in the specimen register.

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INTRODUCTION

This brief report actually starts in 2010 with the publication of Part 2 of the British Silurian Crinoidea. Amongst the numerous figured specimens, including many from the Much Wenlock Limestone Formation of Dudley, were two that form the focus of this note, both flexible cladids and identified as Lecanocrinus bacchus (Salter, 1873) and Icthyocrinus pyriformis (Phillips, 1839) (Donovan et al., 2010, pl. 27, fig. 1 and pl. 28, fig. 3; Figures 1 and 2 herein, respectively). Both specimens are deposited in The Natural History Museum, London (BMNH), but it is only recently that one of us (F.E.F.) recognised an unexpected and undesirable ‘similarity’ between them.

LOCALITY AND HORIZON

The principal locality at Dudley, Worcestershire, is the Wren’s Nest [NGR SO 935 920 and surrounding area], a nature reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Siveter 2000, pp. 191-198), but many museum specimens come from other sites in this area such as Dudley Castle Hill. This is the most important echinoderm-bearing site in the Lower Palaeozoic of the British Isles (Donovan et al., 2008). About 140 nominal species of echinoderms are known from the Silurian of the British Isles, of which over half are recorded from the Much Wenlock Limestone Formation (Wenlock, Homerian) at Dudley. Over sixty of them are crinoids, but an echinoid, asteroids, ophiuroids, rhombiferans and a mitrate are also present (Lewis et al., 2007; Herringshaw et al., 2007; Donovan et al., 2008).

REGISTRATION NUMBERS

The senior author was employed in the Department of Palaeontology, BMNH, in 2011-2012 as a Special Fund Contract Curator, working on the organisation and electronic cataloguing of the museum’s collection of British Silurian crinoids. It was during this period that she discovered the unexpected; two specimens were numbered 57469! Both were figured by Donovan et al. (2010; Figures 1 and 2 herein).

The original, handwritten register (Figure 3) of December 9th, 1871, lists Ichthyocrinus [=Icthyocrinus] pyriformis (=Figure 2), with ‘Ichthyo’ crossed out and ‘(I) Lecano’ written above it; ‘pyriformis’ has been similarly deleted and is replaced by ‘sp.’. The pens that were used to make these two entries were obviously different, as was the authorship as indicated by the handwriting. At some later date (after 1920), ‘bacchus (SALTER)’ was added above the deleted ‘pyriformis’ and reference made to its illustration by Springer (1920, pl. 2, fig. 27, pp. 138-139); this corresponds to the specimen in Figure 1 herein.

It seems likely that the same number was given to these two specimens from the same area, the Much Wenlock Limestone Formation of Dudley, and presumably the same lot. This error has remained unnoticed for over 140 years. As both
specimens have now been published, to avoid confusion the full name ‘Lecanocrinus bacchus’ (Salter, 1873) is now labelled (1) to correlate to the original 'old register’ ['Lecano bacchus’ (1)]. The information has been added to electronic KE-Emu database of the BMNH and photographs of the old register (Figure 3) showing the original entry has been appended in Multimedia.

For discussion of the 'competing' spellings of Ichthyocrinus and Icthyocrinus, see Moore (1978, p. T790). It is also relevant to note that Lecanocrinus bacchus was originally named Ichthyocrinus Bacchus by Salter (1873, p. 126; see Donovan et al., 2010, p. 100).

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REFERENCES


Figure 1. Lecanocrinus bacchus (Salter, 1873), BMNH 57469, a near-complete specimen, missing only attachment structure and distal tips of arms (after Donovan et al., 2010, pl. 27, fig. 1). Much Wenlock Limestone Formation of Dudley, Worcestershire. Specimen whitened with ammonium chloride. Scale bar represents 10 mm.


Figure 2. *Icthyocrinus pyriformis* (Phillips, 1839), BMNH 57469, crown (after Donovan et al., 2010, pl. 28, fig. 3). Much Wenlock Limestone Formation of Dudley, Worcestershire. Specimen whitened with ammonium chloride. Scale bar represents 10 mm.

Figure 3. The original, handwritten register entry in the BMNH for 57469, dated December 9th, 1871.