

Restoration of London type of first earthworm – *Lumbricus terrestris* Linnaeus, 1758 (Annelida: Oligochaeta: Lumbricidae), and setting aside of a ‘neo-neotype’

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Lumbricus terrestris was the first earthworm described by Carl Linnaeus in his *Systema Naturae* (1758). In a particularly well-reasoned and balanced scientific study, Sims (1973: 32) – the responsible curator at the then British Museum (Natural History) – made a cogent argument for stability of its nomenclature and designated a neotype (BMNH Register No. 1973.1.1) since its original types are nonexistent. This nomenclatural act was supported by Gates (1973).

A new neotype was subsequently erected by James *et al.* (2010) on the assertion that Sims’ neotype: “*is now missing (The Natural History Museum, in litt.)*” when they attempted a DNA study emulating that by Blakemore *et al.* (2010). However, a recent survey of the Museum shelves by the current author soon rediscovered the supposed missing specimen and confirmed its identity as that designated by Sims (1973). Under the rules of the International Code (ICZN, 1999: art. 75.8) the replacement neotype (Swedish Museum of Natural History, Stockholm catalogue number SMNH Type-8035) must now be set aside in favour of Sims’ previous neotype.

As justification for presuming Sims’ neotype lost, James *et al.* (2010) state: “*The specimen of L. terrestris in the vial labelled as neotype (Natural History Museum, London; Register No. 1973.1.1) is shorter by 12 mm and has 6 fewer segments than the neotype described by Sims*” (*viz.* with length 165 mm and 153 segments).

However, reinspection of the single specimen in the labelled jar, as figured here (Figs. 1–2), noted that it was much coiled and, without stretching, measured 155 mm with *ca.* 151 segments. Such

slight discrepancies may be accounted for by the post-preservation coiling affecting length and the presence of several hemi-schizometameres (segments in part abnormally sub-divided). Thus segmental counts would always give slightly different numbers depending on which line down the body the count was made. Regardless, both these metrics are well within tolerable median limits for significance (*ca.* ± 0.03 – 0.01).

The exact commencement of dorsal pores could not be confirmed due to its previous dissection, however in every other morphological or anatomical respect the specimen agrees exactly with Sims’ characterization leaving no doubt to its correct and proper identity as Sims’ original neotype, as the label indeed states (Fig. 1). This is a tribute to the conscientious care of the Museum staff and keepers for the last 40 years.

A detailed account of the type specimen will be provided in due course, meanwhile a full description and global distribution of this important European species, now spread around the Globe, is provided in Blakemore (2012), including the first Australian/Tasmanian record of this so-called ‘common earthworm’ (Blakemore, 1997).

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Figure 1. Natural History Museum, London *Lumbricus terrestris* neotype – *habeas corpus!*



Figure 2. A schizo-metamere of the neotype 1973.1.1

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