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1 Historical biology

2

3 **The first Palaeodictyoptera (Insecta) from the Carboniferous-Permian basin**
4 **of Graissessac (France)**

5

6 Antoine Logghe^a, Romain Garrouste^b, Jean-Sebastien Steyer^a, Jean-Marc Pouillon^c and Andre
7 Nel^{b,*}

8

9 Running head

10 Palaeodictyopteran insect from Graissessac

11

12 ^aCentre de Recherches en Paléontologie de Paris, UMR 7202 – CNRS, MNHN, SU, EPHE,
13 Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, 8 rue Buffon, CP38, F-75005 Paris, France. E-mails:
14 antoine.logghe@orange.fr, jean-sebastien.steyer@mnhn.fr

15 ^bInstitut de Systématique, Evolution, Biodiversité (ISYEB), Muséum national d’Histoire
16 naturelle, CNRS, Sorbonne Université, EPHE, Université des Antilles, CP 50, 57 rue Cuvier,
17 F-75005 Paris, France. E-mails: garroust@mnhn.fr, anel@mnhn.fr

18 ^c179 Rue des Plattières, 38300, Nivolas Vermelle, France. E-mail: jmpdb@wanadoo.fr

19

20 Antoine Logghe: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2854-77>

21 Jean-Sébastien Steyer: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1835-7852>

22 Romain Garrouste: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0880-5781>

23 Jean-Marc Pouillon: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6016-4734>

24 André Nel: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4241-7651>

25

26 * Corresponding author

27

28 ABSTRACT

29 A new dictyoneurid insect, *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp. from the Latest Ghzelian – Asselian
30 basin of Graissessac (Hérault, France) is described in details. It is represented by a well-
31 preserved specimen with wings of 32-35 mm long and 13-14 mm wide and other peculiar
32 diagnostic characters such a MP with four branches and a CuP with three branches. As all the
33 other *Dictyoneura* species are known from the Namurian and/or the Wesphalian, *Dictyoneura*
34 *goujonorum* n. sp. is the youngest representative of the genus. It is also the first record of the
35 order Palaeodictyoptera from the Graissessac basin. The Carboniferous-Permian
36 palaeodictyopterans are well-known to have lived in rather humid swamp forests. The global
37 warming and drying of the climate during the Permian and/or the rise of potential predators
38 may be responsible of their extinction.

39

40 KEYWORDS

41 Insecta; Palaeoptera; Carboniferous-Permian; Capitanian extinction; climatic changes; France.

42

43 **Introduction**

44 The Palaeodictyoptera are major herbivorous sucking insects known from the Late
45 Carboniferous to the Early Permian. They were well-diversified, with at least known 50 genera
46 in about 16 families (see Fossilworks database at <http://fossilworks.org>). However the
47 palaeodictyopteran species are generally represented by very few specimens in comparison to
48 other clades such as the Dictyoptera or the Archaeorthoptera (A.N. pers. obs.). Thus, any new
49 fossil of these strange six-winged insects is welcome to improve our knowledge on their
50 diversity and temporal range. Palaeodictyoptera are known of the swamp forests of the Late

51 Carboniferous, with a maximum of diversity in the well-known outcrop of Commentry
52 (northern part of the French Massif Central) (Kukalová 1969a-b, 1970). They are generally
53 associated with the warm and humid evergreen coal forests, together with some of their
54 emblematic predators, the giant odonatopterans Meganeuridae called griffenflies. Some
55 Palaeodictyoptera are also very large insects (e.g. *Homoioptera gigantea* Agnus, 1902 with a
56 wing span of ca. 40 cm), but most of them were relatively small, with wing span ca. 10 cm.

57 The Latest Carboniferous – Earliest Permian Graissessac basin (Hérault, France) is a
58 quite favorable area to find fossils of plants. Numerous geological researches, mainly linked to
59 the exploitation of the coal, have been undertaken since the 19th century. The collect of fossil
60 animals is decreasing since these last decades with the closure of these coal mines. The insect
61 record is especially scarce. Thanks to the efforts of Mr and Mrs Goujon Claude and Monique,
62 more fossils have been found recently. Here we describe in details the first Palaeodictyoptera
63 from the Graissessac basin. It is also the first fossil insect properly described for this outcrop.
64 It is compared with all the other dictyoneurid genera. This new finding addresses our knowledge
65 on the Carboniferous-Permian fauna of Graissessac. It is also the latest occurrence of this genus
66 and therefore contribute to document the putative extinction of the clade before the Middle
67 Permian.

68

69 **Material and methods**

70 The type specimen was collected in 2019 by Goujon and Monique Claude, in the dump issued
71 of the open coal mine named ‘Carrière de Layrac’ (North East of the town of Graissessac). The
72 Graissessac basin is situated in the southern part of the Massif Central, France. Its general
73 orientation is west to east, forming a long synclinal of 30 km long and 2.5 km wide (Fig. 1)
74 (Martín-Closas and Galtier 2005: fig. 1). Becq-Giraudon (1973) considered this basin as a
75 channel of sedimentation flow and plant debris-flow alimentering a larger Carboniferous basin

76 located under the Permian sediments of Lodève. Seven to eight coal layers have been identified,
77 one of them being up to six meters thick on average. They are interbedded between layers of
78 sandstone and shale. The recent sedimentological study of these rocks allows to recognize a
79 great diversity of depositional environments: torrential alluvial cones, fluvial environments of
80 variable energy, flood plains and swamps in an intra-mountain sedimentary basin (Saint Martin
81 1993; Rilliart 2013). These environments may have developed in a relatively low basin region
82 framed by very high mountains (Becq-Giraudon and Van den Driessche 1993), forming
83 possibly what we called here a “lost valley”. Indeed sedimentological data (exhaust craters,
84 solifluxion flows, ice crystal ghosts) suggest the presence of periglacial phenomena and a rather
85 cool paleoclimate for the Graissessac area (Becq-Giraudon and Van Den Driessche 1994; Becq-
86 Giraudon et al. 1996).

87 Concerning the age of the Graissessac basin, Bruguier et al. (2003) estimated it around
88 295.5 ± 5.1 Ma, that-is-to-say Asselian (earliest Permian) based on zircon geochronology.
89 However its plant assemblage suggests a late Gzhelian (latest Carboniferous) age (Poschmann
90 et al. 2016). This Graissessac flora includes about 70 taxa of lycopsids, sphenopsids,
91 pteridosperms, and prephanerogams (Grand'Eury 1877; Becq-Giraudon 1973; Doubinger,
92 1983 Poschmann et al. 2016): these taxa are relatively well-known in the Carboniferous-
93 Permian rocks of the other Massif Central and European basins (e.g. Doubinger et al. 1995).
94 The presence of very large trunks of *Sigillaria* and *Calamites* suggests an environment of flood
95 plains and swamps, also supported by Martín-Closas and Galtier (2005).

96 The animal fossil record is reduced. Mostly invertebrate have been recovered: Mollusca:
97 *Carbonicola* sp. (Becq-Giraudon 1973); Arthropoda: xiphosuran *Euproops mariae* (Crônier
98 and Courville, 2005), Chelicerata *Aenigmatarbus rasteli* Poschmann et al., 2016 and Scorpiones
99 *Eoscorpium* sp., *Compsoscorpium* sp. (Poschmann et al. 2016); Insecta: Paoliida *Blattinopsis* sp.,
100 a wing of a Polyneoptera ‘Prothoptera’ (Becq-Giraudon 1972) and the endophytic

101 oviposition of an insect, possibly an Odonatoptera (Béthoux et al. 2004); Vertebrata: ‘fishes’
102 have been mentioned but not described (Bergeron 1889; Louis 1954) and a branchiosaurid
103 recently excavated is currently under description by us. Trace fossils have also been found in
104 the Graissessac basin with the presence of trackways of the millipede-like *Arthropleura* sp.
105 (Moreau et al. 2019). Compared with the faunas of the other Massif Central basins, this fauna
106 is reduced in specimen number but well-diversified, with representatives of several major
107 groups of organisms. This suggests that the biota of the Graissessac “lost valley” already
108 presents complex trophic chains.

109 The photographs were taken using Nikon D800 camera with 60 mm 2,8 Micro Nikkor lens in
110 the 3D Lab (ISYEB, MNHN), and the reconstruction of the venation was done under a
111 binocular microscope Nikon SMZ 1500, with a camera lucida.

112 We follow the wing venation terminology of Kukalová-Peck (1991).

113 Institutional abbreviations.—MHNE, Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle et d’Ethnologie of Colmar,
114 France.

115 Other abbreviations.—A anal veins; C costal vein; CuA cubitus anterior; CuP cubitus posterior;
116 MA median anterior; MP median posterior; RA radius anterior; RP radius posterior; ScP
117 subcostal posterior.

118 Nomenclatural acts.—This published work and the nomenclatural acts it contains, have been
119 registered in urn:lsid:zoobank.org:pub:9220BD12-40CC-4181-8F90-798E433CDE55

120

121

122 **Systematic palaeontology**

123 Order: Palaeodictyoptera Goldenberg, 1877

124 Superfamily: Dictyoneuroidea Handlirsch, 1906a

125 Family: Dictyoneuridae Handlirsch, 1906a

126 *Dictyoneura* Goldenberg, 1854

127 *Type species*

128 *Dictyoneura libelluloides* Goldenberg, 1854 (Westphalian D, Saar basin, Germany)

129

130 *Other species*

131 *Dictyoneura kemperi* Brauckmann and Koch, 1983 (Namurian, Hagen-Vorhalle, Germany),

132 *Dictyoneura nigra* Kliver, 1883 (Westphalian C, Saar basin), and *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n.

133 sp.

134

135 *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp.

136 (Figure 2)

137 urn:lsid:zoobank.org:act:53F972EE-42A0-4F24-8A86-17D2A9073275

138 *Etymology*

139 Named after Goujon Claude and Monique who found the type specimen.

140

141 *Type material*

142 MHNE.2021.3.1 (imprint and counter-imprint of a fore- and a hind wing in life position with

143 fragments of abdomen and thorax), stored at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle et d'Ethnologie

144 of Colmar, France.

145

146 *Type locality*

147 Quarry of Layrac, Graissessac, Hérault, France (GPS coordinates available to qualified

148 researchers).

149

150 *Stratigraphic occurrence*

151 Latest Gzhelian to Asselian.

152

153 *Diagnosis*

154 Wings ca. 32.0-35.0 mm long, and 13.0-14.0 mm wide; ScP elongate; RP not pectinate; MA
155 simple; MP with four branches; CuA simple; CuP with three branches; bases of CuA, MA and
156 RP approximate.

157

158 *Description*

159 Wings without trace of coloration; forewing ca. 35.0 mm long, 13.0 mm wide; anterior margin
160 not curved basally; costal area 1.0 mm wide; ScP at least 29.0 mm long, terminating on C well
161 beyond midwing; RA simple; base of RP 11.0 mm from wing base; RP not pectinate, with two
162 main branches, anterior one forked and posterior one with two-three branches; MA unbranched,
163 weakly curved basally, separated from MP slightly basal to base of RP, 1.0 mm apart; MP with
164 two main branches, each of them being forked again; CuA unbranched, weakly curved basally,
165 separated from CuP slightly basal to base of MA, 2.0 mm apart; CuP with two-three branches;
166 anal area 4.0 mm wide, anal veins poorly preserved; archaedyctyon present but poorly visible.
167 Hind wing ca. 32.0 mm long, 14.0 mm wide; triangular-shaped and with a broader anal area
168 than in forewing; costal area as broad as that of forewing, 1.0 mm wide; venation identical to
169 that of forewing; cubito-anal area broader than that of forewing, 6.0 mm wide.

170

171 **Discussion**

172 This fossil belongs to the Palaeodictyoptera rather than to the other orders of the
173 Palaeodictyoptera because of the dense venation, with numerous branches of main veins, and
174 the simple pattern of branching of RP and MA (Carpenter 1992). Riek (1976) proposed a key
175 to palaeodictyopteran superfamilies, after which *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp. would fall in

176 the Dictyoneuroidea, because of the following characters: CuA and MA simple; ScP separated
177 from R; Archaedictyon present. But after Riek (1976), the representatives of this superfamily
178 would also have MP simple or three-branched, which is not the case for the type genus
179 *Dictyoneura* and *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp.

180 The current classification of the Palaeodictyoptera is not satisfactory. Sinitshenkova (2002:
181 fig. 138) first proposed a phylogenetic hypothesis, but the absence of real outgroup(s) to
182 basically polarize the character states, and the basal-most dichotomy established on the
183 character ['wings wide basally' vs. 'wing base narrow'], with the two states supposedly
184 supporting the two branches, while one should be plesiomorphic, prevent a total confidence to
185 these results. Sroka et al (2015: fig. 11) proposed another hypothesis, better supported by true
186 outgroups and computer treatment of the data, in which the order Palaeodictyoptera falls as a
187 grade, sister group of the (Megasecoptera + (Permothemistidae + Diaphanopteroidea)).

188 A comparison of this fossil to all the currently accepted families (as listed in the fossilworks
189 database <http://fossilworks.org>) is necessary:

- 190 - the 'anterior margin of the wing not curved basally' excludes the Lithomanteidae
191 Handlirsch, 1906;
- 192 - the posteriorly curved branches of M and Cu exclude the Megaptilidae Handlirsch 1906;
- 193 - the less elongated wings, with only three branches of MP instead of six, and the shorter
194 abal area differs from *Archaemegaptilus kiefferi* Meunier, 1908 (Kukalová 1969: fig.
195 46) and exclude the Archaemegaptilidae Handlirsch, 1919;
- 196 - the 'RP and MA not coalescent nor strongly approximate' excludes the Eugereonidae
197 Handlirsch, 1906a;
- 198 - the elongate ScP excludes the Calvertiellidae Martynov, 1931 and the Stobbsiidae
199 Handlirsch, 1908 (Laurentiaux and Laurentiaux-Vieira, 1951: fig. 5);
- 200 - the 'branched MP' excludes the the Tchirkovaeidae Sinitshenkova, 1979;

201 - the 'CuA simple' excludes the Homiopteridae Handlirsch, 1906a, Spilapteridae
202 Handlirsch, 1906a, Fouqueidae Handlirsch, 1906a, Elmoboriidae Carpenter, 1976;
203 - the 'MA simple' excludes the Homothetidae Scudder, 1885 based on a poorly known
204 fossil;
205 - the 'CuA simple' and the 'MA simple' exclude the Pteronidiidae Bolton, 1912,
206 Mecynostomatidae Handlirsch, 1904, Straeleniellidae Laurentiaux-Vieira and
207 Laurentiaux, 1986, and Eubleptidae Handlirsch, 1906a;
208 - the 'CuA simple', and the broader and shorter wings and shorter cubito-anal area
209 exclude the Peromapteridae Handlirsch, 1906a;
210 - the 'branched CuP and RP with more than three branches' excludes the Psychroptilidae
211 Riek, 1976 (originally considered as a Megasecoptera, but put in the Palaeodictyoptera
212 in the fossilworks database <http://fossilworks.org>);
213 - the 'MA not arising in a distal position, and not on first branch of MP' exclude' the
214 Lycocercidae Handlirsch, 1906a;
215 - the 'RP posteriorly pectinate' excludes the Saarlandiidae Guthörl, 1930 and the
216 Mongolianidae Özdikmen 2008 (replacement name for Mongolodictyidae
217 Sinitshenkova, 1992), two poorly known families;
218 - the 'base of MA basal to that of RP' excludes the Heolidae Handlirsch, 1906a and the
219 Graphiptilidae Handlirsch, 1906a;
220 Finally, The Jongmansiidae Laurentiaux, 1950 have a reduced RP. The Namuroningxiidae
221 Prokop and Ren, 2007 have a richer venation, with bases of RP and MA at the same level, and
222 much more branches of RP, MP, and CuP. The Polycyreae Handlirsch, 1906b have much
223 more branches of RP and MP and a forked CuA (Handlirsch 1906b). The Synarmogidae
224 Handlirsch, 1910 have the median vein appressed to the radial one.

225 Affinities with the Breyeriidae Handlirsch, 1906a are more complicate to exclude. They
226 generally have long crossveins between the main veins and their branches (viz. in *Breyeria* de
227 Borre, 1875, *Jugobreyeria* Brauckmann et al., 1985, *Hasala* Brauckmann, 1995, *Megaptiloides*
228 Handlirsch, 1906, and *Vermooija* Prokop et al., 2018), not present in *Dictyoneura goujonorum*
229 n. sp. Thus this character would be sufficient to exclude affinities of *Dictyoneura goujonorum*
230 n. sp. with the Breyeriidae. But in *Aviobreyeria* Prokop et al., 2013, these crossveins are mainly
231 present in the distal half of the wing while there is an archedictyon in basal part of wing. The
232 Breyeriidae can have a short ScP, ending at the level of first branch of anterior branch of RP
233 (in *Breyeria*, *Jugobreyeria*) or an elongate one (in *Hasala*, *Aviobreyeria*, *Megaptiloides*, and
234 *Vermooija*) (Laurentiaux and Laurentiaux-Vieira, 1951; Brauckmann et al., 1985; Brauckmann,
235 1995; Prokop et al., 2013, 2018). *Hasala* and *Aviobreyeria* have a pectinate RP, unlike
236 *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp.

237 *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp. has all the diagnostic characters of the Dictyoneuridae
238 (as proposed by Carpenter 1992: 28). They share the absence of well-defined crossveins all
239 over the wings (Guthörl 1934). It fits with the genus *Dictyoneura* (see diagnoses in Waterlot
240 1934: 139 or Guthörl 1934), while it strongly differs from the other genera of this family in the
241 combination of the following characters: RP not posteriorly pectinate, base of CuA nearly at
242 the same level as those of RA/RP and MA/MP, base of MA slightly more basal than that of RP,
243 CuP not simple, main veins posteriorly curved, ScP elongate, no trace of crossveins in costal
244 area.

245 Brauckmann and Koch (1983), following Guthörl (1934), made a revision of
246 *Dictyoneura*, with the three species *Dictyoneura libelluloides*, *Dictyoneura kemperi*, and
247 *Dictyoneura nigra*. Waterlot (1934) included the two species *Dictyoneura rugosa* Handlirsch,
248 1906a and *Dictyoneura sinuosa* Kliver, 1883 in this genus. Lastly *Dictyoneura higginsii*
249 Handlirsch 1906a is a basal fourth of a wing, impossible to compare to the other species in the

250 genus. *Dictyoneura sinuosa* probably does not belong to this genus because its base of CuA and
251 of RP are well basal to that of MA (Waterlot 1934: pl. 17, fig. 1). Also, *Dictyoneura rugosa*
252 (based on a fragment of mid part of wing) probably does not belong to this genus because the
253 base of CuA is well basal to that of MA (Waterlot 1934: text-fig. 43). *Dictyoneura kemperi* has
254 five branches of MP, unlike four in the other species and *Dictyoneura goujonorum* sp. nov. But
255 the value of this character remains uncertain because of the lack of information on the variations
256 in the number of branches of the main veins in these insects. *Dictyoneura kemperi* has forewings
257 ca. 43 mm long, 16 mm wide, and the hind wings ca. 39 mm long and 16 mm wide. *Dictyoneura*
258 *libelluloides* has wings more than 55 mm long and 22 mm wide, after Waterlot (1934: 141),
259 and/or wings more than 57 mm long and 22 mm wide, after Guthörl (1934: 52). *Dictyoneura*
260 *nigra* has wings more than 44 mm long and 18 mm wide after Waterlot (1934: 142), and/or
261 more than 35 mm long and 18 mm wide, after Guthörl (1934: 53). *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n.
262 sp. is clearly a smaller insect with forewing ca. 35 mm long, 13 mm wide, and hind wing ca. 32
263 mm long, 14 mm wide.

264

265 **Conclusion**

266 All the previously described *Dictyoneura* spp. are Pennsylvanian ('Namurian B' or
267 'Westphalian C or D'), while *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp. is latest Gzhelian to Asselian,
268 thus the most recent known representative of the genus. The Namurian *Dictyoneura kemperi* is
269 supposed to have lived in a moist area with rich vegetation along a coastal area in a Variscan
270 foreland basin (Brauckmann 1988). *Dictyoneura libelluloides* was found in rocks formed in the
271 Westphalian D swamp forests of the intramontane Saar basin (Uhl and Cleal, 2010), similarly
272 to *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp. *Dictyoneura nigra* was also found in the Westphalian C of
273 the same area. Thus all these insects probably lived in similar environments, humid but possibly
274 not very warm, even cool. This possible cool temperature could be linked with the proximity

275 of relatively high mountains, as suggested by Becq-Giraudon and Van den Driessche (1993)
276 for the Graissessac basin.

277 The fossil record of the family Dictyoneuridae ranges between the ‘Namurian’ and the
278 Artinskian (in Central Siberia and Northern China) (Sharov and Sinitshenkova 1977; Hong,
279 1985). Thus they possibly disappeared because of the global warming which started during the
280 Early Permian and continued after, during the whole Permian. The mean annual temperatures
281 of the period during which they are currently recorded seem to have been under 18°C (Scotese
282 et al. 2021: fig. 6). The floristic changes to a ‘seed plant-dominated world’, due to a supposed
283 global drying, would have happened earlier, around the Permian-Carboniferous boundary
284 (DiMichele et al. 2001). But it seems that the drying was not uniform during the Early Permian,
285 much more serious in the Western part of Pangea than in North China (Yang et al. 2016). Also,
286 the central Siberia was clearly less arid than the central Pangea during the Early to middle
287 Permian (Fujimoto et al. 2012), possibly allowing the survival of the dictyoneurids in these
288 regions at least till the end of the Early Permian. Nevertheless, it seems that the *Dictyoneura*
289 spp. that were living in the humid (and possibly relatively cool) forests did not survive the
290 earliest Permian. Another explanation for the apparent extinction of these insects could be the
291 rise of some of their predators such as the reptiles, whose diversity increased during the
292 Carboniferous-Permian. But, as some other palaeodictyopterans (e.g some Calvertiellidae;
293 Béthoux et al. 2007) of the same range of body size survived till the end of the Middle Permian,
294 this hypothesis is more unlikely.

295

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305

306 **Disclosure statement**

307 No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

308

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482 **Figure 1.** Geological map of Carboniferous Graissessac basin (modified from Martín-Closas
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484

485 **Figure 2.** *Dictyoneura goujonorum* n. sp., holotype: MHNE.2021.3.1. Imprint. (A) forewing;
486 (B) hind wing; (C) forewing under alcohol; (D) hind wing under alcohol; (E) drawing of
487 forewing. Scale bars 10 mm.

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