



Wasps never seen before in Britain found in East Finchley

By Diana Cormack

Apart from former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, another rare species can be found on the extensive East Finchley Allotments site. In the March edition of the *British Journal of Entomology and Natural History* a report revealed that two parasitic wasp species new to Britain have been discovered there.



Active research: The Malaise trap on Dawn's plot where she captured the insects.

The tiny insects, just two millimetres long, were found by Dawn Painter who for 18 months ran a tent-like Malaise trap, collecting samples of some

of the insects active on her plot.

Gardeners' allies

Called *Microterys tricoloricornis* and *Microterys nietneri*, these parasitic wasps may be



The NHS tribute at the station. Photo Mike Coles

Floral tribute

This simple vase of homemade flowers paying tribute to everyone working in the NHS stands on the book swap shelf in East Finchley tube station. It was made by Gill Steiner, who also created the 'Welcome to East Finchley' banner hanging in the station entrance.

microscopic but they pack quite a punch, getting rid of a number of garden pests and other sap-sucking insects that feed upon a variety of plants.

In true horror movie style, they inject their eggs into unknowing hosts where they develop internally and, on maturity, bite their way out *Alien*-style. Such is their destructive power that they are used in agriculture in many parts of the world to combat soft scale pests.

Wildlife haven

Dawn told *The Archer*: "Many of these species are under-recorded and understudied and always very important within an ecosystem. I have long suspected our East Finchley site to be an ecological haven with its old orchards, brooks and the sympathetic ethos of many of the allotment holders.

"Being part of a wider variety of habitats nearby, including the cemetery, a network of surrounding gardens, Martin Primary school field and of course Coldfall Wood, it's a pretty dynamic place for wildlife even in a big city like London. And a biological goldmine."

According to the scientific journal's report the *Microterys nietneri* version had previously been used in this country for biological control purposes within greenhouses, which might explain its presence on the British mainland.

Dawn's samples from her trap, including ladybirds, moths, beetles and flies, are now with experts at the Natural History Museum for closer inspection and identification. Who knows, there might be another entomological rarity lurking somewhere in the local undergrowth!



New discovery: The *Microterys tricoloricornis* parasitic wasp found on Dawn Painter's allotment in East Finchley.

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