

North Eastern Fungus Study Group



Newsletter 27

January 2003



Amanita Phalloides

Annual General Meeting Reminder

The AGM will be held at Durham Wildlife Trusts Headquarters at Rainton Meadows on the Saturday 11th January 2003 at 11am.

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For further information or if you would like to submit an article or questions for the next newsletter, please contact the Chairman of the NEFSG, Alan Legg at 36, Carleton Drive, Darlington, County Durham, DL3 9QP. Tel : 01325 - 350834. Treasurer / Membership Sec, Babs Walton, Stodhoe Farm, Middleton-St-George, Darlington, Co Durham, DL2 1DS. Tel: 01325 332789. The Secretary, Keith Cunningham can be contacted at 1 Grove Cottage, Baybridge, Blanchland, Consett, Co Durham DH8 9UB email keith.cunningham@ntlworld.com Tel: 01434 675339

CHAIRMAN

Those of you who attended the January 2002 AGM are aware that Alan is stepping down from the above position at the end of that year. Needless to say we MUST have a new chairman. Please submit your name to me, Babs Walton, if you would consider taking on this position. The committee will always need new members so again, please put yourself forward if you feel you can contribute. The NEFSG is democratic and the views of the Membership matter...we need your input. Phone me on – 01325 332789

Subscription reminder 2003

Subscriptions are due for payment at the AGM in January, but if members are unable to attend could they please send their subs [£6 individual - £8 couple] to me;

Babs Walton
Stodhoe Farm
Middleton St George
Darlington DL2 1DS

North Eastern Fungus Study Group **Sixth AGM – SATURDAY 11TH January 2003 11am**

Agenda

1. **Apologies for absence – Election of new Chairman.**
2. **Minutes of last A.G.M.**
3. **Matters arising:**
4. **Programme for 2003** To be discussed and possibly revised.

11th Jan – AGM Rainton Meadows.

Sat 8th March Brewlab, Sunderland University ?

Sat 26th April Elemore Woods?

Late May Possible social event?

Sat 19th July Bowlees & Low Force?

Sat 13th Sept Minsteracres?

Sat 12th Oct Slacks Wood, Great Ayton?

November Durham University ?

5. **Treasurer's Report**
6. **Recording Sheets** Samples of fungi brought by members can be entered onto the new sheets.
7. **A.O.B**

NEFSG COMMITTEE MEETING

Held at Stodhoe Farm, 11am Saturday 16th November 2002

Present: Alan Legg, Keith Cunningham, Tom Kirby and Babs Walton.

1. **Apologies:** None

2. **Minutes of last meeting:** Accepted as accurate.

3. **Matters arising:**

[a] Item 5 – There has been no response to Alan's article in the Durham Wildlife Magazine article which encouraged readers to apply for membership; information leaflets are to be placed at Low Barns and Rainton Meadows.

[b] Item 7 – Keith has now produced a good acceptable new record sheet.

[c] Item 8 -Gordon Beakes has not responded to enquiries about his membership.

[d] Item 8 – The financial situation has been reviewed and found to be stable for the next financial year.

[e] Items 11a & b – The notice requesting that people put themselves forward for election to committee will be in the next newsletter.

[f] Item 11c - Keith has now succeeded in synthesising all the records, which now stand at over 6,000. We hope to see them in the national database before too long.

[g] Item 11d – Alan has tried to contact Andy Mclay with no success as he has changed addresses. Keith is going to try to contact him personally.

4. **Dorothy Wolfe's Illustrations -** At present we are unable to print Dorothy's beautiful illustrations as Keith's colour printer is now unserviceable.

5. **Provisional 2003 Programme – To be discussed and possibly revised at AGM**

11th Jan AGM at Rainton Meadows After discussion of Programme the new recording sheet will be discussed. Fungi specimens brought by members (Request to be in next Newsletter!) can be entered onto the new sheets.

Sat 8th March – Brewlab Sunderland University? Babs to contact Keith Thomas about this possibility.

Sat 26th April – Elemore Woods – Tom to check permission on parking.

Late May - Possible social event?

Sat 19th July? – Bowlees & Low Force

Sat 13th Sept – Minsteracres

Sat 12th Oct - Slack,s Wood, Great Ayton

November? – Durham University – Keith to approach Phil Gates about the possibility of a visit?

6. **Date of next meeting: - 7th June 2003**

7. **A.O.B. - None**

September Foray Baybridge to Blanchland

Alan Legg

On September 14th, Group members joined forces with people from the Northern Naturalists' Union and Darlington and Teesdale Naturalists in the car park at Baybridge, just inside the VC67 border on the northern bank of the River Derwent. The weather had been pretty dry during the first half of September, most large agarics had fruited early, and Keith Cunningham, who planned the outing, had become concerned that the woodland on the Durham side of the river might not prove very fruitful. It is true that oak-dominated woods do differ a lot in fungal productivity. An undergrowth consisting largely of Woodrush, *Luzula sylvatica*, as at this site, does often seem to inhibit the growth of fruitbodies though, in my experience, the worst offender in this respect is the grass, *Deschampsia flexuosa*, often flourishing in oak woods on dryish acid soils. As it turned out, Keith need not have worried. Although fruit-bodies were not numerous, there was plenty of variety and a total of just under 100 species was amassed.

The area around the car park gave us a useful start with 24 species including regulars such as the Fly Agaric, *Amanita rubescens*, with birch. The best find here, however, was one of the smallest, *Didymosphaeria conoidea*, a parasite of other small ascomycetes, found here on a dead stem of Rosebay Willowherb. With only three previous records on BMSFRD (including two recent ones from Yorkshire), this must count as a significant find.

The best large fungus found in the wood

was probably *Cortinarius armillatus*, easily identifiable in the field by the broad red bands on its stem. This species is uncommon in the North East and seems to be here newly-recorded for V66. Another exciting large fungus was *Grifola frondosa* found on beech as we entered the wood on the Durham bank. I have seen this fungus only a few times, always virtually at ground level on trunks and roots of beech and oak. It is one of those species which tend to appear in our region for a year or two and then vanish, to reappear several years later for no discernable reason. Since we recorded it here it has turned up for the first time in thirty-odd years in Darlington West Cemetery at the base of a Sweet Chestnut tree.

During our walk towards Blanchland, Hewett Ellis handed me several specimens of a tiny white cup-fungus growing on birch debris amongst the hairy rhizomes of the Woodrush. Most of the cups seemed slightly immature but, when I later looked at specimens under the dissecting microscope, I found them to be covered with long hairs curled round to produce a protective whorl over the fertile surface on the inside of the thimble-shaped ascomata. This was *Leucoscypha erminea*, apparently previously unknown from the North East - including Yorkshire - and most frequently collected by the great Malcolm Clark in Warwickshire and Worcestershire.

Fine weather again favoured our efforts and Keith's fears about the lack of fungal productivity proved groundless.

October Foray 2002 Hopper's Wood Durham

Alan Legg

After a further month of drought, the heavens finally opened on our October 12th Foray to Hopper's Wood at the edge of the vast Newton Hall Estate on the outskirts of Durham City. Never before has the NEFSG been so unlucky in its choice of dates! Our sympathies were very much with the organizer, Phil Sanderson, who had gone to some trouble to work out a route through the wood and also provided us with sketch-maps. Were we daunted? Certainly not! Did we give up! Of course we didn't! Well, not until lunchtime anyway!

Ten stalwarts negotiated the maze of roads and streets to meet with Phil by the main line railway. He carefully shepherded us through the sopping woodland and safely guided us up and down steep, muddy slopes and across a little brook which was certainly in spate but, thankfully, not a raging torrent!

Meanwhile, in another part of the wood ----- seven latecomers enterprisingly conducted their own foray, showing true NEFSG spirit by refusing to give up and adding considerably to our total list of species.

It was rather ironic that, after six weeks of virtual Saharan rainfall figures, the October monsoons should choose this day to break. The semi-natural oak woodland gave the impression of being worth another visit in better conditions. As it was, nothing really exciting was in evidence and the total count for the morning's session was only 52 species.

However, the smaller group turned up copious quantities of *Cudoniella acicularis*, an

ancient oak wood indicator. It looks like a tiny white toadstool and is typically found on old oak stumps often in large numbers. It is, in fact, a discomycete with its fertile surface covering the convex "cap".

Perhaps the most interesting find of the main group was material of the small relation of King Alfred's Cakes, *Daldinia vernicosa*, which favours burnt gorse bushes. This was pointed out by Gordon Simpson who has some familiarity with the species. Finally, one section of the main group was making their separate exit from the wood when they discovered a solitary specimen of what was recognised as the Death Cap, *Amanita phalloides*. I wasn't in this group but decided to list the find, because the finders included people known to have seen this fungus before, and because the habitat was certainly suitable. The Death Cap is not rare in the North East but it is always satisfying to find an unrecorded site for it. We'll certainly look out for it on any future autumn visit.



Amanita Phalloides early stage

November 2002 Foray and Workshop

Alan Legg

It is fast becoming a tradition that our November Meeting consists of a morning foray followed by an indoor afternoon session with microscopes. 2002 was the turn of Hamsterley Forest and the Low Barns Nature Reserve, Witton-le-Wear. Extremely wet weather immediately preceding the trip led some of us to believe that whatever fungi had emerged since the long drought would have been completely washed away.

After a slightly delayed start, we set off through the oak-dominated woodland behind the main carpark to be greeted by lots of soggy blackened remains of *Russula nigricans* left over from the late August flush. These often prove mysterious to beginners but can be found wherever this very common toadstool grows, sometimes persisting through the winter. At first there seemed to be little else around but gradually more sodden objects were collected, often difficult to identify in the field. Large rings of Wood Blewits, better adapted to early winter conditions, were eagerly pounced upon by mycophagists, and *Helvella crispa*, known to Beatrix Potter as Spluttered Candles, was much admired.

By lunch time we had an unexpectedly varied list of 70 species including one I had never collected before in a mature state. This was one of the first found, just beyond the entrance to the wood. There Keith Cunningham handed me a fallen oak branch with a group of bright yellow, roughly beaker-shaped objects glistening in the wet. At about 8 millimetres across the convex top, these were too big for a *Dacrymyces* though clearly gelatinous to the touch. I re-

membered finding something in dry conditions under the very same tree several years previously. Sadly these had proved immature and therefore unidentifiable. It was then, doubly satisfying to me to be able to determine the new collection as a close relative of *Dacrymyces*, currently known as *Ditiola pezizaeformis*. I was very surprised to find 138 records of this species on BMSFRD. Almost all the records are southern, however, with large numbers from the oak woods of the New Forest and the Forest of Dean. I found only one old record for Yorkshire and ours is almost certainly a first for VC66.

We reached Low Barns to be welcomed by large numbers of toadstools growing on the wood chips in the picnic area. Amongst these were a lot of the fishy/cucumber-smelling *Macrocyttidia cucumis*. This handsome toadstool is unique in its genus, with beautiful brown fruit-bodies and a distinctive yellow edge to the caps. In dry conditions it is less easy to identify, being pale ochraceous all over. It can, however always be identified by the smell. Because of the large jagged-looking gill-edge cystidia, for which the genus is named, this makes an ideal subject for exploratory microscopy and so was put to good use during the afternoon. I shall have a good excuse for being cross if anyone present fails to identify this toadstool in future!

There is never enough time to learn much during the microscope sessions. They seem to be much enjoyed, however, and if just one person is bitten by the bug on each occasion, it will have been worthwhile. Not only will the future enjoyment of that person be vastly enhanced but the whole group will be much enriched. The successful use of a microscope constitutes a quantum leap forward in learning to identify most fungi.

NEFSG-Minutes of AGM-12th January 2002 Rainton Meadows

In the Chair-Alan Legg

Apologies for Absence from Pat Wood, and Christine and Hewett Ellis.

Minutes of Last meeting-read and agreed.

Points raised below:

- 1) A brief report on Upland Foray by Alan Legg.
AL expressed disappointment at poor attendance by membership at this event.
- 2) Group Leaders' Meeting. AL did not attend this meeting for various undisclosed reasons but will attend if at Ripon this year.
- 3) Confirmation that Newsletters are going to Kew and that a "batch" (sic) has been sent to Darlington Library.
- 4) Babs Walton requested a membership vote on the advisability of including members details (address, telephone number, e-mail address in newsletter) in view of above. General agreement without vote not to so do. This wise as not all members were present at this meeting.

Programme for 2002:

Before the details of the 2002 programme were discussed TAK made official apology to Phil Sanderson for pre-emptive assumption that Phil would "do" a slide show after meeting. Phil would do a slide show after meeting and apology graciously accepted.

- 1) Hewett Ellis agreed to provide us all with another slide show on March the 9th at 11am here at Rainton Meadows. The venue was confirmed as acceptable by Keith Cunningham. Gratitude duly expressed by committee on behalf of membership.
- 2) Grinkle Park lunch and Foray for 20th April to be confirmed by Tom Kirby. DONE. Sample bar-snack menu on its way. Table for 20 provisionally booked but confirmation of numbers at later date.
- 3) ELEMENTIS foray at Urray Nook to be Saturday May 11th. To be confirmed by TAK. Note. This site is now available to us but we will require a "group" pass. We will also be supplied with two-way radios as a safety aid. TAK will organise in advance of event.
- 4) MINSTERACRES now confirmed for July 20th but KC to finalise.
- 5) Hopper's Wood now confirmed for October 12th. Confirmed by PS who will forward a map to KC.
- 6) Hamsterley Forest confirmed for November 9th. With morning foray then to Low Barns for possible workshop. A list of finds will be sent to Hamsterley Forest rangers.

Notes. PS suggested leader (s) should have Mobile Phones. General agreement

Treasurer's Report. By issued balance sheet. We are solvent.

Recording: Real progress. BW and KC inputting in tandem. Gordon Simpson to go on-line also. This is much appreciated by all especially by those who have tried it!!!

Any Other Business: BW to append Balance Sheet to next newsletter. (March)

AL expressed forlorn hope to step down from Chair. Membership generally saddened but understanding. The task is onerous and the rewards few. AL confirmed that his course of action was not precipitous and that he would remain as group leader after stepping down. Further, he would remain as Chairperson until next AGM at which time a new candidate would be (sacrificed), voted into the position.

Any Points: PS proposed horns and whistles for forays with multi-groups.
(Schoolteachers have access to whistles, don't they?-TAK)

The meeting over, the NEFSG enjoyed an EXCELLENT slide show and crippling quiz by the quisling quiz-master himself, Phil (teach) Sanderson. Much enjoyed and appreciated by all. Thanks proposed by someone, possibly me, and given by all.

Next AGM Jan 11th. 2003.