



North Eastern Fungus Study Group



Newsletter 28

March 2003

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Found and lost ! Can you identify this specimen. See page 8



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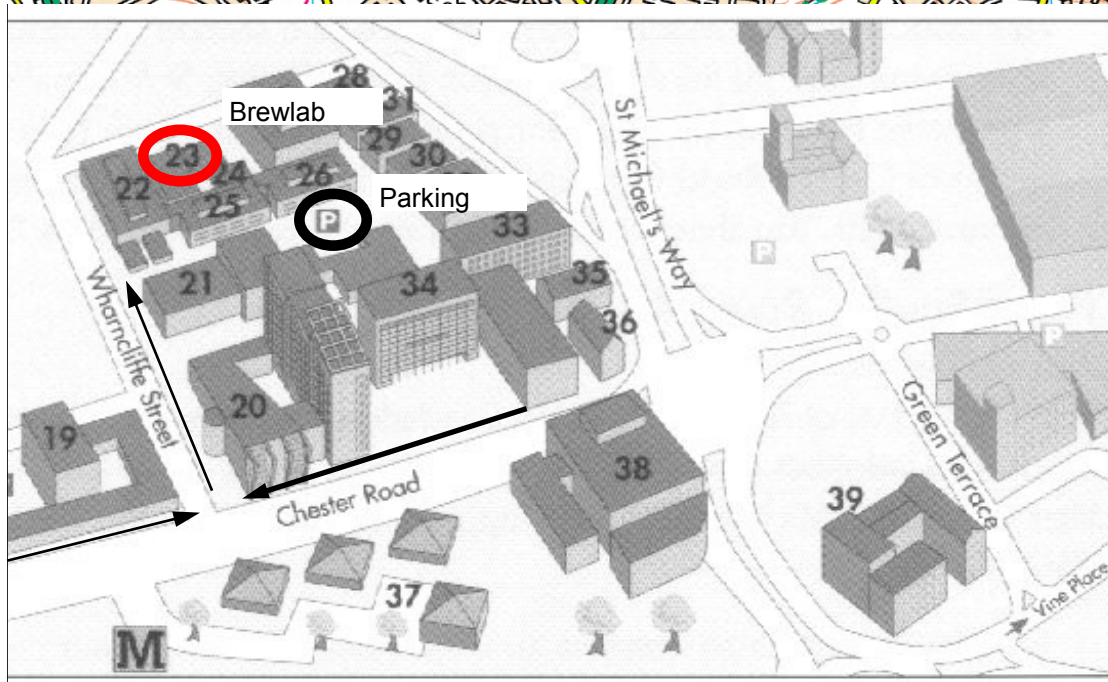
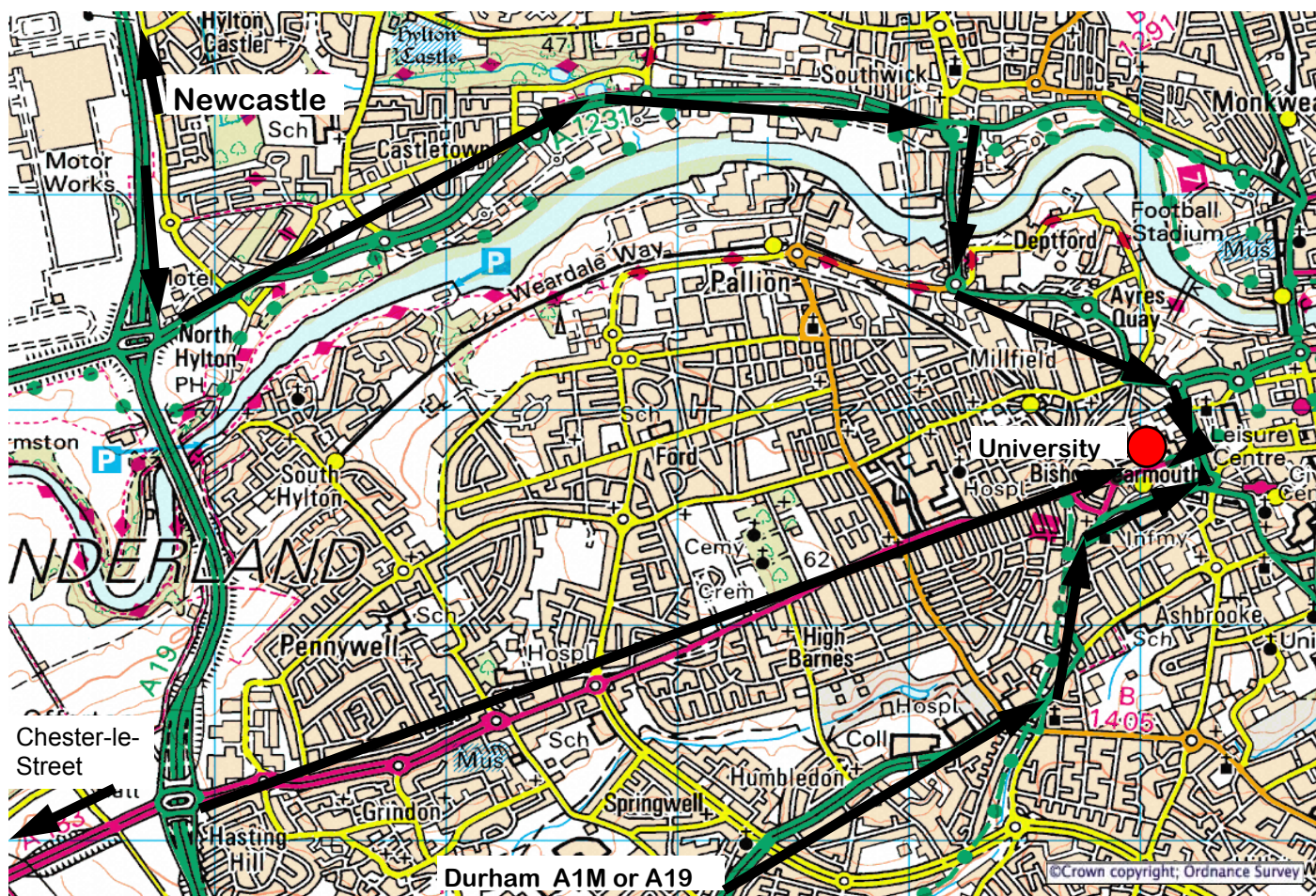


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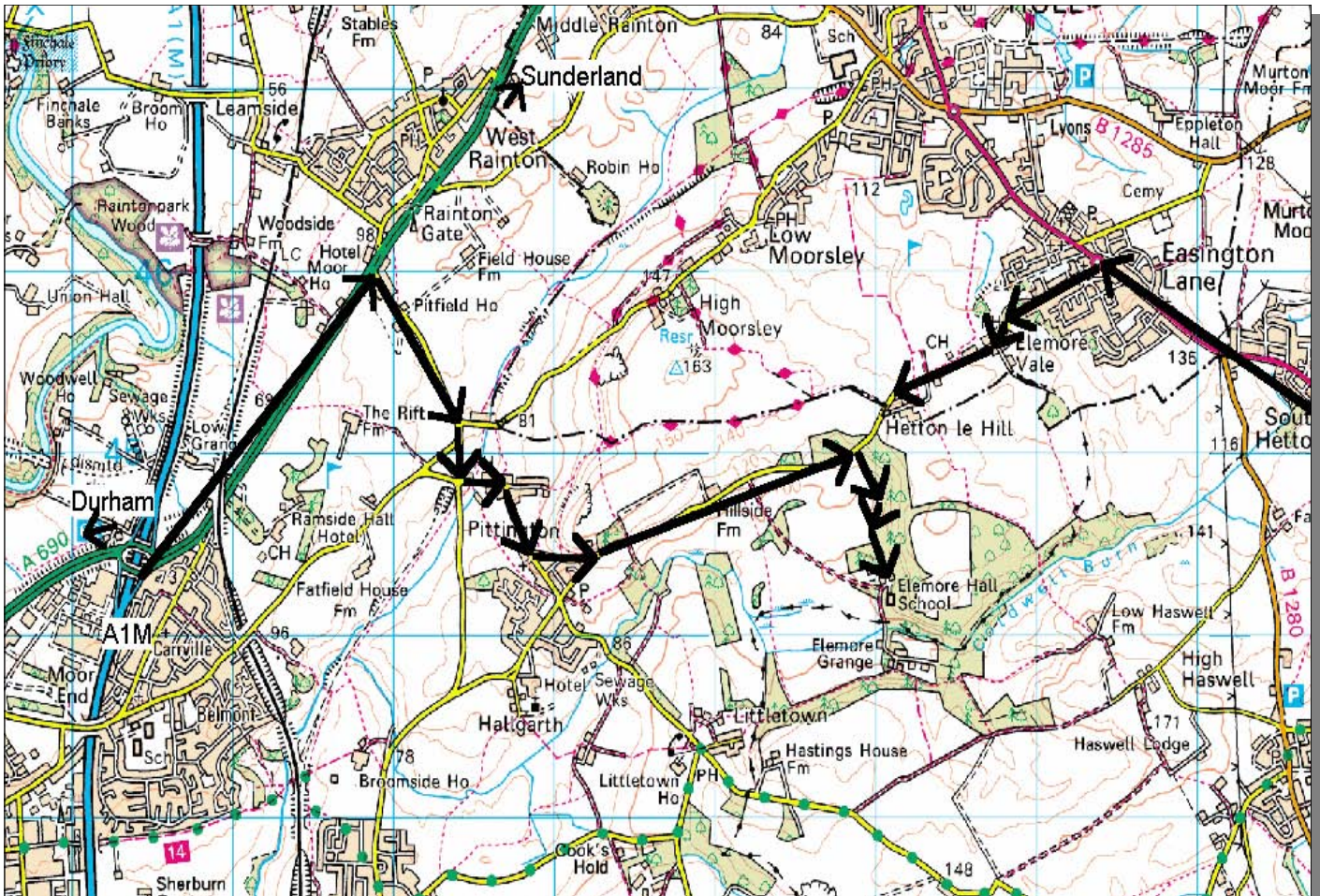
Our Next Meeting at Brewlab Sunderland University Saturday March 8th 11am

Keith Thomas who is a lecturer at Sunderland University does work on the types of fungi that are used in Beer making, has kindly arranged for us to look at the Brewlab. We will also try to fit in a visit to the Darwin brewery at Hendon, and later a look at a electron microscope. As part of the University open day a brew is being conducted in the small brewery plant which should also be worth visiting. If time permits we may try to find some fungi in Mowbray Park (or bring your own) for a look at in the Lab in the afternoon. Lots to do so don't be late.



Elemore Woods Foray Saturday April 26th 11am

Our Spring Foray has been arranged by Tom Kirby at Elemore Hall School. We will be surveying a different part of the woodland than we did in 1997. Directions below



North Eastern Fungus Study Group
Minutes of the Sixth AGM – Saturday 11TH January 2003 at 11.a.m.

1. **[a] Apologies for absence:** Christine and Hewett Ellis, Dorothy and Jack Wolfe, Alan Simkins, Gwen Humble, Pat Wood, Gayle Lowe and Andy McLay.
[b] Election of new Chairman: Tom Kirby (Treasurer), temporarily took the chair as Alan Legg had resigned as Chairman at the end of 2002. Gordon Simpson was then elected as the new Chairman and took the chair.

Gordon officially thanked Alan for his chairmanship and Alan gave a brief summary of his five years plus period of office. Gordon referred to two instances on two very different forays last year as examples of the good spirit that has always existed in the group. This positive spirit continued throughout the meeting.

2. **Minutes of the last A.G.M:** Accepted as accurate
3. **Matters arising:** (Item 2) Alan did not receive the invitation to the Group leaders' Meeting in December at Newcastle-under-Lyme until late October. As this was not convenient no representation by the NEFSG was present at that meeting.

4. Programme for 2003

Sat Jan 11th - AGM at Rainton Meadows.
Sat March 8th - Brewlab, Sunderland University
Sat April 26th - Elemore Woods
Sat June 7th - Social Event to be arranged by Tom Kirby
Sat July 19th - Bowlees & Low Force
Sat Sept 13th - Minsteracres
Sat Oct 11^h - Slacks Wood, Great Ayton
Sat Nov 8th - Durham University Botanical Gardens.
Keith Cunningham to contact Phil Gates.

More detailed information of these meetings will be in the Newsletters preceding these events.

5. **Treasurer's Report:** Tom Kirby informed the group that the bank balance was liquid to the figure of £247.30p. He then asked if the group wished the money to be invested or set aside to purchase possible equipment. A discussion ensued and various suggestions floated. At present however it was decided to maintain the status quo.
6. **Recording Sheets:** The new record sheet that Keith Cunningham had produced was examined and a discussion followed. Alan again requested that members fill in a record sheet of their finds and submit to him – even if what they find might be incorrectly identified. As much of the information requested on the sheet as the collector is able to give, should be written, and specimens included if possible. He will eventually verify, or dismiss a questionable specimen.
7. **A.O.B.**
[a] Members approved of the minutes and the AGM agenda being published in the magazine as it gave them time to examine them before a meeting.
[b] There was also an extensive discussion on insurance. Alan asked Keith to always insert the fact at the beginning of the newsletter, that the NEFSG are members of ABFG and that foray leaders need to be individual members of the ABFG. Such individual members will have their NEFSG subscription reduced by £1.20.

The meeting closed at 13.10.

Date of next AGM – Saturday Jan 17th 2004

SOME FUNGAL RECORDS FROM NORTHUMBERLAND DURING 2002

Hewett Ellis and Christine Ellis

Checking through our notebooks for 2002 there are a few interesting and/or unusual species which we have encountered. Each specimen has been examined microscopically to help us to determine the species. Several of the fungi were new to us and some of these were referred to Kew for confirmation. The following notes relate to ten fungi and are listed chronologically.

Mycena acicula (Schaeff.:Fr.)Kummer

We found several specimens of this yellow *Mycena* growing amongst moss in Plessey Wood on 23rd September 2002. The cap of mature fungi is yellow and the stem translucent lemon-yellow. Small young caps are more orange-yellow. This is the first time we have seen *M.acicula* in Northumberland. It is known at several locations in Co. Durham and Bramley states it is not uncommon in deciduous woods throughout Yorkshire.

Arrhenia acerosa (Fr.)Kuhn.

On the same day in Plessey Woods we found several fruiting bodies of *A.acerosa* growing on a heap of wet wood chippings. The grey-brown funnel-shaped bodies were in clusters arising from individual wood chips on a short and eccentric stem. This species is typically found in winter and is said to be "infrequent" or "rare" in the usual texts. It has been recorded under the synonyms *Leptoglossum acerosum* (Fr.Moser) and *Pleurotus acerosus* (Fr.)Konr.& Maubl. This is the first time we have seen the species in Northumberland (VC67).

Hebeloma pusillum Lange

We found several fruiting bodies of this apparently rare fungus growing under willow

in a wet area at Druridge Bay (NU274002) on 30th September 2002. The gross and microscopical features were typical but since the species was new to us we sent dried material to Kew for examination. Dr Peter Roberts confirmed our determination. Apparently *H.pusillum* is common in southern England in damp places under willow (as in our specimens), but there is only one previous collection from Northumberland at Kew. Our material has been retained at Kew (Accession Number K(M) 104735. The species has been recorded in Co. Durham in Hamsterley Forest and Bramley gives a record for Yorkshire at Malham in September 1959.

Omphallina ericetorum (Fr.:Fr.) J Lange

This attractive little fungus is a species of heathlands growing on peaty soil throughout the year. We found it to be very common amongst moss on wet peaty soil near Primrose Cottage Debden in Northumberland (NU 058 039) on 3rd October 2002. It is characterised by a small creamy yellow cap with radial striations and which is indented or funnel-shaped with decurrent gills. Interestingly several specimens at this particular location were variously malformed.

Aleuria aurantia (Pers.:Fr.) Fuckel

Known as the Orange Peel Fungus, this species occurs in autumn and winter. The clusters of large contiguous cups with bright orange inner and whitish outer surfaces make a fine sight. Although generally regarded as being common we seldom encounter this species. We were delighted to find several large and conspicuous clusters growing in the grass and border of a garden in Hartington Road, Cullercoats on 14th November 2002. The microscopical appearances of this species are interesting. Thus the spores are large, coarsely reticulated and contain droplets, and sections of the wall stained by Melzer's Iodine solution reveal that the tips

of the asci do not stain blue whereas the paraphyses are filled with green-staining granules.

Arrhenia retiruga

We found several grey-white fruiting bodies of this small Crepidotus-like fungus growing on moss in a garden lawn in Hartington Road, Cullercoats on 22nd November 2002. They arise from moss directly without a stem and the “gills” on the under-surface are simple radial folds, some of which are forked. We provisionally identified this as *Leptoglossum retirugum* which is described and illustrated in Phillip’s book, page 264). As we had not previously seen the species we sent samples to Alan Legg who confirmed this but used the preferred name *Arrhenia retiruga*. Alan informed us that this species was decidedly uncommon prior to 1998 when he found it at Darlington Cemetery. Since then, presumably as a result of the long mild and wet autumns, it has become more common in Co. Durham.

***Crucibulum laeve* (Huds.) Kam.**

Commonly known as The Common Bird’s Nest Fungus, we found our first examples growing on a wooden post lying on the ground at the side of a dismantled railway near Middle Engine Lane North Shields on 28th November 2002. Some of the “nests” were yellow due to the presence of an intact covering membrane (operculum).

In the others the operculum had ruptured to reveal several tiny grey-white biconvex lens-shaped “eggs”. Each “egg” was attached by a fine mycelial thread. We were a little surprised to find the “nests” were so small measuring only a few millimetres across and in length. We wonder how often in the past we have overlooked them! Some books consider the species to be widespread and common although others use terms such as “infrequent” (Jordan) and “occasional” (Phillips). Bramley states the species is common in Yorkshire, often on

saw-dust heaps, wood chips, twigs and old herbaceous stems.

***Clavulina rugosa* (Pr.) Schroet.**

This is another species said to be common but one which we seldom encounter. On 8th December 2002 there were numerous growths of these small white antler-like fungi on messy ground beneath a mature beech tree in Preston Cemetery, North Shields. The antler-like processes are short and rounded and the whole fungus may appear compressed or twisted. Microscopy revealed subspherical spores (averaging 11.7 X 9.2µm) with a conspicuous droplet and 2-spore basidia.

***Macrocyttidia cucumis* (Pers.:Pr.) Jess.**

We found small numbers of this species growing on soil near bracken and rotting plant debris alongside a path in Holywell Dene near Seaton Sluice on 9th December 2002. The dull brown matt caps were variously conical to flat depending upon their size and degree of maturity. They were from 30 to 60 mm in diameter with pale tan gills and the stems measured about 50mm long and 4 to 5mm in diameter. Initially we had difficulty in determining the species. A combination of the smell and the microscopic features led us to the conclusion that we were dealing with *M.cucumis*.

The smell is said to resemble that of cucumber or fish-oil. Our specimen reminded us of the smell of cod liver oil from our childhood! Microscopically, the name of the genus provides a clue. Sections reveal prominent large lanceolate cystidia resembling nettle “stinging-cells”. This species is said to be infrequent (Jordan), but has been recorded at several sites in Co. Durham and, according to Bramley, is widespread although not common throughout Yorkshire.

Panellus mitis (Pers.:Fr.) Sing.

On 28th December 2002 we noticed several small white fan-shaped fungi growing from the surface of a rotting felled conifer at Druridge Bay Country Park. Each “fan” arose on a short stem about 2 to 3 mm long, and covered by white granules. The upper surface was sticky and readily peeled off. The gills radiated to the edge of the underside from the stem. It is worthwhile noting that the usual texts give conflicting descriptions of the spore shape! Most books state they are smooth ellipsoids whereas Pegler (D.N.Pegler 1988 *Mushrooms and Toadstools*. Mitchell Beazley, London; and 1990 *Field Guide to the Mushrooms and Toadstools of Britain & Europe*. Kingfisher Books, London) states they are “sausage-shaped” (allantoid). Our specimens gave rise to a white spore print and the spores, which averaged 5.4 X 1.6µm, were distinctly allantoid and stained blue with Melzer’s Iodine This is the first time we have seen this species in Northumberland. Jordan states it is rare, as does Phillips. However Bramley states it is not uncommon late in the year in the Pickering area in Yorkshire and it has been recorded in Hamsterley Forest in Co. Durham.

Another threat to giant trees

The fungal pathogen, *Phytophthora ramorum*, a close relative of the species that caused the 19th century Irish potato blight and famine, normally attacks only oak trees, causing Sudden Oak Death (SOD for short!). Within the last few years it has developed a taste for Californian Giant Redwoods and Douglas Firs, a rather enormous leap for a fungus. Drastic measures are being introduced to protect a \$1,000,000,000 timber industry.

Epping Forest Mushrooming **Licences**

In the land of Essex Man, so many people are trying to make a fast buck selling wild mushrooms that the Conservators of Epping Forest have felt compelled to control this traffic by issuing licences. These are limited in number and restricted to one per household, allowing the householder to pick up to 1.5 kilos of fungi on a specified date only! This restriction does not apply to those pursuing a serious study of fungi.

Mycophagists Beware!

Russians have a passion for collecting edible toadstools but do not usually go in for hallucinogenic self-stimulation. Sadly, whilst on patrol in the Caucasus Mountains recently, a young Russian soldier shot and killed eight of his colleagues, having inadvertently partaken of such fungi. So, watch it, Tom! You may have to submit to a blood test next autumn!

Split-gills recorded locally

Following an indirect tip-off from a Darlington Field Club member. Alan Legg was delighted to find his first ever personally recorded specimens of the Split-gill fungus, *Schizophyllum commune* growing on cement-filled, ornamental bamboo posts at a garden centre in North West Yorkshire in October 2002.

At the beginning of this year he saw it again! Babs’ husband, John Walton, collected some more specimens which had grown from a slit in a full plastic silage bag at Stodhoe Farm. This niche has been increasingly exploited by the Split-gill since first reported from Devon by Professor John Webster in 1990. The fungus does have a worldwide distribution in warmer countries and grows on wood as well as grasses, but it is happiest on tropical substrates or in tropical climatic condi-

Foray at Great Ayton with Great Ayton Wildlife Association.

Tom Kirby

On the 21st October, a fine sunny day, we gathered at the High Green Information Office for a much anticipated foray in the woods around Great Ayton. I had arrived early to take a short constitutional over the Hall Fields, where I assumed the foray would start, just to get the lay of the land you understand, and to ensure some impressive early finds. Nothing. In a field of about 2/3 of an acre... nothing. The Hall Fields comprise of real meadow which in my early years sported pink clover, daisies and buttercups, celandine and red and white dead-nettles. Horses grazed here and kids played here. Kids are well known for their propensity for spreading spores, and this attribute, combined with the equine ability for spreading substrate should have guaranteed SOMETHING...but no. In desperation I headed for the one tree in the field..... the grass was sparse beneath its shady canopy, but long and lush at the limit of the shade. It was at this border that I found, or thought I found, a cluster of *Conocybe tenera*. (I was later disavowed of this find, without malice, by Alan! Too difficult to identify with certainty in the field, I should have kept a sample for identification.) Whatever it was, it was a find, and I could lead my enthusiasts straight to it. It is important to establish oneself in the pecking order earlier rather than later, I always find. Saves trouble later. A disciplined forayer is a happy forayer. No respect, no discipline.

Now, Great Ayton is my birthplace and like to think I know the surrounding countryside very well, but a lot has changed over the past 30 years. So it was with prudence that I deferred to the contemporary topographical knowledge of Alan Bunn and his group for what was to be an excellent day. I had paid a visit to the village Information Office in advance of the start time, for information on local walking routes but information had they none. A oui-oui-board consensus was reached that we should begin in the meadowland, where I had pre-er-ambled, and onwards to the woods. Most of the outgoing routes had been closed during the Foot and Mouth period, resulting in the cancellation of the planned 2000 and 2001 forays, and I was keen to get going. I had not taken into account the pent-up enthusiasm oh the GAWA members! Several had turned up with motley collections of fungi, presented on trays, platters and newspaper. Some had brought along specimens for identification in Tupperware boxes, others in plastic bags. Most specimens were devoid of stipe and substrate and many were in terminal decay...but the motives were good and the interest genuine. A Tupperware box was opened under my nose and nestled within were at least half a dozen Earth-stars, said to be collected from an area of gravel and stone-chippings in the garden of the presenter. There were many more, I was informed! It is unfortunate that there are only so many hours in the day and if a foray we were to have, then a foray we had to begin. With a flurry of rapid identifications, for which I am famous, we set off along the Newton Road to the old wrought iron gate into the Hall Fields. As we walked. I talked. I always begin a foray by advising all that we will find nothing of culinary interest, just to see how many of the group peel off in the first hundred yards. This I did. No one departed. A good sign.

Risking our lives we made hedgehog-like rushes across the busy road and through the gate. Once in the field, a head count established that we had no fatalities and I set off with sufficient confidence, mixed with nonchalance, to inspire all but the most pessimistic forayer. The weather had been very dry over the previous week and there had been a few days of gusty wind. I admit that even I had no great hopes of a high count, and so after but five minutes in the meadow and no finds I thought it was time to pull my eureka stroke and "find"

the conocybes. This was not easy. The blasted things are small and fragile at the best of times but these had developed a further attribute... invisibility. After circumnavigating the tree muttering, several times, I gave up. They were gone... inexplicably gone in less than one hour. These situations are sent to try us and I am not easily fazed by such events, preferring instead to offer up an explanation. And so it was that I decided to come clean and confess to prior knowledge, insider dealing, even planting of evidence. Though I was convincing in my claims of the recent presence, plausible explanations for the vanishing act were not fully formed in my thoughts, which were heading rapidly down such unlikely avenues as "eaten by deer/mice/squirrels" or "...being VERY fragile".... or "... this is a characteristic of..." or "dried up to nothing..". Not good. Not good at all. Then salvation. Salvation in the form of a still, small voice of calm. "Oh, you don't mean these do you?"..... Well, yes, I did. There they were, in a small wicker-basket, along with an *Amanita rubescens* and a couple of dung fungi, *Bolbitious vitellinus* and *Stropharia semiglobata*. The gentle soul clutching the basket was, like me, an early arrival, and had gone for a pre-emptive walk in the field. I had passed her going in the gate.... as I was going out !

There is a moral in there somewhere, which will no doubt be pointed out to me in due course.

Moving swiftly on, we then set off to the woods, finding on the way some fine examples of (Macro) *Lepiota procera*, in a fenced-off covert, path-side growing *Amanita rubescens*, and the usual regulars without which no foray would be complete, *Rhytisma acerinum*, *Auricularia auricula-judea*, *Piptoporus betulinus* and *Xylaria hypoxylon* . You will be delighted to hear that I have no intentions of working my way through the list of finds suffice to say we reached a respectable 48. What I am pleased to report is that I found a whole patch of woodland in terminal decay, due to a rising water level, in which the dominant fungi was *Chlorosplenium Aeruginascens*. Practically every twig and fallen branch was radio-active green! A superb display of *Polyporus badius*, shining like polished shields in the splendid isolation of Slack's Wood added to the excitement. A large find of a species of Eye-lash fungi brought rapturous and unrestrained joy to all. Only *Clitocybe odora* caused more interest among the gathering but for me the confirmed find (A. Legg) of *Cortinarius delibutus* made my day.

Because there were so many good finds I will be putting this site up for a future foray and I would hope that the Great Ayton Wildlife Association would join us, as their enthusiasm was infectious and genuine. I myself revisited the site a couple of days later for a more leisurely foray. I was particularly impressed with a huge outcropping of *Scleroderma citrinium* covering a long slope of dry and sandy ground of some five by twenty metres. There were well over 100 specimens of all sizes and the overall effect was quite stunning.

I made one further find and were it not for the unfortunate pressure of time I would have brought it for identification. In the event I scanned it, I wrapped it in greaseproof paper, I stored it in a cool, dry place..... and the wife threw it out. Here is the scan. (on front cover)

Any ideas? (No.Ed.)

I doubt whether we can run to a colour print, so for the record:

The specimen is approximately 150mm high and was growing on bare earth with a small amount of woody debris, in an area of dense Hawthorn. The large cap is approximately 50mm in diameter and is fasciated (at least it would be if it was a delphinium stem!) to the cap beside it. The caps are chestnut brown and fine suede in texture. The stipe is white with a very faint pink cast and the whole fungi is very firm, brittle and rigid. Gills are pale cream with again, a very pale pink tinge, which may be indicative of spore colour. Under a microscope the spores appear clear, spherical and slightly ornamented.



tions. Hence these two fruitings.

Helping Your Memory

Alan Legg

“How does he remember them all?” I sometimes hear people mutter when I come out with yet another long Latin name. The short answer is that I don’t, not always any way. You will increasingly see me cudgelling my poor old brain, trying to bring to the surface a name that I know I ought to remember. Half the specimens I pop into my bag these days are not fungi I can’t identify, merely some whose names refuse to surface on the spot. So the little parcels are just reminders for when I get home. Increasingly my short term memory won’t work properly. It’s not just a question of going upstairs to look for something and, once there, being unable to remember what it was I wanted. More and more now it’s being distracted in the performance of a simple task and then being unable to remember what it was or making stupid mistakes in the execution of it.

And yet I still persist in trying to learn new names for fungi newly encountered, such encounters still happening almost every time I go looking. The trick is to ensure that, once attributed, I can find and rehearse the new name at will. I know that mostly I shall be unable to call it to mind when I want it so I have to put it where I can get at it again, and again and, probably, again.

Yes, the trick lies in repetition. It is a tragedy that, more and more, in modern education the emphasis is entirely on understanding (a good thing in itself) whilst memorising is often both pooh-poohed and neglected. In my youth the emphasis was too much the other way and, unless you actually enjoyed learning things by heart, - which most small children do quite natu-

rally - you were frequently bored rigid. The fear of not entertaining children all the time is one of the great faults in today’s system. Now, having got that off my chest, I shall descend from my soap-box and get back to the point!

As I said, the trick lies in repetition? Repeating the name to yourself in your head, or by sub-vocalising, is a good start. If possible, use a reference book to find out what it means in English. But don’t, I repeat, don’t worry about pronunciation! There are about as many pronunciations of some mycological names as there are users of them. The important thing is that what you say is intelligible to others. Take the name *Clitocybe* for instance. Give it three or four syllables as you wish, It could be Klíttosibe, Klíttosibby, Klíghtosibe, Klíghtosibby, Klit-tósibby Klightósibby - and probably several others. I did a little Latin at school which helps with some names certainly, but I did no Greek - and *Clitocybe* is a Greek name, from two words meaning “angle” and “head”. This refers to decurrent gills and a deeply concave cap, so that it means something like “depressed head” - and we can all relate to that! Remember, I never learned this at school; I had to look it up!

So much for pronunciation. Much more important to the memorising process is re-reading the names - and frequently writing them down! “Learn with a pen in your hand” is a mantra I must have repeated thousands of times during my career. I have sometimes been thanked for this by former students years afterwards.

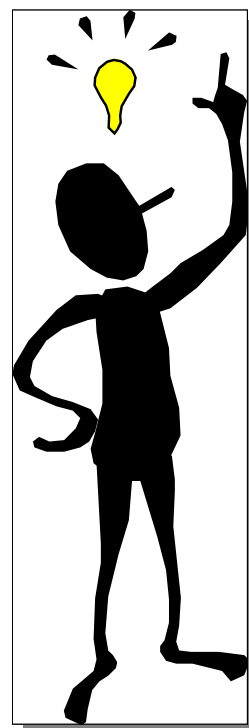
Every new record I make goes first of all into my notebook which is frequently re-read for various reasons. If the fungus concerned is being recorded for the first time, it then gets copied into a supplementary list, also frequently referred to. At the end of each year, each record is again copied on to my card index. Such new records are often

published, sometimes in different contexts in more than one report or journal. Each time this involves a rough, hand-written copy, frequently re-read for correction purposes and stylistic improvement. This, of course involves re-reading the new name several times. The whole text is then word-processed, a procedure for which yet more re-reading and rewriting are required. The resulting printout is again re-read several times for correcting before the final version is sent to an editor for approval or otherwise. More often than not, depending on the publication concerned, further re-reading and amendment have to take place before the piece is fit for publication. Even so, re-reading and correction of galley-proofs are also often necessary. During this process, numerous journals and books dealing with the fungus concerned are read and checked over and again. So, from identifying a fungus to final publication of the record involves innumerable rehearsals, subvocalisations and rewriting of its name. Thus, even if I am unable to bring the name to mind at the drop of a hat, I can certainly refresh my memory by looking up any stage of the original recording process from field guide to published record. And, every time I go over the name, I automatically call to mind the scene of the original discovery and reinforce its place in my long-term memory. Any fault in such recall can usually be corrected by replaying a dictaphone tape or re-reading my rough note-book.

Now, no-one expects every member of the NEFSG to have the time or inclination to go through this long process. But you can help yourselves by getting into the habit of going through the essential part of it. Using a dictaphone, checking a field guide when you get home from a foray - or even just in from the park or garden, - making a few brief notes of your finds and other people's; these are all things you can make a habit of doing. Adding to this process by copying out a personal record on to an NEFSG record

sheet takes little more time - less on each occasion. Moreover eventually your record will be immortalised in the British Fungus Record Database and available to the whole world via the Internet! It will add just a little to the sum total of human knowledge and help scientists to map and track the frequency, distribution and decline or spread of fungi throughout Britain.

It can be a bit of a chore but one you can all perform in any spare moment. And, of course, it will help a little on each occasion



Statistically speaking....

Tom Kirby

Thanks to the sterling efforts of all involved, forayers and collectors, the backroom-boy Alan, and everyone who has helped to input the huge amount of data, we now have our complete found-fungi archive in one distributable database. Quite apart from the importance of the incorporation of our records into the BMS national database, there is an opportunity here for some less serious analysis!

I have often voiced my surprise (to anyone who would listen!) at what I thought were the unlikely distributions of “common” fungi which I had noticed in our records. Though the records were incomplete at the time of my observations (...never let facts get in the way of a good story!), I can now offer up some more substantial oddities. I have to say at the outset that no conclusions should be drawn from the information (a loose term) following, and we should all be wary of statistics!

I would further emphasise that this “record collection” is a funny old business, as at one end of the expertise spectrum there is a tendency to record *only* what we are reasonably sure about, often discarding what may be a rare find, and at the other end a tendency to always be on the lookout for that first-found rarity, to the exclusion of the more mundane or common specimens. Gordon fits neither of these categories! Not only has he dozens of rare finds to his credit, he has also painstakingly recorded every occurrence of *Calocera pallidospatulata*, a total of some 100 entries! I can only just forgive him for this when I was inputting his records, as shift-on C shift-off A L O C E R A space P A L L I D O - S P A T H U L A T A back-shift.....italics on, forward cursor.....italics off does not run readily from my one good typing finger, on the grounds that he had to input them all manually first! It is a moot point, indeed, that the BMS database has only 816 instances of this squidgy little blighter, which means that Gordon’s contribution represents greater than 10% of all the records! I suspect that he records this species for the hell of it! In fairness, Babs (1), Alan(5) and yours truly (1) have also recorded this fungus but I try not to find it as its name is too long. I am, at some time in the future, hoping to prove a correlation between “Occurrence” and “Name Length” and am working on the required macro right now.

Moving on to more familiar ground, the field outside my house to be precise, I can recall that in 1998, we tolerated a particularly offensive summer. This was due to the obnoxious effluvia hanging like a cloud around my dog, she/it being gravitationally attracted to the steaming pyramids of pig-poo dumped with astrologically determined exactitude, just outside our garden gate. I cannot say with conviction but I think that Venus was in ascension and Uranus was in Orion. Long did we wait for the great prophet, Dennis-the-farmer (for it was he) to make a second coming and plough the pyramids into the ground. Which he did, in September. The field erupted in October. *Agaricus campestris* as far as the eye could see. To my shame I did not record the event in any significant sense.... but, dear reader, I am not alone. The NEFSG database has only eight, yes EIGHT, confirmed sightings of this widespread and common mushroom. The database shows that all eight records were made in 1998. Gordon recorded (6), Joan (1) and Alan (1). I would like to put the record straight. I dined royally, as did my many Autumnal friends, that year. I ventured into the field on several consecutive days to collect. The field being in excess of 50 acres I probably entered at the very least twenty, three-digit, grid references. So, belatedly, I would ask the current custodians of the keyboards to include my records for the year 1998. I suggest, say, 1000 finds equally distrib-

uted between October 5th and 25th, grid references by application. There, I DO like precision in all things.

Of course, I am being very tongue-in-cheek in these observations. Do not forget that a considerable effort went into getting where we are today. The NEFSG records total some 6,530. Within *that* many statistics there are bound to be some anomalies. I am not sure whether the following is such an anomaly or not. Out of the 6000 plus separate records we have a recorded *species* count of 1065 approximately. That is not the anomaly. I can be corrected on this but I have determined that the Fungi 2000 database has a species count of 3374. The interesting fact is that the BMS Fungi 2000 database shows that *Agaricus campestris* has been recorded 765 times. You're slipping Gordon. Less than 3% on this one!

Oh, I almost forgot. In 1998, Alan also found and made the one and only record in our database of *Agaricus arvensis* (Widespread, common). He found it in Danby.

We forayers often chatter mundanely as we prod and poke our way along. Each year brings new generalisations and pearls of often eclectic wisdom. I am as guilty, if not more guilty (if not the MOST guilty!), as the next man of waxing unwisely as I foray on. Sometimes, though, a personally held truth is voiced by another.. and a warm feeling it gives. Boletes, I hear you say. Exactly. Where are the boletes? I thought it was just me, but there does seem to be a decline in the Bolete count over the last couple of years. Of course, Foot and Mouth limited us to a large degree recently and areas where we could expect to find Boletes in abundance were not walked. Pearl of eclectic wisdom coming up. I heard it said, and I have repeated this as if my own thought, quote ".....and so we can expect to find lots more Boletes after the Foot and mouth restrictions are lifted..." Unquote. (Forest Ranger in Wendover Ancient Forest, late August this year). This, on consideration, is rubbish. So what is the truth? Well, I am sure there *is* a dip in the Bolete count this year but no more than could be expected with the prevailing weather conditions. Foot and Mouth does not come into it. The recent foray in Hamsterley Forest will show one or two finds and I noted that Gordon got his mitt on a *Boletus Erythropus*, but we generally agreed that it was "a bad year". I, of course, am on the lookout for *Boletus edulis*, a culinary favourite. This year I have found one. So I checked the NEFSG records to get at the facts. *Boletus edulis*, total recorded finds (18). Nine in 1998, (7) in 1999, (2) in 2000. This year? We will have to wait and see. Incidentally, the recorded finds were all, bar two, from Gordon. Andy and Alan each recorded one.

In analysing this exciting new information we must be careful to avoid error due to the nature of the very field of endeavour in which we find ourselves. I am talking here about the *names* of fungi. They keep changing. It is only in mycology that latin can be said to be a "living" language (QOD. and Greek?*Ed*). I give as an example that most ubiquitous fungus, *Trametes versicolor*. Found everywhere, recorded er...twice! Andy again. But look up *Coriolus versicolor* and you will find nearly fifty records, from practically everyone!

As I said at the outset, one must not look too deeply into analysis as it is known to cause paralysis. Bearing that in mind I feel that I am on safer ground if I stick to what I know to be true. I know that I have found *Agaricus xanthodermus* on many occasions. Indeed, I have committed myself in print once or twice. My farmer friend across the road has been saved from certain coma on several occasions by my in-depth knowledge of the identifying characteristics of this species.

As it stands, the most we can hope for in Collins Guide 2005 is *Calocybe pallidospatulata*...common as muck! I knew the man who found them, statistically speaking.