

# North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter 36 March 2005



DEVELOPMENT OF GEASTRUM TRIPLEX

A part of Dorothy Wolfe's Study of the Earth Star *Geastrum triplex*. See pages 7 & 9

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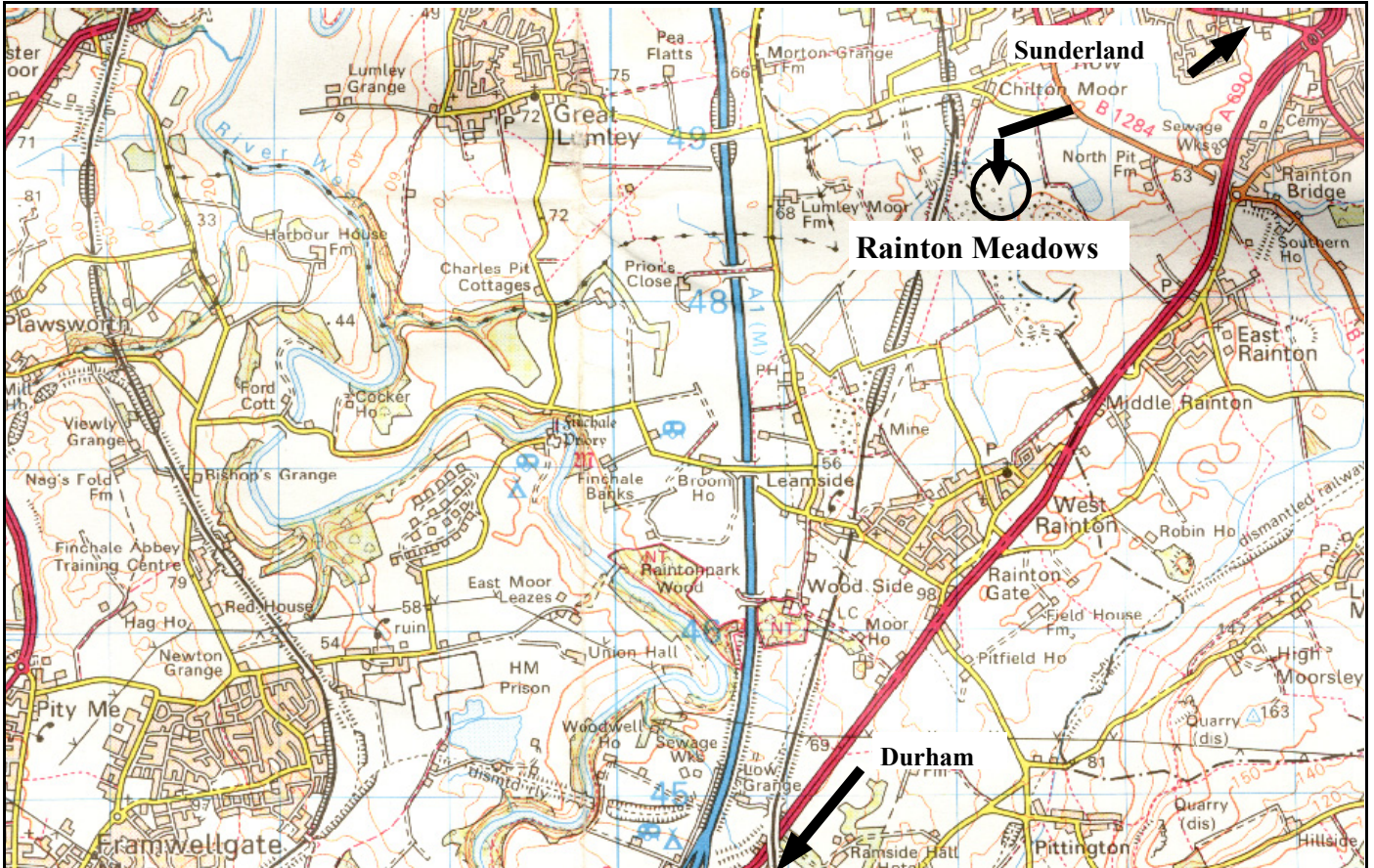




## Next Meeting March 12th 11am at Rainton Meadows NZ325486

We will be having a full day using Microscopes. If you have one bring it along, if you haven't don't worry we have our own and some spares for you to use.

For lunch bring your own food, tea and coffee are available from the Visitor centre.



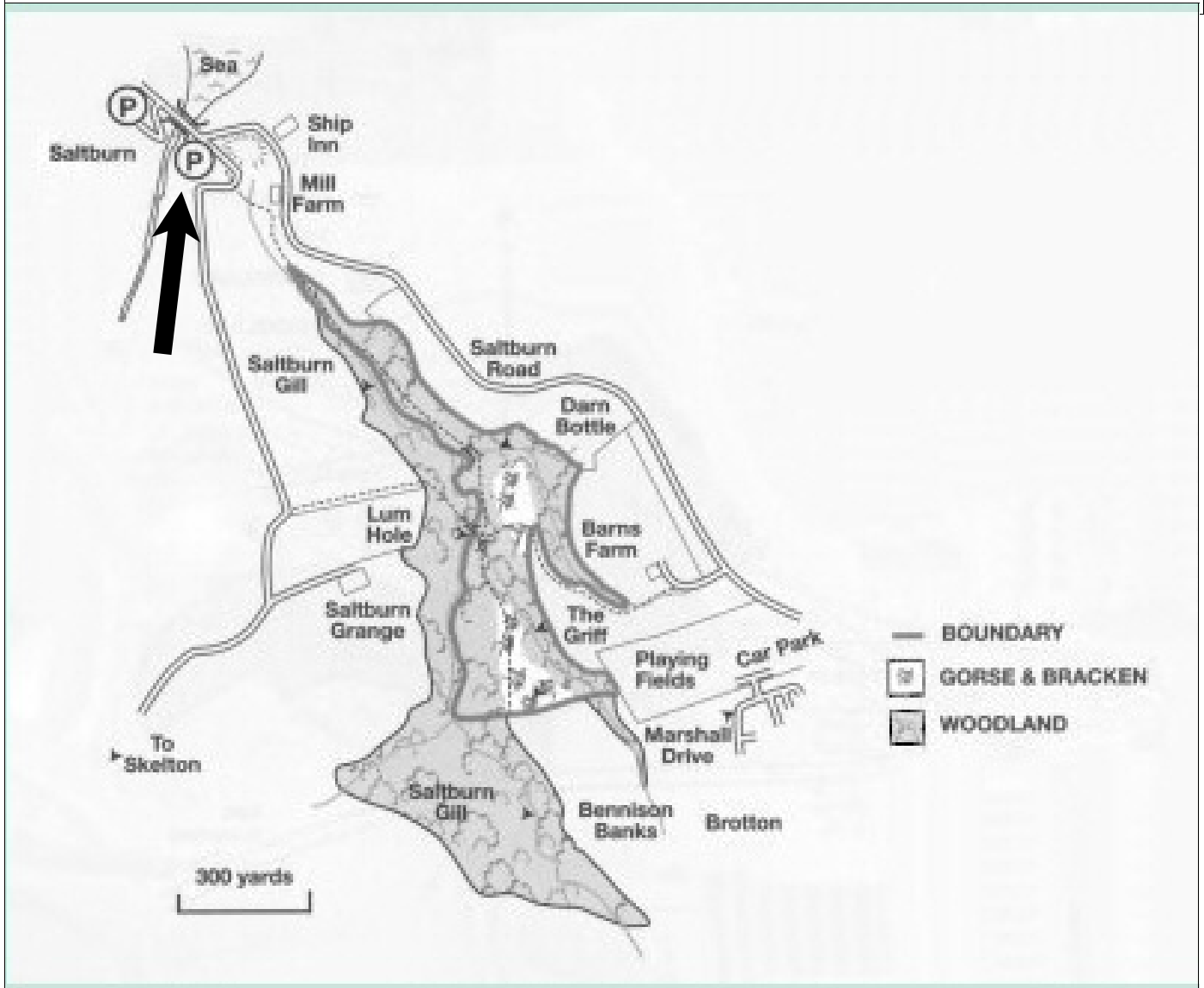
### SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Many members have not yet renewed their subscriptions. Could they please now forward their cheques as soon as possible, £6 single, £8 couple made out to N.E.F.S.G. (North Eastern Fungus Study Group), and send to:

Babs Walton  
Stodhoe Farm,  
Middleton St George  
DL2 1DS

## Saltburn Gill Foray Sat May 7th NZ665215

Location and access: The reserve extends south-east from Saltburn. Access with convenient parking is near Mill Farm, from the boating lake where the Gill flows into the sea



**North Eastern Fungus Study Group**  
**Eighth AGM – SATURDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> January 2005 at 11.a.m.**

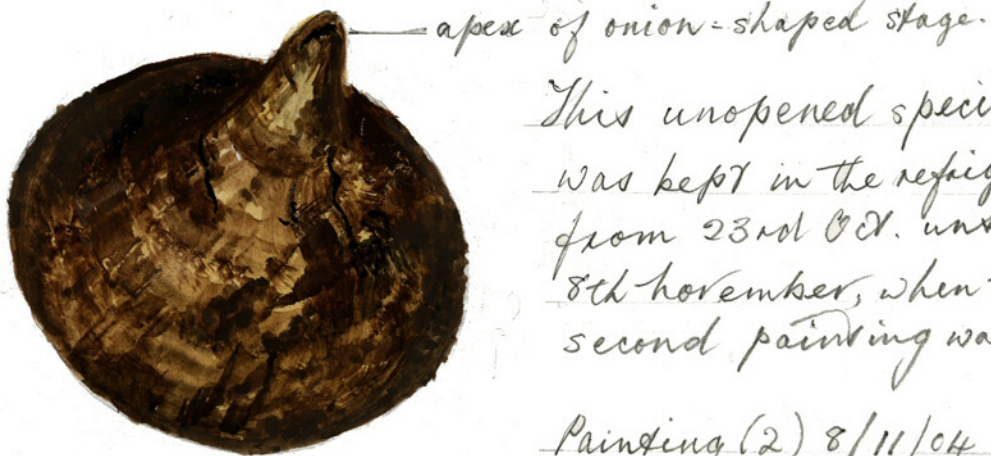
1. **Apologies for absence:** Christine & Hewett Ellis, Gayle & Chris Lowe, Catherine Gillie, Pat Wood, and Doug McCutcheon– 11 members attended.
2. **Election of Officers:** Re-election of Gordon Simpson as Chairperson, Alan Legg as Group Leader, Tom Kirby as Treasurer, Keith Cunningham as Newsletter Editor and Babs Walton as Secretary. There were no other nominees. However, Andy McLay has expressed interest in committee work and will be invited to the next committee meeting where it is hoped to create an office for him.
3. **Minutes of last A.G.M:** Accepted as accurate
4. **Matters arising:** Website - Item 7 of these minutes.
5. **Programme for 2005**  
Sat Mar 12<sup>th</sup> – Rainton Meadows – Microscopes- [whole day]  
Sat May 7<sup>th</sup> – Saltburn Gill – Alan Simkins  
Sat Jun 11<sup>th</sup> – Crathorne Hall – Luncheon  
Sat Jul 23<sup>rd</sup> – The Stang – Cath Gillie  
Sat Sep 10<sup>th</sup> – Letah Woods – G. Simpson or Hexham – Andy McLay  
Sat Oct 15<sup>th</sup> – Mount Grace Priory- T. Kirby  
Sat Nov 12<sup>th</sup> – Rosa Shafto – Alan Legg
6. **Treasurer's Report**  
The accounts were passed around for the group to examine and Tom pointed out that the accounts can be viewed by any member who would care to see them. There is £249 in credit before 2005 subscriptions are collected. We can afford the use of more colour in the newsletter for the time being without increasing subscriptions.  
A microscope and graticule, along with some specialist books were purchased in 2004 and it is hoped to purchase more books this year, possibilities are: Hygrocybes, Agaricus, Lactarius, Entolomas and Lepiotas. At approx £70 we cannot afford all of them this year though.
7. **Website Proposal**  
Tom Kirby said that the situation had progressed with only little effort from him as Malcolm Birtle has done all the work which is excellent. The site though is in a bit of a 'cul-de-sac' as an extension of The Vasculum. Paul Hamlyn has been contacted to create a link between the Vasculum and the ACFG websites.
8. **A.O.B.**  
**[a] ABFG & BMS** – Alan Legg stated that lots of changes have taken place within the ABFG. It is now £15.00 for membership and the journal, now coloured, is renamed 'The Forayer'. Only Alan now has membership in the BMS, which costs £25 annually. Members at this meeting elected to pay Alan's £25.00 subscription as the whole group benefits from his membership.  
**[b] Alternatives to Forays and Microscopy meetings:** Joan Vickers pointed to the successful visit to Sunderland University and its small brewery. A visit to a Quorn factory, talks on Mushroom Farming, Trees and Plants were some suggestions.  
**[c] Request:** Dorothy Wolfe asked if members could supply her with some robust specimens of fungi for her to draw and paint.  
**[d] Records appeal:** Gordon Simpson raised the subject of Alan's article in the newsletter. A discussion followed and those members present agreed to attempt sending in their own personal finds.
9. **Date of next meeting: Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> Jan 2006 @ 11.am**



Early stage of GEASTRUM TRIPLEX - Several specimens collected by Alan Legg from Duncombe Park Helmsley.

SPECIMEN 3.

Painting (1) 23/10/04.



apex of onion-shaped stage.

This unopened specimen was kept in the refrigerator from 23rd Oct. until 8th November, when the second painting was done.

Painting (2) 8/11/04 N.B.

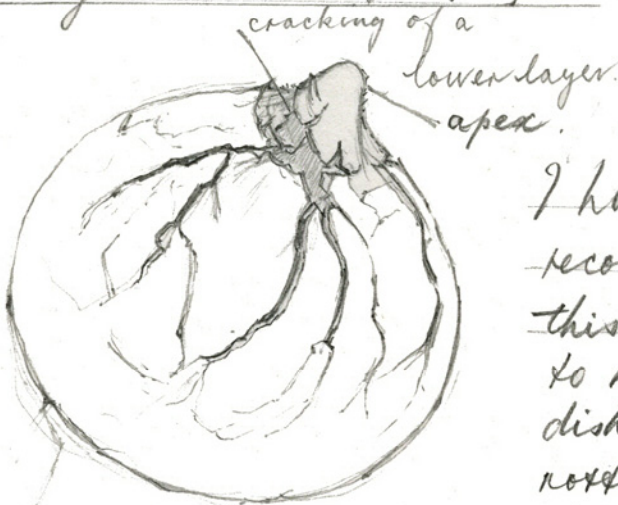
Once the 'initial stage' specimen was removed from cold storage, the change was quite dramatic, it quickly began to crack open.



TOP  
VIEW.

Drawing - same day 8/11/04

LIFE-SIZE.



cracking of a  
lower layer.  
apex.

SIDE VIEW.

I have decided to try to record the development of this specimen, in an endeavour to help I placed it in a dish, with damp soil and resting leaves from the garden. This was very effective as can be seen from the next painting. D.E. Wolfe.



DEVELOPMENT OF GEASTRUM TRIPLEX

Painting (3) 9/11/04



STAGE 3.

This illustration shows the development that has taken place in 24 hrs. I was absolutely amazed to find how much this had opened in such a short time!

LIFE-SIZE

Painting (4) 10/11/04

Development after another 24 hours.

STAGE 4.



Keeping the specimen in damp rotting humus seems to be working from time to time I give it a 'mist spray' with rain water.

D. E. Wolfe.



## A la Recherche - Part One

Alan legg

When people ask how I first became interested in fungi, I usually tell them of the chance discovery and purchase of a little book called *Mushrooms - a Guide to Toadstools and other European Fungi* which I bought, new, for half-a-crown in Middlesbrough in July 1970. At the time I was between jobs and staying with my parents in Loftus where I grew up. As a direct result of this purchase I re-explored the woods of childhood with the express purpose of seeking out and identifying some of the toadstools in my little book.

So began my new hobby which, as you know, was eventually to develop into a passion. But I was already 31 so the story must really have started long before. What was it that first stimulated an interest that had lain dormant for so long?

I must have been destined to teach English. I still have and occasionally glance through a pile of grubby old school exercise books - the ones in which I had painfully compiled a collection of "essays" put together, usually on Sunday afternoons, in the 50s as homework. The very earliest of these in fact dates from just before my last year of primary education at Loftus Junior School. The first "composition" in this volume is entitled *Our Walk to Slater's Banks* dated July 4th 1949. It ends as follows: "On the way back we saw many nice things. We saw a Shrew, a Tree Creeper, some Stink-horn fungi and, after a very nice nature walk, went back to school." This was certainly my first "literary" reference to a fungus - named by the teacher - the eggs of which were already very familiar and routinely collected as missiles on less formal explorations of the conifer plantation known otherwise as "the Private Wood".

So much for inedible fungi, as we children thought- of them. My first memory of field mushrooms dates from a few years later. In my early teens I usually spent a week

or so of the summer holidays with a friend who lived near Ripon. Most of my memories are now hazy but one stands out sharply still. Stewart and I had to make a short journey, before breakfast, to collect the eggs of a few chickens which habitually "laid away" in a hedge-back. In the same field we also collected mushrooms. I had known and enjoyed fresh farm eggs for a long time but collecting mushrooms was a new and intriguing experience. It was a real delight, amidst the scents of a summer's morning, to search for these tasty treasures that appeared so mysteriously over-night.

There must have been many later expeditions, once I returned home, to look for this free but priceless bounty in the fields around Loftus. Such memories are now blurred and it was not until my "long vac" days, after my parents had moved temporarily to Danby in Eskdale, that I did some systematic searching for more field mushrooms. One summer in particular, there was a marvellous "flush" in these fields given over to sheep pasture. I couldn't resist filling several containers with mushrooms. We had far too many to eat ourselves so most were put in little punnets and-taken to one of the chapel "Bring and Buys" in the village. I recall that they sold even faster than the wealth of hot cakes and other delicacies always in abundance at such functions.

From this period too emerge my first recollections of toadstools. One day I took home a rather tough specimen which had the usual mushroom characters but smelt odd and developed yellowish patches whilst in the bag. This my mother regarded with intuitive suspicion and refused to cook! She was probably right to react like this but I regret never knowing exactly what it was. On other occasions during these years I came across numerous "toadstools", many tall, elegant and sometimes scaly. I remember wondering What they were and if they had names. In a small village without a library, it was impossible to find out and, back at college I had plenty of other matters to occupy

my mind.

After graduation in 1961, I went to Westminster College, Oxford, to study for my Diploma in Education - a qualification which no longer exists. Some Durham friends accompanied me but, at the first opportunity after arrival, we, joined, as is the British wont, with new friends from other universities, in an informal game of football on one of the extensive playing fields behind our quarters, I soon discovered a crop of mushrooms, small but perfectly formed, and forgot all about football. The mushrooms were successfully cooked and served on toast in the House kitchen to those brave- enough to join me. I remember being disgusted that subsequent crops were invariably ruined, by football, an activity which has never since had the slightest appeal for me.

A few years later I went to work in West Africa. I was there for three years but present during only one rainy season - the time of most growth and frantic activity in the natural world. During that season a steward, employed, by a V.S.O. girl colleague, brought her a plate of "mushrooms" from a local "bush" market. With usual Anglo-Saxon caution, Sarah put the plate in her courtyard overnight to "think about" the matter. In the morning there was only a mass of blackish putrescence with evil-looking maggots drowning in it! This was my only, not very edifying, experience of tropical fungi.

During this period of the 60s, I spent a lot of summer holidays travelling around Ireland with a former college friend. I well remember one journey across the central plain where, every few hundred yards, it seemed, small groups of urchins were gathered by the roadside selling wild mushrooms to passing tourists. There must have been one of those flushes I had first encountered in Danby. At our next B&B in Athlone, there were masses of huge fresh mushrooms with our usual generous Irish breakfast. Mmm! My mouth still waters with the memory!

## **Book Review**

**Alan Legg**

### **Fungi of the Scarborough District**

**By Colin R. Stephenson**

The publication of a Fungus Flora or Mycota in book form is these days becoming a rare event, destined to become even more rare as electronic data storage inexorably becomes the norm. Also, in these days of shrinking Natural History Societies, it is remarkable that a 200-page book dedicated to fungi should be produced by the Field, Naturalists' Society of a relatively small and isolated town such as Scarborough. More remarkable still is it that such a work should be compiled by a single individual, in this case always backed up by the support and secretarial skills of his wife, Beryl, to whom the book is dedicated.

It appears to have begun its history as a millennial project suggested to the author in 1999 as an update of the 1950 records put together by F.C. Rimmington. That it has taken a further half-decade to bring to fruition should be seen as a tribute to the hard work and persistence of its author in the face of setbacks of which I have heard no more than the merest hint.

The book is an attractive soft-backed volume with a home-grown coloured illustration of Chanterelles on the front cover. It begins with short introductory sections by Professor Bruce Ing, by Col in himself and by forester Brian Walker. There follows a fascinating section, illustrated with colour photographs, taken largely by the author himself, of some of the rarer large

fungi found in recent years in the vicinity of Scarborough. This section concludes with a useful diagrammatic explanation of the taxonomic system used in the book.

The main body of the text is a list, in systematic order, of all the known fungi of the district, with notes on the more recent collections together with dates, initials of collectors and relevant supporting organizations and with identities of determiners where involved. A list of lichens follows and a supplementary list of fungi seen mainly in 2001 and 2002. The book concludes with useful addenda dealing with collectors and determiners, abbreviations used in the text, locations of sites mentioned with four-figure grid references, a map of the Scarborough recording area and indexes of fungi and lichens covered in the text. Personally, I would have liked a list of literature references but to complain of its absence would be nit-picking.

In his introduction, Colin tells us in a few words how he updated the names used in the 1950 list. Typically, he has not hinted at the innumerable hours of labour this task must have taken especially through the inclusion of both the old names and the new as well as cross-referencing of these all through the main section - in itself an enormous but extremely helpful undertaking, especially for readers who do not own a copy of the 1950 list. Names, of course, can never be entirely up-to-date because they change yet again even while publication is in progress! Colin has made a valiant attempt to get to grips with them and, where his grip has occasionally slipped, so would that of anyone else, however expert, within a very short time.

It is a mysterious but apparently inevitable fact of modern publishing that, no sooner has a manuscript passed beyond the control of its author, then all

sorts of errors begin to appear in the text! This book is not without its share of such mainly orthographic and typographic slips. The poet and artist, William Blake, avoided such trifling blemishes when he illustrated and printed his own work two centuries ago. I suppose that nowadays the distance between cup and lip is far greater than it was then; computer technology has in no way diminished and, in some respects, seems actually to have exacerbated the propensity for such slips. They are par for the course and remain no more than a very minor irritant in the reading of a text which is, in most respects, a remarkable achievement. I trust that Scarborough Field Naturalists will still be around to contemplate a further update in 2050. Few of us will be alive to witness it but we can be certain of two things; fungal names will by then be almost unrecognisable, and minor errors in accuracy will still appear in the finished product!

The Scarborough District may be right down in the south east corner of the NEFSG recording area but it comes within our ambit so I do not hesitate to recommend it to all our members. If you are quick you may buy your own copy, post free, by sending a cheque for £14.00 to:

Colin R. Stephenson  
35 Throxenby Lane  
Scarborough  
YO12 5HN.

## **How I became Interested in Fungi**

**Colin R. Stephenson**

I was born in the village of Cloughton and attended the small village school, which was reigned over by a head mistress, the late Miss Hodgson. In those days all women teachers were single.

We were taken quite frequently on nature walks, which I enjoyed greatly. This redoubtable lady also instructed us in the art of doing illustrations in water colour. When the mood takes me, which is not often, I still do water colour illustrations of fungi.

Natural history was then forgotten until 1971, when the now Bio Diversity Officer with the Forestry Commission working out of the Pickering office, took me to a meeting of the Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society and I renewed my interest. At that time this person was a young lad of 17. The botany recorder took me under his wing and I was shown many rare flowers which grow in our area. Then, by pure chance, I was asked to lead the Society's autumn fungus foray as the then recorder of the subject was unable to do so.

The young lad was Brian Walker and he took me to do volunteer work with the North East Area Group of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Another forester also in this group was Gordon Simpson MBE, a redoubtable naturalist. He alone fired my interest in fungi. I was shown such a variety of colour, shape, form and diversity produced by fungi, coupled with the fact that very few could be named, and I was "hooked".

Because I showed an interest I was then introduced to the late Mr W G Bramley; possibly one of the most respected amateur mycologists in the country. Many happy hours were spent in his company, including frequent Saturday afternoon teas at his home in Ruffa Lane, Pickering. I never dared call him by his Christian name, it was always Mr Bramley. He gave me my first microscope. I forgot to mention that fungi cannot be identified down to species without the aid of one of these instruments. Fungi cannot be identified in the field, well maybe a few. If you presented a fruitbody to WG, as we affectionately knew him, and asked him if it was such and such a species, the reply was always, "It could be".

He then advised me to contact Dr D A Read, Head of Mycology at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for permission to send specimens to him for identification. This was duly granted. Both my wife and I visited Kew on a number of occasions and were shown round the Herbarium, a most enjoyable and educational experience.

Many specimens were carefully dried on the mantelpiece over the fire (with maggots crawling out), descriptions written and measurements taken, before being parcelled up and sent to Dr Read. The letters I received back were both helpful and rewarding. Of great assistance throughout my "fungi years".

I was appointed Fungi Recorder for the Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society in 1978, a position I still hold, possibly because no-one else is willing or able to deal with this difficult subject.

Could I explain at this point that there are two main types of fungi. The

mushroom, toadstool type, i.e. umbrella shaped, and the cup fungi, by far the larger group – though not in size – most of these are only millimetres across. Dr B M Spooner deals with this group at Kew and we have corresponded for a number of years. Dr Read has retired and Dr Spooner is now in charge.

Mr Bramley took me along to some of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union forays where a number of professional mycologists were present, including Prof Roy Watling and Dr Mike Richardson from the Edinburgh Botanic Garden. I also met Dr Malcolm Storey, Dr Tom Herring and the best amateur, Peter Orton. All were willing to give advice and help. Now most of the professionals have retired and have not been replaced.

The area that the Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society covers follows grid lines. In the south it follows a grid line running just north of Flamborough Head inland to just south of Malton. It then turns north, running to Pickering, carrying on across the Moors before turning east to run out to sea just south of Whitby. Within the area is a very mixed variety of habitats, from pure moorland, a large amount of coniferous forest, the agricultural vale of Pickering and the chalk wolds. There are still small areas of deciduous woodland in hidden valleys such as Forge Valley. Regrettably, pure moorland does not produce a great variety of fungi. A number can be found growing in sphagnum but mostly of a dull brown appearance. One quite remarkable species can be found on cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*), turning the leaves from green to red and altering the shape to that of a spoon, its Latin name is *Exobasidium vaccinii*. The coniferous woodland does have many bright col-

oured fungi, such as the *Russula emetica* which grows with pine. As the name suggests, it makes you sick if you are foolish enough to eat it.

Agricultural land is the least productive because of the addition of fertilisers. The best areas to look for fungi are the few pockets of old deciduous woodland that we have left.

The fungi that we see are the fruit bodies, the "plants" from which they grow are called the mycelium which consists of a filamentous aggregation of hyphae and are in the ground or the host. The host can be anything from a tree to vegetation and many other substrates. If this hyphae is actually growing in a tree, it is parasitic and may eventually kill the tree. However, most fungi grow around and in the roots of trees and plants, forming a symbiotic relationship. This growing together has benefits for both partners.

Another group of fungi are the decomposers. I remember being told that if there were no fungi, we would soon be knee deep in the debris from green plants. So they do have a use besides some of them being edible, but that subject will have to be left for another day.

Recently I have completed a task which has taken me three or four years. An update of the fungi of the Scarborough district covering the last 50 years. It is more of a catalogue which contains some 3,850 species, and again I must thank Dr Brian Spooner and his colleagues at Kew for checking that I have used the correct names. Mycologists are very prone to changing Latin names.

Someone who shall be nameless has

produced a list of proposed English names for fungi. Frankly, I think it is a waste of time, they are meaningless.

In 1998 we found a small truffle type fungus growing in conifer litter under Sitka spruce in Dalby Forest. Kew confirmed that it was the first known record for England. At a recent British Mycological Society foray based at Cober Hill, Cloughton, a very small fungi imperfecti was found growing on windblown birch twigs. It proved to be the first record for this country, only previously having been described from Poland, Germany and Eastern Russia. So looking at fungi can have its rewards.

As a tailpiece may I just quote some ideas from an article in Field Mycology by Alick Henrici, a far wiser and much more knowledgeable mycologist than I. His sentiments are that if you expect to identify all the specimens that you collect, you are in the wrong game. If you only identify most of what you take home, you are well into mycology. Usually the trouble is lack of suitable books, they just do not exist.

May I wish anyone developing an interest in fungi, "Happy hunting".

Colin R Stephenson