

North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter 38 October 2005



Puccinia caricina

Photo Keith Cunningham

Contents

October foray Directions	Page 2	
November Foray Directions	Page 3	
Members' Talents	Page 4	Gordon Simpson
A walk in the woods	Page 6	Gordon Simpson
Fungi of the Stang Forest	Page 7	Alan Legg
Pocket Plums, anyone?	Page 8	Tom Kirby
Fungi and the Drugs Act 2005	Page 10	Alan Legg
Talking Rot	Page 12	Tom Kirby

For further information or if you would like to submit an article or questions for the next newsletter, please contact Leader: Alan Legg at 36, Carleton Drive, Darlington, Co Durham, DL3 9QP. Tel : 01325 - 350834. Membership Sec, Babs Walton, Stodhoe Farm, Middleton-St-George, Darlington, Co Durham, DL2 1DS. Tel: 01325 332789. Email: stodhoe@ukonline.co.uk Chairman: Gordon Simpson, 2 Coniston Avenue, West Auckland, Co Durham, DL14 9LL email: simpson16@supanet.com Treasurer, Tom Kirby, 4, Bishopton Crossings, Stillington, Stockton -on-Tees, Cleveland. Newsletter Secretary: Keith Cunningham, 1 Grove Cottages, Baybridge, Blanchland, Consett, Co Durham DH8 9UB email keith@kcunn.wanadoo.co.uk Tel: 01434 675339 Foray Organiser; Andy McLay email: andymclay@durhambiodiversity.org.uk



Affiliated with The Association of
British Fungus Groups



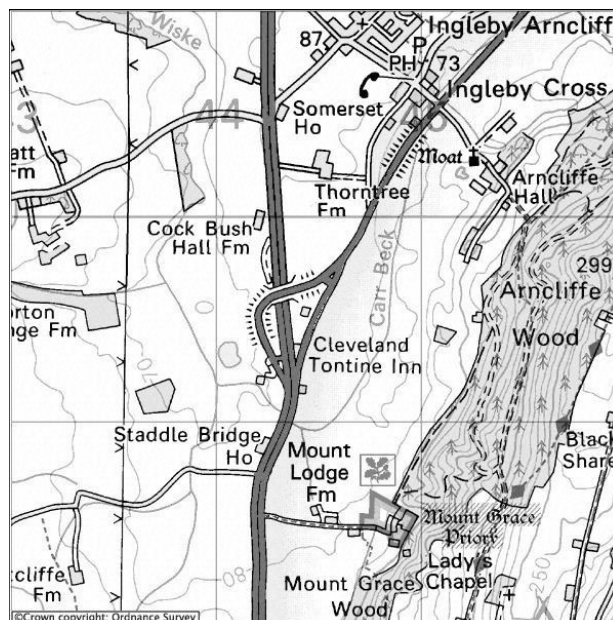
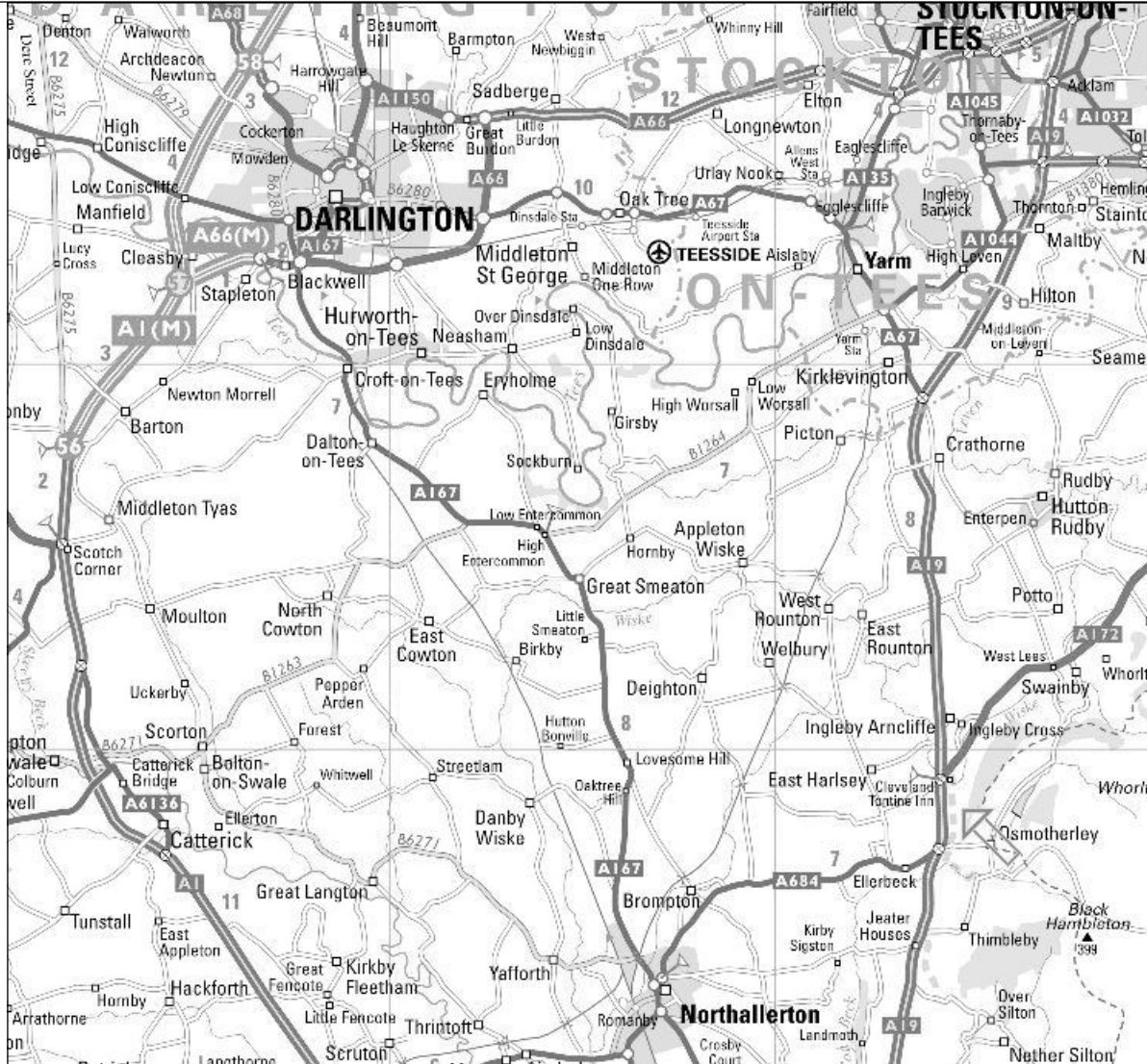
Affiliated to the British Mycological Society



This Newsletter is produced with the
assistance of Durham Wildlife Trust

Mount Grace Priory foray-16th October 11.00 a.m.

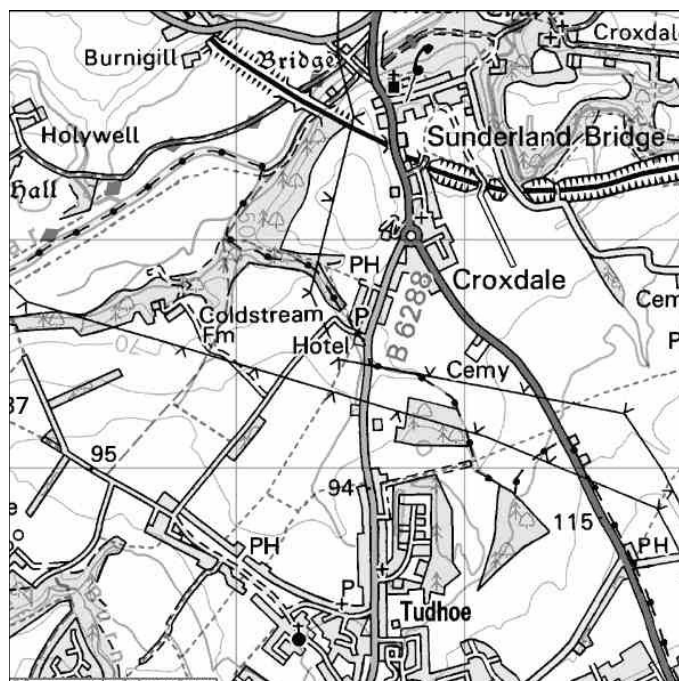
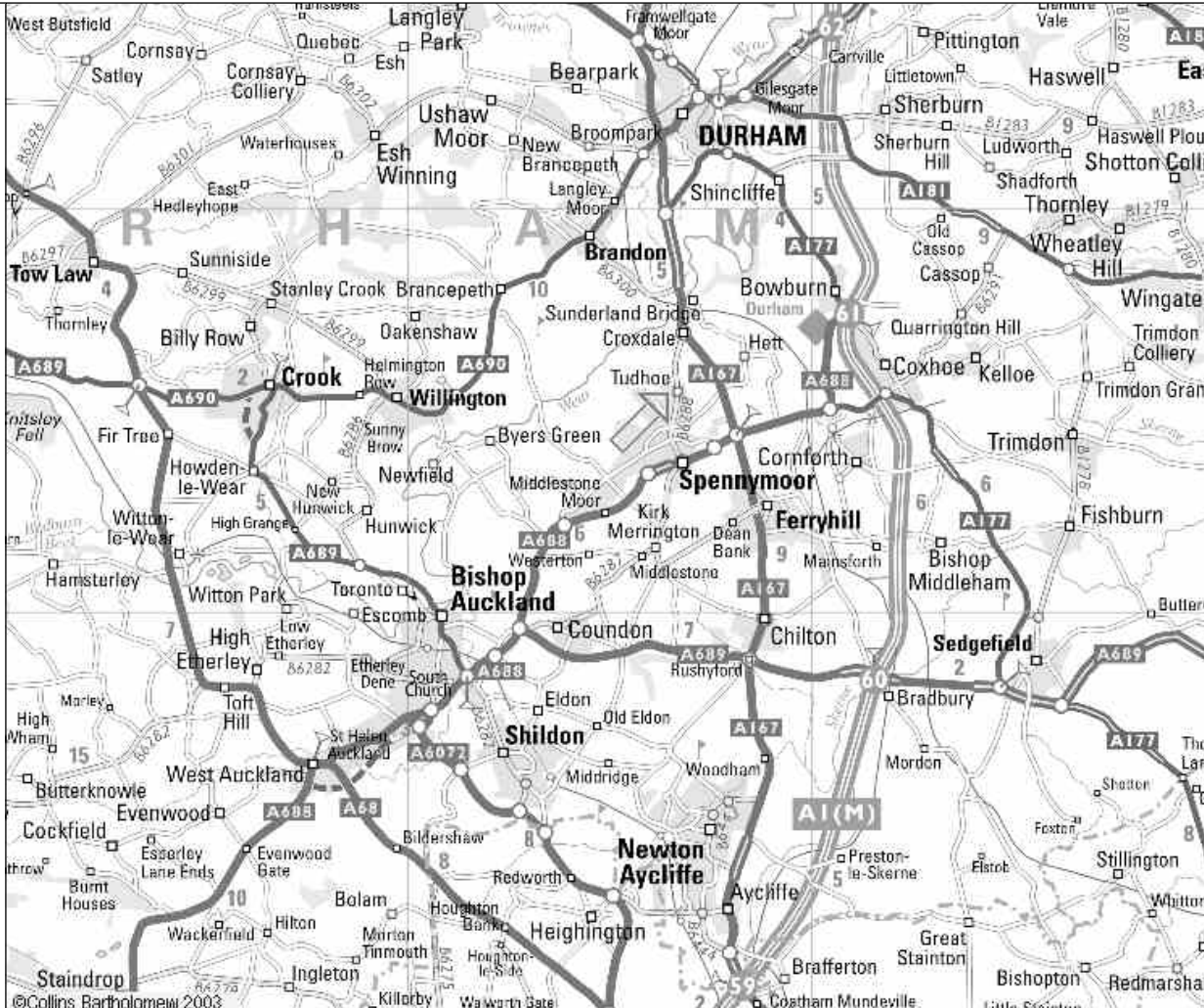
We have been granted permission to carry out a foray in the grounds of Mount Grace Priory. The surrounding woodland is also on the schedule for the day. We have are also permitted to use the car-park, so take the long drive off the A19 right to the end where the car-park is located on the right.



November Foray at Rosa Shafto Woods 12th November 11am Grid Ref: NZ253355

We will be visiting the Durham Wildlife Trust Reserve Rosa Shafto. It has a mixture of coniferous and deciduous woodland.

From Croxdale on the A167 take the turning for Spennymoor B6288. After 1 mile turn right at the Black Horse Pub towards Tudhoe Village. Right at the T junction and through the village for 1/2 a mile and then turn right and on for 1/4 mile park on the left.



Members' Talents

Gordon Simpson

Many of our members have hidden talents. Most of you are aware of Dorothy Wolfe's painting talents. Have you seen Jack's hands? He has to do the washing up and housework whilst Dorothy paints!

Doug McCutcheon studies many categories of wildlife besides fungi and his photography hobby has been rewarded yet few of us are aware of this. I think he ought to be congratulated and you all should be informed about his feats.

Doug won the British Wildlife category of the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2001 competition, which is the world's most prestigious and attracts an entry of around 20,000 from over 60 countries. His photograph was a Long-tailed Tit on snow-covered branches of



Long tailed Tit Canon EOS5 with Sigma 170-500mm lens at 500mm; 1/200 sec at f8; Fujichrome Provia 100; tripod; Canon speedlite 380 EX.
Copyright: Doug McCutcheon

a Norway Spruce, in other words a Christmas tree. At the presentation Doug commented, "As coincidence would have it Bill Oddie was sitting at the next table to us at the presentation and evening meal although I didn't get to speak to him. To be honest Bill's dress wasn't greatly removed from his field gear (between you and me). We were seated with a couple from Austria another couple from Japan, who couldn't speak a word of English, and a chap from China who had an interpreter from Nepal and we had a great night trying to communicate as best we could."

His next major achievement was winning the International Wildbird Photographer 2004, Birds in Habitat class. The subject was a juvenile Cinnamon Bittern climbing up a Lotus stem taken in Borneo.

There were over 2,000 entries from 24 countries and the winning entries were reputedly published in Birdwatching magazine December edition. The prize was donated by Fuji, an S20 Pro digital camera with a few extra bits and pieces which was claimed to be worth £800-00. Doug told me, “ I tried it out on the pretty snow scenes recently and though I got one reasonable shot. I managed to delete the best one which gave me the chance to rehearse some of my old army repertoire of curse phrases. Fortunately I was alone at the time.”



Cinnamon Bittern

Copyright: Doug McCuthcheon

Newsletters

For those members that have embraced the computer revolution we are now able to offer our newsletters in Adobe PDF versions so that you can read it on your computer or even print it for yourself.

Just send an email to me keith@kcunn.wanadoo.co.uk and I will send it on to you. If you prefer it this way instead of mailing, let me know.

It is hoped that most of our past newsletters will be available in the future and eventually on the internet.

Rumour has it that a certain well known NEFSG computerphobe has finally succumbed and now has a better system than me!!

Keith

A Walk in the Woods

Gordon Simpson

Cath Gillie organised a NEFSG foray in The Stang Forest, south of Barnard Castle, on Saturday 23 July 05. She and her husband have bought the Forest Lodge in the forest. Due to the long, dry spell of weather Cath was very worried about the paucity of toadstools so she considered having the foray postponed to a later date. When she telephoned me I pointed out that most members were aware of the shortage of fungi and a walk in a new area was good enough for many participants as they could return at their leisure. I persuaded her to hold the foray as a new date might still be in a dry period. Cath even searched the locality for walks with car parking facilities where more fungi might be found.

On most of the NEFSG forays there is a wealth of wildlife knowledge amongst the group. When fungi are scarce other wildlife of interest can frequently be found. On The Stang foray Andy McLay pointed out different flowers and gave detailed instructions on how to identify some of the sedges encountered. Joan Vickers took an interest in the sedges and at the test at the end of day she scored full marks. Most sedges have stalks triangular in section. Sedges can be divided into three groups. The major group has male “catkins” at the top of the stalk and female “catkins” lower down. On some of this group the female “catkins” are stalked whilst on others they are sessile. Of the sedges seen Moor Sedge *Carex binervis* and Glaucous Sedge *C. flacca* have stalked female “catkins”. Common Sedge *C. nigra* has almost sessile female “catkins” and Pale Sedge *C. pallescens* has a long stalk with pale green, sessile female “catkins” clustered towards the top and it has a downy base to the plant. The next category has male and female flowers mixed together in the “catkins”. Oval Sedge *C. ovalis* has, would you believe it, “catkins” that are ginger and oval. Finally a small group has individual flowers, the male at the top and sessile female flowers below. Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris* found at the lunch stop is in this section.

Due to the warm weather, butterflies were on the wing. Ringlets and Small Skippers were common. Single Small Heath and Small Tortoiseshell were seen. Some Figwort plants had been skeletonised by the Figwort Weevil larvae *Cionus scrophulariae*. The adults look like bird droppings whilst the larvae resemble small slugs. The pupae were in spherical cases nestled amongst the seed pods with which they blended. A few Broad-leaved Dock leaves had been eaten by the leaf beetle larvae *Gastrophysa viridula*. Again the larvae look like slugs. Earlier in the year clusters of yellow eggs are laid under the dock leaf and they could be mistaken for butterfly eggs. The adult beetle is metallic green and the female when full of eggs practises mooning as her black backside protrudes from below the wing cases. Many bumblebees were foraging for nectar and pollen. Amongst these insects were cuckoo bees. They, like the Cuckoo, use a host, the bumblebee, to raise their young so there is no need for a worker caste. Bumblebees have a large, triangular thigh on the hind leg. It is shiny and hairless but bordered by bristles into which pollen is packed for transportation to the nest. Cuckoo bees have hairy thighs.

At the end of the foray we retired to Cath’s bungalow for refreshment. Here hoverflies were exploring the flowers in the garden. Thank you very much Cath for all the work you put into the foray and for your hospitality.

Fungi of the Stang Forest - July 23rd 2005

Alan Legg

Gordon has dealt admirably elsewhere with the incidental pleasures of this outing. I'd like to add my thanks to Cath for the effort she put into making sure that we had a well-planned day. I'd like also to thank Gordon for bringing his own formidable talents to bear with such apparent effortlessness. A walk with Gordon at any time, but especially in summer, is always a pleasure and a privilege as well as being an education in itself - whether we find many fungi or not.

Congratulations to Cath on managing to find an attractive lunch site boasting the only two toadstool species of the day - the Blackening Waxcap, *Hygocybe conica*, and *Entoloma sericeum*. At one point during the afternoon we caught a whiff of the Stinkhorn, *Phallus impudicus*, but it was Peter Manuel who eventually tracked down a specimen. The poor thing had made a valiant effort to burst through its outer membrane but had given up the attempt in the dry conditions. Discoloured and with all its jelly dried up, it looked more like the ridged conical cap of a common inkcap.

As Gordon has already hinted, there is always something to find even in the most unpromising conditions. As Willis Bramley once said to me, on a drought-ridden Spring Foray in Beverley, "It makes you look, this weather". People worked very hard looking so that, by the end of the foray we had managed a total of 39 species. I also took away samples of old rabbit pellets and fresh roe-deer droppings on which to attempt incubation of more species. This has not proved very fruitful but the grand total has risen to 46 at time of writing.

Some spindly beech trees produced eight of our records including the infrequently collected pyrenomycete, *Biscogniauxia nummularia* which has so far defied all my efforts to pronounce its name. The fairly inaccessible culms of Common Bulrush, *Typha latifolia*, yielded a few scraps of dry material. These bore little more than lots of black dots but amongst them were two fungi new to me, *Periconia typhicola* with only 5 records on the National Database, and *Hendersonia culmicola* var. *minor* with none at all. So there you are!

Pocket Plums, anyone?

Tom Kirby

Sounding like some risqué post-pubescent schoolboy game, the rules of which I leave entirely to your imagination, "Pocket Plums" is the vernacular for an increasingly common manifestation of the fungal organism. When I say increasingly common, I mean locally, of course. As many of you will know, I make a mean Sloe (pun. Ed) de Vie from a particularly worthy French "potcheen", supplied by a friend of a friend. Without giving too much away (which tends to bring parties to an abrupt finale) I make it, as the bi-linguists amongst you will have gathered, from er..sloes (*Prunus spinosa*). Up until about six years ago the gathering of the ripe, deep purple berries was particularly pleasant task on a bright September morning. The hedgerows, which produced abundant supplies, were and are all around us, and so it was no effort to gather enough of the dew-damp fruits from only one or two Blackthorn bushes. Of course, not all Blackthorn produce good crops every year and so it was necessary to carry out a mental survey, as one does, whilst walking merrily along foraying and frolicking. What has become apparent is that for whatever reason, there is a huge increase in the occurrence of the deformed sloe, for that is how the fungal infection manifests itself. The effects of the infection begins to be visible as soon as the blossom falls. Blackthorn always seems to have a little celebratory burst of leaf formation once the fruit has "set" as it is one of the shrubs that tends to blossom up when there are hardly any leaves present. If the shrub is going to suffer from the then these early leaves will look a little crumpled and incurled from the start. There then seems to be a "recovery" period



as the leaves begin to pump goodness back into the shrub, in readiness for the production of fruit. What happens next is best illustrated by a picture (left). As you can see, things take a turn for the worse....but all is not lost. There follows a period of supernatural



growth during which many more fruits become similarly deformed. The effect of this ascomycete on sloe berries is quite remarkable, as almost all the characteristics of the fruit are shanghaied into the production of weird bean-like creations (above), coloured berries, curled scimitars and lumpy excrescences extending for several centimetres. From the point of view of the fungus, all this contorting and colour changing seems an unnecessary over-reaction to its presence, but the only obvious advantage is that the fruit gets MUCH bigger in terms of surface area, and this may be to the benefit of the invader. After a few days the infection seems to peak and almost all of the berries which will ultimately become unviable are well and truly in the grip of the fungus. More recognisable signs of a fungal infection than strange fruits appear as the ascomycete goes quickly through its life-cycle. A downy white fur appears (right) which can often be the sign of a secondary infection but further investigation showed that this was, indeed, a thick layer of asci.



The microscope was used to compare the asci with those photographed and illustrated on www.bioimages.org.uk/HTML/T11487.HTM - 2k.



A regular check has been kept on the progress of the infected shrubs and although the infection rate has increased annually so that locally at least we can expect almost 100% of to have SOME infection, the effect appears to be diminishing with practically all shrubs producing good quality fruit once the galled fruits have dropped. The systemic effects of this ascomycete do not appear to be detrimental to the host as even those shrubs severely infected go on to produce, if anything, BETTER sized fruit than the uninfected and possibly immune shrubs. This is, of course, subjective

as there are many other factors involved, not the least being that less fruit can often mean bigger fruit! One thing, though, is certain. This ascomycete is enjoying itself immensely up here in the North, as I have found its effects all over the blackthorn hedgerows from Scarborough to Melrose and from Grange-over-Sands to Grangetown. Down in the hot, wet South there is less Blackthorn and so I cannot honestly say I have seen any evidence of Pocket Plums below The Wash. Of course, there are some 100 or so species of *Taphrina* and so it is certain that one or another cousin will be at its work on fruits of other trees, but you only see where you look.

As a footnote I would mention that this article was written way back in May 2005 with some of the photographs from April 2004. I deliberately didn't publish until later in 2005 when the predicted recovery should be evident. It is. The photograph below was taken August 2005, from a previously very sorry looking *P. spinosa* when the galled fruits above were in full swing (literally). I still cannot see why "Pocket Plums". Answers in a plain sealed envelope, please.



Fungi and the Drugs Act 2005

Alan Legg

I have recently had two letters from Liz Holden, the BMSRN Coordinator, concerning the above subject. It should be of practical interest to all forayers, especially leaders of public forays which often attract people of dubious intent. According to the first letter (June 14th), amended wording of the Act suggests that fresh material of "a fungus (of any kind) which contains psilocin or an ester of psilocin" is now considered a Class A drug. A BMS officer has been in touch with the Home Office concerning collection of relevant species. A reply has been received suggesting that the only way lawfully to continue collecting any fungi containing contentious substances is to obtain a licence. On July 15th Liz wrote to the Home Office Drugs Licensing Section investigating the possibility of obtaining some form of collective license. Up to the time of the second letter (August 10th), no response had been received. I shall let you know of any developments in this area.

Meanwhile Brian Spooner has kindly provided a provisional list of UK fungi known or reported to contain hallucinogens. The confirmed species are mainly little brown jobs in the genera *Conocybe*, *Panaeolus*, *Psilocybe* and *Stropharia* which you are very unlikely to collect for consumption. Also contained in this part of the list are larger fungi you may inadvertently collect and take home fresh for study/identification. These include:

Gymnopilus junionus

Inocybe corydalina

Inocybe haemacta

Pluteus salicinus

The blue/green and other *Stropharia* spp.

Other possible culprits (reported but unconfirmed) include:

Hygrocybe psittacina

Mycena amicta

Panaeolus semiovatus

Pluteus cervinus

Pluteus ephebeus

Psathyrella candolleana

Rickenella fibula

Rickenella swartzii

Stropharia coronilla.

Of the latter group, three strike me as being of particular concern for different reasons:

1. I have myself in the past frequently eaten *Pluteus cervinus*, usually in the absence of anything more appetising, with no ill-effect of any kind. I shall not do this again.
2. *Psathyrella candolleana* is frequently described as edible in field literature. It is a small but common, sometimes prolific, whitish toadstool fruiting from early summer onwards. It might look tempting when not much else is around to collect for the pot. It would seem sensible to avoid this in future.
3. In view of the fact that many of its close relatives feature in the "confirmed" list, *Stropharia coronilla* seems of particular significance in that it can very easily be mistaken for a species of *Agaricus* - even a field mushroom. Many moons ago I made this mistake myself although I did not eat the collected material.

If you want to know more, you may access the relevant text (Chap. 17, Part 4, section 2) of the 2005 Drugs Act, via

<http://www.drugs.gov.uk>

Talking Rot

Tom Kirby

The weather each year is different from the last, particularly, I am convinced, in Great Britain. Anecdotally, Scottish weather is considered to be the most changeable, particularly in the short term. (If you don't like the weather where you are in Scotland, just hang around for ten minutes etc. etc...) I can speak with some personal authority on this subject as my job takes me all over the country at all times of the year. Due, no doubt, to the vagaries of the British climate (...we don't have a climate, we have weather etc.etc....) the subject occupies first contact conversation wherever I happen to alight. Preston, very wet; Ipswich, very dry; Pevensey, far too hot; Abergavenny, terribly cold; Cardiff...just bloody awful, boyo... but there has been a noticeable shift in the conversational content recently. Wind. Wind seems to be the dominant weather topic this year. This is not surprising. We have had some truly destructive blows. All over the country there is evidence of the damage wind causes... from missing ridge tiles in city housing estates to overturned trailers used as advertising hoardings in fields beside motorways. Although many trees along rural roads have been blown over or snapped like twiglets, including quite large specimens,

providing enduring evidence of the recent wind storms, not so immediately noticeable is the effect that the extreme winds have had on forested areas. From a distance, trees which have been blown over in the depth of a forest simply vanish into the greenery, but those on the perimeter are often overturned, uprooted and noticeable. To see ranks of fallen pine trees on a plantation edge is quite common (right, Hamsterley Forest SW exit), and not indicative of unusual weather damage. Of course, such trees are usually very exposed, and often bear witness to years of prevailing pressure by their leaning,



though to survive to an age where the shape of the tree is influenced by wind direction implies that there cannot have been terminally damaging conditions during the growth term. Being very aware of the large number of recently uprooted or snapped mature specimens I decided to carry out a little casual local survey, just to see how far the damage extended.

At the outset, I should state clearly that I had a hidden agenda. There are several very large "favourite" trees within a mile or two of me, nothing sentimental you understand, but they have produced a goodly crop of some edible fungus or other over the years. I was saddened to see that all of them had suffered considerable damage, some being completely fractured although still budding up this year, perhaps as a last DNA gasp. It is not often that an opportunity arises to examine so much damage so soon after the heartwood has been exposed, as the more often random toppling of individual trees may not be discovered for some time. What is interesting, though, is the now observable damage caused by the various infesting fungi ...possibly weakening the trees, so contributing to their untimely demise.

My first autopsy was carried out on a huge Ash, which had been a dominant feature of a favourite ecosystem in a "cleft" through which runs an intermittent stream. The stream used to dry up every year but noticeably had not done so since 2000. Willow whips have taken root in several damp and dark meanderings, poking through the collected detritus (straw, woodchips, twigs and quitesubstantial branches) brought down by floodwater from the streams long course through mixedwoodland and arable pasture. The lower branches of the Ash tree had long been festooned with water-washed dried grasses and twigs, and the huge trunk had been bruised and beaten by the bumping passage of larger flotsam over the recent years. None-



theless, it was the preferred anchorage for some huge specimens of *Ganoderma adspersum* which I had been observing over several years. The Ash has fallen. Snapped off in its prime by the January gales (left). At this point I should absolve myself of making controversial statements by stating clearly that there is no proof that the weakening of the tree was directly caused by the attachment of the fungus, nor that the fungus took up residence on the tree because the tree was already weakened. No. All that can be stated with certainty is that the tree had fallen and that the fungus was present. A little more investigation was obviously required.

I carefully removed a huge specimen (40 cms. across by 15cms. thick at the attachment) of *G.adspersum* from the lower remaining trunk, I still have it, then examined the heartwood of the tree. The main trunk had split in several places due to the force of the falling, and so the heartwood was easily accessible to my prodding. There was obviously something amiss. Instead of the centre core being compressed, hard and

slightly darker than the outer wood, almost the whole of the exposed timber was white, soft and fragile (below). Most of the strength of the trunk was in the few inches of sound wood laid down over the last



three to five years. The fungus was obviously winning the fight, and the tree was destined to fall sooner rather than later. On checking, it was apparent that the condition of the heartwood was typical of the rot caused by *G. adspersum* and I therefore decided to be unsurprised by what I had found.

There were more trees to investigate, one just fifty yards away, a huge Beech. It, too, had suffered the loss of one of its two diverting trunks in the same recent gales. Again I found a couple of sizeable (30-

35 cms. across) *G. adspersum* attached to the lower part of the remaining trunk. In truth, I knew that they were present as I had recorded them some eight years previously. As with the Ash tree, the exposed wood of the Beech was a pale cream, the centre “core” was absent and what remained was wet and fragile. Advanced decay had set in. Again, it is worth remembering that the recent winds have been exceptionally severe, so even “healthy” trees could be expected to be damaged. It is also worth noting that the destruction of even 75% of the centre “cylinder” of a tree may not mean imminent death. This may seem to contradict my previous assertion that “the tree was destined to fall sooner rather than later”, but it rather depends on how long a tree can be expected to survive with a rotten core. The answer is..... a long time. Years. Perhaps even tens of years.

Some authorities suggest that the removal of heartwood by decay can even extend the life of a tree, mechanically that is. A “pipe” is structurally less likely to break under bending stress than a “cylinder”, all other things being equal. Its all to do with the neutral axis and compressive versus tensile stresses. Got that? Right. (Is this about mycology or what? Ed.) I am a little sceptical, but nonetheless these were VERY old trees, that had seen many a good gale. The heartwood didn’t rot away overnight but no doubt took several years....and there are MANY younger trees snapped off on the roadside which have NO evidence of fungal invasion. Perhaps there is something in the theory.

So the rot caused by *G.adspersum* (and *G.applanatum* for that matter.) caused the infected wood to become typically white, wet and soft. Ash or Beech, the result was the same. This set me off in a different direction. You would think I had nothing to do. Ho hum. Here’s the thing. Is it possible to tell what fungus has (had) been present just by examining the corpse? (No Ed.) I decided to enjoy myself for the sake of this article. (In which case maybe, Ed.) Next stop, a much visited Willow, regular supplier of superb *Laetiporus sulphureus*. This tree, like others of the species, grows in or close to water courses, streams and ponds. In this locale, Willow is a renewable resource, trees of all sizes growing together. Old established specimens can reach a considerable size and I have noted on more than one occasion that *L.sulphureus* is to be found on willow of any age but that its establishment seems to rather depend upon damage caused by another mechanism. Furthermore, I have only ever found Chicken of the Woods on Willow in my patch, even

though the “books” would have us believe that Oak and Yew are the preferred hosts. There is no certainty in this fungus business save uncertainty, and I make the same disclaimer here as I did previously in this tome. There is no evidence that *L.sulphureus* is the causative agent in the initial collapse of the example trees I visited but without doubt the fungus is instrumental in the continuing downhill journey to ultimate demise! One particular willow, a vigorous roadside specimen growing in a drainage channel, first produced an outcropping of *L.sulphureus* in the summer of 94’. It was a poor effort. Just a blob of gelatinous yellow material, with a later pink tinge but little form. I believe the local deer ate it. I know I didn’t. In subsequent years, the tree always succeeded in squeezing out at least some fungal mass but it wasn’t until about 2001 that a truly magnificent specimen appeared. The bough of the willow had drooped downwards in a twisting

fashion under its own weight, common with the species, and then split longitudinally. From this split a HUGE Chicken of the Woods appeared. It probably weighed between 3 and 4 Kilos whilst still edible i.e. soft and wet. Then the bough snapped off. I was quick enough to collect enough of the delicious fungus to blanch and freeze for later and this was just as well as it has not produced any more since.....but the willow has now completely collapsed under the pressure of the winds, exposing the bright orange heart-wood (left) with the conspicuous cubic rot typical of *L.sulphureus* (below). The full extent of the rot is quite surprising, for whilst the tree was alive it was easy to imagine the steady spread of the filamentous felon, slowly insinuating itself into the



moist living timber, robbing the tree of life... but the willow showed no wish to give up the fight and even when the infected bough had long since stopped producing new spring growth the rest of the tree was apparently unaffected. Death was sudden when it came, and only a year has gone by from the cessation of last observable vital signs to the time of the toppling. The whole tree is affected, from that one split bough to the very tips of the last growth. It is obvious that the fungus continued to prosper long after the host had given up. The cubic fractures of the heartwood continue to form even now.



One of my favourite edibles is *Plurotus ostreatus* or Oyster Fungus, and I have established the whereabouts, and encouraged the growth of the species, in several locations close to my home. They wax and wane and wax again but always seem to do best when they are the last tenants in the building. That is not to say that Oyster fungus is to be found only on old stumps but that in my experience the species is often in residence just before a stump crumbles into dust. Elm has always been a preferred host in this area, but that is probably because there were many Elms about. The species switched quickly to Willow and Ash, stumps and living trees, once the Elm stumps had turned to dust. For a while, the dominant edible pleurote became *P.cornucopiae* on Beech, causing the same final decay, but slowly the Oyster fungus began making a comeback so that now I am finding it with almost equal, though much lower, frequency on all three host trees, Willow, Ash and Beech. So going back to the original statement regarding the propensity of the fungus for taking up residence in property in need of renovation, I visited several of my known stumps in March this year knowing that there would be only the shredded, leathery remains of old specimens in view. This was indeed the case. No surprise there. What struck me was that ALL the stumps, Beech Ash or Willow had a similar “look” about them, not at all like those of the same species which had succumbed in their final stand to other fungi. Now I know that this is observation at best unscientific because I have no idea of what other fungi had been present on “other” stumps, only on what had been ultimately present on “my stumps. Perhaps I should rephrase that (perhaps you should take a powder, Ed.) The common factor was a particular “sculpting” of the stump. It appeared that the fungus destroyed the cores of old low-growing off shoots, still present in the subsequent growth layers as what we know as “knots”. This left the stump with

tunnels and “bubbles”, spherical holes of varying depth and thin walled cylinders (right) in dry and brittle wood. It is easy to argue that these formations would be more dependent on the early growth of the tree than of the action of the fungus, but other stumps from various trees which I have not identified as having been a host to the two pleurotus species do not exhibit these characteristics. The photograph (right) is of an old Elm stump, which produced *P.ostreatus* for about three years, to the exclusion of all other macro species. There are many such cylinders and elongated holes visible.

The picture below is of a more recently collapsed and de-



cayed Ash stump, which shows very similar holes and chambers. It has also had two years

of very vigorous Oyster fungus growth, particularly profuse last year, and may still produce one more “flush” this year. Hollowed out holes of decayed wood can be seen where originally low shoots and branches had once existed and it is from sites like this that the fungus emerged. At first glance, and particularly when looking at photographs, the similarities between the two stumps do not leap out of the page, but it does appear that the fungus and its growth habit creates similarities which are more peculiar to the fungus than to the substrate! Another Elm stump, which was atop a roadside embankment in a mixed hedge, and which never to my knowledge produced any Oyster fungus, finally succumbed to the many tentacled embrace of Honey Fungus (or Armillaria Sp.) over the past three years, simply slumped in a soggy, wet mass during the winter months. Several other stumps, from various tree species, which were known to be infected by the Bootlace Brigade, have similarly collapsed. I thought it best to check out this assertion before committing to print but could find only a few examples as this kind of decay, being “wet”, is much more likely to result in the total disappearance of the evidence in a very short time, as all manner of termites and friends (theirs, not mine) indulge in a feeding frenzy. What is left is just a pile of damp sawdust, and jolly

good it is when mixed with a little spent grow-bag compost and used as a mulch on your herbaceous

border! (left and below)

So far I have been looking at trees which have already fallen, although I “knew” them all when they were in good (or so I thought!) health. I would like to say that I have been able to witness the com-



complete cycle of decay from initial noticeable fruit-body to the final collapse of the tree, but this may be a longer term project, demanding more time than I can find or indeed have! I was lucky enough to spot a certain fungi, *Bombycina volvariella* when it first appeared on an often passed tree, and have been able to observe its effect on the host, but I cannot say that it has been the only fungus present, so the final condition of the stump may be due to several successive occupations. I have included a picture (left) of the current state of this hapless willow, still shooting but doomed, because I have found ANOTHER *B.volvariella* on a *Prunus* Sp. (?) about 3 miles from the original find. Watch this space.



The *Polyporus squamosus* much photographed in Sedgefield Old Cemetery has not succeeded in causing any obvious damage, except for the typical local black rot where it was anchored, but I can state with certainty that it will prevail. I was asked to go to an address in the village last year, by a concerned householder. There, about fifteen feet up in a huge chestnut tree was an enormous *Dryad's Saddle*. Sharp intake of breath, plumber style, and I heard myself saying "Its not good. I reckon that trunk will be down within a year or two. Better

get a tree surgeon in to bring it down, or it could go badly." The chap took no notice. I wasn't entirely confident in my prediction but as I have often said, only uncertainty is certain. It was with some relief, then, that the whole top section of the tree, above the fungus, toppled into the road in February this year.



He had to get a tree surgeon in pretty quickly to remove the semi-corpse. Was it the fungus? Who knows...but I overheard him say to the tree-surgeon "These mycologists talk a lot of rot! "



ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN EDINBURGH

NEW PUBLICATION

British Fungus Flora 1 / Boletes and their Allies **Revised and enlarged addition**

by R. Watling & A.E. Hills, assisted by E. Turnbull

British Fungus Flora (Agarics and Boleti) is a series of publications which provides information for the dedicated amateur and professional interested in the larger fungi of the British Isles.

This volume is not only a revised but enlarged addition of the first part of the BFF series. The classification of the boletes and their allies has changed so much it was necessary to produce a new version which incorporated the new name changes, the many new records for the UK and arrangement which reflects the new molecular data now coming on stream.

Thus this part of BFF includes all those species residing in the Boletaceae, Strobilomycetaceae, Gyroporaceae, Paxillaceae and Gomphidiaceae. The last now includes *Suillus*, formerly lumped with *Boletus*, as well the two other genera seen in the first part; Paxillaceae now includes *Gyrodon*, again linked to *Boletus* previously and Strobilomycetaceae not only including *Strobilomyces* but *Porphyrellus* also. Gyroporaceae is restricted to *Gyroporus*. To these families are added the lamellate members of the Coniophoraceae which includes *Hygrophoropsis* and *Tapinella*, who's whose

species where previously placed in BFF1 in *Paxillus*. The format of the publication agrees with the first edition and subsequent parts although the introduction is slightly modified to allow ease of use of the text considering all the changes of species names and genera. The genera are treated in alphabetical order in each family and there is a description of the family, genera therein and a key to species; each species is described in detail and arranged in small units of related species, 'stirps', for convenience. Important references to each family are given and the ecological lists have been extended to incorporate the vast amount of field data now available after the use of the first edition acted as a base-line.

Naturally, with all the changes the list of rejected names and that of synonyms are much enlarged. The part ends with a series of line-drawings with a few new ones added and a list of those taxa mentioned in the text including species which should be looked out for in the UK in the future. Colours are described using the Colour Identification Chart, a copy of which is included with this part.

Published by the **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh**, August 2005
ISBN 1 872291 89 9, softback, iv + 173pp, £12.50, (£8.13 - trade)

Also available:

Part 5 / Strophariaceae & Coprinaceae p.p.

(£8 plus £1.50 p&p)

Part 6 / Crepidotaceae, Pleurotaceae and other pleurotoid agarics

(£10 plus £1.50 p&p)

Part 7 / Cortinariaceae p.p.

(£10 plus £1.50 p&p)

Part 8 / Cantharellaceae, Gomphaceae and Amyloid-Spored and

Xeruloid Members of Tricholomataceae, excl. *Mycena*

(£12.50 plus £1.50 p&p)

Part 9 / Russulaceae: *Lactarius*

(£12.50 plus £1.50 p&p)

Colour Identification Chart (50p including p&p)

ORDER FORM OVERLEAF.

For further information please contact: Publications Department, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Tel: 0131 248 2991; fax: 0131 248 2901; e-mail: pps@rbge.org.uk



Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Publications Order Form

HOW TO ORDER:

- Cheques should be made payable to *Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh*; they should be in pounds sterling and drawn on a UK bank.
- We accept payment by Visa, Access, Mastercard, Delta and Eurocard. Please supply card number, expiry date, security number (last 3 digits on the security strip on the back of the card) name and initials as shown on card, address of cardholder and cardholder's signature.
- A discount of 35% is available to booksellers, except where otherwise indicated.
- Please note that postage and packing rates are for the UK only; overseas rates will be supplied on request. Contact us on tel. (+44) (0)131 552 7171, fax (+44) (0)131 248 2901 or email pps@rbge.org.uk

Print off this order form, complete, and return to: Publications, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 20A Inverleith Row, Edinburgh, EH3 5LR, United Kingdom. Fax (+44) (0)131 248 2901

DETAILS OF YOUR ORDER:

Publication	Unit Price	No of copies	Subtotal
British Fungus Flora 1: Boletes and their Allies (includes a complimentary copy of the Colour Identification Chart)	£12.50		
<i>Total postage and packing UK (£1.50 per book)</i>			
<i>Total postage and packing – rest of the world (£2.50 per book)</i>			
TOTAL			

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS:

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

Date:

☐ I enclose a cheque for the above amount. [Cheques should be made payable to 'Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh'; they should be in pounds sterling and drawn on a UK bank].

☐ Please charge my Access/Mastercard/Visa/Switch/ Eurocard

£

Card Number:

Expiry date: Security Number: Issue Date (switch only):

Name on card:

Signature of cardholder: