

North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter 40 March 2006



Pleurotus cornucopiae Derwent gorge 1999

Photo Keith Cunningham

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North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Minutes of the Ninth AGM – SATURDAY 14TH January 2006 at 11.a.m. at Rainton Meadows

1. **Apologies for absence:** Doug McCutcheon, Gordon Beakes, Rachel Richards, David Smith and Daphne Weerasinghe 20 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. Andy McLay was elected and welcomed as the new Foray Organiser.

3. **Minutes of the last meeting:** Accepted as accurate.

4. **Matters arising:**

[a] **Constitution** – This was further amended with contributions from many members. Signing will take place at the next committee meeting .

[b] **Website:** Malcolm Birtle has at present established our newsletter as an extension to ‘The Vasculum’ but this may not be permanent. However, Barclays Bank is to update the Durham Wildlife Group site where a branch for the NEFSG is a possibility. Keith Cunningham and Tom Kirby will be in discussion with Malcolm Birtle about this and will report back later. A discussion followed and it was expressed that greater accuracy within the newsletter is necessary before going onto the internet. Keith Cunningham pointed out that to achieve this it would be necessary for everyone to send their articles to him as a ‘Word’ document as this is the most compatible format for the creation of the newsletter. Alan will write an article in the next newsletter on this subject.

[c] **Book Purchase:** Volume 5 of ‘Agaricina Neerlandica’ – Agaricaceae has now been added to our library which Tom Kirby takes care of. He will list and categorise the books which will be brought to the ‘Forum’ in March. Members wishing to use these books should contact him. Andy McLay requested a book on ‘Hebeloma’s’. Alan Legg thought we should wait for the book to be reviewed.

5. **Programme for 2006**

January 14th AGM , Rainton Meadows

March 11th Open Forum, Rainton Meadows

April 22nd Spring Foray, Black Banks, Wolsingham

June 10th NEFSG Luncheon ‘Andreas’ Restaurant at Shildon followed by a short foray in local woodlands

July 22nd Darlington West Cemetery Foray and Tree Study. Darlington & Teesdale Field Club to be invited.

September 16th Bishop’s Palace Grounds, Bishop Auckland

September 30th Pontburn Woods, Lower Derwent Valley

October 14th Fox Cover, Catterick

October 28th Crawley Incline, near Stanhope

November 25th Microscopy, Rainton Meadows

6. **Treasurer’s Report**

There is almost £500 in credit before 2006 subscriptions are collected so there is no need for the subscriptions to be increased. Our expenses are low due to the goodwill of voluntary workers and the use of the premises and equipment of the Durham Wildlife Trust.

The group agreed to Tom Kirby’s suggestion to fund the Group Leader’s internet fees as the group’s work is all that he will use it for.

Pat Wood suggested a small amount could be put away for digital equipment. The report was accepted.

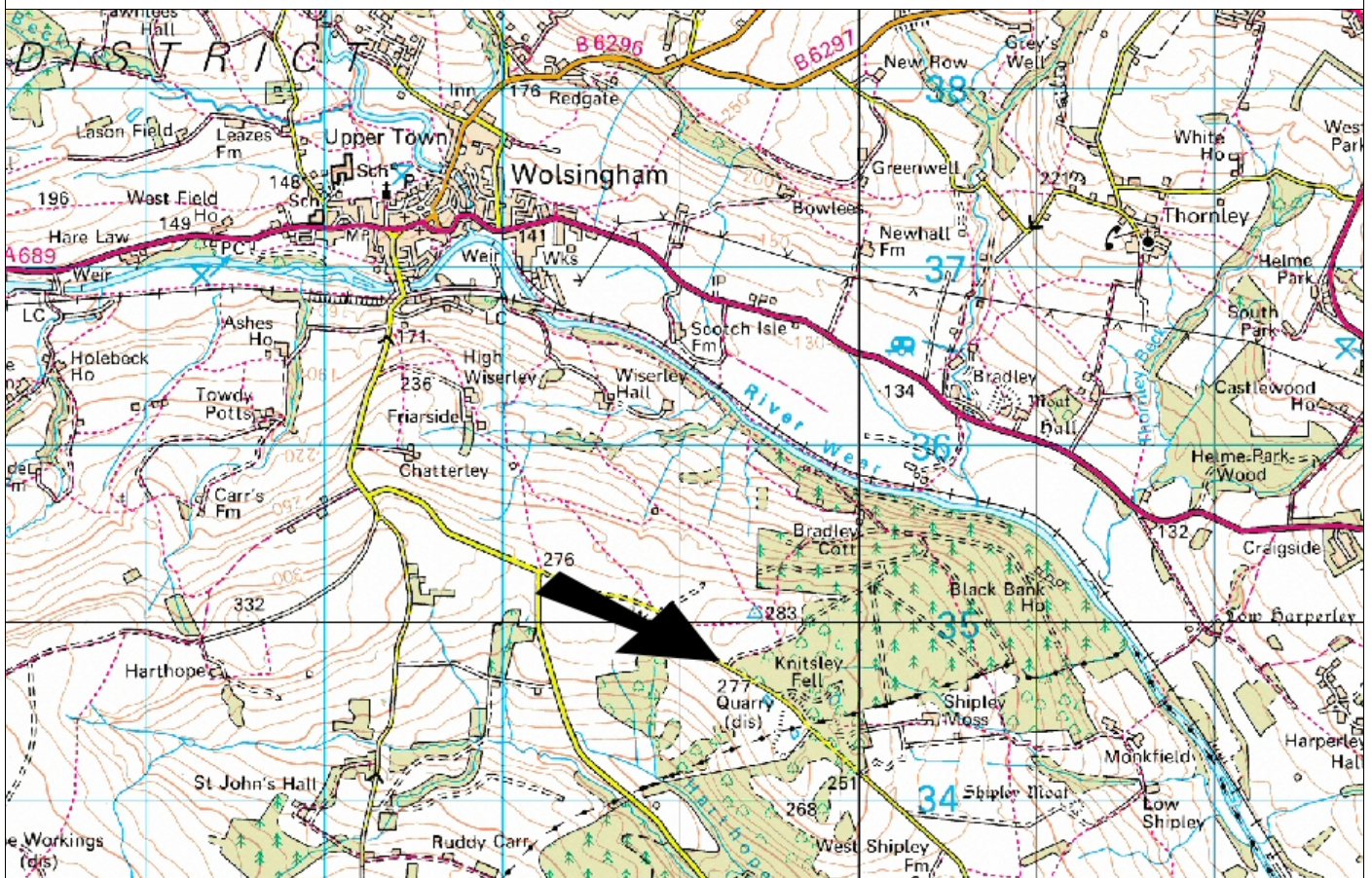
7. **A.O.B.**

(i) **Records:** By summer it is thought we may have transferred over 17000 fungi records to the BMS database. A discussion followed on the value of grid references and many opinions were aired. The discussion concluded with the general belief that trends will change.

8. **Date of the 10th AGM: Saturday 13th Jan 2007 11.am Rainton Meadows**

Foray at Black Banks Plantation near Wolsingham NZ092348

Meet at 10:45 at Grid ref NZ092348 at the junction of a forest road indicated on the map. We will then travel in convoy past Bradley Cottage down to the River Wear. Gordon Simpson has obtained permission to explore the fields to the west of Bradley Cottage.



Pleurotus cornucopiae

On the following page is a copy of another of Dorothy Wolfe's wonderful drawings. The original has much more detail. This was from a specimen I had found after our annual Lunch outing at the Crathorne Arms followed by a walk in the grounds of Crathorne Hall.

Dorothy is unable to get out as much these days, so if you come across any fine specimens of fungi that you think will make a good subject for a drawing please wrap it well and send it to her at:

24 Newlands Avenue
Hartlepool
TS26 9NU

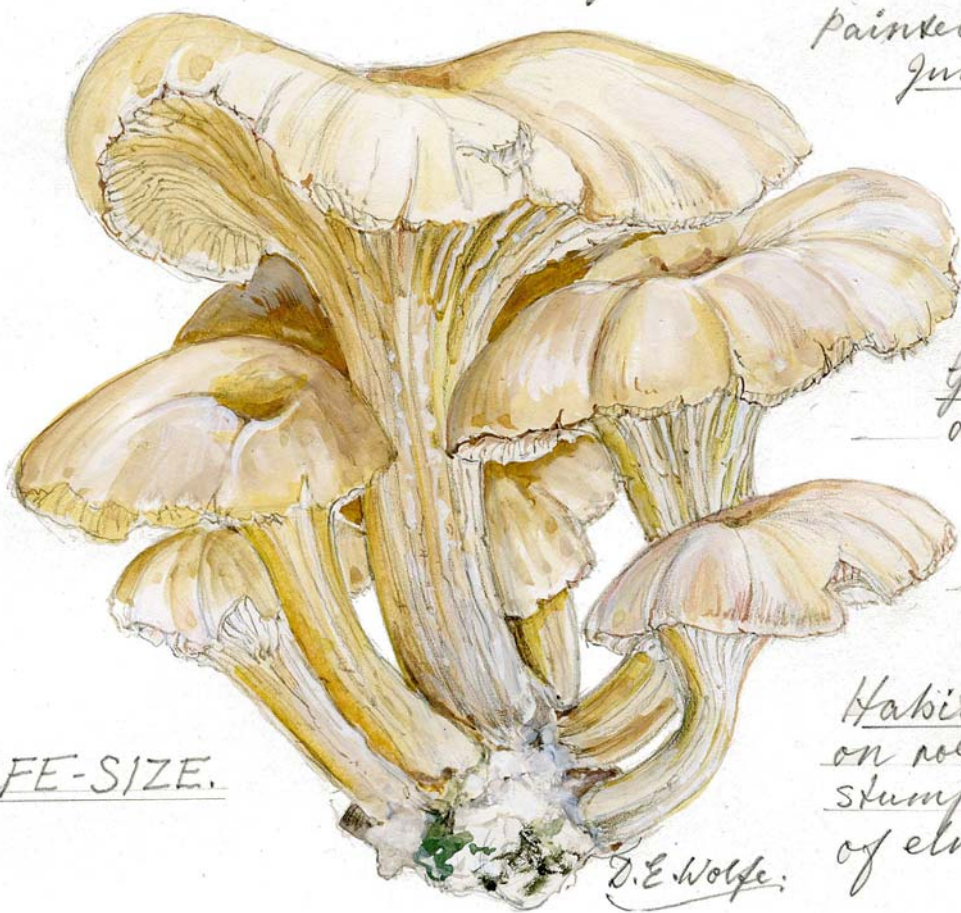
KC

PLEUROTUS CORNUCOPIAE.

Branched Oyster.

Found in the grounds
of Crathorne Hall on
June 11th

Painted on
June 12th 2005



Gills: Strongly
decurrent.

Spores:
Pale lilac.

Habitat: Clumps
on rotten logs &
stumps, especially
of elm.

LIFE-SIZE.

On Saturday, June 11th 2005, the
N.E.F.S.G. held their annual luncheon at
the Crathorne Arms. This had been arranged
by Annie & Tom, to whom thanks are due.
Once again a very enjoyable occasion.

Permission had been obtained for us
to foray in the grounds of Crathorne Hall.

It was in the woodland surrounding
the Hall, that Cath Gillie found the group
of *Pleurotus cornucopiae*, which was well
photographed and then given to me to ill-
ustrate. My apologies are due for not
submitting this for an earlier newsletter.

Dorothy Wolfe.

***Pseudocraterellus sinuosus* in Plessey Woods:**

A new record for Northumberland VC 67

Hewett A. Ellis and Christine C. Ellis

On 20th September 2005, whilst walking along the riverside woodland path in Plessey Woods, Stanington Vale (Grid Reference: NZ 227 791), we found a group of small greyish funnel- to trumpet-shaped fungi growing amongst leaf litter beneath a mature beech *Fagus*. These measured up to 45mm in height and 30mm in diameter at the expanded free margin which was slightly lobulated. The upper part of the stipe was longitudinally ridged but there were no true gills.

The spore print was white and microscopy revealed small guttulate spores measuring on average 10.7 X 7.2 μm , 4-spore basidia and cystidia were absent.

We had not encountered this species previously, although it resembled some form of *Craterellus*. In view of the uncertainty we referred material to Alan Legg. The species was new to Alan but he was able to identify it as *Pseudocraterellus sinuosus*, as described in the British Fungus Flora No.8 (Watling & Turnbull, 1998). At Alan's suggestion we sent material to Kew where Dr Peter Roberts confirmed the species as *Pseudocraterellus sinuosus* (Fries) Corner: Heinemann.

P.sinuosus seems to be uncommon in Britain and this is a new record for Northumberland. The species was listed by Bruce Ing in his Provisional Red Data List of British Fungi (Ing, 1992, The Mycologist 6(3):124-128) as "vulnerable" (ie, a species likely to become endangered in the near future). Our collection has been retained in the Kew Herbarium with Accession Number K(M) 133807.

Update on King Alfred's Cakes on Swedish Whitebeam: *Daldinia loculata*, a new record for Northumberland VC67

Hewett A. Ellis and Christine C. Ellis

Earlier (Ellis & Ellis, 2001 NEFSG Newsletter 23:7), we reported the occurrence of King Alfred's Cakes on the trunk of a moribund Swedish Whitebeam *Sorbus intermedius*, growing in the hedgerow alongside the old waggonway in the Rising Sun Country Park, Wallsend (Grid Reference: NZ 305 688). We first noticed a single fruiting body on 28th October 2001. This continued to enlarge and additional bodies appeared and persisted over the next year or so. Eventually the bark split, separated and fell away along with the fungi.

Since we were aware that there are several species of *Daldinia* and that some of these are more or less host specific, we sent material to Dr B.M.Spooner at Kew for expert appraisal, on 21st October 2002.

Recently, in December 2005, Dr Spooner has informed us that research work at Kew on the British *Daldinia* is now completed, including the re-examination of collections, such as

ours, on unusual hosts. It seems our specimen has proved to be the relatively uncommon *Daldinia loculata* (Levéillé) Saccardo, which occurs mostly on *Betula*.

According to Dr Spooner our specimen is the first to be recorded on *Sorbus* in Britain. Probably the species is a new record for Northumberland. However, it has been recorded in County Durham VC66 in the past, growing on its usual host birch, in Durham Great High Wood in 1976 (see account by A.Legg, 1999 NEFSG Newsletter 15).

Dr Spooner has informed us that *D.loculata* is most often found on burnt trunks, especially burnt *Betula*, and is much scarcer on unburnt substrates, as in the present case. Apparently the fungus exists as an endophyte within the tree and burning (or some other form of stress, as in the present moribund tree), causes it to develop fruiting bodies. *D.loculata* occurs in North America as well as in Europe. In addition to *Betula*, specimens in Britain have been recorded on Hornbeam *Carpinus* and Beech *Fagus*.

Dr Spooner also mentions that the classification of *Daldinia* species is still problematical but there are currently thought to be at least eight species in Britain. Having now seen *D. concentrica*, *D.vernicosa* (Ellis & Ellis, 2005 The Vasculum 90(1):3-6; NEFSG Newsletter 37:7) and *D.loculata* in North East England, we still have five species to seek! Our specimen of *D.loculata* is retained in the Kew Herbarium.

***Pluteus umbrosus* (Pers: Fr.) Kummer in Holywell Dene, Northumberland.**

Hewett A. Ellis and Christine C. Ellis

On the 5th September 2005, whilst walking in deciduous woodland alongside the Seaton Burn in Holywell Dene (NZ329747), we found an unusual and attractive species of *Pluteus* growing on a rotting fallen elm. The cap was brown and “velvety” with darker brown “veins” radiating irregularly from the centre to the margin, and the stem was speckled. The naked-eye appearance was as illustrated in Fungal Portraits No. 13: *Pluteus umbrosus* by Geoffrey Kibby (*Field mycology* 4 (1) 3-4, (2003) and in *The Encyclopaedia of Fungi of Britain and Europe* by Michael Jordan p.204, 1995 edn.

The spore print was pinkish rust in colour and microscopy revealed smooth ellipsoid spores measuring 6.0 x 4.5 microns on average. The gill trama was convergent as is usual in *Pluteus* species but the cystidia lacked the harpoon-like apical hooks of the *P. cervinus* group.

Overall, the naked-eye and microscopic features indicated that this was *Pluteus umbrosus*. Although widespread in Britain, particularly on elm, *P. umbrosus* is an infrequently-found species and this is the first time we have encountered it. As far as we are aware, this is a new species for Northumberland though Alan Legg has informed us that there are a few records for Co. Durham – such as in Castle Eden Dene on 6th October 1990 and Flatts Wood, Barnard Castle on 28th September 2001.

Editor's note:

The pink-spored Pluteaceae, which include *Pluteus* and *Volvariella*, prefer warm conditions for fruiting but seem to be spreading northwards with recent changes in our weather patterns. Both Tom Kirby and I found examples of one of the rather scarce small *Volvariella* species in 2005, for example, and Tom's local site for *Volvariella surrecta* is probably still the most northerly in Britain. With continuing climate change, we in the NE are increasingly likely to record more species of both these genera in future seasons.

***Melanotus horizontalis* (Bull.) P.D.Orton in Preston Cemetery, North Shields**

Hewett A. Ellis and Christine C. Ellis

On the 23rd January 2006, we found several small fungi growing contiguously in a vertical row just below the bark layer on the cut end of a branch of an uprooted mature beech-tree in Preston Cemetery, North Shields (VC67) (NZ347693). Each body was up to 15mm wide, convex and shell-shaped, resembling a *Crepidotus* but rusty brown. The excentric stems were only 2-3 mm long and the concolourous gills were adnate and radiated outwards to the free margins.

The spore print was snuff brown. Microscopically, the smooth ellipsoid spores, each with a small germ-pore, measured 7.3 x 4.8 microns on average. The basidia were four-spored and the cystidia lageniform with long narrow necks.

The species was new to us and we gave some of the collection to Alan Legg who identified it as *Melanotus horizontalis*. Few of the usual fungal texts refer to this species. It is mentioned but not illustrated by Courtecuisse and Duhem and in the later *Mushrooms of Britain and Europe* by R. Courtecuisse (1999). There is a full description in the *British Fungus Flora Part 5*, by Watling and Gregory (1987) pp. 27-28.

According to Courtecuisse, *M. horizontalis* occurs on deciduous wood and is very rare. Up to the publication of the Yorkshire Flora in 1985, only one Yorkshire record was known. However, further such records have accumulated in recent years. Gordon Simpson has kindly provided us with a list of records of *M. horizontalis* currently stored in the BMS database. The list comprises 224 records, including 8 for Cumberland and Westmorland, an additional 11 for Yorkshire (all 5 vice-counties) but only 3 for Co. Durham and none for Northumberland (see editor's note). In addition, Gordon has informed us of a further Yorkshire record made by Colin Stephenson, who found *M. horizontalis* on a birch stump in Harwood Dale Forest between Whitby and Scarborough (VC62) in September 2002.

From the BMS list it can be seen that *M. horizontalis* has a marked predilection for the cut ends of the trunks and branches of various conifers (as in stacked logs). Deciduous trees are less often affected and, of these, beech seems to be favoured, followed by sycamore, ash and willow.

In recent years, severe gales have uprooted a number of mature beech trees hereabouts in the south east of Northumberland and it has been necessary to saw off branches in order to clear pathways. In the light of our experience with *M. horizontalis*, in future we shall be examining the cut ends of such sawn trunks and branches more diligently!

Editor's note:

The fifth part of the British Fungus Flora mentioned above distinguished *M. horizontalis* on deciduous wood from *M. proteus* on conifers. These two have now been united under the name of the former.

The fungus is clearly spreading in the north east of England. Since my first (1999) collection from Hamsterley Forest, I have seen it seven more times. Perhaps the most interesting of these fruitings was on the worked and stained, mass-produced wood of horizontal slat fencing placed as a temporary screen to the entrance to a public toilet in Darlington West Cemetery in 2002! In fact, we recorded it on two recent NEFSG forays, in Slit Wood, Wear-dale (VC66) in July 2004, and in Letah Wood (VC67) in September 2005. The dark cap, brownish gills and brown spore-print clearly distinguish it from superficially similar, small pleurotoid agarics in *Clitopilus*, *Crepidotus*, *Panellus*, *Plicatura* etc.

It is our editorial policy to ignore recently-coined, so-called "common" names such as "Wood Oysterling" (!) for *Melanotus horizontalis*. We will, of course, continue to use traditional English names such as St. George's Mushroom, on occasion.

Derek Reid 1927 – 2006 - a memoir

Sadly, I have to report the loss of yet another distinguished British mycologist, this time a professional and former Head of Mycology at Kew. It is becoming clear that the 1980s represent something of a golden age in British mycology. Roger Phillips' book (with text by Derek Reid) appeared in 1981, followed two years later the translation from German of Moser's *Keys to Agarics and Boleti* which Roger Phillips commissioned. Not only did this decade see the appearance of the Fungus Floras of Warwickshire in 1980 and of Yorkshire in 1985 but also the two seminal works on microfungi by Martin and Pam Ellis (1985 and 1988). It was a period when Roy Watling in Edinburgh as well as Derek Reid at Kew let it be known that they encouraged fungal material sent by post for identification.

I was one of the lucky amateurs who were able to benefit from this free identification service, learning a great deal from the patient replies I received. Roy Watling was then accepting specimens from over 100 people countrywide a fact which embarrassed me considerably when I first discovered it. It was at this point, encouraged by Colin Stephenson, that I tried to take a little of the heat from Roy by sending alternate packets to Derek Reid who also proved most helpful.

I remember being delighted when he was able to put a name to a mysterious *Lepiota* which turned up every year with exotic conifers or with yew in Darlington West Cemetery. It still

does. Dr. Reid was pleased to get it as it was *Lepiota ochraceofulva*, a species which he had illustrated in his *Coloured icons of Rare and Interesting fungi*. On another memorable occasion I found a strange little clavarioid fungus growing on a path strewn with woodchips in Bargany Gardens, Ayrshire. Typically, Dr. Reid shared my excitement and, having spent quite a long time on it, he found it to be comparable only with the North American species *Ramariopsis pseudosubtilis*, known only from a few sites in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee! It was such encouragement as this that made me realise that not all the mysteries I found had to be jettisoned and forgotten. Some of them were well worth all the midnight oil I habitually burned.

When I did something daft (which was not infrequently!), Dr. Reid always knew how to leaven censure with humour. He it was who wrote that my foolishly misidentified specimen of the very common *Collybia confluens* did **not** have a smooth stem but one that was “most conspicuously hirsute from base to apex”. This was a light-hearted lesson I was never to forget.

When Derek Reid retired from Kew in 1987 I was very far from being the only one who felt very keenly the loss of his help and expertise. Now I am just one of the many who will mourn his final passing.

AWL

Open Forum at Rainton Meadows, March 11 2006

This meeting took place despite dire snow warnings from forecasters. As it turned out, the snow managed to hold off until the following day. It stayed bitterly cold outside but was pleasantly warm in the DWT building and the 19 people who attended enjoyed a meeting which was a bit of an experiment.

The committee had felt that members needed more time to interact and get to know each other better as well as pick up information in a relatively informal way. I was kept so busy myself that I didn't really have the chance to assess much of what was going on. The impression I formed however was of people happy to see each other again after a long break and eager to share activity and information as usual.

I did have the opportunity to learn new things about members I have been seeing regularly for years. The impression was as usual of a very wide range of talent which I'm sure we can tap in a number of unexplored ways. I see my own role as one of concentrating on the fungi, but I began to think it would be a good idea for someone to co-ordinate an occasional “News of Members” series for the Newsletter. The focus here would be on people and their activities in the natural world in general, not necessarily just concerning the fungi. If you feel you have anything to offer along these lines, please do contact any Committee member so that your proposal may be discussed at a forthcoming committee meeting.

Peter Orton

Richard Tofts

I first met Peter in autumn 1989 at the Nettlecombe fungus foray where he assisted John Keylock. John did all the talking and Peter stayed quietly in the background, identifying the more problematic collections. I might never have spoken to Peter were it not for the fact that I collected *Lepiota ignivolvata*. I had never come across it before and I showed it to Peter. He was interested in it and prepared a description and pencil drawing of the fungus. I think he took a bit of a shine to me simply because the mycological interest of the other forayers did not seem to extend beyond the culinary! I wrote to Peter after the foray and he sent me offprints of his papers. After that, we corresponded and met at regular intervals until he died.

Peter had a reputation amongst many for being reclusive and perhaps rather forbidding. But for those lucky enough to know him well it soon became obvious that he had a great sense of fun. I recall one foray when we both looked down to see what appeared to be a white-capped agaric partially hidden in the grass. An *Agaricus* perhaps? Peter bent down and picked it up, only to discover that it was the domed surface of a stone. He turned it over in his hand for a few moments before announcing it to be *Lithomyces* - a genus I had never encountered before! He had his own nicknames for many fungi including 'squigglywigs' for *Mycena tortuosa*, a species he discovered and described in 1960. He made a particular study of *Cortinarius*, that most difficult of genera. His unpublished notes contained many descriptions of species that did not appear to have been described before. To avoid confusion between these apparently unpublished taxa and others which already had names, the unpublished ones were put in their own genus - *Ortinarius*.

Peter didn't understand modern technology,

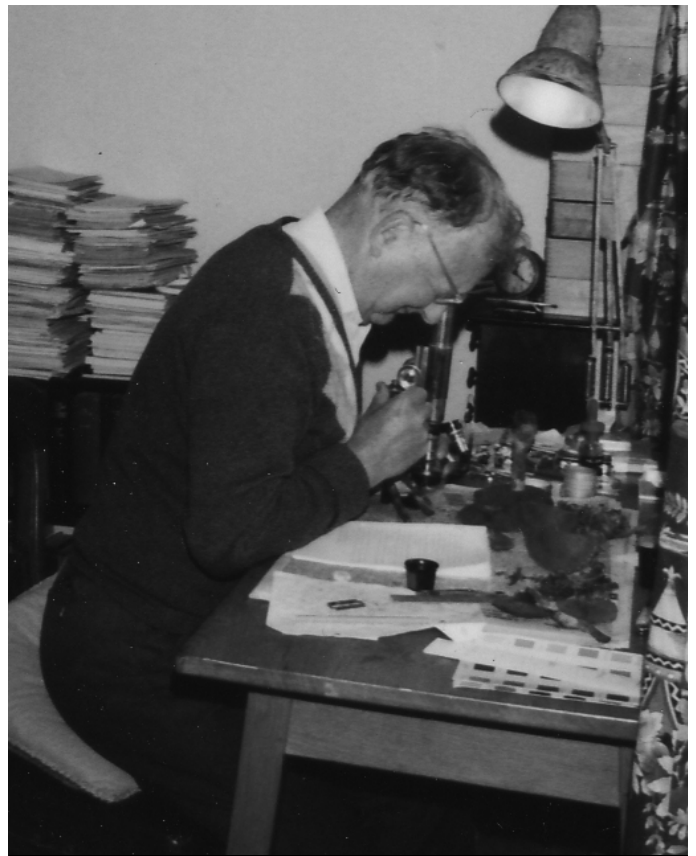
least of all computers. Prior to the beginning of the year 2000, everyone seemed preoccupied by the threat posed by the 'millennium bug'. Would our bank account details be wiped out overnight? Would the transport system be thrown into chaos or our computers just stop working, preventing us from doing our jobs? No-one seemed to know. Peter didn't know either and clearly didn't care. But he did show some concern when I was typing up some of his *Cortinarius* notes on the aged desk-top computer I owned at the time. How could I be sure computer hackers wouldn't get his script? I explained that they couldn't because my computer wasn't connected to the internet. The only way they would get the text was by breaking into my house and pinching my computer. That hardly seemed likely given its antiquity! His text was therefore as safe from burglars as it would be if it was written out on paper - they could steal that just as easily, after all. He clearly didn't understand this and always seemed perturbed by the possibility of internet theft. Towards the end of his life when many people put an email address as well as a postal address on their letters, Peter still had no computer (or television or radio). But, not to be left out, at the top of his letters he would put what he termed his 'z-mail' address: zzz.cort.port.pdort

Peter left his mycological things to me when he died in April 2005. From a scientific standpoint, the most valuable of these are his handwritten notes. He deposited many thousands of collections of dried material in herbaria at Kew and, since around 1960, at Edinburgh. Each collection is accompanied by a detailed handwritten description and, in many cases, also by a watercolour. This information vastly increases

papers on *Cortinarius* in 1955 and 1958. These did not cover all the species, however. Subgenus *Telamonia* was omitted and, although Peter later published accounts of some of the species within this subgenus, his publications only covered a small proportion of the British species. Peter had, in fact, in-

tended to publish an account of *Telamonia* soon after 1960. But the more he looked, the more he kept finding collections that didn't fit any published descriptions. So he just kept on collecting and it was only towards the end of his life that he tried to make a start on synthesizing this information. He divided subgenus *Telamonia* into many 'sections' and had produced an unpublished key to those sections whilst I was involved in the task of compiling and then typing up his handwritten descriptions of the many species he had collected. I am continuing with the work of compiling descriptions. It is a huge job, but I feel I am making quite good progress. I decided to start with the published species and have, in the past few months, prepared descriptions of some 35-40% of the known British species (from all subgenera, not just *Telamonia*). Once I have descriptions of all the known British species, it will be necessary to compare those of Peter's unpublished taxa with species described in recent years from abroad, because other mycologists are likely to have found and described at least some of the fungi that Peter had his eye on. There will inevitably be many problems to address along the way, particularly those associated with deciding where to draw the lines between different species and what names to use for what taxa. In a number of cases I have come to a different conclusion about synonymy from the authors of the new 'Checklist of the British and Irish Basidiomycota', for example. This work is inevitably a slow and painstaking process – wading through piles of descriptions in Latin and various other languages, many of them in obscure publications dating from two centuries ago. Unfortunately, however, it is often difficult to know what fungus some of the older authors had in mind when reading their published descriptions, because information on what are now considered crucial characters is often lacking.

Although Peter published useful accounts of many of the *Cortinarius* species from the mid-1950s onwards, he carried on collecting



Peter Orton at work

these fungi until shortly before he died. His own more recent and unpublished descriptions therefore add significantly to what he published in earlier years. I know that Peter felt significant changes were needed to some of what he had previously published. I therefore think that an attempt to bring Peter's notes to publication should not just restrict itself to *Telamonia* but should involve a review of all the British species. I find the prospect of turning Peter's notes into an account of the British *Cortinarius* species to be a daunting one. But every time I delve into the piles of descriptions and illustrations he prepared, I think of what a fantastic resource of information he gathered together and what a waste it would be if that information were not made available to a wider audience. My own views on some taxonomic matters would no doubt run counter to some of Peter's ideas, and it would of course have been preferable for Peter to have completed his treatment of the British *Cortinarius* species himself. But the best way I have to pay tribute to this remarkable man is to bring to a conclusion the job he started. Peter Orton was a good friend to me and a source of inspiration. I miss him greatly.



An example of Peter Orton's 8"x 10" descriptive sheets on *Cortinarius basiroseus*

A rare visitor....

Tom Kirby

It was early, about 7:15, and the sun was just above the sombre outline of the Cleveland Hills. The dog and I had set off on the first of our three daily trudges along the muddy lane which leads to the field of dreams. The lane is a barren dolomite-surfaced track, a recently renovated supply route laid by Railtrack to serve their front-line troops in the long summer campaign waged against rabbits. Shored up on each side by the original spoil removed during levelling, the track has little to offer in terms of flora, but the all pervasive weeds are slowly encroaching again, covering the black slag, cinder and furnace ash which was the popular “bed” upon which tracks were laid up until the 1950’s. The stuff when laid is pretty sterile and lacks nutrient, which is why it was used, but the line was removed in 1931 and in time the leaves of the lining trees became rotted down into the gravel-like surface and little by little the “weeds” took hold. Nettles, willow-herb, blackthorn, briar rose and ragwort were the early colonisers, but in the past twenty years wild strawberry, guelder rose, corn-flower and various woodland flowers have been noticed.

The air was cool but still and the dog was off down the track, released from her chain at the road junction. She had just engaged top-gear when something caught her by the nose and she came to an abrupt halt, in the manner of Charlie Chaplin negotiating a sharp bend, sort of a stop and an acute aerial turn, whilst at the same time almost but not quite losing balance. This wasn’t rabbit-off-the-starboard-bough behaviour, so I increased my pace getting to her as she lunged hesitantly, sniffed, retreated then very cautiously pawed at something unseen in the dimly lit under-growth. Her nose wrinkled and for the first time I could smell something, too. I got down to her level and pushed her aside. There was a very strong smell of what I at first thought was newly polished leather, but I could not detect where it was coming from.

I got a little closer to the ground and the smell was unmistakably that of coal gas, which we used to smell (and smell of!) as children. The wind often blew back the coal-fire smoke and it belched down out of the flue and into the room. I not unnaturally assumed that I was smelling the gas remaining in the old coke cinders which were no doubt mixed into the spoil, as the local village of Fishburn once boasted in its tourist literature of a huge coke oven, and no doubt the waste would be used here...but I was very wrong. The source was



a small cluster of pale ivory-capped mushrooms, clinging to a crumbling black clod of spoil. At first sight the stems appeared dark from the base but on closer examination several features were apparent. The caps and stems were to varying degrees covered in tiny granular “cysts” which rubbed off easily with even gentle handling. These “cysts” were not noticeable when viewed from any distance in excess of a couple of feet (could be my eyes) but once under a microscope



they are wonderful creations, being irregular spheres with a crumpled cellophane appearance. The cysts were probably not typical but frost damaged. I suspect that rain would wash them off easily and we had had quite a downpour a day before. The fungi looked washed out but were quite rigid and “crisp”. Some were only a few centimetres high but even at this immature stage sported a smart violet/lilac stem, which from a distance and in the gloomy light had just looked grey. It was the smell, though, that was unique. The gassy odour was noticeable from several metres away in the still air. At close range it was overpowering to man and dog! As I took some samples, leaving at least half behind, undamaged and undisturbed, the dog produced that familiar cocked-head look which implied that she considered my behaviour puzzlingly irrational.

I marked the spot with a piece of rag so that I could easily find them again, abandoned the walk, (see, the dog was right) and took the samples back to show my wife. She was naturally overcome with boundless joy at the discovery and immediately left the house, I presumed to spread the word. She may come back one day, I thought.

Because of the washed out colour and the washed off “micaceous” cysts I was unsure of my identification even with the definitive smell, and so I sent Gordon a brief e-mail with outline description. He immediately got back with his suggestion. *Cystolepiota bucknallii*. I was convinced. It only remained to get the sample off to Kew, at Alan’s behest, and into the records it goes.

This was a good find for my home patch as Alan himself had only found *C. bucknallii* once, along a very similar track and on a very similar substrate and under very similar conditions along Castle Eden Walkway. The fungus likes “disturbed” sites and so this was a typical location. I cannot for the life of me work out why a fungus should evolve so as to produce a strong smell of coal-gas, a scent which whilst giving away its location, normally an attempt to attract, is so obnoxious to all who come across it that it can only be a repellent! Except to my dog. The next day we visited again. There had been a frost and the remaining specimens were down and out and smelly. The dog ate them and was later sick in the conservatory. My wife returned, just in time to clean up. We’re a good team.

There are three fairly well-known toadstools that share the smell Tom describes above. The largest and most frequently seen is the medium sized, yellow *Tricholoma sulphureum* where colour and smell seem to compliment each other very well. Our group found this in Derwent Gorge some years ago and, more recently, at Briarwood Banks. I have four other records from various places. I didn't come across *Cystolepiota bucknalli* till 1997 on the BMS Upland Foray in Mid Wales. As often occurs further south, this was growing in wood along with about ten close relatives. *C. bucknalli* has also been found in Castle Eden Dene along with a few other Lepiotas. The East Durham magnesian limestone is a good substrate for these fungi. Others, such as *C. hetieri*, have been found not far away in Cassop Vale. The least common of the three is *Camarophylloopsis foetens* found in 2005 by Rachel Richard on the lawn of a tiny church in the elevated County Durham village of Woodland. Rachel's experience was similar to Tom's in that she smelt the toadstool before finding it. I'd never seen it before so I had a look-and a sniff- before posting it on to Kew.

The response to the FANTASTIC 2005/6 Competition was most encouraging. This year saw a 500% increase in entries, with all participants arriving at the correct answer, PANEL-LUS MITIS, as shown below. The route to the answer varied (you know who you are), but as you have to be in it to win it, it was decided not to be churlish. Accordingly, the names of all entries were put in the black bag and the winner was drawn.

SIMKINS

				S	E	R	P	U	L	A		L	A	C	R	I	M	A	N	S			
1				S	E	R	P	U	L	A		L	A	C	R	I	M	A	N	S			
2	T	A	P	E	S	I	A		F	U	S	C	A										
3			M	Y	C	E	N	A		C	R	O	C	A	T	A							
4					B	J	E	R	K	A	N	D	E	R	A		A	D	U	S	T	A	
5		G	R	I	F	O	L	A		F	R	O	N	D	O	S	A						
KEYNAME	T	R	I	C	H	O	L	A	M	O	P	S	I	S		R	U	T	I	L	A	N	S
7						R	U	S	S	U	L	A		O	C	H	R	O	L	E	U	C	A
8	B	O	L	E	T	U	S		L	U	R	I	D	U	S								
9	P	E	Z	I	Z	A		C	E	R	E	A											
10						A	M	A	N	I	T	A		F	U	L	V	A					
11			P	O	S	T	I	A		C	A	E	S	I	A								
12		A	M	A	N	I	T	A		C	I	T	R	I	N	A							
13					C	L	I	T	O	C	Y	B	E		D	E	A	L	B	A	T	A	
14							S	T	E	R	E	U	M		H	I	R	S	U	T	U	M	

