

North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter 42 October 2006



Armillaria mellea

Bishop's Palace

Keith Cunningham

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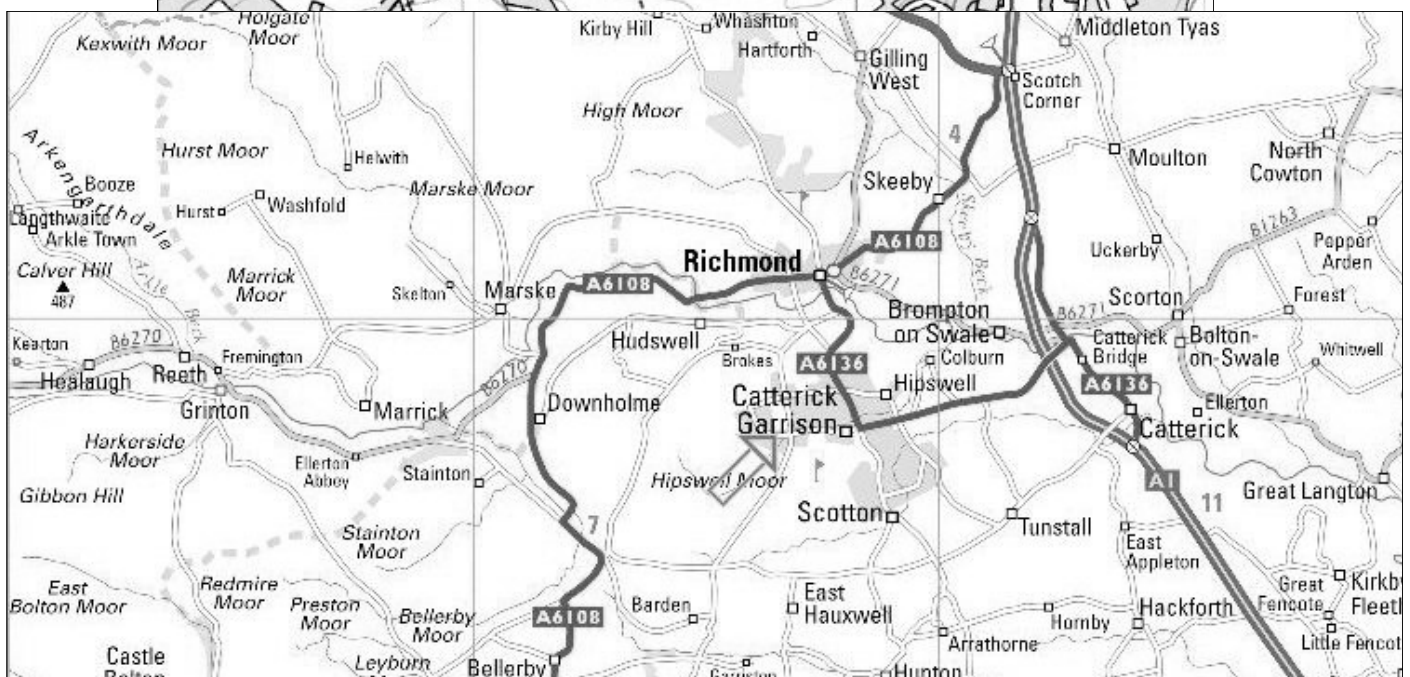
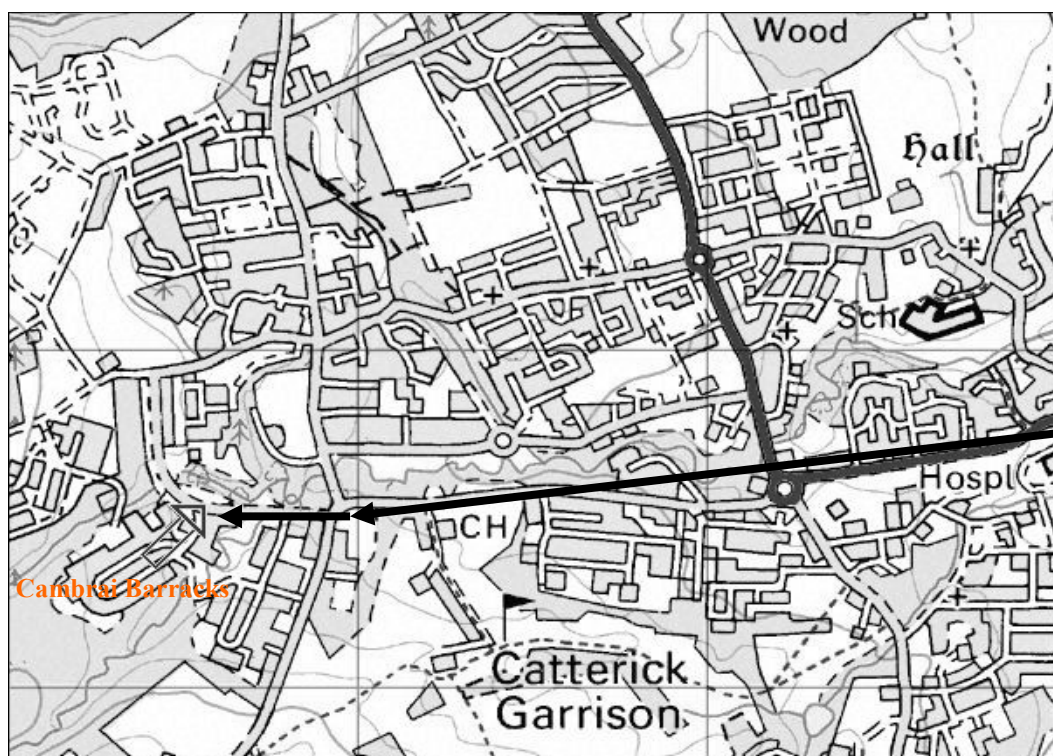


This Newsletter is produced with the
assistance of Durham Wildlife Trust

Foray at Fox Covert Nature Reserve Catterick Garrison October 14th 11am
Grid ref: SE 165975

We will meet the Wildlife Liaison Officer at the entrance to Cambrai Barracks (SE 165975). Here is how to get there:

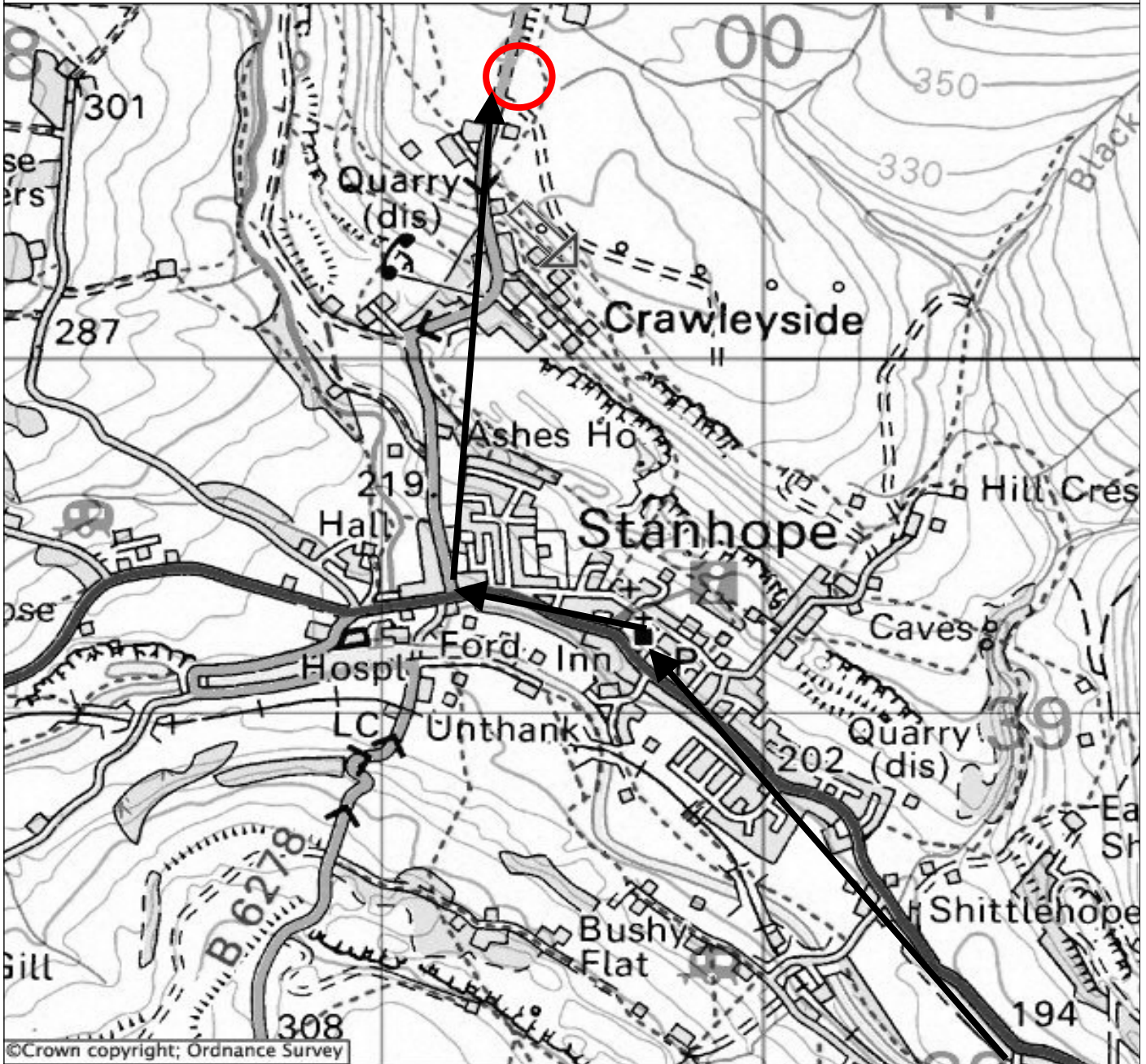
Travelling south on A1, leave at the junction after Scotch Corner (should be signposted Catterick and Catterick Garrison). After crossing river Swale at Catterick Bridge turn right to Catterick Garrison on A6136. Continue on this road until you reach the roundabout at SE 182975 (there is a Lidl or Aldi store here). Go straight over roundabout continuing west in the direction of Alma and Cambrai Barracks. Eventually the road will turn to the left and head off south towards Leyburn. At this point there are two right turns and we take the second one (Ava Road) which should signpost the Barracks. There may be limited parking so car share if you can.



Waxcap Foray at Crawleyside Incline Near Stanhope October 28th 11am

This foray will concentrate on Waxcap fungi, Hyrocybe sp, and other fungi found on unimproved grasslands.

From the A68 take the A689 west to Stanhope. Drive through Stanhope and take the first road right to Edmundbyers. After passing through Crawleyside you will pass over cattle grid. After 300m there is a parking area on the right. Grid ref: NY993407.



Microscopy November 25th 11am

This will be at Rainton meadows courtesy of Durham Wildlife Trust. Grid ref: NZ325486.

A session using microscopes and looking at any specimens you may bring with you.

The groups Records database will be available for those interested.

NEFSG Database

I have just updated our database. Thanks to the dedicated work of Babs Walton and Gordon Simpson we now have 20,039 records up to JULY 2006. The database was started when the group was formed in 1997. There are 2046 individual species. The most prolific recorder is Gordon Simpson with 9939 records.

You will be able to view the database at the November Microscopy meeting.

Keith Cunningham

A Hitchhiking Hyphomycete from Cheviotland

Alan Legg

At the beginning of June this year a packet arrived on my doormat sent by Doug McCutcheon. These parcels invariably contain something of interest and this one was no exception. Here was a barn owl pellet collected, in April 2006, by Doug on one of his trips to the valley of the College Burn which flows northwards from its source on the Cheviot. Those of you who have a copy of *Microfungi on Miscellaneous Substrates* by Ellis & Ellis will know that it contains an intriguing section called fungi on Bones, Feathers, Paper, Cloth etc.” that is organic materials natural to or processed in some way by man or beast but excluding dung.

From past experience I knew not to expect a great variety of fungi but put the pellet to incubate in a closed container on damp kitchen towel, went on holiday and forgot about it for the time being. When I first examined the material on my return, in accordance with expectation, nothing much had happened. Indeed, it was not until July 5th that I found much of the pellet surface covered by a thin layer of white fluff. Most such fluff consists of undifferentiated mycelium but this looked more promising. A sample examined in water on a microscope slide revealed a few short spore-bearing structures and vast quantities of loose, hyaline conidia (spores) each often containing a single large oil-drop and usually pear-shaped with a broadly truncate base. It was then easy to identify the fungus as *Scopulariopsis candida* - described as being found on owl pellets! Those of you who have enjoyed reading *My Family and Other Animals* may remember that the young Gerry Durrell once raised a young *Scops* owl called Ulysses.....

As is my wont, I checked the BMS Database and found a total of only 12 records of *S. candida*. Just one of these was listed as from owl pellets, collected from near Helmsley in VC62 in 1920. A few others were from pellets of other birds but most were from human artefacts of various kinds. The fungus was certainly newly collected from material originating in VC68, yet another new record for Northumberland.

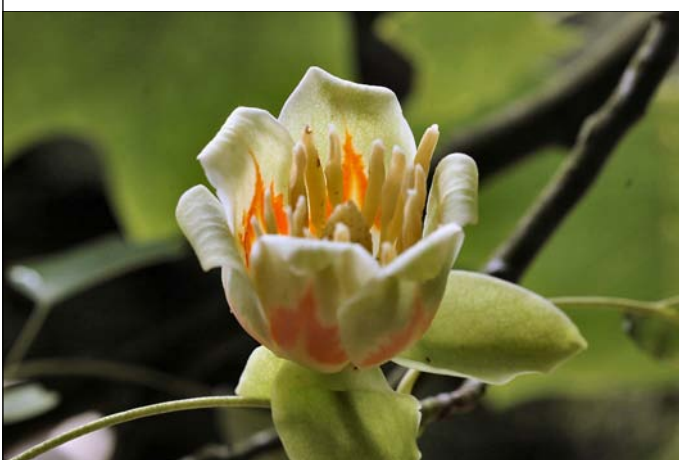
Tree Foray in Darlington West Cemetery

Alan Legg

Twenty years ago Gordon Simpson carried out a detailed, indeed virtually exhaustive, survey of the trees in Darlington West Cemetery, an extensive site dating from the mid Nineteenth Century and with three additions since then, the last of which was in the 1990s. Not only did Gordon identify every species of tree but counted and categorised every individual within each species present. Moreover he plotted the exact position of every tree, producing a complete plan to go with the lists. This was a gargantuan task presumably carried out in his spare time. I don't know how many people have studied the copy kept by the Darlington and Teesdale Naturalists' Field Club but, when I learned of its existence in the early 1990's, it provided me with a marvellous tool for studying fungi. As my knowledge of trees had been very sketchy until then, I was given a great injection of confidence and provided with a spur to the discovery and identification of innumerable species of microfungi I would not even have looked for, not to mention many large fungi I later found growing with and on some of the less well-known trees.

It must therefore count as something of a landmark to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the completion of Gordon's hard work and accompany him on an NEFSG outing to revisit many of the more important and interesting of the trees then mapped. Those who came to our meeting on Saturday 20th July 2006 experienced a unique treat, to be shown round by the man who is the real authority on a site that is a beautiful arboretum as well as being a public amenity. Gordon and I had spent the previous Monday morning looking round and preparing for the event. Not only did I learn things new to me even after 35 years' study of the fungi, but Gordon paid me the compliment saying that he too had had a valuable learning experience.

Of course time never stands still and it is sadly true to say that the site has declined in many respects in the years since the survey took place. I have had it designated an Important Fungus Area in the national context, but this designation carries no guarantee of protection, I'm afraid. Many of the original trees have gone, victims of old age, of disease such as Dutch Elm, of violent winds, of over-enthusiastic pruning and felling and, in some cases, of sheer neglect.



Tulip Tree flower

Keith Cunningham

Rarities like the Handkerchief Tree have disappeared, tall poplars have fallen and most of the venerable rowans have come to the end of their natural lives. There is, however, plenty of variety left, enough to furnish Gordon with more than ample subject-matter for his talk. As a life-long forester he concentrated quite rightly on the broad variety of conifers present but had time to look at broadleaves too, such as the mature and flowering Tulip-tree, the large True Service Tree, Bladdernut and Cobnut, Trees of Heaven and mature Walnuts harbouring the rarely seen leaf-parasitic fungus *Microstroma juglandis*.

It may seem strange for me to say this of an NEFSG outing, but, in a way, we were lucky to have a hot, dry July day when we were rarely distracted by the presence of fungi! A few *were* seen including one macrofungus in the shape of *Scleroderma verrucosum* at one of its usual sta-

tions. Four other fungi were newly-recorded at the site for 2006.

Whilst Gordon was showing us an example of Willow-leaved Pear, *Pyrus salicifolia*, Joan Vickers found a single leaf bearing a small quantity of orange rust fungus. This was a predictable concomitant of the fact that I had just told Keith Cunningham that the tree had no associated fungi!! I thought I knew that there are two *Gynosporangium* species that may be found on leaves of ordinary pear-trees, *Pyrus communis*, one alternating with native Juniper and whose more



usual summer host is Hawthorn. The other I have never seen but it is said to alternate with *Juniperis sabina*. Unfortunately Joan's collection was immature but I sent off her leaf in the hope of obtaining expert comment from friends who have worked on *Gymnosporangium* in recent years. The answer to my query was complicated but the upshot is that this is probably the first British record of a *Gymnosporangium* on willow-leaved pear, but I have been asked to watch closely to see if the next (aecial) stage appears, to enable the fungus to be determined to species.

Inconspicuous in our company was our own expert lichenologist, Doug McCutcheon, who I had hoped would identify any lichens he found incidentally. He set to work with a will and I was utterly delighted when a list arrived a few days later of no fewer than 47 species, at a stroke multiplying more than sixfold the miserable list already existing.

What a day then! The weather was unfailingly fine but not too oppressively hot. We had a few standard fungi but including one probably on a new host for Britain. We enjoyed the leadership of the undoubted authority on Cemetery trees. An amazing list of lichens was produced. Oh, and as a bonus, a disciple of local historian, George Flynn, accompanied us and was able to point out the gravestone of Charles Dickens' brother! Truly a day to remember and a memory to cherish.

Bishop's Castle Foray 16th September 2006

Gordon Simpson

One of my friends works for the Church of England estates so I volunteered to make arrangements for this foray. The initial planning went well up to the point when my friend said I had to contact a well-known firm of estate agents. I had to give reasons why NEFSG wanted to use the grounds of the palace. I had to promise that there would be no damage to trees and property and finally had to provide a copy of the ABFG's insurance. I could not understand why such requests were made when the public have free access to the grounds and deer park. I got so fed up with negotiations that I considered cancelling my request but I kept on as I did not want to be defeated. Although everything was settled I had to finally ask whether permission had been granted. I could not believe the trouble when members arrived at the stipulated parking area. The firm of estate agents had not informed the warden about our event. The warden was very good but a large wedding party had been booked for the Castle so he was worried about parking our cars.

Eventually we started the foray. A young member of the group was heavy with child yet she wanted to jump over the iron fence to look at a brilliant yellow tuft of toadstools on a dead stump. The tuft turned out to be *Armillaria mellea*. I had to record the details of each species identified and identify what I could. After the first record members queued to have species recorded so all I did was write notes. Fungi kept being produced right up to the end of the foray and the total at the end of the day was 88. Rachel, Hewitt, Vince and I took specimens for mi-



Amanita ceciliae

Bishop's Palace

Keith Cunningham

croscopic identification but my time for such work was limited. There will be other species to add to the day's total. At the start of the foray there was a glut of *Amanita ceciliae*. Tom amazed us all as usual in that he was convinced he could walk on water and attempted the crossing of the River Gaunless. He was wet to the knees but he retrieved many new species. A beautiful specimen of *Amanita crocea* turned up before our alfresco lunch stop. Peter Manuel tried his best to get his name on my list and finally managed it by producing a button of the Death Cap *Amanita phalloides*. Peter Holmes handed me a surprise on a dead Hawthorn branch, I kept quiet and passed it to Babs. With great delight she named the two fruiting bodies as *Phaeomarasma erinaceus*. This species was recorded on our Minsteracres Priory foray. Does it favour religious grounds? Late in the afternoon Andy approached with a smile on his face. He had found a small patch of waxcaps including *Hygrocybe calyptriformis*.

I apologise for not answering all your questions and not spending much time explaining why the toadstool was a certain species but my right arm was aching with all the writing.



Hygrocybe calyptriformis.

Bishop's Palace

Keith Cunningham

BMS Recording Network Group Meeting 16th -18th June 2006

Rachel Richards

Some of you may know that back in June I represented the North East Fungus Study Group at the BMSRN Group Meeting held just outside Preston at Alston Hall, a fantastic location which will no doubt be used again. Firstly, apologies for taking so long to write this up and secondly, many thanks for both moral and financial support from the group and to the BMS for subsidising my attendance.

Though the gathering began on the Friday evening, I arrived late Friday night after an orienteering season with the guides in Barney, a rushed meal and a 2 hour drive. On arrival I snuck away to my room, as all tired pregnant women should, only to be awoken in the wee hours by hoards of jackdaws on the roof!

Saturday was an intense and very informative day which I will attempt to summarise whilst explaining the most useful and interesting bits in more detail; wish me luck!!

The BMSRN, which is affiliated with the BMS, has been meeting now, every other year, since 1995 with its main aim being to make recommendations from local group members and pass these to the BMS council. The meeting also serves as an opportunity, as I see it, for groups to catch up on what is going on within other groups across the country, to see old friends and to learn from each other's experiences.

Saturday kicked off after a sociable breakfast catch-up at 9.15 with introductions and apologies from Liz Holden and an opening address from Geoff Gadd, the group president. This was followed by the Geoff Robinson's (BMS general secretary's) report and a report by Liz as BMSRN co-ordinator. One issue raised by Liz, to which BMS members may wish to give some consideration is the existence of the "affiliated member" status which Liz suggested should be removed as affiliated members are unable to vote. It was also pointed out that any affiliated member who wished to become a full member is most welcome to (in fact is encouraged to) and this is now a much easier process than in the past.

Julian Mitchell, BMS Membership Secretary then presented a report in which I was very surprised to hear that, of the 18,000 members, approx 47% are international members, mostly from Europe. There are also apparently over 500 associate members who have not upgraded to full voting members. Many of these associates had been "lost" because they did not reply to mailings (possibly sent to out-of-date addresses), and names could not be matched to subscriptions received because many direct-debits cannot be traced back to the sender. A list of "lost" contacts is available for group leaders for updating. Things are looking up however for BMS members as some reported simple improvements such as receiving receipts of payment for the first time in years!! There are also plans to introduce a welcome pack for new members plus a membership card and to improve the Mycologist Newsletter.

From next year there will be a change in BMS publications available to members. A new journal 'Fungal Biology Reviews' will be introduced, 'Field Mycology' will continue as at present and it is proposed that members will be able to choose which of these two journals they will take for their subscription (If they take both they will pay for the additional journal). 'Mycological Research' will continue as at present. "The Mycologist" will no longer be published and it is hoped that "The Mycologist News" will be issued quarterly from Jan 2007.

After coffee, Peter Roberts brought an update from Kew. You may well know that Kew have now moved into new facilities along with room for their continued growth for about the next 25 years. There are now 4 people on the mycological team and they plan to recruit a 5th later in the year. Please ask me if you require the new contact details. The Checklist of British and Irish Basidiomycota was published in 2005 and will be available shortly on the BMS web-site as a reference document and the planned book on clavarioid fungi is now programmed for publication in 2 to 3 years' time (please send any photos to Peter Hoffer, new Director-to-be).

David Moore, as Webmaster for the last 5 years, gave a brief talk on the BMS website. At present it is basically a document supplying websites but could be a lot more. He made a request for any ideas or materials people wish to post on it. He particularly highlighted that the BMS do have small grants available to groups for all sorts of things and these aren't too difficult to obtain. An application form can be found on the website under resources. Is this something we make use of yet as a group? (We haven't yet but ideas would be very welcome. Ed.)

Peter Spencer Philips of the Field Mycology Committee explained to the group that the purpose of this new committee, which will meet twice a year, is strategic planning and co-ordination, bringing a focus on field mycology activities to the centre of the BMS. There is also a Foray Sub-Committee which will arrange and deliver a foray and workshop programme. The

BMS Foray Programme was outlined by Sherry Stannard (Foray Manager) and local groups were asked to investigate and suggest suitable venues in their area for forays or workshops. The possibility of re-instating BMS Day Forays was discussed.

2006: Autumn – Kingcombe Centre, Dorset (fully booked)

Overseas – Sardinia (fully booked)

Rotheroe Memorial Foray – Carmarthenshire (21st -29th Oct. There were still places)

2007: Spring – Isle of Arran, April or May

Autumn – Sheffield University, visiting Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire & South Yorks 1st-8th Sept.

Overseas – Nice, South of France, lots of Russulas! 10th -19th Oct

Upland – possibly N.Wales or Pembrokeshire

Boletus Workshop – Allan Hills at Romsey (22nd July)

2008: Groups are asked to suggest suitable meetings venues in their areas. Also suggested that we investigate the idea of inviting an expert and paying their travel expenses etc. with a BMS small grant.

One of the most interesting presentations, in my opinion, was by David Moore, the Education officer for the BMS, talking on “Education Matters”. An extremely useful resource available to all is the “Fungi 4 Schools” website, www.fungi4schools.org. This is packed with fun, free resources for anyone working with children.

David began by bringing some alarming facts about the almost complete absence of any inclusion of fungi in the national curriculum. Apparently 1¼ million children do GCSEs each year in England, Wales and Ireland and the only mention of fungi is that “they are like bacteria recycling dead organic waste”. Students are told about penicillin and possibly about yeast and fermentation. At A level, Fungi are mentioned once, a slightly disproportionate representation for an entire kingdom of organisms!

David has been working with the BMS Education Officer on a three-year programme to prepare material for primary and secondary schools; e.g. ‘Fungus Fred goes Foraying’, ‘How the Mushroom got its Spots’, and ‘Key Stages for Fungi’ material aimed at science teachers. This education pack is now available free from David for use with young people. He will post however many copies are requested or, if any one is interested, I have a number of copies to pass on. Efforts are now moving towards preparing material for Higher Education.

Later in the afternoon a rather long and passionate debate developed on the BMSFRD (Fungus Recording Data Base) managed by Paul Kirk. The new suggested name is “Fungal Records Database of Britain & Ireland (managed by the BMS)” (FRDBI), put to Council on June 23rd. The question was whether or not this database of fungi records should be made available to the NBN (National Biodiversity Network). Though most would love it to be, the concern is the condition of the data and the need for “cleaning” first. The scale of the cleaning needed however and the time and money implications, means there would be a considerable time delay if it is first cleaned.

Finally, an agreement was reached that the data which had been licensed should be made

openly available to the NBN in its present “unverified” format, despite many errors. This decision will now be referred to the BMS Council. Another useful website highlighted by Paul is librifungorum.org. This site details useful books and journals and, if groups wish to we can scan our Newsletters and Paul will put them on the website.

After the evening meal, Sheila Spence presented a Talk on “Caring for God’s Acre”. This is a project which began in South Shropshire and provides funding for people to investigate the wildlife in their local churchyard. Mycologists have got involved and found some very interesting fungi including for example *Sowerbyella radiculata*, the first for Herefordshire, and *Geopora sumneriana* (cedar cup) (Both these have been found in Darlington West Cemetery, the latter annually. Ed.).

Following investigation of a site, management recommendations are then made by local enthusiasts and specialists. Unfortunately these recommendations will, at times, benefit one group of organisms, or even an individual species, at the expense of others. We were therefore encouraged, as mycologist, to get involved where possible in providing management recommendations for fungi. At some sites, for example, which also support good grassland fungi communities, botanists have encouraged a late autumn cut to benefits plants not realising the harmful effects this may have on grassland fungi communities.

After this most headed to the bar for a well-earned drink, while some enthusiasts continued with a database workshop.

Sunday 18th June- Jill Sutcliffe of English Nature/Natural England brought a very interesting talk on fungi with emphasis on BAPs, (Biodiversity Action Plans). She looked at how fungi compare to other groups in terms of the attention and resources they are being given.

As you may imagine, despite the very high diversity of fungal species in the UK, ca. 12 000 species, there is a disproportionately low number designated as BAP species and Red Data List species. There are over 27 BAP spp. (27 plus one BAP group designated for the tooth fungi) with the new proposed list of approximately 80 and ca. 300 RDL species with only 9 SSSIs designed solely for their fungal interest. Some species such as *Hygrocybe calyptriformis* (the Ballerina) have been removed due to being more widespread than thought. It has never the less served its purpose well as a flagship species.

The apparent lack of importance given to fungi is due partly to the practicalities of identification; BAPs need to be workable. There are also currently very limited resources to manage these BAPs with only 4 members of EN staff covering plants and fungi. The upside however is that BAPs have generated money for funding work which has increased both our knowledge and general public awareness. The idea of HAPs (Habitat Action Plans) for fungi was also discussed as a possibility for the future.

Together with partner organisations including the BMS, Plantlife is in the process of developing a strategy document for fungal conservation planning. It is hoped that the document will help to concentrate future efforts and funding.

The final talk, The Criminalisation of Field Mycology, became more of a debate which fortunately collapsed into hilarities rather than causing too much concern. Magic mushrooms

Psilocybe semilanceata and other species containing the same substances (psilocin or esters of psilocin) are now considered to be a “class A” drug and, as such, possessing or collecting them has been made illegal. Clearly many mycologists both collect and have dried collections of such species, though most agreed that the enforcing agents wouldn’t have the same powers of identification as the rest of us! There have been some concerns raised with this, understandably, and the occasional unfortunate story.

The badly drafted nature of the legislation, possible loopholes in it and the possibility of obtaining a license to hold a collection, (be it as an individual, a group or a blanket one to cover the BMS and affiliated groups) were all discussed. The final conclusion reached however was that the BMS should apply for a licence from the Home Office to allow their members to keep private herbaria containing these fungi. Time will tell how successful this is.

After coffee the weekend ended with the individuals around the table raising any thoughts or ideas they wished to bring to the group.

Some of the ideas raised included:

- Setting up sentinel sites which would be regularly monitored for environmental change through recording fungi present over many years.
- Some kind of “spring watch idea” which is doable with fungi to increase awareness and appreciation of fungi.
- A need to get and keep young people involved in fungi, pass on knowledge and train up the future (my point!).

The next meeting will be in Summer 2008. I’d suggest it’s well worth while someone from the group attending. Next time however, this person should first consult with the group to gather any thoughts, ideas or questions NESFG members may wish to be raised.

WELL DONE IF YOU HAVE MANAGED TO READ ALL THIS - give yourself a pat on the back!!!

The Great Winter Competition 2006

This year, the competition has taken on a much harder edge. It was obviously becoming too easy (Simkins won the last prize!). Coupled with the increased difficulty, is a value added prize! A £25.00 BOOTS VOUCHER.....how can you afford NOT to enter?

So here it is. Read the short extract below. You will, no doubt, be immediately aware of the quirky style and use of language. This is because, hidden in the text, there are the LATIN names of SIX fungi. The names, as always, are *Genera species*, and the letters appear in the correct order, in groups never less than two, and with no names overlapping. Groups may end one word and begin another. There are no clues this year...just find the names!

The Rough Camping Guide

The campsite was run to a formula. Lunch in the “Log Cabin” was always the same, ripe fruit piled on to plastic plates, luscious and tempting. Given the gannet-like tendencies of us all, the food was invariably quickly consumed. After the first week we tried persuading our culinary donors to liven up their ideas but were then dumfounded when the arrival of pan after pan of pale orange soup, distantly reminiscent of tomato and basil, ushered in the beginning of a new era.

Nonetheless, we all felt that camping was a nuisance so late in the year. The departure date was usually decided in a laconic and spontaneous moment, intentionally, so as to prevent an argument developing. Extra meetings tested our patience, so adverse acerbic comments tended to colour the oratorical reasoning of the friends...but each October off we went... regardless.

So here we were again. Though the food had improved, we all slept badly. During the night horrific winds, apparently meteorological, made staying awake until the small hours obligatory.

The prize will be awarded to the contestant with the MOST names correctly identified. In the event of a tie, a “draw” will take place. This year I have invited Jenny Bond to pull the name out of the bag, but if she is unavailable my wife will oblige.

Please note that there is a bonus prize of a bottle of fine wine to the contestant who finds ANY other fungus name in the text, with the letters distributed as described.

As always, reply to tectak@aol.com, phone 01740 630179, or write to:

Tom Kirby
4 Bishopton Crossings
Stillington
Stockton on Tees.
TS21 1NJ

CLOSING DATE 31st. December 2006