

North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter 47 January 2008



Lyophyllum connatum

Waldridge Fell

Photo: Keith Cunning-

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Affiliated to the British Mycological Society



This Newsletter is produced with the
assistance of Durham Wildlife Trust

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held at Durham Wildlife Trust's Headquarters at Rainton Meadows on the Saturday 12th January 2008 at 11am. Please bring the agenda below and last year's minutes on page 3 with you.

The meeting will be followed by a general discussion.

Committee Changes

Babs Walton is stepping down as Secretary this year, but will be happy to work with whoever wishes to take on that role, enabling a smooth takeover.

Other long term members of the committee also expressed their desire to hand over the mantle of responsibility to other group members. Alan, Gordon and Keith wish to step back into consultative rolls, and Andy McLay's title has now changed from Foray Organiser to Foray Consultant.

It is hoped that members who are interested in any committee roll will come forward for election at the AGM in January. Their presence on the committee will be joyfully welcomed.

Subscriptions 2008

Subscriptions are due for payment at the AGM in January, but if members are unable to attend could they please send their subs [£6 individual - £8 couple] to me:

Babs Walton
Stodhoe Farm
Middleton St George
Darlington DL2 1DS

No reminders except this one will be sent out, so please use **THIS** reminder to send off your cheques. If subs have not been submitted by the end of March we must assume membership is not going to be resumed, and no further newsletters will be sent.

North Eastern Fungus Study Group
10th AGM – Rainton Meadows Saturday 12TH January 2008
Agenda

1. Apologies for absence

2. Election of Officers

3. Minutes of the 9th A.G.M

4. Matters arising: - Website. Manhiem

5. 2008 Suggested Programme

08th March - Micro Photography – Alan Bunn

03rd May - Belsay Estate

14th June - Social Luncheon - Tom Kirby

19th July - Lartington Hall - Gordon Simpson

13th Sept - Cropton Forest - Gordon Simpson

27th Sept - Hudswell Wood - Alan Legg

18th Oct - Lockwood Beck & Castleton Moor – Andy McLay

25th Oct - Blanchland - Keith Cunningham

08th Nov - North Gare (Dunes) -

6. Treasurer's Report

7. Foray Leader's Report

8. A.O.B.

9. Date of next meeting

North Eastern Fungus Study Group
Minutes of the Tenth AGM held at Rainton Meadows
on Saturday 13TH January 2007 at 11.a.m.

1. **Apologies for absence:**

Peter Holmes, Phil Sanderson, Doug McCutcheon, Gayle & Chris Lowe, Aubrey & Edith Colling, Vince Jones, Pat Wood, Rachel Richards, and Michelle Appleby. 17 members attended.

2. **Election of Officers:**

Hewitt Ellis proposed the re-election of Gordon Simpson as Chairperson, Alan Legg as Group Leader, Tom Kirby as Treasurer, Keith Cunningham as Newsletter Editor, Andy McLay as Foray Organiser and Babs Walton as Secretary. The motion was seconded and carried.

3. **Minutes of the last AGM meeting:**

Accepted as accurate.

4. **Matters arising: - WEBSITE.**

It was agreed that Keith Cunningham will proceed with creating our own Website. In reply to Joan Vickers query as to how long it will be before it becomes accessible to users, Keith replied, "about six months". Modification of the site will be progressive. His research shows that the cost will be approx £40 a year. Should Keith hit unforeseen problems, Bernhard Otto, who has his own Mycology Website in Germany, may be able to help. The website will possibly be 'www.NEFSG.co.uk'

5. **2007 Programme: (All meetings start at 11.am unless otherwise stated)**

Mar 10th - Twig foray and Fungi Recording Sheets – Rainton Meadows

May 5th - Burnhope Reservoir - Microfungi

June 2nd - Social Luncheon at Stodhoe Farm

July 21st - Chapman's Well & Anfield Plain (Great N. Forest)

Sept 15th - Aykley Heads

Sept 29th - Blagdon Estate, Northumberland Wildlife Trust [Peter Manuel]

Oct 13th - Walldridge Fell – (Heathland)

Oct 27th - Washington Wildfowl Park

Nov 24th - Hamsterley Forest: Foray (A.M.) and Microscopy in Classroom (P.M.) **10.30AM start**

6. **Treasurer's Report**

There is negligible change to last year's figures so there is no need for the subscriptions to be increased this year. Expenses remain low due to the continued goodwill of voluntary workers and the use of the premises and equipment of the Durham Wildlife Trust, though this could change should DWT decide to charge us a fee for the use of their premises. Cliff Evans will be checking on this. The report was accepted.

7. **Foray Organiser's Report**

Andy McLay as Foray Organiser will now make available on the actual foray, his mobile telephone number for members to call should they be separated at any time from the group. Andy will also draw up an Accident and Risk Assessment for future forays, which will appear in the newsletter. The site status will also appear with future forays to give the members a clearer picture of the particular foray. Thanks were given to Andy for the successful forays of 2006.

8. **A.O.B.**

- (i) **Records:** There are now over 20,000 records. Gordon Simpson is now attempting to tidy up these records as errors of various kinds have occurred in the earlier years.
- (ii) **Manheim:** Bernhard Otto raised the suggestion of an exchange with his mycology group in Germany. He will be submitting an article for the newsletter about this.
- (iii) **Dorothy Wolfe's Book:** Mel Sly will be writing an article for the newsletter on the production of Dorothy's book.
- (iv) **The Tom Kirby 2006 quiz.** Chris Lowe was the winner of this.
- (v) **Forestry Commission Pathology News.** Gordon Simpson reported on interesting articles from this. Perhaps another newsletter article?

9. **Date of the 11th AGM: 11.am Saturday 12th Jan 2008 @ Rainton Meadows.**

Minutes of North Eastern Fungus Study Group Committee Meeting

Held on 10th Nov 2007 at Low Barns

Apologies for absence: - None

Minutes of last meeting: - Approved

Matters arising:

[a] **Website:** It was decided to discuss with Bernhard Otto, if he has the time, would he consider attempting this project for the group.

[b] **Manheim Trip:** Bernhard Otto has now produced an article for the next newsletter which will hopefully encourage members of the group to consider a trip to Kirkel in October..

[c] **Record Sheets:** A single design has now been agreed upon by the committee. A copy will be printed in the next newsletter, and can then be discussed with other members at the AGM.

[d] **Database Records:** A sub-committee will attempt to rectify the problems within the records as they are not 100% accurate at the present moment due to technical problems which occurred previously within the database. We may have to accept that they may never reach total accuracy, but the aim is to do the best we can.

Committee Changes: Babs Walton is stepping down as Secretary this year, but will be happy to work with whoever wishes to take on that role enabling a smooth takeover.

Other long term members of the committee also expressed their desire to hand over the mantle of responsibility to other group members. Alan, Gordon and Keith wish to step back into consultative rolls, and Andy McLay's title has now changed from Foray Organiser to Foray Consultant. It is hoped that members who are interested in any committee roll will come forward for election at the AGM in January.

2008 Suggested Programme

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Fungi Keys and other Information: Following a conversation with Archie McAdam who has produced his own key for Boletes. It was decided that Tom would keep a folder of all useful information in the library. Gordon proposed that if anyone publishes a genera they should present it to Alan to assess its suitability.

Foray Site Lists: It was decided that a list of finds on a foray should be offered to the site owners for allowing us to forage and survey their property.

Brief Report on the National Organisations: Alan Legg reported that there were problems of dissention between the B.M.S and A.B.F.G. which have been ongoing for some time. At the conclusion of the discussion, this committee was in accord that Field Mycology Groups like ours need to remain true to their own vocation.

N.E.F.S.G. Records for D.W.T.: In response to Keith Cunningham's request to download our Mycorec records for D.W.T. Gordon Simpson, as a gesture of courtesy, contacted Paul Kirk for his approval. This he gave freely.

A.O.B.

(a) Alan Legg asked Tom Kirby if he would examine the A.B.F.G. database template to analyse its possibilities for our use.

(b) Gordon Simpson asked if the starting time for all meetings could be earlier. This will be muted at the AGM.

Date of next meeting: 10am on the 26th April 2008 at Low Barns

Dorothy Wolfe

It is with sadness that we report that Dorothy died on the 19th November 2007. Gordon Simpson, Babs Walton and Joan Vickers attended the funeral on the 27th November.

A cine-screen had been erected in the church depicting her work, and the service leaflet included parts of her mycological paintings. It is believed that this was the work of the local vicar. We, on behalf of NEFSG, offered our condolences to Jack and his family.

Dorothy will be sadly missed but her wonderful drawings will be a memorial, especially now that some have been published. Her warm friendliness and gentle humour will be sadly missed at meetings.

In memoriam Dorothy Wolfe 1931 – 2007

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of one of our stalwart founder-members, Dorothy E. Wolfe. Dorothy had been in poor health for some time and had been only an occasional participant in our more strenuous outdoor meetings in recent years.

She was an accomplished professional artist and art teacher and, although not a native of the North East, had made it her home for many years, first as a student and then as a teacher, wife and mother. In all her activities she was always devotedly supported by her genial husband, Jack.

Dorothy taught Dress Design at Hartlepool College and put her practical gifts to good use by also being involved in the provision of classes in Pottery and Natural Studies. She exhibited ceramics and paintings of both flowers and fungi at many galleries and museums throughout the North East. As far as the NEFSG is concerned, we are proud that it was through the efforts of one of our other founder-members, Mel Sly, that Dorothy was finally able to achieve a crowning ambition at the end of 2006 in the publication of the semi-autobiographical volume of paintings, drawings and photographs entitled *A Fungi Sketchbook*.

It has been my pleasure and privilege to have known Dorothy probably longer than any other member of the NEFSG. As far as I am aware, she and I first met at the BMS Spring Foray at Morecambe in 1984. Held, unusually, over the Spring Bank Holiday, it was the first such foray I was able to attend. Having established that we were near neighbours in Hartlepool and Darlington respectively, we later met with more regularity usually at forays organised by the YNU.

Of my many personal memories, I would like to single out one that is still especially vivid. YNU members had gathered during a Spring Foray in the attractive village of West Tanfield on the River Ure. As the party made its way westwards along the southern bank, a sudden cry of delight rang through the wood; Dorothy had spotted a magnificent morel, one she was later to model in ceramics.

I was especially delighted by the series of paintings which Dorothy produced of the development of some specimens of the earthstar, *Geastrum triplex*, I had collected while surveying the fungi of Duncombe Park, Helmsley in 2004 (see *A Fungi Sketchbook* pages 186 – 191).

AWL December 2007

MORCHELLA ESCULENTA - THE MOREL. Y.N.U. SPRING
FORAY

LIFE-SIZE

Found by the River Ure
on 6/5/89 - W. Tanfield.

In mixed woodland,
under a hawthorn bush
— ground sandy.

Sycamores and birch
were predominant.

Flowers — bluebells,
celandines and wild
garlic.

cap —
hollow —
irregularly lobed
colour — ochre
to snuff brown.



stipe very well rooted
in the ground.

side view

D. E. Wolfe

Washington Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust - 27.10.2007

Alan Legg

Despite some difficulties in organising my personal life, I was very pleased to be able to pay a visit to yet another well-known VC66 venue to which I had somehow escaped going before. It is obviously not primarily a foray site but one strength of mycology is that it is always relevant in places where the main focus is on other aspects of natural history. I have to say that, to someone like myself with no more than a mild interest in birds, the entrance fee seemed rather steep – even for a charitable trust – so I was also pleased that the NEFSG had managed to negotiate free group entry! Late October can be a time of lean pickings and the continuing dry weather did not help, especially in a wetland area. The lack of frost was the main factor, then, helping to ensure a reasonable haul of species to report back to the trustees. Our usual site researchers, Andy and Keith, were not with us but Gordon Simpson's encyclopaedic knowledge was, as usual, a reliable guide to carry us around the Reserve.

Our provisional total count of 87 taxa included 30 toadstools across a wide range of genera, with even a few mycorrhizal species in evidence. There were some surprises too. *Strobilurus tenacellus*, that common spring denizen of buried pine cones, had been confused enough by the weather to produce an unseasonable fruiting to add interest to our list. More in keeping with the season but rarely reported was good material of *Tricholoma inocybeoides* which I had first found in the grounds of Darlington College of Technology 20 years before and had confirmed by the then Chief Mycologist, David Pegler who deposited it in the Kew herbarium. We had a single small specimen of *Clitocybe geotropa*, a species often forming huge rings in well-established woodlands further south but with very few records in our patch north of the Tees. Another species worth mentioning despite its former prevalence in October and November, is the firesite denizen, *Tephrocybe anthracophila*, spotted by the eagle eye of Peter Manuel. At one time I specialised in the study of the small group of *Tephrocybe* species colonising burnt ground and even produced a key to them on behalf of the BMS. Nowadays, largely owing to the discouragement of fires on Forestry Commission land, these fungi are becoming much less common, restricted as they are to private sites. Finally among the agarics, I was delighted to be handed a couple of small bright pink *Mycenas*. I immediately showed these to Babs and was not disappointed by her excited reaction to a beautiful, rarely-collected species she had found accidentally after a memorable fall in Elemore Woods ten years before – the lovely *Mycena adonis*.

Only a few uncommonly-reported ascomycetes were in evidence. A *Peziza* reported to be from wood-chips caused me some puzzlement at home until I realised that the woody material must have been overlying more burnt ground and then easily identified as *P. praetervisa*. This I had first encountered in many hundreds on scorched ground in a spruce plantation at Loftus Warren in November 1983. I had seen subsequent collection

Finally, it is a necessary part of my role occasionally to express scepticism about material confidently identified in the field by other forayers. Such an attitude is not always popular but is a vital part of empirical investigation as even our most experienced collectors (myself included) are likely on occasion to be over-confident in field identification. It is however always gratifying to have my doubts discounted by later investigation at home. On this occasion, more than one forayer was quite convinced of the identity of small fungi like small, inverted, soft-fleshed scallop shells found on the bark of ailing deciduous trees. I had found *Plicatura crispa* myself on occasion but usually only dry overwintered material so it wasn't difficult to be sceptical about a number of fresh collections handed to me at Washington. I am pleased to report that both their faith and my doubts proved useful on this occasion. Examination of specimens at home confirmed the identity of the fungus (found frequently in recent years in VC67 by Hewett Ellis and apparently travelling southwards from its former heartland in Scotland). However the same piece of bark that I took home bearing specimens of *P. crispa* I found also to be supporting material of a small inconspicuous *Hypoxylon* bursting through the substrate in little clusters. I have yet to confirm the identity of this species but it seems to be the rarely-collected *H. rutilum*. If confirmed at Kew this will be not only the first record for north east England but also the only collection from *Betula* (as opposed to *Fagus*) on the national database.



Pen Portrait of our Group Leader, Alan Legg



For Philip Larkin, childhood was "a forgotten boredom" and, for Graham Greene, we are all "emigrants from a country we remember too little of". For me neither was true; childhood was broadly happy, secure and often exciting. Much of it I remember rather vividly and was rarely bored.

I was born "between the heather and the northern sea" not long before the outbreak of the Second World War. I recall often being carried down two flights of stairs to the metal air-raid shelter lying on the dank stone floor of an old washroom partly below ground

level. I didn't understand the dangers nor particularly like being woken up and transferred to damp bedclothes in a dark and musty place. But I survived - as did the iron-works at Carlin How the air raids were designed to destroy. Later I often lay awake, hearing the incessant manic rumbles from those same furnaces and seeing the sky light up orange from nearby slag-tipping.

I enjoyed school, probably because I was good at lessons, but I also revelled in the magical countryside within playing distance of our shop in Loftus. There were deep wooded valleys, beaches and high cliffs and, not far away, mysterious moorland easily reachable on a pushbike when I was a little older. All these showed the scars of an industrial past providing yet more play areas to fire the imagination. Rationing persisted until well into the 50s and much was in short supply until I was in my teens, but you don't miss what you have never known so I didn't feel deprived. The early freedom to roam the countryside gave me a formless love of nature and prepared me unconsciously for my later passion for fungi.

My parents had both won scholarships to local grammar schools but both had had to leave prematurely, my father to enter the family drapery business and my mother to make way for younger brothers. For them, my going to Guisborough Grammar School and completing my secondary education there was a vicarious fulfilment of their own thwarted dreams. I continued to enjoy school and worked without excessive effort towards the distant Nirvana of university. What one did afterwards was never made clear but a Methodist upbringing conditioned me to think in terms of a life of service. I perceived "business" as the drudgery my father obviously didn't enjoy and "industry" as the infernal activities at Carlin How to which so many local people seemed to be enslaved. There was no such thing as career guidance in those days and, as I was moderately good at everything, regularly placed in the top two or three in my year, I found it difficult to know my own mind with regard to further study. I acquired a great admiration for the scholarship of certain teachers and so naturally gravitated towards "arts"

subjects. There was no technical education and the science teachers were obviously unhappy with their lot. I still find it difficult to understand those who do not revere learning for its own sake and this reverence often seems to be a puzzle to the more practical people I know.

After an arts degree at Durham and an Education Diploma at Oxford, I spent four years teaching in a grammar school, three training secondary teachers in Ghana and a further year of study at Leicester. I then became a lecturer in English at Darlington College of Technology, where, a few years later, I assumed the mantle of English Section Leader. I had found that I preferred teaching older people and many of my students were adults returning to education after false starts or after raising families. Most were keen to learn and enjoyed and appreciated their courses. With long holidays and plenty of weekend leisure, I was fortunate to be able to develop my hobbies. Only towards the end of my career did I become disheartened by the inexorable collapse of educational standards in a system suffocated by bureaucracy and drowning in a sea of red tape.

Luck was still with me however and I was able to take advantage of the last round of early retirements in 1996 at the comparatively early age of 57. I had never been remotely wealthy and never aspired to the material success now perceived as the only kind of riches worth having, so being able to follow my own inclinations more than made up for a reduction in income.

I have dealt elsewhere (Newsletters 36 and 37, 2005) with the early days of my passion for fungi. The 1970s saw a gradual increase in my knowledge but it was not until the early 80s that a real breakthrough took place. Yet again I was lucky, making contacts first in the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union, a national bastion of field mycology since the nineteenth century, and then in the British Mycological Society. I met stalwarts of the Warwickshire Fungus Survey and was thus gradually introduced to microscopy and microfungi (on only too rare foray weekends) by some of the country's leading exponents.

By the late 80s, I was confident enough to concentrate on specific topics, writing on such subjects as frequency and distribution, fungal teratology and fire-site fungi. Membership of more local organisations such as the Darlington Naturalists and the NNU gave me more background knowledge and led to a fascinating sideline of research in the history of north-eastern mycology. I have long since lost count of the hundreds of notes, reports, articles, reviews and research papers I have published during the last twenty years. My most satisfying achievement was to discover and bring to the attention of the mycological community the existence of a few fungal specimens collected by James Bolton of Halifax and preserved in the herbarium of Edward Robson in the Sunderland Museum. A direct result of my study was that Bolton's classic name *Daldinia concentrica* has been safeguarded for the King Alfred's Cakes so common in Britain on ash-trees. As a Yorkshireman like Bolton, I am naturally proud of this small contribution to international mycological research.

Finally, with experience of leading BMS Day Forays locally, and as a result of some prodding by Jack Marriott, shortly after retirement, I made moves to set up a Fungus Group for the North East of England. Thus was born the NEFSG, now established for ten years but owing its success almost solely to the enthusiasm of its members.

The Waldrige Fell Foray – October 13th 2007

Alan Legg

As a young teacher in Durham in the early 1960s, I frequently took a bus to Newcastle on Saturdays. In those days, the A167 was the A1 and went through places rather than around them. Just south of Chester-le-Street, a signpost pointed west to a place called Waldrige, a name that, for some reason, I found intriguing. Nearly three decades later I found that an area of relict lowland heath called Waldrige Fell was well-known to local naturalists – especially doyen of the NNU, Tom Dunn. It was not, however, until this foray was arranged that I ever had occasion to visit the site so I was fulfilling a minor long-standing ambition when I arrived with Gordon Simpson at the pre-arranged parking venue.

Rain threatened but never arrived though Andy was quick to point out that the mainly dry late season had much reduced our chances of finding many heathland fungi. There was however sufficient dampish birch woodland to help keep us busy longer than usual and, even then, we did not cover all the projected foraging areas. We have been unfortunate this year that the weather has not proved conducive to good foraging conditions, especially as 2006 was such a bumper year. NEFSG members are made of cheerful material, however, not easily downhearted by such setbacks. Keith Cunningham, in particular, was very industrious, making repeated sorties to different habitats we had not time to visit as a group, and returning with samples of their typical fungi. It was owing to these digressions, particularly into an area of conifer woodland, that the total count of identified fungi reached three figures for the only time this year!

In birch-dominated woodland there was naturally quite a lot of species overlap with the July Annfield Plain outing. We had no new County records but plenty to interest forayers nevertheless. Collections worthy of special mention include an interesting ascomycete parasite of *Lactarius pubescens*. The parasite almost entirely replaces the gills and hymenium of the toadstool with thousands of tiny dull orange structures of *Hypomyces spadiceus* and is not uncommon in damp birch woodland but tends not to be recorded because it is overlooked, forayers being merely puzzled by the lack of gills. I first collected this species under the name *Peckiella lateritium*, later transferred to *Hypomyces*. Since then in Scandinavia the name *H. lateritium* has been restricted to a fungus on a different host so we should use the name *H. spadiceus* for the *Lactarius pubescens* parasite. This is infuriating for many and mystifying for beginners but, sadly, part of the necessary process of sorting out incomplete knowledge.

Burnt gorse provided us with plenty of material of the small King Alfred's Cakes, *Daldinia vernicosa* and, nearby, we also found very similar fruitbodies on a thin, dead birch trunk. These turned out to be *D. loculata*, also seen at Annfield Plain in July.

Being familiar with woodland of his own, Doug McCutcheon has frequently drawn attention to the red *Russula* sometimes known as *R. emeticella* because of its similarity to the conifer species *R. emetica*, the Sickener. Checking in my new *Russula* key by Geoffrey Kibby, I found that we should really be calling this fungus *R. silvestris*, a much older name which therefore takes precedence. Using the same key, I pinned down a violet three-quarter-peeling Waldrige *Russula* with a discoloured centre as *R. versicolor*, locally recorded only in Castle Eden Dene in 1999.

Finally, apologies to Keith for my failure to take home a *Melanoleuca* he showed me!