

North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter 54 August 2009



Leotia lubrica, Hudswell Woods, October 2008. Olympus E510, 35mm macro lens, aperture priority, 1sec. f8

Identification notes from Gordon Simpson	Page 2	Alan Bunn/GS
Pen Portrait of Chris Meek	Page 3	Christine Meek
MAK-A Reciprocal Arrangement	Page 4	Tom Kirby
Our Spring Foray at Tunstall Reservoir	Page 5	Alan Legg
<i>Mitrula paludosa</i> ...The Bog Beacon	Page 6	Aubrey Colling
Things ain't always what they seem	Page 7	Tom Kirby
Just when you thought it was all over...	Page 8	Tom Kirby
...it is now	Page 9	Tom Kirby



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This Newsletter is produced
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For most of us our interest in Field Mycology begins with a visual fascination. The varied forms of fungi, generally unrestricted by the need to absorb energy from light, makes for exciting imagery. To satisfy our thirst for knowledge we tend to buy the most expensive books with the largest pictures. Take a look at the identification notes from Gordon to Alan (below) and you may decide that the pen is mightier than the lens. In the interest of fair play, background picture is of *Hydnum repandum* spines, Cropton Forest, September 2008 DS

Here are some identification notes that our Chairman, Gordon, sent to me by e-mail a couple of years ago just after Vince Jones and I joined NEFSG. We found these helpful and gave us some target species to search for on our early trips in the year, so with Gordon's permission I am passing them on and I hope you also find them helpful. The months given refer to the month that Gordon sent the e-mails to me.

October

On the Mount Grace Priory foray I am sure you saw me, after the lunch break, holding an old Oak branch with small, black cushions protruding through the bark. This is *Diatrypella quercina*. Similar smaller cushions on Beech branches will be *Diatrype disciformis*. Brown spheres, turning black, on beech will be *Hypoxylon fragiforme* whereas brown spheres on Hazel or Alder will be *Hypoxylon fuscum*. Black, knobbly crusts on Birch will be *Hypoxylon multiforme*. A large, granular crust on dead, broadleaved logs will be *Diatrype stigma*. Black cushions on Willow will be *Diatrype bullata*. The detail I have given is not absolutely fool proof and there are others but this might help you get a start on pyrenomycetes.

Identifying fungi from photographs is difficult at times because the key identification feature is often hidden. For example, I often want to turn the photograph upside down to look at the underside. (this e-mail was sent by GS after he had attempted some ID's from my photographs)

The photograph with a black background and red spheres I think is the parasitic red *Nectria episphaeria* on an old pyrenomycete. A pyrenomycete is normally a black crust on or small sphere protruding through the bark on dead wood. Pyreno means burnt (like charcoal). If the black background was a granular sheet the old fungus will probably be *Diatrype stigma*.

November

If you can remember *Diatrype stigma*, mentioned in my email to you on pyrenomycete, it is worth a close look at old specimens. If you find minute red dots it will probably be *Nectria episphaeria*. Small white dots might be *Polydesmia pruinosa*. They also affect other pyrenomycetes.

With reference to problem of not finding spores on the Pyrenomycetes. The trouble is the 'charcoal-like' fruiting bodies can last for a year or two and the spores might have been shed long ago. With the microscope I feel satisfied with a 50% success on most fungi. It is tantalising but that is life.

Can you or Vince remember giving me a cluster of dark purple discs about 2cm diameter growing on rotten wood? When the bag was opened a cloud of white spores arose. I have just checked it under the microscope and the spores are 22 x 5 microns. This makes it *Ascocoryne cylichnium*, a species I seldom encounter. The commonest species, *A. sarcoides*, has discs less than 1cm diameter or a brain-like structure.

February

Look for reddish patches up to 1cm diameter on dock leaves, especially broad-leaved dock. Last year's spots might still be visible. They are caused by *Ramularia rubella*. Alan Legg will not accept the record until summer but you might be able to become familiar with the fungus. In summer you might be lucky and find black spots on the underside of the leaves using a magnifying glass. This is *Venturia rumicis*. Break off the dead stems of common nettle at around ground level and look for small, black projections 1mm long. They resemble soft ice cream with its projection in the centre. This is *Leptosphaeria acuta*. Also look for an orange tinge to the dead stems further up the stalk. Magnify the coloured area and you might find minute orange cups. This is *Calloria neglecta*.

Now that celandine might soon emerge look for white almost transparent patches (not the normal pale leaf patches) on the leaves. This is *Entyloma ficariae*. Make sure the patches are white. You might also see leaf discoloration and a brown rust underneath. This is *Uromyces ficariae*.

May

A further rust causes brown lumps on the top of Celandine leaves. Look under the leaf for orange spore clusters. This is *Uromyces dactylidis*. If the leaf has brown spore clusters underneath it is *U. ficariae*. I have not seen the latter this year.

Start looking for the rust fungus *Puccinia punctiformis* on Creeping Thistle. It smells of honey in the orange stage and the plants will be paler than healthy plants. Also look for the rust *Puccinia caricina* on Common Nettle. It is orange and it distorts the leaf or leaf stalk or the plant stalk.

From Gordon Simpson to Alan Bunn

Pen Portrait – Chris Meek

Born in Stockton – on – Tees in 1955, I attended a Primary School in Norton, followed by Grangefield Grammar School for Girls, which furnished me with 10 'O' Levels and 3 'A' Levels. Most of my spare time was taken up with the Girl Guides and after collecting a goodly number of badges I was awarded The



Queen's Guide. It was in Guides that I first experienced a hike on the North Yorkshire Moors and enjoyed it so much that I did the Lyke Wake walk as my second walk, a 42 mile walk, which stopped any protests my parents may have had that I was too young to join the Stockton Rambling Group at the age of 14.

I continued my education, gaining an honours degree in Theology at Birmingham University. From here I decided to go into teaching and so took my Post Graduate Certificate of Education at St. Martin's College in Lancaster. By the time I was applying for my first teaching post I had decided that I wanted to live in or near a National Park and so was delighted to acquire the post of 'Teacher in charge of Religious Studies' at Richmond Comprehensive School, North Yorkshire in 1977.

Here I met my husband and left to become a full-time mother in 1984. When Rachel, my daughter, started school, I took a part-time job teaching Special Needs children in mainstream schools. I gave individual tuition to pupils ranging from 4-16 years of age. After 7 years I gave up this post and in the ensuing years undertook various part-time jobs, too numerous to mention. Currently, I am self-employed and garden for clients 3 mornings a week and undertaking an occasional garden design, when requested to do so.

Sometimes however, I think it is the voluntary jobs, just as much as the paid ones that have brought fulfillment and enjoyment: Teaching pupils map reading for their Duke of Edinburgh Award; taking teenagers to Scottish Islands to camp, hike, climb and canoe; running a Brownie Pack for eight years and, at the present moment, coordinating a Wildlife Group for adults and helping my husband to run a monthly cycling group for friends. All these things have kept me busy and glad that I was privileged enough to work only part-time.

I've always been interested in Natural History. Often chance meetings helped me in my quest to gain more knowledge on the subject. My main area of study is wild flowers, though I also enjoy ornithology. My first encounter with a fungus foray was a study weekend, which I had booked with the Youth Hostel Association in Derbyshire when I was in my early thirties. My interest in all aspects of Natural History and my love of the countryside has continued throughout my life, leading me at different times to volunteer for the National Trust at Round Howe near Richmond, to work on footpath maintenance, stile and dry-stone walling repair, hedge-laying and tree planting for the Yorkshire Dales National Park and to co-ordinate a group of 50 people, known as 'The Ragged Robin Wildlife Group', whose 30 activities per annum include hiking, visits to nature reserves and natural history events, socials and, in addition, a work party that meets weekly to perform practical tasks.

My hobbies are numerous and varied. When I'm not involved in nature study I may be found walking, cycling, doing yoga, playing badminton, flower arranging, traveling, reading or lying in the undergrowth practising my macro photography. With so many interests I feel I lead a very varied life, but there is little chance in me becoming an expert in any one field!

What are my hopes for the future? Whilst I really enjoy my lifestyle at the moment I may have to change my career if the gardening work becomes too heavy for me: it really depends how much my joints complain! Hopefully I will stay fit enough both physically and mentally to continue for several more years. It would be wonderful to visit the Galapagos Islands, Thailand and some of the world's National Parks to see the variety of nature there. I do get a thrill from seeing new and interesting species, though there is still plenty of scope in my own country to appreciate the beauty of nature.

We are all on a spiritual journey through life too and it would be nice to be totally clear on the meaning of life and our role in the universe, though I think I may be being a little ambitious if I stated that I would like to come up with all the answers and achieve perfect inner peace in the next couple of years!

MAK-A Reciprocal Arrangement

The October 2008 visit to Kirkel was a great success which was always going to be very difficult to match let alone top! Nonetheless, during the NEFSG annual lunch it was strongly mooted that we should reciprocate, as a group, and invite MAK members to visit us in an as yet undetermined location, on an undecided date. Small acorns...large oaks.

So, as is the way of things in a democratic group such as ours, it falls upon the committee to notify the membership of the intention to organise an autumnal "event" to which the membership will not only be invited to attend, but will also be asked to PARTICIPATE (yikes!). At this stage we are light on ideas at but essentially we need to be able to offer "block" accommodation in some suitable hostelry within reasonable walking distance of a "good" foray. Because this would be an extended weekend "event" it is unlikely, if past experience is anything to go by, that many members would be able to attend the function for the whole duration. I may be wrong, I hope I am wrong.....

There is no doubt, though, that to give us a sporting chance of making a success of a plan of this complexity, advance notice is required. So we are talking of NEXT year, 2010.

To suggest some guidelines at this stage would probably stifle our creativity and so this is an open forum. Any thoughts on the matter from within the membership would be welcomed.

So far, we are looking into the possibility of using the Youth Hostel facilities at Wooler, near Craggside, Northumberland. An example of the facilities can be seen at www.escape-to.co.uk/view_property.php?id=20.

Of course, it is early days, but the sooner we start the better as it would be nice to have things finalised for the end of this year. Our hosts in Germany were very well organised and had the advantage of having done this sort of thing before as part of their annual program of events. It would be a good opportunity for the NEFSG to use this exercise as a step towards the adoption of a similar scheme.

The Destroying Angel

from 'PARASOL LOST' (A mycological thriller)
by J. Milton Verschoyle

Like Death he stalked the ravished land,
His 'cutting implement' in hand.
Pale Oyster Mushrooms cried in fear:
"The Mad Mycologist draws near!"
"His bloodlust will not be abated"
"Until we're all decapitated".

He stripped the barren fields and woods
Of Chanterelles and Scarlet Hoods.
No Parasol was safe from him,
The Fungus Fiend, the Reaper grim.
Smug Deathcaps smirked: "He won't hurt us"
"For we are much too poisonous".

Plump Puffballs pleaded as he passed,
And Weeping Widows wept their last.
The Horns of Plenty blew no more,
As Ceps lay slaughtered by the score.
A small voice cried out: "Please don't eat us!"
The last words of a Bay Boletus.

One day he slew two Agarics
(Defying Byelaw 26)
They gloated: "Ha! We've got him now!"
And hauled him off to court in Slough.
"Off with his head!", the jury cried,
"He's guilty of Mass Fungicide".
The moral of this tragic tale
Is: "Wickedness must not prevail"
That he who harms a helpless fungus
Is not fit to dwell amongus,
But he shall go to Hell to boil
(or lightly fry in olive oil).

Dedicated to THE CORPORATION OF LONDON
Reprinted with "Express Consent" from:
THE REGULATION SONGBOOK, Section 26, Subsec-
tion
IV, Paragraph (IIIa), Verses 1-5.
Traditionally sung by the corporation Male Voice
Choir
To the tune of The Red Flag

TAK

The inset poem was read to us during the evening of the Great Supper in Kirkel and caused much mirth. It may be familiar to many of you but is worth printing in full for those of us whose memories of the evening seem strangely elusive. You know who you are.

Our Spring Foray at Tunstall Reservoir

Ever since a successful "morel foray" in Deepdale, Barnard Castle some years ago, it seems to have become accepted that April is the best month for such outings. In fact this has never been the case. True, morels may be found often enough in April but the traditional time for Spring Forays is early to mid May.



Not only can morels still be found then but there are usually far more plant parasites such as rusts, smuts and mildews around. Moreover, you are much more likely to find small cup fungi and other ascomycetes on dead herbaceous stems of many kinds, not to forget grasses, rushes and sedges in boggy areas.

The 2009 foray illustrated the truth of this generalization. Members worked very hard and managed to come up with a total of just over 40 species, including a few lichens. Pickings were rather poor though partly because of a very dry early spring but also because it was simply too early for most spring fungi.

at all! The false truffle, *Elaphomyces muricatus* (above), was a welcome find for Cath Gillie and for the group as a whole principally because she had consciously set out to look for truffles! It is undoubtedly true that definite plans and intentions are much more likely to produce results than is random wandering about at any site. Witness the recent choice of autumn sites in unimproved upland grassland areas known to produce a variety of waxcaps.

The only identified toadstool we found was *Conocybe aporos*, a very reliable little thing for April found, on this occasion, by Rachel and Joy Richards.



Alan Bunn came up with a group of tiny black fungi on decorticated wood, later identified as *Bertia moriformis* (above), shaped, as the Latin name tells us, like minute mulberries. The two common slime moulds, *Enteridium lycoperdon* and *Lycogala epidendrum*, were both found on the same dead ash trunk and Gordon Simpson identified the tiny *Lophodermium seditiosum* on pine needles. Also found were groups of the tiny basidiomycete, *Merismodes fasciculata* (left), on thin, dead attached willow branches, one of its favourite hosts.

Nothing unusual was found but most people should feel that they acquired at least a little new knowledge. If you didn't, perhaps you should be asking yourself why not and resolving to do something about it in preparation for next year's Spring Foray!

AWL

***Mitrula paludosa*, The Bog Beacon**



These two fungi were given to me on the 18 April 2009 by Peter Waterton, a member of the Cleveland Naturalists' Field Goup. He had found them the day before on the North York Moors walking the Incline from Bankfoot. I was fascinated by their appearance and tried without success to find the site the following day. Further instructions were given to me that evening by his wife Ruth and after two hours searching ditches the next day I was rewarded by

the wonderful sight of several hundred of these delicate yellow fungi stretching in a shallow ditch for about 100 paces alongside a forestry road. (NZ59905/04686)

I tried to obtain spores but cutting into the soggy, gelatinous cap did not reveal any discernable structure. They kept well in the fridge and after a few weeks I allowed them to dry. Crushing the dried fungus and looking at the resulting powder gave a few cells of some kind but nothing convincing. I revisited the site on 28th May 2009 and found a good number still present. However, many were collapsed flat in the water. Others were pallid and firm and some of the paler ones were open and empty.

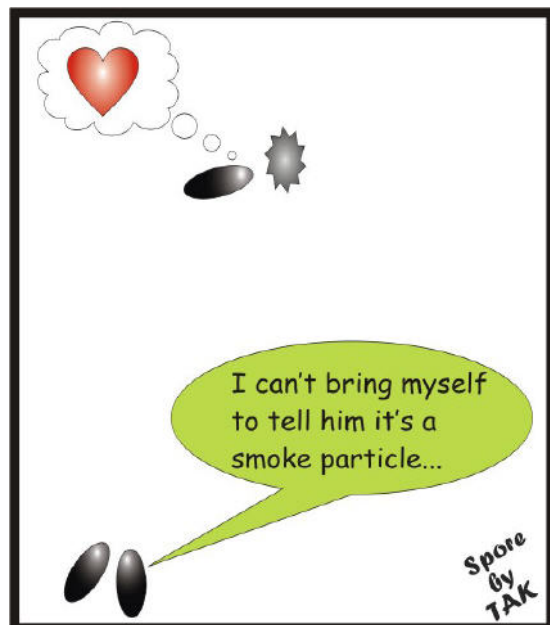


'How common is it?' I asked Alan Legg. 'Well, put it this way', he said. 'I'd been looking at fungi for 11 years before I saw my first one and not in your area'. I found later that BMS had records of 589 sites nationwide. There are 21 records in VC62, the last one by Alan Legg/Gordon Simpson (2008, site unspecified). Most records are from the South of the VC- e.g. Scarborough, Helmsley, Goathland, but this may reflect the fact that most reports have been made by Chris Yeates. (As well as there being more appropriate habitats in the upland acid soils of the N. York Moors AWL.)

AC

Things ain't always what they seem.....

...and I should know, or rather I should know better. Over the past decade I have on more than one occasion deposited the forlorn remains of a fungus found with no known identity, on AWL's doorstep. Hopeful always of a rare specimen, such hopes are oftentimes destined to be wrecked on the rocks of superior knowledge, and jagged rocks they are.



Hope though, springs eternal and but a season slips by before the next puzzle presents itself. I has to be said, though, that better "observation" could eliminate most enigmas. Not just looking but seeing. Good observation is a bit of a black art, and may appear to be magic in extreme cases. Who hasn't watched Gordon strolling along a shady track under dark autumnal skies...then glanced away for an instant only to find him vanished as he dives into the foliage? What has he found this time? A microscopically small fungus? A tiny patch of uncommon Myxomycete? An inconspicuous tendril, a blade of grass, a rare slug? This is the magical power of observation but it is not viable without the prior knowledge to back it up. Interesting finds are surely made by us all but unless we can be sure of what we are "seeing" then it is unlikely we will even bother to record the necessary detail to confirm the identity...or worse, we will not record accurately because we are not "seeing" clearly. I can give a recent example of this problem. Last year the Great Ayton Group Foray was in the woodlands near Wilton. On the way back to the cars one of

the forayers, Vince I believe (can't be sure, poor observational/ recording skills/ memory), picked up a fallen stick upon which were colonies of two identifiably different coloured fungi. To my eyes, glasses off, we had two different species here. Glasses on, and we had two states of *Nectria Cinnabarina*, anamorphic and teleomorphic. OK, that's a simplistic example of poor observation.....and not one that many would admit to, but there are others of a much higher order. I should point out that putting on your reading glasses is no substitute for using a "glass" and that under no circumstances should one make any proclamations on uncertainties BEFORE scrutiny! It is embarrassing.

So to the point. Last year at Castle Eden Dene I found a puzzle. You may remember it, it featured in the April 09 newsletter. To my eye, the peculiarly dimpled under surface of this polypore was quite unique and so rare (right). I said as much to my assembled group of eager forayers.....although what I PROBABLY said was that the SPECIMEN was rare, not the APPEARANCE of the specimen. This was an error of observation made worse by voicing the thought before observing the find!



A sample was taken. AWL figured it was some kind of mutation/ aberration caused by some agent unknown. The ABFG admitted freely that they had no real idea. The BMS have other things on their collective minds and proffered nothing. It was left as a mystery....until....

Subject: Mystery Fungus p13 Newsletter
Date: 19/05/2009 08:51:46 GMT Standard Time
From: simpson713@hotmail.co.uk

Hello Tom,

As I am not an expert I have been awaiting expert replies. I am making a guess. Your fungus is *Ganoderma australe* and it is galled by *Agathomyia wankowiczii*. The minute fly causes 'lumps' on the pores about 5 to 10 mm diameter and on emergence there is an opening about 1 to 3mm diameter. Look at each 'lump' and you will see where the opening will develop. The gall appears to be rare.
Gordon

We shall see, as we are destined to go back this autumn. The gall is known on only four sites in England
Keep your eyes open!

TAK

Just When You Thought it was all Over....

"Survival" programs are popular on television right now. I suppose it is a reflection of the times we live in....although there seems to be a cycle in everything if you live long enough. I can only just remember the echoes of the "Dig for Britain" campaign which encouraged everyone with dirt beneath their fingernails to plant a carrot in order to negate the effects of food shortages after WW2. My father, the neighbours on both sides, my local uncles and at least half of the adult male population in our street, whom I knew by sight, still tended allotments in 1955. It was a grim vigil destined to diminish in its fervour once the Co-Op got going again. More recently, so-called "bush-craft" has been vogue, with various bold and brave well-fed city dwellers enduring the wilds and encouraging us in the belief that we can live on acorns and pig-nuts.....returning after a hard days survival in the hell which is the Great Outdoors to a seven roomed tent with wi-fi, shower, stand-up bedrooms and an Aga (allegedly).



Cynic that I am, I can see no reward in making things harder than they are already, especially as things being things they get harder!

Of course, I am not averse to the odd weekend under canvas and I do enjoy a wild mushroom omelet as often as possible, even if cooked on gas rather than a campfire. Watching a well known TV aficionado living off the land a couple of months ago I was pleased to see that in spite of his usual sackcloth-and-ashes approach to "camping" he had the

good sense to use a little garlic, cream and some parsley (Parsley? Cream? Where did that come from?) in his wild mushroom ragoût...and I grudgingly noted that at the very least, rather than gas, his heat source was charcoal. Except it wasn't. Damn the man it was *Daldinia concentrica* (above) and you can't get more earth-pilgrim than that!

He explained the incredible usefulness of this fungus as a fuel, but I was skeptical. I have, however, been known to advise the uses of digestive biscuits as an alternative fuel in exceptional circumstances...such as a surfeit of digestive biscuits on a wet and gas-less day.

So it was that I came upon a host, a crowd of swollen King Alfred's cakes...underneath the large bough of a fallen willow (not Ash as is usual). I chipped a load off and bagged them for some future culinary use. A particularly smooth and perfectly round specimen I put on my collection shelf in the lounge.....huge mistake. They don't tell you about spores in Larousse. A heap of spores an inch deep and a great black aura on the textured wall paper was sensed immediately by wife. Fortunately, it was not as bad as it looked but that is no recompense for the wrath of a woman faced with something black on the shelf which is her husband's fault. I removed the offending item and reunited it with its siblings in the garage. The bag in which they were nearly contained was full of spores. Incredible. Like a pound of soot in a bag. The stuff was welling out. I released it all to the wind and said a little prayer for Asthma and Hay Fever sufferers in Newton Aycliffe. I managed to cook an omelet in a small pan over several specimens lit by a...er....gas lighter. I have to say that the heat output and burning time was quite impressive but the smell wasn't up to barbecue standards, being somewhat acrid and eye-watering.

Frankly, I'll be sticking with gas....it's more natural.

TAK

....it is now!



In what was a quite reasonable spring albeit slow to start, the last days of June and into July were warm and humid, with some balanced showers. The "growing" season went into top-gear and everything in the garden and fields caught up quickly.

The local sheep were spoiled for choice in the quick-growing meadowlands and that left one large field shin-deep in new grass. Just as I was about to give it a good going over the sheep were given priority and the grass was quickly devoured to leave a much shorter turf

in which thousands of LBJ's made a rapid appearance. At today's date (July 9th) the *Panaeolina foenisecii* are out in force and after a couple of hundred yards of searching it is easy to become lulled in to the belief that there is nothing else to see....but wait a minute, I see a dot of day-glo orange ahead, about ten yards beyond an old oak tree.

Hmmm?, *Hygrocybe conica*? A rarity in this specific location as in thirty years I have no recollection of finding/recording this species in this field. Because of the similarity to *H. nigrescens*(=*H.conica* var *pseudoconica*) I thought I would take a sample back and give it a little further investigation. For the record, here are the results.

Found Characteristic	<i>Hygrocybe nigrescens</i>	<i>Hygrocybe conica</i>
Cap 2-6 cms	YES	YES
Cap orange/red.Blackening with handling	NO	YES
Cap flesh blackening when cut .	NO	YES
Stem yellow, blackening when handled	NO	YES
Stem hollow	NO	YES
Gills pale yellow, blackening quickly when handled .	YES	YES
Gills free, slightly adnexed	YES	YES
Spores 8.5-9.5X5-6	YES	YES
Cap conical with pronounced umbo	NO	YES

If this were a murder investigation the evidence would not secure a conviction. In spite of my best efforts with the microscope I could not identify the species with certainty. After checking several sources I was even more confused as the "blackening" is variously described as "when bruised", "when cut", "when handled" and "with age" and combinations of these characters are given for both species. On points, then, *H.conica* wins! TAK