

North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter 58 August 2010



Coprinus disseminatus, Hudswell Woods. October 2008

Olympus E510, 35mm macro lens, aperture priority, flash, 1/60 at f3.5

David Smith

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A Timely Word or Two....

By the time this Newsletter is read we will have trialled the “new” foray format and those who attended will have opinions and views on how well it went. A few words, then, to explain why the change.

For some time we have all been aware of the difficulties encountered “in the field” when eager members seek “instant” identification of their finds. This is an understandable requisite of the enthusiastic forayer as the naming of the find brings instant gratification; but it is not always quite as easy as the skilled mycologist would lead you to believe. Accordingly, it can be disappointing if you make several excursions into the jungle, return in triumph only to be told that accurate identification is just not possible on the hoof, so to speak.

The burden of providing detailed microscopic identification is onerous, make no mistake; but to carry out the important function of recording, accuracy is a pre-requisite and must be of paramount consideration. That is not to say that it is impossible to identify ANY specimens on the day. Indeed, most of us carry in our heads sufficient experience to be able to name on site, quickly and certainly, species from own collection of “favourites” . I have written unwisely on this before, but am grimly holding on to the opinion as I have gradually been forced reduced my own catalogue to those species of which I am certainly certain. The list stands at about thirty but will no doubt lessen over the next few months. This situation should not be worrying to any of us because by definition the NEFSG is a GROUP and as such the expertise lies not with individuals but with all of us.

Historically, however, since the inception of the NEFSG, the burden of expertise has been placed on a few willing individuals. We should be extremely grateful for this but the time is rapidly approaching when in in our own group and in many others, this expertise is becoming scarce. That is a pity but a fact.

And so we are entering a new era. “Era” sounds far too pedantic, but it may prove to be the mot juste. The need to encourage members, young, old and not-so-young, to *develop* their interest in Mycology is becoming more important every year; changes are necessary to bring this vital process about. It is hoped that that the enjoyment of learning will be its own reward but as always your views are of great importance to the committee.

The changes to the foray format are just the beginning. It is hoped that we will be spending more time in “workshops” over the coming years. Microscopy and the use of keys and chemical reactants will be covered and we look principally to the membership for help in making these “sessions” both achievable and worthwhile.

Hopefully, we will also be treated to an increase in photographic presentations, at all levels of expertise. It may well be that because of the use of digital photography we will be able to increase interest in the smaller members of the fungal community when the barely visible by eye become more fascinating using photographic techniques. Again, we are looking for members who can help to raise this much ignored branch of mycology to a higher level.

Of course, we cannot hope to do everything at once and the speed of change will be dictated by the amount of support and effort which we can muster; but for us to do nothing would result in a great loss of resource. It is fully appreciated that many of the members have full lives to lead outside the NEFSG and that volunteering for ANY extra-curricular activity may be a commitment too far. Please be assured that there is absolutely NO obligation on any of us to over-reach ourselves and that ANY assistance, however small, would be appreciated by all.

The NEFSG is determined to remain at its core a “friendly” assembly of like-minded people. The pleasure of being part of such a group lies quintessentially in the commonality of purpose but also in the diversity of opinions and thoughts. If you would like to comment then we would like to hear a timely word or two.

TAK for the Committee

Help with your questions

I've been putting off writing this article for some time largely because I wasn't at all sure how to go about it. The pretentious title, *Consultant: Identification*, appears to offer far more than I can pretend to give. I'm certainly no "expert" in fungal identification; only a very brave – or very foolish – person would claim to be. There are no university degree courses in such a discipline. If there were, I'd be very happy to recommend one (as soon as I'd vetted it!). I'm just an elderly bloke without even an "O" level in biology who, at the age of 31, found himself with sufficient leisure to look a little more closely at the toadstools of wood and field which had vaguely fascinated him since boyhood. This interest grew and eventually blossomed into a passion only now beginning to cool.

What I have to offer is 40 years of piecemeal study which may have resulted in my being able to answer a few of the questions I might be asked. I've picked up a few more intriguing pebbles on the shores of field mycology than the majority of other NEFSG members. I can thus possibly offer a little informal help to those prepared to ask questions in the field or at indoor meetings. What I certainly don't intend to do is fill their heads with facile generalizations about identifying fungi.

I am painfully conscious of the limitations of my knowledge and the fact that much of it is rapidly becoming dated. Moreover, my memory is not what it was and is not likely to improve in future.

In addition, you should be aware at the outset that much less is known about the classification of fungi than, say, about that of vascular plants - though it is in the interests of popular field guide writers to gloss over this inconvenient fact. Indeed, the picture is constantly changing.

Botanists, who, until recently, had been able to rely on the wisdom of Linnaeus, have been getting their knickers in a twist over the inconvenient revelations thrown up by molecular biology, in particular the discipline of genetic sequencing. How much greater then are the problems facing fungal taxonomy and systematics where Linnaeus himself gave up, talked about *Chaos fungorum* and left the basic work to his countryman, Elias Fries, and a reclusive ex-Africaner called Christian Hendrik Persoon. It will be many years before the work of molecular mycologists is able to replace the old classification system based on gross morphology and sexual characteristics.

Meanwhile there is no cause for alarm. Elementary field guides still use the time-honoured distinctions and I'm sure most NEFSG members can deal with gradual changes as they filter down. For example, what I learned to call *Coprinus* is already thought of by many younger mycologists as been split into *Coprinus*, *Coprinellus*, *Coprinopsis* and *Parasola*.

It is, of course, impossible to make any progress with identification in however rudimentary a way without getting to grips with classification. The beginner soon learns, for instance, that *Russula* and *Lactarius* are closely related despite the fact that species of the former do not exude latex. They appear next to each other in most elementary field guides and they "have a look about them". Once you begin to use a microscope, of course, any rules of thumb can be supplemented by the more important taxonomic relationship evidenced by the distinctive ornamented spore-type they both share.

If there are any among you likely to persist in merely leafing through the pictures in their elementary field guide whilst ignoring the essential information given in its introduction, then

I'm afraid I must advise you to give up hope of progress and try something less demanding like collecting cheese labels. These at least have the virtue of having their names printed on them! If all you want to do is eat some of your finds then a modicum of skill in identification is, of course, essential. There will be a place for you in the NEFSG. I myself began with something like this thought in mind, though I now like to imagine that I very quickly rose above it! Since, however, one of the main concerns of the NEFSG is conservation, mycophagy can never be more than a peripheral pursuit of which some other members may actually disapprove. So, if your only question is "can I eat it" you should not be surprised to find it eliciting a less than enthusiastic response.

But I digress. What I would like to stress here is that I can only offer help to those who ask questions. I can't tell what you want you know unless you ask me. If only very complex answers are possible I will try to advise you on what to read. When first set up, the NEFSG was conceived as an organization for enthusiasts who wanted to learn more about their interest, help others to do so and, eventually, be able properly to record their finds. Recording is a serious business aiming to add to our very limited knowledge of the frequency and distribution of fungal species in this country, a necessary prerequisite of all conservation effort.

Many new members will not have sufficient skills to produce accurate and detailed lists of fungi they have identified. Nobody expects them to. Even the elements of such knowledge take a long time to acquire and the last things the NEFSG wants are lists of misidentified fungi!

Most of your knowledge will have been accumulated from book-learning as has been my own. You will not progress very far unless you continue to learn from books. I can probably give advice on what books to acquire and on where to find specialist texts but I have reached the age when I am finding it difficult to keep up with new ones myself. Bear in mind the caution of the writer of *Ecclesiastes* – "Of making many books there is no end and much study is a weariness of the flesh"! I didn't meet another fungus enthusiast until about a decade after I first caught the bug and in those days there were far fewer books for amateurs. When I eventually located a group of keen people in the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union I found that they came from all over England and held only two meetings a year. You are far luckier than I was. But please don't expect to be spoon-fed. The main advantages of foraging come from the companionship of like-minded people and sympathetic sharing of the excitement of the hunt. Most of the hard work of learning you will have to do alone. Other members (including me) can offer little more than occasional hints and tips.

Ways have already been suggested in which forays might be reorganised to offer more help to the less experienced. Discussion in Committee has followed and moves are afoot to implement some of the changes we have thought about. One result should be that I have a little more time on forays to offer you help. Of course, I shall not always be able to do this but it is one of my aims.

AWL

For the record...

The two articles leading this Newsletter were written independently and co-incidentally touch largely on the same points. That is fortunate as emphasis is added to each by the other. A comment may be added following the circulation of the e-mail outlining the new foray procedure. Rachel got back very quickly and a small extract from her e-mail is printed below.

*Regarding **collecting material**- it might be a good idea to try and limit our impact on fungi and only collect/damage what is needed for ID so if someone already has a specimen of a species leave the others for the inverts/mammals etc to enjoy. Also on the "**intact**" specimen note. I think its good practice for any later microscopy to handle specimens as little as possible.*



HERE'S THE LOWDOWN...

This very large specimen (52cms across) of *Polyporus squamosus* was reported to me by a villager in Bishopton near Sedgefield. Although very common it was a little unusual to find the fungus growing at ground level. It was growing so low down the trunk of it's host Oak that one of the "brackets" was lying on the grass.. The tree is in the church-yard and the villager was concerned for the well-being of the tree. TAK

A Farewell to Foraying

(I'd like to reassure forayers that this little pastiche, based, of course, on Byron's "So we'll go no more a'roving", was written spontaneously with no particular person in mind!)

He'll go no more a-foraying
So deep into the day,
Tho' woods and fields be brimming o'er
With fungi after May.

He'll sit no more a-studying
So far into the night,
Tho' mysteries there'll always be
To try his main and might.

For the mind will cease remembering
And the heart will fail to care
And the baton pass to other hands
For other hands to bear.

So he'll go no more a-foraying
In pastures old or new,
But leave these joys to other hearts
According to their due.

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...and whilst I am down here..

You may need to look twice but will quickly realise that this is a view from way down below looking up to the sky.

Apologies for a little blurring due to camera shake but I still like this shot of *Trametes versicolor* using the mirror attachment (PADFOS) described earlier this year in the April newsletter. TAK

THE LIBRARY IS ALWAYS OPEN

Although much under-used the small portable library of the NEFSG is available to all members. Should you wish to borrow any of the books or journals listed below please contact me, Tom Kirby, by whatever means you choose. Note that the "Library" attends every AGM and is always taken to workshops. It is intended that we will greatly expand the library over the coming months and we are actively taking advice on which books would be the most useful to the Group as a whole.

Guide to the Literature for the Identification of British Basidiomycetes

Bert Brand, Alick Henrici and Patrick Leonard (BMS 2001)

A Checklist of the Downy Mildews of the British Isles

T F Preece (BMS 2002)

A Checklist of the Rust Fungi of the British Isles

D M Henderson (BMS 2000)

Keys to the British species of Russula

R W Rayner (BMS 1997)

Keys to Fungi on Dung

M J Richardson and Roy Watling (BMS 1997)

British Truffles

D N Pegler, B M Spooner and TWK Young (Kew 1993)

Microfungi on Land Plants

Martin B Ellis and Pamela Ellis (Richmond Publishing Co. Ltd. 1997)

Microfungi on Miscellaneous Substrates

Martin B Ellis and Pamela Ellis (Richmond Publishing Co. Ltd. 1998)

Ainsworth and Bisby's Dictionary of the Fungi

D L Hawksworth, B C Sutton and G C Ainsworth (CAB 1983)

Flora Agaricina Neerlandica Volume 5 (A A Balkema 2001)

The Fungi

Michael J Carlile and Sarah C Watkinson (Academic Press 2007)

Should you require a specific book, which would also be useful to the NEFSG, please notify a Committee member when consideration will be given to your request. TAK

Obituary

Professor C.T.Ingold - 1905 - 2010

Terence Ingold was a true giant in the study of fungi, recently described by Peter Marren as the Grand Old Man of mycology. It would not be possible in a brief notice like this even to list, let alone do justice to the publications, honours and achievements of such an indefatigable field mycologist and scholar.

Although an Ulsterman by birth, we should be proud that he spent the last years of his long life in Wooler in Northumberland, concentrating on the history of Lindisfarne.

He will be remembered primarily for his discovery and studies of a group of aquatic hyphomycetes known for decades now as Ingoldian fungi. The enormous spores of these fungi may be found and studied by anyone with a simple microscope, suspended in the foam of fresh water streams. In 1983 he received the Linnean Society's coveted Gold Medal for his work on aquatic fungi. He remained interested in another of his specialisms, basidiomycete ballistospore discharge, until the end of his life, still publishing short articles on this topic until well into his nineties.

A list of his publications compiled for his 80th birthday numbered 174 and, in the following twenty years, he published another hundred! A major paper on the anatomy and germination of smuts was written when he was 93.

He was also a gifted administrator and, for example, helped to set up the universities of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

Among his many longer publications perhaps the widest known is the textbook, *The Biology of Fungi* (1959) which remained in print for a quarter of a century and is still instructive as background reading for field mycologists. It may be picked up for very little in second hand bookshops and is well worth while studying.

AWL

CHOOSE YOUR SUBSTRATE CAREFULLY...

This fine example of *Coprinus disseminatus* was spotted from several metres away due primarily to its habit. It tends to be found in large trooping groups (or as seen recently described, "swarms") and this can make it stand out in the gloom of the forest floor. It is



often shown in photographic illustrations in an early stage of development coloured a light creamy buff (see cover); it tends to darken with age. This species is found on large stumps and logs of deciduous trees.

The image (left) was taken on the Stanhope Burn foray and shows only a fragment of the total cover. There are three substrates in view on this image, moss, soil and leaf; the specimen is growing exclusively on an overwhelmed log.
TAK

Forays & Events

All forays start at 11:00 hrs. unless otherwise stated. Be there early for a prompt departure.



September 11th. KIPLIN HALL WOODS

Kiplin Hall is east of Catterick and on the south side of the B6271. Look out for the entrance then take the first right

turn into the Car-Park. The foray is in reasonably level woodland and grazed parkland grass. Conditions are usually dry but there is the odd gutter to cross and a stile. Grid Reference SE273977

September 25th. PLESSEY WOODS

The entrance to the woods is at Grid Reference NZ240802 to the west of the A192. There are paths in the wood but no shelter. There may be car parking fees here but the NEFSG will pay if this is necessary.



October 9th. COCKFIELD FELL

This foray has been organised by Rachel and the meeting place is at the Cemetery entrance, Grid Reference NZ129245. There is space for only a couple

of cars here but ample parking is available on the main street through Cockfield. Rachel has very magnanimously invited those who are in need of additional refreshment after the foray to join her for tea and coffee at 16, The Green. DL13 5AF .

Forays & Events Continued

November 6th.

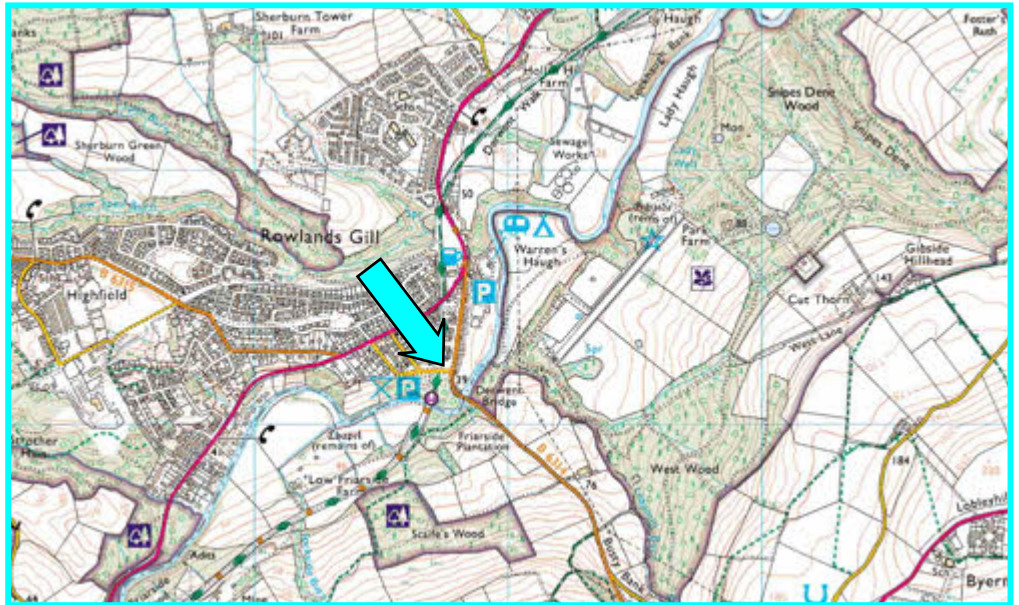
GIBSIDE

For this foray we will meet in the National Trust public car park at NZ172583. The entrance to the car park is off the B6314, known as Busty Bank. The location of the entrance is clearly signed at NZ169581.

Though the car park is NT the fee has been generously waived for the NEFSG and hopefully Phil Younger, NEFSG member and NT employee will be able to point us in the right direction.

If Phil is unable to attend Andy has assured us that he knows the site well having carried out a full wax-cap survey last year. This location has a very good mix of grassland and woodland so there should be a wide range of species.

There are also toilets, a cafe and a visitor centre.



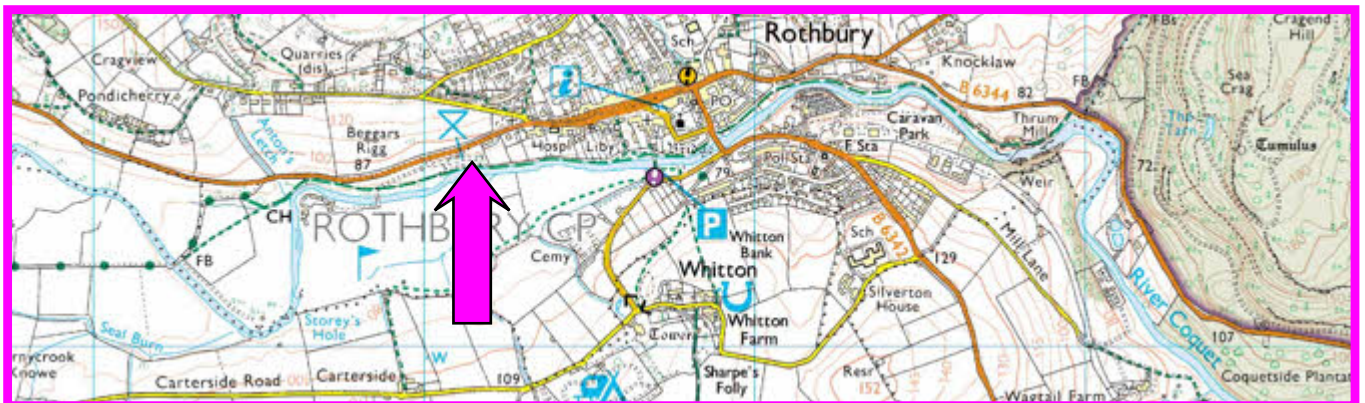
November 23rd.

ROTHBURY

This foray may prove to be a little arduous, according to Gordon, who ominously advises taking high-energy provisions and wet-weather clothing! The foray is on the hill slopes north of the B6341. The climb may be a little difficult and so we (the infirm among us!) are to be treated to a lift up the nursery slopes courtesy of Shaun (sic), the National Park warden, in his Landrover. We tried to summon the Mountain Rescue Helicopter but the team explained that they had other things to do; although we may be able to book them for the return trip.

Once up on the hill pastures walking is reasonable.

Park at NU050016, just south of the B6341. Heading west out of Rothbury you will see the car park between the road and the River Coquet.



Minutes of North Eastern Fungus Study Group Committee Meeting held on 19th June 2010 at Durham Wildlife Trusts Rainton Meadows Reserve

Members present Alan Bunn, Keith Cunningham, Alan Legg, Tom Kirby, Gordon Simpson, Alan Simkins (Chairman), and Babs Walton

1. Apologies for absence: Andy McClay

2. Minutes of last meeting: - Approved

3. Matters arising: [a] Alan Legg's article on his role as Identification Consultant has been delayed and will be written later.

[b] The Committee had not received any comments from members regarding issue dates and contents of the Newsletters. Following this report a discussion ensued and the Treasurer agreed to send all members a letter seeking opinions on a 'satisfaction survey' for the Newsletters's contents and issue dates.

[c] The Autumn forays are now all organised.

[d] Books in general and those in our library were discussed with the result that Tom will republish the Library list in the next Newsletter. Members will be reminded that any of these books are available for loan, although in the past very few have been borrowed.

[e].Ref Minute 8e; Gordon's article containing information needed by members to report finds has been reviewed and a further attempt will be made to simplify and reduce the number of options available for such data as substrate, grassland type etc. However, it was noted that a list of species found and identified at the Foxglove Covert was collated within a week and this was recognised as a positive step forward. Notes on any more difficult ID species (from future forays) which require further study by Alan Legg etc would be included in future Newsletters.

4 Treasurer's report

The Treasurer reported we were over £413 in credit. He proposed that Membership fees should become due on January 1st each year and in situations where subscriptions were not received by July 1st it would be assumed that the member was not renewing membership and Newsletters would cease to be sent. This proposal was agreed by the Committee and would be included implemented for 2011.

4 Future Management of Forays

Alan Legg (AWL) had written his thoughts on a possible way forward for future forays. This reflected his concerns about his ability to continue this role in its present format. Alan was finding the role more stressful and the post-foray studies to identify species were becoming more time consuming.

Alan's note had raised the issues of i) the role of the Foray Leader; ii) methodology and person responsible for identifying and recording species on the foray; iii) who would attempt to identify the more difficult species after the foray and ensure points ii) and iii) were ultimately linked so that members would be able to have a list of species for each foray and iv), if required, AWL would continue to issue a summary reports of the forays he could attend.

These issues were discussed at length and are summarised:

i) The Foray Leader would be responsible for knowledge of the territory over which the foray would take place and would undertake a Health and Safety Assessment i.e. look for hazards and inform foray members before the foray start, make local arrangements and produce a species list.

ii) AWL made the point that immediate identification of species in the field was very difficult and often was a 'best guess'. Currently he takes the unknown fungi home for further study; even so it is not always possible to be sure of species so some specimens do not get identified.

iii) in an attempt to improve the way we operate on forays it was agreed we would trial some changes at the July 24th foray at Stanhope Burn in Weardale. Tom will describe the proposal in the next Newsletter and it is hoped that the way forward will increase the number of species we find, provide a methodology for identifying more species and enabling all members to see a display of all specimens found and increase ID skills by sharing knowledge.

As a result of these discussion Tom agreed to e-mail a list of species identified on the day of the foray and provide small proforma labels to include spaces for species name, habitat details, collector, etc i.e. all information usually included in database record sheets.

The Secretary will contact Andy McClay, organiser of the Stanhope Foray, to discuss with him the proposed changes.

The changes the Committee propose may well create some problems early on but hopefully these can be resolved without too much trouble and NEFSG will have an improved foraging regime which will be helpful and rewarding to all members.

5. Consideration of the needs of newer and perhaps less experienced members.

The Secretary introduced this item which to some extent had been partly addressed by the previous item. He believed the item needed raising as NEFSG had increased its membership by around 20 in the past year or so, and these new members needed to be integrated into the Group and most would be seeking to improve their knowledge for fungi identification, which, as most mycologists are aware, is a very big task. The need for education in identification skills, use of microscopes, foraging technique, use of keys and learning from more experienced members were issues which needed to be addressed. With these skills members would be in a better situation to identify species found on forays, and input their own records into the various databases. The Indoor meetings which have been proposed for end-2010 and beginning 2011 should help to address some of these issues.

(The day following the Committee meeting the Secretary received permission to use copies of material used on a national Fungus identification course – copies of this material should prove very useful for new and more experienced members and will be an invaluable resource for use in the Indoor meetings)

6. Website development

Keith reported that the last Newsletter had not been put onto the Website because, unusually for Newsletters, it was a very large file size. Tom agreed to investigate why this was so.

Additionally Keith noted that the proposal to investigate whether we could include Dorothy Wolfe's paintings on the website is being dealt with by Mel Sly and Dorothy's husband, Jack.

Keith agreed to investigate whether we could install a 'hit meter' on the website so we could monitor how many web-surfers visited our site.

Photographs for possible publication taken by members would be welcomed and should be sent to Keith at keith@kcunn.wanadoo.co.uk

7. AGM issues outstanding

Topics for the January and February indoor meetings have not been agreed and it was decided that this issue could be finalised at the November Committee meeting (November 13th 2010) and publicised in the November Newsletter. Additionally, the nature of the 'support' item for the AGM on the 5th March 2011 would be decided at this November Committee meeting.

8 Any Other Business

a) Babs Walton stated that she wished to retire from the Committee and proposed, so that the Committee would not be all-male upon her retirement, that a lady should replace her. Babs believed Cath Gillie would be an admirable replacement and Babs agreed to seek Cath's views on this proposal.

9. Date and venue of next meeting

Saturday 13th November 2010 at 11-00 at Rainton Meadows Reserve.

Alan Bunn

Hon. Sec.

Just When You Thought it was all Over...

This is really a "stop the press" footnote to the article describing the new foray procedure as we now have the dubious benefit of hindsight. The Stanhope Foray was very enjoyable and until there are comments to the contrary, was a vindication of the changed format.

There were a couple of problems for which the writer must take responsibility; primarily in the category of "equipment" The labels supplied for the specimen records were far too small and so this has been corrected. A sample sheet is attached to this newsletter and although some labels will be brought along to the next foray, could we ask that you print off your own in future.

The real problem was in the DISPLAY of the finds. Although a table was available the writer decided not to carry it with him and so the finds were laid out on the grass! Some further thought is required here!

TAK

COLLECTOR _____	Sketch/Notes
GRID REFERENCE -- SUBSTRATE _____ ASSOCIATION _____ HABITAT _____ GENUS SPECIES	
COLLECTOR _____	Sketch/Notes
GRID REFERENCE -- SUBSTRATE _____ ASSOCIATION _____ HABITAT _____ GENUS SPECIES	
COLLECTOR _____	Sketch/Notes
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