



North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter No103 Winter 2021

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NEXT ISSUE: The deadline for articles for the Spring newsletter is 23rd April 2022
All contributions will be gratefully received!



Forthcoming Events

Meet at 10:30am for an 11am start.

Sat April 9 th	Jo Scott	TBA (information by e-mail)
Sun May 15 th	Ron Pattinson	Humford Woods, Bedlington, South Northumberland
Sat July 2 nd	LUNCH	Durham
Sat July 31 st	Mike Cruse	Kings Law, Whitley Chapel, Hexhamshire, South Northumberland
Sun Aug 6 th	Louise Watson	Tunstall Reservoir, Wolsingham, Weardale, County Durham
Sat Aug 20 th	Gabi Recknagel /Mike Cruse	Sweethope Lough, Knowesgate, Mid Northumberland
Sat Sept 3 rd	Lydia Koelmans	Hindhope Linn, Rochester, Redesdale, North Northumberland
Sat Sept 10 th	Louise Watson	Twizell Wood, Chester-le-Street, County Durham
Sun Sept 18 th	Alan Simkins	Middleton-in-Teesdale, Upper Teesdale, County Durham
Sat Sept 24 th		Week-end away in Scotland (poss incl Fri 23 rd - Mon 26 th)
Sat Oct 1 st	Cath Gillie	Bedburn, Hamsterley, County Durham
Sun Oct 2 nd	Alan Simkins	Guisborough Woods, Guisborough, North Yorkshire NP
Sat Oct 8 th	Mike Cruse	Featherstone Castle, Haltwhistle, West Northumberland
Sun Oct 9 th	Ron Pattinson	East Chevington Widdrington, South Northumberland
Sat Oct 15 th	Sally Pattison	UK fungus Day, Morpeth, South Northumberland
Sun Oct 16 th	Lydia Koelmans	Scotch Gill, Morpeth, South Northumberland
Sun Oct 23 rd	David Miller	Bonfield Ghyll, Bilsdale East Moor, North Yorkshire Moors NP
Sat Oct 29 th	Louise Watson	Oakenshaw, Brandon, County Durham
Sat Nov 5 th	Doug McCutcheon	Westernhopeburn Farm, Eastgate, Weardale, County Durham
Sat Nov 12 th	Alan Simkins	Keldy Castle, Cropton, North Yorkshire Moors NP
Sun Nov 13 th	Rhona Sutherland	Kirkdale, Nawton, North Yorkshire Moors NP

Sat Nov 26 th	David Miller	Beaconhill, White Lea Farm, Easington Colliery, County Durham
Sat Dec 3 rd	Mike Cruse	Warkworth Dunes, Warkworth, Mid Northumberland

Sunday 15th May

Humford Woods, meeting at Humford Mill part of Bedlington Country Park.

This is an old mixed woodland on the banks of the River Blyth, Northumberland. The site hosts red squirrels (as well as mushrooms, hopefully!)

Directions:

Grid Reference: NZ267806, Nearest Post Code: NE22 5RT

Travelling from the south take the A1 or the A19 to Cramlington, taking the A189 North. Follow the sign directions to Bedlington. Travel NW along Bedlington Front Street for about half a mile until St Cuthbert's Church is reached. Turn left into Church Lane and follow for just over a mile (5 mins) descending down to the river and finally reaching the car park marked Bedlington Country Park, Humford Mill.

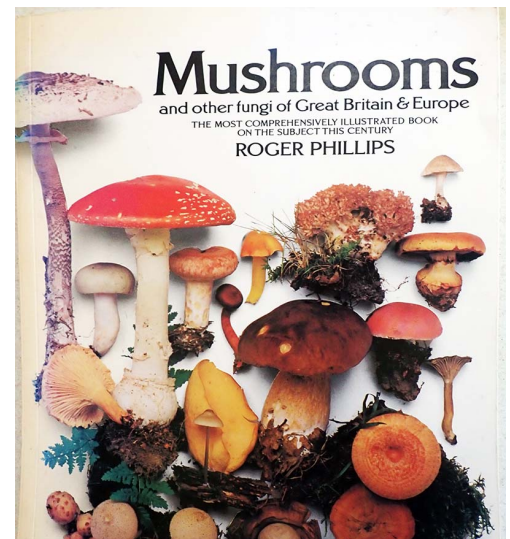
Travelling from the North, similarly arrive at Bedlington Front Street and follow as above.

Foray Leader: Ron Pattinson. Mobile: 07393 717144

Obituary - Roger Phillips

Roger Phillips who has died aged 88 was a self-taught plantsman and author of numerous photographic guides to plants and fungi, starting with *Wild Flowers of Britain* [1977]. He became a cult figure among foragers after the publication of his *Wild Food* [1983] a book of recipes alongside photographs of British plants and fungi.

His books *Mushrooms and Other Fungi of Great Britain and Europe* [1981], *Mushrooms* [2006], and *Mushrooms and Other Fungi of North America* [2005] earned him the soubriquet "the mushroom man". With colour photographs and descriptions of hundreds of species and stages of growth—with footnotes ranging from "edible", "not edible", "hallucinogenic", to "deadly poisonous" and even "edibility unknown"—these were not only essential reference works, but were enlivened by anecdote. Common inkcaps [*Coprinopsis atramentaria*] he noted have been used in rehabilitation due to their emetic effect when consumed with alcohol, while Fly Agaric [*Amanita muscaria*] are used as a hallucinogen and intoxicant by the Lapps, who may have picked up the habit by observing the effects of the fungus on reindeer.



Roger Howard Phillips was born in Uxbridge on December 16th 1932 and was introduced to the joys of foraging by his father, and for fungi when he was sent during world war 2 to live with his grandparents at their dairy farm in Hertfordshire. There he would earn extra pocket money by picking mushrooms which his grandmother would cook and send to market—but she would only allow the family to eat field mushrooms.

Phillips resigned a national service RAF commission declaring himself a pacifist and went on to obtain qualifications in painting [at the Chelsea School of Art] and photography. In 1968 he established himself as a freelance photographer working from a studio in London.

From the 1970's to the 2010's his design and photographic skills allied with his botanical knowledge enabled him to publish numerous books on wild flowers, trees, garden plants, and fungi, several of them

with Martyn Rix an expert botanist. Television series followed in the 1990's.

He also served as chairman of the Society for the Protection of London Squares , work for which he was appointed MBE in the 2010 New Year Honours.

An ebullient figure, often seen in distinctive red-rimmed glasses and matching jacket and beret, Phillips travelled all over the world in his quest for wild food, and celebrated his odyssey in *The Worldwide Forager* [2020].

Alan Simkins

***Claviceps purpurea/microcephela/arundinis* = a conundrum on Phragmites!**



On an amble round Joe's Pond area at Rainton Meadows after the AGM I pointed out Ergot, *claviceps* sp. in old Common Reed, *phragmites australis*, inflorescences that are a bit darker than the uninfected heads. This ergot is always very small compared to Ergot in grasses and in Ellis + Ellis it is classed as *claviceps microcephela* when on this host. Some internet sites, e.g. First Nature, GBIF, say this is a synonym of *claviceps purpurea*. However, delving into the internet research papers e.g. BMS Research-gate, Science Direct, shows that from 2014 on-wards molecular genetics have indicated that *c. purpurea* includes 3 cryptic species: -

C. purpurea on Poaceae, (grasses/cereals)

C. spartinae on chloridoid saltmarsh grasses

C. humidiphila on phalaris arundinacea (Reed Canary-grass)

C. arundinis - the new proposed name for ergot on phragmites (Common Reed) and Molinia (Purple Moor-grass)

So 'another name change possibility' I hear you all groan..... but actually this one is to our advantage as these grasses are easily identified and thus they could add 3 extra species to our recording lists! In the meantime, it makes recording the Ergot hosts or family type important for future reference.

Jill Cunningham

Recording finds on forays

For recording on CATE2 for Species Data there are 4 sections :-

- a. **Recorded as** b) Assoc Org c) **Medium (substrate)** d) Abundance

The 2 in red are required to be filled in. The Assoc Org should be filled in if known, the Abundance is optional, I personally don't fill it in.

So it is asked on forays that when a fungi is found that aside from the species name the medium (substrate) is also given.

On CATE2 there are some 136 categories on the drop down list for Medium (substrate) , but in practice 11 are most commonly used.

1.Branch att or branch att (dead); branch att (living)

Branch fal or branch fal (broadleaf); branch fal (coniferous)

2.Grassy soil (grass)

3.Leaf att or leaf att (dead); leaf att (living)

Leaf fal

4.Litter or litter (broadleaf); litter (coniferous); litter (submerged)

5.Log/trunk fal

6.Moss or mossy soil

7.Soil

8.Stem herbaceous (dead) or stem herbaceous (living)

9.Stump or stump (broadleaf) or stump (coniferous)

10.Trunk standing (dead) or trunk standing (dead base)/(dying)/(living)/(living base)

11.Twig att or twig att (dead)

Twig fal

Other often used categories are :- bark; bud; catkin; cone; dung; inflorescence; insect; root; sporophore; wood rotted; woodchip etc.

Ideally the Assoc Org should also be given, which tree, plant etc. it is growing with.

Often a fungus appears between several different tree species a recorder may leave this section blank or may extrapolate from the fungi's known association what the tree is.

There are a number of trees that may pose a problem unless an expert in identification. In these cases it is common to record as,

Betula sp (Birch)

Quercus sp (Oak)

Salix sp (Willow)

Similarly to a lesser extent,

Pinus sp (Pine), although Pinus sylvestris (Scots Pine) would generally be used unless there is some doubt.

Picea sp (Spruce), or P.abies (Norway Spruce); P.sitchensis (Sitka Spruce)

Larix sp (Larch), or L.decidua (European Larch); L.kaempferi Japanese Larch).

Fortunately, unless in a botanical garden etc. the following are easy to record.

Ash (Fraxinus excelsior)

Beech (Fagus sylvatica)

Elder (Sambucus nigra)

Hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna)

Hazel (Corylus avellana)

Hornbeam (Carpinus betulus)

Horse Chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum)

Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus)

It is also acceptable to record as,

Angiosperm (deciduous tree)

Gymnosperm (coniferous tree)

For recording fungi on plants, the plant's name is generally necessary as this is often the determiner of what the fungus will be.

Poaceae (grass) can be used if the particular species of grass is not known eg for Ergot (Claviceps purpurea).

For Recorders a quick provisional list should be sent out soon after each foray.

I personally just send out the fungi names as other details are irrelevant at this point , asking for any additions with Medium (substrate) and Assoc Org (if known) to be given . Once all the info is received the full list can be inputted on CATE2 in **an A-Z form** . This makes it a lot easier to see at a glance what has been found when the foray list is finally on the CATE2 database .

Any comments etc. welcome .

Mike Cruse

Fungi from Outer Space

1. [Microbes in Space: JPL Researcher Explores Tiny Life - ...](#)

<https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/news/microbes-in-space-jpl-researcher...>

03/06/2016 · On May 11, a sealed capsule containing fungi and bacteria fell from the sky and splashed down in the Pacific Ocean. Microbiologist Kasthuri ...

2. [Why fungi adapt so well to life in space - Scienceline](#)

<https://scienceline.org/2018/03/fungi-love-to-grow-in-outer-space>

07/03/2018 · Fungi nearly wrecked Mir on multiple occasions. For example, fungus found on one of Mir's Soyuz transports, the variety of spacecraft used to ferry personnel to and from the orbital.

3. [Muton the fungi from Space](#)

<https://muton.blogspot.com/2006/04/fungi-from-space.html>

05/04/2006 · A fungus. Strangely this idea seems to have been resurrected in the age of UFOs where fungi and fairy ring are again mistaken for extra-terrestrial ...

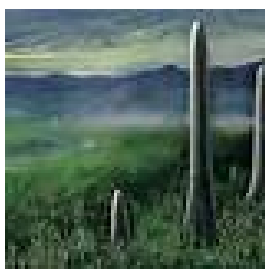
Mushroom Spores Can Survive in Space. But Are They FROM Space? Did you know that mushroom spores are a real problem for space travel? It's true. In 1997, an astronaut on the Russian space station Mir discovered what he described as "beach-ball size" globs growing behind a service panel.

4. [Are Mushrooms From Space: Space Mushrooms - Can They Surviv...](#)

qualityspores.store/mushroom-spores/can-mushroom-spores-survive-in-space/

5. [Images of Mushrooms in Space](#)

bing.com/images



Mike Cruse

Gabi Recknagel sent in these photographs from the Drakestone Foray.



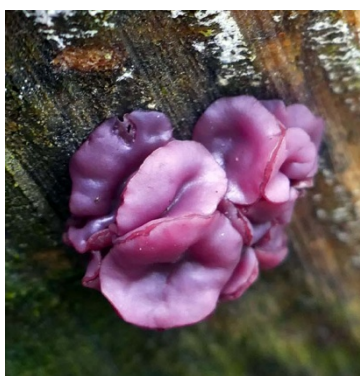
Doug, Keith, Alan and Lydia



Ron and Alan



Ron at lunch!



Alans basket

The Sward of the Rings: 'Where fairies might sport and enchanters weave their unhallowed spells'¹

Keith Tulip



Figure 1: Fairy Ring of *Clitocybe nebularis* (photograph: Sally Pattison)

In 1633, as darkness was coming on, a man of the cloth, Mr. Hart, a curate, entered a green circle, a 'fairy dance, as the common people call them', and was surrounded by innumerable 'elves or fayries' dancing and singing. Hart was assailed and bound in enchantment, and, when the sun rose, was found alone in the ring (John Aubrey, in Lees (1869 p214)). He could be considered fortunate.

In Monmouthshire, two men were going past a meadow where there was a big oak tree, round which was a circle danced bare by the fairies, and as they passed, sure enough, there were the fairies dancing away. So the young men went and danced too. Presently one looked around for his

friend, and lo! he had vanished 'clean and clever' and so had the fairies. He was charged with having 'made away' with his friend, so he went back the next night and there was his friend waltzing around with a fairy. He said he had had a splendid time, and although he came back, after one day he returned to the fairies 'for good and all', and was never seen again (Wherry 1905).

The fairy 'women are most frequently seen by moonshine; then they dance their rounds in the high grass so lightly and so gracefully, that they seldom meet a denial when they offer their hand to a rash young man' (Keightley 1882).

There is a conflict between the practicalities of this seductive nature, and stories of fairies being of diminutive size, with 'butterfly wings and gauze petticoats and shiny stars in their hair' (Kipling 1906). Size matters. 'They were almost as big as ordinary men, yet had unmistakably

the appearance of dwarfs' (Sikes 1880 p74). Perhaps the remembered 'cute' image is only a protective 'glamour'. After all, in Scandinavia, the fairies are 'the Souls of those men, that give themselves to Corporal Pleasures, and make themselves as it were slaves unto them, and obey the force of their Lusts, violating the Laws of God and men' (Magnus 1658).

¹Rev. Hugh Macmillan (1861) p107

Can a man who is so enthralled be saved from what is, effectively, a portal to fairyland? ‘Wild majoram and thyme, thrown into a fairy ring, would bewilder and confuse the fairies’ (Trevelyan 1909). Or touch him with a piece of iron and drag him out (Hartland 1891). For ‘the great safeguard against the elfin race is iron, or better, steel.’ It is said: ‘whenever you enter a fairy dwelling, you should always remember to stick a piece of steel, such as a knife, a needle, or a fish-hook, in a door; for then the elves will shut you out’ (Frazer 1911).



Figure 3: Cute fairies in a ring (Keightley 1882 frontispiece)

Perhaps the rings should be destroyed? Perhaps not. In Trellech, Wales, the healing well used to be encircled by a fairy ring, where the fairies would dance, notably at Samhain (*Nos Galan Gaeaf* in Welsh). A ‘churlish farmer’ dug up the ring, because he ‘didn’t like all them silly tales’. Thereupon, the well dried up (but only for him), and the water did not return until the sods were replaced (Eyre 1905).

He who tills the fairies’ green,
Nae luck again shall hae;
And he who spoils the fairies’ ring,
Betide him want and woe;
For weirdless days and weary nights
Are his till his dying day.
(Henderson 1856)

So keep off and outside the circle. If you do, you may be rewarded. ‘If you can run nine times round one of these rings without drawing breath, a fairy will bring you something good’ (Udal 1922 p261). For those less fit, the same book offers an easier task, but deferred gratification: ‘A wish formed previous to the ceremony of dancing three times round a fairy ring is likely to be fulfilled within the year’ (p330).

We may have satisfactorily demonstrated that fairy rings are caused by the dancing of fairies. But other theories have been advanced, mostly involving sex.

Garden-Snails ... and others without shells call’d Slugs, when they couple, always make choice of short grass to creep on. It is their manner, when they *generate*, to take a large Compass upon the Ground, and meet one another ... leaving upon the Grass where they crept, a viscous shining Matter ... That slime, when it putrifies, may produce the Mushrooms we find growing in Circles.
(Richard Bradley in 1718, quoted in Ramsbottom (1960)).

Certainly, a group of snails, being hermaphrodite, could easily form a large circle chasing each other! Similarly, Rutter (2002) refers to amorous hedgehogs going round and round as a cause. The sexuality of hedgehogs is summarised in Pratchett (1988).

Even in 1868, a paper was presented by Edwin Lees (1869) proposing the cause of the rings was the Mole: 'I have established not merely the presence of the Mole near the circles, but *the certainty of his formation of them*'. 'Writers have given an account of the gyrations of the mole in the ground when love inspires his movements' - 'termed by the French *'traces d'amour'*'. He alleges that this disturbance allows 'the wandering sperules of Fungi' to 'seize the rounds' and occupy the ring, but 'they do not form it'. It must be said that after this paper, 'a very lively discussion took place' and it 'created considerable antagonism', as the formation of fairy rings and their progressive increase from a central point, caused entirely by mushrooms, had been hypothesised over sixty years earlier (Woolaston 1807).



Figure 4: Fairy rings, probably *Calocybe gambosa* & *M. oreades*. Whitburn Coastal Park, Tyne & Wear. ©Google Earth 2021

A more modern view is expressed in Miller & Gongloff (2021): 'The ring forms as the mycelium advances radially outwards from the point of origin, consuming soil organic matter and releasing excess nutrients ... These nutrients are taken up by local vegetation and contribute to plant vigour, creating a differentially fertilized ring of grass at the periphery of the extending mycelium. As mycelial biomass accumulates behind the front, a hydrophobic zone is often created ... and plant vigour is reduced', even forming a dead zone, giving the appearance of a ring of 'lush vegetation separated by reduced or dead vegetation ... with sporocarps typically appearing in or adjacent to the dead zone'.

John Aubrey, about 1685, almost got there, drawing parallels with human ringworm, a fungal disease of the skin, and noticing 'if you digge under the turfe of the circle, you will find at the rootes of the grasse a

hoare or mouldinesse' (Aubrey 1847).

These grassland rings have been classified into three types. 'Type-I rings are those that kill the grass or seriously damage it, typical of *Marasmius oreades*. Type-II rings only stimulate the vegetation at the margin of the ring, e.g. *Tricholoma* spp. and *Lycoperdon* spp. Finally, type-III rings are formed by *Hygrocybe* spp. and *Panaeolus* spp. among others, and appear as a ring of fruit bodies that causes no visual effect on the vegetation' (Marí *et al* 2020).

The dead grass seemed an obvious sign of the dangers to be found in a fairy ring; hence the telling of tales of warning. As well as the dangerous fairies, the grass itself could be poisonous, 'whereof the ewe not bites'. In Denmark, it was 'necessary to watch cattle, that they may not graze in any place where the Elf-people have been', for they may have spit, '*or done what is worse*', and the animals will succumb to a 'grievous disease', which can only be cured by giving them St John's Wort, pulled at midnight on St John's Night (Keightley 1882). There may be a little truth in this: Fox (2006) reports that *Marasmius oreades*, thought to be an obligate saprophyte, can also parasitize the roots of grasses, and produces hydrogen cyanide and other compounds capable of damaging grass roots.

Natural selection has also provided a solution: 'The Welsh sheep, it is affirmed, are the only beasts which will eat the grass that grows in the fairy rings; all other creatures avoid it, but the sheep eat it greedily, hence the superiority of Welsh mutton over any mutton in the wide world' (Sikes 1880 p94).

The uncanny nature of a fairy ring may also have been discerned by those with a sensitive sense of smell. Berkeley (1860) describes the smell of the spawn of *Agaricus arvensis* arising from a large ring as nauseous. Even his 'labourers, whose perceptions of such matters are not in general very delicate, observed it'. Mrs Hussey (1847) concurs: again while employing workmen to remove a ring of *Calocybe*

gambosa [as *Agaricus Georgii*] from the lawn, they found the smell was ‘intolerable’. ‘The idea that it is a perfume is Italian, and not easily acquired.’

English country folk were hence prejudiced against these mysterious mushrooms. Farmers, ‘on the supposition that they injure the grass crops ... kicked over and destroyed’ St George’s mushrooms, which horrified Mordecai Cooke (1891) - ‘A better plan would be to collect them in a basket and carry them home to cook’. Macmillan (1861 p256) warns us away: *Marasmius oreades* ‘is sometimes used as an article of food in this country, but too frequently very different and poisonous fungi are gathered under the name’. One of these that can grow in rings and could be confused with the latter is the very poisonous *Clitocybe dealbata*, now synonymised with *C. rivulosa*. Alarmingly, Cooke, in 1875, seemed to describe this, as *Agaricus dealbatus*, as ‘very good eating’! The FRDBI suggests he may have been referring to *Hemimycena lactea*. Cooke (1891) himself says ‘The adoption of scientific names was a necessity in order to secure accuracy and promote recognition by those who prefer precision in matters of life and death’, but it wasn’t too helpful here! Mistakes made with ring mushrooms could easily have led to folklore fearing the fatal fairy ring.



Figure 5: The Fairy Ring, by George Cruikshank

Types of grassland rings have been discussed above. However, Gregory (1982) divides rings in another way, as ‘free’ and ‘tethered’. Free rings feed on a two-dimensional sheet of organic matter whereas tethered rings depend on a point source, usually the roots of a tree. ‘By contrast to the free rings of grassland, a succession of species can be centered around one point of origin - a tree’. He gives, as an example, a solitary *Pinus sylvestris* ‘surrounded by multiple zones: outermost were *Boletus granulatus* and *Gomphidius viscidus*; within this came a ring of *Lactarius deliciosus*; and still nearer the tree were *Tricholoma striatum*, *Hygrophorus gliocyclus*, *Boletus luteus* and *Hygrophorus hypothejus*.’ Similarly, Sally Pattison and Mike Cruse of the NEFSG managed to find six different species in one circle around a tree at a foray at Linden Hall.

Although Gregory, above, implied grassland rings not to have a mixture of species, there are many contrary reports. Professor Buckman described in 1867 the same rings being occupied by *Calocybe gambosa*, then later in the season by *Marasmius oreades* and *Lepista saeva* (Cooke 1868). Such occurrences even misled some into thinking that these successions were therefore only varieties of the same species. ‘Some cause, to us unknown, varies these plants from year to year, and that *Agaricus campestris* and *A. Georgii* are really but one species’ (Key 1868).

One *M. oreades* ring is seldom found inside another. Two rings that meet almost invariably obliterate each other. It was thought that two factors would explain this: firstly that the nutriment became exhausted; and secondly, there being some evidence that a toxin from the fungus is self-inhibitory (Smith 1980).

However, not all free rings are grassland, and Dowson *et al* (1989) investigated woodland rings of *Clitocybe nebularis*, a litter decomposer, and hence free. They also noted that the collision of two rings caused the mutual loss of mycelium. In addition, expanding rings meeting obstacles such as stones, large tree roots or barren terrain resulted in the loss of viability of the mycelium, causing a gap in the ring, as there was negligible lateral growth from the disruption. Experiments were conducted by cutting sods from the rings and re-orienting them through 180° before replacement. The mycelium disappeared, leaving a permanent gap.

They found the previously expressed theories ‘unsatisfactory’. *Clitocybe* resources are renewed annually by leaf fall; the lack of lateral growth into ring gaps cannot be due to nutrient depletion, nor can it be due to autoinhibitory chemicals. Instead, it is suggested that ring development is the natural outcome of a foraging strategy that will optimize the probability of locating colonisable resources. In particular, ‘when resources are abundant, more can be gained by only consuming those that are readily available.’

Fairy rings can be regarded as co-ordinated collections of hyphae. The mycelial cords at the growth front can be viewed as ‘foraging parties’ whose extension is resourced from the ‘exploitative’ mycelium of the trailing edge, which is feeding on the already found material. When the foraging mycelial cords find nutrient-rich areas, as is usual in a layer of litter, they are replaced by exploitative mycelium. If they encounter an obstacle, their extension is inhibited and they regress and are recycled, forming the gaps in the ring. This ‘polarity of development’ also explains the regression on the collision of rings, and after the artificial reversal of sods. Fairy rings are nothing but the outward sign of an optimal foraging strategy.

So science has intruded into the fairy rings:
‘the fairies have abandoned their moonlight turf;
the witch no longer holds her black orgies in the hemlock dell’
(Scott 1830).



I cannot tell what possesses me with the fancy that they laugh and clap their hands, especially the little ones that grow in troops and rings amongst dead leaves in the woods. I suppose it is the fairy rings, the myriads of fairy fungi that start life in the autumnal woods.

Beatrix Potter
(Jay 1992 p151)

Figure 6: Beatrix Potter: *Marasmius oreades*, Coldstream
(Jay 1992 p132)

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Thanks to Elsie for being the fairy in the ring (Figure 1).

Tis Midsummer Eve

Heres the old fairey rings by this dark thickets side
 Where the owl rests in fear & the foxes abide
 Where fairys dance round them more still than a sigh
 Yet the shepherd when late hears the noise passing bye -
 & oer his snug fire in his cottage at night
 He'll talk till the candle turns blue with affright
 Of the pranks that they play & the sports they pursue
 & the mischief when vexed that they venture to do.

John Clare
 (Arborfield 2020)

Bones, Bugs & Poison in a Northumbrian Churchyard

It was February and the greasy sky scowled on the three as they picked their way over the slick, heavy moss of the church path and stepped up to the bolted church door. The first, the only adult of the group, turned her head and smiled knowingly at the two girls, then boldly rapped on the door. Once. Twice .

*"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence chomped the
grasses Of the forest's ferny floor."*

The girls stared, round-eyed and listening to the silence but they felt in their heart the strangeness, the stillness answering the cry.

After a moment the oldest girl laughed, as if roused from her worry but neither of them moved to join the adult. After a long moment the adult laughed too and beckoned them from the door, around the church and into the graveyard.

The girls wandered from grave to grave, the oldest asking questions about dates and nervously asserting the rule that no-one must ever step onto a grave. The youngest, but 2 years old, copying the oldest in every movement and assuming the same meandering half walk/half skip from stone to stone.

Well, that was just a bit of fun to introduce my little experience in a churchyard this week, although everything happened just as described.

The Natural History Society of Northumbria is running a Winter Ladybird Survey and I volunteered to take part. TheNHSN recommended specifically targeting local cemeteries for the survey as many



ladybirds have been found to hibernate on gravestones, up to 510 found sheltering in one cemetery!

So, I set off with my two nieces in tow. We found two bones almost as soon as we entered the graveyard. They looked human to me, but I told myself that the proximity to buried bodies was playing tricks with my head and they were most likely animal bones. However, I made a mental note to contact the church and ask them to check it out.

We found a few bug instars and some cocoons in the

nooks and crannies at the top of some of the stones so I was optimistic that we might see at least one ladybird for the kids to count.



Then we found something really exciting - for me atleast! Some mushrooms!

This little group were growing under a Lime tree and lured me from their huddle with their seductive charms,

"We look like proper mushrooms and we are growing in February! Take us, we are yours!"

With an offer like that, I had to take one home. After long months with mostly ascomycota and corticioids, it's always nice to grab a 'proper' fungus.

The fungi had the look of an *Inocybe* or maybe a *Hebeloma* and their dark orange stem base staining was intriguing. Microscopy would hopefully reveal more.

At the very end of our search we spotted what looked like a ladybird larvae - hooray! One at least! But correspondence from Gordon Port at the NHSN revealed that it was just the exuvium



of the larvae, (the cast pupal skin). Drat!

It was time to go home. Alice had finally collected every windswept flower in the graveyard and



spread them neatly on long-buried graves. Elsie's nappy had leaked through and she was asking to, "carry you" - hmmm, she could try...

We went back to the car, but as we got in, the strangest part of the day occurred. Taking off Elsie's muddy shoes as I put her in her car-seat, I spotted a human tooth stuck in the mud there! My earlier suspicion about the human bones might not have been all in my head!

The police were contacted and the bones and tooth were taken away for forensic testing.

Despite the police looking for holes and asking questions which implied the bones had reached out of their own graves, I did hint at it possibly being a little less sinister.

The church was initially medieval

but the gravestones in the cemetery start at around 1820. It seems likely that some of the newer graves might have turned up a few older bones.

Funny enough, that might not have been the most frightening event of the day. The fungi turned out to be *Inocybe erubescens*, the Deadly Fibrecap and extremely poisonous as the name implies.



It perhaps goes without saying that my job as babysitter has been withdrawn.

Sally Pattison

A Foray at Howick Hall



in Northumberland by Sheila Lillie & Sally Pattison



NORTH EAST

Fungus Study
Group

Howick Hall is situated in North Northumberland, not far from the coast. The Hall was built in the late 18th century and is most famous for being the family seat of Earl Grey, British Minister in the 1830's. Of course, the famous tea has links with the Hall, being said to suit the water of Howick.

However, Sheila and I weren't there for the tea. The gardens and arboretum are what drew us to the Hall. It's a site that has been forayed by both the Edinburgh Fungus Group and the North East Fungus Study Group and we fancied a day spotting waxcaps on the croquet lawn with tea and cake close at hand - perfect!

Almost the first mushroom that we found was one to excite us - *Leucoagaricus badhamii*, the Blushing Dapperling. Not a fungus that either of us had seen before and this perhaps being the most Northerly record, following on from another siting of it in the wood shed of Doug McCutcheon, (NEFSG) a few weeks earlier.





The Blushing Dapperling, (a red data list species) showing immediate red staining when touched and later turning black and staining green with KOH.

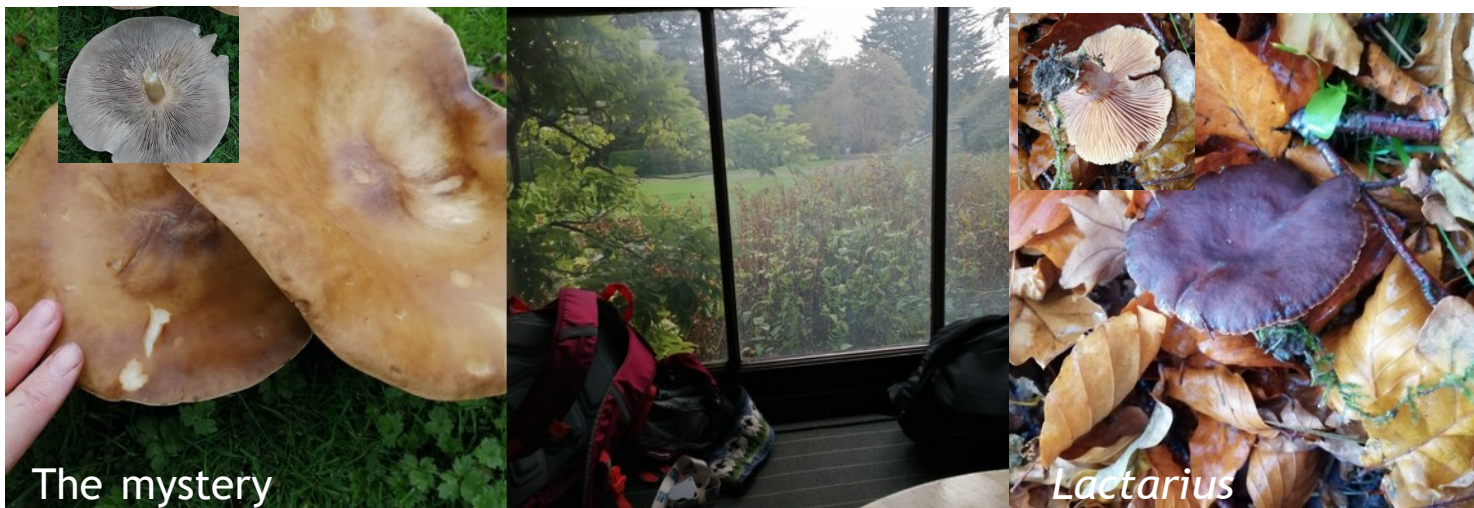
This was followed by a double-headed *Lycoperdon excipuliforme*, Pestle Puffball, or puff 'balls' in this case! - All the better to spore you with!

We got a little carried away, with everything else that we were finding on our way to the croquet lawn, that when we arrived at waxcap-central most of our containers were already full of goodies! Luckily, Sheila had her trusty waxcap key and most of them could be identified on-site, including the sturdy and bright *Hygrocybe quieta*, Oily Waxcap, and *Hygrocybe coccinea*, Scarlet Waxcap, shown opposite.

By this time we were getting hungry but we delayed our visit to the tea-rooms to stop at two clusters of fungi alongside the lawn.

One of the clusters turned out to be *Melanoleuca melaleuca* and the other a mystery *Melanoleuca* -yet to be determined.





A view of the croquet lawns from the tea-rooms - we didn't realise our waxcapantics (enthusiastic shouts and coordinated scouring of the lawn), were being viewed by a visiting bus-load of bemused pensioners.

After dragging ourselves away from the warmth of the cafe we left the path to discover some more unusual finds. Under some Yew & conifer trees we found a cluster of *Agaricus semotus* - a rare find in the North of England.

Another find under Yew was *Pluteus romellii*, the Gold Leafshield mushroom. Sheila and I almost dropped our backpacks when we spotted the amount of sporocarps littering the area - 70-80 of them! We haven't seen anything like that before and perhaps never will again.

The abundant Beech woodland gave us lots of treats, including many *Tricholoma sciodes* and lots of *Mycena* and *Cortinarius* sp. The most striking *Cortinarius* being a 'possible' *C. barbatus* - a really stunning mushroom that grew all through the beech woodland and almost got ignored as it resembled another 'horrible' *Hebeloma*. Does anybody actually enjoy identifying *Hebeloma*?

All in all, we got 100 records from the site, including 3 red data list species, which wasn't bad at all.



North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Minutes of Committee Meeting—Saturday 22nd January 2022, Stockton.

- 1- Apologies: John Robinson, Dominique Colback
- 2- Present: Jo Scott, Alan Simkins, Mike Cruse, Ron Pattinson, Val Standen. For the record the last committee meeting was held on 30th November 2019.
- 3- NEFSG Officers: Chair - Alan Simkins, Treasurer - Ron Pattinson, Secretary - Val Standen indicated they were willing to continue their roles.
- 4- Committee Membership: DC has indicated he would like to stand down as committee member. AS had contacted Sally Pattison who agreed to be nominated and AS to ask Jill Cunningham if she would be willing to stand.
- 5- NEFSG Financial Position: £1300 in bank. RP to present accounts at the AGM.
- 6- Subscriptions/Membership: 40 members have paid for 2022 – Jan 1st – December 31st. A reminder will be sent out but payment must be made by March 1st. New potential members to be asked for an address or some indication of where they live. Details of any new member to be sent to RP who will keep the definitive list and send to Jo Scott and Mike Cruse when needed.
- 7- Newsletter: Jo Scott will ask members for contributions to the newsletter at the AGM.
- 8- Website: Main use appears to be for contact information for the public and also as an archive for members. Not all back issues of the newsletter are available. AS to find any issues he has. VS offered to scan them and send to John Robinson to be uploaded to the website.
- 9- Microscopy—including BFG proposal: A microscopy workshop has been arranged by the Borders Fungus Group over 6 Sundays from March to August. Details have been sent to members.
- 10- Library purchases: AS has the library and will prepare a list which will be available via the website. More purchases for the library were not ruled out but none suggested for immediate purchase. Many people either bought their own copies of books they needed or used online sources.
- 11- Visit to Germany 2023: Cath Gillie has agreed to organise a visit to BMK in Kusel, Germany in mid-October 2023. Regina Hubers will coordinate with NEFSG.
- 12- Draft Foray Programme 2022: A list of proposed forays is attached. The balance of areas around the region and day of the weekend was felt to be reasonable. The programme leaves room for Pop-up forays. VS to explore possibility of joint foray with Durham Wildlife Group. It was agreed that the leader of each foray should remind people to record at least the substrate on which each specimen was found. Otherwise it is not possible to record species on CATE2. Effort should be made to display and discuss specimens at the end of each foray – time should be allowed for this.
- 13- AGM at Rainton Meadows—Saturday 12th February 2022: AS will confirm availability of venue. RP to provide quiz with dried fungi specimens.
- 14- Any Other Business: National fungus day October 15th. It was agreed to support Sally Pattison who will arrange an exhibition at Morpeth Church. Lydia Koelmans will lead a foray nearby. BMS is to hold study week in September at Bellingham. Details to be circulated when available. The possibility of meeting up for a joint foray was discussed but it was agreed to leave to individuals to decide if they wished to attend.
- 15-Date/venue of next committee meeting: Next meeting to be held November 11th at Durham.



Introduction

The Chairman, Alan Simkins, opened the meeting and called it to order. Newmembers were introduced.

The AGM was attended by 19 members.

Apologies were received from Keith Tulip, Kaye Kossick, John Robinson, ValStanden and Peter Holmes.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the 2021 AGM meeting were presented.

Proposed by Jo Scott

Seconded by Ron Pattinson

Report of the Chair

The Chair circulated his report to those present and he thanked all who had contributed to the successful 2021 foray programme. He gave his opinion ofthe best foray of the year to the one at Harbottle.

Action - Gabi Recknagel mentioned that she had some photographs from the Harbottle foray which she would send to Jo Scott for the newsletter.

Proposed by Jill Cunningham

Seconded by John Sutherland

Treasurers Report

The Treasurer made a short presentation to the group regarding finances and asked for suggestions for utilising funds from the group. He also reminded the group about the Easy Fundraising facility.

Action - Ron Pattinson to re-send the Easy Fundraising information to thegroup by email.

Proposed by Gabi Recknagel.

Seconded by Doug McCutcheon.

Election of Officers

It was agreed that the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer be re-elected for the next 12 months

Committee Members

It was noted that Dominique Colback, did not want to continue his Committeemembership, as discussed at the January 2022 Committee Meeting.

The Chair proposed that two new members should be brought onto the Committee, these being Jill Cunningham and Sally Pattison.

Proposed by Alan Simkins.

Seconded by Ron Pattinson.

2022 Foray Season

The 2022 foray list was discussed, with most foray proposers in attendance totalk about their foray sites.

Gabi Recknagel requested that all foray sites on the list include more information with regard to geography so that members know where a placewas at a glance and could better plan their weekends.

Action - Foray site list to include more site information in future.

A short residential meeting was proposed, in September 2022, in preparationfor the next German visit in 2025. This would be to reccy sites and find suitable accomodation. Alan Simkins suggested the Scottish Highlands.

Aviemore and Kindrogen were two places that were suggested. It was noted that proximity to airports and travel times would need to be considered whenselecting a site, as well as presence of appropriate study rooms. It was proposed that various accommodation could be offered, ie youth hostels andbed & breakfast to suit different members.

Action - Rachel Richards to investigate the possibility of booking Kindrogan in2025. Sally Pattison to help. It was agreed that the committee would make the decision, on the location of the September 2022 residential weekend, once more details on cost and room hire were available.

The National Fungus Day event at Morpeth was discussed and a request for volunteers was made. Gabi Recknagel, Cath Gillie and Gordon Beakes put forward their names. Rachel Richards offered to supply childrens activities if required and Jill Cunningham offered to provide some fungi images to decorate the venue. It was also suggested that Sally Pattison contact the BMSOutreach Coordinator to request further resources.

Action - Sally Pattison will continue to organise and liaise with volunteers and BMS Outreach Coordinator.

Action - The amended foray programme and details of April and May forays to be forwarded to Jo Scott to be put into the April newsletter. The Chair emphasised that it is essential that all records given to the foray leader MUST include the substrate (i.e. fallen branch, twig, stump, soil, litter.

leaf (fallen), leaf (attached), etc) otherwise they cannot be entered on to Cate II. It was agreed that foray leaders will decide the start time (having given thought to travel time for members) of forays and that effort be made to display/discuss finds at the foray end.

Any Other Business

Jo Scott requested that everyone supply her with more articles for the NEFSG quarterly newsletter, including photographs of finds.

Action - Gordon Simpson volunteered to write an article exploring the origin of the group.

It was mentioned that the NEFSG website does not include all historical newsletters.

Action - it was noted that Val Standen had agreed to scan the missing newsletters and send them to John Robinson who would upload them onto the website.

The NEFSG library was briefly discussed and the fact that some members do not know of its existence or barely utilise it.

Action - the library books will be listed on the website.

Gordon Beakes questioned the CATE II recording website and was curious how the information was utilised and whether regional information could be easily accessed. Doug McCutcheon and Mike Cruse both explained the system and it was clarified that there are search facilities which allow regional data to be supplied quite easily. Doug mentioned that there was a CATE II recording information/instructional booklet. Cath Gillie suggested that Mike Cruse organise a Recording Workshop.

Action - Alan Simkins to contact Michael Jordan to request further information regarding the use made of CATE II records. Mike to re-share the CATE II booklet with the group and organise Recording Workshop.

Alan Simkins asked for more information regarding the Borders Fungus Group Microscope Workshops.

Action - Sally Pattison offered to share the invite information with the NEFSGagain.

After discussing the visit to Germany in 2023, (12-17th of October), it was established that potential numbers of those interested would be helpful. Action - An email asking members to lodge interest was suggested - Mike Cruseto action.

Alan Simkins declared that he wished to retire from the position of Chair in 1-2years and suggested the group consider who may replace him when the time comes.

2023 AGM

The Chair suggested that the 2023 AGM take place around the same time as this year, in February, and the 2022 meeting was brought to a close.

Lichen Lookout

Three Cladonia lichens to look out for.



Cladonia chlorophaea

Podetia (stalk) up to 3cm tall which flare gradually from the base to form cups.
Squamules (leafy lobes) are white underneath.
Common on soil, rotting trunks or in mossy areas.



Cladonia coniocraea

Podetia up to 3cm tall, pointed or with a small cup. Curved.
Squamules can cover a large area.
Common in woodland where it grows at the base of trees or on rotting logs.



Cladonia fimbriata

Podetia up to 1.5cm tall. Commonly called 'golf tee' lichen from the shape of the cups.
Very common on rotting wood and mossy earth.