

Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire

Spring 2009
Issue 5



Editors news

Our thanks go to Marion Warland for this year's illustration of *Morchella esculenta*. As in past years, it will appear on the front of our programme. This year is the first time our newsletter will appear on the British Mycological Society's group website; please have a look at this site as it promises to be helpful in furthering knowledge, not only on fungi but finding out more about the other groups, reading their newsletters and gaining ideas. 2008 was not a good season for me, so I added this photograph of us all before setting off on the first foray of the year to Pinsley Wood led by Max Peterson. It turned out to be a wonderful day and all came back to the car park smiling. We used this photograph to make up a greetings card from the group to our President, Terence Ingold, for his 103rd birthday. We hope to see more people foraying this year in, as promised, a hot dry summer !!! *Editor Alan Hills*



New laptop for our records

Thanks to a generous grants from the British Mycological Society and the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre we have been able to purchase a new laptop for our records. MycoRec is now installed on the computer and the huge task of inputting our back records is being undertaken by a valiant group of members who have volunteered to share the work. Many thanks are due to Wendy MacEachrane, Judy Webb, Molly Dewey, Gillian Oldfield and Joanna Dodsworth .

Chris Hawes

Oxfordshire Fungus Survey –Shotover, 16.11.08

A bright autumn morning attracted more people (17) than any previous 2008 foray and we followed a route worked out by Alan Hills. Almost immediately the short grass by the car park yielded numerous wax caps, *Hygrocybe virginea (niveus)*, *H. pratensis*, yellow ones (*H.*

ceracea) and fewer of *H. psittacina*. As we moved into the gorse we found *Clitocybe nebularis*, many wood blewits *Lepista nuda*) in both grass and woodland and *Flammulina velutipes* and *Daldinia concentrica* unusually on gorse. A tiny orange cup-fungus on fine mole-treated soil was looked at by Richard Fortey and thought to be *Cheilymenia*, possibly *C.fibrillosa*.

Entering mixed woodland we soon found *Scleroderma citrina* and *Lycoperdon perlatum*; butter-caps *Collybia butyracea* and *Lepista inversa* were plentiful but *Russulas (ochroleuca)*, *Amanita muscaria*, superannuated *Macrolepiota rhacodes* and *Lactarius (ancient turpis)* were sparse.

Further on, some nutrient-poor acid grassland yielded many *Rickenella fibula* and a few fairy clubs; here I also had young sulphur-tuft and *Trametes versicolor*.

Back in the wood we studied a fallen, old, rowan, attacked by a large but too-young-to-name bracket, and nearby birches had been attacked by *Pholiota squarrosa* and *Pluteus cervinus*.

By now we were surrounded by leaves made to fall by incipient rain and were glad to get into the cars for lunch at the Hills's.

John Killick

Our Chairman's Report

2009 was a funny year for fungi; the autumn weather was wet and potentially conducive to the appearance of masses of fungi, but hope was not matched by reality. The newspapers were hyping us all up with reports of a bumper crop, but, certainly in Oxfordshire, the season ended with relative disappointment. There must be a lot more to learn about the optimal climatic conditions! Still there were some notable highlights, one of which was the finding by Pam Hills of an unusual *Amanita*, yet to be formally identified.*

On 16th November, following a morning foray at Shotover SSSI, Pam and Alan Hills provided an excellent lunch and hosted a lively and very well attended 2008 AGM. Updates included the news of a purchase of a laptop for the group. Our thanks go to Chris Hawes who had obtained grants from BMS and TVERC to cover the costs. Due to lack of space our herbarium collection still cannot be housed at Woodstock Museum but its maintenance at the Standlake Store is ongoing. Joanna Dodsworth has offered to arrange a working party visit to the store in the New Year.

There were some changes to the committee. Marion Warland, a founder member of the group and our treasurer for many years, was forced to resign through poor health. In recognition of her long service and work on behalf of the group, it was unanimously agreed that she be appointed as a life member of the committee, which she accepted. I agreed to take on the job of treasurer (another cap!). We are very pleased that the committee has been strengthened by the election of Joanna Dodsworth, who is also a staunch member of the Buckinghamshire group, and she brings with her a wealth of experience.

There was lively discussion regarding the annual membership fees. Opinions were expressed in favour of making a fairly major increase but counter opinions were put forward to limit any increase unless there were good reasons for doing this. It was agreed that, in order to increase the group's reserves sufficiently, to perhaps fund the expenses of an expert guest foray leader, to help in purchasing books and chemical re-agents and to go towards funding a delegate to attend the Leader's Conference in 2010, the annual subscription be increased to £5 from the beginning of the next season in September 2009.



There is a widespread view that the group needs to broaden its horizons to welcome new younger members and, by raising public awareness and some advertising, we hope to achieve this in the coming year. We need to strike a balance between small forays with no new faces and the other end of the spectrum where, by virtue of ill-considered advertising, forays could become too large for the leader to safely manage. Safety and responsibility are the watchwords for our foray leaders in 2009!

We are lucky to have such an efficient committee, naming particularly Wendy MacEachrane our secretary, and Judy Webb, our recorder. Now possessing our own laptop, having a full committee and our finances in good order we are looking forward to another successful foray season in 2009. - Good luck for 2009

Max Peterson

* Editors note –*The jury is still out on this one, it is I believe going to Sardinia for identification. See photo below.*



THE EDITOR ASKS

Nearly all our members have some access to e-mail. We have discussed in committee how useful a tool it may be for contacting you all en masse when extra events can be arranged to cover times when we have a wonderful glut of fungi. I know this does not happen very often, but we have no other quick and easy way of contacting members should this situation arise.

In some groups a list of e-mail addresses of members is circulated to everybody, making personal contact between members easy.

I know that some members in the Oxford Fungus Group may not be happy to do this, so I am asking you all to send to me your e-mail addresses; [only if you are happy to do so](#), for use when extra forays might be arranged, or other important issues arise. This could also be a help to any members having trouble with identifying their collections, so do you want to talk by email?

Alan Hills

Weird and wonderful fungi

Judy Webb

I have always liked the weird and unusual in the world of wildlife. Fungi in general strike me as pretty weird, but amongst them, particularly odd ones seem to me to be the fungi that live on other fungi. We saw one of these rare beasts in Waterperry Wood this last year. It is a little clay-buff-brown toadstool that grows only on the rotting remains of just one type of

other fungus - *Russula nigricans* (the Blackening Brittlegill). There were hundreds of these blackened old *Russulas*, but Ellen Lee found just one with a cluster of small (1cm) toadstools sprouting from the remains of its stipe. They are the so called '**Powdery Piggyback**' toadstool, *Asterophora lycoperdoides*. The tops of the caps were whitish and smooth upon collection, but when kept indoors for a few days, they turned pinkish brown and powdery.



Asterophora lycoperdoides
The Powdery Piggyback toadstool



This 'powder' on the cap is made of special spores called 'chlamydospores' which are covered in long blunt processes, giving a star-shaped appearance (see the photograph of the spores, x1000 magnified). The toadstool produces other plain, oval spores in the normal position on its gills, but only when they are young. Why would it need two sorts of spores of two different shapes? Why would it grow only on *Russula nigricans*? There are more things to find out about fungi than one could ever imagine.

The last summer of 2008 was another appallingly wet one and although butterflies suffered dreadfully, some fungi had their best fruiting ever. Fruitbodies of the rare 'Orchard Tooth' *Sarcodontia crocea*, were found on many old apple trees at the known site in the Clay's orchard in Warborough, near Shillingford. One particular growth was remarkable for its large size and here are the photos to prove it.

It turned up in one new site as well – an old apple tree in a back garden in Marston, Oxford. Don't forget to look out for it on old apple trees next summer – it will be visible from



Sarcodontia crocea on an old apple tree



end of June until September (before one is really expecting fungi to emerge). In January this year I was delighted to find another oddity in a site we will be visiting next October (Hinksey Heights Nature Park). Brackets of *Ganoderma applanatum* on a dead ash log, revealed the unusual pimple shaped galls underneath that I had first found last year on this bracket in Spartum Fen, near Great Haseley. These galls are produced by the larvae of a rare fly (a flat-footed fly, or Platypezid) that has been slowly colonising Britain from the southern countries. As I'm also interested in records of this rare fly, I would like you all to look out for these pimply growths on any *Ganodermas* you come across.



G. applanatum bracket with the pimple galls

Photographs © Judy Webb.

Let's Talk about Paxillus

Alan Hills

For many years, without even thinking about it, if a *Paxillus* was found on a foray, we entered it into our records as *Paxillus involutus*. Now the time has come when we have to think a little more and decide which species we have collected.

We have five species in all, four of which I am now in the position to recognise and name in the field. *Paxillus rubicundulus* is the easiest one to recognise, this is always under *Alnus* (Alder) in very damp situations. A description can be found in almost any fungus guide book. To date we have no records of this species on our Oxfordshire database.



Typical *P. involutus*

We tend to think of *P. involutus* as a *Betula* (Birch) species, but it is also commonly found with *Picea* and *Pinus*, preferring dry, sandy, nutrient poor soils. When foraging on with rich loamy, acid to neutral soils, in parks, gardens and roadside verges such as industrial estates



Paxillus validus, showing short stipe.

and car parks, you are more likely to find *P. validus*. Normally somewhat larger than *P. involutus* and having a short, stumpy tapered stipe, (often so short that the gills may touch the ground) it can be found in large numbers fruiting under *Carpinus* (Hornbeam) *Tilia* (Lime) and *Populus* (Poplar). We have a very good site for this species near Oxford, it is found all along the road side grass verges on the entrance to Kidlington Airport, last year in hundreds. The spore print colour in both *P. involutus* and *P. validus* is the same (sienna brown) so gives no help separating the two species. *Paxillus obscuroporus* on the other hand, has a spore print described as reddish brown to chocolate, mixed with wine red tinges. It is rare or maybe has been over looked. I was with Geoffery Kibby in Scotland at the end of last year when we found it on two sites. The cap is strongly grooved, conspicuously felty when young and at this stage, having a very large roll to the rim. The rim becomes flat with age and the mature fungus ends up having the largest cap of the four species described here. The type description quotes: "fruiting with *Abies* (Fir) *Tilia* and *Quercus* (Oak)" but the one in the photograph was fruiting with *Betula*.

The last *Paxillus* at this time I can not put a name to yet, I have sent material for molecular study to many good mycologists, but as yet without success. It is not uncommon in places as Snelsmoor Common and the New Forest, always with *Salix* (Willow) and it may well be an undescribed species. If Ammonia is placed on the cap, a dark green-blue reaction is observed; at times fleeting, at others remaining for some time. *Paxillus rubicundulus*, *P. involutus*, *P. validus* and *P. obscuroporus* give no reaction or toward pinkish.



***P. obscuroporus*, showing the very large, tight, roll**



***Paxillus* found under *Salix* showing blue-green ammonia reaction**