

Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire

Newsletter 2010



Happy days for the FSO after the Eynsham Park foray last year - fungal identification and refreshments in the garden of Max and Joanna Peterson.

We lost the second of our founder members, Marion Warland, in February this year. Together with her husband Arthur, they started the FSO group in 1987, as an interest in retirement. She was keen to get out to every foray, even when her mobility became limited; the photo above shows us all with Marion at the last foray of 2009. Always the person to whom we would make a bee-line with that unknown toadstool, I think 22 years contribution to mycology after a full working life is a great achievement. While Arthur was working at the Oxford University Zoology Department between 1980 and 1991, Marion was Librarian at the Botany Department (now known as Plant Sciences). She was very keen on lace-making as well as creating water colour paintings of fungi, particularly the fungi which had been found on the local forays. They arranged for fungal specimens from forays to be stored with the County Biological Records Centre (now TVERC). In earlier days they led forays for other groups beside the FSO, such as BBOWT. Marion's precise nature was well suited to fungal recording and Max Peterson remembers both she and Arthur as keen daily recorders of the weather at their home, firstly in North Leigh and latterly Minster Lovell. They

attended St Kenelm's in Minster Lovell and this beautiful church was the where the funeral was held, well attended by members of this group. My personal debt to Marion is the help she (and her husband Arthur) gave to me when I was struggling to identify numerous fungi from Milham Ford

school grounds in the battle to protect the site from development. They were always patient with my parcels of rotting specimens and really encouraged me into Mycology. I'm sure I'm not the only one to have benefited from their time.

On the 31st of May this year we also lost our President, Prof. Terence Ingold, who died at the age of 105. One of the giants of mycology and a world authority on aquatic fungi, space here does not allow me to do him justice. The Obituary in the Guardian of 30th June 2010 is really well worth reading.

J. Webb (ed.)



Marion Warland

Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire

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You are very welcome to join us on forays to learn about fungi, but note this group focuses on identification skills and accurate records to increase knowledge on fungi and to aid their conservation.



Our Chairman's Report

This has been a landmark year for the group with the death of Marion Warland, who with her husband Arthur were instrumental in setting up the fungus Foray of Oxfordshire in May 1987. Of course their enthusiasm and expertise will be greatly missed, but there is now the opportunity to move forward and revitalise the group for the 21st century! However this will require initiative and enthusiasm.....!

We have been aware for a few years of the need to try and widen the membership and bring in some new keen mycologists. It is regrettable that mycology as an academic specialty within the universities is in decline and we can no longer be assured of interest and expertise from this source. Our colourful poster campaign in schools and public libraries has gone some of the way to publicising the group, but we are always on the lookout for new ways to generate enthusiasm and introduce new members. Ideas please!

As far as fungi are concerned, 2009 should have been a good year; after a prolonged dry spell in the early autumn, the rains that finally came took weeks to stimulate the required response and we had to wait until November before finding any pleasing numbers of fungi. Perhaps this is a sign of climate change that will become the pattern for the future. However it takes more than a swallow to make a summer, and it may well be that the unusual season last year will be a one off!

The committee have planned a varied and interesting program for 2010, so let us look forward to a rewarding season! **Max Peterson**

** Editor's note –This strange Amanita featured in the last newsletter found By Pam Hills at Bladon, has finally been identified by experts who state it is A. olivaceogrisea, a species newly found in Bucks by Carol Hobart and Martyn Ainsworth, confirmed by Martyn. Definitely a first for Oxon.....*



Amanita olivaceogrisea

The year 2009 and its fascinating finds



Geopora sumneriana

Geopora sumneriana is an uncommon cup fungus which emerges very early in the year in March – April and is always associated with the roots of conifers. FSO have a known site for this under Cedars on a bank near a path in Blenheim Park, but the last time we surveyed there for it, we must have been just slightly too late as all we found were holes where squirrels and other animals must have dug the fungi up to eat. Richard Fortey contributed this new find from Vicarage Rd, Henley on Thames, under *Cedrus deodar*. Just a few houses from where George Orwell spent his childhood!

Our spring foray to **Lashford Lane Fen**, BBOWT reserve, near Wootton, was fixed up on the basis that 'Morels' were to be found there, according to the BBOWT handbook. Spring forays are always hit and miss, sometimes we find good fungi, other times we mostly appreciate spring flowers and a good chat. This year we were rewarded with the site of no less than 17 caps (some very large) of the **Thimble Morel**, *Verpa conica* and one cap of the **Semifree Morel**, *Mitrophora semilibera*.



Thimble Morel, *Verpa conica*

The autumn forays started in September and as with the previous 2 years, hit an Indian summer or very warm, dry patch, uncondusive to finding fungi.

Headington Hill Park was almost a lost cause apart from the impressive *Ramaria* clump on woodchip (identified by Kew as *R. stricta*) and that pavement mushroom, *Agaricus bitorquis*.



Ramaria stricta

Wytham Wood did a little better - still dry. We were seeking out damp bits and under log things. John Killick showed us the odd fungus that causes green spots on sycamore leaves, *Pleuroceras pseudoplantani* and Marion confirmed it, explaining that this was the site she had first been shown it. The Veined Shield, *Pluteus thompsonii*, caught my eye and made a nice photo. An impressive number of caps of the bay polypore *Polyporus badius* sprouted from a damp log. The other unusual thing found was Small hairy-stiped version of rooting shank, *Xerula pudens*.



Veined shield, *Pluteus thompsonii*

Queen Wood on the Chilterns was again mostly kicking through dry as dust leaf litter, but in spite of that, having Alan Hills as the leader ensured we found no less than 5 bolete species. Out of the hot, dry, woodland a dead beech with numerous shining white caps of the porcelain fungus, *Oedemansiella mucida*, all the way up the trunk, was a sight for sore eyes.

The joint foray with Bucks fungus group led by Derek Schafer to **Bernwood Forest** drew a large number of people and resulted in an impressive list of finds. The **Blackening Chanterelle**, *Cantharellus melanoxerus*, was perhaps the most unusual as this is **Red Data listed with only 19 previous records in the FRDBI**. My favourite was, however a large clump of the bright yellow **Hare's Ear**, *Otidea onotica*.



The little Red-spored Dapperling *Melanophyllum haemospermum*

Back in Oxon again Joanna Dodsworth found us this spectacularly coloured little toadstool with blood-red gills and spores called *Melanophyllum haemospermum* (**Redspored Dapperling**). The mealy brown cap was uninspiring until it was turned over and the remarkable gills came into view. This was a surprise find from the **Hinksey Heights**

Nature Reserve foray. This site is mostly a fen with a lot of wet woodland with fallen willows. The quantity of lichens (*Peltigera* sp) and mosses was spectacular, due no doubt due to the damp air.

The **Eynsham Park** foray benefited from some weeks of rain and a large number of species were found including some mysteries which remain unresolved despite specimens being sent to Kew. I remember particularly the lime tree avenue approach to the park where there were spectacular troops of *Clitocybe geotropa* and large caps of *Hebeloma sinapizans* along with large **Field Blewits**, (*Lepista saeva*). In the park woodland, a beautiful buff-orange *Lepiota* came back from Kew as *L. magnispora*, with only one previous Oxon record from Nettlebed woods.



Lepiota magnispora

No less than 2 species of **pipe club**, *Macrotyphula* sp. sprouted from leaf litter. The beautifully floral scented *Hebeloma saccariolens* pleased our noses and a large, tan capped toadstool with a contorted, fibrous, splitting stem, found under the lime trees with help from Kew has turned out to be another *Hebeloma* sp. In section *quercetum* and remains with expert Geoff Kibby until the publication of the *Hebeloma* monograph. We have some time to wait for that answer!

Records from outside the official forays have produced some spectacular species as follows. Many fungi fall into the small, brown or whitish category. Just occasionally they are coloured so brightly to be described as truly gorgeous. This is one, a corticioid, photo sent to me by John Woolliams this spring. Instantly recognizable, but needed microscopic checking, as there are a couple of similar coloured things, but not so brilliant. Here is his description of the find.

'Leaffield Community Wood was the first of the Wychwood Project community woods to be planted in the Millennium year. It has a good range of deciduous species with a well-established Hazel coppice. It was during a regular work party to coppice the Hazel on Sunday 14 February 2010 that Sarah Betteridge found a Hazel stick smothered in Pulcherricium caeruleum. The effect of finding such a dazzling blue fungus in a landscape bereft of colour was nothing short of stunning.' **John Woolliams**



Pulcherricium caeruleum

My own special find of the year was the less visually spectacular, but the strongly aniseed-scented white bracket known as '**Tramète parfumée**' in French, *Trametes suaveolens*. On poplar logs nearly in the Cherwell flood water in Feb 2009 in Marston Meadows, Oxford. Looks like *T. gibbosa*, but has round, not rectangular, pores and the unmistakable sweet smell. I was sent a photo of the same thing by **David Guyoncourt**. It was found in a willow in a swamp in Barton Fields, Abingdon.



Trametes suaveolens

Only 63 previous records in the FRDBI and Vulnerable / B (Red Data List, ed. 2)

Please watch out for it this next winter– only on either poplar or more commonly willow. Thames valley might be a hotspot for it. (J Webb, editor)