



Herefordshire Fungus Survey
Group

News Sheet N^o 4: Autumn 2002



Ustilago violacea (Bringsty Common - 5/6/02)

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Some thoughts on the HFSG News Sheet

As I mentioned in the Spring issue News Sheet, the aim is now to try to produce an issue twice per year. This would seem to work out as publications in:

- late April/early May, covering the September – February forays;
- late September/early October, covering the March – August forays.

Both the last issue and this current one rely very heavily on contributions from Ted and Ray, to whom I am most grateful for their willing(?) submission to blackmail! It would be pleasing, though, if our News Sheet reflected more widely the talents, as well as the wishes, of the whole Group and I hope that future issues will increasingly do this.

It is, I think, desirable to keep both the size and content of these News Sheets as flexible as possible. However, each issue will, hopefully, contain, as a common denominator:

- Recorder's Report - ie Ted's summary of the main finds, etc. from the forays in the relevant period.
- 'Fungal Fragments' - a rag-bag column of information, photographs, or anything else which might be interesting or entertaining. **Your contributions are needed!**
- A puzzle – in this current issue it is a crossword (thanks to Sheila and George), but it need not be. **Volunteers, please!**

Also, the Spring News Sheet each year may well contain items emanating from the AGM.

In addition, hopefully starting next Spring,

- Heather has 'volunteered' to write a short series of articles, 'An Introduction to Lichens', which will probably span three or four issues. It will be particularly apposite, as we now often record these and many of us know next-to-nothing about them.
- Likewise, Stephanie has agreed to do something to help us with our botanical identification of host plants. Again, many members of the Group feel that this is very relevant.

I should, however, like to know what **you** would wish to see included in future issues – as well, of course, as anything that you, yourself might be prepared to contribute.

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The Spring foraying season started with great enthusiasm: it was great to be out in the woods again! My first season as Chairman has gone smoothly, due to the great support of members - in particular Shelly and Mike, for leading the foray to Netherwood and, of course, Ted for his continuing, unstinting help and guidance. We have had some really good forays so far: thank you, Ted, for giving us all the info. on the exciting finds we have made.

As Chairman, I would like, officially, to thank Mike Stroud for taking over the News Sheet. So far, it has had a very good reception and I am sure that this one will go down just as well.

Recently, I found the following extract from the preface to a book of photographs by Taylor Lockwood, which I would like to share with you. I hope you like it as much as I did.

Something happens to me when I walk into the woods; something greater than the sum of what my senses hand me. I turn around and glance at the road and the cars whizzing through a world that I just left behind, and then turn back andWow! Hidden treasure! A new frontier! Every mushroom or clump of mushrooms a tip of an iceberg, leading to all the mysteries that they hold: how they got there, what their names are, and so much more. And I am here to make these discoveries and here to find and capture the treasure of their beauty.

Sheila Spence

RECORDER'S REPORT, March – August 2002

Lea & Pagets Wood, 27th March:



Sarcoscypha austriaca - Lea & Pagets Wood (27/3/02)

In addition to *Sarcoscypha austriaca*, this early foray produced *Polyporus squamosus* and several Agarics including *Galerina pallida*, of which there is only one previous Herefordshire record.

Myxomycetes were frequent, amongst which a first county record of the rare and minute *Cribraria microcarpa*, the determination being by Prof. Bruce Ing, who commented, "We have a few records from North Wales, Scotland and Surrey/Sussex but it is very difficult to spot and may be more common. It is a common tropical species and it is significant perhaps that all recent gatherings have been since the onset of climate change". Another 'first' was *Coniochaeta scatigena* on a rabbit pellet, not rare just under-recorded.

Dinmore Hill & Arboretum, 24th April:

St. George's Mushroom *Calocybe gambosa* made its usual appearance and there was a good representation of Agarics, lichens, rusts, and a smut, together with seven Myxomycetes. Creeping Thistle, *Cirsium arvense*, was found with the rust *Puccinia punctiformis* which has the quite unusual character of a pleasant floral smell reminiscent of *Hyacinth*, this acting as an insect attractant for the dissemination of the pycniospores. A completely formless *Peziza vesiculosa* needed the microscope to confidently unravel its blistery mystery. Interesting Myxomycetes were the genuine and less common *Lycogala epidendrum*, and the minute 'goblets' of *Craterium minutum*.



Craterium minutum - Dinmore Hill & Arboretum (24/4/02)

Moccas Park, 8th May.

Although recording began at Moccas as long ago as 1873 by the Woolhope Club, a remarkable fact of this foray was the first-time recording of fungi and rusts common elsewhere - *Kuehneola uredinis* on bramble stems, *Phragmidium violaceum* on bramble leaves, *Puccinia sessilis* on Cuckoo-pint leaves, *Uromyces muscari* on Bluebell leaves, and the smut *Entyloma ficaria* on Lesser Celandine. The explanation is that Moccas records are known to be deficient both of spring fungi and microfungi, due to most past recording being autumnal and biased towards macrofungi. Also new to Moccas were *Hymenoscyphus repandus* and *Mollisia clavata*.

Other fungi of interest were *Peziza micropus* on beech, *Hercospora tiliae* on lime bark (new to the Herefordshire database although not rare), *Ramularia variabilis* on Foxglove leaves, and *Xanthoriicola phyciae* (only the second county record) which parasitises the common yellow lichen *Xanthoria parietina* turning the apothecial hymenium sooty black (and therefore conspicuous), eventually killing the thallus.

Hollybush Roughs Wood: 22nd May.

There was a predominance of ash at this site with frequent elder, with the consequent abundance of *Daldinia concentrica* and *Auricularia auricula-judae*. Amongst the Agarics, St. George's appeared again, plus *Agrocybe preacox* and *A. semiorbicularis*, and the waxcap *Hygrocybe chlorophana* made an early appearance. There was also the rather strange and deceptive *Lachnella alboviolascens* which can be easily mistaken for a the small Ascomycete cup-fungus *Dasyscyphus* until examined microscopically, not commonly recorded.

Ceriporia reticulata is also amongst the seldom recorded species, and appears as a thin delicate network of 'pores' which under the stereo-microscope appear as shallow cups. The anamorph of *Eudarlucia caricis* (*Sphaerellopsis* state) occurred as a parasite of the rust *Puccinia caricina* var. *ribesii-pendulae* on Pendulous Sedge,

only the second Herefordshire record. *Gloniopsis praelonga* was found on dead bramble stem looking like a parade of minute black slugs. Branches of both ash and elder were in places plastered with the lichen *Xanthoria parietina*, so not surprisingly, its parasite, *Xanthoriicola physciae* was again found.

Bringsty Common, 6th June:

The grassland and broadleaved hedge-row habitat, with a stream and wet area, were a variation on our usual woodland, and several fungi rather different from usual were found, compensating for the modest score.

The deceptive *Flagelloscypha minutissima* appears under the hand-lens like a minute tubular *Dasyscyphus* but microscopically reveals itself to be a Basidiomycete with curiously encrusted whip-like 'hairs', only the second Herefordshire record.



Flagelloscypha minutissima (microscope at x40) – Bringsty Common (6/6/02)

Actinospora megalospora is an 'aquatic Hyphomycete' remarkable for the size of its conidia which have a 300um diameter spread across a tetra-radiate array of four arms, said to be visible with a hand lens. Aquatic Hyphomycetes typically grow on submerged leaves, releasing conidia into water and may be collected by sampling foam occurring in fast flowing streams. The teleomorph *Miladina lechithina* was also found and is a small yellow Discomycete growing on submerged wood in streams, previous Herefordshire records of which date from 1977-84.

Other Discomycetes included *Scutellinia scutellata* s.s. and the "Orange-peel" cup-fungus *Aleuria aurantia*.



Miladina lechithina – Bringsty Common (6/6/02)

Our site guide Dr. David Boddington found "Jupiter's Beard" *Hyphodontia barba-jovis*, in appearance more like designer stubble.

Another of the Aphyllophorales was the less common *Ganoderma applanatum* s.s..

"Pocket plums" on *Prunus* spp. which have been prevalent this year, were found on both bullace and sloe, the name deriving from the suppression of the stone and kernel formation by *Taphrina pruni*, leaving a cavity.



Taphrina pruni - Bringsty Common (6/6/02)

Coincidentally, the anamorph of *Eudarlucia caricis* found on the previous foray occurred here but, on this occasion, on *Kuehneola uredinis*, the yellow rust often found on bramble stems.

Although not rare there are only a few records on the database of the bark-colonising Pyrenomycetes *Ceratostomella cirrhosa* and *Nitschkia grevillei*, in fact the first Herefordshire records were in 1996 by visiting specialists during the BMS Centenary forays.

Nether Wood, 10th July:

This was the Group's first visit to the site, securing two species new to the county, *Ceriporia viridans*, and *Physarum psittacinum*. As remarked by recorder for the day, Ray Bray, the last county record of *Pezizula livida* was in 1976, so the reported hard going over tree thinnings and deeply rutted tracks earned an admirable reward.

Fishpool Valley, Croft 21st August:

The star find was *Podostroma alutaceum* which had been found a week or so previously by Jo Weightman who kindly gave us accurate directions to the particular log for a second collection. It had been reported in 1996 by Frank Lancaster from the same general area on conifer, but this time it was clearly on beech. Kew asked for the specimens as they had none from Herefordshire.



Podostroma alutaceum – Fishpool Valley (21/8/02)

Colonies of conspicuous orange tendrils (cirrhi) of 'Spore Horns' which can occur in large masses on fallen beech trunks and twigs were seen emerging from beech bark. These are an anamorphic state of *Quaternaria quaternata*, the anamorph name being *Libertella faginea* and are composed of uncountable numbers of sickle-shaped conidia.



Libertella faginea – Fishpool Valley (21/8/02)

Ramaria formosa was fruiting in more or less the same place as on previous occasions, and the uncommon *Russula solaris*, appeared again.



Ramaria Formosa – Fishpool Valley (21/8/02)



Russula solaris– Fishpool Valley (21/8/02)

Boletus (Xerocomus) communis and *Lactarius romagnesi* are new to the county and appear to be quite rare as there are few BMSFRD records. The uncommon species *Volvariella speciosa* was recorded from the parkland. The last previous record of the Myxomycete *Didymium nigripes* was in 1951 on the occasion of the BMS Hereford Autumn Foray held jointly with the Woolhope Club as part of the latter's Centenary celebrations.

Apart from Group-organised forays, additional records were contributed by Group members. From amongst those notified since February, the following may be of interest:

Daldinia concentrica was discovered on the unusual host of oak by Sheila and George Spence at Ledbury in June 02, confirmed at Kew by Brian Spooner.

A Powdery Mildew was noticed on Jacob's Ladder *Polemonium caeruleum*, by me at Orleton on 26th June 02. Because Ellis & Ellis do not list *Polemonium caeruleum* as a host, nor could it be found in any regional lists, it was sent to Kew. Brian Spooner replied after some deliberation that it appeared to be *Sphaerotheca polemonii*, not formally reported from Britain yet.

Venturia maculiformis on *Epilobium hirsutum* was recorded by Ray Bray at Durlow Common June 02, only 28 records on BMSFRD. Ray also found *Puccinia behenis* on *Silene dioica* at Durlow in August 02, seen by Tom Preece who commented, "Most interesting material, a rare rust by my standards".

Jo Weightman recorded at Moccas, in April, *Urocystis colchici*, a very rare rust on *Colchicum* (only 2 records on BMSFRD) and from Fishpool Valley, in August, *Hebeloma pallidoluctuosum*, of which there are only 15 records on BMSFRD.

Amongst other fungi, Sheila and George Spence found *Boletus pseudoregius* at Great Doward on 24th August, but reported no *Boletus satanas*, which they had specifically gone to look for. However, on 3rd September, Heather Colls reported 10 *Boletus satanas* at the site, with evidence of earlier fruitbodies having 'gone-over'. This indicates how easy it is to miss *B. satanas* through not having the good luck to be there at the right time and may partly explain why this is the only known Herefordshire site.

My thanks to all collectors and recorders who have contributed lists and the results of homework - and who continue to expand the Herefordshire records of fungi.

Ted Blackwell.

FUNGAL FRAGMENTS

Might this verse, by 'Bard Blackwell', be entitled 'The Mycologist's Lament'? :

*We blithely strive with perspicaceous verve
To crest the sinuous fungus-LEARNING CURVE
But Fortune's moods oft rule despotically
Alas, our curve ends asymptotically.*



- There is a small Ascomycete which grows on pine twigs called **Zeus olympius**. The fungus is known only from one site at around 1300 m altitude - on Mount Olympus!
- The growing mycelium of *Armillaria mellea* is luminous in the dark, and pieces of wood infected with the mycelium have been known to glow. John Ramsbottom in his book *Mushrooms and Toadstools* recounts a number of instances (pp159-60) including one where he was informed that during World War 2, wood in a timber yard near London glowed so brightly on moonless nights that men on fire-watch covered it with a tarpaulin for fear it would attract enemy aircraft.
- Extract from old newspaper:

"TOADSTOOLS STARTED A SPY SCARE
A spy scare was caused in a country district of England when it was found that a main road had a luminous glow at night.

Some people thought that enemy agents had put a substance on the road to guide German bombers.

The glow, however, came from wood which had been attacked by luminous toadstools of the "honey-tuft" species. The wood had been cut down for war purposes, and during transit pieces had fallen from a lorry.

Dr. John Ramsbottom, Keeper of Botany at the British Museum, told this story in London yesterday".

- Jenny Shorten (wife of Dave Shorten Cotswold Fungus Group) has started a new venture, 'MycoMiscellany'. There is an associated website

www.mycomiscellany.co.uk

which is growing all the time and may well be of interest to members with web access.

Jenny says that she will be having lots of 'mycological-type treats' for Christmas presents, to add to the interesting array of bits and pieces she already has in the catalogue and on the web-site.

For the non-web people there is a telephone number (01793 765094) to call to get a brochure. Do have a look at the site.

OCCASIONAL PORTRAITS



Sheila and George Spence

HEREFORDSHIRE RECORDS OF CROP DISEASES, 1947 - 1982.

Unexpectedly, fungus records of an unusual nature became available as additional data for the Herefordshire fungus database.

These were of plant-disease fungi, and were obtained through the good offices of Dr. Tom Preece, chairman of our neighbouring Shropshire Fungus Group. They were derived from records originally made by the laboratory of the National Agricultural Advisory Service of the (then) Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), spanning a period from 1947 to 1982. The MAFF plant pathology laboratory at Wolverhampton served the large geographical area of the West Midland counties, investigating diseases occurring on crop plants, and was consulted by farmers, nurserymen, foresters, local authorities, and even occasionally by gardeners, to obtain advice on how to deal with outbreaks of plant diseases.

However, under government cut-backs, the Wolverhampton laboratory was closed in 1982, and in the clear-out, the daily case accession-books were unceremoniously scrapped and thrown into a skip. By some miracle of grapevine organisation, Tom Preece managed to arrange for their retrieval, and so in due course, I was given access to the books to enable transcription of any Herefordshire records they contained.

The completion of this rather arduous process of transcribing about 1830 records is now in sight. This involved surmounting such difficulties as learning an almost new branch of mycology in relation to crop plants, deciphering many different styles of handwriting and finding grid references for many unfamiliar place-names.

Plant pathology has its own vernacular language (when you see the Latin equivalents, you understand why), a jargon of common currency between the growers and the muddy-boot scientists who did the field investigations. Names are mostly descriptive of the disease effects or its appearance.

A brief analysis can be made of the various types of crop diseases which were occurring in Herefordshire during the 35 year period up to 1982. Since that date, there is a blank, as no further records were made. The types of disease reported obviously relate to the types of crops in cultivation.

Cereals (wheat, barley, and oats), hops, potatoes and apple (orchards) rank high in the list of affected crops. Beans, tomatoes and other soft fruits are next in rank and a variety of other crop or nursery plants, such as mangolds, oil seed rape, swedes, peas, sprouts and many others bring up the rear.

The plant list spans the alphabet from Asparagus and Aster, to such as cucumber, Erica, Gladiolus, lettuce, Magnolia, oil seed poppy, continuing through to Veronica, vine (the grape Riesling Sylvana) and *Zea mays* (maize) on which occurs the rarely recorded maize smut, *Ustilago maydis*.



Ear (above) and leaf (below) infected with *Ustilago maydis* – photographs by courtesy of CIMMYT



By far the most reported disease was "Take-all" *Gaeumannomyces graminis* var. *tritici*, a soil-borne root infection of cereals, about equalled by "Hop Wilt" *Verticillium albo-atrum*, with "Hop Canker" *Gibberella pulicaris* being less frequent.

Cereals were also prone to "Powdery Mildew" *Erysiphe graminis* and "Eye-spot", *Pseudocercospora herpotrichoides*, and wheat to "Sharp Eye-spot" *Thanatephorus cucumeris* (= *Rhizoctonia solani*), and "Glume Blotch" *Leptosphaeria nodorum*.

Potatoes were affected by "Late Blight" *Phytophthora infestans*, "Skin-spot" *Polyscytalum pustulans*, "Black Scurf" *Thanatephorus cucumeris* (= "Stem Canker") and "Tuber Rot" of tubers in storage *Phoma exigua* var. *foveata*.

Apple had "Powdery Mildew" *Podosphaera leucotricha* and "Apple Scab" *Venturia inaequalis*. The "Grey mould" *Botrytis cinerea* was often diagnosed on such as tomato plants and strawberries but also affected a wide range of other plants, strawberries additionally falling victim to "Red Stele" (Downy Mildew) *Phytophthora fragariae*.

A few "proper fungi" get mentioned, such as the more familiar *Armillaria mellea*, *Marasmius oreades* and *Serpula lacrymans* (the latter not a crop disease, but sent in for identification). There was even a case of a Myxomycete *Diachea leucopodia* being diagnosed, after occurring on living strawberry leaves and suspected by the grower as a disease.

It is hoped these records will make both a useful addition to the database and provide interest beyond the more usual run of fungus records.

The first of the books below provides a fascinating insight into diseases that affect plants in Britain, and their life styles.

Plant Disease - A Natural History. David Ingram & Noel Robertson. 1999. HarperCollins New Naturalist Series.

A Dictionary of Plant Pathology. Paul Holiday. 1989. CUP

Ted Blackwell

THE EAR FUNGUS



We sat around a pub lunch table reflecting on the morning's foray, as one does, when the name "Jew's ear" came up. Where did it spring from? Was it pejorative, or likely to be perceived as such? Most seemed to think that any sensitivities were ill founded.

Ted later considered whether the Latin name means "Judas's Ear" or "Jew's Ear". According to the Oxford English Dictionary "Jew's Ear" is "an erroneous rendering of Latin *auricula-Judae*, Judas's Ear, so called from its shape and from it being found on the elder on which Judas Iscariot was reputed to have hanged himself". John Ramsbottom wrote in similar vein in *Mushrooms and Toadstools* although in his earlier work, *A Handbook of the Larger British Fungi* he gives the etymology "Latin *Juda*, a Jew". Ted found that other British mycologists were similarly divided and inconsistent in their usage.

I have tried to throw further light on this. Roy Watling translates "judae" as "of a Jew", but he

adds "a warning to all of us of Judas".

W.P. K. Findlay in *Wayside and Woodland Fungi* gives "judae" as "of Judas" adding "in course of time "Judas' Ear" became corrupted to "Jew's Ear". He remarks that, while eaten in the East, "possibly because of its name and appearance it does not seem to appeal much to Western cooks". In *The Botany of Worcestershire* Carleton Rea refers to "Jew's Ear", but in the entry under *Sambucus* his co-author adds "a name, if not personal to Judas, at least designating his nation".

I note that in the USA the Latin name tends to be simply "*Auricularia auricula*" - a certain sensitivity here, perhaps? I note also that the Mycological Society of San Francisco and others use "Judas's Ear" or "Cloud Ear", the latter seemingly of Chinese culinary origin. "Tree ear" has some currency in the States and has also been used by David Pegler and Brian Spooner.

The hirsute appearance of Jews arriving from Germany and Poland in the 18th and 19th centuries has been attributed to Leviticus 19, 27. This led 18th century herbalists to use the name "Jew's Ear" for a fungus "similar in appearance to the characteristic side-locks". A bit far-fetched, surely, and in any case "Jew's Ear" as a vernacular name is much older and indeed pre-Linnaean.

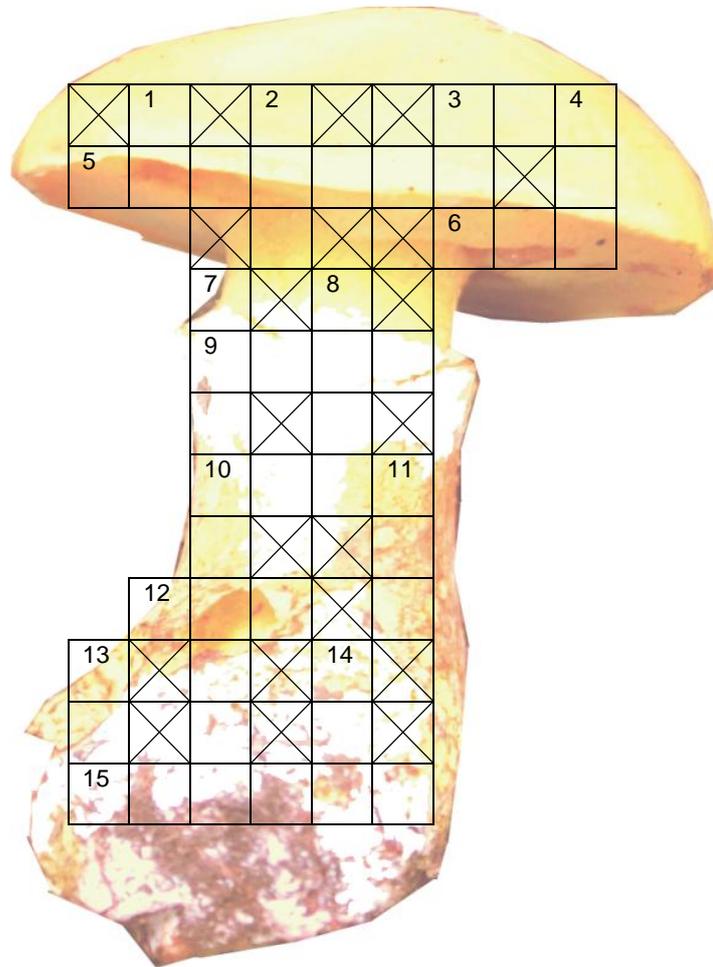
Early in the 18th century, oil of "Jew's Ear" was used as a specific for throat affections. The medicinal virtues of the tree and of "Jew's Ears" were described in 1644. Also in the 17th century "Jew's ears" were considered "a famous medicine in quinses, sore throats and strangulation". Even earlier, in his *Herbal* of 1597, John Gerrard says: "the jelly of the Elder, otherwise called Jew's ear, taketh away inflammations of the mouth and throat if they be washed therewith, and doth in like manner help the uvula".

So there we have it. "Jew's ear" seemingly a corruption of "Judas's ear", certainly since the 16th century and possibly much earlier, since the tradition that Judas hanged himself on an elder dates at least from the middle of the 14th century. No offence intended, it seems, and perhaps none taken although the website of the Shell Better Britain Campaign does find the name "rather pejorative". I, too, still have a slight sense of unease. I'd take a leaf out of Gerrard's book and go for "Elder Jelly" or, sticking to the auricular theme, "Jelly ear". Not that change seems at all likely.

Please ask, dear readers, if you are interested in source references, some of which have been omitted on space grounds and others abbreviated.

Ray Bray

MYCROSSWORD



Across

- 3 Honey fungus out on a limb, perhaps? (3)
- 5 (& 7 down) Who is in the picture? (7)
- 6 Fronds in a tree, down the pecking order, though. (3)
- 9 Where Heterobasidium usually attacks (4)
- 10 Worn in Church? ... but only when young (4)
- 12 (& 4 down) Wrinkly found in the woods, maybe? (3)
- 15 If the Bolete is King, this is first in line (6)

Down

- 1 Micron (2)
- 2 Agaric with acne? (3)
- 3 Fraxinus (3)
- 4 See 12 across (3)
- 7 See 5 across (9)
- 8 Where does Fern keep hers safe? (4)
- 11 (& 14 down) A deceptively friendly name (3)
- 13 Keeps the rain off, it's said. (3)
- 14 See 11 down (3)

Answers next time!

Sheila & George Spence