



Herefordshire Fungus Survey Group

News Sheet N° 39: Spring 2022



Ganoderma lucidum Crowards Mill Photo © Mike Stroud

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Editor's Notes:

Welcome to issue 39 of our News Sheet.

In this issue we have quite a number of super pictures, as well as articles from Shelly & Mike Stroud, Roger Evans, Ted Blackwell, and of course our regular recorders report from Jo Weightman. Many thanks to all for contributions.

If you are reading the news sheet electronically Shelly and Mike's "In the Garden – 4" article has links to more information e.g. [Stem](#): Absent. (Ctrl + click the underlined text in blue this then opens your web browser and takes you to the web site www.mushroomexpert.com/glossary).

The next addition of the news sheet will be with us before you know, so get out and find lots of Fungi then tell us all about your experiences for the next edition.

Recorder`s Report for 2021

Forays for 2020 were cancelled and restarted in June 2021. We were also able to run three Study Days that had originally been scheduled for 2020.

The usual pattern for morning forays followed by a pub lunch had to be changed owing to Covid so we picnicked on site and then talked about the morning`s finds. These had been laid out on a table kindly brought along by Sue and Charles Hunter.

The Forays

Queens Wood, Dymock 09.06.2021.

This was our first foray since 2019. By June conditions on the ground were already very dry but the group trickled hopefully downhill, not finding very much but enjoying the occasion and the fine day. June is not the best time for agarics and only a few common ones were found. They included Rooting Shank which is now to be known as *Hymenopellis radicata* and an unusually pale and dry, initially puzzling *Agrocybe praecox*. Two small white ascos were collected from rotting wood in a damp spot. The first, *Hymenoscyphus imberbis* was recorded at this site by Graddon in 1981 since when just a few collections have been made elsewhere. The second, *Lachnum impudicum*, has been recorded only once before in the county (Croft Castle Estate) and appears to be scarce nationally.



Hymenoscyphus imberbis on a rotting spruce cone at Queens Wood. Dymock. . Photo © Mike Stroud.

Blakemere Hill Wood 14 07 2021.



Amanita excelsa var. *spissa*. This species was frequent in a conifer plantation in Blakemere Hill Wood, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

This is a large site which we have not surveyed before. The broadleaf plantation blocks looked promising but were so full of bramble that access was difficult. Some more open areas under spruce had an early showing of *Amanita excelsa* var. *spissa* and also yielded the horse mushroom look-alike *Agaricus macrocarpus*. Several examples of the beautiful slime mould *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa* were found on rotting wood and Choke *Epichloë typhina* was frequent on the grasses along the path. We did not record many fungi this time but the wood is large and a further visit later in the year would be more productive.

Lady's Coppice 1 08 2021.

This was the Group's fourth visit to Lady's Coppice and the first in August. Most members followed the circular route and found that the damp lower path was the most productive. Other members disappeared into the undergrowth. Once again conditions on the slope were dry and access inhibited by bramble.

New site records included the ubiquitous *Xerocomellus cisalpinus* and the less frequent *X. rubellus*, the latter's ID confirmed by the red dots in the stipe base. *Agaricus litoralis*, a pale species with a more or less concolorous scales on the cap and a rather short stipe, has not often been recorded in the county and the milky white *Conocybe lactea* has not been seen much recently. Two eyelash fungi were added to the site list, *Scutellinia scutellata* and *S. setosa*.



Agaricus litoralis, showing the typically short stipe.
Photographed on the Goggin in 2013.
Photo © Jo Weightman.

The best find of the day remains un-named as the host tree was uncertain. Only a highly polished chestnut red stipe was found with the future bracket no more than a very slight swelling at its tip. In habit it appeared to be terrestrial but must have been growing from buried wood. A nearby yew tree was a possible host in which case the fungus would have been the rare *Ganoderma carnosum* (formerly *atkinsonii*), which has only been recorded three times in Herefordshire. If it had arisen from the root of a broadleaf tree, it would have been the uncommon *G. lucidum*.

The Weir Garden 04 09 2019.

I was unable to attend this meeting so a warm thank you to all finders and identifiers.

As the weather continued to be good for leisure but not good for fungi, agarics were in exceptionally short supply for a September meeting. So it was odd that the only two found were less than common waxcaps. I am particularly sorry to have missed *Hygrophorus chrysodon*, a white species characterised by a speckling of small yellow scales or granules on the otherwise white cap and stipe.

Three species had not been recorded before in Herefordshire – the smut *Entyloma serotinum*, the powdery mildew *Podosphaera xanthii* and the hyphomycete *Ramularia cerinthes*. Only the *Podosphaera* is at all well represented on the current Fungus Records Database for Britain and Ireland (FRDBI) and then with only 64 entries. The other two, with 15 and 5 entries respectively appear to be even rarer but it is probable that all three

are under-recorded nationally rather than rare. The recent splendid *Guide and Welsh Census Catalogues* covering leaf-infecting fungi should help fill these recording gaps.

A young ash tree was showing signs of ash dieback – dead hanging leaves and lenticular lesions on the stems. The cause, *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* was found on the ground beneath on old petioles.

Conspicuous scarlet leaves on a pear tree were an indication of the presence of the aecial stage (Stage 1) of the rust fungus *Gymnosporangium sabinae*. Later stages occur on *Juniperus sabina*.



The aecial stage of *Gymnosporangium sabinae* photographed in Kent in 2009. Photo © Jo Weightman.

Great Doward 29 09. 2021.

In the morning we headed down towards the river, turning back before further descent and subsequent near vertical return became too tasking. After lunch and discussion of the finds so far, we moved on to White Rocks Reserve in the afternoon.

It was sad to see the beech woods so dry, crunchy and bereft of their usual species. Even so, a number of notable species were found including a fine specimen of the earthstar *Geastrum triplex*.

Two notable *Cortinarius* species were recorded, both in the *Phlegmacium* subgroup. The first, *Cortinarius calochrous*, has a golden cap often with darker spots of veil in the centre, as did ours, and violet gills when young. The white stipe has a large marginate bulb and the KOH reaction was negative. This species is restricted to beech on calcareous soils. Of the six other records on the Herefordshire database, three dating from the 1980s are also from the Doward. The other three, from Dinmore Hill and Ledbury date from the nineteenth century.

Similarly the second, *Cortinarius splendens*, has previously been recorded on Great Doward (twice) and John Bingham found it in the Wigmore Rolls in 2001. Cap, gills and stipe are all strongly yellow and the stipe base has a slightly marginate bulb. The strongly yellow flesh is an important character. KOH on the cap gave the expected greenish-brown reaction.



Cortinarius splendens. A fungus which occurs with beech on calcareous soils. Great Doward, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

Rubroboletus (Boletus) satanas occurs in several places on Great Doward but nowhere else in the county in modern times. Earlier records from Eastnor and Moor Park date from the nineteenth century. It is rare nationally.



A young specimen of *Rubroboletus satanas*. Great Doward, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.



Geastrum triplex. Great Doward, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

Croft Castle Foray 13.10.2021.

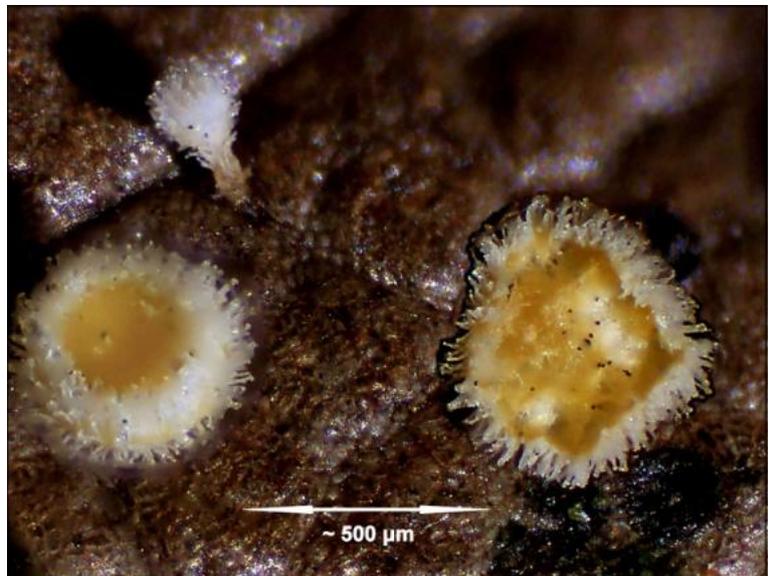
As usual we headed down into Fishpool Valley which has been very rewarding in the past. Not so this year. Almost all the fungi seen were on the damaged southwest-facing side where the scars left by the extensive removal of secondary ash due to die-back are beginning to heal. Many of the fungi seen here were species typical of recently disturbed sites. On the other side of the valley, the usually very rich beech slope was entirely devoid of fungi. The day was challenging but our members are not easily daunted and a respectable number of species were seen, including four which had not been recorded before on this much surveyed site. After lunch and a look at the morning's collections, those who could stay on looked at the grassland and parkland trees adjacent the exit route.

Chalciporus piperatus, surprisingly, has only been recorded a dozen of times in Herefordshire. It is a bolete, about half the size of most of them, with distinctive bright yellow flesh in the stipe. It appears to have a relationship with the Fly Agaric *Amanita muscaria*, often appearing with it. *Entoloma porphyrophaeum*, a species characteristic of unimproved grassland, was present and both *Rickenella swartzii* and *R. fibula* were recorded in mossy areas.



The Weeping Widow *Lacrymaria lacrymabunda*, a species often found by waysides and in disturbed places. Croft Castle, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

A small white *Mycena* with arching gills was identified as *M. alba*, a species seen only once before in the county. The only other county record dates from 1975 when it was recorded at Llangrove. *Incrucipulum ciliare* is white at the outset, darkening as it ages and the margin is heavily encrusted with white hairs. A species mostly occurring on dead oak leaves, it has often been recorded in the past but under several older names.



Incrucipulum ciliare showing the typical dense hairs. Croft Castle, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

Croward's Mill Foray 27.10.2021.

We were very kindly invited to foray in two adjoining damp gardens and in the adjacent cow-grazed pasture. The lawns and scattered specimen trees provided good opportunities for foraging.

One of the commonest species found was *Agaricus impudicus*, a dull coloured species with small grey-brown scales and a darker brown central disc.

Among the less common species seen were *Lactarius controversus*, a very large pinkish fungus mycorrhizal with willows and poplars, the beautiful lacquered *Ganoderma lucidum* (see Front cover) and a particularly fine example of the diminutive blue-grey *Mycena pseudocorticola* that occurs in moss on the trunks of deciduous trees.

The undoubted find of the day was made by Chris Silkin who found the first known Herefordshire specimen of *Saproamanita (Amanita) inopinata*. It was near the edge of cattle-grazed pasture under an ash. The national database holds 33 records of this '*Amanita*' which was new to science in 1981 when it was found in a conifer plantation in West Kent. Since then it has spread into other south eastern counties and Oxfordshire but nowhere further west so far as I know. It does not look like any other British *Amanita*, having thick, dark grey-black integral scales on the cap instead of loose veil remains. Interestingly, one of my class members, on seeing the photograph of this find, said that she had seen it in early November in Hereford Cemetery. So it really has arrived and more sightings can be expected.

After foraging we were invited to look at our specimens and have our picnic in a barn in the grounds.



Saproamanita inopinata showing the scaly cap. Croward's Mill, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.



Saproamanita inopinata side view. Croward's Mill, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.



Chris Silkin holding his find of *Saproamanita inopinata*. Croward's Mill, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

Homme House Foray 10.11.2021.

In the morning we spread out over the lawns and into the woodland beyond, gathering for lunch and discussion of our finds. In the afternoon we explored the woodland near the lake.

This year's remarkable and continuous dearth of mycorrhizal species continues. Russulas, Amanitas and boletes were conspicuous for their absence. What we did find, was a good variety of dead wood and litter species and some additions to the waxcap list for the site. The greenish yellow discs of *Bisporella sulfurina* and a seldom recorded *Pluteus* with dark edges to the gills – *P. luctuosus* were found on some fallen dead wood. An *Inonotus* on a fallen poplar branch was *Inonotus cuticularis*, a species which forms thin brackets, often in clusters, on dead wood of a range of broadleaved trees. This is the third county record.

Cuphophyllus fornicatus, (formerly *Hygrocybe fornicata*) is a dry grey waxcap that is only occasionally seen in Herefordshire. Also recorded was *Agaricus depauperatus* which is less common than other reddening *Agaricus* species and has only been recorded twice before in the county.

Volvariella gloiocephala, which was also recorded has had a good year. A tall greyish and sticky-capped fungus, it grows in stubble fields or among tall grasses where its defining feature, a volva at the base, can often be missed, causing confusion to the finder.

Crow Wood and Meadow Foray 24.11.2021.

It has been a sad year for fungi generally and little was expected. My heart sank when we arrived and saw how long the grass was in the first two meadows and we knew already that the wooded areas would not be bristling with fungi. Amazingly, we managed to find nearly fifty species. Even more amazingly, nearly half were new site records.

It initially appeared that waxcaps, which normally occur here in some number, were not to be found at all despite much probing in the grassland. Then came a surprise – one perfect specimen of a single large, scarlet and gold waxcap, the dry and fibrous *Hygrocybe intermedia*. And a new site record to boot.



Hygrocybe intermedia, photographed in Kent in 2004. Photo © Jo Weightman.

Mycenas were present in some variety. It was good to see the two 'polys', *Mycena polygramma* and *M. polyadelpa*. The first is a tall, rather stiff species with a deeply ribbed silvery grey stipe that occurs, usually singly or in small groups on stumps or fallen branches. *Mycena polyadelpa*, on the other hand, can only be found by turning over the rotting oak leaves on which it lives. It is a diminutive white species with few gills.

Lea and Pagets Wood Foray 08.12.2021.

Our earliest records for Lea and Pagets Wood date from the 1970s. Since then a good many forays have been held there and yet new records continue to be made, some of common species, others less common.

Repeat records.

Exceptionally swollen, purple, jelly-like fruitbodies on one of the newly felled ash trees proved to be the imperfect form of *Ascocoryne sarcooides*. *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* has often been recorded here but not often in the large numbers seen. A propped-up damp fallen branch was host to a hundred or so fruitbodies. It was good to see *Encoelia furfuracea* again – a species I cut my recording teeth on a lifetime ago. In the late

autumn and winter months it pushes through the bark of moribund hazel branches in brown scurfy clusters, opening as brown cups. It is not rare, just a nice thing to look for during the bleak winter months. *Cyathus striatus* is also fairly common but it is always a winner to find one of the bird's nest fungi. The nest of *C. striatus* features a neatly fluted inner wall.

New site records

Entoloma byssisedum has only been recorded once before in Herefordshire (Barnett Wood 2003) and is seldom recorded nationally. As it is small and the stipe is laterally or eccentrically attached, it has a passing resemblance to a *Crepidotus*. However, the angled spores put it immediately into the *Entolomataceae*. The brownish cap colour and marked mealy smell are good distinguishing characters in the field.

Tricholoma columbetta differs in the field from the trio of white/whitish *Tricholomas* because the pure white cap is silky-shiny while the others are all matt and less snowy white. Also, it occurs under a range of under broad-leaved trees so is not host specific.



Entoloma byssisedum showing its lateral attachment to the rotting wood host. Lea and Pagets, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

Notable non-foray records.

Gilled fungi.

A good colony of *Cortinarius balteatocumatilis* was found with oak at Hellens during our Study Day there in late October. Interestingly, a further example was found at Bacton in the same week, also with oak. This fungus is in the *Phlegmacium* subgroup in the genus *Cortinarius* and is characterised in the field by a red-brown cap with traces of violet, a clavate stipe base and a yellow reaction on the flesh with KOH



Cortinarius balteatocumatilis. Hellens, 2021. Photo © Jo Weightman.

We have a scattering of records for *Panus conchatus* over the years but this year's find in July by Ed Fox in the woodland above Moccas Park is the first since 2007. If found when young, this fungus is easy to identify as it has purple colours on cap, gills and stipe but these colours fade in time. It grows on a range of broad-leaved wood and often has a lateral or eccentrically attached cap.



Panus conchatus Woodbury Hill Wood, 2021. Photo © Ed Fox.

John Davies has reported what is probably the first Herefordshire record for *Lentinus tigrinus*, a species with specialised habitat requirements. Large clusters appear on wood that is seasonally inundated. It was found in June by a waterway in Hampton Bishop. In appearance, as well as in habitat it is a distinctive species, having pale caps speckled with dark fibrous tufts and decurrent often anastomosing gills.

Very little was to be found on Bircher Common on the 1st of October but the edges were misted with hundreds of *Rhizomarasmius* (formerly *Marasmius*) *undatus*. This is another fungus with specialised habitat requirements, bracken litter this time. It is a small grey-brown species with the rising flush of red-brown on an otherwise whitish stipe that is so typical of *Marasmius* species.

Arrhenia obscurata is also small and grey but has deeply decurrent gills. Third county record, Sheil Meadow, near Orleton, 22.5.2021.



Lentinus tigrinus photographed during a Gwent foray near Monmouth, very close to the border with Herefordshire. Photo © Mike Stroud.



Arrhenia obscurata, Sheil Meadow, Orleton, 2021. Photo © Jo Weightman.

Geastrum pectinatum is an earthstar associated with conifers. Look for the distinct stalk under the spore sac, the rounded shape of the sac and the grooved 'chimney'. UK Fungus Day, Queenswood 2.10.2021.



Geastrum pectinatum, Queenswood, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

Fungi without gills.

I was sent a photograph of a white 'lump' weeping red droplets which had been found on the ceiling of a shed on the Croft Castle Estate. After a search of several 'sheds', the very distinctive object was finally located and a ladder found. The lump was extremely soft and yielding. Assuming it was an exciting slime mould, I referred it to our president Ted Blackwell who said "no" it was *Postia ptychogaster*. This is the imperfect state of a bracket not often seen in the perfect state but quite a familiar sight in this imperfect condition. However, I have not seen *Postia ptychogaster* weeping before although guttation is not uncommon on certain bracket-forming fungi. Bright red droplets are very unusual. The only other occurrence I know of is on young *Hydnellum peckii*, a rare hydroid (hedgehog fungus) that is mycorrhizal with pine in Scotland.



Postia ptychogaster, photographed on the ceiling of a shed in the garden of Croft Castle, 2021. Photo© Alison Cottrell.

Few of the crust-forming fungi can be identified in the field. So it was with pleasure that I found large patches of the bright orange *Leucogyrophana mollusca* in October. It was colonising the underside of the lowest of a pile of conifer logs in School Wood on the Croft Estate. The surface of this fungus is crumpled and described as meruloid or, less pedantically, as tripe-like. There are few records for it on the Herefordshire database and it was last recorded twenty years ago.



Leucogyrophana mollusca on the underside of a conifer log.
School Wood, Croft Castle, 2021. Photo © Jo Weightman.

Last year I reported a second record for the Devil's Claw *Clathrus archeri* from the south west of the county. I can now report a third occurrence but from Bircher Common in the north of Herefordshire, too far surely from that source for the flight of the fly vector to be responsible. Has the fungus crossed the county in stages unseen?



Clathrus archeri, on Bircher Common , October 2021.
Photo © Andrew Perry.

Exidia recisa is a jelly fungus that forms brownish, cushion-shaped fruitbodies that sit on or hang from willow branches. If the light shines through them they can look like amber jewels. It was found on Wofferwood Common near Stanford Bishop in January. Fourth county site for a rarely reported species.



Exidia recisa, Brilley Green Dingle, October 2018. Photo © Mike Stroud.

FOLLOW UP NEWS.

It is good news that the rare *Sarcodontia crocea*, first reported at Awnells Farm in 2014 on a Warner's King apple tree, has now fruited on another host tree, a Newton Wonder. The original tree has died.



Sarcodontia crocea, photographed on the original host tree at Awnells Farm, Much Marcle, 2014. Photo © Jo Weightman.

I first found the golden *Rugosomyces chrysenteron* in Haugh Wood among fallen spruce branches in 2016. This very uncommon species was seen there again this year on October 20.



Rugosomyces chrysenteron among moss and fallen spruce branches, Haugh Wood 2016. Photo © Jo Weightman.

Loreleia postii was first seen at Kentchurch Court during a Group foray in 2016. A further population was found this year at a different location on a hard path edging the lawn. The orange caps were nicely silhouetted against mosses and liverworts.



Loreleia postii among mosses and liverworts on a hard path, Kentchurch Court, 2021. Photo © Mike Stroud.

OUT OF COUNTY RECORDS.

In February six to seven large clumps of *Peziza campbellii* (formerly *Peziza proteana* f. *sparassoides*) were found on a deep pile of ash chippings in a Gladestry garden just over the border into Wales. Each clump strongly resembled the pine associate, Cauliflower Fungus *Sparassis crispa*, but the habitat was wrong. Once under the microscope the similarity disappeared and the fungus was revealed as an ascomycete. *Peziza campbellii* is very uncommon nationally. My only previous acquaintance with it was between 1987 and 1989 on some of the huge bonfire sites that followed the Great Storm in 1987.

While still putting this report together, news has come in of another find of this species! So, here is an early 2022 record from Mike and Shelly Stroud of a fruiting on a bonfire site in a field near Cwmdy, Powys on 18th January.

A colleague in Kent reported a visit to the Ruckinge area to see a very rare British occurrence of *Artomyces pyxidata* where five colonies had been found on dead fallen oak. This is a whitish to yellowish much branched coralloid fungus. The branchlets end in little cups, each with several spiny outgrowths. Perhaps we will be seeing it in Herefordshire in a few years time.



Artomyces pyxidata photographed in France in 1994. Photo Anon.



Peziza campbellii. One fruitbody sliced in half, showing the brain-like structure, Gladestry, February 2021. Photo © Amanda Crawshaw.



Peziza campbellii. One frosted fruitbody in habitat, Gladestry, February 2021. Photo Amanda

Jo Weightman.

Resilient Toadstools

Roger Evans



In the first week of November five statuesque pale cream fruit bodies of the Trooping Funnel Cap, what used to be known as *Clitocybe geotropa* but which we must now call *Infundibulicybe geotropa* had developed on one of my lawns, they formed in a slight arc as if part of a circle. Although I have never seen these in a complete circle, one was recently mentioned in The Times, present in France in a circle half a mile in diameter where the mycelium was believed to be 800 years old. I have many other fungi on my lawn, the most conspicuous being *Laccaria laccata* in October and November and *Clitocybe fragrans* which produces regular crops from November through to February. The fruit bodies of these fungi usually last about 7-10 days, but the Trooping Funnels, apart from one, which I accidentally knocked over, were still there at the beginning of December. By this time they had endured three frosts, admittedly not hard frosts but enough to need ice scrapped off the car windscreen, and also the two named storms. They were still present in early January, they had changed to a tan colour by now but it wasn't until the 12th January that they finally collapsed. So they lasted in typical and easily recognised form for seventy one days. We know that some stalked fungi can last for a long time such as those in the genera *Battarreia* and *Tulostoma* but is this a record for a gilled, stalked toadstool?

In hindsight, I should have detached small pieces of gills periodically to determine for how long the fruit bodies were sporulating. It would be an ideal student project to try and determine how they were able to survive so long. Two possible explanations that spring to mind are, they may possess powerful antimicrobial compounds which prevent bacterial decay, or there may be so much chitin in their hyphal walls that the structures are extremely tough.

IN THE GARDEN - 4 Shelly & Mike Stroud

As mentioned before, these articles are not going to be totally restricted to the fungi we have found in our own garden but will, from time to time, also include spp. that we have come across when out and about in our local area - ie in the Black Mountains, near Crickhowell.



Just after the New Year we were walking down a lane about ½ mile from the house and we saw a whole lot of what looked very much like the fruitbodies of Split Gill Fungus (*Schizophyllum commune*) on top of a large pile of silage bales. Further examination showed that many of the bags did indeed have this fungus poking out from them.

S. commune is possibly the most widespread fungus in existence, being found on every continent except possibly Antarctica, where there is no wood to be used as a substrate. The genus name means "split gill," and thus this is the Split Gill Fungus. The gills function to produce basidiospores on their surface and they appear to be split because this enables them to open and close many times over the course of a growing season depending on the moisture content of the atmosphere.

Cap: 1–4 cm across; fan-shaped when attached to the side of the log; irregular to shell-shaped when attached above or below, finely hairy to velvety or almost granular; dry; whitish to grayish or brownish; sometimes developing concentric textural zones.

Gills: distant, split at the edge, the edges either folded together or wide apart; whitish to greyish.



Stem: Absent.

Flesh: Tough; whitish; not changing when sliced.

Odour: Not distinctive.

Spore Print: White.

Microscopic Features: **Spores** 4–6.5 x 1.5–2 µm; subcylindric or subellipsoid; smooth; hyaline in **KOH**; **inamyloid**. Hymenial **cystidia** not found. **Pileipellis** a cutis of elements 2.5–5 µm wide, sometimes aggregated into upright bundles. **Clamp connections** present.

It is usually saprobic on deadwood or occasionally parasitic on living wood. It can be found growing alone or, more frequently, gregariously to clustered on decaying hardwood sticks and logs, but we have also seen it quite a number of times over the years, as now, on silage bales. Clearly, it is not too fussy what it grows on and this fungus has also been known to cause a human mycosis in a few cases involving immunoincompetent people, especially children. In one of these the fungus had grown through the soft palate of a child's mouth and was actually forming fruiting bodies (mushrooms) in her sinuses!!!

Medically, there is some recent evidence that at least one of the strains of *S. commune* may be useful in the treatment of Alzheimer's.

It seems to have been having a good year around where we live & you may remember also that we found it at Queenswood on UK Fungus Day last October. Keep a good look out when you are going for a walk yourselves!

WHEN IS A LICHEN NOT 'A LICHEN'?

Ted Blackwell

The question arises because some confusing information has appeared in a source that we tend to rely on as scientifically correct.

The story begins with our member Les Hughes finding a sooty-like deposit on the upper surface of the leaves of his Camellia. After referring to Ellis & Ellis *Microfungi on Land Plants* (p221), Les identified this as *Dennisiella babingtonii*, which E&E describe as a sooty mould and an Ascomycete. However, as pseudothecia of the teleomorph perfect state were not present, strictly speaking what was present on the Camellia leaf was the anamorph of this species, *Microxiphium fagi*.



Microxiphium fagi. Photo Ted Blackwell

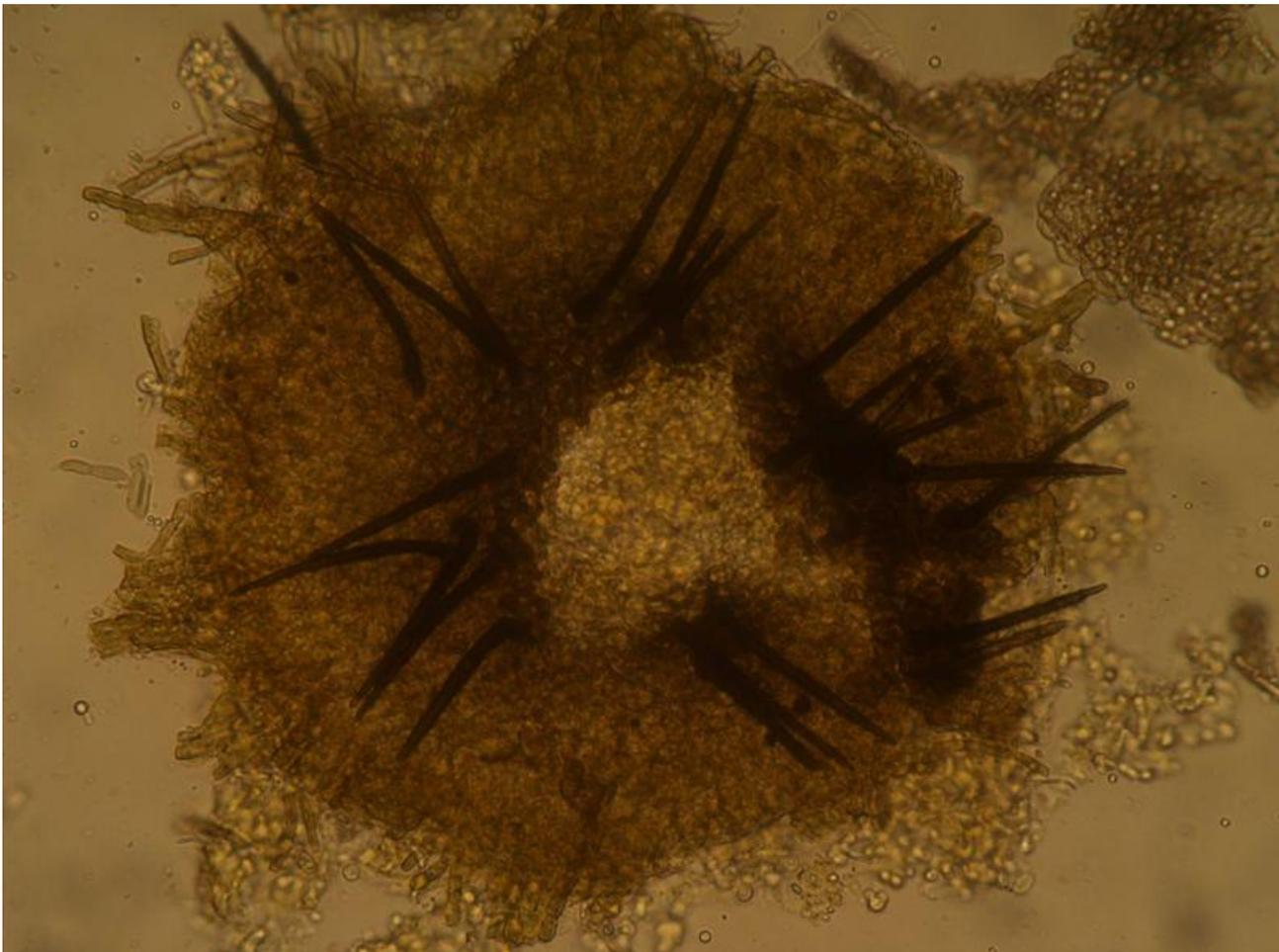
Sooty moulds are in effect composite colonies of saprobic ascomycetes coating the leaf surface and colonies may consist of mixed populations of eight or more species. They grow as epiphytic fungi, forming masses of black powdery cells adhering to plant leaves and are often associated with the honeydew secreted by aphids and scale insects feeding on plant sap. They form black mats on living leaves and may form a thin network of hyphae, a velvety growth, or a dark crust on leaves and smaller twigs. They show no host preference. Apart from shading the leaf and restricting photosynthesis, they have little adverse effect on the plant's health.

Les checked on FRDBI2 and was surprised to find *D. babingtonii* was classified as a lichen. He queried this with FRDBI's webmaster, who gave the somewhat puzzling and unscientific response that the lichenologists have claimed it. Given that a lichen is defined as a composite organism of algae or cyanobacteria living among filaments of multiple fungi species in a mutualistic relationship, this did not seem to correspond with what was known about sooty mould biology.

Further investigation revealed that the FRDBI2 database has 68 records of *D. babingtonii*, all stated as 'lichen'. On the other hand, FRDBI2 lists the anamorph *M. fagi* as a fungus. This poses the puzzle (a) that the perfect stage of *D. babingtonii* is classified as a lichen which implies photosynthesis in a mutualistic relationship when to all appearances a sooty mould is purely epiphytic on the leaf surface (b) that the anamorph is not apparently also considered to be a lichen.

To try to resolve this inconsistency, Dr Paul Cannon, an Ascomycete specialist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew was approached for his opinion, and replied as follows: "*Dennisiella* isn't lichenized, but it tends to be recorded by lichenologists as it occurs on living leaves. The FRDBI2 site includes names from the lichen list (which is curated by Brian Coppins of the BLS) for which the taxonomy over-rides that derived from the non-fungal taxonomies. It's a bit of a fudge, which would explain the misleading data. *D. babingtonii* is commonly found without perithecia."

So there you have it. When is a lichen not a lichen? ANSWER: When it's a sooty mould on FRDBI2.



Dennisiella babingtonii anamorph. Photo Les Hughes.