



Herefordshire Fungus Survey Group

News Sheet N° 38: Spring 2021



Rutstroemia firma (Hergest Croft)

Rutstroemia firma Photo © Mike Stroud

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Contents

Editor's Notes	Page 2
Recorder's Report September to December 2020	Page 3
In the Garden 3	Page 9
Red Letter days	Page 11

Editor's Notes

Welcome to the spring 2021 edition of the News Sheet. Despite Covid or maybe because of it, we have a bumper edition to educate and hopefully entertain you.

The programme for this year's forays has issued and with a bit of luck we should get back in the fields sometime this year. Further details as we get them. In the mean time, stay safe and healthy.

Your contributions to "Your Red Letter Day" Jo has collected appears on page 11. My red letter day is below (got to put something in the editor's notes).

Since joining HFSG I have wanted to see an earthstar. I looked in all the places I thought they might be without any sightings, even picking up beechnut shells in the hope it may be one. Then one day a couple of years ago walking along the cycle path between Abergavenny and Gilwern at the side of an old railway bridge there I spied a number of them in pristine condition. I think these are almost wood-like and fascinating. Funnily, though, since then I have seen a number of them around on our walks in a wood near Llanbedr (Powys) and by the side of the A465 behind the crash barrier at the junction of the Old Hereford road (Monmouthshire).



Possibly an immature *Geastrum triplex* Photo © Graham Park

My new goal is to see a *Clathrus archeri* as the one in Fig 10 of the Recorder's report.

Recorder's Report

September – December 2020

Forays may have been cancelled but happily the natural world carries on regardless. A dozen or so of our members and a similar number of members of the public have provided upwards of two thousand fungi records to the Herefordshire database. Although news of some has already been circulated by email, it seems right to include them here as a more permanent summary.

In general the dry summer followed by some rain in September led nationwide to an exuberant fruiting of common wood-inhabiting species. In Herefordshire it was the Sulphur Tuft, *Hypholoma fasciculare*, which produced spectacular displays. Some parts of Britain reported a fantastic season, one of the best ever but in this county this does not seem to have been the case. In late September and early October a limited range of mycorrhizal species did fruit in astonishing abandon and hopes rose for a bumper season but this abundance was not sustained. The woods were nearly but not completely dead and good things cropped up here and there. I kept my eye on several normally good grassland sites and did a round of local churchyards but although many of the latter looked perfect for waxcaps et al, it was all disappointing. In late November, as a last shot, I revisited Brimfield Common to find it so bursting with the commoner waxcaps, including sheets of *Cuphophyllus russocoriaceus*, that it was difficult to find room for my feet.

C. russocoriaceus, probably best known as *Hygrocybe russocoriacea*, closely resembles the very common *C. virgineus*. But pick it and sniff it and you will know. The smell is strong and utterly delightful. Why Russian leather? An online explanation is: "the scent's origin was the warlike hide for soldiers' boots. According to the legend, yufte – another of its names – was born when a Cossack rubbed his boots with birch bark to make them waterproof".

Members Finds

John and Denise Bingham visited Wigmore Rolls on the 14th of September. In addition to re-recording *Chamaemyces fracidus* which is only known from four other Herefordshire sites, they found 1000s of the Orange Larch Bolete, *Suillus tridentinus* (Fig. 1), a rare species in the UK where it usually occurs in the south on calcareous soils. It is a regular at this site with the larch but not usually in this abundance. The fungus does not have three teeth anywhere but is common in the Trentino in Italy and the chief town of Trento is named for its three surrounding peaks.



That visit marked the beginning of a brief and widespread explosion of mycorrhizal fungi. On the 23rd at Wapley Hill I sought out the beech rides which dissect the conifer plantation, two climbing the slope and one following the contours along a flatter stretch mid-slope. Blackening Brittle-gill, *Russula nigricans*, which is always prolific was if possible even more so, especially on one of the up and down rides.

Fig. 1. *Suillus tridentinus* a rare mostly southern species associated with larch on calcareous soils.
Photo © Jo Weightman.

The contour path however was heaving with *Russula curtipes* (Fig. 2), a large species with a short stipe and a rosy purple cap that soon faded to cream. Until this year, there was just one known Herefordshire record from the Croft Castle Estate in 2011. Now there are three more sites. What causes a locally rare species to erupt in hundreds and why was the second beech ride on a slope so dead? The common Blusher and the Grey-spotted Amanita, *A. rubescens* and *A. excelsa*, were equally fruitful on the same contour path on Wapley Hill.

The next day a similar phenomenon greeted me at the south-facing beech wood in Haugh Wood South. Dawn Brittle-gill, *Russula velutipes* (Fig. 3), (within my memory both *R. aurora* and *R. rosea*), which is usually found in ones and twos here and there, repeated itself in almost contiguous clumps across the more or less flat ground at the top of the slope. Bruising Webcap, *Cortinarius cf collocandoides* was also present in unusual numbers although with an uncharacteristically tessellated cap. The slopes here were good for recording but it was the less drained top that was phenomenal.



Fig. 2. *Russula curtipes* a rare and occasional species with a short stipe and closely attached cuticle. Wapley Hill. Photo © Jo Weightman.



Fig. 3. *Russula velutipes* is characterised by its very matt cuticle and soft pink colour, often with cream at the centre. Haugh Wood South. Photo © Jo Weightman.



Fig. 4. The rare *Cortinarius cinnabarinus* was locally abundant under beech in 2020 in Fishpool Valley in 2020, fruiting alongside the common *Tricholoma sciodes*. Photo © Jo Weightman

Two days later I was under the beech on the plateau above the slope in Fishpool Valley in the Croft Castle Estate. One of the red-staining milkcaps *Lactarius romagnesii* was there and *Russula curtipes*, again. Some yards further and I nearly stepped on a clutch of very young Cinnabar Webcap, *Cortinarius cinnabarinus* (Fig. 4), almost hidden in the deep litter. In fact they swarmed across the woodland floor for several metres. One patch contrasted nicely with the Grey Beech Knight, *Tricholoma sciodes*, a familiar species here. And within arm's reach were some battered Sunny Brittle-gill, *Russula solaris*, which has only two sites in the county. A few yards on was a good specimen of the pink-red tipped Rosso Coral, *Ramaria botrytis*, a species that normally occurs near the bottom of the slope in Fishpool Valley. It is only known from four sites in Herefordshire. Once off the plateau, the slopes were dry and bare. At the bottom, where moisture had collected, was a ribbon of Bitter Poisonpie, *Hebeloma sinapizans*, a large member of a complex genus identifiable in this case in the field by the hanging 'wick' in the stipe apex.

Downton Gorge on the 27th September was less exciting. The most notable three were Birch Webcap, *Cortinarius triumphans* (Fig. 5), a species with yellow girdles on the stipe, Dusky Bolete, *Porphyrellus porphyrosporus*, a scarce species with just two county sites and the Hoof Fungus, *Fomes fomentarius*, a species with a curious gap in its Herefordshire records from a sighting in the Hereford area in 1902 to Rob Rowe's find on a standing dead birch in 2018 in the grounds of Berrington Hall.



Fig. 5. *Cortinarius triumphans* is a birch species characterised by the russet-yellow bands below the ring zone
Photo © Jo Weightman

Then the woods fell silent or nearly so. On the 7th October Mortimer Forest yielded only one species of interest, the red-flecked *Cortinarius bolaris*. A week later a visit to Hergest Croft produced little and nothing of note apart from a large colony of *Xeromphalina caudicinalis* (Fig.6) growing in a lawn under pine. This is a Scottish species considered rare elsewhere. It was however recorded in Herefordshire at Merryhill and Mynde Park in the nineteenth century and not re-recorded until John Bingham found it in 2015 in Moccas Park, a find shortly followed by another three weeks later in Holywell Dingle by Mike and Shelly Stroud. So now we have three recent records. We should be looking out for it under conifers and especially under pine. It is a thin-fleshed orange-brown species with yellow, very decurrent gills and a long slender dark brown stipe.



Fig. 6. *Xeromphalina caudicinalis* occurs in large troops in the litter under pine and other conifers.
Photo © Mike Stroud.



Fig. 7. *Hypomyces leotiarum* infects the Jelly Baby *Leotia lubrica* discolouring the caps. The juvenile caps in this photo are intensely green.
Photo © John Bingham.

John and Denise Bingham were back in the Wigmore Rolls on the 17th October. Their list includes *Hypomyces leotiarum* (Fig. 7), a species which parasitizes the Jelly Baby, *Leotia lubrica*. In John's photo the juveniles have a bright green cap and the adults have a curdled or mottled appearance. This is the first time this species has been recorded in the county and one we should be watching out for.

Neohygrocybe ingrata was recorded by Cherry Greenway in the churchyard at Brockhampton Park on the 25th October. We have only a handful of records for this very uncommon species which I have yet to find or even to see for myself. It appears to be a northern and western species. The cap has brown tones and the stipe is whitish, discolouring slightly reddish when handled. Interestingly a week later it was also recorded in the Wofferwood Common area. Perhaps it was having a 'year'.

That same 25th October was a fateful day for me as a lifetime's hopes were satisfied by finding the seriously uncommon *Phaeolepiota aurea* (Fig. 8) at Shobdon Arches. There are just three Herefordshire records for this large golden fungus. The first was on the 12th November 1872. Dr Bull commemorated it in a painting which appeared in the Woolhope Transactions and was subsequently published by M.C. Cooke in his Illustrations of British Fungi. The second find was made more than a hundred years later by our President Ted Blackwell in the Wigmore Rolls in October 1997. The fungus is said to favour nettle beds and disturbed places but my collection was in managed grass under beech beside the driveway and Dr Bull's in a fir plantation near Belmont Cathedral. In size, colour and shape *P. aurea* can be confused with *Gymnopilus junonius* but that common species grows in clusters on stumps. *P. aurea* differs in having a granular texture especially on the ridged area on the stipe below the tough, flaring ring. It is called *Phaeolepiota* because unlike the white-spored Lepiotas it has yellow-brown spores.



Fig. 8. *Phaeolepiota aurea* photographed in managed grass under beech near Shobden Church.
Photo © Jo Weightman.

Cherry Greenway was back in Brockhampton Park on the 20th November and found the uncommon waxcap *Gloioxanthomyces vitellinus* (formerly *Hygrocybe vitellina*) (Fig. 9), a species she found there some years ago when the find was confirmed by Martyn Ainsworth at Kew. This slender bright yellow species has very decurrent gills with gelatinised edges.



Fig. 9. *Gloioxanthomyces vitellinus* An uncommon species with a gelatinous edge to the gills.
Photo © Cherry Greenway.

On December 1st and still looking in churchyards, I found *Clitocybe houghtonii* in Eardisland churchyard under yew. This is an occasional species for which we have few records. It is pale pink, often frilly and smells of tomato leaves when crushed. The fungus was named for the Reverend William Houghton, classical scholar and naturalist who was featured in an article by Tom Preece in News Sheet no. 16.

Some days later I spotted a fly stuck on my kitchen window and surrounded by a mist of white spores. It had been infected by a fungus. Spore dimensions together with a white fungal growth between the segments of the fly's body pointed to the parasitic fungus *Entomophthora muscae*. The fly had ingested spores which then germinated inside it and took over control of its movements, compelling it to climb up the pane and anchor itself there. In this way the fungus acquired a suitably elevated place to disperse its spores. I had never before seen this fungus-controlled action despite much searching among tall grasses for zombie flies so it was my second thrill of the year.

Finds from non-members

Our records this half year have been considerably boosted by old friends and several new ones. Here is a selection, again in date order, from the large number received.

Amanita betulae a species similar to the Tawny Grisette, *Amanita fulva*, but with nut brown tones to the cap. Downton Gorge 15.09.2020.

Arrhenia rickenii one of the so-called navel fungi, recorded from gravels on a drive on the 23rd October and still fruiting in December. A second county record.

Clavaria incarnata, the Skinny Club, a single example of this pink club was found in unimproved grassland in early November in the south east of Herefordshire on Wofferwood Common. A third county record.

Clathrus archeri (Fig. 10) a second county record for devil's fingers and an amazing first for the finder on the 15th November. Just in Herefordshire at a site near Llanrothal in the south west.



Fig. 10. *Clathrus archeri* the Devil's Fingers fungus is an Australian species that is spreading across southern areas in Britain. It most commonly occurs in wood chips. Photo © Pete Bryden.

Sowerbyella radiculata was found at Birches Farm, Kington on the 22nd of November. We now have six sites for this seldom seen, bright yellow stipitate cup fungus. The reverse of the cup and the stipe are white. It grows in the litter under trees. The first I ever saw was in the front garden of Down House in Kent where Charles Darwin lived.

Geoglossum fallax is one of the earth tongues, a group with virtually identical fruitbodies most of which occur in unimproved grassland. I was shown one growing in a garden lawn in Colwall on the 2nd of December. As my eyes became adjusted, I saw another and another. There must have been a hundred – or more.

I have received a number of photographic records of fungi this season taken in the grounds of Berrington Hall but one photo of a bracket fungus called for a personal visit and a feel. I went on the 29th December. Running my fingers underneath the bracket I could feel lumps. They were the galls caused when the Yellow Flat-footed Fly, *Agathomyia wankowiczii*, lays its eggs in the pore layer of *Ganoderma applanatum*. (Fig.11). The fly has a very limited distribution in Britain, occurring mainly in the south east. This is only the second find in Herefordshire following one in 2017 in the Croft Castle Estate. The record has been sent to Buglife.



Fig. 11. Galls of the yellow Flat-footed Fly *Agathomyia wankowiczii* on the hymenium of *Ganoderma applanatum*.
Photo © Jo Weightman

Out of county records

In 2006 when I lived in Kent I saw the first known specimen in the county of *Plicatura crispa* (Figs 12 & 13), a species that occurs on dead branches of broad-leaved trees. It was a species I had seen once before on a visit to northern France. In the few years before I moved to Herefordshire there had been 4 more finds. I hear now from my friend and colleague Joyce Pitt that it is now rampant in the county. As it had travelled as far as Scotland by 2016 when she and I found it in a garden, it will surely not be long before it arrives here. It forms a tan coloured bracket, is narrowly attached and hanging. The white underside is strongly crumpled. One more to look out for - who will be first?



Fig. 12. *Plicatura crispa* is a flaring bracket fungus with a narrow point of attachment. It has become common in Kent in recent years and is one to look out for in Herefordshire. Photographed in Putt Wood in Kent in 2006
Photo © Jo Weightman.



Fig. 13. *Plicatura crispa* has a white deeply creased fruiting surface. Photographed in Putt Wood in Kent in 2006.
Photo © Jo Weightman.

IN THE GARDEN – 3
Shelly & Mike Stroud

Even if they achieve nothing else, these Covid lockdowns are certainly making us all concentrate more on our gardens ... that is if we are lucky enough to have one! In our case this has meant that we are also turning up fungi that might well have been overlooked in more normal times. We have chosen three of the many that have cropped up here since September, one of which, at least is quite uncommon.



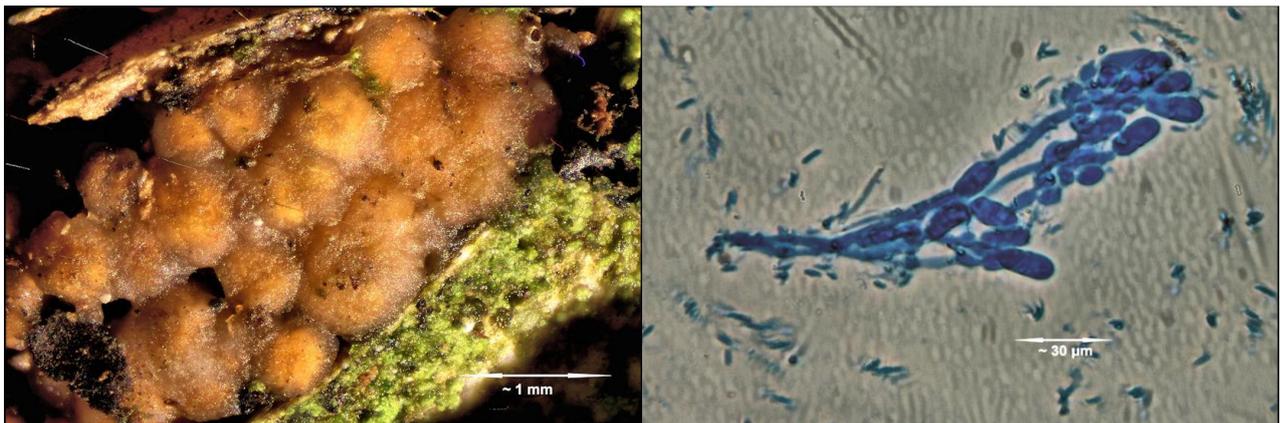
In October, whilst Shelly was clearing away dead matter from some herbaceous plants, she came across this not very young, yellowish *Entoloma*. Some years ago we had found *E. pleopodium* (used to be *E. icterinum*) about 50 yards away and we thought this was another occurrence of that species - which we had, in fact, been looking out for ever since then.

Problem, though: under the microscope this new specimen had cheilocystidia, which *E. pleopodium* does not, and so it keyed out to the *Entoloma*

chlorophyllum - extremely rare, so Shelly got the 'colly-wobbles'! Very kindly, however, Peter Roberts 'volunteered' to take a look at the - by now dried - fruitbody and, having also seen the cystidia, agreed that it did seem to key out to *E. chlorophyllum*.

There is some debate (see, for example, *Field Mycology*, 17(3): p102), as to whether the two species are distinct, or whether *E. chlorophyllum* is just a variant of the other. Noordeloos, though, (*Fungi Europaei*, *Entoloma* 5a: p965) does consider them to be separate and on the new FRDBI they are still recognised as such. So we have now entered it as a record.

Another curiosity we found in December is this *Hypomyces aurantius* (*Cladobotrium* state), the Orange Polypore Mould. This is often found on *Piptoporus betulinus*, but is also found on other basidiomycetes.



Hypomyces aurantius (*Cladobotrium* state): conidiophores with conidia (right)

It is not at all uncommon in itself, but the specimen appeared to be growing on *Diatrypella favacea* (itself on a birch branch), which is an ascomycete and there appear to be no other records on this type of substrate. Ted thinks that it might have been growing on the dead wood - which is sometimes reported, but rare - but the *Hypomyces* did appear to be growing **only** where the ascomycete was, even if this substrate was itself defunct a puzzle!

Also in December, we found this *Peziza vesiculosa* (Blistered Cup) growing at the base of an ash tree we had cut down. Although quite common, as it was rather nice specimen, we thought that we would include it here.

This cup fungus usually grows on well manured ground, etc. and the habitat slightly concerned us at first. However when still alive the ash had been for many years been the home to a rookery, which no doubt caused considerable enrichment of the ground below – as well as on our heads, periodically!

The lower photo shows the asci (~350 μ m long) each containing 8 ascospores (~ 20 x 12 μ m).



**Red Letter Days with Fungi
Compiled by Jo Weightman**

To begin at the beginning.....

I was brought up near to some amazing woodland despite living in London suburbia – now it is a 300 hectare NNR known as Ruislip Woods. I enjoyed just wandering and one wet October Sunday at age 11 or 12 I got completely lost in a wild inaccessible area of the woods. My concern at finding my way out was soon replaced by sheer wonder at the extraordinary colours and shapes of fungi that seemed to be everywhere. It formed a vivid memory and when fifty years later I went into our field here in the Wye Valley and saw bright red and yellow Waxcaps for the first time, I decided straight away that I was going to find out more and learn about them.

Jon Dunkelman



Hygrocybe splendidissima ©Jon Dunkelman

My Red Letter Day was, of course, when I discovered HFSG and arranged with Mike to go on my first foray at Brillley Dingle. I soon realised I had met a group passionate about all things fungal with a wealth of knowledge and experience they were happy to share.

But it had taken me about 50 years to pursue this interest! Many years before, I was camping with friends at the foot of Cadair Idris in mid Wales in late September. We had climbed the mountain but as we came off the summit a storm blew up with fierce winds and heavy rain. We took a short but treacherous route off the mountain, arriving back at the tents soaked through and exhausted as dusk was falling. I slept like a log and woke in the morning to the sun streaming into the tent. The storm had passed and I could hear sizzling outside the tents and smelt something delicious wafting through the air. I went outside and found one of our group, a Czechoslovakian student, cooking breakfast. She had picked two huge ceps that morning which she sautéed in butter and served on fried bread rubbed with garlic. They were delicious! After breakfast she took me to where she found them, not far from the tents as the path started to climb in mixed woodland next to a mountain stream. There were ceps everywhere. We had passed that way the day before but she was the only one to notice them. Her family had always picked wild mushrooms and it was second nature to her. It must have been soon after 1968 as she came to study here during the Prague Spring and was still here when the Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia. That day stayed with me and sparked my interest in fungi but somehow work, family and other interests took over and it was not until I was made redundant and found myself with time on my hands that I set about trying to learn more, joined HFSG and began to realise how much I had missed!

Chris Silkin

My Mushroom Moment

In 2005 a friend who had an interest in edible fungi persuaded me to go on a public foray with him. It was held in the Wrekin Woods. After that my own interest began to grow, and the following year I started going out by myself looking for mushrooms. It was 6th October 2006 when I came across a hollow in the woods with a large log lying in it. It was surrounded by dozens of large fruit bodies, some as big as a dinner plate.

At that time my main interest was in eating them, and, to my lasting regret, I just picked a few and took them home. How I wish I had taken a photograph of that sight. Here they are in my kitchen.



That weekend I had arranged to meet the same friend for a foray in the New Forest, so I took one along to see if I could get an ID. The foray leader was Andy Overall. He knew his stuff, but wasn't the power he is now, and he was baffled by it. "It's got to be a *Cortinarius*" he said. The following week I got the ID from a contact in Shropshire, (I'm sure you recognise it), and, I'm ashamed to say, I asked 'Can you eat it?' [*It was Phaeolepiota aurea*. See Recorder's Report in this issue.]



However, that find certainly gave me the impetus to want to know more, and within a couple of years I was learning fast, and no longer interested in eating them (not much anyway).

Then, in 2010, I was walking the same woods, at the same spot, and there they were again. Now I knew how unusual they are, and I tipped off Roy Mantle, who later wrote this in the SFG Newsletter: "My immediate reaction was "when can we go". A couple of days later Les took me to the site, a ferny depression about five or six meters across and along the one edge were several fruitbodies of this charismatic fungus in several stages of growth. I was armed with a camera and took some nice pictures. A

dream come true." Here is one of his photos. Somewhat bizarrely, neither Roy nor I managed to record the finds. I discovered this recently when there was a new sighting, at Colemere. I've added them retrospectively to last year's records.

I have never managed to see them again. I kept going back to that spot year after year, with no luck. Then a few years ago the landowner closed off the access to the wood, and put up threatening notices about keeping to the permissive path. A later request for SFG to be allowed to foray there was refused, the only time we have ever met with a blank refusal from a landowner.

I'm convinced that that early find confirmed me on the path to the obsession we all share.

Les Hughes

And so you join a Fungus Group –

Funny Fungus Foray - by a novice

Some years ago, don't remember when or where, but before I knew much about fungi (I don't know much about it now after many years) but it was on a fungus foray and Jo was identifying specimens found by forayers. I showed my collection. 'Honey Fungi', said Jo, picking one out of the basket. 'Honey Fungi' she said again, picking out another fungus which did not look at all like the first. A third time-another Honey Fungi, again different from the other two. After the same with the fourth specimen, in exasperation, I threw it over my shoulder and the person behind me had to dodge it. 'Temper, temper' she said smiling. Ted explained there were many variations in the appearance of Honey Fungus due to stages of growth, and species. Looking in my basket, there was one specimen left. It was not a Honey Fungus! Amusing to look back on.

Margaret Hawkins



Armillaria mellea © Jo Weightman

Several of you recalled magic moments. Here`s Margaret again-

A quiet walk along the path some years ago that runs alongside the R. Arrow at Lyepole Bridge.

Along one side of the path there were lots of *Coprinus disseminatus* lining the pathway, very dainty & fragile. *Amanita muscaria* was showing brightly in the glades among the trees and further on many

Sarcoscypha coccinea nestling in the lovely green moss, very striking and attractive. On the way back, *Flammulina velutipes* was highly visible up in the trees. All common fungi but very colourful and brightened up a dull winter's day.



Flammulina velutipes © Jo Weightman

Another member became spellbound –

Here is my account of the day that sparked my interest in fungi.

During a period of sick leave, I was told by the physiotherapist that I must walk for half an hour a day. This got me looking in the hedgerows in more detail, as I was doing the same walk every day. There was nothing much of note to see in January except on one occasion when I thought I saw a piece of litter. It looked like the top of a Smartie tube and was bright red. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it was attached to a mossy twig. I took the twig home to inspect. My research on the object came up with "Scarlet Elf Cup". The effect it had on me was strange. It gave me a sense of connection with nature. I could see how people would think that fungi could have magical powers; it looked so unusual. It must have triggered a second childhood experience, as I started to photograph every fungus I found (especially Scarlet Elf Cups) with fairy folk! I would set up little scenarios with models of imps, gnomes and pixies... see example below.



I later discovered that there are two types of scarlet elf cup, *Sarcoscypha austriaca*, which has curly hairs on the back of the cup and spores with blunt ends, and *S. coccinea* which has straight hairs and rounded ends to the spores. These can only be seen with a microscope, but thanks to the HFSG I've learned a lot more since.

Patricia Morgan

Chris and Les were not the only members whose interest in fungi was heightened by sampling them.

Round about 1960, I lived on the edge of the green belt near Kings Langley. We could walk through some woodland and across a pasture where every year there would be some mushrooms. I remember that polythene bags had just become available and we would wash them and re-use them over and over again. We used to carry one as you never knew whether you might find some blackberries or rose hips, or someone might give you something from their garden to take home. On this particular day, as we stepped out of the wood into the field it all looked very strange. The field had been ploughed. As we crossed the field we realised that all the furrows were filled with mushrooms. We picked as many as we could carry, but were unable to leave the buttons to get bigger as the mushrooms were growing in bunches. As we stepped out of the wood back into the lane someone passed by and of course they could see through the poly bag. Word soon spread. The next year there were just a few. [It was probably *Volvariella gloiocephala* in that ploughed field,

Jo.Jean Wynne-Jones



Volvariella gloiocephala © Jo Weightman

We had a red letter day in August last year in the Forest of Dean when we came across a patch of *Boletus edulis* in deciduous woodland. There were dozens of them. We even picked a few to eat in an omelette. Wish we had taken more photos of them in situ. Do you think they will come back next year?

Rob Pye



The cep *Boletus edulis* © Rob Pye



Page of bolete photographs © Rob Pye

Some members recalled exciting finds -

My Red Letter Day



Mike Stroud

The first time that I ever found or, for that matter saw, *Spathularia flavida* (Yellow Fan), was certainly one of my own red letter days.

There was an HFSG foray on Hergest Ridge (October 18th 2006) - just uphill from Hergest Croft gardens - and we were rooting about in the dead bracken: suddenly, there was this group of pale yellow, spathes up to about 5 cm tall. Of course, I hadn't a clue what this was, but was quickly informed that the name was *Spathularia flavida* - one of the ascomycetes - and I was really chuffed to have come across it. Shelly & I have found them on several occasions since then and they are always a joy to see.

My Red Letter Day

For several years I had been unsuccessfully searching for *Marasmius hudsonii*, (the Holly Parachute) which, as the name implies, is a *Marasmius* specific to holly and grows on the moist, dead leaves. It is a quite little thing, no more than about 5 cm tall and the pale pink cap about 5 mm diameter at maximum. What is really attractive is that in a good specimen the cap is covered reddishbrown hairs (setae).

Mike and I were on a Field Studies Council fungus course in Devon, at Slapton Ley (led by David Farley) and walking to the Ley themselves when, there under a holly tree was a nice pile of dead leaves which at last revealed my quarry! When, in my excitement, I showed it to David, he had never come across it before - in fact, I don't think he had any knowledge of it whatsoever.



It really was a memorable Red Letter Day!

As a footnote, though, the irony of all this is that, since then, we have regularly found loads of *Marasmius hudsonii* in our garden under various hollies.

Shelly Stroud

I think in the end I am going to go for the Scarlet Berry truffle *Paurocotylis pila*. I first found this in Bishops Castle churchyard 3 years ago. It comes from New Zealand somehow and has such an interesting story of how it mimics the *Podocarpus* tree fruits which were eaten by the giant Moa. Then a year later when out with a group Cherry I found it in Cradley churchard near Malvern and knew what it was and was able to relate its wonderful story.

Rob Rowe



Paurocotylis pila © Rob Rowe

A RED LETTER DAY TALE OF ROCKETING EXPANSION

We tend to think that familiar common toadstools have always been part of our foraging ecology. So it may surprise some to learn that a widespread and locally common British fungus whose colourful fruitbodies are so eye-catching that it is never likely to be overlooked, has only been consistently recorded in Britain since 1972.

Although it may be verging on ancient history, I suppose I could count it as a Red Letter Day, because I was in at the take-off, so to speak, when an unknown fungus sprang to light, which it transpired, had not been recorded in Britain for over 50 years.

In the autumn of 1972 I was in a group walking near Bircher Common in N. Herefordshire, enjoying the autumnal scene with natural history in much mind. As we traversed a conifer plantation, we came across a group of weird-looking unfamiliar toadstools. Coral pink tongue-shaped fruitbodies were emerging in a metre-long row sprouting from a mix of soil and sawdust from logging operations. Several specimens were collected for examination, but searches through the contemporary literature failed to find an answer, it wasn't in the fungus handbooks, so the material was promptly despatched to Dr Derek Reid at Kew seeking information.

Dr Reid relied promptly, prefacing his comments with the remark "To say I was delighted would be a complete understatement" and that the toadstools were *Tremiscus* (now *Guepinia*) *helvelloides*. He continued by saying it was exceptionally rare in Britain and genuinely so as it was far too conspicuous and strange to be have been overlooked. It was a fungus chiefly of montane coniferous forest areas of Central and Southern Europe, but also occurred in Scandinavia and North America. Kew had only two earlier ancient records of its occurrence in Britain without supporting voucher specimens, one reported in *Grevillea* in 1891 without a locality, the second in *The Naturalist* in 1914 from Sandsend, Yorkshire. He concluded by saying "This record is so exciting that I am preparing a note for the Transactions of the British Mycological Society."

At the time Dr Reid felt it was of transient occurrence, very much a "one-off". But in the following year, Malcolm Clark, editor of the Warwickshire Fungus Flora, found it in July at Binton Hill, Warwickshire, and Marion Rayner

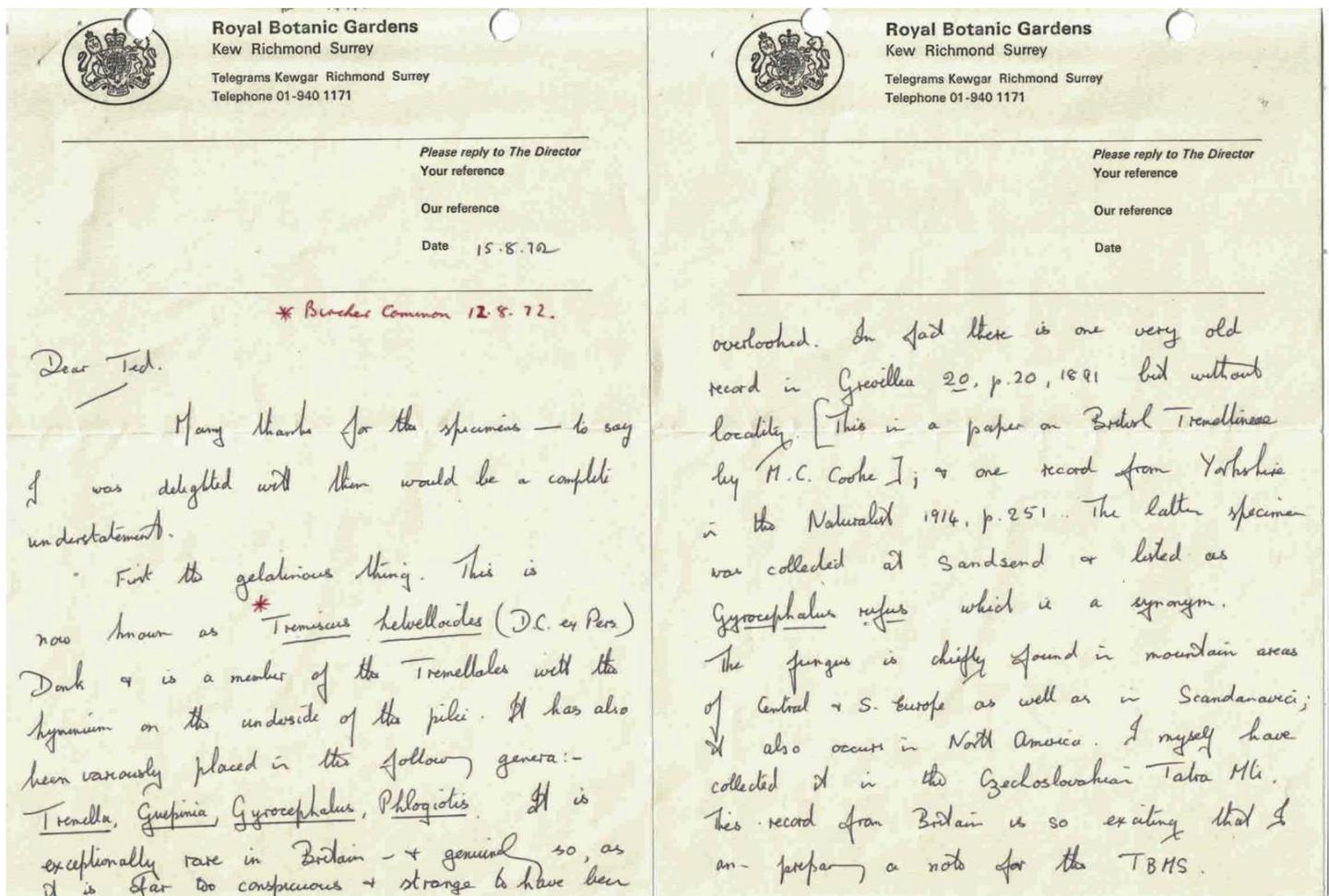
found it in St Gwyno's Forest, Llanwonno, during the September BMS Autumn Foray at Cardiff. Following this discovery on Welsh soil, Dr Mary Gillam reported its occurrence along half-a-mile of old tramway sleepers leading from the Baltic Limestone Quarry, Ponsticill. More Welsh

finds turned up the same year on tramway sleepers on the Aberpergwm tip in the Neath Valley and on old tip at Tylorstown in the Rhondda.

From 1973 onwards this fungus spread steadily throughout Wales, the English Midlands and the south-west, and in the next decade to Yorkshire and Scotland. Today it is so firmly established in the UK to have earned the English name of Salmon Salad and is now regarded as just another of those common old fungi you might see on decaying conifer wood. The current generic name *Guepinia* was bestowed by Elias Magnus Fries in honour of the French mycologist Jean Pierre Guépin (1779-1858). It is interesting to note that it was as late as 1987 before the first illustrated description appeared in a popular British fungus identification handbook by Marcel Bon in his *Mushrooms and Toadstools of Britain and North-western Europe*.

It has been speculated that its occurrence in Britain was through imported infected timber, but as with more recent conspicuous arrivals such as the Scarlet Berry Truffle *Paurocotylis pila* and Orange Ping-Pong Bats *Favolaschia calocera*, the sudden appearance cannot easily be explained.

Ted Blackwell



© Ted Blackwell



Guepinia helvelloides © Jo Weightman

On 11th Oct 2001, I was working on a Herefordshire estate surveying woodland with a view to identifying Ancient Woodland that would qualify for a grant. I came across a felled trunk of a beech tree with a strange lump lying on the ground nearby. I could see that the lump had previously been attached to the trunk. From the feel of it, I was pretty sure that it was a fungus so I wrote to Ted Blackwell with photographs and a tentative identification (I was wrong). He had asked me to dry off a slice for him. The specimen had the most wonderful perfume as it dried. It turned out to be *Hericium erinaceus*. Ted told me that there was only one other record circa 1880 and not far from where I found my specimen. My only regret is that, if I had known what it was, I could have eaten some of it. [On the other hand, if Jean had known then how very rare this fungus is, she would not have eaten it but opened the champagne instead.]

Jean Wynne-Jones



Hericium erinaceus © Jean Wynne-Jones

Probably thirty or more years ago I was given a rather grubby paper bag with a hard lump in it by an acquaintance here in Govilon in Monmouthshire. He said, "do you know what this is, I keep finding them when raking up leaves from a shrub bed." I knew immediately it was a summer truffle. I asked if I could go and see where he found it, which I did. It was actually under an Hydrangea plant but about 10 yards from a two hundred year oak.

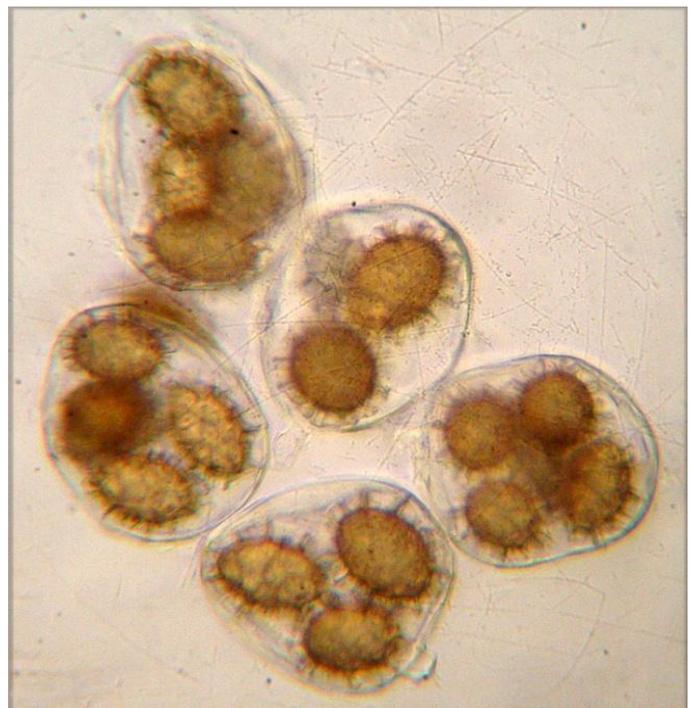
I was told, he found them every year but always collected them and put them in the rubbish bin, in case they were harmful to the grandchildren.

I think at that time there was one other record of *Tuber aestivum* in Wales and that was in North Wales. I was impressed by the truffles, but also by the spectacular view from the house, twenty five years later we bought the house and it is where we live now, but I have never found any more truffles.

Roger Evans



Tuber aestivum © Roger Evans



Tuber aestivum spore © Roger Evans

And finally **Cherry Greenway** discovered how relatively important fungi and people are size for size!!

Going to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew for the first National Fungus Day, Sunday 13th October, 2013. Such a happy day walking through giant woven fungi and seeing and hearing my first ring-necked parakeets; Squawk! Squawk!

Cherry Greenway



© Cherry Greenway