

NEWS SHEET N° 1

OF THE HEREFORDSHIRE FUNGUS SURVEY GROUP, AUGUST 1999

The Group's first tentative foray - when it was uncertain whether sufficient interest existed for a regular Group or not - was on 26th August last year. So the present month marks the completion of a year's activity and it seems timely to review the past year's events and achievements.

Having had promising attendances at three forays in August, September and November last year, and with some progress made towards a data-bank of records, affiliation of the Survey to the BMS was obtained in November with a view to launching a Group in 1999. In March our enthusiastic Secretary, Sheila Whipp, suggested getting it going the next month, so our inaugural meeting was held on 21st April, following a successful if somewhat damp morning foray at the Queenswood Arboretum, Dinmore.

Membership now numbers 18, we have a bank account (and a credit balance!). Group public liability insurance, and BMS affiliation, so we may count ourselves an up-and-running Group. So far, monthly forays have been held mid-week, with the expectation of two in October. This routine of forays seems to suit the present membership, but the matter is open for suggestions if other patterns need to be considered.

Progress has continued on my personal project, the records data-bank, which with continuing accessions has increased the current total to approximately 22,500 Herefordshire records on the computer database, including many from the days of the pioneering Woolhope Club. These are being copied in convenient batches to the BMS national database to contribute to the broader national picture. As far as Herefordshire is concerned, there are now sufficient records to enable a meaningful search of the database, and it is possible to see if a species has been recorded before how often, where and when. It has also revealed the Herefordshire 'Top Ten most common fungi, *Stereum hirsutum* the Common Stump Flap leading the charts closely followed by the Many Zoned Polypore *Trametes (Coriolus) hirsutus*. Not surprisingly the Top Ten includes those generally considered nationally 'common' such as Candlesnuff *Xylaria hypoxylon*. Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*, The Deceiver *Laccaria laccata*, Bonnet cap *Mycena galericulata*; Birch Bracket *Piptoporus betulinus*; Honey Fungus *Armillaria mellea*; Deer Toadstool *Pluteus cervinus*; and the Stump Puffball *Lycoperdon pyriforme*. The database will also be the source of a checklist of Herefordshire fungi, which it is hoped can be produced before the end of the year.

The first foray on 26th August 1998 was to Humber Marsh, one of the few wetland sites in the County. Among the 60 or so species recorded were *Lepiota brunneoincarnata* and *Phaeolepiota erinaceus* and the Cup-fungi *Bisporella citrina* and *Cheilymenia vitellina*, and a disease of ornamental cherry trees *Blumeriella jaapii* was seen turning the leaves brown.

This was followed by a visit to Lea & Pagets wood on 16th September where the seldom recorded tiny white Agaric with vein-like gills *Cheimonophyllum candidissimum* was found on very rotten log. Several *Pluteus* were found and the small cup-fungus *Rutstroemia echinophilla* on last season's Chestnut husks and the somewhat larger cup-fungus *Peziza ampelina* were amongst the list of about 75 species.

The final foray of 1998 was held in Fishpool Valley on 4th November where a satisfying 110 species were put on record. These included Hare's Ears *Otidea onotica*. Jelly-brain *Tremella foliacea*, Golden Pholiota *Pholiota aurivella* on cut logs, and a rare rust on box bush leaves *Puccinia buxi*. An intriguing find which was initially sent for identification to Dr. Jerry Cooper (CAB) were some tiny fruitbodies shaped like miniature toadstools on dead wood. Dr. Cooper decided they were not his speciality and sent them to Mr Alick Hennci who determined the specimens as the anamorph of *Ascocoryne solitaria*, a new County record, and quite rare.

The first foray of 1999 was that of the inaugural meeting at Queenswood Arboretum, which despite the early date produced about 60 species. St. George's Mushrooms were much in evidence, and there were several finds of *Strobilurus tenacellus* which grows on pine cones. Amongst the Agarics were *Pluteus romellii* with a dark cap and yellow stipe, and *Melanoleuca excissa* with a grey felty dry cap. About half the list were microfungi, amongst which were *Endoxyla cirrhosa* on oak wood, *Clypeosphaeria notarisii* on dead bramble stems, while numerous black pustules on Lime bark were determined as *Corynespora olivacea*, having large multiseptate conidia. Ascomycetes included the small orange cup fungus on Larch twigs, *Lachnellula occidentalis* and *Bisporella sulfurina* which occurs only on the dead stroma of old Pyrenomycetes. Rusts were recorded on leaves of Bluebell, grasses, and Cuckoo-pint, and three Myxomycetes completed the list.

We returned on 12th May to Lea & Pagets wood, where St. George's mushrooms were recorded again, and due to recent rain a plethora of Myxomycetes, *Lycogala terrestris* being found by nearly everyone. New records for the database included *Pluteus minutissimus* and *Calosphaeria wahlenbergii*, the latter occurring under birch bark and having a circular arrangement of perithecia with long trunks, looking a bit like a group of elephants. A varied list of about 60 species were recorded.

The June foray was at Eastnor Park on the 23rd where conditions were very dry producing a consequently shorter list but typical of parkland with old oaks, with *Laetiporus sulphurea*, *Fistulina hepatica*, and *Ganoderma* sp., and *Agaricus macrosporus*, *Russula parazure*, *Bovista plumbea* and *Calvatia utriformis*. A supplementary foray to Coneygree Wood in the afternoon produced what was thought might be *Gomphidius glutinosus* but the specimen was rather small, so possibly *G. gracilis* but an expert appraisal is needed.

On July 21st the Group went to the Brockhampton Estate where both woodland and parkland were visited and about 75 species were listed, while a further 9 were recorded during an afternoon visit to nearby Bromyard Downs. Again a good varied list was made, and several additions made to the database, amongst which was *Russula xerampelina* var. *barlae*, Horsechestnut Leaf Blotch *Gignardia asculi*, and a rust on Herb Robert of which there were said to be only two other occurrences in Britain. Chicken-of-the-Woods was seen on yew on Bromyard Downs, making only the third record on the database on this host, as it is usually on oak.

Other recent interesting Herefordshire fungi.

Apart from those of the forays, there have been additional records of interesting fungi both in 1988 & 1999.

Jo Weightman has reported *Boletus leonis* and *Cortinarius bulliardii* in Fishpool Valley, *Volvariella bombycina* on an old elm stump near Bircher Common, and *Uloporus lividus* in Mary Knoll Valley, only the third record in the County. In early 1999, Jo found *Mniaca jungermanniae* in Fishpool Valley; this is a minute green Cup-fungus which grows parasitically on the living leaves of the liverwort *Diplophyllum albicans*, making a new County record.

The diminutive *Marasmius hudsonii* growing on dead holly leaves was collected by me at Titley Pools, Kington on 3rd September, the last previous County record being from Lyonshall in 1960. Although only about 2 mm diam. it has quite spectacular spiky red hairs on the cap, like a microscopic sea-urchin. *Ganoderma resinaceum* appeared again on one of the old oaks in Croft Castle avenue. This bracket was also present on the unusual host of a fallen willow at Bodenham Lakes near Leominster, where Walnut Leaf Blotch *Gnomonia leptostyla* was found on fallen walnuts from an overhanging tree. At Lyonshall another leaf disease *Mycosphaerella ulmi* was seen on hedgerow elm (*Ulmus glabra*) browning the leaves.

A collection of what is thought to be a new rust now spreading to wild daisies (*Bellis perennis*) throughout England and Wales was found at Little Marcle in July by Jean Wynne-Jones, which has been named *Puccinia distincta* (see MYCOLOGIST 12-2 May 1998, p87 for a definitive account of this fungus and its spread).

Perhaps the star find of 1998 was a rare Hydroid, *Hericium (Creolophus) cirrhatus*, recorded by Stephanie Thomson on beech from the Woodside area of the Great Doward. In confirming its identity Kew commented that apart from SE England its occurrence is rare in Britain and they had no previous record of it for Herefordshire, and none for Shropshire, Wales or Scotland.

During a foray of the Herefordshire Botanical Society at Wigmore Rolls in late October the uncommon Sponge Cap *Suillus tridentinus* was found; this is nearly always associated with larch.

Ray Bray made perhaps one of the most significant finds to start off a new year, that of *Geastrum berkeleyi* in January 1999, near to his home. This fungus had been thought extinct until Sheila's daughter Katie found it in Worcestershire in 1996. Ray's find is only a few miles distant, so has it spread - or was it there all the time waiting for Ray?

Forthcoming events.

Forays arranged for the remainder of 1999 are detailed on a separate note. The Group is helping with a fungus exhibit at the Hereford City Library on 8 & 9th October to mark the Woolhope Club's 125th anniversary of the allocation of the Woolhope Room for its exclusive use. If you would like to help with this please let me know.

The BMS have proposed a "FORAY 2000" for next year where each group is invited to organise a foray at which a number of BMS experts can be present to assist with identifications. The idea is to try to record 2000 fungus species in the year 2000. All being well, it should be possible to arrange this as one of our forays in next year's programme.

The BMS are hoping to publish the first issue of a new magazine, Field Mycology in January 2000. Edited by Geoffrey Kibby it is aimed at those wanting to identify fungi and will have lots of colour illustrations, keys and other information. The first four issues will be distributed free to BMS members, thereafter it will be £16 for four issues per year. The BMS have made the remarkable offer that those who subscribe will be entitled to receive most of the information about BMS activities that Associate members receive, including the Newsletter. This means that since BMS meetings are open to non-members, subscribers to Field Mycology will be able to participate in BMS activities and get the magazine that meets their needs for £5 less than the cost of Associate membership.

Finally, my thanks to all who have contributed to the Group's activities and records during the past year, and especially to Sheila for her efficient shouldering of the Secretary's administrative responsibilities.

Ted Blackwell.

15th August 1999