

**Fungus Survey
of Oxfordshire**

Editors news

This is my first effort at becoming a newsletter editor and sadly my first few lines are to inform you of the death in December of one of our founder members, Arthur Warland who throughout all our activities, always put so much time and effort into the group. A tribute

to Arthur is to be found on page 4.

Spring 2007

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Issue 3.**

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**Our picture
this issue is**

***Helvella
Lacunosa***

Painted by
Pamela Hills

**Antrodia xantha
- cheap lemon scented soap or toilet cleaner?**

Judy Webb

This autumn two of our members (Mike Ivory and Richard Fortey) separately recorded this spectacular bright, citrus-yellow, encrusting, porate mat fungus on dead wood. Mike's specimen was from a fallen, dead larch tree at Sydlings Copse on our group foray and a photograph of a part of Mike's specimen is shown here. Our FSO records show no previous entries for this species encountered on our forays in this county, but a search on the BMS database on their website (the FRDBI or Fungus Records Database for Britain and Ireland*) lists 198 records for this species with 5 previous ones for Oxon. Three of these are by Nick Legon from the Warburg Reserve at Bix and one by Nick from Bagley Wood. One collector quoted on the BMS database states it has a 'citrus smell when fresh'. Nick states his specimens smelled of 'cheap lemon scented soap'. My nose said the strong smell was more reminiscent of some cheap lemony toilet cleaners I have passed by in Sainsbury's! (*the best way to get to this quickly to find out about any species you are interested in is to type 'field mycology FRDBI' into Google. Then you can search the FRDBI by your chosen genus).



Photo Judy Webb ©

"Homo tuberensis"

A tale of truffle hunting in Oxfordshire – Carol Hobart

Collaboration and sharing between colleagues in the mycological community is one of the joys of "mushrooming". The sharing of the excitement of a find, the passing round, the noting of features, the shared smelling is perhaps almost a primeval act that we have inherited from the past. Whatever the origin it is a bonding act that brings disparate individuals together to share their passions.

Such it was that in July 2003 it was arranged that I visit Alan Hills, to share with him the excitement of his previous weeks find, *a truffle*. The significance of the italics will be understood fully by those that are acquainted with the gentleman in question. What may not be known is that in the early 1990's when the lure of the larger terrestrial Boletaceae were a mere glint in his eye, he could be found raking the woodland floor in search of hypogeous delights. Indeed it was on the last of these organised excursions that we met.



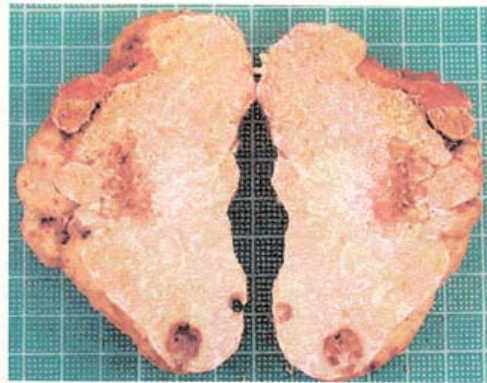
The identity of his find was in little doubt despite the lack of mature spores.

The *Choiromyces meandriformis* was about the size of a fifty pence piece and superficially looked like a

scleroderma with a smooth whitish peridium. The gleba was solid and veined and the asci clavate or saccate. (See photos.) However confirmation was important and a mature fruitbody needed to be found. A trip to the Chiltern site was arranged; a very beautiful mixed deciduous woodland on calcareous undulating ground. A mature beech fringe adjoined the track. The track, with a raised bank in part had been eroded by rain and was speckled with protruding rounded flints, mostly pale in colour, and looking superficially like our truffle.

Moving slowly we poked the flints. Eventually the hard clang of steel on flint was replaced by a softer sound, I had found a fruitbody. Despite our joint excitement, the soil was slowly and carefully excavated around the find; the fruitbody grew and grew until it appeared to be approximately 12 cms in length in the bank. This large mass was in fact two fruitbodies, one approximately 8cms x 6cms weighing in at 6 ozs and a further smaller one. Excitedly, but carefully, the fruitbody was wrapped in wax paper and entombed in an appropriately sized large flora tub. We could return home

jubilant, confident that this would yield the necessary spores required for the determination.



Microscopic examination revealed magnificent mature spores with tube like projections.

This fruitbody was indeed fully mature and confirmed Alan's identification. Although initially lacking, a smell developed after a couple of days in a plastic box and was intensely fragrant. The material now also seemed to be home to a number of small maggots, so to halt deterioration; it was sliced and quickly dried.

A large dried slice of this magnificent find accompanied me to the West Country; it was so often unwrapped from its waxed paper protection and stuck under unsuspecting non mycological noses that the crisp wax paper became a softer, gentler and more fitting wrapping.

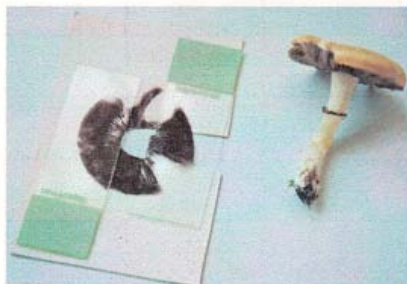
Editors comment – Thanks carol, and that day was your real birthday as well!

PRACTICAL TIPS
HOW TO MAKE A SPORE PRINT

Derek Schafer

Spore prints are important in identifying fungi for a number of reasons. They show the colour of the spores in mass, an important identification character for identifying genus and within many genera, e.g. *Russula*. The print provides mature spores for measuring their size under the compound microscope, compared with gill tissue, which includes immature, usually smaller spores. And the print is a useful addition to a herbarium specimen for future reference.

Spore prints are best made on to a smooth, colourless waterproof surface to avoid contaminating the spores and to aid in judging colour. A glass microscope slide is almost ideal - I say almost because they do occasionally break. To make a print, we need to place the mushroom with its cap resting on the slide. If we use two slides on top of a plastic cup, the mushroom can be placed with its stem in the cup and there is no need to cut off the cap. Cutting off the cap usually works OK, but we may want to keep the mushroom whole (to re-photograph) or cut it horizontally (to examine gill attachment) and is unnecessary.



Stropharia coronilla spore print

The problem with two slides at the top of the cup is that they fall off (believe me, no matter how careful you are, they fall off). The solution (see photos) is a piece of cardboard with a slot in one side.

24th September 2005



The slides sit on top of the cardboard on top of the cup with a space for the stem and the mushroom sits on top with its stem in the cup. The arrangement is much more stable and after a few hours, we have a good thick spore print. Dipping the stem in water does NOT improve the result, but a second (see-through) plastic cup over the cap helps avoid drying out and keeps out air currents.



Agrocybe rivulosa spore print

A note about cardboard. I use a plastic-coated cardboard which is white, at least on one side, and can be washed. This is obtained by buying certain drink or food products that are sold in cardboard cartons. The cartons have a plastic-coated surface inside and can be cut up when empty. Unfortunately, some of these are lined with foil, so you have to find a product with the appropriate white inner surface. Another example, like margarine pots, of mycologists diet being dictated by the containers the food comes in!

Incidentally, the second photograph shows a species collected whilst writing this in August 2006. It appeared on my woodchip pile and seems to be the species discussed in the article by Camilla Lovatt in *Field Mycology* (7(2), April 2006, p.47), first described from the Netherlands in 2003 and from one site in Britain in 2004. I need to have it confirmed but if truly this species, then it is really on the move!

But, when was this one taken?



Arthur. L. Warland. (1926-2006) An appreciation

The death of Arthur Warland will leave a large gap within the Oxfordshire Fungus Group. It was Arthur who first had the idea to form the group, along with his wife Marion and others in 1987. The first foray was in September of that year. Arthur and Marion had been so impressed when they forayed with the Warwickshire group, that the idea of forming a second group within Britain presented a challenge to them.

Arthur was born in Wantage, the youngest of four children. At the age of four, he and the family moved to the village of Cumnor, where he attended his first school and then went on to Southfield Boys' School, having as happy a life as was possible during the war.

After this, he went on to Culham Teacher Training College, where about this time, he first met Marion.

In 1948, he started teaching in Haddenham School in Bucks and whilst there, he married Marion in 1949 and they set up home in Thame. His interests at this time centred on botanising in the Chilterns. 1958 saw a move to teaching in Surrey, where the subjects included his favourite one of Natural History. He became an active member of the Surrey Naturalists Trust.



Arthur attended his very first fungus foray at Haslemere museum in 1960. This sparked an interest that would stay with him for the rest of his life.

He became Head Teacher at Churchill School in Oxfordshire in 1971 and continued in this post until taking early retirement from teaching in 1980.

His last working post was in the Oxford Zoology Admin Department where he stayed until 1991.

Our "Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire Group" owes much to Arthur, especially for most of the Ascomycetes records in our database, and for all the years he selflessly worked as our secretary.

Another first for Oxfordshire

Alan Hills

Oxon Foray, Warburg Reserve Bix nr Henley. 15 Oct 2005

When I collected the mushroom illustrated below, I mistakenly thought it was *Boletus subtomentosus*. The cap had an olive colour; it was just protruding out from semi dry moss. Once out of the soil, I thought it was *Suillus granulatus*. On arriving home, closer examination revealed it to be *Suillus collinitus*.

What was strange was it was collected from under a Larch and yet this tree association had never been reported with either of the two *Suillus*. The next day I returned to the site to check out the host with a warden. He told me that no Pine (the expected host) was known from the area of collection. We then did a thorough search for any seedling Pine, but none was to be found. Three weeks later I repeated the search with another Warden, it was the same story.

I then sent the specimen to a friend, Dr Andy F. S. Taylor. Department of Forest Mycology and Pathology Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Sweden. Molecular studies confirmed it to be *S. collinitus* with Larch, and then in January 2007 I had this e-mail. "The collections we made of *Suillus collinitus* in Sardinia are identical to your collection from under larch from Oxfordshire".

