



Editors news

Again we are looking forward to another fungi season. I am hoping for a good even rainfall through-out the year to make it a season to remember. In this issue Max Peterson, our Chairman, has written his report that is to be seen on page 2. It tells of what has been going on through-out the year and how lucky we are to have wonderful officers putting in much time and effort for our survey, thanks go to them all.

So a reminder when foraying

1. Heed all instructions given by the foray leader and always keep the foray leader in sight when taking part in a foray.
2. Always obey the countryside code at all times.
3. Never put anything in or near your mouth unless asked to do so by the leader, and always wash your hands after a foray.
4. Please supervise your children at all times.



Our foray at Harcourt Arboretum on 22nd September 2007 was a most enjoyable occasion starting with everyone being served with a glass of apple juice on arrival. Our chairman Max welcomed our group and visitors, Dave Shorten (Cotswold Fungus group), Steve Kelly (Hertfordshire fungus group) and Derek Schafer (Buckinghamshire fungus group) making our forayers a total of 21, recalling the very

first meeting of the Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire group at the Harcourt Arboretum. It was almost 20 years ago to the day Arthur Warland led the first meeting, it was he who was in our minds as Marian cut Wendy's delicious chocolate Anniversary cake before starting our foray, led this time by John Killick. The weather was mild with little recent rain, although the ground was very dry; more fungi were found than was at first anticipated, finding the first Oxfordshire record of *Amanita inopinata*. (See Field Mycology Vol. 6(1), page 31) in all 41 species were recorded, it was a great foray giving people the opportunity to mix and mingle.



Gillian Oldfield

Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire

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Inside this issue:

Chairman's Report 2

Max Peterson

Our President 2

Terence Ingold

Taking the Hard Route 3

Ellen Lee

A new World species 4

Richard Fortey

Rare fungi 4

Judy Webb

Our picture this issue is

Gaeastrum quadrifidum

**Painted by
Caroline
Jackson-Houlston**

Chairman's Report

This has been an important year for the group who celebrated our 20th anniversary in September, with a very good foray at Harcourt Arboretum at Nuneham Courtenay ably led by John Killick. The foray was held in celebration of Arthur Warland who sadly died last year, as a tribute to all that he had done for the group. It was his brainchild, with Marion's help, to form The Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire, at that time being only the second national group.

We had a huge turnout of 21 members, not only from our own Oxfordshire group but there were also representatives from the Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Cotswold groups. The only fly in the ointment on an otherwise splendid day was that someone ran into the back of Judy's car as she waited to turn into the gates of the arboretum. Wendy and Rod kindly produced a delicious cake and refreshments. The sun shone; it was a splendid day and a fitting tribute to Arthur.

Fungi were pretty hard to come by in 2007 and things only started to look up in the last few weeks of the season, but the forays have been enhanced by a couple of new members who will hopefully bring "new blood", added experience and expertise to the group! Despite the generally poor year for fungi, Alan has, in the last 15 months, described & published two new world species of *Boletus*, *Xerocomus chrysonemus* and *X. silwoodensis* and managed to generate a little publicity in the National Press with the finding of one of them in Silwood Park. Richard Fortey has also described & published a new species, *Ceriporiopsis herbicola*. We must remember these are not only the first in the UK, but in the world. We are very fortunate to have such distinguished members within the group.

Alan and Pam manned the BMS stand at the Chelsea Flower Show, again bringing the Oxfordshire group to the attention of the nation.

The newsletters have been very professionally published by Alan and Judy and have taken the group forward in leaps and bounds. Thanks to both of you for all your efforts which are greatly appreciated, especially to Judy for her work as recorder.

Most of all thanks must go to Wendy who has been tirelessly efficient in organising a disparate group who are pretty hard to keep in order. Thanks also to Rod who has so admirably supported her. "Behind every great woman is a great man!"

Now is the time to start planning this year's forays which I hope will cover a broad cross-section of interesting habitats and will bring a good selection of specimens over the season to come.

Max Peterson



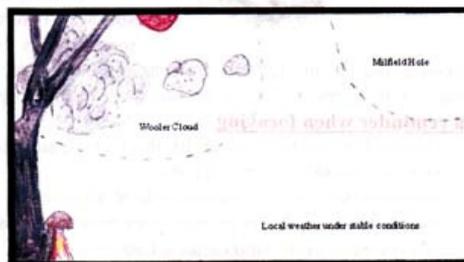
Greetings from our President

Terence Ingold

In June this year our very special President Terence will be the grand age of 103 years old and each year we receive a Christmas card from him (this one drawn by him) in his own unique style. I have included last years so the membership can enjoy reading it.

We wish him more fulfilling years writing mycological papers.

(Alan Hills Editor)



A Robin and me

Most mornings I manage to sit outside for an hour or so. This has allowed me to develop a relationship with a Robin. I lure it to my wheelchair with a crumbled biscuit. Only rarely does it fail to appear. A Robin has prominent and relatively large eyes and often turns its head on one side. Thus we make eye contact and almost seem to understand one another.

My Robin has a hide-out in the front of the Old Vicarage. Rarely, another Robin comes to my patch from a different direction. On one occasion, they flew at each other in active conflict. My Robin won. The intruder flew off.

Once, my Robin was accompanied by a son or daughter and instructed him or her on the picking up of biscuit crumbs.

Other birds do not dare to approach my wheelchair except for once when a chaffinch daringly pinched a crumb. I was given birdseed and crushed nuts as a more suitable food for my Robin and at the same time offered crushed biscuit, but my Robin turned his beak up at the more suitable food.

With a drink, a bath & biscuit, a robin's life is not too bad!

(Terence, written September 2007)



Mycena adonis

(Photo R. Fortey)

Taking the Hard Route

Ellen Lee

As a beginner at the science (or is it art?) of fungus identification, I'm always really grateful when a fungus gives me a helping hand by having a unique or memorable feature. Unusual colours (red with white spots perhaps?) or an unusual smell (Radishes, coal gas or phenol are good, bedbugs or chicken-run are theoretically helpful but my modern lifestyle hasn't given me too much experience to go by!). However there is one species that I have been long aware of that offers an identification "leg-up" in quite another way, *Agaricus bitorquis* known by the French as the Psalliotte de Trottoirs or Pavement Agaric for its strange habit of producing fruiting bodies through concrete and tarmac.

However, until this wet summer of 2007, this fungus just existed to me as a wonderful cartoon in a strange book of fungus cartoons by the French cartoonist and amateur mycologist Roland Sabatier. In this book *A. bitorquis* emerges from a Parisian pavement. She is clearly a "lady of the night", the double ring which gives her the Latin name "bitorquis" is transformed into an exotic fox-fur draped nonchalantly, and a cigarette holder and small green purse complete the outfit. She appears very slightly disdainful as she looks out at the city night life. It was therefore with some surprise and excitement that I spotted this exotic creature for the first time this summer as I cycled to work one morning along the cycle track besides the A4165 next to the North Oxford Golf Course (nothing like Paris!).



She was emerging from the join between the tarmac cycle track and the stone sets. Initially all that was visible was a sort of flattened and slightly crazed egg. However, over the next week I followed her maturing until she looked like the accompanying photograph. The great thing about being on my bike was that I

could easily stop and look at her and push back the cap slightly to check that she had the characteristic double ring. It certainly must have been a good year for "ladies of the night" because before the summer was out, I had recorded her from two more locations, the A44 cycle track south of Woodstock, and the Marston Flyover. In these days of spreading urban habitat, it's great that some species of fungus seem happy to follow us into our gardens, wood-chip piles and even apparently onto our roads!



Above - *A. bitorquis*, showing characteristic double ring (photo by Judy Webb)

Opposite - *A. bitorquis*, A4165 Cycle track

This set me thinking. Why do the fruiting bodies seem to emerge preferably, although not I believe exclusively, from under concrete and tarmac? I suppose that it is the combination of fragile fungal flesh and hard concrete that seem so incongruous. Of course, when you think about it, there is no reason why fungal mycelium shouldn't be able to do what many plant roots achieve so readily by applying a bit of osmotic pressure. Every time I found another patch of *A. bitorquis* I had a good look at her surroundings, for example the patch on the A4165 was some 2-3m from a row of poplar trees on the edge of the golf course. At the same distance from those trees was grass and gravel, so why "choose" tarmac to fruit through? Come to that, concrete and tarmac wouldn't have been around when this species evolved, so what habitat did it evolve in, and was grass or earth or other soft substrates either absent or used by other species so that *A. bitorquis* evolved its strong man trick? Perhaps it evolved in dry conditions where the ability to use moisture trapped under rock or rock-hard clay was a bit of a boon? Perhaps you can think of other equally plausible (or implausible) explanations. If so please share them with me. That's what I love about natural history. It constantly reminds me how much I don't understand.

A new species of *Ceriporiopsis* discovered on the Oxfordshire survey

Richard Fortey

On a very dismal wet day in December 2006 I decided to have a very short personal foray to a site near the National Trust property of Grey's Court, where standing dead herbaceous stems had yielded some interesting small specimens in the past, mostly ascomycetes. It's only about ten minutes away from my house. Wiping the rain out of my eyes I picked on the very stout stems of greater burdock (*Arctium*) which have a number of special fungi associated with this substrate. Some of the stems had tumbled close to the mossy ground. I was surprised to see a rather coarsely poroid resupinate fungus forming a conspicuous orange brown patch along one of the stems. I found a second specimen nearby. When fresh, the texture was very soft, and I confess that the thought even crossed my mind that here might be a funny kind of slime mould. Back home I saw normal-looking basidia under the microscope, so it began to look like an anomalous polypore after all. Since most of these fungi are associated with woody substrates I began to wonder if this species might be rather unusual. My attempt to run it down in my copy of Ryvar den and Gilbertson's European polypores met with no success, although the specimens were in fine condition. It was time to send them on to someone more knowledgeable. Nick Legon has generously helped me with these kinds of fungi in the past, and it was to him I posted half the sample I had collected. He said he spent several hours on it, and recognised it as an odd species of *Ceriporiopsis*. But with admirable caution he didn't 'shoe-horn' it into the closest species, but sent it on to Lief Ryvar den, in Oslo, the authority on these 'critters'. Ryvar den recognised the species as a new one, and generously added my name as discoverer to the scientific description - *Ceriporiopsis herbicola* Fortey & Ryvar den in Synopsis Fungorum vol. 23, p. 13-14 (2007). In fact, the species can even be recognised in the field from the related (and common) *C. gilvescens* by having much coarser pores. The spores are also wider and ellipsoidal - and the hyphae are a beautiful red colour in transmitted light. So it seems to be quite a distinctive form. I believe this is the first new species that we have discovered in the county during our Surveys. Perhaps the moral is that we should continue having forays later - and examine substrates that may not have been exhaustively sampled in the past.



(Photo R. Fortey)

Rare fungi

From Boletes to tooth crusts

Judy Webb (Group recorder)

2007 was a good year for discoveries. The awful rain in June and July meant that the rare, yellowish, fruity-scented **Orchard Tooth**, *Sarcodontia crocea* (crustose mat with 'teeth') mentioned in a previous newsletter, occurred not on one tree, but on 5 ancient apple trees at its only Oxon site in an orchard near Shillingford. The BMS database (FRDBI) still has approx only 13 sites for this fungus nationally. Since it is now Red Listed as 'Vulnerable' and also appears on the UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) Priority Species lists, I thought it might be a good idea to raise its profile, so I pasted photos of it onto a 'Wanted' Poster which has been sent out to individuals and organisations that might be involved in surveying orchards this summer. During a wildlife survey of the Lye Valley and Southfield Golf Course in September 2007 two interesting fungal discoveries were made. The first occurred as I sat to rest under an alder tree adjacent to the Lye Brook. Putting my hand down beside me, I found a rather short-stiped brown bolete with yellow-olive pores that instantly blued to touch. On getting it home I found it to be the **Alder Bolete**, *Gyrodon lividus*. Seeing that this is Red Listed as 'Near Threatened' I decided I had better call Alan out to check the identification - but luckily he immediately confirmed it was correct. Later on in November, I was clambering through willow and alder scrub at the same site when I came across a little *Lactarius* which was a beautiful shade of lilac on the cap with rather orangey gills. A trawl through all available books resulted in the idea that it is most likely *Lactarius lilacinus* which fruits late and is associated with those tree species. It has yet to be confirmed, but may be new to Oxfordshire if correct. I'll be attending the BMS *Lactarius* workshop this autumn in Somerset, so that is the time to get a final answer!

Gyrodon lividus. - First Oxfordshire record

(Photo A. Hills.)

