



Newsletter

Spring 2018



Redspored Dapperling
Melanophyllum haematospermum

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View from the Chair April 2018

Since the last 'View' in December 2017 there has been one sad but important event and one major group activity. The sad event was the death at 91 of our founding Chair, Rita Cook, who did so much for the NWFG. There is an obituary for her in this Newsletter. The major group activity was our AGM on 24 February at Risley Moss Reserve centre (you should have received the minutes of the meeting). As usual it was well-attended (28 people), the highlight being a talk on writing popular guides to fungi by our President, Geoffrey Kibby. The first volume of his own guide is now available, and very good it is, whilst the second volume is eagerly anticipated: we saw some of the colour plates for this vol-

ume at the meeting. After the formal business of the AGM and the talk there was a lunch organised by Kathleen Ryan and time to chat (a lot of that) and browse the splendid display of books and equipment (such as hand lenses) from Summerfield Books. Some of us went beyond browsing and actually bought books!

During the afternoon of the AGM some people went on a short foray round the reserve where the delightful Scarlet Elfcup (*Sarcoscypha austriaca*) put in its usual appearance whilst others stayed for a further tutorial on using the new FRDBI 2 database, led by John Watt. We are slowly becoming more comfortable with FRDBI 2 and the latest, very helpful development has been a set of detailed guidance notes from Stuart Skeates which were circulated via email to all members.

The only other group activity since the AGM was a visit to the Liverpool World Museum on 11 March. Donna Young, Curator of the herbarium, showed us their fungal collection and had placed on display all the notebooks and foray lists of Beth Harthan. which the museum holds. Beth was an excellent mycologist and a member of the steering group in the North West Naturalists Union which set up the NWFG. Her notebooks are an invaluable record of fungi in our area and the museum hopes to digitise them so that they become widely available: we discussed with Donna the possibility of collaborating in this project, which everyone present thought would be thoroughly worthwhile – so watch this space.

The foray season, organised by John Watt, starts on 13 May with a visit to one of the best fungal sites in the region – Roudsea Wood in Cumbria. This is rather a long journey for many members but it really is worth the effort. Eleven more forays are planned with the Beginners Foray on 22 July linked once more to a microscope workshop – IF there is sufficient demand, so do let me know if you are interested. The hope is that the workshop will help people at all levels of expertise, from those who have never used a microscope before to those who are familiar with it but need help in preparing fungal material or interpreting what they see. The Keswick residential foray is happening for the last time at the beginning of October and is already almost fully booked. Whether it will be possible to resume these forays once the

Keswick Convention Centre moves to their proposed new premises in a few years is unclear but there is hope that we can have a residential foray in the Isle of Man in 2019.

Several events – including public forays have been co-ordinated by Jeanette Maddy for National Fungus Day (around 6 – 7 October). The British Mycological Society initiated and support NFG (by providing leaflets etc.) with the intention of interesting and informing a wider public about fungi. We may love fungi but many people, alas, don't, often because they know nothing about them. One of our committee, Alistair (Ali) McKernan, has been doing a great job in educating primary school children at his school about the delights of fungi and recently went a step further and ran a successful fungus workshop for other teachers. This is a very promising development and if any other members have ideas about how to interest children in fungi – do let us know or go ahead and take the initiative yourself!

It remains only for me to wish you a happy and enjoyable fungus season and I hope to meet many of you on forays..

Irene Ridge, Chair.

A.G.M.

Saturday 23 February 2019

10.30 a.m.

at the Risley Moss Centre.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Field guides: the problems, pitfalls and challenges in their production

Geoffrey Kibby

(Reported by Paul F. Hamlyn)

In the 1970's the Collins Guide to Mushrooms & Toadstools (Lange & Hora) was the standard work with very little else available. First published in 1963 its seven editions are evidence of how highly it was valued. It illustrated 600 species of larger fungi. These days of course it is very much out of date. Forty years later Geoffrey has produced the first of two volumes (or perhaps 3) that will show around 2000 species by the time they are completed but this is still only a fraction of the total number of British species. The British and Irish checklist listed 3,670 species of Basidiomycetes on its publication in 2005 now with online supplements the total currently stands at around 4,000 species. The rate of new discoveries shows no sign of slowing down so the real number of species is likely to be at least 5,000 and if you add in the Ascomycetes the total climbs to at least 15,000 species! Therefore, one problem any author of a field guide faces is which species to include bearing in mind that all species have a range of variations as well.

There are different types of field guide. Photographic guides excel in being able to show habitat details which are difficult to portray in an illustrated guide. Also the artist may be unfamiliar with the normal habitat of species so the author has to spend a lot of time editing the paintings. Illustrated guides on the other hand are very good in being able to show details such as microscopy or specific body parts of fungi. The illustrated 1950 field guide on Common British Fungi by Wakefield and Dennis has been the inspiration for Geoffrey's new book. A field guide to fungi may be a misnomer, as so many species are not distinguishable in the field. Detailed microscopy was the first revolution and these days the identification of fungi depends heavily on microscopic examination.

Another issue an author faces is the problem of organisation. For example, *Inocybe* spores fall into two groups smooth and knobbly but it is difficult to know how they should be arranged. Gross morphology is not a good guide to relationships since certain structures have evolved independently many times and even within species may vary. Does a guide follow a strictly phylogenetic system or organise species based on their similarity? Geoffrey decided to use a combination of strict phylogeny and a more pragmatic approach for difficult groups such as the

corticoids. No arrangement will be perfect or please everybody the author must decide how 'cutting edge' they wish their guide to be.

The second revolution after microscopy has been DNA molecular sequencing resulting in some unexpected relationships, for example by placing *Hericium* within the Russulales. DNA is also revolutionising our knowledge of species and this should be incorporated into guides wherever possible. The Big Blue Pinkgill (*Entoloma bloxamil*) has in recent years been considered as just one species. However, DNA has revealed the presence of at least 4 species. These can be distinguished in the field so should be included in future guides. Other changes have been perhaps less popular. In 1978 there were just 2 genera of boletes, *Boletus* and *Strobilomyces*. Now in 2018 the number of genera has 'mushroomed' to 23 and there is no way round this.

Geoffrey sees his new guides as trying to present the latest and most useful information as best as he can, while in the knowledge that some of that information will undoubtedly change in the future. The role of a good field guide will still be vital in conveying information to the reader, preferably feeding in new discoveries and taxonomic changes, but we must accept that not all species can be defined in a guide some have to be done molecularly. So what is the way forward for the amateur, or indeed the professional mycologist? Not everyone has access to molecular sequencing. The answer will lie in Citizen Science projects such as those being successfully undertaken at Kew and other institutes (see reference)

Reference : *Solving the Mysteries of Mushroom DNA:*

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/news/archive/2016/09/title-189300-en.html>

Editorial

It was brought to my attention that the last issue of the Newsletter appeared on the website of a Welsh fungus group very soon after it had been sent out to members. It has been our (NWFG) policy not to put the latest Newsletter online since many of our paying members do not attend forays and the Newsletter is seen as one of the few benefits of their subscriptions. If the current Newsletter is freely available online this could be to the detriment of the NWFG concerning membership leaving us

with fewer resources to promote fungal education and conservation. I would therefore be grateful if members who receive a pdf copy of the Newsletter exercise caution and do not pass it on to persons who are not members of the Group.

This issue of the Newsletter includes a brief report on the talk presented by Geoffrey Kibby at the AGM, several reports on forays carried out during the year and some interesting articles from Tony Carter.

(Continued on page 16)

RED IN THE BED

Tony Carter



I regularly look for fungi on my local golf course. An ancient tree-lined lane runs along the length of the site. A stone wall runs along one side of the lane but there is open access to the course on the other. Over the years, Liverpool Council has stacked fallen trees and branches along the boundary to act as a barrier against dog walkers, ball stealing children and scrambler bikes.

Recently, the golf course has passed into private hands. The new owners have started reconstruction, involving moving lots of earth, some of which was used to form an earth barrier, covering the deposited wood. This was quickly taken over by nettles and balsam that were, in turn, also covered with soil.

Walking down the lane, I spotted some large groups of an uninteresting looking brown fungus on the bank. I thought *Inocybe* but when I turned one over, the red gills were unmistakable *Melanophyllum haematospermum* (Redspored Dapperling – see photo).

The habitat for this species is described in The Checklist as ‘loam or highly nitrogenous soil, usually in deciduous woodland, often with *Urtica* in nettle beds. So this soil bank is the perfect habitat for this species.

However, I am surprised that it has only taken just over one year for this fungus to appear. Having recorded only odd specimens from other sites, I never expected to see over one hundred fruiting bodies in the same place.

IN THE PINK

Tony Carter

In October, I paid a visit to my favourite woods at Hale (the one near Liverpool). Once the grounds of Hale Hall, they often support unusual fungi.

On this day, there was troop after troop of *Clitocybe nebularis* (Clouded Agaric). Too many fruit bodies to count.

In an open piece of the woodland, where the sun had shone through on one of the lines of *Clitocybes*, I noticed that some of the caps seemed much whiter than the others.



So I collected a couple. I noted they had pink gills and a volva, obviously a *Volvariella*.

Back home, under the microscope, the spores were small at 5-7 x 4µm. My original conclusion was *Volvariella caesiointincta*. But that is said to grow on fallen tree trunks.

So, I went back to see if there was a buried trunk. Sticking my hand in the soil, all I got was slime. No wood. I picked a couple of fruit bodies and

noticed that they were slimy with fungal bits attached.

Finally, it dawned on me. The *Volvariella* was growing on dead *Clitocybe nebularis*. *Volvariella surrecta* (Piggyback Pinkgill). That was why it was growing along the same line.



It is a rare fungus, once on the Red Data List. Not often reported. Most pictures show the *Volvariella* growing on top of the *Clitocybe*. If the connection to dead *Clitocybe* is not noticed, it could easily be missed.

The mycologist Charles [Plowright](#) commented "Berkeley's figure ... is rather misleading. So is that given by Knapp under the name *Agaricus surrectus*, in as much as they show the Agaric (*A. nebularis*), upon which it is parasitic, in a very robust condition. In my specimen the host (*A. nebularis*) was quite sodden and collapsed so as to be practically unrecognisable unless one had known what species to expect."

Wigan Flashes Local Nature Reserve (Lancashire Wildlife Trust)

22 October, 2017

Christopher Bowden

The Flashes (or lakes) are a legacy of the town's industrial past and were formed as a result of mining subsidence.

Some of the flashes were partially filled with colliery waste and ash from the nearby Westwood Power Station. Ince Moss Colliery closed in 1962 and Westwood Power Station was demolished as recently as 1989. Natural colonization and large-scale reclamation works have helped heal the industrial scars, turning the area into the amenity it is today.

The Reserve is part of a larger network of important wetland habitats, running for approximately 9 km along the Leigh branch of the Leeds Liverpool Canal, and including Pennington Flash Country Park which we visited last year. Wigan Flashes habitats include large areas of open water, reedbed, fen, rough grassland, wet woodland and scrub. Over 200 species of bird, 15 species of dragonfly and 6 species of orchid have been recorded and The Flashes are known for their resident and overwintering waterfowl. The remaining colliery spoil and ash provide suitable conditions for a wide variety of wild flowers such as Common Spotted Orchid, Marsh Orchids, Pale Toadflax and Vipers Bugloss. Less common spe-

cies include Round-leaved Wintergreen, Marsh Helleborine and Yellow Birds Nest.

Eight hardy souls, including 2 potential new members, braved the last vestiges of Storm Brian, which had threatened winds of 45 mph, to explore just one small part of the Reserve. By the end of the day, 64 species had been recorded with several of them to be confirmed by the efforts of Tim Rogers and John Watt, to whom I am indebted.

Of particular interest was a specimen of what was thought to be *Hypocrea minutispora* but which was later to be confirmed by Brian Spooner at Kew as *H. britdaniae*:-

“A species which was new to science not so many years ago, first found in England and later in Denmark. It has large, rather lobed stromata, in appearance not unlike at times a *Hypocreopsis*. Typically found on *Salix*. The part spores are virtually globose, small and almost monomorphic. *H. minutispora* is what we used to call *H. rufa*, a common species. Its spores are more ellipsoid or slightly wedge shaped, rather different”.

Another of interest was *Pulvinula convexella*, a small orange Ascomycete found growing in a small mossy mound near the lunch-stop. Additionally, Tim identified *Lactarius controversus*, described as uncommon by both Phillips and Buczacki, and *Cortinarius saturninus* along the canal.

So, despite the weather, an interesting and profitable day's foray and a site worthy of further investigation which we plan to visit again on 9 September.

HALE Tony Carter

Among my favourite sites to foray for fungi are two small, private, adjoining woods at Hale, next to Liverpool Airport. Hale Hall (the hall now demolished), once ornamental gardens from 1758 (including ponds and a ha-ha). And Icehouse Plantation (the icehouse is still there). An unofficial footpath runs through from Hale Village to the River Mersey. They produce some uncommon species.

My first significant find was of *Rhodotus palmatus* (Wrinkled Peach).



A large tree, probably ash, had fallen across the path. To proceed one had to clamber over it. Amazingly, this fungus must have survived many walkers and dogs before I found it. It reappeared twice but not since 2012.

This tree had snapped during a storm. A substantial shattered stump remained, eventually hidden by undergrowth. I was poking around in this and found *Ossicaulis lignatilis* (Mealy Oyster) (right, top) growing from the splits in the wood. We regularly see one of these species at Moore Nature Reserve.



The stump of another shattered tree lies further along the path. About 3 ft. high, the interior has rotted away and left a deep hollow. I always look down it.

Usually crisp packets but on this occasion I spied an ink-cap half way down (below). It was the uncommon *Coprinopsis spelaiophila*. It reappeared three years later so may fruit again.



Another faller was an oak beside the icehouse which lay there for a few

years before somebody set fire to some of it. Very soon after, *Daldinia fissa* (Gorse Cramp Ball) appeared (below). This had me a little perplexed as I associate it with gorse like we find at Moore. But it is recorded on other substrates.



At the entrance to the woods are piles of woodchip that are constantly refreshed from the timber that regularly falls down. For a couple of these years, I recorded *Melanoleuca verrucipes* (Warty Cavalier) (below). In my experience, this fungus prefers fresh woodchip so it should reappear.



My latest find was last winter. Large rings of *Clitocybe nebularis* (Clouded Agaric) had appeared. One of the rings included specimens that were much whiter. I collected a couple and took them home where I identified *Volvariella* but not the exact species. Then my brain clicked and realised it could be *Volvariella surrecta* (Piggyback Rosegill). So I went back to check. I was looking for one with a volva but when I put my hand into the grass what I got was a gooey mess of rotting *Clitocybe*. Species confirmed but no piggyback (see page 7)

A LATE FORAY AT FORMBY

Tony Carter

North West Fungus Group held their last foray of 2017 at Lifeboat Road, Formby on 12 November. This area and Ravenmeols have now been transferred from Sefton Council to the National Trust. The visit was later in the year than usual. It was a day of a fresh, biting wind and a hailstorm.

A quick visit to Ravenmeols Sandhills Nature Reserve was rewarded with a large group of *Tulostoma brumale* (Winter Stalkball) in the sand amongst the Marram. This species is common along the coast but difficult to spot as the stalk is usually buried and they look very much like rabbit droppings.

Even better was finding the much rarer *Tulostoma melanocyclum* (Scaly Stalkball) on a mossy bank only a short

distance away. It was regularly recorded at Ainsdale Sand Dunes Reserve some years ago but it disappeared.

T. melanocyclum (left) & *T. brumale*

Another species that grows in moss was the tiny *Arrhenia spathulata* (Spatulate Oysterling) (below)



Moving into the coniferous woodland, on the boundary with the dunes was found *Lepiota erminia* (Dune Dapperling) (below)



Also present in good number was *Inocybe geophylla* var. *lilacina* (Lilac Fibrecap) (below).



Next into the scrub woodland where there was an impressive group of *Macrolepiota mastoidea* (Slender Parasol) (below).



Also recorded was *Omphalina pyxidata* (Cinnamon Navel - below) and the rarer *Omphalina galericolor*.



Then back to the dunes where both *Bovista aestivalis* (Summer Puffball) and the much rarer *Bovista limosa* (Least Puffball - below) were recorded.

A total of 51 species were recorded, a



list that also included the uncommon species, *Hygrocybe mucronella* (Bitter Waxcap), *Parasola misera* (Least Inkcap), and *Marasmius curreyi* (Grass Parachute).

A MATTER OF SLIME

Tony Carter

A contributor to the decomposition of vegetable matter is the Myxomycete. Known as a Slime Mould this is a misleading description as Myxomycetes are not moulds and only a few are slimy.

They 'feed' on microorganisms found on soil, lawns, litter and wood. They are single cell organisms but if food is in short supply, they will combine together to form a structure that can move when they detect a food source. They engulf bacteria, fungal spores, protozoa etc. When the time is right they are able to turn into a spore bearing fruit body and the cycle starts again. Because they

produce spores they are often recorded as fungi, which they are not.

Many are very small but a combined structure can measure in square metres.

Some of the larger ones that can be found locally include *Enteridium lycomperdon* or Bark Puffball.



This one is from Calderstones Park. Often on dead Beech trees, the 'casing' frequently breaks to reveal a brown spore mass.

Fuligo septica, commonly known as Dog's Vomit. One of the largest, the spores are dispersed by beetles. It is very common on many substrates, usually wood.



This one is at Ainsdale.

Following a theme, *Mucilago crustacea* is known as Dog Sick Slime Mould (do I detect a lack of imagination?). It is common on grass and soil in large patches.



This one was recorded at Sefton Meadows.

Tubifera ferruginosa (Red Raspberry Slime) seen here at Ainsdale on wood.



When broken, the spore mass is either grey or pink, depending on which species it is.

There are hundreds of much smaller species that may only be easily seen if they form a sizeable group structure. Below are examples of *Stemonitis*, *Arcyria* and *Trichia* species, all locally sourced.

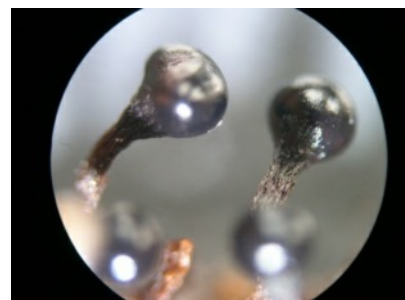
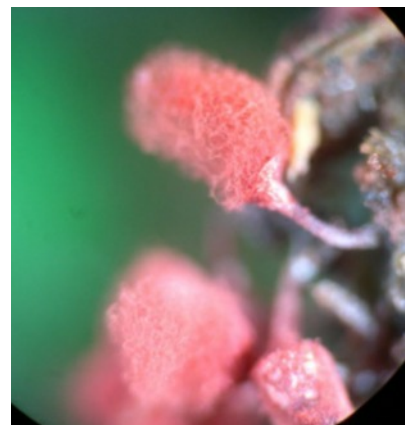


The picture below is *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa* or Coral Slime.



The small finger like projections can appear in large masses on fallen trees, this group was recorded at Pennington Flash.

Lycogala epidendron/terrestre (Wolf's Milk or Toothpaste Slime) is a common slime mould on wood, seen here (top right) at Allerton Golf Course.



Address given at Rita's funeral by Irene Ridge



Many of us here will have very fond memories of Rita. She was such a lively, vivid person – and with so many interests: birds, wine, travel and perhaps her main interest, for many years, was fungi – mycology.

That's how I first came to know Rita in the early 1990s when she became the first Chair of the North West Fungus Group that had evolved from an earlier group that was part of the North West Naturalists Union.

Rita was the life and soul of the NWFG and for several years she did everything: as well as chairing the committee, on which I sat, and doing the minutes, she wrote much of, edited and mailed out the Newsletter, organized many of the forays and led quite a few of them. She took particular delight in leading the beginner's forays and introducing new members to fungi, something she was very good at. Only gradually did other committee members take on these jobs but even when Rita resigned from the chair and I took over that role, she continued as a committee member and we still held committee meetings at her house until 2 or 3 years ago.

Rita was always a good friend to me and I regularly stayed with her. Up until 2002 when I retired, I travelled down weekly to the Open University at Milton Keynes, starting at crack of dawn on Tuesday mornings. We had the NWFG committee meetings on a Monday night, so Rita very kindly let me stay overnight with her, since she was nearly a third of the way to Milton Keynes. When I told Deborah this she remarked that I obviously didn't mind the mess – implying that Rita was a bit untidy: but I had to confess that I hadn't noticed any mess, so I must be even more untidy.

Rita was also a keen member of the British Mycological Society and a regular attender on their residential forays. Often we would go together and share a room and I well remember how vital was Rita's morning cup of tea and boiled egg.

And there is one final illustration that I know of which illustrates Rita's liveliness and energy: her dancing. Up until her late 70s Rita was attending tap dancing classes and regularly appearing on stage in their shows. I only wish I'd seen her.

Rita's daughter Deborah, who has been such a huge support to her mother, arranged a 90th birthday party for Rita just over a year ago. Many of us here were present and it was a wonderful occasion which I think that everybody, including Rita, greatly enjoyed. A photograph of Rita with her fungus-decorated birthday cake graced the front of our next NWFG Newsletter.

So, dear Rita, we are here to remember you, say goodbye and rejoice and give thanks for your life, which was so very well lived.

Rostherne foray, May 2017

Tim Rogers

The most notable find was of *Entoloma rusticoides*, nationally rare, only 11 records, discovered by Lynne along a track amongst the reed beds – it seems to occur in a variety of habitats, mostly wet, including dune slacks – it's a tiny species, so may be under-recorded – an excellent spot then, for Lynne.

Only 34 species were recorded in total, largely because of the time of year, but a number were new for the site – this justifies the unseasonable date (John W's idea). There were very few agarics, and a lot of examining of leaves (mostly by Jeanette & John T), and pulling up dead stems, looking for ascos – one of these was *Trichobelonium kneiffii*, on *Phragmites* (to which it's restricted, apparently), found, again, by Lynne. I mention this as I was not even aware of the Genus (taxon previously in *Tapesia* & *Mollisia*).

I found a basidiomycete which pretends to be an ascomycete, *Calyptella capula*, on a buried stem of *Epilobium hirsutum* – not uncommon, but very pleasing to me.

John Taylor found *Peniophora laeta*, which is distinctly uncommon, on the Reserve's only Hornbeam – this is a superb mature tree, in Mere Covert, worth seeing quite apart from the fungus.

(Editorial - continued from page 5)

We were all very sad to hear the news about Rita Cook. Her funeral was very well attended and the address given by Irene Ridge is included in the Newsletter.

Many thanks to all those members who have contributed articles for this issue and to Mike Walton for typesetting and organising the printing and posting of the newsletter. Articles can be submitted to me by email. Pictures of fungi to accompany articles are very welcome preferably sent as separate attachments. Please note that it is important to show due diligence when including any photographs (or other material) that have not been taken by yourself by getting permission and including the name of the photographer (or copyright holder) so that due credit can be given in the newsletter.

Paul F Hamlyn

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