



# Newsletter

## Spring and Autumn 2020



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## **View from the Chair, April 2020**

**Irene Ridge**

And the view is indeed bleak just now: Covid-19, lockdown, no forays. Looking back, however, we did manage to have an enjoyable AGM in February with a record number of attenders. After the 'business' section there was the usual splendid talk from Geoffrey Kibby (our President), a summary of which will appear in the next Newsletter, an excellent lunch thanks to Ali and Lynne and rounding everything off a pleasant foray at Risley Moss complete with the usual finds of scarlet elf cups (*Sarcoscypha austriaca*). The minutes of the AGM will be emailed to you so I will say no more – except that our Group is overall in good shape, financially sound and with exciting developments in the DNA work led by Jeanette.

Since the AGM there have been no forays but people still managed to find fungi in their gardens or on local walks and tell us about them via the email group or Facebook. The dry weather hasn't encouraged fungi but there is usually something and at least some rust fungi are developing nicely (plenty of Arum rust, *Puccinia sessilis*, round here just now). When we can resume foraying is anybody's guess but probably not before July at the earliest and whether we can

hold the Microscope Workshop on July 4<sup>th</sup> (the new date) is uncertain. It would still be helpful if you could let me know if you want to attend that workshop. We fervently hope that our residential foray at Keswick in October can still go ahead and it looks like this really will be the last time. So please do book if you intend to come – **sending your booking forms to Mike Walton** and not to me. Mike took over management of Keswick last time because of my heart problems which meant that sadly I had to miss the foray. The heart problems were resolved by an operation in November and I'm very much better now.

So dear members keep fungi in mind but above all keep safe.

## **Editorial**

In these unprecedented times I hope our newsletter will bring some comfort by reminding you about the great forays we had last year. Unfortunately with the current lock-down it has not been possible at this time to provide a printed copy of the newsletter to members that have requested one. Therefore, Mike will send a pdf copy to all members on the email group until the restrictions are relaxed.

I am delighted to include a report about the 2019 recipients of the BMS 'Field Mycology Award' namely NWFG member Debbie Evans and other mycologists of the 'Welsh Rust Group'. Some of our older members will remember Alan Bamforth (brother of Norman) who sadly passed away last year. I remember Alan attending quite a few NWFG forays during my early years with the group. With many of us spending even more time than usual in the garden or allotment this year I would encourage you to keep a lookout for fungi and send any interesting reports to me for inclusion in the next issue of the newsletter.

Many thanks to all those members who have contributed articles for this issue, and to Mike Walton for typesetting and sending out 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**

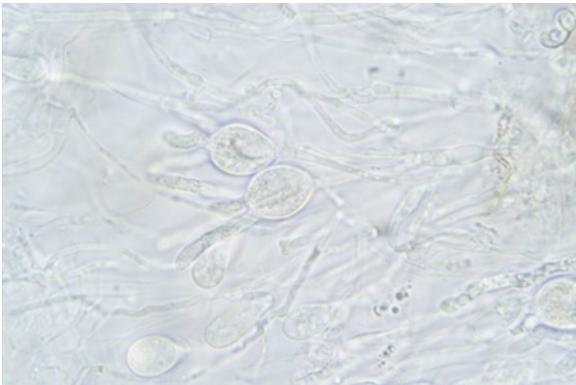
**[pffhamlyn@gmail.com](mailto:pffhamlyn@gmail.com)**

# Dean Wood Foray, 17 March 2019

John Watt

A group of 9 of us including one member of the public donned wellingtons by Gathurst Station and made our way along to the West Lancashire clough called Dean Wood - (as distinct from the one by Rivington). The (very) wet woodland with dead wood was thought to have offered promise albeit rather early in the season. The West Lancashire BC rangers manage both the lower section owned privately and the upper steeper section and it was the intention to complement the tally of biological records for this site which has a number of vascular plants characteristic of ancient woodland.

The approach path provided 3 separate colonies of *Psathyrella* which though rather dark and without marginal veil remnants were all *P. candolleana*. Amongst the *Tubaria furfuracea* finds was one markedly more orange both in cap colour and spore print. Its cystidia were also more regularly cylindrical than *T. furfuracea* and overall matched the uncommon *Tubaria romagnesiana*. Amongst the few other agarics found was *Gliophorus psittacina* in vegetation along the wooded pathway. More impressive though was the mass of *Sarcoscypha austriaca* growing along many mossy branches.



Nearby a rather dull looking soft resupinate turned out to be the rare *Exidiopsis effusa* with large longitudinally septate basidia (left), sometimes called Hair Ice Crust though not always showing this

feature.

The characteristic appearance of *Tremella foliacea* on *Corylus* indicated the likelihood of this species found nearby as an anamorph on *Stereum rugosum*, with an appearance rather like minute poached eggs on the crust. (right)



One poroid incubated at home overnight had nearly been devoured by maggots but enough was left to identify it as *Ceriporia reticulata*. This is one which could be subsequently recognised in the field with its very shallow rather angular pores and virtually no underlying subiculum layer. Overall, a total of 61 species was identified thanks to members taking home a mixture of resupinates, ascomycetes and leaf rusts and smuts for confirmations of identity.

# Turn Slack Clough foray, 3 November 2019

Ken Gartside

Eleven cheery folk braved the chill and very foggy day to foray on this marvellous upland Waxcap site. Of course, usually led by Norman, but illness meant he was unable to do so and we wish him well – especially with the very sad news of his brother Alan's recent death, who was such a stalwart NWFG fungal expert and wonderful character.



We were augmented by Steve Hindle from over in Calderdale who was able to help with a number of finds and ID's. Highlights were a find of five specimens of *Gliophorus reginae* – the Jubilee Waxcap (left) which has been found before here in 2017, but only one then. This is a fairly new species, first described in 2013 with only around a dozen national records.

The pace moved on a little quicker than usual to try and find time in the day to thoroughly search the other side of the Clough for *Clavaria zollingeri*, but sadly no such find this year. However, Beige Coral, *Clavulinopsis umbrinella* and Ivory coral, *Ramariopsis kunzei* turned up to compensate. A total of 17 Waxcap species were found, with some nice colour variants to Parrots and Heath's. These and the Jubilee will be sent off to Kew for DNA sequencing by Steve, who also will be looking into the site potential.

On a misty wintery day, we managed 64 species in total. Tim's *Galerina subclavata* is quite unusual and the *Omphalina griseopallida* not common either. No doubt we missed a good few by a quicker pace! One downside is that the Pink Ballerina was picked and I don't understand why when it is a species that is easily identified and well known, so should be left in situ. It hadn't even opened up to shed spores. As Mycologists, we of course have a look at and take many fungi home for identification, looking at spores and to smell them etc., but there should be at least some NWFG guidance to stop pointless collection of the obvious species, particularly when they are so uncommon. At least the rain held off!



*Tricholoma ustale*  
Burnt Knight

# Moore Nature Reserve foray, 13 October 2019

Paul F. Hamlyn

My annual foray for beginners at Moore Nature Reserve carried out since 2003 rarely fails to disappoint but on this occasion, we did struggle to find a good variety of specimens for beginners to examine. There were ten of us including a representative from the Wilmslow Guild Natural History Society. The ground was quite wet although thankfully it did not rain.



We got off to a good start and I was please to come across several specimens of *Geastrum triplex* (Collared Earthstar - left - Paul F Hamlyn) all in good condition. They only seem to grow in one place on the reserve. A very large group of *Tricholoma sculpturatum* (Yellowing Knight) was growing nearby. However, there was no sign of *Cyathus striatus* (Fluted Bird's Nest) seen in great profusion last year.

The heathland area was disappointing there was just the odd specimen around. Clive managed to find *Daldinia fissa* (Gorse Cramp Ball) growing on *Ulex*. This species was present in large numbers ten years ago following the burning of some gorse bushes. In recent years only the odd specimen has turned up.

The woodland area around the old canal bed was a bit more productive and included *Macrotypophula fistulosa* var. *contorta* (Pipe Club - right - Paul F Hamlyn) growing on a fallen branch. Surprisingly we did not record a single specimen of *Amanita muscaria* (Fly agaric) on this foray seen in profusion previous years. I surmise that they must have fruited earlier and had since rotted away. Although somewhat disappointing for beginners 77 species were identified in total thanks to the experienced members taking specimens home for more detailed examination



under the microscopic. All the records have now gone onto the Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland (FRDBI).

# FRUITFUL FORAYS ON THE ISLE OF MAN

## Overview - Tom Waghorn:

Enthusiasm pays dividends for mycologists. So does sound planning, good leadership and local knowledge. The adding in of an identification masterclass by Bruce Ing contributed to making the North West Fungus Group's first residential foray on the island a resounding success.

Ten members and partners took the ferry crossing from Heysham to Douglas, narrowly escaping the main path of storm Lorenzo though it resulted in a rather wet ride onwards for Kerstin, who was to cycle around the island with some friends afterwards. We enjoyed four comfortable nights in the Falcons Nest Hotel, Isle of Man, from where as it transpired that John had enjoyed a school marine biology field trip some 50 years earlier. The food was excellent, and we had use of a spacious room in which we could spread ourselves and our microscopes around. As usual, the midnight oil came in handy to help to bring the tally of identified macrofungi up to 146, whilst Bruce made 283 records of mainly microfungi (only in part helped by staying on two extra days with Alan Braddock).

The trip had followed an invitation from polymath naturalist Liz Charter of the Isle of Man Fungus Group, and she had prepared a lovely sequence of five or six site visits with excellent mapping and background information. She and other members dined with us in the evenings and worked on identifications and kept the records by the day. Together with her colleagues she helped lead us around a lovely varied sequence of five sites, for which she had earlier prepared excellent mapping and background information. Especially memorable were the broad-leaved woods and tumbling torrent of Glen Helen; the dunes lichen heaths and coastal grassland of Ayre's NNT from where we could look out to the Irish Sea and the Scottish hills from a wooden look-out tower.

There's something romantic about islands. In early October the great golden change of the year was just starting to unfold. So, as well as an abundance of fungi, we noticed luxuriant growths of lichens, mosses and liverworts, testaments to the healthy unpolluted atmosphere of Manxland. Few birds were added to our notebooks though; a flock of Golden Plovers, female Eider duck, a Wheatear and Stonechats. Was the lack of birds at the Curraghs related to the population explosion of red-necked wallabies? Some originally having escaped from a zoo 50 years ago, those bounding herbivorous marsupials are notoriously difficult to count. Using camera traps, latest estimates are of 1,742 plus or minus 455. There are now sightings over three quarters of the island which is 31 miles long and 13

miles at its broadest. Maybe bountiful for the tourist industry and charities with Wallaby towels, mugs and other merchandise. Not popular with naturalists, some of whom point out that the wallaby has no place in the bio-diversity of this enchanting island, and which is blamed for reducing the numbers of hen harriers at their traditional winter roost in the Curraghs; and in damaging nesting territories of other bird species. Not only that, they have a penchant for Royal Fern and Common Wintergreen has become more scarce.

However, they may be bountiful for the tourist industry and charities with Wallaby towels, mugs and other merchandise. Perhaps taking its place alongside the tail-less Manx cat, which we didn't spot during the trip.

### **Summary of fungal findings - John Watt**

Our first outing was to the lovely wooded Glen Helen where we found 39 species including *Porphyrellus porphyrosporus*, and *Aleurodiscus wakefieldii*, which was a new record for the Isle of Man.

After lunch we went to what might have sounded an unlikely site, the grounds of the Nobles Hospital but there are many and varied mature trees in a parkland setting. *Conocybe arrhenii* was new to the Isle of Man and I was pleased to find my first *Entomophthora muscae*, a member of the *Zygomycota* phylum, one which causes the fly to climb to the top of a blade of grass; the better for spore dispersal as the fly's carcass becomes a mass of hyphae and spores.

Our second day took us to the Curraghs, a nice wild area of willow carr and wet woodland, which produced *Tricholoma album* and *Lepiota incarnata* to wrestle over. (It has not been fully established whether Red-necked Wallabies eat fungi but likely.). After lunch we strolled around Milntown House and gardens and viewed an impressive array of Dog Stinkhorn and plenty *Clavaria cinerea*.

The third day we explored the dunes and lichen heath of the Ayres National Nature Reserve in the north of the island. The *Volvopluteus gloiocephalus* was a new species found on the Isle of Man.

Overall the total number of separate species was of the order of 360, of which Bruce had recorded 200 separate taxa of mainly microfungi and 22 myxomycetes. A fair count we felt and helpful towards increasing the coverage of records on the Isle of Man and a great opportunity to get to know our mycological colleagues, who are not so far away and to whom we extend our appreciation for their hospitality.



*Pholiota arrhenii* (Ringed Conecap)  
(Photos John Watt)



*Pholiota gummosa* (Sticky Scalycap)  
with *Entomophthora muscae*

### **A personal account - Paul F Hamlyn**

I took the ferry from Heysham to Douglas and then drove to Port Erin for a weekend of identifying fungi with fellow members of the North West Fungus Group (NWFG) and members of the Isle of Man Fungus Group. The weather was fairly wet, which is good for fungi. Sites visited included Ballaugh Curragh a wetland nature reserve, the Ayres National Nature Reserve a stretch of low-lying sand dune coastline with lichen heath and Milntown House that has mature woodland as well as formal gardens. There are now said to be several hundred wild wallabies living on the island descendants of animals that escaped from a local wildlife park and we came across a couple at Ballaugh Curragh. Evenings were spent doing microscopy prior to dinner.

Port Erin was originally a seaside resort before the decline of the tourist trade and was a very good location for our base. Since I was not involved with the organisation or recording I was able to focus on photography. Unfortunately, on our first day at Glen Helen it hardly stopped raining, so I did not even get my camera out of the bag. However, the other days provided plenty of photo opportunities. Evidently the Island had become virtually devoid of trees over centuries of human occupation until the Victorians decided to develop the glens for the tourist industry.

The trip to Ayres was quite memorable with flooding on the main road and I did wonder if my car would make it through some of the deeper pools. I kept my wellies on just in case. There were quite a few blackening waxcaps around but also some larger specimens that even when left overnight only showed traces of

blackening. Spore measurements confirmed that we had found *Hygrocybe conicoides*, the Dune Waxcap. I found one specimen growing with Marram Grass in the sand dunes and took it back to the workroom thinking that it was an *Entoloma*. After cleaning the grass away from the base of the fruit body a volva could be clearly seen. It turned out to be *Volvopluteus gloiocephalus* (Stubble Rosegill) a new record for the Isle of Man.

We had a great time thanks to the excellent choice of sites and hard work put in by the local organisers.



Members of NWFG and the Isle of Man Fungus Group



*Mutinus caninus* (Dog Stinkhorn)  
at Milntown House



*Macrocyttidia cucumis* (above)  
growing on wood debris  
(smells of cucumbers and  
has very large cystidia)



*Volvopluteus gloiocephalus*  
(Stubble Rosegill)  
(this and previous three photos -  
Paul F Hamlyn)

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## NWFG member, Debbie Evans receives BMS FMCC award

“The BMS Field Mycology Award recognises extraordinary contributions to the advancement of British field mycology. Its recipients have contributed significantly through conservational, taxonomic, recording or educational activities. They may have regularly led field events or workshops, have written extensively or lectured widely about fungi, or have substantially advanced the identification and conservation of fungi.” The award was instigated in 2015, and previous recipients have been Geoffrey Kibby in 2015 and Roy Watling in 2018.

In 2019, The ‘Welsh Rust Group’ was thrilled to learn that they had been chosen to receive the award for their work on the plant pathogenic fungi of Wales. The group nicknamed the ‘Famous Five’, comprising Ray Woods, Arthur Chater, Debbie Evans, Paul Smith & Nigel Stringer, received a £500 cheque towards future publication costs and each received a bespoke certificate designed by Carol

Hobart using appropriate illustrations by M.C. Cooke. The award was presented to 4 of the 5 members in S. Wales at the Autumn Field meeting by Geoffrey Kibby.

The first member, Ray Woods, based in Radnorshire, is a well-known Welsh naturalist and conservationist and is a specialist in lichens, bryophytes, botany and fungi. He worked for many years for CCW (Countryside Commission for Wales) and more recently for Plantlife specialising in the lower plants. Having already published a RDL for Lichens in Wales he realised that there was nothing similar for fungi (in Wales or Britain) and rust fungi would be a good place to start.

Ray got together a group of 4 other likeminded mycologists spread over Wales, all with the same passion for rusts and other plant pathogenic fungi and the 'Welsh Rust Group' was formed. Nigel Stringer, based in Carmarthenshire, is a renowned expert on rust fungi; Arthur Chater, based in Cardiganshire, is a renowned botanist and author of the 'Flora of Cardiganshire', who has now come over to the 'dark side' recording the plant pathogens, he is a particular expert in smut fungi; Paul Smith, originally based in S. E. Wales, lectures in Southampton University and has a special interest in smut fungi, plus other plant pathogens; and Debbie Evans, based near Caernarfon, is a passionate and obsessive recorder of all the plant pathogens especially the rust fungi. The authors are all very competent botanists. They are/have been Vice County recorders in the past/present or have contributed greatly to their County Floras. This is very important when it comes to the identification of the fungal parasites, most of which are host specific. Their work has highlighted the presence of new fungal species to Britain and hundreds of new host/pathogen associations.

The group's primary aims are to highlight the importance of the plant pathogenic fungi, increase their profile and aid identification and recording by providing well-illustrated and free or affordable books and free downloads.

In recent years the Group has published three important works, significantly contributing to the conservation of the rusts, smuts (and Exobasidiiums), and powdery mildews in Wales. All the publications contain information applicable to the rest of Britain as well.

*Rust Fungus Red Data List and Census Catalogue for Wales* (2015) presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of the current conservation status of the 225 taxa of rust fungi so far recorded in Wales, using the updated IUCN criteria and provides a census catalogue of all species recorded in Wales and their hosts.

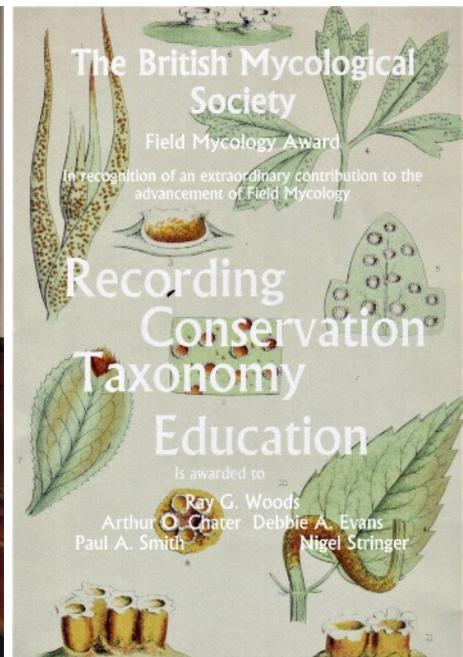
*Smut and Allied Fungi of Wales: A Guide, Red Data List and Census Catalogue for Wales* (2018) provides an introduction to the smut fungi and Exobasidiiums and a basic identification guide. It catalogues them and presents an analysis of their conservation status.

*The Powdery Mildews (Erysiphales) of Wales: An identification Guide and Census Catalogue* (Woods and Chater 2019) provides an introduction to the powdery mildews and an identification guide and census catalogue.

The three publications are available in hard copy from booksellers, and are also freely downloadable from the Aberystwyth Waxcap website: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/waxcap/links/index.shtml>.

Debbie is a key contributor to the work of the Group, having amassed many records from North Wales, especially in the vice-counties of Caernarfonshire and Anglesey as well as further afield. These records have provided an excellent picture of rust and smut fungi distribution in what was a relatively poorly surveyed area. The publications also contain many of Debbie's amazing rust and smut photographs.

The Group is currently busy working on the final stages of a book on the 'Downy Mildews and White Blister Rusts (Albugos) of Wales' which will be published shortly. With over 150 pages and an A4 format this important work is designed as an identification guide and also provides a census catalogue for Wales. It will be well illustrated, including more of Debbie's photos. Most species encountered in Britain should be readily identified using the book and it will hopefully provide a much needed resource at an affordable price.



Future projects of the Group will include an update of the Rust RDL to include more recent records, Ramularias and a checklist bringing together all the rusts, smuts, mildews etc. and their hosts recorded in Wales in to a single book which could used in the field.

**Jeanette Maddy**

## Alan Bamforth



With qualifications in electrical engineering, Alan worked with the railways on signalling maintenance and installation until taking early retirement in 1995. Along with an interest in railways, in 1968, when their mother got a copy of a book on wild flowers from the library, Alan and Norman found an interest in natural history.

Their mother also introduced them in 1978 to the group that became the Manchester Field Club, still active today. Through this they joined North Western Naturalists' Union whose Mycology Section became North West Fungus Group in 1994

Alan became a Warden at Werneth Low from 1988 and continued in that post. Alan and Norman ran Flora Walks

for the public in Tameside from 1979, and there have been more than 300 walks over the years. Alan and Norman recorded their finds and have been involved in Lichen recording for the Vice-County 59 Flora Project (South Lancashire). Records were submitted to the Greater Manchester Biological Records Centre.

Alan was closely involved with NWNLU and then NWFG over the years from 1978 to 2014. He was part of a small group trying to produce keys, meeting at a visitor centre. Alan was very easy to get on with, and happy to share his knowledge. An asset to our group.

Alan passed away in Tameside Hospital on 29 October 2019. His funeral was well attended by friends from the organisations mentioned above.

Thanks are due to Norman for details included here.

**John L. Taylor**

# CALDERSTONES PARK

Tony Carter

Calderstones is my nearest park and one of the largest in Liverpool. Named after some Neolithic standing stones. In 1875 it became the family estate of Charles McIver, one of the founders of The Cunard Line, before he sold to Liverpool Council.

The Allerton Oak, 2019 tree of the year, is a major attraction, but not for fungi. The only species I have seen is *Laccaria laccata*. One would think that there should be more variety after 1000 years. Interestingly, my Liverpool Botanists friends tell me that the Oak is a hybrid.



The park has numerous trees imported by McIver from destinations served by his ships. The majority are American conifers but there are broadleaf species from Asia and a number of strange grafts such as a beech on oak. I have a list of all the trees but no plan showing where they all are.

One of my favourites is a *Polylepis australis* (below) from the high Andes, known as ‘The Filo Pastry Tree’ because of its bark. It is not in very good condition and has started to attract fungi such as *Bjerkandera adusta* (Smoky Bracket) and *Hypholma fasciculare* (Sulphur Tuft) as well as a worrying patch of *Coniophora puteana* (Wet Rot). The most recent coloniser is *Mycena corynephora* (Bark Bonnet)

Away from the botanical specimens, there are extensive grassed areas, which are very popular with the public but not with fungi. There are large stands of *Fagus* and *Pinus sylvestris*, of which quite a few have fallen and are left in situ. Finds include *Cortinarius vibratilis*, *Echino-derma asperum* (Freckled Dapperling), *Geastrum striatum* (Striate Earthstar), *Lepiota echinella*, *Trechispora stevensonii* and *Phaeolepiota aurea* (Golden Bootleg).



*Polylepis australis*

There are numerous ornamental plants and trees in a series of shrubberies that are regularly mulched with woodchip. Interesting finds here include *Chlorophyllum brunneum* (Brown Parasol), *Lepiota subincarnata*, *Lyophyllum loricatum* (Gristly Domecap) and *Melanoleuca verrucipes* (Warty Cavalier).

Lots of areas are low maintenance where herbaceous plants have been allowed to flourish so with dead stems and fallen wood from the trees I have a good source for material all year round.

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## FUNGI WALK

Risley Moss, Warrington, 6 October 2019

Tom Ferguson

The fungi walk at Risley Moss, Warrington has become a regular annual occurrence under the auspices of the Risley Moss Rangers and supported by the Risley Moss Action Group. This year around 35 attended including many younger enthusiasts who made sure that even the smallest fungi were not overlooked.

We needed to look carefully because despite the favourable weather conditions there was a complete absence of *Amanita*, *Lactarius*, *Cortinarius* and only one *Russula*.

Nevertheless, there was lots to see and talk about and raise awareness of the characteristics of fungi, their importance in the local ecosystem and the subterranean relationship they have with trees and other green plants.

Risley usually provides plenty of Earthstars (*Geastrum triplex*) and Saddles (*Helvella crispa*) and this year was no exception demonstrating the amazing diversity of fungal form. The youngsters were delighted to help the earthstars release their clouds of spores.

Despite the absence of conifers, the Conifer Mazegill (*Gloeophyllum sepiarium*) turned up, growing on a park bench constructed from timber imported to the site.

The highlights were probably great rings of Clouded Agarics (*Clitocybe nebularis*), cascades of Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*) and Scarlet Caterpillar Club (*Cordyceps militaris*) which with careful excavation revealed its parasitic attachment to the buried moth larva.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2021 A.G.M.</b></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Saturday 27 February 2021 at 10.30 a.m. (10.00 a.m. Coffee) Risley Moss Centre, depending upon the Covid situation.</p>
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# PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS (AGM 2020)

Common fungi we know well or perhaps don't ...

Geoffrey Kibby

(Reported by Paul F. Hamlyn)

Prior to the main talk Geoffrey mentioned that one of our members, John Ratcliffe, had found a very unusual *Volvariella* with a blackish-brown, hairy cap on wood chips in association with *Agaricus xanthodermus* (Yellow Stainer). *Volvariella aethiops* was first collected from Kew in 2010 and originally described in 2007 from France. It is most likely a recent introduction to Britain and possibly to Europe also {Note: *Volvariella aethiops* is included in Mushrooms and Toadstools of Britain & Europe, Volume 2, written and illustrated by Geoffrey Kibby, published February 2020}. Geoffrey encouraged us to look for it and tell him of any finds.

Geoffrey continued with the theme on problems with identifications this time focussing on common fungi that we think we know well but this may not be the case. For example, *Amanita rubescens* is a common but variable fungus. DNA studies have indicated that *A. rubescens* var. *annulosulphurea* is the same species but *A. rubescens* var. *alba* is a completely separate species.

He made the point that even without DNA evidence careful observations in the past showed that the blue *Stropharia* which everyone called *S. aeruginosa* was actually 3 species - the other 2 being *S. caerulea* and *S. pseudocyanea*. *S. aeruginosa* and *S. caerulea* look very similar the latter being distinguished in the field by its loose ring and pale gills. However, under the microscope they are quite different. *S. pseudocyanea*, an occasional find in Britain is more slender and smells strongly of freshly ground pepper.

*Lepista nuda* and *Lepista sordida* are very common but quite variable in appearance. From the literature there is too much overlap in spore size between the two species to distinguish between them. In addition, DNA investigations suggest there are two species of *L. nuda* and at least three species for *L. sordida*. Clearly the common Blewit is currently not very well defined at all. Another example of a very common and easily identified species is *Russula nigricans* found in both broadleaf and coniferous woodlands. However, this should ring alarm bells and there is likely to be at least two separate species.

The Parasols, *Macrolepiota* were previously very confused. *M. procera* has quite a few varieties. *M. procera* var. *permixta* looked very distinct - red stem lacking the usual zig-zag marks and thought probably to be a separate species - but it wasn't. DNA work suggests that *M. procera* var. *permixta* is just a variety whereas *M. olivascens*, which is not found in Britain yet and bruises green was a

separate species. *M. konradii* may just be a form of *M. mastoidea* and needs more DNA evidence; a plea for us to look out for these. *M. rhodosperma* has been known for a long time having been described by Peter Orton in 1984. It is found on calcareous soils and has short, sparse coarse flakes on the cap and is characterised by rosy pink spores. Although DNA supported it is rarely reported and should be looked for. *M. phaeodisca* found in S. Europe on dunes/sandy soil but not yet in the UK has a smooth stem but is it really a separate species - again we should look out for it since with global warming it could be heading our way.

Collections at Kew assigned to *Geastrum fornicatum* and *Geastrum quadrifidum* were found by DNA to be a different species. This was named by the Spanish researchers as *Geastrum britannicum* since it has only been found in Britain. *G. britannicum* looks rather like the other 2 species but the very granular cap (sugar-like) is quite distinctive. *Melanoleuca* has the key characteristics of a bump in the middle of the cap and the gills just meet the stem. The main criteria for identification are its distinctive cystidia. A collection of *Melanoleuca turrita* at Kew was found to be misidentified and turned out to consist of four different species. *Melanoleuca* will never be easy in the field since its characteristics overlap.

Geoffrey emphasised in his talk that there is still a very important place for traditional mycology. While DNA will be essential for difficult genera such as *Melanoleuca* we were particularly encouraged to record all oddities on our forays together with careful recording of association and habitat followed up by microscopy wherever applicable.

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## PRICKLY PROBLEM



### Tony Carter

In March I paid a visit to my favourite woods at Hale near Liverpool.

Despite the rains there was not much to collect, nothing with a cap and stem. Even log rolling was disappointing until I was making my way home and speculatively turned over a piece of rotten trunk. I saw the Ascomycete but so rotten and fragile was the wood, I had to make do with small crumbling bits. My microscope revealed that I had a discomycete. Most unusual were the ornamented spores at 6-7.5 x 2.5-3µm.

I searched through my books, Ellis & Ellis, Thompson, the Internet, AscoFrance. Nothing with this type of spore. I could not return to the wood due to 'lockdown' until 4 June. The trunk was still in situ and so was the fungus. Further research added nothing. After discussion with Peter Wilberforce, I decided to ask Peter Thompson, author of *Ascomycetes in Colour*. He replied immediately that it was *Mollisia subglobosa*, 373 in his book.



Looking at the spore diagram, I noted that it did not show the 'pointy bits' and informed Peter Thompson of this. He agreed that he should have extended the reticulation beyond the edge of the spores. The species grows on *Ilex* (Holly), which is abundant in this wood but I could not recognise my piece of wood as this. Only five records on the National Database. Previous finds are from Hampshire, Somerset and Pembrokeshire so this uncommon species has moved a good distance north.

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## NWFG Miniforays

John Watt

The North West Fungus Group has currently around 90 members widely spread from North Wales up to South Cumbria, and with a good dozen on average on our forays, we have got to know one another and enjoy the shared experience of the fungal foray. Furthermore, both the novices and the more experienced amongst us benefit from the cooperative attempts to identify fungi in situ. So, what a hit we have taken this year from Covid-19 with at least one of our members having recovered after having had the infection. Our major group events such as the Keswick autumn weekend had to be cancelled as were the normal forays. But as things seemed to ease somewhat in September - and after some deliberation - it was felt that we could within the Rule of 6 stage a series of miniforays. Guided by the responses to my email mooting such a possibility, I coordinated some such miniforays in late August and September amongst those who had expressed interest in response to my group email.

The scheduled foray programme for late August included a site new to the group, **Stanley Bank Wood**, which is one of Tom Ferguson's local sites, so he led a group of 6 of us around on a pleasant day. The site along the Sankey Valley is deservedly popular locally and includes wet woodland as well as mature beech

woodland on an elevation in Stanley Bank Wood itself. Tom had been worried about a lack of show of fungi but as is usually the case, the additional pairs of eyes enabled us to find two score of species.

Amongst these was *Postia tephroleuca*, or *Oligoporus tephroleucus*, a pure white polypore on broadleaf wood without any blueing reaction, and distinguishable in the field from *Postia stiptica* by the lack of bitter taste. It is half as common as the latter so this was a nice find. Gili took a nice photo of the Blackfoot Polypore, one which, while keeping the epithet, has had its genus changed to *Cerioporus leptocephalus*. (Right)



We had some small Mycenae species including *tenerrima* (left) showing the cap frosting nicely, more hairy than *stylobates* but without the foot plate, but less hairy than *corynephora*, also a mossy bark inhabitant. The finding of some black Pyrenomycetes



allows one to demonstrate the ability to differentiate species such as the *Hypoxylon* sp within the Zylariaceae family from such as *Diatrype bullata*, (above), by

the instant release of differently coloured pigments on application of KOH in the *Hypoxylon* group (*Hypoxylon rubiginosum* SA below left) and the lack of such reaction in the Diatrypacea family.

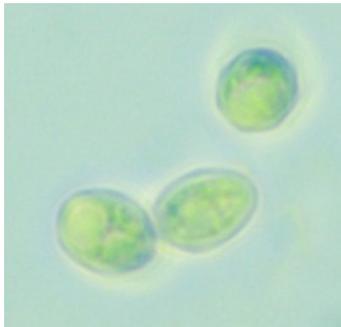


The latter, *Hypoxylon rubiginosum*, was one of our findings the following Sunday at **Scutchers Acres**, a 13 hectare site in West Lancs which I have been lucky enough to manage and where I have made scores of biological records over the last 20 years. On this occasion, there were just four of us but managed to track down

widely dispersed 52 species. One intriguing find identified by Tim was the tiny *Mycena rhenana* on an Alder cone, with only 8 records nationally. There are a number of species of *Tilia* trees growing on the site and we were lucky enough to find a second record from here within two years of an associated rarity, *Pleuroflammula ragazziana*, (right) which Martyn Ainsworth has been most interested in. Like a russety-brown *Crepidotus*, it has different microscopic features. We also found a very small white pleurotoid fungus providing what I thought was a white spore print. There are a few unrelated contenders within this group including *Panellus mitis*;



*Chaetocalathus craterellus*; *Cheimonophyllum candidissimum*; *Hohenbuehelia fluxilis*; all with very different spores. My first mistake was not to have gathered the spore print into a mass to enable me to discern that it was actually pink, which would then have led to a choice between *Entoloma byssisedum* and a group in the genus *Clitopilus*, - which is the genus of the 'Miller': both these cases illustrating how a minor genetic change within a given Genus can lead to big morphological changes between species. Pursuing the microscopy, I had looked



for the longitudinal ridges which are described in all *Clitopilus* spores though could not initially see these with conviction, despite even trying with Cotton Blue. But at length on reviewing the slides, I spotted some spores which were lying head up (left) under the cover-slip and then I could with conviction discern the ridges. It then was necessary to make an average count of these ridges from over 10 spores in order to separate *Clitopilus*



*hobsonii* (8-10 ridges) from *C. scyphoides* and *rhodophyllum* (6-8); the spore size itself then separates *C. hobsonii* (left) from *C. damsii*. In the records we were also able to include Dog Stinkhorn, *Mutinus caninus*, for we found the 'eggs' just about to burst, albeit already eaten by slugs; in an area under Spruce where I'd found them two years running, the last time at the end of December.

My third account covers an excursion for five of us at **Gait Barrows** ably led around by Kerstin Nagel in late September. (One unfortunately had had to drop out at last minute on account of vehicular problems). Though the Natural

England reserve was not overwhelmed with fungi we were on the look out for some of the Lost and Found fungi identified in earlier years at this site. However, we were taken a bit by surprise early on at Helen's finding of a bulky *Entoloma* with violet tints under *Taxus*, which brought to mind Martyn Ainscough and Brian Douglas's article on *Entoloma bloxamii* group in Field Mycology. Tim and I both had a good look at this later and reckon it to be a good match to the *Entoloma atromadidum*, (right) previously



identified by John and Sheila Weir at this site, and with 5 other sites in the south of England. We aspire to have the DNA analysis at some stage. Not so rare but very charming was the Blue Pinkgill, *Entoloma serrulatum* (left).

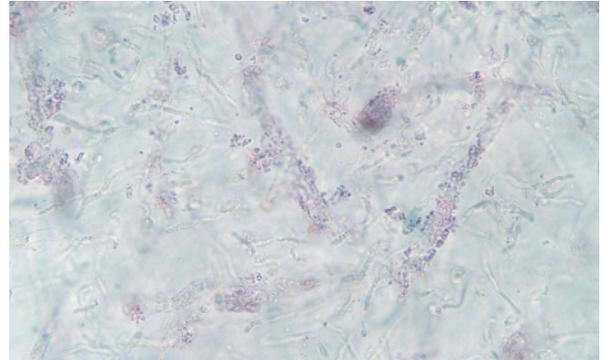
Tim was able to point out the distinguishing feature to help in the field identification of *Hebeloma sinapizans*, the hanging wick near the top cut of the stipe, best described by Courtecuisse in his Field Guide. A different *Hebeloma*, *H. helodes*, with 66 records nationally required microscopic work by Tim. The same number or records are accorded to *Inocybe posterula*. We were pleased to refind *Hygrocybe cantharellus* (right). The small pleurotoid with very white looking gills and a rather smooth cap did not initially suggest a *Crepidotus* but it did turn out to be the relatively rare *Crepidotus appianatus*, with both Max and John confirming the globular spiny spores to be much smaller than those of the more usual *C. cesatii*; also confirmed by cystidial



morphology. On a small personal note, having found the deep red umbonate *Russula caerulea* under Pine, with the group confirming its identity, it became an opportunity for me to look for the fuchsinophile cystidia in the cap using the dreaded sulphuric acid/sulfovanillin combination (below).



*Russula caerulea* spores



*R. caerulea* hyphae

So, I was very chuffed to be able to identify these, the first time for myself.

It was interesting to observe a large fallen *Betula* tree hosting at least three different bracket species; *Fomes fomentarius*, *Fomitopsis betulae* (syn. *Piptoporus*) and *Trametes gibbosa*, each occupying different segments of the trunk.

## STREETWISE

Tony Carter

I visit my allotment nearly every day. The entrance and path into the site have a tarmac surface sufficient to take the weight of a delivery lorry. I park my car outside on the public highway. On a visit in September, I found a group of *Coprinellus micaceus* (Glistening Inkcap - right) growing in the gutter from a crack in the highway.



A couple of years ago a large beech tree in an adjacent garden blew over in a storm. I assume that the fungus is growing from the old roots.

A couple of days later, I found *Xerula radicata* (Rooting Shank - left), also in the gutter on the other side of the driveway of the adjoining house. I assume from the same tree roots.

In October *Lacrymaria lacrymabunda* (Weeping Widow - right) started growing through the allotment path for the second year running.



Interestingly, just before the tree blew over, *Pholiota squarrosa* had been growing out of the tarmac path. Afterwards a large *Meripilus giganteus* (left) grew from the same spot so the demise of the beech was probably inevitable. A few years before, I took a photograph of this species growing out of a wall some twenty yards away. I cannot say if it was from this tree. There may be another beech tree in trouble.

Looking through my records, I find that street fungi are not unusual. Twenty years ago, I have records for *Xerocomellus chrysenteron* (Red Cracking Bolete) from the same path. Some years ago, I found *Coprinus comatus* (Lawyer's Wig - below) growing out of the pavement on the other side of

the road. I have seen this fungus growing through the surface of a tennis hard court.

So, your street and pavement might be a good foray site. Just remember not to bump into a lamp post while looking. Interestingly, the one I have not yet found in a street environment is *Agaricus bitorquis* (Pavement Mushroom).



## KESWICK 2021

The Centre is booked for 1 - 4 October 2021. Hopefully by then we'll be back to normal (or near enough for the foray to go ahead.

Further details will be sent nearer to the date

## How I Survived the Virus

It buoyed me up during the most traumatic six weeks of my life. Never will I forget that lovely Get Well card from all my friends in the North West Fungus Group featuring an exquisite sketch of *Helvella lacunosa*. Thanks a million Kerstin Nagel, Sherry Stannard and John Watt for a start.

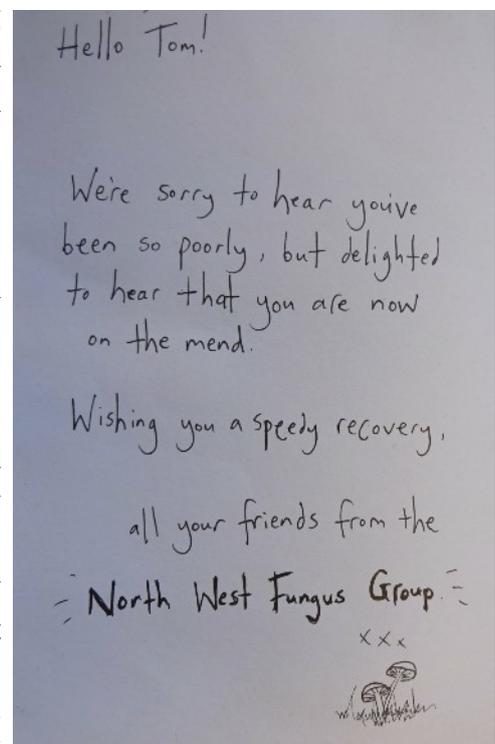
The curse of Covid-19 almost ended my life. Things looked pretty grim at one time in hospital. A doctor phoned my daughter to say “Prepare for the worst” and hinted that I could “go” in the night. What the medics didn't reckon for was my mental toughness honed by surviving desperate situations on high mountains together with the competitive cut-and-thrust of daily paper Journalism. Stubborn I am too.

Eventually still feeling tired and unwell, I was stretchered from the ward to a waiting ambulance via a “guard of honour” of applauding nurses. They knew that, against all the odds, I'd beaten that nasty virus. Then came more than four weeks in a rehab centre. The peace, after the hellish cacophony of coughing which characterises coronavirus, was almost indescribable.

Now safely back home, I am enjoying one-man forays on two local golf courses. With apologies to Tony Carter, well-manicured greens and fairways are not the most productive for forays. No pars yet on my rounds! My score is Identified Fungi 6, Lost Balls found 3. For the record, my miserable card was Honey Fungus, Fairy Inkcap, Artist's Bracket, King Alfred's Cakes, Fly Agaric and a lone Penny Bun which wasn't worth picking for the pot.

Curiously, among mini forests of silver birch, I didn't spot a single Polypore. If and when this deadly pandemic finally ends I look forward to joining you all on those fantastically friendly forays.

**Tom Waghorn**



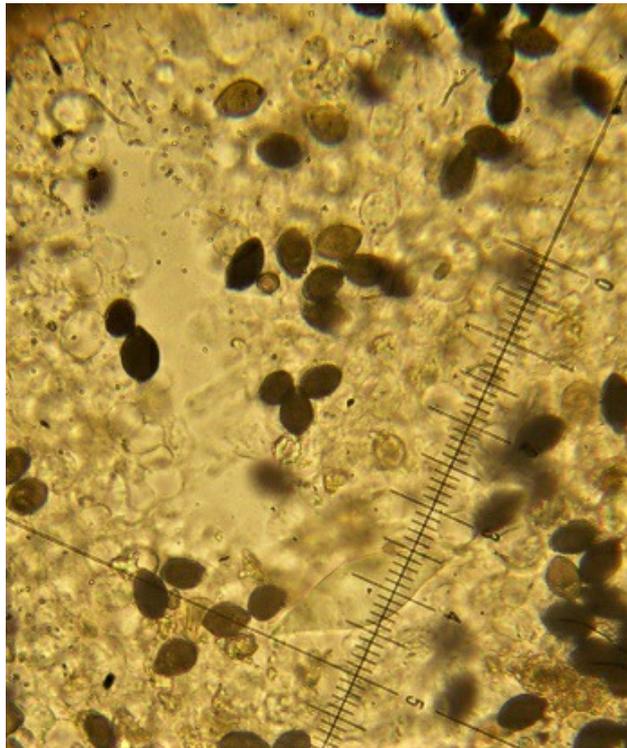
# Behind the Veil

Tony Carter

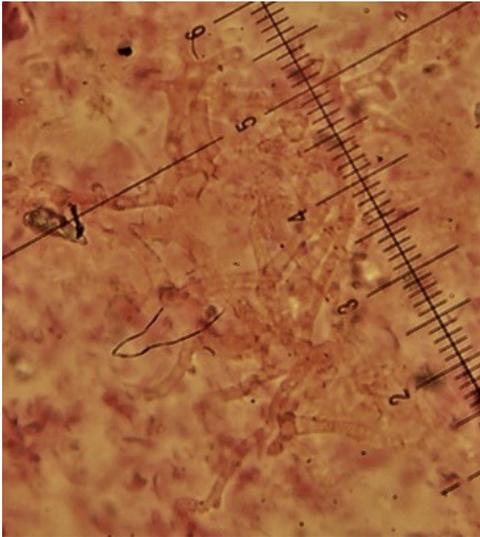
After a couple of days of rain in June, I thought it would a good time to visit Ainsdale Sand Dunes Reserve to see if anything was showing on the dunes. However, it had also been windy, the blown sand having covered the Marram Grass so little chance of finding anything. I dropped back to the dune slacks where dozens of *Agrocybe pediades* (Common Fieldcap) were growing. I noticed a small hole in the sand, surrounded by bits of charcoal from burning scrub that had been cut down. On examination, I saw three small inkcaps in the hole.



I thought of *Coprinellus angulatus* that we found on our last visit to Freshfield Heath. But the youngest of these specimens had a veil. This is most important when trying to identify firesite inkcaps. By the time I got home two of the inkcaps had collapsed but I was able to put the survivor under a microscope. Spores averaged 7-8 x 5-6 $\mu$ m.



Older books refer to *Coprinus lagopides* as a bonfire fungus. This name has been reassessed and if smooth spored is now *Coprinopsis jonesii* (Bonfire Inkcap). The veil of this contains elongate sausage shaped elements which were not in my specimen. *C. lagopides* is now *Coprinopsis phlyctidospora*. This has warted spores and a veil with diverticulate elements, an anatomical description of a cell that has outgrowths. My specimen has diverticulate elements with what look like encrustations but no warted spores. My photographs attempt to show these diverticulate elements but sand under the coverslips made things a bit difficult.



My conclusion is that I have *Coprinopsis gonophylla*, described on the British Checklist as rarely reported and collected but apparently widespread. Not surprising when you consider how rarely you come across a firesite inkcap. My main literature resource is *Studies in Coprinus* by Kees Uljee - <https://grzyby.pl/coprinus-site-Kees-Uljee/species/Coprinus.htm>

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## ERYSIPHE SEDI - A POWDERY MILDEW NEW TO THE UK.

Tony Carter

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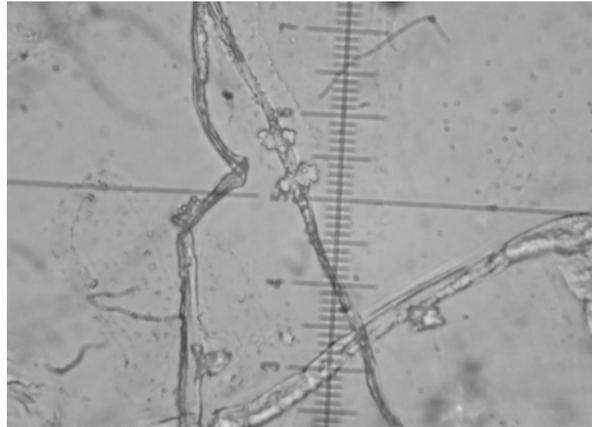
In my garden are four clumps of an ornamental Sedum that I have had for over thirty years. I examine these plants regularly as when the stems die and age, a small black spot fungus grows on them (as yet unidentified). This year, two of the clumps supported a powdery mildew not seen before. As I could not find a UK record for such an occurrence I researched further. In their book, *The Powdery Mildews of Wales* by Chater and Woods, there is a reference to *Erysiphe sedi*. This seemed an obvious choice until John Taylor pointed out it was not recorded in the UK. But neither is there a UK record for a powdery mildew on Sedum.



I found a Hungarian research paper from 2006 describing three *Erysiphe* mildew species on Sedum, two of them producing conidia singly, which matches my specimen (conidiophore left). Both are Asian but *E. sedi* has spread to North America and Eastern Europe. John Taylor came up with more papers on *E. sedi* from 1981 and 2015 which also match

my specimen. Also referred to is *E. orontii*. This mildew is recorded from the UK on various hosts but not on Sedum. However, the conidia for this species are produced in chains.

Another difference is in the appressoria, swellings along the hyphae (right) that allow the fungus to access the host's cells. In *E. orontii* they are nipple-shaped, in *E. sedi* they are lobed. My specimen is lobed.



I am confident that this is *Erysiphe sedi*. John Taylor agrees and Arthur Chater commented that it is 'something to look out for, and it looks from photos to be very conspicuous'. I have been informed that an earlier record is claimed from last year but it has not been recorded.

I have offered it to Kew and await a response.

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## View from the Chair, Autumn update, November 2020

The view remains bleak, I'm afraid, and no residential weekend at Keswick materialized nor the microscope workshop and any 'normal' forays.

It's also not clear when or if we can resume normal forays but we are preparing a foray programme, with most of those missed this year repeated, and the Keswick Convention Centre has been booked for 1 – 4 October . With so much uncertainty we also plan to hold our February AGM online as a Zoom meeting, if necessary, and hope that our President (Geoffrey Kibby) can give his usual talk via Zoom.

In September and early October when restrictions were less stringent we did manage to hold a few mini-forays: six or nine people booked in advance and with social distancing. They were very nice (I managed to attend one) but so sad that numbers were restricted. We also managed to hold Zoom meetings for the people involved in DNA sequencing and will let you all know later how things are going.

So keep 27 February free for a Zoom AGM (instructions on how to join will come later), keep an eye out for winter fungi, and here's hoping for a better 2021 – with plenty of fungi.

**Irene**