

LEICESTERSHIRE FUNGI STUDY GROUP



NEWSLETTER No. 30

WINTER 2023

A few years have passed since we last published a Newsletter, but a lot has been happening this year. So, we thought it was time for one to update everyone about our activities.

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NEW MEMBERS

There has been a lot of interest in the group during the year, mostly through our website, and we are pleased to welcome 16 new members to the group. We hope they will

enjoy our meetings and forays and increase their knowledge of Leicestershire & Rutland's fungi.

LFSG TRAINING COURSE, RUTLAND WATER

As many of you may know, the LFSG received a substantial bequest from Tom Hering's estate to support our activities. We identified training in fungi identification techniques as an area in which we wish to invest for the future and so we arranged training for members led by Carol Hobart, who provides regular courses for the British Mycological Society (BMS).

Thanks to the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT) and Tim Sexton, their Species and Recording Officer, we were able to make use of the excellent facilities at Rutland Water Volunteer Centre. Twelve members met there on a very hot Saturday morning in September. The plan for both days was to collect specimens in the morning, so that we had material to discuss, and to practice our identification skills later in the day, using descriptive keys and microscopic examination. Despite the hot, dry weather, we

still managed to find decent specimens to work on.

It was a wonderful opportunity to learn from Carol, who is an experienced mycologist and trainer, and to learn and share with other members on the course.

Ann & Phil

BMS ASCOMYCETE TRAINING COURSE, CUMBRIA

I attended this course arranged by the BMS, which was based at the University of Cumbria campus in Ambleside on 24-28 August. The course was well-attended, and it was also a chance to get to know other people in the BMS who are interested in field mycology, as well as to learn some new techniques. The course was very good value: £140 for four days accommodation, and, being self-catering, people could buy food locally, or bring their own which reduced the cost.

The first day was spent settling into the teaching room and listening to a talk on Ascomycete groups by Brian Douglas, a very knowledgeable mycologist, who was the Coordinator of the BMS's 'Lost and Found' fungi project. For field work, we split up into smaller groups and visited woodlands to search for Ascomycetes, then returned to examine them in the teaching room with help from Brian. Carol Hobart, who organised the course was also on hand to give advice and help with examining specimens.

Further talks followed in the evening, including one by Marcus Yeo on Hyphomycetes (fungi not known to have sexual reproduction). These are an ecologically important, but highly neglected

group of fungi, nearly all of which have been shown to be closely related to known Ascomycete genera. This pattern was repeated for the next two days. On the final day, we had a general recap and examination of our finds, then left at lunchtime.

While there, I had a chance to talk to Stuart Skeates (BMS Database Manager) about transferring our records to the BMS's Fungal Record Database of Britain and Ireland (the FDBI), and to Brian Douglas about doing DNA analysis, which is becoming possible at home with the advent of the Bento Lab portable DNA analyser. (For further information on this equipment, see <http://bento.bio/>). If you are interested in this topic, have a look at the talk by Irina Druzhinina and Eric Janke entitled 'Using DNA barcoding to identify fungi: two perspectives' on the BMS's YouTube channel: see <http://youtu.be/9qw6sVt-vm0>.



Leotia lubrica, Jelly Baby, at Skelghyll Wood. Photo © Geoffrey Hall.

It was a great way to learn new skills and meet some new mycologists, and I would urge LFSG members to consider attending training courses that the BMS organises and are heavily subsidised for Members. The membership subscription is currently £21 for the first year, then £38 per year.

Geoffrey

WAXCAPS PAST AND PRESENT

Waxcaps are often in the news, as they are colourful and are being promoted by conservation organisations such as Plantlife, because, together with some other selected fungi, they can be used to evaluate the quality of a grassland for conservation purposes. They are used to calculate the CHEGD (Clavarioids, Hygrocybe, Entoloma, Geoglossum, Dermoloma) score, which determines whether the grassland is locally, regionally, nationally or internationally important, and is also used to designate a SSSI for its fungi.

In 1996, the BMS began a project to record waxcaps and other grassland fungi with the aim of producing an inventory of species-rich grasslands to inform conservation. Peter Long and Richard Iliffe were both involved, although Richard left after the first year as he was already committed surveying forestry land. Based on the fungi that Peter recorded, Roeclyffe Manor was designated a SSSI and as a nationally important site for grassland fungi. Bradgate Park, was also designated as nationally important, but it was already a SSSI (but not for its fungi, sadly.) Specimens of the grassland fungi at Roeclyffe Manor were deposited in the Leicestershire Herbarium (LSR) held by Leicestershire Museums at the Collections Resources Centre (CRC), Barrow on Soar. As they provide evidence for the designation of this site as a SSSI, they function as voucher specimens i.e., they are proof that the fungi were there, and they can be checked if need be.

In 2020, after the restrictions of the first Covid lockdown had been relaxed, Richard Gornall, who was then Director of the Botanic Garden, gave me several boxes of specimens,

books, and notes from Peter's former office at Leicester University that he had been keeping at home. I sorted the material and deposited the specimens and notes in the CRC; his books are now in the LFSG library. This year, I went back to the Museum and cleaned the fungi specimens, matched them up with their recording cards and produced a catalogue of the 211 specimens in the boxes. There also were seven record cards without specimens, but these are still useful records. These specimens supplement those that had already been added to the Museums' Collection in previous years.



"Raw" specimen with grass and moss.



Cleaned specimen preserved in a plastic bag.

On to the present day. This year, two sites were visited that were found to be rich in species of grassland fungi.

First, there was a group visit to Ibstock Cemetery (see *Sites Visited This Season*), where we recorded 27 fungi; they included six clubs and corals, and 11 waxcaps, giving a CHEGD score of 17, which makes it **nationally important** and there are undoubtedly more to be found at this wonderful site.

Second, Sophia Attwood-Clarke, Reserves Officer for the LRWT, contacted the LFSG to see if we would like to record fungi in the grassland areas at Dimmingsdale Reserve, so that they could be included in the management plan that she is revising. The Reserve has been visited by our group in the past, and we have 904 records of 273 fungal taxa from the period 1975-2019 in our database, nearly all from the woodland area, so the grassland areas were of great interest. There wasn't enough time to arrange a group foray, so Ann & Phil went on behalf of the LFSG. Two visits were made in November and 23 species were found including two clubs and 13 waxcaps, which makes this Reserve **regionally important**.

In addition, Tony Fletcher led a lichen walk at Peckleton churchyard and found some interesting specimens, including *Ramalina farinacea*, which is returning to VC55 with the reduction in air pollution. He also noted several waxcaps in the grassland.

Sue Timms (former Principal Ecologist at Leicestershire County Council) got the waxcap recording bug and visited several churchyards and cemeteries, mostly in the North-west of Leicestershire. She produced a report with the

aim of defining criteria for designating a grassland as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) on the basis of its fungi. This is needed as no sites in VC55 have been designated a LWS for their fungi yet. This report is on the LFSG Website (see *Publications*) and contains some good photos of the fungi she found, as well as some distribution data.



Ballerina Waxcap, *Porpolomopsis calyptriformis*, at Ibstock Cemetery. Photo © Geoffrey Hall.



Rough Club, *Clavaria rugosa*, on the edge of a grave at Ibstock Cemetery. Photo © Geoffrey Hall.

The importance of these sites will be reported to the Leicestershire & Rutland Environmental Records Centre at County Hall with some conservation advice. Conservation of grassland sites for waxcaps is fairly simple: don't add fertiliser or lime to the soil to 'improve' it; don't disturb the turf, as this disrupts the mycelium; and keep the grass mown short before October. Hopefully it should not impose a great burden on the cemetery maintenance and reserve management teams, so the sites can be maintained for the fungi to give pleasure to future generations.

A PROJECT FOR 2024?

Grasslands have been recorded by the group in the past, but mainly in nature reserves. It is clear from this year's records that some churchyards and cemeteries are excellent sites for grassland fungi, as some of them contain areas of old, undisturbed meadow, managed only by mowing. So, maybe a group project could be to record grassland fungi in churchyards and cemeteries next year and for a couple of years afterwards. We are fortunate that two Members, Stephen Woodward and Helen Ikin, have surveyed all the churchyards and many of the cemeteries in Leicestershire and Rutland for vascular plants, so by examining their records we can determine which ones to target. Often the plants associated with flower-rich meadows survive, but sometimes they are much reduced. However, maybe the fungi are still there, so a more extensive study of grassland fungi in these sites in VC55 might reveal some unrecorded gems.

Geoffrey

THIS SEASON'S FORAYS

Despite the slow start because of the hot, dry weather in September, the rains finally came and temperatures dropped, and there were fungi in abundance from mid-October until the end of November, making 2023 a very productive year overall. We benefitted from collaboration with the National Trust (NT), LRWT and Loughborough University, and visited several new sites.

This season's forays kicked off on 16 September with a visit to **Willesley Wood**, the first woodland planted at the inception of the National Forest. The weather was still hot and dry, but we were able to record 22 fungi, including several brackets, a Collared Earthstar (*Gaeastrum triplex*), Chicken of the Woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) and some fungi with persistent fruiting bodies, such as Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*). This site is still comparatively young, but does have some older trees, and so ought to produce many more fungi, so perhaps we'll try again next year later in the season.

Our next visit was on a rainy 23 September to **Hicks Lodge / Newfields Wood**, which is a fairly recent plantation on former colliery land and where we recorded 29 fungi in two monads (1km squares). The trees have few mycorrhizal species, but a good list of common species, mostly saprotrophs and wood-inhabiting species, was made, along with some plant parasitic rusts and powdery mildews including Red Raspberry Yellow Rust (*Phragmidium rubi-idaei*, a Basidiomycete) and Clover Sooty Blotch (*Cymadothea trifolii*, an Ascomycete).

The woodland at **Lax Hill, Rutland Water NR** was a new site for us when we visited on 1st

October courtesy of the LRWT. Despite the dry weather leading up to the meeting, we recorded 39 fungi, with some rarely recorded species (see *Significant Finds*). We found a good number of Suede Bolete (*Xerocomus subtomentosus*) and Burgundydrop Bonnet (*Mycena haematopus*), but the Bay Polypore (*Polyporus badius*) fungi at this site were variable and generated a lot of discussion. It was lovely to see the delicate Bonnet Mould (*Spinellus fusiger*) on an unidentified *Mycena*. We also recorded some fungi in the grassland leading up to the wood, but this was being grazed and produced fewer species.

UK FUNGUS DAY

On 7 October, we celebrated UK Fungus Day with a 'Bring a friend to a foray' event at **Burbage Wood**. Twelve attendees enjoyed a sunny morning and found a good variety of specimens, including the brightly coloured *Pluteus aurantiorugosus*, Hen of the Woods (*Grifola frondosa*), Weeping Widow (*Lacrymaria lacrymabunda*), living up to its name, and five varieties of *Mycena*, including Blackedge Bonnet (*Mycena pelianthina*).



Forayers at Burbage Wood. Photo © Chris Peat.

We are grateful to the BMS for the donation of information leaflets, pens, notebooks, magnifying rulers and tee shirts.

Joint Foray at Charnwood Lodge NNR. A visit to Charnwood Lodge was organised on 11 October following a request from the Charnwood Forest Regional Park Project Officer, Isabel Raval, for a combined foray with her volunteer group, and we welcomed 12 guests. This well-recorded site produced some of its specialities characteristic of acid grassland such as Garlic Waxcap (*Hygrocybe helobia*) and Honey Waxcap (*Hygrocybe reidii*), several mycorrhizal species such as Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), and several brackets, such as Hoof Fungus (*Fomes fomentarius*) and Birch Polypore (*Fomitopsis betulina*) on Birch. Vaughan demonstrated the use of chemicals for identification, by dabbing potassium hydroxide (KOH) onto the flesh of an Ugly Milkcap (*Lactarius turpis*) which produced an immediate purple colour. We recorded 49 fungi and the guests made notes about the fungi we showed them and all seemed keen to continue recording fungi in the future.



Examining some grassland fungi at Charnwood Lodge. Photo © Chris Peat.

We were pleased to be able visit **Holywell Wood** on 22 October. This wood is now part of the Loughborough University campus and is

not normally accessible to the public. We visited by courtesy of Richard Fenn-Griffin.

Part of an ancient woodland site, but much altered by human activity over the years, it is now mostly Ash and Oak in wet clay soils and a section of drier ground with Birch. We recorded 38 fungi with some interesting finds that included two waxcaps, Butter Waxcap (*Hygrocybe ceracea*) and Oily Waxcap (*Hygrocybe quieta*) in a grassy clearing in the wood. Very near the end of the foray, we made our best discovery, which was Coral Tooth (*Hericium coralloides* - see *Significant Finds*) on an old fallen Ash tree.

Stoneywell Wood was another new site for the group, which we visited courtesy of the National Trust on 28 October. This wood forms part of the grounds of Stoneywell Cottage and consists of mature Oak trees with some mixed shrub understorey, typical of Charnwood Forest. Our foray passed through the formal gardens, with its mix of native and exotic trees, where a large specimen conifer revealed Greening Coral (*Phaeoclavulina abietina*) and Milky Bonnet (*Hemimycena lactea*) in the needle litter.

Of the 49 fungi we recorded, notable finds in the woodland included a large number of Blood Red Webcap (*Cortinarius puniceus*, one of the easier *Cortinarius* species to identify). A keen-eyed spotter in our group found the very small (2-3mm) Holly Parachute (*Marasmius hudsonii*) with its beautiful needle-like hairs on the stem and cap, visible when viewed with a hand lens. This species is found only on old, decayed leaves of Holly. We found several specimens of Common Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*) including in their early stages as 'witches eggs'. Contrary to their name and reputation, most of us could not detect a

significant smell. Also pleasing to find was its diminutive cousin The Dog Stinkhorn (*Mutinus caninus*) and a large colony of the Coral Slime Mould (*Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*) on a log by a stream.



Mutinus caninus at Stoneywell Wood. Photo © Stephen Woodward.



Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa at Stoneywell Wood. Photo © Stephen Woodward.

In a new departure for us, we visited two sites in one day on 4 November; **Ibstock**

Cemetery and Market Bosworth Country Park.

Despite the threatening skies, little rain fell, and we were treated to a massive display of 11 waxcaps and six coral fungi at Ibstock Cemetery which make it of regional importance for these fungi, and there may be other species that we didn't see on the day of the visit.

We recorded 20 fungi in the Country Park arboretum that has a bewildering collection of introduced non-native trees and shrubs, many of which are now mature. It yielded a varied collection of saprotrophs and some mycorrhizal species, including Beech Milkcap (*Lactarius blennius*), Plums and Custard (*Tricholomopsis rutilans*) and the unusual Pinkgill *Entoloma subradiatum* (see *Significant Finds*). After the foray, we were invited to Irene's house, where we were treated to tea and home-made cake.

On 8 November, we visited **Martinshaw Wood** and re-traced the route that was taken for the 'LFSG Millennium Year Project'. (see the website under *Publications*). The transect is dominated by Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) but has an open section where Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) was planted, and is very wet in one region. Parts of the transect had changed little, but some sections had been cleared and were much more open, the brash and stumps having been left on site allowing a variety of wood-inhabiting fungi to colonise them.

Although we spent two hours on site, it would have been easy to have spent a lot longer, as there was a diverse collection of fungi to see, including 7 species of *Mycena*, *Pluteus richardii*, a large stand of huge Shaggy Parasol (*Chlorophyllum rhacodes*) in

conifer litter, Greening Coral (*Phaeoclavulina abietina*), Jelly Tooth (*Pseudohydnum gelatinosum*) and Violet Jellydisk (*Ombrophila violacea*). We recorded 49 fungi, of which 30 had been recorded in 2000, and 19 were new.



Phaeoclavulina abietina at Stoneywell Wood. Photo © Stephen Woodward.

Fosse Meadows was a last-minute choice on 15 November, following our discovery that our intended destination, the woodland area of Narborough Bog, had been cordoned off because of the weather. Fosse Meadows is still a young site and has many fungi characteristic of early succession and colonisation but is no less interesting because of that. The grassland had no fungi present, but the woodland plantations, paths and wood chip on borders provided a total of 28 fungi including several common species. We were impressed by the dinner-plate size of the fruiting bodies of Clouded Funnel (*Clitocybe nebularis*) on the edge of the wood. The small group of Blue Roundheads (*Stropharia caerulea*) had been recorded on our last visit and it was nice to see them again.

Our final planned foray was to **Cademan Wood** on 26 November. Following a sharp

frost most fungi were beginning to shut down for the winter. However, in the shelter of the woodland, there were still many species to see and we recorded 39 fungi. Particularly prominent were the Field & Wood Blewits (*Lepista saeva* and *L. nuda*, respectively).

We would like to thank those Members who have helped to organise and lead forays this year, and also the following people for their help and cooperation:

Amy Beaumont, Property Operations Manager, NT Stoneywell

Isabel Raval, Charnwood Forest Regional Park Project and Surveys Officer

Richard Fenn-Griffin, Assistant Gardens Manager, Loughborough University

Tim Sexton, Senior Species and Records Officer, Rutland Water Nature Reserve

Ann, Phil, Irene & Geoffrey

SIGNIFICANT FINDS

It has been a good year for new and unusual species, among which the following are notable.

Entoloma subradiatum, a Pinkgill: Market Bosworth Country Park. A First County Record.

Geastrum pectinatum, an Earthstar: Lax Hill, Rutland Water NR. The Third County Record.

Hericium coralloides, Toothed Coral. Two sites have been found: one at Holywell Wood and another near Gumley. This fungus was protected under Schedule 28 of the Wildlife &

Countryside Act until 2006, when its protection was removed, as it was found to be much more common than previously thought. It is still protected under Section 41 of the Environment Act and Rural Communities Act (2006).



Hericium coralloides at Gumley. Photo © Michael Dobson.

Hypomyces microspermus: Lax Hill Rutland Water. A First County Record for this Hyphomycete fungus that grows on xerocomid Boleti.

Mycena pelianthina, Blackedge Bonnet: Lax Hill Rutland Water. First County Record; closely followed by a Second County Record at Burbage Wood.

Ombrophila violacea, Violet Jellydisc: Martinshaw Wood. The first record since 1975.

Pseudohydnum gelatinosum, Jelly Tooth: Martinshaw Wood. The first record since 1977.

Geoffrey

FORAY DETAILS AND RECORDS ON THE WEBSITE

Unless otherwise advertised, forays are limited to members of LFSG. We are, however, keen to encourage new members and guest visitors are welcome to attend with prior notice.

The names of recorders and determiners are removed from foray reports but are retained in the records that will be passed to the BMS, when they are used according to their data sharing agreement with the National Biodiversity Network (NBN).

Also, *please* send me any casual records that you make, as you may visit sites that we as a group don't visit or wouldn't normally visit. Although records are not being added to the FRDBI at the moment, they will be uploaded shortly when I have decided on the best way to do it after consulting with the BMS Database Manager.

Geoffrey

INDOOR MEETINGS 2023

Geoffrey's presentation in January 'Recording fungi in Leicestershire and Rutland' is now published on the website and stimulated a lot of questions and ideas about the Group's future strategy, which was discussed further at a constructive open meeting in April. Tony reminded us about 'Basic Fungal Biology', and Irene's review of 'Fungal Diseases in Man' and their prevalence and treatment shed a different light on mycology.

The identification meetings in October and November, led by Phil and Ann, were very well attended, with plenty of fresh specimens to discuss, and members were encouraged to identify what they had brought, with the aid of microscopy and spore prints, and the help of other members.

The Christmas meeting on **14 December with seasonal refreshments** is awaited.

Irene

INDOOR MEETINGS FOR 2024

The programme is awaiting confirmation, but meetings will be held on: **January 25, February 22, March 28, and April 25.**

Topics are likely to include 'Dung Fungi', 'Fungal Succession in a Millenium Wood', 'Ash Dieback', and 'Waxcaps'.

Irene

AGM ADVANCE NOTICE

The 2024 Annual General Meeting will take place on **Thursday, 28 March 2024** at the Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel, 45 East Bond Street, Leicester, LE1 4SX.

Martin Cooke & Ben Devine stood down from the Committee at the AGM on 23 March 2023, so there are now two places vacant. If anyone would like to join the Committee, please get in touch. We meet a couple of times a year before an indoor meeting and the duties are not onerous or time-consuming.

Irene

NEW FACEBOOK GROUP

The group has set up a new Facebook group which we hope can be of value to members as a place to share sightings and other information. The group will be a private group only open to LFSG members. Members will shortly receive an e-mail which will give an option to join the group. Your request will then be verified by the Membership Secretary.

If you wish to opt out of this, please let us know at: membership@lfsfg@gmail.com

We will continue to communicate with you by email and via the website.

Phil & Ann

STOP PRESS!

A fungus new to England was found just over the county border in Nottinghamshire at Rufford Colliery near Mansfield by Tim Sexton (LRWT, Rutland Water).

He found the Ascomycete *Sarcoleotia globosa* in 2022 but had to wait until its identity had been confirmed by DNA analysis at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and then added to the English Fungi Database. He then refound it this year on 28 October. It is in the *Geoglossaceae* family and is related to Earthtongue fungi that are often seen in grassland and lawns.



Fruiting bodies of *Sarcoleotia globosa* at Rufford Colliery.
Photo © Tim Sexton.

Tim notes that: "The fruiting bodies were between 10mm and 20mm in height, stipe between 1mm and 3mm broad, cream in colour and with a darker cap that was almost globular on younger specimens and later become more flattened. Asci were 8-spored, and the ascospores from all the fruiting bodies I looked at were multi-guttulate and aseptate (as they mature, they apparently

become multi septate...a few were 1-septate). Ascospores were either straight or slightly curved, measuring around $35\mu\text{m} \times 3\mu\text{m}$ on average."

These specimens were mostly in the wetter parts of the heathland (which has been established over the last twenty years on the former colliery) amongst the moss *Polytrichum*, although it is considered that they have a mycorrhizal association with Ericaceous plants. Previous finds of this fungus were in Wales and Northern Ireland, both times on land that had been dug out of coal mines. There is a lot of accessible land on former coal mining areas in VC55, so there is a good chance that it is here too. But it is only about 1cm tall and is easily missed.

Geoffrey & Tim

RUSTS AND SMUTS

Paul Smith, the botanical Recorder for the Outer Hebrides, gave a talk at the recent Botanical Recorders Meeting held at Preston Montford on fungi. Paul is not only an excellent botanist but has been recording rusts and smuts on the plants that he finds in the Hebrides. He has found some unusual and very rarely recorded fungi called root smuts, which are like the smuts we see locally on the aerial parts of plants, but which occur underground, forming nodules on roots. The nodules contain masses of white spores which decay to release the spores into the soil. They are very poorly known and there could be some in VC55. His talk entitled 'Exploring Plant Parasitic Fungi' can be found on the BSBI's YouTube channel at:

<https://youtu.be/RsDM2azGScY>

and is well worth a look if you want to find out more about this wide-spread group of fungi.

Geoffrey

...AND FINALLY

Geoffrey, the Editor, would like to thank all those who have contributed articles and/or photos for this Newsletter. Your contributions are much appreciated.



*We wish all our
members a
Merry Christmas
And A
Happy New Year*



Velvet Shank, *Flammulina velutipes*, at Cloud Wood. Photos © Martin Cooke.

This fairly common, edible fungus appears in the winter months, growing in clusters on dead hardwood.