

## Fungi of Wyre Forest

JOHN BINGHAM

Fungi comprise of a Kingdom of their own yet despite being such an important group they are poorly recorded compared to vascular plants, and botanists still outnumber mycologists many times over. Fungi are difficult to record because of their seasonal nature and infrequency of occurrence. This is not helped by the nomenclature and taxonomy that is still in a state of change that just adds to the difficulties in identifying fungi. It is estimated that in a given area the number of fungi will outnumber vascular plants seven or eight fold. So in the woodlands of Wyre, with perhaps 700 vascular plants, there could be over 5,000 species of fungi.

The Wyre Forest was recorded quite extensively for a period of 35 years around 1888 to 1923 by expert mycologist Carlton Rea. He published his paper and list of fungi in the Transactions of the Worcestershire Naturalists Club entitled The Fungi of Wyre Forest. (Rea 1923) His list numbered 1,391 species. I'm not aware of any longer list of fungi recorded for the forest. It would be interesting to update Rea's list using the modern taxonomic changes and revised names. It could then be combined and compared with more recent records from the British Mycological Society forays and other recorders such as the late Neville Wilde (Wyre Forest Study Group Review 2000) and my own list of c.700 species and those of other recorders. Now we have a checklist of the British & Irish Basidiomycota from Kew it should be a bit easier to sort out all the excluded taxa and to check synonyms.

Here is a sample of a few of the more uncommon species that have been recorded recently. Remarks are taken from Kew's online Checklist of Basidiomycota by N W Legon and A Henrici.

*My extra comments for Wyre Forest are given in a bolder type.*

England (E), Scotland (S), Wales (W), Northern Ireland (NI), and the Republic of Ireland (ROI). (c) common, (o) occasional (or infrequently reported), (r) rare (or rarely reported), (!) present, but frequency unknown, (?) reported, but the report is doubtful or uncertain.

### **Cortinarius violaceus (L.) Gray** *See cover picture*

**Conservation Status:** Endangered (Red Data List, ed. 1); Near Threatened (Red Data List, ed. 2)

**Habitat:** On acidic or peaty soil, in open deciduous woodland, often associated with *Betula* spp., also known with *Fagus*, *Quercus* and *Pinus* spp., and occasionally with *Pteridium* on heathland. This is a Wyre Forest speciality! Most of the Wyre Forest sites appear to be

on disturbed ground (even on land cultivated for a short time) and dominated by mature birch. Recorded over many years but rarely common. Phil Rudlin discovered the best site in 2003 near to Park House when dozens of fine specimens appeared. This site appears to have been cultivated about 60 years ago?

**Notes:** Occasional but widespread. Most often collected in Scotland and northern areas of England, becoming rare further south.

**Distribution:** E: !, S: o, NI: !, ROI: !



*Cortinarius violaceus*

John Bingham

### **Clavariadelphus pistillaris (L.) Donk**

(171 records in BMS checklist)

**Conservation Status:** None

**Habitat:** On calcareous soil, in woodland, usually associated with *Fagus*. In Wyre this species typically occurs in oak woodland, in acidic ground with an open, mossy ground flora with bilberry and a scattering of weak bracken.

**Notes:** Occasional to rare, and possibly declining. Widely scattered throughout mainland Britain, and a single record from Northern Ireland. Just three records over the last 20 years most along the slopes along the Dowles Valley.

**Distribution:** E: o, S: !, W: !, NI: !



*Clavariadelphus pistillaris*

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## **Gomphidius maculatus (Scop.) Fr.**

(248 records in BMS checklist)

**Conservation Status:** None

**Habitat:** On soil, associated with *Larix* spp. Only a few records from Wyre larch near Breakneck Bank in 2006 growing with *Suillus*.

**Notes:** Rarely reported or collected but apparently widespread. Why this species appears so scarce in Wyre is a mystery as larch is frequent in the forest? It does appear to have a close association with *Suillus grevillei*, the larch bolete, and *Gomphidius* tends to prefer younger or isolated larch trees?

**Distribution:** E: !, S: !, W: !, NI: !, ROI: !



*Gomphidius maculatus*

John Bingham

## **Hygrocybe calyptriformis (Berk.) Fayod**

**Conservation Status:** Vulnerable (Red Data List, ed. 1); BAP species.

**Habitat:** On soil in unimproved grassland, including open glades in woodland. Unimproved pasture grasslands and mown forest rides.

**Notes:** Occasional but widespread and may be locally frequent. In Britain, far too great an emphasis has been placed on the supposed rarity of this species although it is useful as an indicator of old grassland habitats. On the water pipetrack, an orchard, and notably in good numbers on grassland at Willow Bank, Bliss Gate, but could be in quite a few of the old pastures around the Wyre Forest!

**Distribution:** E: o, S: o, W: o, NI: o, ROI: o, Other: Channel Islands: !

## **Entoloma nitidum Qué.**

**Conservation Status:** Rare (Red Data List, ed. 1)

**Habitat:** On soil, often in boggy areas in coniferous or mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland.

**Notes:** Very rarely reported and less often collected. Apparently widespread, but reports of this species in Britain show a distinct bias towards northern areas, although recorded as far south as East Sussex (Ashdown Forest). An unmistakable taxon! Recorded from Kinlet in dense *Picea* woodland, my only record (identified by Kew). This habitat is widespread in Wyre but perhaps not a very interesting place to foray in?

**Distribution:** E: !, S: !, NI: !

## **Squamanita paradoxa (A.H. Sm. & Singer) Bas.**

**Conservation Status:** Vulnerable (Red Data List, ed. 1); Near Threatened (Red Data List, ed. 2)

**Habitat:** Parasitic on *Cystoderma* spp. British material is all on *C. amianthinum*.

**Notes:** Rarely reported or collected and little material in herbaria. Seemingly rare but widespread. My only record on the water pipetrack at Longdon in 2004 and not see there since. The host species *C. amianthinum* is quite common in grassy places throughout the forest. (WFSG Review 2004)

**Distribution:** E: !, S: !, W: !, NI: !



*Squamanita paradoxa*

John Bingham

## ***Strobilomyces strobilaceus* (Scop.) Berk.**

**Conservation Status:** Vulnerable (Red Data List, ed. 1)

**Habitat:** On soil, usually with *Fagus* and less often *Carpinus* in mixed deciduous woodland, occasionally with conifers such as *Pinus* spp. in mixed woodland. Scattered records from the oak woodlands along the River Severn valley such as Eymore and Seckley Wood, but can occur in coniferous woodland.

**Notes:** Occasional but apparently widespread, and may be locally abundant in areas such as the Welsh borders (Severn Valley). Not reported from Ireland (Co. Down) since 1880. English Name is 'Old Man of the Woods'.

**Distribution:** E: !, S: !, W: !, NI: !



*Strobilomyces strobilaceus*

John Bingham

## ***Clavaria greletii* Boud.**

**Conservation Status:** Endangered (Red Data List, ed. 1); Endangered / B (Red Data List, ed. 2)

**Habitat:** On soil in deciduous woodland, and recently collected amongst grass on fixed dunes. Found on

one of our Roxel survey visits by Rosemary Winnall in 2005. The habitat was on acidic bryophyte-rich, mown grassland (identified by Kew).

**Notes:** Very rarely reported or collected. Known from England (Shropshire and South Lancashire). Reported from Oxfordshire and Westmorland but unsubstantiated with voucher material. This was one of the species Rea thought of as being 'noteworthy' and he (and his daughter Violet who collected it) found it in 1922 on a charcoal heap at Breakneck Bank. The Roxel site has been disturbed and might have been used to burn rubbish, and it would be interesting if this could be proved!

**Distribution:** E: !



*Clavaria greletii*

Rosemary Winnall

## ***Guepinia helvelloides* (DC.) Fr (*Tremiscus helvelloides*)**

**Conservation Status:** Rare (Red Data List, ed. 1)

**Habitat:** On soil amongst grass in woodland glades, and a single collection on a spoil heap by a coal mine.

**Notes:** Rarely reported or collected. British collections from widely scattered locations in England and Wales with the majority from around the English-Welsh borders. A single collection from Scotland (Stirling: Doune Ponds). This is a genuinely rare taxon in Britain, the very distinctive basidiomes making it unlikely to be overlooked or misidentified. Found by Neville Wilde and this species occasionally turns up along grassy, but slightly disturbed edges to forest rides.

**Distribution:** E: !, S: !, W: !



## Clavaria straminea Cotton.

**Conservation Status:** Vulnerable (Red Data List, ed. 1); Near Threatened (Red Data List, ed. 2)

**Habitat:** On acidic or calcareous soil, amongst short turf, or occasionally in areas of scrubby woodland. On the steep bank near Dowles Brook at Wimperhill, on wet, bare soil under scattered bramble. (Identified by Kew)

**Notes:** Very rarely collected or reported, but apparently widespread.

**Distribution:** E: !, S: !, W: !, NI: ?, ROI: !

## Rhizopogon luteolus Fr. & Nordholm,

**Conservation Status:** None (261 records in BMS database)

**Habitat:** Epigeous or subhypogeous in sandy acidic soil, usually associated with *Pinus* spp. My few records just above the surface of the soil with Scots pine at Wimperhill Wood. The species is ectomycorrhizal and thought to play an important role in the ecology of coniferous trees, especially pines possibly in association with *Lactarius deliciosus*, which can be an indicator when looking for it!

**Notes:** Common in Scotland and occasional in England (but may be locally very abundant). Rarely reported or collected elsewhere. English Name = 'Yellow Beard Truffle'. This species is quite common in the New Forest and might be overlooked in Wyre as it barely appears above the soil surface!

**Distribution:** E: o, S: c, ROI: !



## Mitrula paludosa Fr., 1821 'Bog Beacon'

(NB an Ascomycete)

**Conservation Status:** None (531 records in BMS database)

**Habitat:** In wet roadside ditches, water filled tractor ruts or on damp ground near spring flushes in woodland. Nearly always growing on submerged decaying oak leaves.

**Notes:** Widely scattered but locally frequent in some areas such as North Wales, North Sussex, around Leeds, Galloway and the New Forest. Scarce in the Midlands but could be frequent in the Wyre Forest. As this species fruits in the early spring and, given the special habitat and distinctive yellow sporophores, is easy to identify. So let's make this a species to record in the spring of 2008. Wyre Forest could be the best place in the Midlands to see this species!

**Distribution:** E: o, S: o, W: o, NI: r, Cl: ?



## References

- Rea, C. (1923) The Fungi of Wyre Forest Transactions of the Worcestershire Naturalists Club Vol VIII, 1923-1931 pages 16-40
- Bingham, J. (2004) Squamanita paradox in the Wyre Forest, Shropshire 2004 in Wyre Forest Study Group Review 2004. page 21-22
- Wilde, N. (200) The Fungi of Wyre Forest in Wyre Forest Study Group Review 2000. page 41-44
- Legon N W and Henrici. A. Kew's online Checklist of the British & Irish Basidiomycota with P.J. Roberts, B.M. Spooner & R. Watling. Database designed by J.A. Cooper and supported by P.M. Kirk