

BMS Recording Network News

December 2022

To: BMS Recording Network Contacts
Cc: BMS Field Mycology & Conservation Committee members

From: Nathan Smith, BMS Recording Network Coordinator

1. Upcoming Online Talk: Bryophilous ascomycetes: a microscopic El Dorado

The next **BMS Talk** is on the 18th of January and is certain to be of interest to field mycologists. Despite the large numbers of active mycologists and bryologists, the diverse fungi that grow on mosses, liverworts and hornworts have been largely neglected in the British Isles. In this talk, George Greiff - PhD student researching plant developmental genetics at the University of Bristol - will discuss how mosses and liverworts interact with ascomycete fungi, briefly introducing the bryophytes as hosts, and giving an introduction to the main groups of ascomycetes he focuses on. George will also outline his study methods and highlight a selection of his favourite fungi.

Book via Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/486711756967>

2. New Year, New Role

The BMS is currently reviewing all roles and their functions including that of the BMS Recording Network Coordinator. Whilst talks are currently going on as to how the role will evolve, I would very much appreciate any feedback you have on what you want from the BMS Recording Network Coordinator and how I can be doing the role better. Please send any comments to cwe.smith@gmail.com

3. Slime Mould Collections at the Kew Fungarium: An update

Slime mould type specimens collected by David W. Mitchell have finally been accessioned and incorporated into the Kew Gardens Fungarium collection of dry fungi. Despite slime moulds not technically being included in the fungal kingdom, the 56 type specimens have found their new home. The specimens were collected from a wide range of places across the globe, including Europe, Australia, Africa and Asia as well as Southern and Northern Europe. Many interesting localities were noted and one I particularly enjoyed was the famous Serpent Burial Mound in Ohio USA, in which *Trabrooksia applanata* was collected. Databasing the slime moulds was a lovely experience, not only because of the specimens themselves but also the range of small, cute containers they were kept in – old match boxes appear to be the most common with many of the specimens sitting snugly in them. With the collection came David's meticulously kept field notebooks. Deep purple in colour and with his small golden initials in the corner of each book, clearly David took pride in his field data collection as his notes were also beautifully written for each specimen collected.

Amy Junnonen

4. Lets Get Digital: Getting the Kew Fungarium Online

Following the securement of a £10 million government grant in October 2021, the mass digitisation of the collections at Kew, including those of the fungarium, was underway. This project will contribute towards the growing network of open access reference material online and provide a wealth of resources for researchers, scientists, and the public. In particular, the fungarium collection holds over 1.25 million specimens, which span the breadth of the globe and date back centuries.

To achieve this, a team of digitisation officers, quality assurance officers, curators, and various other teams have combined forces to ensure the project operates smoothly. This includes assigning each specimen with a unique identification number, imaging the specimens, and transcribing all associated information into a handy online database.

Whilst the process may appear simple, the reality of completing such a task can present challenges. As the team was specifically created to complete this project, the construction of workflows, databases, and systems is occurring simultaneously to the bonding of a new and ever-growing team with a large array of backgrounds and expertise. Whilst this has the potential to create tension, a large multifaceted team will ensure that the project is completed within the outlined 4-year time frame and all possible avenues regarding processes and outputs are considered. Another challenge to consider is the complexity in taxonomically identifying fungi species. Consequently, the curatorial organisation of the collection can frequently change, and specimens can be moved and potentially missed. Furthermore, many of the specimens currently in the collection are stored under outdated names, so a keen eye and extra care are required to ensure that these specimens are correctly transcribed.

As one of the largest and most well-stocked fungaria in the world, the digitisation of the Kew collection is a mammoth undertaking, but one that is very important for science, research, and conservation efforts. With this valuable scientific resource soon to be freely available online, the conceivable uses of such a resource seem endless. In addition to providing a collection index, which will allow researchers to identify whether Kew possesses specimens appropriate for their studies and decide whether it is necessary to visit the collection, valuable information will be stored in the database, including temporal and spatial data, which can be used for various types of scientific studies without ever visiting Kew.

Improved access to the information stored in the collection will have huge benefits regarding research, which could have knock-on effects in areas of science that are lacking. For example, the lack of fungi specimens included in IUCN Redlists has been documented on multiple occasions. This oversight could mean that certain ecosystems are not accurately represented in conservation efforts as key species, which provide vital ecosystem functions and network links, are not being considered in the assessments.

In this new digital age, access to information is continuing to improve and transform, with endless application possibilities. Being part of such a transformational project is a thrilling endeavour and one to be held at the highest esteem.

Rachel McCarthy

5. Norfolk Fungus Study Group Fungus Day 2022

This year the Norfolk Fungus Study Group (NFSG) decided, for the first time, to celebrate UK Fungus Day! We noted that the date coincided with a fungus event already planned at The Ted Ellis Reserve at Wheatfen, about 10 miles south of Norwich, so we decided to make this a joint event and expand the day.

The day started with a public foray, attended by about 30 people and supported by 10 members of the NFSG. We were pleased that the public group included a wide range of ages - from young children through to more senior citizens (most of which were members of the NFSG!).

We spent about 2 hours in a piece of woodland where the group enthusiastically searched for and found over 70 species of fungi, despite the dry weather which had preceded the foray.

Everybody then returned to the workroom for refreshments and where members of the NFSG had set up a photographic display of local fungi plus a display of some more 'exciting' specimens such as Field Bird's Nest Fungus/Cyathus olla. Some spore prints had also been created which proved fascinating for the visitors. In addition, a couple of microscopes had been set up to enable people to look at the fine details of the fungi and see the different shapes of the spores. This proved especially interesting to the children.

One member of the group, interested in micro fungi, set up a display of plant pathogens entitled "50 Shades of Grey" which caused some amusement.

It proved to be a really successful day and thanks to Will Fitch, the warden at Wheatfen for hosting the event.

Stephen Pinnington



6. News from Overseas

John Taylor, who is also a member of the Netherlands Mycological Society, has (rather fantastically) translated their journal for distribution to Recording Network members (with full permissions of course). The translated journal is attached and John has wonderfully volunteered to give summarised updates of future news from the Netherlands Mycological Society so as to keep us all “in touch with the Dutch”.