

**BMSRN
Group Leaders Meeting
Alston Hall Preston
25th to 27th of June 2010**

Friday June 25th

After arrival and an evening meal at 7:00pm the attending group leader delegates enjoyed a presentation from Dr David Minter on his experiences, as part of the Darwin Project, in various Countries including some from the former Soviet Union. This included various projects relating to conservation of rare and endangered species of fungi.

Saturday June 26th

Introduction and Apologies

Sheila Spence welcomed all attendees to the weekend event. There were no apologies received from anyone who had proposed to attend.

Opening Address by BMS president Lynne Boddy

BMS President, Lynne Boddy, presented the new format of the BMS as agreed at the Special General meeting held in February 2010. There will be three distinct sections or committees under the umbrella of the BMS. Each of these would have a specific remit to further the overall aims of the BMS, from supporting the Field community, encouraging educational outreach and supporting fungal research. The question asked and ably answered by Lynne Boddy was 'Where are we now and where are we going?'

Using a selection of PowerPoint slide presentations LB illustrated the changes and restructuring within the BMS and how this would work to encompass all the different needs of the members.

A debate about the difference between this new structure and its committees as opposed to the previous structure then took place.

LB then presented the Council nominations for 2011 to be approved at the AGM in November. The procedure for electing members to the new committees was explained further to previous discussions, emphasizing how open to the membership it is. She also explained the procedure of having representatives from the other committees attending meetings of each committee, to ensure transparency and create cross committee working relationships.

Stuart Skeates, BMS Vice-President and Chairman of the Field Mycology and Conservation Committee (FM&CC), then introduced the members of the (FM&CC) present at the meeting. He highlighted that the new structure gives groups greater access to BMS resources through the FMC with the relative autonomy now enjoyed by the Field Mycology aspect of the BMS.

Lynne Boddy returned to speak about the finances, explaining that, as with most Charities and Businesses, the current economic climate and a declining membership mean the 'real' income of the BMS is down somewhat. The contract with the publisher Elsevier gives a fairly secure income up to 2015, but after that things may be more challenging.

Paul Kirk commented on perceptions attached to the emerging 'open access publishing' and the impact this will have on BMS journal revenue. It may create new opportunities while closing off current income streams. Membership & Publications. Looking at the realistic costs of publishing and supplying journals to the membership. LB explained the current disparity in charges for the different journals and the level of subsidy currently enjoyed by some journal recipients. This subsidy can not be realistically maintained within the current economic climate. The rationale behind differing costs was expounded by Graeme Walker as that of

economies of scale and disparity in readership of certain journals. It was suggested that the Field Mycology journal could be promoted to the general public to increase sales and attract similar economies of scale to other publications.

Stuart Skeates mentioned the new option for BMS members of electronic access to BMS journals, with the possibility of extra features in the online version to encourage a shift from hard copy to e-access.

The discussions then moved onto the topic of membership and what the membership fee is actually used for. This should include outreach and expanding mycological interest to the wider society, rather than individual return on monies spent.

Stuart Skeates posed the question, 'How does BMS funding help the fungus groups? The three schemes currently in place are;

- Small Grants Award, open to BMS members who need financial assistance to help fund a project or purchase equipment for their group.
- Speakers Funds to enable groups to pay a speaker to address their group and broaden their knowledge of specific areas.
- The Young Persons Award which takes the form of a voucher giving discount on the accommodation and other charges set out on any booking form for a meeting or foray of the British Mycological Society.

Other ideas will be looked at as the three new committees establish themselves.

New BMS Website Stuart Skeates explained that the website discussed at the last group leaders meeting had failed to be realised, due to the Company going bust. After exploring options it had reluctantly been decided to pursue an alternative web designer. From a short list of three considered by a Council approved group, a partner had been chosen. This Company 'Souk' will create a new website in time for the main BMS meeting of 2010 at IMC9. Staffing issues have slowed delivery but things are on track for an August delivery. SS then presented the proposed format of the site in a PowerPoint presentation, demonstrating the proposed functionality of the site and the role the groups would have within it. The specific sections relating to the new committees would be populated by the Chairs of these committees and their delegated members.

Lynne Boddy thanked Stuart Skeates for all his hard work on this vital project for the BMS and Sheila Spence thanked both Lynne and Stuart for their input to the meeting.

FRDBI Update Paul Kirk presented the progress enjoyed since the last Group Leaders meeting in 2008.

He reminded members of what FRDBI actually is. A database of the fungal records held relating to Britain and Ireland. It can be mined for many kinds of data dependent on the needs of the enquirer.

- 200,000 new records have been added in the last 2 years.
- 1356 new names have been added to the checklists therein.
- Of these 625 are 'new' current names including taxonomic changes.
- 300 of these new names are new UK records, mostly microfungi,
- But 38 are larger basidios.
- In conclusion there is still so much to learn about UK fungi.

There has not been as much progress as might have been wished in the last few years.

The schedule for uploading a new copy of the FRDBI to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) gateway has not been realised. It is accepted that a new web interface is needed to be more recorder friendly with contemporary ease of functionality. It is hoped that once the new BMS website is completed, the focus can shift to enhancing the FRDBI. Creative Commons, Paul explained what this meant and how it affected our records. Only records in the public domain are fully open on the FRDBI website.

The issuing of licenses will allow people to view web content and indicate what is permissible to use it for. Responses from other parties have tried to imply the site has links with non-scientific groups, who have a separate agenda, and cannot therefore be scientifically valid.

It was suggested that restricting the availability of the information would inhibit planning and environmental decisions. There were concerns that allowing open access to all information could impact on vulnerable species, and perhaps restricting total access to specified agencies might be better. Stuart Skeates proposed that only a limited number of species be kept 'obscured' within the data fields. A discussion ensued about how best to address local record centres and the needs of planning departments in relation to sensitive species data.

RBG Kew -Update (Paul Kirk)

The agreement has recently been signed between CABI and RBG Kew to work together on mycological projects/issues. There are currently 3 mycologists employed at Kew, David Minter, Paul Cannon and Paul Kirk. The reference collection at Kew now holds 4000 specimens. Martyn Ainsworth has recently taken up a paid position at Kew in the area of Conservation, funded jointly by Kew and Natural England. Kew is currently looking to appoint a new mycologist whose remit will include molecular biology as well as mycology.

Conservation Officer Report & the Red Data List (RDL)

Bruce Ing had supplied a report on the conservation aspects of the BMS work, and the issue of Red Data Lists for attendees to familiarise themselves with prior to this meeting. He opened up the floor to discussion and responses.

David Minter pointed out terms such as 'not evaluated' and 'data deficient' and asked if negative results of forays were recorded alongside positive finds?

Bruce Ing responded that this sort of data is recorded but only in those species perceived to be on the increase, not those declining and may not therefore be the same thing.

It was opined that a criteria to categorise and record specimens needs developing to make it easier to draw useful and meaningful conclusions.

A debate on the merits of 'negative' result recording ensued.

This ended with the agreement that the emphasis given to the difficulties of fungi monitoring be replaced with a 'can-do' or 'how-to' attitude through use of training and instruction schemes.

Stuart Skeates proposed looking at areas with a history of certain species as a rationale for the future. Using an 'eco-system protection' basis, preserving the area or habitat, rather than the individual species in isolation.

BMS Administrator report and CRB checks.

Norman Porrett, BMS office administrator, reported on the field mycology aspects of the BMS office. The role of Field Mycology assistant was now held by Sophie Embleton who unfortunately had been unable to attend the weekend meeting. The various field groups across the UK had been contacted by Sophie and group affiliation details and insurance were just about completed. The increasing drive for efficiency and economy have meant that the BMS Newsletter is now available through electronic e-access mostly, and from 2011 will only be accessible through this channel. Information and articles are always welcome from the groups and they need to ensure that the office has all the latest information such as contact email address and named group leader on file. The development of the new BMS website will also be a great benefit to the groups who can submit their foray programmes and newsletters to the site, where they will have a section just for fungus groups. The office gets a lot of fungus related enquiries specific to certain areas of the UK and it would be desirable to have a list of locally based field contacts to refer enquirers to. This could also benefit the groups by increasing their exposure and swell their membership.

An area of possible concern had been raised at a meeting of the new Field Mycology and Conservation committee (FM&CC) in relation to fungus groups and their liabilities when taking children on forays. What level of legal checks, if any, may be required to protect both the children and the foray leaders in these situations? After consulting the Governmental sites on both Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), it was felt that the field groups holding forays did not need to be either CRB or ISA checked as the events they organized were not within the scope of 'regulated activities' as defined by the legislation. Any foray event that allowed children to attend must ensure a parent or designated

guardian accompanied the children, and these individuals would then be responsible for the children's safety and well-being. As long as field events were not specifically aimed at children then there is no legal requirement for foray leaders to be CRB or ISA checked.

Further information and clarification can be found at www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk and www.isa.gov.org.uk

Fungi: the Natural England Approach (raising the profile of fungus)

After lunch Natural England Ecologist, Pete Stevens, gave a presentation where, through a series of slides, he explained Natural England's efforts to raise the profile and attention given to fungi was going. Starting with a look back at how it all started, where they were at now and moving on to how they envisaged work going in the future. Apart from Martyn Ainsworth who has now been appointed as NE Mycologist (50% of his time at Kew) Pete explained the functions of others within NE working with fungi. This included:

- Evidence team -
- Biodiversity
- Plants and Fungi Group
- Ian Taylor, Senior Specialist
- Ben McCarthy, Species Recovery Programme Manager
- Pete Stevens, National Fungi Champion

He went on to explain how fungi can be incorporated into their environment schemes including HLS including: Targeting- preserve the habitat of fungi, 62 agreements made - to address fungi management, Habitats - woodland, wood pasture/parkland, likened also to management of archeological features. The Future - Martyn Ainsworth to take on much of Natural England's technical advice provision, survey work, monitoring and research. Pete Stevens is to continue the partnership work currently involved in and some technical casework. Closer working ties with field mycology groups envisaged and identification of lead BAP partners. Natural England's Priorities for the Future are: BAP fungi, RDL fungi, Raising the profile of fungi, Novel ways of monitoring fungal populations, Interagency work and cross border co-operation. Anyone wishing to contact natural England can email Pete Stevens on Pete.j.stevens@naturalengland.org.uk

Dataval: editing location data on the FRDBI (Liz Holden).

From the print outs supplied by Liz Holden, the aim of this present review is to produce 'a more internally consistent database' This included a plea to the fungus groups for volunteers to assist with this huge task. To start input herbariaunited.org/gridrefVC/ into a search engine, and use this to confirm grid references before uploading fungus location data to the FRDBI. Further instructions and guidance can be found in the handout supplied, and volunteers need to contact Liz Holden if they wish to be involved.

Scottish Natural Heritage (Graeme Walker) - Conservation of Fungi in Scotland

An overview of the current situation within Scotland was presented with the information and resources that are looked for from supportive groups such as the BMS. As with Natural England, the current economic climate means that funding for environmental and conservation bodies is being frozen, squeezed or stopped altogether. There two key questions that need addressing are;

- How do we know a fungus is rare?
- Is rarity important?

Use the focus on the more obvious attraction of fruiting bodies, emphasize the cultural importance of fungi, Fruiting bodies easier to monitor and assess, emphasise the importance of fungal diversity and education about the dependency of plant species on fungi.

Protected Site versus Wider Countryside Management?

The current guides to conservation are being reviewed based on economic constraints, with environmental conditions, protected sites and habitat qualification criteria monitored over time.

There is cross Society pressure to have fungi included more in conservation efforts of the BMS and other international Agencies or Societies.

Scottish Natural Heritage is always receptive to information about the location of species, to enable them to apply for funding to preserve the habitat and the species. Just like Natural England and other concerned conservation organizations, they rely more and more on local groups to assist with this.

Foray Manager report (Carol Hobart)

BMS meetings and workshops 2010 - 2012

Aims of the Foray Manager for 2011;

- Increased participation particularly of younger individuals.
- Bring down the costs of holding and attending.
- Attract more individuals from the field groups' network.
- Supplement the groups' offering to its members in return.
- Vary the length of the meetings
- Involve or work with other organizations
- Training events to target BAP/RDL habitats
- Ensure the quality of data provided to the FRDBI is maintained.
- Develop camaraderie and good working relationships
- Run very enjoyable events

A concerted effort should be made to bring in beginners to fungi/forays with an 'Introduction to Fungi Identification for Beginners' 2 day course possibly. CH asked for feedback from those present. A lively discussion ensued.

Fungus Conservation Forum Update (Lynne Boddy)

LB has spoken with both Plantlife representatives and Pete Stevens of Natural England and it is hoped the next forum will be announced soon.

RDL -Martyn Ainsworth will take the lead in this area and hope to create a framework of 'ground rules' against which the list can be judged.

Following the evening meal Dave Shorten gave a short presentation on Recording and Databases, including a Q&A session on difficulties of getting permission to foray from some landowners/land managers and a brief discussion about CATE, the database run by the ABFG. This was then followed by the usual database workshop run by Paul Kirk.

Sunday 27th June

RENF update (Liz Holden)

Liz Holden started the day with a progress report on the working group looking at the system of Recognized English Names of Fungi. The handout supplied informed those attending of the current table of names and invited feedback and suggestions to advance things further. These can be sent to the BMS office and will be collected and collated by the Field Mycology assistant Sophie Embleton, and regularly sent onto the working group for consideration. Given the huge number of species currently without an 'English Name', the process is set to continue for many years to come. A debate about the usefulness of the English names agreed that they were extremely useful for involving the general public, as they are more memorable, but that the scientific Latin names are equally useful and very necessary for more consistent identification.

Publicity and Public Outreach (Lynne Boddy)

Looking at the public aspects of the work the BMS is involved in including:

- RHS shows, Malvern, Chelsea, etc. LB expressed the BMS' thanks to George & Sheila Spence for their continued hard work.

- Earthwatch Debate, the topic 'What is the Most Important Organism on the Planet'? The Honey Bee won, but fungus was recognized as being very important too.
- Chelsea 2009 – the large backdrops used there are available for use by the fungus groups, but the new FEO committee are designing smaller more transportable pull-up stands for flexible display usage.
- Fungi on the 4th Plinth- The Anthony Gormely art event in Trafalgar Square featured Martha Crocket (ex-Cardiff University student) and Dr Patrick Hickey (Edinburgh) raising the profile of fungi through this much reported event.
- From Another Kingdom - an exhibition in association with Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, starting during the main Scientific meeting of 2010 IMC9 in Edinburgh. A huge event held in the RBGE visitors centre and staying for months afterwards. A specifically BMS themed weekend event will take place in October 16th -17th including lots of activities to involve the whole family. LB asked for volunteers to help out to contact her through the BMS office. Those based in Scotland may be best to keep costs down and be more readily available.

It is proposed to take this exhibition, or a large part of it, on tour round the UK and LB asked those present for suggested venues. A book will also be launched to coincide with the event, aimed at the general public. IMC9 Edinburgh as mentioned above, the main BMS Scientific meeting for 2010 as part of this huge international event. A special edition of the BMS Newsletter will be available to showcase the many aspects of the BMS.

Other Projects (Stuart Skeates) Stuart mentioned the 'ispots.org' website and 'Neighborhood Nature' the latter similar to the 'wildaboutbritain' site. Both worth a look.

He then went on to explain about OPAL - the Open Air Laboratory project where £11M of lottery money funding is available to organized groups who submit an acceptable plan to use the funds for educational events. There are guidance notes on the application criteria on the website <http://www.opalexplornature.org/?q=Societyfunding>

Questions to the Panel - Stuart Skeates and members present from the BMS Field Mycology and Conservation committee took questions from attendees. Discussions ensued on: Increasing membership, groups and BMS, Role of the local groups, Joint Fungal projects and How can everyone work together to promote mycology.

Using a brainstorming format Stuart asked those present what the role of the local groups encompassed. The suggestions received were graded according to how much they featured in responses, with recording being the most prominent as the most important function of a fungus group.

There was also a suggestion to create a course to help group leaders in newly formed groups, with basic rules and hints to help get things up and running quickly.

Carol Hobart raised the question: 'Should the BMS continue with a foray program, or have the local groups take this role on'. Bruce Ing and others present responded that the BMS should continue with its organized forays, as the BMS can cover areas without involving the groups, and have access to expertise.

Joint Fungal Projects - the group leaders present were asked to break into groups of 3 to discuss what, if any, projects they feel could be done as cross group activities.

There were many ideas put forward from cross group recording, recording on specific types of site or concentrating some time on a specific species to gain more knowledge.

The meeting closed at 12:45pm with thanks from Sheila Spence to all attendees and presenters. The next meeting of the Group Leaders will be in two years from now.

Those present are asked to consider what time of year would be best to hold it, and to submit ideas for possible alternate venues to her email address. [sheila.spence @btinternet.com](mailto:sheila.spence@btinternet.com)

This is an abridged version of the full minutes taken by Norman Porrett at the meeting. If you wish to receive a copy of the full version please contact me.

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