

A HAMPSHIRE MYCOLOGIST

By E. W. SWANTON, A.L.S.

Fungus Foray

A FUNGUS Foray, attended by about 35 members, was held at Itchen and Micheldever Woods on Tuesday, October 16th, 1934. Permission to visit Itchen Wood had been given by Mr. George Philippi, M.C., and Micheldever Wood by the Royal Forestry Commission and Mr. T. S. Mitchell, C.A.

Fungi were abundant in Itchen Wood, the most noticeable species were *Pluteus Bullii* (on sawdust), *Amanita muscaria* (in troops under young birches), *Ganoderma lucidum* and *Clavaria fusiformis*; uncommon ones included *Lycoperdon velatum*, *Lepiota hispidula*, *Lepiota Bucknallii*, *Pluteus patricius* and *Amanita nitida*.

Before entering Micheldever Wood the leader, Mr. E. W. Swanton, A.L.S., read a short paper on mycological work by the late Rev. W. L. W. Eyre in the Swarraton district: he exhibited a razor strop and other domestic objects made from *Polyporus betulinus*, and coloured sketches of rare Hampshire fungi found by Eyre. Fungi were scarce in Micheldever Wood. Of the larger species *Coprinus comatus* and *Lactarius torminosus* (abundant) were the most conspicuous; of uncommon species the most noteworthy were *Hypholoma leucotephrum* and *Cortinarius triumphans*.

One hundred and thirty-eight species were listed during the day. After tea at Lunways Inn, the leader commented on the most interesting finds and spoke about fungi in general with special reference to the methods of spore dispersal.

A well-known Hampshire Mycologist

We are meeting to-day in a district that will always be associated by students of British field mycology with the work of a well-known Hampshire mycologist, the Rev. William Leigh Williamson Eyre.

In 1875 Eyre was appointed Rector of Swarraton and Vicar of Northington. Born at Padbury, Bucks, in 1841, he took up the study of fungi early. He was a member of the Woolhope Club in the later years of its mycological work, and was an enthusiastic supporter of the British Mycological Society from its foundation in 1896 till his death in 1914.

Between 1887 and 1890 Eyre contributed valuable lists and notes on Hampshire fungi to the *Proceedings* of the Field Club. The first list (in 1887) comprised the white-spored agarics noted by Dr. M. C. Cooke in the New Forest and those gathered by Eyre "within the ten years either in the park or woods of 'The Grange' near Alresford." A statement indicating that he commenced to

keep a record of local fungi two years after he came to Swarraton. Three more lists were published, but the four lists were sent as a supplement to his paper on Hampshire Clavarias, which, however, did not appear till 1893. In that paper he described fourteen species under popular names and without reference to localities. The most noteworthy are the Amethyst Clavaria (= *C. amethystina*), the Reddish Clavaria, "an uncommon form but found in the New Forest" (this may have been *C. formosa*, a rare species closely allied to *C. flava* and *C. aurea*), and Lady Arden's Clavaria (= *C. Ardenia*, a near relative of *C. fistulosa*).

In 1894 Eyre contributed to the *Proceedings* a paper, illustrated by a coloured plate, on "A new Hampshire Fungus," an agaric found by him growing on soil amongst leaf refuse in a wood between Abbotston Down and Grange Park. "Nothing to compare with it," he wrote, "has hitherto been found in Britain, one only in the United States, and another in Brazil. Each of the latter is remarkable for green spores, which in our species may be more exactly described as of a pale greenish blue colour." It was described by G. Masee under the name *Schulzeria Eyrei*, the generic name was subsequently changed to *Chlorospora*, and still later to *Glaucospora*. This little species, abundantly distinctive in the free gills and bluish-green spore map, has since been found in Yorkshire, Sussex and the Isle of Wight.

I think there is only one fungus named by Eyre—he preferred to send critical species to Kew—and this is *Schulzeria Grangei* found by him, in November 1902, on soil amongst beech leaves in Rectory Wood, Swarraton. It is figured, in colour, in Vol. II, *Transactions of the British Mycological Society*.

In October, 1899, Eyre read at the Lyndhurst meeting of the B.M.S. a very suggestive paper on Hampshire Fungi, and distributed to the members "A list of Fungi found in the County of Hants" he had specially compiled for the occasion. Over 580 species of Basidiomycetes were noted and the author was "congratulated on the accuracy of his work, seeing that only 46 species were added to the list during the week's foray by all the members, whilst 221 species enumerated therein were confirmed." In that list Eyre emphasizes the fact so well known to those who have made a long study of fungi in a particular area, that the appearances of some species are remarkably erratic. He mentions *Cortinarius azureus* and *russus*, *Lepiota Badhami*, *Russula aurata* and *citrina* as being erratic species; and remarks that *Cortinarius azureus*, *argutus*, *firmus*, *reticulatus*, *injucundus*, *subnotatus* and *triformis* are "species the county has produced for the first time in the British Isles."

Amongst chalk-loving species he lists *Amanita strobiliformis*, *Entoloma Bloxhami*, *Stropharia inuncta*, *Cortinarius dolobratius* and

rigens. He observes that "*Amanita strobiliformis*, thought very generally to be among the rarer kinds, is with us in the months of August and early in September extremely abundant, so much so that scores may be seen destroyed by the labourer's boot as he returns over the downs at the close of his day's work."

Eyre drew up the list of Hampshire Fungi (Basidiomycetes) published in 1900 in *The Victoria History of the County*. He enumerated 617 species, and remarked that "two of our parks, Avington and The Grange, have produced several species that have taken their proper place in Mrs. Hussey's *Illustrations of British Mycology* and Dr. Cooke's *Illustrations of British Fungi*." From his notes one gathers that "*Polyporus betulinus*, abundant on the trunks of decaying birch trees, is still (in 1900), in the cottages of Hampshire as in the peasants' homes in Sweden, used as an economical razor strop; and that truffle hunting is still practised in North Hants, "a small, rough, curly-haired poodle is used, and his vocation may be said to end about his eighth year."

In 1903 Eyre was elected President of the British Mycological Society. His Presidential Address concerned "Mycology as an instrument of recreation." In his own neighbourhood he had been asked, "What do you get out of the study of Fungi?" The query was answered in his Address. He pointed out that from our love of the study emerge ideas and thoughts of real value. We note differences, we learn to distinguish and thus increase the powers of observation, "in all walks of life an intelligent and educated eye is of service." Novelty is ever-present and luring us into the open air clears the "mind of the dust and cobwebs of too close an application to an absorbing occupation or professional business." He cordially endorsed the statement that "there is quite enough work to be done within the compass of a single parish to keep a man's mind fresh and vigorous, and to give him a chance of contributing something to the world's knowledge."

It is of interest to note that Eyre was educated for the Merchant Service and went to sea at an early age, but soon gave up a seafaring life. It has been observed that his geniality "seemed to have a trace of the sea." He was a fine example of a parson-naturalist carrying on the Gilbert White tradition, being an excellent all-round botanist and actively interested in meteorology, archaeology and zoology. He contributed to the *Proceedings* notes on the mollusca of the northern part of the County, on Godsfield and its ancient chapel, on a monumental brass from Brown Candover, on a newly introduced plant (a Grape Hyacinth, *Muscari comosum*) and on some Hampshire Brambles. In 1890 he published (undated) the "*History of Swarraton and Northington*."

His collections of Hampshire L. and F. Shells, Rubi and Mycetoza were given to Haslemere Educational Museum.