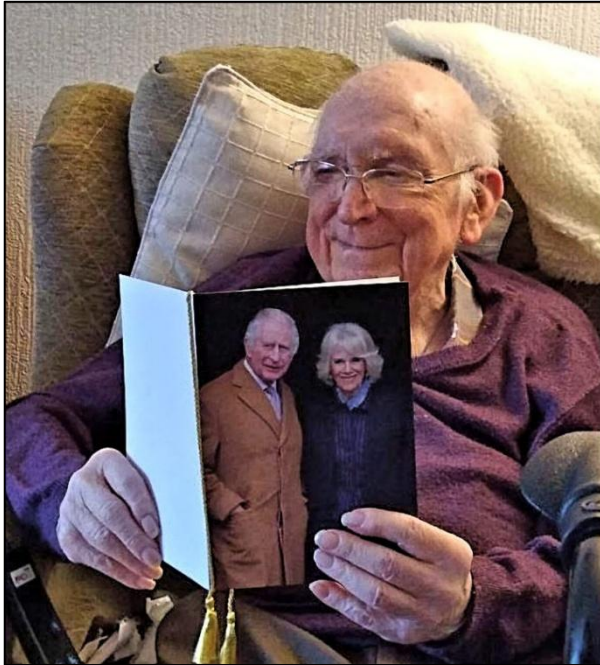


Edward (Ted) Blackwell

Founder, Chairman and President of the
Herefordshire Fungus Survey Group
(1924 – 2025)



On his 100th Birthday

I first met Ted Blackwell in 1999. By that time he was already a very well established and skilled field mycologist with particular expertise in the fungi and slime moulds of the West Midlands. He had been on the Committee for the publication of *A Fungus Flora of Warwickshire* alongside Bert Brand and was active in the survey and monitoring work preparatory to this. He was co-founder of the Shropshire Fungus Group, alongside Roy Mantle and Tom Preece, and he was a stalwart at Jack Marriott's Dean Fungus Group meetings. He founded the Herefordshire Fungus Survey Group (HFSG) in 1999.

Ted, along with four others, was at the meeting in the Forest of Dean in 1992 when the concept of a network of local fungus recording groups linked to the British Mycological Society was born: a pivotal moment leading to the establishment of over forty BMS affiliated groups today.

For fifteen years Ted was Fungus Recorder for Herefordshire and personally contributed a large number of fungus records to numerous sites throughout the County. Over 15,000 records determined by Ted are currently on the BMS Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland and over 100 of his specimens, collected between the 1960s and 2010s, are lodged in the Fungarium at RBG, Kew.

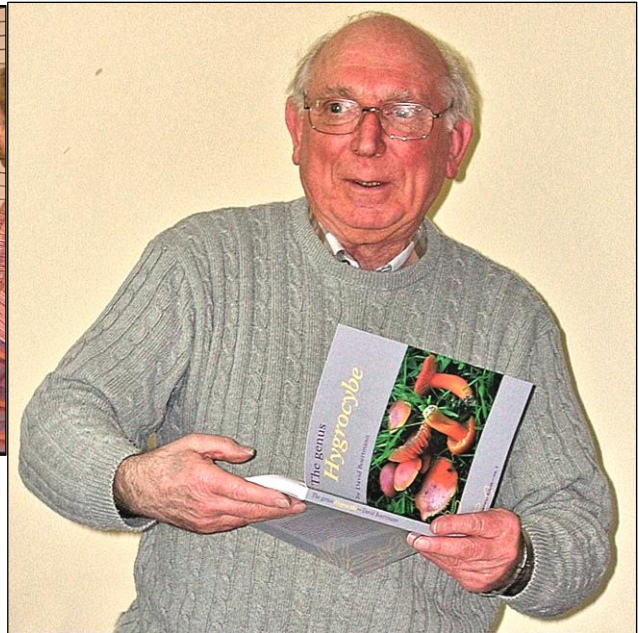
In 2003 he was awarded the British Mycological Society's Benefactors Medal for Services to Mycology.

As a young man Ted was apprenticed as an electrical engineer, but this career was put on hold during the Second World War, when he was placed in the REME vehicle recovery unit. He landed on the beaches of Normandy and worked through France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Denmark. In recognition of his contribution to the liberation of France, he was made Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur in 2016. After the war he was employed as works engineer at GKN Technology Centre. Taking early retirement meant that he and his wife Beryl were free to move to Herefordshire, an area they had grown to love.

Before the computer era Ted was an informative and entertaining postal correspondent to many a budding mycologist keen to improve their identification skills. To spread the fungal message more widely, he wrote many articles, not only for the Newsletters of the Shropshire and Herefordshire Groups, but also for *Field Mycology* and its forerunner, *The Mycologist*. Ted also ran several courses on practical microscopy for the HFSG.



Microscopy Workshop for HFSG members



Ted retires from HFSG chair (March 2002)

Meticulous in everything he did, he became expert in deciphering, whenever possible, the vascular structure of a piece of wood so that the associated organism could be properly recorded. No more 'host indet'. And he would take great pains to track down the etymology of fungus names.

Apart from mycology Ted was deeply interested in geology and fossils, attending extramural classes at Birmingham University for many years. He was also fascinated by the sheer beauty of the microscopic structures of fungi and Myxomycetes.

Ted's interest in the history of fungal recording naturally led him to his hero, Dr Henry Graves Bull (1818-1885) of the Woolhope Club, whose 'Forays among the Funguses' in mid nineteenth century Herefordshire not only established the word 'foray' for fungal field trips, but eventually led to the foundation of the BMS: Bull was the subject of many conversations and various articles. Forays with the Woolhope Club ended with a meal, a tradition which was, until recently, echoed by the HFSG. Though typically unassuming and self-effacing, Ted was a convivial companion and the table where he sat was invariably engulfed in laughter - such was his wit and fund of stories.

He was always scrupulous in discriminating between fact and surmise, whether in analysing data (eg identifying fungal species) or in written articles. He was forthright in correcting those who were not so conscientious. To those who genuinely wished to learn, however, he was prepared to give endless time and patience. Many of us owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

Although in recent years he had not been able to take such an active part in our foraying, he was still available to give advice and help and, until not long ago, a really difficult specimen would be greeted with the statement, "Here's one to go to Ted".

We shall sadly miss the founder and president of HFSG for his inspiration, knowledge and teaching skills but, most especially, his steadfast friendship and kind support.

Jo Weightman *et al*