

# MUSHROOM NEWSLETTER

24 June 2013

Well, you can't say the year has started well, but after a slow beginning the prospects are starting to look rather more promising. My foray-buddy Justin has just found a small circle of young St George's locally (about two months late) and I spotted my first chanterelles yesterday.

Things are beginning to warm up and the real star of the show is chicken of the woods. This normally emerges about now, but I was very surprised by the number erupting from local oaks on our foray last weekend.



Helen and Liz demonstrate determination

I didn't weigh our first (and best) find, but it must have tipped the scales at 1.5kg and it was in perfect condition. All the other outcrops we spotted were too small to harvest now, but should be 'ripe' in a week or two.

[Stop Press: My discoveries are echoed by reader Dinah Murray who has been finding plenty in North London as well as lots of dryad's saddle.] As usual, the best outcrops were just beyond reach – and naturally we didn't come equipped with a ladder, but Helen and Liz were un-aunted.

Liz ran back to Oxford (almost literally – with a three hour, 12-mile, dash up and down the Beacons) with enough for three meals. Meanwhile Helen and I stuffed ourselves on a risotto complete with fresh young broad beans and lashings of organic Caerphilly cheese.



A chicken of the woods and broad bean risotto – a perfect early summer combination (see website for recipe)

This still left us with almost a kilo of prime yellow mushroom. It doesn't dry well (simply continues to age to woody maturity), so the solution was to flash-fry and freeze in containers ready for this autumn's forays. As a result this year's guests will get to taste an out-of-season mushroom along with the usual porcini/chanterelle/hedgehog/parasol fare.



The best way to preserve chicken of the woods is to freeze – either in bite-size morsels or as finished dishes

The other news is that the smallholding's population is expanding. Helen and I are 'reclaiming' our hawks, Catie (lamb) is helping Poppy (terrier) chase squirrels and rabbits in the borders and we've invested in two Tamworths, Scrappy and Scoobie, to help with the search for truffles.



Meanwhile, there are two new additions to the smallholding: Scrappy and Scooby (eight week-old Tamworths)

Just in case they fail to find anything in our thin, acidic, soils (whisper it not, but *Tuber aestivalis* only grows in alkaline conditions), I've also dusted down my Kenwood sausage-making attachment.

Happy Mushrooms!

Daniel Butler

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P.S. As always, let me know if you want to be removed from the list and I will do it forthwith.