VARARIA OCHROLEUCA IN BRITAIN

D N PEGLER
The Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AE
& T W K YOUNG
Division of Biosphere Sciences, King's College, University of London, Campden Hill Road, London W8 7AH
& A HENRICI
57 Clarendon Road, London W11 4JD

Five years after the publication of *British Basidiomycetes*, Rea (1927) produced a list of additions and corrections. Amongst these was a record of *Asterostromella ochroleuca* Bourd. & Galzin, based upon a number of collections made between December 1922 and March 1927, by the Rev J Harvey Bloom, father of the best-selling romantic novelist Ursula Bloom. The collections, now deposited in the Kew Herbarium, came from Mickleham, Surrey, and all, except one July gathering, were collected during the winter months of December, January and March. This species has not been further recorded from Britain until February 1991, when abundant fresh material was found by one of the authors (AH) at the same Mickleham locality (TQ1753) in mixed woods on chalk. The rediscovery of this rare fungus allows the opportunity of providing a revised, illustrated account of its remarkable structure.

Vararia ochroleuca (Bourd. & Galzin) Donk in *Ned. kruidk. Archf.* 1930: 79 (1930).

Asterostromella ochroleuca Bourd. & Galzin in *Bull. Soc. Mycol. Fr.* 27: 266 (1911).

Basidiome broadly effused over woodland debris, loosely to firmly adnate but generally separable, dry, fibrous to cottony, rather fragile thin, 0.4 - 2 mm thick. *Fertile surface* (Fig. 2A) smooth to slightly tuberculate, light yellow (Munsell 3Y.8.7/4.4) to cream buff (M 2.5Y.8.0/4.5) when fertile, pruinose sub lente, with a narrow, white, byssoid margin and sometimes thin hyphal strands. *Subiculum* thin, consisting mostly of dichohyphae, with large interhyphal spaces. *Hyphal system* dimitic (Parmasto, 1972) i.e. with generative hyphae and dichohyphae. *Generative hyphae* (Fig. 1D, 3D) mostly concentrated towards the base of the subiculum where they are arranged horizontally, 1.2 - 3.5 μm diam, hyaline, cylindrical and non-inflating or weakly so, thin-walled, septate but lacking clamp-connexions. *Dichohyphae* (Figs. 1E, 3A - B) mainly vertical, 1.0 - 3.5 μm diam, with regular dichotomous branching and long internodes (5 - 35 μm, very pale yellowish brown to hyaline, thick-walled (- 1.5 μm) and with a narrow continuous lumen, terminating towards the surface as dichohyphidia. *Dichohyphidia* (Figs. 1F, 2B - E) very numerous and crowded, forming a thick surface layer, branching with numerous dichotomies and short internodes (1.5 - 8 μm), thick-walled (- 0.8 μm), terminating as numerous sharply pointed spines, often appearing cristate. Both dichohyphae and dichohyphidia dextrinoid and cyanophilous. *Spores* (Figs. 1A, 3G) 3.2 - 4.5 × 2.5 - 3.2 (3.7 ± 0.3 × 2.8 ± 0.2) μm, Q = 1.3, ovoid to broadly ellipsoid, with a prominent hilar appendix, hyaline, inamyloid, thin-walled, smooth, with few granular contents. *Hymenium* catahymenial. *Basidia* (Figs 1B, 3E - F) scattered, often forming small fascicles, 15 - 18.5 × 3 - 4 μm, cylindrico-utriform, 2- or 4- spored; sterigmata long and straight. *Gloeocystidia* (Figs. 1C, 3C) numerous but scattered, arising deep in the subiculum and not extending far above the fertile surface at maturity, 24 - 50 × 6.5 - 17 μm, ventricose-rostrate or lageniform, 3 - 5 μm wide at the obtusely rounded apex, often either with an apical wall-thinning or mucronate (schizopapillate, Hallen-