

A query via
info@qldfungi.org.au



As some of you know we frequently receive queries from non members about various fungi they find and photograph. Not all of them send good photos and some have done no homework to try to work out what they have found. However, this was not the case recently when we received an email from Samantha in Palmwoods about this fungus.



"Is this a truffle?
I've looked on the
Internet, and gone as
far as I can, and that is
my best guess."



It was stone like, very solid, round and eventually the family found 4 of them under some eucalypts where the loose ground had been bulldozed for a new fire trail.

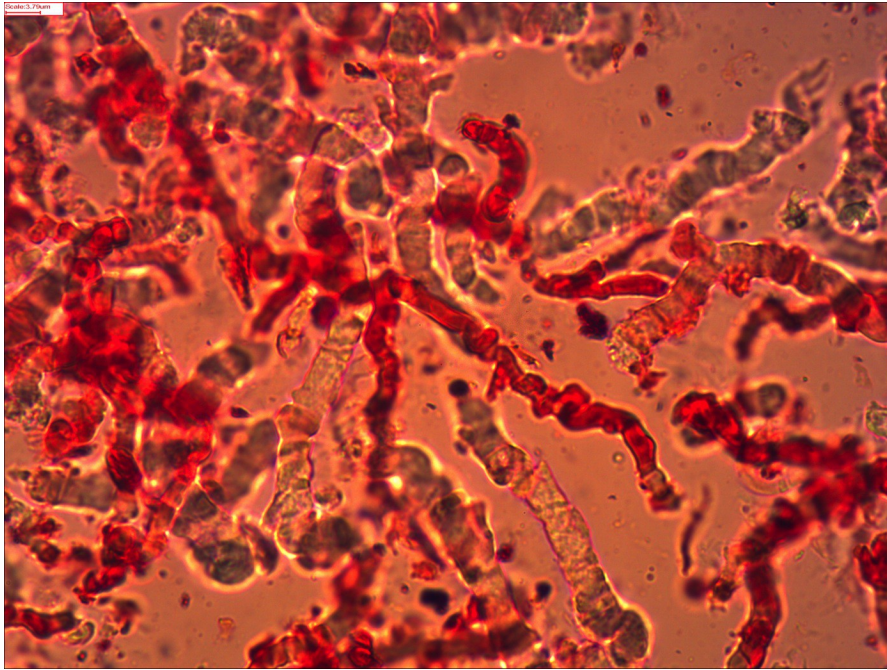
I'd never seen a truffle anywhere near as big as these, but I was very keen to see them and made arrangements to go that day to the property.



No, not a truffle, but a Sclerotium

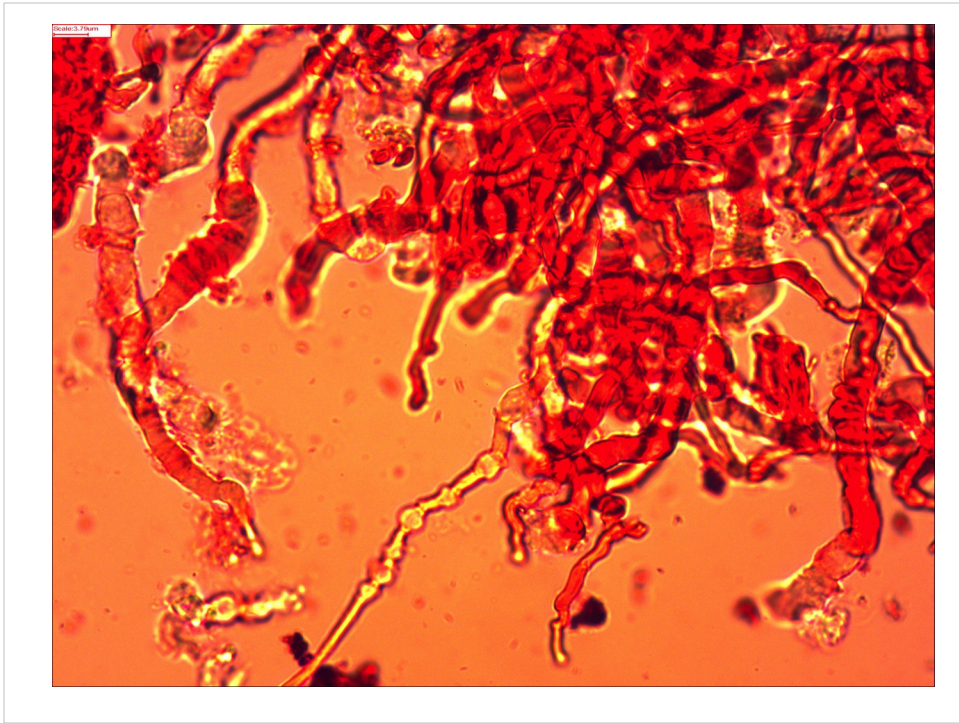
The cut section looked like a fine mosaic of whitish buff solid material and the objects were 40 to 50 mm diameter, with a dark brown rough coat. It required the kitchen cleaver to cut through.

Sclerotium (plural Sclerotia) are storage organs for some fungi. They occur under ground and may stay there, growing larger for 30 years or more. Sometimes they can be as big as footballs.



With considerable difficulty, I managed to tease a tiny amount of the inner material apart and made a slide, staining it with Congo red.

It showed thick knobbly hyphae, some branching and some not even taking up the stain. Of course there were no spores to be found.



They were tightly interwoven and it was easy to see why the structure was so solid.



Laccocephalum mylittae
only fruits after fire.
Commonly known as
Native Bread, and said to
be eaten by aborigines.

Photo by Morrie 2 at Website
"Tall Trees and Mushrooms"
from Victoria.

This photo I've borrowed from the Internet and it shows the fungus that will emerge from the sclerotium after fire.

Laccocephalum mylittae is one of four species of *Laccocephalum* in Australia which all have sclerotia and tend to fruit after fire. The cap has pores not gills, and was formerly called *Polyporus mylittae*, when first described by Cooke and Massee in 1893.