

## PHOTOGRAPHING FUNGI — 2

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The word 'photography' literally means 'drawing (or painting) with light' and this is enormously easier in field situations if one uses available light as it can be varied with shading or with reflectors to produce an effect which can actually be seen in the viewfinder. Whilst flash has its place, the shadows it will cast cannot be seen until the photograph is developed.

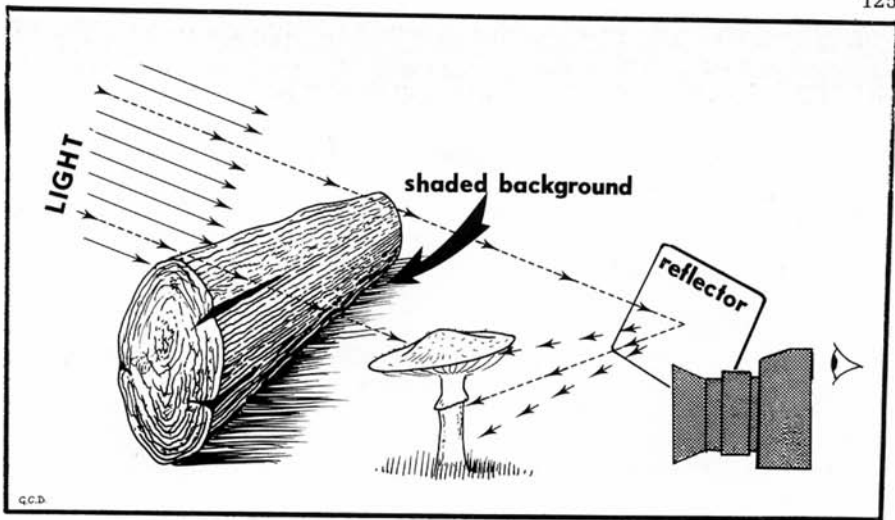
### CAMERA SUPPORT

It follows that the first requirement is for a camera support of some kind, usually a tripod but a ground-spike or a bean-bag can be used: the problem with most tripods lies in getting the camera low enough. The only one I am aware of which will do this is the 'Benbo', which has all three legs pivoted on a bent bolt. This does all that one would wish for but is extremely heavy and cumbersome to carry around all day: a lighter version would be ideal but so far is unavailable. The ground-spike with a ball-joint on top is perhaps the next best thing (and can always be used in self-defence!) but I usually find that either the ground is too hard to penetrate or too soft to hold the camera steady, so I still carry (and complain about) my 'Benbo'.

### LIGHTING

Without any doubt whatever the most difficult light in which to photograph fungi (and most other things) is bright sunlight. All films, colour films especially, have a limited latitude — that is a limited range of brightness to which they can respond. It follows that whilst the eye can see perfectly well detail in shadow, and detail in highlights, the photographer is in an 'either/or' situation: he can *either* have detail in the shadows or detail in the highlights but *not both* together. Fortunately in Britain there are more dull days than bright and in the sunnier countries fungi tend to grow in the shade. The actual intensity of the light does not matter very much if the camera is on a tripod as the duration of the exposure can be increased. The *ideal* lighting is a lightly overcast day with the sky lighter on one side than the other — and it is surprising how often this does actually occur. Even in woodland, a dull day is better than a bright one as patches of bright sun can completely ruin a picture.

The most interesting effects and the most texture-revealing pictures are taken *against* the brightest light especially if a dark, shadowy background can be devised. This produces a rim-lighting effect which throws into relief any texture present on the cap surface, especially scales. It does have the effect, of course, of throwing the underside of the cap and the nearside of the stem into shade. This shaded area must be 'filled-in' either with a small flash held well back behind the camera or, better, by a reflector, an item which is an absolute 'must' for all outdoor photographers (the BBC Natural History Unit uses large ones to fill in the shadows on Sir David Attenborough's face when filming in tropical conditions). In very bright conditions a slightly matt reflector is best whilst in dull conditions a really shiny one is better. Kitchen foil is very useful as it is usually matt on one side and bright on the other and can be easily glued onto a piece of card. Other useful reflectors can be made from the covers on Chinese take-away meals or aluminium sheet which



can be obtained with an irregularly patterned surface used for decorative purposes. Really large areas can be filled in using the aluminium coated polythene sold as 'survival blankets', and, who knows, you might be glad of it on a cold winter's night! I make no apology for repeating that the reflector has a huge advantage in that, with the camera mounted on a tripod, it can be manoeuvred with one hand whilst the effect is observed in the viewfinder. The general idea is illustrated in the text-figure.