TRUFFLE HUNTING AND TRUFFLE EATING

On a Fungus Foray most people look for mushrooms and toadstools which are easy to find. But if you see a group of forayers on hands and knees busily scratching the ground with small rakes they may be looking for truffles. These are fungi which grow in the soil often under oak and beech trees. They are usually small — ½-2 cm across — black and brownish and can look like small stones but they are soft and often have a strong smell. Rabbits and squirrels can smell truffles and scratch small holes to find them. If you search in a hole they have started you may be lucky and find a truffle they have missed. If you are very lucky a squirrel will throw one down to you — this happened to Prof Ingold who drew a cartoon to celebrate the event.

How can you find truffles? The easiest way (and the most fun) is to join the Truffle Hunt organised in August each year by the British Mycological Society. Two young truffle hunters are shown at work on page 90 of The Mycologist. The picture below shows a dog sniffing out truffles for his master in France. Fig. from Kendrick, B (1986).

Figure from Kendrick, B (1986).
Next time: Fungus guns.

It is difficult to find real truffles but you can easily make — and very easily eat — these chocolate ones. The recipe was copied by Piglet who has kindly permitted it to be copied again and has also offered two rather good suggestions.

1 Ask permission to use the kitchen (please leave it tidy).
2 Wash your hands really well before you start.

You will need:
- Scales for weighing
- Mixing bowl — large one
- Wooden spoon
- Cup and teaspoon
- Plate

Stage 1. Weigh out, put in the mixing bowl and stir with the wooden spoon
- 200g (8oz) porridge oats
- 200g (8oz) soft margarine
- 150g (6oz) caster sugar
- 6 teaspoons of cocoa powder
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Stage 2. Measure and mix in the cup
- 2 teaspoons 'instant coffee'
- 6 teaspoons cold water
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Stage 3. Tip the coffee/water mixture into the mixing bowl with everything else and give it all a tremendous stir until it looks good and smooth and just right to eat.
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Stage 4. Take out small lumps either with the teaspoon or the well washed fingers and make them into small balls.
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Stage 5. To add a professional touch roll each ball in cocoa powder spread out on the plate or, rather expensive, use chocolate vermicelli (worms).

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