

BFG Foray at Penn Wood

Saturday November 2nd 2013

Report by Jackie Mackenzie-Dodds



A picturesque venue, celebrity Leader (Richard Fortey) and surprisingly kind weather drew the crowds for this foray; well over 60 enthusiastic fungal forayers met in the Holy Trinity Church car park, Penn Street at 1pm prompt. Perfect conditions (continuation of mild and wet weather) promised fungal abundance, and we were not disappointed.

After a welcome and debriefing from the Woodland Trust Team (Paul Jarczewski, John Brown and Gary Roberts) we all set off towards a large beech stump just opposite the church, which was absolutely covered in fungi including huge quantities of *Pleurotus ostreatus* and other interesting species such as *Neobulgaria pura* (Beech Jelly-disc).



Moving on to a more open area of mainly beech woods with the occasional birch, oak, hornbeam etc, fungi were everywhere and Richard did a marvellous job keeping the crowds enthralled by one fungal find after another, and teaching everyone to get their eye in for particularly interesting finds in this area.



The large foray group spread out under the beady eye of the Woodland Trust Team in their Hi Vis coats (gathering up stragglers in danger of getting lost). Forayers happily gathered specimens for Richard to identify on route or kept them safe in baskets for the post foray 'Show and Tell' in the Village Hall: see full List of species found for details.



Xylaria hypoxylon (Candlesnuff Fungus) as shown on the left was particularly abundant in the woods.



Justin Warhurst was pleased to receive many specimens especially from the children whose keen eyesight discovered some very interesting species.



Much woodland maintenance had been in operation in Penn Wood during the weeks prior to the foray, hence many fallen branches, sticks and twigs etc which provided us with an abundance of brackets including this *Piptoporus betulinus* (Razorstrop Fungus).



A few bolete specimens were still to be found including *Boletus chrysenteron* (Red Cracking Bolete) left, and one respectable *Boletus edulis* (Cep).



Despite the vast majority of beech trees, a few fungi were found which betrayed the wood's previous coniferous past (buried stumps remaining now only): see full List for details of fungi associated with coniferous wood including *Calocera viscosa*, Yellow Stagshorn (left), *Cortinarius sanguineus* (Blood-red Webcap), *Gloeophyllum sepiarium* (Pine Bracket), *Gymnopilus penetrans* (Common Rustgill), *Heterobasidion annosum* (Root Rot), *Lepiota ventriosospora*, *Phaeolus schweinitzii* (Dyer's Mazegill), and *Postia stiptica* (Bitter Bracket).



Another mostly conifer (but broad leaf trees also) associated species *Ramaria stricta* (left) was found by several forayers. This species is listed as 'uncommon and vulnerable on the Red Data List' (Roger Phillips 2006)

[In fact we find *R. stricta* not uncommonly under Beech, and it seems to have had a good season this year, appearing quite frequently. It is no longer on the Red Data List. - Penny]

Ascomycetes found included *Peziza repanda* (Palamino Cup, left) and *Leotia lubrica* (Jellybabies, right)



At 3pm forayers made their way to Penn Street Village Hall across the village green, where several species of *Hygrocybe* (Waxcap) were found, including *H.chlorophana* (Golden Waxcap), *H.psittacina* (Parrot Waxcap), *H. punicea* (Crimson Waxcap) and *H. virginea* (Snowy Waxcap); unfortunately there are no photographs of these specimens from this foray. Waxcaps on Penn Street village green are a sign of ancient (and unfertilised) grassland, which is an increasingly rare wildlife habitat.

In the village hall the Woodland Trust Team had kindly put on most welcome tea and coffee for forayers and tables to display their fungal finds. A vast array of fungi assembled for Richard to identify (see left), including a large *Macrolepiota procera* (Field Parasol) collected by Jacqui Darby (see below).





At the end of the 'Show' Richard identified all the specimens on the table where possible (remaining unconfirmed species/specimens were taken home for microscopic determination), and I was kept busy trying to keep up with the rapid fire of Latin genus and species names coming my way. Occasionally Richard took pity on me and gave me the Common Name, which I could check on the Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland (FRDBI), an excellent site to determine the current Latin names and synonyms.

Meanwhile Richard double checked his IDs: he had been puzzled by a bright yellow species on wood, finally identified as *Pholiota alnicola*. He was also puzzled by a bracket he thought was an *Inonotus* species; it wasn't - it was actually *Phaeolus schweinitzii* (Dyer's Mazegill), and must have been collected around a conifer stump somewhere: he was completely fooled until he looked at the microscopy.

At the end of the afternoon everyone was invited back to our (Jackie and Justin)'s house in nearby Amersham for a wonderful post foray party including the amazing Mushroom Cake (see below), made by Joan Warlow, with incredibly accurate sugar-paste fungi decorations, which all tasted as good as it looked!



Photographs contributed by Andy Warlow, Muriel Rabone, Linda Pitkin, Catharine Mackenzie-Dodds.