

Foray at Rushbeds Wood on April 13th, 2014

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Our group of twelve enjoyed a beautiful spring morning here with an abundance of wild flowers, bird song and sunshine making up for the somewhat few gilled fruitbodies, though the list is just under fifty species – about what we would expect for this time of year, with the absence of a few things we might have expected duly replaced by some new and interesting finds.

So mushroom-types first, starting with a colourful woodland species found commonly in late autumn but a real surprise in April: *Lepista nuda* (Wood blewit). Glancing through the 175 previous records for VC 24 there are in fact a smattering for Jan and Feb, none for March, then just 3 for April and 2 for May, then none until 1 for Sept and the rest as expected for Oct, Nov and Dec. This is the first spring record for Rushbeds, however, where it is clearly not that common, having only 3 autumn records.



Pholiotina vexans with cap about 1.5cm across (NS)

Nick found a small *Conocybe* with a ring on the stem (this character now placing it in the fairly newly created genus *Pholiotina*). It proved not to be *P. aporos* *Lepista nuda* – a pristine unseasonal specimen (NS) which often occurs in spring, but the much rarer *P. vexans*, new to the site and with only a handful of county records. Two collections of *Psathyrella spadiceogrisea* (Spring brittlestem) were made, looking considerably paler than those we found at Whitecross Green last month (photo in that report). This genus is hygrophanous (i.e. fades as it dries out) and the recent bright sun had obviously been at work here. Another repeat species from that foray was a singleton *Agaricus* which was thought then to be *A. bitorquis* but left unnamed. The same doubts experienced by Derek when keying it out then also occurred this time, so for now it still remains unnamed, but watch this space.

The only other gilled fungi of note were a cluster of *Crepidotus mollis* (Peeling oysterling) on the sawn end of a stump, and a species of *Coprinopsis* still causing Derek some difficulty – again watch this space. We were expecting to find the seasonal *Calocybe gambosa* (St George's mushroom) – so named because of its occurrence around St. George's Day, April 23rd, and already reported this spring from elsewhere, but if it was there we missed it. However, if you're out and about it's worth keeping an eye out for now: 4-6 cms across with creamy white cap, gills and stipe and a distinct mealy smell (of musty flour), it's a chunky species looking not unlike a *Tricholoma* and is favoured by many as a good edible though I'm not amongst them. Incidentally, just a word of caution: one of our members avoids eating them because they cause her quite serious heart palpitations!

On now to ascomycetes of interest. This is normally a good site for *Sarcoscypha austriaca* (Scarlet elfcup), found on both our previous two forays this spring. We came across just one specimen today, though Joanna identified a similarly shaped but brown cup fungus, *Peziza vesiculosa* (Blistered cup) growing on a pile of rotting grass and new to the site. This is the time of year for morels, and Jenny found one just pushing up through the moss at the path edge in exactly the same spot as in previous years – always very satisfying.



Mitrophora semilibera (Semifree morel) (PC)



Mollisia cinerea (above - NS), *Cudoniella clavus* (immediately below - NS), and *Lachnum niveum* (below right - DJS)



Very different in appearance from the soft-fleshed cup fungi but still within the ascomycota are the many black crusty spots and lumps which erupt through bark on fallen wood. Some are easily recognisable and very familiar - *Daldinia concentrica* (King Alfred's cakes) was one such on today's list (and I can't resist including here a photo of one of today's specimens growing strangely on the top of a twig and so reminiscent of a certain part of the human anatomy that it has to be worthy of sharing with you!) Others, like the *Hypoxylon* species (Woodwarts) are equally familiar but one needs to note the host tree as several species are very similar - we have three on our list today but not the commonest, *H. fragiforme* (Beech woodwart) due to that tree's absence here. Claudi, who has a keen eye for such things, presented us with a range of sticks with similar but subtly different black dots, and one of these which both Derek and I independently looked at later proved a challenge but worth the time spent as we both arrived at the same rare species we'd never heard of, though through rather different routes. It is always essential to check the spores of such species, but finding these in such inhospitable hard material can be tricky. By slicing off the top of

With so few 'mushroom-type' fungi around, much turning over of damp logs went on to search out some of the less conspicuous asco-types. One such bare deciduous log produced nice specimens of *Mollisia cinerea* (Common grey disco), with attractive cups up to just 3mm across, confirmed later by Joanna. Another log was liberally covered with little yellow cups up to about 1cm across on longish stalks. These caused some debate as to genus in the field, and later both Joanna and I independently made them *Cudoniella clavus* (Spring pin). With just three county records and new to the site, this is considerably rarer than the smaller white *C. acicularis* (Oak pin), and both look superficially not unlike a small clustered species of *Mycena* until one looks underneath to find that there are no gills. Yet a further log produced tiny white cups, furry on the outside, typical of the genus *Lachnum*. There are several very similar white species, so Derek took it home, identified it as *L. niveum*, and took a close-up photo which is well worth including below here.

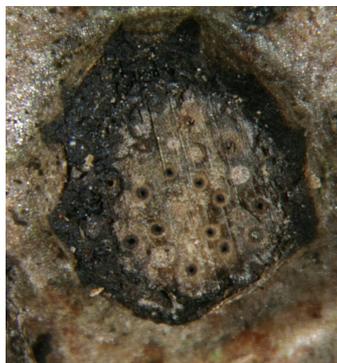


Daldinia concentrica - an interesting view! (DJS)

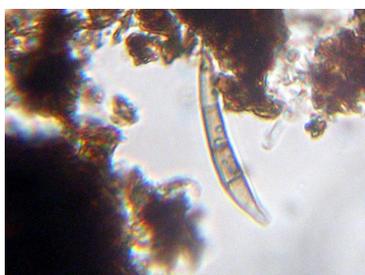
a fruitbody as if preparing to eat a boiled egg, one hopes to find soft black gunge beneath, and smearing a bit of this on a slide with a drop of water should produce the spores. (See photos below which show *Diatrypella favacea* – another of Claudi’s finds today - being decapitated in this way.) However, when the material is old and dry – a frequent occurrence - one ends up with no spores, a broken cover slip and the accompanying frustration.



Diatrypella favacea (above - CS) on a Hazel stick, each individual black crust about 0.5 mm across, then (below left to right - DJS) a single crust, then with a thin slice removed from the top, then this view magnified to reveal the black pockets where, if fresh enough, soft material can be extracted to find the spores.



My end of Claudi’s stick seemed to contain specimens of the latter type (i.e. old and dry) but after several attempts I did manage to find two amazing spores – enough to know I’d got something a bit unusual. They were about 40 microns long (this is notably large for spores) and also distinctively shaped - like a boomerang, pointed both ends and divided into sections by three lines (septa), the two inner sections darker than the two outer ones. Flipping through the final part of the first volume of *Fungi of Switzerland* (devoted to ascos) I came across a species with the correct shaped spores and also the correct small black crusty lumps occurring in Spring on Hazel – a perfect match, the name being *Melogramma bulliardii*. Then checking out Google images there appeared to be a second species of this genus occurring on Hazel, *M. campylosporum*, so I was not home and dried quite yet. The next port of call was the Fungal Records database (FRDBI) which luckily solved the problem because under *M. bulliardii* it refers one to *M. campylosporum* because the former is now an obsolete name and the latter is the new accepted name. It also can occur on Hornbeam and Birch, but there are only 16 national records and it is new for the county. Derek, having missed the species in *Fungi of Switzerland*, went a more devious route via more complicated searching in FRDBI, but ended up with the same name – very satisfactory.



Melogramma campylosporum (above - CS) also on a Hazel stick, new to the county. This is worth comparing with the extremely similar *Diatrypella* on the previous page! The material was dry and the give-away large boomerang-like spores were hard to find and photograph. Left is my attempt, right is Derek's.



Moving on from ascos to a couple of rusts which were of interest today. John found one growing on Moschatel (or Townhall clock) which was showing two different stages; on the stems were tiny white cups with yellow centres, and on the leaves were dark brown tufts of teleospores. Rusts can be quite easy to identify compared to other groups of fungi because they tend to be host specific, thus if you can name the host plant it is often a case of looking up that plant in Ellis & Ellis's Microfungi on landplants for a list of possible species. This technique brought me quickly to *Puccinia adoxae*, and a quick check that the teleospores matched the diagram confirmed it.



The rust *Puccinia adoxae* on Moschatel. The dark brown tufts containing the septate teleospores (magnified in the insert) can be seen on the leaves (above left), and the paler discs (magnified to show the daisy-like pattern above right) can be seen on the stems below (above left) (PC).



We also found *Melampsora populnea*, another rust, growing on stems and leaves of Dog's Mercury. The name refers to the fact that this rust has a stage found later in the year on Poplar and Aspen, also Pine and Larch, though in this particular case it would be on Aspen because the other trees are absent from the site.

Melampsora populnea (left) growing on Dog's mercury. (DJS)

Finally to several slime moulds – we found five today, including several collections of *Metatrachia floriformis* (photo in the report on our previous foray at Finemere), also the common and colourful *Lycogala terrestre* and *Stemonitopsis typhina* with its stalks looking as if clothed in silk stockings - a useful field character.



Lycogala terrestre (below left) a largish slime mould with orbs up to 1 cm or more across, and *Stemonitopsis typhina* (below right), with individual fruitbodies only up to 5mm tall, and stalks clothed in 'silk stockings'. (NS)

Rather a lengthy report this time, but the fine day encouraged many photos which I felt it was worth including. Please don't expect this length every time! Many thanks to all those who attended, and especially to Claudi, Nick and Derek for their photos.

This was our last foray until the autumn programme gets underway. We would be pleased to see you at our AGM to be held on Sunday June 29th (venue still to be announced). Information about this and the foray programme will be available on the website in due course.

See the complete list for more details on the species found today.

By the way, if you attended the Finemere foray in February and recall a cluster of yellow fruitbodies we thought might be a Pholiota but weren't sure, I'm about to update that report with the final solution.