

FUNGI WALK at KEEPERS WOOD & HERMITS WOOD Octoer 28th 2017

Penny Cullington

This was a joint event together with the Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire, Keepers Wood being owned by Caroline Jackson-Houston – member of FSO though her wood is in Bucks. BFG members were 8 strong and FSO members 4 including Joanna who belongs to both groups. The area is typical Chiltern semi-natural woodland, mainly Beech, and we spent most of the morning in Caroline's wood and concluded with a visit to an adjacent area whose owner also was keen to acquire some fungi records.

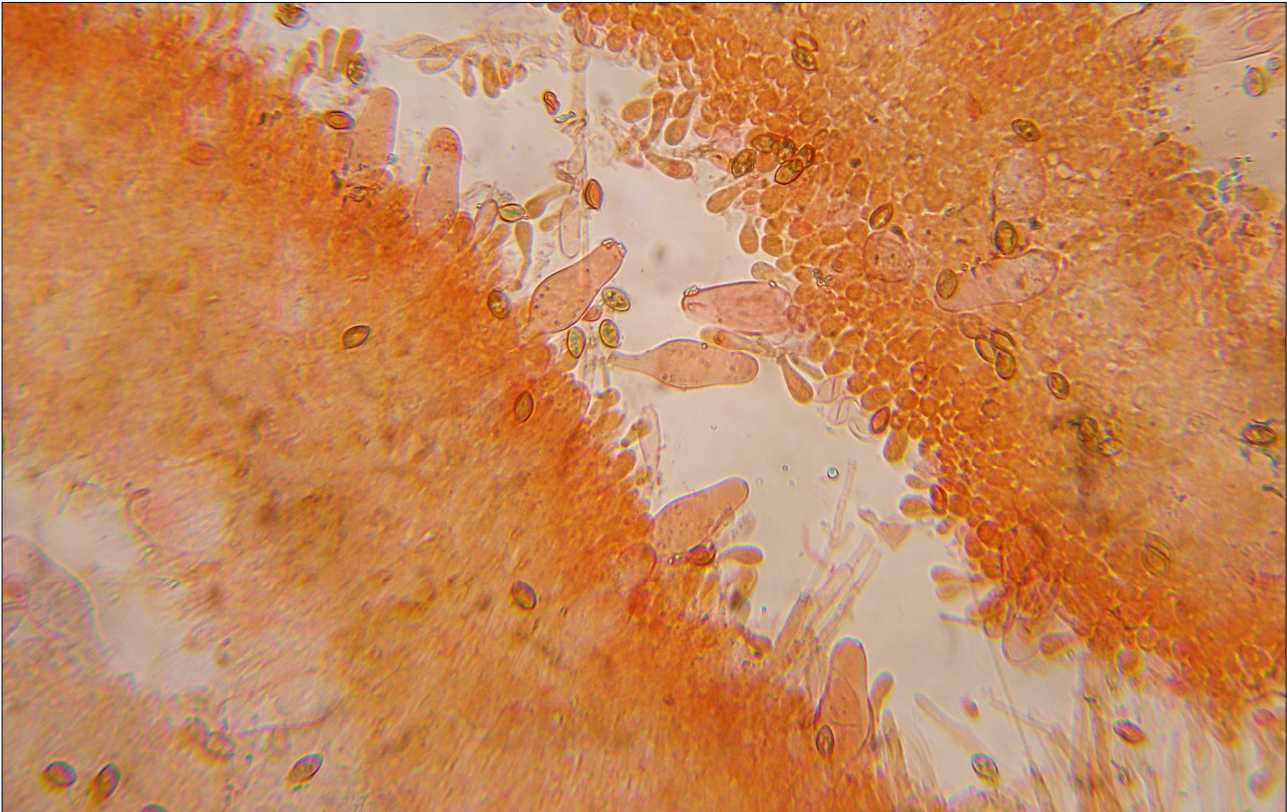
We really struggled to find any of the large agarics which no doubt at peak fruiting would be much in evidence here, but the season has sadly somewhat petered out leaving us scrabbling for small things amongst the litter and on wood. However, such conditions often turn up things which would otherwise be eclipsed by larger fruitbodies, and several things of note were found. One was a species of *Psathyrella* (Brittlestem) which was collected by John Tyler and I suspected it would be interesting as the cap was covered in veil. Looking at it later with a scope I found large cells on the gill edge and face which not only had thickish walls but also sported some crystals at their apex. Only a very few in the genus have this combination of features and together with the spore size I was able to identify it as *Psathyrella olympiana* (no English name). Checking in the national database I found that there are only 24 records, 2 of which were mine from Hodgemoor Woods in 2002 and 2006 – so not quite new to the county but certainly a nice record for the wood and I'm drying the material to send to Kew Fungarium.

Another good find was made by Joanna who handed me two tiny brown mushrooms she'd found on wood. Initially I was put in mind of a small species of *Inocybe* (Fibre-cap) – one that often confuses people because it looks very unlike the rest of its genus. However, I soon revised this idea because the specimens were too fragile and soft so I wondered about a couple of other genera of LBJs (Little Brown Jobs) such as *Conocybe* or *Galerina*. At home I confirmed that it was not an *Inocybe* but was utterly surprised and confused to find brown spores and large fat cells on the gill which also had the odd crystal attached at the apex. However, these cells were nothing like what one would normally expect to find in either of the two genera mentioned above. I wondered about *Psathyrella* again but the jizz of these tiny fruitbodies was all wrong for that, so I went back to my *Galerina* idea because a faint bell was tinkling in my memory that there was one species which had thick-walled gill cells with crystals. So using the lengthy key in *Funga Nordica* I quite easily came to a species called *Galerina nana* (again no English name) and all the features matched well. This is another quite rare species with only 69 UK records, one of which was mine from Whitecross Green, Bucks in 2014 when collected by John Tyler. No doubt this was why I was aware somewhere in the depths of my brain that such a species existed! So again this is drying and will be sent to Kew and another nice find for Caroline's wood. (See microphoto below)

We moved into Hermits Wood and here found a slightly different range of things as the wood was more open and also contained more conifers, Western Hemlock in particular. Molly found a small Inkcap growing on wood which I was able later to identify as *Coprinellus xanthothrix* (no English name), in some ways similar to the very common *Coprinellus micaceus* (Glistening Inkcap) but the veil over the cap when young (as this specimen was) is very thick and the cells on the gill and the spores are different in shape. One small grey mushroom which John Tyler found here kept us guessing: it looked like a species of *Mycena* (Bonnet) and had a grey cap and gills which were decurrent in shape and it had a mealy smell too. I half expected it to smell of swimming pools which would point to its being the fairly common *M. leptcephala* - a grey species but one which does not have decurrent gills. So we then wondered if it was a species of

Tephrocybe but at home I was able to sort it out as ***Mycena cinerella*** (Mealy Bonnet). Once I found the very characteristic cells on the gill I remembered that this was a species which often occurs in conifer litter and has decurrent gills as well. In fact I found a very small specimen of it amongst the many small things I was handed from Keepers Wood, so it is now recorded for both woods.

Thank you to all attendees. We did well to record as much as we did considering how very little fungi there appeared to be. None of the more interesting finds were photoed, however. For more details of what we found see the complete combined list for the two woods.



Above: a photo of the unusual gill cells (cheilocystidia) of *Galerina nana*. They can be seen here between the two sections of orange gill tissue like pink floating snowmen. This is magnified x 400. (Photo PC)