

## BFG / HBFG Foray at Pancake Wood on Sunday May 8<sup>th</sup> 2016

by Penny Cullington

A group of fourteen of us met up on a bright, sunny and extremely warm morning (in fact it was the hottest day so far this year) – about half and half Bucks and Herts/Beds members – to see what could be found despite the previous unseasonably dry and hot spell, though prior to that we had been experiencing more than our fair share of chilly and damp weather. These extremes had in fact produced a real mix of dry and damp conditions in the wood, and though tinder dry on the surface of the litter in many areas it was possible to turn over logs which were still quite damp underneath. There was, however, little (even nothing?) fungal to be found growing in soil, and predictably all that we did find was on wood - a meagre list of 34 species of which only three were mushroom types (with caps, gills and a stem).



*Hypholoma fasciculare* found today (PC)

Justin's diligent searching turned up a conifer log having a reasonably good number of fruitbodies of *Hypholoma fasciculare* (Sulphurtuft); one was duly tasted (then quickly spat out as it's very poisonous) by Derek to confirm its very bitter taste. The only other agarics found were a few young specimens of *Coprinellus micaceus* (Glistening inkcap) found by Justin again, and Pat handed us a small specimen growing in moss which both Derek

and I independently thought might be a *Conocybe*

(Conecap). However, at home later the microscope revealed not the typical 'skittle-shaped' cells of this genus on the gill edge, but the rather wavy ones with swollen heads typical of *Tubaria furfuracea* (Scurfy twiglet). In fact Pat had originally suggested this genus in the field, and she was proved correct!

Having realised when we arranged this late Spring foray that we would greatly benefit from having an Ascomycete specialist with us (in the form of HBFG member Kerry Robinson), it was a shame that in the end Kerry was not able to join us. The list would no doubt have been twice the length (and may in fact still grow if Steve can get some of today's collections to her to identify), but we did the best we could. All of what we were able to name were pretty predictable and mundane species apart from one of the Pyrenomycetes (black crusty dots / splodges on fallen wood). Claudi collected a species of *Hypoxylon* which he recognised did not match well with the common ones we are used to finding in this type of woodland. He gave a specimen to Derek and both of them checked it out independently at home and came to the same conclusion: it was *Annulohypoxylon cohaerens*. Three of the species originally in the genus *Hypoxylon* were moved some years ago into a separate genus, *Annulohypoxylon*, on account of their rather more pronounced and bumpy ostioles (tiny openings on the surface). One of these is the very common *A. multiforme*, often found on Birch bark, but the other two (*A. cohaerens* and *A. minutellum*) are poorly known (though are not necessarily rare) and consequently have relatively few British



records. We have only four previous records of *A. cohaerens* in VC24. For a good key and background information I recommend a back copy of the magazine *Field Mycology* vol 9(3) page 97, published in 2008. For more images try online by clicking first on images then google the latin name – this is a wonderful resource as long as one bears in mind that there are plenty of errors out there!

**Above, *Annulohypoxyton cohaerens* on Beech bark showing the characteristic bumpy ostioles of this species. (Ignore the sprinkling of sawdust on the surface, caused as Claudi extricated the sample!) (CS)**

Claudi also sent me photos of two other very common Pyrenomycetes which are worth including here as they often cause confusion in the field.



**Left, *Biscogniauxia nummularia* (Beech tarcrust) on Beech bark: note the smooth surface and the irregular lozenge-shaped patches typical of this species. It is often confused with *Diatrype stigma* (Common tarcrust) which tends to cover much larger areas in a single sheet of black, often cracking with age. (CS)**

**Right, *Diatrype disciformis* (Beech barkspot) also found on Beech today. Unlike *D. stigma* this species forms regular round slightly raised individual areas which emerge through the bark. The tiny pimples covering the surface are the ostioles through which the spores are shot out when mature. (CS)**





Now one more of Claudi's photos, this time of a species with some colour and which can be recognised in the field. This is *Phlebiella sulphurea* (previously *P. vaga*) (Yellow cobweb). The fan-like fine cottony fibres of this species can quite often be found spreading on the underside of bare damp deciduous logs.

**Left, *Phlebiella sulphurea* growing on the underside of a bare rotting beech log. (CS)**



Finally to one of the four slime moulds (Myxomycetes) we found today. Many slime moulds need microscopic work to name but this is one which can be identified in the field because it looks a bit like a white shiny eyeball stuck on some bare wood. This is *Reticularia lycoperdon*, the species name reflecting the fact that it looks a bit like a puffball. Its 'slimy' stage comes first as it develops into a round white slightly roughened or bumpy mass, this then dries with a firm shiny skin on the outside whilst underneath the spores are developing and maturing. Eventually the skin cracks open to reveal the mass of spores resembling cocoa powder which either blow away or are eaten by slugs and the like. The specimen we found was just drying off and thus slightly shiny, but for the full array of this species' development try the image googling system.

**Left, *Reticularia lycoperdon* on a bare Beech branch (PC)**

My thanks to all who attended and especially to Claudi for his photos: we had a lovely Spring walk even if we didn't find a whole load of exciting fungi. Fingers crossed for a bumper crop come the Autumn season!

