

BFG Foray at Burnham Beeches
September 29th 2013

Report by Penny Cullington

Nine of us met up at the Victoria Cross on a fine morning. Conditions had been dry for the past week or so but Head Ranger Helen Read had told me that things had started popping up, and so it proved. Fruiting was certainly not prolific but there was plenty to keep everyone busy and interested. This is a well recorded site, so of our list of 100 species only a few were new to the site. We chose a route which took us past the spot where some of the rare toothed fungi (*Phellodon* and *Hydnellum*) are known to fruit, but with no success. However, another special toothed fungi did show up, growing on a fallen Beech branch on the opposite side of the road from where I'd found it previously: *Hericium cirrhatum* (Tiered Tooth). Martyn Ainsworth (Kew expert) has a theory that this rare species only fruits once on the same substrate whereas *H. erinaceus* (Bearded Tooth, also known from this site and even rarer) will reoccur over several years on the same trunk. This theory seems to hold good because though I've found this species several times both here and elsewhere, it has never yet been in the same place twice. My photo was taken here several years back and not far away from today's find.



Hericium cirrhatum (Tiered Tooth) fruiting at Burnham Beeches in October 2005

Species we found new to the site were *Stropharia inuncta* (Smoky Roundhead), *Russula puellaris* (Yellowing Brittle-gill), *Mycena abramsii* (no common English name) – one of surprisingly few of this genus, the Bonnets, to turn up today, though two others caused interest as always: *Mycena crocata* (Saffron-drop Bonnet) and *Mycena haematopus* (Burgundy-drop Bonnet) with their distinctive give-away brightly coloured juice in the stem. Claudi Soler found an unusual grey species of *Tricholoma* which he later identified as *T. sciodes* (no common English name), confirmed by Derek. Also surprisingly not previously recorded here was a cluster of tiny sulphur yellow discs on a bare stick collected by Jenny Schafer whose sharp eyes often spot such things: this was *Bisporella sulfurina*, much smaller and also rarer than the commonly found *B. citrina*.



Typical cystidia on the gill of *Pluteus cervinus*

Six members of the genus *Pluteus* were found today – quite a haul. We had the common *Pluteus cervinus* (Deer Shield) though fruitbodies were unusually pale for that species necessitating a quick microscope check for the telltale 'cat's ear' topped cystidia (see left), also *P. nanus* (Dwarf Shield), *P. phlebophorus* (Wrinkled Shield) and beautiful bright yellow specimens of *P. chrysophaeus* (Yellow Shield) (see overleaf). In the field Derek instantly recognised the unusual 'veined' cap of one of the smaller and rarer species: *P. thompsonii* (Veined Shield); not only is the cap distinctive but the cystidia on the gill edge have long projecting spines unique to this species of the genus and

visible even at fairly low magnification, though the complete cystidia seem quite hard to see even when stained with a preparation with Congo red at high magnification.



Pluteus thompsonii cap detail showing the typical veining (above), the veining in detail showing the characteristic cystidia (right © DJS), and a single cystidium under high magnification (far right).



Pluteus chrysophaeus (left) at Burnham Beeches today

Finally (below) two specimens of a small very pale *Pluteus* growing on a bare rotting Beech trunk, and for me the most interesting find of the day. Working on it at home I thought it might possibly be *P. exiguus* – a rare species with barely any British records (and those somewhat questionable). I had taken one fruitbody to examine and hoped that Derek would reach the same conclusion on studying the other independently, but sadly it had deteriorated too badly for him to get to a name. Luckily more specimens turned up the following weekend at Stoke Common, which he was able to determine as *P.*

plautus (Satin Shield), so not the rarity I'd hoped for but at least another species new to the site. (Unfortunately in the height of the moment on collection I failed to get the whole cap in view.)

Pluteus plautus (right), two very pale specimens of this somewhat variable member of the genus, showing the characteristic free gills just beginning here to turn pink at it matures (this also apparent in the photo above of *P. chrysophaeus*). The larger cap was under 2cm across.

See the complete list for more details of what we found.



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