BFG FORAY at Wotton Park Estate, July 22nd 2012

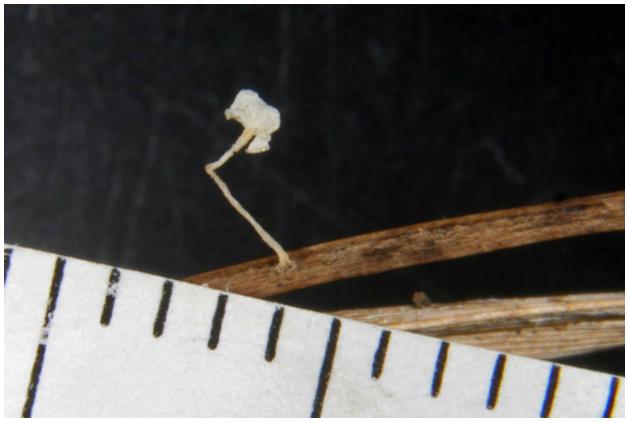
Penny Cullington

There were eight attendees at this early season foray, and we enjoyed the beautiful setting and also lovely day – as it happens, our first since the end of May! It was interesting, however, that despite more than our fair share of recent rain we were rewarded with disappointing numbers of fungi – both in terms of quantity and different species, possibly pointing to the fact that it seems to take more than just plenty of wet weather to trigger good fruiting. Last year's foray here in early September produced around 50 different species, this time only around 30, though five of those are new for the site, one of which is rare and new to the county. Only ten different gilled fungi were found in all, though of these only one supplied us with more than one fruitbody – and this only chanced upon thanks to a large and much admired grass snake. Not many things would make me take up a 'fungus-photoing' pose quite so near a snake, but the genus *Inocybe* is one of them! This was a largish cluster of *I. corydalina* (see photo below) under a Lime tree and found by our youngest forayer, aged just 4; but for the bright eyes of this little lad we'd have missed it, focussing as we were on the snake attempting to hide away from us under the same tree. The distinctive smell of pear drops gave away the identity of this species – the fungus, not the snake!

Noticeable by their absence were all other mycorrhizal genera apart from the singleton *Russula vesca* growing with Oak, and which obligingly turned bright salmon on the stem when rubbed with a crystal of Ferrous Sulphate. Amongst other things worthy of note, apart from a large but unidentified fritillary butterfly, were three simply miniscule Bonnetcap-types which needed a scope later to identify: *Mycena adscendens* on a hazelnut husk, *Mycena speirea* on a deciduous stick, (both these new to the site) and - the best find of the day - *Hemimycena epichloë*, so small it was barely visible to the naked eye, growing on a dead grass stem. The collector, Derek, said later of this find "I only looked at one rather unclear preparation under the compound microscope - a single fruit body from which I carefully cut a bit of cap and stem in order to leave some dried remains - which flicked off the bench never to be seen again!" There are just 10 previous British records of this species, one of these Derek's, though he suspects it is probably more common than this would indicate but is often overlooked for obvious reasons. Unfortunately this particular find has to remain a 'doubtful' record, since Derek was unable to make a second slide to clarify some of the microscopic features.

Photos of this species plus several others of note taken on the day can be seen below. See the complete list for more details.

(All photos taken by Derek Schafer except *Inocybe corydalina* by Penny Cullington.)



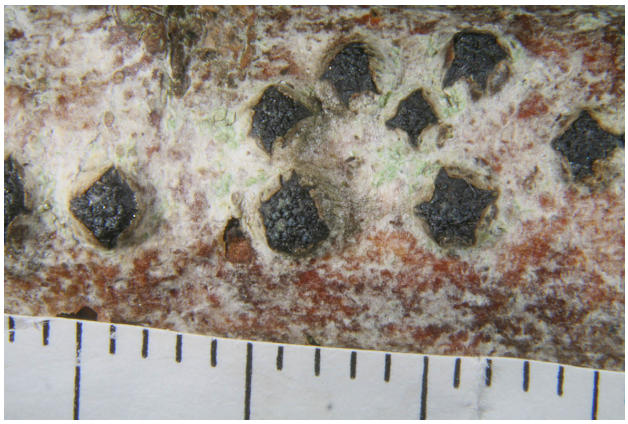
Hemimycena epichloë, a minute species found on a dead grass stem.

Hemimycena epichloë, a close-up showing its tiny ribs underneath in place of gills.

Inocybe corydalina (Greenflush Fibrecap) growing under Lime. This species is one of a few in this genus which have a distinctive fruity smell, of pear drops.

Scutellinia scutellata (Eyelash Fungus), tiny bright orange discs found on rotting vegetation on the ground. .

Close-up of *Scutellinia scutellata* showing the 'eyelashes' which give this species its common name.



Diatrypella quercina on an Oak stick.

A close-up of *Diatrypella quercina* when sliced open, showing the little black pockets where the asci which contain the spores are formed.

A view of the asci (long thin sausage-like cells) of *Diatrypella quercina*; in this species each ascus contains vast numbers of spores rather than the normal eight.

A view of the spores of *Diatrypella quercina* having left the ascus and showing their distinctive curved shape.

Xylaria longipes (Dead Moll's Fingers), not to be confused with the better known *X. polymorpha* (Dead Man's Fingers)! This view shows the white interior with little black pockets (as in *Diatrypella quercina* above) running along the outer edges.

The typical 8-spored asci and spores of *Xylaria longipes;* the length and helical split of the spores separates this species from *X. polymorpha.*