

Foray at Naphill Common on Sunday, October 25th

Penny Cullington

This foray was joint with the Friends of Naphill Common and we had an excellent turnout with 45 attendees, 12 of whom were BFG members. It was an ideal October day with bright sun and wonderful autumn colours, though fungi were sadly not prolific and we struggled a bit to find much



Forayers at the introductory chat before we set off (CM)

at times, but ended up with a reasonable list of 76 species, of which 16 were new to the site. With a large crowd who are new to foraging it can be utterly overwhelming when there are quantities to collect and identify, with Latin names only adding to the confusion, so in some ways it was just as well that fruiting was not so abundant here as at our foray at Burnham Beeches last weekend.

Large collections of showy mushrooms (fungi with gills) were in short supply with one notable exception: the genus *Cortinarius* (Webcap) is a huge one with maybe 600 species or more in Britain, many of which are well-nigh impossible to identify and no doubt some which are still to

be described. We found good numbers of one today - a species which happens to be recognisable in the field and which grows under Beech. It has a cap and stem both of which are dappled with distinctive red blotches, this was *Cortinarius bolaris* (Dappled webcap). There were specimens of all ages - an attractive species and one that was new to the site.



Cortinarius bolaris was fruiting well under Beech today (PC)



Fallen wood often provides a good source of different fungi when fruiting in the soil and litter beneath the trees is sparse, and this proved to be the case today. We found one felled Beech trunk liberally coated in the very common *Stereum hirsutum* (Hairy curtain crust – ugh, I’m not a fan of that common name, what a mouthful!). This is a species which occurs all year round on deciduous wood and is often confused with the equally common *Trametes versicolor* (Turkeytails – ah, that’s a better name). Turn a piece over to see the underside: the *Stereum* is orange and smooth underneath whereas the *Trametes* is creamy white and covered in tiny round pores.

Another Beech trunk was adorned with tiny yellow jelly-like spikes: this was *Calocera cornea* (Small stagshorn), one of several similar species but this one favours Beech whereas the others favour conifer though this tree association is not infallible so one does need to check with care to avoid error.

Above *Stereum hirsutum* (JW) and right *Calocera cornea* (NF), both growing prolifically on old Beech trunks today.



More jelly-like fungi on wood were found, the most prolific being *Neobulgaria pura* (Beech jellydisc). Also on Beech was the much smaller and less conspicuous though brightly coloured *Ascocoryne sarcoides* (Purple jellydisc), and on fallen Oak we found *Bulgaria inquinans* (official common name is Black bulgar but Joanna knew it as Bachelor’s buttons – much more memorable.)



Three species of fungi found on fallen wood today, all quite common: above left *Neobulgaria pura* on Beech (JW), above right *Ascocoryne sarcoides* also on Beech (JW), and left *Bulgaria inquinans* on Oak (PC)

We encountered several old Beech trees with huge impressive brackets attached near their base, some of them 1ft across. These were clearly a species of *Ganoderma*, and Derek and I took samples from different trees to check as there were several possibilities, but we made them the common *G. australe* (Southern bracket). This is almost identical in the field to *G. applanatum* (Artists's bracket – so named because one can indelibly write/draw on the underside, a property shared by all members of the genus), but the spores differ in size.



Impressive brackets of *Ganoderma australe* with its spores having coloured the surrounding trunk as if with a dusting of cocoa powder. (NF)

Yet another swarm of fungi on fallen Beech caught our eye, this was the unusual and not commonly recorded *Phleogena faginea* (Fenugreek stalkball). Its common name describes it well: tiny white balls on short stalks, and if you put a few of these into a pot there develops a pervasive smell of fenugreek or curry powder as it dries out; today's collection was no exception.



***Phleogena faginea* also colonising some fallen Beech today. (JW)**

During the morning I was handed quite a few little bits and pieces, mainly species of *Mycena* (Bonnets), most of which were retained to work on later. As I suspected, many turned out to be the same common species, *Mycena vitalis* (Snapping bonnet) – one which can be guessed at in the field but as there are several other look-alikes it should really be checked.

Right, *Mycena vitalis* was quite common in the litter today (CM)



I've left the most interesting till last, however: two tiny 'mushroom' types I stuffed into a pot together with the soggy dead leaves they were growing with. In the field the horse hair-like stem, paler at the top and gradually much darker below suggested the genus *Marasmius* (Parachute), but at home under some better light and magnification I could see the whitish caps were covered in long dark setae (hairs). On noticing this I had high hopes that it would turn out to be a species I'd long been on the lookout for in Bucks but without success – one that grows exclusively on soggy dead Holly leaves but that has a distinctly western distribution in Britain. Checking the microscopic characters confirmed the determination, so someone (I don't know who) had found *Marasmius hudsonii* (Holly parachute) today new to the county. I attempted a photo (below) which does show the cap hairs but does no justice to this beautiful little fungus, so I've included one I downloaded from the Internet for you to enjoy. Now we know that this species exists in the area we should search with more care under soggy Holly bushes, and not just for the other common fungi which can be found on dead Holly leaves.



The delectable *Marasmius hudsonii* (left PC, right Internet) found today and new to the county. The caps are only about 5mm across if that, and with a handlens the remarkable hairs can easily be seen.

It remains to thank everyone for attending and making the foray so successful and enjoyable. My thanks in particular to those who provided photos for this report. I finish with one of these which gives a feel of the occasion and also a nice view of the site.

See today's complete list for more details of what we found.

Photos: PC = Penny Cullington, NF = Neil Fletcher, CM = Chris Miller, JW = Justin Warhurst



Forayers today at Naphill Common (JW)