

BFG Foray at Brill Common
December 15th, 2013

Report by Penny Cullington

It has become our tradition to finish off the year with a 'Festive' Foray followed by an informal lunch, and 11 of us met at the windmill in Brill – a repeat of last year's event here – on a mild but somewhat windy and at times rainy morning. It was good to welcome three new members though we were unlikely to be able to impress them with vast numbers of showy fruitbodies so late in the season, but nevertheless the recent mild weather gave us hope and we certainly found enough to keep our interest. The terrain here is unusual and provides a varied habitat for fungi though is not the easiest to wander over due to clay excavation in the past for brick-making; there are good areas of unimproved grassland, some grazed by a herd of Dexters, some by rabbits, together with pockets of mixed deciduous trees – hawthorn, ash, elder, willow, together with both sweet and horse chestnut.



It was not long before we were finding fungi, the first being several large fruitbodies of *Pseudoclitocybe cyathiformis* (The Goblet) in the longish grass, shortly followed by the much smaller and also much less common *Crinipellis scabella* (Hairy Parachute) – new to the site and only the third record for the county. There were quite a few rather similar looking rusty-gilled LBJs to be found in the shorter grass, mostly *Tubaria furfuracea* (Scurfy Twiglet) but also a few collections of *Conocybe*, though only one of these got checked later and made it onto our final list. Several species of the darker-gilled grassland genus *Panaeolus* were also found.

The Common is Joanna's local patch and she had planned our route to cover the spots where there might still be some waxcaps around. We found five species, thought one didn't get named, and it was good to be able to show the newcomers to the group some strikingly green *Hygrocybe psittacina* (Parrot Waxcap) and also these stunningly bright specimens of *Hygrocybe coccinea* (Scarlet Waxcap).

Pseudoclitocybe cyathiformis above
growing in longish grass.

Hygrocybe coccinea right growing
in shortish grass.

Both photos © Nick Standing



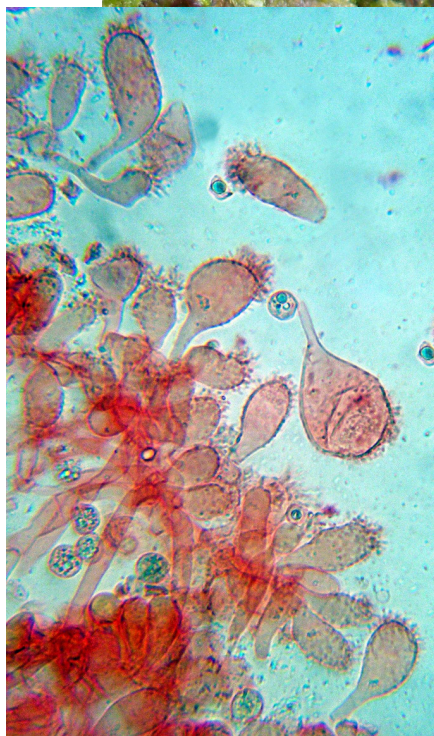
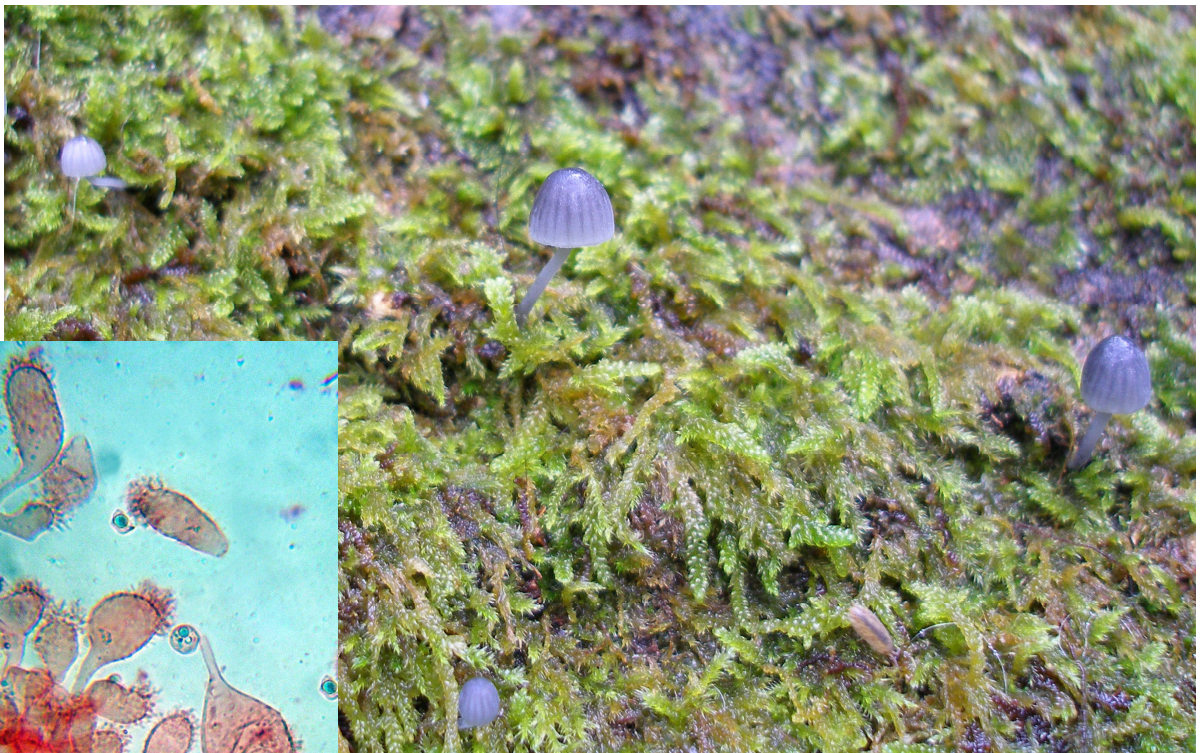


Parasola misera on Dexter dung (© Nick Standing)

Derek had the grazing Dexters to thank for provided the substrate for five of the seven Inkcap species we found, many of which occur on dung of one sort or another. Two species now transferred to the genus *Parasola* were found, one being the tiny *Parasola misera*, no more than 5mm across.

Later in the morning the sharp eyes of new member Neil Todd noticed another tiny species, this time growing in the mossy bark of Ash at about head height. There are several tiny species of *Mycena* (the Bonnets) which like this sort of habitat though mostly they are white or pale, so when I was shown this slate grey specimen with a bluish tint I was

fairly confident it would turn out to be *Mycena pseudocorticola* (no common name). Not often recorded and with only two previous county records (incidentally one of these from only just down the road at Rushbeds Wood), this is an attractive little species often occurring in good numbers on mossy deciduous bark (as can be seen in my photo below) though today we could only find a singleton. Under the microscope can be found round spores (unusual for this genus) and cheilocystidia (cells on the gill edge) mostly with long thin stalks and bristly punk hairdos on top. These occur in quite a few *Mycena* species and are known as brushcells, and are a very useful identification tool for the mycologist.



Mycena pseudocorticola, only 5mm across, on mossy deciduous bark (above), and left a photo taken down the microscope x 400 showing the round spores dotted amongst the brushcell cheilocystidia. The photo above was taken in Dorset in 2006, the photo left was from the Brill specimen. (© PC)

We listed over 50 species in all, of which 20 were new to the site though this percentage is not of particular significance as there has been no fungi recording here other than Joanna's visits and our late season forays this year and last. One more find is worthy of mention, however, being new to the county as well as the site, and also of national importance at present. Everyone has heard of the ash dieback disease caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea*, which threatens to decimate the country's ash trees thus changing the nature of British woodland in much the same way as Dutch Elm Disease. This fungus, an ascomycete – one of the spore-shooters, was first described in 2006 in Poland, but it was not realised until 2010 that this is in fact the asexual stage of another fungus, subsequently named *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus*. It is closely related to the virtually identical *H. albidus* which, however, causes no such disease but the two can apparently only be split with certainty by DNA.

Both Joanna and John looked at the fallen leaves of ash on our foray, and both found the typical little white discs of *H. albidus* (or *H. pseudoalbidus*?) growing on the leaf petioles. On Derek's advice Joanna has since been in touch with the organisers of an important survey being carried out in Norfolk to discover more about these species, and will be sending the specimens to them. Whichever of these two species it turns out to be it will be new to the county, though we keep our fingers crossed that it is *H. albidus* for obvious reasons.

[We have now heard back from Anne Edwards (on the Norfolk survey of *Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus*) that Joanna's collection was not this fungus but in fact the sclerotia (like tiny peas made of a mass of hyphae and attached to the mycelium of some fungi) of *Typhula placorrhiza* – not an ascomycete but a club fungus, one which is common on many fallen deciduous leaves, ash in particular. Below is Joanna's photo of the sclerotia, also one of the fruitbodies (not found today) taken from the internet.]



***Typhula placorrhiza* – a club fungus, the sclerotia of which (left © JD) were found growing on fallen ash leaves at Brill by both Joanna and John Tyler.**

After the foray we all enjoyed delicious soup and other goodies back at Joanna and Martin's house in Brill (see below) - a most enjoyable and fitting way to end off our autumn season, one that has been considerably more prolific for fungi than the previous year with good numbers of interesting things turning up to keep us busy. I'd like to thank Joanna and Martin for their generous hospitality and also all attendees of our forays this year for their support. May I also take this opportunity to offer the season's greetings to all members, and we look forward to seeing you next year – we start again in February with a foray at Finemere Woods, details as usual are on the website.

