

Foray at Brill Common, December 18th, 2016

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Eight of us met up for our final event of the year to complete what has been a pretty impressive autumn for fungi in the Chilterns despite mycologists from other areas reporting a slightly disappointing season over all. The weather was kind to us today and though dull it was dry and not too cold or windy – in fact typical for Christmas week in this part of the world. It was good to welcome two new and enthusiastic members to the group who were very quickly finding specimens and contributing to our list of species. We ended up with well over 50 species for the morning - a respectable number for this late date though fewer than we found here last year.

We started in the area of shorter grass grazed by sheep to the south of the road which crosses the common, and this proved more productive than that just to the north grazed by Dexters where the grass was considerably longer. Waxcaps were somewhat few and far between and had virtually finished fruiting, but there were good specimens of the frilly-edged *Panaeolus papilionaceus* (Petticoat Mottlegill) growing in the dung-enriched soil. Another eye-catching species we find regularly near the windmill at this time is *Pseudoclitocybe cyathiformis* (The Goblet) and there were good numbers of this to be seen here today.



Two species of *Mycena* (Bonnet) which occur only in grassland were recognisable in the field: *M. flavoalba* (Ivory Bonnet) is probably the commonest grassland Bonnet species (white all over with touches of yellow in the cap) whilst *M. olivaceomarginata* (Browndge Bonnet) is much less often recorded (having a rather nondescript beige cap and stem with white gills which however sport a distinctive brown edge visible if you look carefully with a handlens). We also picked up several specimens of *Galerina* and *Conocybe* – two genera known affectionately as LBJs (Little Brown Jobs) and both of which having many species occurring only in grassland but which always need identifying with the use of a microscope as they look virtually identical to the human eye. I did manage to key several of these out at home (together with the many *Mycena* specimens in my box): *Galerina graminea* (Turf Bell) and one of the *Conocybe* species, *C. rickenii*, both proved to be new to the site, each with only one previous county record though neither are particularly rare in the UK. The small number of county records is probably indicative of the lack of attention often given to these genera on our walks when other more eye-catching and interesting species tend to take priority.

We ended up with ten different species of *Mycena* (Bonnets) on the list, all species of fallen wood or woody litter apart from the grassland species already mentioned above. The tiny white species proved to be the most interesting when I worked through them at home: *M. adscendens* (Frosty Bonnet) has a cap and stem covered as if sprinkled with icing sugar, has a small disc at the stem base and can quite often be found on woody debris. This appears to be the first time we've found it here and we thought we'd found several collections of it. However, when I checked one collection of these tiny fruitbodies which I'd found growing at eye-level on the bark of a deciduous tree (I omitted to make a note of which, unfortunately) it proved to be a much rarer species. This was *M. clavularis* (no common name); it looks very similar to *M. adscendens* even to the extent of having a disk at the stem base but is a duller greyer white and grows in clusters on living deciduous bark and the microscopic features are very different. We have only two previous county records, the first back in 1978 from Ibstone by well-respected mycologists: collector Roger Phillips and identifier Derek Reid, and the second from 2014 at Finemere collected by Nick Standing and identified by me!



Above, the tiny fruitbodies of *Mycena clavularis*, each cap being only 5mm across at most. The characteristic disc at the stem base can be seen on several specimens. (NS)



Above, *Pleurotus ostreatus* growing in profusion on Horse Chestnut. (NS)

Incidentally, it appears that the correct name for *Mycena adscendens* is now *Mycena tenerrima* - yet another example of a name change we're going to have to get used to!

Moving further into the more wooded area with both Sweet and Horse Chestnut trees, we found splendid examples of *Pleurotus ostreatus* (Oyster Mushroom) growing prolifically on a standing trunk together with several other species.

There follow some other species of interest of which we have photos to share thanks to Nick working away with his camera.



Left, *Exidia glandulosa* (Witches Butter) was found quite near to the tiny white *Mycena clavularis* collection on the same unnamed deciduous trees. (NS)



Right, *Auricularia auricular-judae* (Jelly Ear) growing in various piles of wood though none of the wood looked like Elder – the normal host for this fungus. I note that we recorded this species here last year on Horse Chestnut (a somewhat unusual host) and suspect that this was the case again today. (NS)



Left, *Flammulina velutipes* (Velvet Shank), one of several clumps of this fungus growing at the base of Horse Chestnut. This species is one which fruits late in the season and can often be found into the New Year growing quite happily with snow and frost. (NS)

Right, the bracket species *Chondrostereum purpureum* (Silverleaf Fungus) just developing on a felled Horse Chestnut trunk. It is unusual to find it so fresh with these wine red droplets oozing out. (NS)





In the litter under another Horse Chestnut we found *Lepista flaccida* (Tawny Funnel), a common species easily recognisable by its cap colour and strongly decurrent gills.

We then returned to Joanna and Martin's house to warm up with soup, salad, cheese and home made bread followed by mince pies - all seasonal and delicious and the perfect way to celebrate the end of another most enjoyable season of events for BFG. Many thanks to all attendees for making it such a successful day, with extra thanks to Joanna and Martin for hosting the lunch and also to Nick and Toni for the excellent photos which saved me from having to take any as we went round.

Happy Christmas to all, and see you next year!



Above, the group busily exploring the Horse Chestnut for fungi with *Pleurotus ostreatus* on the standing trunk. (TS)