

BFG Foray at Hodgemoor Woods
October 6th 2013

Report by Penny Cullington

We boasted a record number for this season of both attendees and fungi today – 13 attendees (4 of whom were prospective new members) and 107 species. It was a beautiful morning and it was great to find the fungi fairly thick on the ground; I was kept suitably busy scribbling names down whilst progress was typically snail's pace as we moved off from the carpark. At last there was good evidence of those mycorrhizal genera (those growing on tree roots to the mutual benefit of both organisms) often missing from foray lists last season: *Amanita*, *Boletus* and *Leccinum*, *Russula*, *Lactarius*, *Tricholoma*, *Hebeloma*, *Cortinarius* and *Inocybe* were all represented. Last week at Burnham Beeches the genus *Pluteus* was plentiful, but today we found not one though there were 12 species of *Russula* and 8 of *Lactarius*.

One species of particular interest to forayers was a cup fungus, a member of the Ascomycetes (spore-shooters) growing on the spoil heap from the charcoal burners who frequented this wood in years past: *Otidea bufonia* (Toad's Ear) was fruiting in good numbers, and it was the third time it's been recorded here though not noted on this substrate before.



Otidea bufonia fruiting on the charcoal burners' spoil today

Jenny Schafer found a large and photogenic display of the fairly common *Kuehneromyces mutabilis* (Sheathed Woodtuft) covering an old Birch stump. This species has been placed previously in



Kuehneromyces mutabilis showing its typical 'two-tone' cap with paler centre

two different genera: *Galerina* and *Pholiota*, and an earlier (and in my opinion more apt) common English name was Two-tone Pholiota referring to the centre of the cap becoming strikingly paler as it matures and dries out. Its Latin species name *mutabilis* also describes this mutating feature. When a Latin name has to change - quite a common occurrence - at least the common English name usually remains constant, but unfortunately not in this case. This is presumably because here that name

incorporated its Latin genus name which was forced to change due to a better understanding of the science of the species. A pity the 'Two-tone' part of the name had to be lost as well, though.

Jenny found another species of interest growing in a small cluster out of the base of a Birch tree. Both Derek and I had no doubts that it belonged to the genus *Psathyrella*, but it was not one that we recognised. This is a genus, together with *Entoloma*, *Cortinarius* and *Inocybe*, often passed over by mycologists and is really not possible to identify to species without the use of specialist books and a microscope. I offered to have a go and took a couple of specimens home, where with the scope I discovered cystidia (special cells all over the gills) which were reminiscent of bottlenose dolphins (see photo below) – I'd definitely seen these before! Looking back through my *Psathyrella* photos I found the one I wanted, taken 7 years ago, which had these distinctive cells, then checked through the various books to make sure all other features fitted before naming it *Psathyrella spadicea* (Chestnut Brittlestem). I then took a photo of the by now rather pale fruitbodies – one of the characteristics of this species is its hygrophanous cap, one that fades (not unlike *Kuehneromyces mutabilis* previously discussed) as it dries out. In fact I'd recorded this species at Hodgemoor before but (like many other things) had forgotten all about it!



Psathyrella spadicea fruitbodies and cystidia

This being a well forayed site, it was not surprising that we added only a handful of species new to its longish list of well over 600: another *Psathyrella* – a rare one which I've found several times at nearby Penn Wood, *P. spintrigeroides*, also *Crepidotus cesatii* (odd because this is quite a common Oysterling), *Hebeloma aestivalis* (English genus name Poisonpie), *Mycena flavescens*, a small Bonnet which when young has a yellow gill edge, *Scleroderma bovista* (Potato Earthball), a member of this genus which is not well known and possibly often misrecorded, *Tricholoma scalpturatum* (Yellowing Knight), and finally *Helvella lacunosa* (Elfin Saddle) – this another odd one as it's quite common in this area.

For more details of what we found see the complete list.

All photos © Penny Cullington

[A note to attendees of Burnham Beeches last week, September 29th: the identity of the very pale small species of *Pluteus* of which I was unsure and which is shown at the end of my report turned up again at Stoke Common on Saturday. Derek kindly checked it for me this time and determined it as *Pluteus plautus* (Satin Shield) and not the rare species I had tentatively suggested. I'll be amending that report shortly!