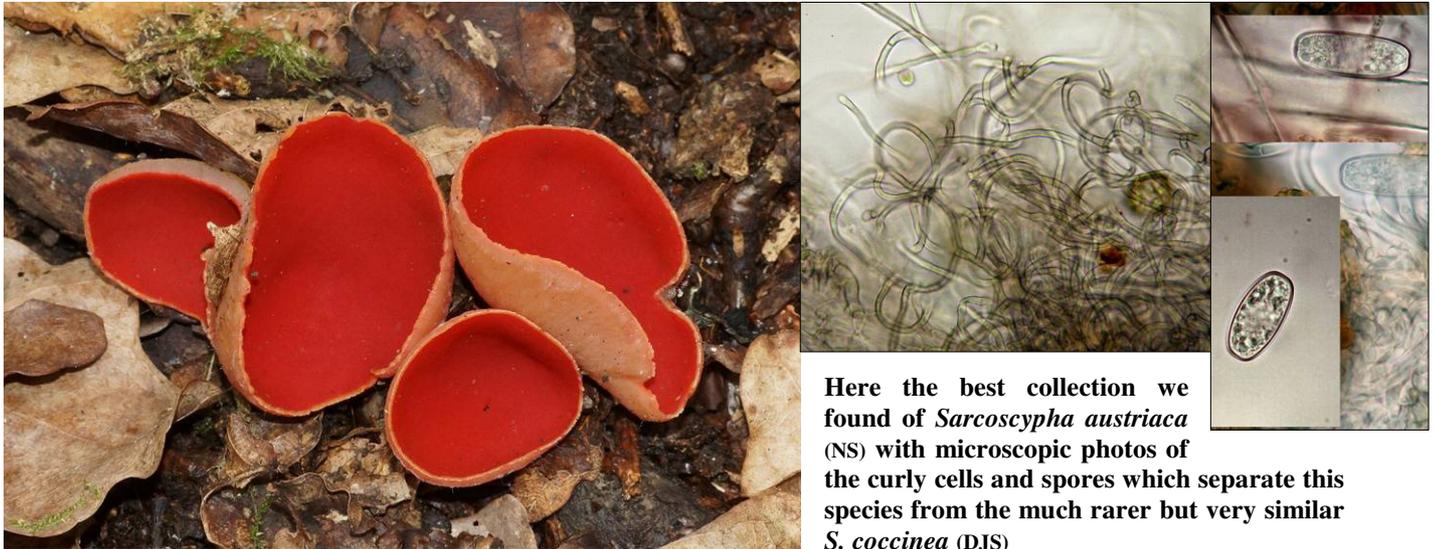


Seven of us met up for the first of our two springtime fungi walks this year on a greyish windy morning but mild and dry underfoot despite a reasonable amount of recent rain though no recent frost. Conditions had obviously suited the late fruiting of *Sarcoscypha austriaca* (Scarlet Elfcup) which we found within a few minutes of setting out and were dotted about in twos and threes poking through the leaf litter or on rotting wood in many places as we went round.



Here the best collection we found of *Sarcoscypha austriaca* (NS) with microscopic photos of the curly cells and spores which separate this species from the much rarer but very similar *S. coccinea* (DJS)

As was to be expected at this time of year, very few agarics turned up: just one clump of *Hypholoma fasciculare* (Sulphur tuft) and also two collections of a *Psathyrella* (Brittlestem) which, however, proved to be of interest. A singleton growing on very rotten woody debris turned up first, and from its partly translucent brown cap we guessed it was not *P. spadiceogrisea* (Spring Brittlestem) – a fairly common species which we’ve found here before at this time. Later Joanna found two more small but quite similar fruitbodies on a damp mossy log which we guessed were also from this same genus, though first impressions were that it might be a species of *Galerina* but once collected the gill colour proved to be that of *Psathyrella* and not *Galerina*. At home a microscope revealed this to be the case and both collections keyed out to *Psathyrella obtusata* (no common name), a species with just a few county records but only 15 national records (its rarity possibly reflecting how few mycologists spend time on this genus rather than of the species itself?). The literature does not mention that this is a springtime fruiter but as one of the previous 15 records was dated in April (by a reputable identifier) I felt this was enough justification for its early occurrence here.



*Psathyrella obtusata* (NS)



Our somewhat short list of just 32 species consisted mainly of common brackets and various crusty black ascomycetes found on fallen branches of various deciduous trees. One which Claudi recognised and we often find here was *Diatrype bullata* (Willow Barkspot) (CS)

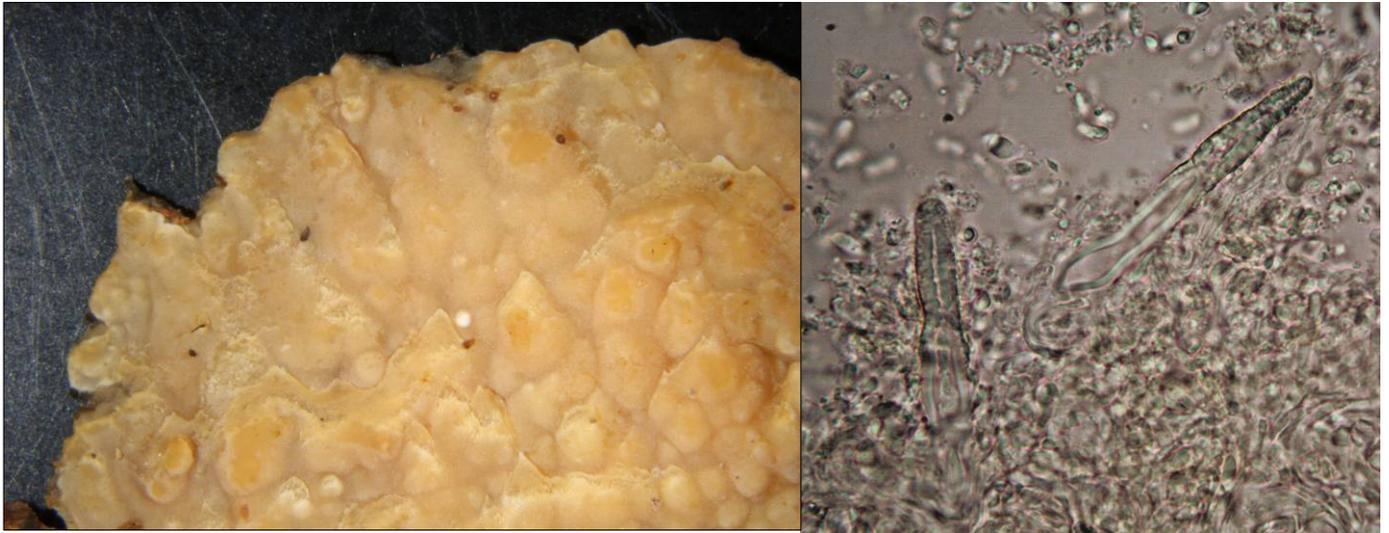
but another he found fruiting on a Hazel stick we were unfamiliar with and looked distinctly different. Later Derek identified this as *Diatrypella favacea* (Birch Blackhead), not a rare species and commonest on Birch but (according to Ellis and Ellis) also found on Beech, Oak, Hazel, Hawthorn and Alder. This is one we should probably be finding and recognising from many of our regular sites, so I'm including several of the excellent images taken by both Derek and Claudi as a useful reference.



*Diatrypella favacea*, above showing the typical crusty blobs breaking through the bark and top right a detail of a decapitated blob revealing the black pockets where the spores are formed. Right is a single ascus (x1000) which in this species contains not the usual 8 spores found in the majority of ascomycetes but many many more than this. Below are the allantoid shaped spores (x1000) having been ejected from the ascus, each spores being only 5-6 microns long. (All photos DJS apart from the one immediately above – CS)



Also worth a mention is a soft buff-coloured slightly bumpy corticioid which Derek noticed on the sawn off end of a conifer log. This he later identified as *Phlebiopsis gigantea* (no common name) though maybe we should have recognised it in the field because our records show that we found it here (probably in exactly the same log pile) in 2007 and in 2014, also with records from Whitecross Green and Penn Wood. It is described as widespread, always found on conifer, and no doubt another species we should be committing to memory and recording more frequently.



*Phlebiopsis gigantea*, on the left showing the 'meruloid' surface (one that is pliable and slightly jelly-like as in the genus *Merulius*) and on the right the encrusted pointed cytidia x1000 which are found on the surface and give it its slightly hairy appearance. (DJS)

To finish with, an attractive slime mould found right at the end of our walk, another species found on conifer often on damp rotting stumps, this was *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*. The fine tubes are beautiful under a hand lens and a challenge to photograph but we have two good images to conclude the report.

For further details of what we found see the complete list. Many thanks to all attendees and to our three photographers. We look forward our next event on Easter Monday.

*Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*, on the right in situ showing in the bottom left corner the slime mould in transition between the slimy mobile plasmodium stage and the fully developed tubular structure. (NS)

Below is a magnified view of the tubes taken on a stereo microscope. (DJS)



