HOCKERIDGE WOOD FORAY

Sunday, March 11th 2012 Leader Penny Cullington

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This was a joint foray with the Herts / Beds Fungi Group, followed by the HBFG buffet lunch and AGM which was held conveniently only ten minutes' drive away. This may be responsible for the large number of attendees: 17 of us enjoyed a beautiful sunny spring morning, though fungi were not in plentiful supply and much turning of logs and peering at sticks was required to assemble any sort of list. Only two gilled fungi were found, both miniscule. The first I found whilst scraping about amongst pine needle debris, a tiny immature whitish mycenoid mushroom – in this state looking not unlike the asco *Cudoniella acicularis*, but the gills were just visible and it was clearly attached to a cone by a longish fine strand. This suggested it might be the springtime species *Strobilurus tenacellus*, and at home with the scope the telltale cystidia confirmed this despite the lack of any mature spores. This is a relatively easy genus to sort out because there are only three different species in Britain, all tending to be found in Spring and also always growing on cones – two species on Pine and one on Spruce. If on Pine the shape of the cystidia is enough to decide which of the two possible species you have, *S. tenacellus* being relatively common and *S. stephanocystis* considerably rarer.

Jenny Schafer found the second of our gilled fungi, the delightful tiny white *Hemimycena tortuosa* on a damp mossy deciduous log. See Derek's photo below for the reason for the species name. It's always a delight and relief when one finds these remarkable and unique tortuous corkscrew-shaped cystidia on the cap, thus eliminating all the other 14 British species of this very tricky genus.

The remaining species on our shortish list of 35 were made up of a few brackets and corticioids, one gastromycete, a couple of slime moulds and the rest were ascos of some sort or other. Quite a few things went unnamed due to lack of the necessary specialist expertise (i.e. the absence of Kerry Robinson), but I was delighted to get a name for one of the little black crusty dots on sticks I took home to work on. Claudi Soler handed me a beech stick covered in numerous slightly raised individual tiny black lumpy dots pushing through the bark (reminiscent of little blackheads!). At home the spores were pale and distinctively shaped like long bendy frankfurters (officially known as allantoid). Quite a few pyrenomycetes (the collective name for these black crusty ascos) have spores this shape including the genera *Diatrype* and *Eutypa*, but I struggled to find anything with big enough spores for my species until I discovered one I'd never heard of which happened also to fit the macroscopic description: *Quaternaria quaternata* - what a magnificent name for a crop of blackheads! A photo I found on the net matched exactly, and I also discovered it's not particularly rare though with only a handful of county records, no doubt reflecting the rarity of mycologists who look at such things locally.

An asco of particular note was collected by Joanna Dodsworth, this being a collection of pinkish mounds similar to the common slime mould *Lycogala terrestre* but on close inspection pocked with ostioles all over. These species have an alternative form (anamorph) Trichoderma sometimes growing with them and this was recognised and collected by Anthony Burnham. The pink mounds were again too immature to produce spores but their detailed features and the characteristically small spores of the anamorph allowed Derek to suggest this might be *Hypocrea minutispora* – a species first described only eight years ago in America when it was realised that what mycologists have previously been determining as the fairly common *Hypocrea rufa* is in fact this new species, whereas *H. rufa* exists but is considerably rarer. The determination was confirmed for him by expert Walter Jaklitsch of Vienna University, so a new record for the wood. Photos of this are below also.

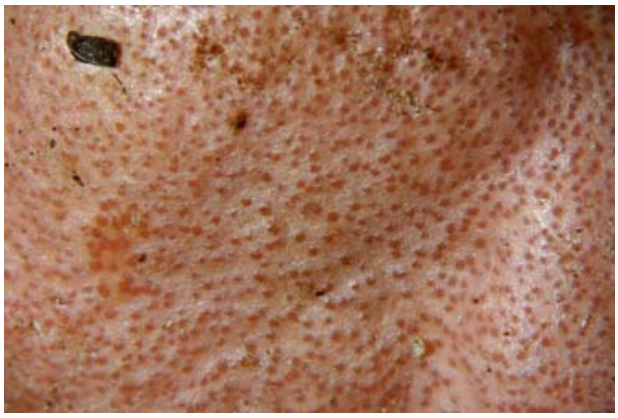
See the complete list of species for more details.

All photographs below were taken by Derek Schafer B

Hypocrea minutispora on (possibly) Aspen.

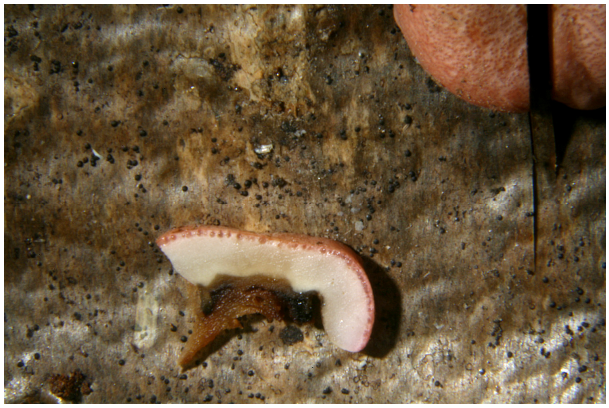
Hypocrea minutispora (the scale divisions are 1mm)

Hypocrea minutispora pink mounds (cushions) of the telemorph along with anamorph Trichoderma stage



Hypocrea minutispora

Hypocrea minutispora

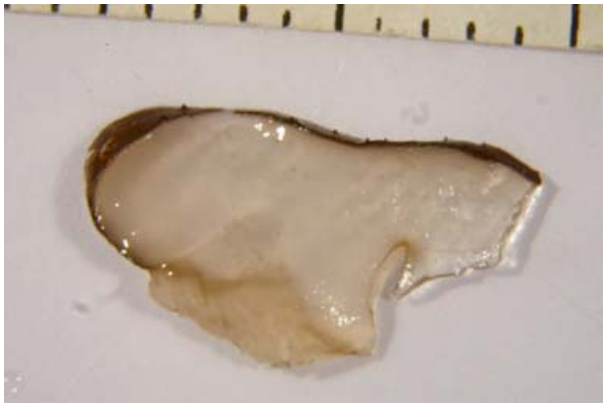


Hypocrea minutispora crosssection of the cushion showing the chambers near the surface where ascospores are released when mature


Hypocrea minutispora crossection of the cushion


Hypocrea minutispora Trichoderm stage


Exidia plana – now known as *Exidia nigrescens*



Exidia plana crossection (scale divisions 1mm)

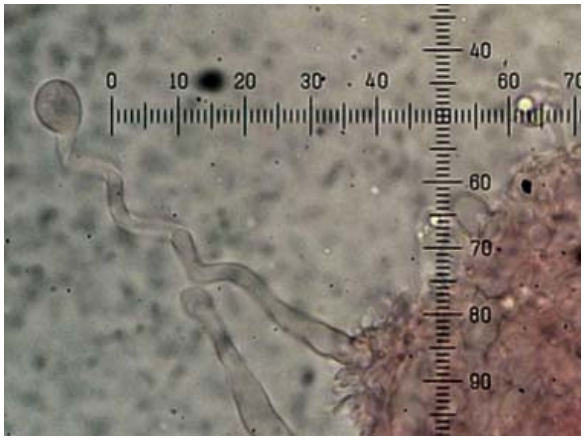
Exidia plana crossection

Exidia plana crossection

Hemimycena tortuosa (scale divisions 1mm)

Hemimycena tortuosa

Hemimycena tortuosa (if you look closely, the corkscrew – shaped cystidia can just be made out on the cap surface)



Hemimycena tortuosa cap cystidia at x 1000 under the compound microscope

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