

# A Fungi Foray in Pigneys Wood

*By Peter Croot, Coltishall Parish Tree Warden*

**T**HE IDEA for a fungi foray came about when four directors and a trustee of Pigneys Wood met Dr Tony Leech at the presentation of awards by the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership in the Assembly Rooms in Norwich. Both Pigneys Wood and Tony's conservation group had won awards, the former having been proposed by a manager from BTCV.

Following the awards ceremony, many people commenced "networking" and we spoke to Tony about our woodland and, as he had never visited Pigneys Wood, he was most enthusiastic about seeing any fungi that we have.

It was agreed that Tony would visit us in 24 October and would bring a fungi "student group" with him and, as it was a volunteer day, we hoped to swell the number of interested people.

However, the day dawned with a forecast of the rain that gardeners had been praying for following weeks of dry weather. That, of course, threatened to result in the cancellation of our event.

On telephoning Tony, I learned that he was anything but dismayed at the prospect of rain. Indeed, he told me that the recent drought could seriously reduce the quantity of fungi that we may find. Nevertheless, he was willing to come along and "give it a go".

I panicked at the thought of having a fungi foray without any fungi. That chap Fleetwood would have a field day in Broadsheet. I could see the headlines. "Crootie has fungi hunt but no fungi". I would never live it down!

So, in desperation I collected some fungi from my garden and popped them into a plastic bag so that we would have something to identify at least.

We met Tony in the car park and he had his group with him as promised. In

addition there were a few interested bystanders plus some trustees. I had also taken along Tony Codling (Horstead Parish Tree Warden) who, as we all know, is very interested in fungi.

I understood that my task was to give Tony Leech and his group an "overview" of Pigneys Wood, showing them all over the site and pointing out the various habitats we have, but that was not to be!!!

Fifty yards up the main path Tony's eagle eye spotted fungi. Another twenty yards and he spotted a lot more. So, I began to sigh with relief. It looked very much like the morning would not be a waste of time for Tony and his group after all.

On we went to the old wood where we made more discoveries, then down the railway embankment for even more discoveries.

In fact, it was there that we remained with many species being found. Tony was inundated with questions from his student group and us novices alike.

Tony's basket got fuller and fuller with those specimens that were difficult to identify being retained for later inspection under the microscope, resulting in a lot of homework for him!

I never knew that such a variety of species of fungi and such a quantity could occur in such a relatively small area!

The time seemed to fly by and it was only after three hours solid foraging that we decided to call it a day with Tony declaring it one of his top twenty sites. As you can imagine, we trustees were absolutely



delighted with that.

We made our way back to the car park with Tony promising us a list of the fungi we found. I have to say at this point that he was true to his word and we now have a complete list and I will be pleased to provide you with a copy on request.

He also invited us to visit his site near Holt next spring. It is managed by his conservation group.

Tony is enthusiastic about returning to Pigneys Wood for another foray. He will be most welcome and we hope that we will be able to participate in that.

Whilst the comprehensive list Tony supplied is too long to include in this article, here are a few species that may interest readers

Field mushroom (*Agaricus campestris*). Whitish/greyish and not yellowing or reddening.

Fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*). The classic toadstool of children's books but with no fairies or elves found beneath. Scarlet with white spots.

Jelly ear (*Auricularia auricularia-judae*). Dull brown gelatinous lobes. It is often found on elder.

Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*). Foul smelling and candle-like. From 'egg'.

Finally, I am sure that our editor is eager to learn about the fungus I collected in my garden. It was *Armillaria mellea s.l.*, the dreaded honey fungus!! Oh well!!!

