Published in: North West Fungus Group Newsletter, Spring 2021 (ISSN 1465-8054)

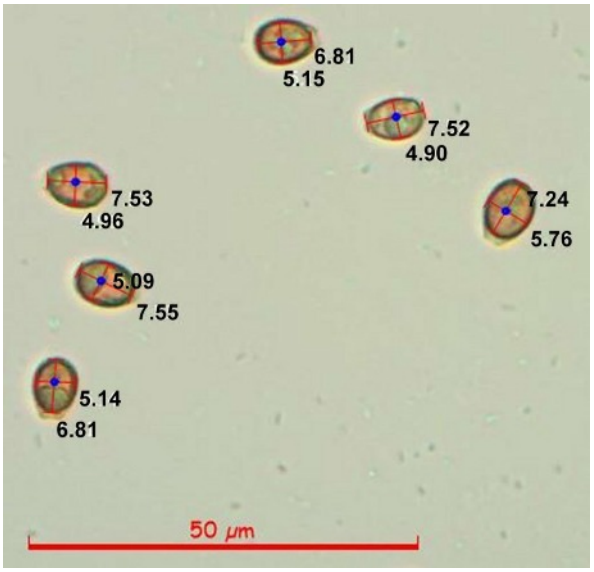
Stenner Woods

Paul F. Hamlyn

Adjacent to Fletcher Moss Park in Didsbury, a suburb of Manchester, Stenner Woods is a small area of wet woodland a remnant of the original Mersey Valley flood plain. Fallen trees and dead wood are generally not removed from the site providing a habitat for invertebrates that in turn provide a food source for birds. This also makes the site an ideal location for wood decomposing fungi.

With restrictions on travel and attending forays in 2020 I have started to record at this site since it is only a short distance from where I live. I have only found common species so far but even these sometimes require careful examination.

Ganoderma applanatum



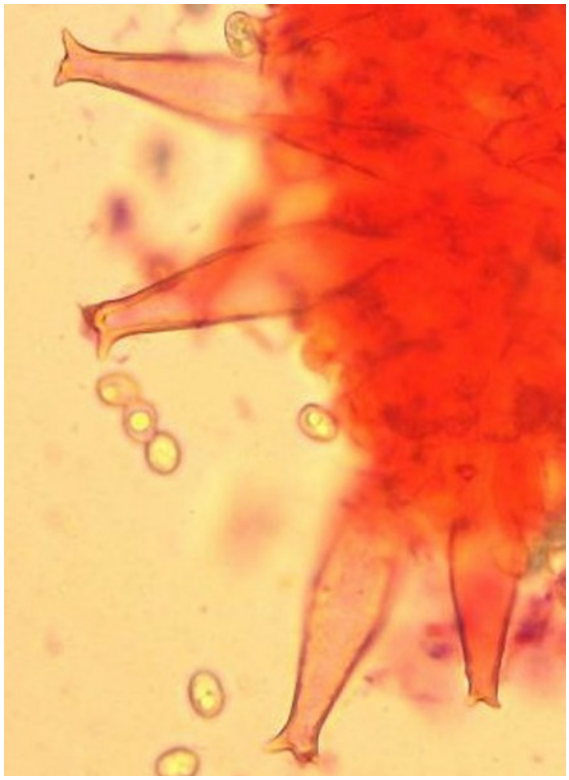
Spore size measurements using Piximètre

For example, *Ganoderma applanatum* (Artist's Bracket or Artist's Conk) is similar in appearance to *Ganoderma australe* (Southern Bracket) but there is a significant difference in spore size (Andy Overall, Field Mycol. 17(4):124-128, October 2016). Measuring spores is tedious at the best of times but there are free software programs that can help. Robin Dean recommends Piximètre so I put it to the test and it worked very well.

One day I came across a rather soggy and partially eaten specimen of *Pluteus cervinus* (Deer Shield - opposite). It appeared to have the requisite free and pale pink gills. A quick look under the microscope revealed the large cystidia on the gill edges with horn-like prongs characteristic of this species.

Pluteus cervinus

Cheilocystidia (right)



Sarcoscypha austriaca

Excipular hairs (right)

In January 2021 the River Mersey came within centimetres of the top of the riverbank necessitating use of the overflow water storage basin that includes Stenner Woods. Within a few days most of the water had receded and it was safe to walk around the woods again. At the beginning of February, I was greeted with an abundance of *Sarcoscypha austriaca* (Scarlet Elfcup), they obviously like very wet conditions. *Sarcoscypha coccinea* (Ruby Elfcup) is almost identical to *S. austriaca* but has straight hairs on the outer (infertile) surface of the cups whereas the excipular hairs of *S. austriaca* are strongly sinuous to coiled and convoluted (Butterfill & Spooner, Mycologist 9 (1):20-26, 1995).

Note: all photographs taken by Paul F. Hamlyn.