

Rimbachia neckerae: a rare moss fungus

△ *Rimbachia neckerae*. L Sanchez (https://www.flickr.com/photos/leandro_schnz/)

Tom Preece relates his encounter with a bryophilous fungus

The mycologically definitive “Ainsworth and Bisby’s Dictionary of the Fungi” (Kirk *et al.*, 2008) tell us that bryophilous fungi “seem to be a very frequent, universal phenomenon” and that they are “generally totally neglected, despite their number and frequency”. Having enjoyed finding and doing some simple experiments with fungi on lichens around our house near Oswestry (Preece, 2011; 2013) and spurred on by the notion that moss fungi are common, I decided to search for these near our house and in the nearby Nature Reserve. After 2 years of drawing a blank, Sam Bosanquet helped me by loaning me a lot of papers by Döbblers about bryophilous fungi. Döbblers has drawings of many moss fungi, in particular ascomycetes. These are usually incredibly small (1.0 to 1.5mm or less) and on a near single leaves of mosses. In an important paper he writes (Döbblers, 2002) “very few bryophilous fungi are ever detectable in the field” and states in several others that large quantities of mosses should be carefully examined using a stereomicroscope. I am now continuing to search as he suggests. Since BBS members examine vast numbers of mosses, it must be that these universally occurring fungi are very difficult to see, and this accounts for the rare finds reported in *Field Bryology* (Fisk, 2000; Bosanquet, 2007). However, I had a surprise on January 1st 2012, looking at a mixture of *Didymodon rigidulus* and *Scleropodium cespitosum* growing on an unusually damp set of paving stones under our north-facing bedroom window, I saw a quantity of what looked like fine pure white dust. Microscopy quickly showed this was a fungus, many individuals cup-shaped,

not an ascomycete, but plenty of very small basidiospores. Sent to Kew, Martyn Ainsworth identified it as *Rimbachia neckerae*, a rare cyphelloid and clamped basidiomycete, and pointed out that Shropshire is one of two English counties in which this fungus has been found – in 1976. There are very few other records (Herefordshire, 1965; Glamorganshire, 2000; two records from West Sutherland, 2003 and 2005). You too may find it. Look out for “white dust” or tiny white crumbs! My material is at Kew: K(M)173734.

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Tom Preece

'Kinton', Turners lane, Llynclys Hill, Shropshire, SY10 8LL