Lichens of New Parks

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Starting off from the main car park, along the east side of New Parks the trees comprised a mix largely made up of mature trees, singled up from the traditional oak coppice, and planted conifers. Rather poor in lichen cover and diversity. However, as we progressed northwards, we slowly built up a list of some of the common species that favour the acidified bark of the oaks and other trees.

On the bark of the mature trees we had the pale yellow-green patches of *Lecanora expallens*. The greenish black *Scolisciosporum chlorococcum*, looking like damp alga but in places with elusive black fruits. The powdery grey-green *Leproloma vouauxii* and similarly leprose *Lepraria incana sensu lat.*; the latter particularly prevalent on conifer. Occasionally a smooth hard green-black film in crevices of oak trunks or on conifers where it is often associated with the hard circular wood growth around an old scar. This is *Dimerella pineti,* confirmed in places by the presence of often crowded, tiny, white to translucent, delicate fruits.

The lichens that need better light are best developed in the tree crowns and this was observed on wind fallen branches. The grey leafy species such as *Hypogymnia physodes, Parmelia sulcata and Physcia tenella* were common and obvious, along with occasional grey leafy *Punctellia jeckeri*, small specimens of the shrubby *Ramalina farinacea* and tiny specimens of *Usnea Cornuta* (seen twice only). Crusts on the windfall and on some small diameter accessible branches included *Cliostomum griffithii, Lecanora chlarotera, Lecidella eleachroma, Lecidella eleachroma* form *soralifera and Fuscidea lightfootii.* The flora developed better as we progressed northwards and perhaps closer to Park Brook. The elongated fruits of *Opegrapha varia* were nice to see on a small branch.

In more open spaces extensive violaceous grey sheets of *Lecanactis abietina* were seen on oak, often accompanied by streaks of the rusty yellow pinhead lichen *Chaenotheca ferruginea.*

When we entered the arboretum for lunch, we added some species of more nutrient rich bark, in this case on Magnolias. Additional species here included *Arthonia radiata*, with its flat irregularly stellate black fruits, the Leafy bright orange yellow *Xanthoria parietina*, the also bright orange yellow granules of *Candelaria reflexa*, the appressed leafy green brown *Melanelixia subaurifera*, and its shinier brown cousin *M. glabratula.* The grey leafy *Punctelia subrudecta* and the strap like *Evernia prunastri* and shrubby *Physcia adscendens.* The adpressed grey white rosettes of *Physconia distorta* with smart looking black fruits.

Small to medium sized white patches of *Phlyctis argena* were seen on the trunks of several, mainly smooth barked trees, confirmed by visual inspection as we did not have caustic potash solution with which to make it bleed red. It was then seen on the Whitty Pear just inside our exit gate; a huge thallus looking like several large tins of white paint had been emptied over the trunk. It is emphasised that this extensive growth is of no detriment to the tree, which looked robust and healthy; the lichen was observed to provide a habitat for some insects.

Another lichen habitat within the woods was that of rotting tree stumps. These were not rich but locally had the squamulosa *Cladonia coniocraea* with its spike like podetia. Also, the granulose-gelatinous *Trapeliopsis flexuosa and T. granulosa*, sometimes associated with *Placynthiella icmalea.*

As we returned toward the car park the best find, *Graphis scripta*, was seen as several sizeable thalli on 6 to 8-inch diameter holly trunks.

The habitat in New Parks lacks the ecological continuity that favours diversity and abundance among the lichens and other organisms. Added to this the forest here is in an elevated position that has been exposed to the ravishes of sulphur dioxide pollution, so prevalent in the not-too-distant past. Nevertheless, our list of lichens totalled 34 species. This part of the forest certainly has more species to yield, particularly along the Park Brook, the valley of which was not included in this visit.

I didn't realise until examining the Ordnance Survey map afterwards but I had previously made a short visit, alone, to the lower part of the Brook, entering off the dismantled railway, just west of Forest Lodge. It was very rich and is a promising subject for further lichen survey work. In contrast to the area visited in New Parks it forms a deep sheltered area surrounded on all sides by high tree covered hills. In addition to the protection afforded from pollution, the terrain has not been suitable for commercial coppicing or forestry. It forms part of a network of such habitat along the Dowles Brook and up the lower stretches of several tributaries; a rich habitat first identified by Francis Rose when he visited Wyre with David Hawksworth to survey the lichens and bryophytes for the Nature Conservancy Council who were then considering designation of Wyre as a National Nature Reserve.

Graphis scripta Rosemary Winnall