



*Disciotis venosa*, the Bleach Cup

Helen found this spring cup fungus in the grounds of Threshfield Chapel a couple of weeks ago. The fruit-bodies were cups that were closed up, looking like a chunky Peziza. The cup had a short stem buried in the soil of the rough grass behind the chapel and it was very brittle when we harvested it. Microscopy was unhelpful because there were no spores, however it was possible to show that there was no reaction to Melzer's reagent, so we reckoned it was not a Peziza.

Archie remembered seeing it on a MYFG Spring foray years ago in Grass Woods which are about a Mile and a half from Threshfield as the crow flies. Very soon we found it in Swiss volume 1 page 50. It was *Disciotis Venosa*, the Bleach Cap, named from the strong smell of bleach in the broken flesh. It is described as being deeply veined or wrinkled when open as ours was.

Swiss describes our find well: 'Fruiting body deep disc, to flat plate-shaped. 50 - 150 (250) mm across, ending on a short stalk embedded in the ground...It goes on to say, 'In many years occurring in masses. April - May Widespread.'

Edibility is very doubtful in our opinion.

Phillips tells us it is 'Occasional. Poisonous'. Swiss is a bit of a surprise in saying, 'Connoisseurs prefer *Disciotis venosa* to all other morels as a special delicacy. Confusion is certainly possible with *Discina perlata* (no. 31) and *Discina melaleuca* (no. 29), which are likewise edible but much rarer. The conspicuous chlorine odor of the fresh fungus is a reliable identifying character in doubtful cases.'

Dennis says has a nice, clear description, quoted here:

## DISCIOTIS Boudier

Disciotis Boudier in Bull. Soc. mycol. France 1:100 (1885).

Fruit body an apothecium, very large, becoming fully expanded or even reflexed and lobed, the hymenial surface some shade of brown, often veined or convoluted; stalk short and broad or almost obliterated. Distinguished from the Pezizaceae by its asci not being blued by iodine and by its broadly elliptical spores often bearing polar granules; paraphyses broad, septate.

*Disciotis venosa* (Persoon) Boudier, Icones mycologicae II, Livraison 10 (October 1906).

Apothecia large, up to 15 cm. across when fully expanded, hymeniurn dark brown, in large specimens always more or less deformed by ribs and furrows radiating from the centre, exterior whitish or cream, minutely scurfy; stalk short and stout, sometimes sunk in the soil. Asci about  $320 \times 20 \mu$ .; spores broadly elliptical,  $19-25 \times 12-15 \mu$ , without conspicuous internal oil drops; paraphyses septate, with brown sap, slightly clavate and up [to]  $12 \mu$  broad at the tip. The flesh has an odour of Eau de Javelle, or hypochlorite solution, and is very brittle, so that large expanded apothecia often split extensively *in situ* and are not easily collected intact. Luxuriant forms with strongly convoluted hymenia have been called var. *reticulata* (Greville) Boudier, Hist. Class. Discom. d'Europe:42 (1907), but are scarcely worth a distinctive name.

On soil in woods, on shady banks and lawns, March to May. Common.

