

FUNGI WALK at HOWE PARK WOOD – 19th October 2019

Justin Long

It was a fresh, but bright morning on the 19th October with the low morning sun struggling to nudge the thermometer above 10°C. There were a good number of 15 or so attendees at Howe Park Wood, where the Bucks Group have not visited for 15 years, and this included a handful of new members, which is always good to see.

It turned out in fact to be a most rewarding walk, with a couple of species new to VC24, and one *almost* new to the British list...

Like all good forays, it took a fair while to venture very far from the car park, and we almost gained a few new members who inadvertently joined our group, rather than the Open University tree identification course being held in the visitors centre.

There were some typical grassland species in the lawns around the centre, and that gave Derek the opportunity to discuss various *Coprinus*, *Parasola*, *Lacrymaria*, and *Coprinellus* species with the group. Thanks to Margaret for supplying the photo of this young *Bolbitius* nestled in the grass, with its wonderful egg-yolk yellow cap.



Bolbitius titubans nestled in the short grass. (M Mch)

We wandered slowly towards the wood, pausing by a small pond surrounded by *Salix*, and collected a couple of specimens of the Roll-Rim *Paxillus* sp. With a hunch, due to their size, that they may not be *P.involutus*, Derek took one away to carry out a test with ammonia vapour. As this specimen turned green in the vapour, and following Geoffrey Kibby (2017) plus its general macro characters, it proved to be *Paxillus ammoniavirescens*. This is in fact a new County record (new to Vice County 24) but the species is relatively recently described, and therefore probably more common than that would suggest.

Heading towards the low sun and into the woodland itself, it was notable that there were a limited number of mycorrhizal species around, despite the very wet October. One can only assume that the extremely dry conditions in August and September had convinced these species not to bother with this particular fruiting season. Hopefully they will be saving their energy for next year...



their characteristic black 'foot'.

Whilst studying an old ash tree covered with moss and *Mycena speirea*, Derek spotted an unusual-looking *Crepidotus*-like species growing on soil under the tree. Being that the fruit body was particularly large it seemed unlikely to be a *Crepidotus* at all (*applanatus* was an unlikely possibility) but, on further investigation at home, it turned out to be *Crepidotus autochthonus*, which is again new to VC24.

Further into the wood, and growing perhaps 20 feet up an old ash tree was what we agreed was probably *Polyporus squamosus*, quite large bracket fungi with

A good rummage around in the undergrowth at the base of the tree revealed two or three very rotten specimens of the polypore which more or less confirmed the ID. What was interesting however was that these rotten fungi played host to a number of small white gilled fungi, identified as *Clitopilus hobsonii*. Unfortunately, this meant that the soggy rotting lumps that the polypore had now become were passed, carefully, around those with a particular interest. One of the less glamorous moments of the morning's foray.

Interestingly, Martin Kincaid mentioned that this particular tree also hosts a colony of noctule bats. So despite being in the latter phase of its life, this demonstrates the importance of these older, moribund trees to the wider woodland ecosystem.

A steady stream of specimens was collected by the group and handed to Derek for identification. Of those that couldn't reliably be identified in the field, Derek took these, along with a good number of other specimens away for further work to confirm the ID.



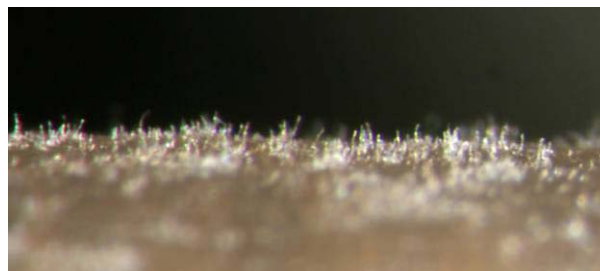
Clitopilus hobsonii growing from the rotting remains of *Polyporus squamosus*.



One that was easily identifiable was the wonderfully named Redhead Roundhead - *Leratiomyces ceres* – an alien invader from Australia. Many thanks to Janet for spotting this one in the woodchip next to the path, and for letting us use her wheeled chair as a temporary stage for those wanting to take photos!



Among the *Mycena* species that were collected on the day, Derek spent time confirming things like *Mycena olida* with microscopy and reference to diagnostic keys. However, in doing so, and with one particular 'nitrous' smelling one, he uncovered an unexpected find. Nitrous smells are common in *Mycena* and there are several species (e.g. *M. leptcephala*) that would fit the general appearance of this one. Anyway, it turns out to have a distinctive set of characters, which makes it *Mycena scirpicola*.

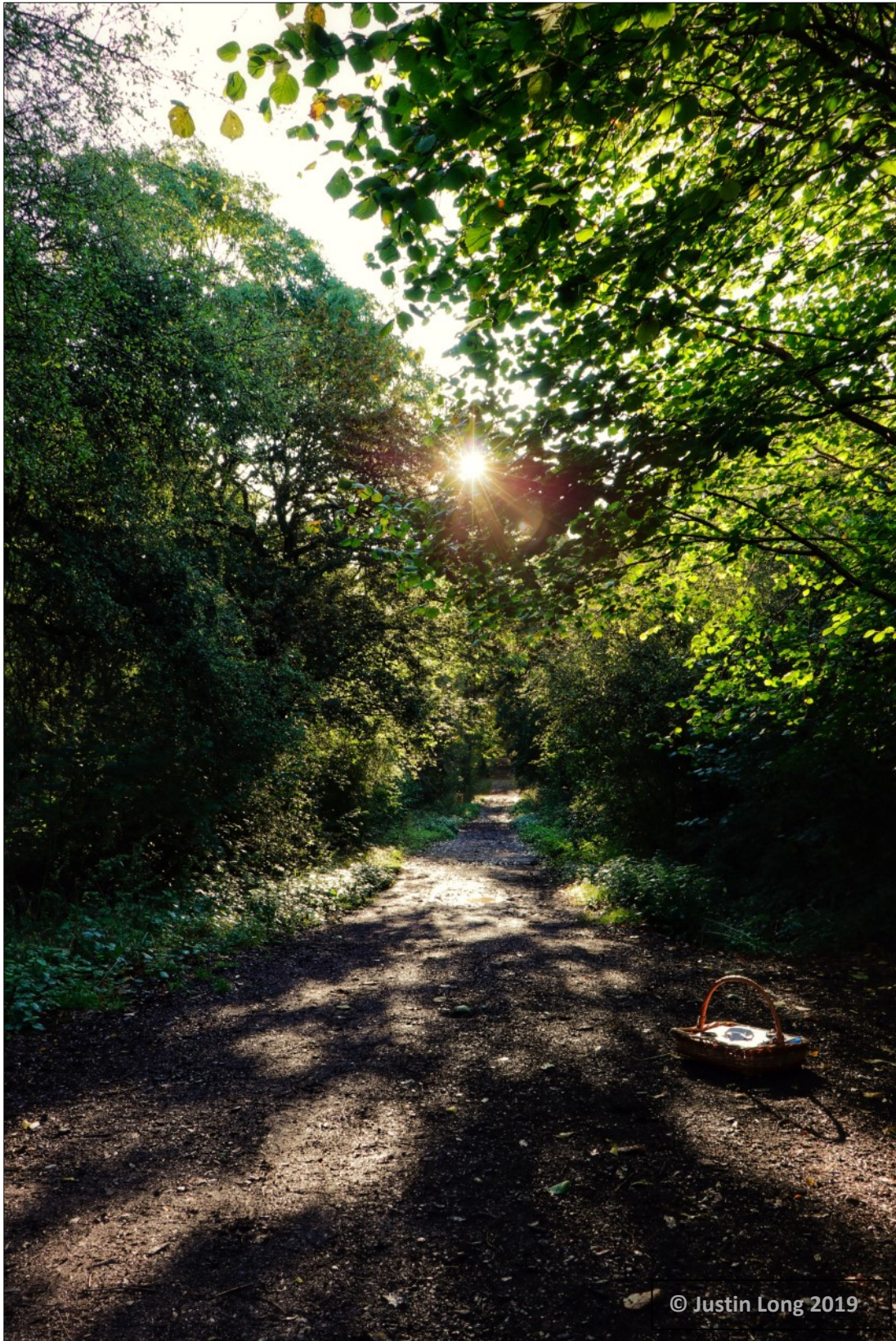


Photos of *Mycena scirpicola* taken later at home by Derek after he had identified it. Left is the underside of the cap, above is the stem surface magnified to show the fine hairs, left is the detail of one hair magnified x 1000.



There are no records of this species on the Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland (FRDBI), so on this basis, the species would appear to be new to Britain, and a rare find indeed! But... the name rang a bell and, following a hunch, Derek checked on information from a Workshop that Thomas Laessle (author of the recent European monograph on *Mycena*) ran in the Forest of Dean in 2017. It turns out Thomas identified this at the workshop but that it had not been reported to Kew for it to be put on the British list. So the HPW find is in fact the second British record, but nevertheless, a significant find, and a great record to add to the species to be found in Howe Park Wood.

See the separate detailed list for more information on what we found.



It was the kind of morning at Howe Park Wood where one really wants to be heading away from the low sun, rather than directly towards it, alas, the planets had conspired against us, so that the main ride through the woods was aligned perfectly with the rising sun, making silhouettes of everything in front. (JL)