

FUNGI WALK and MEETING at NAPHILL COMMON on Sunday September 29th 2019

Penny Cullington

Today was the fourth time that friends and colleagues of Jackie and Justin, supplemented by BFG members, have descended in force upon Naphill Common for this our annual jumbo fungal meeting. Guest mycologists extraordinaire Richard Fortey and Geoffrey Kibby had once again kindly agreed to head up two of the three groups of forayers once Justin had skilfully divided everyone up into manageable numbers, with Derek and I leading the third group. All told we must have easily topped 100, providing the three long-suffering representatives of Friends of Naphill Common with a formidable challenge to lead each group to a different area of the Common and keep us under some semblance of order. As far as I know we didn't lose anyone despite the deluge of rain we were subjected to latterly.

In previous years we'd met up in late October or early November when fruiting was clearly past its peak, so this year we decided to bring this event forward to coincide with what is normally considered 'peak fungi time'. However, Kingdom Fungi is renowned for its unpredictability and thus we were to be thwarted once again! This time it was the extremely dry and warm Indian summer which foiled our plans: fungal fruiting had been stopped in its tracks by the lack of moisture and sadly many genera were conspicuous by their absence today. Everyone nobly scratched around in search of something to collect and bring back for our display and 'Show and Tell' session back at the village hall, but it was hard work and not very rewarding at that. When the heavens opened it surely added insult to injury – much needed rain, yes, but far too late to encourage the fungi to provide us with the delights we'd been anticipating.

There were a few such delights, however, with a couple of interesting species which were new to the over-all Naphill Common list, now standing at 350 species. Firstly one keen lad came up to me with a mushroom which had pores (like a sponge) underneath rather than gills – in other words a species of Bolete. At first I was at a complete loss because it really didn't match any of the common Bolete species; it was not until I asked him to show me exactly where he'd found it that we realised what it was. There was not just one species of fungus growing there but two, both adjoined, one with a stem and pores, the other round like a tennis ball. This was certainly a case of two for the price of one, the ball being *Scleroderma citrinum* (Common Earthball) and the mushroom attached to it being *Pseudoboletus parasiticus* (Parasitic Bolete) – in some years found



in good numbers but in others not appearing at all and usually considered quite a rarity. As its name suggests, this particular Bolete is unique in that it grows exclusively on this particular species of Earthball, sometimes surrounding the host fungus like a crown. The photo here is of a second collection we found further on today.

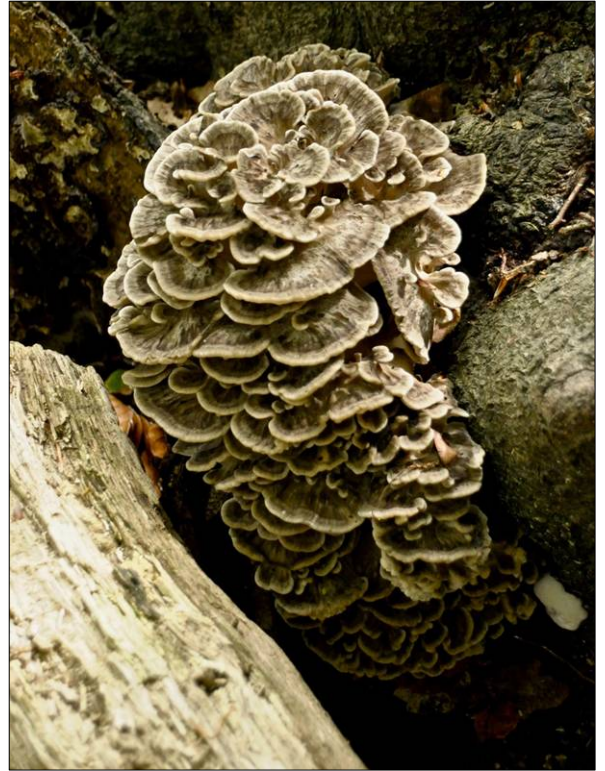
Left: The common *Scleroderma citrinum* with its much rarer parasitic partner *Pseudoboletus parasiticus* growing on it - a nice find and new to the wood today. (PC)

Secondly Richard's group came across an impressive cascade of fungal florets growing on a Beech trunk: this was *Grifola frondosa* (Hen of the Woods), a species much prized for its edible qualities and Geoffrey told us later that it was in fact his favourite fungus to eat. Like the Parasitic Bolete, this species seems to have years when it fruits and others when there's no sign of it but it's never very common. Another of Geoffrey's pearls of wisdom: apparently it tends to appear on

trees which have been struck by lightning. How strange is that?! No photo of today's collection I'm afraid, but here's one courtesy of BFG member Roger Wilding taken last year in nearby Hodgemoor Woods.

Right: *Grifola frondosa*, another nice find today and the second addition to our species list for the wood. (RW)

No walk in the autumn here would feel complete without at least taking a look to see if the magnificent *Hericium erinaceus* (Bearded Tooth / Lion's Mane) was fruiting on the old Beech at the Dew Pond. Was it performing for us today? Yes it was! As last year not only were its white sprays bursting through some of the piled up felled branches from the same tree near the pond, but also there were several large and beautiful clusters at their peak on the underside of the massive fallen trunk. Reminiscent of a frozen waterfall, this rare fungus is a BAP species and as such protected by law. What a stunner!



Above, just one of the impressive fruitbodies of *Hericium erinaceus* we were treated to today. (BW)

Luckily the rain held off just long enough for everyone to enjoy this fungal spectacle before the heavens opened and we beat a hasty retreat to the hall for a much needed hot drink. Then

after setting out the somewhat meagre specimens as best we could, Richard, Geoffrey and Derek kept everyone entertained with instructive and light-hearted gems and anecdotes about our collections and fungi in general.

Then it was time for Justin to wind up the proceedings with due thanks to the group leaders, to the Friends of Naphill for planning and leading us round the various woodland routes, to everyone for coming and finally to Jackie for all her hard work in getting this amazing event off the ground once again. A detailed list of what we found is available separately though inevitably at an event of this sort some things will have been missed off and many of the smaller species which need microscopic examination will have gone unnamed. There follow a few photos to give a flavour of the day, and my thanks to those brave photographers who got their cameras out in such dismal weather: Barry Webb, Catherine Klyhn, Gill Ferguson, Harry Rutherford and Justin Warhurst.



Richard Fortey (GF)



Mycena sp –a species of Bonnet (BW)



Stereum hirsutum - Hairy Curtain Crust (CK)



Scutellinia sp – Eyelash Fungus (BW)



Basidioradulum radula – Toothed Crust (HR)



Hypholoma fasciculare – Sulphurtuft (CK)



Left: *Calocera pallidospathlata* – Pale Stagshorn (BW)

Right: *Schizopora paradoxa* – Split Porecrust (HR)





Schizophyllum commune – Splitgill (HR)



Calocera cornea – Small Stagshorn (HR)

I can't finish off without mentioning Jackie and Justin's generous hospitality in inviting all back to their house in Amersham afterwards where probably the best edible fungus of the day was on view and no doubt much enjoyed: What a stunningly beautiful cake!



