

## FUNGI WALK at BERNWOOD FOREST, August 29<sup>th</sup> 2021

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This was the group's first outing since before the pandemic and proved to be a most enjoyable and successful one with a bumper crop of attendees (around 30 with an encouraging number of new members) who all searched diligently and produced a good list of interesting things despite the somewhat dry conditions. It was our first visit here since early September 2014 and the weather was perfect - a comfortable temperature with no wind and good light, and as usual on our walks we covered only a tiny area of the site.

The car park area started off our species list whilst people assembled. An interesting *Russula* (Brittlegill) – the first of eight on our list – was found under Oak here, one I instantly scratched (cap, gills and stem) and put in a pot to check later in the hope that it would turn chrome yellow where damaged. *Russula luteotacta* (no common name surprisingly) can take up to 12 hours to develop this unique staining but kindly had obliged by the time we finished. With experience it is recognisable in the field by its 'strawberries and cream' sticky cap having a cuticle (cap skin) which won't peel at all and rather widely spaced white gills. It is uncommon, usually under Oak as here, and we also recorded it here in 2014.



Above, *Russula luteotacta* (the photo taken elsewhere PC)



Under the conifers we soon came across a distinctive bright brown bracket on fallen wood which when turned over reveals 'almost gills' rather than pores, having a maze like pattern. This was *Gloeophyllum sepiarium* (Conifer Mazegill) and we found good numbers wherever this substrate was present.

Left, *Gloeophyllum sepiarium*, common on fallen conifer today. (PC)

On the ground in the mossy debris under conifer we found this rather strange whitish fungus with frilly fanned out edges. The name escaped me at the time but this was *Thelephora penicillata* (Urchin Fan), also found here on our previous visit.



Right, *Thelephora penicillata* (PC)

Two species of *Amanita* were found – both unusual and new to the site. We have records for the first, *A. ceciliae* (Snakeskin Grisette) from seven other county sites but it is never very common and recognisable by the dark grey veil remnants on the cap and rather grey stem also. The second, *A. olivaceogrisea* (no common name) is another Grisette (ie having a tapering stem with no ring) but small for the genus and notable for its white 'sock' at the stem base and rather dull olive brown cap. This is a rare species which favours



Right, *Amanita olivaceogrisea*, a small and rare species (JW)

Birch and previously has been found only in Penn and Hodgemoor Woods within the county.



Rather disappointingly only one (rather undeveloped) specimen of Bolete turned up today and I had strong doubts that identification would be possible until it started to blacken where handled on the stem. This rang a bell, as then did the golden cap and yellow pores (only just visible underneath) and stem, though the name escaped me until I looked it up at home. *Leccinum crocipodium* (Saffron Bolete) is unusual amongst its genus in lacking much sign of scabers (scaly mesh) on the stem and in blackening in all parts. It is a regular in Hodgemoor Wood where Oak abounds as it does here (though Jackie who found it noticed the nearest tree here was Pine but no doubt Oak was nearby). We have few records from other sites, however.

Left, immature *Leccinum crocipodium* before blackening had begun. (JW)

Several people noticed fallen bare deciduous wood with clear patches of blue-green staining, this caused by the delightful tiny Ascomycete *Chlorociboria aeruginosa* (Green Elfcup). Eventually we found several examples with the cups present – always a popular one to see.

Right, *Chlorociboria aeruginascens*, each cup no more than 5 mm across. (BW)



In a wooded area amongst mossy debris

we found several small clumps of a clustered yellow club fungus which puzzled me. It looked like *Clavulinopsis fusiformis* (Golden Spindles), this being a species described from grassland and heathland – not woodland as here. At home the spores matched, however, and there appeared to be no other likely candidate, also I found we have other woodland records for the species, so this was another species new to the site today.

Right, the grassland species *Clavulinopsis fusiformis* we found fruiting in woodland today. (BW)

The most common Agaric (mushroom type)

we found today was *Gymnopus fusipes* (Spindle Toughshank), another species which favours Oak, growing at its base in tight clusters often with stems narrowing at the base where fused together. This growth habit together with its brown caps, widely spaced pale gills, rather rubbery texture and usually under Oak, makes it quite an easy one to identify.





Right, *Gymnopus fusipes* at the base of an Oak tree. (PC)

Any walk with Barry and Gill present is likely to end up with a good list of Slime Moulds and other tiny things and today was no exception! Notable were these tiny white blobs found by Gill on rotting conifer which, though only 5mm across, when viewed close to are remarkable and beautiful structures. *Ceratiomyxa porioides* (no common name) I'd not seen before, it being very rare though apparently on the increase. It was new to the site and we have just one previous county record.

Left, *Ceratiomyxa porioides*, a particularly beautiful Slime Mould much magnified here. (BW)



Also on rotting Pine Barry found two (or rather three) for the price one! He noticed this Slime Mould, an unidentified species of *Cribraria*, on which was growing *Stilbella byssiseda*, a species of Hypomycete. The brown stalked blobs are the *Cribraria* species, the white 'horns' on top being the *Stilbella* growing on it, the two together being less than 1 cm tall. Then in the foreground we have another unusual species, *Henningsomyces candidus* (White

Tubelets), also equally tiny and surprisingly not a Slime Mould or an Ascomycete but a member of the Cyphelloid Basidiomycetes. What a little stunner!

Right, the amazing tubes of *Henningsomyces candidus*, less than 1 mm tall, and above, fruiting literally above it, the white horns of *Stilbella byssiseda* growing on a species of *Cribraria*. (BW)



Barry found a further species of *Cribraria* on rotting Pine, this one identified as *Cribraria vulgaris*, again tiny and exquisitely formed, its round head containing the spore mass sitting in a delicate 'cup', typical of this fascinating genus of Slime Mould. (See more examples in Barry's page in Members' Finds on our website.)

Right, *Cribraria vulgaris*, less than 2 mm high, fruiting on rotting Pine. (BW)

Near the car park as we returned we found a clump of brown capped mushrooms growing in grass. This was the unusual *Desarmillaria tabescens* (Ringless Honey Fungus). Previously in the genus *Armillaria* together with the other species of Honey Fungus, it



differs from them in being (a) smaller and (b) lacking a ring on the stem. It occurs uncommonly near Oak, growing in very tight clusters, the cap centre being a bit roughened and scaly. Interestingly, all our county records are from this area (here, at nearby Whitecross Green and Rushbeds).



Left, *Desarmillaria tabescens*, a small species of Honey Fungus which lacks a ring on the stem - found near the car park. (PC)

I've kept possibly the most intriguing find of the day till last: this was a coral-like tight cluster found on a conifer stump by Bob, the like of which I don't think I'd seen before. Working on its identification at home got me nowhere, though I knew without doubt that it was **not** *Ramaria formosa* - the name produced by an app on someone's phone in the field! I eventually resorted to sending the photo to a few experts and Kerry Robinson (of the Herts &

Beds Fungi Group) came back with the answer. It is very young undeveloped material of *Lentinellus cochleatus* (Aniseed Cockleshell), a large species which develops gills which have a sharp saw-edge – difficult to imagine from today's example which lacks gills entirely! However, there is no doubt because the spores match in every detail: they go blue in Melzers reagent (something I hadn't checked), are the correct size and shape and are finely spiny – possibly a unique combination. The species often has a strong smell of aniseed and I had noticed a sweet smell. I've included here a photo of a mature collection for comparison. This was new to the site and is uncommon though we have a good handful of records



Right, immature *Lentinellus cochleatus* found today, and below, the same species looking very different when mature! (Right BS and below PC from elsewhere)



Well, what a start to our season of walks! We recorded over 50 species (quite a modest number but still impressive considering the dry conditions), 20 of those being new to the site according to our records. It remains to thank everyone for coming and contributing to such an enjoyable morning, and particular thanks go to the photographers without whom this

report would be so much less informative. See the complete list for more details of what we found, and to familiarise yourself further with any of the species plenty of images can be found online by clicking on Images in Google and entering the Latin name (bearing in mind that not all will be correctly named there!).

Photographers: BS = Bob Simpson, BW = Barry Webb, JW = Justin Warhurst, PC = Penny Cullington