

## FUNGI WALK at IVINGHOE COMMON, September 4th 2021

Penny Cullington

A group of 12 of us met up on a grey but dry and warm morning, rather fearing that the lack of recent rain was going to mean that species growing in soil would be somewhat limited. This proved to be the case and numbers of fruiting bodies were indeed disappointing (our final complete list just making 50) but, as is nearly always the case, some interesting things turned up and the liberal amounts of fallen wood at this site produced enough to keep us busy and occupied.

On fallen Beech we found several good patches of the bracket *Stereum subtomentosum* (Yellowing Curtain Crust) – a species which forms very similar tiers to the much more common *S. hirsutum* (Hairy Curtain Crust) but being flabbier in texture and often with patches of green algi on the upper surface – as seen here. The yellowing in the common name refers to the edge of the underside which, if damaged when moist, uniquely stains yellow. Not so today – too dry! Several other *Stereum* species stain red when damaged though in the common *S. hirsutum* there's no change. **Right, *Stereum subtomentosum* on fallen Beech. (PC)**



Another bracket but very different which was seen on several large Beech trunks was the perennial *Ganoderma australe* (Southern Bracket). Commonly on Beech and Oak, the photo shows one on fallen Birch - a much less common substrate. It was about 6 inches across but is often much bigger than that and is solid and woody with fine white pores beneath which turn dark brown when pressed. Note also how the cocoa brown spores have coated the surrounding area including the top surface (despite being produced from the pores beneath!), this being a notable feature of the genus.



**Left, *Ganoderma australe* found here on fallen Birch (PC)**

Next, a common Ascomycete (one of the spore-shooters) found on an Ash stick: *Daldinia concentrica* (King Alfred's Cakes – you can look up the story about said King online if you're not familiar with it!) is hard, like a lump of coal, cocoa brown when fresh but ending up black as seen here, and can get to 5 - 6 cms across. When broken open it reveals distinct concentric rings running throughout inside, seen here on the two outer halves.

**Right, *Daldinia concentrica* found on Ash. (PC)**

**Below, *Hypholoma fasciculare* found on Beech. (PC)**



Now for some Basidiomycetes (mushroom types – the spore droppers): firstly a common species which is just starting to appear, *Hypholoma fasciculare* (Sulphur Tuft) grows 'fasciculate' (in tight clusters often fused together at the base) on / near to fallen wood / roots of many different tree species. It is very poisonous and, despite

having pale yellow gills when young (seen in the upturned lowest specimen here) has almost black spores which gradually darken the gills as it matures – this a common feature of many genera having dark spores and often causing confusion.



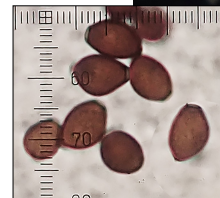
Left and above: *Mycena crocata*, often common in the Chilterns fruiting as it does on fallen Beech. (PC)

Another common species in our area where Beech often predominates is *Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop Bonnet). Of the 100 or so Bonnet species this is perhaps the easiest to identify being unique in having copious bright orange ‘juice’ in the stem. It grows only on fallen Beech and once collected the saffron colour tends to bleed into all parts of the fruitbody, visible here on the gills. We only found one today but it often occurs in good numbers given the correct substrate. The saffron stem is the feature to look for: cap colour can range between pure white to dark brown – very misleading!

We found just one example of an Inkcap but it was a notable one, being new to this well recorded site. At home Derek determined it as *Coprinopsis mitrispora* (no common name and previously *C. spelaiophila*), one which favours damaged parts of (usually) standing deciduous wood - often Beech. We have a handful of Bucks records from just three other sites. The species name comes from the spores which are shaped like a bishop’s mitre!



Right, *Coprinopsis mitrispora*, an unusual Inkcap found by new member Matthew Bull. Note the flecks of veil on the top of the cap, their presence / absence often critical in identification of this group of mushrooms. The insert shows the ‘mitriform’ spores x 1000. (DJS)



We found 4 different species of *Amanita*, three of these only singletons and one doing its best to fool us into thinking it was something else! The brown capped *Amanita fulva* (Tawny Grisette) often has small patches of white (the remnants of its ‘universal veil’) left on its cap, but today’s find appeared to have a completely white cap but turning it over revealed its true identity! We could only assume that the dry conditions had prevented this white covering – a feature of the genus – from disrupting in the usual way as the cap attempted to enlarge.



Far left: the mysterious white capped mushroom, and near left: the same specimen revealing itself as *Amanita fulva* once the thick ‘universal veil’ was peeled back a little. (GF)

We were delighted to find two separate fruitbodies of a very beautiful and also quite rare *Amanita* - another Grisette (ie the group within the genus which has a tapering stem lacking a ring) but larger than the previous species. Usually found under Birch as here, this was *Amanita crocea* (Orange Grisette). The best specimen was in thick grass, probably 15 cm tall, and we left it in situ rather than damage it but the prominent volva

(sac) at the stem base is just visible. The previous specimen was already very damaged but served to show this volva – a distinctive feature of the species together with the stunning cap colour which is present to a lesser degree on the stem as well. We have about 20 Bucks records from just 5 sites, this being one of them where Derek recalls finding it in pretty well the same spot 22 years ago!

Right, *Amanita crocea*, a stunningly beautiful Grisette, found today for only the second time at an Ashridge site. Inset is the distinctive volva enveloping the stem base. (PC)



Now for a few Slime Moulds found mainly (of course!) by Barry Webb. The first is probably the commonest species and also the easiest to identify:

*Fuligo septica* var. *flava* (affectionately known as Dog’s Vomit but I much prefer Scrambled Eggs – to eat, that is!). The patches of unmistakable lemon yellow, often spreading over several cms, stand out against its woody substrate, here found on standing Birch.



Left, *Fuligo septica* var. *flava*, one of our commonest slime moulds and found several times today. (PC)

*Metatrachia floriformis* (no common name - few Slime Moulds have

one) is another common species and stands no more than 4 mm high, the second photo demonstrating how each head opens out when mature forming the petal-like shape depicted in its species name.



Right, *Metatrachia floriformis* (above) not quite mature and (below) fully mature. (BW)

Even smaller is *Physarum album* (previously *P. nutans*), another common species found in clusters on rotting wood and recognisable in the field (if you can find it in the first place!) by its tapering stalks and nodding greyish heads covered in a fine white powdery film – actually grains of calcium carbonate. (*Nutans* in Latin means nodding / drooping).

Left, the nodding heads of *Physarum album*. (BW)



*Cribraria vulgaris* (image on the next page) is a member of another genus having a stalk and a round head but separated from others by the head having a fine meshlike protective net, some species including this one having a cup at its base. (For more examples of this beautiful

genus together with many others go to [www.bucksfungusgroup.org.uk/finds.htm](http://www.bucksfungusgroup.org.uk/finds.htm) and click on the 4<sup>th</sup> choice for Barry's page.)

Right, the miniscule *Cribraria vulgaris* found on well rotted fallen Beech. (BW)

Finally to a species which was new to the site and to Barry, found by Stephen Plummer: the delectable *Diderma floriforme* – again tiny and found in clusters on rotting wood – has pearl grey round heads coated with a two-tone double layer of calcareous crust (clearly visible in Barry's amazing photos) which breaks open to reveal the contrasting dark ripening spore mass within. I had no memory of seeing the species before but found two records (both mine!) from Common Wood and Hockeridge Wood, the last in 2012.



Above, *Diderma floriforme*, showing in detail (right) the maturing heads with a double layer of calcareous coating just beginning to disrupt, and (left) the fully mature spore mass ready to be dispersed by wind or rain. (BW)

Thanks to all attendees – it was hard going at times to find much, but rewarding none the less. For more detail of what we found see the complete list. Thanks too to Derek, Barry and Gill for their photos.

Photographers: BW = Barry Webb., DJS = Derek Schafer, GF = Gill Ferguson, PC = Penny Cullington.