

FUNGI WALK at STAMPWELL FARM on November 6th 2021

Penny Cullington

We were a group of 18 today and were looking forward to exploring this new site for BFG, and after an introductory talk about the farm by the owner Rev. Dr. Frog Orr-Ewing we were shown around by member Jackie Ewan who has studied the fungi here for several years and knows the site like the back of her hand. Most of the morning was spent in grassy areas interspersed with fruit trees and Oak but later on there was the odd Birch and finally a small piece of mixed woodland with Beech predominating. The varied habitat is reflected in today's list which, at just over 90 species, includes a few unusual things with one species new to the county.

Centre stage have to be the Waxcaps we saw here in amazing numbers despite the recent frosts which had sadly affected quite a few but luckily not all the many grassland areas. In some parts it was as if someone had sprinkled packets of brightly coloured smarties around! We have 12 species on our list – probably the most Waxcaps for one morning for many a year, though Penn Wood where we go next week used to produce even more species but they seem to have declined somewhat recently. Luckily Barry was busy with his camera so we have a couple of Waxcap photos to share, the most notable species we found being *Gliophorus laetus* (Heath Waxcap), not that common with the majority of our records from the Penn Wood area though not seen there in the last five years. Incidentally, *Hygrocybe* has now been split into various genera so we need to acclimatise ourselves to the genus *Gliophorus* for the slimy Waxcaps including *psittacinus*, and *Cuphophyllus* for the dry Waxcaps including *virgineus* and *pratensis*. The beautiful Pink Waxcap (not seen today but possibly at Penn next week?) is now *Porpoloma calyptriformis*!



Above left, *Gliophorus laetus*, and right *Hygrocybe coccinea*, just two of the many Waxcaps we enjoyed today. (BW)

Early on Jackie pointed out two fresh and beautiful specimens of *Stropharia caerulea* (Blue Roundhead), her determination confirmed once we'd had a sniff to check for ground black pepper which would indicate *S. pseudocyanea* – otherwise identical in the field and one we saw – and smelt – last week at Bittam's Wood. Soon after Barry found the delectable but tiny *Cyathus olla* (Field Bird's Nest), a species Jackie was delighted to see, not having found it here before. This was just a singleton, complete with two spore-bearing 'eggs', the rest of the 'clutch' no doubt already distributed around by rain droplets splashing into the cup. There are two quite common species, this one and *C. striatus* (Fluted Bird's Nest), and they are easily separated in the field by the lining of the cup: smooth in today's species but clearly grooved in the other. (See Members' Finds dated Oct 25th for a recent photo of *C. striatus*.)



Above left, *Stropharia caerulea*, and right, *Cyathus olla* (BW)

Jesper Launder collected a *Clitocybe* (Funnel) which he didn't recognise and bravely took home to work on. To me it looked pretty similar to many other species but he'd noticed its distinctive white margin and this led him to *Clitocybe diatreta* (no common name and new to the site and to the county), so a nice find today.



Right, *Clitocybe diatreta*, a new county record and a species seldom recognised or recorded. (JL)

I also took home some LBJs to work on and which it had been suggested were the common *Tubaria furfuracea* (Scurfy Twiglet). A spore print together with microscopic features took me to the genus *Galerina* (Bell) and from there to *Galerina sideroides* though I initially had doubts if this was correct because the substrate and association given was on logs / woody litter / woodchips of conifer which didn't seem to match well. I then checked our database for any earlier records and found just one, from Naphill Common in 2012 found by Claudi and identified by Derek, the substrate and association down as litter and mainly bracken. Snap with where it was found today! So it's on the list but will be dried and sequenced to make doubly sure.



Right, *Galerina sideroides* showing the caps both fresh and faded. (The photos were taken a few days beforehand. (JE)



Another tiny little mushroom was found by Barry on a dead bracken stem. Derek worked on this later and identified it as *Deconica crobula* (no common name and previously in the genus *Psilocybe*). We have just a handful of previous county records, the last in 2007. So yet another nice find today (and a delightful photo too!)

Left, the diminutive *Deconica crobula* (plus friend) found growing on a dead Bracken stem. (BW)

After frost identifying fungi can be quite a challenge, consequently several common things caused debate and confusion. It was not just the Waxcaps which were affected, particularly their cap colours and smells, but *Clitocybe nebularis* (Clouded Funnel) together with the myriads of *Laccaria laccata* (Deceiver) and *Rhodocybe butyracea* (Butter

Cap) were constantly being picked up and questioned. One that seemed unaffected was *Armillaria ostoyae* (Dark Honey Fungus) – a species also seen on last week's walk and clearly tough enough to resist whatever the weather throws at it. Features to enable separation from other common Honey Fungus species in the field: the contrasting dark scales which are found not only on the cap but also on the underside of the stem ring and lower stem.



Right, *Armillaria ostoyae* on fallen wood. (BW)

Ascomycetes did not feature much here today, but we have three to share, the first two found and photographed by Barry: A single *Scutellinia scutellata* (Common Eyelash), the species later confirmed by Derek, and a delightful row of *Dasyscyphella nivea* (previously *Lachnum niveum*, no common name and not checked today but recognised as this species rather than other very similar species purely by the presence of tiny droplets visible amongst the hairs surrounding the cups).



Left, *Scutellinia scutellata*, and below, *Dasyscyphella nivea* (BW)



Along a grassy path we saw several clusters of the much larger Cup Fungus *Aleuria aurantia* (Orange Peel Fungus).



Left, *Aleuria aurantia*, a common but always much admired Ascomycete, often occurring on disturbed ground. (CS)

Barry found one Slime Mould: *Physarum album* (previously *P. nutans*) is quite a common species if you know where to look but like most Slime Moulds it takes diligence, dedication and much scrabbling around on your knees to discover them, especially as

many are well under 1 cm high! Whilst searching he also found this delightful but miniscule family of gilled mushrooms, the senior member being about 4mm high at most. Sadly they evaded my attempts at identification.



Above left, an unnamed tiny cluster of mushrooms, and right the Slime Mould *Physarum album*. (BW)



As we walked back my eye was caught by a few tiny mushrooms lurking in the grass. Their pointed pale caps in contrast to almost black gills told me they were *Psilocybe semilanceata* (Liberty Cap), quite a common grassland species and consequently not often found on our walks which mainly focus on woodland. For fear of having the police after me, they were not retained!

Left, *Psilocybe semilanceata* showing its unique cap shape. (BW)

We were hoping today to see *Clathrus archeri* (Devil's Fingers), a striking but alien species to these shores which seems to be on the increase. Found here for the first time last year, it was fruiting again here in late summer and also recently but the frost was likely to have put paid to our chances. However, when a probable Stinkhorn egg was found Jesper suspected it was not this and took it home to check, coming to the conclusion that it was in

fact the Devil's egg and not the Stinkhorn's! Right at the end of the morning a couple of rather apologetic specimens did turn up, and Jackie later told me that the day after our visit she'd found



some much better fresh specimens which we'd missed! She'd previously sent me this photo, taken here before the frosts and complete with flies!

Left, the strange *Clathrus archeri* fruiting here a few days before our visit. (JE)

Right at the end of our morning the Beech woodland provided a photogenic collection of one of our firm favourites, *Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop Bonnet), and making a fitting ending to a very enjoyable outing.

Right, *Mycena crocata* showing off its wonderfully coloured stems and also varied cap colour. (BW)



Our thanks to Frog Orr-Ewing for permitting our visit today, also to Jackie for leading us round. We hope to be back again next year. Thanks also to Geoffrey Kibby who kindly identified the *Cortinarius* species on our list, taken him by Claudi. Thanks also to all attendees and particularly to our photographers who've provided such a feast for the eyes. See the complete list for more details of what we found.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb, CS = Claudi Soler, JE = Jackie Ewan