

FUNGI WALK at STOKE COMMON, September 18th 2021

Penny Cullington

Another large group (26) met up today and it was fortunate that we'd kindly been given permission to park inside the main gate. The day was warm with wall to wall sunshine which together with the horribly dry recent conditions did the fungi no favours but at least could be enjoyed by the participants whilst searching - much of the time in vain - for specimens. Nevertheless we ended up with a list of over 60 species of which 13 were new to the site, 2 of these being new to the county. This site together with nearby Burnham Beeches is owned by the City of London Corporation who are generously funding our 3 year survey of the two sites involving the molecular sequencing of interesting or rare species, so today's walk has provided several specimens for our project.

One of the first things to turn up was a species of *Psathyrella* (Brittlestem) growing apparently in grassy soil though probably on woody fragments beneath – a subsequent collection clearly being on rotting wood. It was quite distinctive, the cap having a white fluffy fringe of veil when young though this was absent in more mature examples which had faded quite considerably (causing us to wonder if we had two different species) but retaining the slightly wrinkled surface – another interesting feature. At home I spent quite a time working on it and eventually keyed it out to *Psathyrella pertinax*, a species found on conifer, new to the county and rarely recorded in England. So here was our first candidate to be dried and sequenced.

Right, the rare *Psathyrella pertinax* found by several people today. (MT)



Just a very few small and rather dry specimens of *Lactarius helvus* (Fenugreek Milk Cap) turned up, this being a species we've only previously recorded either at Burnham Beeches or here where it can be amazingly common under the Pines. It's one which can be hard to determine to genus if you're looking for white milky juice on damaged gills – the feature which typifies the genus, because in this species the so-called milk is in fact completely colourless and therefore easily missed. Another clue to the species is its characteristic strong curry smell, hence its common name.

Left, *Lactarius helvus* – the photo taken at this site in 2016 and demonstrating the unusual colourless liquid exuding from damaged gills. (PC)

Early on in the open areas in grassy soil we kept coming across a smallish yellow-brown to red-brown mushroom having pale gills at first though darker later. The 'jizz' suggested it was a species of *Hypholoma* (ie related to the very common *H. fasciculare* - Sulphur Tuft) and the habitat suggested possibly *H. elongatum* though some collections were a bit big for that species which has a small cap but a long stem. This was another species needing work at home and



Right, *Hypholoma ericaeoides*, an uncommon species of open heathland. (MT)

eventually I decided upon *Hypholoma ericaeoides* (a Brownie but with no common name) though there are several very similar species (none commonly recorded) and also with some discrepancy over microscopic detail in some descriptions. So this was clearly another candidate for sequencing.

So many species common to this particular site were sadly missing from our visit, notably the genus *Suillus* (one of the many Bolete genera which favours conifer, Pine in particular) – in fact the singleton *Imleria badia* (Bay Bolete previously in the genus *Boletus*) was our only example of this normally early season prolific family of mushrooms.

Like the Boletes, the genus *Amanita* forms another mycorrhizal group which tends to proliferate at this time. We managed four species today, though the only species providing more than singletons was *A. fulva* (Tawny Grisette). One species, however, was notable and found under the Pines as we were returning to the cars. This was *Amanita porphyria* (Grey Veiled Amanita), an uncommon species and one I recalled being pleased to find here during my yearlong survey of the site for the CoLC back in 2010 (though on Sunday the name eluded me when it was handed me till jogged by Claudi's list of Amanita species!). In shape not unlike a smallish Grisette, ie one with a bright brown cap having thinnish flesh and a tapering ringless stem, it differs in having a distinctive grey ring on the stem which also has a small round volva at its base. The cap is a dull brown, greyish with a hint of violet and unlike many of our more common Amanitas this one favours Pine.

Right, *Amanita porphyria*, the photo hastily taken later at home when it was realised that no-one had taken a photo in the field! (DJS)



A small cluster of the impressive *Gymnopilus junonius* (Spectacular Rustgill) was found at the base of an unidentified deciduous tree. This is a large clump-forming species sometimes with caps up to 15 cms across, hence its possibly overenthusiastic common name! Note the typical crowded orange gills and stem with a ring, here coloured by the rusty fallen spores. Quite a common species, it is a regular at this site.

Left, *Gymnopilus junonius* found clustered at the base of a deciduous tree. (CVS)

From one extreme to the other, a tiny Inkcap was found on a cowpat which Derek took home to work on. He later informed me this was, I quote, 'between *Tulosesus* (= *Coprinellus*) *pellucidus* and the new - and not yet accepted as British - *T. radicellus*. Again, we can do the DNA - I have been collecting potential *T. radicellus* to get it on the [British] list. We can use this collection to do that or to get a fix on *T. pellucidus*, which I do not have any good material of.' So this was an exciting find and may well prove to be an important one, but I have no note of who found it! Can you let me know if it was you! (Barry's stunning photo is on the next page.)

Right, a tiny inkcap on dung which may prove to be *Tulosesus radicellus* – a species not yet on the British list. Sequencing will determine whether it's that species or *Tulosesus pellucidus* which would in any case be new to the county! (BW)

At the base of a large Pine a bright orange bracket was found just developing, at this stage having a furry texture and rather lumpy. This was the dramatically named *Phaeolus schweinitzii* (Dyer's Mazegill), a parasitic bracket which affects conifers, most often Pine, and when mature can get to dinner plate size. As the common name suggests, it has been used in the past to produce yellow, orange and brown dyes.



Above left, the eye-catching bracket *Phaeolus schweinitzii* found at the base of a Pine (BW), and right the same species the size of dinner plates when mature, the photo taken in the Forest of Dean in 2013. (PC)

In the afternoon three of us checked a small but interesting area, predominantly Oak, over the road from the main gate which spends much of the year under water thanks to the underlying clay. Dry as a bone today it still produced around 10 new species for our list, one being a nice collection of the mycorrhizal genus *Hebeloma* (Poisonpie). One reason why I try to include this particular area when visiting Stoke Common is that it was exactly here in 2010 that I found a remarkable *Hebeloma*, entirely white and eventually determined by expert Henry Beker in Belgium as *H. laetitiae*, it being the third European record. I've not found it since, so when today's little cluster was spotted (not by me!) my heart missed a beat because apparently this rarity is not necessarily white. However, at home I keyed our collection out to the fairly mundane *Hebeloma leucosarx* (Pale Poisonpie). The photo represents a typical *Hebeloma* – a genus which can be recognised quite easily in the field though nearly always needing a scope to determine to species. Features to look for: the caps are smooth and slightly sticky (even when dry, if you touch the cap to your lips then remove it – this known as the kiss test - you can feel it adheres momentarily), they are mostly some shade of cream with brown tints, many of them



Right, *Hebeloma leucosarx* found under Oak – a typical member of the genus. (PC)

have a sharp radish smell, some have a burnt sugar smell.

Now our mystery Ascomycete found on several different cowpats which neither Derek nor I were able to identify. Barry's amazing photo was posted on the facebook page he uses for identification, where it was suggested that it was *Cercophora coprophila*. Asco expert Kerry Robinson agrees it must be this, a species not often recorded and new to the county.

Right, *Cercophora coprophila* on cow dung, identified online and new to the county. (BW)



No report on a BFG walk when Barry is present would be complete without some of his extraordinary Slime Mould images, and today is certainly no exception. Two species of *Cribraria* feature this time, and I've added them below for your amazement! We really are privileged to have such a skilled photographer amongst our number.

Thanks to all attendees for making today's walk so successful in conditions which were somewhat unrewarding for finding fungi. Thanks also to our faithful band of photographers. For details of what we found see the separate complete list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CVS = Claudi Soler; DJS = Derek Schafer; MT = Mario Tortelli; PC = Penny Cullington.



Left and below, the seldom recorded *Cribraria cancellata*, no more than 1mm high and found today on rotting Pine. The purplish brown typically nodding heads are covered in an exquisitely delicate protective mesh, which can be seen in amazing detail below. (BW) See also the next page





Here we have a series of photos of *Cribraria argillacea*, all taken today: a much more common species, showing its development from plasmodium (in this species shining lead-coloured) through to almost mature when the weak protective rather widely spaced mesh has all but formed. This species is recognised in the field by forming tight colonies - almost appearing as one, its lead shot colour when immature and developing only a very short stalk, the whole being under 1mm tall. (BW)

