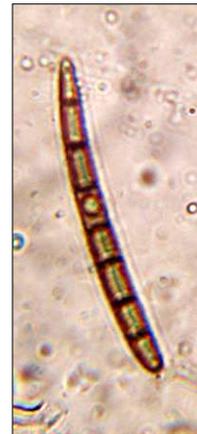


Our group of 21 met up in the church car park on a cheerless drizzly morning – our first such morning this autumn so we can't really complain. The reason we arrange this fixture for so late in the season is to enjoy the display of Waxcaps which in the past have been impressively bountiful here at this time. However, last year we found just nine species and today was even more disappointing, with only three very common species in the churchyard and not one on the cricket pitch despite conditions being pretty perfect at the moment. Why this should be is anyone's guess though it's possible that the management routine for the cricket pitch is now less favourable for waxcaps which thrive in unimproved grassland. It seems unlikely that chemicals – possibly viewed as a necessity on a cricket pitch - would have been applied in the churchyard, however?

We started off with a quick look round the churchyard where in past years some rare species have been found. Today the most interesting find was a patch of the Ascomycete genus *Geoglossum* (Earthtongue) fruiting in the mossy covering of a grave. I'd forgotten until reading through last year's report that we'd found probably the same species here then - when I'd named it *G. umbratile* (Plain Earthtongue). However, having worked on it again this time and also checked last year's microphotos, I'm confident that ID was incorrect! Virtually all the characters point to ***G. cookeanum*** (no common name) though the spores are on the long side and in fact seem to match those of a much rarer species: *G. simile*. For this reason the collection was sequenced to confirm exactly what we have here: sadly it was contaminated and therefore failed. Hopefully next year we may have more success. I'm including images of several microscopic features as an example of the sort of thing we look at down the microscope when working on identification.



Above left: *Geoglossum cf cookeanum* in the churchyard today (SE). Micro-images from left to right: a single ascus with immature long thin spores still inside; a single huge mature spore out of the ascus with the typical seven septa (divisions) of both this species and *G. simile*, measuring about 80 microns long; the tips of the paraphyses – cells lying between the asci - with swollen chains of cells. All images are magnified x 400. (PC)



Two other churchyard species are worth a mention. Firstly the simply miniscule and stunningly beautiful ***Marasmius hudsonii*** (Holly Parachute) found on a dead Holly leaf and new to the Penn area. The species was in fact new to the county from Naphill Common in 2015, then after no further records for several years it now seems to be on the increase (though it may just be that the eagle-eyed amongst us – notably Barry Webb and Gill Ferguson – know how and where to find it!) Even with a hand lens it is hard to see the fine bristles which uniquely cover the cap, captured here for your amazement!

Left: *Marasmius hudsonii* – the whole fruitbody less than 5 mm tall! The species only occurs on dead Holly leaves. (BW)

A large specimen of *Lycoperdon nigrescens* (Dusky Puffball) was found here also, new to the churchyard. The species is similar to *L. perlatum* (Common Puffball) but is less common, also clearly browner even when young and covered in small spines which resist rubbing off – unlike the other species which has rounded pale warts which rub off all too easily.

Right: *Lycoperdon nigrescens* in the grassy litter in the churchyard today. (JW)

Below left: *Exidia nigricans* on a deciduous stick in woodland. (JW)



We then moved to the cricket pitch passing through a wooded area which produced a few more for our list including the black jelly fungus *Exidia nigricans* (Warlock's Butter) which was showing nicely on a deciduous stick. Previously known as *E. plana*, the species is easily confused with the very similar and more common *E. glandulosa* (Witch's Butter) which, however, has larger more cushion-like black lumps. Both species occur on fallen deciduous branches, typically Beech or Oak.

As already mentioned, the cricket pitch was something of a disappointment with very little to find other than good numbers of three common grassland *Mycena* species (Bonnets). These were quite easy to differentiate, however. The first is medium sized with a darkish grey cap and gills and a smell of bleach: *Mycena aetites* (Drab Bonnet). The second is smaller and more delicate with a white cap and gills, the cap having a yellowish centre, and no notable smell: *Mycena flavoalba* (Ivory Bonnet). Lastly between the two in size and the probably the hardest to recognise, it has a mid brown slightly fluted cap and white gills which have a faint brown edge especially near the cap margin (seen best with a handlens): *Mycena olivaceomarginata* (Browndedge Bonnet). If the genus *Mycena* is new to you, at least these three species serve as typical examples showing the delicate form with thin stem and often conical cap which many species in this large genus have.



Above left: *Mycena aetites*, the photo from Burnham Beeches a few weeks ago (PC).

Above centre: *Mycena olivaceomarginata*, the photo from Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens a few weeks ago (PC)

Above right: *Mycena flavoalba* today (BW). All three species were on the cricket pitch today.

One other species of interest here was a cluster of innocuous pale mushrooms which often grow in rings on lawns etc and are dangerously toxic. There is debate as to the correct name for *Clitocybe dealbata* which is often now synonymised with the admittedly very similar and equally toxic *C. rivulosa* (Fool's Funnel). I'm one of those who are of the opinion that this lawn species with typically zoned and rather pinkish tinges is distinctly different from the white capped more woodland species. No doubt DNA sequencing will resolve this issue in time.



Above: *Clitocybe dealbata* on the cricket pitch. (SE)



Before leaving the cricket pitch I should include one other species we found: another puffball but considerably larger than the churchyard specimen. This was *Lycoperdon excipuliforme* (Pestle Puffball), like a much larger version of *L. perlatum* (Common Puffball) and a species we quite often find here on the edge of the pitch.

Left: *Lycoperdon excipuliforme* on the cricket pitch today. (JW)

Moving into the woodland proper species were handed to me thick and fast despite the increasing drizzle. Soggy fungi often present problems with identification and several collections of *Lactarius* (Milkcaps) refused to oblige with showing any white latex from their damaged gills and also had lost much of their characteristic smells. Nevertheless we have five Milkcaps on the list, also nine woodland Bonnets including *Mycena pseudocorticola* (no common name but Blue Bonnet would be apt) which is seldom recorded here though it was somewhat faded and not looking its best. *Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop Bonnet) was showing nicely, however, and also obliged with its bright orange juice which always impresses when seen for the first time.

Right: *Mycena crocata* with stems clearly full of its diagnostic bright orange juice. (JW)



We have a few more woodland species to share with you though photography by this stage was none too easy (neither was writing names in an increasingly soggy notebook!).



We found only a few Boletes, most of which were somewhat bedraggled and past their sell-by date, but a reasonable specimen of *Leccinum scabrum* (Brown Birch Bolete) was found under Birch and later checked by Claudi at home. Note the dark 'scabers' (warty spots) on the stem - typical of this genus of Boletes (there are many others), also the pale pores under the cap.

Left: *Leccinum scabrum* showing its pale unchanging stem flesh - diagnostic of the species. (CS)

Several people found white slightly branching single clubs in the litter, about 7-8 cms tall. These were ***Clavulina rugosa*** (Wrinkled Club), a fairly common woodland species. Somewhat similar in shape though not related in any way was the brightly coloured ***Calocera viscosa*** (Yellow Stagshorn). This is a species always found on wood / roots of conifer as here. Another quite common species of deciduous litter which attracted attention was ***Ramaria stricta*** (Upright Coral).



Above left : *Clavulina rugosa* (BW); centre: *Calocera viscosa* (JW); right: *Ramaria stricta* (JW).

Someone spotted a group of small mushrooms in the Beech litter which were actually Mushrooms in the strict sense. ***Agaricus dulcidulus*** (Rosy Wood Mushroom) belongs to the same genus as our cultivated shop mushrooms but is a delicate thin-fleshed woodland species which tends to turn dirty yellow where damaged (seen here on the stems which had been handled) and have a faint lilac to pink tinge in the cap centre (also seen here). Like all true Mushrooms, the gills start out pale pinkish and gradually darken to almost black as the dark spores mature and colour them as they drop. The species is not that common but we've found it at several sites recently.

Right: *Agaricus dulcidulus* – quite an unusual woodland Mushroom. (SE)



Several specimens of an unusual *Helvella* (Saddle)

turned up together with the much more common *H. lacunosa* (Elfin Saddle) enabling us to compare the stems of these two species. The strongly ridged stem of the dark Elfin Saddle was in complete contrast to the smooth white stem of the much paler ***Helvella elastica*** (Elastic Saddle) seen here. (Jackie M observed how this species 'boinged' in a suitable way when flicked, hence living up to its common name!). This is an Ascomycete species, not one we find that often and new to the wood today.

Left: *Helvella elastica* found in woodland litter today. (SE)

Just one or two more to round things off: Barry Webb found just a couple of Slime Moulds today and one was particularly interesting because it was covered in a

Hyphomycete fungus, so in effect gave us two for the price of one. We had just two previous county records (1991 and 2005) of the tiny *Cribraria argillacea* until Barry started championing slime moulds for us three years ago, so now we have nine records – today's being the second from here. However, new to the wood is *Stilbella byssiseda* which was liberally smothering it. Barry also found this remarkable species - new to the county - twice last year at different sites. Looking at the few previous national records it appears to be commonest on *C. argillacea* but is occasionally recorded on other Slime Mould species. Glancing at available images of the species online, Barry's photo here knocks the socks off them all! You need to bear in mind that his amazing photo shows just a single sporangia (fruitbody) of the *Cribraria* amongst a mass of others, all of which were covered in the *Stilbella*, and the whole is probably less than 4 mm tall!



**The seldom recorded Hyphomycete *Stilbella byssiseda* found on *Cribraria argillacea* today. (BW)**

Our final list topped 100 species, and of those just 10 were new to the site – no surprise there because this is a well recorded site. Many thanks to all who came despite the drizzly conditions, and a special thank you to the patient photographers for producing the images above for us. For more details of what we found see the complete separate list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CS = Claudi Soler; JW = Justin Warhurst; PC = Penny Cullington; SE = Sarah Ebdon