

FUNGI WALK at BURNHAM BEECHES on Saturday October 1st 2022

Penny Cullington

We were 18 strong today – nearly half that number being new or newish members which it was really good to see – and we were blessed with a beautiful morning after the heavy rains and wind of the previous day. The rain was much needed, of course, but was too recent to have any effect on fungal fruiting today which was patchy to say the least. There was certainly enough to keep us busy, however, and our final list of around 85 species contained a good mix of common and more unusual things. Unfortunately our guest leaders, Geoffrey Kibby and Mario Tortelli, were unable to join us owing to the rail strike, so Derek and I were kept pretty busy and missed Geoffrey and Mario's expertise in identifying the several very similar *Xerocomellus* – type Boletes we were handed. Thanks to our ongoing City of London Corporation project, now in its second year of three, we do have the funds to get specimens sequenced for their DNA, so a few of the Boletes together with several other collections made today have been earmarked for that purpose.



We start off with an attractive Milkcap, the genus *Lactarius* having been practically non-existent so far this season. This was one of three different species found today, a pristine specimen of *Lactarius pubescens* (Bearded Milkcap) growing under Birch, with which it is host specific. There are two somewhat similar Birch associating Milkcaps which look extremely similar, differing only in their cap colour. Both have tightly inrolled caps when young which are fleecy-shaggy, especially at the margin as seen here. *L. pubescens* is pale pinkish cream whereas

L. torminosus (Woolly Milkcap) is a darker pink. In fact today's find was bordering on being dark enough for the latter, so this is one to be dried and sequenced to confirm which of the two it is.

Left: two views of our singleton Milkcap, *Lactarius pubescens*, its cap colours almost dark enough to make it *L. torminosus* though we decided on the former. This will be sequenced, to confirm, however. (NF)

Continuing under some Pines we spotted two different species of Bolete which associate solely with that tree – one on either side of the path. The first, *Suillus luteus* (Slippery Jack), is a distinctive Bolete having a sticky to slimy rich brown cap, dingy yellow pores underneath which stain brown if anything and a stem which has a thick ring – very unusual amongst this large

group of fungi. The recent rain insured the cap was suitably slimy today. The second was spotted whilst the first was being set up for a photo, and was the closely related *Suillus bovinus* (Bovine Bolete). This also has a sticky cap but paler buff with a pink tinge, pores and stem more or less concolorous and the stem lacks a ring. Sometimes with careful searching one can find a small bright pink mushroom (with gills) which likes to grow alongside this particular *Suillus*, namely *Gomphidius roseus*, but there was no sign of it here today.



Far left: *Suillus luteus*, and near left: *Suillus bovinus*, both growing near together under Pine today. (PC)

Along the same path we found a fallen Birch trunk liberally adorned with brackets of two sorts: the very common *Fomitopsis betulina* (Birch Polypore) and the much less common *Fomes fomentarius* (Hoof Fungus), though this latter - once considered a rarity in the south of the country - is now clearly on the increase. The photo here shows how apt its common name is. Both occur only on Birch, either fallen or standing but probably dying. (Sorry, no photo of the *Fomitopsis* today though there are plenty available in Members' Finds via the recently added Masterlist.)

Right: *Fomes fomentarius* on fallen Birch. (JC)



Further along this same path before entering the Mire area various *Mycena* species (Bonnets) were being spotted – this being another genus notably conspicuous by its absence so far this season, though not today: we ended up with a tally of 14 different species! Most need a microscope to identify, and often my first task on returning home after one of our walks is to set to and work through as many of the Bonnets I'm handed as best I can. Luckily a few of the more common members of the genus have redeeming field characters and can be (relatively) safely named on the spot, and today by the end of the morning we'd named examples of *Mycena crocata*, *epipterygia*, *galericulata*, *galopus*, *haematopus*, *pelianthina*, *pseudocorticola* and *rosea*. One of these to share with you here is *Mycena haematopus* (Burgundydrop Bonnet), a species found often clustered on fallen deciduous wood and with dark reddish brown 'juice' in the stem, often visible at the stem base when one picks a sample. The cap also tends to have dark pink colours as well, as seen here.

Right: two of several separate collections of *Mycena haematopus* we found today. (The threesome: NF; the cluster: PC)

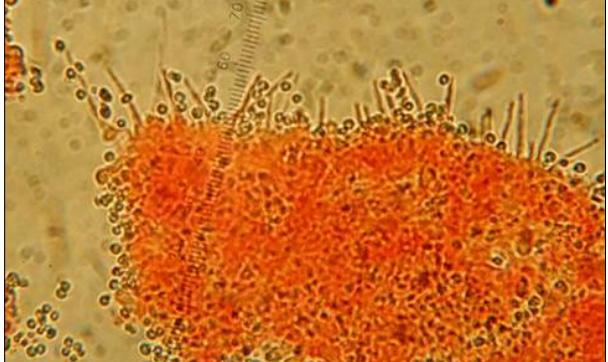


Continuing with the Bonnet theme, one of the many which needed checking at home was the almost black species we encountered in the Mire itself. This I suspected would be *Mycena megaspora* (Rooting Bonnet), having found it in this area before, and so it proved. Our only county records for this unusual species are from here and nearby Stoke Common – two sites of peaty acid heathland with *Sphagnum*, exactly what the species requires. Closely related to the very common *M. galericulata* (Common Bonnet), both sharing the anastomosing ridges between their gills, it differs in its much darker cap and often larger spores.



Left: *Mycena megaspora* found in a couple of places in the Mire today. (SE)

Whilst in the Mire I asked people to keep a close eye out for a tiny whitish *Mycena* growing amongst the *Sphagnum*. Almost before the sentence was finished a couple of specimens were spotted! This is an as yet undescribed species, so far known only from this site and found here over the last few years. It can sometimes fruit with abundance but today we struggled to find just a very few, but enough to confirm its identity at home with its unique cells found on the gill edge. When published, the



species will be named *Mycena pinochoides*. When I first discovered these cells I was reminded of the Italian puppet boy with the extraordinary extending nose, hence the name!

Left: my original collection of our undescribed *Mycena* from the Mire back in 2017 (cs), and below it the remarkable cells which protrude from the gill edge (x 100) and after which the species will be named *Mycena pinochoides*. The microphoto below is from today's collection. (PC)

As we first entered the Mire a sizeable collection of ochre-brown mushrooms was spotted in the ditch and near a large Willow. Both Derek and I were at a loss at the time, though I eventually suggested it might be a species of *Mallochybe* (recently split from the genus *Inocybe*) and this proved to be the case when I looked into it later. European experts on the genus all agree that *Mallochybe* is an extremely tricky genus and the sequencing carried out so far has still not yet sorted things out very satisfactorily.

Having specialised in *Inocybe* and the related genera for quite some years now, I feel as confident as I can be that this is *Mallochybe agardhii* (no common name), rarely recorded and with no proven sequenced collections as yet in our national fungarium at RBG Kew, so clearly this requires sequencing to confirm.

Right: *Mallochybe agardhii*, a rare species and, if confirmed, new to the site. (PC)



As I picked up my basket at one point on the far side of the Mire near the large pile of Pine trunks a tiny brown cap just beside it caught my attention. This was the delightful *Auriscalpium vulgare* (Earpick Fungus), a unique little species growing exclusively on old Pine cones and with fine spines underneath rather than gills or pores. The eccentric stem (one not placed in the centre of the cap) is covered in fine bristles. The species is quite common but easily missed for obvious reasons and always a crowd pleaser when found.

Right: a beautiful specimen of *Auriscalpium vulgare* found on a Pine cone today, the cap only 10mm across. (NF)

Continuing the tiny theme, on several patches of pony dung we spotted some minuscule and delicate mushrooms belonging to the large Inkcap group of species, all originally in genus *Coprinus*





but now split into various different genera. Derek later identified these as *Parasola misera* (Least Inkcap). This, like the Earpick Fungus above, is host specific – this time on dung rather than Pine cones - and is also not rare but easily overlooked.

Left: the minuscule *Parasola misera* on pony dung, the larger of the two caps only about 5mm across. (NF)

Our final total was 86, and of those a handful were new to this well recorded site, renowned for its fungal diversity. Many thanks to everyone for contributing to a very enjoyable morning, and particular thanks to our photographers who make these reports possible. I've added a few more photos below, and as always for more details of what we found see the separate complete list.

Photographers

CS = Claudi Soler; NF = Neil Fletcher; JC = John Catterson; PC = Penny Cullington; SE = Sarah Ebdon.



Left: *Baeospora myosura*, another Pine cone species (JC)

Right: *Russula amoenolens*, the stem showing the rapid blue reaction to a drop of Guaiac – a helpful identification aid. (SE)



Left: *Daedalea quercina* fruiting abundantly on a standing dead Oak trunk. (SE)

Right: a cluster of *Kuehneromyces mutabilis* on fallen deciduous wood. (SE)





Above left: *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* under the Pines



Above right: *Hygrophoropsis sp* in the Mire (PC)



Above centre: both species of *Hygrophoropsis* for comparison – *H. sp* on the left, *H. aurantiaca* on the right. (PC)