

FUNGI WALK at HODGEMOOR WOOD, September 18th 2022

Penny Cullington

For my report on today's walk I'm going to do something I've never had reason to do before: use almost word for word the opening paragraph of my previous year's report – our visit here last year having been just one week later in the season on September 26th. I quote with just the odd adjustment: 'Our walk today was extremely well attended (~~30~~ 27)..... Sadly the continuing dry conditions made it hard going to say the least, but with this number searching in a site well known for its variety of species we still managed to produce a list of just over ~~70~~ in fact 100 – our longest list ~~so~~ by far this autumn.' In fact in recent years many September BFG reports seem to reflect this trend for so-called Indian summers with the real start of the main fungal fruiting delayed till well into October. Is global warming responsible? Who knows and time will tell. I digress, my apologies: onward!

It soon became clear that the extraordinary early fall of deciduous leaves this year was going to hamper our searching – this a hazard we expect to have to wrestle with after the clocks go back in late October, but in mid-September? Some specimens were predictably somewhat shrivelled and dry and many common species on our list were represented by just single fruitbodies rather than abundance. The list would certainly have been shorter without the attendance of Richard Fortey, Mario Tortelli and Jesper Launder who all made valuable identifications to things which might well have gone unnamed if down to Derek and I, especially when challenged with leading a group of this size. Even so we were stumped by several collections which we hope to get sequenced.



We found just a smattering of mycorrhizal species today: still no signs of any *Lactarius*, *Tricholoma* or *Cortinarius* and just one species of *Amanita*, but four each of *Russula* and *Inocybe* and quite a few different Boletes. The most interesting of the Boletes was ***Hortiboletus rubellus*** (Ruby Bolete – more familiar under its previous genus name of *Boletus* or even *Xerocomellus*). Two separate singletons were found, then combined for our photo. It has been recorded here before, also at 5 other county sites, but is far less common than the other Boletes on our list today.

Left: *Hortiboletus rubellus* showing its striking red cap and stem in contrast to the dull yellow pores underneath. (LS)

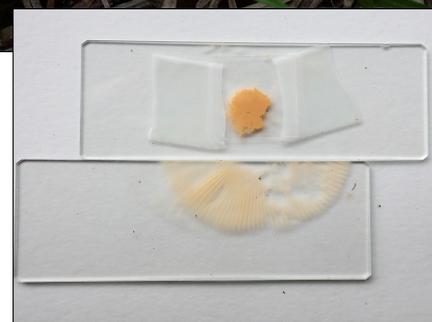
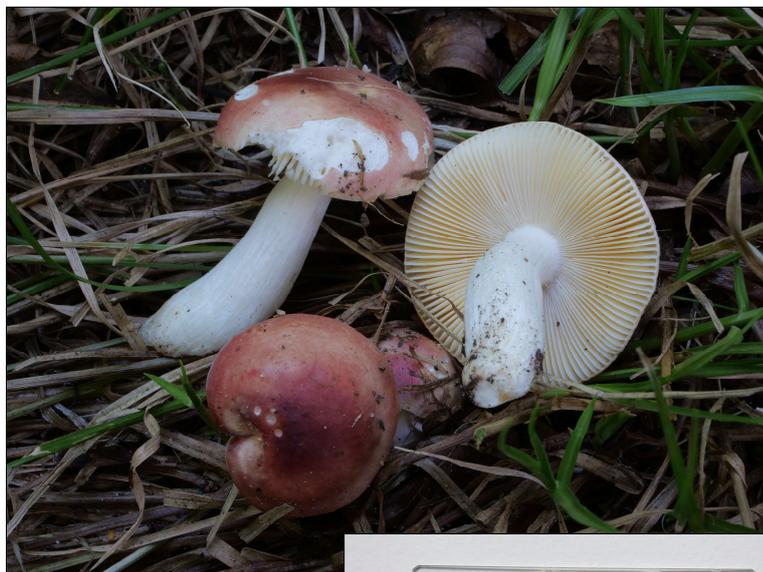
It was nice to see a few fruitbodies of ***Boletus edulis*** (Penny Bun) just emerging – this is often a good site for them though today's were small as yet. This is one of very few species still remaining in the genus *Boletus*!

Right: one of several specimens of *Boletus edulis* found today. (LS)

One of our *Russula* species was also of interest: ***Russula risigallina*** (Golden Brittlegill) is so-named after its cap colour though in fact this colour is very variable and certainly not its most constant character. *Russula* is a huge genus with about 160 species in the UK, and most Brittlegills have white or (pale) cream spores with mature gills to match, but quite a few of the rarer and more interesting species, including *R.*



risigallina, have much darker spores - ochre yellow to orange, turning the mature gills darker too though they may be pale cream when young. This is the reason why it is often necessary to take sporeprints of Brittlegills: the cap colour in many species can be confusingly inconsistent but the sporeprint of each species remains constant, hence is a very useful identification tool. As can be seen in our collection today, the caps show little signs of golden yellow but the gills are already turning ochre-orange, being coloured by the maturing spores. The insert shows two slides – the lower with the spore print as dropped overnight, the upper with that sporeprint scraped together then covered with a glass coverslip and showing the true spore colour. This colour together with other microscopic characters pointed to *R. risigallina* but the intense pink caps of this particular collection suggest it would be well worth sending a sample for sequencing.



Above right: the *Russula* species we are naming *R. risigallina* (MT), together with its spore print taken overnight (PC).



Perhaps the most prolific species we saw today was the very common *Megacollybia platyphylla* – one which I repeatedly and incorrectly named Rooting Toughshank in the field! Richard Fortey kindly put me straight the next day: this is of course Whitelaced Shank - and we demonstrated the thick white mycelial strands on several of the finds – my apologies for the common name error! The photo is one of mine showing the telltale ‘white laces’ in the leaf litter, taken at this site several years ago.

Left: *Megacollybia platyphylla* which was fruiting in abundance today. (PC)

Usually after one of our walks I have the task of checking the many collections of *Mycena* (Bonnets) which get handed in. Few can safely be named in the field and virtually all need a scope to determine, and I regularly find that checking, say, 10 collections produces only a handful of species at most and often only two or three! Today there were surprisingly few collected with very few duplicates, one being a species we record infrequently. This was *Mycena abramsii* (no common name), one of many similar grey-brown capped species found on fallen deciduous wood though with two helpful field characters – neither of which I thought of in the heat of the moment when it was handed to me. The stem, when damaged

Right: *Mycena abramsii* growing on a deciduous stick (cw)





or cut, exudes a colourless liquid, furthermore it tends to have a strigose (furry) base where it attaches to the substrate. This second feature is clearly present in the photo but the colourless liquid I didn't discover till later at home.

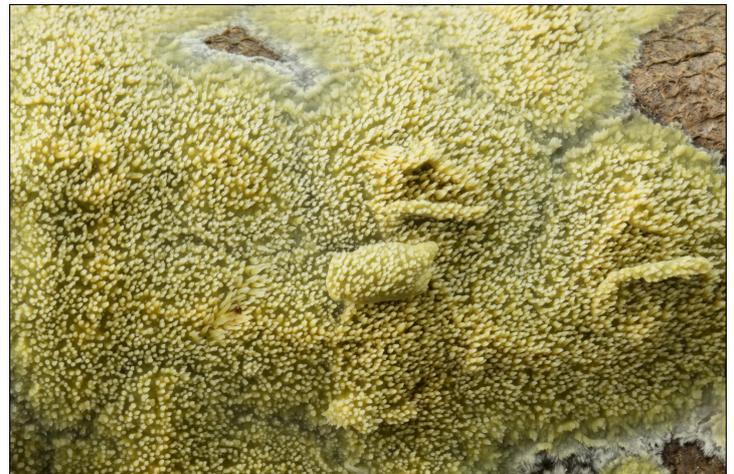
This being a well recorded site, we add new species to the over-all list less often than at some of our other regular sites. Today we added a dozen or so, and one of these was *Lentinellus cochleatus* (Aniseed Cockleshell). Quite similar to *Pleurotus* (Oyster), it tends to grow in tight clusters on old deciduous stumps (as today), rather curled and with decurrent gills which have a notably sharp jagged edge (like a saw). Some collections have a distinct sweet aniseed smell (which helps with the identification if present) but others (as today) can lack the smell completely.

Left (LS) and above (JW): *Lentinellus cochleatus*, new to the site today.



Several of the Corticioid species on our list were new to the site and we're grateful to both Claudi Soler and Richard Fortey for their time spent identifying these later. One Corticioid which is recognisable in the field – there aren't many! – but was not new today is *Mycoacea uda* (no common name). Growing flat on fallen deciduous wood, its bright yellow colour and distinctly spiny surface are memorable.

Right: *Mycoacea uda*, a distinctive Corticioid species found a couple of times today. (CS)

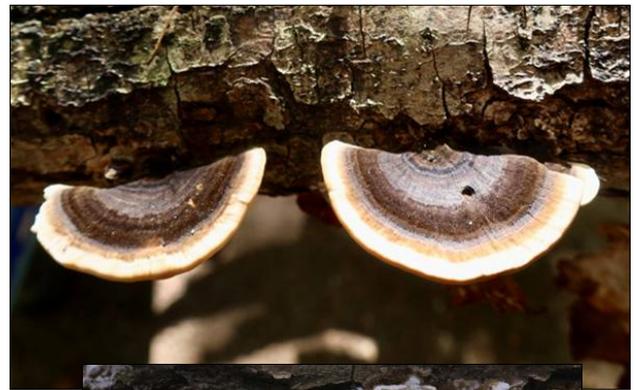


Now a trio of brackets to share with you: firstly *Lenzites betulina* (Birch Mazegill) - not that common though it seems to be on the increase in this area. At first glance it could be one of several smallish pale zoned bracket species with pores, but the undersurface is clearly not pored and is in fact almost gill-like though the ridges are too thick and hard for proper gills. It occurs mainly but apparently not exclusively on stumps of Birch, as it was here.

Left: young developing brackets of *Lenzites betulina*. (LS)

Next an example of the very common *Trametes versicolor* (Turkeytail) which had a surprise underneath! Growing on the creamy pores was a tiny stemless mushroom. There are quite a few fungi which habitually use other fungi as their substrate but this wasn't one of them. From its colour, tiny size, lack of stem and general 'jizz' we suspect it is either a species of *Crepidotus* or more than likely *Clitopilus hobsonii* (Miller's Oyster), known occasionally to grow like this rather than on its usual woody substrates. We can't be sure, however, because sadly the specimen never reached Penny or Derek at the end of the morning. However, *C. hobsonii* is on our list anyway: it turned up elsewhere today and was later checked by Derek.

Right: *Trametes versicolor* (LS) with (possibly) *Clitopilus hobsonii* growing on the pores underneath (CS).



Right at the end of the morning in the car park a nice fresh specimen of this bright red distinctive bracket was spotted low down on a large Oak: *Fistulina hepatica* (Beefsteak Fungus) - worth including here as it's looking suitably gory despite the dry conditions.



Left: the upper and lower surfaces of *Fistulina hepatica* (LS).

I'll wind up now, but don't miss the selection of beautiful images which follow below, taken today by Barry. As usual he added several species new to the site today with his careful searches for minute slime moulds and other small things. Thank you to all attendees – we ended up with a surprisingly long list and everyone contributed. I've already mentioned Richard, Mario and Jesper – thank you again for your input, and a big thank you to our faithful band of photographers as well. For more details of what we found see the complete list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CS = Claudi Soler; CW = Claire Williams;
 JW = Jim Wills; LS = Linda Seward; MT = Mario Tortelli;
 PC = Penny Cullington

Left: the tiny and exquisite *Marasmius hudsonii* growing on Holly leaves, and below right: the equally stunning and tiny slime mould *Arcyria denudata* found on rotting wood. (BW)





Above left: another species of *Arcyria*, this time *A. obvelata*, one of the easiest to identify as its drooping habit and pale beige colour are diagnostic. This was part of a large expanse of the species growing on a bare dead Oak, spreading from a few feet above ground level to well above head height. (BW)

Above right: yet another collection of *Arcyria denudata*, this time giving a sense of their size by the apparently huge orange blob of *Lycogala terrestris* (another slime mould) growing alongside. The blob is probably less than 1cm across. (BW)



Above: two closely related species of slime mould, one common and one supposedly rare though Barry seems to find it regularly! Left: *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*, common, and right *Ceratiomyxa porioides*, rare and until recently considered a variety of *C. fruticulosa* but now apparently recognised at species level. (BW)

Below: two more closely related species of slime mould, one common and one much less so, both found on dead leaves. Left: *Didymium squamulosum*, common and typically rather squat. Right: *Didymium nigripes*, unusual and typically with a long black stalk. Both are absolutely miniscule! (BW)

