

## FUNGI WALK at STAMPWELL FARM on October 22nd 2022

Penny Cullington

Our walk today was the first since the reintroduction of our booking system, hence we comprised the allotted 18 members plus Derek, myself and local enthusiast Jackie Ewan who led us round. This was our second visit here and we were hopeful of a good showing of fungi after the recent very welcome rain. We were not disappointed! This was our first event this autumn when fungi was relatively plentiful underfoot, and the varied habitat - with much more grassland than many of our sites - provided us with an interesting mix of species, mostly quite common things but with a good smattering of the more interesting and even some rare species. By the end of the morning - well, it was 1.30 when we finished! - we'd amassed a list approaching 100 species which, once Derek and I had done a fair amount of work on specimens at home, easily exceeded that figure.

The list was already starting by the time we were all assembled, the first entry emerging just feet away from the parking spot by a grassy orchard. A second handsome specimen of *Volvopluteus gloeocephalus* (Stubble Rosegill) was quickly spotted nearby, displaying the characteristic 'volva' / sac at its stem base which separates the genus from *Pluteus* with which it shares the crowded pink gills described as 'free', ie not attached to the stem. Derek explained the reason for 'stubble' in the name: the species was very common on the rotting stems of grain left after harvesting but became scarce once stubble burning was introduced. The species could well start to proliferate again now that practice is no longer in use.

Right: *Volvopluteus gloeocephalus* with the grass peeled back to reveal its volva at the base of the stem. (JW)



Next stop was a pile of wood where last year we saw *Stropharia caerulea* (Blue Roundhead). There it was again but almost unrecognisable having faded in the rain. Later we found some beautiful specimens - always a crowd-pleaser, this one.

Left, *Stropharia caerulea* on a mossy log. (BW)

The orchard was flush with a small brown-capped grassland Bonnet: *Mycena olivaceomarginata* (Brownedge Bonnet) was not on last year's list as we visited a few weeks' later in the season. With a hand lens one can identify this Bonnet in the field from its white gills which have a faint brown edge.

In this area under Oak we (surprisingly) found the first of many fruitbodies of *Amanita muscaria* (Fly Agaric and said to fruit only under Birch!), and on the other side of the same Oak were good numbers of a large and interesting *Cortinarius*. The species (one we found here last year also) has taken a while to identify, eventually done with DNA sequencing and compared to Orton's 1954 type collection. *C. azureovelatus* is an exciting find with very few confirmed UK records; the material will be sent to Kew.

Below: *Cortinarius azureovelatus* under Oak (NF)





Left: *Clathrus archeri*, much admired today. (BW)

Soon after this a shriek went up as the first of several examples of the extraordinary *Clathrus archeri* (Devil's Fingers) was spotted. The species was first found here a couple of years ago when new to the county and has been up, though in different places at the site, each year since. Considered an alien which somehow got here from Australia and is apparently spreading, it is related to the Stinkhorns, emerging from a gelatinous egg as they do and also having a similarly disgusting smell which attracts flies which then spread its spores. The smell is not as

pervasive as in *Phallus impudicus* (Stinkhorn) but was confirmed today by the indomitable Justin who dared to put his nose only inches away from it!

So many good things to share with you it's difficult to know where to start! Here goes:

We found *Bolbitius titubans* (Yellow Fieldcap) in several different places and admirably living up to its name. In early stage it could possibly be mistaken for a yellow Waxcap (especially at this site where Waxcaps are frequent) but its thin-fleshed cap - somewhat *Parasola*-like - when mature is diagnostic.



Right: *Bolbitius titubans*. (JW)

Three very different Inkcaps were found, the first - in a grassy path edge - was *Parasola leiocephala* (Bald Inkcap), one of several extremely similar species and virtually always needing confirmation with a scope to name reliably. The second was spotted through a fence and only just visible above the grass (with its telltale substrate well out of view). None of us recognised it from this distance and it was not until Justin went off to collect it that we realised it was growing on horse dung! Bingo! This had to be *Coprinopsis nivea* (Snowy Inkcap), common on horse and cow dung. The third was the readily recognisable *Coprinus comatus* (Lawyer's Wig) and found by the side of several paths, this clump being the most photogenic.



Above left: *Parasola leiocephala*, the larger cap only 15mm across (NF). Centre: *Coprinopsis nivea*, with cap about 20 mm across (NF). Right: *Coprinus comatus*, the caps 3-4 cms across and considerably taller than that. (BW)

Several good things were found either in or around the first dried-up pond we visited. On a pile of logs under Oak Barry Webb's eagle eyes spotted several clusters of a miniscule Bonnet. At home under better magnification than just a handlens it became clear that they were all the same distinctive

species (we found many other clusters elsewhere today). *Mycena tenerrima* (Frosty Bonnet) is one of very few tiny Bonnets which with experience can be recognised in the field: it has a tiny disc at the base of the stem attaching it to the substrate and both the cap and stem are covered in fine white flecks of veil (like icing sugar) though this feature was not that obvious in many today owing to the previous heavy rain having washed them off. After checking the gills of several specimens with a scope for their individual cells, I'm confident all collections were the same – it was amazingly common today.

Right: a swarm of *Mycena tenerrima* on an Oak pile (NF), and far right: the same tiny species showing the basal disc and 'frosting' typical of the species - the fruitbody well under 10mm tall! (BW)



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Not far from the Oak by the pond was an old door lying flat and when Jackie turned it over she found a couple of small grey mushrooms somehow growing underneath it. Derek and I were confused as to genus at the time, but at home the angular heterodiametric spores confirmed it as a species of *Entoloma* (Pinkgill) despite the fact that the gills looked grey and not typically pink. Rather than getting

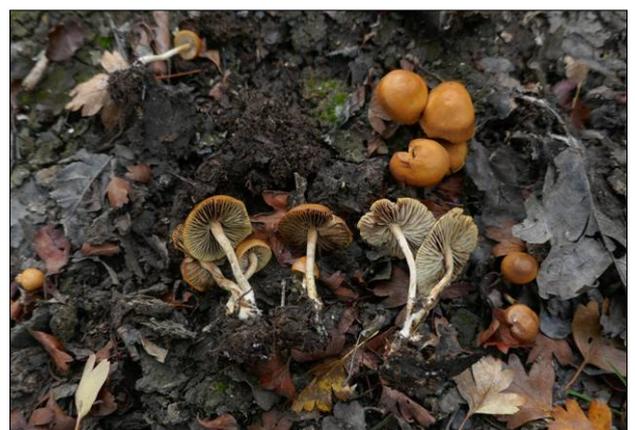
hopelessly lost in an extremely lengthy key, I took a gamble and flipped through images in the *Entoloma* monograph and came up with a likely candidate having this distinctive grey fibrous slightly zoned cap with decurrent greyish gills. Checking the microscopic characters, they fitted exactly, and Derek then confirmed the ID (as did DNA sequencing a few months later). So we have *Entoloma undatum*, not that rare but apparently new to the county. This is a grassland species though reported also from bare soil as here (though underneath a door?!)



Left: *Entoloma undatum* lurking under an old door by the pond. (JE)

Below: *Hypholoma* sp. in the dried-up bed of a pond, possibly new to science? (JE)

Moving now into the dried-up bed of the pond, there were quantities of a species, probably growing on old Willow roots and debris, which has been fruiting here for several weeks if not months and bothering both Jackie and Penny. Though clearly belonging to the genus *Hypholoma* (both macro- and microscopically) it frustratingly failed to key out satisfactorily. We were hopeful therefore that Derek might be able to succeed today where we had failed. The jury is still out, but DNA sequencing shows no close matches so it is possible that



this could be an undescribed species of *Hypholoma*. Jackie has been asked to keep her eyes open for its re-appearance as further collections for testing would strengthen the case for claiming it as new.

Under the Willows in the same pond were two more interesting species, both new to the site. *Hebeloma pusillum* (Dwarf Poisonpie) typically has a two-tone cap and occurs under Willow in wet soggy places, so this was the perfect habitat for it. *Cortinarius cinnamomeoluteus* (no common name) is also a Willow associate though a rarer species and new to the county also. Very similar to *C. uliginosus* (Marsh Webcap) which again favours this particular habitat, today's species has yellow colours rather than orange. The ID was confirmed by Geoffrey Kibby.



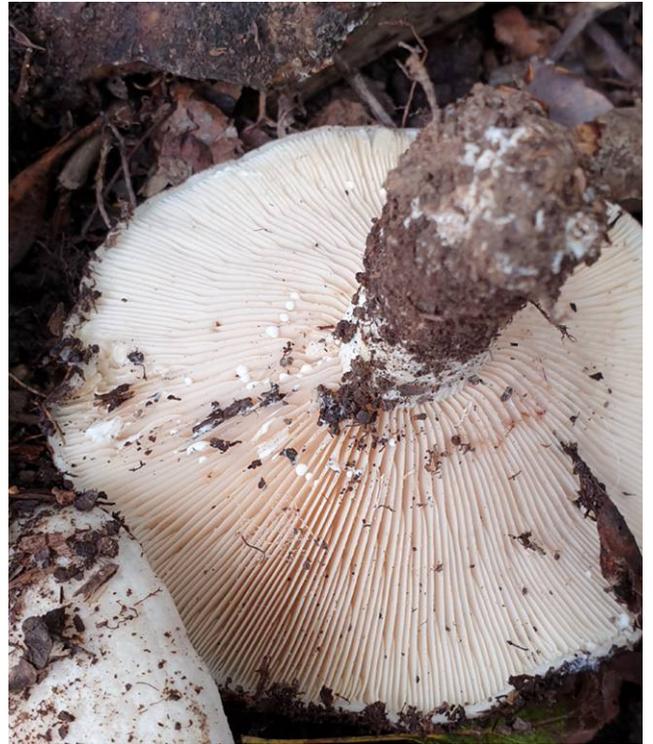
Above left: *Hebeloma pusillum*, and right: *Cortinarius cinnamomeoluteus*, both under Willow in the dried-up pond bed and new to the site today. (JE)

As we progressed from one pond bed to another, we noticed amongst many other things a mystery LBJ (Little Brown Job) in a grassy path edge which took quite some research to solve. None of us could place it in a genus at the time (and it defeated Geoffrey Kibby later also) and after I'd taken microphotos of the salient features at home and emailed them to Geoffrey he suspected this was a species of *Naucoria* (Aldercap). I then keyed it out to *Naucoria bohemica* (no common name) and dried it for sequencing. However, to our surprise DNA showed it to be *Cortinarius friesianus = desertorum*, a 100% match! The species belongs to the notoriously difficult Section Telamonia, it apparently not clear which epithet should prevail, also not that rare but only recently recognised but certainly a new record for the county.



Right: *Cortinarius friesianus = desertorum*, new to the site and to the county. (JE)

I'm going to cut now to the nice find at the second pond, then will add more general photos at the end. Jackie was keen to show us a crop of the extremely large *Lactarius contraversus* (Blushing Milkcap) which was fruiting up the pond bank where Willow roots were being removed. We have records from just three other Bucks sites for this quite unusual species, possibly the largest Milkcap and one which occurs only under Willow and Poplar. The gills turn pale pink as it matures, a diagnostic feature. Derek made the point that the underground organism of this fruiting was probably reacting under stress to the disturbance caused by the removal of roots, hence its perceived need to fruit and spread its spores to possible pastures new. (The photo is on the following page).



Above (NF) and right (JW): *Lactarius controversus* with caps up to 20 cms across though covered in debris as they'd pushed up through the loosened soil. Note the pinkish gills and droplets of 'milk'

Well, what a treat we had today. It remains for me to thank everyone for coming, also Jackie for leading us round, also Frog Orr-Ewing for permitting us to visit and enjoy his wonderful farm, not forgetting our skilled photographers who had a field day today! See the complete separate list for more details of what we found.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; JE = Jackie Ewan; JW = Justin Warhurst; NF = Neil Fletcher.



Above: the unusual *Coltricia perrenis* (Tiger's Eye) found in a grassy path, and right: the delectable and tiny *Mycena corticola* found new to the site in several places fruiting on fallen Willow. (BW)



Above: *Typhula quiquiliaris* (Bracken Club), less than 1 cm tall and found fruiting along a dead Bracken stem. (BW)



Two beautiful Waxcaps: left: *Hygrocybe ceracea* (Butter Waxcap) (BW) and above: *Hygrocybe insipida* (Spangle Waxcap) (NF)

Below: *Cyathus olla* (Field Bird's Nest) found right at the end of the morning. (JE)



Below, a fitting finale to this amazing display of beautiful fungi: *Amanita muscaria* (Fly agaric) (NF)

