

We were again a large group today, 24 strong, and the recent rains promised a fruitful morning though prevented our use of the grassy – now very muddy – parking area. The track inside the gate plus some roadside space sufficed, however. The day was dry and remarkably mild and we were busy with specimens from the word go – very different from our previous visit here in mid September 2021 when an even larger group struggled to find around 60 species with no sign of several things often common here. A decade ago fungal fruiting in this area tended to peak at the start of October and was slowing down considerably by the end of the month. In the last few years, however, things appear to have moved about two weeks later, so our visit today was well timed.

Our list of 117 species reflects the very varied habitat on offer here, with a good mix of species coming from deciduous woodland, conifer woodland as well as open heathland. For the leader – I was on my own today - this presents quite a challenge, however, with people popping up with specimens which could have come from any one of these habitats! Identifying any fungus is always easier when seen in situ – the ‘jizz’ is all important. Therefore however perfect a single specimen might be when handed to one, it is missing many clues which help to build up its mycological picture. Several times today I was stuck for a name but when seeing other examples in situ as we progressed the light dawned and the cogs turned, then out popped a name!

One species we expect to find here but which was missing last time was *Suillus bovinus* (Bovine Bolete), and sure enough under the Pines first one broken half of a cap turned up, then more till we had a nice selection to illustrate the species. The genus *Suillus* contains the slimy-capped conifer-loving members of the very large Bolete family; they are host specific with Pine or with Larch, and today’s species is possibly the commonest under Pine. Wherever we found it we searched with care for the mushroom which often grows alongside it, the pink-capped grey-gilled *Gomphidius roseus* (Rosy Spike), known to occur on the Common but sadly not showing up today.



Above: *Suillus bovinus* found under Pine. (JC)
Below: *Russula emetica* also found under Pine. (JW)

Another specialist Pine species I hoped we’d find today was the eye-catching *Russula emetica* (Sickener), sometimes here in good numbers. Only a very few turned up and, as with the *Suillus* above, it was a question of hanging onto the odd singleton we stumbled across, then placing them together for a photo.



Perhaps the commonest mushroom we saw today was *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* (False Chanterelle). It was everywhere under the Pines though often fooling people into thinking it was something else until turning it over revealed the distinctive orange



gills sloping down the stem. This served as a useful lesson in how many guises any one species can have and that one can't assume it will always look like the single illustration in a hand book!

Left: *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* – the photo taken at nearby Burnham Beeches a couple of weeks ago, also under Pine there. (PC)

On a Birch stump a fresh cluster of a small Ascomycete was spotted. This was ***Ascocoryne sarcoides*** (Purple Jellydisc) - perhaps commonest on Beech but also found on other fallen deciduous woods. Incidentally the many Beech associates regularly on our

lists are missing from today's list, this tree occurring here only along the southern perimeter - an area we didn't reach.

Right: *Ascocoryne sarcoides* found on Birch. (CW)

Nearby a tiny orange cup fungus (Asco) was spotted in the disturbed mossy soil and I was very hopeful that this would prove to be ***Aleuria congrex*** (a very rare species of Orange Peel Fungus recorded here new to the UK 10 years ago). The specimen was sent to Asco guru Kerry Robinson together with a couple of other things we found.



Conferring with

another colleague she was able to confirm the ID for us though it still awaits DNA confirmation. An exciting find!

Left: the tiny and very rare cup fungus *Aleuria congrex*, each cup only a few mm across. (CW)



Amongst the many LBJs (Little Brown Jobs) in the open heathland areas (which we soon gave up collecting) was one which caught the eye - a small species of ***Psathyrella*** (Brittlestem) with a distinctive layer of fluffy white 'veil' around the cap edge and also on the stem. Though the genus itself is

not that hard to recognise with experience (and its many members do mostly have brittle white stems), determining to species is often another matter and nearly always entails microscopic study and a complicated key. The majority of species lack conspicuous veil, however, so its obvious presence here gave me a fighting chance. As it happened the gill cells were also quite distinctive, and I was able to name it ***P. spintrigeroides*** (no common name), not that common, new to the site today and one which we also found at Naphill Common a couple of weeks ago. This collection will be dried for sequencing.

Right: *Psathyrella spintrigeroides* (CW)



Next another Pine species - this time a large and showy bracket. *Phaeolus schweinitzii* (Dyer's Mazegill) is a regular here and also featured in last year's report. It grows at or near the base of living conifers, most often Pine, and is parasitic on its roots. It can get as large as a dinner plate and was not far off that size here, and as its common name suggests it was in the past used to produce yellow, orange and brown fabric dyes. The insert is of an immature bracket taken on our walk here last year.

Right: *Phaeolus schweinitzii*, both mature today (CW) and immature last year (BW).

Below: *Lenzites betulina*, the gill-like lower surface is on the left. (SP)



Another bracket of interest was *Lenzites betulina* (Birch Mazegill), one which initially can look extremely like the very common *Trametes versicolor* (Turkeytail) having similar zoning and colours on its upper surface. Underneath it is very different, however, with gill-like structures rather than the fine white pores of Turkeytail. It is not that common and though most frequently on fallen Birch can also be found on other deciduous woods.

I'm going to return here to the genus *Suillus* covered at the start as I've just received a photo of a further species we found! *Suillus luteus* (Slippery Jack) is also a regular at this site under the Pines and eventually we found some good examples which show its characteristic skirt-like ring, pale yellow pores which don't blue and it's very slimy cocoa brown cap.

Right: *Suillus luteus* found under various different Pines. (SP)



In the deciduous woodland area a miniscule grey singleton similar in shape to the genus *Crepidotus* (Oysterling) was spotted on an Oak stick. No more than 5 mm across, lacking a stem and having a gelatinous texture with a black central fuzzy patch, this was identified later as *Resupinatus trichotis* (Hairy Oysterling) – not at all common and new to the site today.



Left: the upper and lower surfaces of the delicate and beautiful *Resupinatus trichotis*. (SP)

We collected several specimens of an *Inocybe* (Fibre-cap) which thrives in acid sandy soil under Birch and Willow so is well suited here and regularly recorded. *I. lacera* (Torn Fibre-cap) is typical of its genus having a brown dry fibrous cap surface which often disrupts with small splits at its margin and beige brown gills. The genus is large, about 160 species in the UK with that number increasing in frightening numbers with DNA sequencing, and now split into four different genera just to confuse the issue still further!



Right: *Inocybe lacera*, typical of its genus. (SP)



Another LBJ we found, typical of its genus but needing care and microscopic study to determine to species, was *Hypholoma ericaeoides* (no common name). It is uncommon and found in open peaty heathland areas such as this but there was such a myriad of other quite similar LBJs dotted about the open areas today that it was not until I worked on it at home that I recalled the name and remembered we also found it here last year.

Left: *Hypholoma ericaeoides* found in the open areas today (SP)

later when we looked at an area over the road and found it growing in situ. This was *Pholiota alnicola* (Alder Scalycap), though its common name is somewhat confusing. Unlike many in this genus it lacks obvious scales and also occurs at the base of several other deciduous trees besides Alder. The bright but pale yellow cap is distinctive and the largest cap here was about 8 cm across. This is yet another species which regularly occurs here but is not that common in the county.

Right: *Pholiota alnicola*, here found at the base of an Oak. (AD)

Another species which I was shown early on but failed to name until later in the morning when I saw it in situ was *Gymnopilus junonius* (Spectacular Rustgill). This is a large orange-brown mushroom which, like the *Pholiota* above, grows in clusters around the base of deciduous trees. It has rusty gills and also a prominent ring on the stem.



Caps can reach anything up to 15 cm across – a big beast.

Right: *Gymnopilus junonius* today (JW) and left: a collection from Hodgemoor Woods in 2020 (PC)



We have nine species of *Lactarius* (Milkcap) on today's list, and yet again the name of one we found early on eluded me till I looked it up at home. This was *L. lacunarum* (no common name), one which favours boggy wet sites like this and grows under Willow, Birch and Oak. Quite a low growing Milkcap, it is bright brown - darker in colour than the very common *L. tabidus* and *subdulcis* but also with quite thin soft flesh as they are.



Right: *Lactarius lacunarum*, typical of the genus. (SP)

I'm going to sign off now but below are some stunning photos of slime moulds found today by Barry. We are so lucky to have such a talented photographer willing to share his (often prize-winning) photos with us. Thank you to all for coming and being patient with my efforts to identify, name and list what we saw today. Thank you also to *all* the photographers who contribute so much to these reports. See the complete separate list for more details of what we found.

Photographers

AD = Andrew Dodd; BW = Barry Webb; CW = Claire Williams; JC = John Catterson; JW = Justin Warhurst;
PC = Penny Cullington; SP = Stephen Plummer



Above: *Trichia decipiens*, transitional between the slimy plasmodium stage and full maturity, each blob probably less than 2 mm. Below: *Arcyria cinerea*, equally tiny and also not fully mature when the grey heads become fluffy.





Above and below: two examples of *Didymium clavus*, mature. The tiny stalk they were found on giving an idea of scale.





Above and below: an unidentified species of *Stemonitopsis*, immature above, mature below, each fruiting body only a few mm tall.

