

FUNGI WALK at ROUND SPRING WOOD on October 29th 2023

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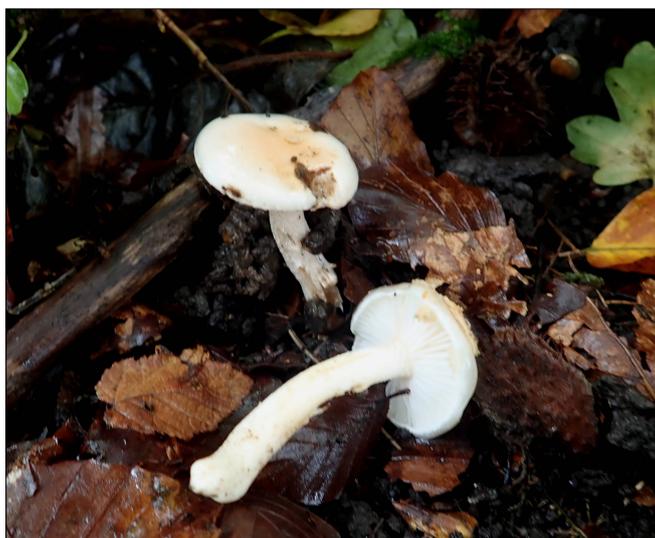
Our group of 19 set off for the wood in good light, having first been warned by warden Mick Jones (who led us round) that very recent forestry work to remove dying Ash trees had left some areas somewhat disrupted. This certainly proved to be the case, and our progress was further hampered by the tipping rain which started fairly soon and annoyingly continued until just after we'd finished! The deteriorating light made both identification and photography a challenge but everyone nobly continued searching with little complaint about conditions underfoot though our list – just about legible at the end in my very soggy notebook – would no doubt have been far longer had we been treated to a fine day. At least the clocks changing had given us an extra hour in bed that morning and after all, we're nearly into November now so should probably be grateful we've not received a soaking on our walks prior to this one.

A few of us had visited this site last November and recalled find the rare and beautiful *Terana caerulea* (Cobalt Crust) on a log pile as we entered the wood. Barry promptly located it again today in the same spot though it was only just beginning to fruit but was still a sight to behold, especially for those who'd never seen it before. Its colour is surely remarkable and unique in the fungal world but one does wonder if it could sometimes be mistaken for a splash of blue paint.

Right, *Terana caerulea* found in a log pile. (BW)



I was soon scribbling madly as species after species was presented to me and several times I stayed glued to the spot as it got darker and darker. I was soon handed what I thought was a species of *Hebeloma* (Poison Pie) owing to its slimy cap and pale colours with a slightly browner centre. I soon realised that the stem was equally slimy, surely eliminating that genus which has a dry stem, and as we'd already just identified the entirely slimy *Hygrophorus eburneus* (Ivory Woodwax) with a drop of KOH turning bright orange on the stem base, this genus was in mind. I also then recalled finding an interesting *Hygrophorus* in just this spot last year, and as today's finder had noted a second specimen present I attempted a photo (though my apologies for my and my camera's inability to do justice to the species in the conditions). Last year I'd named it *H. unicolor* (Twotone Woodwax) though was unsure so had a sample sequenced, but as is so often the case the result was inconclusive so today's collection will also be sequenced. There are several extremely similar Woodwaxes and I now suspect this one might be *H. lindtnerii* (no common name) which associates with Hazel and would be new to the county with only 40 UK records.



Left: *Hygrophorus cf. unicolor*, a slightly tentative ID which we hope to sort out with DNA sequencing. (PC)

Meanwhile Mick left us briefly to collect a species of *Lepiota* (Dapperling) from nearby which he'd identified a few days earlier though sadly it was now not in the best condition. *Lepiota*

fuscovinacea (no common name) is uncommon and, as its species name suggests, has purplish brown colours on both cap and stem. His photo below was taken a few days earlier. Soon after this I was handed a species somewhat similar but with pink colours though again not in the best condition, so I gave it a miss. However, later on a better and larger specimen turned up which I then worked on at home, keying it out to *Lepiota subincarnata* (Fatal Dapperling ie extremely toxic!), also rare and we have just a handful of county records for both these two species. They are in fact pretty similar though the latter has larger spores and is clearly pinker. My photo was taken indoors at home once I'd identified it as conditions made it out of the question in the field at the time. The specimen is drying for sequencing to confirm the ID.



Above left: *Lepiota fuscovinacea* (MJ) and right + insert: *Lepiota subincarnata* (PC)

The two Dapperlings above are both medium sized for the genus but another smaller species

was also found here today. I was handed one fairly early on and kept it in a pot in case another turned up later to make up a photo. It did, but by then it was tipping it so the photo below was taken at home on the lawn later. *Lepiota castanea* (Chestnut Dapperling) is a small but distinctive and pretty little species, recognisable in the field from the finely scaly bright rust-chestnut cap which is reflected in the lower stem, and of course the white free gills. It lacks the unpleasant smell of the much more common *L. cristata* (Stinking Dapperling) – not seen today and a much paler-capped mushroom altogether.



Left: a pair of somewhat rather waterlogged *Lepiota castanea*. (PC)

Before conditions put an end to photography a couple more species were suitably photogenic. One big showy mushroom normally very common in our woodlands, though I for one had not seen it this year before today, was *Infundibulicybe geotropa* (Trooping Funnel and previously in genus *Clitocybe*) – what a mouthful of a name to have to get our tongues around now! A useful diagnostic feature to help with identification though not really visible here is the round 'bump' in the middle of the sunken cap centre.

Right: *Infundibulicybe geotropa* showing in a range of sizes, both immature and mature. (CW)



An eye-catching jelly fungus stood out amongst the gloom on an Oak stick. This was *Tremella mesenterica* (Yellow Brain), very common and found on various deciduous woods though most frequently on Oak. It is in fact parasitic on the mycelium of the corticioid fungus *Peniophora* though the fungus itself is rarely visible at the same time.



Left: *Tremella mesenterica* (CW)

Derek at one point was telling me that he'd recently learnt something entirely new to him about the tiny *Marasmius bulliardii* (no common name but like a tiny version of the very common *M. rotula* - Collared Parachute). This is an unusual species we sometimes find in rotting deciduous leaf litter but is easily missed, being so small. It has a pale beige fluted cap with a central sunken dark dot together with a distinctive gill attachment to a collar surrounding the stem top rather than to the stem itself. Apparently this species has

minuscule branching stems with tiny mushroom-like heads coming off the stem, a feature we both knew to occur in the extremely rare *Dendrocollybia racemosa* (Branched Shanklet) but had thought was unique to that species amongst mushrooms. Not so! It also apparently occurs in *M. bulliardii* though this was news to both of us. As luck would have it, a few minutes later I was handed this very species! Out came the x10 lenses and sure enough one or two of these branching stems were just visible. Derek took a few samples home to examine in more detail and later sent me the photo below.

I've included also my photos of this species taken at Pulpit Hill in 2020 to show the features, and lo and behold on several stems one can just make out these tiny branches though I'd never noticed them till now - amazing!



Far right with insert: an earlier photo of *Marasmius bulliardii* showing its fluted cap, dark central dot and gills attached to a collar. (PC)
Near right: a close-up of branching stem with cap



cap, dark central dot and gills attached to a collar. (PC)
today's collection showing the diagnostic miniscule (DJs). These are also just visible on the far right photo.

This wood comprises a good variety of trees, both deciduous and conifer, and this is reflected in our list of 88 species. For instance, amongst the specimens handed me as probable *Mycena* species (Bonnetts) were several which appeared tougher and with stems with a yellowish tint. These were in fact *Strobilurus esculentus* (Sprucecone Cap), a *Mycena* lookalike but only found on Spruce cones - sometimes on the rotting remains as here which therefore makes their identity less obvious, but often visibly on cones which makes their identity much easier. However, just to point out the dangers of making assumptions, I was also handed a cone today which *did* have a genuine *Mycena* species attached! Hence the importance of checking the microscopic details. Below I've included an earlier photo of the *Strobilurus* to illustrate just how Mycenoid in character it is.



Left: *Strobilurus esculentus* found on rotting Spruce cones in litter at Turville Heath in 2021. (PC)

Also under Spruce today we came across a few clumps of a delicate Coral which interested me as I'd recently worked on a clump from Bernwood Forest, also under Spruce. *Ramaria stricta* (Upright Coral) is by far the commonest of this large genus, favours deciduous litter and is quite common under Beech. Today's find was smaller and much more delicate, so I collected a piece to work on at home later. It obligingly dropped me a pale ochre sporeprint overnight and I found very small

ornamented teardrop-shaped spores which then led me to *Ramaria gracilis* (no common name) and checking in our database I found just one previous record – mine from Penn Street Churchyard in 2006 with the comment 'spores too small for any other *Ramaria* species'. In fact there are several Spruce associating *Ramaria* species and my collection from Bernwood Forest was different again, so this was a nice record for the site today. Typical of the species are the sharp tips to its delicate branches which arise from a single common base with white rhizomorphs – all features visible here. However, the sweet aniseed smell of the species was at most very faint, so a sample will be sequenced to confirm. The photo was taken the next morning at home once I'd identified it.



Right: *Ramaria gracilis* found under Spruce today. (PC)

Other species of particular interest though sadly with no images to share: a cup fungus found on fallen rotting wood I keyed out to *Peziza isabellina* – rare and with few records so dried for sequencing. An Inkcap which Derek worked on was *Coprinellus* (now *Tulosesus*) *cinnamomeotinctus*, also rare and new to the county, and is awaiting sequencing. Several things went unnamed, conditions making things difficult, but one such - a chunky white *Agaricus* which somewhat resembled *A. xanthodermus* in shape but contrary to that species the cap reddened really strongly where touched – was later (tentatively) identified by Derek. This was the rare *Agaricus benesii* (no common name) new to the county and with only 30 UK records in FRDBI. The specimen will be sequenced to confirm. A couple of singleton but somewhat damaged and soggy species of *Russula* (Brittlegill) also defied identification later – not an unusual occurrence! We'd hoped to find some interesting Larch associates today but sadly searching in poor light, tipping rain and somewhat disturbed soil put paid to our chances.

Thank you all for coming and braving the elements. Our list surely reflects the diligence and patience of you all, and we've added considerably to the list of known species for the wood which was our main objective. Thank you to those who risked their cameras for our few 'in situ' shots today. For more details of what we found see the separate complete species list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CW = Claire Williams; DJS = Derek Schafer; MJ = Mick Jones; PC = Penny Cullington.