

FUNGI WALK at RUSHMERE ESTATE on Sunday November 12th 2023

Penny Cullington

Having visited this site last year in a very dry September with sparse fungi to be found, we opted this time for a late season walk in the hope of better luck. Consequently today our group of 19 had to put up with pretty miserable conditions – both chilly and wet – but we were well rewarded for our efforts. There was fungi aplenty and the first hour or so found me scribbling madly in my waterproof notebook (essential today) as things were handed in. With a good number of newish members present there was inevitably a fair amount of repetition and the poor light under the conifers didn't make things any easier, but our list of over 100 species reflects the totally different habitat in this part of the county. In contrast to the calcareous soils of the Chiltern Hills where Beech predominates, here on the Greensands Ridge the soil is thin, acidic and sandy and in much of the area we focused on today conifers predominated.

Justin Long had kindly done a quick recce the day before to plan our route, this being one of his local sites. Though we were enjoying finding quite a few species in the car park including nice examples of *Amanita muscaria* (Fly Agaric) under the Birches, he enticed us to get moving with the promise of a nearby patch of dung! Derek's eyes lit up at this, dung being a good source of Inkcaps – his special area of expertise, and sure enough he was soon on his knees examining some tiny white-capped Inkcaps which he collected and later identified as *Coprinopsis nivea* (Snowy Inkcaps). His photo may give the impression that this was a large species but it was only 2 cms tall at most!

Meanwhile people were busy exploring under the Pines, and on fallen wood was found the attractive *Tricholomopsis rutilans* (Plums and Custard) with plums on top and custard underneath! This is a sizeable and showy species with caps anything up to 10 cms across or more, restricted to fallen conifer – most often Pine – though we don't see it 'down south' of the county that often.

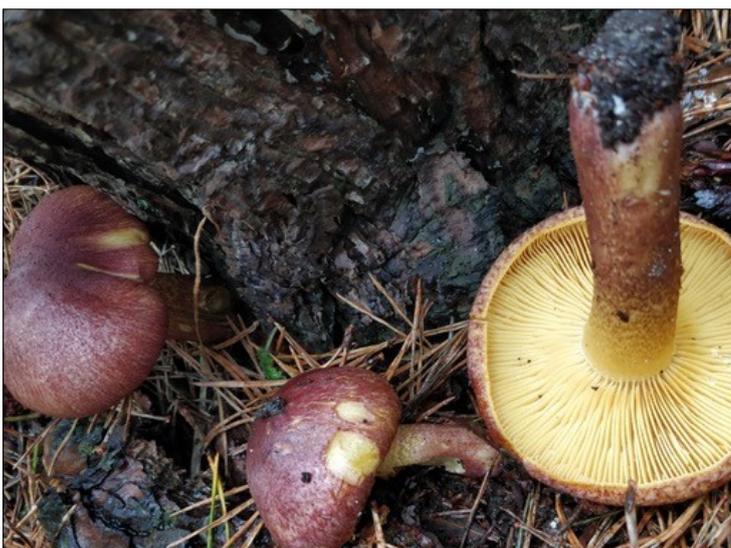


Above: *Amanita muscaria* in the car park. (LD)

Below: *Coprinopsis nivea* on horse dung. (DJS)



Left: *Tricholomopsis rutilans* on fallen conifer wood. (BS)



We soon entered an area of Spruce with some Oak and were promptly spoilt for choice with huge rings of both *Clitocybe nebularis* (Clouded Funnel) and *Paralepista flaccida* (Tawny Funnel) dominating the woodland floor but many other smaller species in abundance also. Two different species of *Geastrum* (Earthstar) were present though most specimens were somewhat past their sell-by date. Also amongst the *Geastrum triplex* (Collared Earthstar) in the thick Spruce litter were clumps of an unusual species of *Phaeoclavulina* (Coral – previously placed in genus *Ramaria*). *Phaeoclavulina decurrens* (Ochre Coral)



Above: one of many similar rings of *Paralepista flaccida* under the Spruce today. (PC)

Right: *Geastrum triplex* in the Spruce litter (LD)

Below left: *Phaeoclavulina abietina* (JL)

Below right: *Phaeoclavulina decurrens* (LD)



It was in this same amazingly productive area that I was shown a pair of *Lepiota*-like mushrooms which were clearly strongly reddening where touched. This was *Leucoagaricus badhamii* (Blushing Dapperling). Closely related was another Dapperling found soon after though smaller and with darker cap markings. This I identified at home as *Lepiota echinella* (no common name). Both these two Dapperlings are described as occasional but are distinctive and were two of many new species for the site today.

Right: *Lepiota echinella*; below (next page): *Leucoagaricus badhamii*, the fingers in view giving an idea of the relative size of these two species. (EP)



was identified later at home by Derek and is uncommon though we've come across it in recent weeks in several different sites under various conifers despite the fact that it is a species normally recorded under deciduous trees. For this reason there remains some doubt as to its identity and a sample will be dried for DNA sequencing. Much more common is *Phaeoclavulina abietina* (Greening Coral) which Justin found on his recce the day before and knows well from under Spruce at this site. For comparison both species are shown below.



Two species of *Inocybe* (Fibre-cap) were in evidence in this area, the first – *Inocybe sindonia* (Beige Fibre-cap) – is not confined to conifer but certainly favours it and was seen in good numbers today. The second I was excited to see here – in fact people may have noticed my preoccupation in the gloomy light at one point when I spotted just two small brown fruitbodies and out came the camera. This is a typical and fairly insignificant LBJ (Little Brown Job) but under the microscope it has the most amazing spores like maritime mines. I have become familiar with *Inocybe calospora* (no common name) from past visits to the Forest of Dean and therefore was able to recognise its dark rusty red-brown cap and stem, but I've never found it in Bucks despite having specialised in the genus for years. Much to my chagrin colleague Jesper Launder has found it twice in his Jordans Village garden (in South Bucks, also having sandy acidic soil as here) so I

was very pleased to be able to break my duck today.



Above left: *Inocybe sindonia*, and right: *Inocybe calospora* with insert showing its spores magnified x 1000. (pc)

Still more exciting species to share with you from this area! I found another singleton LBJ in the thick Spruce and Bracken litter. At the time Derek and I conferred and puzzled over it and failed to get even to genus though I took a guess (wrongly) at a species of *Tephroleuca*. At home I remained completely at a loss after studying it with a scope, so took a sporeprint overnight, then thumbing through various books the next morning came across a possibility. I'd never heard of *Rhizomarasmius undatus* (no common name) which shares with the genus *Marasmius* (Parachute) a stem which is pale at the top but gradually darkens to orange red then black towards the base – this matched our specimen perfectly as did the shape, colour and size of the spores together with other microscopic features.

Also a good match was the grey pruinose cap and remarkably stiff stem covered in moisture droplets and which was clearly deeply rooting into the litter, the lower section having debris attached. The species apparently occurs only on the rotted remains of Bracken and is not exceptionally rare but is only our second county record, the first being 30 years ago. Interestingly there exists one record from nearby Heath & Reach just over the border into Bedfordshire back in the 1960s found by Derek Reid – a mycologist of much repute.



Left: *Rhizomarasmius undatus* in the thick litter. (LD with insert PC)

A species new to the county was found here by Sarah Ebdon. She showed me some tiny stalks with pale heads she'd found in Spruce litter, no more than 2 cms tall and the like of which I'd not seen before. Taking it home to work on she managed to pin it down to ***Heyberia abietis*** (Spruce Needle Beacon), matching both the macro and microscopic characters to the species description. This is a species of Ascomycete (containing the spore shooters rather than droppers) and is not dissimilar to *Mitruha Paludosa* (Bog Beacon) which also has a thin stem with a little fertile head on top. This was an excellent find, also good detective work and another nice record for this site.



Above: ***Heyberia abietis*** new to the county. (EP)

There was an abundance of *Mycena* species (Bonnetts) everywhere we went today and I eventually had to discard the many offered collections (which in all likelihood were duplicates of those already retained for identification) unless they caught my eye for some specific reason. Of the 15 species on our list most are very common and have been featured recently either in earlier reports or in Members' Finds – both available on our website. Of interest, however, was one (unidentified) *Mycena* cap which appeared to be sprouting tiny 'hairs'.



These were caused by a fungus growing on a fungus: ***Spinellus fusiger*** (Bonnet Mould) is a Hyphomycete (a branch of the Ascomycetes). It is quite common on various Bonnet species and occasionally invades other genera as well. We met with an astonishing example of this in Burnham Beeches in October – see my earlier report for more.

Left: ***Spinellus fusiger*** spotted on the cap of a *Mycena*. (LD)

A little further on I was shown a Bonnet which Sarah noticed had an unusual dark rim to its cap. Before even looking closely at it and as we were near to Pine at the time I immediately suspected this might be ***Mycena amicta*** (Coldfoot Bonnet). This unusual species favours fallen rotting Pine and tends to have a blue-green tint not only to the cap edge but also to the stem base. Sure enough, when we looked closely this feature was indeed present in both places though sometimes it can be found with no blue-green in evidence at all which makes it identifiable only from its microscopic features. Luckily today we were in no doubt.



Above right: ***Mycena amicta*** with blue around the cap edge and at the stem base. (SE)

It is becoming apparent that *Mycena rosea* (Rosy Bonnet) is now much more prevalent in our county than ***Mycena pura*** (Lilac Bonnet) though not many years ago both species were included under the name *M. pura* despite their clear colour differences, the DNA era having brought about many such changes. Today, though both species were in evidence, we encountered nice examples of particularly



good material of *M. pura* under conifers as well as deciduous trees and showing its lilac colours off a treat.

Left: an impressive collection of *Mycena pura*. (DJS)

Whilst on the subject of *Mycena*, as we moved under a huge Beech I made the comment that I'd not yet seen *Mycena capillaris* (Beechleaf Bonnet) this year and suggested it was highly likely to be here. Several people dutifully set about searching for these tiny white mushrooms which grow in colonies of rotting fallen Beech leaves, and it was not long before some were found! This was another species new to the site today.



Left: the miniscule and delicate *Mycena capillaris* found on a fallen Beech leaf. (EP)

One last *Mycena*-like species which should be mentioned: under the Spruce were several sheets of tiny bright white mushrooms growing in the litter – there must have been hundreds. We suspected this was a species of *Hemimycena* and Derek and Sarah both took a few samples home to work on. This genus is not for the faint-hearted and requires considerable skill to prepare slides to view under a

scope, but both Derek and Sarah came up with the same name – always gratifying! *Hemimycena lactea* (Milky Bonnet) is not rare and favours conifer litter though probably goes unrecorded and mistaken for one of the many white-capped Bonnets unless proper care is taken .

Right: *Hemimycena lactea* found in hundreds today. (DJS)



Well, I've run out of time and space again with so much fungi on show today to choose from for the report. It was a shame the wet conditions had affected many collections, particularly the genus *Russula* (Brittle Gill) today, rendering them unphotogenic as well as hard to name, but I'm very grateful to those of you who got your cameras out and sent me your photos. It makes these occasions so much more meaningful and memorable, especially to members who are just beginning to get familiar with some of the commoner species. Many thanks for coming and for more details of what we found see the separate complete species list.

Photographers

BS = Bob Simpson; DJS = Derek Schafer; EP = Eleanor Page; JL = Justin Long; LD = Lynn Day; PC = Penny Cullington; SE = Sarah Ebdon.

Below: an impressive patch of *Armillaria* (Honey Fungus) near the visitor centre. (EP)

