

We were a modest number today compared to recent walks, just 11, and were treated to a beautiful spring morning though ending up with quite a modest species list. Despite a reasonably dry week the site was still remarkably flooded in several areas – not unusual here owing to the underlying clay – and wellies were certainly the order of the day. The sparse fungi to be found was admirably counterbalanced by a wealth of birdsong – a stunning tree pipit and several warblers amongst other things – together with a range of butterflies – brimstone, holly blue, peacock - and other insects; all in all a thoroughly enjoyable visit.

This was our first springtime walk here, prompted in part by our Burnham Beeches / Stoke Common project funded by the owners, City of London Corporation and now in its final year, and in part in response to the increasing support shown by members for events even at this apparently ‘quiet’ time of year for fungi. However, the last month or so has proved remarkably productive in this area – reflected in the number of interesting and unseasonal finds on view in our Members’ Finds page online, and today’s list of around 40 species certainly underlines this. We found our first Brittlegill, Bolete and Amanita of the year today and our database shows no previous May records for *Russula claroflava* (Yellow Swamp Brittlegill) or *Imleria badia* (Bay Bolete) though a couple for *Amanita rubescens* (Blusher), one of which was from this site. These three genera, all of which are important mycorrhizals (i.e. having mutually beneficial relationships with the trees with which they associate) tend to start fruiting earlier than many of the mushrooms we commonly record in autumn. It is not unusual to find them popping up in August or even July at a pinch, but May is surely exceptional.



Far left: *Amanita rubescens*; left and above: *Imleria badia* with pale yellow pores which blue when pressed. (LS)

Early on two of us separately picked up a species of *Galerina* (Bell) from mossy grass, worked on it at home and came up with the same name: *G. mniophila* – a species apparently new to the site and the county though by no means rare. This is a genus of LBJs having many members, most of which look extremely similar and even with careful examination of microscopic details often defying identification to species. Hence, though encouraging that we’d agreed separately, this record will hopefully be confirmed when dried and subsequently sequencing.

Right: *Galerina mniophila*, the ID to be confirmed in due course. (LS)



A large area of somewhat disturbed soil, littered with woody remnants and plentiful old bonfire sites from the clearing of trees, provided interest and had obviously been visited by the pasture-grazing cattle. Surprisingly, however, the dung patches here produced only one related species but we found several nice collections demonstrating its different stages of development. This was *Panaeolus*



papilionaceus (Petticoat Mottlegill), always occurring on manured ground and readily identifiable in the field from its distinctive frilly white veil remnants adhering to the cap margin together with its almost black mottled gills.

Left: *Panaeolus papilionaceus* showing nicely. (LS)

Here we also found several fresh and unfaded clumps of *Laccaria* which were later checked for their spore shape – both have distinctly spiny spores: round in *L. laccata* (Deceiver) but oval in *L. proxima* (Scurfy Deceiver) – both species were

found today. *L. laccata* is one of our commonest woodland litter mushrooms occurring in all soil types but also frequenting more open grassy areas and burnt sites. *L. proxima* is far less common and not found in woodland litter but favours acidic soils in more

‘heathy’ open areas such as this. We’ve also found the much rarer *L. bicolor* in this same area, similar to *L. proxima* but with a markedly lilac stem base, but not seen today.

Right: *Laccaria proxima* found in several spots here today. (LS)

Also from this area on one of the burnt patches with remnants of vegetation was a small yellow cup fungus having a markedly long stem. This together with several other mystery collections was taken to Asco expert Kerry Robinson later and identified as *Hymenoscyphus repandus*, new to the site.



Left: *Hymenoscyphus repandus* on dead vegetation. (BW)



Amongst the Pines there was a large heap of vegetation - a mix of cleared bracken and woody remains, both Pine and deciduous – and here we found probably the largest mushroom

of the day: a *Pluteus* (Shield) measuring about 3 cm across, also nice and fresh. I was hopeful this might prove to be *P. pouzarianus* (Conifer Shield) – an unusual lookalike of the very common *P. cervinus* (Deer Shield) but as its name suggests confined to fallen conifer wood – but a scope at home later revealed it to be just the common species which though frequently found on deciduous wood also can occur on fallen conifer.

Right: *Pluteus cervinus*, the insert showing its pink-tinged free gills. (LS)





Also in the Pines a small *Mycena* was spotted on the underside of a log and when disturbed it conveniently showed a drop or two of white 'milk' on the cap and stem – a character definitive enough to identify it straight off as ***Mycena galopus*** (Milking Bonnet). I'd also collected an unnamed *Mycena* in Pine litter earlier but at the time had just retained it for later inspection, not thinking to test it for milk. Checking the gill edge cells later revealed this was also *M. galopus*, confirmed when I then nicked the stem with a razor blade for the telltale white latex. This is quite a common Bonnet occurring in both deciduous and conifer woody litter.

Left: *Mycena galopus* exuding its diagnostic white latex from both cap and stem. Note also the typical 'strigose' (hairy) base of mycelial threads often seen in this genus. (LS)

On a fallen deciduous branch was spotted a patch of 'black velvet' which was recognised by Sarah, then confirmed by me, as the Pyrenomycete species ***Chaetosphaerella phaeostroma*** – no common name despite the obvious one suggested above and also the fact that it

has a mouthful of a Latin name to get your tongue around! Though not that unusual it was new to the site today and this brilliant photo – far better than anything online – shows its mature stage with tiny spores-bearing black bobbles amongst the fine fuzz of black hairs.

Right: *Chaetosphaerella phaeostroma*. (BW)



Towards the end of the morning I was handed a stick having two small stemmed fungi attached. Turning it over revealed not gills but pores under their caps, pointing to a species of *Polypore*. The stem base was not black thus eliminating the commonest of these, *P. leptoccephalus*, and it wasn't obvious which of the other species it might be. So it was a case of hoping I could find a few spores at

home though it was clearly already very dry and passed its sell-by date. Spore size is one of the easiest ways of determining Polypores to species, and those I found were extremely small for the genus making it *Polyporus ciliatus*, now one of many fungi with a new name ***Lentinus substriatus*** (Fringed Polypore). When in good nick the species has a clearly fringed cap margin which had all but disappeared today but it did still show the typical rather mottled almost snakeskin markings on the stem which helps to differentiate it from others, furthermore it tends to fruit in summer. This was also new to the site today.



Left: *Lentinus substriatus* on a deciduous stick. (LS)

A fresh patch of a quite soft, waxy and bumpy Corticioid was found on fallen Birch which had a distinctive pinkish / cream / peach tinge. This was another identified for us by Kerry Robinson and was *Phanerochaete velutina*, quite a common species occurring on many deciduous woods though easily overlooked.

Right: *Phanerochaete velutina*. (LS)



We rarely find truffles on our walks mainly because we tend to focus on the types of fungi we know more about and truffles are considered something of a specialist area. Luckily Jesper was with us today and knows not only how to find them but also how to identify them! He went searching under Aspen and was duly rewarded with a species both new to the site and to the county. *Elaphomyces*

granulatus (False Truffle) is a member of a genus of Ascomycetes which appears more like a small *Scleroderma* (Earthball), having a tough outer skin with a spore mass within, and grows just under the surface of the soil. Truffles are mycorrhizal and today's find was only about 2 cm across, the species apparently favours sandy soil and though under Aspen today it is more often encountered under conifers, less frequently under deciduous trees. This was a nice find.



Left: *Elaphomyces granulatus* – the first truffle found at this site. (JL)

Our Myxomycete enthusiast and exceptional photographer, Barry, had a busy time today and was already finding Slime Moulds on a rotting bare Pine trunk near the gate when I arrived 20 minutes before kick-off! Here he found large patches covered in the miniscule *Cribraria argillacea* – few of these organisms have common names – and growing on some of the more mature patches he also found the rarely recorded Hyphomycete (asexual Ascomycete) *Stilbella byssiseda* – new to the site today and in fact quite often invading *Cribraria* species, *C. argillacea* in particular. The white stalks with swollen heads are no more than 1-2 mm high.

Far right: *Cribraria argillacea*, and near right: *Stilbella byssiseda* growing upon it. (BW)

Also found by Barry was the stunningly beautiful and exquisite *Cribraria vulgaris*, the spheres on top less than 1mm across; this was also new to the site today.



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Left: *Cribraria vulgaris*. (BW)

Further Slime Moulds for your delectation are to be found at the end of this report - all common species, but one more worthy of comment here was a remarkably brightly coloured swarm of *Lycogala* on a fallen Birch trunk. *L. terrestre* (Wolf's Milk) is one of our commonest Slime Moulds and easily recognised by its peachy pink stalkless spheres, but there is a further and much rarer species, *L. epidendrum*, which is seldom recognised or recorded and described as

'carmine red to carmine pink, always with bright dark shades' as opposed to the 'salmon pink but occasionally white or pale orange, never with bright red shades' of *L. terrestre*. Barry had never seen a collection looking as startlingly dark and bright as this cluster today which surely must be a good candidate for *L. epidendrum* if ever there was one! So yet another species new to the site today.

Right: *Lycogala epidendrum* (BW)

So of the 39 species recorded today 11 were new to the site, 4 of which were new to the county also. No doubt there was a whole lot more lurking unfound at this remarkable site which always seems to turn up interesting species and was well worth the our springtime trip today. Thank you all for coming and thank you too to those who provided such a brilliant selection of photos. For more details of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; JL = Jesper Launder; LS = Linda Seward



Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa (LS)



Physarum album (BW)





Metatrachia floriformis (BW)



Not a Slime Mould but mating Wolf Spiders spotted today! (BW)