

FUNGI WALK at EAST COMMON, GERRARDS CROSS, November 10th 2024

Penny Cullington

Our group of 16 met up in the Town Council car park in some fear and trembling that the Remembrance Day service-goers would have taken all the spaces, but thankfully we need not have worried! We set off in light drizzle serenaded by a nearby somewhat patriotic operatic soprano accompanied by guitar but thankfully we were soon out of earshot! It immediately became apparent that the grassland was where we should be spending our time as the wooded paths were more or less devoid of fungi and remarkably dry. A few faded Buttercaps and Deceivers provided some interest for the less experienced and everyone improved their skills at recognising the various disguises with which these common mushrooms present. How different they were today compared to those found a month or so ago when the generally damp conditions allowed their unfaded colours to predominate.



There was very little found in the woodland worth disturbing the camera for, but *Gymnopilus penetrans* (Common Rustgill) was one exception, found on fallen Pine sticks which had managed to retain enough moisture to support a few fruitbodies. This small to medium species is always on fallen wood and favours conifer but can also be found on deciduous wood. There are other mushrooms with similar coloured caps but not with this combination of yellowish rusty gills and growing on wood rather than soil.

Left: *Gymnopilus penetrans* on Pine today. (PC)

It will come as no surprise to read that the larger woodland mushroom species were few and far between today, as they seem to have been throughout the autumn in southern England this year. We did manage to find just a couple of damaged examples of *Amanita rubescens* (Blusher), one rather misshapen *Macrolepiota procera* (Parasol), one each of *Inocybe* (Fibre-cap) and *Tricholoma* (Knight) and Jasper later valiantly identified one *Hebeloma* (Poisonpie) and the few rather bedraggled species of *Cortinarius* (Webcap) we found, though these were under trees in the grassland rather than in the woodland itself. The genus *Russula* (Brittlegill) fared slightly better with singletons of four of our commonest species turning up but only one specimen was worthy of a photo. As we emerged into the grassland we came across *R. parazurea* (Powdery Brittlegill) under a large Oak. Its green cap pointed to one of several possible Brittlegills but the rusty reaction to a ferrous sulphate crystal on the stem together with the whitish 'bloom' on the cap surface (referred to in its English name) – both features just about visible here – were sufficient to identify it. Needless to say it was well nibbled as are most woodland mushrooms at present, a reflection of the tough time many small mammals must be experiencing with so few fungi about to supplement their autumn diet.



Right: our sole example of *Russula parazurea*. (PC)

One advantage of there being apparently little fungi about is that it encourages more diligent searching for the smaller and less eye-catching species – things we often overlook and which tend not to be featured in these reports. One such was a soft rather gelatinous pale pinkish bracket found on fallen deciduous wood. This was *Phlebia tremellosa* (Jelly Rot), a common species which - once you feel its

soft consistency which peels off the wood quite readily and recognise the distinctive porous underside (seen here) – is quite an easy one to name in the field.



Left: *Phlebia tremellosa*. (JL)

Another bracket, *Gloeoporus dichrous* (Bicoloured Bracket) - much less common but quite similar in appearance - was found, also on fallen deciduous wood, though this one was growing in tiers and is fibrous and firmly fixed to the substrate. The pores are brownish pink, have a white margin, and readily separate from the white fibrous context, this being

demonstrated by Sarah!



Above and left: the upper and lower surfaces of *Gloeoporus dichrous* (SJE)

We have a nice photo of *Xylaria hypoxylon* (Candlesnuff) to share, one of our commonest pyrenomycete ascos on fallen deciduous wood, and here looking like some poor prostrate elfin creature pleading for help with hands outstretched! (Apologies for my descriptive suggestion.)

Right: a rather skinny example of *Xylaria hypoxylon*. (SJE)



Now for a rarity which was spotted by Jesper on a mossy bank in the woodland area. The parasitic genus *Cordyceps* is rather a gruesome one invading and living off insect larvae. The small white clubs of this genus were found and excavated today though the luckless insect beneath was not discovered. Sarah worked on the species identity and is fairly confident this is the anamorph stage of *Cordyceps tenuipes* (no English name) which she discovered has a yellow base as can be seen here on the right. However, there appear to be no UK records for this species in FRDBI so for now we'll name it *C. cf. tenuipes* and will hope to uncover more information and get the sample sequenced.

Below: two views of *Cordyceps cf. tenuipes*, a rare find today. (SJE)



Now for some of our finds made in the grassland area which proved much more productive. Firstly in woody litter near a deciduous stump a couple of Earthstars were spotted though not in the best nick unfortunately but still nice to see. I have it on the best authority (ie Geoffrey Kibby!) that what we've been naming ***Geastrum triplex*** (Collared Earthstar) for years in Europe is in fact an American species and our European species is proven to be not the same and will need at some stage to be given a new Latin name!

Right: ***Geastrum triplex*** found today, placed on a stump for a convenient photograph! (PC)



Of the 8 waxcap species we found the small and bright orange-red ***Hygrocybe miniata*** (Vermillion Waxcap) was showing nicely with its dry scurfy cap - not one we found recently either at Stampwell Farm or at Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens.

Left: ***Hygrocybe miniata***. (PC)

Another of the 8 species we found was like a much larger version of *H. miniata* but remains unnamed for now, defying our identification skills! It was too big for *H. miniata*, was similar to *H. reidii* (Honey Waxcap) but lacked the honey smell of that species despite our best efforts to detect it. The jury is still out! (No photo, I'm afraid.)

Another Waxcap it was good to see here was the quite uncommon ***Gliophorus laetus*** (Heath Waxcap), one Jesper had not found here previously and recently featured in Members' Finds as we also found it in good numbers at nearby Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens a few days ago.

The grassland clubs and corals have been having a good season and fortunately for us Jesper has just acquired a copy of the recently published Italian monograph on the so-called 'Clavarioids'. A common species we saw today was the yellow ***Clavulinopsis corniculata*** (Meadow Coral). Though in the same genus as the individual yellow clubs we saw everywhere in the grass today, this species has a very different habit with branching tips.

Right: ***Clavulinopsis corniculata***. (SJE)



Another much rarer coral was spotted quite nearby and was a duller beige colour – not one we recognised. Sarah, using Jesper's new book, was able to identify it as ***Clavulinopsis dichotoma***, at present on the UK list as a synonym of the unusual *Ramariopsis subtilis* (Slender Coral) but quite possibly soon to be split from it as a species in its own right. This is another collection which will need sequencing to take us further down the line with naming.

Left: ***Clavulinopsis cf. dichotoma***. (SJE)

Jesper and I both picked up examples of the genus *Entoloma* (Pinkgill) to work on later in the hope of arriving at probable names. He keyed out his small specimen to *E. lampropus* (Azureleg Pinkgill), one which has been found a couple of times before at Stampwell Farm but is otherwise new to the county. Mine I discovered had remarkably small and subglobose spores for the genus which thankfully eliminated vast numbers of species. It keyed out to *E. vinaceum* var. *fumosipes*, new to the county and with only a handful of UK records. For this reason I have my doubts if I'm correct – this is one of my least favourite genera to work on! - and will get the sample sequenced.



Above left: *Entoloma lampropus* (JL)



Above right: *Entoloma vinaceum* var. *fumosipes* (PC)

Another grassland species of interest was *Geoglossum* (Earthtongue) but although those few we found were not named they were interesting for their whitish 'bloom' caused by some fungus growing upon them. Some homework including info from a facebook page revealed that this was *Hypomyces papulasporae* (no English name) and not surprisingly new to the county.

Right: *Hypomyces papulasporae* infecting a species of *Geoglossum* (JL)



On the seeded heads of Silver Hairgrass (identified by Jesper) Sarah noticed these dark growths and recognised them as *Claviceps purpurea* (Ergot) – a fungal pathogen

which affects many cereal crops and in times past has caused many deaths from the disease 'Ergotism'. Thankfully commercial crops are now treated to resist this dangerous pathogen which is no longer a problem.

Left: *Claviceps purpurea* (SJE)



Time to sign off. Thanks to all for coming and especially to Jesper, Sarah and Jackie for all their IDs which lengthened our species list considerably. For more details of what we found see the separate complete species list.

Photographers

JL = Jesper Launder; PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon