

## FUNGI WALK at HODGEMOOR WOOD, September 29th 2024

Penny Cullington

We were 25 strong this morning and were hopeful that after a poor start to the season the wet previous week would have at least triggered a reasonable amount of fruiting here. Not so! Though our species total eventually pipped 90 this is more a reflection of the growing skills, experience and persistence of today's attendees rather than the abundance of fruiting bodies. We also covered a fairly large area with several splinter groups arriving back at the cars with species to add to the day's finds. This is a well recorded wood and one which we've visited on many occasions but we still managed to add quite a few new species to the lengthy over-all list for the site, also one new to the county. However, many of the really common species were today represented by singletons or doubletons at most, making it harder for our several newish members to start getting to grips with their recognition. For their benefit I'm including images of a few really common things here which many of you know well.

The two very common species of *Laccaria* (Deceiver) found in woodland litter are on today's list though very few examples were seen. The striking colour of *Laccaria amethystina* (Amethyst Deceiver) is almost unmistakable especially in damp conditions like today, but when dry and with the cap almost completely faded it can easily mislead even the experienced amongst us, the trick being to check the gills which in all conditions remain this stunning colour.



Right: *Laccaria amethystina* (AP)

Now from purple to pink! Another quite striking mushroom we find regularly in deciduous litter is *Mycena rosea* (Rosy Bonnet). This is not a typical member of its genus which is why it can confuse until you get to know it. There are, however, few other mushrooms with bright rose pink caps, pale gills and stems with quite thick bases that taper upwards like this. It also has a distinctive sharp smell which we refer to as the radish smell and which is quite common in other species as well.

Left: *Mycena rosea* (SH)



Now from pink to yellow! *Tricholoma sulphureum* (Sulphur Knight) is so-called not just for its sulphur yellow colour (in cap, gills and stem) but also for its remarkable sulphurous smell reminiscent of coal gas tar. There are just a few other mushrooms with a similar smell but they are not entirely yellow like this one, so its combination of smell and colour make it quite an easy one to recognise. It grows under deciduous trees with a preference for Oak and Beech.

Right: *Tricholoma sulphureum* (AP)



Continuing the colour theme we move from yellow to orange! We have no less than 13 species of *Mycena* (Bonnet on the list) and this is not unusual. Most of you are now well familiar with my ritual of collecting boxfuls of these tricky lookalike mushrooms to take home and identify using a microscope. There are thankfully a few which we

can name in the field, particularly those which possess latex which becomes apparent when you break



the stem. Three of these are on today's list and all three are very common. *M. galopus* (Milking Bonnet) is an inconspicuous dull brown and occurs in litter like many others but uniquely has white latex; *M. haematopus* (Burgundydrop Bonnet) only grows on fallen wood and is a dirty pinkish brown but uniquely has dark red/brown latex; *M. crocata*



(Saffrondrop Bonnet) can be anything from white to dark brown and also grows on fallen wood – almost always Beech – but uniquely has bright saffron/orange latex. This last species is usually easy to spot even before breaking the stem because the stem itself is also often bright orange, and once damaged this striking colour 'bleeds' into the gills and cap staining them as well. All three species are typical of the genus, ie quite small and slender with conical smooth caps as seen here. Note the telltale orange droplets visible on the cap margin.

Above: two examples of *Mycena crocata* found today. (AP with inset BW)

Now to green! Early on a bare stick with what appeared to be blue/green wood was found (and recognised for what it was by one of our new members who remembered it from last week!) As often happens, however, there were no fruitbodies of the fungus – *Chlorosplenium aeruginascens* (Green Elfcup) which causes this remarkable colour to be seen. When I was sent some photos later, however, there was a beautiful example of these stunning tiny green discs contrasting nicely with the surrounding moss. The discs are less than 1 cm across but the rest of the organism is living within the wood which in days gone by was used to supply the blue/green colour often seen in the veneer of antique tables and boxes known as Tunbridge ware. Note below the coloured wood here as well as the fruiting bodies.

Below: *Chlorosplenium aeruginascens* found late on this morning. (JW)



The above species is an example of an ascomycete cup fungus – one of the spore-shooters rather than the spore-droppers like the mushrooms. There follows another, also found unbeknownst to me

until I received the photos! *Bulgaria inquinans* (Black Bulgar but more familiarly known as Bachelor's Buttons) is larger than the Green Elfcup with soft black almost jellylike discs about 2-3 cm across when expanded and flattened though the inset photo shows how they look when immature. There are other black jellylike species which might possibly be confused with it, but if you rub a finger across the surface it comes away blackened – a sure sign you have this species. It is quite common and nearly always on fallen Oak.



Left: *Bulgaria inquinans* (JW) with inset (SJE)

In the litter a collection of a fairly nondescript 'mycenoid' mushroom was found, and from the tough though thin stem which was clearly progressively darker towards the base we were able to ascertain that it belonged to the genus *Marasmius* (Parachute) rather than *Mycena* (Bonnet). Both Derek and I independently checked the microscopic details later – a useful exercise especially when we end up agreeing though this doesn't always

happen! Today it did, however. *Marasmius cohaerens* (Bristled Parachute) happens to have some very distinctive microscopic features which help to separate it from several other look-alikes. It has remarkable thick-walled spiky hairlike structures (setae) covering both the gill and cap surface. The almost identical *Marasmius torquescens* (no common name) also has these structure but on the stem and cap though not on the gills, thus giving its stem a finely furry appearance rather than smooth and shiny as seen here.



Left: a lab shot of *Marasmius cohaerens* – we didn't take one in the field – together with two micrographs. Below left: the cap surface showing the setae extending well beyond the other cells which include some 'broom-cell' hedgehog-like cystidia (x 400) typical of the genus; below: the gill face (flat surface) showing the setae protruding (x 1000). DJS

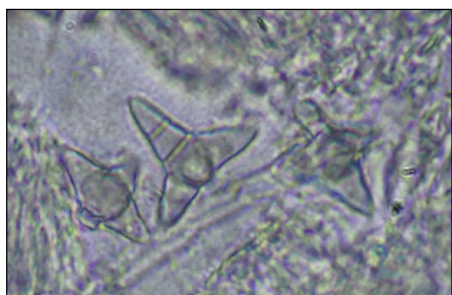


At the end of the morning Stephen showed me some tiny pale discs he'd been handed which he was hoping to try and identify. Noticing their almost glassy translucent appearance I suggested the genus *Orbilbia*, and after much research and deliberation he was able to identify this as ***Hyalorbilia inflatula*** – a species of Glasscup with no common name and also with under 50 UK records. This is likely to be new to the county though with name changes one can't be sure that it hasn't been previously recorded under a different name. This was impressive detective work and all credit to Stephen for working it out.



**Left: *Hyalorbilia inflatula*, new to the county today. (SP)**

Incidentally, whilst examining the above Stephen came across some remarkable spores floating in his preparation which intrigued him! Their unique shape is probably sufficient to be able to name the species *Triposporium elegans* (an ascomycete with no common name) though Stephen is hoping to get this confirmed from his photo. Apparently quite common, we have just one previous records, from Burnham Beeches 25 years ago!



**Right: the remarkable spores of *Triposporium elegans* x 1000 and noticed by chance! (SP)**

I'm now running out of both time and space but will add a few more photos just received below. Our species list today started at around 80 from the names I'd noted in the field and identified myself later at home, but then expanded amazingly, especially considering the poor conditions, thanks to the valuable contributions of the growing band of members using scopes and now gaining considerable experience and skill. To them a special thank you, but everyone present contributed: thanks to all, especially the photographers. For more details of what we found see the separate complete list.

#### Photographers

AP = Alison Peace; BW = Barry Webb; DJS = Derek Schafer; JW = Justin Warhurst; SH = Sue Hattan; SJE = Sarah Ebdon; SP = Stephen Plummer



**Left: The stunning and tiny *Cyathus striata* (Fluted Birds Nest), showing all three stages of its development, found by Bob and new to the site today. (BW)**

Right: the slime mould *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa*, considered a rarity but turning up increasingly often in our area (or has it been here all along but just gone unnoticed till recent years?!) (BW)



Right: the tiny frilly cups of *Incrucipulum ciliare* (no common name) on the underside of a dead leaf – new to the site and our third county record. (SP)

Right: *Mycena stylobates* (Bulbous Bonnet) – hardly more than 1cm high and found on a piece of bark. There are many similar small white Bonnets, a few of them with basal discs also, but the delicate fringed disc seen here is unique to this species which also has distinctive cystidia on the gill edge which were checked today. (BW)



Below: to conclude, yet another of Barry's stunning photos which I just can't insult by cropping to fit on this same page! *Stemonitopsis typhina*, another slime mould, found on a piece of rotten wood and less than 1 cm tall and showing perfectly its stem with a look of an old fashioned stocking with seam running up the back – a unique feature of this quite common species.



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