

FUNGI WALK at NAPHILL COMMON on Sunday October 13th 2024

Penny Cullington

On arrival this morning our group of 23 were a bit surprised to find the large car park utterly full, but everyone managed to find an alternative spot somewhere and we then progressed to the entrance to the Common and were led round by Peter who managed to prevent us getting lost. It was a chilly dull morning and we really struggled to find much of interest – putting it mildly, it was probably the most disappointing walk so far this season! One tiny *Amanita citrina*, one *Amanita muscaria*, a few rather small *Russula ochroleuca* and a couple of somewhat damaged *Russula atropurpurea* sums up the extent of the mycorrhizal species we found – oh yes, and some white and lilac now unnamable *Inocybe* species right at the end! Nevertheless, our species list managed to creep into the 70s which might sound a good number to the several members joining us for the first time today but is not impressive for mid-October – considered the peak of the season.

Early on we found a mushroom which nicely demonstrates what we mean by decurrent gills. ***Paralepista flaccida*** (Tawny Funnel) is a common species of mixed woodland litter – previously in genus *Lepista* and before that in *Clitocybe*. It's often found in troupes but today was represented by this singleton – no surprise there! The sloping gills, sunken cap centre and tawny brown colour (usually darker than this) described by its English name are self evident here.

Right: *Paralepista flaccida* (LS)



One of the few mushroom types we found in quite good numbers was ***Coprinellus micaceus*** (Glistening Inkcap) often lurking amongst the many log piles, though this was the only Inkcap species we saw. After rain the 'glistening' tiny specks of veil on the cap - like a sprinkling of icing sugar - which typify the species are often missing, having been washed off. However, these are just visible on all the caps in this attractively posed cluster.

Left: *Coprinellus micaceus* (LS)

Also on wood we found another common brown-capped species (a typical LBJ) found in clusters. ***Psathyrella piluliformis*** (Common Stump Brittlestem) was found at various stages of development, the photos below showing the young caps with typical white veil around the rim, the white stem typical of the genus, the more mature fully opened caps and brown gills.

Below: *Psathyrella piluliformis* (LS)





Two species having gills but which have the appearance of a small bracket on wood turned up; one is very common here and one was new to the site. *Panellus stipticus* (Bitter Oysterling) is quite similar to a species of *Crepidotus* (also called Oysterling). Both have a short eccentric stem (not central like a mushroom) but the *Panellus* is pale brown, not white, and has sticky gills (if pinched between thumb and fingers). It was just beginning to fruit and some attractive but tiny immature examples were on show together with a few larger ones.



Left: *Panellus stipticus*, the larger example less than 2 cm across. (LS)

We've seen only immature examples of this next species in several places recently but here at last it was sufficiently developed to show its characteristic underside giving rise to its English name. *Plicatura crispa* (Crimped Gill) was considered a rarity in the county until a few years ago but is now rapidly spreading and relatively common, often on Birch. Here it was thought to be on a Beech stick and is new to the site. It likes to grow in large clusters on fallen wood but each fruitbody is only about 1cm across.



Right: *Plicatura crispa* (LS)

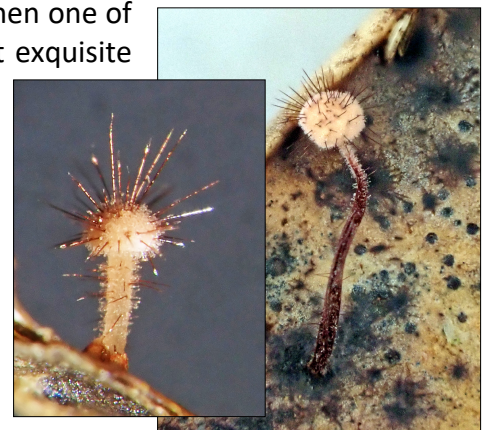


An attractive species which we often find here is *Aleuria aurantia* (Orange Peel Fungus) which does what it says on the tin! A cup fungus often occurring in disturbed soil or woody remains, today it was found lurking amongst some woody debris.

Left: *Aleuria aurantia*. (LS)

This was a new species for the county from here back in 2015 and has gradually been on the increase since then, having been found now at several other sites. It only grows on dead Holly leaves, a prickly environment to search for such a minuscule mushroom, hardly visible without a hand lens and no taller than 5mm at most. The insert was of a baby looking like a sparkler here but only 1mm tall and taken at home later by Derek.

A cry of delight went up when one of our two Justins found the tiny but exquisite *Marasmius hudsonii* (Holly Parachute) under a Holly bush.



Right: *Marasmius hudsonii*, much admired today by those with a hand lens. (NF & DJS)

Now from the sublime to the ridiculous! In complete contrast we were led to admire a huge bracket – well, four brackets forming a tier on a fallen Beech trunk. This was a species of *Ganoderma*



which I confirmed later by checking the spores as *Ganoderma australe* (Southern Bracket). It is very common on a range of deciduous trees, both standing and fallen, and here Sarah obliged by giving a sense of scale for us.

Left: *Ganoderma australe* (LS)

On fallen Beech there was a large patch of the very common *Hypoxylon fragiforme* (Beech Woodward) which on closer inspection by Sarah revealed the tiny bright red blobs of *Nectria episphaeria* (no English name) which can occur on a range of black



pyrenomycete ascos such as this. It was not until she zoomed in on her photo that she spotted them!

Right: *Hypoxylon fragiforme* with insert showing its typical bumpy surface with *Nectria episphaeria* growing upon it. (SJE)



Two more ascos now, both also on fallen Beech though very different from each other. Nice fresh examples of *Neobulgaria pura* (Beech Jellydisc) were found, living up to its name with obvious gelatinous texture. Several bare sticks adorned with colonies of small bright yellow discs were collected, the example shown here was taken home and checked to confirm it was indeed *Calycina citrina* (Lemon Disco) and not the very similar sister species *C. claroflava* (Sulphur Disco), not seen today.

Below left: *Neobulgaria pura* (NF), and right: *Calycina citrina* (DJS)



I mentioned earlier the genus *Crepidotus* (Oysterling) and several examples were collected and checked today. It is always necessary to check the spores amongst other features to confirm a species name with this genus though we most often find just two species, both of which are on our list today. On a mossy log, however, I collected one which I suspected was a different genus altogether though it

basically appears extremely similar. It's a question of 'jizz' and experience and then checking with a scope as Derek kindly did for me later, confirming it as *Clitopilus hobsonii* (Miller's Oysterling), not rare but much more uncommon than *Crepidotus variabilis* (Variable Oysterling) and new to the site today.



For comparison, above left is *Crepidotus variabilis*, and above right is *Clitopilus hobsonii*, both found today. (DJS)

We saw quite a few different Bonnets today though despite much checking at home later only 8 different species were recorded – a very modest number. One which is distinct enough to name in the field was *Mycena inclinata* (Clustered Bonnet) which turned up towards the end of the morning. Not only does it grow almost exclusively on Oak in tight clusters, it has a distinctive smell and the stem tends to turn yellow through orange to brown. This was typical material.



Right: *Mycena inclinata* (LS)

We've already discussed the lookalike *Crepidotus* above; there is also a mushroom which masquerades as a *Mycena* but is in no way related, and it is often not realised until one has it under the scope at home later when the microscopic features reveal all! *Hydropodia subalpina* (no English name) was not recorded in the county till 2019 when considered something of a rarity, but this year we've already found it 5 times, today making the 6th. We also found it here in 2022 and '23 so it is clearly on the increase. Today luckily I suspected it was this species in the field, though it was tiny and can get considerably bigger than this, so Linda took the photos which we can now share and which show just how like a typical *Mycena* it can look.



Right: *Hydropodia subalpina* found on the end of a stick. (LS)

Several rare species were identified at home afterwards though as often is the case they were not recognised in the field and needed careful work to key out and consequently were not subject to any photography. One such was found by Stephen who showed it to me in the field but I'd no idea what it might be. Sarah cleverly suggested it might be a species of *Cordyceps* maybe growing on a moth pupa, and later Stephen discovered she was spot on! He not only extricated the fungus and attached pupa



from the woody substrate but was then able to identify the fungus as *Cordyceps farinosa* (no English name) with just one previous county record, his photo taken later complete with pupa.

Left: *Cordyceps farinosa* on a moth pupa. (SP)

Just at the end of the morning as we emerged onto the grassy perimeter we suddenly started picking up more species. One of note which is usually common but we'd not seen before this year was the beautiful

ascomycete *Helvella crispa* (White Saddle). Though easily recognisable to those who know it and in a cluster of several examples here, none were very photogenic which is a pity. The impressive ridged and usually prominent white stem beneath the main body of the fungus was not visible amongst the vegetation, sadly.

Left: a welcome group of *Helvella crispa* (LS)



Despite the absence of Barry and Gill today there was much activity on the slime mould front, with Jackie and Kath embarking upon their project to supply the Natural History Museum with samples. As a result we have several on the list, one in particular of note.



Arcyria stipata (very few slime moulds have English names) is not often found, with under 50 UK records, though Barry has found it a few times in the county but this was a first for the site and for Jackie too.

Left: *Arcyria stipata* (NF)

Well, despite the dearth of specimens compared to what one would expect at this time, we still made a reasonable showing with 12 new to the over-all site list and one new to the county which will need confirming with sequencing. Thank you all for coming, and our apologies for the unexpectedly tricky parking today. We already have plans for a different arrangement next year! Thank you to our photographers, especially to Linda who has supplied the bulk of today's images. This makes my job so much easier! For more details of what we found see the separate complete species list.

Photographers

DJS = Derek Schafer; LS = Linda Seward; NF = Neil Fletcher; SJE = Sarah Ebdon; SP = Stephen Plummer



The photogenic Naphill Common with our group today - a fitting conclusion (LS)