

FUNGI WALK at STAMPWELL FARM on October 26th 2024

Penny Cullington

Our group of 20, this time comprising a good number of newish members, met up on a fine morning. Jackie Ewan, co-leader, started us off in a nearby field which was packed with interest. This site is now well known for its array of grassland fungi and it was not long before the first of our 13 different species of waxcaps was found: *Hygrocybe chlorophana* (Golden Waxcap) is one of the commonest species but can be confused with another yellow waxcap which was also in this area today: *H. ceracea* (Butter Waxcap). Jackie was able to point out the differences to look for: in the first both the cap and stem feel sticky, and in the second the cap is sticky but the stem is dry. Further differences: the stem of the first is often grooved and the species is medium to large when mature; the second usually has slightly decurrent gills, lacks the grooved stem and is small to medium when mature. (There are plenty of images of both these species available on our Members' Finds webpage by clicking on the masterlist index, then the letter 'H', and so on.)

Two further waxcaps were of interest here and their identity was debated and eventually sorted out by their distinctive smells, though this character can be hard to detect and one often has to squash the cap or place a specimen in a plastic container for a while before it becomes obvious. Today the squashing technique worked! *Hygrocybe quieta* (Oily Waxcap) is another yellow species but with a more orange colour and an oily smell similar to that of *Lactarius quietus* (Oakbug Milkcap) – another species we found nearby under an Oak. *Hygrocybe reidii* (Honey Waxcap) is a dry capped orange to reddish species, often confused with *H. coccinea* (Scarlet Waxcap) – also found today in this area – but its honey smell was sufficient to make the determination here.

Below left: *Hygrocybe quieta*, and right: *Hygrocybe reidii*. (SP)



One of the reasons we started out in this field was the presence here of a really unusual species which many today would not have seen or heard of before. *Clathrus archeri* (Devil's Fingers) is a unique and bizarre fungus - actually an alien species first described in 1980 from Tasmania but now spreading worldwide. It was new to the county in 2019, Stampwell Farm being one of its first sites when discovered here by Jackie, and has been fruiting here in increasing numbers every year since. Related to the Stinkhorns, it arises from a gelatinous 'egg' and uses the same tried and tested technique of attracting insects by its unpleasant smell, the insects then obliging by transporting its spores. Today we were treated to a display of specimens at different stages of development including the eggs.



Right: *Clathrus archeri* (BW) with insert (SP).

On a large patch of woodchip here was a colony of *Coprinopsis lagopus* (Hare'sfoot Inkcap) in various stages of development from the furry early stage to the dripping final stage. It is amazing that a species can change so radically during its rapid development, furthermore this often happens within a day or so with this family of species. Inkcaps are alone amongst mushrooms in their technique of deliquescing (dissolving into a liquid state) as a method of distributing their spores, the liquid having been used as ink in years gone by.

Right: *Coprinopsis lagopus* at the deliquescing stage today (cw) and inset a library photo showing the 'haresfoot' stage. (PC)



There were a few nice fresh examples of *Macrolepiota procera* (Parasol) in the field for us to admire, though none were fully developed to show how impressively large this species can become when fully expanded and dinner-plate size. Note here the brownish 'snakeskin'-like stem markings which help to separate it from the equally common and very similar *Chlorophyllum rhacodes* (Shaggy Parasol) – a species we didn't see today.

Left: *Macrolepiota procera*. (cw)

As we moved from the field into some woodland a large bolete was found – well past its sell-by date but still with some notable features: the cut flesh turned instantly and strongly blue (suggesting the genus *Suillellus*) but the pores were clearly yellow and not reddish or orange which appears to eliminate the likely candidates from that genus. No photo to share here but a sample has been dried and will be sequenced in order to try and find out what this species can be.

It was at this stage that Barry - always on the search for tiny slime moulds and fungi - handed me a small piece of dead bracken stem on which were several white undeveloped mycenoid types. There was one mature but incomplete specimen just about big enough to work on and with a handlens one could see the gills were widely spaced and clearly decurrent – the whole fruitbody was at most 6mm tall. As he'd taken a nice photo of it I endeavoured to key it out at home and (somewhat to my surprise) managed to extract a single gill which then revealed good numbers of large cystidia (sterile cells) and pip-shaped spores. This was a species of *Hemimycena* which, in the monograph of this genus which I happen to have, keyed out with some certainty to *Hemimycena delectabilis* (no English name), one of very few in the genus to have this combination of characters. Furthermore I learnt that it apparently had a unique and distinct nitrous smell. I hadn't thought to try and detect a smell from something so tiny but on reading this I dutifully cut the remaining scraps with a razor blade and on putting them to my nose was amazed that it did! Bingo! Any remaining doubts were removed. The species is new to the site and not often recorded though we do have a few previous county sites.

Right: *Hemimycena delectabilis* on the inside of a bracken stem. (BW)





The woodland area, dominated by Beech, generally proved less prolific and of less interest for fungi than the grassland. Nevertheless it was good to be able to demonstrate some typical Beechwood Bonnets and other species. Not only was *Mycena haematopus* (Burgundydrop Bonnet) found on fallen wood but also nice examples of the photogenic *Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop Bonnet) which were duly demonstrated with the bright orange 'juice' in evidence in stems, caps and gills.

Left: *Mycena crocata* fruiting on fallen Beech. (BW)

Also on mossy fallen wood was another Bonnet cluster though with much darker caps and no coloured juice in the stem. I noted the smell of bleach at the time, typical of *M. leptcephala* (Nitrous Bonnet) but was not familiar with that species occurring clustered on



Right: *Mycena leptcephala*, here on a mossy log. (CW)

wood – it commonly occurs in litter, both deciduous and coniferous, also in grassland. However, at home the cells on the gill edge left no doubt as to its identity.

Having just pointed out to everyone how to recognise the litter associating *Laccaria amethystina* (Amethyst Deceiver) which it was nice to see in good numbers here, I found myself tested when handed another amethyst-coloured mushroom, the jizz of which just didn't fit comfortably to me for a Deceiver. Sadly it wasn't in the freshest nick but when then shown the cluster from which it had been collected I was fairly confident this was in fact another species of Bonnet though not a common one. *Mycena diosma* (no English name) is one of a species complex related to *M. rosea* and *M. pura*, the first of which we also saw today; it has a purple-brown somewhat zoned cap and shares with the rest of the complex a sharp smell of radish though with a component more akin to cigars! This was another species new to the site today.

Below left: the uncommon *Mycena diosma* (JE), and right, for comparison, *Laccaria amethystina* (MT)



On the underside of a log a soft ellipsoid white blob was noticed and its gelatinous feel together with its shape and the mycelial chords visible at its base told me this was the 'egg' of *Mutinus caninus* (Dog Stinkhorn), a species Jackie had just mentioned had been seen here recently. Slicing it open revealed the undeveloped fungus within surrounded by its jelly-like layer of protection. The transformation from egg to maturity in stinkhorns takes only a matter of hours!

Right: our *Mutinus caninus* 'egg' sliced in half. (SP)





I'm going to conclude with a couple of interesting finds we made. We found an *Amanita* under Birch which may well be a rarity. I suspect it is ***Amanita olivaceogrisea*** (Olivegrey Amanita), closely related to the common *Amanita fulva* (Tawny Grisette) but differing in its smaller size, duller colours and significantly the white volva at the stem base rather than brown as in *A. fulva* – clearly seen here. There are, however, a number of other species in this complex recently described through DNA sequencing, so this is by no means a certainty until we have our dried sample sequenced also.

Left: *Amanita* aff. *olivaceogrisea*, to be confirmed. (JE)

Finally to another waxcap which has been found here a couple of times before and may or may not be ***Gliophorus europerplexus*** (Butterscotch Waxcap). This is a relatively recent addition to the UK species list but again a species complex is involved here which has not yet been fully sorted out.

Basically entirely slimy as in the *G. psittacinus* complex (Parrot Waxcap) it is described as lacking green colours in the cap and /or stem and sports this rich red to rust-brown colour. Today's collection varied quite a bit with some signs of green seen. A sample will be sequenced.

Right: *Gliophorus* aff. *europerplexus*. (JE)



Thank you to all for attending and especially to Jackie for leading us round and showing us a range of interesting species. Seeing this number of Waxcaps is always a treat. Our list of just over 90 species may well need amending as some additional identifications come to light. There follows a selection of the many photo you kindly and promptly sent in to me, for which many thanks. For more details of what we found see the separate complete species list which includes English names where they exist.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CW = Clare Williams; JE = Jackie Ewan; LM = Leigh McMahon; MT = May Tang; PC = Penny Cullington; SH = Sue Holtom; SP = Stephen Plummer;

A selection of waxcaps:

Left: *Gliophorus psittacinus* (JE with insert SH);
 Right above: *Gliophorus laetus*, and below:
Hygrocybe cantharellus (JE); Directly below:
Hygrocybe coccinea (CW)





Above left: *Amanita muscaria*, and right, the tiny *Parasola leiocephala* spotted near the cars (but not *P. plicatilis* as suggested at the time.) (JE)



Left: the unusual *Phellinus pomaceus* (Cushion Bracket) on a plum tree (SP).

Right: The tiny blobs of *Lasiosphaeria ovina* (Woolly Woodward) new to the site today. (BW)