

FUNGI WALK at WOTTON PARK ESTATE on Sunday September 15th 2024

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This was our first walk of the season, the site chosen not only for its spectacular setting beside a lake brimming with birds but also for giving us a fighting chance to see *Boletus satanas* – a stunning species and a regular here at this time. Not today though! Our modest group of 10 enjoyed a beautiful morning, but fungi? Not a lot to put it mildly. Despite reasonably favourable conditions we found we were somewhat scraping the barrel today with extremely few species found in soil and most of those on our rather meagre list were found on trunks or fallen wood. The only sign of a bolete was a rather sad *Caloboletus radicans* (Rooting Bolete) well past its sell-by date.

We do have a few photos to share, thanks to some diligent searching off-piste – the grassy paths producing very little. It was not until we reached the large Red Oak and admired the regular *Daedalea quercina* (Oak Mazegill) found there that we found anything fungal at all! Soon another sizeable bracket turned up. Deciding whether specimens of *Ganoderma* might be either *G. australe* (*adpersum* for some) or *G. applanatum* is something best done by checking their spore size *unless* your specimen has obvious signs of the galls of *Agathomyia wankowiczii* (Yellow-footed Fly) on the underside! This fly can clearly tell these two brackets apart and chooses only to infect *G. applanatum* (Artists' Fungus) thereby providing us less skilled humans with an instant ID! The inset image here shows all the proof we needed. Not all examples of *G. applanatum* will necessarily have this infection, however, and it is often a case of collecting a spore sample to check with a scope (nearby vegetation is often well coated in enough cocoa-coloured spores to provide this without damaging the bracket itself). Invariably, however, it will turn out to be the much more common *G. australe*!



Right: *Ganoderma applanatum*, showing both upper and lower surface (PC)



Left: *Fistulina hepatica* (SP)

Another quite common and impressive bracket was found on Oak, though Stephen had to take a fairly precarious stance to get his photo as the branch was overhanging the lake! Unlike the hard woody genus *Ganoderma*, *Fistulina hepatica* (Beefsteak Fungus) is quite soft and spongy and the giveaway red colour is distinctive also.

Chestnut and when fully grown can be the size of a large horse's saddle rather than one more suitable for a Shetland pony as seen today.

A third bracket we found was an immature and still small *Cerioporus squamosus* (Dryad's Saddle, previously in genus *Polyporus*). Often on Ash, here it was on Horse



Right: *Cerioporus squamosus* (BS)



Now to some smaller species. A singleton *Marasmius rotula* (Collared Parachute) was found on woody debris, its cogwheel gill attachment and darker lower stem (both visible here) serving to point out its salient features. The fact that we only found this one example shows just how sparse mushrooms of any sort were today.

Left: *Marasmius rotula* (NF)

A pair of small LBJs were spotted on a deciduous stick which both Derek and I were able to name on sight as the genus *Simocybe*, though when asked how we



Right: *Simocybe sumptuosa* (NF)

recognised it we were hard pressed to answer very satisfactorily! Dull brown, nondescript, not with the jizz of other brown-capped wood associates was the best we could do, but at home under the scope the spore size and cystidia with knobs on top told me this was *Simocybe sumptuosa* (Velvet Twiglet) – rather an elaborate Latin name for such an insignificant little mushroom!

A couple of ascos now. Several colonies of the distinctive *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* (Green Elfcup) were found, always a favourite. On a stick collected with a few examples of *Calocera cornea* (Small Stagshorn) we also then spotted the tiny but brightly vivid discs of *Calycina claroflava* (Sulphur Disco). This species, less common and also smaller than Lemon Disco, has had the unusual misfortune of recently changing both genus *and* species name! Previously known as *Bisporella sulfurina*, one can only speculate that the powers that be decided that whilst updating the genus name of this pair of species it was an opportunity to remove the original misspelling of the word ‘sulfurina’ (with ‘f’ instead of ‘ph’) and give it a completely new name.



Above left: *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* (NF)



Above right: *Calycina claroflava* (cs)

Two small different stemless gilled mushrooms were found on fallen wood. One – on an Aspen log - turned out to be the quite common *Crepidotus mollis* (Peeling Oysterling). This is the one *Crepidotus* species we are normally able to name in the field without recourse to a scope, but today’s specimen was young and notably white suggesting *Clitopilus hobsonii* (Miller’s Oysterling). At home Derek immediately realised its ID when the stretchy cuticle revealed itself as he tried to remove a gill.

The second small stemless species, found on a stick, was tiny and beautiful though needing a handlens to do it justice. This was *Resupinatus applicatus* (Smoked Oysterling), the commoner

of two similar species both of which are no doubt under-recorded owing to their size and inconspicuous appearance. This was one of seven species new to the site today.



Above left: *Crepidotus mollis* (BS)



Above right: *Resupinatus applicatus* (CS)

The only slime mould we saw was the eye-catching *Fuligo septica* var. *flava* (Dog's Vomit) which was found in various stages of development on stumps and log piles. No doubt if our squad of Myxo fans had been with us today there would have been more on the list!

Right: *Fuligo septica* var. *flava* (PC)



I've deliberately left the most interesting species till last. We found four species of *Pluteus* today though none were the common *P. cervinus* (Deer Shield). All needed checking at home and two were new to the site, one to the county. When Bob handed me a rich brown-capped mushroom (seen below right here) found on a mossy rotten log and already identified by him as *Pluteus*, one glance at the underside was enough to tell me it was one of two species owing to its distinctly dark-edged gills. I immediately suggested *P. umbrosus* (Velvet Shield) which we find occasionally though the cap texture didn't look quite right, but knowing the alternative was rare and a species I'd never seen I didn't really consider it. The specimen duly went in a pot for checking later, and further on I was handed a second much smaller *Pluteus* also with dark gill edges which looked more typical of *P. umbrosus*. That went in a pot as well for comparison later. (See the photo below of both specimens together taken at home on the lawn once I'd realised how different they were.)

Right: *Pluteus atromarginatus* in situ on a mossy rotten log (BS)

At home one look at the gill cystidia of the first larger specimen was enough to tell me this was something interesting. There are seven members of this genus which have distinctive hooked cystidia (ie topped with what I like to call cat's ears). *P. umbrosus* is not amongst them, and only one of these seven has dark gill edges: *P. atromarginatus* (Blackedged Shield), therefore leaving the identity of our species in no doubt. It is rare with around 60 records on FRDBI and the only question mark in my mind was the fact that it is described as a conifer associate. Certainly broad-leaved trees predominate at Wotton as was obvious yesterday, and there was no way Bob could have identified his rotten mossy log even had he known it might be significant, but both he and Stephen noted that there was some conifer present there.



The sample is dried and will be sequenced in any case as it is new to the county. When I examined the smaller specimen it matched *P. umbrosus* fine with very different gill cells, also both cap and stem were not streaky fibrillose like in *P. atromarginatus* but covered in dark fine squamules. I found myself thinking what were the chances of having the opportunity to study and compare both these two species – one unusual and one rare – at the same time, especially as neither had been found here before. Remarkable.



Above left: *Pluteus atromarginatus* showing the distinctive dark edges to the gills together with the streaky stem. (NF)

Above right: for comparison, the same specimen together with the smaller *P. umbrosus* which has a clearly different 'jizz'. (PC)

We ended up with a list of over 40 species which, though disappointing for mid-September, seemed highly unlikely after our miserably unproductive start this morning. It was still a very enjoyable occasion and really nice to be out as a group once again with the promise of better things to come in a few weeks (we hope!). Thank you to all who came and searched and also to our photographers who enabled me to make the most here of our relatively few finds today.

Photographers

BS = Bob Simpson; CS = Claudi Soler; NF = Neil Fletcher; PC = Penny Cullington; SP = Stephen Plummer.