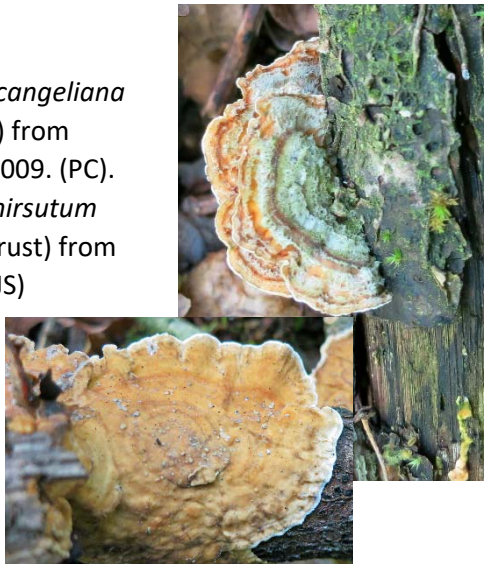
FUNGI WALK at BITTAM'S WOOD, DANCERSEND on OCTOBER 13th 2018

Our group of nine included several new participants that I hope will shortly join the Group. We assembled at the Aston Hill entrance to the Wildlife Reserve, welcomed by warden Mick Jones to this BBOWT wildlife reserve known, among other things, for its extensive fungal diversity.

Although it was raining as we assembled, Mick explained that it had been extremely dry until now and fungal fruiting bodies were in limited supply. The choice of this part of the wood was because the clay with flint soil retained more moisture than other parts of the reserve. Nevertheless, we managed to find 55 species during the morning (and identified 54 of them) and the rain gave way to sunshine to make the exercise that much more enjoyable.

First on the list were ***Stereum hirsutum*** (Hairy Curtain Crust) and ***Mycena arcangeliana*** (Angel's Bonnet), both very common generally and at this site.



Left: *Mycena arcangeliana* (Angel's Bonnet) from Dancersend in 2009. (PC). Right: *Stereum hirsutum* (Hairy Curtain Crust) from another site. (DJS)

Amanita muscaria (Fly Agaric) put in an early appearance, a number of fruitbodies at different stages showing how the fruitbody develops.

Left: *Amanita muscaria* (Fly Agaric, photos from another site) showing different stages of development from completely covered in veil to veil and some colour washed off cap. (PC).

In Penny's absence, not all the Russulas were identified but a tiny purple specimen turned dark green with an iron crystal, putting it in the *Russula xerampelina* group and was ***Russula graveolens***, a Beech associated species. Small fruitbodies of ***Kuehneromyces mutabilis*** (Sheathed Woodtuft) were found by John Tyler. This is a well-known edible species but (for those whose interest is in

eating rather than recording) extreme care must be taken not to confuse small fruitbodies with the deadly poisonous *Galerina marginata* (Funeral Bell).

Left: *Kuehneromyces mutabilis* (Sheathed Woodtuft) from another site. (DJS). Right: *Galerina marginata* (Funeral Bell, not found today). (PC).

In addition to the very common ***Pluteus cervinus*** (Deer Shield), ***Pluteus phlebophorus*** (Wrinkled Sheild) was also found (Right, showing wrinkled cap, DJS).

Marasmius bulliardii (Right and below, DJS) was found by Mick Jones on fallen dead leaves of Oak and also later on Beech and Oak leaves. It has no recommended English name. This is smaller than, but similar to *Marasmius rotula* (Collared Parachute), which has a whiter cap without such a distinctly dark centre and is usually found on twigs or fallen branches. Both have gills attached to a distinct collar.

Other Mycenas included ***Mycena rosea*** (Rosy Bonnet) and its less common relative, ***Mycena pearsoniana , Mycena galopus*** (Milking Bonnet) bleeding white juice and ***Mycena crocata*** (Saffrondrop Bonnet). This splendid species, bleeding intensely saffron or carrot-coloured juice, is common in the Chiltern Beechwoods but much rarer in many other parts of Britain and deserves consideration as the County Fungus!

Right: Mycena crocata (Saffrondrop Bonnet). (NS).
Below: Mycena rosea (Rosy Bonnet). (PC).

The find of *Phallus* ***impudicus*** (Stinkhorn) provided some amusement.

Right: John Tyler with Phallus Impudicus (Stinkhorn).

All of the fungi I have mentioned so far are classified in the *Basidiomycota*, one of two large divisions within the kingdom Fungi, producing basidiospores on the outside of cells called basidia. The other large division is the *Ascomycota*, producing ascospores inside bags or tubes. There are more species

of the *Ascomycota* recorded from Britain (and elsewhere) than of the *Basidimycota*. Our recording walks invariably identify more of the Basidiomycota, perhaps partly because they are generally bigger and more obvious, perhaps because of our limited knowledge of the Ascomycota. Today's list includes a dozen species in the Ascomycota, including ***Trochila ilicina*** (Holly Speckle) and ***Phacidium multivalve*** (No recommended English name), found and identified by Roger Wilding, both comprising small dots on fallen Holly leaves. ***Chlorociboria aeruginascens*** (Green Elfcup) fruits as a green disk on dead Oak wood that is also coloured green because the fine threads of fungus (mycelium) comprising the organism that produces the fruiting body are also coloured and live within the wood. The coloured "Green Oak" is used in marquetry as Tunbridge Ware.

Left: *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* (Green Elfcup) from Dancersend in 2011. (DJS).

John Tyler collected (and identified) the small, stalked, disk-shaped Ascomycete ***Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*** growing on the old petioles (the central stem of the leaf) of old fallen Ash leaves. This is the fungus that causes Ash die-back disease, relatively recently introduced to Britain but established earlier in other European countries such as Denmark. This is closely related to another fungus that also grows on Ash petioles, *Hymenoscyphus albidus*. To confirm John's identification, I found a paper published in 2014 by leading Ascomycete researcher Hans Otto Baral describing how the two fungi can be distinguished under the microscope in this disc fungus state on the petioles and John's collection did indeed correspond to the die-back species. I also checked two other collections that I had made in Scotland this August. One, identified as *Hymenoscyphus albidus* had the requisite, different microscopy. The second, made at another site two days later had the microscopic feature of the die-back fungus. To resolve this further, I have arranged with Kerry Robinson and Peter Wilberforce (two leading UK Ascomycete experts) to look at three earlier dried collections

Right & below:
Hymenoscyphus albidus
(collection form Scotland on 28th August 2018).

labelled as *H. albidus* from 2014, 2010 and 1994. The microscopic distinction seems to work in allowing us to distinguish the two and should provide us with an opportunity as field mycologists to examine more collections to see where the disease organism is now found and where it has displaced *H. albidus* (as has been claimed to have happened in Denmark).

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who attended for collecting and/or identifying the fungi and especially to Joanna for keeping the records of what was found.

Derek Schafer