

FUNGI WALK at FINEMERE WOOD, September 17th 2017

followed by an identification session chez Derek

Penny Cullington

Our group of 14 met up in the carpark at Finemere and it was good to welcome two new members (their first outing with us) and two for whom it was their second attendance. Rather a gloomy morning but the damp conditions of the last week boded well for finding interesting things and we started the list off in the carpark with many specimens of *Lacrymaria lacrymabunda* (Weeping Widow) together with *Coprinellus saccharinus* (an Inkcap very similar in appearance to *Coprinopsis micaceus* – Glistening Inkcap).

Right, *Lacrymaria lacrymabunda*, my photo taken in Penn Wood in 2008. (PC)



Our main object today was to collect specimens which would be useful to study later when we would be introducing attendees to the challenge of working through keys, specialist books and microscopic work. Our walk was therefore shortened to finish by 12.00 and our species list was

therefore probably curtailed as we covered a fairly limited area of the woodland. Nevertheless the list of just under 70 species included 16 new to the site according to our database, with one special find which I'll leave till last! Finemere is not in the Chiltern area and contains no Beech, this being reflected in the low numbers of Russulales - *Russula* (Brittle-gills) and *Lactarius* (Milkcaps) compared to last week's list from Hodgemoor. We did, however, see good numbers of *Lactarius pyrogalus* (Fiery Milkcap) – a species host specific to Hazel, and perhaps surprisingly *Russula nigricans* (Blackening Brittle-gill) – very common under Beech but also occurring with many other trees and in this case growing under Oak.



Left above, *Lactarius pyrogalus*, a readily recognisable Milkcap owing to its rather orange-tinted gills, its occurrence only under Hazel and – if you taste it – its exceptionally hot milk.



Left below, *Russula nigricans*, also readily recognisable owing to its gills which are extremely widely spaced and very brittle, also its flesh which when exposed to air turns at first pink then red and eventually black. (Both photos PC taken previously at Penn Wood and Mousells Wood respectively.)



Five species of *Inocybe* (Fibre-cap) were collected. None of this large genus of LBJs (Little Brown Jobs) are particularly eye-catching but one today - *Inocybe flocculosa* (Fleecy Fibre-cap) was worthy of a photo, having an attractively marked cap. As we saw when back at Derek's house later, this is a genus which makes up for its lack of bright colours in the field by having particularly interesting microscopic features.



Left, *Inocybe flocculosa* (JW) and below what can be seen on the gill edge of this species when magnified x 400. Amongst the tiny pale brown spores floating about are long thick-walled cells with swollen middles and very characteristic of many members of this genus. These are called cystidia. (PC)

The genus *Amanita*, though often well represented in Chiltern woodlands, is often absent here, but today we found two species though one confused us thoroughly until we worked on it in the afternoon session. The somewhat squat stem and sticky whitish to brown cap with no flecks of veil apparent rather led us astray but the large volva, free white gills and ring on the stem kept us returning to this genus for the solution. Eventually the rather unpleasant sickly sweet smell became apparent and this feature together with following the key and finding that the spores were clearly amyloid (blue when iodine is added) left us in no doubt that this was an atypical specimen of *Amanita phalloides* (Deathcap) despite the lack of any of the usual green tints on the cap. Sadly we have no photo of our find to share here though it's worth including one of more normal specimens as this is a species with which everyone with an interest in fungi should become familiar, particularly if you ever collect for the pot: it is deadly poisonous with no known antidote.

Amanita phalloides, found today though not looking anything like the examples in my photo here taken at Hodgemoor Wood in 2004. This is a common species in the Chilterns, and though covered in white veil when young it often quickly loses any sign of this, especially after rain. I also discovered from various books later that the cap can be somewhat viscid after rain, as we indeed found today. (PC).





Justin W. found a cluster of tiny bright orange spheres on the end of a stick. This was a species of slime mould still at the slimy stage and very few can be named in this state (slime moulds have to dry off and mature before work can be done to identify them). However, I knew that this was a species of *Trichia* which would be nameable purely from the shape and distinctive colour of these little blobs but at the time couldn't remember the exact name.

Left, *Trichia decipiens*, a slime mould, this one only just developing but as the majority of slime moulds have white plasmodium (the slimy stage) this particular species can be named purely from its unusual colour. (JW)

Poorly represented today were the Boletes (mushrooms with pores underneath in place of gills). Jackie found our only two specimens, one being so far past its sell-by date that it was well past identifying but, however, covered in another fungus which was nameable. The bright chrome yellow *Hypomyces chrysospermus* (Bolete Mould) is a common fungus which likes to grow on rotting fruitbodies and is often to be found on members of the Xerocomoid Boletes – those with softer flesh. The shape of the affected Bolete can clearly be seen here though the whole fruitbody is enveloped by the mould.



Right, *Hypomyces chrysospermus* spreading over the decomposing body of a member of the Bolete family. (JW)

Now to Jackie's exciting find, new to the wood and previously recorded from only one other county site, this was *Aureoboletus gentilis* (Gilded Bolete). From the number of national records it seems not to be that rare in the south of the country, where it is usually recorded under Oak as it was today. It is instantly recognisable by its small size, pinkish sticky cap and bright golden yellow pores which do not change colour when damaged by handling, and I was delighted to see it again today having found it once before when only just starting to learn about fungi. My find, however, is not amongst our county records because it was before the days of the BFG database.



Left, *Aureoboletus gentilis*, a somewhat unusual member of the Boletes found today under Oak by Jackie. Certainly our most notable find of the day. (JW)

I conclude with a view of the group gazing heavenwards trying to work out the tree association for the fallen branch bearing our nice fresh specimens of *Daedaleopsis confragosa* (Blushing Polypore). Many thanks to all who attended and particularly to both Justins who took the photos. We look forward to seeing you all again soon. By the way, please bear with me: these reports may well become less comprehensive as I get busier as the season progresses!



Our group at the walk at Finemere today (JL)

Photos: JL = Justin Long; JW = Justin Warhurst; PC = Penny Cullington

The afternoon identification session (Photo JL)



After the walk most of us followed in convoy back to Derek's house in Whitchurch, where after downing our packed lunches we enjoyed a really good session in Derek's superb lab. We

focused on samples found during the morning, going through a few keys in specialist books to show how these worked, skilfully aided by Derek displaying the relevant microscopic features on his new monitor rigged up to his scope. This is such a useful teaching tool and we were treated to really good views of different types of spores, how these can show different characters when appropriately stained, also other significant cells like basidia, cystidia, asci which characterise cup fungi, and much more. Interesting questions abounded and Derek and I were kept on our toes and working hard to answer as best we could. All in all it was a lively and informative event, one which was much appreciated by those who attended and well worth the effort to set up. This appendix to our normal walks was a format not previously tried and is one we will certainly repeat next year. Thank you to everyone who came and helped to make it such a success.