

## Foray at Penn Wood on Sunday November 13<sup>th</sup> 2016

Penny Cullington

This meeting, arranged rather at the last minute, was well supported with 12 of us present, all of whom enjoyed a fine morning of foraging which was very rewarding with good numbers of fungi found. Everyone contributed to the longish list which covered not just the woodland area but also the vicarage lawn, the cricket pitch and finally the churchyard. We had suspected that the waxcaps would be fruiting well but feared that elsewhere the recent frosts and leaf-fall would limit what we found, especially this late in the fruiting season. Predictions about fungi are somewhat prone to inaccuracy, however, and this proved to be the case once again! As can be seen from the final list, the cricket pitch produced very little and was disappointing in most respects (but not all - more on this later) and all other areas were surprisingly productive. In fact I found I had hardly a minute to myself and was kept very busy scribbling names down once we entered the woodland, thus all the photos below are supplied by camera stalwarts Justin and Nick – many thanks, both.



We started off with the vicarage lawn where the grass was somewhat overgrown; waxcaps were few but other things of interest turned up, starting with two large *Clitocybe* species under the Oak which it is very easy to confuse once they get to this size and have become weathered with frost and rain. As one is considered a good edible but the other is poisonous we felt it would

be useful to set up a shot to point out the visible differences. The edible *C. geotropa* (Trooping Funnel) tends to retain its regular shape and strongly decurrent gills through life, though the characteristic 'nipple' found in the centre of the cap can disappear with age. The poisonous *C. nebularis* (Clouded Agaric) tends to become somewhat wavy and irregular in shape. Its cap lacks a 'nipple' when younger but it has a distinctive sweet fruity smell which it retains, also though clearly greyer in colour than *C. geotropa* when younger, the two species become virtually the same colour when older, thus the common confusion between the two species.

Still on the *Clitocybe* topic, a much smaller and more delicate species was also found here, one which can be recognised in the field by its slightly pink tinge over all and its distinctive smell of tomato leaves. (Anyone who grows tomatoes and handles any part of the plant will be familiar with this smell.) This was *Clitocybe houghtonii* (no common name), not a regular fungus on our lists but one which we have recorded at six other sites in the county.

Right, *Clitocybe houghtonii* found on the vicarage lawn today. (NS)





Above, a strangely shaped specimen of *Agaricus silvaticus* (JW)

At one point Joanna called us over to admire a strange fruitbody which, once extracted from the pile of rotting lawn mowings under the conifer hedge, proved to have an extraordinarily long stem though from its cap it was easily identifiable as a species of **Agaricus** (the genus of true mushrooms). Its pink gills are not visible in this shot but one can see where I scratched the cap which then quickly started to redden. Colour change in this genus is a useful

identification feature: many species of **Agaricus** turn either red or yellow where damaged though this is not necessarily an indication of edibility or otherwise. Derek took this specimen home to work on and identified it as the fairly common **A. silvaticus** (Blushing Wood Mushroom) - a good edible species. I suspect the elongated stem was caused by the fruitbody's need to grow through the pile of mowings to enable it to release its spores.

Our next stop was the cricket pitch which I've already mentioned proved somewhat disappointing today except for one exciting find which did not reveal itself until later at home when I started wading through the many specimens of **Mycena** (Bonnets) I was handed during the morning. I have no recollection of who found the two little somewhat boring brown fruitbodies which turned out to be a species not only new to the county but also with only 28 previous UK records, the last in 2010; it is also on the Red Data List as 'Near threatened'. This was **Mycena latifolia** (Sideshoot Bonnet) – I discovered that this is a species of mossy grassland but have no idea why it has this English name. It was the interesting microscopic features which alerted me to its identity: the gill edge cells (cheilocystidia) were surprisingly long, swollen in the middle where ornamented with fine stubble-like growths. Many species of **Mycena** have these growths (called brush cells) but it is unusual (possibly unique?) to have them in the middle but not at the apex of the gill edge cells. We have no photo of the fruitbodies but I include here a microphoto of the cheilocystidia with brush cells.



Above, the unique gill edge cells of *Mycena latifolia* (PC)

On now to the species found in the woodland. Derek identified an unusual species which mystified us when it was found: a small bracket-like fungus growing in a tight cluster on a fallen Oak branch which on first glance was not dissimilar to a **Crepidotus** (Oysterling) having gill-like structures underneath but with a **Stereum**-like upper surface. The underside was white, however (i.e. not the same as **Crepidotus**) and it clearly had a different 'jizz' to it. This was **Plicatura crispa** (Crimped Gill), new to us and to the county but with records spread over the south of the country.



Penn Wood is a well recorded site thus it is not that often that we find species not previously recorded here, so the *Plicatura* and the rare *Mycena* were particularly pleasing finds today. (It's worth bearing in mind that although today's lists show in fact quite a few species new to the individual areas, these are mostly new to the grassland areas of the site and are probably connected to the surrounding woodland where they will have been previously recorded.)

Left, *Plicatura crisa*, another find new to the county today. (NS)

Herewith a quick resumé of some interesting species we saw today and of which we have photos to share. Two species of *Macrotyphula* were found, and particularly common (and found regularly by Jackie as we went round) were the tall brown swollen stems of *M. fistulosa* (Pipe Club - my photo being taken at Penn in 2009). Much smaller though still in the same genus were the thin cream-coloured wispy tubes of *M. juncea* (Slender Club) growing in the leaf litter.



Above left, *Macrotyphula fistulosa* (PC) and above right, *Macrotyphula juncea* (JW)

Two species related to conifer and found growing on stumps today were the common *Calocera viscosa* (Yellow Stagshorn) and the much rarer and intriguing *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum* (Jelly Tooth). Not related to *Hydnum* (Hedgehog), the similarity to that species with its spines found underneath is clear. This very unusual jelly fungus never ceases to amaze.



Above, *Calocera viscosa* (JW), and right *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum* (NS)

Justin found a species of *Mycena* (Bonnet) which is easy to recognise in the field if one notices the green/yellow stem which is very sticky. Another feature of *Mycena epipterygia* (Yellowleg Bonnet) I was able to demonstrate today: it has a gelatinous coating over the cap which with care can be peeled off in one. (Apologies for the rather grubby thumbnail!)



Left and above, *Mycena epipterygia* showing its sticky cap and stem and the removable gelatinous pellicle. (JW)

It was good to be able to compare two species of the Ascomycete genus *Helvella* (Saddle) which were found today, one near the vicarage lawn and the other in woodland litter. The darker of the two species, *H. lacunosa* (Elfin Saddle) can be black or grey, as seen here, whereas *H. crispa* (White Saddle) is always pale and often more 'voluptuous' in shape.



Above left, *Helvella crispa* near the vicarage lawn, and above right *Helvella lacunosa* in the woodland area. (JW)



Another Ascomycete species with a stem was *Leotia lubrica* (Jelly Babies); we found this on the vicarage lawn and also on a muddy bank in the woodland area. It is easy to mistake this species for a gilled fungus until one looks underneath the cap to find that there are none!

Left, *Leotia lubrica* found in several places today. It is often quite a common species here. (JW)

It was good to find another Ascomycete which we regularly record here still fruiting in the churchyard. This was the unusual *Spathularia flavida* (Yellow Fan), a species at one time considered a rarity in the south of the country and more or less confined to Scotland, though it seems to be spreading with a more southerly distribution in recent years. Though found in the lawn in the churchyard it is not in fact a grassland species but one which likes conifer litter and was indeed quite near to a large conifer here.

Right, *Spathularia flavida* growing in the churchyard today (NS)



In all we recorded over 130 species today, so quite a haul especially considering the late date and the fact that fruiting is now slowing down. My thanks to everyone who came and kept both Derek and I so busy with identifying, and particularly to Nick and Justin for all the wonderful photos. See the detailed list for more information on what we found. It's sad that our foray season is now virtually at an end, and I for one have thoroughly enjoyed the season which has been a really good one in the county this autumn. One last seasonal photo from Justin to finish with. Hopefully you can identify the two species below for yourselves!

