

## FUNGI WALK at STOKE COMMON, October 7<sup>th</sup> 2018

Penny Cullington

A select band of just seven made it to Stoke Common today, the low number perhaps influenced by the fact that yesterday was our busy day at Aylesbury County Museum. We enjoyed a beautiful morning despite the ridiculously low numbers of fungi to be found – it was a real struggle to find anything much for the first hour or so but things picked up a bit once we reached the deciduous woodland patch at the eastern end of this large and unusual site. When I say seven attendees, we were actually 6 plus 1 as our paths never actually crossed with Derek who'd started out from a slightly different spot!

Our total of 31 species is certainly a record low for an October outing (which makes my life easier for producing a report at a busy time!) but 5 of those were new to the site, one being new



to the county, and a few things were showing nicely. This heathland site, being on acid sandy soil, always turns up interesting things that are unusual – even unrecorded – at other sites in the county. The only fungus we found in the northern patch of the common – normally a very productive area which spends much of the year under water – was *Gymnopilus junonius* (Spectacular Rustgill) found by John on a large fallen Oak branch and living up to its English name.

Left, *Gymnopilus junonius*, a striking species which is often to be found at this site. (PC)

Crossing over the road into the main part of the Common fungi were apparently absent under the patch of mature pines apart from the occasional *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* (False Chanterelle), so the first find of note was further into the open area amongst the mosses, this was a species typical of heathland habitat but always rare: *Mycena megaspora* (Rooting Bonnet). Closely related to the very similar but paler capped *M. galericulata* (Common Bonnet) with which it shares the cross-ridges between the gills and its tough rooting stem, it differs in not growing on fallen wood or stumps – always the case with the Common Bonnet, and is only found in heathland or mires with Sphagnum. I've recorded it here before but it was new to nearby Burnham Beeches in 'the Mire' just last week. (Sorry, no photo.)

Further on under a large Pine Jackie found another species which is usually quite common here, this was the Bolete *Suillus luteus* (Slippery Jack) which after yesterday's rain was living up to its English name with a good layer of slime coating the young caps. We have over 20 county records for this species but over half come from this site. *Suillus* species are distinguished from other Bolete genera by their sticky or slimy caps and sometimes (as in this case) a ring on the stem. Most species grow under Pines.

Left, *Suillus luteus* found growing under Pine today. (PC)





We found a nice little group of *Amanita citrina* (False Deathcap) and a little further on and new to the site, the entirely white form of this species with no hint of yellow – *var. alba*. (Not my best photo of the *Amanita* here but having taken my snap I couldn't resist taking one of Justin following after me with his camera - bare knees and all! (I hadn't mentioned to him that this site is well known for adders!)



Left above, *Amanita citrina*, and below an example of what daft things we have to do in the pursuit of fungi and art! (PC)

Two more species worth mentioning – one new to the site and the other to the county as far as I know: First, in the middle of the path but somehow undamaged we spotted a large button with a brown cap but a red stem – *Boletus* (now *Neoboletus*) *luridiformis* (Scarletina Bolete) always calls for a 'before and after' photo to demonstrate its intriguing colour change when the flesh is exposed to the air. Not visible here in such a young specimen are the distinctive red pores – it's the pores rather than the red stem which give rise to its English name.



Above left, *Neoboletus luridiformis*, as yet undeveloped, and right a few seconds later when I'd cut a slice to show how the yellow flesh turns instantly blue on exposure to air. (JW)

Lastly – and for me the find of the day – was another Bolete, this time from the genus *Leccinum*, distinguished from other Bolete genera by the (usually) contrasting floccules which adorn the stem. Most members of this genus grow under Birch but quite common at Stoke is one which grows under Oak, *Leccinum aurantiacum* (Orange Bolete). We didn't see it today but found an extremely similar but rare species which grows only under Poplar, especially Aspen. Described only in 2005, *Leccinum albstipitatum* is distinguished from the Orange Bolete not just by the

different tree association but also (as the Latin epithet describes) its much whiter stem. For comparison I include here a photo of *L. aurantiacum* taken a few years back under oak where the floccules on the stem can be seen to match the cap colour – on close examination there *are* floccules on today’s find but their contrast in colour is lacking, giving the stem an overall whitish appearance. There are just 13 records for *L. albstipitatum* in FRDBI and its one I’ve often hoped to find here under this particular patch of Aspen (there was Oak quite nearby as well but I feel confident enough with the pale stem markings to make the identification.) So a nice record, and new for the county as well as the site.



Left, *Leccinum aurantiacum*, a specimen from Hodgemoor showing the typical contrasting floccules on the stem (PC), and right today’s find of the rare *Leccinum albstipitatum* under Aspen, having only pale stem floccules. (JW)

My thanks to today’s attendees for making the most of the very few fungi we managed to find today, and particularly to Justin for his photos. For more details of what we found see the separate complete list.

JW = Justin Warhurst, PC = Penny Cullington