

## Fungi Walk at Kings Wood Tylers Green - September 28th<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Penny Cullington

At last we've had significant rain! Autumn proper seems to have arrived and 16 of us set out with great expectations this morning especially as a couple of things turned up in the car park – always a promising sign. However, despite the good soaking over the past week we were in for a nasty shock: fungi were still disappointingly thin on the ground. For me, knowing just how prolific this wood can be for mycorrhizal species in particular, this was really frustrating as it was the group's first visit here, but as is often the case with a good sized group we ended up with a respectable list of just under 70 species even so. Notable by their complete absence, however, were several common genera: *Boletus* and their allies, *Lactarius* (Milkcaps), *Laccaria* (Deceivers), *Scleroderma* (Earth Balls), with only single examples of *Amanita*, *Russula* (Brittlegills), *Cortinarius* (Webcaps) with just two examples of *Inocybe* (Fibre caps) and *Tricholoma* (Knights). All these common mycorrhizal genera, normally to be found in abundance here at this time, clearly need still more time with more rain to encourage them into fruiting. Fingers crossed that they don't decide (as happened last year) that they'll give up the struggle and wait for a more suitable season next autumn.

On the grassy bank in the car park Claudi was soon photographing what looked like a white *Tricholoma* but it was puzzling because it lacked the unmistakable smell of the likely species. We moved on without paying it much attention and then forgot at the end of the morning to study it carefully.

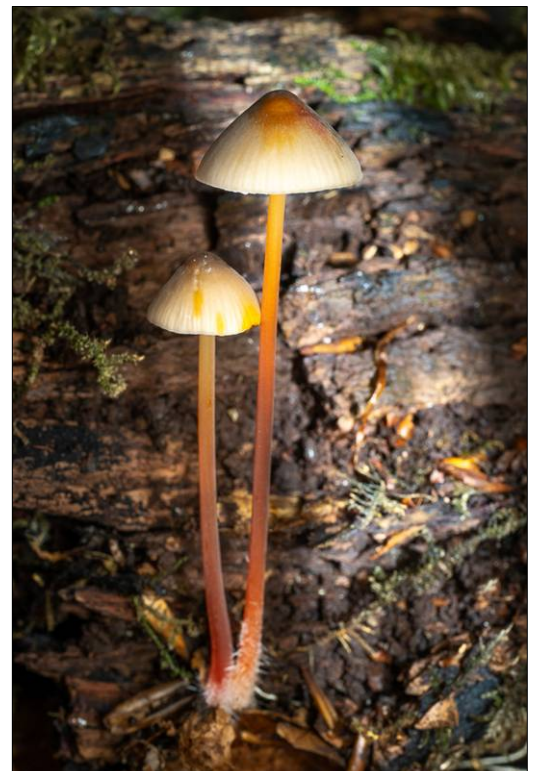


Luckily Claudi kept it to show to expert Geoffrey Kibby the next day who immediately recognised it as ***Lyophyllum connatum*** (White Domecap), confirming this by rubbing a crystal of iron salts on the cap and gills which quickly turn violet. (No *Tricholoma* has this reaction.) Problem solved, and no wonder it didn't smell right for a white *Tricholoma*!

Left, ***Lyophyllum connatum*** in the car park, one of many species new to the site today. (cvs)

Another species from the car park was ***Mycena crocata*** (Saffrondrop Bonnet), a species anyone who looks for fungi in the Chilterns soon becomes familiar with because we record it on nearly all our walks. Many of the Bonnets (there are some 80 British species in the genus) need a microscope to determine, but the orange latex which exudes from this particular species when collected is diagnostic. It grows exclusively on the fallen branches or roots of Beech, having a preference for calcareous soil, thus this area of the country seems to be its stronghold and it would be a good candidate to represent the county (if such a fungus was required!). We found several more examples today and the photo here shows it off to really good effect.

Right, ***Mycena crocata*** showing its typical habit of 'bleeding' its orange 'juice' into the cap once it has been collected. Note also the dark orange stem with its hairy white mycelial growth helping to anchor it to its woody substrate. This is typical of many species of *Mycena* though no others sport the saffron coloured juice of this species. (BW)





I looked at quite a few small *Mycena* species later at home and nearly all turned out to be the very common and rather nondescript *M. vitilis*. I was about to bin the rest of them but luckily checked a couple more which were different: one was a collection of ***Mycena galericulata*** (Common Bonnet) – a species that roots firmly into deciduous fallen wood and can get rather bigger than others in the genus. Today's specimens were small, however, and at the time I failed to check for the give-away feature one can spot in the field: between its gills are distinct anastomosing ridges which in large caps is very obvious but in small ones is hard to see.

Far left, *Mycena galericulata* just emerging, the largest cap only about 1cm across. (BW) The insert shows this species' typical anastomosing gills. (PC)

There was much debate whether the pink mycelium at the base of several collections of the very common ***Gymnopus dryophilus*** (Russet Toughshank) was enough to justify naming it the much less common *G. aquosus*. However, when shown it the next day Geoffrey was not convinced and declared it was just *G. dryophilus*.



Above, *Gymnopus dryophilus* (BW) and further right the pink mycelium of that species in question today. (RW)



We found at one point two strange blobs on long stems emerging from a fallen Beech branch. This I recognised as the early stages of a very beautiful mushroom – one that might compete with *Mycena crocata* to represent the Chilterns as it shares with that species its habit of growing exclusively on Beech, either living or fallen. This was ***Oudemansiella mucida*** (Porcelain Fungus – so named because of its translucent cap when held to the light and viewed from underneath). Sometimes one can find the slimy white fruitbodies of this species on the ground under Beech when their identity can confuse, but on looking up into the tree one can often see where they were originally fruiting, sometimes in abundance and high up in the canopy. (For photos of mature collections of this species go to [www.bucksfungusgroup.org.uk/image\\_list.html](http://www.bucksfungusgroup.org.uk/image_list.html) and click on 'O' to find the selection of members' images.)

Left, the undeveloped specimens of *Oudemansiella mucida* – clearly fruiting was just under way, so this is a species to look out for elsewhere at the moment. (BW)

Several 'Coprinoïd' species were found (these are the Inkcaps and comprise the genera *Coprinus*, *Coprinellus*, *Coprinopsis* and *Parasola*). Here are photos of two examples found today which illustrate the very different appearance within this group of mushrooms.



Above left: the fleshy *Coprinellus domesticus* (Firerug Inkcap) showing the characteristic fine white dusting covering the cap surface and known as 'veil', this a feature of many Inkcaps. Above right: the dainty thin-fleshed *Parasola leiocephala*, one of several species very similar in appearance and always needing microscopic examination to determine to species. (CVS)

The highlight of the morning for me was when Paul called us over to see something exciting he'd found. Bang in the middle of the path and in imminent danger of being trampled under foot were three pristine fruitbodies of a beautiful species of *Cortinarius* (Webcap) – a genus known to be one of the hardest to identify to species, there being in excess of 600 in the UK alone. This one belonged to a section of the genus called *Phlegmaceum* which has a sticky cap but a dry stem (other sections being entirely dry or entirely sticky). Many of the *Phlegmaceum* group are large and fleshy with purple tinges to the gills and/or flesh and with experience can be named in the field by some mycologists who specialise in their study. (The dry-capped groups are well-nigh impossible to name and there are probably many species as yet undescribed.) As I knew we were seeing Geoffrey Kibby the next day, he being the most likely person in the country to be able to name our collection with any certainty, I didn't waste time on attempting an identification. Sure enough he recognised it instantly as *Cortinarius amoenolens* (Blueleg Webcap) though he thought the latest recognised name for the species was *C. anserinus*. I'm sticking with *amoenolens* for now, however, as there's a good illustration under this name in Phillips, also on the link to our website clicking on 'C' you'll find another image in our Newsletter no 12 on p21.



Left (cvs) and below (BW) *Cortinarius amoenolens* found under Beech and showing well the feature for which the genus is named: the 'cortina' or fine weblike mesh which serves to protect the undeveloped gills before the cap starts to expand. In fully developed specimens this web all but disappears, leaving merely fine hairy remnants on the stem where it was attached, usually by this stage appearing rusty brown from the mature spores which have dropped onto it. Note also the violet/purple young gills (another feature lost in maturity as the rusty brown spores coat them).



Two more features of this beautiful *Cortinarius* to note: left the wide platform-like stem base, present in many species of *Phlegmaceum*, and right the purple flesh visible where the cap has been eaten (by slugs or mice, maybe?). This colour extends all through the cap and stem, giving rise to its common name of Blueleg. (BW)

On that note, I'll conclude – difficult to follow something as impressive as this *Cortinarius*. A word about the possibly surprising number (over 30) which were new to the site today – some of them quite common things. As far as I know I'm the only person to have recorded fungi at Kings Wood, having discovered this site with its potential for fungi in 2004. The species total for the wood in our BFG database was (before today) 215, all entered by me over the intervening years. In that time my visits here were mainly focussed upon those mycorrhizal species which most interest me and in which I tend to specialise, other things being recorded in passing. Thus the many gaps and the reason why I was keen for the group to visit today. So we've now pushed the overall list up to 284 and it's clear that in a 'good' year that number would rocket up further. Don't be surprised to see Kings Wood in our programme in future!

Thanks for coming, everyone, and thanks particularly to our brilliant photographers today (this meant I didn't get my camera out once!).

Photographers: BW = Barry Webb, CVS = Claudi Soler; PC = Penny Cullington; RW = Roger Wilding.