

FUNGI WALK at HODGEMOOR WOOD, October 8th 2025

Penny Cullington

This was a midweek walk, normally 10 strong but with 17 of us today, and I was very grateful for the expertise supplied by last minute guests Geoffrey Kibby and Mario Tortelli to support myself plus Claudi Soler and Jesper Launder – quite a team! This was just as well because as it turned out we were all kept very busy with an array of interesting things and our longest list for the season so far. It was no surprise that we didn't make it back to the car park till 2.30! I'd decided beforehand on a change from our normal route to cover an area not previously visited by the group though known to both Jesper and myself from our separate previous experiences here. Having experts in both *Russula* and *Cortinarius* with us and knowing that Beechwoods were now performing well, I was hopeful that this area of mature Beeches would produce the goods. It did!

We found several different collections of *Russula grisea* (False Charcoalburner), not always an easy one to recognise but when with beautifully violaceous pink shades, even under the cuticle when peeled back, 'bleeding' slightly onto the gill edge near the margin and faintly on the stem, it was unmistakable. The firm stem flesh together with salmon reaction when rubbed with an FE crystal provided the bolts and braces. All these features are showing nicely here.

Right: *Russula grisea* (SJE) with RH insert (JL)



A nice little cluster of attractive and delicate Inkcaps was found in the pathside litter. *Parasola leioccephala* (Bald Inkcup) is perhaps the commonest of a group of very similar species which luckily don't 'deliquesce' (dissolve into an inky puddle in your pot before you get it home). This is just as well because they always need a scope to name to species.

Left: *Parasola leioccephala* (TK)

The only other Inkcup we saw was very different in appearance and definitely of the deliquescing kind! *Coprinopsis picacea* (Magpie Inkcup) is one of the largest, certainly the tallest, species but fortunately is instantly recognisable in the field from its 'black and white' cap

markings once mature, though early on it has a fluffy coating of veil as do many other Inkcaps. If in doubt, have a sniff – it has a revolting smell!

Left: *Coprinopsis picacea* (LD)



Honey Fungus was just beginning to make its presence felt with some photogenic clumps of young material on show. Two different species were here: the common *Armillaria mellea* (Honey Fungus) and the much less common *A. ostoyae* (Dark Honey Fungus). Both species have a ring on the stem when mature, though the material we saw was not sufficiently developed for this to have broken away from the cap margin, but I managed to find one example. Note here the dark spots on the ring, also the dark scaly cap surface which separates *A. ostoyae* from the commoner species. Incidentally it was unusual to see *A. mellea* appearing quite as yellow as this!

Below: *Armillaria mellea* (JL), and right: *Armillaria ostoyae* (PC)



We found several different species of Milkcap, some common, some quite rare. One of the most



attractive we was *Lactarius torminosus* (Woolly Milkcap) which was really living up to its English name. It is host specific to Birch and characteristically starts life tightly inrolled (like a species of Rollrim) but the pink colour, furry surface – really wispy at first, and of course the leaking milk when the gills are damaged are diagnostic. Incidentally there is another very similar Birch associate – *Lactarius pubescens* (Bearded Milkcap) which is probably more common but is a much paler creamier pink – not seen today.

Left: *Lactarius torminosus* (SJE)

Another eye-catcher was *Stropharia caerulea* (Blue Roundhead) which regularly frequents grassy path edges but here was found in woody litter. This was a particularly striking specimen though it is often much more faded with yellow tints particularly if in more open surroundings. In fact today it was looking suspiciously like the rather uncommon *S. aeruginosa* (Verdigris Roundhead) – a species often misrecorded for *S. caerulea* unless checked microscopically, but Bob confirmed today's ID for us later.

Right: *Stropharia caerulea* (LD)





One find which I missed out on was a large and rare species of Mushroom. ***Agaricus lanipes*** (The Princess) had been found at this site in 2021 by Jesper, new to the county, so he was particularly delighted that it should show up again today. A genuine rarity, it is one of the chunky scaly brown capped Mushrooms and unusually stains both pink when damaged above and yellow at the stem base (though sadly today's specimen was too dry and far gone to show the yellow). It also has the sweet aniseed smell common to quite a few in this genus.

Left: ***Agaricus lanipes*** (GK)

sprouting out of the ground near a large Beech. Geoffrey explained that though quite similar to a few other sticky capped members of this genus, it is alone in sometimes fruiting apparently in soil, ie not in contact with a trunk, exactly as it was doing here (presumably on submerged roots). If occurring as others do at the trunk base, usually Beech or Oak, the regularly spaced dark scales help to separate it but often a scope is need to confirm.

Right: ***Pholiota jahnii*** (MT)



Two brackets now, one very common and the other a rarity. This impressive example of ***Fomitopsis betulina*** (Birch Bracket) was a good 20 cms across - that's the common one! However, the *Ganoderma* spotted at the base of a living Hornbeam is far from common and was the cause of much discussion. The shiny lacquered reddish surface quickly eliminated the common *G. adpersum* and *G. applanatum*, leaving the debate between the unusual *G. resinaceum* or the much rarer ***G. lucidum***. The distinct stem visible here together with the fact that we had a sequenced collection of *G. lucidum* from Gt. Missenden fairly recently which was found at the base of living Hornbeam, points to this species. So a sample will again be sequenced though this is a known complex of species still to be resolved, hence we'll record it as *cf. lucidum*.

Below: ***Fomitopsis betulina*** (PC), and right: ***Ganoderma cf. lucidum*** (SJE)





Several boletes having red pores but well past their sell-by date were handed to us, only to be discarded. However, eventually a nice example was found and identified by Geoffrey as *Neoboletus xanthopus* (no English name). He explained that the pointers to separate it from other look-alikes were the red pores fading to orange then yellow towards the margin and the rather pale stem, lacking a network or much in the way of red floccules. The striking instantly blueing flesh when exposed to air brought about a few suitable gasps from the newer members today! This is another of today's collections dried for sequencing.

Left: *Neoboletus xanthopus* (SJE)

The day before I'd come across an attractive and quite uncommon little mushroom in a similar Beechwood and had brought it to show people before we set out today. We found it again this morning – no surprise there. I've given up counting the number of times I get reports of a species from one place, only for it to turn up simultaneously elsewhere – fungal telepathy or what?! Anyway, *Leratiomyces squamosus* (Slender Roundhead) was until fairly recently in genus *Stropharia* (along with the beautiful blue-green *S. caerulea* featured above) having greyish gill colour and a ring on the stem (which turns dark from the deposit of ripe spores). However, this is no eye-catcher, a delicate species and easily missed, it is uncommon but seems to favour our Chiltern Beech woodland floor. Its pale ochre brown cap is marked with concentric flakes of white veil, and the grey gills when mature together with stem having faint floccose belts below the ring are all good character to look for.

Right: *Leratiomyces squamosus* (SJE)



In contrast, a chunky species of *Cortinarius* (Webcap) was found, one belonging to Section *Telamonia* though its large size and distinctive silvery violet colours eliminating all but a couple of contenders. Though at the time

Geoffrey put his money on *C. acutispissipes* (Tapering Webcap) largely based on his experience that most collections with this appearance are this species (which is apparently much more common than realised), I'm going to stick my neck out for *Cortinarius alboviolaceus* (Pearly Webcap) which favours Beechwoods and lacks a tapering stem base, also I had the advantage of comparing the spore size later which was a better fit for this species. Furthermore I now find that we had a collection from this site last year that was confirmed with sequencing.



Left: *Cortinarius cf. alboviolaceus* (BS)



A second *Cortinarius* collection was also of particular interest, this one belonging to Section *Phlegmaceum* (ie having a sticky cap but dry stem). There was much debate in the field, then serious research later by Jesper with further email discussion, resulting in the possible name ***Cortinarius daulnoyae*** (no English name) – a rare species with possibly only one or two UK records though also found by Jesper last year (also under Hornbeam) near Burnham Beeches. Jesper returned to Hodgemoor the day after our visit and found young material which showed the all important white veil (visible attached to the cap margin in the insert here) which fits

further with his ID now supported by Geoffrey and Mario. Yet another one for sequencing!

Left: *Cortinarius cf. daulnoyae* (cvs) with insert (JL)



Now the pièce de résistance! I was secretly hoping that a rare species of *Russula* I'd found here in 2009 might turn up today – it would be perfect timing with Geoffrey and Mario working on the finishing touches for their long awaited monograph on the genus. As we approached the spot - I remember it well, it was an exciting find – I couldn't resist mentioning it, and a few moments later one of our new members handed in this beautiful yellow *Russula* which, with a grin on my face, I silently handed on to Geoffrey. '***Russula solaris***!' he said – music to my ears! Not one but eventually 7 beauties were found here, making the perfect photo for the book. This species (Sunny Brittlegill) is a beautiful egg yellow with a darker central zone, pale cream gills and a white somewhat fragile stem. A rare species which is host specific to Beech, we do have 5 known county sites since my initial find here so it clearly favours our calcareous Chiltern beechwoods, but to find more than one or two together like this was just spectacular – Geoffrey's word! I have a feeling his lovely photo will be in the new book.....



Above: *Russula solaris* (GK)

What a morning we had! Our list of 114 species includes 10 new to this well recorded site, with several real rarities found. Hodgemoor is certainly up there amongst the best woodlands in the area for fungi and seldom disappoints, but today was possibly our most rewarding visit here. Thank you all for coming and making it so special; thank you to our team of experts for their invaluable input, it was an unexpected bonus to be joined by Geoffrey and Mario which was much appreciated by all; thank you to all the photographers who've made this report possible. For more details of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers

BS = Bob Simpson; CVS = Claudi Soler; GK = Geoffrey Kibby; JL = Jesper Launder; LD = Lyn Day; MT = Mario Tortelli;
PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon; SK = Sally Knight; TK = Tony Knight



Our team of leaders at work under the beeches (SJE)