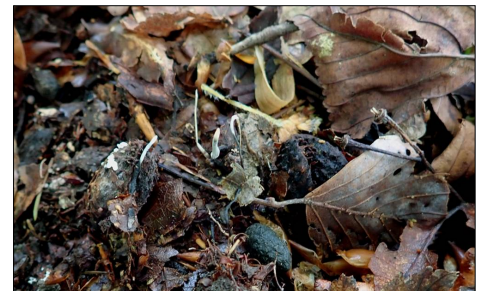


## FUNGI WALK at HODGEMOOR WOOD, April 26th 2025

Penny Cullington

This was our first outing of the year and was well supported and in fact fully booked within 24 hours, so we were 20 strong and blessed with a fine morning with the woodland looking its springtime pristine best. The air was not only filled with birdsong but also subtly scented with bluebells and although fungi were not surprisingly fairly scarce – particularly those of the gilled variety – there seemed to be plenty to keep everyone entertained. This being our first springtime visit here we were not sure what to expect, especially considering the recent dry warm conditions which have clearly been unfavourable for fungal activity – evident from the dearth of entries so far this year on our Members' Finds webpage. But Hodgemoor is one of our best recorded woodlands – our database reveals that we have an incredible 800 different species listed, 20 of which are myxomycetes – so there was a good chance that we'd find at least a smattering today and we even managed to add a few new names which is something of an achievement here!

We started the list off with a few predictable 'bums on seats' (ie species which one can pretty well count on being present in woodland at this time: *Uromyces ficariae* (Bitter Chocolate Rust) - which grows on the fresh leaves of *Ficaria verna* (Lesser Celandine) – sorry, no photo of this one. On the edge of the car park we found two ascomycetes which occur commonly at the base of dead stems of *Urtica dioica* (Nettle): ***Leptosphaeria acuta*** (Nettle Rash) and ***Calloria urticae*** (Nettle Pox) – this last more familiar by its previous species epithet '*neglecta*' (I only picked up on this recent name change when checking before writing here). Soon after this some fossicking around in the beechmast revealed several examples of ***Xylaria carpophila*** (Beechmast Candlesnuff) – a diminutive relative of the very familiar *X. hypoxylon* (Candlesnuff) which, however, fruits commonly on fallen deciduous wood later in the year. This tiny species, only occurs in spring on last year's fallen Beech cupules.



Above, from L to R: ***Leptosphaeria acuta***, ***Calloria urticae*** (both species well under 1mm across) (BW), and ***Hypoxylon carpophila*** (little black spikes with whitish tips arising from Beech cupules) (PC)

Below: ***Trametes versicolor*** (LS)

As we continued round, focusing on turning logs and uncovering damp litter, a selection of corticioids, slime moulds, little discos, brackets etc were found – some nameable in the field, some not as is often the case. Very often even working on specimens to name them at home proves impossible because success usually depends upon finding spores, and for that one needs fresh and active fungal growth. Many of the things we found were too dry and/or inactive at this time of year, rendering





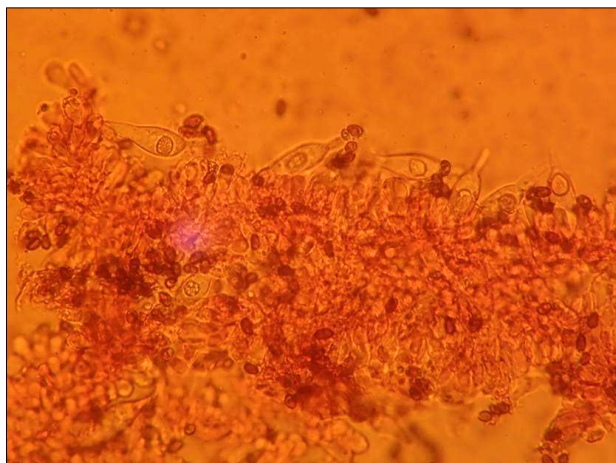
microscopic identification hopeless – very frustrating. One that was easily identifiable in the field, however, was an attractive cluster of brackets on a fallen Birch trunk which was much admired: ***Trametes versicolor*** (Turkeytail) is one of our commonest bracket species, both its Latin epithet and English name describing it well, but today's example showed a remarkably striking blue colour range in its zoning.



It was beginning to look as if no gilled mushrooms would be found until searching amongst woody debris revealed this tiny example of *Crepidotus* on a piece of twig! No more than a few mm across, the seashell shape and lack of stem together with its white colour eliminated everything except for this genus or possibly *Clitopilus hobsonii* (Miller's Oysterling). The spores Derek was able to find at home later left no doubt that this was ***Crepidotus cesatii*** (Roundspored Oysterling) one of our commonest members of the genus and regularly found on deciduous woody debris though mostly in autumn.

Left: *Crepidotus cesatii*, our first proper mushroom today. (LD)

More mushrooms soon followed, this time a loose cluster of brownish medium sized fungi found on fallen rotting Beech which looked to me like *Psathyrella piluliformis* (Common Stump Brittlemat). Luckily, as I suspected I was going to be short of interesting photos for this report, though this was a common species I decided to get the camera out and went back to the spot in order to take an 'in situ' snap. Good thing I did because it turned out to be the most interesting find of the day – for me anyway. At home I found the spores too big for *P. piluliformis*, also the cystidia on the gill were not the right shape. So out came the key (this is a large genus one can't think of attempting without recourse to the necessary detailed literature) and I set to work. At first I went sailing passed the correct answer because I could see no sign of the key feature mentioned which was that it has cystidia with 'oily inclusions' (ie blobs) visible in their centre. I then turned to some different literature which suggested that these blobs were best viewed in the stain Congo Red, but I'd been viewing in ammonia. Bingo! Congo Red revealed the oily blobs with no difficulty and as they seemed to be a unique feature and all other features also fitted nicely I'm confident of my ID of ***Psathyrella gossypina***, recently moved to genus *Typhrasa*. This is new to the Hodgemoor list and we have just two previous county records, one identified by Tom Herring, a *Psathyrella* specialist, and the other unidentified by us but subsequently named for us through DNA sequencing.



Above: *Typhrasa gossypina*, our most unusual find today. The micro-view, x 400 in Congo Red, shows a line of several cystidia along the gill edge (looking a bit like skittles) having the diagnostic large oil droplets within. (The small darker brown oval shapes are the spores.) (PC)



A further mushroom was spotted on woody debris, this being a species of *Mycena* (Bonnet) recognisable from its general 'jizz', ie size, shape, delicate stance and white gills. I first nicked the stem with a knife to see if the 'juice' within was white, which would have made for a quick field ID of *M. galopus* (Milking Bonnet) (and interestingly when Derek saw the specimen later he also suspected it might be that) but the resulting juice was colourless thus eliminating that species. At home the microscopic features together with the copious colourless juice matched ***Mycena abramsii*** (no English name) – not that common but we have plenty of records though only a few early in the year like this. Can you spot the second immature specimen adjoined at the stem base which we didn't notice until the collection was made? The furry stem base is a feature quite often found in this genus.



Right: *Mycena abramsii* found today (PC)

Nearby at the base of a stump a pyrenomycete asco was noticed, showing both the early and later stages of development. ***Kretzschmaria deusta*** (Brittle Cinder) is notable not just for its six consecutive central consonants(!) but because it appears so entirely different depending on its stage of development. The grey bumpy surface with white rim appears first, then it gradually hardens and blackens becoming crusty and brittle, hence its English name. (I'm including a snap of this later stage - not taken today - as a comparison with Linda's photo of the fresh material taken in situ today.



Above: *Kretzschmaria deusta* - left today (LS), and right, fully mature from Turville Heath in 2024 (PC)  
Below right: *Lachnum mollissimum*, another tiny disco found on an old nettle stem (BW)

Just a few more photos to share with you, the first of which we had no idea of in the field though it looked temptingly distinctive: some fluffy white but tiny discos found on a dead nettle stem. It was not until I received Barry's beautiful photo that I tried searching through some images and luckily chanced upon it, whereupon the name rang a bell and I found a matching photo of Barry's from a collection in Dancersend in 2022, also on a nettle stem. *Lachnum mollissimum* (no English name and in some texts with genus name *Trichopeziza*) is actually a small cup fungus though the cup here is entirely covered with this unique hairy surface. It can apparently also be bright





yellow and fruits on old umbellifer stems in spring but most commonly on nettle. This was another species new to Hodgemoor today.

When Barry is out with us we are fortunate in benefiting from some of his skilled photos of slime moulds as well as of other tiny fungi. Here are a couple of slime mould examples found today.



Above left: cf. *Didymium squamulosum* on a fallen dead leaf; right: *Metatrichia floriformis* on rotten wood. (BW)

Similarly when Claudi is out with us we benefit from his particular skill at identifying corticioids (white splodges on wood), many of which look remarkably similar but have fascinating microscopic features (if you have the skill and patience to find them!). Here are a couple of his corticioid examples to illustrate the point, both of which were new to Hodgemoor today:



Above left: *Botryobasidium subcoronatum* on rotten fallen Cherry (together with a few grey cups of *Mollisia cf. cinera*); right: *Sistotrema brinkmannii* on decayed Beech. (CVS)



Just when I'd given up all hope of us finding *Calocybe gambosa* (St. George's Mushroom) today I spotted it in a grassy pathside verge - its favourite haunt. This pale species is so well named because it seems to be able to check the calendar and pops up regularly on or around St. George's Day.

Left: *Calocybe gambosa*, our final entry on the list. (PC)

Thanks to everyone for coming – we had a very happy and enjoyable morning with valuable contributions made by all. Considering the unfavourably dry conditions our list of 46 species was encouraging and we contributed 6 new names to the over all list for the site. For more details of what we found see the separate complete list. As always, special thanks to the photographers are due; without their contributions this report would be far less useful as a record and memory jogger. Hope to see you all again soon!



Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CVS = Claudi Soler; LD = Lyn Day; LS = Linda Seward; PC = Penny Cullington



A typical scene this morning at Hodgemoor Wood. (LS)