

FUNGI WALK at PULLINGSHILL WOOD, October 1st 2025

Penny Cullington

Today's group of 13 comprised a good mix of the very experienced, regulars and beginners (actually the norm for our walks!) but it was a morning of surprisingly special fungi which excited our leaders – myself with Mario Tortelli, Claudi Soler and Jesper Launder – but as a result was possibly somewhat daunting for the newer members of the group. We kicked off with an interesting *Russula* (Brittlegill) which I'd spotted in the roadside verge opposite our parking spot, clearly one of the group of Brittlegills affectionally known as 'the smellies'. A fairly nondescript palish brown species – as are several others in this group – but one redeeming feature was soon spotted by Mario: it naturally develops tiny dark red markings at the stem base (see insert). ***R. recondita*** – previously *R. praetervisa* (Bypassed Brittlegill) is not that common and we have just 4 previous county records, all from under Oak as here. So this was a nice start to our morning, soon to be put in the shade when the next excitement was discovered!



Right: *Russula recondita* (MT)



I'd visited this site a week earlier as it often produces good things early in the season, and had checked out the small triangular area of Beech and Oak formed by roads just where we park and with a reputation for special species. On the southern tip I'd found some boletus 'buttons' (undeveloped mushrooms) which looked to me (and to Jesper later) to be a species of

Rubroboletus, possibly the rare *R. legaliae* (Bilious Bolete). I had my fingers crossed that these would have fully developed for today's walk but was disappointed to find them still as buttons. However, at that moment a few feet away I heard 'Is this what you're looking for?' What Lisa Dodd had found far exceeded my expectations! Here was a perfect specimen of ***Rubroboletus rhodoxanthus*** (Ruddy Bolete), a species none of us had ever seen except for Mario who recalled seeing it once in France. There are just 2 UK records in FRDBI (the national database), 1 from N. Ireland in 2007 and 1 from Norfolk in 2022 (though it's doubtful if either would have been authenticated with sequencing). The latest Red Data List online includes this species in the category 'Not Evaluated' due to lack of authenticated material, so this is clearly a very significant find. What a thrill! Material is drying ready for DNA sequencing before sending up to the fungarium at RBG Kew.

Left: *Rubroboletus rhodoxanthus* (MT)



Close by was yet another interesting bolete which after discussion it was decided could well be *Suillellus mendax* (no English name). There do not appear to be any UK records for this one which as I write is also on the drier ready for sequencing!

Right: *Suillellus mendax* – awaiting sequencing to confirm (JL)

Things then started to calm down a little as we set off to explore the Beech dominated roadside ditch where several rare and interesting mycorrhizal species have been found in recent years. The list soon started to grow with some predictable common species but a few nice things



were found. A pink *Russula* (Brittle Gill) I'd found here the previous week but had failed to get a satisfactory name for was luckily fruiting again. This time Claudi took it to work on and now feels confident that it is *Russula maculata* (no English name). It has one of the darkest orange spore prints in the genus belying the gill colour seen here. A rare species, this would probably be the first sequenced British collection.

Left: *Russula maculata*, also awaiting sequencing (CVS)

Always a good spot for the genus *Cortinarius* (Webcap), here we found *C. turgidus* (Swollen Webcap) and *C. infractus* (Bitter Webcap), followed soon after by *C. bergeronii* (Chalky Webcap). The mature collection shown here was actually found by me an hour earlier up the road at Marlow Common but then this stunning immature singleton (see insert) turned up here. Note the cortina (meshlike web for which the genus is named), also on the yellow cap the red stain made by KOH (potassium hydroxide) which helps to identify this rare and beautiful species. The cap colour fades to tan with age.

Right: *Cortinarius bergeronii* (PC)

The genus *Amanita* also featured this morning with 6 species recorded. Notable was this collection of *A. pantherina* (Panthercap) showing off its regularly spaced pure white spots of 'veil' which help to separate it from the much more common *A. excelsa* var. *spissa* with which it



is regularly confused. We checked another useful pointer to separate these two species: the upper surface of the stem ring is smooth in *A. pantherina* but distinctly striate (marked with tiny vertical lines) in the commoner species, as also is the stem above the ring. Incidentally we saw both species again during the morning and were able to demonstrate this feature.

Left: *Amanita pantherina* (CVS)

Another *Amanita* which featured was ***A. phalloides*** (Deathcap) which we reckon to find here pretty regularly. Several separate collections were made, the best shown here with good examples of the cap colour and volva, both features which are important for identification. We also came across an example of *A. citrina* (False Deathcap) which was looking suspiciously similar and also was lacking much of its characteristic and diagnostic smell of potato peelings – one of the safest ways to separate it from the genuine Deathcap which has a sickly honey smell. There are other differences to help, one being the shape of the volva, but the similarity between the two was quite marked and *A. phalloides* can be very pale and sometimes similar in colour to *A. citrina*.



Right: *Amanita phalloides* (PC)



Amongst our list of 11 *Russula* species found this morning was one which is not easy to recognise in the field. ***Russula romellii*** (no English name) is one of the larger quite chunky species but the cap colour is renowned for being amazingly varied, with shades of pink, red, violet, purple, green or even yellow, or any combination! Today's singleton seems to illustrate this with maybe the exception of yellow! One redeeming feature which helps is the clearly ochre yellow gill colour which deepens with maturity as the dark orange spores coat the side of the gills. It shares with *R. maculata* shown above one of the darkest spore prints in the genus - not a common species and new to the site today.

Left: *Russula romellii* (PC)

Right below: *Lactarius pallidus* (CVS), and underneath: *Hebeloma sinapizans* (MT)

A genus which tends to be overlooked in these reports is *Hebeloma* (Poisonpie), one of several mycorrhizal genera we often encounter and usually not that hard to place to genus in the field if you know to check for the sharp radish smell (present in many but not all species), the sticky cap surface, usually dull buff to brownish cap colours with beige gills and white stem. However, that's where the easy bit ends! This genus, along with *Entoloma* and *Inocybe*, possibly also

Conocybe and *Galerina*, is not for the faint-hearted and naming to species cannot be attempted without the use of a scope and a complicated specialist key! At home they tend to get left to the bottom of the pile to work through (and with any luck will have gone off well past their sell-by date by the time their turn comes!). Today we came across the unusual sight of a partial ring of *Hebeloma* under Beech, around 20 to 30 caps forming a crescent. To begin with, having just picked up ***Lactarius pallidus*** a few feet away and tested the gills for the



exuding telltale 'milk', I mistakenly assumed that this crescent was more of the same – they were very similar in colour. Setting up a photo to show all the features I then noticed that the gills of these mushrooms, though not unlike the *Lactarius* in colour, were clearly not those of a *Lactarius*. This just goes to show how careful one needs to be to avoid making assumptions and forming mixed collections. It is not unusual for unrelated species to grow really close together. Danger averted, the photo was taken and the material collected and identified later as *Hebeloma*



sinapizans (Bitter Poisonpie) – not at all rare but quite unusual to see in these concentrated numbers and obviously growing along the same submerged Beech root.

Barry, looking for tiny things (though he found not a single slime mould here today), noticed this poor shield bug sadly afflicted by a fungus. Some internet research later revealed the fungus to be *Beauveria bassiana* (no English name), new to the county with around 60 records in FRDBI.

Left: the gruesome *Beauveria bassiana* (BW)

Last but by no means least was another exciting find made by Claudi. This was yet another bolete which caused much discussion, two stunning specimens with midbrown caps and bright yellow pores which, unlike the majority of boletes having yellow pores, didn't stain blue when pressed. One by one the possible contenders were eliminated for one reason or another, ending up with a choice between



Butyriboletus fechtneri (Pale Bolete) and *B. fuscoroseus* (previously *pseudoregius*, the Pretender), both with just one record in FRDBI. The jury is still out and the name will probably not be resolved until the material is sequenced.

Above: *Butyriboletus* aff. *fechtneri* / *fuscoroseus* – to be sequenced (CVS)

So this was a remarkably successful morning but, unlike some attendees who were expecting it to be really dried up and unproductive here, I was not that surprised having visited a very similar Chiltern Beechwood a couple of days before where I was amazed by the fungal abundance. However, the quality and rarity of the boletes we found was indeed staggering and I was so grateful that Mario and Jesper were at hand, both far more knowledgeable than I in this department. My apologies that the leaders were of necessity somewhat preoccupied with these rarities and hope that everyone got something out of the morning. We recorded 85 species in all with roughly 20 new to the site though the group has not visited that often. I reckon we'll be back next year though! Thank you all for coming; a special thank you to Mario, Jesper and Claudi for helping me out; thank you also for the photos. For more detail of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb.; CVS = Claudi Soler; JL = Jesper Launder; MT = Mario Tortelli; PC = Penny Cullington

Below are some beautiful photos of Barry's just received to share with you:

***Mycoacia nothofagi* (a species of Crust)**



***Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop Bonnet)**



***Mucidula mucida* (Porcelain Fungus)**



Chromellosporium carneum, found by Sarah – apparently the anamorph (asexual) stage of a species of *Peziza* (Cup Fungus)

