

FUNGI WALK at STOKE COMMON, May 20th 2025

Penny Cullington

Our party of 14 met up for our final spring outing today, and it was not until I read through the report for our only previous springtime walk here that I discovered it was two years ago to the day! Conditions were very different, however, with wellies needed then – much of this site spends many of the winter months under water – but certainly not required today. It was warm and dry, in fact remarkably dry though we've had some rain recently but we doubted if there'd been enough to encourage much fungal activity. Much to our surprise, however, we started turning up a smattering of gilled fungi and this pattern continued through the morning though our walk at nearby Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens two weeks earlier had produced a list dominated by ascos and with hardly a gill in sight. My previous report (May 20th 2023) comments on some interesting early fruiting of a few mycorrhizal species here (though we'd all forgotten this fact!) and that trend was repeated today with not only a *Lactarius*, two different *Amanitas*, a Bolete and even a *Russula* and an *Inocybe* turning up.

Our singleton *Lactarius helvus* (Fenugreek Milkcap) is a regular autumn fruiter at this site though the earliest it's been recorded here prior to today is September and the only other county site for it is Burnham Beeches, reflecting its preference for acid sandy soil with plenty of Birch and Pine. It did display its curry smell for us today but as usual there was virtually no evidence of 'milk' which in any case is confusingly completely colourless in this species and often you're lucky to persuade it to produce even a single watery droplet!

Right: a surprisingly early fruiting of *Lactarius helvus* (cvs)



Closely related to *Lactarius* is the genus *Russula*, and right at the end of the morning just after we'd commented 'All we need now is a *Russula*' one was spotted in the middle of the path definitely in danger of been trodden on! It was only a 'button', ie undeveloped,

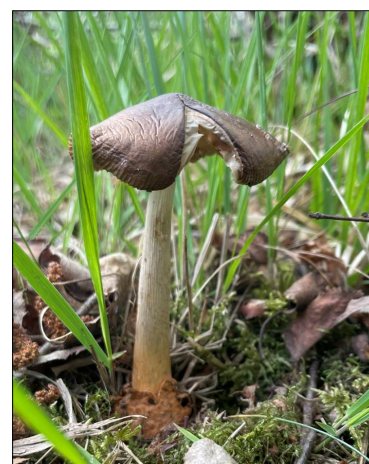


but still clearly primrose yellow with cream gills and white stem, needing only the presence of a nearby Birch to confirm it as *R. claroflava* (Yellow Swamp Brittlegill), another regular at this site. It is host specific to Birch and favours damp areas, and we were able to name it straight away with just a quick check that it wasn't the much commoner *R. ochroleuca* with a drop of KOH failing to turn bright red on the cap centre or stem base. Was this our earliest ever *Russula*? No, we found this same species here two years ago as well!

Left: *Russula claroflava* showing its typical primrose yellow cap (PC)

Our two *Amanitas*? A rather desiccated but still recognisable *A. fulva* (Tawny Grisette) - another Birch lover though not quite our earliest record today as we found it at nearby Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens on May 19th 2023! Also a fresh *A. rubescens* (Blusher), also on our previous May 20th list when it was our earliest record.

Right: *Amanita rubescens* (PC) and far right: *Amanita fulva* (SJE) – not the greatest examples but included here just for the record.....



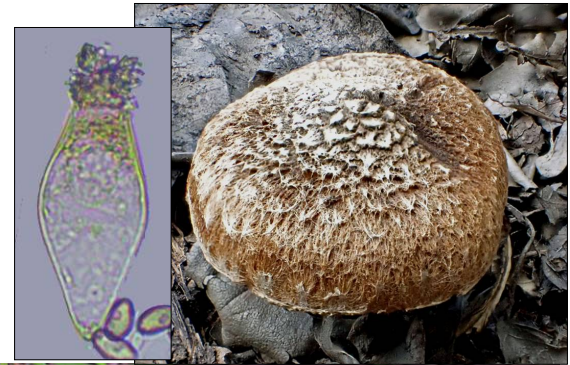


Jesper spotted and quickly identified *Xerocomellus chrysenteron* (Red Cracking Bolete) under Pine and Oak whilst detouring along the road verge to avoid the mire. This is our earliest county record for the species by a couple of months (though last year's list here includes *Imleria badia* (Bay Bolete)).

Left: *Xerocomellus chrysenteron* (JL)

Our most prolific mycorrhizal mushroom by a long way, in fact the only fungus which kept turning up today,

was *Inocybe lacera* (Torn Fibrecap). This came as no surprise to me, however, because though we find it rarely elsewhere in the county the species is really common here, favouring the acid sandy conditions, and when surveying this site for the owners, City of London Corporation, in 2010 I recorded it every month through from May to November. The epithet 'lacera' refers to the lacerated cap surface (see RH insert) which quickly develops, and a further field character we noted today was the stem which when rubbed turns quickly dark brown, but otherwise this is a fairly typical LBJ needing microscopic data to name to species – it just happens that I'm confident recognising it in the field for obvious reasons. Having said that, however, we are going to have a sample sequenced because within this species complex is one named *I. pluppiana* which was proven new to the UK with sequencing from this site a few years back (though to all intents and purposes it's virtually identical to *I. lacera* s.s.!).



Right: a collection of *Inocybe lacera* (cvs) with cap detail insert top right (NF) and a single cystidium from the gill edge x 1000, typical of this genus top left (BS)



Just a few more things of interest to report, then I'll add more photos at the end. Sarah and Stephen were determined to find a simply minute cup fungus which occurs at the base of bracken stems and having checked around 50 stems during the morning they eventually struck lucky! *Micropodia pteridina* (Bracken Swarmer) is a species Stephen had long wanted to see and in fact told Sarah about last week, who promptly went out and found it on the first stem she checked just outside her garden gate in Naphill! (See the entry in Members' Finds.) So the challenge was on today, and having Barry at hand was a real bonus because we now have an amazing photo – remember, this tiny white asco is no more than 0.2 mm (n.b. not cm) across and barely visible to the naked eye! There appear to be no comparable images available on line. Not surprisingly this fungus is new to the site.



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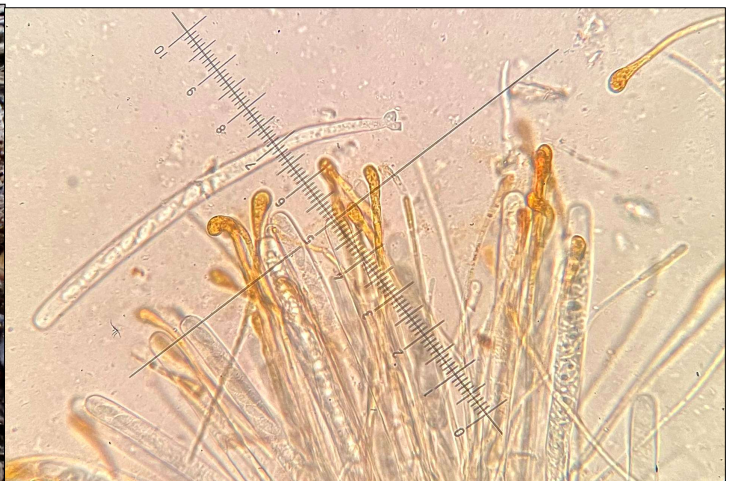
Left: the exquisite and miniscule *Micropodia pteridina* found by Sarah on a Bracken stem base (BW)

Towards the end of the morning Bob extracted a soggy (smelly) Oak log from the mire area which was liberally covered with some pale grey discs looking similar to the genus *Mollisia* – one we often shy away from working on as there are numerous lookalike species and no very satisfactory key. However, Sarah bravely took on the challenge because like me she suspected the jizz was slightly different, eventually after much research coming up with the name *Haglundia perelegans*, only to discover that it is now moved to genus *Mollisia* as *M. olivascens*. Worth the effort, though, because it appears to be new to the county though not a real rarity.



Above: *Mollisia olivascens* found in the mire. (NF)

The most exciting find of the day was made by David soon after I'd been telling everyone to look out for a small orange cup fungus (like a tiny Orange Peel Fungus) which was discovered at this site in 2010 new to the UK and apparently with no records since then apart from the very few made here. *Aleuria congrex* (no English name) forms tight clusters and seems to favour the open areas of soggy mossy vegetation though today's find was thought by David to be on well rotted dung of some sort. It appears to be genuinely rare in Europe and was described originally from a find in sandy soil which also tallies with this site. Sarah worked long and hard checking the identification because information is not easy to come by apart from Brian Spooner's article in the magazine *Field Mycology* when he identified and wrote up our original collection, including a key to the few species in genus *Aleuria* of which only the common *A. aurantia* is covered in standard reference books. We hope to get a sequence from today's material which will be the first DNA proven UK specimen and will go to the Fungarium at RBG Kew.



Top and bottom left: the rare and special *Aleuria congrex* which we were delighted to find today – our target species. Top right the asci and orange tipped paraphyses x 400, and bottom right the remarkable ornamented spores x 1000. (all SJE apart from top right NF)

So our list of 45 species tops that from May 2023 though still not a huge number, but that's to be expected at this time. This number may well increase when further IDs are made either with a scope or with sequencing (now being undertaken by Jesper and Jackie for the group – an exciting new development!) Thank you all for your contributions, especially Jesper, Claudi and Sarah for their skilled and valued IDs afterwards, and especially to our faithful photographers. For more detail of what we found see the separate species list. See you all in the autumn!

Photographers

BS = Bob Simpson; BW = Barry Webb; CVS – Claudi Soler; JL = Jesper Launder; NF = Neil Fletcher;
PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon; SP = Stephen Plummer.



Above: two LBJs, left: *Entoloma conferendum* (Star Pinkgill); right: *Panaeolina foenicicii* (Brown Mottlegill) (JL)



Above left: *Pluteus salicinus* (Willow Shield) (CVS); right: *Hapalopilus rutilans* (Cinnamon Bracket) with purple reaction to KOH, new to the site today (SP)

Below: the stunning corticioid *Phlebia subochracea* (JL)



Below and new to the county today: the corticioid *Gyrophanopsis polonensis* with insert of the cystidia x 1000 (cvs)



Left: the tiny slime mould *Trichia crateriformis* with spore filled cups and fluffy orange elaters which help with spore dispersal (BW)

..... and finally a typical view of the group at Stoke Common today (SJE)

