

## FUNGI WALK at HODGEMOOR WOOD, September 26<sup>th</sup> 2021

Penny Cullington

Our walk today was again extremely well attended (30) and it was particularly pleasing to welcome a good number of new and young members to the group. Sadly the continuing dry conditions made it hard going to say the least, but with this number searching in a site well known for its variety of species we still managed to produce a list of just over 70 – our longest list so far this autumn.

Almost first on the list and one we kept on seeing throughout the morning – though so variable in size and colour that it continued to confuse the less experienced – was *Gymnopus fusipes* (Spindle Toughshank). Always a common species here, this is not the case in some woodlands, dependant as the species is on mature Oak which abounds here and (less often) Beech or other deciduous trees. It likes to form tight clusters at the trunk base with its rubbery rooting stems fusing together and tapering downwards. The fact that on occasion it sends up just one fruiting body instead of a cluster can add to the confusion because in this case its energies are all funnelled into forming the one extra large cap! I've included several photos here to illustrate some of its different guises.



Above, three examples of *Gymnopus fusipes*, left showing the widely spaced pale gills (taken today - JW), centre showing some large specimens with strongly tapering fused stems (from Burnham Beeches – PC), and right a tight cluster of smaller paler specimens (from Hodgemoor last year – PC).



We found six species of *Russula* (Brittlepill) today which at least served to demonstrate the amazing colour range of this beautiful genus - we saw bright red, yellow, green and purple caps. Only one was reasonably photogenic, *Russula nobilis* (Beechwood Sickener), and when in short supply - as this large genus (around 170 species) is at present – this is often the case, it being a favourite with many woodland creatures with few specimens remaining un-nibbled. The same was true of the only Amanitas we saw today: just two species and both specimens very damaged.

Left, *Russula nobilis*, our first brightly coloured Brittlepill found today (CW), and below right *Xerocomellus cisalpinus*, our only Bolete of the day. JW)

Just one member of the Bolete family turned up, *Xerocomellus cisalpinus* (Bluefoot Bolete) - this a singleton under Oak and not terribly typical with an elongated stem and small cap. However, it served to demonstrate the characteristic pores of this large and important family of mushrooms, also the strong and quick blueing which occurs on the pores and stem of this



particular species when handled, thus separating it from the several other look-alikes within this genus. Gone are the days of naming many of these *X. chrysenteron* (Red Cracked Bolete) and until recent times thought to be very common! Molecular sequencing has proven the genuine *chrysenteron* to be quite rare and predominantly under conifers.

On now to some bracket fungi seen today. Firstly we saw good numbers of *Fomitopsis betulina* (Birch Bracket) – very common wherever its host tree occurs. (This would be a good moment to add a note about Latin names which are constantly being updated since the introduction of DNA testing into the fungal kingdom, often to the consternation of the long suffering mycologist trying to memorise these sometimes daunting mouthfuls. If you have a small handbook you may well find a discrepancy over many names, particularly genus names, depending upon when your book was published. The species above is a good example and until a year or so ago was called *Piptoporus betulinus* – thankfully the common English names remain pretty constant!).



Above and right, two of today's examples of *Fomitopsis betulina* – the lowest view showing the fine-pored undersurface of the bracket seen on the left. (JW)

One sharp-eyed member spotted a beautiful bright red bracket away from the path on a living Oak, much admired by all today. This was *Fistulina hepatica* (Beefsteak Fungus), an impressive species most commonly found on Oak in early Autumn. In damp conditions it oozes bloodlike droplets making the common name even more descriptive. No droplets today of course, but I've included a nicely lurid specimen found last year in damper conditions at Pullingshill Wood!



Left, *Fistulina hepatica* found today (CW) and below on the next page the same species (unusually) growing on Oak roots rather than on a living trunk. PC.



Another much more unusual bracket was found, this one apparently new to the site – not a common occurrence as this is a well recorded woodland though we added 5 new species to the site’s overall list today. *Gloeophyllum sepiarium* (Conifer Mazegill) is a distinctive and common species of conifer plantations, increasing in number the further north you go in the country. It grows on fallen trunks and is one of the brackets differing from the majority by having not pores underneath (like the Birch Bracket featured above) but a more gill-like labyrinthine pattern – hence its common name.

Below, the unusual bracket *Gloeophyllum sepiarium*, top view on the left and maze-like underside on the right. (JC)



Continuing the brightly coloured theme, some vivid yellow tiny cups were found on a bare Oak log, this being *Bisporella sulfurina* (Sulphur Disco), an Ascomycete – one of the ‘spore-shooters’ and much less common than the very similar *B. citrina* (Lemon Disco) also found today. Each tiny cup is no more than 1mm across, it can be separated from *B. citrina* in the field by its smaller size, its brighter sulphur colour and its habit of growing in tight little clusters rather than in loose swarms.

Left, the tiny cups of *Bisporella sulfurina* (JL)

On old stumps several people found some tiny fungi having white caps with longish stems which looked as if they might be one of the many small white species of *Mycena* (Bonnet). On closer inspection, needing a x10 lens to be sure, one could see that the caps lacked gills (or pores) underneath because this is in fact another Ascomycete species: ***Cudoniella acicularis*** (Oak Pin). It frequents rotting deciduous stumps, most commonly Oak, getting only to about 3mm tall and often found in little groups as here.

Right, the miniscule Ascomycete *Cudoniella acicularis* masquerading as a small Bonnet-like mushroom. (BW)



We'll conclude with a few of Barry's Slime Mould photos taken today, as impressive as ever. If you would like to see the detail of these tiny organisms in the field you are advised to get a x 10 lens, readily available online – the naked eye just can't do them justice!

Thanks to everyone for coming – it was a good morning if somewhat frustrating for those of us who have seen this lovely woodland with fungi in full flow. Things can only get better as we progress through the autumn months – they surely can't get a lot worse anyway! Thanks also to the photographers on whom I was completely reliant today, taking not a single photo myself for obvious reasons! For more details of what we found, see the complete list which includes common names.

#### Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CW = Claire Williams; JC = John Catterson; JL = Justin Long;  
JW = Justin Warhurst; PC = Penny Cullington



Do you like your fairy loofahs pale grey or orange pink?! Above is *Arcyria cinerea* and right is *Arcyria denudata*. Both species start out as a white slimy pile (the plasmodium stage) but within a few hours can develop into these beautiful forms, often in large clusters. These sporangia (fruiting bodies) are less than 2 mm high. (BW)



Now from fairy loafahs to fairy pipecleaners! Here we have the mature tiny brown sparklers of *Stemonitis fusca*, the collection on the left under 1 mm tall, the collection below right about 1.5 mm tall. This species also starts off exactly like the *Arcyria* species, ie a white slimy pile. (BW)

See Barry's page in Members' Finds for a series of photos showing how this genus mutates from plasmodium to sporangia.

