

FUNGI WALK at RUSHMERE ESTATE on Sunday October 17th 2021

Penny Cullington

At last a walk with a decent list of species! We were a group of 16 comprising 11 members plus a handful from the Milton Keynes NHS, and the fact that we spent 15 minutes or so finding things under the Pines and Birch in the car park at the start was an encouraging sign. The site is a large one and very different from our Chiltern woodlands, being in the heart of the Greensand Ridge and straddling the Bucks / Beds border – originally acid heathland with areas of grassland mixed with conifer woodland with Pine and Spruce as well as deciduous woodland. We were led around by our treasurer Justin Long who'd kindly done a recce the day before to ascertain the best areas, and this certainly paid off.

Our last and only previous visit here was in 2014 when we recorded about 50 species – quite a few of them not on today's list and with a far smaller group of members. Today we totalled just over 100 species, about half of which appear to be new to the site – this probably reflecting the lack of previous recording here rather than anything else. Two species were new to the county, and one in particular brought back memories for Derek and me, having spent many hours struggling to identify the species when found in the Forest of Dean several years ago and new to us both. ***Chamaemyces fraxidus*** (Dewdrop Dapperling) is a pale cream mushroom related to the Lepiotas but with a sticky smooth cap, cream free crowded gills and a stem having a fugacious ring and below this a darker slightly scaly surface. An uncommon species, most records seem to be from deciduous woodland in the south west which ties in with the Forest of Dean where we subsequently recorded it several times after we first came across it.

Right, ***Chamaemyces fraxidus***, new to the county here today. (JW)



Near the car park another interesting species turned up, this one rather like an Oyster Mushroom having no stem but with rusty orange cap and gills and growing in tiers on fallen deciduous wood. I had found ***Tapinella panuoides*** (Oyster Rollrim) in Pullingshill Wood the previous day where it was also new to the site (see Members' Finds Jul-Dec dated Oct 16th) so recognised it instantly and was able to point out a key feature which it shares with *Paxillus involutus* (Brown Rollrim), another species we saw today. You can run a finger between the gills and cap flesh to separate them with ease – possibly surprisingly this is also a feature of all Boletes to which *Paxillus* is closely related despite having gills.

Several 'Lepiotoid' species are on our list ranging from the tiny white somewhat furry Mycenoid ***Cystolepiota seminuda*** (Bearded Dapperling) – today quite a common species alongside the road and which has a tendency for the stem to turn pinkish - to the considerably larger ***Macrolepiota procera*** (Parasol) which was fruiting in good numbers in the long grass today. (Incidentally the reason this species together with the Waxcaps and a few other things is omitted from the final list is because we discovered afterwards that the grassy area was entirely in Beds!) I was handed a slightly larger *Cystolepiota* from the roadside which at home keyed out to the much rarer ***C. adulterina***, one for which we have just a single previous county record. There were also good numbers of ***Lepiota oreadiformis*** in the same area, a species with only two previous county records. Of the smaller *Lepiota* species the very common *L. cristata* (Stinking Dapperling) was found (illustrated in Members' Finds Jul-Dec dated Oct 12th), also a singleton of ***Lepiota castanea*** (Chestnut Dapperling), decidedly more chestnut in colour and lacking the unpleasant smell of the commoner mainly white species.



A page of 'Lepiotoid' species seen today: top left to right: *Cystolepiota seminuda* (photo from elsewhere PC); *Cystolepiota adulterina* (photo from elsewhere PC); *Cystoderma amianthinum* (JL). Centre left to right: *Lepiota castanea* (BW) and *Melanophyllum haematospermum* (BW.) Bottom right: *Macrolepiota procera* (JL). Bottom left: *Lepiota oreadiformis* (JW)

One further related species we found was the attractive and quite common *Cystoderma amianthinum* (Earthy Powdercap), this being a grassland species though today found in a mossy glade amongst the Spruce. One last related species with a wow value turned up: *Melanophyllum haematospermum* (Redspored Dapperling) is not that common but an easy one to recognise having striking red gills and spores, also typically a very ragged edge to the cap.

Several species of interest were found with the Spruce, firstly *Ramaria abietina* – an unusual Coral with no common name and one known from just three other county sites, also the beautiful *Postia caesia* (Conifer Blueing Bracket) – quite common on stumps and fallen wood of conifers, lastly the eye catching *Russula queletii* – also with no common name, a Brittlegill which is host specific to Spruce.



Above, the unusual and beautiful *Ramaria abietina*, a species found with Spruce which tends to turn green (the photo taken here last year JL). Above right, *Postia caesia*, a smallish bracket which turns blue both above and below (JL). Right, *Russula queletii*, another Spruce species (the photo taken at nearby Waverley Park NJJ)



As is often the way on these walks, I was inundated with collections of *Mycena* (Bonnets), a few of which could be named in the field but many needing to be checked later. Barry Webb, recent winner of two prestigious international photography competitions, took these two stunning photos of common species, the tiny brown *Mycena leptocephala* (Nitrous Bonnet) being common in the litter today but seen unusually on wood here.



Left, *Mycena leptocephala* and above, typical immature *Mycena arcangeliana*. (BW)

In the grassland we found several Waxcaps though these are usually late season fruiters. The grass was long which made them hard to find and also to photograph.



Left, a typically blackening and conical *Hygrocybe conica* (JW) and above the charismatic *Hygrocybe psittacina* (JL), both species found just over the border in Beds today.

Boletes were few and far between in number today (and have been so far this season) though we did record several species, mostly singletons, including the genuine *Xerocomellus chrysenteron* under Pine. The highlight was no doubt finding the unusual *Pseudoboletus parasiticus* (Parasitic Bolete) – always a crowd pleaser and never very common. It is entirely dependant on its host fungus, *Scleroderma citrinum* (Common Earthball) and even where the Earthball occurs in large numbers the Bolete is in some years entirely absent.

Right, *Pseudoboletus parasiticus* growing on *Scleroderma citrinum* today. (Note the tiny 'buttons' in the centre which will develop into more fruitbodies surrounding the Earthball. (JW)



We had an excellent set of finders today resulting in an impressive species list and a very enjoyable morning. Hopefully our remaining walks further south will prove as rewarding but it's rather looking as if fruiting is going to remain limited and a bit disappointing. I really hope to be proved wrong! Thank you all for making the journey today, and particular thanks as always to our talented photographers. For more details of what we found see the complete list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; JL = Justin Long; JW = Justin Warhurst; NJJ =- Nick Jarvis; PC = Penny Cullington.