

## FUNGI WALK at IVINGHOE COMMON, ASHRIDGE on Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 2022

Penny Cullington

15 of us met up on a fine morning after a week with considerable and desperately needed rain. We were hopeful that at last there'd be some interesting things to find, the Chilterns having appeared almost devoid of fungi other than a few brackets for what seems like months! To whet our appetite we started off with a whopper in the car park spotted by Bob. This was a group of pale capped Boletes, the largest not far off 20 cms across, and on turning one over the bright yellow fine pores which blued instantly on touching revealed the species as *Caloboletus radicans* (Rooting Bolete). Several of us instantly recalled a recent article in the quarterly magazine Field Mycology telling of DNA sequencing having uncovered another lookalike to today's species, *C. kluzakii*, now proven through sequencing to be in the UK but apparently almost indistinguishable in the field from *C. radicans* – sometimes with some pink in the cap, sometimes with some pink in the lower stem though sometimes apparently with neither. **Note added in November: Sequencing has now confirmed this collection as *C. kluzakii*.**



Left (NF) & above (PC): *Caloboletus kluzakii* – now confirmed by DNA sequencing and as such a first for the county with few UK records as yet.

It was not long before a photogenic threesome of *Pluteus* (Shield) was spotted on a fallen Beech trunk. The general jizz told us it was most likely to be the common *Pluteus cervinus* (Deer Shield), though as with the Bolete above there is now a recently described lookalike in the UK which one should check for before naming *P. cervinus* with certainty. Also occurring on deciduous fallen wood, *P. hongoi* is almost indistinguishable in the field from *P. cervinus* but the gill cells reveal a clear difference when examined with a microscope. When checked at home later several collections today proved to be *P. cervinus*, however.

Right, *Pluteus cervinus* fruiting on fallen Beech today. (BW) The lower image shows the crowded free gills, here only just beginning to turn slightly pink. (NF)

Another much smaller and greyer *Pluteus* was found later on, possibly growing on conifer wood. This one will also be sent for sequencing as its identity was not obvious when examined later.







Above: *Neoboletus luridiformis* (LS)

Several Coprinoid species (Inkcaps) were found, no doubt responding to the recent rain. One growing out of the base of a Sycamore tree was later identified by Derek as *Coprinopsis mitrispora* (previously *C. spelaiphila* – no common name) and shows nicely the flecks of veil on the cap which often feature in species of the various Inkcap genera (though Derek comments that the brown tipped scales – usually a feature of this particular species – were missing in today's specimen). We have just five previous county records, the last being from our visit here last year. However, another Inkcap found today appears to be new to the county though is potentially even more interesting than that. The tiny white fruitbodies of *Coprinopsis cf. phaeospora* (no common name) were noticed amongst rotting herbaceous stems in several spots, though later Derek found that the spores were not an exact match (hence the cf. in the name indicating 'compare to') and a sample will be sent for sequencing.



Above: *Coprinopsis mitrispora* (BS) and below left: two views of *Coprinopsis cf. phaeospora* taken with a dissecting scope the following day, the caps being less than 10mm tall. (DJS)



Directly below: *Cystolepiota seminuda* found amongst woody debris today. (BW)

Another small white mushroom was found and was recognisable in the field from various distinctive features (though it still needed checking at home to confirm). This delightful specimen of *Cystolepiota seminuda* (Bearded Dapperling) was not only sporting its 'beard' (ragged remnants of veil around the cap margin) but also creamy white free gills and a floccose stem which tends to show pink towards the base. Though apparently new to the site, this is not a rarity and we have plenty of records from elsewhere in the county.





Later on we found a species from a genus closely related to *Cystolepiota* but a giant in comparison as its name suggests. ***Macrolepiota procera*** (Parasol) was spotted from a distance standing proud above the woodland litter; even the pristine immature specimen shown here was about 10 inches tall, identifiable from its distinctive brown snakeskin markings on the stem – a feature missing from the very similar and equally common though often misidentified *Chlorophyllum rhacodes* (Shaggy Parasol previous also in *Macrolepiota*) – not seen today, however.

Right: the immature specimen of ***Macrolepiota procera*** much admired today. (LS)



Now back to tiny mushrooms again. We spotted some miniscule pale brown caps amongst the deciduous leaf litter which at first glance appeared extremely similar to *Marasmius rotula* (Collared Parachute) – a very common species of woody litter we'd already recorded, usually easily recognised by its fluted white cap and white gills attached to a collar around the stem. This gill attachment is somewhat unusual but not quite unique within the genus, also occurring in ***Marasmius bulliardii*** (no common name), a species only rarely recorded though possibly misidentified as *M. rotula* owing to this shared gill feature. *M. bulliardii* is even smaller than *M. rotula*, is pale brown rather than white and has a small dark dot in the centre of the cap. A further difference: it grows not on woody remains but exclusively on fallen rotting leaves of Beech and (less commonly) other deciduous leaves as here today. Though tiny, viewed with a handlens it is a real little beauty and was new to the site today.

Right: the tiny ***Marasmius bulliardii*** found today. The caps were only a few mm across. Note the cog-wheel-like gills attached to a collar as in *M. rotula*, also the dark central dot seen here which helps to distinguish these two similar species. (NF)



It was good to see several species of *Mycena* (Bonnet) at last making an appearance, some found in litter, some on fallen wood depending on species (see the complete list for more details). Two found on conifer wood were of particular interest, both having distinctive features one can spot with care in the field – something lacking in many members of this large and difficult genus which practically always needs microscopic work to name with any certainty. The first was found by Millie, one of our two very young new members on their first outing with the group – what a way to start! When handed the singleton she'd found, Derek noticed that the gill edges were distinctly coloured, in fact purplish-brown. Penny pricked up her ears on hearing this, recalling the rare species ***Mycena purpureofusca*** which was found new to the county last year at Dancersend. This is a smallish Bonnet confined to fallen conifer wood and apart from its distinctive gill edge looks extremely like a host of other Bonnet species having a brownish cap. (The common *Mycena pelianthina* (Black Edge Bonnet) also has a similar dark purple gill edge but is much larger, has a different coloured cap not typically Bonnet-shaped – in fact looks nothing like today's rarity and is found in deciduous litter, so not likely to be confused with it.)



Almost in the same spot we were handed another pair of small Bonnets which Derek and I couldn't agree on at the time but having checked our specimens at home and then conferred we are now both happy that this is *Mycena amicta* (Coldfoot Bonnet). This is an occasional species, very variable in appearance but when sporting its distinct blue line at the cap margin and also having a blue stem base it is nameable with confidence in the field. This is not so easy if the blue colours are absent as can happen, when it looks like many other similar Bonnets. Today's collection did have some signs of blue though not that convincing, but the microscopic characters confirmed its identity.

Below left: an underside view of today's *Mycena purpureofusca* showing the dark gill edge, and right: *Mycena amicta*, the insert (DJS) showing just a faint blue line at the cap margin. The blue tinge in the caps and at the stem base is also visible here. (BW)



A notable and quite rare bracket was found on a fallen Birch trunk – this was *Fomitopsis pinicola* (Red-belted Bracket). A species new to the county in 2019, today's being just our third record, it occurs mainly in Scotland on conifer but also on Birch and occasionally other deciduous trees and now seems to be on the increase further south. It shares some similar features with some *Ganoderma* species with its hard crusty almost lacquered upper surface (though clearly zoned and much more colourful) and its pale fine pores underneath. However, in contrast to *Ganoderma* when scratched the pores remain pale (this just visible in the photo here, X marks the spot towards the left) because the spores are white and not brown as in that genus.



Above left (JW), centre and right (LS): *Fomitopsis pinicola*, a beautiful and unusual bracket found on Birch today.

The day's final count was 64 species, 22 of which were apparently new to this area of Ashridge. Thanks to all for coming and particular thanks to our brilliant photographers. A few more of today's photos follow below. See the complete list for details of what we found.

Photographers: BS = Bob Simpson; BW = Barry Webb; DJS = Derek Schafer; NF = Neil Fletcher; JW = Justin Warhurst; LS = Linda Seward; PC = Penny Cullington





Left: *Calocera cornea* (Small Stagshorn) found on fallen Beech, each spike less than 10 mm tall. (Note also the tiny brown slime mould fruiting body at the left hand end! Barry might be able to name this? (NF)



Left: *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa* (Coral Slime Mould) on a damp mossy deciduous log. Each spike here is probably no more than 2mm tall. (NF)



Above left: a colony of the tiny slime mould *Cribraria argillacea* (no common name) on a very rotten log (JW), and right: the same colony showing the detail of the network characteristic of this genus just beginning to form. (BW)

Below, the underside of *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* (False Chanterelle) showing clearly the sharp edged and forking gills – a useful feature to note if unsure whether your orange /apricot mushroom might be this species or *Cantharellus cibarius* (Chanterelle). (JW)







Above: Barry's stunning photo of the rarely recorded slime mould *Cribraria rufa* (non common name) which he found today.