

FUNGI WALK at MOUSELLS WOOD on October 8th, 2022

Penny Cullington

On a bright sunny morning we met up in the gated car park kindly provided for our use – just as well because by the time we set off we were roughly 35 strong and the roadside layby would have proved sadly inadequate. BFG members provided over half our number, Frieth NHS the remainder, plus our three expert guest leaders Geoffrey Kibby, Mario Tortelli and Richard Fortey, without whose help and brilliant field skills Derek and I would certainly have been struggling today. Keeping up with the constant supply of fruitbodies and names, both fungal and human, was quite a challenge and by the end of the morning we'd amassed a bumper species list which, when boosted by further identifications carried out later by our team of experts, totals an impressive 147 – probably our largest total ever (though I've not actually checked!) and following further additions after sequencing will no doubt top 150. Many local woodlands are still depressingly dry and unproductive at the moment but this site, being on a north facing slope, seemed to be the exception, making our UK Fungus Day outing a really worthwhile one.

This is typical Chiltern woodland, ie calcareous with Beech predominating, and over the last decade or so we've found here many exciting mycorrhizal mushrooms which favour this particular habitat. You've only to glance at today's list containing 19 *Russula* (Brittlepill) species - a few of them very rare - to realise this is one such genus well represented here. The genera *Cortinarius* (Webcap) and *Inocybe* (Fibre-cap) are others, each having provided species new to the UK from here in previous years and though neither were fruiting particularly abundantly, one collection from each genus made today will be dried for DNA sequencing with the potential for further new UK species.

So now for some images to share with you. Firstly a showy species of *Cortinarius* which is a regular here and not uncommon in Chiltern woodlands. ***C. amoenolens*** (Blueleg Webcap) is a large

chunky member of Section *Phlegmacium*, one of the four main sections in the genus and typified by their slimy caps and dry stems which often, as here, have swollen bases. Lilac or blue colours are not unusual in the young gills of members of this section though they usually soon change to rusty brown. This particular species also has blue flesh in the stem, hence its common name.

Left: *Cortinarius amoenolens* found under Beech and displaying its different stages of development nicely. Note in particular the 'cortina' (cobweb-like veil) still intact in the lower middle specimen, the remnants of which are left later as a mesh on the upper stem coloured by the rusty spores – showing clearly on the right hand specimen. (GK)



Moving from a common member of this genus to a possible rarity: On finding the collection below, Geoffrey and Mario (two expert specialists in *Cortinarius*) at first named this the fairly common *C. collocandoides* – one we've previously recorded here – but on reflection and microscopic examination later they thought it likely to be ***C. subpurpurascens***, very similar but with very few UK records and none verified by DNA. This ID has subsequently been confirmed with DNA sequencing.

Right: *Cortinarius subpurpurascens* – a rare find confirmed with DNA sequencing. (GK)



For comparison with the above we also have a photo of a stunning collection of *C. collocandoides*, thus giving an idea of how tricky separating some of these look-alike species can be.

Right: *Cortinarus collocandoides* found under Beech today. (CS)



Of the many species of *Russula* (Brittlegill) we found today, perhaps the most prolific – and certainly the largest – was *R. chloroides* (Blue Band Brittlegill). This is a big chunky squat species with very firm flesh and a dirty white cap, usually sunken in the middle. One would think, therefore that these features make it easy to identify – not so! You guessed it: there are several other look-alikes, one in particular, *R. delica* (Milk White Brittlegill), which is almost identical and regularly causes problems when the telltale blue-green band found right at the top of the stem is missing (as was the case in all but one specimen I saw today). If present there's no difficulty, but if absent one has to go by the consistently very crowded and narrow gills and the hint of green glint to the underside of the fruitbody which point to *R. chloroides* rather than *R. delica*. I eventually turned over one of the surprising number of specimens today which obliged by having a convincing blue-green band.



Above: *Russula chloroides*, a large Brittlegill fruiting abundantly here today (LS)



Another member of this large genus – having probably about 160 species in the UK alone – and which is a rarity but seems to be a regular at this site is *Russula veternosa* (no common name). We were pleased to find it fruiting today under Beech – the host tree with which it associates. Geoffrey pointed out how the aging specimens have a distinct smell of honey – a useful pointer to confirm its identity as there are plenty of other species with pale pinkish, yellowish, cream caps with which it could be confused.

Right: the rare *Russula veternosa* known only from this site and Dancersend within the county. (GK)

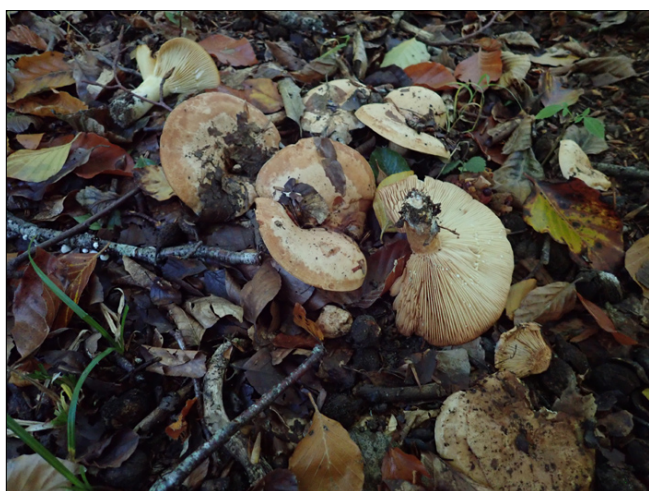




The genus *Lactarius* (Milkcap) is closely related to *Russula* and it was good to see quite a few of these today as they've been pretty well absent from previous lists so far this autumn. The commonest species was *L. subdulcis* (Milk Milkcap), quite a thin-fleshed flimsy Milkcap with a mid-brown cap and stem, but we also had a couple of examples of *L. fulvissimus* (Tawny Milkcap) which is sturdier and much more intensely bright reddish brown, also less common.

Left: *Lactarius fulvissimus* found under the Beeches today. (LS)

Below: *Lactarius zonarius*, a rarely recorded species and new to the site today. (PC)



As Geoffrey and I returned to the main path we simultaneously spotted a collection of a more interesting Milkcap which on further investigation turned out to be *Lactarius zonarius* (no common name), new to the site and with only one previous county record (actually mine from Coombe Hill in 2001 - and I wouldn't guarantee I'd have been correct 20 years ago!).

With so many wonderful photos to share, I'll end off the commentary here and add them below. Many thanks to everyone for your diligent searching and patience at our slowish pace – there was much to see

and with a large group it is well nigh impossible to move any faster than we did today. As it is I must inevitably have missed a fair number of things off the final list or maybe never saw or heard about them – my apologies. Today we added over 20 new species to our over-all list for the site - some very common but previously missed, others much more special, and there are several mystery collections which remain unnamed and which will need sequencing to resolve. I'd like to thank the owner, Alan Mann, for allowing us to visit this special piece of woodland (and his wife for the chewy bars which were much enjoyed afterwards!). We'll definitely be back again next year – this is such a rewarding and exciting place for fungi-hunting! Thanks also to all the photographers who've contributed so much to this report – what a feast for the eyes! For more details of what we found see the separate complete species list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CS = Claudi Soler; CW = Claire Williams; GK = Geoffrey Kibby; LS = Linda Seward;
MT = Mario Tortelli; PC = Penny Cullington; RB = Rick Behl; RK = Roger Kemp.

Below left: *Echinoderma asperum* (Freckled Dapperling) (LS)

Below right: *Clavariadelphus pistillaris* (Giant Club) (MT)





Above: an exquisite collection of *Stropharia caerulea* (Blue Roundhead) (BW). Note how its dark brown spores have coloured the upper surface of the ring on the stem.



Above left: *Geastrum triplex* (Collared Earthstar) (CW)

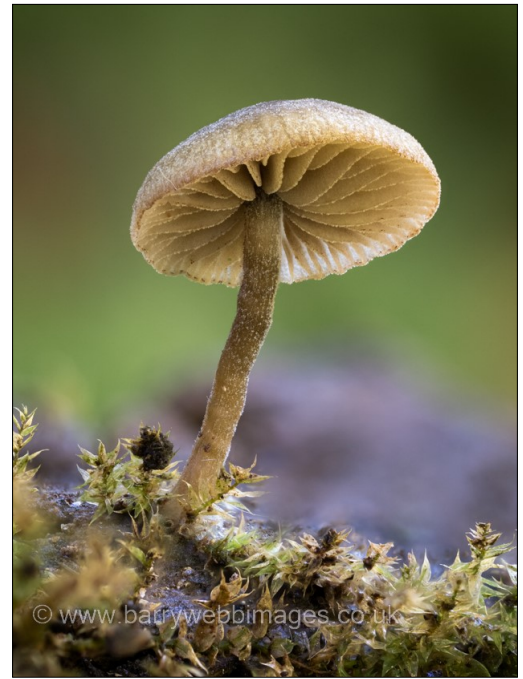
Below left: *Craterellus cornucopioides* (Horn of Plenty) (RB)



Above right: *Ramaria stricta* (Upright Coral) (CW)

Below right: *Lycoperdon perlatum* (Common Puffball) (LS)





Above left: *Pluteus chrysophaeus* (Yellow Shield) (CS); Centre: *Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop Bonnet) (BW); Right: a tiny specimen of *Simocybe centunculus* (Dingy Twiglet), the cap only 5mm across (BW).



Above left: Derek and Richard (LS)

Above right: Geoffrey and Penny (LS)

Right: a gaggle of forayers (RK)



Two for the price of one: *Coprinopsis picacea* (Magpie Inkcap) and, lurking in the litter beneath these beauties, some much smaller Inkcaps – quite possibly *Coprinellus impatiens* though not on today's as they weren't checked. I have a sneaky feeling this superb image may be destined for the front cover of the quarterly magazine 'Field Mycology' produced by the British Mycological Society and edited by Geoffrey. What a finale. (GK)

