

## FUNGI WALK at BURNHAM BEECHES on Saturday April 29th 2023

Penny Cullington

This was the group's first springtime walk here (though some of us regularly make private visits at this time) and we were amazingly fortunate with the weather: it was a glorious day – the warmest so far this year – which was a real treat after the dismal conditions we've been subjected to recently. Our large group – over 20 attendees due to a glitch in the booking system – was joined by Richard Fortey who provided much needed extra leadership and expertise.

Whilst we assembled in the car park a stick adorned with some strange greyish powdery pink tipped spikes was found. This was in fact the very common *Xylaria hypoxylon* (Candlesnuff) but not in its familiar autumn guise when shiny black and forking like antlers – often one of the first fungi new members get to recognise on our walks. However, when immature as seen here it has a very different appearance.

Right: immature *Xylaria hypoxylon* on a mossy stick (LS)



We headed to the Mire first and were soon admiring *Mitrula paludosa* (Bog Beacon) – a springtime species and new today to a good proportion of attendees though many examples were virtually underwater due to the recent rains. The Beeches Mire remains one of only two county sites where we know it occurs, dependent as it is on constant slow-moving shallow fresh water and mossy wet vegetation. Clearly conditions are perfect here though why it has never been found in the large section of Mire across the road remains a mystery. Barry's stunning photo with the beacons reflected in the water makes it hard to believe that this tiny Ascomycete is at most 2 cms tall!

Left: *Mitrula paludosa* in the Mire today. (BW)



We moved on next to explore the open heathland area nearby, dominated by Pines and Juniper and much used by the local Exmoor ponies whose dung provided a good source of fungi with several interesting species found. New to the site today were two species of Inkcap: *Coprinopsis trispora* and *Tulosesus*

*pellucidus*. The first has only 31 records on the national database (FRDBI), though predictably quite a few of these are from Bucks (after all, Derek happens to be the UK's leading authority on Inkcaps!). The second has around 100 records in FRDBI but this is only the second county record, the first from nearby Stoke Common and still awaiting confirmation from sequencing. Common on the dung today, however, was *Conocybe pubescens* (Downy Conecap) – a typical Little Brown Job (LBJ) but its stem,

Right: *Conocybe pubescens* found on pony dung. (BW)





covered in fine hairs, helps to distinguish it from other lookalikes. (These hairs are the cause of the silvery coating apparent on the stem in our photo.) It still needed verifying later with a scope, however.

Also new to the site (and to the county) in this area was another small LBJ found in grassy soil and later identified by Richard Fortey. ***Entoloma vernum*** (a Pinkgill with no common name), is a springtime fruiter as its name suggests, and not at all common with most records from Scotland. It favours sandy heathy areas such as this, apparently often near both Pine and Juniper. We found it today in two separate places here but sadly have no image to share.

We moved on to more typical deciduous woodland areas though with occasional Pine, picking up a range of different species. Of interest, and useful to compare, were two somewhat similar species of *Exidia* – a genus of jelly fungus - which often get confused. Both are brownish black and often found on fallen Oak. ***E. glandulosa*** (Witches' Butter) forms clusters of individual 'cushions' with flattish tops and small stems whereas ***E. nigricans*** (Warlock's Butter and previously known as *E. plana*) forms wrinkled 'brainlike' mounds. Both have an undersurface dotted with tiny pimples though these are more marked in *E. glandulosa*.



Above left & left: *Exidia glandulosa* – the insert showing the pimples  
..... and for comparison .....  
Above right: *Exidia nigricans*.  
(LS above left and right; JW left)



Two unusual finds were made in the mixed woodland, both LBJs and mycorrhizal genera normally fruiting in autumn. A species of *Inocybe* (FibreCAP) was found under Pine, later identified

at home as from the *flocculosa* complex, then still later confirmed by DNA sequencing as ***Inocybe tigrina***. Not only was this a new species for the site (and one only fairly recently new to the UK) but it was a first for me to find this genus so early in the year, though last week a couple more had been

Above: *Inocybe tigrina*(PC)

reported from elsewhere in the county - remarkable!



The second surprise found was a small *Cortinarius* (Webcap) found under Willow amongst other deciduous trees. Both I and Richard (who found it) came to different conclusions when attempting to identify it later (not an unusual occurrence with this tricky genus!) so the details and photos were sent to *Cortinarius* guru Geoffrey Kibby who agreed this is most likely to be ***C. saniosus*** – a species he's found in early summer before. The identification has now been confirmed with sequencing.



Right: *Cortinarius saniosus*, an unusual find today. (LS)

Several brackets are on our list. We saw various examples of *Ganoderma* from which I collected leaves underneath on which had fallen a thick deposit of the cocoa coloured spores from the brackets. This is a good way to determine whether you have *G. applanatum* (Artists' Fungus) or the more common *G. australe* (Southern Bracket): in the field they can appear identical. Their spores, however, differ in size. All examples today were *G. australe*. We also saw various fallen Birch trunks with nice examples of *Fomes fomentarius* (Hoof Fungus), now becoming relatively common though 10 years ago the species was a rarity in these parts.

Right: *Fomes fomentarius* living up to its common name. (LS)



Above: the tiny discs of *Calycina claroflava*, each only 5mm across. (BW)

A few ascos to mention now. On a deciduous stick some tiny vivid yellow discs were spotted and recognised as what was previously *Bisporella sulfurina* (Sulphur Disco) but is now renamed ***Calycina claroflava*** – luckily the common name remains unchanged! Not as common as what was *Bisporella citrina* (Lemon Disco and now also in genus *Calycina*), today's species is a brighter, slightly greener yellow with slightly smaller discs, also unlike the commoner species it grows on old pyrenomycetes (seen here as the black base under the discs).

On a large heap of rotting vegetation we found a large pale brown *Peziza* (Cup), around 8cm across. After discussion as to which species it might be, neither Richard nor I remembered to collect any of it to check later! However, on reflection we feel reasonably confident that this has to be ***Peziza vesiculosa*** (Blistered Cup) owing to the general 'jizz', large size, the colour and the substrate of rotting grassy vegetation. We can't be more definite than that, however.

Right: *Peziza vesiculosa* (possibly) found today but sadly not checked later. (JW)



As we returned along the main drive a number of rich brown medium sized cups were spotted in soil on a grassy bank. This was exactly the right habitat for the spring-fruiting ***Helvella acetabulum*** (Vinegar Cup), previously in genus *Paxina* and recently featured in Members' Finds as well. It was a surprise to





find that this species appears to be new to the site though it is by no means a rarity. The common name refers to its shape apparently reminiscent of a Roman vessel used for storing vinegar. Though similar in many ways to the genus *Peziza* it differs markedly under a scope and also in having a white stem with distinct veins or ridges, clearly seen here.

Left: *Helvella acetabulum* on a grassy bank. (cw)

***Daedalea quercina*** (Oak Mazegill) but it was tricky to see enough detail on the underside until Linda managed to take a photo and zoom in on it – it being far too high for us to retrieve a sample. We then agreed that it didn't look typical for that species so the photo was sent to expert Martyn Ainsworth for a second opinion. He has now confirmed that it is more than likely to be that species, hence this updated report. This highlights one of the disadvantages of producing reports so soon after each event: it gives only a very short time for identification and research into difficult / atypical collections such as this, and necessitates the need to amend as I've done here.

Above: the somewhat atypical underside of *Daedalea quercina* on living Oak (LS)



To sum up: we ended up with a list of 50 species, 7 were new to the site and 1 new to the county. This has been an exceptional Spring for Morels in our county but sadly we found not one, nor any sign of *Calocybe gambosa* (St. George's Mushroom) which is also fruiting plentifully at the moment. These species may favour calcareous soils hence their absence here, this being an area having acidic soil - unusual in this part of the county. Many thanks to all of you for your valued contributions and particularly to those who provided me with this array of brilliant photos. Below are a few more of these featuring some slime moulds and also that amazing adder's shed skin found by Claire. See the separate species list for full details of what we found.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CW = Claire Williams; JW = Justin Warhurst; LS = Linda Seward; PC = Penny Cullington.



Left: the slime mould *Metatrachia floriformis*, each sporangia (fruiting body) less than 3mm high and bursting open in petal-like shape to reveal the spores within. (BW)





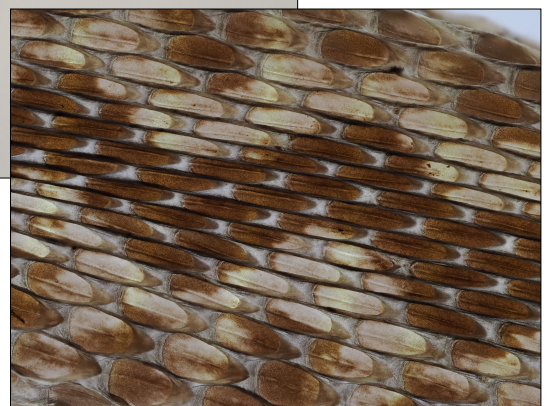
Left: the slime mould *Physarum leucophaeum* (not confirmed yet but likely), even tinier than the slime mould above. (BW)



Left: an as yet unidentified species of *Arcyria* (another slime mould) and possibly a rarity. Watch this space for an update! (BW)



Left and below: the adder's skin found by Claire. (cw)



Left: Richard admiring the *Fomes fomentarius* trunk. (LS)