

FUNGI WALK at STAMPWELL FARM on October 21st 2023

Penny Cullington

It was a year ago almost to the day that we last visited this interesting site and today our group of 19 was again treated to a varied range of woodland and grassland species which were fruiting in good numbers. The weather was kind, the promised rain holding off till after we'd finished, and our route this time – planned by Jackie Ewan who knows the site and its fungi well - started off in the woodland area which we'd only touched on briefly in our previous two visits here. Consequently, as this area was rich in fruitbodies, we covered far less of the site after this than last time but still amassed a list of around 100 species.

We started off with some rather faded and washed out specimens of *Stropharia caerulea* (Blue Roundhead) in the grassy path edges, but eventually a reasonably presentable pair turned up though sadly still not looking their stunning best. Usually very common, this species seems to have been reluctant to fruit so far this season.

Right: *Stropharia caerulea*, typically slimy and faded after rain, also having lost its stem ring for the same reason. (LS)



As we approached the woodland we found the charismatic *Amanita muscaria* (Fly Agaric) under the Birches though once again mostly soggy and well past their sell-by date. One or two were worth a photo to share though. This is one of several common Amanitas which have been few and far between so far this season, and another of these found in various guises in this area today was *Amanita rubescens* (Blusher). In rainy weather the characteristic bits of white veil on the caps of this genus are so easily washed off, making their identity a little less obvious.



Left: *Amanita muscaria*, fully expanded (JE) and (the inset) immature (LS). Both caps had lost some veil spots but still left one in no doubt over their identity!

Below: a similarly immature *Amanita rubescens* with veil well in tact and a slight pink tinge already developing on the stem. (CW)



Under the Beech we found a cluster of the sticky capped genus *Hebeloma* (Poison Pie) just emerging. This is a genus which needs microscopic examination and a lengthy key to name to species



though I suspected it would turn out to be one we found last week on our Wotton walk: ***Hebeloma aestivale*** (no common name) – so often we notice that conditions will trigger a certain species into fruiting simultaneously though many miles apart.

Left: ***Hebeloma aestivale*** – new to the site today. (JE)

We found various members of the genera *Lactarius* (Milkcap) and *Russula* (Brittle Gill) – not obviously similar but in fact closely related and both important mycorrhizal fungi (those growing on the roots of trees and forming a mutually beneficial

relationship with their host). One species which was showing particularly well here was ***Russula grisea*** (False Charcoal Burner) – not that common and quite similar to several others which share a cap colour range of spilt petrol – ie a mix of pinks, mauves, greens, greys, even creams and blues. Rubbing a crystal of Iron salts on the stem helps to separate them to some extent, and today's species shows a clear and instant salmon reaction when treated thus. Furthermore, peeling back the cuticle from the cap edge reveals pink to lavender flesh beneath rather than the greyish green of the similar *R. parazurea* (which we also saw today).



Right: a stunning group of ***Russula grisea*** (JE)

We found various species of *Mycena* (Bonnet) which were able to be identified by their unique field characters though so often with this genus it's down to their microscopic characters. First was ***Mycena galericulata*** (Common Bonnet), one of many species found on deciduous fallen wood / stumps etc. The feature to note is the anastomosing ridges found *between* the gills though often a x10 handlens is needed to see them. Next was ***Mycena inclinata*** (Clustered Bonnet) which favours fallen Oak, grows in tight clusters, has a strange smell (reminiscent of lupins!) and has a stem which discolours orange then brown in the lower half. Still on fallen wood, we had both ***Mycena crocata*** (Saffrondrop Bonnet) and ***Mycena haematopus*** (Burgundydrop Bonnet), easily distinguished by their coloured latex which bleeds from damaged stems – bright orange in the former, dark reddish brown in the latter. Still in woodland though not on wood but in litter we had ***Mycena rosea*** (Rosy Bonnet) – the name is self-explanatory though it's worth noting its pinkish white tapering stem and distinct smell of radish. Finally in the grassy areas we had ***Mycena olivaceomarginata*** (Browndge Bonnet), a small insignificant species for which you need a handlens to see the brown gill edges - sometimes distinct but often faint.



Left: ***Mycena galericulata***.
Right: ***Mycena inclinata*** (LS)





Far left: *Mycena crocata* (JL)
Near left: *Mycena haematopus* (LS)
Below: *Mycena rosea* (LS)



Left & above: *Mycena olivaceomarginata* (LS)

Now back to the woodland again, we have a few more photos to share. Near the group of *Hebeloma aestivale* under Beech was a nice fresh clump of *Clavulina coralloides* (Crested Coral) in the litter, and soon after a stick with a bright yellow gelatinous blob was found. This was *Tremella mesenterica* (Yellow Brain). Both species are common and though they don't have gills they are still related to those that do, all being classed as Basidiomycetes.

Below left: *Clavulina coralloides* (CW)



below right: *Tremella mesenterica* (JE)



This site is known for its Waxcaps and today we were treated to nine different species. Certainly the most prolific was ***Hygrocybe chlorophana*** (Golden Waxcap) recognised by its relatively large size, bright colour, sticky cap and stem – also sticky, often with grooves. Much smaller and less common is the delicate ***Hygrocybe insipida*** (Spangled Waxcap), often with decurrent gills as here and with a mix of orange and red colours. Jackie took us to see a rare species which she'd recently noticed and was new to the site: ***Hygrocybe intermedia*** (Fibrous Waxcap). Quite a



chunky large species, both cap and stem are dry and clearly fibrous with orange to red colours. She'd recognised it from my recent photo in Members' Finds from Prestwood Churchyard. So here is another example of a particular species being triggered into fruiting simultaneously though often miles apart.

Above left + insert: ***Hygrocybe chlorophana*** (LS)

Below left: ***Hygrocybe intermedia*** (LS)

Below right: ***Hygrocybe insipida*** (LS)



There were a few woodchip piles in the field which produced species of interest. The first of these contained ***Agrocybe rivulosa*** (Wrinkled Fieldcap) and the remains of an Inkcaper – probably ***Coprinopsis lagopus*** (Haresfoot Inkcaper) which we then found fruiting further along. On two of these piles were some pale brown 'Cups' belonging to the genus *Peziza*. Both I and Jesper Launder - who provided us with much valuable information and knowledge today – later separately keyed one specimen out to ***Peziza micropus*** (no common name) but the other was not mature enough to deliver spores though could well have been the same species.



Left: ***Peziza micropus*** in one of the woodchip piles (LS)

It was near the edge of one of these piles that a cluster of strange white roundish lumps were spotted and extracted for examination. They were quite soft, a bit squidgy and also remarkably heavy. They puzzled us until Jackie saw them and, being familiar with this extra-ordinary species which often appears here, she was able to name them. These were the 'eggs' of the

bizarre *Clathrus archeri* (Devil's Fingers), related to the Stinkhorns which also emerge in the same way from gelatinous eggs, and a species imported accidentally from Australia some years ago and now apparently beginning to spread quite rapidly. It was new to the county only a few years ago when found here and has popped up here every year since. Sadly there were no mature examples to be found today but I include a photo taken here previously for those of you who've never seen it before.



Above left: the 'eggs' of *Clathrus archeri* found today (JL), and right: the fully developed fruitbody, the photo taken here in 2020 (JE)

Finally, a mystery species we found soon after this was a *Russula* (Brittlelegill) which had those of us who know the genus fairly well utterly confused. The caps were creamy white with no hint of other colour, and rubbing a crystal of Iron salts on the stem produced the strong salmon pink reaction on both stem *and* gills which occurs in only two British species – one having a pink cap and the other having a green cap! A sporeprint dropped overnight was pure white (as it is in both species having this salmon reaction) and a scope then revealed very small spores for the genus which eliminated the pink-capped species but fitted the normally green-capped *Russula heterophylla* (Greasy Green Brittlelegill). Microscopic examination of the cap cuticle also fitted this species and further research then revealed a white-capped '*forma virginea*', not often recorded. So problem solved! This genus is renowned for causing just such challenges, with colour variation rife amongst many species, especially after rain or exposure to bright sunlight.



Right: *Russula heterophylla forma virginea* (JE)

On our list are quite a few species which appear to be new to the site though may not be so. I could have continued this report ad infinitum but had to draw the line somewhere! Many thanks to all for coming, also for all the wonderful photos, and big thank you to both Jackie and Jesper for their expertise and experience today which made things so much easier for me. For more details of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers

CW=Claire Williams; JE = Jackie Ewan; JL = Justin Long; LS = Linda Seward.