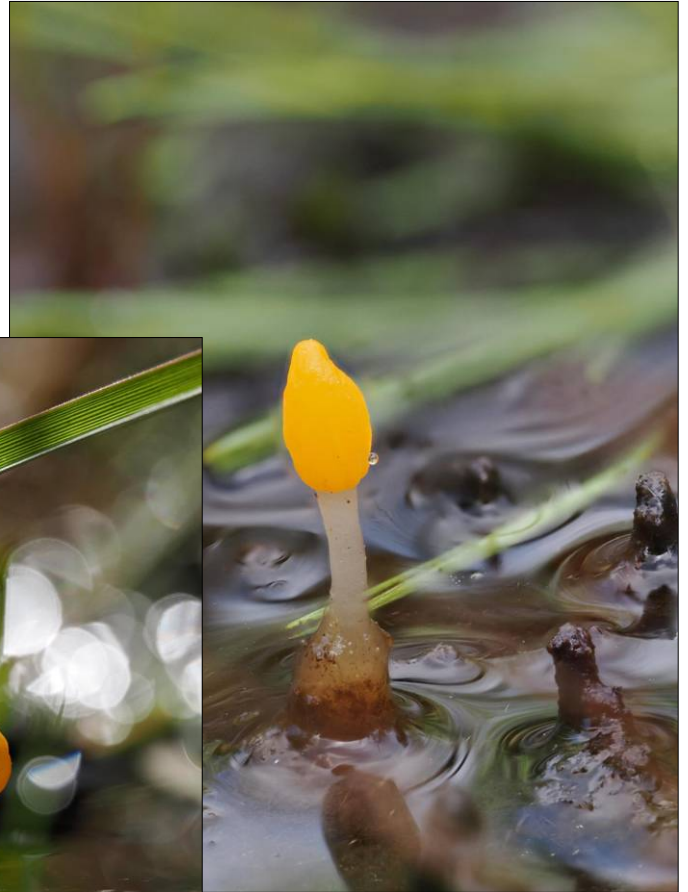


## FUNGI WALK at BURNHAM BEECHES on Wednesday April 17th 2024

Penny Cullington

We met up today in the Henry Peeke car park for our first BFG midweek walk – a bit of an experiment with those having longer journeys likely to be hampered by rushhour traffic. In the event this wasn't a problem and we were 23 strong, the weather was kind – chilly but sunny and mercifully dry - and we set off for the Mire with the promise of finding the Bog Beacon to start off our species list. Sure enough there it was and we were spoilt for choice.

*Mitrula paludosa* is not a common fungus, limited as it is to areas of clean slow-moving water, growing on the wet vegetation and only at this time of year. Here in the Mire it is a regular and we know of very few other county sites where it occurs. Those who'd not seen it before were probably a bit surprised that it was quite so tiny! However, what it lacks in size it certainly makes up for in brightness, hence its English name.



Left (NF) and above (CW x 2): a trio of *Mitrula paludosa* fruiting today in the Mire.

Our Spring visit here last year was just a week later in April but with a similar sized group of collectors today our over-all species list was longer - around 60 – considerably lengthened by Kerry's expertise in determining later some of the tiny things she'd found. The notable difference between the two lists, however, is in the almost complete lack of agarics (gilled fungi) we found today: 17 species last year but just three today. This was a surprise to me considering the recent months of warm wet conditions which – judging from our Members Finds entries – have been producing an array of mushroom types of all sorts, both seasonal and unseasonal. One can't say this too often: fungal fruiting is a law unto itself and remains utterly unpredictable!

We have images of just two of the agarics found: the first, *Gymnopus cf. aquosus* (Watery Toughshank), was found in two separate spots in the Mire and is a species we don't often record. (The 'cf.' indicates an unsure determination.) There are three very similar Toughshanks which are easily confused and in fact not easy to separate even with a scope; two are unusual, one is very common and all three tend to be early season fruiters. *G. dryophilus* (Russet Toughshank) appears on virtually every autumn woodland species list, whereas *G. ocior* and *G. aquosus* are much less common. *G. ocior* tends to have darker cap colours, also yellowish gills; *G. aquosus* tends to have paler cap colours, also pinkish mycelial strands at its base; the difficulty is that the cap colour of *G. dryophilus* is variable and can go either way: dark like one but also pale like the other! Furthermore the microscopic differences between

the three are not that clear cut or simple to interpret, somewhat compounding the problem. As part of our CoLC project covering this site and Stoke Common, today's collection will be sequenced as an extra check, but DNA results do not always help. Matching the DNA of one's specimen to other existing sequences in the public domain is fraught with difficulty as well! Unless there exists a sequence of the 'type collection' of a species (ie the first known collection made, and from which that species was described and named) how does one know that other existing sequences given that name were correctly named in the first place? In many instances type collection sequences don't exist for obvious reasons and the data available to us is known to contain sequences of many misidentified collections. The poor field mycologist does his best, coping with the endless bombardment of new Latin names amongst other things. I digress – apologies! Onward .....



Above: *Gymnopus cf. aquosus* in the Mire today. (cs)



The second agaric was a simply tiny Inkcaps noticed in some dung and which Derek later identified as *Narcissea ephemeroidea* (Diaphanous Inkcaps) but with reservations. The magnified insert here shows an unusual feature in Inkcaps, a ring on the stem – just visible here - which in this species is somewhat shortlived (hence its Latin species name). However, Derek tells me that this is a mis-applied name and as such is likely to change in the future.

Left: *Narcissea ephemeroidea* found in dung today. (JL)

The third agaric found today was handed me by Kerry: a tiny specimen of what looked like a *Mycena* (Bonnet) which she'd spotted in woody litter. Removing a gill at home to examine its spores and microscopic cells, I was amazed to find that this was not a *Mycena* at all but one of its 'lookalikes': *Hydropodia subalpina* (previously in genus *Hydropus* and with no English name). This was only a baby as the cap can get to 5cm across – today's was no more than 3mm at most and no photo was taken. It's not at all common but luckily very distinctive under the scope.



Once away from the Mire, the majority of the things we found were predictably found on the plentiful supply of fallen deciduous wood, ranging from large brackets of various sorts to minute 'dots on sticks'. We've featured some of these brackets many times in previous reports and also in Members Finds, so rather than repeat them here, a bit of research using today's species list should locate useful images elsewhere on our website. One bracket worthy of inclusion today was found by Claire: a common species but not often seen in its immature state as shown here. *Laetiporus sulphureus* (Chicken of the Woods) will be familiar to many but I for one hadn't seen it looking quite like this before any sign of bracket shape is to be seen!

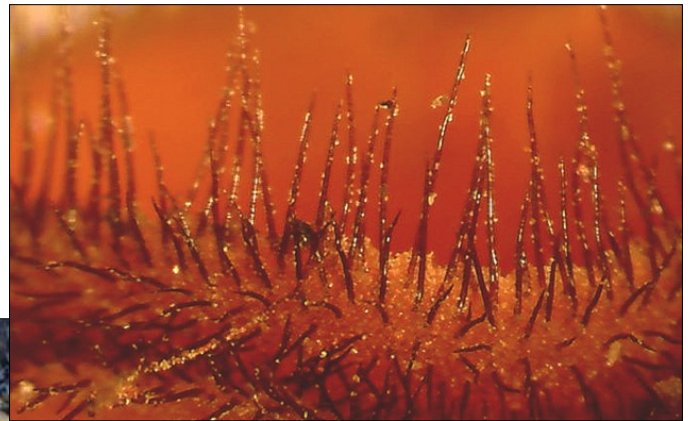
Left: the beginning stages of *Laetiporus sulphureus* on a bare dead Beech trunk (cw).

We kept finding bare fallen deciduous wood affected by the distinctive blue-green colour of *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* (Green Elfcup), this coloured wood being an excellent demonstration of how a fungus lives within and throughout its wood host, only occasionally producing fruitbodies on the outside in order to spread its spores. We did eventually turn up a couple of examples which showed a few very small cups, only 2-3 mm across, but there are plenty of good images on Members Finds which show fully mature cups which can get to maybe 1cm across.



Above, *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* – some tiny examples (NF)

Another cup fungus which attracted attention and was fruiting in remarkable numbers in a damp log pile was a species of *Scutellinia* (Eyelash). The first time you are shown this beautiful fungus using a x10 handlens is always a memorable one! There are in fact over 30 different species in the genus, all of which look remarkably similar and always needing microscopic examination to name accurately. Several of us took home samples to work on and after much email discussion over the next day or so it was decided we couldn't be sure! By far the commonest Eyelash species is *S. scutellata* (Common Eyelash) which has the longest lashes, but there are several very closely related species and it is one of these which we suspect we might have here. *S. crinita* is said to have alternately long and short hairs around the rim and this particular feature can be seen in the insert here, so for now we're naming it *Scutellinia cf. crinita* and hope that DNA sequencing will resolve the issue.



Above, a beautiful cluster of *Scutellinia cf. crinita* awaiting DNA confirmation (NF with insert JMD)

Various different black crusty fungi (known as pyrenomycetes) were found on fallen wood. Two of our commonest Woodwarts are on the list, *Hypoxylon fragiforme* (Beech Woodward) and *H. fuscum* (Hazel Woodward), but two others were of particular interest. The first, previously in genus *Annulohypoxylon*, is the amazingly named *Jackrogersella minutellum* (no English name) which was found on Oak bark and is new to the site according to our database, also only our second county record. This is no doubt due to its not being recognised by us previously because it is not particularly rare – just

easily overlooked or misidentified. Today's collection was later carefully confirmed by Claudi for us. It may appear in his photo below to be huge but is in fact no more than 2 cm long!

The second unusual pyrenomycete was spotted by Jenny on fallen Beech and notable by its bright ochre-orange patches and brown rather than black crusty fruiting body. This was named in the field by Kerry who had seen it before, and was then later confirmed by both her and Claudi. *Hypoxylon subticinense* (no English name) is new to the county with just 70 UK records on the FRDBI database; this was our rarest find of the day and shows two different stages of its development. The species is presumably genuinely rare because it is such a conspicuous colour and as such not likely to be missed by those of us looking for fungi on wood.



Above left: *Jackrogersella minutellum* on Oak, and right: *Hypoxylon subticinense* on Beech (cvs)

Truffles are a group of fungi much under-recorded by the group. As they don't appear above ground they take quite a bit of finding and this takes experience in knowing both where to look and when. Luckily for us Jesper has both the knowledge and dedication and was out with us today, determined to find one! Success! He unearthed *Elaphomyces granulatus* (False Truffle) under some deciduous trees – it occurs under both deciduous and coniferous trees. It is new to the site and only our second county record (the first being Jesper's last year at Stoke Common!) though is described as common, reflecting our lack of expertise in this area. To give you an idea of size, this one was about 2.5 cm across.



Above: *Elaphomyces granulatus* (JL)

Below you'll find some more photos to enjoy. Whenever Barry (FRPS) is out with us we can be sure of some stunning slime mould photography, and today was no exception! Thank you all for coming and contributing; thank you to all our photographers too; finally thank you to Kerry for adding so much expertise and to all those who worked on specimens later, adding to our list. For more details of what we found see the separate complete list.

#### Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CVS = Claudi Soler; CW = Claire Williams; JL = Jesper Launder;  
JMD = Jackie Mackenzie Dodds; NF = Neil Fletcher.



Above: *Ceratiomyxa fruticulosa* – immature stage      Below: *Metatrichia floriformis* – fully mature.  
Both these two are no more than a few mms high





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Above: *Stemonitopsis typhina* – immature but displaying the typical stem coated in slime.  
Below: *Physarum album* – fully mature with nodding 'heads' ready to shed their spores.  
As above, these are tiny organisms only a few mms high at most



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Above: We have two different species here though only one slime mould. Lower left is the early plasmodium stage (yellow) of *Stemonitis flavogenita*. Centre right are two tight clusters of the mature 'pipe-cleaner' stage of the same species. This is one of quite a few *Stemonitis* species but can usually be recognised in the field by its yellow plasmodium (others are white) and by its pale cocoa brown colour when mature (others are darker brown). Along the top are some tiny grey discs of a species of *Mollisia* – a genus of ascomycete cup fungi with many species, only a very few of which are nameable to species even with specialised keys to help.

