

FUNGI WALK at PAVIS WOOD, DANCERSEND on October 15th 2017

Penny Cullington

A good sized group of 17 met up here today to take a first look at the fungi in a part of Dancersend Reserve fairly recently acquired from Bucks County Council, a substantial area of mixed deciduous woodland with some mature Oaks and also more recently planted areas. Head Ranger and BFG member Mick Jones led us round – just as well because we'd probably have become thoroughly lost otherwise. Conditions underfoot were somewhat dry and as in other Chiltern woodlands this Autumn fungal fruiting was clearly slowing right down despite the fact that mid-October is normally considered to be peak season. Nevertheless with a lot of diligent searching a group of this number will usually produce a reasonably lengthy list. The final total was just under 100 species though nothing particularly showy or rare turned up.

We found several patches of *Tricholoma cingulatum* (Girdled Knight) – an unusual Knight which unlike many of this genus is easily named in the field being the only one to have a ring on the stem. It grows only under Willow and the cap is somewhat similar to another we found today which was *Tricholoma sculpturatum* (Yellowing Knight), a species found under many deciduous trees though often under Birch. In fact both species can stain yellow with age.



Above: two similar grey-capped species of *Tricholoma* we found today: on the left *T. sculpturatum*, lacking a ring on the stem and here showing the typical yellowing with age or damage on a couple of the specimens (photo taken elsewhere in 2015 PC). On the right *T. cingulatum* showing the distinct fluffy ring on the stem which separates it from all others in the genus. (NS)

We came across several areas where a pure white fairy club species was fruiting. Clubs cannot be safely named in the field though I guessed it might be *Clavaria acuta* (Pointed Club) which Derek has now confirmed. We have two images of it worth including as one shows a good comparison with the yellow clubs it was found growing with at one point - a cluster of *Clavulinopsis* which was not, however, identified to species. Clubs are normally found growing in grassland areas and not in woodland as here, so we suspect that these together with the species of *Hygrocybe* (Waxcap) we found today are relics of the time prior to the fairly recent planting of trees in this particular part of the wood.

Far right: *Clavaria acuta* growing in moss (NS) and nearer right one specimen of the same *Clavaria* found growing with an unidentified species of *Clavulinopsis*. (JW)





We found a large group of distinctive brackets on an old Oak stump. These were *Daedalea quercina* (Oak Mazegill). Several of the fruitbodies had some mauve-pink areas of infection probably caused by a *Hyphomycete* fungus growing on the brackets. We were not able to identify it, however.

Left: *Daedalea quercina* (NS)

Forays at Dancersend often produce a good list of different species of *Mycena* (Bonnet) and today was no exception. The smallest was *Mycena capillaris* (Beechleaf Bonnet) which if you know where to search is often quite easy to find. If you disturb damp patches of last year's fallen Beech leaves you may well be rewarded with a leaf covered in these perfectly formed miniature mushrooms. If you find tiny Bonnets on Oak leaves you'll have found a different species!



Above: *Mycena capillaris* (Beechleaf Bonnet) - a species easily overlooked for obvious reasons. Their size can be judged by the relatively enormous leaf! (NS)



Left: *Junghuhnia nitida* (no English name) an unusual 'Resupinate' fungus recognised by Derek and found growing on one of the many fallen branches, probably Oak. (JW)



Above: *Armillaria mellea* (NS)

The felled Beech trunk at the entrance to the wood provided us with several species for the list, and one of these was this impressive large cluster of *Armillaria mellea* (Honey Fungus). There are several species of Honey Fungus and they are not always easy to separate in the field unless one knows the key features to look for. The genus is parasitic and the species here, *A. mellea*, can be very destructive in gardens, spreading as it does from tree to shrub by way of its thick black mycelial chords often visible on the surface of rotting trunks and often killing infected plants. The combination of features which distinguish it from others in the genus: it has a ring under the cap (often lost in older specimens) and a long stem which lacks a swollen base and also lacks the tendency to yellow at the stem base.

We do not often include the really common fungus pictured on the right, but this was such a perfect example and it does not often present quite as impressively as here, so I thought it well worth including Nick's lovely photo.

Right: *Xylaria hypoxylon* (Candlesnuff) (NS)



Finally to a mystery species which had everyone guessing in the field because it looked like nothing one had seen before with a great long apparently rooting fibrous stem, a pale cream cap and gills which were densely packed and had a slightly serrated edge. Various suggestions were put forward at the time (and I had my suspicions which in fact proved correct) but it was going to depend on the microscopy to find out what it was. Derek and I took a specimen each and hoped we'd come out with the same name, also as I was about to join the BMS foray week in Wales there was going to be an opportunity for further more experienced opinions. The pale cap with a greasy feel to it suggested to me *Collybia* (now *Rhodocollybia*) *butyracea* (Buttercap), a species which I've been fooled by before when it was looking completely atypical though in no way like our specimens today! The microscopic features did indeed fit, and Geoffrey Kibby, BMS tutor in Wales, also thought it could well be this species, so I was relieved when Derek's email came through and he'd come to the same conclusion. We assume that these somewhat deformed specimens had been infected by another fungus or some bacteria, and it's a shame we don't even have an exciting new species to add to the list, but at least we have a name now confirmed by three of us.



Above, the strangely deformed fruitbodies of *Rhodocollybia butyracea* which baffled everyone today. (NS)

Thanks to all who attended and especially to Justin and Nick for sending me their photos. See the complete list for more information on what we found.

Photo credits: JW = Justin Warhurst; NS = Nick Standing; PC – Penny Cullington

