

## FUNGI WALK at STOWE LANDSCAPE GARDENS on Sunday November 11<sup>th</sup> 2018

Penny Cullington

This our final outing of the 2018 Autumn season was well supported with 17 attendees including some new members. Though the weather looked decidedly threatening at the start the dark sky soon lifted and the morning was surprisingly warm and sunny considering the late date. Our last visit here, exactly a year ago to the day, produced a list of some 70 species which included 4 species of Waxcap (though this site has an impressive list of 15 such species and is one of the reasons why we choose to visit here at this time, normally being the best for their fruiting). This year, however, we found not one! This for some reason has been a really poor year for these colourful and attractive fungi, not just in Bucks but I've also had reports from as far afield as Wales

and Yorkshire that they have failed to appear this autumn. That's fungi for you!

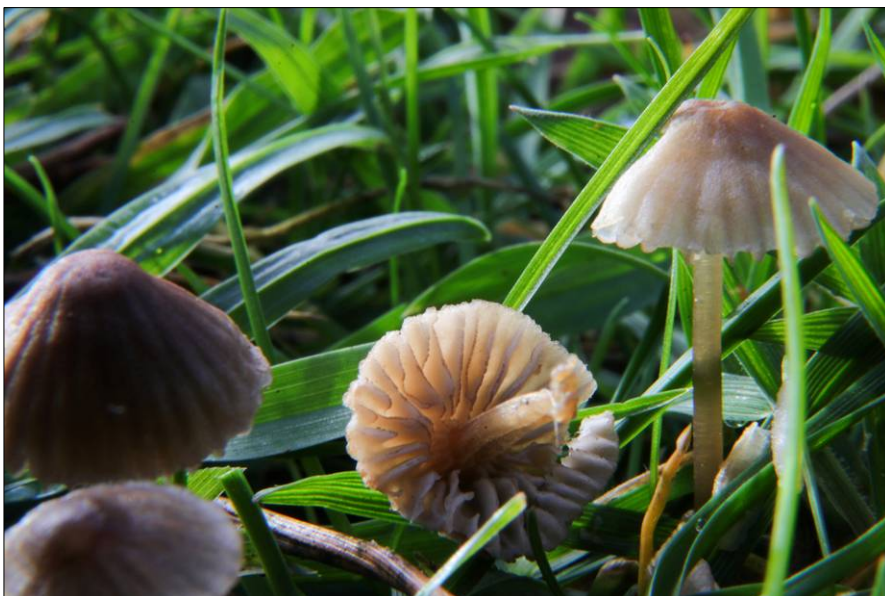


Above, what a backdrop for our walk! (JL)

We found an amazing number of species still happily fruiting, however, and there was never a dull moment with so many keen pairs of eyes searching over the relatively small area we managed to cover – this a sure sign that there was plenty to be found.

My small containers were soon filled to bursting with the various *Mycena* species I was handed. Luckily a few of these were nameable in the field but working through them later took quite a time. We ended up with 12 different species (compared with 8 last year), the most common being *Mycena filopes* (Iodine Bonnet) and *M. vitilis* (Snapping Bonnet) – both woodland litter-lovers but also found in grass near trees as was the case here. Two species I was particularly pleased to see today were *M. olivaceomarginata* (Browndge Bonnet) and *M. citrinomarginata* (no common name). Both are grassland specialists and have a coloured edge to their gills though

this often needs a hand lens to see and varies in its intensity. I set Justin (L) the tricky challenge of capturing this feature with his camera and congratulate him on the results!



Left, *Mycena olivaceomarginata*, a typical nondescript Bonnet until one looks carefully underneath for the olive-brown edge to its gills which separate it from the many other very similar members of this genus. This is just visible in the middle upturned specimen. (JL)

Right, *Mycena citrinomarginata*, much rarer but more easily recognisable in the field than the previous species, having not only a yellow edge to its gills but also a yellowish cap and a yellow stem which clearly contrasts with the white gills. This was new to the county on our previous visit and therefore very pleasing to find again today. (JL)



Left: sorry, Justin, but I couldn't resist including this snap of you busy with your *Mycena* task! (PC)

As soon as we started exploring under the Pines Joanna found a very special fungus which always needs careful searching in this particular habitat, growing as it does on rotting pinecones. This was the delightful *Auriscalpium vulgare* (Earpick Fungus), a tiny mushroom with a long stem and very ordinary brown cap until you look underneath and see not gills there but spines – commonly referred to as ‘teeth’. We have a handful of known sites for this in the county and I discovered from our database that the only previous record for it here was mine in 2005. (Here no doubt was the second Justin (W) prostrate today to achieve the detail seen on the left.)



Below and inset, *Auriscalpium vulgare* found today in litter under Pine on a rotting cone. (JW)



The genus *Agaricus* (Mushroom) is considered to be an early season fruiter with some species often around in July and August. Not so this year! It like many other fungi has been making a very late appearance this Autumn, so it was no surprise to find good numbers of *Agaricus campestris* (Field Mushroom) in the grass today, though the large cluster of a different species having fine dark scales proved much more interesting (though not as tasty!). This was *Agaricus moelleri* (Inky Mushroom), closely related to *A. xanthoderma* (Yellow Stainer) and new to the county today. It has the same smell (of old-fashioned ink) and characteristic instant chrome-yellow staining where the stem base is scratched as the much commoner smooth white-capped Yellow Stainer, but the brown-black cap scales are diagnostic, also the instant yellowing elsewhere on the fruitbodies today seemed quite remarkable.

Right, *Agaricus moelleri* found today under Pines in the grassland – a new species for the county according to our records. (JW)



We ended up under the large Cedar near the temple where last year several things of note turned up. This year the woodchip was liberally covered in a species of *Psathyrella* (Brittlepill) which I'm ashamed to say I failed to identify later. My apologies because we have good photos of it, but this is a genus renowned to be tricky and the microscopic features I found just didn't seem to fit with the several different keys I tried. However, we also found a species of *Hygrophoropsis* (False Chanterelle) here which was clearly very different in appearance from the norm and rang a bell with me. Having carefully studied it I'm happy that this is *Hygrophoropsis rufa* featured in an



article by Geoffrey Kibby in a 2012 edition of Field Mycology. The dark finely hairy cap cuticle when viewed under the microscope matched his diagram for this species exactly. So this was another species new to the county.

Left, *Hygrophoropsis rufa*, closely related to the False Chanterelle and new to the county today. (PC)

Of the 90 species we recorded today 25 were new to the site of which three were also new to the county. Two I've already covered above and the third was a small species of *Lepiota* (Dapperling) which someone handed me fairly early on once we reached the grassland area and which I hurriedly boxed and then forgot about in the pandemonium which followed. So at home I keyed it out as *Lepiota oreades* (no common name), one which has a pale pinkish-buff smooth cap about 2cm across, cream to white free gills and a stem with remnants of a white ring. If this rings a bell with you, do let me know so that I can credit you with this nice find.

Finally to a chunky species of *Psathyrella* which I did manage to identify! This I spotted under a Beech when we first left the carpark and was pretty sure I knew what it was but decided to leave until we returned. Luckily I remembered to take the photo and collect a specimen which sure enough was *Psathyrella spadicea* (Chestnut Brittlestem). We have just a handful of previous records at a couple of sites for this species which has quite individual microscopic features worth sharing with you here.

Right and inset, *Psathyrella spadicea* growing at the foot of a Beech trunk today. The inset shows the remarkable cells found on the gill edge (x 400) which have thickened walls towards their tips which sometimes bear crystals (though today were missing). They look amazingly like a pod of porpoises – once seen never forgotten! (PC)



Well, that's sadly about it for the season! My thanks as always to all of you for your contribution to our amazingly long list today. I for one thoroughly enjoyed it and we can now start looking forward to whatever next year brings. We've had a remarkable new intake of members this year – at a rough estimate around 35! A good percentage of those, however, have yet to make an appearance but we hope will be in evidence in the Spring when we'll hope to have at least a couple of dates arranged. Thank you too to the photographers

today and my apologies that not more of your photos were included but time was somewhat curtailed as my quest for a tiger fast approaches!

Bye all.