

FUNGI WALK at BRADENHAM WOODS, October 1st 2017

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Despite the dreary drizzly morning with a serious threat of wind and rain, a group of 17 members plus two prospective new members met up today continuing this season's trend of encouraging numbers attending our walks. Making our way up the somewhat muddy path we started off the day's list with a cluster of good sized though somewhat soggy Entolomas (Pink Gills) which Derek later identified as *Entoloma sericatum* - no English name and one of 11 species new to the site today

Entoloma sericatum - a rather nondescript mushroom and a member of a large and very tricky genus to identify. The telltale pink gills of the genus are just visible in Nick's photo where the lowest cap is splitting. (NS)

It soon became apparent that we were finding many small species – either litter-loving or growing on fallen branches, but very few of the larger mycorrhizal fungi – *Russula*, *Lactarius*, *Boletus*, *Amanita* and the like, which are often in abundance at this site. Our final list of 87 species certainly reflects this, and I soon found myself wondering how we are going to provide a good showing of specimens for the public at our annual display next weekend. It seems that this autumn fungal fruiting got underway early in the Chilterns but has also peaked early despite suitable damp conditions; as I suspected, I think it likely that numbers will now decline, also the early leaf fall is now likely to hamper finding fungi, but I really hope to be proved wrong!

We found two different species of *Agaricus* (Mushroom) which frequent deciduous woodland but aptly display some typical characteristics of this large genus: *A. silvaticus* (Blushing Wood Mushroom) has a scaly brownish cap which 'does what it says on the tin' i.e. reddens where scratched or damaged. In complete contrast, *A. silvicola* (Wood Mushroom) has a smooth white cap which yellows where scratched or damaged (perhaps Jaundiced Wood Mushroom would be a more descriptive English name?). Surprisingly, both are good edible species despite their staining flesh, especially when one knows that *A. xanthodermus* (Yellow Stainer and another species having yellowing flesh) is one that should be avoided. The trick is to scratch the stem base to distinguish between these two yellowing mushrooms – only the Yellow Stainer turns bright chrome yellow here and as we demonstrated today the stem base of the Wood Mushroom might turn slightly brownish but never chrome yellow. (For a variety of examples of these species try googling the Latin names and clicking on Images.)

Our list includes 12 species of *Mycena* (Bonnets) and many specimens were to be found either in the litter or on fallen branches according to species. This genus often needs to be carefully identified with a microscope but quite a few species we saw can with experience be safely named in the field. We found 4 litter-loving species which are closely related, though one of them is much less frequently recorded. These were *Mycena pura* (Lilac Bonnet), *M. rosea* (Rosy Bonnet), *M. pelianthina* (Blackedge Bonnet) and the much less well-know *M. diasma* (no English name). Under the microscope they are all pretty similar but they can readily be distinguished in

the field with practice, being larger and thicker fleshed than most other Bonnet species. The first two have different coloured caps and stems, with lilac tones in *M. pura* and with a pink cap and whitish stem in *M. rosea*. (See the photo of this species on the final page.) *M. pelianthina* has a duller often greyish cap but has one redeeming character: with a hand lens one can see a distinct

dark purple (not black as its English name suggests) line along the edge of each gill, a unique feature. *M. diosma* somewhat resembles *M. pura* though the cap colour is clearly darker purple and tends to show some concentric zoning in the outer half; also it has a slightly aromatic smell whereas the other three species all have a sharp smell of radish.

Mycena diosma (taken in 2014 at Penn Wood) showing the typical concentric zoning which helps to separate it from the much more common *M. pura*. (PC)



On our walks we regularly

record two species of *Mycena* which grow on fallen wood and are very common in the Chilterns owing to the preponderance of Beech found here. *Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop Bonnet) is one of the easiest to recognise with its orange stem and juice. *Mycena arcangeliana* (Angel's Bonnet) takes more practice and has no redeeming juice to help; when young the stem has purplish tints and the cap is dark at the top with a much paler rim around the bottom - seen clearly in the lowest cluster in Nick's photo. Note here also how the fruitbodies grow in tight clusters on the wood and how the caps fade with maturity when they become much harder to recognise and look very similar to many other *Mycena* species, but the knack is to look around for young specimens when the telltale distinguishing features are apparent.



Above left: *Mycena crocata* with its unmistakable orange stem and juice. Note also the typical 'bleeding' developing on the cap flesh of the nearest fruitbody. Above right: *Mycena arcangeliana* showing here both typical young fruitbodies tightly clustered and much less distinctive more mature fruitbodies. Both these two species are very common in the Chilterns and grow on fallen branches of Beech. (NS)

Whilst discussing this genus we have one more common species of *Mycena* worth a mention: *Mycena leptocephala* (Nitrous Bonnet) grows in litter (both deciduous and conifer) and is decidedly grey in both cap and gills but the feature which is distinctive is its strong smell of bleach, especially if the gills are crushed a bit. If you find a grey *Mycena* in grassland with this same smell it is much more likely to be *M. aetites* (Drab Bonnet) - a species which, however does not occur in woodland.

Mycena leptocephala, one of many species of this genus found today. (NS)



Many of us picked up collections of *Marasmius rotula* (Collared Parachute) a small and common woodland species superficially reminiscent of *Mycena* which grows on twigs and sticks. The white caps are somewhat fluted with a hollow in the middle and the stems are typical of its

genus being very thin and wiry, also pale at the top but lower down soon almost black. With careful observation the gills can be seen to attach to a collarium, like a cogwheel, and are free of the stem itself – this feature found only in one other *Marasmius*, one which is much less common, also tiny and growing exclusively on fallen Beech leaves, *M. bulliardii*, not seen today.



Marasmius rotula (above NS and right taken from online courtesy of Leif Goodwin – a beautiful photo making the cogwheel gill attachment easy to see).

It was surprising with the amount of fallen wood around that only two specimens of *Pluteus* (Shield) were found, the first being the common *Pluteus cervinus* (Deer Shield), one we can safely identify in the field unless found on conifer when it could be one of two different Shields. The second was *Pluteus ephebeus* (no English name), new to the site and with only a handful of previous county records. Though typically dull brown and having pink gills which are free (features common to all Shields), in the field the smaller size and different texture to the cap surface alert one to the fact that it will need checking with a microscope to identify: following a

detailed key the cells both on the cap and on the gill edge and face (the flat surface) led me to the name.



Pluteus ephebeus, a smaller and flimsier Shield than the common *P. cervinus*, often having a striate outer surface (visible here). The young gills are only just turning pink in this specimen but can be seen to be free (i.e. not attaching to the stem). (TH)

Below are a few more photos of things we found. Many thanks to everyone for coming and searching so diligently, and to Nick and Tony for sending me their photos taken in what were not very easy conditions – the light was not conducive to photography to say the least. Hope to see you all again very soon.

Photos: NS = Nick Standing; PC = Penny Cullington; TH = Tony Hardware.



Mycena rosea (Rosy Bonnet), a beautiful species and often large for the genus with cap up to 5 or 6 cm across, one of several similar Bonnets nameable in the field and having a smell of radish. (TH)



Left: Perfect specimens of *Lycoperdon perlatum* (Common Puffball) showing their crumbly 'warts' which separate it from the equally common but smooth surfaced *L. pyriforme* (Stump puffball). The warts rub off very easily and in fact a few can be seen here having fallen onto the leaf below on the left. (NS)

Below: *Geastrum triplex* (Collared Earthstar). Though the collar around the 'Puffball'-like centre is sometimes missing in this species, it is showing well here in the left hand fruitbody. (NS)



Left: Two specimens of *Inocybe lilacina* (Lilac Fibrecap – in most books as a variety of *I. geophylla*) though it is now recognised by some authorities as worthy of species status. Several small species with lilac tints can be confused with it, but none of them have these pale beige crowded gills underneath, nor an acidic smell. (NS)