

FUNGI WALK at FINEMERE WOOD, September 8th 2018

followed by an identification session chez Derek

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This was our first event of the 2018 Autumn season – a repeat of last year’s successful session (held just 10 days later in Sept) when 14 members attended and we recorded 69 species. Not so this year! My guess, before we started, that we’d struggle to list 30 species sadly proved all too accurate: just 21 species were found despite the diligent searching of the five attendees. I suspect this is a record low for the group. The woodland floor was bone dry and as hard as concrete after the hottest and driest summer for years, though to add insult to injury it drizzled on and off throughout the morning. For those of us who’d recently returned from Scotland where we were falling over the fungi it was a sorry and frustrating sight to behold.

It was good to welcome two new members today though sad that we found so little to impress them with, but in some ways for beginners it’s less daunting to start off with only a moderate number of fruit bodies and Latin names to contend with. Predictably most of what we found was growing on fallen wood rather than in the somewhat impenetrable soil, also nothing we found was in very good nick except for two nice specimens of *Fistulina hepatica* (Beefsteak Fungus), both growing on its commonest though not quite exclusive host: Oak. As we’re somewhat short of images to include in this report for obvious reasons, I’m including both specimens below as both are excellent.



The two different specimens of *Fistulina hepatica* we found today, both a bit on the dry side so not showing any signs of the blood-like red juice which can exude in damp conditions to make its English name even more realistic! Left was taken by Derek and Right (with the macabre appearance of someone’s hand creeping over the top) was taken by Claudi.

Another large bracket we found was *Laetiporus sulphureus* (Chicken of the Woods) growing on a fallen Oak trunk. From our records this appears to be new for the site, so at least we have one new addition to the list of just over 300 species we’ve recorded here in the last 20 years. Again the material was predictably on the dry side and rather curling down at the edges. I include below Claudi’s photo of today’s find and in contrast another I have which shows the same species looking somewhat different when young and moist.



Above is today's rather atypical and emaciated bracket *Laetiporus sulphureus* looking suspiciously like *Meripilus giganteus* (Giant Polypore) (CVS). To show how different it can sometimes look, below is a much fresher and beautiful specimen I found growing on Cherry elsewhere in the county back in 2005. (PC)



One further bracket of interest is worth a mention: this was *Daedaleopsis confragosa* (Blushing Bracket) growing as it often does on fallen Birch, though it's equally common on Willow. Below Claudi has put two photos together to show both the upper typical zoned surface and the pores beneath which give rise to its common name: when fresh and moist they bruise pink when pressed. Today's specimen obliged by turning just faintly pink (visible around the edge of the pores), but when really old and dry this colour change is absent.



Above: *Daedaleopsis confragosa* showing both surfaces and the slight pink 'blushing' at the edge. (CVS)



Claudi found one 'Jelly' fungus growing on fallen Oak which we identified as *Calocera pallidospatulata* (Pale Stagshorn). In the absence of other things to mention today I thought I'd include a little more about this genus here. There are several quite similar *Calocera* species, all notably orange, perhaps the commonest being *C. viscosa* (Yellow Stagshorn), a taller and striking species with branching tips which grows on old conifer stumps to a height of 6 cms or a bit more. The other species are much smaller, under 1 cm tall and unbranched though growing in swarms on fallen wood. Today's find is a paler species (as its English name suggests) and tends to widen out and flatten at the tips (spatulate or spoonlike). Some books state that it grows on conifer but we find it regularly on deciduous wood as well.

Left: *Calocera viscosa*, not found today but included for comparison with the species we did find – see below. (PC)

Right: *Calocera pallidospatulata*, under 1 cm tall and found growing on fallen Oak today and showing its typical 'spathulate' tips. (CVS)

Another similar species though not as common as the one we found today is *Calocera cornea* (Small Stagshorn). The species name (cornea) translates as 'shaped like a horn' and the tiny fruit bodies are more like a spike, do not widen out as in the previous species and tend to curve over slightly like a cow's horn. It occurs on fallen Oak and Beech.



Left, *Calocera cornea* shown here for comparison with the similar *C. pallidospatulata*. The photo was taken by member Tony Marshall at Naphill Common in 2014.

Afterwards we repaired to Whitchurch and enjoyed a few hours exploring Derek's amazing library of fungi books and learning from a demonstration of the features to be found in fungi when one uses a microscope. Something of the intricacies and pitfalls of identification were explained and we all appreciated the opportunity to see Derek's lab and equipment in action.

See the separate list available for more details of what we found today. Thanks to all who attended, and particularly to Derek and Claudi for their photos. We now desperately need a really prolonged soaking of rain to spur things into action.