

Foray at Linford Wood on October 30th 2016

Penny Cullington

Our walk today was joint with the Milton Keynes Natural History Society and we were a group of about 15 of which 5 were BFG members. The day was mild and dry and we were warned at the start that the area was very dry and there was not much fungi about. Certainly compared with the south of the county the ground appeared very hard but as we progressed along the tarmac paths the thick undergrowth and moss at the edges had retained enough moisture for a few species to be found including the delectable and miniscule bright white *Marasmius setosus* and some specimens of *Scleroderma verrucosum* (Scaly Earthball). When the tarmac gave way to woodchip we started finding a wider variety of species though unfortunately the recent addition of a new layer of chipping had probably submerged quite a few things. Once this has rotted down a bit there may well be more fungi here - damp woodchip provides an excellent substrate for many interesting species.



Once we were able to move off the paths a bit and explore the ditches either side and mixed deciduous trees the species list started growing and several species of *Pluteus* (Shield) were found on the fallen wood. Particularly photogenic were two specimens of *Pluteus salicinus* (Willow Shield) which served to demonstrate the characteristics of this genus: pale pink gills which are free i.e. not actually attached to the stem in the centre as can be seen clearly in Justin's lower photo here.



Left and above, nice material of *Pluteus salicinus* found growing on a fallen branch today (JL)

We also came across several clumps of *Armillaria* (Honey Fungus) growing either on wood or around the base of stumps. Two different species of the genus were found, the first being *Armillaria gallica* (Bulbous Honey Fungus) which can be distinguished by its yellow tints especially in the lower stem where as the common name suggests it tends to be somewhat swollen.

Armillaria gallica growing on a deciduous stump (PC)



Later we found the true Honey Fungus – *Armillaria mellea* which lacks the swollen yellow stem base of the previous species. This species is considered bad news for any woodland, or even garden, and can spread rapidly from tree to tree (or shrub to shrub) via its thick black bootlace-like threads of mycelium attacking both dying and healthy plants; it is very difficult to eradicate once it gets a hold.



Steccherinum ochraceum on a Oak stick today (UL)

Joanna picked up a stick which had good specimens of a corticioid species (one which grows resupinate / flat on wood). This particular species has spines as opposed to pores and luckily Derek had the name at his fingertips: *Steccherinum ochraceum*. The spiny ochre centre and smooth white edge is typical of this distinctive species, making it one of only a few of this type of fungus which can safely be recognised without recourse to a microscope. Many of them are more or less smooth and white and the group as a whole are affectionately known to mycologists as ‘white paint’!

A cluster of impressive large and pale mushroom types was noticed growing at the path edge at one point; this was *Clitocybe geotropa* (Trooping Funnel), an edible species when young though easy to confuse with another similar Funnel which is best avoided: *Clitocybe nebularis* (Clouded Agaric). This species turned up a few minutes later along the same path.



Above left the edible *Clitocybe geotropa* and above right the inedible and somewhat similar *Clitocybe nebularis* (PC)

Conspicuous by their absence today were several genera of mycorrhizal fungi (those which grow in association with particular trees). In fact the only species we found belonging to this group were a few members of the genus *Inocybe* (Fibre-cap) and one member of the genus *Hebeloma* (Poisonpie).

We also found a slime mould growing on a piece of rotting bare wood which really need magnification to enable on to appreciate its detail, a miniature forest of tiny stalks with nodding round sliver heads on top. This was *Physarum nutans*. Slime moulds are intriguing and not really fungi at all but form a unique kingdom of their own; they have many characteristics in common with the fungal kingdom, however, and are therefore usually studied by mycologists and included in their lists for recording purposes.



The slime mould *Physarum nutans* found today. (DS)

The list for today stands at 50 species, the most interesting of which was *Agaricus moellerianus* found in soil under thick vegetation at a path edge. This is the first record for the county with only 6 UK records to date. For more details of what we found see the complete list. Many thanks to all who attended, and in particular to Justin and Derek for their photos.



Forayers under the mixed Oak and Fir trees today. (JL)