

FUNGI WALK at PENN WOOD, October 29th 2017

Penny Cullington

A good sized group (16) met up in the church carpark and started as we usually do by looking at the patch of grass opposite the Vicarage. In the past this has been an excellent spot for grassland fungi but sadly no longer: we found virtually nothing! Moving through to the cricket pitch we started picking up a few interesting bits, including a Beech stick collected by Jackie with a long patch of a grey almost toothed resupinate (flat fungus on wood). This peeled off easily making me think at first that it was *Datronia mollis* (Common Mazegill) but I soon twigged it was not that as it had a distinctive sweet smell not unlike orange! This rang a bell with me and at home I was able to confirm it as *Mycoacia nothofagi* – no common name and a species with only 77 UK records, also Near Threatened on the Red Data List, first recorded in the county at Burnham Beeches in 2005. In the last few years we've found it again both here at Penn and also in nearby Beaconsfield and today's was the 5th for the county. So a nice find by Jackie to start us off.



Mycoacia nothofagi found on a Beech stick today (JW)

Woodland fungi are now becoming quite scarce this year, so we were hopeful that the cricket pitch and churchyard would provide us with some grassland species and we were not disappointed. A total of ten different *Hygrocybe* species (Waxcaps) were found, all of which have been recorded here previously, but for quite a few years the numbers of these attractive and brightly coloured fungi have been decreasing here so it was good to find them fruiting in good numbers today.



Two species of Waxcap found today: above left is *Hygrocybe psittacina* (Parrot Waxcap) on the cricket pitch, a species with slimy cap and stem, here sporting unusual pink colours as well as the typical green which may possibly make it a recently recognised new species; above right is *Hygrocybe insipida* (Spangle Waxcap) in the churchyard, a small species with a sticky cap but stem no more than moist and slightly decurrent gills. Cap colour is variable from reddish orange to yellowish but typically as here the stem top is clearly red though may be yellowish lower down. (JW).

Both grassland areas sported plenty of bright yellow 'Fairy clubs', some tall, some short, some a slightly more orange colour, but though I checked the spore shape of quite a few later at home all the yellow ones were the very common *Clavulinopsis helvola* (Yellow Club) and the more orange ones were *Clavulinopsis luteoalba* (Apricot Club).

In the churchyard at the end of the morning Justin noticed two black clubs, these belonging to the grassland genus *Geoglossum* (Earthtongue). These are much less often found than the Fairy Clubs and used to appear on the Vicarage lawn here though I've not seen them here for years now. There are about ten different Earthtongue species which always need a scope to identify, and this one today was *Geoglossum fallax*. It is in fact the commonest species with the most number of UK records but for some unexplained reason has no common English name though other rarer species do! As it happens this was not only new to the site but also to the county, so a nice find by Justin.



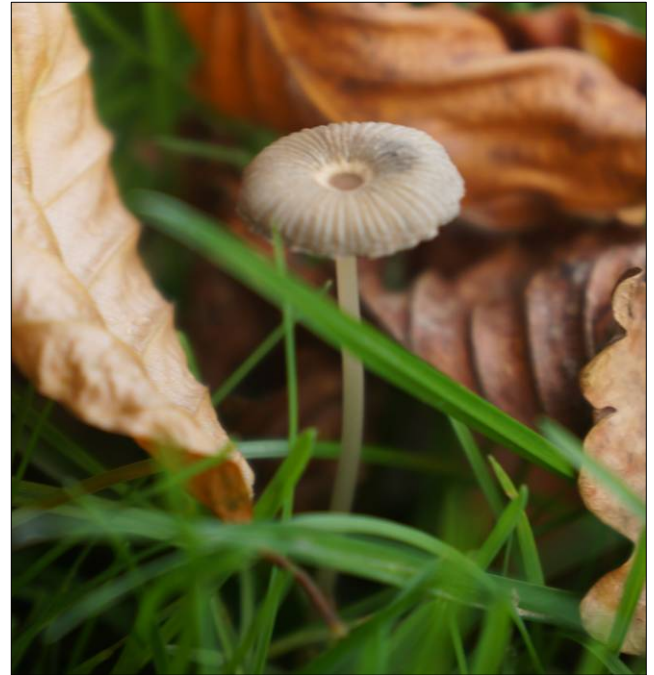
Geoglossum fallax found in the churchyard today. (JW)
 Right are microscopic views of the unusual features of this genus: though in the field they look somewhat similar to the Fairy Clubs (which are Basidiomycetes – spore droppers) Earthtongues are Ascomycetes – spore shooters and have amazing spores which can be up to 100 microns long according to species. The number of septa (divisions) within each spore is critical in identification, as is the shape of the wormlike colourless paraphyses also seen mixed with the spores here. (PC)

Under the huge oak near the cricket pitch we found an attractive ring of *Clitocybe geotropa* (Trooping Funnel, here living up to its English name). One family of prospective new members who were clearly disappointed by our lack of concentration on edible fungi had already deserted us by this point so missed this treat as well as the *Cantharellus tubaeformis* (Yellowlegs) we found later on!

Two good edible species we found today: right, two views of *Clitocybe geotropa* showing the characteristic central 'bump' in the caps and the deeply decurrent gills (NM); below, *Cantharellus tubaeformis*, though rather faded specimens the diagnostic yellow stems and shallow folds for gills are clearly visible. (JC)



We have photos of two Inkcap species found today: the delectable *Parasola plicatilis* (Pleated Inkcap) was showing nicely on the boundary of the cricket pitch under the Oaks. There are several very similar species in this group of Inkcaps and it is always necessary to check the spore size and shape to arrive at a species name – luckily this group do not deliquesce (autodigest leaving just a black pool of liquid in ones collecting pot) giving one time to assess the details at home later. Justin found a fallen Beech branch liberally covered in another little Inkcap, this one luckily recognisable in the field as it is one that deliquesces. This was *Coprinellus disseminatus* (Fairy Inkcap, in some books as Crumblecap) which grows in large colonies often on submerged deciduous roots but also on fallen wood.



Above, *Coprinellus disseminatus* (JW) and right *Parasola plicatilis* (NM)

In one of the grassy areas near the cricket pitch one specimen of *Lepista saeva* (Field Blewit, in some books as Bluelegs) was found. This is another good edible species and was in fact new to the site; it is much less common than *Lepista nuda* (Wood Blewit) also found today in the woodland area. It has a much paler cap than the woodland species and the stem is a beautiful shade of violet blue, just visible here.



Right, *Lepista saeva* was new to the site today. (TH)



We regularly turn up two rather large members of the Puffball family in the cricket pitch area, both of which have previously been in the genus *Calvatia* but are now residing with the more common puffballs in the genus *Lycoperdon*. Both were found today: *L. excipuliforme* (Pestle Puffball) and *L. utriforme* (Mosaic Puffball).

Left, *Lycoperdon utriforme*, this fruitbody was more than 12 cm across. (JW)

Finally to a couple of Myxomycetes (Slime Moulds): One grassland species found in the churchyard was *Mucilago crustacea* (no slime moulds have common English names but this particular species is often affectionately referred to as either Dog Vomit or Cat Sick!). The other species found was a brightly coloured and attractive one covering a damp bare rotting log: *Trichia decipiens*. The colony of tiny orange-peach coloured blobs develop tiny white stems and eventually at maturity they dry off to become rather dull pale brown spore masses (sporangia) which look a bit like tiny balloons on a short string. At this stage the wind currents blow away the spores leaving the minute stems with cups looking like miniature wine goblets. Often when one collects a slime mould in its 'slimy' state, with care it is possible to keep it for several days and watch it develop to the spore spreading stage (the stage at which it can be identified). However, I have regularly failed to keep *T. decipiens* until this stage – it eventually just goes black and never reaches maturity. I have Sunday's specimen still at home and will add a photo here if I succeed this time but have my doubts! At least the early stages of this particular species are distinct enough to allow it to be identified safely.

Right, *Mucilago crustacea* on grass stems in the churchyard, still at the slimy stage before drying off and become crusty (TH).

Below, *Trichia decipiens* on a damp bare log, also not yet fully mature but recognisable from its unique orange blobs on white stems. (JW)



If you'd like to see what these or any other species look like at different stages, try clicking on Images and Googling the Latin names. There will be errors online as in all things, but this can be a very useful source of information if your fungi handbooks lack enough images to give you sufficient information on a species.

Thank you for attending today, and as always many thanks to those who supplied me with photos.