BFG Fungi Walk at Wotton Park Estate
September 1st, 2019

Penny Cullington

A party of 11 of us met up today in the hope that despite the recent dry warm spell there might at least be some good Boletes here: this is the best time and indeed the best site we know of in the county for such as *Boletus* (now *Rubroboletus*) *satanas* (Devil's Bolete). We were in for a disappointment, however, and until nearing the end of the morning it looked as if the number of walkers would exceed the number of fungi! The list eventually made it to 20 (possibly our lowest autumn total ever?) with just one example of a bolete: Paul appeared with a small and rather slug-eaten specimen of ***Leccinum variicolor*** (Mottled Bolete), the slug damage on the stem showing the bright bluish–green staining which this species develops where the flesh is exposed to air. At least it was new to the site – our only addition for the day.

Early on in the grass near the lake Margaret found a clump of an interesting and unusual species which we've found here a couple of times before, also once at Hodgemoor Woods. ***Lentinus tigrinus*** (Tiger Sawgill) grows on the wood or roots of Willow and Poplar (probably the latter in this case) in damp habitats. It can be an impressive and beautiful fungus, so as we're a bit short of photogenic material today I include two examples for comparison.

Above left, today's rather desiccated collection of *Lentinus tigrinus,* and right rather more impressive specimens collected from this same spot in 2011, showing the tiger stripes and markings on cap and stem. (Interestingly the date of the 2011 collection was Sept 4th.) (PC)

Various specimens of *Ganoderma* provided interest today (possibly reflecting how little else of interest showed up!). The first was on a fallen hybrid Poplar – a common tree at this site, and once we'd seen the galls of the fly *Agathomyia wankowiczii* on the underside of one specimen we suspected this must be ***Ganoderma applanatum*** (Artist's Fungus) though this seemed a strange tree host for the species. However, I checked the spores later which matched fine so I'm happy that the determination is correct despite the fact that the literature does not include Poplar amongst the known hosts.

Right, *Ganoderma applanatum* on a fallen Poplar branch showing both the upper surface liberally covered in spores and the pores below infected by the galls of *Agathomyia Wankowiczii* (Yellow flat-footed fly). (PC)

A little further on Margaret found more brackets, again on Poplar, but the surface was clearly different from the two more common species of *Ganoderma* we often record: shiny and more orange with a varnish-like coating which cracked when I bent it in an attempt to break a bit off, revealing a brownish red juice. This was ***Ganoderma resinaceum*** (surprisingly with no common name), a species I'm familiar with from Stoke Common where it grows on Oak though I was pleased to find at home later that it is also known on Poplar.

Above, fresh and old specimens of *Ganoderma resinaceum*, much less common than *G. australe* and *G. applanatum*, here growing on a standing Poplar trunk. (PC)

Further *Ganoderma* brackets were found, to which I applied the 'thumbnail' test, explaining that if one's nail went into the upper rim of the bracket reasonably easily it was likely to be *G. applanatum*, but if the surface was too hard for this it was likely to be the extremely similar but more common *G. australe*. I took samples home to check if this test was reliable by comparing the spore size of the fly infested specimen (presumably *applanatum* with smaller spores) with a specimen with no signs of the fly but a rim soft enough for the thumbnail test (presumably also therefore *applanatum*) – spores of *australe* are distinctly larger in comparison. The test failed, however, disproving the theory! The second bracket with the soft rim had spores too big for *applanatum* so had to be *australe*. So it's back to the drawing board, though I believe it still holds true that any specimen having the fly galls on the underside is *applanatum*. We humans may not be able to distinguish between these two species in the field but the yellow flat-footed fly can!

This place has many bonfire sites which in past years have proved very productive for fungi but despite much searching nothing could be found on them today. Even ***Bolbitius vitellinus*** (now *titubans*) (Yellow Fieldcap) took some searching in the grassy areas to find today. Also in the grassy parts we found two species of Inkcap (a genus often well-represented here). I was pleased that later at home I was able to identify one of these as for obvious reasons it's not a genus I normally have much reason to study. This was a small and flimsy specimen, cap less than 1 cm across, growing on dead grass cuttings. At home I luckily managed to find a scrap of veil left on the cap; this proved crucial and led me together with spore size to ***Coprinopsis friesii***, a species I was relieved to find that Derek had found here several times before.

Andy McVeigh pointed out to me the signs of *Chalara* - Ash Dieback disease, which he'd noticed showing on saplings throughout the site. This is caused by the tiny ascomycete *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus* which fruits on the leaf petioles of this tree. We didn't find the fungus today though it did turn up at nearby Rushbeds Wood last weekend.

Nothing much else to share with you apart from a large clump of ***Polyporus squamosus*** (Dryad's Saddle) spotted half way up a deciduous trunk by Paul Goby, also a dead Birch trunk found by Toni which was liberally covered in fresh (yes, fresh!) brackets of ***Piptoporus*** (now moved to ***Fomitopsis*****) *betulinus*** (Birch Polypore). There must have been in excess of 40 brackets at different stages of development - a sight for sore eyes on a day when such sights were few and far between, and one that prompted Margaret to suggest it was a fairy staircase! (Photos on the next page.)

Thanks for coming, everyone, and searching so hard for our meagre list of species today. Let's pray for some serious rain in the next 10 days to get Hodgemoor Woods really fruiting well for us when we visit.

Left: a cluster of *Polyporus squamosus* and below: Margaret's fairy staircase - *Fomitopsis betulinus* fruiting in abundance (the only thing that was!) *(PC)*