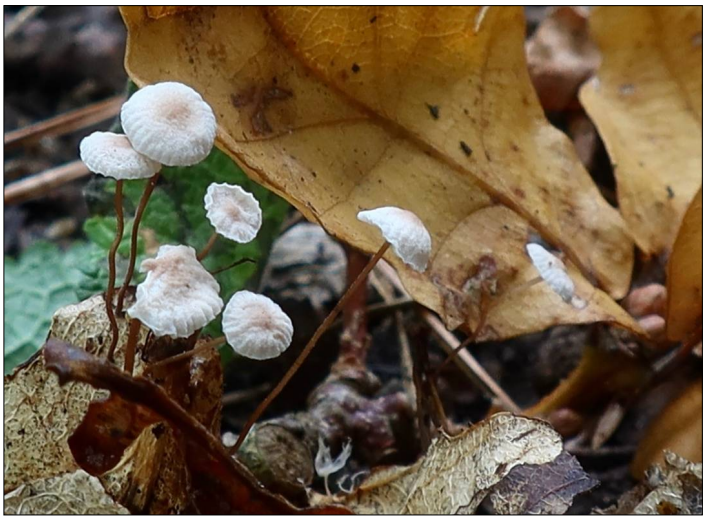
FUNGI WALK at RUSHMERE ESTATE on Sunday September 25th 2022

Penny Cullington

We were a smallish group today – just 11 (though a few years ago this would have been considered a good number!). Those regular attendees who were absent today did not, however, miss a walk blessed with prolific fungi: it was *so* dry with fungi really thin on the ground – very different from our late October visit here last year when we topped 100 species. Today's list struggled to a disappointing 41 and many of the common things we found were represented by just one or two rather shrivelled specimens. It was hard going to say the least! But as you've read in these reports many times before, despite the somewhat modest list some interesting things were found – always the way, and the best of them was spotted by two young new members – more on this later.

The first species of note was growing in good numbers on the very dry leaf litter under Oak - a species also found last week at Hodgemoor Woods though I failed to name it there, only discovering its identity after this second find when browsing though books as one does when stumped. This was a tiny white capped 'Marasmioid' type, not unlike a small off-white *M. rotula* but lacking the 'cogwheel' gill attachment: ***Collybiopsis quercophila*** (Oak Toughshank). One redeeming feature is its distinctly reddish stem, the other being its occurrence solely on dead Oak leaves. We have just two previous county records, both made by renowned mycologists about 20 years ago, so a new one on both Derek and I.



Above: The tiny *Collybiopsis quercophila* found in quantities on dead Oak leaves today. The left image (PC) is included to give an idea of scale, the right (LS) showing the reddish stems and parachute-like pale caps.

On a fallen Birch trunk it was nice to see a fresh display of the tightly clustering ***Kuehneromyces mutabilis*** (Sheathed Woodtuft). The species is quite easy to confuse with the somewhat similar to *Galerina marginata* (Funeral Bell) which also grows clustered on fallen deciduous wood, has similar colouring and a ring on the stem. Today's species soon develops a two-toned cap, seen clearly here and not a feature seen in the other species.

Right above and below (PC), also left (LS): *Kuehneromyces mutabilis.* Note the clustered habit, the two-tone caps and stem with a ring – all good pointers to the species.

Near the road we found not only an impressive example of ***Meripilus giganteus*** (Giant Polypore) fruiting amongst nettles around an old Beech stump, but also several impressive clumps of ***Coprinopsis romagnesiana*** (no common name but very similar to *C. atramentaria* Common Inkcap). This was our only Inkcap of the day and served to demonstrate how Inkcaps can go over and 'deliquesce' often in a matter of hours.

Above: *Meripilus giganteus* (LS), and right: several clusters of *Coprinopsis romagnesiana* at different stages of development (JL). Below: Derek explaining to Molly and Lizzie (two new members) about the delights of his specialist genera, the Inkcaps. (JL)

One fallen Birch trunk had three different bracket species adorning it. One was the unusual ***Lenzites betulina*** (Birch Mazegill), illustrated last week in my Hodgemoor Woods report. The next was the very common ***Daedaleopsis confragosa*** (Blushing Bracket), a species often found on Birch or Willow and one we seldom include in these reports. Today's were fresh enough to display the instant pink blush on their pale pores underneath when pressed (though confusingly when older and browner no blushing occurs). The third caused some doubts because though our instant reaction was to name it *Fomes Fomentarius* (Hoof Fungus), it bore a striking likeness to the genus *Ganoderma* – especially when one was overturned and we found we could 'draw' on it as one can with the other genus.

However, the pores were not quite pale enough for *Ganoderma* and later, having checked the spores which are very different in *Fomes*, Derek was able to confirm our initial thoughts in the field.

My apologies, but at this point the Microsoft programme refused to co-operate with adding in photos, and I ran out of time trying to cajole them! So from here on there are a few placed at the end of the report.

On a large Pine stump a fresh clump of the impressive ***Sparassis crispa*** (Wood Cauliflower) was found – always a crowd pleaser and also not surprisingly a regular at this site in which conifer abounds – though we failed to find it here last year.

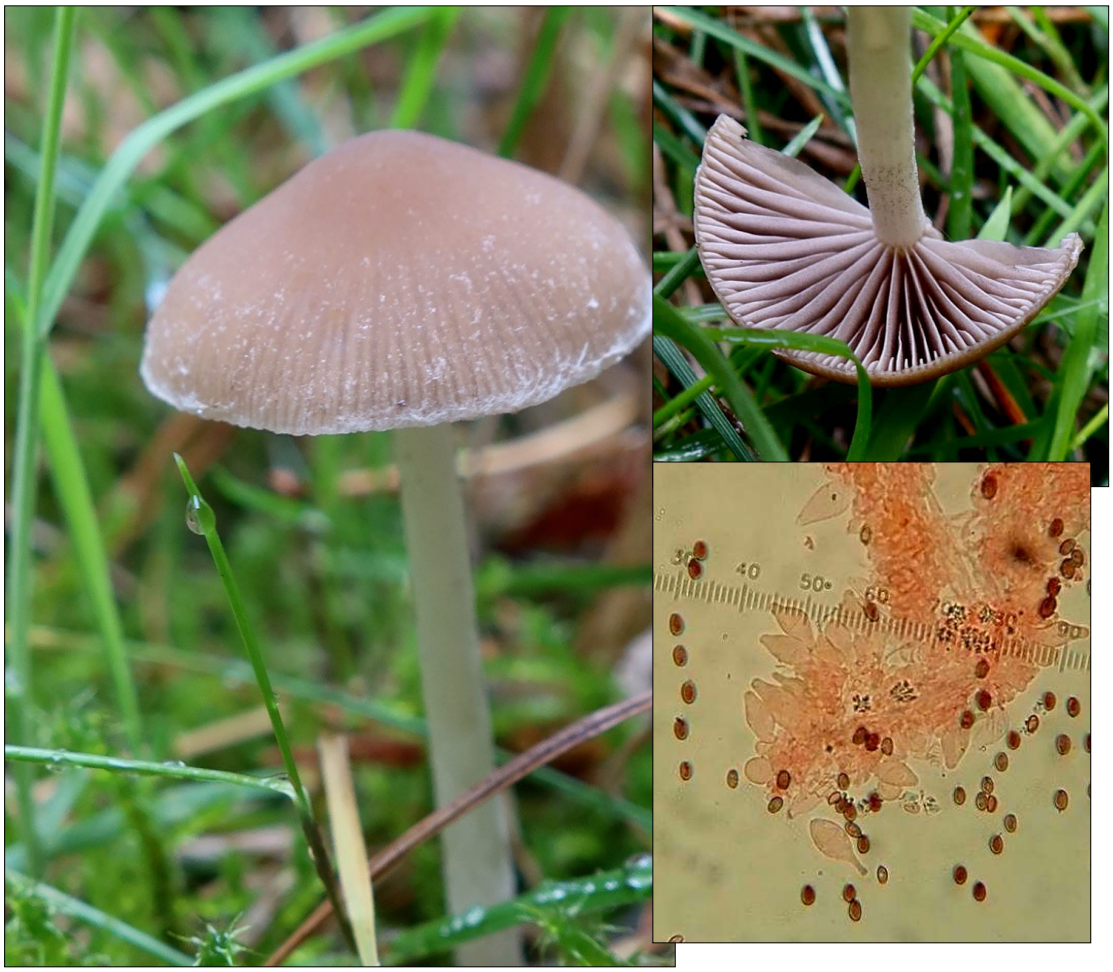
It's not often that the genus *Psathyrella* (Brittlestem) features in my reports. It is a genus with many species, mostly rather drab and unmemorable and though with experience one can usually name the genus in the field this is certainly not the case with naming the species. Today we found three different species, all needing a scope to identify later at home, one common, one certainly unusual and one rare and new to the county. The unusual species fooled me even to genus in the field, it had a small pale slightly ochre rounded cap reminding me of *Stropharia semiglobata* (Dung Roundhead) but was found in woody litter. Later at home I found the cells on the gills were unusual, being partly coated with granules which turned green in ammonia. This was ***Psathyrella lutensis*** (no common name) and one I'd found just once before at Stoke Common also on woody litter, making today's just the second county record. (No photo to share, I'm afraid.)

Our rare species was found in a grassy pathside by our new members Molly and Lizzie, and looked pretty well like many other Brittlestems. Luckily Linda took photos of this one in the field. At home it was the last species I checked and in fact I nearly forgot it, only remembering overnight which pot I'd put it in! The smallish spores and presence of cystidia only on the gill edge led me eventually to ***Psathyrella canoceps*** (no common name) – a species new to me, and I was relieved to find that the full description fitted well including the cap being partly striate and with streaky bits of 'veil' – both features visible here. There appear to be about 50 national records and today's is the first for the county. (It appears also to have moved to the genus *Coprinopsis*!) The photos of this are at the bottom of the report.

Right at the end of the morning in the Pines above the car park when we were almost resigned to the fact that this area was pretty well devoid of fungi we found two separate collections of ***Agaricus bohusii*** (Medusa Mushroom). The first was a small group of three immature fruitbodies growing clustered, one of which I retained to check later; the second – in a different area – was much more mature. The photo here shows the retained young specimen placed with the second larger specimen to illustrate the species. The strongly contrasting dark brown cap scales make this species notable – one that Justin Long is familiar with in the north of the county where it seem to favour the sandy soil and areas of conifer though the species also occurs in other conditions. The photos of this are also at the bottom of the report.

Time to finish off. So the final total number of species was a disappointing 42, and of those 14 were new to the site though this is only our third visit here and it is a large site and presumably also under-recorded. Justin has made the suggestion that we time any visits here later in the season as this green sand area obviously drains very quickly and needs good quantities of autumn rain to kick start the fungi. So we'll bear that in mind for next time. Many thanks to all who made the effort to travel up from the south of the county, and a big thank you to Linda for all her photography. For more information on what we found see the detailed list.

Photographers
JL = Justin Long; LS = Linda Seward; PC = Penny Cullington



Left: *Psathyrella canoceps* found today, new to the county. (LS) The lower insert shows the gill edge cystidia stained in congo red, also the brown spores, magnified x 400. (PC)

Below: *Fomes fomentarius,* here looking suspiciously similar to a species of *Ganoderma*. (LS)

Left: *Agaricus bohusii* found in the Pine litter here today. (LS)