

FUNGI WALK at BURNHAM BEECHES on Sunday October 19th 2024

Penny Cullington

We were 22 strong today, so a full compliment with a number of experienced mycologists to help Derek and I with identifying both in the field and at home afterwards. We were also joined by Conservation Officer Angus Wilkinson who, before we set out, told us a little about the site, its heritage, the importance of fungi to its ecology and continued health, and how our visits and records are contributing to its conservation. It was a drizzly morning but had been very dry for several weeks and this was reflected in the lack of much fruiting in most parts we visited. However, such is the diligence and growing field skills of this group that the list still managed to creep up to 111 species once the scope work at home had been done, though only a few of those appear to be new to the site.

Last year on our walk in early October we found a rare species of *Lentinellus* here, but I'd forgotten that when early on I noticed this small greyish brown cluster on a fallen Birch trunk. As it clearly had the decurrent saw-edge gills of that genus (see insert here) and also had a sweetish smell I put 2+2 together and made 5, thinking it was most probably *Lentinellus cochleatus* (Aniseed Cockleshell) – not that uncommon. However, others who recalled our exciting find of *L. ursinus* (Bear Cockleshell) previously put me right, and at home a careful check confirmed it. So this was our second find of this rare species here and just the 6th time we've recorded it in the county.



Above: *Lentinellus ursinus* (LS)

Under the Pines before moving into the mire we saw quite a few specimens of the common *Hygrophopsis aurantiaca* (False Chanterelle), but in the mire was a much paler member of this genus which we've found in this area before. At home the spores were too large for the common species and fitted well with those for the much rarer *Hygrophoropsis macrospora* (Ivory False Chanterelle) – a species which favours *Sphagnum* areas such as this. Samples of this collection and the *Lentinellus* above are now dried for sequencing.

Below left: *Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca* (AP), and for comparison, right: *Hygrophoropsis macrospora* (LS)



Several other species of interest were found in the mire – an area we regularly check as it is such a unique and special habitat. This was where the very rare *Mycena dasypus* was first found and

eventually identified in 2023 after much confusion and research, a species with no records anywhere since it was first described in the 1990s. Just two tiny rather bedraggled specimens turned up today but though somewhat inconspicuous in the field the microscopic characters were unmistakable at home. Other members of this genus we found were a singleton specimen of *Mycena megaspora* (Rooting Bonnet) – a rare species which favours sites such as this, and ***Mycena galopus var. nigra*** (Dark Milking Bonnet) – a common species when in its usual brown-capped form but today it had everyone guessing till a stem was broken to reveal the white latex within.



Right: *Mycena galopus var. nigra* (LS)

I was handed a further *Mycena* of interest: a group of entirely white fruit bodies which just didn't compute into any species I knew. At home when I prepared a gill for microscopic examination I noticed the cross-ridges between the gills – a field character found in the ubiquitous brown-capped *Mycena galericulata* (Common Bonnet). Wondering whether a white variety of this species occurred though I'd never met it, I took a look at the microscopic features which did indeed match those of this species, then in an Italian book discovered *Mycena galericulata var. albidus*. Problem solved! So the mire today had produced unusual varieties of two of our commonest Bonnet species, one black and one white! (Sadly no photo of the white one, however.)

The ponies had been busy in this area and their dung provided further fungal interest. As well as several ascomycetes on our list, a large species of *Conocybe* which occurs on this substrate was separately collected and worked on at home by both me and Jesper, with agreement that it was ***Conocybe pubescens*** (Downy Conecap) – always a comfort when this happens. Also on this substrate in good numbers was some simply miniscule Inkcaps. As Derek had no scope to aid him at home afterwards their identity is not certain but both ***Parasola misera*** (Least Inkcaps) and ***Narcissea ephemeroides*** (Diaphanous Inkcaps) are the likeliest candidates.

Below left: *Conocybe pubescens* (JL), and right: possibly *Narcissea ephemeroides* (BW) NB: though these two photos might be the same size, the fungi were not! The *Conocybe* was 10 cms tall and the largest *Parasola* at most 10 mms tall!



Moving on, we found the grassland area almost barren of fungi though a nice fresh collection of *Xerocomellus cisalpinus* (Bluefoot Bolete) turned up and dutifully started to show signs of blueing once sectioned with a knife. Once back in the woodland a typical example of *Chlorophyllum rhacodes* (Shaggy Parasol) was found, showing the diagnostic features nicely.

Below: *Xerocomellus cisalpinus*, and right: *Chlorophyllum rhacodes* (both LS)



Later on an impressively large clump of rusty coloured mushrooms was found at the base of an old Birch. This was identified in the field as *Flammula alnicola* (Alder Scalycap) and later confirmed by Claudi after careful checking. Previously in genus *Pholiota*, this quite uncommon species lacks the scaly cap and stem of most members of that genus and despite its English name can occur at the base of other deciduous trees as well as Alder.



Left: *Flammula alnicola* with insert showing the smooth cap and gill colour. The spore colour is also apparent here, having dropped and then coloured several caps where they had overlapped. (cvs)

Many people picked up specimens of *Paxillus involutus* (Brown Rollrim) but failed to recognise it today. Though one of our commonest woodland mushrooms and when young quite easy to name when the caps are typically tightly inrolled, it regularly catches people out once that stage is past and the caps are fully expanded. Noting the decurrent gills at this stage is important, and another useful clue is to rub a finger up the gills whereupon they (the gills, not the fingers!) detach really easily from the flesh beneath. Trying this test out on other genera doesn't work in the same way. This species can get deceptively huge, up to 20 cms or more, which adds to the confusion



Left: *Paxillus involutus* showing a range of specimens from young with caps tightly inrolled to mature with obvious decurrent gills and no signs of inrolling left. (PC)

Pretty well done now, though I'll add a few extras at the bottom. Thank you, everyone, for your contributions today. Thank you especially to Mario, Claudi and Jesper for their excellent skills both in the field and at home, also to Sarah and Stephen for adding some rare ascomycetes to the list Thank you to Linda and

Barry for sterling work with their cameras too, and to Angus for helping to lead us round. For further details of what we found, see the separate species list which includes English names.

Photographers

AP = Alison Peace; BW = Barry Webb; CVS = Claudi Soler; JL = Jesper Launder; LS = Linda Seward;
MT = Mario Tortelli; PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon

Below left: *Russula fragilis* (MT)
Bottom left: *Imleria badia* (PC)

Below right: *Crepidotus applanatus* (SJE)
Bottom right: *Mucronella calva* (BW)



Below left: *Rhodocollybia maculata* (LS)



Below right: the slime mould *Didymium squamulosum* (BW)



Below left. The slime mould *Arcyria stipata* (BW)



Below right: the slime mould *Physarum leucophaeum* (BW)

