

FUNGI WALK at PENN WOOD on Sunday November 2nd 2025

Penny Cullington

We were a group of 23 today and met up in the church car park on a bright dry morning. Starting off in the churchyard we were hopeful of finding a good variety of grassland species as there'd been reports of a good display here quite recently. Not today, however! We scraped together a list of just 18 species with only four very common waxcaps found and in very low numbers. The most exciting find was a patch of *Geoglossum* (Earthtongue) found in a spot not previously known about though we've recorded the genus here several times in the last few years. In fact we've had samples sequenced from here twice and both times they've failed! Today's seemed to key out with no difficulty to *Geoglossum cookeanum* - not rare but as yet with no English name.

Right: *Geoglossum cookeanum* (JW)



Moving into the woodland things started to pick up and several times early on I was glued to the spot with specimens being handed in left right and centre, though many were not in the greatest nick consequently photo opportunities were few. Though I'd planned that we'd traverse the wood along the main path to the Amersham road, then back diagonally to the gate south of the cricket pitch, it became clear that this was never going to happen! So plans were quickly changed and a far shorter route was taken. Our list comprises mainly predictable common species but a few things were either of particular note or species we've not featured in these reports recently.

On an old Oak stump a gathering of tiny white rounded caps were spotted though despite giving the initial impression that they were mushrooms having gills and stem this was not the case.

Cudoniella acicularis (Oak Pin) is in fact an ascomycete and closer inspection with a x10 lens reveals no gills on the underside of the cap. Only up to 1cm tall with caps less than 5 mm across, they favour rotting deciduous wood, particularly Oak, and have been inhabiting this particular stump for many years.

Left: *Cudoniella acicularis* (YH)

Below: *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum* (BW)



When someone said they'd found a gelatinous lump which had teeth, I was particularly pleased knowing instantly from this description what the species was. *Pseudohydnum gelatinosum* (Jelly Tooth) is not something we see very often, partly because it only occurs on fallen conifer wood and we tend to visit predominantly deciduous woodland. However, of our 20 odd county records almost half are from this site, one I've been visiting for the last 30 odd years and I can recall the exact spot where I first discovered it here. This is in fact a basidiomycete and one of the 'jelly fungi' like



Tremella and *Exidia* but unique in having this spiny undersurface. Barry's description, when he sent me his stunning photo though not knowing the species name, was 'Cat's Tongue' – very apt!



on fruit trees where it is not welcome by commercial growers. The insert here is a library photo showing the species in its flat less mature form which is perhaps more easily recognisable.

Left above: *Chondrostereum purpureum* (PC)

A bare stick with a nice example of *Calocera pallidospathulata* (Pale Stagshorn) was found - a species common on bare conifer but also occurring on deciduous wood but very different in shape from the thin, short and spiky *C. cornea* (Small Stagshorn) which is also on our list today.



Right: *Calocera pallidospathulata* (JW)



Above: *Plicaturopsis crispa* (BS)

Several people handed us bits of a small flimsy bracket which seemed to be growing extensively in various places and forming tiers on fallen Beech. Superficially similar to the genus *Stereum* which has some members which grow flattish on wood as well as some which form brackets, *Chondrostereum purpureum* (Silverleaf Fungus) is most often encountered growing flat but displaying its distinctive pinkish to violaceous colours which separate it from species of *Stereum*. It was unusual to find it growing quite so prolifically. The English name refers to the disease this fungus causes when

Quite a few examples of the attractive little bracket *Plicaturopsis crispa* (Crimped Gill) were noted though some were still tiny and undeveloped making identification harder. Eventually a fully developed example turned up though each bracket is less than 2 cm across but the shape and colour show well here, with one upturned example showing the typical 'crimped' foldlike white gills underneath.

Another crowd pleaser in the woodland litter, and with several examples seen, was the ascomycete *Helvella crispa* (White Saddle), its shape and form so different from typical mushrooms and always a surprise to the uninitiated. The convoluted top and ridged stem are showing nicely in this example.

Right: *Helvella crispa* (AP)



On a mossy Oak branch but well out of reach were spotted some tiny mushrooms silhouetted against the light. There was no way of reaching them but I surmised that there might well be more of them dotted about on the mossy trunk lower down and if so

much more accessible. Sure enough the tiny bluish grey fruit

bodies of the delectable *Mycena pseudocorticola* (Steely Bonnet) were lurking in the moss. Justin's photo shows a slightly shrivelled but beautifully blue specimen found at eye level just waiting for his camera! Remember, these little beauties are well under 1cm including cap and stem.

Left: *Mycena pseudocorticola* (JW)



At one point I was handed a somewhat fluffy fungus about the size of a hen's egg which had been found on a stump. Both Derek and I recognised this as the unusual *Postia ptychogaster* (Powderpuff Bracket) which grows on fallen conifer but is generally only found in this immature anamorph state. As with the *Pseudohydnum* above, of our 20 odd county records we have more from this site than elsewhere.

Right: *Postia ptychogaster* (YH)



Above: *Deconica horizontalis* (PC)

Running along a fallen Beech branch I spotted some small brown 'pleurotoid' mushrooms – ie with a similar shape to *Pleurotus ostreatus* (Oyster Mushroom) with gills forming a fan shape and with either an eccentric stem or no stem at all. These were *Deconica horizontalis* (Wood Oysterling, previously in genus *Melanotus*) not that uncommon though easily overlooked as many such small species are. It is unusual in that it can occur not only on fallen wood but also on old rotten rope and even old sacking or carpet.

On a fallen Birch branch were some much larger pleurotoid mushrooms, similar in size to *Pleurotus ostreatus* but a very different colour and in a different genus. *Sarcomyxa serotina* (Olive Oysterling and previously in genus *Panellus*) is more often a subtle olive greenish grey-brown colour

but here was really fresh and more ochre yellowish. The caps have a slightly slimy gelatinous texture unlike the dry caps of *Pleurotus* and the gills are crowded and paler ochre and it has a short stubby eccentric stem. It is an occasional species occurring on deciduous wood often late in the season and into winter.

Right: *Sarcomyxa serotina* (BS)



Our most unusual species today, and new to the wood, was *Chromocyphella muscicola* (Moss Ear), a tiny ear-shaped 'cyphelloid' fungus – these being basidiomycetes though in general appearance

masquerading as ascomycete cup fungi, forming discs, tubes or in this case cups. The epithet *muscicola* means moss-loving and today's collection was on a moss covered stick, each cup only 4mm across at most with a smooth inner surface and a hairy outer surface. We have just two previous county records and neither Derek nor I could name it in the field so it was identified later by Sarah. (Bearing in mind the measurement of the largest cup here, give a thought to the size of two tiny but perfectly formed specks seen bottom right!



Left: *Chromocyphella muscicola* (BW)

When we eventually made it to the cricket pitch it had unfortunately just been mown and there was virtually nothing fungal to be found though in all honesty there were few signs of damaged fruit bodies and I suspect waxcaps are either more or less done for the year in this area or are 'having a bad season'. (I'll hopefully be proved wrong when we visit Stampwell Farm next weekend.) Today we did find just a few in the longer vegetation near the war memorial.

Right: *Hygrocybe reidii* (Honey Waxcap) accompanied by *Rickenella swartzii* (Collared Moss-cap) (YH)

So despite the grassland areas being somewhat disappointing we seem to have amassed a grand total of around 130 species. Thank you all for collecting so diligently; thank you Derek, Sarah and Stephen for valuable identifications afterwards; thank you to the photographers as well of course! I'll add a few extras after signing off. See the detailed list for more information on what we found.



Photographers

AP = Alison Peace; BS = Bob Simpson; BW = Barry Webb; DJS – Derek Schafer; JW = Justin Warhurst; MB = Margo Bekkering; PC = Penny Cullington; YH = Yen Hoe.



Above left: *Coprinopsis acuminata* (DJS), and right: *Clavulina cinerea* (MB)



Above left: *Xerocomellus pruinatus* (AP), and right a medley of woodland species for you to identify! (JW)
Below left: the miniscule slime mould *Cribraria rufa*, and right: the equally miniscule slime mould *Physarum* sp. awaiting a species name (BW)



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