FUNGI WALK at WOTTON PARK ESTATE on Wednesday September 24th 2024

Penny Cullington

I'm starting off this report with the identical words to last year's report for Wotton's walk which was a couple of weeks earlier in September: '*This was our first walk of the season, the site chosen not only for its spectacular setting beside a lake brimming with birds but also for giving us a fighting chance of seeing Boletus satanas – a stunning species and a regular here at this time*.' There the previous report ends and this year's takes over because last year we failed to find this charismatic species but this year we succeeded! Our midweek group of 11 enjoyed a beautiful morning here and though the first 15 minutes or so were somewhat slow and unfruitful, things then started to pick up. And how! Once we reached the beautiful old *Quercus robur* (Red Oak) where the predictable *Daedalea quercina* (Oak Mazegill) was showing as usual, suddenly I was being kept busy with specimens to identify.

Several examples of a brown capped *Inocybe* (Fibrecap) were under this Oak; these turned out to be some close relative of *Pseudosperma rimosum* (previously *Inocybe rimosa*) and will be sequenced. *Inocybe* and its three closely related genera have become not easier but a good deal more complicated to identify since the application of the DNA era into mycology, but another which I feel reasonably confident to name was also found under the same tree. Despite Jesper Launder's best efforts to destroy the collection with his feet, we rescued just enough of this strikingly pink example to make a photo viable! ***Inosperma adaequatum*** (Vinaceous Fibrecap, previously in genus *Inocybe*) was tentatively named in the field by me as I'd not seen it looking quite so strikingly pink before, then confirmed later – new to the site and quite uncommon .

Above: *Inosperma adaequatum* (PC)

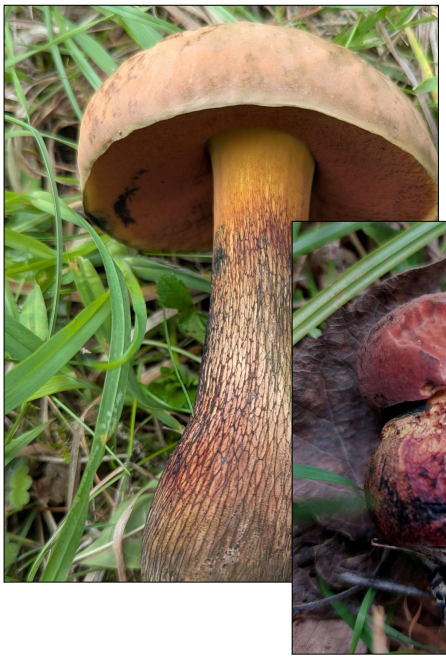
Also at this point I was shown a singleton pink and cream *Russula* (Brittlegill) and from the signs of brass yellow staining already discernable this had to be ***Russula luteotacta*** (Yellowstaining Brittlegill) – not that common in our area but quite frequent at this site. We soon found more to form the photo and with care you can just spot the give-away patches of staining (which can take up to 24 hours to develop!) on the bits of damaged material here. (This species always reminds me of 'strawberries and cream'!)

Left: *Russula luteotacta* (PC)

Before we set off we were met by Michael Harrison (Estate Manager) carrying an enormous orange mushroom he'd just collected! This could only be ***Gymnopilus junonius*** (the aptly named Spectacular Rustgill), and sure enough we then located more where he'd found it on an old stump not far from the aforementioned Oak. The whopper seen here – probably 15 cm across – was less impressive than his specimen.

Right: *Gymnopilus junonius* (PC)

Meantime several interesting Boletes were being handed in and I was glad to have Jesper to hand to help with identification. It was good to have



the chance to compare ***Suillellus queletii*** (Deceiving Bolete), new to the site today, with the very similar ***S. luridus*** (Lurid Bolete) which we quite often find here (though I now wonder if we'd not spotted the subtle difference between the two in the past?). Both have strongly blueing flesh when cut and also beetroot red staining in the lower stem but only *S. luridus* has the clear network / mesh on the stem, nicely caught in Gill's L.H. photo here. The R.H. insert shows a 'button' of *S. queletii* we found with no network showing on the stem.

Far left: *Suillellus luridus* (GF), and near left: *Suillellus queletii* for comparison (JL)

However, what really got me excited at this point was the fact that if we were now finding these boletes here there was a good chance that ***Rubroboletus satanas*** might be fruiting further on in the spot we'd found it in the past. Fingers were crossed!

Several examples of the common ***Hymenopellis radicata*** (Rooting Shank) were found in a grassy path edge, and one was dutifully dug up to expose part of its diagnostic long taproot. Note also the typically wrinkled cap surface and widely spaced white gills – more good pointers to its identification. Sometimes it can be found with distinctive black edges to the gills though apparently this makes no difference to its name. (In older handbooks this will still be under the genus name *Xerula*, or in even older books – *Oudemansiella* – the name I learnt to call it!)

Right: *Hymenopellis radicata* (GF)

Another interesting bolete was found in this area by several people, and slicing one lengthways soon revealed white flesh which slowly turned pink then greyish black, also with signs of blue towards the base. Jesper immediately named this ***Leccinum duriusculum*** (Slate Bolete) but was not entirely happy until we found more examples clearly growing under the hybrid Poplars - both Aspen and Poplar being the host trees for the species. We have only a few sites for this species and have found it here twice before.

Left: *Leccinum duriusculum* (CVS)

Some pale yellowish quite solid mushrooms were found which, when the gills were sliced, revealed the white latex of the genus *Lactarius*. After some discussion it was realised that despite their similarity we had two different species here – both known from the site previously: ***Lactarius evosmus*** and ***L. acerrimus*** (Fruity Milkcap and Twospored Milkcap). Both species had some radial zoning around the cap, also some 'scrobiculae' (pitting) on the stem, but the two noticeable differences were in the smell (strikingly of stewed apples in *L. evosmus* but not so in *L. acerrimus*) and in the gill colour (cream in *L. evosmus* but pink in *L. acerrimus*). Furthermore the gills in the latter tend to anastomose (fuse together) particular near the stem, and a scope reveals that the

basidia (spore-bearing cells) unusually have just two sterigmata (prongs) instead of the normal four – this being the definitive diagnostic difference between the two species. So my photo shows the cap and gills of *L. evosmus* on the left, with the cap and two examples of gills of *L. acerrimus* right and centre. (We can't share the smell with you but at least the difference in gill colour is visible and Claudi's insert shows the anastomosing gills nicely.

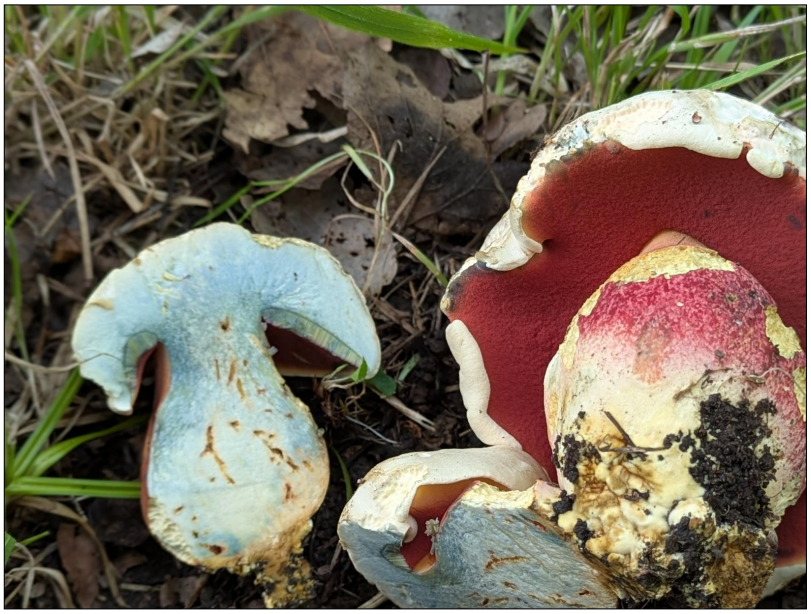
Right: on the left *Lactarius evosmus*, centre & right *Lactarius acerrimus* (PC), with insert below showing detail of the anastomosing pink gills of *L. acerrimus* (CVS)

A collection of another interesting *Russula* was discovered in longish grass with Birch, Oak and Poplar all quite near. It was clearly a pale grassy green and had cream gills and though I wondered about ***R. aeruginea*** (Green Brittlegill) as a possibility at the time it lacked the typical rusty spots often seen on the cap. Both co-leader Claudi and I worked on this collection at home, coming to the same conclusion that though many features fitted well with *R. aeruginea* (including two chemical tests carried out in the field: Guaiac negative – only very pale blue, and an FE crystal salmon pink, both visible in the photo on the stem second from the left) we still had doubts. Not only were the rusty spots absent and the taste hot rather than mild - Jesper double-checked this for me at the time - but we also noted later that the spore and cap cuticle micro-details though close were not an exact match. Hence for now we're naming it *R.* aff. *aeruginea* (i.e. similar to), and it's dried for sequencing.

Left: *Russula* aff. *aeruginea* (to be confirmed) (PC), with insert of the spores stained in Melzers reagent x 1000, showing the warts and connectives (adjoining lines) typical of this genus (CVS)

Below: *Rubroboletus satanas*, our star find of the day! (GF)

Whilst we were busy with this *Russula* the cry went up that ***Rubroboletus satanas*** (Devil's Bolete) had been found though we'd not yet reached the area it was known from previously – in fact there was no sign of it later on so this was a new spot for it – exciting! One of the two conjoined specimens was duly cut in half to reveal the blueing flesh and also to give us a chance to experience the strong garlic smell which in age becomes quite repulsive. This smell should be enough to warn one off eating it because the toxins this mushroom contains can



cause serious gastric upsets. Of our 11 county records 7 are from this site with only three other sites known, so it was a privilege to see it today.

Just a few other things to share with you to finish off. We found ***Hebeloma sinapizans*** (Bitter Poisonpie) growing in unusual numbers and forming a semicircle near Oak, around 30 caps.

Above left: *Hebeloma sinapizans* in a partial ring (CVS), and right: *Rhodocybe gemina* (BS)

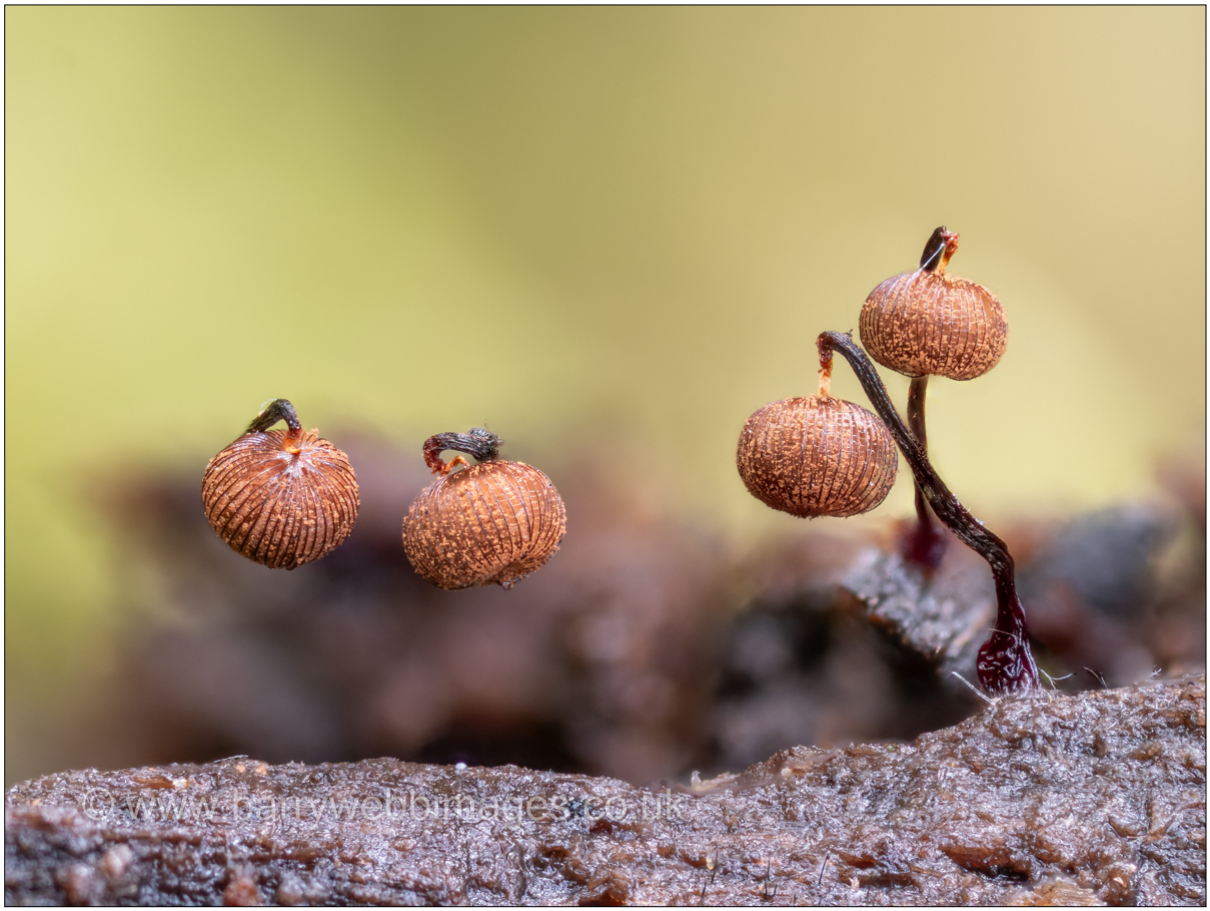
Several people were confused by a species which at first glance was somewhat similar to the *Lactarius acerrimus* found earlier because if its pink gills and firm stature. This was ***Rhodocybe gemina*** (Tan Pinkgill), found here once before but a regular at nearby Rushbeds Wood. It favours grassy areas, path edges, but is not that common and 'has its good years and bad years'. It appears to be on the increase in our area, however – or else we're getting more skilled at recognising it!

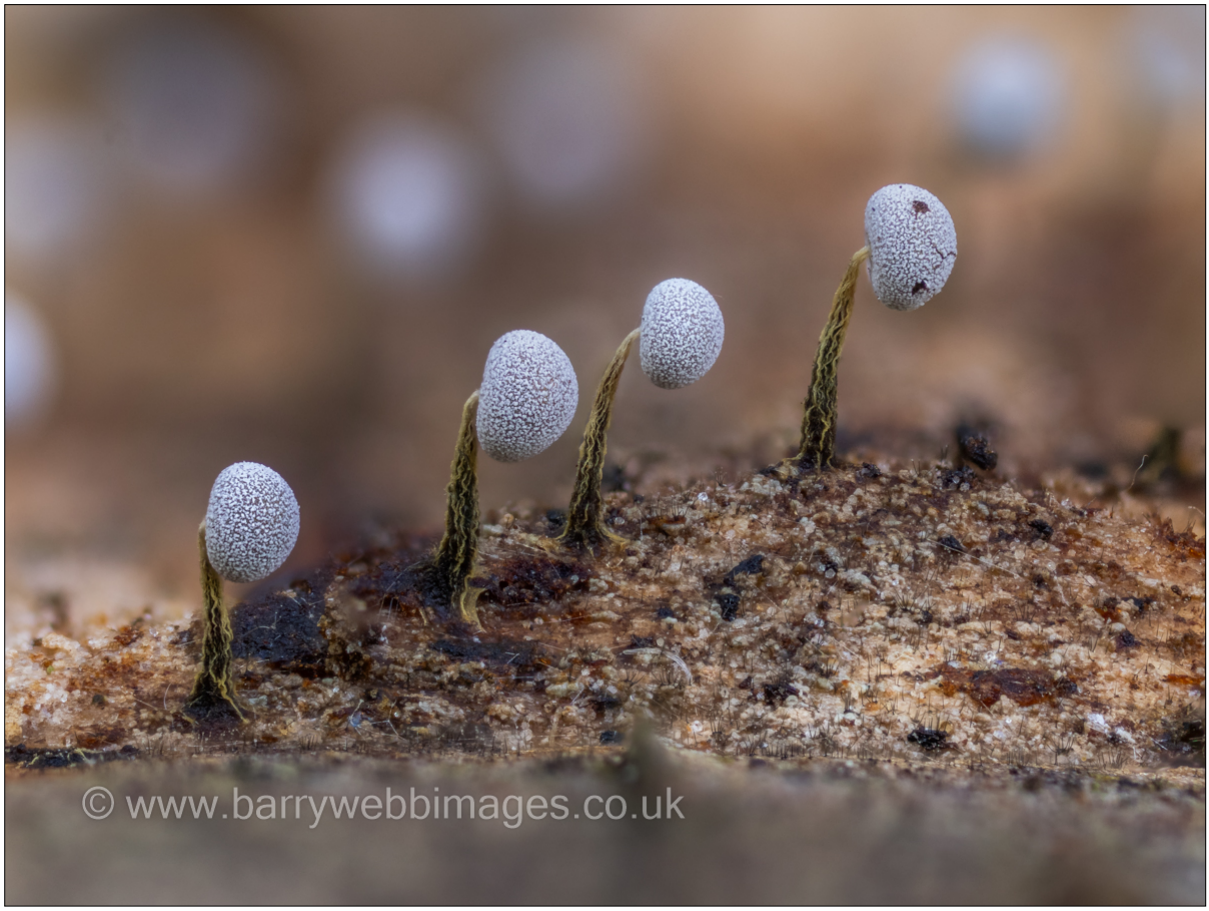
So we had a thoroughly enjoyable morning, listing just over 60 species, several of which new additions to the site. It was a treat to see so many interesting boletes and our habit of coming here early in the season in order to see them really paid off this time. Thank you all for coming, also thanks to the photographers who have done us proud as usual. For more details of what we found see the complete separate list. See also below for some of Barry's stunning slime mould photos, also a scene shot from Claudi as a fitting conclusion.

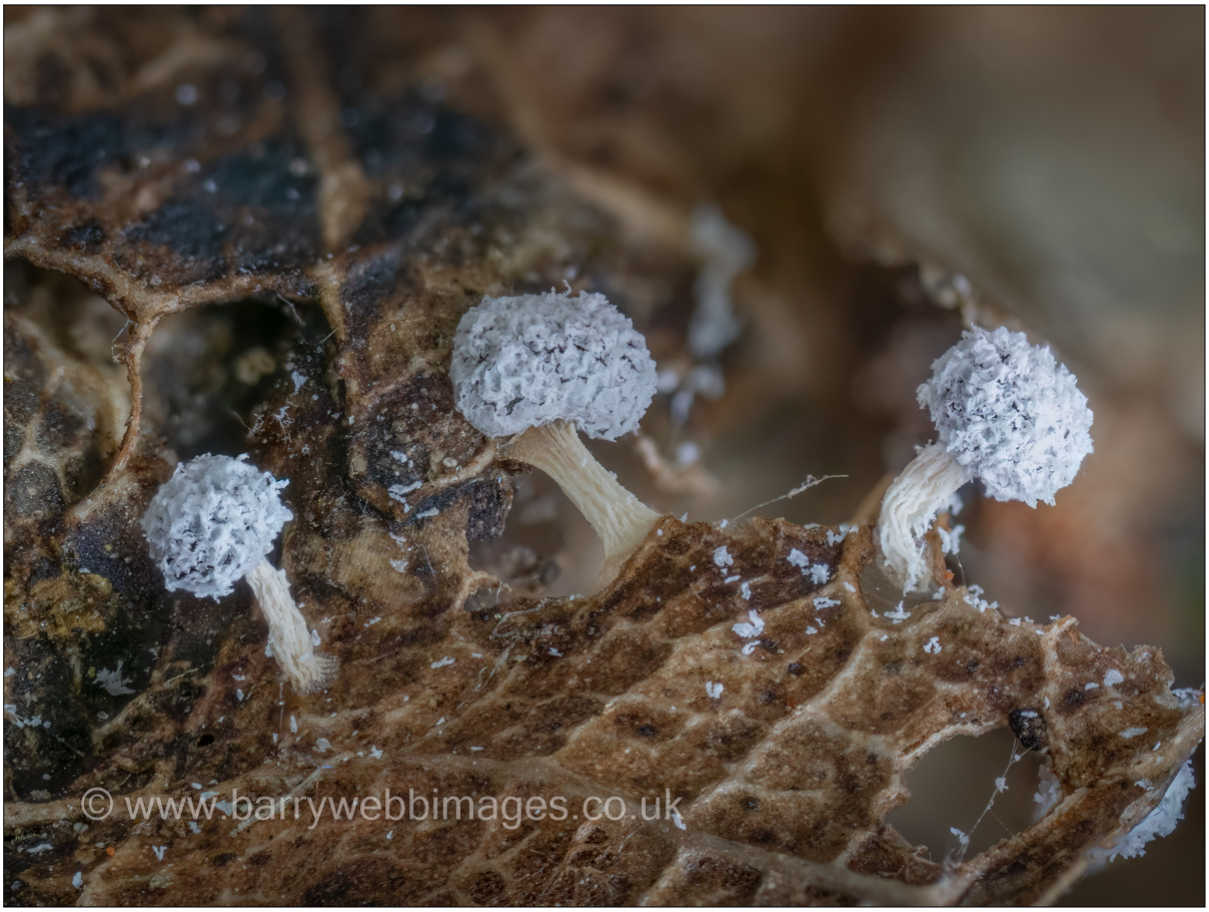
Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; BS = Bob Simpson; CS = Claudi Soler; GF = Gill Ferguson; JL = Jesper Launder; PC = Penny Cullington.

Barry's photos below, in order: *Cribraria cancellata; Physarum album; Didymium squamulosum*






© www.barrywebbimages.co.uk