Foray at Mousells Wood, September 17th 2016

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Just 7 of us met up today – a grey and slightly drizzly one. After the recent few days of remarkably hot weather followed by a downpour the day before it was difficult to predict how this was going to affect fungal fruiting, but we found quite enough to keep us busy and some of the finds proved to be exceptional – more on this later.

In previous visits here we've focused on just one section of the wood, but this time Alan had asked permission for us to take a look at a different section as well – one which belongs to the original owner's daughter – and this proved interesting and rewarding. Early on we came across several fruitbodies of *Russula olivacea* (Olive brittlegill) showing its characteristic pink flush at the top of the stem. I include here a photo taken at this site in 2010 which hardly does it justice but the flush is just visible.

***Russula olivacea* showing typical variation in cap colour (PC)**

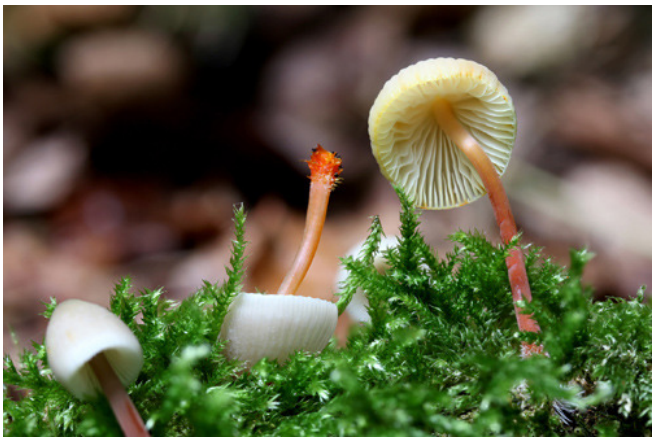
We were soon pondering over various Boletes and though I was happy with placing most of them in *Xerocomus* (or *Xerocomellus* for some) this was as near as I could get to a name at home apart from confirming one specimen of *Boletus porosporus* (Sepia bolete), the spores of which are clearly unique and appear as if one end has been snipped off. It was good to find a couple of species belonging to the genus *Inocybe* (Fibrecap) – one of them new to the site, though we quite often collect good numbers of these LBJs here and have in fact recorded 30 different *Inocybe* species since we started visiting this wood in 2005 - a remarkable statistic. Other mycorrhizal genera (those which grow in association with trees) were poorly represented today with just one *Lactarius* (Milkcap) and one *Amanita*. It is worth including a photo of this, however, because its colour was atypical for some people and as the species is deadly poisonous it is good to get to recognise it in all its guises.

***Amanita phalloides* (Deathcap), on the left as we found it with an entirely white cap which caused some confusion amongst the group, and on the right the next day having expanded a bit further and developed the typical green tints. The large sack (volva) at its base appearing as if torn open left me in little doubt of the identification despite its deceptively white cap. (PC)**

A species we've found here several times previously on the same fallen Wych Elm trunk was obligingly fruiting again for us today; *Rhodotus palmatus* (Wrinkled peach) has decreased considerably since the devastation of the Elm population in the UK.

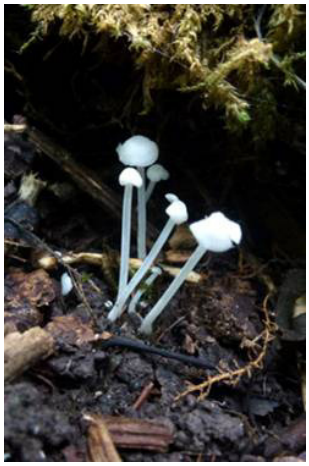
***Rhodotus palmatus* found on Wych Elm today (CS)**

As we moved into the different section of the wood an excited cry from Alan informed us he'd found something for us to admire: here were two nice specimens of *Geastrum triplex* (Collared earthstar). This genus always produces some oohs and ahs and rightly so. Looking back at our records, we've found this particular species here on three previous occasions. Another favourite we found in abundance today was *Mycena crocata* (Saffrondrop bonnet) – not surprising as this species grows exclusively on fallen Beech, a substrate in plentiful supply in the Chilterns.



Left *Geastrum triplex* (PC) and right *Mycena crocata* (CS) – both species were much admired today.

Another much smaller species of *Mycena* was collected growing on leaf litter; this was *Mycena stylobates* (Bulbous bonnet), one which with experience and careful observation one can recognise in the field. The small size (caps are less than 7mm across), white colour, the litter substrate and the ridged disc at the stem base all add up to help one make an informed guess though most members of the genus need to be checked with a microscope to be sure of identification.



Just to show how careful one needs to be with naming tiny white collections, I also found today *Hemimycena lactea* (Milky bonnet) which in the field I thought was one of the small white *Collybia* species (there are three) but found at home that I was way off the mark.

Left *Hemimycena lactea* (PC) and right *Mycena stylobates* (CS)

We found a log liberally covered in a colony of a species of *Crepidotus* (Oysterling). This genus is characterised by little shell-like gilled caps, almost always white, which lack a stem and are found on a variety of plant substrates: twigs, sticks and herbaceous stems. Nearly all need a scope to confirm identification and our collection today was no exception. It was *Crepidotus lundellii* (no common name and one which we've not recorded here since our very first visit.)

The underside view of *Crepidotus lundellii* showing the genus's typical lack of stem, clustered habit and shell-like shape. Note also the pink brown gill colour when mature caused by the ripe spores which are described as clay to snuff brown.

I've left the three most interesting finds till last. The first was found by Alan and was growing on a fallen Beech trunk, a single small white *Crepidotus* type which I immediately thought was something I didn't know. It seemed odd for a *Crepidotus* to be growing singly and on something as big as a trunk, furthermore the gill colour was not like the *Crepidotus* photo above but paler with a cream pink tinge and the general jizz was just not right for that genus. At home I set it up to drop spores and left it till the morning when, sure enough, the sporeprint was not the clay to snuff brown of *Crepidotus* but white. I had wondered about the genus *Hohenbuehelia* (not one I had any experience of) and checked in the literature to see if there were any special features which might confirm this. There were, and looking at the edge of a gill from Alan's specimen under the scope I found thick-walled cells (cystidia) with pointed tips covered in small crystals – bingo! I eventually tracked it down to *Hohenbuehelia mastrucata* (Woolly oyster), a rare species with only 36 UK records and down as endangered on the Red Data List (RDA). It is new to the county though has been found quite nearby in Oxfordshire. Apologies for the quality of the macro photos but by the time I realised what we had the material was not at its best.

***Hohenbuehelia mastrucata* with a view of the thick-walled metuloids found on the gill edge x 1000 (PC)**

Next to a species found on a Beech stick by Claudi. This looked like a small *Galerina* or *Tubaria* (i.e. rusty brown all over) but had an unusual brown pruinose (powdery) covering on the cap and stem. It rang a bell with me and though I couldn't recall the full name at the time (I knew it was Phaeo-something) I remembered finding something similar at another Bucks site. At home I looked up records for this site on our database to remind me and found *Phaeomarasmius erinaceus* (Hedgehog scalycap). However, on checking the details for this species I soon realised this was not what we'd found today: the spores were too small and the cap covering not spiny enough. Searching for something similar I found nearby in my book of keys *Flammulaster muricatus* and this was a perfect fit in all respects, both macro- and microscopic. Here was another rarity with only 54 UK records and also down as RDA Vulnerable, and another new county record. Interestingly, in my searching I came across an article in Field Mycology (2005) written by expert Martyn Ainsworth on 'Identifying important sites for Beech deadwood fungi' where he describes over 20 rare species with illustrations, and amongst them were both the *Hohenbuehelia* and the *Flammulaster* we had found at Mousells Wood.

***Flammulaster muricatus* found growing out of the end of a Beech stick, also its gill edge cystidia and spores and unusual globose cells on the cap surface which give this species its powdery look. (Left CS, other photos PC)**

As I was clearly on a roll I thought now was the time to tackle the beautiful violet *Cortinarius* we'd found in the middle of the main path just before we finished. This I knew was one of the *Phlegmaceum* group of species (those in the genus having a sticky cap) so it was just possible I might get to a specific name, and in one reference book I found a photo of possible contender which was suitably violet and had the correct very wide 'platform' at the stem base. Working through other sources this seemed more and more likely - a species of calcareous soil growing in association with Beech, the spores size and shape also fitted, and furthermore there was a chemical test which might help: adding a drop of KOH to the cap should turn bright cherry red. I tried and it did! Lastly my book of keys described a distinctive detail on the cap which I'd noticed: 'when young usually with droplike spots at the margin'. That clinched it! We had *Cortinarius sodagnitus* (Bitter bigfoot webcap), and googling images of this species also showed the droplets which I'd noticed. I found there were just 47 UK records and it had been removed from the RDL as Vulnerable in 2006, but still a rarity, new to the county and one I was delighted to see.

***Cortinarius sodagnitus* showing the violet colours on cap and stem, also the typical dark 'droplets' on the cap and the cherry red staining with KOH. Note also the cortina (weblike fine mesh) on the upturned smaller fruitbody which protects the immature gills when young. (Top photo CS, right PC)**

My thanks to all attendees. We found an amazing range of interesting species, proving once again what a special place this is. We recorded 57 species, of which 11 were new to the site and as already mentioned some new to the county too. My thanks also to Claudi for his excellent photos.

For further details of what we found see the complete list.