



Newsletter

Autumn 2023



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View from the Chair

Well, judging by the photos of various species which have been circulated over Christmas and the New Year, this has been a long fruiting season. Thanks to Karen and Adrian, Tony, John W and Anne for sharing their discoveries.

Looking back over 2023, we managed to fit in 17 forays altogether. Alongside some old favourites, were some new sites and some we haven't visited for a long time. There was a well attended joint foray with West Yorkshire Group at Hardcastle Craggs and another successful Keswick weekend. It must be noted that both foray programme and Keswick weekend involve much work behind the scenes Many thanks are due to the organisers, John Watt and Mike Walton, for their efforts.

Two microscope workshops were held, one for beginners and one for improvers. Both went very well and we're looking at repeating them in 2024. We were able to make good use of the two microscopes which NWFG purchased earlier in the year.

UK Fungus Day saw us leading a family event at Mere Sands Wood. Organised by Irene Ridge, it was a very enjoyable day. Many thanks to all those who helped run it. Several children really impressed me with their enthusiasm for writing down the names of the species we found on the walks, even taking great care to spell them correctly. Recorders of the future maybe? Still on the subject of UK

Fungus Day, I was delighted to discover that one of our members, Mike Valentine, had won first prize in the BMS photography competition (18 + category). You can see his brilliant photo of *Microglossum viride* on the cover of this newsletter. Congratulations Mike! If any of you have a fungus photo of your own that you would be willing to share, we'd be happy to include it in a future newsletter.

Throughout 2023, BMS continued its programme of monthly online talks. The recordings can be seen on it's Youtube channel. BMS also hosted World Fungus Day. Professor Lynne Boddy organised and chaired this online event which involved a truly international group of speakers covering such diverse topics as aquatic fungi, Polar fungi, climate change and sustainable development. The recordings can now be accessed via this link from the BMS website <https://www.britmycolsoc.org.uk/resources/events/fungi-around-world> .

Recommended viewing (although obviously not all at once) for those who wish to increase their general knowledge of fungi.

Finally, looking forward, we have a special anniversary to celebrate in 2024. As Paul has highlighted in his editorial, it is 30 years since the formation of North West Fungus Group. We will be marking this significant milestone in our next newsletter.

Jeanette Maddy

Editorial

We have been able to fill the newsletter with a good selection of foray reports. On another matter I was having a clear out earlier in the year and came across a flyer for the Inaugural General Meeting of the North West Fungus Group held on 29 January 1994 at Liverpool Museum. This also marked the beginning of the Internet (there were only 130 websites in 1993). Look at how far both the NWFG and the Internet have developed since then. So, 2024 marks the 30th anniversary of the NWFG and hopefully we will be able to celebrate this event in some way at our AGM. It has also been suggested that we should put something about the history and background to the NWFG in the next issue of the newsletter particularly for the benefit of newer members.

Special thanks to Mike Walton for typesetting and sending out the newsletter. Articles can be submitted to me by email. Pictures to accompany articles are very welcome preferably sent as separate attachments. Please note that it is important to show due diligence when including any photographs (or other material) that have not been taken by yourself by getting permission and including the name of the photographer (or copyright holder) so that due credit can be given in the newsletter.

Paul F. Hamlyn, pfhamlyn@gmail.com

North Walney NNR

George Clarkson

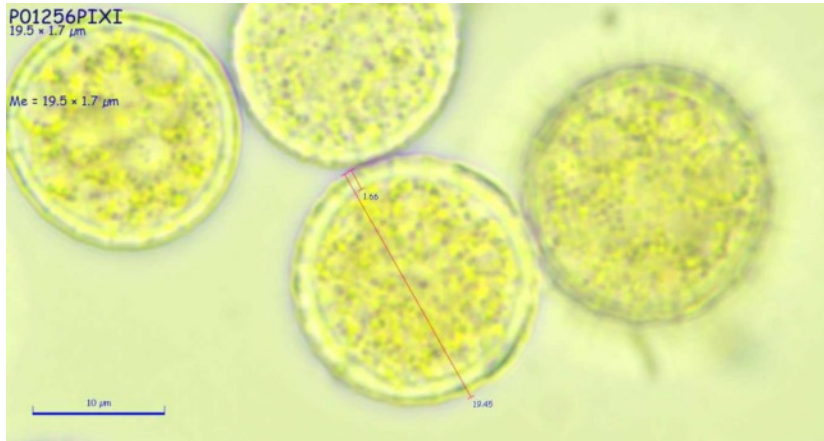


Rainbow over Black Combe from North Walney NNR.

Photo by Kerstin Nagel

On 18 September 2022, at the invitation of Natural England, 11 of us – including a couple of very welcome new faces – forayed the North Walney NNR, on Walney Island, just off Barrow-in-Furness. We recorded 29 species – a little further into autumn and a little more rain might have extended this total. This is a new venue for the NWFG, situated at an extreme of our geographical coverage and relatively unvisited by outside civilisation. For those so interested, the reserve has much to offer in the way of ornithology as well as mycology, and there is very healthy lichen growth (suggesting clean air despite Barrow lurking nearby), which could be home to lichenicolous fungi. It is sufficiently large that it was not feasible to sample all of its habitats in one visit; we opted to focus especially on the characteristic sand dunes, with their bordering grassland and extensive and strikingly attractive slacks. The copses and heather- dominated grassland will wait for the future. We remain indebted to the resident cows and sheep, whose generous contributions ensured a good supply of dung fungi.

We started with a brisk walk of some twenty minutes to reach the reserve boundary, inspiring thoughts that future visits should be billed as a foray-and-fitness-workout. With the sound of the surf in the background, this was an opportunity to admire the setting, overlooked to the north by dramatic Black Combe, with the famous Lake District peaks lined up along the horizon.



Melampsora epitea urediniospores. The red lines show measurements made using Piximetre software. Photo by John Watt.



A perfect Parasol with Steve - photo by Steven Hurley

I had notions of searching for Round-leaved Wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundifolia* var. *maritima*) and its critically endangered rust *Chrysomyxa pirolata* – found by Kew mycologists at Sandscale Haws just across Walney Channel. Being an unaccomplished botanist, I found Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) instead, sadly showing no sign of its own endangered rust *Puccinia hydrocotyles*. But we did sample a couple of microfungi that came our way: the rust *Melampsora epitea* seemed to be everywhere on Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) leaves, as was Bracken Map (*Rhopoglyphus filicinus*) on dead Bracken stems. No doubt there were many more microfungi to be recognised given time.

A visit to the spot that yielded the uncommon and distinctive, Winter Stalkball (*Tulostoma brumale*) in January of this year, failed to locate it again, and Marram



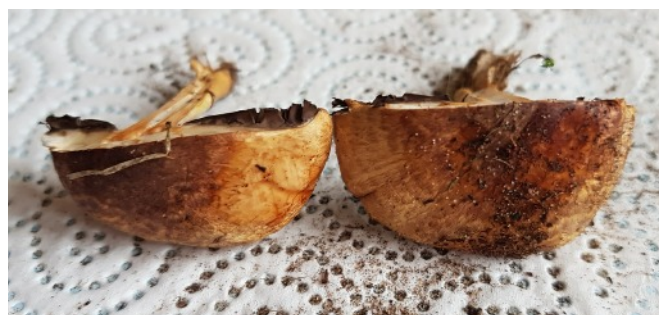
Grass-associated specialists were not yet in evidence, but otherwise the autumn mycota was beginning to appear. Maybe it is a feature of coastal meadow fungi that at first sight many look similar – white shapes in the grass –but look more closely and they emerge as puffballs or mushrooms, and then as different species of puffballs or mushrooms. We identified four species of *Lyco-perdon* and eight of *Agaricus*. The Parasols (*Macrolepiota procera*) were spectacular and numerous, often visible from far off; an unfamiliar relative of theirs, *Macrolepiota fuligineosquarrosa* (left - photo by John Watt), also turned up. An exquisite little blue-tinged *Entoloma* required a visit to

Noordeloos's monograph to establish its identity: *E. poliopus* var. *parvisporigerum* – which tied for longest name of the day with *Hygrocybe acutoconica* var. *acutoconica* (Persistent Waxcap). Waxcaps generally were not yet prevalent, the only other species found being the common Dune Waxcap (*H. conicoides*). A large, conspicuous Brown Rollrim (*Paxillus involutus*) demonstrated that even a small group of just two or three trees had mycorrhizal partners, as, seemingly, did the herb-like Creeping Willow (*Salix repens*), which grew alongside a specimen of the very seldomly recorded *Inocybe dunensis* (below, left - photo Colin Doull).



Dead wood was necessarily sparse but we recorded two resupinates: *Hyphoderma argillaceum* and Hazel Bracket (*Skeletocutis semipileata*), here making do with *Salix*.

The dung fungi featured the regulars Dung Roundhead (*Stropharia semiglobata*), and Egghead Mottlegill (*Panaeolus semiovatus*), along with Snowy Inkcap (*Coprinopsis nivea*), and one notable find: *Psilocybe moelleri* (above right - photo John Watt), stated by Kibby to be a denizen of Caledonian pinewoods, but not as yet recorded in the FRDBI – rather far from home in this instance. The specimen is preserved for future investigation if required, as is the most intriguing



of our finds: one of the *Agaricus* species appears possibly to be *A. freirei* (left), previously unlisted for Britain. It is up for DNA sequencing – fingers crossed: if it is *A. freirei*, then it will feel special to have been present at its discovery.

It would be good to return to North Walney NNR. So far, we have only taken a snapshot of the mycota, with habitats yet to be visited, and there may be more gems to find. Speaking personally, I look forward to returning to a place which has not only scientific interest but also outstanding natural beauty.

Moor Piece Nature Reserve, 28 May 2023

Irene Ridge

Despite exceptionally dry conditions – even for this usually very wet site – a small band of 8 people managed to record 22 species plus 4 from incubated roe dung (and still coming in from this source). We met, as usual, in the village hall car park at Bashall Eaves but then shared cars and proceeded to the site. Conditions here were much altered since our last visit because of the wholesale removal of rhododendron plus felling of larch, which had been necessary because of *Phytophthora* infection. Perhaps because of the dryness plus felling and disturbance we didn't find the rare stinkhorn, *Phallus duplicatus*, despite diligent searching. The first national record of this 'stinkhorn with a skirt' was made by NWFG on this site. Nor did we find any of the fungi growing in *Sphagnum* even though there was still plenty of moisture in some places.

Nice but not unusual finds were Bog Beacon (*Mitrula paludosa*) - found by Marton Lange, a new member - growing in the damp ditch alongside the road; and Spring Pin (*Cudoniella clavus*) on damp dead wood. It was also

pleasing to find Common Eyelash (*Scutellinia scutellata*), which we checked out later and it really was this species with eyelash hairs often over 1 mm and having a multi-branched base. Marton Lange passed to me a sample of roe deer dung, which was incubated and (after drying and re-wetting) produced a strange little fungus, *Mycotypha microspora* for all the world like a miniature *Typhula* club fungus. It's a Zygomycete with an unbranched stalk (sporangiophore) one or more millimeters long and a fertile elongated head at the tip full of spores 4-5 by 2-3 µm. The dung pellets look like little hedgehogs with sporangiophores sticking out all over. I'd never seen it before and there seem to be only 2 records on the national database dating from 1932! It was identified using the excellent booklet 'Key to the Fungi on dung' (Richardson and Watling) plus internet searches.

All in all, a pleasant day was had by all; the weather was kind, nobody fell over and the company was excellent. What more could we ask.

Quernmore Park & Knots Wood, 27 August 2023

John Watt

In the course of searching for new sites for fungal recording, the leader of this excursion had explored Knots Wood which lies within the Forest of Bowland Area of Natural Beauty, for which there is a Nature Recovery Plan now in place, and any fungal records would contribute to the overall biological profile.

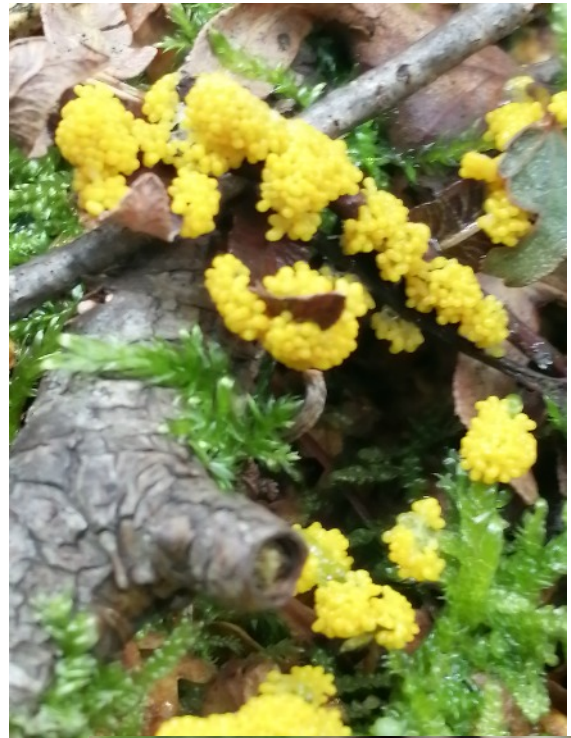
With no formal public access at Knots Wood, it was also evident that there was a problem for group car parking. This led to the author making contact with the owner of the adjacent land called Quernmore Park who kindly agreed to us undertaking a foray there and parking along the length of the driveway within the park. Curiously, one of our members, Denis, who in his capacity as a woodland contractor had worked there and in Knots Wood some 40 years ago, and on this occasion, he was able to make contact once again with the present owner and his wife. The latter is a direct descendent of the 19th century cotton mill owner and rail magnate, William Garnett. He had magnanimously provided gainful employment to the cotton mill workers after the cotton trade embargo during the American Civil War, by tasking them to quarry sandstone and build a spectacular flight of 145 steps leading up the hill towards Knots Wood. All 13 forayers gallantly ascended these steps for their lunch break with a view back down towards the Giant Redwood and beyond.



Despite the leader's trepidation about a lack of fungi, perhaps related in part to the recent presence of extensive rhododendron under the canopy of Oaks, Birches and Beeches, we did manage to amass a total of 77 different species, including four myxomycetes. Three of these were bright yellow, at least in the plasmodial stages, one being the, well known *Fuligo septica* (Scrambled Egg Slime Mold). (Right).

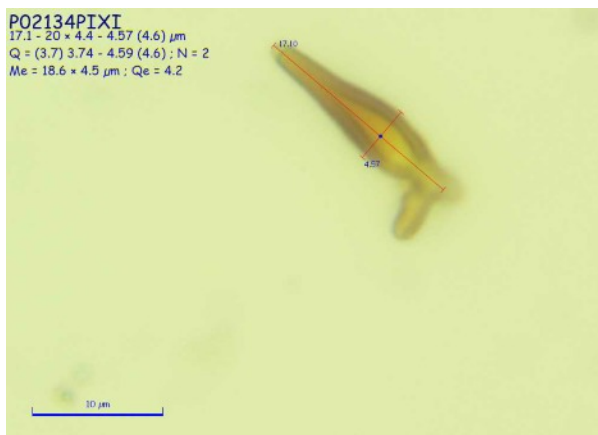
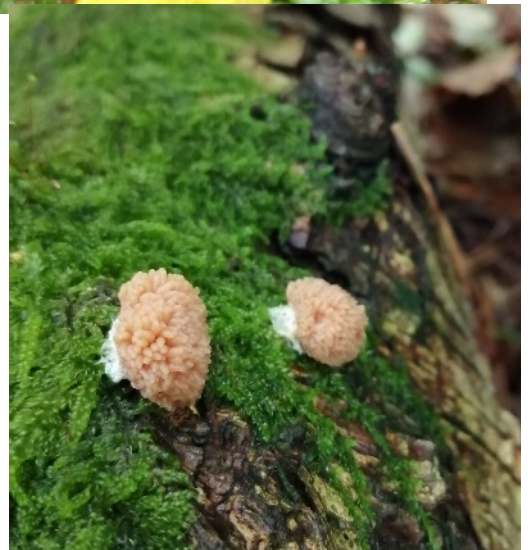


Another was *Physarum virescens* (Right) commonly seen along moss stems but also twigs, and the other was *Leocarpus fragilis* (Below).

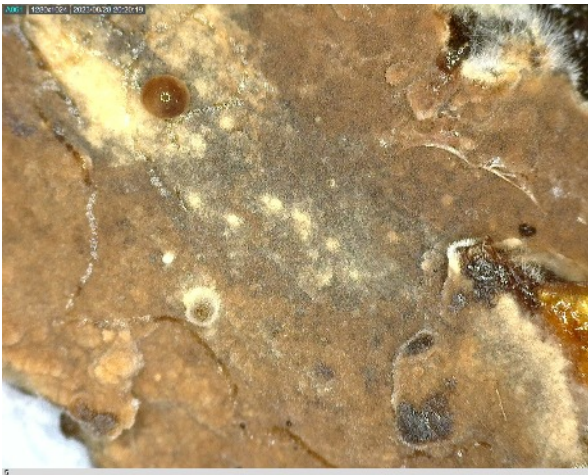


The latter two quickly changed colour as the sporophytes formed. The fourth is sometimes known as Raspberry Slime Mold (*Tubifera ferruginosa*) on account of its colour and shape, and is one which can be recognised in the field. (Right).

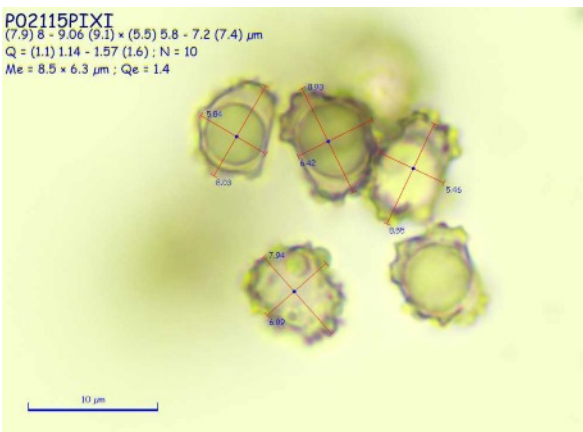
This epithet also calls to mind the brown poroid bracket fungi, of which we found one, *Fuscoporia ferrea*, (formerly *Phellinus ferreus*). Ryvar den and Melo list 36 different species under *Phellinus*, some bracteate, others resupinate, some only on conifers, others only hardwoods; and some with dextrinoid spores, the others with inamyloid spores. *Phellinus ferrugineofuscus* is



restricted to spruce trees and has tramal setae but no hymenial setae; *Phellinus ferruginosus* is restricted to dead hardwoods and has both tramal and hymenial setae; *Phellinus ferreus* is predominantly but not exclusively on hardwood trees, and has only hymenial setae, (Left) much shorter than the tramal setae.



Another non-poroid resupinate turned out to be very interesting with a dark red-brown spore print, which is unusual across the broad grouping of corticioid fungi (Above left and right). It had very distinctive spores and demonstrated clamps very nicely. (Below and bottom) Despite some taxonomic shifts, this matches *Tomentella radiosa*, with 45 records on FRBI.

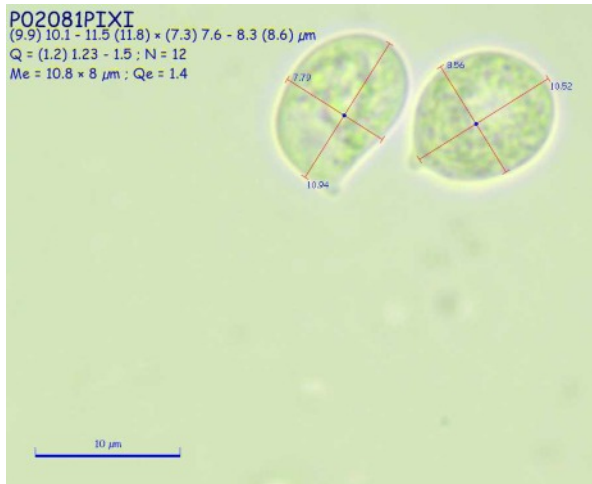


After the lunch break, John and Kerstin directed the group into adjacent Knots Wood, where they had recently come across two ‘fairy rings’ under beech trees, and of uncertain identity. (Opposite top left).

Kerstin has the German Pliz123 on her smartphone and the *Rhodocollybia prolixa* var. *Distorta* (opposite top right) looked like a strong contender, and its semi-globular spores (Opposite bottom left) and cystidia confirmed this, with 200 records on NBN Atlas. Knots Wood was otherwise somewhat unproductive and the group continued their foray back in Quernmore Park where a few more toadstools were found though overall



Amanita fulva (Tawny Grisette), had probably been the commonest of the day.



Stanley Bank Wood, 01 October 2023

Tom Ferguson

I admit that I haven't been on a great number of NWFG field trips but today's at Stanley Bank Wood in St Helens did seem a bit different to the ones I have attended. It coincided with the annual Keswick weekend and it may also have been affected by the heavy early morning rain but whatever the reason it was a small close-knit group of only five which set off for the wood as the rain eased.

Our final list was a modest one and consisted of only 30 species compared to over 100 last year. Partly, a result of fewer eyes, although those on the job were enthusiastic and pretty forensic. And they had to be, because despite weather conditions seeming to be absolutely perfect, there was a remarkable dearth of the larger fungi. So, no *Cortinarius*, *Collybia* or *Clitocybe*. One *Lactarius* and by that, I mean one individual fruiting body and similarly one tiny *Russula* fruiting body. But primarily we missed those NWFG heavyweights capable of sniffing out a rust on a nettle stem or resupinates under a log and prepared to spend the

following week working out their exact identity. However, we were able to consider how different fungi were interacting within the environment of the wood. Parasitic bracket fungi were much in evidence. Several Beech trunks were infested with *Ganoderma* with many large white rimmed brackets covered in brown spores bursting out of the rotting wood. The massive trunk of one of the infected trees had broken off about twenty feet up demonstrating the vulnerability of the weakened tree to strong winds. Where the fallen trunks had been left saprophytic brackets such as Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*) and Lumpy Bracket (*Trametes gibbosa*) were at work rotting them down and returning the nutrients to the woodland soil. Other smaller logs produced Dead Moll's Fingers (*Xylaria longipes*) and Jelly Ear (*Auricularia auricula-judae*).



Evidence of the mycorrhizal relationship between fungi and the beech trees was found although we had to look hard for it this year. Although the grey *Tricholoma sciodes* (Left) with its black spotted gills was quite abundant we really had to search to find the single Beech Milkcap (*Lactarius blennius*) and Geranium Brittle Gill (*Russula fellea*).

We were joined on the day by a fungi enthusiast from New Zealand on holiday visiting parents and had a fascinating time learning about species common to New Zealand and here as well as some which do not occur here. I was particularly impressed by the bright blue *Entoloma hochstetteri* which features on the New Zealand 50 dollar note and Beech Strawberries (*Cyttaria gunnii*) (Right), an edible Ascomycete forming on galls in the upper branches of *Nothofagus* and dropping off in the spring. Unfortunately, a bit far off for one of our field trips or even weekends.



(Editor note: *Cyttaria gunnii*, is an orange-white ascomycete fungus native to Australia and New Zealand. New Zealand populations are a specific parasite of *Nothofagus menziesii*, commonly known as silver beech – not related to the European or American *Fagus* species).

Cyttaria gunnii published with kind permission from Julie Davies, taken at Lake Rotoiti, South Island, New Zealand.

Alderley Park, 22 October 2023

John Watt

The NWFG fungus group used to visit Alderley Park up until 2002 which was before my time, but I have had the opportunity to visit the site with the Royal Forestry Society in 2022, when I met the Estate and Horticultural Manager, Graham Evans. He was very interested in my proposal to undertake a fungus recording event in the grounds and so it was that 15 of us were able to make a very productive visit there in October 2023. Some members on the day had actually been present collecting 230 records on those earlier recording forays though the recollection of them and routes followed had largely faded from memory.

The site is of considerable historical interest, with an entry in the Domesday book and then having been an important country seat for the Stanley family for hundreds of years. But in the 20th century the chemical company, which became ICI, had their headquarters there. More recently, some of the open land has been developed for white collar offices and expensive residential housing. Much of the woodland had been re-planted in the nineteenth century with a variety of tree species, including Sweet Chestnut, Beech and various conifers, but there are also still many natural Oak and Birch trees, and the woodland continues to be managed actively.

We assembled in the car park at the far corner near the Radnor Mere, but the foray had already started unofficially along the grassy embankment under Oak Trees whilst awaiting some attendees to arrive. Amongst the numerous fungi there, there was one which Ken initially keyed out in Nordic *Macromyces* to match *Clavaria falcata*. There are a dozen records of this species on FRDBI but it is not now currently listed as a British species, the earlier records have been deemed inaccurate, and it is now an excluded name. It thus is likely to have been *Clavaria acuta*, (right) the spores of which actually change as they mature becoming echinulate, when it had been called *Clavaria asterospora*. It is thought that the *Clavaria* genus may be polyphyletic and certainly needs more DNA work.



Going on into the woodland, Julie found a lovely example of the rosecomb abnormality on *Laccaria amethystina* (over top left). With its brilliant purple colour, was it not strange then to find another very purple toadstool nearby, which, after discounting a *Cortinarius* species, we realised was a highly coloured



Laccaria amethystina

Blewit. The two contender species, *Lepista nuda* and *Lepista sordida*, can both have colour variants and the accounts by the authorities are somewhat contradictory.



Microscopy does not help either even though the minutely warty pinkish spores were checked. It most closely matched the *Lepista sordida* var. *lilacina* variant (above right).

A little further on, it was intriguing to find Toad's Ear (*Otidea bufonia*) on one side of a birch, with Tan Ear (*Otidea alutacea* (below left)) on the other side. The next interesting find, masquerading a bit like a small white *Mycena* except that it had a sclerotium, was *Collybia cookei*; the original fungus upon which it had been parasitic no longer in evidence. (Below right).



After a lunch stop at a formal seating area in the woods, it was not far to find a nice group of Yellowing Knight, *Tricholoma sculpturatum*, which was found again later in a different part of the estate. I had taken home a couple of LBJs (little brown jobs), and was delighted to see the lecythiform (fat skittle-shaped) cystidia, which led me on to *Conocybe echinata*, of which there are 42 records on FRDBI (The Fungal Records Database of Britain and Ireland). The next LBJ though looking a bit different from *Galerina* with a much flatter cap, it was growing on a dead herbaceous stem so didn't fit that genus. The finding of metalloid cystidia (right) was a real surprise, and thanks to the wheel keys in FTE⁽¹⁾, it pointed straight away to a species I'd never heard of, *Mythicomycetes corneipes* (below left).



In addition to its mention in FTE, it receives a listing in Kibby's Mushrooms and Toadstools of Britain & Europe though he qualifies it by saying it is not yet in UK.

Somewhere in the same vicinity, Clive spotted a very attractive yellow delicate funnel toadstool growing out of the side of a mossed over tree stump. This turned out to be *Chrysomphalina grossula* (above right), for which there is one record on FRDBI – this one!

We emerged from the woodland onto roadways and short grassy verges with trees. Many of the latter were hosting masses of mycorrhizal fungi, seemingly more abundantly than in some of the woodland we had been through. A couple of waxcaps were even found; *Hygrocybe insipida*, and *Cuphophyllus virgineus*. Is

this showing the combined effect of good light exposure and short managed vegetation one wondered?



I had warned the whole group at the outset that my hoped for, circular circuit would be around 5 km but the reward was the lure of refreshment at the ancient Stanley chapel with minstrel gallery, turned Churchill Pub. Some of us did indeed make it that far and enjoyed a coffee rest there before the final leg back to the car park, with a final species count of 128.

Reference

⁽¹⁾ FTE - *Fungi of Temperate Europe* (Volume 1), Læssøe T. and Petersen J H., 2019.

Photograph on front cover

UK Fungus Day is an annual event organised by the British Mycological Society. This year, the theme for UK Fungus Day was the many faces of fungi and the BMS encouraged submissions of fungus photographs to capture the many faces of fungi, with prizes for the winner and runners up in different age categories. NWFG member Mike Valentine won first prize (age 18 years and over category) with his photograph of *Microglossum viride* (Green Earthtongue).

The photograph was taken with a tripod mounted Nikon D80 camera and Sigma 180mm macro lens, and is a focus stack of four images. (Needed to get front to back image sharpness over the required depth of field). Each of the four shots being 1/2 second at f11, and then stacked using "CombineZM" stacking software. The photograph was taken on site in Gisburn Forest, using ambient daylight lighting, and a "Lastolite" folding reflector to throw some additional light onto the subject. It was very dark that day under the tree canopy.

Reference

<https://www.ukfungusday.co.uk/photocompetitionwinners>

(Picture:

https://static.wixstatic.com/media/1d8000_dccdb04b3e9e4e5fab1afcec4a960e2~mv2.jpg)