

Montgomeryshire Field Society Fungus Foray, Pont Llogel 24/10/2024

Organisers: Sue and Steve Southam

On 24/10/2024, 35 members met at Pont Llogel. The main focus of the trip, as is usual for this time of year, was fungi. The season had been unusual and, as a consequence, the recce visit a week or so before the meeting revealed very few fruiting bodies. A further disappointment on the day of the outing was that Les Hughes was unable to join us due to health problems. Fortunately however, three very knowledgeable members and friends stepped forward to help with identification. Kim Greenwood, Paul Roughley and Huw Faulkner were all very helpful in finding and naming species, and Kim's idea of members marking any 'new' fungi with a red flag proved really useful when we were re-finding them for identification. The woodland, churchyard and meadow habitats yielded a good variety of interesting specimens, and by the end of the outing at least 35 different species had been recorded. Later, a few members recorded a further two 'new' species at Llanfair Caereinion churchyard, bringing the total number of fungi species to 37 plus (a few were non-identifiable!)

The weather was dry and relatively mild, which was a relief after the recent rainfall, and the autumn colours along the riverside path were breathtakingly beautiful. A walk from the car park to the churchyard produced the first few fungi of the day, including the aptly named Jelly Baby fungus which does resemble the sweet version of the name but is definitely not to be eaten!

Once at the churchyard, the hunt was on for waxcaps in particular, and it was good to find that in the few days since our recce, many more fruiting bodies had appeared. Waxcaps rely on undisturbed and nutrient-poor ground, where the grass is removed after being cut, so churchyards can often provide the perfect habitat. Crimson Waxcaps (*Hygrocybe punicea*) were the most common, but in all a total of 11 different waxcap species were identified here, ranging from red, orange, yellow and black to pure white and including Blackening, Snowy, Spangle, Parrot and Butter. (See centre pages for full list). We searched in vain for the beautiful pink Ballerina Waxcap though. Several other mushroom types were spotted, with intriguing names such as Hairy Leg Bell (*Galerina vittiformis*) and Felted Pinkgill (*Entoloma griseocyanum*) amongst them. An unexpected find here was the jawbones and skull of a hedgehog, with the body of the unfortunate animal close by. Jackie Matthews pointed out the large forward-facing front incisors, and explained that the teeth are probably highly suited to both an insectivorous and omnivorous diet.

The second section of our route took us along the woodland edge beside the River Vyrnwy. Here our helpful mycologists pointed out a different group of fungi, many of which are dependent on dead or decayed stumps, and occur in a whole variety of shapes and forms. These included an eye-catching cluster of Glistening Inkcaps, conveniently close to some Common Inkcaps which helped us to note the differences between them! We were also shown Purple Jellydiscs (*Ascocoryne sarcoides*), in both their young, spherical stage, and also their later brain-like stage. Bright yellow saucer-shaped discs on a dead oak branch had the delightful name of Yellow Disco! (*Dacrymyces minor*).

We had hoped to see Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*), the classic fairy-tale toadstool, red with white 'spots', which is often found under birch trees, of which there were plenty. But we found none in the woodland.

Time was passing surprisingly quickly and we had to step out in order to explore the third of our habitats - the meadows. Here we found three more waxcap species, one of which was the Ballerina, which although very attractive did not steal the show for the mycologists, as a very occasional variant of the usually flesh-coloured Meadow Waxcap was a surprise for us all. It was *Cuphophyllus pratensis* var. *pallidus*, and is not at all common, but here were two growing together, rather nibbled but perfectly identifiable by those in the know!

A few members recorded bird sightings, but these were thin on the ground today. On the recce trip 3 dippers had been seen but unfortunately they did not appear this time. A kingfisher was a treat though, as it darted along the river, its shrill whistle alerting those of us on the bank to its presence. It was literally gone in a flash.....of blue.

Most of the group reconvened at The Goat Hotel in Llanfair Caereinion, where Richard and Alyson treated us to a splendid afternoon tea, complete with excellent service and the best china, brought down from the loft and apparently washed especially for our party. Huge thanks to them, and to all our fungi enthusiasts! A memorable last outing for 2024.