

Sightings for December 2012

Russet Toughshank (*Collybia dryophila*) at map location D9, on the grass ride between Bluebell Wood and the new wood. Extremely common but variable toughshank, whose fruiting season extends from early summer to late autumn, orange-brown cap and stem commonly found near oak trees. This fungus was spotted and image provided by Rory Morrissey. (Sighted 4th December 2012)

White Cheese Polypore (*Tyromyces chioneus*) at map location D9. Several small white wavy brackets on a small ash stump, beside the grass ride outside of Bluebell Wood. Soft and rubbery, its name is derived not from its taste or smell but from its scientific name; *Tyromyces* which means "with a cheesy consistency" and *chioneus* which means "snow white" in reference to the colour of this polypore. This fungus was spotted and image provided by Rory Morrissey. (Sighted 4th December 2012)

Sightings for November 2012

Coral Spot (*Nectria cinnabarina*) at map location J4, beside the path on dead fallen branches close to the Stoke Road entrance. The effect of Coral Spot infection is that (usually small) twigs and branches die back and then dense clusters of soft, pinhead sized pink fungal blobs break through the thin bark. Later the blobs harden and turn dark reddish-brown, and by this time the infected timber is so weak that it usually snaps off during windy weather. (Sighted 6 November 2012)

Butter Cap (*Collybia butyracea*) at map location D1 (large map) in the new wood, old bike jump area of a larch plantation. Dozens of these dark brown cap fungi spread randomly over quite a large part of the plantation. Also known as the Greasy Toughshank it has a tremendously variable cap colour with many forms of the species. Very common, found mainly amongst conifers. (Sighted 6 November 2012, new image added)

Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) at map location J5. Another sighting of this quite variable fungus about 3m up a 6m dead beech tree at the path junction. Pale blue/grey colour and much larger than the smaller previously sighted species (see 4th Nov 2011 sighting), hence additional image added. This tree also had a small troop of Turkeytail fungi at its base and has also hosted a Branching Oyster and Giant Polypore on it in the last year. (Sighted 23 November 2012)

Elder Whitewash fungus (*Hyphodontia sambuci*) at map location G6, a fungal pathogen (i.e. infectious agent or germ). Growing on the trunk and branches of several dead elder trees. Being just a thin white featureless coating, it could be mistaken for graffiti ! This is one of the more boring fungi to photograph, however I've included an image incase anyone wondered what it is. (Sighted 23 November 2012)

Sightings for October 2012

After a rather wet month, many fungi appeared in Bluebell Wood plus one in the New Wood. This included repeat sightings of; several separate troops of Parasols, Shaggy Parasols and Rosy Bonnets. Also a separate sighting of a Golden Scalycap, Candlesnuff and a few Stump Puffballs. There were 7 new sightings this month which brings the total to 29 separate species recorded since September 2011.

Stump Puffball (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*) at map location J7 just inside the main gated entrance also at several other locations in the wood. Of the ten of so species of puffball this is the only one that grows on old tree stumps. It has a small opening at the top which releases the spores when rain drops fall on it. (Sighted 18 October 2012)

Golden Scalycap (*Pholiota aurivella*) at map location H4 on a dead cut tree trunk raised above the ground. This is a separate sighting to the one found last October, growing in a hollow tree. The photo of this one was taken by Dave Booth shortly after it emerged; I visited the wood 3 days later, after heavy overnight rain, to find the scales had been washed off, a common feature of this fungi. (Sighted 15 October 2012)

Honey Fungus (*Armillaria*) at map location J5 beside the path also at J7 close to the Stump Puffball above and at I7 opposite Esther's pond. Large troops of these fungi at each location. One of the most varied fungi in shape, form and colour making identification difficult; it is now reclassified as a group of about 10 closely related separate species. Therefore I've only included its genus and not the species type. Also the honey fungus is one of the most deadly parasites of trees responsible for the death of many. (Sighted 18 October 2012)

Porcelain Fungus (*Oudemansiella mucida*) at map location D8 about 20ft up on a dead beech tree. One of the most beautiful of fungi, striking and edible, the Porcelain Fungus has a pure white to pale grey cap. The slimy cap resembles glistening porcelain. The stem is very tough, thin, and roots on the wood in which it grows. Often appears high up on beech trees, the gills are also white and widely spaced. For a close up view, see this month's; Photo of the Month. (Sighted 23 October 2012)

Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*) at map location D8 near the base of the dead beech tree above, hidden amongst brambles. Four fungi all fairly close to each other. This species is usually smelt before it is seen; it gives off an unpleasant odour of rotting meat. The stout white stem is hollow and spongy; it is topped by a thimble-shaped, honeycomb-like cap. When it first emerges, the cap is covered with a greenish spore laden coating or 'gleba'. This is seldom seen because insects quickly eat the gleba and some gets stuck to their legs which results in the spores being transported away. (Sighted 23 October 2012)

Sulphur Tuft (*Hypholoma fasciculare*), at map location H8, on the new wood side of the path between the old and the new wood, a large troop growing on a woodchip pile. This fungus is inedible and for most people it is poisonous, with a very bitter taste. Although only very rarely fatal, poisoning by Sulphur Tuft can have severe symptoms, including stomach pains and nausea but also temporary paralysis and distorted vision. This is a first sighting of this species, (Sighted 2 Oct 2012).

Fairy Inkcap (*Coprinellus disseminatus*): At map location F6 on a rotten fallen tree trunk about 20 yards from the 'signature tree' (also known as Fairy's Bonnets). The caps are about 1cm in diameter, sometimes nearly pure white; the stems are hollow and very fragile. They often form dense masses; these were a separate sighting to those seen in August. (Sighted 9 October 2012).

Rosy Bonnet (*Mycena rosea*) at map location J3 in leaf litter, close to the Stoke Road9 Oct 2012) entrance gate. This fungus occurs with beech and oak trees; it has a bell or bonnet shaped cap and is a delicate shade of pink. This is a separate sighting to the one seen in September 2011. There is a similar species which is lilac coloured, known as the lilac bonnet. (Sighted

Glistening Inkcap (*Coprinus micaceus*), at map location F6 on an old dead tree trunk beside the main path. The caps are covered at first in tiny white granules - the remains of the veil - these egg-shaped caps become bell shaped and lose their mica-like grains as they age. The cap colour is ochre-brown, with a russet central 'eye', and turns grey-brown as it ages. The gills are white, turning purple-brown and then blackening before becoming a black inky fluid, hence its name Inkcap. (Sighted 9 Oct 2012)

Sightings for September 2012

Giant Polypore (*Meripilus giganteus*) the annual reappearance, at map location F5, on the base of the large beech 'signature tree'. There were several large fruit bodies on the base and another on a nearby root. This fungi was sighted last year on 2nd September 2011. I first saw this fungus in the autumn of 2003 and it has reappeared each year since – perhaps it should be referred to as 'old faithful'. (Sighted 10 September 2012). The 6 Artist Bracket Fungi sighted on the 30 October last year are also still present on the tree, with new growth.

Dead Moll's Fingers (*Xylaria longipes*), at map location H4 close to the large Southern Bracket fungus sighted in December 2011. This unusual fungi is seldom noticed as it is small (6cms), slender cylindrical and black, points upwards like a few dead sticks, or fingers – hence its name! This is a close relative of the larger club shaped; Dead Man's Fingers (*X. polymorpha*). (Sighted 24 September 2012)

Hairy Curtain Crust (*Stereum hirsutum*), at map location I4 on a dead tree stump beside the path. A cluster of small wavy brackets; upper surface is velvety and covered in fine pale hairs near the centre. Ochre-orange colour bands, interspersed with darker brown bands, turning greyish with age. This is one of the most variable of fungi, both in terms of colour and form. (Sighted 24 September 2012)

Branching Oyster (*Pleurotus cornucopiae*), at map location D8 on a fallen dead tree (possibly wild cherry) close to the path. A second and separate sighting of this species, this one was quite fresh and pure white, smooth on top with shallow gills running deeply down the short stem. The photo was taken in rain hence the shiny wet surface, the underside gills are shown at the inset. (Sighted 24 September 2012)

Sightings for August 2012

Yellow Fan (*Spathularia flavida*): A second separate sighting of this very small and quite rare fungi, at map location G4 (large map). Found in another larch plantation, off the central ride in the new wood on the left side of the track through to the large grassy glade area. There were about 5 small troops, each with about 5-10 fruitbodies and around 2-3cm tall. They have a yellow flat fan-shaped, spatula head and a narrow white stem. These were already several weeks old and probably appeared in early June with the first sighting of this species. (Sighted 9 August 2012).

Fairy Inkcap (*Coprinellus disseminatus*): At map location H7 on the base of a mature ash tree, beside the path about 50 yards from the top entrance gate (also known as Fairy's Bonnets). The caps are about 1cm in diameter, sometimes nearly pure white; the stems are hollow and very fragile. It takes just two or three days for the young white caps to turn grey and then begin blackening producing an inky fluid. They often form dense masses; this photo shows about 3 to 4 hundred of the tiny fruitbodies. (Sighted 9 August 2012).

Sightings for July 2012

Shaggy Parasol (*Chlorophyllum rhacodes*): at map location F8 close to the old wood boundary, beside a narrow path. Very similar to the parasol mushroom except it lacks the 'snakeskin' pattern brown scales on the stem and the cap scales are brown and recurved. Whereas the parasol fungus is edible and tasty the shaggy parasol is toxic to some and should not be eaten! This particular fungus was old and decayed and not worth photographing however I have included an alternative photo of a group I took in November 2005 at the same approximate location. (Sighted 2nd July 2012)

Yellow Fan (*Spathularia flavida*): A very small and quite rare fungi, only the 2nd sighting outside of Bluebell Wood, at map location D1 (large map). Found in a small grass glade on the eastern side of a larch plantation at the NW end of Linslade Wood (beside the old bike jump area). There were about 12 small troops, each with 10-30 fruitbodies and around 20-30mm tall. They have a yellow flat fan-shaped, spatula head and a narrow white stem. This is the smallest fungi find so far, it would be easy to walk past them and not even notice them. (Sighted 5th July 2012)

Sightings for June 2012 (First new sighting in 4 months)

Chicken of the Woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*) also known as the Sulphur Polypore, at map location H3, on a very old fallen tree between the path bend and the Stoke Road. This fungus was probably a week or two old when found so not as bright yellow as would be expected for this species. It usually appears between late winter and early summer and has a typically 'mushroomy' smell. Edible when fresh and young with not surprisingly - a taste of chicken but may cause stomach upsets for some ! (Sighted 9 June 2012)

Sightings for February 2012

Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*) at map location I4, on the base of a large tree beside the south easterly going path, about 20 metres from the path junction. This fungus is old and woody the larger one of the four had a couple of dark ridges representing 2-3 year old growths. The Southern bracket is very similar to the Artists bracket previously found in the wood but tends to be thicker. The white underside is not usually as flat but also bruises brown if cut. (Sighted 21 February 2012)

Sightings for January 2012

Branched Oyster (*Pleurotus cornucopiae*) at map location J5 on the same dead tree stump as the September 23rd 2011 Giant Polypore sighting. This fungi was reported and photo taken courtesy of Dave Booth on the 2nd January

2012. Unfortunately on visiting the wood on the 4th January the fungi had been vandalised despite it being about 3 metres above ground, the remains were left scattered nearby. However from the photo taken when it was fresh and intact it was most likely a branched oyster. Had it been allowed to age the cap would have become depressed and funnel shaped, this would have confirmed its identity! Hopefully it will reappear late next December/early January (sighted 2nd January 2012).

Cramp Balls (*Daldinia concentrica*) at map location I4, on a large fallen branch from an ash tree. These uneven, ball-shaped black fruit bodies are hard but relatively light. When young, they are a dark rusty brown colour, blackening with age. When cut in half they reveal concentric black and silver/grey rings, shown inserted on the photo taken.

Traditionally used as a preventative for cramp, they are also known as King Alfred's Cakes for their resemblance to the cakes the Saxon king supposedly burnt (sighted 23rd January 2012).

Sightings for December 2011

Candlesnuff Fungus (*Xylaria hypoxylon*) at map location H4 path junction on a well rotted tree stump. Also known as the Stag's Horn Fungus, this fungus grows on dead hardwood for many years after the trees have died and fruits throughout the year. When a lighted candle is snuffed out by quickly pinching the wick between finger and thumb, the flattened partly-burnt wick looks something like the fruitbody of this fungi (although the black part of an extinguished candle wick is at the top!) The whole of the fruitbody eventually blackens, particularly common during late autumn and winter (sighted 6th December).

Southern Bracket (*Ganoderma australe*) at map location H4, path junction a few feet from the Candlesnuff fungus above on a separate rotten tree stump. About 40cms wide and several years old, as shown by the several black ridge layers of growth. This one was completely hidden from view by brambles and nettles and was probably the cause of the tree's death several years ago. The brambles were cut back to enable the photo to be taken. (sighted 6th December) The original photo has since been replaced with a more recent one (May 2012) which was taken shortly after the fungi released its brown spores. These can be clearly seen on the upper side of the fruitbody also on the tree stump and the nearby leaves, a good indicator as to its species type

Sightings for November 2011

Jelly Ear (*Auricularia auricular – judae*) at map location F5 on old elder tree west of the path. Mainly seen in winter and spring, the Jelly Ear fungus is most commonly seen on dead elder trees and on fallen branches. The outer surface is tan-brown with a purple tinge and is rubbery when wet but brittle when thoroughly dry, it's a popular Chinese edible delicacy (Sighted 4th November).

Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) at map location J5 on an old cut log beside the path near the tall dead tree stump. A most attractive fungus which is variable in size, shape and colour, there are many kinds of oyster mushroom making identification difficult. This one appeared after heavy overnight rain and was pure white, two days later it had taken on its usual blue-grey colour. There were several large clusters of the fungus on the log (Sighted 4th & 6th November).

Butter Cap (*Rhodocollybia butyacea*) at map location A7 on the north side of the path just west of the bridleway junction in Linslade Wood also 50 yards further west along the path, at both locations there were several large fungi (10cm dia.). A very common woodland mushroom often found in troops or fairy rings. The cap colour is very variable, though usually purplish brown with a paler margin and greasy, can be a much paler brown or buff in dry weather. This species was previously known as the Greasy Toughshank (Sighted 25th November).

Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) another sighting at map location J5 on an old cut log beside the path about 3m from an earlier sighting on the 4th November. It's a very large troop of the fungi (about 80+) which were a smaller variety of the previously sighted species and a deeper blue-grey colour (Sighted 25th November).

Sightings for October 2011

Artist's Bracket (*Ganoderma applanatum*) at map location F5, on the same tree with the giant polypore sighted on 2nd September. There are six separate fungi, the largest at head height and the others attached to the roots. Common on beech trees and like the giant polypore this fungus will also eventually kill the tree. Artistic etchings can be made on the white underside of the fungus which turns instantly to dark brown – hence the common name. As you can see on the photograph were I scratched my initials on it to prove its type (sighted 31st October).

Turkeytail (*Trametes versicolor*) at map location J5 beside the path on an old cut log. A very common bracket fungus which fruits in autumn and early winter but the brackets take a long time to decay and can be found through the year. Grows mainly on dead hardwood in a wide range of colour variations. There are several turkeytail fungi in Bluebell wood this one was old and not so brightly coloured (sighted 31st October).

Golden Scalycap (*Pholiota aurivella*) at map location G6 inside a hollow dead ash tree beside the path on the slope. This is an infrequent species in many areas but more common in the south-east of England. This one is particularly unusual as it is a reddish brown variety of the normally golden yellow species. The rain normally washes the spots off the cap but as this one was growing inside a hollow tree they remained until it decayed (sighted 31st October).

Sightings for September 2011

Giant Polypore (*Meripilus giganteus*) at map location F5 on the base of a large beech tree which has initials carved on it higher up. There were 2 large fruit bodies on the base (both about 2 feet across) and another on a nearby root. Sadly these fungi will eventually kill the tree after which the fungus continues fruiting for another year or two (Sighted 2nd September).

Common Puffball (*Lycoperdon perlatum*) at map location F7 near the path, also further east at I7, south of the path. This is one of the most common woodland fungi which can be found from July through to the first heavy frosts. When rain drops fall on the mature puffball it releases its spores through a pore hole on the top (sighted 9th September).

Wood Mushroom (*Agaricus silvicola*) at map location J5 down the slope near the woodland edge. Very much like a Horse Mushroom but with a thinner cap, the wood mushroom is a good edible species and quite common it has an odour of aniseed. Also known as Woodland mushroom (sighted 9th September).

Parasol (*Macrolepiota procera*) at map location I4 beside the path close to a recently fallen large tree. There were 12 other Parasol mushrooms nearby. The Parasol is just as its common name implies – a lovely sunshade, tall with a ragged tidiness. This one was already mature and not at its best (sighted 17th September).

Giant Polypore (*Meripilus giganteus*) at map location J5, on the base of a large dead (20ft high), dead tree stump by a path junction. As with the other giant polypore sighted earlier it was probably this fungus that killed the tree (sighted 23rd September).

Rosey Bonnet (*Mycena rosea*) at map location G4 in leaf litter. This fungus occurs with beech and oak trees; it has a bell or bonnet shaped cap and is a delicate shade of pink. There is a similar species which is lilac coloured, known as the lilac bonnet (sighted 23rd September).