

Micheldever Wood

Fungi Foray

October 2020



Seven fungi foragers stepped out into Micheldever Woods for a bit of mushroom spotting on a bright, clear afternoon. October is the time of year that these magical organisms seem to spring up almost overnight. Straying just a short distance away from the main pathways, and rummaging among the autumnal leaves and tree stumps, we homed in our first species – the zonal multi-coloured **Turkeytail** (*Trametes versicolor*, photo below) sprinkled along a fallen beech tree trunk. Decomposing timber forms a food store for many types of mushrooms which, not having chlorophyll, are obliged to get their food supply ready-made. As with other common fungi names, the name is aptly descriptive of its appearance.



One can imagine country folk of old naming these fungi. More wonderful names and fungi followed: **King Arthur's Cakes** (*Daldinia concentrica*, photo below) because the black-coloured fungi, as you can see, resemble burnt cakes, and became linked to the legend of King Alfred not keeping an eye on some baking cakes for a woman who was sheltering him

(not a contender for the Great British Bake Off then). As with the cakes, you wouldn't want to eat these burnt offerings as they are poisonous.

In the UK, of about 4500 species, about 200 are edible, 50 poisonous and the rest are inedible or tasteless but fortunately only a few mushroom poisonings are fatal. On the edible mushroom front, there was an abundance of

Common Puffball (*Lycoperdon perlatum*), not the large round ones (apparently very nice sliced and fried my foraging friend told me) but smaller versions of this extensive family. The puff it emits when touched are the spores which, lacking seeds, is how fungi reproduce. Other aptly-named species spotted included a solitary and past its best **Stinkhorn** (*Phallus impudicus*) but still emitting an unpleasant odour, pretty little **Fairy Bonnet** (*Coprinellus disseminates*) and yellowy **Sulphur Tuft** (*Hypholoma fasciculare*).



Tucked away alongside other species we spotted dainty **Amethyst Decseivers** (*Laccaria amethystina*, photo left). When young the deep purple of this fungi is quite distinctive, but with age the mushroom can

fade.

Shaggy Inkcap (*Coprinus comatus*) is another example of fungi which changes as it ages – emerging from the ground as white cylinders before the bell-shaped caps open out, while the gills beneath the cap are white, then pink, before blackening and secreting a black liquid filled with spores (hence the "inkcap" name). These changes can make name identification tricky.

As our eyes became focused, we became more adept at spotting clumps of well-camouflaged fungi among the detritus and leaf litter such as the delightful **Magpie Inkcap** (*Coprinopsis picacea*, photo right); first one was spotted and then another



and “oh look, a whole clump of them”. This fungi with its dark and light patches is reminiscent of magpie plumage.

Sometimes a tree stump would play host to six or seven different types.



A little gem popped up – a member of the Earth Star family, **Collared Earthstar** (*Geastrum triplex*). This mushroom looks as though it might have arrived from space – the result of the outer layer of fruit body tissue splitting open in a star shape. Another quirky-shaped fungi was the **Crested Coral** (*Clavarioid coralloides*, photo left) looking as though it belonged in the Barrier Reef!

And finally, at the end of the day’s foraging-a solitary **Fly Agaric** (*Amanita muscaria*, photo right) was spotted - the magical toadstool of children’s fairy books. This iconic red and white-spotted mushroom is



so named because it is thought to derive from its use as an insecticide when sprinkled in milk.

These are just a few of the many species which were spotted - and more are lurking. Do go and look before they disappear ...






Photographs: Bruce Graham, John Leeks and Gail Alexander

Report: Gail Alexander, October 2020

Full Photo List

				
Amethyst Deceiver (<i>Laccaria amethystine</i>)	Brown Birch Bolete (<i>Leccinum scabrum</i>)	Common Earthball (<i>Scleroderma citrinum</i>)	Common Puffball (<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i>)	Crested Coral (<i>Clavarioid coralloides</i>)
				
Collared Earthstar (<i>Geastrum triplex</i>)	Destroying Angel (<i>Amanita virosa</i>)	Fairy Inkcap (<i>Coprinellus disseminates</i>)	Fly Agaric (<i>Amanita muscaria</i>)	Honey Fungus (<i>Armillaria mellea</i>)



				
King Alfred's Cakes (<i>Daldinia concentrica</i>)	Lilac Bonnet (<i>Mycena pura</i>)	Magpie Inkcap (<i>Coprinopsis picacea</i>)	Piano Key Inkcap (<i>Coprinellus impatiens</i>)	Porcelain Fungus (<i>Oudemansiella mucida</i>)
				
Red Swamp Brittleleg (<i>Russula aquosa</i>)	Shaggy Inkcap (<i>Coprinus comatus</i>)	Stinkhorn (<i>Phallus impudicus</i>)	Sulphur Tuft (<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>)	The Prince (<i>Agaricus augustus</i>)
				
Turkeytail (<i>Trametes versicolor</i>)	Yellow Stagshorn (<i>Calocera viscosa</i>)	(<i>Panaeolus</i>)	Unknown!	

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