Fungi Notes – Deer Park Wood – 11

Mycena filopes – Iodine bonnet

The caps of this common and widespread fungus are greyish brown with a darker centre growing to about 20mm across. Conical, becoming bell-shaped, translucent and striate, meaning the white gills can be seen through the cap. The stem is long and slender and greyish brown with a fine white, hairy root structure at the base as can be seen in this picture. It is said to have an odour of iodine, hence the common name, but this is not always evident. Found on woody debris in mixed woodland, this example was found growing on a decaying 75mm diameter branch under the birch trees at the southeast corner of DPW when we started scything the grass on 28th October 2024.

Mycena galopus variant candida – White milking bonnet

This is a less often seen variant of the very common Milking Bonnet. Rated as frequent, it differs from the Milking Bonnet by virtue of its pure white colour. The cap is bell-shaped, striate, and the delicate stem exudes white latex if broken. Also said to have a white hairy base like the Iodine Bonnet, although this was not visible. I didn't want to risk damaging one of this pair of delicate mushrooms by burrowing into the moss they were growing through. It occurs in deciduous woodland and is an important decomposer of leaf litter, breaking down the lignin and cellulose components. Mycena galopus is one of a group of bioluminescent mushrooms, although it is the mycelium or root structure that exhibits this phenomenon rather than the fruit body. Normally seen in summer to autumn, this example was found in DPW on 2nd January 2025, growing on small a moss-covered branch a few metres from the west path.

Fungi Notes – Deer Park Wood – 12

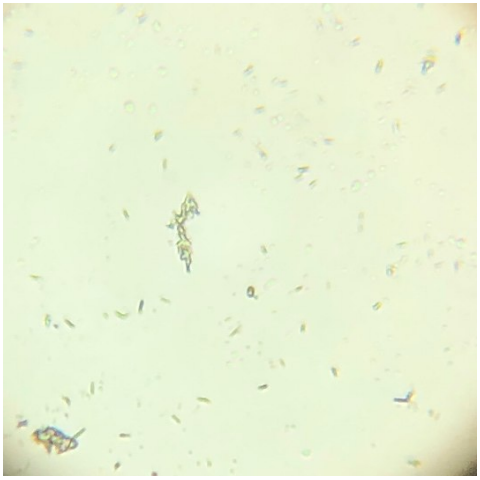
Mycena galericulata – Common bonnet

Common, as the name implies, the cap of the Common bonnet is 20mm – 60mm across, conical, brown or grey-brown, paler and striate at the margin. The gills are fairly distant, whitish or grey initially, developing a pink tint with age. The stem is smooth, shiny with fine white tendrils at the base. It is found on the decaying and buried wood of deciduous trees. This example was found next to the east path in DPW on 3rd February 2025. Carefully removed, the white tendrils at the base of the stem are easily seen.

Fungi Notes – Deer Park Wood – 13

One of the more conclusive features used to identify a particular fungus is the spores. These are the tiny, dispersive, reproductive unit of fungi. To establish their colour, a spore print is taken. The cap is removed from the stem and placed, gill side down on a piece of paper and covered with a glass bowl to prevent it from drying out. Left overnight, the resulting spore print will show the shape of the gills and the spore colour. The spores come in a variety of colours, white, yellow, brown, olive, pink and black. I placed these two examples of Velvet Shank on overlapping sheets of white and green paper to ensure the spores would be clearly visible, regardless of colour. By the next morning, a mass of white spores could be seen. Where the gills had been in contact with the paper, the gill pattern could be seen. Where the gills had been slightly raised above the paper, the spores formed a veritable snowstorm of white, giving an idea of just how many could be produced by one fruit body. The spores are very small, individual spores of Velvet Shank are elliptical, measuring 6,5-10 x 3-4µm, visible only through a microscope.

My first attempt at taking a photo through a microscope is shown on the right at X1000 magnification, giving a good idea of the size of the individual spores.



Fungi Notes – Deer Park Wood – 14

Scleroderma citrinum – Common or Citrine earthball

These examples of the Common Earthball, found by Esther Hepworth and Jill Tigwell in December 2024, formed part of a group of around a dozen seen near the east path in DPW. Said to be very common, the fruit body is typically yellow to light ochre with a hard scaly outer skin, hence the scientific name which translates to exactly that. It looks like a flattened potato growing between 40mm – 100mm in diameter. Occurring in damp woodland and having no significant stem, the fruit body is attached to the ground by pale threads. The upper skin rots away when mature, allowing wind and rain to disperse the dark brown spores inside. The empty earthball cases can remain visible for several months in sheltered areas.

These are not for eating. Foragers who have confused these with puffballs have ended up in hospital.

Fungi Notes – Deer Park Wood – 15

Hypholoma fasciculare – Sulphur tuft

This is reported to be a very common mushroom, appearing throughout the year, but I have not seen any before. This example was spotted in DPW in April 2025, growing on the stump of a felled tree.

According to Pat O'Reilly, the conical cap, 30 – 80mm in diameter, starts life a sulphur yellow, paling towards the edge, aging to yellow/brown with the gills and the stem also the same colour. This can be seen in the left photograph found on Wild Food UK's website. The margins of the caps often retain hanging tatters of the partial veil, which explains the genus name, Hypholoma, meaning 'mushrooms with threads', while fasciculare is derived from the Latin '*fascicularis'* meaning, in bundles.

Sulphur tuft fungi tend to appear in large groups, so tightly packed that the caps are unable to expand regularly, as can be seen in these photographs. The grouping above gives it the appearance of a type of loaf, almost like a braided challah.

Unlike a delicious loaf, this fungus is definitely not for eating. It is said to have bitter tasting caps which can cause severe stomach pains and sickness. John Wright in River Cottage Handbook No1 refers to a report of an Italian restaurateur who hospitalised his customers after mistakenly including Sulphur tufts in his mushroom dish.