

# SOME NOTABLE FUNGI from Central London

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I found 2005 to be a rather topsy turvy year for London fungi, reflecting the unpredictable weather. Temperatures went up and down like a yo-yo, with extended dry periods interspersed with heavy downpours.

It got off to a good start during April and May with the rare *Entoloma aprile* appearing for the fifth year in a row, confined to a small elm copse on Hampstead Heath extension. There were the usual spring candidates: *Calocybe gambosa*, *Melanoleuca cognata*, *Coprinus domesticus*, *Entoloma clypeatum*, *Psathyrella spadiceogrisea*, *Conocybe aporos*, *Polyporus squamosus* and the earliest fruiting of *Laetiporus sulphureus* (May 7th) I have seen. In fact May was *the* month on Hampstead Heath for this beautiful polypore, with fruitbodies appearing in many areas. During the summer months things did become rather dry, but during August *Boletus appendiculatus* was recorded for the first time from Hampstead Heath, directly beneath a lime tree, although oak - with which this species is normally associated - was also close by. Later, during October, *Amanita pantherina* fruited in healthy numbers in an area where I frequently foray, - an unexpected new record for the heath. This species, which prefers alkaline soils, is rare in the London area. It does appear for instance in the Lower Forest above Epping, where alkaline boulder clay comes to the surface, but is absent in the majority of Epping Forest (pers. com. Geoffrey Kibby). This was followed in late November by *Amanita gemmata*, also new to me and to the Heath.

However, it was the late autumn that brought the two most exciting finds. Kensal Green Cemetery is one of my regular haunts; I visited it in early November to monitor the *Hygrocybe* on the old lawns close to the cemetery catacombs and made my first London record of the Pink Wax Cap, *Hygrocybe calyptriformis*. This is only the second record of this species from Middlesex (see BMSFRD). A well known BAP species of conservation concern (thanks to Shelley Evans *et al.*), *H. calyptriformis* is now included on a recent local BAP list of threatened fungi compiled by the Greater London Authority in 2004. This was an exciting and surprising find as it hasn't occurred before, to my knowledge, in the cemetery, certainly not on my watch. Eight more frequent species of *Hygrocybe* were recorded from the same visit. Also in evidence was *Tricholoma populinum*, which I wrote about in FM 6 (1):29-30, 2005.

Little did I know that the fungi had something else up their sleeve for me. For this we return to Hampstead Heath and join the final 'Fungi to be with' foray of 2005. This was on its final leg before returning to the car park to review the finds of the day when on a steep bank I noticed something among the grasses, close to the muddy track we were on. I thought I was looking at a white *Clitocybe*, maybe *C. dealbata*, but as I focussed in I noticed that there were two different fruitbodies and that the white-capped species was fruiting from beneath and on top of a more decayed fruitbody of another species. I then realised I was looking at *Volvariella surrecta* fruiting on the decayed

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*Amanita gemmata*, a rare species in the London area with very few records. The pale yellowish-buff cap, prominent bulb with apical 'gutter' and often large velar patches on the cap are all typical for the species.



*Boletus appendiculatus* is locally common in some of the woodlands around London, usually associated with oaks although here it was growing directly below a lime (*Tilia*). Photographs © Andy Overall.

fruitbodies of *Clitocybe nebularis*. Now this is a rare species and once the photographing frenzy had died down I collected the more healthy looking specimens to dry for Kew. There must have been about ten fruiting on a small, scattered number of *C. nebularis*. I returned some days later and they were still fruiting.

I have never before met *V. surrecta* here or anywhere else in the UK. With only 44 records on the BMSFRD, this record from Hampstead Heath is the only one for Middlesex. The BMSFRD notes that it is rare and red-listed, so why is it not included in any BAPs as a species of conservation concern? As noted by Alick Henrici (FM 6 (3):84, 2005), the life history of this species is poorly understood and it appears to be systemic within its host (*C. nebularis* in most cases). I presume that the lack of ecological knowledge of this species is the reason for its omission.

It has been suggested (pers. com. Geoffrey Kibby) that the white bloom often seen

covering the caps of *C. nebularis* fruitbodies could in fact be a sign of the presence of *V. surrecta* within a particular population. Geoff tells me that Roy Watling once made several attempts to culture or stimulate this bloom into fruiting but he thinks without success. Perhaps Roy can give us an update on this? If it is a hyphal stage of *V. surrecta*, it may not be as rare as seems apparent, it may only be rarely encountered because it rarely fruits.

Luckily for me, on this occasion it had fruited and I was in the right place at the right time to see and record it.



*Entoloma aprile* is a vernal species with yellowish-brown tones overall and a distinctly umbonate cap 3-5 cm across, associated with elm trees. It occurs regularly on Hampstead Heath. Photograph © Andy Overall.



The Pink Waxcap, *Hygrocybe calyptiformis* is quite unmistakable with its rosy, pointed caps and waxy brittle texture. It is a rare fungus in the London area. Photographed in Kensal Green Cemetery.



*Volvariella surrecta* growing on the rotting remains of *Clitocybe nebularis*, a striking but sadly rare species with a unique habitat. Photograph © Andy Overall.