

MACROFUNGI OF THE KENWOOD ESTATE

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As many readers of FM may be aware, following previous articles (FM 7(3):82-84; 8(1):24-27), Hampstead Heath is my home patch for fungi. Recording of the macro fungi of the Heath by 'Fungi to be with'/London Fungus Group reached its 10th year in 2007 with 433 species to date.

At 791 acres (320 ha) straddling two boroughs, those of Camden & Barnet, Hampstead Heath is far from being an easy place to cover, therefore it is understandable that some areas tend to be neglected, for whatever reason, be it distance or the low probability of any interesting fungi turning up.

During 2007, apart from my usual forays upon the Heath, I decided to pay a lot more attention to the Kenwood Estate, as much, but not all, of this area had been rather neglected by LFG forays and personal visits by myself. Kenwood makes up 112 acres (45 ha) of the total of Hampstead Heath and is quite different from the rest of the Heath. This whole area was in fact designed by the 18th century landscape garden designer, Humphry Repton, complete with lakes, woods, meadows, farm, dairy, stables and a kitchen garden, so it is no surprise that it has a different air from that of the heath itself.

Today Kenwood is managed by English Heritage who took over from the Corporation of London in 1989; this means that the area is now likely to receive more sympathetic attention than it would have done prior to 1989. The house is definitely worth a visit for its paintings by Turner, Rembrandt, Reynolds, Gainsborough and Vermeer as well the wonderful decor & rooms.

Sprawling at the rear of Kenwood House itself is a large area of short, lush green grass, known as 'The Pasture Ground' which was grazed by cattle

during the 18th century. In front and to the side of the house two large lawns look ripe for waxcaps and other unimproved grass-loving species.

There are two woodland remnants on the estate, both with SSSI status; South Wood, that has good populations of both Pedunculate and Sessile Oak along with some beech and birch, and the smaller North Wood with its towering oak & beech trees on Bagshot sand; there are also unimproved meadows & bogs with mature alder. Both are remnants of a wood that existed before 1600 and management by man, therefore qualifying as ancient woodland. They gained their SSSI status not only because of their age but also for the many hundreds of invertebrates that they support via the dead, standing and fallen wood.

Maybe it was because of the 'less wild' nature of Kenwood that it wasn't a priority for me when looking for fungi; if so, I couldn't have been more wrong and should have known better. I have mentioned that not all of the estate had been ignored, areas I had visited were mainly the woods, South & North and other wooded areas along the Western Boundary with Spaniards Road, namely Mount Tyndal & The Elms. It was some of the more open areas where 'meadow meets tree line' that were to be the most interesting. At the northern end, on the eastern flank of the estate, just outside the fenced boundary, an area known as Stable Field, fringed with oak & beech, was to reveal some real gems.

The hot weather during April followed by the incessant rains of May onward, encouraged species of *Amanita* & *Russula*. By mid-May *Amanita rubescens*, *A. excelsa* var. *spissa* and *A. fulva* had all made an appearance, mainly in a small open, wooded, valley-like area known as the Pasture Ground Cope, of mainly oak and birch.

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A. excelsa var. *spissa* became particularly common during June.

It was during the summer months that some of the more interesting discoveries began to emerge. Along the western edge of Stable Field, during mid June, good collections of *Russula virescens* and *R. graveolens* were made, the former being a new record for the Heath. *R. virescens* is a species I usually associate with beech. Here it was with oak but this is not unknown. There were several variations of *R. graveolens* present, as colouration varied from the usual reddish-brown to a vibrant purple-violet-brown. Here also in healthy numbers were large, robust, green-brown fruitbodies of *R. heterophylla*. Not that any of these species are unusual, it was just good to see fine, healthy populations of each together at the same time.

The outstanding species from this area was undoubtedly the rare, small to medium-sized *Russula zvarae* (Fig. 1), which appeared during early August in a drier period, on totally worn, exposed, dry and cracked, bare soil, about 10 feet from a huge oak tree, not a species I was at all familiar with, even though it had a pink, matt/velvety cap and pink flushed stem. It had me somewhat flummoxed until I got it under the microscope where it revealed characteristics to

help tell it apart from similar species such as *R. rosea*: encrusted fuchsinophile hyphae and flexuous, branched hairs in the pileipellis and subglobose spores with relatively low warts and an incomplete reticulum. Other *Russula* species in this area included *R. pseudointegra*, *R. amoenolens*, *R. grisea*, *R. ionochlora* & the ubiquitous *R. parazurea*.

Among the boletes along this narrow stretch was a new record for the heath of *Leccinum crocipodium* which appeared during July. Also present were *Leccinum scabrum*, *Boletus radicans*, *B. edulis*, *B. luridiformis*, *B. badius*, *B. pulverulentus*, *Gyroporus castaneus* and *Xerocomus rubellus*.

At the base of one of the older beech trees in Stable Field *Podoscypha multizonata* occurs (it is one of the sites covered in a previous article on this species). This year was no exception. It fruiting at the end of August but in a stunted, malformed manner. At the base of one of the few Scots Pine on the estate, the rather resplendent and alluring *Phaeolus schweinitzii* was in evidence, another new record for the Heath.

Just to the east of Stable Field, heading toward Hampstead Lane, a rather ramshackle set of wooden gates lead into the Kitchen Garden where herbs and various shrubs are grown; it is also



Fig. 1. *Russula zvarae* showing its striking matt pink pileus and stipe. A nationally rare species. It was a new record for the Heath. Photograph © Andy Overall.

home to a wonderfully fruitful Mulberry tree. It was here on the edge of the lawn that four tightly knit clusters of the infrequent *Psathyrella multipedata* (Fig. 2) glistened with the early morning dew, first appearing at the end of August and then again in October.

The Pasture Ground is a large grassland area fringed with various trees, including English Oak, Holm Oak, beech, hornbeam, lime and birch. Here throughout the summer various *Russula* species came and went, including *R. atropurpurea* (one specimen of which was practically white/cream in colour), *R. farinipes* (new record), *R. puellaris* (new record), *R. exalbicans*, *R. aeruginea*, *R. pseudo-integra* & *R. pectinata*.

The most exciting record from the Pasture Ground was that of *Amanita crocea*, a first for the Heath, a single specimen sitting right out in the open, among short turf, a few feet away from two lone birch trees – never orange in my opinion (more peach?), despite the vernacular name for this species - Orange Grisette. A more robust species than *A. fulva* and more tawny-orange in colour, the stem is strongly shaggy-scaly and also pale tawny-orange. The volva is white, often greying, as opposed to the thin-fleshed and russet-toned volva of *A. fulva*. Also in association with the same birch trees, though later in September,

Leccinum scabrum came through, as did *Russula aeruginea*.

Sandwiched between the Pasture Ground and South Wood are two ponds, £1000 Pond and Wood Pond. On the east side of £1000 Pond is the Sham Bridge, a fake bridge behind which are a row of alder trees. On the banks of the pond directly beneath the alder and the bridge, fairly large groups of *Naucoria striatula* were fruiting during mid October.

In South Wood, at the base of oak trees, *Grifola frondosa* came and went during September at four separate sites. *Laetiporus sulphureus* was widespread across the estate, mainly during July and August, mostly on oak, though one fruiting occurred on hawthorn, a first for me. *Fistulina hepatica* was also widespread on oak, mainly during September.

West of the Pasture Ground, toward Spaniards Road, is West Meadow where there is a small boggy area, called North Copse with a small group of mature alder trees mixed with silver birch. I made a few visits to this spot throughout the summer, finding little except for the odd earth-ball. It was during late September that two notable species appeared among the wet moss and soil directly beneath the alder: *Lactarius obscuratus* (Fig. 3) and *Laccaria purpureobadia*.



Fig. 2. *Psathyrella multipedata* is frequently found in grassy areas around trees. The large clumps arise from a common rooting base. Photograph © Andy Overall.



Fig. 3. *Lactarius obscuratus*, one of a suite of *Lactarius* species associated with alder. It has smaller spores and lacks the olivaceous tinges of the closely related and equally common *L. cyathuliformis*. Photograph © Andy Overall.



Fig. 4. *Inocybe hirtella* var. *bispora*, a species which smells strongly of almonds when enclosed for a while in a container. Photograph © Andy Overall.

With *L. obscuratus* being so small and far from forthcoming with any latex, I was looking elsewhere for a short while, but when the white milk eventually showed on some specimens (although not all), I knew what I was actually dealing with. Both of these species are new records for the Heath.

Running parallel with the ridge of North Wood, is West Lodge Drive on the Bagshot sand. During October, sitting tight up against chestnut paling, were small groups of the Almond Fibrecap - *Inocybe hirtella* var. *bispora* (Fig. 4). I found the smell of almonds barely evident on fresh material, it wasn't until collected specimens had sat for a few hours in a container that it became clear and fairly potent. Fresh specimens had a different, rather unpleasant smell.

The lawns around the house proved a little disappointing, as I was hoping for a good display of waxcaps. Only two species turned up, the common *Hygrocybe virginea* and the uncommon *H. citrinovirens*. There were also a few difficult species of *Inocybe* that escaped identification. There was a nice surprise however when I found *Suillus luteus* fruiting with a seven year old Bhutan Pine.

A lawn that turned out to be more interesting than those surrounding the house was one that goes with the tied cottages belonging to the estate—aptly named Cottage Lawn, close to the West Lodge car park. At the far end of the lawn is a large Weeping Willow. In late October, beneath the willow and all around its fringe, were literally hundreds of fruit bodies of an *Entoloma* species. Having looked at it under the microscope a few times and using the Noordeloos key in *Flora Agaricina Neerlandica* Vol. 1, my conclusion was *E. myrmecophilum*. Also found on the lawn were *Rickenella fibula* and *R. swartzii*. I was really surprised not to find any *Hygrocybe* here but I suspect there may be on future visits.

To finish off, growing on wood-chips around the shrubbery, close to the Mansion Cottage visitor centre, *Ramaria stricta* (Fig. 5) was fruiting generously, unseen by most visitors except for the ever searching eyes of the field mycologist. 150 species of macrofungi were recorded for Kenwood from April to November 2007, some of which were new records for both the county of Middlesex and the Heath. I shall be paying a lot more attention to this area in the future.



Fig. 5. *Ramaria stricta* is one of the few common species of *Ramaria* in the UK, often appearing on woodchip mulch. Photograph © Andy Overall.