FUNGI WALK at BURNHAM BEECHES on Saturday October 2nd 2021

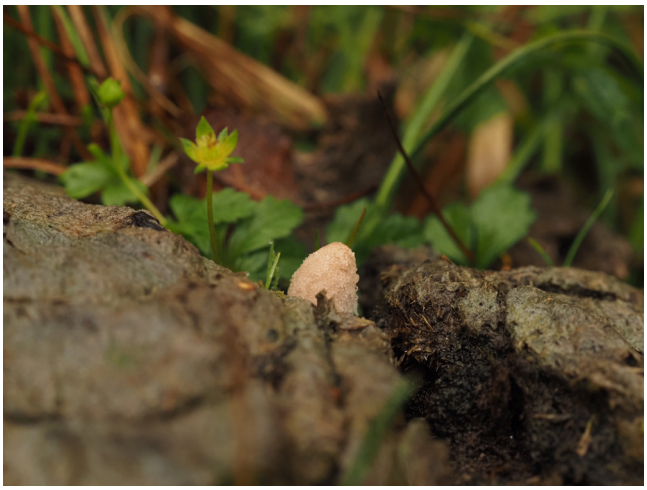
Penny Cullington

A group of 20 met up on a drizzly chilly morning, the forecast of increased rain through the day unfortunately proving spot on! It was tipping it by midday when we were very ready to return to the safety of our vehicles. Geoffrey Kibby kindly joined us as guest leader and everyone benefited from his amazing field skills, making Derek's and my task very much easier, though we decided against a car park Show & Tell session at lunchtime – it was just too wet. Despite rain during the previous week conditions were still really disappointing for fungi – it's clearly going to take more time for fruiting to get properly underway. At a site renowned for its fungi and with this many people searching we would expect to top 100 species in early October with no difficulty; instead we made it to 71 though 4 of these were new to the site, two of which are also new to the county. Several will be dried for sequencing as part of our 3 year project funded by the owners, the City of London Corporation.

Above, *Suillus bovinus* under pine today (CW)

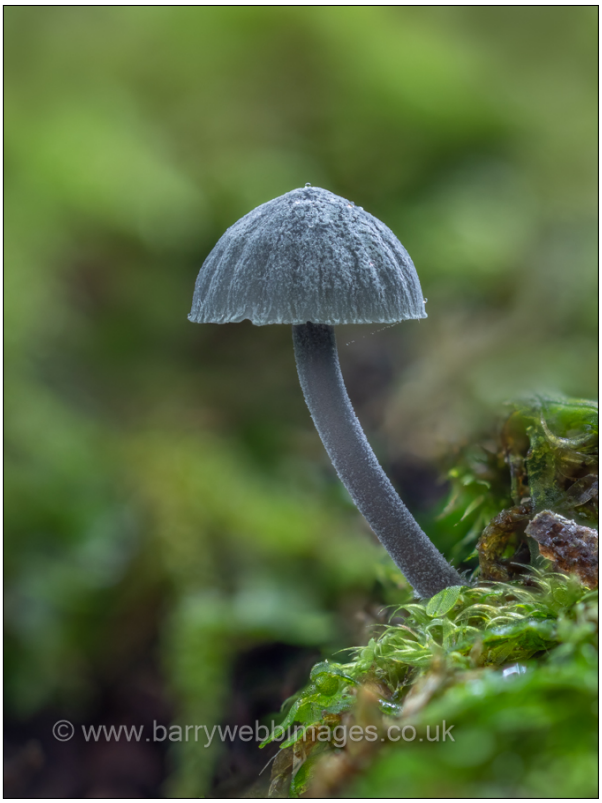
We headed first towards the Mire, an area which retains moisture well and consequently often produces species of interest. Under the surrounding Pines a few specimens of ***Suillus bovinus*** (Bovine Bolete) were found, the genus separated from the many other Bolete genera by having sticky caps (slimy when wet as today) with most species occurring under Pine, a few under Larch, and one or two having a ring on the stem. Today's species is one of the commonest and is host specific to Pine, having a buff cap with a pink tinge and the ringless stem and pores are concolorous, the pores being notably large to angular.

Just emerging on the pony dung in the Mire two separate examples of ***Coprinopsis pseudonivea*** were found, an Inkcap having a distinctive cap covered in copious pinkish veil. A much more common dung species is *C. nivea* (Snowy Inkcap) having thick pure white veil when young, but today's species with its pink tinge is much less common and in fact appears to be new to the site with just a handful of previous county records.



Above, our two collections of *Coprinopsis pseudonivea* on pony dung in the Mire today. (Left: CW; right: BW)

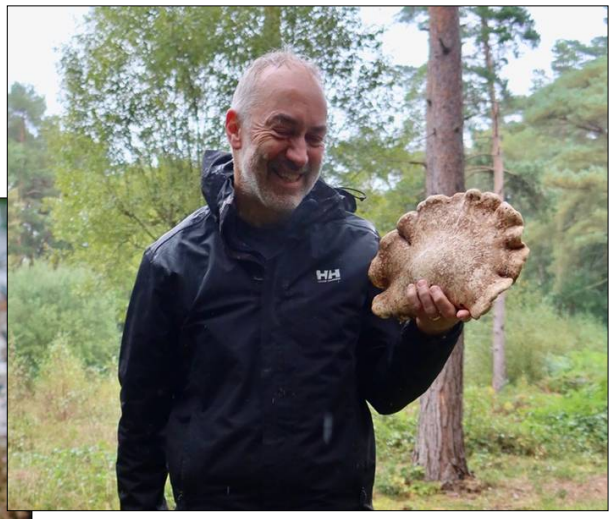
At last the genus *Mycena* (Bonnet) is beginning to make an appearance – we have 7 species on the list. When examined at home many of the singleton collections turned out to be one of three common species: *M. galericulata* (Common Bonnet) on fallen wood, or *M. galopus* (Milking Bonnet) or *M. filopes* (Iodine Bonnet) – both these found in the Mire as well as in general litter elsewhere. One *Mycena* is missing from the list because it has no name as yet: we have a Mire Mycena which we strongly suspect is undescribed and has turned up here for the last 5 years. To my delight two tiny examples were found today, both checked out at home for the amazing gill edge cells (see my report for Burnham Beeches dated 6th October 2019 for images), so we hope this species will finally be described and named this year.



Still on the *Mycena* theme, near the board walk just after the Mire is a fallen Willow now known to us as the Blue Mycena Tree! This is where, two years ago, we first found the beautiful and very dainty ***Mycena pseudocorticola*** (amazingly with no official common name though there is an obvious one), and those of us who remember the occasion never walk past this spot without looking for it. The sharp-eyed Barry found just one fruiting body today which prompted several to get their cameras clicking even in the rain! What a stunner – both the mushroom and the photographer!

Right, *Mycena pseudocorticola*, under 1 cm high, on fallen Willow today. (BW)

The very common ***Fomitopsis betulina*** (Birch Bracket) was much in evidence on its host tree - both standing and fallen. As this is a species people often seem to have trouble recognising at all its various stages of development and we regularly get asked to name it, I thought it might be useful to include a few examples taken today.

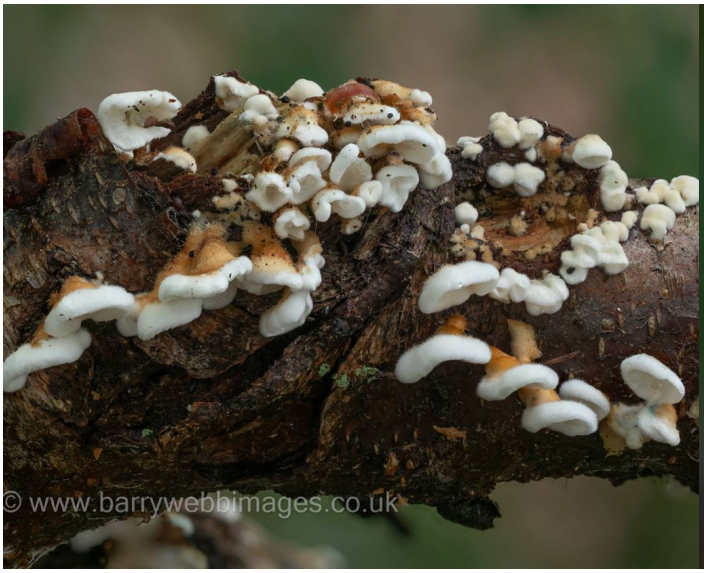


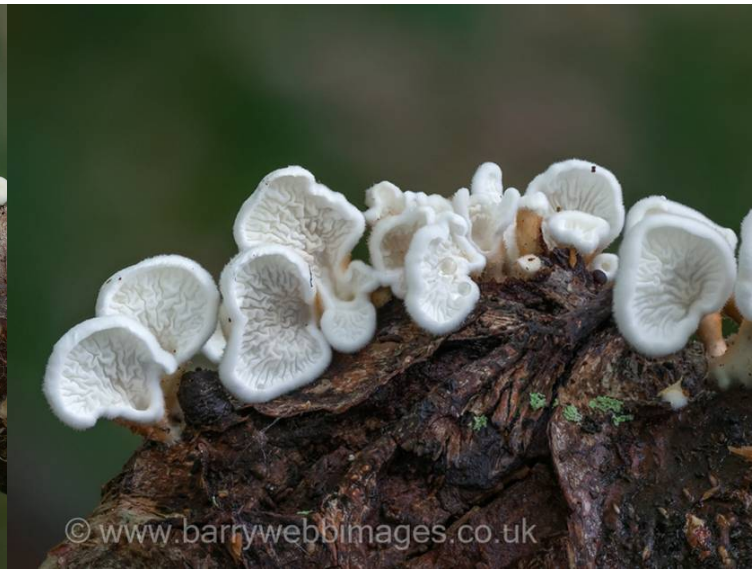
Above, three examples of *Fomitopsis betulina* from the white 'button' through the emerging bracket shape to the fully expanded semicircle (with Justin kindly providing a sense of perspective!). (LS)

Near the Blue Mycena Tree was a fallen mossy Birch trunk well hidden under brambles but with several fresh brackets of a species which eluded us at first glance. This was ***Lenzites betulinus*** (Birch Mazegill), an interesting species with a distinctive gill-like structure on the underside though the top surface is similar to several other bracket species. Not regularly recorded, it appears to be becoming more common in our area.

Right, *Lenzites betulinus* freshly fruiting on fallen Birch. (CS)

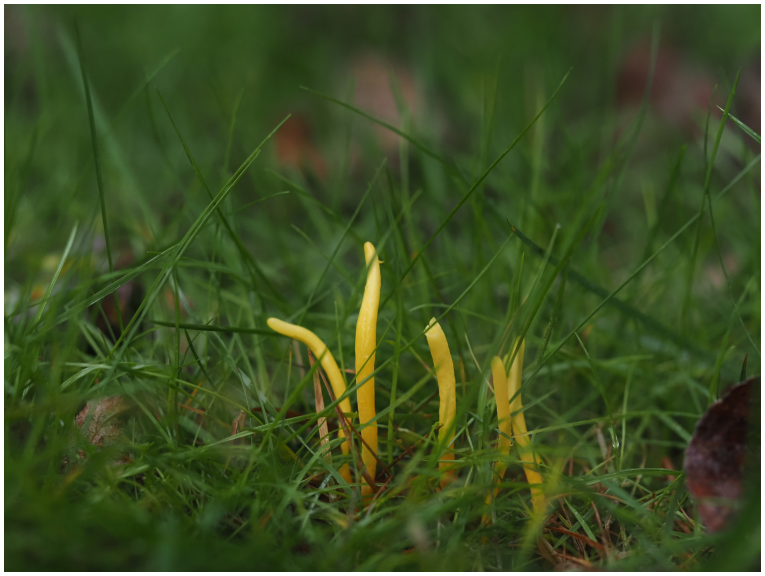
Another bracketlike fungus found today which is actually classed with the mushrooms rather than brackets is the small and delicate ***Plicaturopsis crispa*** (Crimped Gill), a species found increasingly commonly and seemingly often on fallen Birch. It forms clusters of small quite soft 'brackets' with brown tops (not unlike small Turkeytails) but underneath has rather distinctive crinkled white gills.





Above, *Plicaturopsis crispa*, showing its bracketlike shape but distinctive unusual gills beneath. (BW)

In a grassy area as we continued round, several people found little clumps of the genus *Clavulinopsis* (Club), these being small yellow clubs similar in height to the shortish grass. There are several extremely similar species and it is always necessary to look at their spores to name them accurately. Today's were the most common species: ***Clavulinopsis helvola*** (Yellow Club). (These are not Ascomycetes as might be assumed but belong to the Clavariaceae, a group having basidia (like mushrooms) but lacking gills or pores.)



Right, *Clavulinopsis helvola*, a common grassland species. (CW)

Heading back past the two lakes and getting pretty wet as the rain became heavier, we came across a dead Beech with its trunk impressively adorned with many brackets of ***Daedalea quercina*** (Oak Mazegill). This particular trunk has delighted us with a similar display for several years now.

Above (LS) and left (GK) *Daedalea quercina*, a magnificent sight which sustained us as we made our sodden way back to the cars.

Finally from the sublime to the ridiculous, a miniscule ***Fistulina hepatica*** (Beefsteak Fungus) was spotted just emerging on a bare Oak trunk. Despite its immaturity, the realistic bloody droplets meant we had no problem with its identity!

Left, the lurid *Fistulina hepatica*, our final fungus of the day. (LS)

Firstly, a big thank you to our guest leader, Geoffrey Kibby, who never disappoints when he joins us. Secondly, thank you to all the photographers who so promptly sent me their images for the report. Thirdly, thanks to all attendees for coming on such an unpromising day. Everyone made valued contributions. For more details of what we found see the complete list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb, CS = Claudi Soler, CW = Claire Williams, GK = Geoffrey Kibby, LS = Linda Seward.