

FUNGI WALK at COWCROFT WOOD on Wednesday October 22nd 2025

Penny Cullington

This pleasant Chiltern woodland, mixed deciduous though predominantly Oak, was new to BFG and visited at the suggestion of Jackie Mackenzie-Dodds and Justin Warhurst who led us round. Our group of 14, including 4 new members – one of them an enthusiastic 7 year old, enjoyed a rainfree morning though the fungi we found were generally a bit the worst for wear after recent rains, also the thick leaf cover didn't aid our cause. Nevertheless we amassed a healthy list fairly typical of what we've been finding elsewhere recently – nothing startling and many larger things not looking particularly photogenic unfortunately, but it was good to be able to introduce the new members to some of the basics in the field such as the latex in Milkcap gills and the coloured juice in the stems of a couple of Bonnets etc.

At one point our youngest attendee came running up with the cry: 'Mushroom emergency!!' Something too amazingly enormous to be collected had been found. Sarah went off to investigate and was not surprised to be shown an admittedly very large ***Ganoderma australe*** (Southern Bracket). Estimating the length of her knife sitting atop the bracket for perspective at, say, a minimum of 8 cms, we can assume that the RH bracket is 5 times that length! Note how it has dropped a load of its cocoa coloured spores (later checked by Bob to confirm the identity), some of which have typically made their way onto the upper surface. What a magnificent beast! The finder was suitably delighted when Sarah then wrote '*Laila*' on the pore surface underneath for posterity!



Above: *Ganoderma australe* (our mushroom emergency!) (SJE)

Now from the sublime to the ridiculous: virtually all the following photos are of tiny things, the larger fungi just not making the cut today. One classed as small rather than tiny, however, was a species of Bonnet which grows typically in tight clusters usually on fallen Oak - in plentiful supply here. ***Mycena inclinata*** (Clustered Bonnet) is one which with experience can be named in the field. Though similar in



both shape and size to many other Bonnets which favour fallen deciduous wood it has three redeeming features. Besides growing typically in really large tightly clustered 'bunches' on Oak as here, when mature the lower stem tends to turn rusty orange though remaining white at the top, and once collected it has a distinctive smell described as soapy, farinaceous or rancid, also spicy, of cucumber or wet paint – take your pick! However, both Sarah and I put money on the smell of lupins!

Left: *Mycena inclinata* (JW)

A couple more Bonnets now, but of the miniscule variety. There are many of these, mostly needing a scope to identify with any certainty, but here we have two which with experience can fairly safely be named in the field. ***Mycena tenerrima*** (Frosty Bonnet) is regularly found by Barry, always on the search for the smallest of the small with his camera. Several key features to note, though you need a x10 handlens (or one of Barry's photos) to be able to see them: Besides being entirely pure white, it has a swollen disc at the stem base helping to anchor it securely to its wood substrate, furthermore it is covered – both cap and stem – with a fine 'frosting' like a sprinkling of icing sugar. In contrast, ***Mycena speirea*** (Bark Bonnet) is pale buff but with a small brown central dot in the slightly fluted cap, the gills are slightly decurrent (sloping down where they join the stem and here just visible under the largest cap) and the stem lacks a basal disc. It is quite common on the bark of fallen Beech, sometimes in small gatherings as here.

Below left: *Mycena tenerrima*, and right: *Mycena speirea* (BW)



The mushroom ***Hypholoma fasciculare*** (Sulphur Tuft) is one of our commonest woodland species though seems to have been a bit late to the show this autumn. Here we have a small tight cluster just emerging out of a stump with its sulphur yellow gills still not developed and showing, and when immature like this it can go unrecognised as it looks so different once mature.

Left: *Hypholoma fasciculare* (LD)

Another mushroom with gills but very different in appearance was this tiny species spotted by Sarah as we first entered the wood.

Resupinatus trichotis (Hairy Oysterling) is simply minute, lacks a stem and occurs on the underside of fallen wood so that its gills (the spore-bearing surface) are facing downwards in order for the spores to drop with gravity. Here we see it turned upwards for our convenience and to reveal its beautiful detail. Note here also the immature pinhead sized third fruitbody yet to open. The hairy exterior seen here

helps to separate it from the very similar but greyer *R. applicatus* (Smoked Oysterling). Both species are uncommon though maybe thought to be so because they are so easily overlooked.

Right: *Resupinatus trichotis* (BW)

Towards the end of the morning two eye-catching species turned up and were suitably admired by all. When this group of the ascomycete ***Helvella elastica*** (Elastic Saddle) was spotted we'd none of us seen such a sizeable collection of fruit bodies before, and they appeared in perfect condition too - not that common a species though we have over 10 previous county records.

Soon after this three surprisingly thick-stemmed examples of ***Coprinus comatus*** (Lawyer's Wig), one of them displaying nicely the typical deliquescing (dissolving into an inky puddle) which was well under way giving it more the appearance of a witch's hat than a lawyer's wig!



Above left: *Helvella elastica* (SJE), and right: *Coprinus comatus* (JW)

We had a very enjoyable and cheerful morning. Thank you all for your valued contributions; thank you also to Sarah and Bob for identifying both in the field and afterwards; thank you to our excellent photographers as well (a few more photos to follow once I've rounded this off). For more details of what we found see the separate species list with over 80 species – not a bad number considering that four of the group were attending for the first time.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; JW = Justin Warhurst; LD = Lyn Day; SJE = Sarah Ebdon

Below left: *Neodasyscyphus cerena*, and right: *Chromelosporium carneum* (BW)





Above left: *Physarum leucopus*, and right + insert: *Comatricha nigra* showing different stages of development (BW)

Below left: *Mycena crocata* (LD) and right Penny and Jackie (SJE)

