FUNGI WALK at NAPHILL COMMON on Saturday October 11th 2025

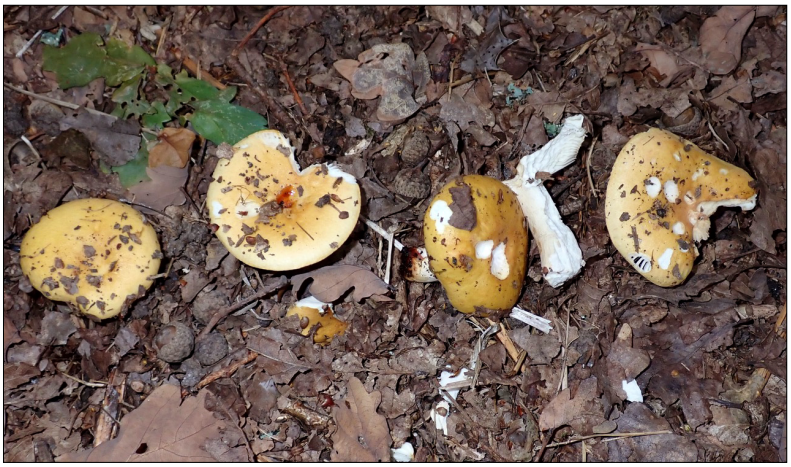
Penny Cullington

Our group of 21 assembled in the playing field car park which was as previously already pretty well full on arrival. (Maybe we'll make next year's visit here midweek to avoid this issue.) Peter and Chris kindly chaperoned us for the morning, leading us to the eastern end of the common – an area we'd not surveyed before, though on reflection it seemed not as interesting mycologically as our previous routes. This was borne out by the fact that a few people, led by Jesper and Sarah, continued on at the end and visited the more Beech dominated part where they found more fungal variety which boosted our overall list considerably.

We started off with a species which has not only a beautiful cap but an equally beautiful smell! ***Clitocybe odora*** (Aniseed Funnel) was handed round for everyone to enjoy its sweet scent (hence its English name) and subtle blue-green colour. We did see a few further examples later on, one of which was old and had virtually lost all the blue tints though the remarkable smell was still there, though none found today showed the really striking depth of colour this species can sport when looking its very best.

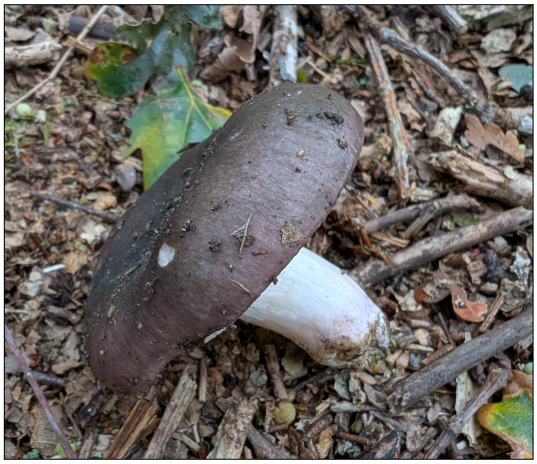
Left: *Clitocybe odora* (LS)

We have 10 species of *Russula* (Brittlegill) on our list though this in itself is not that exceptional – it's a huge genus with around 160 different species in the UK, many of which thrive in our Chiltern woodlands. Three days earlier at Hodgemoor Wood we recorded 16 species which was pretty special but one which we didn't find there – nor have we seen it elsewhere yet this season – is perhaps the commonest of them all and was showing nicely here today. ***Russula ochroleuca*** (Ochre Brittlegill) is happy growing under a large range of trees including conifers whereas many in this genus are much fussier or even host specific (ie are only found under one tree species). There are other yellow capped Brittlegills with which it can be confused by the less experienced, but a drop of KOH (potassium hydroxide) on the cap centre and stem base turns uniquely dark rusty red, thus eliminating other look-alikes. (The KOH test can be seen here on the cap second from the left.)



Right: *Russula ochroleuca* (LS)

Below: *Russula cyanoxantha* (AP)



We were handed a range of *Russula* specimens which had caps with shades of green, blue, violet in various combinations and needed another chemical test to help with their ID. A small green crystal made of ferrous sulphate is a useful aid when rubbed on the stem of this genus and most species then turn a dirty rust colour where rubbed but some turn salmon, some turn dark green and some hardly change at all. ***Russula cyanoxantha*** (Charcoal Burner) is one which comes in a range of greens, mauves, violet but changes hardly at all with an FE crystal. Unusually this particular specimen has a hint of its cap colour on the stem as well, towards the base. A crystal on the stem confirmed the ID for us.

We have 7 species of *Amanita* on our list – all but two very common in deciduous woodland. However, when someone handed in a tall olive grey/brown capped mushroom with a white ringless stem having a loose 'baglike' volva at its base it was realised that this had to be ***Amanita submembranacea*** (Olive Amanita) – not rare but not one we see that often. This is a member of the 'Grisette' group of Amanitas which have graceful stems which lack a ring and tend to taper upwards but with a rather flimsy volva at their base. This particular species has a notably flared and fragile white volva which is difficult to extract from the soil without damage but is showing really well here.

Right: *Amanita submembranacea* (SJE)
Left: *Amanita crocea* (LS)

Another member of the Grisette group was found after the majority of us had returned to the cars. ***Amanita crocea*** (Orange Grisette) is a particularly beautiful species, again not that common and host specific to Birch. The belts of 'flocks' on the stem are typical of the species and the flimsy white volva can be seen here too though less impressive than in the previous species.

Someone handed in a species we expect to start finding towards the end of the season so it was a bit of a surprise to see it today. ***Lepista nuda*** (Wood Blewit) is quite common, favours mixed woodland path edges and has lovely violet colours when young in the cap, the gills and the stem. These tend to fade to buff brown as it matures but when fresh as here it is a very attractive mushroom. There are some species of *Cortinarius* (Webcap) which also sport these colours but if in doubt taking a spore print at home will separate the two genera at a glance: *Lepista* has white spores whereas *Cortinarius* has rustly brown spores.

Right: *Lepista nuda* (LS)

Under the many Oaks in this area we picked up a good number of a brown capped species of *Lactarius* (Milkcap) which is host specific to Oak and also very common, *Lactarius quietus* (Oakbug Milkcap). However, when we moved into an area of Birch a different Milkcap, host specific to that tree, was much in evidence. ***Lactarius turpis*** (Ugly Milkcap) is a chunky beast with a rather thick squat stem, copious 'milk' which literally drips from the gills when damaged and a dirty olive blotchy cap. If that wasn't enough to identify it by, it is alone amongst Milkcaps in turning intense purple with a drop of KOH – the chemical already mentioned re *Russula ochroleuca* above. Here the KOH has been added to the top of the stem but it works just as well if not better on the cap.

Left: *Lactarius turpis* (LS)

This brightly coloured fungus was handed in at one point with the question: 'Can you identify this mushroom?' Answer: 'No, but we can identify the mould which is turning it this brassy yellow!' ***Hypomyces chrysospermus*** (Bolete Mould) is often much in evidence, most commonly affecting old boletes which are well past their sell-by date but also other species as well at times. It starts out white, takes over the fungus rendering it completely unidentifiable, and eventually coats the fungus in this strikingly vivid 'dust'. Here we have a particularly specatular example.

Right: *Hypomyces chrysospermus* (LS)

In complete contrast, next we have a rather inconspicuous 'LBJ' (Little Brown Job) which is very common in woodland but often goes unnamed as there are many such LBJs with which it might be confused. Under 2 cms across, ***Tubaria furfuracea*** (Scurfy Twiglet) is mid yellowish brown (cap, gills and stem), often with furry bits of mycelium adjoining it to the substrate (woody litter and debris) and the cap is often finely speckled as here with a radial ring of white veil just in from the margin. This is a particularly good example making ID relatively easy but there is a sister species, *T. conspersa* (Felted Twiglet), which is extremely similar though lacks this radial marking, and the problem starts when *T. furfuracea* is found with this feature hardly apparent at all as happens all too often! Then it can be down to a scope and the spore shape to separate them. The gills can often be much more decurrent than seen here, and sometimes this species is found in sheets covering the woodland floor.

Left: *Tubaria furfuracea* (JC)

Another mushroom we tend to think of as a late season fruiter was found today. ***Clitocybe nebularis*** (Clouded Funnel) is another chunky species with a substantial stem and distinctly decurrent gills (that slope in a curve from the cap to the stem). It appears often in troupes and is found mainly in deciduous woodland but also in grassy areas, sometimes forming a ring of fruitbodies around a particular tree. It can get to 10 cms across or even more and is always pale like this and has a distinctive fruity smell (to me of dried apricots!).

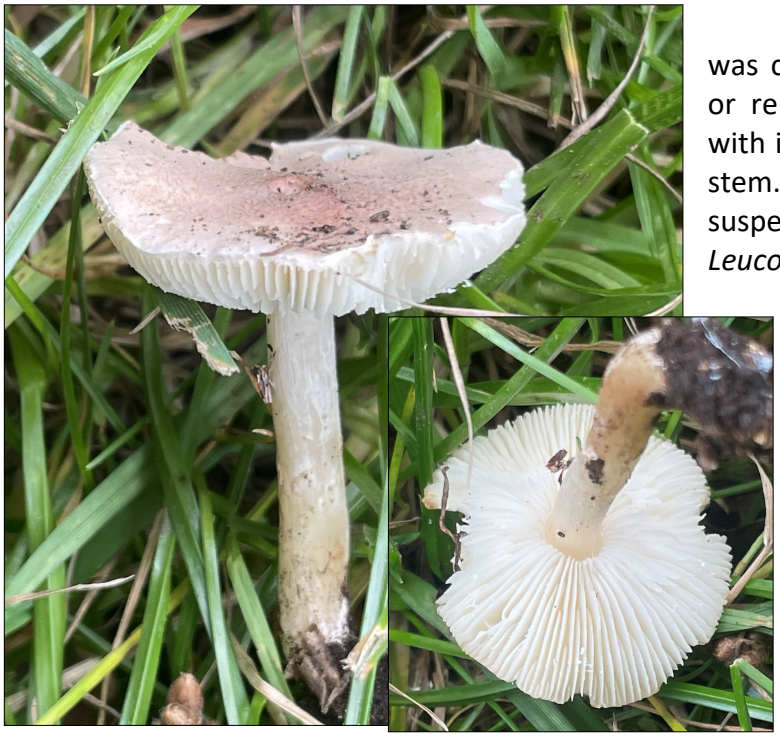
Right: *Clitocybe nebularis* (LS)

All the above are pretty mundane species, so next we have two – both found by Sarah Ebdon - which are new to the county. By the pond she found these tiny orange 'blobs' on dead vegetation in damp soil beside the pond and took them home to work on, coming up with this name with which all features fitted really well: ***Phaeohelotium monticola*** (no English name and previously in genus *Hymenoscyphus*). There are reports of it online from exactly this habitat and there appear to be about 30 records in FRDBI (the online national database we use for reference) so this was a nice find and the material will be dried for sequencing.

Left: *Phaeohelotia monticola* (SJE)

Sarah had recently heard from another BFG member who'd just learnt of an apparently very common but much under-recorded little ascomycete which can be found very easily on cankered branches and twigs of Holly. It apparently erupts through the bark forming tiny black lumps with brown centres and can be found in quantities. Up for the challenge, she started searching for it today and was instantly rewarded: ***Vialaea insculpta*** (no English name) is another species new to the county today.

Right: *Vialaea insculpta* (SJE)



Another small mushroom she picked up was clearly some species of *Lepiota* (Dapperling) or related genera but none of us recognised it with its pink tinted cap, white free gills and white stem. At home she puzzled over it, eventually suspecting it was likely to be a species of *Leucoagaricus* and the best fit seemed to be *L. ianthinophaeus* (no English name) though with very little information available and no UK records on FRDBI. However, when asked for an opinion on Sarah's photos Geoffrey Kibby actually favoured ***Lepiota subincarnata*** for this collection and we'll hope that sequencing will resolve the issue.

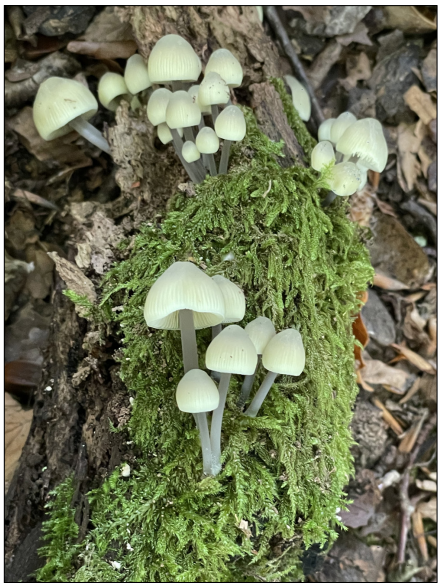
Left: *Lepiota cf. subincarnata* (SJE)

I seem to have virtually filled my customary 4 pages so will round off now but add a few more images below. We somehow amassed a list of over 100 species today though the vast majority were predictable and common things, however, around 20 were new to the site with at least three new to the county. So it was certainly a successful morning with everyone supplying us with things of interest. I took no photos myself so was pleased to receive the images which have made this report possible – thank you very much for supplying them so promptly. Thank you also to Sarah, Jesper, Bob and of course Derek for working overtime with scopes and books to confirm and identify our finds. Thank you to Peter and Chris also, for patiently leading us round. For more details of what we found see the separate species list.

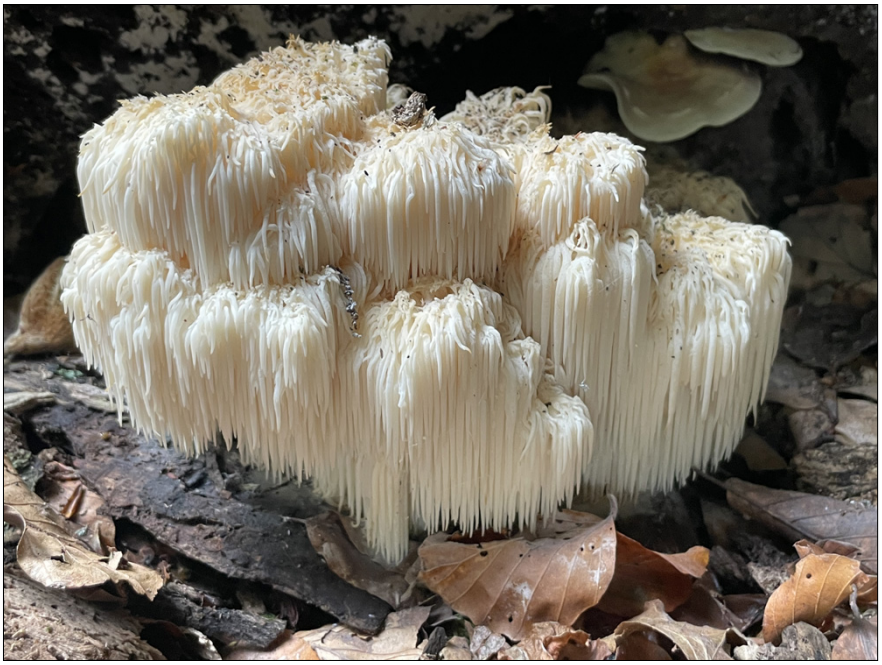
Photographers

AP = Alison Peace; JC = John Catterson; LS = Linda Seward; PD = Peter Davies; SJE = Sarah Ebdon; YH = Yen Hoe.

Below left: *Amanita muscaria* (YH); centre: *Boletus edulis* (LS); right: *Baeospora myusora* (SJE)



Left: ***Mycena arcangeliana*** **(SJE);** **above:** ***Trametes versicolor*** **(LS)**



Right: ***Hericium erinaceus*** **(SJE)**

Below: our group this morning (PD)