

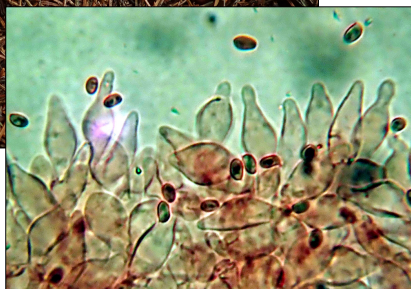
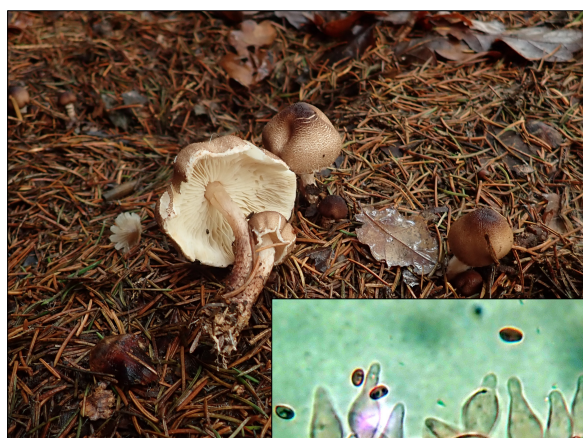
FUNGI WALK at RUSHMERE COUNTRY PARK on Sunday November 16th 2025

Penny Cullington

Our group of 22 met up in the car park with yesterday's rain thankfully having cleared off and the weather brightening through the morning. Justin Long had kindly braved the wet yesterday to do a recce for us and plan our route though as it turned out we covered probably only a quarter of it, finding plenty to keep us busy. In fact for me the first 20 minutes were somewhat challenging as I attempted to keep up with demand and consequently probably tested people's patience and made a few mistakes – hopefully nothing too serious.

We started off in the open grassland near the car park with the usual suite of species turning up though I never quite made it there myself being pinned to the spot still under the Pines on the periphery with both grassland and conifer woodland species coming at me from all directions! First in was a species of Parasol found under the Spruce with the name Brown Parasol being bandied about, and in the heat of the moment I went along with that though realised on receiving Mark's photo later that it was surely just *Chlorophyllum rhacodes* (Shaggy Parasol), the cap lacking the necessary contrast between rich brown scales and white flesh beneath and the stem base not exceptionally bulbous enough for the other species. I had at least thought to scratch the stem which it can be seen here turned orange to confirm the genus.

Right: *Chlorophyllum rhacodes* (MH)



Hot on the heels of this collection came another found under the Spruce which puzzled me, possibly a species of *Lepiota*, and which I then asked to be shown in situ. I'd forgotten that we'd found something very similar here previously and it was not until I looked through last year's report later and saw the photo that I realised this was more than likely the same species. This then checked out with microscopy. *Lepiota echinella* (no English name) is not that common – we have just a handful of county records - and it seems to occur under both deciduous and coniferous trees though with a preference for sandy sites.

Left: *Lepiota echinella* with insert showing the tiny pip-shaped spores and gill edge cystidia x 400 (PC)

Then whilst under the Spruce I picked up a specimen of Brittlegill which I suspected was the quite rare *Russula nauseosa*. It was hurriedly stashed away to photograph when less rushed. So the photos here were taken under the Pines at the end of the morning but this is in fact a species associated only with Spruce – my apologies therefore for the incorrect substrate visible! This apology also applies to the next Brittlegill we found and which also was not photographed till the end. *Russula queletii* (Fruity Brittlegill) is another Spruce associate and one we've seen here before, this one with a sweet fruity smell and a red stem to match the cap colour. Then a third Brittlegill, this one a genuine Pine associate and quite a rarity: *Russula cessans* (Tardy Brittlegill) was new to the site and notable for its remarkably orange gills and spore colour. I rarely have time for photography when leading, thus all three were set up and photographed under the same Pine, then at home set up to drop spore prints overnight and were checked with care the next morning.

Below left: *Russula nauseosa* + insert, centre: *Russula queletii*; and right: *Russula cessans* (PC)



This site is notable for its position in the heart of the Bedfordshire Greensand ridge (though the area we visit is just into Bucks!) and is therefore a very different environment from our usual calcareous Chiltern haunts and the reason why we tend to find some different fungi here. One species which favours this area but doesn't occur elsewhere in the county is an unusual *Amanita* (though when the first rather small and faded example was handed in I failed miserably to recognise it). Eventually when one or two more were found under Pine we twigged that this had to be ***Amanita junquillea*** (Jewelled *Amanita* and previously *A. gemmata*), a late season Pine associate having a bright yellow cap with white veil flecks when in good condition, a stem with a small fragile ring which quickly disappears, and a neat round white volva (like a bulb) at its base. Sadly today's rather bedraggled examples don't do this beautiful mushroom justice though Justin did his best with the material available.



Right: *Amanita junquillea* (JLo)

Our list for the day is dominated by smaller species which tend to fare better as conditions deteriorate towards the end of the autumn season, and this became immediately apparent as we searched around and under the mossy Spruce – a lovely habitat which it was a treat to explore today. There were carpets of bonnets and LBJs in places – some of which were named at the time or afterwards though many were of necessity left untouched, being just too time consuming to identify. We have an amazing 18 species of *Mycena* listed considering that both Sarah and I had to discard quite a few we'd been handed as we ran out of time at home before the maggots got busy. 6 of these appear to be new to the site, though it's hard to believe that ***M. tenerrima*** (Frosted Bonnet) had not been previously recorded. However, the very similar ***M. corynephora*** (no English name) was also found – just as tiny and white and favouring mossy deciduous wood with a 'frosty' coating of fine hairs



Left: *Mycena tenerrima* (YH), and below: *Mycena corynephora* (JW)

on both cap and stem. In the field it lacks the bulbous stem base of *M. tenerrima* and under the scope both

spores and gill edge cystidia are differently shaped. I've included both species here, showing the diagnostic stem bulb of *M. tenerrima*, missing on *M. corynephora*.

The star of the *Mycena* show surely has to be the veritable mini-forest we were treated to at one stage. When Yen alerted me to a few specimens of *Mycena pseudocorticola* (Steely Bonnet) she'd spotted on an eye level mossy Oak branch, I made a quick check to see if by any chance the rarer sister species Sarah had recently identified on another walk, *Mycena meliigena* (Mauve Bonnet) and which is known to grow alongside it, might be there as well. It was! Then a few minutes later on a mossy Oak trunk we could hardly believe our eyes: there conveniently at eye level were swarms of these tiny little beauties, both blue and mauve and no more than 1 cm high, the more we looked the more we found – there must have been hundreds of them all in perfect condition. This was a sight to remember and certainly made the day for both Sarah and me, being *Mycena* fans. I can't bring myself to reduce these two lovely photos further!



Above: *Mycena pseudocorticola* (left) and *Mycena meliigena* (right) (SJE)
Below: *Mycena meliigena* (YH)



The genus *Geastrum* (Earthstar) seems to have missed out a bit this autumn but today a singleton was found under Spruce, not the common *G. triplex* but the smaller ***Geastrum fimbreatum*** (Sessile Earthstar). The epithet '*fimbreatum*' means with a fringed border referring to the central opening at the top of the puffball part which develops with a torn edge in this species. Its previous name was '*G. sessile*' meaning with no neck, also apparent here. The whole fruitbody was no more than 4 cms wide.

Right: *Geastrum fimbreatum* (JLo)



Another interesting species, a distant relative of *Geastrum* and found today in conifer litter though after most of us had left, was the tiny ***Crucibulum leave*** (Common Bird's Nest). Like a miniscule puffball when immature, it then opens out forming the 'nest' to reveal several packets of spores (the 'eggs') which are then dispersed by as little as a rain drop. Each nest is less than 1 cm across. Here it can be seen at various stages of development.

Left: *Crucibulum leave* (JLo)

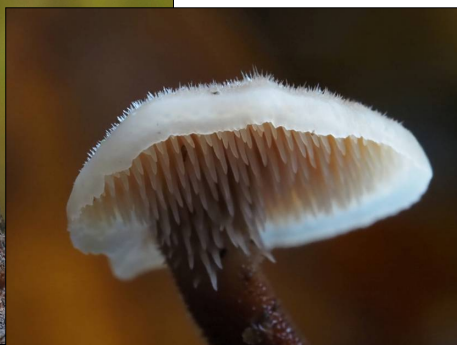
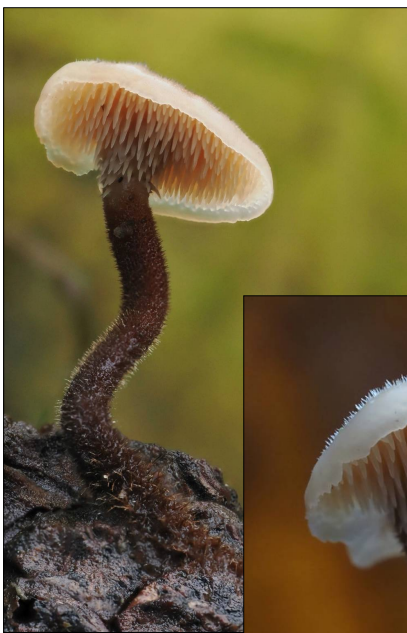


Much admired today was a special little mushroom which grows on Pine cones – not the very common *Baeospora myosura* (Conifer Conecap) which we saw aplenty today but much rarer than that! ***Auriscalpium vulgare*** (Earpick Fungus) always causes excitement when found because it has neither gills nor pores under its little cap but spines – by far the smallest fungus to have this attribute. Not only that but even the tiny stem which is set at the side of the cap is covered in fine bristles.

Only 1 cm tall and the same colour as the cones and general litter, it is often really well camouflaged and easily missed.

Left: *Auriscalpium vulgare* (YH with insert JW)

Below right: *Ramaria abietina* (JLo)



Next, another unusual species which we quite regularly find here was ***Ramaria abietina*** (Greening Coral). Similar to our common *R. stricta* (Upright Coral) which frequents our beechwoods further south, this species is restricted to Spruce and does what it says on the tin, ie it tends to turn green (no added chemicals involved) – this showing very clearly here.

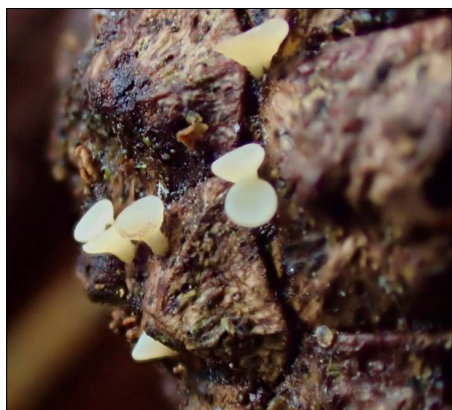


Both Sarah and Stephen are becoming very adept and finding and identifying tiny fungi of all sorts, and today between them they added a good number of species new to the site, two also new to the county. So together with Jackie who was on her own coping with the many slime moulds found

today the three of them contributed greatly to our final list. I'm going to sign off now but will add a selection of some of these finds below. This was in fact our final weekend walk of this amazing season which seems to have flown by and has been pretty prolific in terms of both species lists and attendees. Thank you all for coming; thank you Justin for preparing our walk and shepherding us round; thank you Stephen and Jackie and especially Sarah for help with identification – the list would be half the length without your valued contributions; finally thank you to all the brilliant photographers who make this report possible – just wonderful to have such support from you all. For more detail of what we found see the separate complete species list.

Photographers

JLo = Justin Long; JW = Justin Warhurst; MH = Mark Harris; PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon; YH = Yen Hoe.



Above left: *Hymenoscyphus lutescens* on a Pine cone; centre: *Hymenoscyphus scutula*, and right: *Calyprella capula* – these last two both on an *Artemisia* (Mugwort) stem and new to the site (all SJE)



Above left: Immature *Leocarpus fragilis* – a slime mould new to the site; centre: *Pezizula livida* found & named by Stephen, new to the county; right: *Rutstroemia firma* (all SJE)

Below: the slime mould *Arcyria stipata* (new to the site) with *Calocera viscosa* in the foreground (YH)





Above left: *Hygrophorus hypothejus* (Herald of Winter) (PC); and right: the slime mould *Physarum album* (YH)



Left: a enormous specimen of *Sparassis crispa* (Wood Cauliflower) found at the end by Justin at the base of a Larch tree and measuring half a meter across! Did it smell of coffee and walnut cake mixed with hospital waiting rooms as suggested by Sarah?! No, just of coffee and walnut cake, apparently! (SJE)

Below: Justin W hard at work (SJE)



Below: Yen and Paul ditto! (SJE)

