

FUNGI WALK at STAMPWELL FARM on November 8th 2025

Penny Cullington

Our group of 21 met up on a fine morning and were welcomed by the owner Dr Frog Orr-Ewing who gave us a brief introduction to the site. We then set off led by Jackie Ewan to an area of woodland, stopping on the way to admire a few grassland species. Some really tiny examples of *Rickenella fibula* (Orange Moss-cap) were soon spotted in the moss, accompanied by the brown capped *Mycena olivaceomarginata* (Brownedge Bonnet). Both these grassland species were fruiting in abundance throughout the morning.

Our first woodland species was an interesting one and probably came as a surprise to the many less experienced members who enjoyed this site today. *Typhula fistulosa* (Pipe Club) looks a bit like a tall brown mushroom stem which is missing its cap! Not so! What you see is what you get! Not always very easy to spot, they stand up to about 12 cms tall and blend well into the woodland litter, but once you spot one there are usually more around and sometimes they can form a veritable forest. As with many similarly shaped fungi the spores are found on the outside of the club throughout its length.

Right: *Typhula fistulosa* (PC)



The next delight was soon found growing in good numbers on the moss covered base of a large Beech. I never tire of finding this beautiful little mushroom, *Mycena pseudocorticola* (Steely Bonnet), which seems to thrive on mossy trunks and branches and though considered rare in this area a few years ago it does seem to be on the increase (or is it just that we're better at spotting it now?!) The subtle steely blue colour is tricky to capture on camera and photos often don't seem to do it justice, also this colour fades with age, but their shape and the density of this fruiting is well illustrated here. We found it in several other similar spots today.

Left: *Mycena pseudocorticola* (JL)

mucida (Porcelain Fungus) on fallen Beech, the only tree host it fruits on thus a common species in the Chiltern area. When young and at the 'button' stage, however, it can go unrecognised because the characteristic white almost transparent caps, also the stem ring, are not yet developed. This shows well in our photo where the tiny brownish grey blobs under the larger fruiting bodies are typical of the species when immature.

Right: *Mucidula mucida* (YH)



Continuing along the edge of a field on our way to the next excitement – our target species, two interesting mushrooms were spotted. *Pseudoclitocybe cyathiformis* (Goblet – a nice succinct English name in contrast to its Latin counterpart!) is a late season grassland mushroom - though larger than the many tiny species which frequent this habitat - and is characterised by its goblet shape with upward sloping cap and downward sloping gills (known as decurrent). After rain the caps are very likely to hold droplets in the centre, as here. Also under the Hawthorn hedge here I realised there was a good chance of finding the tiny *Tubaria dispersa* (Hawthorn Twiglet), and so it proved. This is a much paler version of the very common *T. furfuracea* (Scurfy Twiglet), another we saw today, and is only to be found under Hawthorn where it grows on the previous year's rotting haws (red berries). We don't record it that often though Jackie informed us that it is a regular under this hedge.

Below left: *Pseudoclitocybe cyathiformis* (RL), and right: *Tubaria dispersa* (KR)



Now to what for many was the highlight of the morning and our target species. *Clathrus archeri* (Devil's Fingers) was reported to me from Stampwell Farm back in 2020 by Jackie, and it was this find – one year after our first county record for this remarkable species from Naphill Village – which set in motion BFG's link to the site resulting in our consequent visits here. Belonging to the *Phallaceae* (along with the Stinkhorns) it was first found in the UK during World War 1 when thought to have been introduced along with wool products from Australia and New Zealand where it is native. Thriving in well rotting vegetation and woody debris it has remained a rarity here until recently and appears now to be occurring all across continental Europe and indeed globally (climate change?). Stampwell Farm must now surely be its most prolific UK site and the word 'invasive' sometimes applied to this species certainly comes to mind. Jackie has never seen it here in these numbers before – probably running into hundreds with large clutches of its gelatinous eggs from which emerge these extraordinary red tentacles up to 10 cms or more. Another name for the species is Octopus Stinkhorn and today in this rough patch of vegetation and scrub the smell of putrid flesh was concentrated by the extraordinary numbers of fruiting bodies we saw. We encountered several more examples during the morning but this first spot was just mind boggling!

Right: three stages of development of *Clathrus archeri*, eggs at the top (KR), fully developed in the middle (RL), and emerging from the eggs below (RL).





Also in this area the quite unusual and chunky *Rhodocybe gemina* (Tan Pinkgill) was found, a species recorded here recently for the first time and one which favours grassy path edges and hedgerows. We have several sites for this species though it has not been much in evidence this autumn.

Left: *Rhodocybe gemina* (JL)

Next we were treated to a walk along the railway embankment at the edge of a field with the ideal low sward of mossy grass for waxcaps and the like. Although we only listed a modest five different waxcaps in this area which in a 'good waxcap year' is rich in such species, it was a pleasure to stroll along amongst the many other small fungi to be seen here: *Atheniella flavoalba* (Ivory Bonnet), *Mycena olivaceomarginata* (mentioned earlier) and *M. aetites* (Drab Bonnet); *Rickenella fibula* (also mentioned earlier) and its more unusual relative *R. swartzii* (Collared Moss-cap); various unidentified LBJs though Jesper took home one which he identified as *Galerina mniophila* (Bryophyte Bell); various unidentified species of *Panaeolus* though a couple we could recognise on the spot were *P. acuminatus* (Dewdrop Mottlegill) and *P. papilionaceus* (Petticoat Mottlegill); two different species of Club, the very common *Clavulinopsis helvola* (Yellow Club) and the rarer white *Clavaria acuta* (Pointed Club).



Above left to right: *Galerina mniophila* (JL), *Clavaria acuta* (JL), and *Atheniella flavoalba* (PC).

Along this embankment were several well rotted woodchip piles which, as well as more *Clathrus archeri*, supplied various other species, one of these being the tiny but explosive *Sphaerobolus stellatus* (Shooting Star). The English name is apt because though only about 2mm across this amazing little fungus has a sticky central sack, full of spores and seen in the LH fruitbody here, which when mature is literally forcibly expelled up to 20 ft! There it sticks to whatever it lands on and releases its spores. What a clever strategy!

Right: *Sphaerobolus stellatus* (BW)



We now did a quick frogmarch to a different area in order to see a few more waxcaps which Jackie knew were up and fruiting, inevitably picking up a few other species on our way. Here amongst

the bracken we found *Hygrocybe miniata* (Vermilion Waxcap) together with *Gliophorus laetus* (Heath Waxcap) as well as a few specimens of *H. reidii* (Honey Waxcap) and *G. psittacinus* (Parrot Waxcap).



Above left: *Hygrocybe miniata* (JL), and right: *Gliophorus laetus* (PC)

Also here a few of us found a silvery grey mushroom with a distinctive smell of rancid flour. First one was found and named, then several more turned up under the Bracken. *Tephrocybe rancida* (Rancid Greyling) is an occasional fruiter, usually seen singly, so it was quite unusual to find it so plentiful today.

Right: *Tephrocybe rancida* (JL)

As we made our way back to the cars Jackie's daughter was leaning over a gate waiting for us with a few mushrooms she'd just found in some woodchip. Was it of interest? Yes, it was! Though a fairly ordinary looking



brown capped species it had a redeeming feature in that the lower stem looks decidedly blue /green - a sure indication of the presence of the chemical Psilocybin. Species belonging to the genus *Psilocybe* (together with others) are a natural source of this drug. The woodchip inhabiting *Psilocybe cyanescens* (Blueleg Brownie) is often overlooked by those on the hunt for a quick high in favour of the much smaller grassland *P. semilanceata* (Magic Mushroom) which also occurs here though was not today.

Left: *Psilocybe cyanescens* (JE)

Time to round off now though I'll add a few more photos including some of Barry's stunners at the end. We ended up with a list of around 100 species with quite a few new for the site according to our records but probably known here already to Jackie. Thank you all for coming, thank you to Jackie for leading us round, to Derek and Jesper who helped me with identifications both in the field and at home afterwards, also to the photographers who make these reports possible – their efforts are much appreciated. For more detail of what we found see the separate complete species list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; KR = Katie Rooney; JE = Jackie Ewan; JL = Jesper Launder;
PC = Penny Cullington; RL = Rick Lilley; YH = Yen Hoe.



Above left: *Ascocoryne sarcoides* (Purple Jellydisc), and
right: *Peziza vesiculosa* (Blistered Cup) (KR)

Below: the slime mould *Craterium minutum* (BW)



Right: a tiny specimen of *Mycena tenerrima* (Frosted Bonnet) (BW)



Three more slime moulds (BW) :
above left: *Diderma hemisphaericum*
left: *Physarum album*
above right: *Didymium squamulosum*



Above: the slime mould *Physarum leucopus* (BW)
 Below: two views of this morning's walk (Left PC, Right YH)

