

FUNGI WALK at NORTHMOOR HILL, Denham on Wednesday October 21st 2026

Penny Cullington

Well, it had to happen sooner or later, and it appeared that today was the day when we were in for a proper soaking! This was our first visit to this nature reserve and our intrepid and ever enthusiastic group of 16, undaunted by the conditions, set off on time and were led round by Jacqui Kirk, from the Colne Valley Regional Park management team. We were hopeful of finding some interesting things in the initial area of alder carr - a rare habitat in the county and explored profitably in the Spring by Jesper and Sarah together with Barry and Gill, in fact this being one reason today's visit was arranged. However as we crossed the boardwalk at the start this area was pretty impenetrable and uninvitingly overgrown (also it was seriously tipping it and the light was dire) and nothing but a few bedraggled *Mycena* species were picked up. It was apparent that photography was going to be a challenge today, a fact reflected in this report.

Moving into mixed deciduous woodland things improved but only a little and the first page in the waterproof notebook consists mainly of mixed unnamed *Mycena* species which when checked later

turned out to be the expected trio of the very common *M. vitilis* (Snapping Bonnet), *M. filipes* (Iodine Bonnet) and *M. galopus* (Milking Bonnet). One tiny white specimen found by Hasan was *Mycena tenerrima* (Frosty Bonnet) though the rain had done its best to remove the typical 'frosting' (like a sprinkling of icing sugar) which adorns both cap and stem. The distinctive microscopic features were unaffected, however, and I never tire of finding the unique cystidia covered in prickles in the swollen centre and with an extending proboscis. (These are library photos taken at Penn Wood in 2021, the insert in 2007.)



Left: *Mycena tenerrima* (BW) with insert of the cystidia found on the gill edge x 1000 (PC)

Continuing the *Mycena* theme, later when the rain had eased a bit we came across a couple of more photogenic collections which tempted the cameras out. *Mycena haematopus* (Burgundydrop Bonnet) was spotted on fallen wood and can be recognised not only from its dark red-brown juice which exudes from the stem when collected but also from the pinkish tinted caps which tend to have a frilly margin which despite the conditions is just visible here. (Do not confuse with *M. crocata* - Saffrondrop Bonnet, also found today but with bright orange juice which bleeds into both cap and gill when damaged.) *Mycena vitilis*, already mentioned, is one of the many brown-capped Bonnets found in deciduous litter or even on wood as here and usually needs a microscope to be sure of identification. Its English name Snapping Bonnet refers to its firm stem which tends to be inflexible and snap rather than bend when tested, but this is not considered an infallible test!

Below left: *Mycena vitilis* (PC), and right: *Mycena haematopus* (JW),

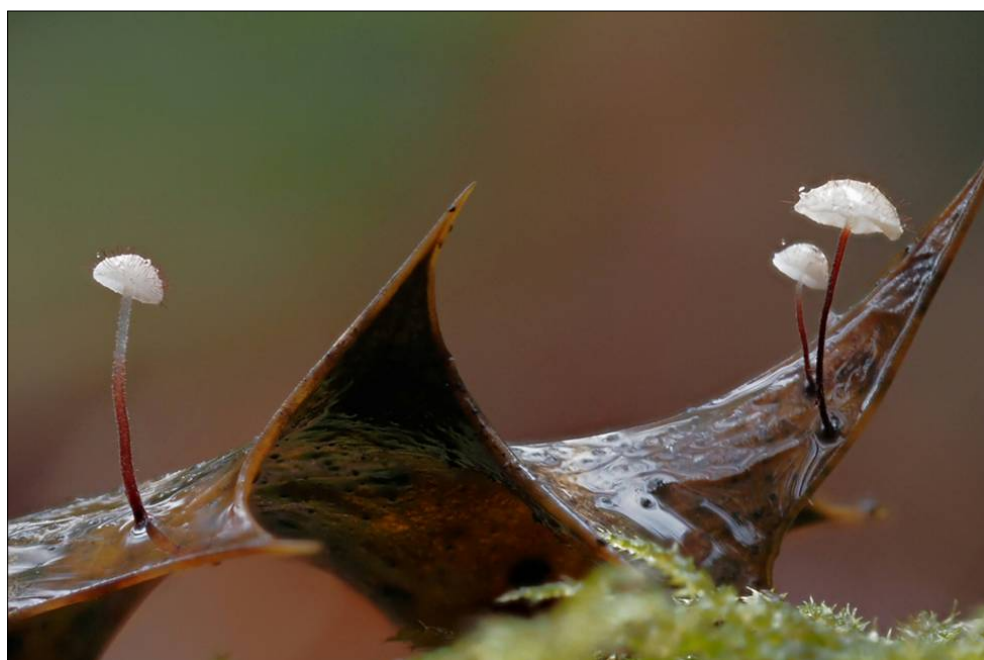


With few exceptions the mushrooms we found today were small species. Not a single example of *Boletus* and its many relatives, *Amanita*, *Hebeloma*, *Russula* or *Lactarius* was found with only one species of *Tricholoma* – extraordinary for mid October, peak season for such species. I remain convinced this is due to conditions and not to their absence from this special piece of ancient woodland though I suspect they may not now make an appearance till next year which hopefully will be more favourable. Two larger species we did find, however, were ***Pholiota squarrosa*** (Shaggy Scalycap) found in a tight cluster at the base of a deciduous trunk (though the photo shows it pretty washed out and not nearly as scaly as one would expect). Later a couple of examples of *Agaricus* turned up (another genus so far conspicuous by its absence in the woodlands we've explored recently). A quick scratch of the stem base revealed the telltale chrome yellow staining of ***A. xanthodermus*** (Yellow Stainer) - a species more commonly found in grassland (when easily confused with other white good edible Mushroom species) but also not unusual in woodland. Another character which should alert you to its possible identity is the rather square flat top before the cap fully expands, this visible here though sadly the chrome yellow is not showing very convincingly. Incidentally this is not a species for the pot and can cause gastric upsets.

Below left: *Pholiota squarrosa* (CVS), and right: *Agaricus xanthodermus* (PC).



Returning briefly to tiny mushrooms, one species which was considered a rarity and was new to the county from Naphill Common only 11 years ago now seems to be popping up wherever we go. The unmistakeable ***Marasmius hudsonii*** (Holly Parachute) is simply tiny but exquisite when viewed with a x10 lens, but you need to know where to look for it and be prepared for some discomfort to the knees!



It grows exclusively on fallen dead Holly leaves (thus the discomfort) and both cap and stem are covered in tiny fine reddish hairs – a unique feature. Justin was brave indeed to attempt a photo today but even when sodden as here the cap hairs can be seen and are clear on the stem. The outsized prickle on the leaf here gives a good sense of scale – this mushroom is sometimes just ridiculously small.

Right: *Marasmius hudsonii* (JW)

Several common members of genus *Gymnopus* (Toughshanks) were found but one puzzled us quite a few times on our way round and though clearly similar to *G. dryophilus* (Russet Toughshank) it had a different 'jizz' - just didn't look quite right - though in these conditions anything is possible. I kept checking and trying to convince myself (and others) that the mycelial strands attached to the stem base looked pinkish which would point to the much more unusual *G. aquosus* (Watery Toughshank), and eventually we found one which with distinctly pink mycelium, confirming my suspicions. Sorry, no photo to share.



Moving on to a few corticioids and brackets now. One pored corticoid on fallen wood which appeared to be turning pink was later identified by Jesper as *Ceriporiopsis gilvescens* (Pink Porecrust), and another he checked was *Steccherinum fimbriatum* (Fringed Toothcrust). Both are common and quite distinctive in the field.



Right above: *Ceriporiopsis gilvescens* (SJE)
and below: *Steccherinum fimbriatum* (JLa)

A bracket which seemed very common here is a close relative of the familiar *Stereum hirsutum* (Hairy Curtain Crust). This was *S. subtomentosum* (Yellowing Curtain Crust) which is flimsier, more flexible and has a tendency to become covered in green algi. If you bruise the white rim underneath it turns yellow, unlike its more common relative.

Another bracket we saw several times and is not so common is *Trametes betulina* (Birch Mazegill, and previously in genus *Lenzites*). We found it on Birch, its normal host, but also on Beech today.



Above left: *Stereum subtomentosum* (SJE), and right: *Trametes betulina* (NF)

Time to end off with a few extras for you below. We ended up with a list of 70 species which is some achievement under the circumstances. Thank you all for coming and making the most of the trying conditions. Ten out of ten to all, especially the photographers!

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CVS = Claudi Soler; JLa = Jesper Launder; JW = Justin Warhurst; NF = Neil Fletcher;
PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon.



Left: the rare and tiny slime mould *Didymium serpula* found on a mossy deciduous twig when at the bright yellow plasmodium stage, then kept by Barry till mature enough to identify and seen here in the process of changing and drying off. This is new to the county with only 35 previous records on FRDBI. (BW)



Above: the common *Coprinellus micaceus* (Glistening Inkcap) but glistening from the rain and not from its normal sugary cap coating of white 'veil' which had been entirely washed off! (JW)



Left above: *Calocera cornea* (Small Stagshorn), under 1cm tall and often occurring on fallen Beech (JW)



Right: an attractive colony of *Calycina citrina* (Lemon Disco) – our sole asco photo today and common on bare fallen deciduous wood. (JW)



Left: a tiny and so far unidentified species of *Resupinatus* found on a stick though immature and very soggy. So far no spores have been produced limiting the possibility of naming it, so it may well remain unnamed (BW)