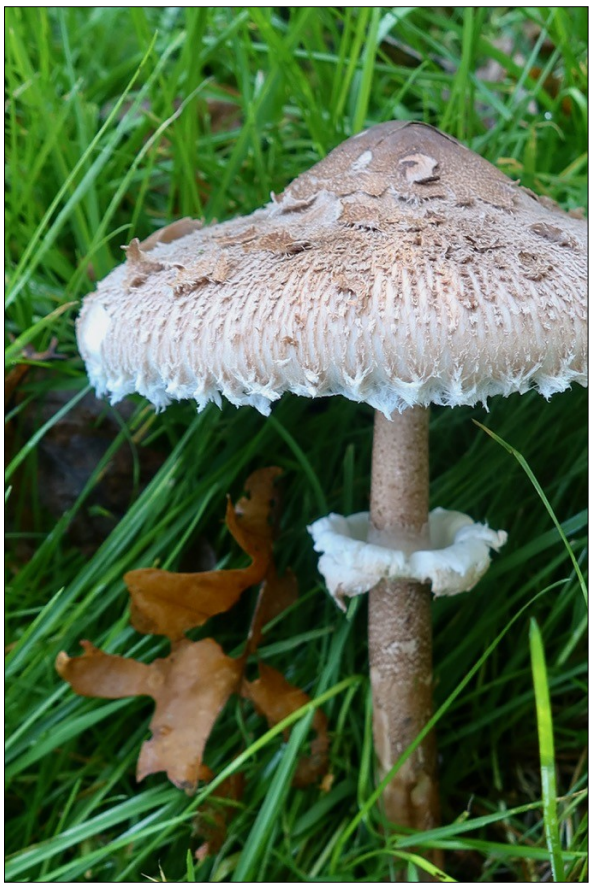
FUNGI WALK at NAPHILL COMMON on Sunday October 16th 2022

Penny Cullington

We were a sizeable group today, the head count easily topping 40 – not only very gratifying, especially with so many new members of BFG with us for the first time, but also setting Derek and me a somewhat daunting task. Luckily there is a sufficiently large car park here but at many of our sites this is not the case, hence our decision to reintroduce last year's booking scheme for our walks from now on. The morning was beautiful and the Common full of autumn colour, and we were efficiently but subtly and very patiently shepherded round by Chris and Peter (from Friends of Naphill Common). Derek and I were extremely thankful for their help.

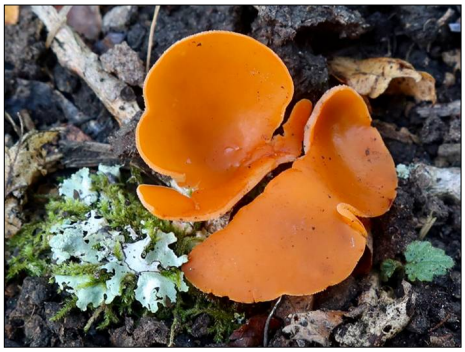
Left: A view of the Common this morning. (LS)

It was not long before people were queuing up to find out what they'd found and I was regularly rooted to the spot through the morning with notebook at the ready and with the usual collaboration and memory prompting between Derek and myself as we formulated a species list. We've now held an event here every year since 2012 (bar 2020 when no walks took place due to Covid) so a sizeable species list for the site exists, hence only 4 of our 91 species were additions today and of only one of these do we have a photo to share here. The rarer species we find nearly always need work at home afterwards to identify, and only at that stage do we realise we have no image of them. Nevertheless we do have a good selection of photos which may help as memory joggers for those attendees for whom even the commoner species were new today.



Our first find, ***Macrolepiota konradii*** (a species of Parasol), was standing proud in the long grass just as we set off. Somewhat similar to the more common *M. procera* (Parasol) also on today's list, it shares with that species the distinctive brown snakeskin markings on the stem with its movable ring but has a considerably less scaly cap, the scales mainly on the inner half with the outer half merely streaky fibrillose. There is debate amongst mycologists whether this species is in fact the same as *M. mastoidea* (Slender Parasol) which however has an abrupt nipple-like swelling in the cap centre. For me today's species looks distinctively different but time will tell which name should be applied.

Right: *Macrolepiota konradii* with cap about 10 cms across (LS)

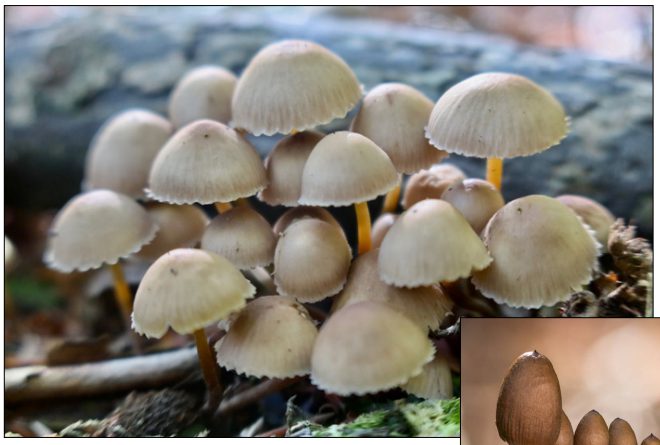


Amongst the many patches of disturbed soil someone spotted something bright orange. Was it just a piece of discarded orange peel? No, it was the cup fungus, ***Aleuria aurantia*** (aptly named Orange Peel Fungus).

Left: *Aleuria aurantia* amongst woody litter today. (LS)

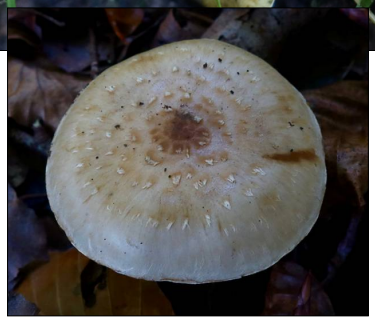
As we continued, many specimens of the genus *Mycena* (Bonnet) were handed in to me. This is a regular occurrence and I often spend several hours checking collections through with a microscope at home. We have 8 different Bonnets on today's list – quite a modest number for this time of year – and luckily several of these were recognisable in the field owing to some distinctive feature or other. ***Mycena galopus*** (Milking Bonnet) grows in woody litter and looks pretty well identical to many other Bonnets unless one spots that when damaged it uniquely leaks white milky fluid from the stem. We saw two other Bonnet species which also leak fluid in this way: ***M. crocata*** (Saffrondrop Bonnet) which has bright orange juice and ***M. haematopus*** (Burgundydrop Bonnet) which has brownish red juice. Both are common but are found on fallen wood rather than in litter. (Images of both species can be found via the Masterlist on our Members' Finds webpage.

Right: *Mycena galopus*, the damaged stem bases showing their white 'milk'. (LS)



Above & right: *Mycena inclinata*, both mature (LS) and immature (BW) on an Oak log today.

Another Bonnet which was plentiful today and grows clustered on fallen Oak was ***Mycena inclinata*** (Clustered Bonnet). No coloured juice to help one recognise this one, and it does look very like many others which grow on fallen wood, but it has two redeeming features: though the cap is somewhat variable in size, form and colour, the stem - pale at the top – uniquely develops orange ochre colours below this and becomes red brown towards the base. Add to this its distinctive smell, mealy or of lupin flowers, together with its tightly clustered habit on fallen Oak and with experience this is quite an easy Bonnet to name in the field.



In a rut in a muddy path I noticed an insignificant dirty greenish yellow species which tends to cause confusion over its identity. ***Pholiota gummosa*** (Sticky Scalycap) grows on tree roots or submerged wood and regularly appears apparently on soil at pathsides but lacks the typical obvious scales of the showier members of the genus and is also considerably smaller. The sticky caps are clearly visible here. Later I was handed a larger specimen on which the fine scales are visible.

Right: *Pholiota gummosa*, the insert is of a mature cap about 5 cms across (LS)

Towards the end of our walk an impressive display of one of these showier *Pholiota* species was much admired. ***Pholiota adiposa*** (Golden Scalycap) is not nearly as common as the equally showy *P. squarrosa* (Shaggy Scalycap) and also differs considerably from it. Today's species is somewhat slimy, grows in tight clumps

often on Beech and favours the sawn off ends of trunks - exactly as here, whereas *P. squarrosa* is entirely dry, also grows in clumps but favours the base of living trunks.

Left & above: two views of the impressive clump of *Pholiota adiposa* fruiting on the sawn off end of a Beech trunk. (LS)

Also admired today was the beautiful and perhaps surprising colour of the smallish mushroom ***Laccaria amethystina*** (Amethyst Deceiver). Though often very common in deciduous litter, this year the species has hardly been seen, so it was good to find a few examples today and to have the opportunity to explain how it can deceive when its cap fades to almost white in dry conditions though the vivid purple widely spaced gills remain constant.

Right: *Laccaria amethystina* showing how, despite the cap typically fading, the gills stay this stunning colour. (The caps here are about 2-3 cms across.) (LS)

During the morning Derek and I were separately handed collections of a small *Psathyrella* (Brittlestem) found in soil / litter which had interesting white flecks of veil over the cap. We both worked on this at home later and independently keyed it out as ***Psathyrella spintrigeroides*** (no common name), a somewhat unusual species with few records though one I've found previously in the county at several sites including this one five years ago. It seemed quite common here today, however, and therefore we suspect that its rarity stems from the general lack of mycologists prepared to take on this genus which has a reputation for being one of the trickiest to identify to species.

Left: *Psathyrella spintrigeroides* found by several people today. (DJS)

My granddaughter at one point handed me a species of *Russula* (Brittlegill) which stopped me in my tracks: the cap was like no *Russula* I'd ever seen! This is another tricky genus with around 160 species known in the UK - we found 5 today - and one I've long enjoyed challenging myself with. The strange disrupted surface breaking up into a crazed mosaic as shown below is a regular feature of just two known species within the genus, but both are green-capped species and not brown! At home I remained mystified so sent the photos to two colleagues known to many BFG members: Geoffrey Kibby and Mario Tortelli, both recognised *Russula* gurus. Mario replied that he'd found this same phenomenon recently in two common species which normally have entirely smooth caps (though not brown) and suggested that the unusual combination of recent weather conditions could be responsible. It was only when my specimen dropped a sporeprint overnight that the light began to dawn on me what the species might be. The spores were exceptionally small for the genus, a feature of only one species: the relatively common ***Russula heterophylla*** (Greasy Green Briitlegill). Another feature of this species is its remarkably strong salmon colour reaction when rubbed with an FE crystal (made of ferrous sulphate), not only on the stem but also on the gills. This I tried and bingo, I had my answer! 'But the brown cap with no signs of green?' I hear you ask! Well, though the species has a smooth cap which is nearly always green, it can on occasion be yellowish, olive or even brownish (though with no mention in reference books of the extra-ordinary mosaic pattern seen here). The specimen is being dried and will be sequenced to confirm, but this is an example of why the genus *Russula* – though often temptingly brightly coloured - is not for the faint-hearted!

Right: an extremely unusual and unrecognisable specimen of *Russula heterophylla* found today (LS), and far right: a library photo of mine for comparison, showing the normal green cap of this species together with the salmon pink reaction to both gills and stem when rubbed with an FE crystal. (PC)

Piles of fallen wood are often a good place to look for interesting fungi and today was no exception. One of these was a small rather insignificant bracket-like species with gills. ***Schizophyllum commune*** (Splitgill) is common on this substrate in many parts of the world and has a rather hairy surface, distinctive forking gills and a frilly edge - features which make it an easy one to recognise.

Above: The upper and lower surfaces of *Schizophyllum commune*, found fruiting on a fallen wood pile. (LS)

In some ways similar to the Splitgill above, the equally common ***Panellus stipticus*** (Bitter Oysterling) also found on fallen wood, is small and pale brown but the upper surface is smooth and not hairy, furthermore underneath it has an eccentric (off-centre) stem and brown crowded gills but not forked as in the Splitgill, the whole shaped rather like a seashell and each fruitbody only about 2 cms across.

Right: the underside view of *Panellus stipticus*, also fruiting on fallen wood. (LS)

Continuing the fungi on wood theme, another bracket-type which was admired today was ***Abortiporus biennis*** (Blushing Rosette) adorning a pile of large fallen Beech near the Dew Pond. This species regularly confuses people and often doesn't present as here with its obvious pinkish round shape. Its maze-like rather craggy pores are always present, however, and are a useful diagnostic feature when it is found not on wood but on submerged roots with little pink signs in evidence. In really wet conditions it can ooze blood-red droplets which confuse even further!

Left: two views of *Abortiporus biennis* fruiting abundantly on fallen Beech today. (Far left: LS; Left: NF)

Also on fallen Beech we were shown a corticioid species (one that grows flat on wood) which was a mystery to the BFG member who found it here a few days ago. The small spines on its surface suggested the genus *Mycoacia* to us both and Derek went one further, eventually coming up with its name: ***Mycoacia nothofagi*** (no common name) and new to the site today. It has a strange soapy smell which we didn't notice at the time but was clearly in evidence when checking it at home later.

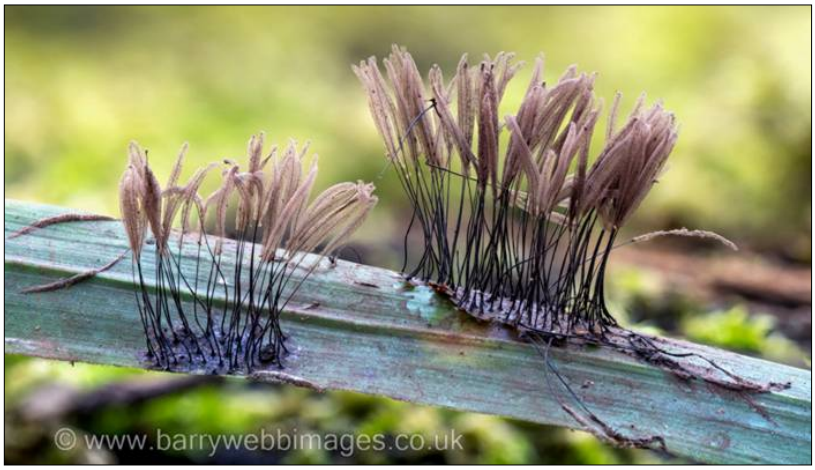
Right: the unusual *Mycoacia nothofagi* found on a rotting Beech log. (SE)

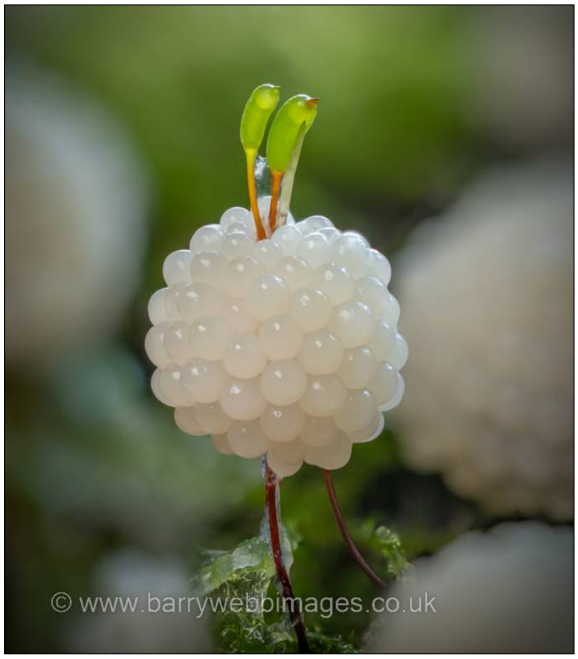
The star of the show and pride of place today has to go to the stunning display of ***Hericium erinaceus*** (Bearded Tooth, also Lion's Mane) to which we were treated. This is a very rare fungus, protected by law, and one which we were privileged to see in all its glory today. (See images below, plus a couple of extras which were received after I'd finished this report off.)

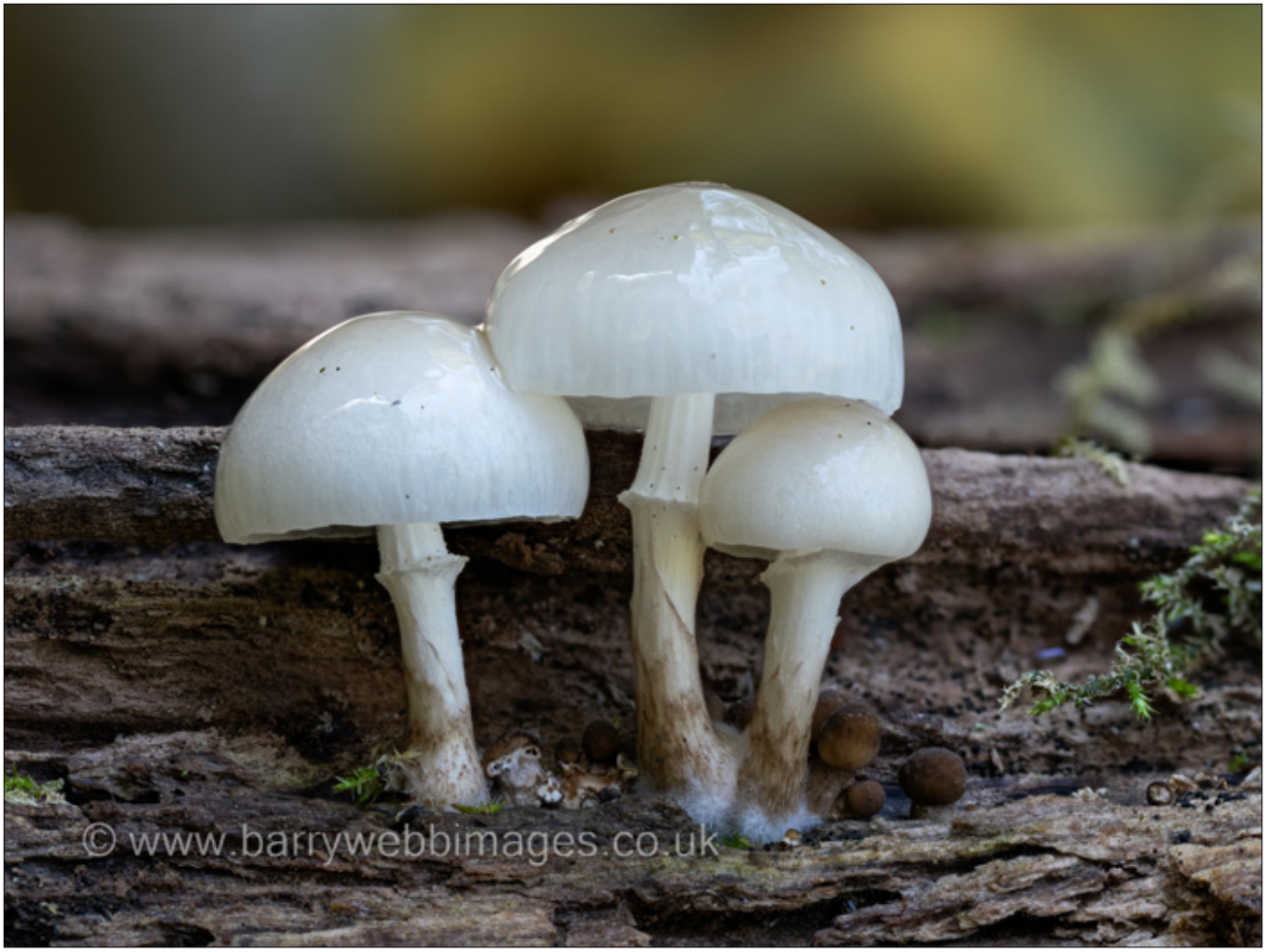
Many thanks to all attendees for their patience and understanding as we struggled to cope with all identifications, listing, explanations etc. Thank you as always to today's photographers. For more details of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers
BW = Barry Webb; DJS = Derek Schafer; LS = Linda Seward;
NF = Neil Fletcher; SE = Sarah Ebdon; PC = Penny Cullington.

Below and right: the tiny slime mould *Stemontis fusca* at both early and late stages of development, found fruiting on vegetation. (BW)







Above: a small cluster of young *Mucidula mucida* (Porcelain Fungus) (BW)

Below: three views of the magnificent *Hericium erinaceus* (LS and BW)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