

FUNGI WALK at GREAT BOIS WOOD on Saturday October 25th 2025

Penny Cullington

Our group of 20 met up to visit this typical Chiltern beechwood – a new site for BFG. There being no suitable parking spot nearby we had a 10 minute walk to reach the entrance but the route was thankfully quite flat and no-one grumbled (except possibly me!). I was grateful to share the leadership today with Jesper Launder whose expertise was much appreciated by all as there were quite a few new members present therefore quite a bit of explaining to do.

The leaf cover was extensive after the recent winds and rain and that together with poor light certainly made our task a challenge – it was not just the thickness of cover but the range of colours, though beautiful, which made for very effective camouflage to anything fungal lurking underneath. It soon became apparent that any larger mushroom species we found were somewhat soggy, often missing vital features and not in the best nick, making recognition tricky at times and limiting photo opportunities also. This is reflected in our shortish species list (just on 60) which comprises few of the showier larger species with no Amanitas or Boletes. Though in recent years the latter half of October and first half of November has proven very productive, this year it would seem (to me) that the main flush of fruiting in woodlands such as this is now behind us and things are now clearly slowing down. Hopefully I shall be proved wrong as we still have quite a full programme ahead of us!

So to a few photos to share – mostly small things. A stick with a good number of little brown fan-shaped mushrooms was found, this was ***Panellus stipticus*** (Bitter Oysterling). The name Oysterling is applied to quite a range of similar but unrelated small mushrooms which share this shape and have either no stem at all or an eccentric stem (ie off to the side) as seen in this case. Their spore colour varies depending on their genus (Latin family name – in this case *Panellus*), and in many cases observing the gill colour is the first step to making an identification. Here the buff brown gills are concolorous with the cap, and a further check can be made by pinching the gill surface between thumb and finger which then leaves a slightly tacky residue on your finger! This was tried today and worked! The fully mature cap seen here is probably well under 3cm across which puts the size of the miniscule underdeveloped youngsters seen all along the stick into perspective!



Above: *Panellus stipticus* (MB)



Above: *Crepidotus applanatus* (JW)

Another very different Oysterling was found but is worth comparing with the above. The genus *Crepidotus* produces little mushrooms which are white-capped (very rarely orange!) and virtually stemless, occurring on sticks and woody stems. Virtually all need a scope to identify to species and today's example was no exception. From its rather flat fan shape I guessed it would be ***Crepidotus applanatus*** (Flat Oysterling) and later this was confirmed by the microscopic detail found. Note that both cap and gills are white though as it matures the gills turn pinkish beige which reflects the spore colour. The caps here were about 1 cm across.

Now to a few more conventionally shaped mushrooms. A cluster of a small pale-capped species with white 'free' gills (those not quite adjoining the stem – see the insert right) and long stems was found and looked to me to belong to the genus *Cystolepiota*. There are several closely related genera which are collectively called Dapperlings, this being one of them. Again a scope was needed to identify to species and this took me time because they were not pure white but slightly beige which I felt was not typical for the species *Cystolepiota*



Above & left: *Cystolepiota seminuda* (JLo)

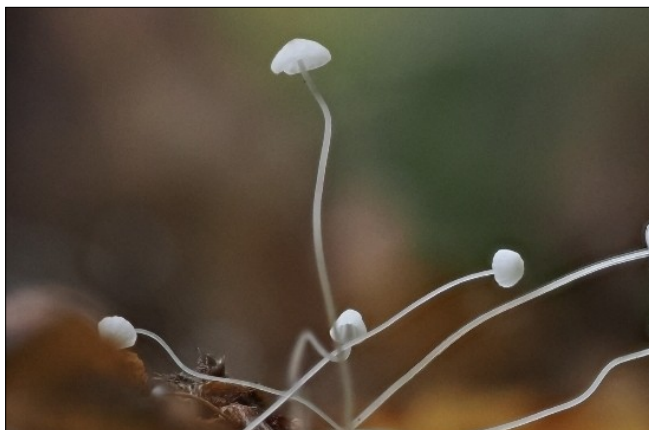
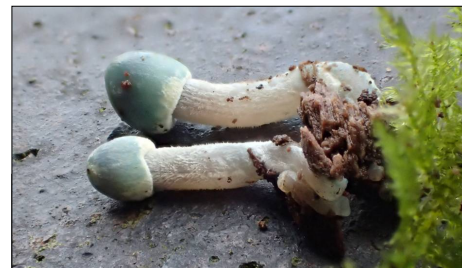
seminuda (Bearded Dapperling). However, it fitted perfectly microscopically and I then discovered in my basket a further singleton collection I'd been handed which was pure white and also had clear remnants of 'veil' (fleecy bits) still attached to the cap margin and no doubt the reason for the English name here. So the cluster I'd been examining (and seen here) was obviously well weathered. Note the stem becoming slightly reddish lower down – another feature of this particular species. (Incidentally, Sarah also independently identified this species at home.)

We saw many collections of the genus *Mycena* (Bonnet) displaying their long thin stems and conical smooth caps (the word *Mycena* refers to the Mycenae – Greek soldiers of ancient times whose helmets were this shape!). Two species were found which we don't often get the opportunity to feature in these reports. Occurring only fallen rotting Beech leaves is the simply miniscule *Mycena capillaris* (Beechleaf Bonnet), the Latin epithet referring to the incredibly fine stems like capillaries. They tend to fruit in good numbers on one leaf as shown here, and caps are less than 3 mm across!

The second species of interest was found on the underside of an old collapsed post, again miniscule and also clearly immature with no gills yet apparent. What was apparent, however, and instantly caught Sarah's attention was the distinct greenish blue tinge visible on the caps even though still tiny. This pointed to the unusual *Mycena amicta* (Coldfoot Bonnet), so named because it quite often develops blue at the stem base. This colour is unpredictable and sometimes occurs just on the cap margin, sometimes just on the stem base and sometimes not at all! When just brown like many others in the genus then the species is only separable by its microscopic features together with the fact that it only occurs on conifer wood. Clearly the old post here must have been conifer of some sort. Sarah took it away to work on, noticing that the next morning the blue had increased still further and was now also present on the stem base.

Right: *Mycena amicta*, above: the next morning (SJE), and below: in situ on the log (JW)

Below: *Mycena capillaris* (YH)



Two of the larger mushroom species we found today are worthy of mention. Firstly an unusual Milkcap which, when the gills are damaged, produces the usual white latex reaction but given 20 minutes or so this gradually dries pink. Only a few Milkcaps have this specific character and today's species we identified in the field as *Lactarius azonites* (no English name).

Also found was a rare species of Brittlegill which occurs only under Beech and belongs to a special group within this genus (*Russula*) which at maturity develops a distinct smell of cooked crab and furthermore has a dark green reaction when the stem is rubbed with an FE crystal (made of iron salts), this clearly visible in the photo. *Russula faginea* (another with no English name) is considered a rare find in many parts of the UK but in our Chiltern beechwoods we do find it fairly often and this autumn it has turned up quite a few times.

Below left: *Lactarius azonites*, and right: *Russula faginea* (JLa)



An attractive coral fungus was found and much admired. *Ramaria stricta* (Upright Coral) is quite common in our beechwoods, often found in groups in the litter. The spores are produced not on gills but form in cells on the outer edges of the vertical 'uprights'.

Distantly related to the *Ramaria* was *Clavulinopsis helvola* (Yellow Club), a species we normally expect to find in grassland habitats but in fact not that unusual to pop up in woodland. There are several very similar yellow clubs which are considered not separable in the field so Sarah checked the spores of this collection at home to confirm the identity.

Below left: *Ramaria stricta* (cw), and right *Clavulinopsis helvola* (KR)



It's back to tiny things again now before finishing off. Some interesting tiny gelatinous blobs were noticed on a piece of bare wood. I instantly recognised them from the general appearance and tiny greenish spots all over the surface but the name just wouldn't come! It took Sarah to work out its identity at home as a species of *Trichoderma* (though previously in genus *Hypocrea* – the name which

eluded me). There are now many species known which are very similar so she is not entirely confident but has named it ***Trichoderma strictipile*** (no English name). (I received several photos of this but considered this one to be the best!)



Left: ***Trichoderma strictipile*** (YH)

Sarah delights in finding (and identifying) tiny things on leaves and the like. Today she spotted these miniscule but very beautiful little white cup fungi, the detail of which needs some magnification to appreciate. ***Incrucipulum***

ciliare (no English name) occurs only on fallen rotting Oak leaves, and now she's discovered this fact she seems to be turning it up wherever we go! The Latin epithet means frilly with hairlike appendages, which this certainly has in spades! Their tiny size can be assessed from the veins of the substrate leaf.

Below: ***Incrucipulum ciliare*** (BW)



More of Barry's amazing photos follow, but I'll end off now. Thank you all for coming; thank you Jackie and Justin for organising our visit; thank you Jesper for helping me lead today; last but not least, thank you to all those who sent me photos – my apologies if yours were not included but I much appreciate receiving them so promptly in order to make my selection. For more detail of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CW = Claire Williams; JLa = Jesper Launder; JLo = Justin Long; JW = Justin Warhurst; KR = Katie Rooney; MB = Margo Bekkering; PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon; YH = Yen Hoe.

Below left: the slime moulds ***Arcyria cf. enudate***, and right: ***Hemitrichia cf. decipiens*** (BW)



Below: another slime mould *Arcyria* sp. awaiting identification when further developed! (BW)



Below: in complete contrast, the much admired pair of *Coprinopsis picacea* (Magpie Fungus) amongst the autumn leaves (PC)

