

## FUNGI WALK at BURNHAM BEECHES on Sunday April 19th 2026

Penny Cullington

Today was our first outing of the year and it was a perfect April morning. Our group of 17 were not expecting to find anything much but were pleasantly surprised as the list gradually neared 40 in the field thanks to the skills and know-how of many present. Turning logs and finding damp areas was the order of the day though we'd been specifically asked not to visit the Mire this time for fear of disturbance to ground nesting birds, reptiles, etc. So we headed towards the aptly nicknamed 'Nile', ie the stream coming from the area nearby called Egypt and running along the valley bottom parallel to but north of the cafe and main parking areas. We then turned left along Victoria Drive following this valley before circling back via the ponds (no baby Mandarins this year as yet) with a final quick and successful hunt for the Bog Beacon above the top pond, found without having to enter the mire!

First on the list (which inevitably comprises many common and predictable species affectionately known as 'bums on seats') was *Leptosphaeria acuta* (Nettle Rash) which at this time of year is easy to find at the base of dead nettle stems. These tiny shiny black ascos look like miniature bottle kilns though you need a x10 lens to appreciate their shape unless you have Barry Webb's camera skills which we are lucky enough to benefit from! Glancing at images online there are none of this species which are a touch on his stunning photo here. It is often accompanied by the equally tiny and also host specific orange disco *Calloria urtica* (Nettle Pox) but there was no sign of it today despite several searches.

Right: *Leptosphaeria acuta* (BW)



Soon after came the bracket *Fomitopsis pinicola* (Red Belted Bracket) first recorded here in April 2022, since when it has become commonplace fruiting mostly on fallen Birch and Beech though named for its association with Pine. It's a species which appears to have been gradually moving south through the country in recent years and today we saw it in several places on fallen Beech trunks, forming anything from small whitish blobs to fully expanded brackets up to 12 cm across or more.

Left: *Fomitopsis pinicola* (CW)

Down by the Nile amongst the beautiful array of Wild Garlic Sarah spotted an interesting fungus on Hazel branches. *Hydnoporia corrugata* (Glue Crust, previously in genus *Hymenochaete*) is well named because it does what it says

on the tin, ie it has developed the ‘dog in a manger’ strategy of spreading across two branches – one live, one dying - fixing them together thus preventing the dying branch from falling to the ground where other species might invade to benefit from its nutrients. This technique also enables the fungus to spread more easily. We find it commonly at Rushbeds Wood where Hazel is plentiful but I didn’t recall it being recorded from here before, then later discovered just one previous record in our database, from 2022 when found here by Jesper! Sarah’s photo shows the central broken branch firmly affixed to its neighbour by the brown crust fungus.

Right: *Hydnoporia corrugata* (SJE)



We often check a particular pile of huge Beech trunks in this area which can provide a good source of autumn fruiters but there was little of interest here today though a couple of things were noted. Firstly these black shiny strands visible where the bark had come away. These



are in fact the mycelial ‘bootlaces’

of the genus *Armillaria* (Honey Fungus) and can quite often be found forming a resilient network which enables this invasive species to spread so efficiently through whatever medium it meets. This explains why *Armillaria mellea* is so difficult to eradicate from gardens, often killing shrubs and trees, though it is thought that other members of the genus are far less dangerous. (*Armillaria* is not on our species list as we are unable to identify to which species of the genus the mycelium belongs.)



Also spotted here were the dessicated remains of some polypore, and though well past being named we noticed a distinctive orange patch infecting it. We suspected this was *Hypomyces aurantius* (Orange Polypore Mould) and Sarah later confirmed it at home, discovering from one source that a drop of KOH turns it purple – a useful tip to know and the result can be seen in her photo here.

Left above: *Armillaria* ‘bootlaces’ spreading over a Beech trunk (LS)

...and below: *Hypomyces aurantius* (much magnified) showing the effect of a drop of KOH (SJE).

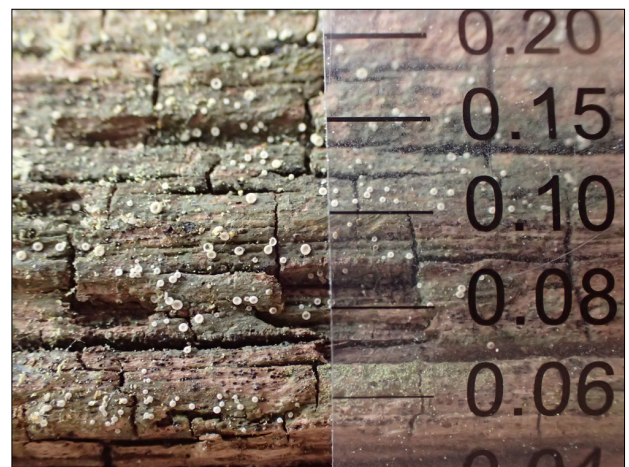
As we continued round I was beginning to suspect that we weren’t going to find anything having gills at all; in fact just two species turned up thanks to everyone’s diligent searching. A fresh cluster of the ubiquitous *Pleurotus ostreatus* (Oyster Mushroom) was located on fallen Beech – perhaps its favourite host, and a singleton Inkcap was handed in which I later identified as *Coprinellus micaceus* (Glistening Inkcap) from its spores – shaped like a bishop’s mitre.

Several collections of small white stemmed hairy discs were found, some on woody remnants, others on Beech cupules. As we commented at the time, there are at least three different lookalike white species of the genus *Lachnum*, all of which are common on deciduous woody substrates and which cannot be safely named to species in the field. Sarah spent time on them later, identifying *Lachnum virgineum* (Snowy Disco and the commonest species) on Beech cupules and *Dasyscyphella nivea* (no English name and previously in *Lachnum*) on rotting bare wood, possibly Oak. (The photos below show just how similar these little discos are, also we can't be *absolutely* certain that these photos are of the precise collections Sarah made her IDs from for obvious reasons!)



Above left: *Lachnum virgineum* (NF), and right: *Dasyscyphella nivea* (LS)

We were handed quite a few further collections of discos and other tiny things which didn't get named either at the time or later, but one – the smallest of them all – intrigued Sarah and she was able to work out its identity, new to the site and to the county. At one point David handed me a wood fragment, pointed to a spot for me to inspect with a handlens (where I could see nothing with the naked eye) whereupon I could just make out a swarm of the minutest white dots! I automatically directed him to Sarah as our only hope of getting further, and she did the business, coming up with the name *Coenogonium pineti*, apparently a lichenised fungus and with around 50 FRDBI entries. Sarah comments that without its distinctively shaped spores she'd have struggled with this 'excruciatingly small asco' – her photos taken the next day include a scale with fractions of a mm making many of them 0.2 mm or less! Note also the presence of lichen responsible for the dull green substrate. Hats off to both Sarah and David!



Above, two views of *Coenogonium pineti*, surely our smallest ever BFG cup fungus! (SJE)

One more significant find to report: a month ago in Naphill Common Sarah found and identified another tiny under-recorded asco which occurs on dead attached hardwood twigs, especially Holly, *Corynespora smithii*, new to the county and with few if any photos in available literature or online. (See the Members Finds entry for May 22<sup>nd</sup> for more

information.) Today she checked several Holly bushes, found this same species on two of them and with Barry and his camera conveniently on hand we now have an amazing and probably unique macrophoto of these miniscule sea urchin-like beauties. From the mm scale in Sarah’s photo they are clearly pretty small but not in comparison with the *Coenogonium* on the previous page!



**Above: *Corynespora smithii* with (left) a scale showing 1mm divisions (SJE), and (right) Barry’s remarkable photo.**

As I already seem to have covered more than 3 pages but still have more photos to share, I’ll round off the text now but add further images below. So our list surprisingly reached over 50 (not bad for a rather dry April walk) but will probably grow slightly: Jackie has some slime moulds hopefully maturing, also Linda is taking Claudi a few of today’s corticioid samples. Inevitably not everything we collected was able to be named, but even so we appear to have added 5 new to the Burnham Beeches list – an achievement in itself at this well-recorded site, and I’m most grateful to both Jesper and Sarah without whom the list would be far shorter – their time and expertise is much appreciated. This was a most enjoyable awakening from BFG hibernation and thank you all for your amazing searching. Thanks also for the skillful photographers who sent in their photos so promptly! For more detail of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CW = Claire Williams; HaF = Hasan al Farhan; JL = Jesper Launder; JW = Justin Warhurst; LS = Linda Seward; NF = Neil Fletcher; SJE = Sarah Ebdon; YH = Yen Hoe.

**Below: three unidentified species:**

**left: thought in the field to be possibly a species of *Cordyceps* but not so, and so far a mystery (LS);**  
**centre: a Hazel stick with an unfamiliar pyrenomycete having a distinctive ‘tiger’-like pattern, also a mystery (SJE);**  
**right: a disco, possibly a species of *Dacrymyces*, which was not able to be checked (NF)**





Above: *Lenzites betulinus* (Birch Mazegill) on fallen Beech (LS), and right: *Xylaria carpophila* (Beechmast Candlesnuff) on beechmast (HaF)



Above: *Meripilus sanguinolentus* (Bleeding Porecrust) on rotting wood (NF), and right: *Phanerochaete velutina* on a fallen Beech trunk (JL)



Above: the corticioid *Botryobasidium aureum* (Golden Crust) on a bare trunk (LS); and right: *Kuehneola uredinis* (Pale Bramble Rust) on a bramble stem (CW)



Left: *Mitrula paludosa* (Bog Beacon) in a stream (YH); and above: a nice display of *Trametes versicolor* (Turkeytail) on a Beech stump (JW); below: the slime mould *Oligonema affine* (NF)

..... and finally below: our trio of members posing for our article on Foundations of Field Mycology soon to be appearing in the BMS publication *Field Mycology* (SJE)

