

FUNGI WALK at PAVIS WOOD, DANCERSEND on October 14th 2026

Penny Cullington

This was just our second visit to Pavis Wood after a gap of nine years almost to the day and with a very similar sized group of 18 attendees. Mick Jones had provided a map and some signs to help us find the parking spot and also led us round this lovely piece of typical Chiltern woodland. Though fungi were not at all abundant and mostly represented by just ones or twos – something we are getting pretty accustomed to this autumn – we somehow amassed our longest list by far at 131 species. Just amazing! With those amongst the group now experienced at looking for a wide range of different types of fungi and slime moulds, this is paying off in terms of variety and interest for all of us.

The list is still remarkably short of mycorrhizal species, even the common ones, and nothing was in very good nick often coming up somewhat distorted as a result of dry conditions and therefore not always easy to recognise. Another factor coming into play much earlier than usual this autumn is the early leaf fall and unusual abundance of Beech mast which adds to the natural camouflage of fruiting fungi, something we reckon not to have to contend with till the end of this month. Nevertheless keen eyes were able to overcome this and I was kept busy scribbling names down as they came in thick and fast.



No mushrooms of impressive size were on show today, the most abundant genus probably being *Mycena* (Bonnet) and both Sarah and I ended up with our suitably sized pots pretty well full. This was no surprise because Dancersend lists often reflect good numbers of this genus and we ended up with 14 different species though none were that unusual. At home I must have checked 6 or 7 collections of the fairly nondescript *M. vitilis* (Snapping Bonnet) but perhaps the most notable today was the delectable but tiny *Mycena acicula* (Orange Bonnet) which really got the cameras clicking. I was spoilt for choice but couldn't resist including these two photos, the exquisite pair with long stems having caps probably less than 2mm across and needing a x 10 lens to fully appreciate their beauty.

Left (NF) and above (BW): *Mycena acicula*

Other mushrooms of interest now, going up in size. In the pathside amongst vegetation Jesper spied a pair of mycenoid types and noticed their firm stems rooting into the soil. This plus their grey colouring and (once he'd extracted them) their notably strong smell of flour going off confirmed them as *Tephrocybe rancida* (Rancid Greyling) - not really rare but uncommon.

Right: *Tephrocybe rancida* (JLa)

Also in soil at the path edge we found three or four brown capped mushrooms belonging to genus *Pluteus* (Shield), though this was not apparent until their pinkish crowded free





Above: *Pluteus nanus* (PC)

gills were seen. This genus nearly always occurs on fallen wood so when on soil as here (which occasionally happens when on submerged wood or roots) one is left guessing at genus till the cap is turned over. Both Jesper and I recognised this was not the common *P. cervinus* (too small and just with the wrong 'jizz') so we keyed it out independently at home to ***P. nanus*** (Dwarf Shield) – again not rare but not that common (and despite its name not the smallest Shield either!).

Probably the rarest mushroom today was found by Jesper, again alongside a path this time amongst nettles. The three pale brown capped specimens with crowded cream emarginated gills put him in mind of genus *Melanoleuca* (Cavalier) though I was unconvinced! At home he was proved correct when he found warty amyloid spores (ie white till a drop of Melzers reagent (iodine) turns them instantly black). Some Cavaliers have cystidia on the gill edge with pointed tips like arrows with 'flight feathers' either side, and this led him to ***Melanoleuca bataillei***, a species close to but not the same as the familiar *M. polioleuca* (Common Cavalier) though for some authors the two are synonymised. It matched well and is a new species for Buckinghamshire. The material will be dried for sequencing to confirm.



Above: *Melanoleuca bataillei* (JLa)

Andrew Dodd handed me two specimens of a rich red brown capped mushroom which we all agreed was collybioid but a name evaded us until I eventually came up with *Rhodocybe prolixa*. Much relieved to have remembered it, I was then promptly proved incorrect at home because the spores were the wrong shape for that species though it did look very similar. I then proceeded to check all other related species and drew a blank though am sure it is in genus *Gymnopus*, part of the collybioid genera, from its microscopy. Sadly no photo was taken in the heat of discussion but it is dried for sequencing.

We've been finding just one species of *Scleroderma* (Earthball) so far this autumn but today at last was an example of ***S. areolatum*** (Leopard Earthball) as well as several examples of ***S. verrucosum*** (Scaly Earthball). The two are notoriously tricky to tell apart in the field with the difference in their spores considered the only secure way to do this. Bob Simpson was later able to check and confirm that we had both species today.

Below left: *Scleroderma areolatum* (NF), and right: *Scleroderma verrucosum* (JW). Note the 'leopardskin' markings of one compared to the rough scaly markings of the other. However, this difference is often considerably less clear than shown here.



We've yet to come across the common and aptly named *Phallus impudicus* (Stinkhorn) this autumn (and it can't be that we've missed it because we'd have picked up on its pervasive smell by now if it had been present!). However, today it was nice to see its smaller and less common relative, the distinctive ***Mutinus caninus*** (Dog Stinkhorn) also aptly named as is obvious! This species also arises from a gelatinous 'egg' which however is not only smaller but ellipsoid to pyriform rather than globose as can be seen here at its base. Its smell is similar – as several people confirmed today - but is far less pervasive so not detectable from a distance like its larger relative. Though posed upright for Claire's photo it tends to lean over and is usually found lying at an angle as it expands.

Right: *Mutinus caninus* (CW)



Another common genus – *Lycoperdon* (Puffball) - normally much in evidence by now is only just starting to make an appearance. Today we found extremely few examples and those we did



were not looking their best thus raising discussion as to their specific identity and not resolved satisfactorily in the field. So I took one home to check, concluding that it was ***L. nigrescens*** (Dusky Puffball – now apparently moved to genus *Fuscopina*), this determined by its spores together with the fact that the spines when worn off at maturity leave no regular mosaic-like pattern on the surface as would be seen in the similar though usually larger and more pear-shaped *L. perlatum* (Common Puffball).

Left: *Fuscopina nigrescens* (JW)

It was nice to see a good fruiting of the attractive fungus ***Ramaria stricta*** (upright Coral) which favours Beech litter – in plentiful supply here – and was also actually on fallen wood today as well. This is by far the commonest member of a large genus, some members of which are now moved to genus *Phaeoclavulina*, and they often hard to identify.

Right: *Ramaria stricta* (JW)



We didn't find many brackets today but one Mick knew about and took us to see was a nice example of ***Daedalea quercina*** (Oak Mazegill). As is often the way with fungi, it's the underside which gives us



the best identification clue and of the several species with Maze in their English name this is surely the best example of that feature. But it's the Latin genus name which tells the story for me, of the Greek mythological character *Daedalus* who built a maze for King Minos on Crete to contain the dreaded Minotaur (half bull half human!). I digress

Left: *Daedalea quercina* (NF)

Rapidly running out of time but wanting to mention one other nice thing found on some horse dung (if that isn't a contradiction in terms!). Barry spotted this amazing colony of tiny fungi



on a pile of droppings which we recognised as a species of *Pilobolus*, a Zygomycete genus for which the commonest species has the apt English name Dung Cannon after its amazing method of spore dispersal by firing its packet of spores like a water pistol. The spores stick to the grass where they land, then travel through the gut of grazing animals to start a new colony once expelled with their droppings. As horses never graze near their dung the spores need to be shot well away in order to reach more inviting grass, and though



the fungal fruiting body is simply tiny it has developed a method which successfully delivers its sticky spores a distance of up to 2 metres away! Sarah knew there were more species within the genus that are not often recorded and following a key in Field Mycology she's identified our find as *Pilobolus oedipus* (therein lies another Greek myth!) which is new to the county and has just 11 FRDBI records! Two stunning photos to share, one showing the colony amongst the dung which gives an idea of their minute size, and the other in Barry's inimitable style showing the water pistol before launching its black capsule of spores.

Left: *Pilobolus oedipus* (JW & BW)

Time to round off now but there are more photos to share below. We had a thoroughly enjoyable morning and have added a host of new species for the site and hopefully for the reserve as a whole. I know Mick was concerned that conditions were going to make this visit disappointing and will be delighted at what we achieved. Everyone made valuable contributions and our team of identifiers (Jesper, Claudi, Mario, Sarah, Neil, Bob, Barry and Jackie) deserve special mention and without their input the list would be far shorter. The photographers made the most of less than ideal specimens and have done us proud as well. Thank you all!

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; CW = Claire Williams; JLa = Jesper Launder; JW = Justin Warhurst;
MJ = Mick Jones; NF = Neil Fletcher; PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon.

Below left: The tiny tubes of *Henningsomyces candidus* (White Tubelet) found on a Beech trunk (JW), and right: *Bulgaria inquinans* (Bachelor's Buttons) found on Oak (NF).





Above left: *Abortiporus biennus* (Blushing Rosette), and right: *Coprinopsis picacea* (Magpie Inkcap) both found by Mick earlier on. (MJ)



Above left: The tiny asco *Calycina citrina* (Lemon Disco) on a bare piece of wood (JW), and right: *Flammulina velutipes* (Velvet Shank) – usually a late season fruiter so a surprising find on a log pile (JLa).



Above: two views of the unusual slime mould *Physarum bivalve* which forms these long thin structures and found on a stick. (SJE)

..... and finally, Mick couldn't resist this invitation for a quick snap.

