FUNGI WALK at HOMEFIELD WOOD, November 3rd 2026

Penny Cullington

Our group of 13 met up just inside this BBOWT reserve, the gate having been opened for us by warden Phil Pratt who also spent the morning with us. It was another day and both Jesper and I were particularly looking forward to exploring more of this site where little previous recording for fungi has taken place, our visit here last year being BFG's first.

As we assembled the early arrivers were already spotting interesting species, amongst them a tiny white mycenoid found in mossy ground near Spruce found by Bob and which I was unable to name. We looked in more detail at this patch on our return at the end, finding good numbers of this species, and later at home I was able to identified it as ***Hemimycena cucullata*** (Hooded Bonnet) – sorry, no photo to share. Entering the woodland we were welcomed by a stunning example of ***Coprinopsis picacea*** (Magpie Inkcap), whereupon I then became glued to the spot whilst being supplied with a continuous stream of specimens both named and unnamed, my pots quickly filling with things to be checked later. Amongst them was the attractive ***Stropharia caerulea*** (Blue Roundhead) with its pale turquoise sticky blue cap, but later we found more impressive examples of this species with even more richly coloured caps which begged the question: was this by any chance the much rarer though over-recorded *S. aeruginosa* (Verdigree Roundhead) which has these more striking colours? Answer, sadly no we hadn't! The microscopic details proved to be those of the commoner species – disappointing, but maybe one day we'll find the true *S. aeruginosa*…..



Below left: *Coprinopsis picacea* (CW), and right: *Stropharia caerulea* looking temptingly like its much rarer relative. (LS)



Several unusual species turned up as we worked our way through the mixed woodland – mainly deciduous but with Yew and Pine dotted about as well. The first of these, found by Akhil, was ***Rugosomyces ionides*** (Violet Domecap, previously in genus *Calocybe*). We have only a few county records of this beautiful and rare mushroom, and as today's specimen was sadly not suitably photogenic I include here one taken in 2022, the best we have and which does at least show the subtle and unmistakeable violet colours of both cap and stem.



Right: *Rugosomyces ionides* – a library photo from Jordans Village in 2022 (JLa)

The next excitement was an impressive collection of a species of *Cortinarius* (Webcap) – a genus apparently reluctant to make an appearance so far this autumn but with many members having a wow factor. Jesper worked on this collection later, identifying it as ***Cortinarius osmophorus*** (Sweet Webcap), a member of section *Phlegmacium* and with a distinctive but odd sweet smell akin to that of *Hebeloma sacchariolens.* Described as rare with a liking for calcareous soils under Oak, Beech and occasionally Lime, we have only a very few county records, so this was a nice find.



Left: *Cortinarius osmophorus* (JLa)

Another unusual find was this tiny insignificant mushroom found growing on a Beech nut husk and instantly recognised as ***Flammulaster carpophilus*** (Leaf Spark - though the English name is misleading as it specifically fruits on Beechmast, not leaves). It is similar to a small *Tubaria* but has a somewhat grainy surface to both cap and stem clearly visible with a x10 handlens. Also found was a possibly rarer member of this same genus which was growing on some bare deciduous wood: ***Flammulaster muricatus*** (Scaly Spark) is one for we have few records though we did find it quite recently at Hodgemoor Wood.

Below left: *Flammulaster carpophilus* (JW), and right: *Flammulaster muricatus* (JLa)





We came across various collections of a small *Lepiota* which prompted debate because though the smell was instantly recognisable as that of ***L. cristata*** (Stinking Dapperling), the jizz (general appearance) seemed to us different. Knowing that there are quiet a few members of this genus which share this particular rubbery smell, we wondered if this might be something more interesting. Not so! As with the *Stropharia* mentioned earlier, the microscopy when checked by Jesper confirmed it was just the common species.

Right: *Lepiota cristata* (CW)



It was pleasing to find several mycorrhizal species of note today besides the *Cortinarius* already mentioned. One of these was the occasional ***Lactarius pallidus*** (Pale Milkcap), a species host specific to Beech though with a clear preference for mature woodland where it can sometimes be seen in large numbers. A genus closely related to *Lactarius* is *Russula*, and today we found two species of particular interest which also associate with Beech in mature woodland as here. ***Russula olivacea*** (Olive Brittlegill) is a large robust mushroom with a confusing range of cap colours as we saw today but with one redeeming feature (when present – sometimes it's missing!): it sports a subtle pink sheen on the upper stem, often difficult to capture in photos but just visible in the upturned specimen here.

Below left: *Lactarius pallidus* (CVS), and right: *Russula olivacea* (LS)





A more unusual *Russula* was found and though I suggested the correct name in the field it took work by both myself and Claudi to name it ***Russula romellii*** (no English name). The dark orange spore print taken overnight together with mild taste, spore size and ornamentation and macrochemical reactions all contributed to confirm it though, as with *R. olivacea*, the cap colours are notoriously fickle and confusing in this species with no pink stem to give a useful clue.

Below: Two views of our singleton *Russula romelli* (PC)





It was good to find a couple of Earthstars today – the first we've seen all autumn. There was discussion as to which species of *Geastrum* they were, but the general consensus was that they were the common ***Geastrum triplex*** (Collared Earthstar) despite some indications to the contrary, including the fact that there was no 'collar' visible. This can often be the case, however, the collar depending on whether the rays split to form one as they expand and fold downwards.

Right: *Geastrum triplex* (now *G. micheleanum*) (LS)



On our list we have the rarely recorded ***Tomentella lateritia*** (no English name) which is new to the county and with only 21 records in FRDBI: This is a corticioid species and was found by Bob and identified by Claudi who, however, prefers that we include cf. in the name indicating an element of doubt, and a sample will be sequenced. This is a difficult genus to say the least, and even if Claudi is not spot on with this name it will surely prove to be a rarity of some sort as this is such an under-recorded genus.



Left: *Tomentella* cf. *lateritia* (CVS)

Time to end off now. We had an interesting and very enjoyable morning, further confirming the potential we saw in this site last year. We have a list of 116 species with many new to the site (not surprising with only two visits here so far) and hope to return next year. Thank you to all attendees, to Phil for leading us round and opening gates, to Jesper, Claudi and Bob for their valuable ID input, and of course to the photographers. For more details of what we found see the separate species list. I'll add a few more photos below.

Photographers

CVS = Claudi Soler; CW = Claire Williams; JLa = Jesper Launder; JW = Justin Warhurst;
LS = Linda Seward; PC = Penny Cullington



Left and below: two common species we've seen somewhat infrequently this autumn so far: *Amanita muscaria* (Fly Agaric) (CW) and *Lycoperdon perlatum* (Common Puffball) (LS).





Left: another common species, *Coprinellus disseminatus* (Fairy Inkcap) found growing in a typically large and impressive colony on and around a stump (PC), with detail below (JW).



Below left: the tiny cup fungus *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* (Green Elfcup) – its mycelium responsible for the turquoise coloured wood previously used as decorative inlay in antique tables etc., and right: an impressive fresh example of *Stereum rugosum* (Bleeding Broadleaf Crust) doing what it says on the tin when scratched (LS).





Below: two separate examples of the slime mould *Trichia varia* at different stages of maturity though neither yet fully mature – a process which can take many days. Left; the earlier stage, and right the mid stage (LS).







Left: the simply tiny slime mould *Physarum leucophaeum* found on bare fallen wood (JW)