FUNGI WALK at NAPHILL COMMON on Wednesday October 28th 2026

Penny Cullington

This was our first midweek walk here as a result of previous parking issues when at the weekend, but luck was not with us because preparations for the Nov 5th bonfire party here meant that part of the parking area was unavailable to us, so again we overflowed! However, our group of 23 eventually assembled by the notice board entrance to the Common and were then shepherded round by the ever-patient Peter. Our visit here last year was a couple of weeks earlier in the month and, reading through that report, we'd found a range of fairly predictable species amassing a list of 108 – not considered an exceptional number for mid season. This year the fungi season has failed to get going as expected and a walk any earlier in the month here would have been a wash-out. Today's lowish total of 85, though disappointing in some ways, came as no surprise and in fact it's a credit to those present that it was not any lower. Despite the recent downpours fruiting in our area generally seems reluctant and common things one would expect to be counting in tens or more were either absent or represented by somewhat bedraggled ones or twos.

Enough of this depressing talk! We still enjoyed a very pleasant morning and were pleased to have the opportunity to spend time explaining things to newer members. In fact in a 'good season' anyone new to this game would tend to be completely overcome with the quantities and variety, so there are advantages when there's not that much about. First on the list was ***Psathyrella corrugis*** (Rededge Brittlestem) growing in a woodchip pile and spotted by several people as we assembled (though not named to species at the time – this is a genus which nearly always needs a scope to check later). It does often have a faint thin red line along the gill edge, but not always – mushrooms unfortunately for us don't read the hand books or do what it says on the tin! It's a common species, often fruiting in good numbers – sometimes in sheets in woodland litter and pathsides, and like all members of the genus it does indeed have a white but somewhat fragile stem.



Above: *Psathyrella corrugis* (JW)

It won't have escaped anyone's notice that I was soon filling my pots with examples of non-descript brownish Bonnets (genus *Mycena*) of varying sizes as they were handed in. This is very much the norm though thankfully of the 13 *Mycena* species on our list 9 are with experience fairly easily nameable in the field. Nevertheless my pots were soon brim full and checking at home added just another three very common species: *M. filopes* (Iodine Bonnet) and *M. vitilis* (Snapping Bonnet) are ever tricky to name without a scope with any certainty, and today *M. arcangeliana* (Angel's Bonnet) also needed checking - though often easily recognised, the rain had made it less obviously so. Some photos follow, but I'm now going to deviate from my normal routine because I though it might be useful to summarise the features of the common *Mycena* species we regularly meet and can name in the field – the features we look for straight away which tell us what species they are. Hopefully you can then start identifying them for yourselves before handing them in to us! All have basically palish brown caps unless it says otherwise!

M. arcangeliana (Angel's Bonnet): on fallen deciduous wood - often Beech, in large troops, when young stem looks purple, cap has an olive greenish tint, faint smell of iodine – hospital antiseptic.

M. crocata (Saffrondrop Bonnet): on fallen Beech, often in loose groups, unique orange 'juice' very obvious at stem base when picked or damaged, causing 'bleeding' into gills and cap – a give-away clue.

M. galericulata (Common Bonnet): roots firmly into fallen deciduous wood, can get big - up to 4-5 cm across, gills have ridged cross-webbing in between (use a handlens and look at the largest caps opened out a bit to see this).

M. galopus (Milking Bonnet): in woodland litter, when damaged the stem exudes white watery 'milk' – a give-away clue.

M. haematopus (Burgundydrop Bonnet): On fallen deciduous wood, often loosely clustered, cap has a pinkish tint, unique dark brown-red 'juice' very obvious at stem base when picked or damaged – a give-away. (Do not confuse with *M. crocata*!)
M. inclinata (Clustered Bonnet): On fallen Oak, tightly clustered, when mature stem is white at top then progressively orange then brown below, distinctive smell variously described but to me like that of lupins!
M. pelianthina (Blackedge Bonnet): in deciduous litter, quite substantial for genus, gills greyish with dark purple edges (use handlens), smell sharp - of radish (the same smell as *M. pura* and *M. rosea*). (Not seen today).
M. polygramma (Grooved Bonnet): on fallen deciduous wood, stem with (usually) distinct longditudinal grooves / ridges (use a handlens).
M. pura (Lilac Bonnet): in deciduous litter, quite substantial for genus, cap, gills and stem with lilac purple colours, gills white – no coloured edge, smell sharp - of radish (the same smell as *M. rosea* and *M. pelianthina*). (Not seen today)
M. rosea (Rosy Bonnet): in deciduous litter, quite substantial for genus, cap a beautiful rose pink, gills white - no coloured edge, stem white, tapers upwards, smell sharp - of radish (the same smell as *M. pura* and *M. pelianthina*). (Not seen it today).

Now for some *Mycena* photos taken today: just one from my list above plus two tiny beauties which are far less common and which were spotted on an eye-level mossy Willow branch. ***M. arcangeliana*** is here not showing it's typical olive green tint or purplish young stems but was checked later at home, just proving how field characters can sometimes be fickle and affected by conditions (which doesn't make our job any easier!). The stunning and simply tiny ***M. pseudocorticola*** (Steely Bonnet) was new to the site today, as was the equally stunning and tiny ***M. meliigena*** (Mauve Bonnet) – identical twins apart from their colour. These two can often occur together, something I have to admit I'd not noticed until last year when we found both in close proximity several times.



Left: a typical cluster of *Mycena arcangeliana* (JW)
Below left: *Mycena pseudocorticola*; right: *Mycena meliigena* (BW)





Whilst on mycenoid types, today we came across a surprising number of a *Mycena* lookalike which fools many but which we've learnt to look out for and hopefully now recognise its 'jizz'. The uncommon ***Hydropodia subalpina*** (Chipolata Bonnet) is not a *Mycena* despite its English name and occurs on fallen wood or woody debris. It is not until one inspects the micro-details that the difference becomes apparent. No *Mycena* (in fact no other mushroom) has sausage-shaped spores nor cells on the gill edge like those of this species. We've recorded it here on our three previous visits but probably as singletons and not in the numbers seen today.



Right: *Hydropodia subalpina* (PC)

Also found today was a clump of the tiny ***Cudoniella acicularis*** (Oak Pin) which on first glance could be mistaken for yet another small white mycenoid species. Closer inspection with a handlens reveals that the underside of the cap lacks gills or pores because this is not a 'mushroom' at all but an ascomycete – one of the spore-shooters (mushrooms are basidiomycetes, the spore-droppers). Ascos have a unique and completely different mechanism for producing and dispersing spores involving firing them out of the top of the fruiting body rather than dropping them from underneath from gills or pores (as in basidios). This particular species occurs on decaying Oak stumps.



Left: *Cudoniella acicularis* (BS)

A completely different type of asco was found just starting to fruit on fallen Beech. ***Neobulgaria pura*** (Beech Jellydisc) is very common and well described by its English name, developing gelatinous round flat topped clustered fruitbodies which are pale pinkish but in wet conditions lose much of their colour as here. They never get much bigger than 1-2cm across.



Right: *Neobulgaria pura* (BS)

I must mention what to many was the highlight of the morning when we called in at Vincent's Field on our way back from the Common to see the extraordinary ***Clathrus archeri*** (Devil's Fingers) and found here by Claire Williams a couple of days earlier. First discovered in this field in 2019 by Neil Fletcher who was with us today, when it was new to the county, it has been on the increase here ever since and is also a regular at Stampwell Farm where it fruits in abundance. An alien species, it was originally thought to be introduced to the UK via Australian boots during World War One though has been considered a rarity since then until recent years when apparently now rapidly spreading in suitable areas. Today the abundance was clear to see with an array of all stages of development on show including the unpleasant smell! What is strange is that the not distant and very common relative, *Phallus impudicus* (Stinkhorn), is this season conspicuous by its absence from our lists.

Below: *Clathrus archeri* fruiting abundance today in Vincent's Field (JW)





Time to end off and thank everyone for coming. We managed to add a good number of species new to the Naphill Common list despite the somewhat poor showing today. Thank you too to the photographers who make these reports so much more interesting and useful for everyone. If you'd like a print out of my earlier common *Mycena* notes please let me know. For details of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers

BS = Bob Simpson; BW = Barry Webb; JW = Justin Warhurst; PC = Penny Cullington.

Below, from the bizarre to the ridiculous, Left: the unmistakeable and simply miniscule *Marasmius hudsonii* (Holly Parachute (BW), and right: not a snake but the strangely deformed *Mycena vitilis* (Snapping Bonnet) (JW).





Below left and right: views of the upper surface and mazelike under surface of the bracket *Daedalea quercina* (Oak Mazegill) (JW)





Below: a fittingly stunning photo of the tiny nodding heads of the slime mould *Physarum album* (an earlier and in my view more apt name was *P. nutans*, the Latin epithet meaning drooping or nodding, the feature which helps to distinguish it from the many other similar species of this amazing and beautiful genus). (BW)

