FUNGI WALK at STAMPWELL FARM on October 31st 2026

Penny Cullington

Another glorious autumn day, and our group of 24 included Jackie Ewan who knows the site inside-out and led us round for the morning. We were pleased to be joined by the site owner Frog Orr-Ewing for some of the time and who showed a keen interest in our antics, filling us in with snippets of information about this interesting place as we progressed. This has so far been a somewhat disappointing and strange fungi season in our area, no doubt as a result of our unique summer this year which was – to state the obvious - unprecedentedly hot and dry. It was impossible to predict whether this would affect fungal fruiting favourably or not; but affect it it certainly did, and favourably it was not! Here we are on the brink of November and in many places we've visited things have still just failed to kick off with even the commonest of species conspicuous by their absence. This is not universal, however, and in the last couple of weeks there've been reports of 'good' sites, furthermore other parts of the country both north and south of us seem to have generally fared better. Here things are still very patchy and wherever we go at the moment we never know what awaits us.

We headed off in the direction of a dried up pond bed which we knew had some species of particular interest, but as is often the case it took us a while to get there and we were waylaid by fungi finds along the way. I'd noticed as I got out of the car on arrival that the grassland species ***Mycena olivaceomarginata*** (Brownedge Bonnet) was fruiting in a cluster just feet away – a promising sign. In fact none of us had ever seen such abundance of this species before, and as we traversed it was everywhere in the shortish grass and almost impossible not to walk on – thousands of them! Its diagnostic feature is well described in both the Latin and English name but its pale brown gill edge is often really hard to see even with a x10 handlens, also not always present or if so then only near the cap margin. Try as we might, we didn't manage to get a photo to show this particular feature but Neil's photo here gives a flavour of the phenomenally prolific fruiting we enjoyed.



Above: *Mycena olivaceomarginata* (NF)

As we entered a wooded area a different suite of species were encountered along the path edge, one of which is always a crowd pleaser with its attractive turquoise blue cap and contrasting grey gills. ***Stropharia caerulea*** (Blue Roundhead) is a regular on our lists from this site and favours grassy path edges. On collection it's always worth giving it a sniff to see if it smells of freshly ground black pepper which would indicate the much rarer ***S. pseudocyanea*** (Peppery Roundhead) and which is reportedly around at the moment. Apart from its distinctive smell it is otherwise a look-alike and for this reason probably under-recorded. Note the frilly cap margin and stem ring seen here, these being all that is left of the protective white veil which covers the gills before expansion.



Left: *Stropharia caerulea* (LS)

This path is the site where an exciting find was made by Jackie a week or so earlier when ***Aurantiolachnea solsequia*** (Orange Glazed Cup) turned up – just the second UK site for it, the first being Dancersend where it's been found fruiting abundantly every year since we discovered it there in 2022. Today it was still in evidence here, but more remarkably a little further on there was a metal tank filled with soil and woody debris which we were informed had been used for growing vegetables. Here we discovered a single specimen of this rare and beautiful disco growing apparently in soil though we were informed that there was some Cherry bark beneath. This was significant because the Dancersend site is both on and around a fallen rotting Cherry trunk, also the pathside here where it was fruiting is also close to Cherry, pointing strongly to a possible association between this species and Cherry. An apt description of this species is like *Aleuria aurantia* (Orange Peel Fungus) but covered on the outside with fine dark bristly hairs – in fact when Jackie first found it she made the natural assumption that it was the *Aleuria,* which quite often fruits along this path, until she noticed the hairy covering.



Right: *Aurantiolachnea solsequia* found in a tank today (LS)

Before arriving at the pond Jackie pointed out to me a tiny white mycenoid mushroom which grows in good numbers here in the grassy areas and which she had not been able to identify. I suspected this might be *Delicatula integrella* (Veined Bonnet) which seemed to tick all the boxes (size, colour, habitat) but Sarah rightly pointed out that it had distinctly decurrent gills which didn't really fit. At home the microscopic features didn't fit either, so eliminating that possibility and leaving the genus *Hemimycena* – not my favourite! It keyed out best to ***H. delectabilis*** (Delectable Bonnet and recently moved to genus *Atheniella*) which matches well though I shall be happier once it is confirmed with sequencing, though I note that we do have a previous record of it from here identified by me in 2024.



Left: *Hemimycena* cf. *delectabilis* (LS)

Now to the dried up pond bed where several year ago Jackie discovered a species of *Hypholoma* (the same genus as Sulphurtuft) near a Willow stump which defied identification either by her or by myself or Derek when BFG visited later. More significantly when sequenced there were no matches, pointing to a possibly undescribed species (though there are plenty of rare but well established species not yet with published sequences). Jackie has not surprisingly been on the lookout for this *Hypholoma* here ever since but without success until a couple of weeks ago. Significantly this is the first time since her original find that the pond has completely dried out again. Many photos were taken today including those by Sarah who, knowing that

Below: *Hypholoma* sp. – possibly an unnamed species (NF)



this genus fluoresces a striking yellow-green in ultraviolet light, was able to show this effectively using her UV torch affecting both gills and the pale cap margin on young specimens. Later I took a spore print, also made careful examination and a description of it and we have it dried and will sequence it again to see if we can get further down the road as to what it might be.





Left and far left: *Hypholoma* sp. showing fluorescence on gills and cap margin (SJE), and below: its mature typically splitting cap (NF)



Nearby and actually on the Willow stump were three other species: *Pholiota gummosa* (Sticky Scalycap) was forming several clusters. Also there was immature ***Abortiporus biennus*** (Blushing Rosette) just developing and in one place showing its typical bloodlike droplets which it forms in wet weather and which when present often confuse people into thinking they've found the rare and very special *Hydnellum peckii* (which occurs almost exclusively in Caledonian Pine forests).

The third species we didn't recognise and Jesper took to work on but is still at a loss! Its 'jizz' just didn't ring any bells with us though it is clearly still immature and it will be interesting to see how it develops – no doubt Jackie will keep us informed. Meantime we will sequence it in the hope that all will be revealed (though this process does not always provide satisfactory answers!)

Below left: *Abortiporus biennis* (LS), and right: a mystery species from around the Willow stump (NF)





Eventually we tore ourselves away from the pond and moved on, picking up a range of species to add to the list - mostly common and predictable things. In a 'normal' year, if that isn't a contradiction in terms where fungi are concerned, we'd be expecting to be enjoying the plentiful waxcaps which abound at the farm at this time, regularly recording 10 or more species. Today we found just two specimens, one just a broken cap and the other just a very sticky stem with no cap! Both were nameable even in this dilapidated state so are on the list, but it was a shame not to find more, especially with quite a few new members out with us for the first time today.

Three species of *Agaricus* were found, one of which was a nice example with two specimens allowing a single photo setup to show the important features. Like many other genera, *Agaricus* is an easy one to name to genus but that's often where the easy bit ends. We are all familiar with the shop bought types but the large size of this genus with many different species, both woodland and grassland, comes as a surprise to those just starting to learn about fungi. Scratching the cap and or stem to watch for reddening, yellowing or no colour change is a useful first step in identification and getting a clear reaction promptly eliminates all those with a different reaction. Today we quickly realised that this was one of the strongly reddening species (note the red patch on the cap where I'd just scratched it) and that together with its brown scaly cap and strikingly pink gills pointed to one of several species, the likeliest being ***A. sylvaticus*** (Blushing Wood Mushroom). This was confirmed when Jesper checked it later at home. It was out in the open here though is more commonly in mixed woodland which was, however, not far away.



Above: *Agaricus sylvaticus* (LS)

We found extremely few mycorrhizal species today which came as no surprise and has been the pattern virtually everywhere we've visited this autumn. The exception here was a patch containing several good sized specimens of ***Boletus edulis*** (Penny Bun) – off the top of my head we've seen only one small specimen elsewhere. Here they were really quite plentiful and it was just as well they were behind a fence so not available to us for collection for the pot! Our photo demanded some dexterity to take through fencing!



Right: *Boletus edulis* (NF)



Still on the mycorrhizal theme, just a singleton *Cortinarius* belonging to section *Phlegmacium* was found and identified in the field as ***C. collocandoides*** (Opalescent Webcap) from its sticky cap, dry stem and distinct purple colours throughout. A smart mushroom though with several look-alikes so the spores were checked later by Jesper to confirm the ID. Note the scratched stem revealing the purple flesh within, also the cobwebby cortina remnants on the stem showing clearly how the rusty coloured spores have dropped from the gills to land there.

Left: *Cortinarius collocandoides* (LS)

Right: *Typhula erythropus* (BW)



Moving on to other things, new to the site today was a tiny species of club which grows on herbaceous stems and twiggy remains but takes some finding being only 3mm tall at most! ***Typhula erythropus*** (Redleg Club) does what it says on the tin, its spores borne on the outside of the fertile top section. Sarah knew to look for the tiny brown sclerotium (like a miniscule bulb formed from hardened

mycelium) which lies embedded in the substrate at the base of this species, and at home she successfully managed to excavate it!

As I've already filled four pages it's time to round up though there are more photos to share added below. Despite conditions being less than perfect we managed a total of just under 100 species adding a good number new to the site. A visit to this farm would not be complete without seeing the enigmatic *Clathrus archeri* (Devil's Fingers), and at the end of the morning Jackie took those who'd not had this pleasure before to do just that. As usual it was showing wonderfully and prolifically. Thank you to all for coming, to the photographers, and in particular to Frog for permitting our visit and to Jackie for taking us to see so many interesting species. A good time was had by all. For details of what we found see the separate species list.

Photographers

BW = Barry Webb; JLa = Jesper Launder; JLo = Justin Long; LS = Linda Seward; NF = Neil Fletcher; SJE = Sarah Ebdon





Above left: the delicate red gill edge of *Mycena saunguinolenta* (Bleeding Bonnet) (BW), and right: one of just two species of *Lactarius* found today, *L. serifluus* (Watery Milkcap) (JLo) – a second species defied ID and will be sequenced.

Below left: *Clathrus archeri* looking particularly lurid and bizarre (LS), and right: *Lepiota subincarnata*, an uncommon species found in the same area at the end of the morning (LS).









Above left: the tiny blobs of *Lasiosphaerea ovina* (Woolly Woodwart) (LS), and right: the rarely recorded *Protocrea pallida* found and identified by Jesper, new to the county today (JLa)



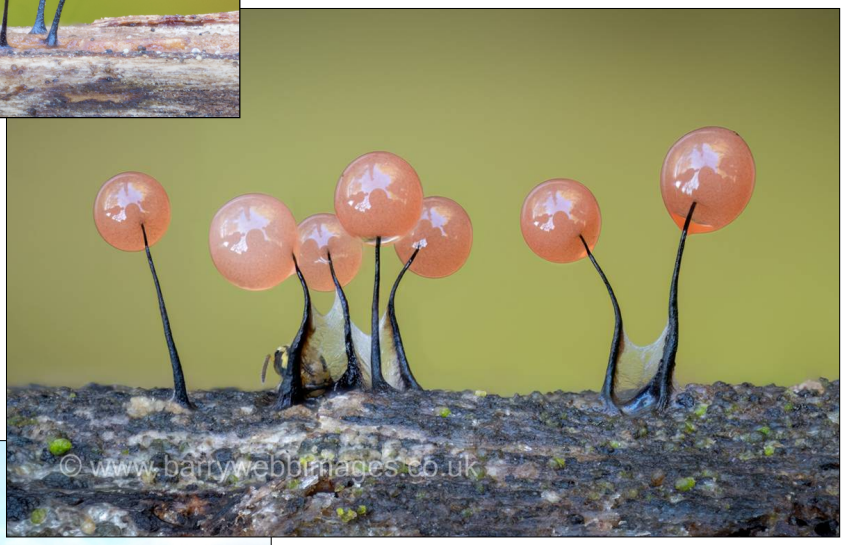
Left: a stunning member of the slime mould genus *Physarum* awaiting a species name (BW)

Right: the slime mould *Enerthenema papillatum* (BW)





Left: the mature exquisite and tiny slime mould *Comatricha nigra*, and below: the immature stage of the same species - all found together today on a deciduous stick. (BW)





Left (LS) and below (SJE): two views of the group in action today

