

FUNGI WALK at ASPLEY WOODS on Sunday October 11th 2026

Penny Cullington

Our modest group of 13 met up in the busy car park on a fine morning and we were joined by two members of the Bedford Estate Management who came round with us for the morning. This was a new site for BFG and we were initially encouraged by the evident puddles here, but though we gathered that rain had fallen several days earlier it seemed to have had little effect on triggering fungal fruiting and today we really struggled. The exceptionally sandy soil in this area drains very quickly and even the damp grassy path edges were pretty unproductive, resulting in our somewhat meagre list of 65 species – disappointing for what is considered peak season and also coinciding with UK Fungus Day as well. The habitat was very much Pine dominated with a fair amount of Birch dotted about and just the occasional other deciduous tree, thus we'd been hopeful of finding some species we don't often encounter further south. However, we also learnt that the area is very popular with foragers who tend to strip the place of anything fungal, collecting into carrier bags, so no doubt the foragers together with the dry summer conditions were responsible for our lack of success today.

As there were so few photo opportunities I apologise for the lack of the usual display below, but it's the fungi which determine what suitable photos I receive afterwards and today they just weren't in evidence. For example, what boletes we found were either infected with *Hypomyces chrysospermus* (Bolete Mould) or if not then fit only for identification rather than for useful photography.

Right: *Hypomyces chrysospermus* when mature – the photo from Naphill Common in 2025 (LS) – though most of today's examples were still at the earlier white stage.



Nevertheless as always happens some interesting species turned up, and amongst the many small and insignificant Bonnets we were handed as we progressed was one which favours conifer wood – not in short supply here - thus we were on the lookout for it. *Mycena amicta* (Coldfoot Bonnet) is an unpredictable species, sometimes doing 'what it says on the tin' – ie having a cold and very bright blue stem base – but often lacking this feature though possibly showing blue on the cap in varying degrees, however sometimes lacking blue entirely in which case it appears extremely similar to the myriad of other basically brown Bonnets. Today Sarah and I were handed one or two Bonnets with caps which no more than hinted at blue but also displayed another useful diagnostic feature, a finely furry stem best viewed with a x10 handlens. So we were confident enough to name it in the field but hoped that more photogenic examples might turn up. Eventually one did! When a specimen of the Pine associate *Lactarius hepaticus* (Liver Milkcap) was handed in, we spotted that attached to its base was this stunning little blue capped *Mycena*! Here was the photo opportunity we'd been looking for. The Milkcap was no more than 2-3 cm across but serves to give a sense of perspective for this miniscule and beautiful tiny Bonnet!



Left: *Lactarius hepaticus* with *Mycena amicta* (SJE)
with insert detail (JLo)

One mushroom we saw quite a few times was ***Gymnopilus penetrans*** (Common Rustgill), a species which favours fallen conifer wood but also occurs on deciduous wood. From above this common species appears pretty similar to some other brown capped mushrooms, but turning it over reveals the rusty gills (coloured by the maturing spores) and this is the best way to recognise it in the field.

Right: ***Gymnopilus penetrans*** (PC)



Another we kept picking up was a small brown 'mycenoid' mushroom – in fact easily mistaken for that genus unless one notices the shallow and very crowded gills and the fact that it is popping up constantly under Pine in the litter. ***Baeospora myosura*** (Conifercone Cap) fruits exclusively on fallen rotting cones – often those buried and disintegrated thus concealing their origin – but if you keep searching eventually an example will turn up actually on a cone as here, thus leaving no doubt as to its identity.

Left: ***Baeospora myosura*** on a Pine cone (PC)



by Neil whilst we were exploring an area of mire with Birch predominating amongst the thick vegetation and sedge. He showed me a couple of pale mushrooms which at first I couldn't place till the rusty spore deposit attaching to the top of the stem prompted me to the genus ***Cortinarius*** (Webcap). Simultaneously Jesper had found a cluster of larger fruitbodies and come to the same conclusion though with its dry cap and stem pointing to Section ***Telamonina*** – by far the hardest section to identify to species - this was going to need keying out at home with care, taken on by Jesper. Various features both macro and micro led him to ***Cortinarius lepidopus*** - no English name, not at all common and with the majority of records coming from the Caledonian forests of Aberdeenshire. This is a Birch associate with just 3 previous Bucks records, the most recent back in 2004 made by Geoffrey Kibby.

Above:

Cortinarius lepidopus found with Birch in the mire area. (JLa)



No other photos to share with you except for a tiny but interesting little species noticed on horse dung in the car park by Jesper after the group had departed. ***Sphaerobolus stellatus*** (Shooting Star) is so named because though only 2 mm across it opens up starlike and literally fires its packet of spores as much as 2 metres away in the hope of it landing on suitable dung on which to continue reproduction. What an amazing mechanism this extraordinary fungus has developed! It is not rare but obviously easily overlooked.



Right: ***Sphaerobolus stellatus*** (SJE)

No photo to illustrate our second exciting find, but I can't finish off without sharing with you another similarly tiny species spotted by Justin on the stem of a fern. Jesper suggested maybe this was a species of Bird's Nest but it seemed to us doubtful because when immature such fungi show signs of a lid on top which eventually opens to reveal the 'nest' beneath and here we had a globose pale blob with no sign of a lid. However, on dissecting it at home he did indeed find tiny packets of spores underneath, identifying it as ***Nidularia deformis*** (Deformed Bird's Nest) which unlike other Bird's Nest genera lacks a lid but apparently splits open irregularly. This is not common and is a new county record, a species favouring woody substrates of various sorts found in sandy plantations and swampy places.

It remains for me to thank everyone for coming, especially as long journeys were made by many (and Justin drove up from Devon to lead us round today!). I'd like to single out Sarah for her microscope work at home which added considerably to the species total. This site clearly has great potential though was not on best fungal form today, so we hope to return next year and will try for a later date which may be more productive.

Photographers

LS=Linda Seward; JLa = Jesper Launder; JLo = Justin Long; PC = Penny Cullington; SJE = Sarah Ebdon.

Below:
action
mire
(SJE)



BFG in
in the
today



Above: another similar scene but worth including and showing this lovely woodland well. (JLo)

