

BEING FUNGAL

Being Fungal

Being Fungal is a day devoted to...being fungal. It took place on UK Fungus Day 2023 - Saturday 7th October. Being Fungal was developed by artist Jane Lawson working with Heart of Glass, fungi enthusiast Tom Ferguson and Stanley Bank ranger Dave Owen. The aim of the day was to get up close and personal with fungi - to enable people to experience them through sight, smell, taste and touch (and sound for those with very sharp ears).

Being Fungal included a fungal foray in Stanley Bank Woods led by Tom Ferguson, a fungus-based lunch (and biscuits!) by Kezzie's Community Cooking, an activity taking participants through the lifecycle of a mushroom from spore to spore, and the co-creation of this zine – for which participants were invited to make a page about their Being Fungal experience.

We made the outer pages of this zine in advance and added the inner pages on the day. This means that this page was written before the day happened, and so without a time machine can't include any info about what we actually found (although we hoped to find porcini, ganoderma, birch polypores, tricholomas, milkcaps and brittlegills, among others). Read on to find out what did happen on the day...

Jane Lawson, 3rd October 2023

Jane Lawson

I've been working with fungus since 2012, when I used oyster mushrooms to detoxify the global financial system (in the form of portraits representing aspects such as economists, investment bankers and ratings agencies). Since then I've detoxified various key neoliberal texts and become fascinated by all aspects of the fungal realm, most recently spore prints.

In working with fungi I aim to embody alternatives to the dominant cultural narrative which claims that the present economic system is our only realistic option. I also make diagrams to help me understand the processes and structures that shape human society and our impact on the world, and sometimes I combine the two. My work is informed by my previous involvement in environmental activism and my work as a researcher into corporate ethics at Ethical Consumer magazine.

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Tom Ferguson

I always introduce myself when leading a foray not as an expert but as a fungi enthusiast. I am not professionally trained in mycology but have developed an interest in fungi which has strengthened over the years since my school days and the small natural history club which generated my passion for the natural world and how fungi relate to it. Many hours have been spent searching for fungi and identifying them, or to be more accurate trying to identify them.

For many years I have led fungal forays mainly for the Ranger services in St Helens and Warrington, raising awareness and hopefully generating in others my enthusiasm for this fascinating subject. In more recent times I have joined the Northwest Fungus Group and have benefitted from the extensive knowledge and expertise in that organization. I have now extended my identification skills through microscopy although the challenge of identification remains as great as ever.



On The Day

What we found

Stanley Bank Wood, St Helens
7th October 2023

Parasitic fungi

Latin name	Common name
Ganoderma australe	Southern Bracket
Piptoporus betulinus	Birch Polypore, Razor-strop
Armillaria mellea (bootlace rhizomorph)	Honey Fungus

Saprophytic wood rotters

Latin name	Common name
Trametes versicolor	Turkeytail
Trametes gibbosa	Lumpy Bracket
Psathyrella piliformis	Common Stump Brittlegill
Gymnopilus juonius	Spectacular Rustgill
Mycena arcangeliana	Angel's Bonnets
Stereum hirsutum	Hairy Curtain Crust
Xylaria longipes	Moll's Fingers
Pluteus cervinus	Deer Shield
Coprinellus micaceus	Glistening Inkcap
Auricularia auricula-judaea	Jelly Ear
Crepidotus mollis	Peeling Oysterling
Pleurotus sp	Oyster Mushroom

Ectomycorrhizal fungi
(fungi that form mutually beneficial partnerships with plants, trading nutrients and water for carbohydrates)

Latin name	Common name
Tricholoma sciodes (beech)	
Lactarius blennius (beech)	Beechwood Milkcap
Russula nobilis (beech)	Beechwood Sickener
Russula foetans (beech,oak)	Stinking Brittlegill
Russula ochroleuca (various)	Ochre Brittlegill
Russula atropurpurea (various)	Purple Brittlegill
Amanta excelsa (beech,spruce)	Grey spotted amanita

Miscellaneous fungi

Latin name	**Common name**
Scleroderma citrinum	Common earthball
Helvella crispa	White saddle
Scleroderma verrucosum	Scaly earthball
Leottia lubrica	Jelly babies
Hygrocybe nigrescens	Blackening waxcap
Rhytisma acerinum	Sycamore tarspot
Lacrymaria lacrymabunda	Weeping widows

Fungi from Colliers Moss, brought by Tom Ferguson

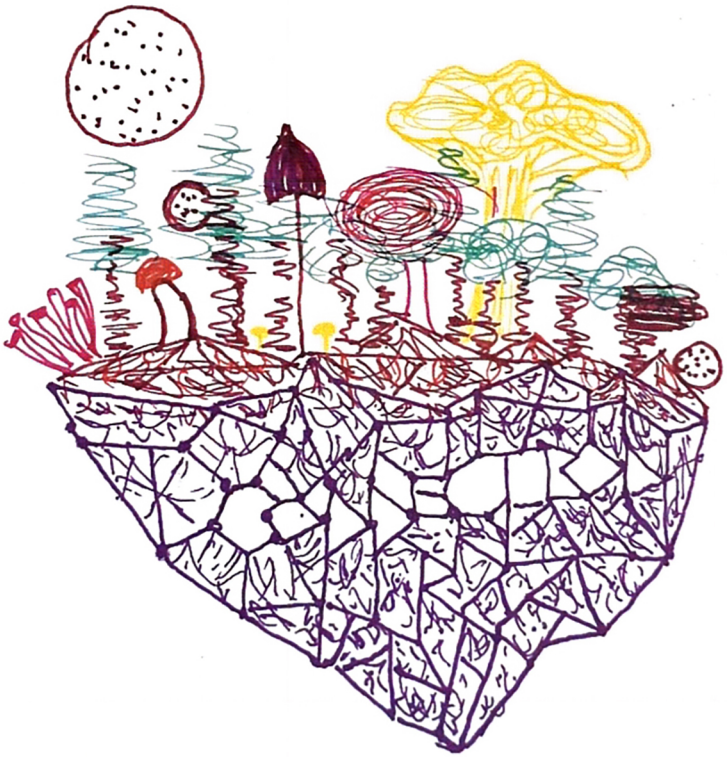
Latin name	**Common name** Amanita
Amanita muscaria	Fly agaric
Amanita rubescens	The Blusher
Cortinarius alboviolaceus	
Cortinarius subbalaustinus	
Mycena pura	Lilac Bonnet
Lactarius vietus	Grey Milkcap
Lactarius torminosus	Woolly Milkcap
Lactarius quietus	Oakbug Milkcap
Russula claroflava	Yellow Swamp Brittlegill
Leccinum versipelle	Orange birch bolete
Boletus parasiticus	Parasitic bolete
Lycoperdon perlatum	Common Puffball
Lycoperdon excipuliforme	Pestle Puffball
Clavulina cristata	Crested Coral
Agaricus sp	Mushroom sp

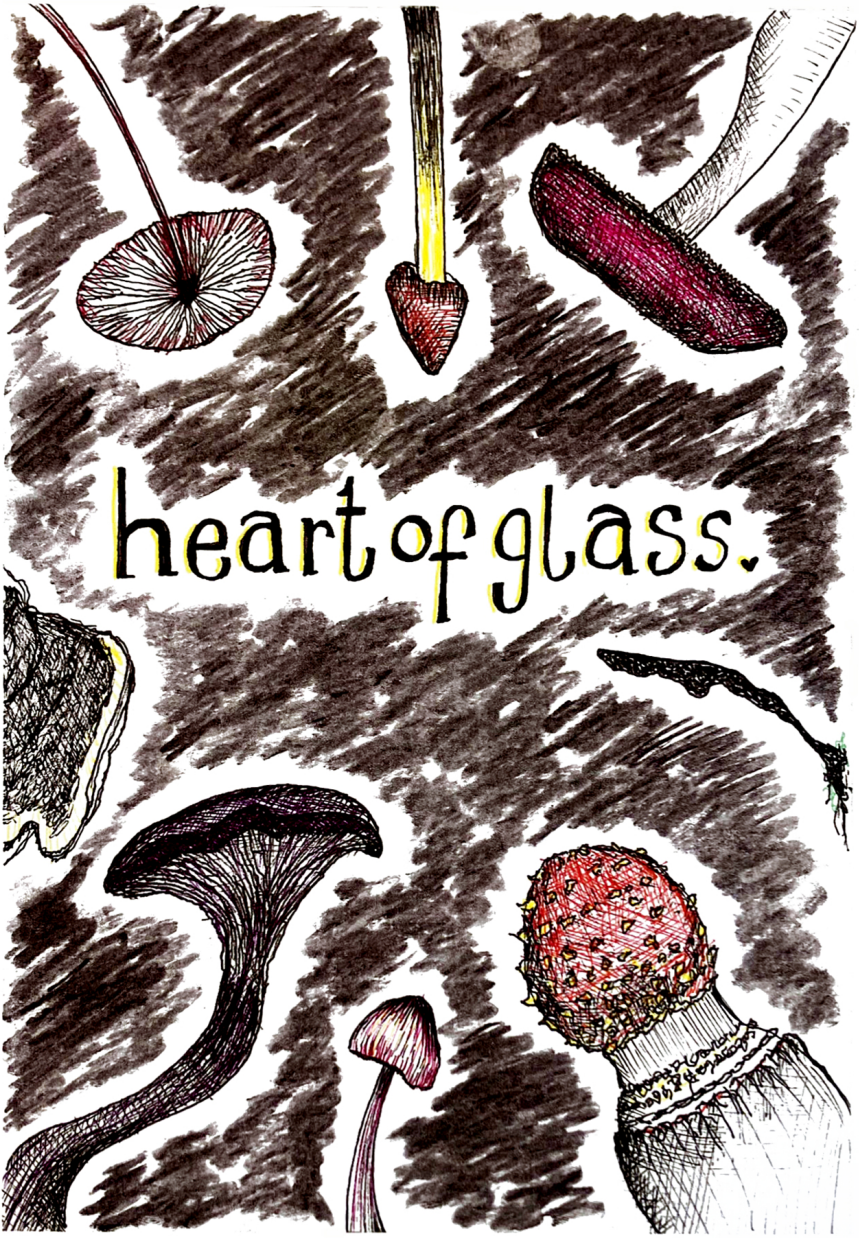
Fungi from Mere Sands Wood, brought by Gili Armson

Latin name	**Common name**
Laccaria amethystea	Amethyst Deceiver
Nectria cinnabarina	Coral spot
Tricholoma sulphureum	Sulphur Knight

List kindly provided by Tom Ferguson tg.ferguson@btinternet.com

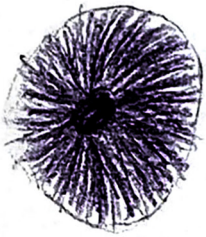
What we drew and wrote




heart of glass.

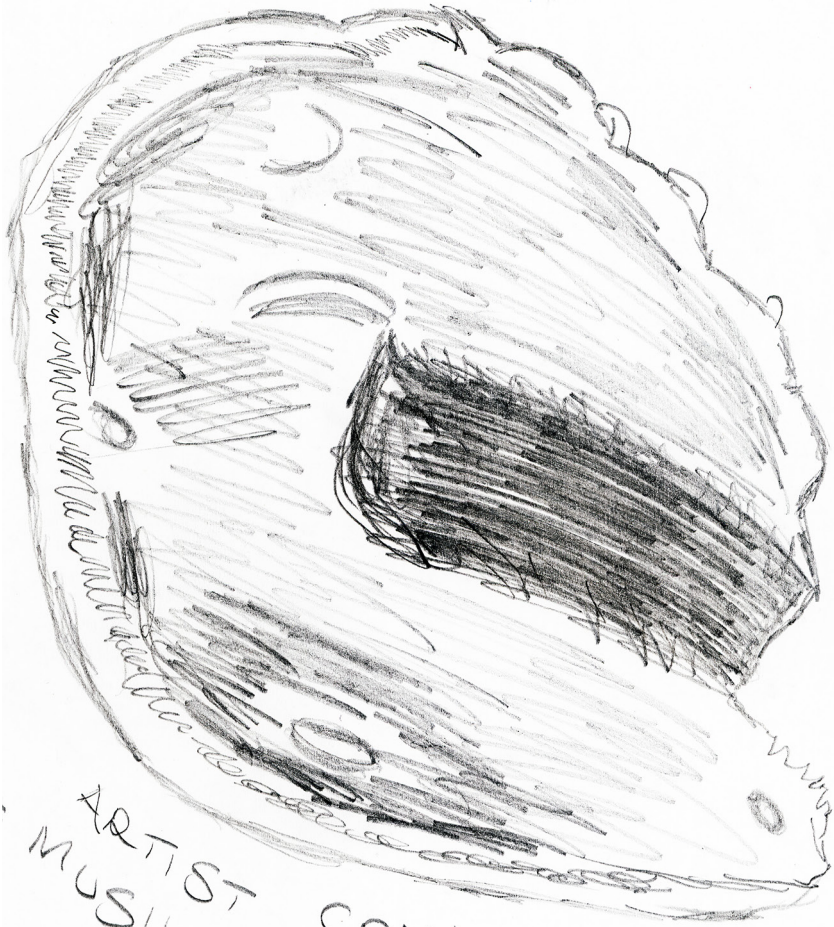

orange
Birch
Bolete



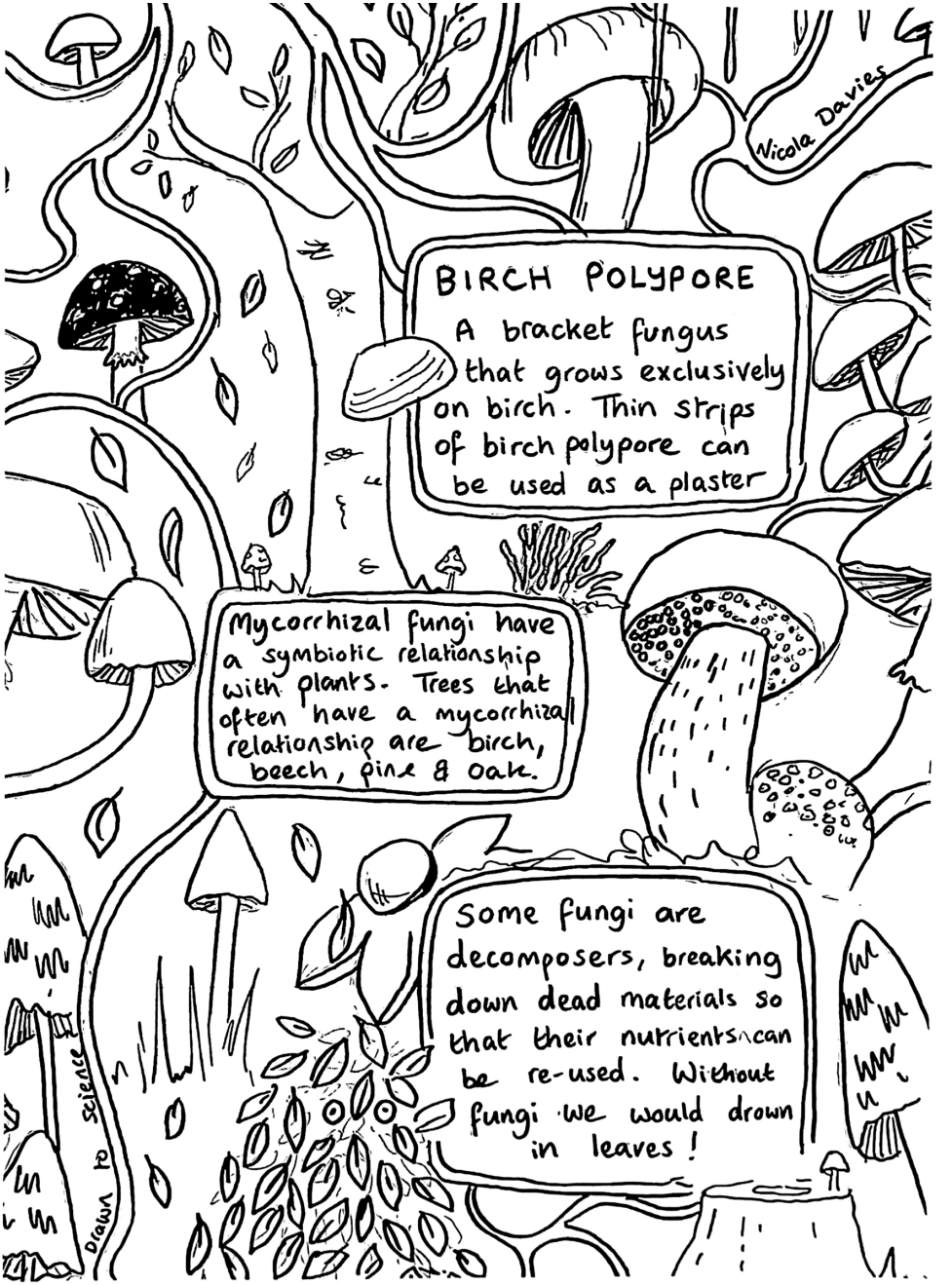








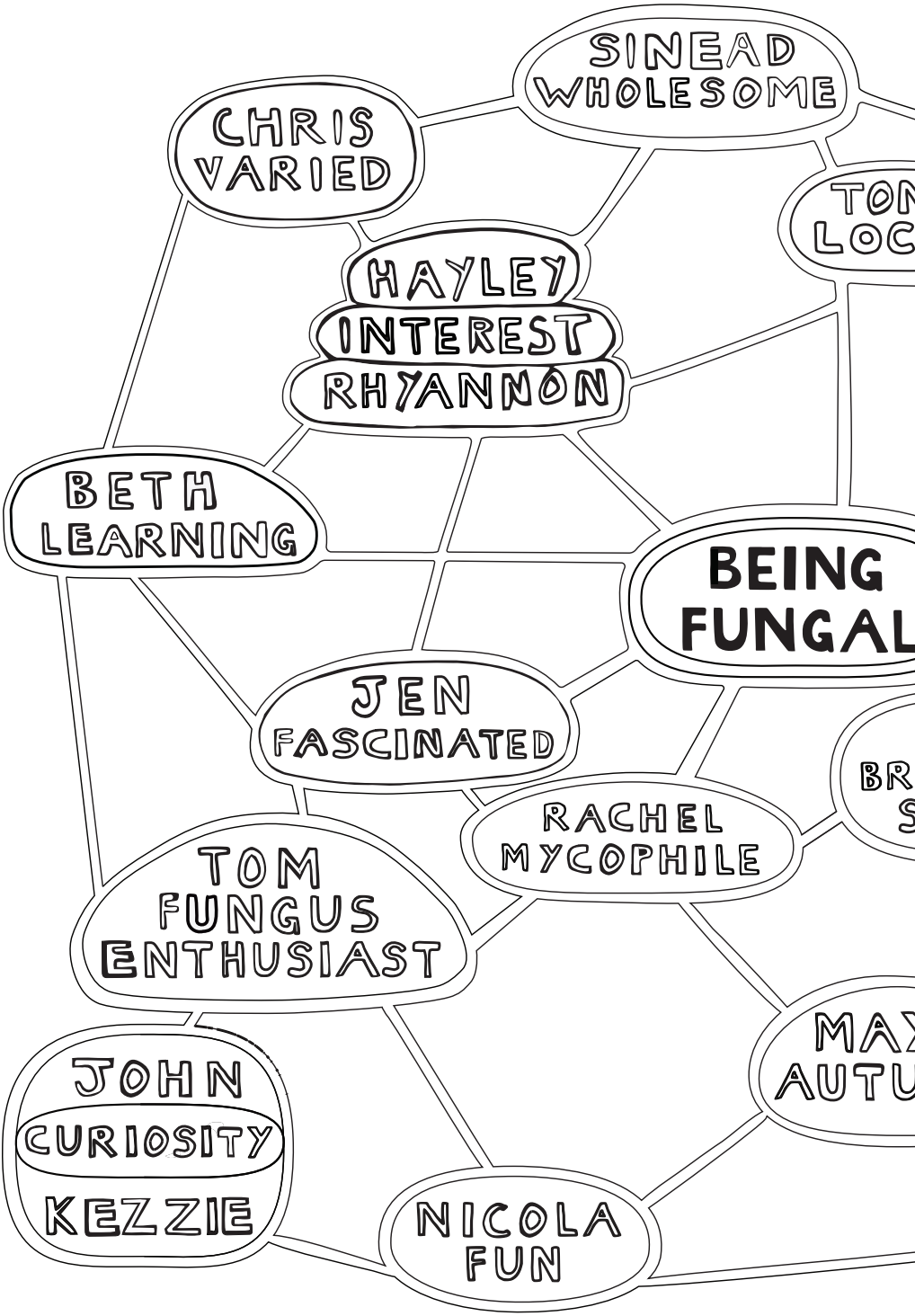
ARTIST CONK
MUSHROOM PLONK

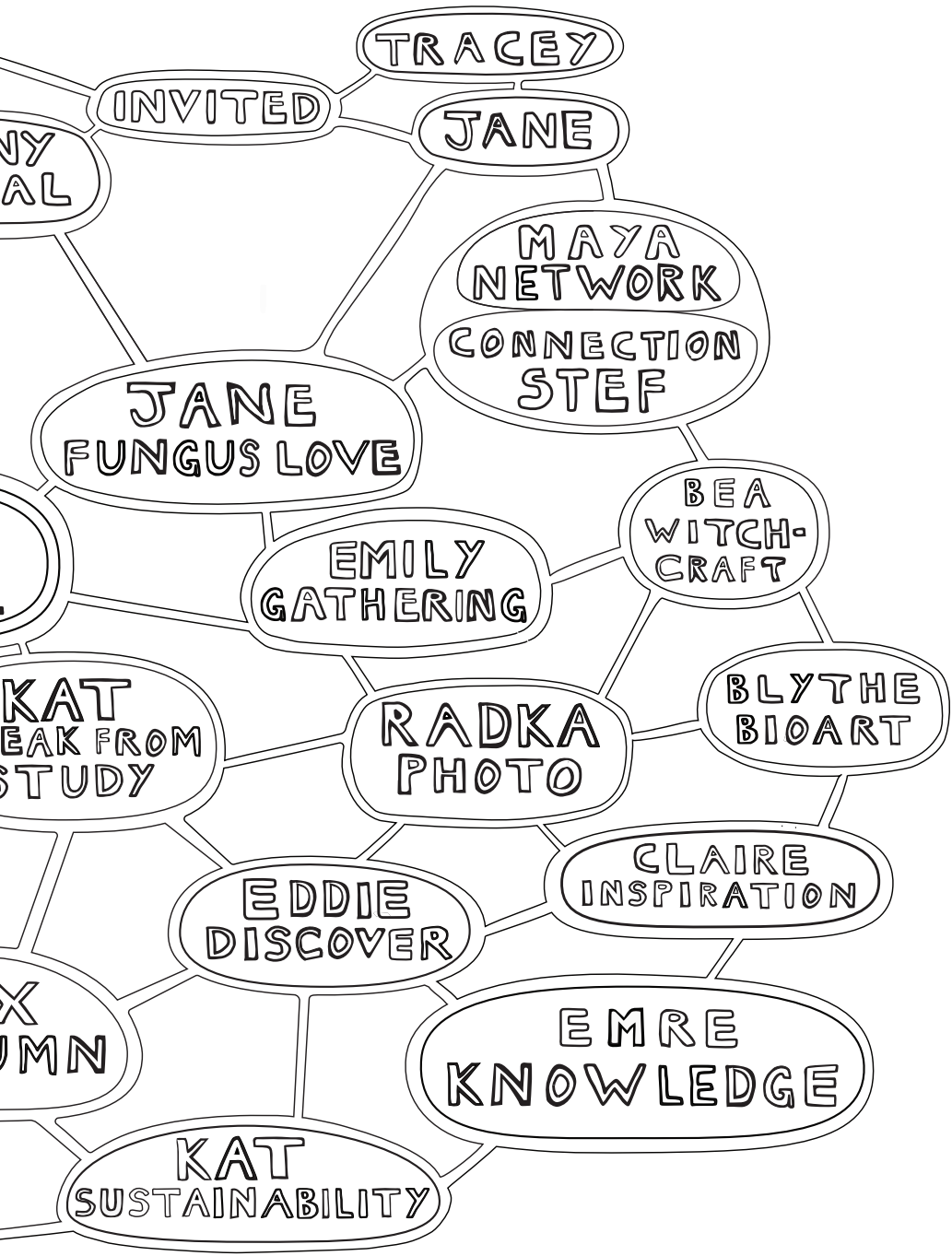

Nicola Davies
BIRCH POLYPORE
A bracket fungus that grows exclusively on birch. Thin strips of birch polypore can be used as a plaster
Mycorrhizal fungi have a symbiotic relationship with plants. Trees that often have a mycorrhizal relationship are birch, beech, pine & oak.
Some fungi are decomposers, breaking down dead materials so that their nutrients can be re-used. Without fungi we would drown in leaves!
Drawn to Science

Speaking fungal

Sticky weeping
Swamp crowded
with jewelled
devils fiery
and fragile

Slender clouded
Summer the
pretender deceiving
mild ghosts
bruising first
honey and milk
then blood red


SINEAD
WHOLESOME
CHRIS
VARIED
HAYLEY
INTEREST
RHYANNON
BETH
LEARNING
BEING
FUNGAL
JEN
FASCINATED
RACHEL
MYCOPHILE
TOM
FUNGUS
ENTHUSIAST
JOHN
CURIOSITY
KEZZIE
NICOLA
FUN



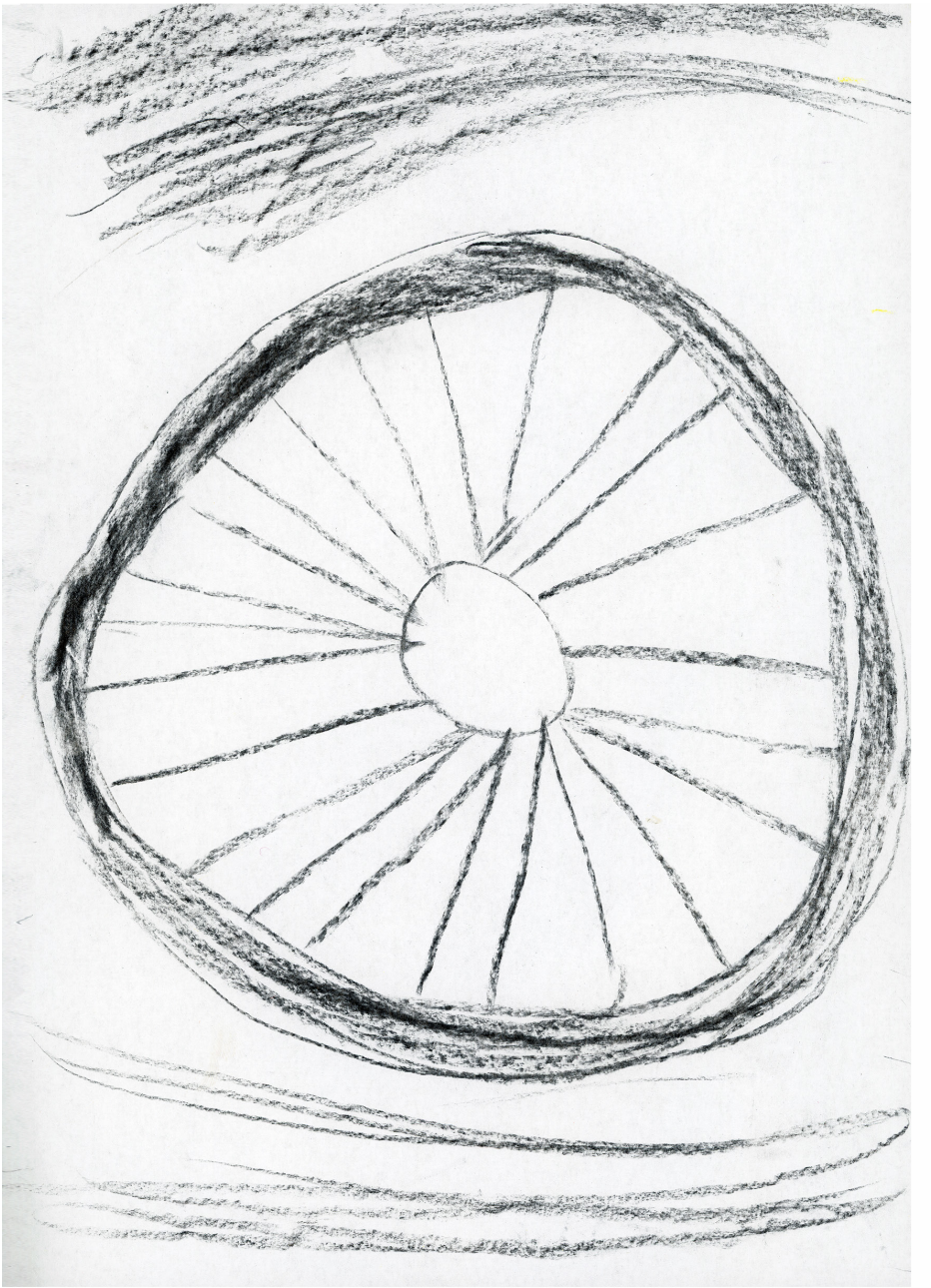
Who came and why

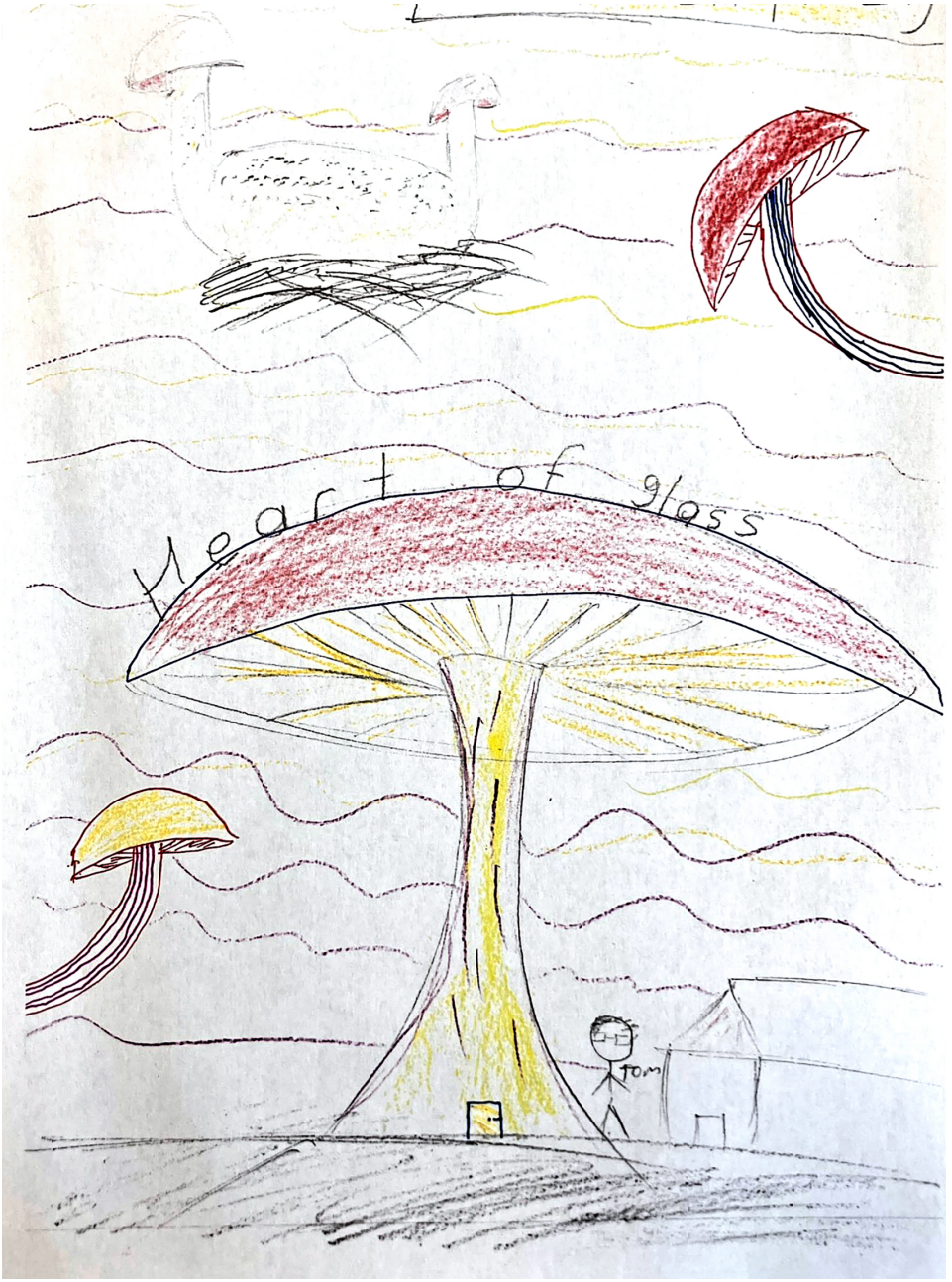


care-take

cova entity a sporome unboardable
cosmological flesh decomposing humankind
into a nomadic vessel of transparency

reclaimed dirthchas wavy with funga
a cosmovision of a crib
an intimate glossary
silent with sustenance
where portal is an interplay of curave.




Heart of glass
Tom

MUSHROOM DATING PROFILE:

Species: Amanita Rubescens AKA THE BLUSHER!



Meet...

Mike Celium

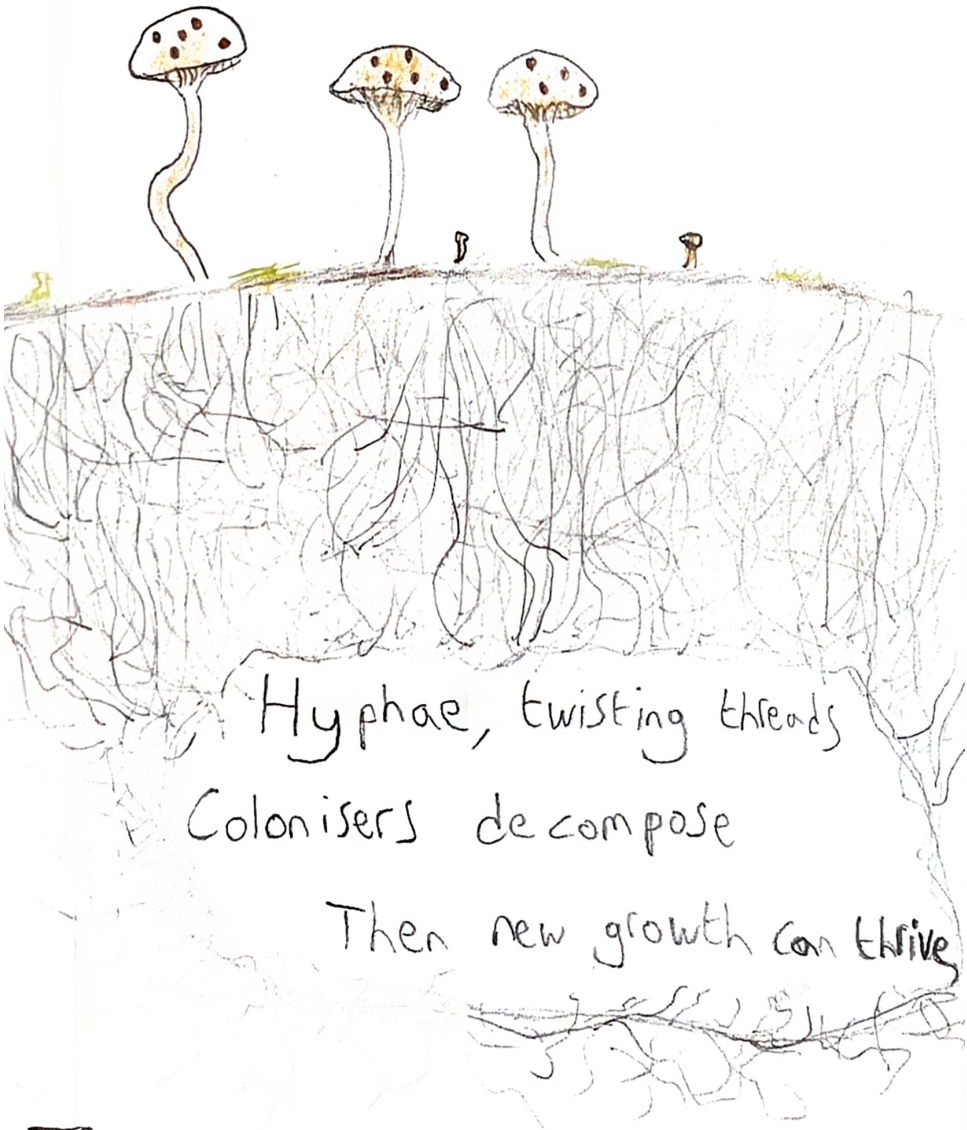
Heart of Glass

07/10/23

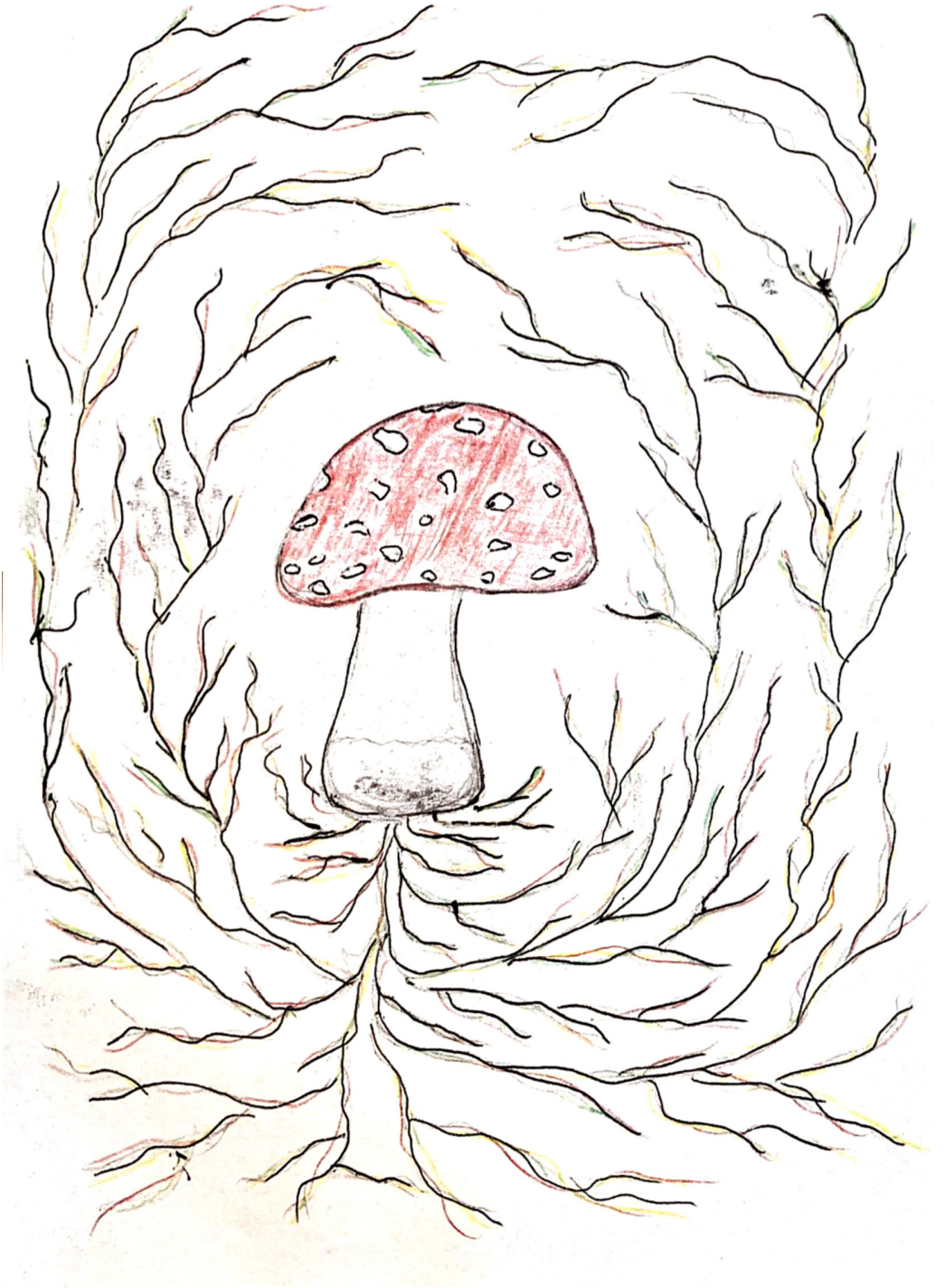
He's such a fun guy!

but he's also very shy!

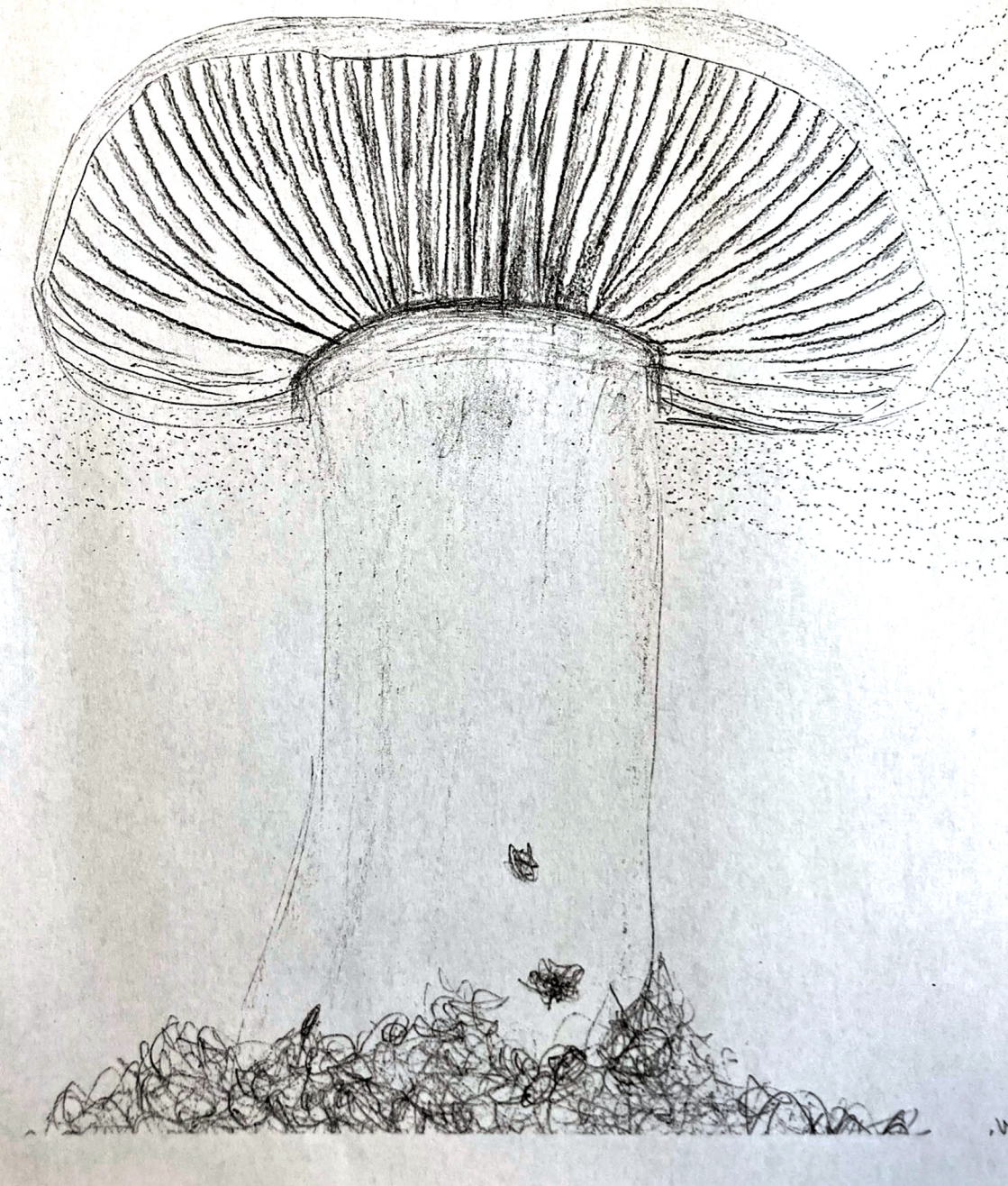
Would love to meet a str
oak or pine for a long-
lasting relationship


Hyphae, twisting threads
Colonisers decompose
Then new growth can thrive

JTC







Shaggy shield
botched blushing
burnt by the
parasitic infestations
of slimy
gilded fingers

A solitary
penny to the
old man of
the woods
woolly headed
splendid speckled
and warped
by winters
dusky parasol



Tom Ferguson leading the foray in Stanley Bank Woods



Jane Lawson leading the afternoon session

Photos by Radka Dolinska

A huge thank you to our participants
Bea, Beth, Blythe, Chris, Claire, Eddie, Emily, Emre, Gili, Hayley, Jane, Jen, John, Kat, Kat, Max, Maya, Nicola, Rachel, Stef, Tony and Tracey
and the team
Dave, Jane, Kezzie, Radka, Rhyannon, Sinead and Tom

Stanley Bank

Stanley Bank Local Nature Reserve is owned and managed by St Helens Council. It consists of Stanley Bank Meadow, the only Site of Special Scientific Interest in St Helens; Stanley Bank Wood and Glass House Close Wood, two Ancient Semi-natural Woodlands; Stanley Bank Stream, the Black Brook and various other ponds and wetland habitats.

Stanley Bank is rich with historical and natural importance, being also the site of an 18th century Iron Slitting Mill and the terminus of England's first canal. Much of the woodland is designated as a Local Nature Reserve and the adjoining Stanley Bank meadow is a valuable unimproved damp natural grassland habitat and home to many species of native wildflower, mammals, birds and insects. The plant life includes several species uncommon in the Merseyside region, including Bristle Clubrush, Adders Tongue Fern, Square-Stalked St. Johns Wort and the particularly uncommon Spiked Sedge.

https://sthelens.gov.uk/article/5975/Stanley-Bank

Heart of Glass

Heart of Glass is a Merseyside-based community arts organisation. We believe that art has the power to bring us together, imagine new futures and create real change, for the people of our community and the place we call home. Through collaboration and conversation, we bring meaningful art projects to surprising spaces throughout St Helens, Knowsley and beyond. Our philosophy is simple: art belongs everywhere, to everyone.

www.heartofglass.org.uk

A Sense of Green

A Sense of Green is an arts programme across St Helens and Knowsley inviting local communities to listen, watch, create and reflect on the wild spaces right on our doorsteps. Community arts organisation Heart of Glass invited artists whose work responds to the environment to work with communities across St Helens and Knowsley. The result was a series of free workshops followed by four weekends of free art events (16th September - 14th October 2023).

Artists including Jane Lawson, Frances Disley, Juneau Projects, Kerry Morrison, Paul Harfleet and Harun Morrison and communities worked together to take audiences on a sensory journey through the peat bogs of Colliers Moss, the fungi of Stanley Bank Wood, Halewood Triangle Park's trees and the vegetable patches of Incredible Edible Knowsley.

A Sense of Green is part of Heart of Glass' Arts Council England supported Creative People and Places programme. The programme has additional support from Cultural Hubs and Open Eye Gallery and takes place in partnership with Green Task Force Veteran Rangers, Incredible Edible Knowsley, Knowsley Council, The Mersey Forest, The Reader and Shakespeare North Playhouse.

www.heartofglass.org.uk/projects-and-events/projects/a-sense-of-green

Resources

British Mycological Society

The British Mycological Society is a professional organisation for mycologists and enthusiasts who share an interest in fungal biology and field mycology. It offers events, publications, grants, awards and local fungus groups for its members and the public

www.britmycolsoc.org.uk/

North West Fungus Group

The North West Fungus Group was established in 1994 aiming to promote an interest in fungi across the counties of Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside, and the vice-counties of Denbighshire and Flintshire (part of Clwyd.) The NWFG runs an extensive programme of forays, workshops and related events.

https://northwestfungusgroup.com/

Suzanne Simard's Ted talk on mycorrhizal systems

www.ted.com/talks/suzanne_simard_how_trees_talk_to_each_other/

Paul Stamets' classic Ted talk Six Ways Mushrooms Can Save the World

www.ted.com/talks/paul_stamets_on_6_ways_mushrooms_can_save_the_world

Zine laid out by Jane Lawson
Printed at The Printroom UK with vegetable oil-based inks
on treefree paper
https://theprintroomuk.com/

