



Buckinghamshire Fungus Group

UK Fungus Day Display – Mushroom Magic – October 5th 2019

County Museum, Aylesbury

Penny Cullington

Reading through the start of last year's report for this event, I could almost quote it word for word again this time. Yet another incredibly dry and warm September in the Chiltern area of the county had us all convinced that our annual display really was going to be a complete failure this time. If we'd been putting this event on a few days earlier this would certainly have been the case because the rains which eventually arrived a week or so beforehand seemed to be having remarkably little effect on triggering our woodland floor species into action. All the much needed moisture was rapidly absorbed by the hungry trees and it was not until two days before UK Fungus Day that the fungi at last started making an appearance. Still virtually no mycorrhizal species were in evidence in most areas, however, but we were lucky enough to chance upon a few prize specimens of *Amanita muscaria*, surely a species without which no fungus display would be complete.



On the day our team of helpers worked non-stop for a couple of hours to get everything ready for the off at 11.00. Having set out and labelled the 140 odd different species there was just time to don the T-shirts and take the customary photo before the public started arriving.

We were all soon busy chatting and answering the usual inquiries about edibility, poisonous species, where all the specimens had been collected from, etc. etc. It's

always satisfying to observe the disbelief on the faces particularly of the children who've only seen 'that red one with the white spots' as illustrations in story books, then to be able to explain how the spots came to be there.

Smells are always popular too and the (tightly contained) pristine specimen of *Phallus impudicus* came in for some oohs and aahs though we made sure the lid stayed firmly in place.

Derek's microscope and sporeprint corner was kept busy and it was pleasing to see children peering down at spores and gill edges in amazement. The monitor screens linked to both his scope and to our powerpoint loop containing over 600 species photographed in the county certainly held people's attention too.



The children not only enjoyed the array of fresh specimens but were soon producing both highly fanciful and colourful play-doh fungus models, also a few which bore some semblance of reality, all encouraged by member Jackie who took this section completely under her wing with boundless enthusiasm. After that there were colouring sheets to complete and add to the collage wall of fungi followed by badge-making, all ably organised by Museum representative and member Mike.



There were information boards with posters, BMS leaflets, also free Oyster Mushroom-growing kits (all 60 went like hot cakes), together with a selection of books for people to browse. Some brought in their own fungi for identification and which were then added to the display table which was bulging by 4.00 when it was time to pack everything away and clear up.

Though we were not as busy this time as in the last two years, the Museum staff estimated that we had around 400 visitors so we were well satisfied and felt that all in all the effort needed to put the event together was just about justified. So a big thank you is due to all the valiant helpers, BFG members who gave up time on the day or collected in advance. There follow a few more photos to give a flavour of the day.

