

Buckinghamshire Fungus Group

UK Fungus Day Display – Mushroom Magic – October 8th 2016

County Museum, Aylesbury

Penny Cullington

We had high hopes for our display today, having put in considerably more planning, time, effort, resources (thanks to a grant from the BMS) and advertising compared to previous similar events. The one thing which can't be planned for, however, is the most important component: a suitable supply of specimens which of necessity need collecting only a day or so beforehand. This challenging aspect kept those of us involved on tenterhooks. Would there be enough rain to keep the fungi fruiting? Would it keep dry just beforehand to ensure fruitbodies didn't rot or spoil before we could set them out? Would enough group members go out and collect for us? Last but certainly not least: would the public come in enough numbers to justify all this effort and worry?



Lady Luck ticked all the boxes! The day was a great success and the event was by far our best by a long way. As usual it was down to the faithful few (Derek Schafer, myself and our team of six helpers) who with Mike Palmer from the Museum set everything up on the day ready to open at 11.00. With our UK Fungus Day Tshirts and BFG badges in place, we were all set to welcome our first visitors. We had collections of well over 100 different species all labelled with Latin and common names, also – new this year – genus information sheets and individual information sheets for all the good edible and poisonous species, a feature which went down really well and attracted much comment.

Derek's microscope corner attracted much interest together with his TV powerpoint rotating loop of members' fungi photos. He was soon kept busy explaining about sporeprints, how to make them and why, and of course demonstrating what can be seen with a microscope and its importance as a tool in fungal identification.

The public had been invited to bring in their own specimens for identification and this proved very popular, especially when their specimens were then added to the display table. A number of species new to the display were brought in this way and though we already had one prize Giant Puffball on show we were delighted when an even bigger one appeared to the disbelief of many who'd never seen anything quite like it. Several children were excited and delighted (as were their parents!) to be given the opportunity to hold it and have their photos taken.





The children's corner was popular, with colouring, a mushroom collage, badge making and – another innovation for us this year – plentiful pots of Play-doh for making model mushrooms. This kept everyone happy, including parents, and it had all been used up by the end.



Apart from a lull at lunchtime there was a pleasing buzz about the room with never a dull moment and far more people attending than we'd had at previous events which was very gratifying. All the BMS handouts, leaflets and free Oyster mushroom spawn had gone by 4.00 which arrived at surprising speed and the grand clear-up was completed without too much hassle though we were all somewhat hoarse and fairly exhausted by this stage. All in all we were well satisfied with how everything went, and a big thank you is due to our valiant team of helpers, to the County Museum for housing the event and to the BMS for their supply of free goodies and also funding to buy equipment. The day would not have been possible without the support from all these various sources.

