

COLLEGE LAKE DISPLAY, OCTOBER 11th and 12th 2014

An event laid on by the BUCKS FUNGUS GROUP and HERTS & BEDS FUNGI GROUP – our joint contribution to NATIONAL FUNGUS WEEKEND

Penny Cullington



A view of College Lake Reserve (photo SK)

This was our second attempt at a display of this size and the first at this venue – BBOWT's large and beautiful reserve on the Bucks / Herts border having excellent facilities for our needs though perhaps less extensive resources for foraging onsite than we would ideally have chosen. However, as it turned out – with the previous month being the driest on record and

consequently fungi really thin on the ground everywhere in this region – it would have been no better for foraging wherever we'd been based.

Collecting specimens for the display was a fairly thankless task attempted by a few valiant members on Thursday with varying degrees of success. Friday was a hive of activity with setting up in the barn: Steve, with assistance from Claudi, constructed the magnificent lifelike woodland stand complete with birch tree, a mix of his own fungi models and supplemented by some fresh specimens, creating a very pleasing effect. Derek was responsible for the sporeprint and microscope corner – both a dissecting and compound scope were rigged up to a large screen which, when not in action for this purpose, displayed an impressive slide show of well over a hundred different species of fungi – all previously recorded from College Lake, the photos provided by various BFG members.



Steve's woodland stand. (photo SK)

Derek clearly in his element demonstrating the essential use of microscopy as an identification tool. (photo NW)

Meanwhile we set out the specimen display on moss and woodchip covered





Various views of our display (photos SK, JL and NW)

trays, labelled them all, then adorned the walls with various information posters and more fungi photos. We added the finishing touches with tables of books, various leaflets and handouts supplied by the BMS, display boards with information about our two groups, and finally erected the BMS banners to welcome people at the entrance.



The College Lake rangers used the far end of the barn to set up tables of colouring and crafts of various sorts to keep the children amused, and this together with their short woodland fungi trail which was just outside the venue proved to be a very popular attraction.

The weather was kind to us and we were open all over the weekend and were kept suitably

busy by the numbers of visitors – a steady trickle with hardly a lull, and for the most part quite a buzz about the place. Families enjoyed the range of interest supplied, bird-watchers gave their binoculars a rest and came in to see what was on offer, those with a more serious interest were treated to fascinating

demonstrations of what can be seen down a microscope at different magnifications. People brought in specimens for identification which were then added to the display or used to replace our rather rapidly deteriorating collections.



Forayers on one of our fungi walks (photo NW)

We led a fungi walk each morning, though we found remarkably few things considering this should be the peak of the autumn fruiting season. In fact the only part of the reserve which produced any material was the little woodland area nearby where the woodchip paths provided enough different species to keep people happy. We listed a disappointing 40 species, this considerably boosted by Alan Outen's short visit during which he noted several rusts and the like on the vegetation as he went round the reserve. There follow a few photos of things we found, mostly very

common species with just one or two exceptions.



Above: *Auricularia auricula-judae* (Jelly ear) looking particularly realistic. Above right: *Parasola conopilus* (Conical brittlestem). Right: *Xylaria hypoxylon* (Candle snuff) - all found and admired on our walks. (photos NW)



The most interesting species found was growing on stick fragments and woody litter and produced some very satisfying oohs and ahs, especially when viewed through a x10 lens or with Derek's excellent equipment back in the display barn. This was *Crucibulum laeve* (Common bird's nest) - a delightful and aptly named species, each fruitbody only a few millimeters across but looking just like a perfect miniature bird's nest fit for a dolls house. It was a new record for the site.



Crucibulum laeve (Common bird's nest) which delighted our walkers on both forays. The fruitbodies seen here at either end still have their yellow protective covering in tact – this ruptures at maturity to reveal the 'nests' with tiny sacks full of spores which are dispersed by rain droplets. (photo NW)

We felt the weekend was a great success and had been enjoyed by everyone – whether helpers or punters. Our message of spreading the word about the importance of the fungus Kingdom was well received by young and old alike, whatever their level of interest, and we went away tired but satisfied with a good and worthwhile job done.

It remains for me to thank College Lake and BBOWT for letting us host the display here, and also our tireless team of helpers without whose efforts this event could not have happened.

Organisers: Penny Cullington, Steve Kelly, Derek Schafer,
with

John Catterson, Sue Davis, Joanna Dodsworth, Madeleine Donoghue, Greg Douglas, Sandra Hayter, Margaret Kelly, Justin Long, Mick Jones, Jenny Schafer, Claudi Soler, Nick and Toni Standing, John Tyler, Nick White.

Photographs were kindly provided by Steve Kelly, Justin Long and Nick White.