



Buckinghamshire Fungus Group

UK Fungus Day Display – Mushroom Magic – October 6th 2018

County Museum, Aylesbury

Penny Cullington

This annual event, held at the Museum for the last four years, was again a very successful and satisfying occasion with really pleasing numbers (over 500) attending through the day. Collecting specimens to make a good showing proved even harder work this year than last, in fact I'd not have believed what we managed to produce was in any way possible. After our hottest and driest summer on record – followed by a frighteningly dry September in our area, our group's weekly fungi walks had proved really disappointing with the first event, September 8th, producing merely 21 species – a record low for one of our autumn meetings. Many species, even common things, have not yet made an appearance in the Chilterns, so it was with some fear and trepidation that we approached this event: I found myself wondering whether all the effort on publicity, focusing on our impressive display of local fresh fungi, was going to make the whole event rather embarrassing if we failed to achieve. Was this going to be the first year without *Amanita muscaria* to catch the eye at the head of the display table to set people talking?

Luckily (and to my amazement) we managed to find a really good showing of Amanitas including *A. phalloides* – always a crowd pleaser being not only a good topic of conversation but bearing an important salutary lesson to those who consider they might know enough about fungi to go out and collect for the pot. It was placed safely under a display case away from prying fingers! Our faithful band of helpers / collectors had really done their stuff and we spent a hectic two hours getting everything set up with specimens labelled as best we could, posters, books and information leaflets in place, Derek's microscope and display screen all connected and the childrens' corner ready with play-doh, badge-making and a collage on the wall for them to contribute to. There was just time for a quick snap of our display and team before we opened at 11.00.



The morning was busy right from the off though it was noticeable that we had far fewer specimens brought in by visitors for identification than in previous years, reflecting the dearth of fungi around at the moment. Many were astounded by the amount we'd managed to find: in excess of 100 different species. The piles of BMS information leaflets needed constantly topping up and the 50 Oyster Mushroom spawn packets had run out well before we closed. The usual lunchtime lull came as a relief, allowing time for much needed refreshment, but things soon picked up again in the afternoon and we were kept busy with chat and questions until 4.00 when it was time for the major clear-up session.

My grateful thanks to the County Museum for once again hosting and supporting the event, and especially to Mike Palmer from the museum for designing and organising much of our publicity, also for manning the children's corner throughout the day. Thanks are also due to our sponsors the British Mycological Society for supplying leaflets, booklets, our UK Fungus Day T shirts, also funds for some extra equipment. Finally and perhaps most importantly I must thank our valiant team of BFG helpers, without whom an event of this sort would not be possible. Below are a few photos to give a flavour of the day.



photos provided by Alan Gudge, Sue Shave and Penny Cullington