Putting fungi on the map

Enclosed are reports from those who took part in the inaugural UK Fungus Day. Find out what they did and how you can be involved in this years UK Fungus Day.

Guest Editor: Dr Alison Ashby

Issue 1, 2014
UK Fungus Day—Why did we do it?

In the UK, fungi seem to have a bad reputation, usually being thought of as ‘those organisms that poison us if we eat them, rot our food and homes and cause diseases of plants. In fact, few fungi cause a nuisance, yet without fungi humans could not and would not exist. We therefore needed to emphasise how crucially important fungi are to life on this planet.

The first UK Fungus Day (13 October 2013) was sponsored by the British Mycological Society, partnered by the Society of Biology, and was supported by many organisations including; the British Society for Plant Pathology, the British Lichen Society, Association of British Fungus Groups, the Royal Horticultural Society and the National Trust and was the main event supported by the BMS’s Fungal Education and Outreach Committee in 2013.

Fifty seven event organisers in 26 different regions across the UK and Ireland supported UK Fungus Day over the weekend of 12 and 13 October. Support came from fungus recording groups, academics in Universities and Industry, Educators and fungal enthusiasts. Events ranged from forays, displays and family activities, to presentation of cutting edge fungal science and fungal science fun organised and presented by academics and educators within Universities and Industry.

What happened on UK Fungus Day weekend?

A host of public engagement activities including science and the arts ran concurrently across the UK over the weekend of 12 and 13 October, aimed at introducing the general public to the wonders of the Fungal Kingdom.

Forays were organised by BMS and ABFG local recording groups across the breadth of the country; fresh display material, information displays and leaflets, talks by academics, hands-on family art, craft and science activities were also run by event organisers. For example; In the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew there were giant wicker mushrooms, the ‘fungarium’ was opened to the public on UK Fungus Day; and many other fungal related craft activities for families took place; at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh there were fungal dye demonstrations, forays by Roy Watling and individuals from Plantlife Scotland dressed as Lichen and Amanita (the Fly Agaric). In Wales the National Botanic Gardens visitors were treated to poetry, music, forays and culinary delights as well as the ‘From Another Kingdom Exhibition’. Manchester’s Aspergillosis centre ran poetry workshops and in Cambridge, the Botanic Gardens hosted the local recording group forays and BMS children’s activities whilst Cambridge Science Centre launched UK Fungus Day with an evening of fungal drinks and canapés which was attended by academics, BMS council members and the Cambridge business community followed by a weekend of hands on science fun with fungi. In Norwich researchers from the JIC, IFR and UEA joined forces with volunteers from the NNUH, STEM ambassadors, local businesses and community groups to host a free event for families to celebrate the amazing kingdom of fungi!

Promoting the event.

All the event organisers promoted their activities locally. The BMS supported this activity at a national level by developing a specific UK Fungus Day website which not only featured and promoted all the events but also was a good source of information. This site also carried out an interactive hunt for the UKs largest ‘fairy ring’. A Twitter feed (@ukfungusday2013) was set up along with a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/UKFungusDay). In collaboration with BSPP two videos were made featuring fungi and presented by the naturalist, Steve England:

Uses of Fungi: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAriaUOxBFM and When fungi attack trees: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYAW9tSWWlc

The BMS also became a partner of BBC Things to do Activity maker where the Cambridge launch and UK Fungus Day events were listed.
How the BMS supported Events.

The BMS agreed a budget in order to support events across the country. This included BMS Recording Group exhibition stands, generic pvc banners, leaflets, electronic Education & Outreach activity resource packs, specific website, online survey and provision of support for room hire and activity materials where necessary.

Recording Group Exhibition Stands:

The Recording Group Exhibition Stands were compact, lightweight pull-up stands. The content focused on three important fungi of the Group’s region and were a great success with positive feedback from local recording groups who participated. Some of the banners are visible on photos from different venues. Seventeen recording group banners were made in total for UK Fungus Day 2013 and these will be used throughout the year at local recording group events and for UKFD 2014.

Generic PVC UK Fungus Day banner:

This item was used by most venues who had listed events. They were lightweight and versatile—able to hang from gates, fences or marques or be fixed to windows, doors and walls.

What people thought?

We have received lots of positive feedback from people; from those that thought a mushroom was just a ‘veg’ from the supermarket and can’t believe how important a role they play in life on earth to seasoned professionals that enthused from sharing their knowledge with new audiences.

Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive of the Society of Biology, said: “Biology affects us all, and biological research has helped to provide food, medicines, vaccinations, and much more. We have organised Biology Week in order to share our fascination with the world around us. UK Fungus Day will be an exciting opportunity for individuals to explore this forgotten kingdom of organisms, which provides the lifeline enabling our continued existence on planet Earth.”

Will we do it again?

Most certainly, Weekend of 11th and 12th October 2014. Start planning now, and let’s work together to promote fungi and fungal science by running an event in your region. It’s time to put fungi on the map!

Tell us your plans, or contact us to find out more or get some advice on how to plan an event:
Email: ukfungusday@britmycolsoc.info

Keep an eye on the website www.ukfungusday.co.uk and don’t forget to follow us on Twitter and Facebook to find out the latest news first.
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Buckinghamshire together with Herts & Beds Fungus Recording Groups

27th - 29th October 2013
Held: A 3-day event run jointly with HBFG for the National Trust Ashridge

Author: Penny Cullington

Ashridge was the ideal venue for this event: a SSSI site half in Bucks, half in Herts, a large expanse of mature mixed woodland with good grassland areas too, also a very popular destination for recreation having car parks and excellent facilities including a café and shop within the NT building complex where our display was to be held. Planning for this, our most ambitious event by far, started over six months ago, involving meetings and many emails for the six of us involved - three from each group, putting together the design, logistics and contents for the display under the leadership of Steve Kelly, our enthusiastic and tireless organiser. This was our joint contribution to UK Fungus Day, for which the BMS provided our banners to adorn the entrance (right).

Ashridge provided us with the room, a few tables and boards for posters and also made the basic framework for our woodland scene. The rest was down to us: more display boards, posters to cover them, fresh specimens and also some models (expertly made by Steve), materials to create the woodland scene (provided by Claudi), information leaflets, photos, sporeprints, a TV screen (provided by Derek) showing an endless stream of fungi species found at Ashridge – the images supplied by several of us. As the day for setting up approached there was much to do, not least the unpredictable business of collecting specimens upon which the whole event depended. When it came to it, would group members go out and supply us with enough material to make a really good show?

Saturday was set-up day, it took five of us together with a couple of willing helpers the best part of seven hours to put it all together. Were we inundated with the requested specimens from group members? Well, actually no! Just one or two faithful souls had been out, so Steve and Margaret went off for supplies, which with their skill and knowledge of the area were quickly forthcoming.

We opened at 10am on Sunday and were immediately inundated with visitors despite the rather dreary day with wind and rain forecast. At 10.30 the first of our two forays got under way, with thirty prebooked NT forayers divided into two groups, led by Steve & Margaret and Derek & myself, leaving a few stalwart member to man the display. On our return we supplemented the specimen trays with the morning’s finds, identifying as best we could without recourse to books and scopes – we now had an impressive selection as there was ample around to collect without spoiling the autumn spectacle of fruiting for the many walkers in the area.

At 2pm the second foray set out, again with two parties and Joanna replacing me with a few group members to help also. Meanwhile we were kept busy in the display by a steady stream of interested visitors with many children full of questions and observations. The many different facets on view prompted much comment and admiration, even disbelief at some of the facts.

We packed up at 4.30, all exhausted but pleased and also relieved with how the day had gone. The two forays produced a list of over 100 species – not an enormous number for this site but our focus today was on introducing the public to the delights of fungi and foraying, and not on recording. The weather was rapidly deteriorating...
with the exceptionally high winds forecast for the following day unfortunately threatening to close the site and our display with it. Luckily that was not the case and we were able to open up at 10.30 the next morning as planned. Though visitors were no doubt reduced by the stormy conditions but still came in fairly good numbers. Tuesday, our third day, also produced a pretty constant flow, the event having been planned to coincide with school half term week.

We called it a day at 3.00, though the onerous task of dismantling and packing up only took an hour or so, thanks to the generous time given by our few hard-working helpers. As always the success of such occasions depends upon the dedicated efforts of the faithful few.

Having devised and prepared this event from scratch, hopefully if asked to repeat it in future we shall now have the basis ready to hand and also some experience of how to go about it. For such events there always remains the nagging worry that fruiting will be poor and not sufficient to supply a good showing on the day, but that’s fungi for you! It is clear that the public are hungry for education and information on this fascinating subject, and we are more than happy to be able to share our acquired knowledge and skills with as many people as we can.

Left: Our information boards, Herts & Beds Fungi Group left, and Bucks Fungus Group right, with TV screen above showing a constant stream of fungi photos.

Right: Another display board with information about a selection of edible and poisonous species, and beneath it some commonly asked questions with their answers.

Cambridge Science Centre

12th - 13th October 2013
Held: Cambridge Science Centre

Author: Dr Ali Ashby

Cambridge Science Centre launched the inaugural UK Fungus Day with an evening of fungal drinks and canapés which was attended by academics, BMS Council Members and the Cambridge business community.

Dr Ali Ashby gave a talk on the importance of fungi and the aims of UK Fungus Day, which was to raise awareness of fungi and fungal science in the public arena. Guests were then able to mingle and enjoy the range of information boards describing the importance of fungi and experience hands on activities and view fungal fashion.

On Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th the Science centre opened its doors to families for an amazing ‘fungus weekend’, with ‘Fascinating Fungus Facts’ talks through the day from Ali Ashby and Lynne Boddy and ‘How can yeast help us’ talks from Bessie Bilsland.

Far left: Prof. Lynne Boddy giving ‘Fascinating Fungus Facts’ talk. Photo credit: A. Richards.

Top left: Dr Ali Ashby giving a ‘Fascinating Fungus Facts’ talk. Photo credit: A. Richards

Bottom left: Dr Bessie Bilsland giving a ‘How can yeast help us?’ talk. Photo credit: A Richards

Fungal fashion by Ninela Ivanova and the mycelium map of the UK.
PHOTO CREDIT: A. Richards
Children had great fun inoculating toilet rolls with the oyster mushroom *Pleurotus ostreatus* in a workshop designed to highlight the life cycle of a decomposer fungus. The spawn inoculated toilet rolls were then taken home to allow children to observe the growth fruiting of their very own fungus.

Mushroom detectives involved looking at mushroom gills and mushroom spores using microscopes and demonstrations of ‘how to make a spore print’ were performed throughout the day.

Good use was made of the Science Centre wind tunnel to demonstrate how the cleistothecia of the rust pathogen *Phyllactinia guttata* have adapted to fly! Children cut out a template of the fruit body and modified it to achieve maximum flight through the wind tunnel. Lots of fun had by all!

The magnetic boards were also put to good use with two activities: the first was ‘help to build fungus roots and send nutrients through mycelium, explaining how trees and fungi work together for mutual benefit in mycorrhizal associations; and the second was the supermarket challenge, which tested the children’s knowledge of the role of fungi in the production of everyday items such as foods and medicines.

Younger children made mushroom masks and mushroom badges and coloured images of ‘Mycokids’ characters.

The diverse role that fungi play in our lives was depicted through a series of short movie clips (kindly provided by Patrick Hickey and others) and information panels, display materials and imagery (prepared by Ali Ashby and Cambridge Science Centre) showing background to the fungal kingdom and fungal lifestyles, fungal friends and fungal foes, how fairy rings are formed, the good and the bad side of decomposers and moulds, and ‘there is more to a mushroom than meets the eye’

Everyone got to take a goodie bag home with spore print info, spore print card, BMS literature and an Ann Miller ‘spore-less oyster’ mushroom kit.

Feedback from the event was very positive: A quote from Andy Donnely (CSC Head of Development) “I'm sure you've heard that the UKFD was an unqualified success over the weekend. I'm just writing up the evaluation report but from the CSC side of things it was brilliant. 91% of entrants gave it 5/5, the rest 4/5. More to follow”. Exited tweeters have since posted photos of the first grey oysters appearing on toilet rolls!
Cambridge: South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon Fungus Groups and G’s Fresh Mushrooms

13th October 2013
Held: University Botanic Garden

Author: John Holden

In collaboration with the British Mycological Society and G’s Fresh Mushrooms, The South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon Fungus Recording Groups took over the Classroom at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden on Sunday 13 October to celebrate the inaugural UK Fungus Day.

The weekend commenced on Saturday morning with group forays to local places of interest to gather specimens for the exhibition. The sun shone and after the recent wet weather fungi were abundant. The afternoon was then spent arranging material for viewing by the public, including such traditional favourites as the Giant Parasol, Fly Agaric, and Death Cap. In all, about a hundred species were on display.

On the Sunday, in addition to the display of wild fungi, there were craft activities for children including; ‘make your favourite fungus’, ‘how the mushroom got its spots’ and ‘help to make a mushroom fairy ring’ on the botanic garden lawn. Visitors were also able to learn all about the cultivation of mushrooms from G’s Fresh Mushrooms, Ely, grow their own oyster mushrooms with our give away kits supplied by Ann Miller mushrooms and sample food from a fungal themed menu in the Botanic Garden café.

Despite torrential rain during the morning, there was a steady trickle of visitors, swelling to a stream as the weather improved after lunch, and visitors were able to foray in the Garden as well as enjoy the indoor exhibitions in the classroom.

RHS Rosemoor, Devon

12th and 13th October 2013

Author: Sally Smith

The Oyster Mushroom Growing packs were very well received and all went to families and adults who were keen to get growing! At 12 noon on both Saturday & Sunday we had a Fungi Habitat walk to see all the places in the garden that they were growing or where they will be, on Saturday this was overbooked with 31 attendees and on Sunday fully booked with 25. These walks encouraged 3 more bookings onto our Fungi Foray walk later in the week with Nigel Pinhorn of the Devon Fungus Group.
Dorset Fungus Group

Held: Brownsea Island

Author: Mike Power

We decided that Brownsea Island would be the venue for our foray and, on a day that promised rain, some 30 or so members and visitors duly arrived at the castle pier by private and public ferries. A ranger from the National Trust led the walk, first over the south side of the Island and then the north. There was nothing of the quantity as previous forays, but one little gem made up for it *geastrum fornicatum*.

The foray lasted for about 2 hours and, after stopping briefly to admire the antics of the red squirrels, we headed through the nature reserve to the Villa, an old Victorian house on the island built in 1854 as a manse, the house now being the headquarters of The Dorset Wildlife Trust. Our finds were laid out on a large table and Mark identified them to all those still present. It was here we met Giuseppe who travelled over from the Olive Tree Cookery School in Norden. As forecast the rain arrived just as he was setting up a cooker to prepare a wild mushroom risotto. He brought all the ingredients with him which included ceps and chanterelles, not normally found on Brownsea. We all had a taste of his cooking, some even had seconds.

The rain came down harder, even the chickens ran for cover, so we decided it was time to depart to the comfort of the Island’s restaurant whilst we awaited the 2.30 boat. Fortunately the rain had held off for most of the morning and as the boat battled its way back to the mainland we all reflected on a successful first UK Fungus Day.

East Sussex, Ashdown Forest

Held: Ashdown Forest

Author: Iona Fraser

The event was a tremendous success! With in the region of 100 attendees over the course of the day. The weather was terrible but we had lots of children’s activities to be enjoyed along with plenty of tea and biscuits.

Ted Tuddenham and I taking it in turns to lead mini forays and do identification/microscopy workshops. We also had a laptop out with Mycokey for people to experiment with, which was definitely a winner!

East Sussex, Wilderness Wood

Held: 13th October 2013, Wilderness Wood

Author: Ann Yarrow

Fungus hunts and courses led by Ann Yarrow at Wilderness Wood.

They’re beautiful, they’re weird, in an amazing variety of shapes, colours and sizes; some make a delicious dinner and a few can kill you. Fungi are everywhere, and the natural world can’t function without them.

Wilderness Wood is an ideal place to learn, with a range of species that you’re likely to find in Wealden woodlands and heaths.

Groups came along and joined in the celebration of the fungal kingdom – fungal mysteries were brought along for identification. There was also a labelled display of Wilderness Wood fungi.

A special fungus hunt for the whole family, especially geared to children, was organised where children were asked to find the largest and the smallest fungi and to see how many different colours and shapes they could find. They also learnt how the fly agaric gets its spots and how to make a spore print.

End of family fungus hunt. Photo credit: Ann Yarrow
Forest of Dean - Dean Fungus Group, North Somerset & Bristol Fungus Group and Cotswold Fungus Group

Held: Forest Enterprise, Beechenhurst Inclosure Exhibition Centre

Author: Keith and Val Davies

The event was run by three local fungus groups: Dean Fungus Group; North Somerset & Bristol Fungus Group and Cotswold Fungus Group, co-ordinated by DFG at Forest Enterprise’s New Beechenhurst Inclosure exhibition centre, with:

- Local fungus-groups foray;
- Three half-day led public forays;
- Discovery Trail for children;
- Display of fresh fungi of the Forest of Dean;
- Rolling slideshow of fungus images;
- Digital microscope for children to use;
- Experts on hand to identify fungi brought in by the public;
- Poster display of fungi of the South-West across four seasons;
- Static display of member’s fungus photos;
- BMS & ABFG publicity hand-outs.

The local Fungus Groups foray on Saturday morning collected further specimens for the display to add to local DFG collecting efforts during the week.

Over 120 members of the general public went on one of the three half-day forays arranged over the weekend. Children and families were catered for by running a Discovery Trail designed specifically for them (with prizes). The vast majority of the public were on an organised foray for the first time.

Another 50+ members of the public visited the exhibition alone without attending a foray.

120 species of fungi were out on display by the time the display opened to the public Saturday lunchtime.

The display was topped up with fresh specimens brought back from the public forays. Another 60 species were added to the display during Sunday from public forays. 42 new species were added to the local site list for New Beechenhurst Inclosure.
Gwent Fungus Group

Held: Cwm Carn Forest Centre, Cwm Carn

Author: Roger Evans

The Gwent Fungus Group held an event for Fungus Day in association with Caerphilly Borough Council at Cwm Carn Forest Centre. Since there are only two or three within our group who are confident about naming specimens we decided to limit the number attending to thirty.

A demonstration of previously collected named specimens was laid out at the venue, plus photographs of interesting fungi. In addition, a rolling power point presentation was projected, showing a wide range of fruit bodies.

A competition inviting people to identify some ten fungal species by making observations from the demonstration table, or the provided photographs, proved popular and the winner was delighted to receive a book token as a prize.

The staff of the centre then guided us on a walk that lasted about two hours. The weather was awful, it poured with rain the whole way but that in no way diminished the enthusiasm of those attending, particularly the children. Large numbers of specimens were found and some collected, participants were pleased to find two of the fungi that were detailed on our exhibition stand and were delighted to come across a large number of fly agarics in perfect condition. On returning to the centre the specimens were placed on the demonstration table and named where possible. The staff of the Centre then provided tea and cup cakes. All those attending appeared to greatly enjoy the event, some had learned about it from a local newspaper, most had found out about it from the website of the Centre.

Herefordshire Fungus Survey Group (HFSG)

Held: Queenswood Arboretum, Dinmore. 12th October 2013

Author: Mike Stroud (HFSG)

We held a joint event with Herefordshire Council Environment & Culture, Parks, Countryside & Leisure Development Service, who own and manage Queenswood Arboretum. 2013 is, incidentally, also the Diamond Jubilee of the Arboretum, so our event fitted in very well with their own celebrations during the year.

We organised a series of activities for the day (10.00 - 3.30), based at the Woodland Gate entrance to the Park:

i. a 'rolling programme' of walks throughout the day - approx. every hour, for an hour, led by HFSG members;
ii. a display of named fungi on tables - including those found during the walks held throughout the day;
iii. a 'Name that Fungus' competition for visitors;
iv. a continuous Powerpoint presentation and display boards of photographs, etc.;
v. children's ('mycological') games, run by the Park's staff - for their Adventure Club in the morning and for visitors after lunch;
vi. visitors were also encouraged to bring along their own specimens for identification.

We seemed to have a large number of people who attended, probably around the 300 mark - we were well sited, at the entrance to the Arboretum! Many of those visiting showing a great amount of interest in our activities. Feedback was very positive, especially about the fungus walks and also the children's games. All in all, it seemed to be a very successful UK Fungus Day.

Right:
Photos credit Mike Stroud
Herefordshire—Sheila Spence of Cotswold Fungus Recording Group

Held: Fungus Forays in Herefordshire

Author: Sheila Spence

As part of UK Fungus Day 2013 I led several Fungus Forays here in Herefordshire, 3 for National Trust including 2 at Croft Castle Estate which included 75 participants, one at Brockhampton Estate for just over 20 people. All three events were massively overbooked with long waiting lists due no doubt to all the great publicity for UK Fungus Day. Another walk was for Herefordshire Nature Trust at one of their wonderful reserves, known particularly for its wealth and diversity of its fungi. Yet again we were fully booked and a waiting list started. It was a good year for fungi both for people’s interest and fruit bodies alike!

Also as part of UK Fungus Day I led a day class for conservation volunteers on the Malvern Hills, the photograph (right) shows some of the members our on the hill taking in the delights of some of the Sulpher Knights (*Tricholoma sulphureum*) we found during out walk. Really good, hands on stuff; smelling some and also feeling the waxy or slimy waxcaps on the open grassland areas too.

A really great series of walks with lots of public interest.

Leicestershire Fungi Study Group

Held: Leicester University Botanic Gardens

Author: Richard Iliffe (LFSG)

We had arranged with Leicester University Botanic Garden to hold an outdoor table display of freshly collected fungi between 1pm and 5.00pm, and this was publicised on their website and in their programme of events. We also passed details to other local natural history groups. We were expecting to get a good percentage of the normally high throughput of visitors to the Gardens on a Sunday afternoon.

In the event the advance weather forecast was so severe that the Director of the Botanic Garden gave us access to a large room in one of their buildings, with good notices and direction signs to our location.

It rained steadily all morning and by the early afternoon it was evident that the weather was getting worse! We had no visitors at all until about 3pm when the rain at last eased off. We estimated that no more than 20 members of the public visited the Botanic Gardens that afternoon, and we saw them all and did our best to entertain them!

On the credit side the Botanic Garden Director and his staff were very pleased with the effort we made, and the half dozen or so members of our Group who prepared the display had a relaxed and enjoyable afternoon just talking about fungi! We shall try again with a similar event next year in the hope that the weather gives us a better chance of success.
London Recording Group

Held: Puttenham Common, 13th October 2013

Author: Andy Overall

Puttenham Common became the first UK Fungus Day site for the London Recording Group on 13th October 2013. Twenty or so people of mixed ages learnt about how crucial a role the larger fungi play in the natural environment as well as enjoying the wonderfully diverse fungi on display that day. Rarities such as *Cortinarius bivelus* were quite abundant as were common species such as *Russula claroflava*. The only thing that let us down was the weather, we got absolutely soaked but it was all well worth it.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Held: Kew Gardens; as part of the IncrEdibles programme which ran from 1 September to 3 November 2013. A number of adult courses and family activities were organised in celebration of the Fungal Kingdom.

Author: Compiled from a report provided by Camille Oosman; Engagement Executive, Kew.

Adult Education:

Four ‘Talks & Courses’ events were offered for the Autumn IncrEdibles Festival:

- Thurs 10 Oct Course: Fungi Stroll & Soup 25 attendees. A popular sell out event and an example of a successful link up with caterers Peyton & Byrne.
- Sun 13 Oct Course: x2 Fungi Forays 45 attendees.

Further popular sell out events which marked UK Fungus Day:

- Weds 16 Oct Talk: The Hidden Kingdom – Britain’s Amazing Fungi. 80 attendees. This talk, delivered by Geoffery Kibby, explored the diversity, complex life cycles and variety of British Fungi.
- Weds 6 Nov Course: Fungi Foray held at Wake Hurst. 33 attendees (some of which had booked for this after attending one or some of the above events).

Fungarium Tours (UK Fungus Day 13 October):

87 people booked onto these tours of the Fungarium. This behind-the-scenes tour was very well received:

“The gentleman who conducted the tour didn’t introduce himself but I wondered if you’d do me the favours of thanking him very much for such a fascinating introduction to the amazing world of Kew Mycology.” Email from visitor.

Hands on Family activities:

Numbers varied from about 20-87 per day. Over the 15 days there were 697 participants.

Feedback from activities:

Lots of references to the staff being helpful, patient, cheerful and caring

Age range 2-10 years.

“Super ideal! The boys had a great time and my husband has decided to steal one of the ideas for his science lesson at school!”

“It is such a lovely idea to introduce children to mushrooms using balloons and play dough. Thank you very much for this lovely work.”

“I loved it because you learn things about plants and you can make stuff.”

“What a magical workshop experience!”

“Thank you! Great idea: entertaining and educational. Made my six year old daughter and three year old son interested in mushrooms and learnt a lot of things about them!”

“I really liked making them (mushrooms). It was really fun. I made lots. I learned about mushrooms”
“Fabulous way to pass a very rainy, torrential Sunday afternoon. I couldn’t get my children to leave!”

“Lovely autumnal activities for the children (and adults!) Especially liked the balloon science experiment and the wish leaves.”

Images from Ninela Ivanova fungal dyes workshop. Image credit: N Ivanova

London - Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)

Held: WWT London Wetland Centre

Author: Catherine Beazley

Despite a fair bit of rain, the two fungi walks at the centre went well. Interest was high with us turning some people away when we were fully booked. I’d say both groups were ‘interested beginners’ which was the target. I explained about why I’m so passionate about fungi, it’s importance, spore dispersal, grouping and got some good facts in there including a bit of folklore!

We found approximately 17 species including shooting stars on woodchip for the afternoon group.

I showed dried common birds nest and a few others from my collection as well as a few models. Other species on the walk included brown birch bolete, elfin saddle, woolly milkcap, glazed cup, giant puffballs (not in the best state but still impressively sized!) and we had a sniff for radish scent of a poisonpie sample which went down well! Everyone was really pleased with their oyster kits and took the BMS supplied leaflets home.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the walk and I had some good feedback. I hope my enthusiasm rubbed off somewhat and that attendees keep their eyes peeled for fungi in future.

One thing I wasn’t surprised by, as it came up via previous walks I’ve lead for National Trust, was the subject of edibility. I explained about some of the most toxic species and showed pictures of a morel vs. false morel. I am a big lover of eating wild mushrooms and forage for various chanterelle species, ceps, bay boletes and blewitts particularly. However, not only is it not possible to give people the info they need to go forth and forage after an hour’s walk, but our site and other good sites locally (Richmond Park, various Surrey Commons) are not suitable places for foraging for the pot and I explained why. I hope I didn’t put people off generally but then again, I suppose part of me feels it was responsible to dissuade them! I did show pictures and discuss how to ID a chanterelle against a false chanterelle which is a nice easy one to start with. I also mentioned a wonderful local restaurant which does a 5 course ‘mushroom fest’ set meal each year. They all now have their Oyster mushroom kits so hopefully this will do the trick!

Manchester - Manchester Museum

Held: Manchester Museum, National Aspergillosis Centre

Author: Caroline Hawkridge

The Poetry & Medicine day which the National Aspergillosis Centre (NAC) hosted with Manchester Literature Festival on 12th October was held at Manchester Museum. A full review of the event can be found by following the below link.

http://mlf.clusterup.com/blog-posts/review-open-the-windows-at-manchester-museum-872

The Poetry & Medicine performance was fully booked (90 seats) and we were delighted that the audience included health care staff as well as poetry lovers. In particular, we were thrilled that the review (follow link above) noted the value of microscopes at a literature event!
North Yorkshire, Whitby Museum Exhibition

Held: The Fungi—death and decay bring life, a celebration of nature’s recyclers exhibition.  
26th June—30th November 2013

Author: David Minter

As the cradle of fungal conservation and home to the gothic, Whitby is the ideal venue for an exhibition focused on nature’s dark side. But the fungi, so often pictured as agents of death and decay, are also paradoxically the source of life. They form their own huge biological kingdom and, where plants produce and animals consume, they are the great recyclers. Without them, life on earth would be unsustainable.

This exhibition uses live fungi, natural objects, artefacts, panels and music to explore the world of fungi through four main themes:

**Theme 1** deals with their place in the natural order of life, and illustrates the vast diversity of the fungal kingdom.

**Theme 2** shows the amazing range of habitats where fungi are found, from the inside of Antarctic rocks to outer space, from bats, frogs and toads to zombie ants, and from the corpses of mummies to the open sea.

**Theme 3** looks at how fungi and humans interact. We need fungi for healthy crops, healthy forests, pharmaceuticals (like penicillin, statins and anti-cancer drugs), food and drink (yeast for bread, beer, wines and spirits is a fungus), and for much much more.

**Theme 4** is about fungal conservation. Everyone worries about how to protect animals and plants. Fungi are just as vulnerable to climate change, habitat loss and pollution. They need protection too.

*Whitby Naturalists’ Club* Chairman, Dr David Minter says, “the exhibition shows it is possible to stimulate public interest in these wonderful organisms on which our lives depend; it is also a wake-up call to everybody - not just educationalists, conservationists, botanic gardens and natural history museums - that our neglect of fungi needs to be put right”.

Wales - National Botanic Gardens Wales

Held: Fairy Fun Time in the Garden, Weekend of Events at NBGW

Author: Bruce Langridge

When a strapping lad turned up to the waxcap foray in a pink tutu and fairy wings, I knew our marketing strategy had worked.

The second Wales Fungus Day (now part of UK Fungus Day) held at the National Botanic Garden of Wales attracted a motley crew of young and old dressed as fairies and elves, no doubt attracted by the offer of free entry as by the chance to dress up for fun.

Despite persistent rain, 360 people turned up for an event packed day. The first walk augered well – over 40 people joined David Mitchel for a Wonderful World of Waxcaps walk, which not only entertained but uncovered several new fungi records for the site. Other walks by Ray Woods (The Importance of Fungi) and Pat O’Reilly (Woodland Fungi) drew similar crowds whilst Sue Parker and Richard Culleton indoor cookery demonstration and Pat O’Reilly’s The Amazing World of Fungi talk, drew around 60 people each.

Under the cover of the world’s largest single-span glasshouse, visitors to the BMS’s From Another Kingdom exhibition also got the chance to make their own woodturned fungus, talk to fungi-inspired artists and gaze down microscopes at the micro-world of fungi.
There was also a photographic exhibition of Botanic Garden fungi, lots of family activities, a demonstration of using Ispot and a special storytelling and music performance by Cheryl Beer, based on a new work of hers, The Tethered Fairy Ring, which was inspired by last year’s Wales Fungus Day. This, and a specially made fairy model village, provided the inspiration for the fairy theme, and the day was rounded off by Bruce Langridge with advice, gained from Welsh folklore, of how to escape from a fairy ring.

Pembrokeshire Fungus Recording Network (PFR)

Held: Recording Events and Exhibition at Narberth Museum

Author: David Harries

The PFRN organised three fungus recording events to celebrate UK Fungus Day. These ran from the 13th to 20th October and were preceded by a month long exhibition of photographs and posters hosted by Narberth museum. The local biological records centre (West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre) generously funded the printing and mounting of the photographs and posters for the display. The exhibition also provided the first outing for the UKFD banner kindly provided by the BMS.

A wet day failed to dampen the enthusiasm of foragers at the first field event - a sand dune excursion at Freshwater East. The foray was well supported, though a lack of rain in the previous week didn't bode well for fungus recording. This was then compounded as the first drops of rain started to fall just as we ran through introductions and safety briefing. Nevertheless, we were fortunate in having a hardy and cheerful group who endured increasingly heavy rain until we eventually called a halt after two hours. A reasonable selection of grassland and dune species was collected, though not on the scale of earlier years.

The following weekend opened with a joint venture with the Field Studies Council - a fungal bioblitz at Orielton Field Centre. This was fully subscribed following a notice in the local paper - and this time the rain held off (mostly). It proved to be a good family event, including several people who had not previously participated in forays. Although the lawns failed to yield the grassland species seen in other years, the woodlands more than made up for it. The event was judged a great success with an invitation to repeat the visit next autumn.

The following day was a more formal affair with a training and recording event held at the National Trust Centre at Stackpole. Fully subscribed, and with three visitors...
making the journey from Glamorgan, the group enjoyed excellent weather, superb scenery, a fine collection of specimens and lunch laid on......what more could you ask for.

Whilst these events provided our formal contribution to UKFD, our final group event of the season followed two weeks later, and was a highly successful woodland excursion in north Pembrokeshire led by Pat O'Reilly (Author of Fascinated by Fungi). Pat took us through Ffynone Woodland, a site he knows very well, and kept us entranced with anecdotes about many of the species collected.

**Treborth Botanic Garden, Wales**

**Held: Fascination of Fungi at Treborth Botanic Garden**

A Fascination of Fungi event was held on Sunday 13th October. This consisted of two free family forays around the Garden’s ancient woodlands. The event attracted 150 people and a good variety of fungi discovered, identification sessions and assorted pearls of wisdom was given from Nigel, Charles Aron and Mike Hale.

**Northern Ireland Fungus Group**

**Held: Hidden Secrets and Fungi Walk in partnership with Sperrins Gateway Landscape Partnership, Carnedsy Glen**

**Author: Stéphanie Baine (SGLP)**

On Saturday the 5th October the Sperrins Gateway Landscape Partnership unearthed the hidden secrets and fungi of Carnedsy Glen.

Mixing the natural and historical heritage were local guides, Ronnie Irvine and Mark Edgar, Biodiversity Officer for Mid-Ulster, who led half the group through the Glen. Debbie Nelson, Chair of the Northern Ireland Fungus Group, led
the others on an extremely productive Fungi Foray. The results were productive with over 30 fungi found and with many needing expert identification.

“The walk was fantastic' stated Stéphanie Baine, Landscape Officer for the Sperrins Gateway, ‘the knowledge of our guides was second to none, from learning about the site of the old baptismal pool to seeing the huge variety of fungi this little glen has to offer.’

As the sun shone the enthusiasm for the walk increased with 20 people joining the walk from as far away as Belfast, and even a visitor from Toronto.

Norwich (SAW Trust, JIC, IFA & UEA)

Held: Fascinating Fungi, Norwich Research Park & John Innes Conference Centre

Author: Jenni Rant (SAW Trust)

On Sunday 13th October around 250-300 people visited Norwich’s UK Fungus Day event. Researchers from the JIC, IFR and UEA joined forces with volunteers from the NNUH, STEM ambassadors, local businesses and community groups to host this free event for families to celebrate the amazing kingdom of fungi!

Among the activities on offer was bread making with the NCYC, storytelling with Liam Carroll, beer tasting with the Craft Brewers Association, Marmite Taste and Flavour activity, learning about fungal diseases and how fungi is used to make products that protect from disease.

Dozens of Norfolk schoolchildren rolled up their sleeves and pummelled bread dough at the National Collection of Yeast Cultures (NCYC) stand. Dr Jo Dicks and IFR PhD student Cristina Gherghisan-Filip instructed the children in how yeast is used to raise dough during the bread baking process via fermentation. Each child shaped their own dough ball for proving, with cobs, plaits and mushrooms among the many ensuing creations. An incubator kindly lent by Dr Jenni Rant, SAW Trust scientist and organiser of the event, was used as a proving oven, enabling the children to see their dough transformed within minutes.

Visitors also learnt about the extraordinary yeast biodiversity present within the NCYC collection and how it is being used within the IFR Biorefinery to identify yeast strains capable of converting agri-food waste into valuable chemicals. Cristina, together with UEA Chemistry student Matthew Francis, helped show off different yeast samples under the microscope, kindly prepared for the event by the NCYC team along with colourful and educational displays. The prize exhibit was undoubtedly the pink-coloured Antarctic strain, which provoked much wonderment and discussion among children and adults alike.

Fungi experts from Norfolk and Suffolk took over 100 people on fungal forays around the NRP finding over 50 different species, including some deadly specimens!

The WI held a cookery demonstrations and provided tasty mushroom soup to warm people up!

The Waveney Valley Mushroom Farmers brought a mini farm display that proved very popular and sold mushrooms to raise money for EACH.

The microscopes were a big hit and people were keen to learn about Ash Die Back disease using an airzooka and were fascinated by Leafcutter Ants!

SAW artists invited children to build a mycelial maze with giant mushrooms.

Visitors also took part in games and competitions and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive!
Nottingham - Nottinghamshire Fungi Group &
University of Nottingham

Held: Forays, Demonstrations & Family Fun at Bestwood Country Park.

Author: Di Mears (Nottinghamshire FRG) & Paul Dyer (University of Nottingham)

As part of UK Fungus Day, members of the Life Science Fungal Biology and Genetics group joined forces with the Nottinghamshire Fungi Group to host an event at Bestwood Country Park. Activities included two guided fungal forays around Bestwood Park, together with demonstrations of University fungal research and 'fun with fungi' family activities.

Despite the weather, the event was well attended by members of the public and children were seen wandering around Nottingham afterwards with 'tell-tale' fly agaric balloons.

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Rydale Natural History Society (Mid Yorkshire Fungus Recording Group)

Held: Fungus Foray, Ashberry/Nettledale

Author: Rhona Sutherland

Fourteen forayers met on the Rievaulx to Scawton Road where the Cleveland Way leaves the road and heads west beside a small stream. We clambered along the slope of a bank of Oak, Birch, Rowan Holly and Apple! The path then passes two small lakes before opening out to a patch of grassland where the stream goes north west while we followed the path along a dry valley west for a while, firstly between conifers and then past a large patch of beeches. We found different fungi in all three habitats and finally identified 69 species.

Several fallen birch logs were covered with beautiful tufts of bright orange/brown fungi called Sheathed Woodtuft - Kuehneromyces mutabilis.

Under the Pines and Cypress trees there was no vegetation at all but plenty of fungi. There were Russula, Lactarius, Clitocybe, Mycena and Collybia species as well as masses of Shaggy Parasol mushrooms - Chlorophyllum rachodes, and Wood Blewits Lepista nuda. On the edge of the beech woodland we found several large milky coffee coloured cup fungi Peziza repanda.
Scotland - Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh

Held: Plantlife Event of Family Friendly activities and Guided Fungi Walks

Author: Ali Murfitt, Plantlife Scotland & Roy Watling

Our event organised by Plantlife in partnership with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh was a drop in event over the weekend of the 12th 13th October. It was a great success with 680 people attending.

Over the weekend we ran 4 guided fungi walks led by Stephan Helfer and Roy Watling. Jo Taylor from the RGBE ran a microscope drop-in workshop where adults and children alike got to an insight into how fascinating fungi look like close up.

We had a diverse range of fungi on display – with a ‘find the fungi’ children’s quiz run by Plantlife. Sally Eaton from the Lichen Society brought in a range of lichens for people to smell and touch along with hand lenses and Trisha Gow and Marilyn Caddel brought along a beautiful display of textiles coloured using mushroom dyes.

The South East Scotland Fungus Group had a sign up sheet – which proved very popular, and finally ...some people dressed up as mushrooms and lichen inspired forest monsters!

Roy Watling reported that the two Sunday excursions linked to Plantlife’s contribution to UK Fungus Day were very successful with good attendances from those who booked on and several who joined on hearing about the event. There were good populations of *Reratiomyces auratiaca* formerly *Stropharia*. Also a good collection of the hallucinogenic *Psilocybe caerulescens*. The nice thing about such gatherings (and there were several hundred at the end of the day on Sunday) is that there will be some exciting find made; either brought along as a specimen or as a photo with details of collection. This particular weekend brought the semi hypogeous *Paurocotylis pila* collected in Kirkcaldy— it's known from several sites around Edinburgh and from Orkney; a finding of *Armillaria gallica* and for Scotland the rarer true *A. mellea* the opportunity was used to demonstrate the differences between the two. Lichens included ‘lichen tea’.

Highland Biological Recording Group, Inverness

Held: Foray and Identification, Abriachan, nr Inverness

Author: David Genney (HBRG)

The event took place at a community woodland just outside Abriachan near Inverness. Primarily organised by Emily Hessling and led by Andy Taylor (a mycologist from the James Hutton Institute), there was a great turnout with 30 attendees.

After an introduction, we headed out into the conifer forest for a tour and collection of the local fungi. Andy illustrated our finds with fascinating descriptions of their ecology. We then took our collection back to the forest classroom for a more detailed look at the fungi we'd collected. We also set up a couple of microscopes to show people a range of microscopic features. All in all, the event lasted over four hours and everyone got a lot out of the day.
Scotland - Grampian Fungus Group

Held: Family Activities Day, Haughton Country Park, Aberdeenshire

Author: Liz Holden

A day of family activities and forays was organised at Haughton Country Park to celebrate UK Fungus Day. The local press gave us good coverage leading up to the event and the weather was kind to us, however the turn out of visitors on the day was disappointing - we will have to do more advertising next year!

The fungi however were wonderful - October would normally be getting rather late for many species but 2013 has been an exception in NE Scotland. Pride of place must go to the collection of distorted *Clitocybe nebularis* (Clouded Agaric) which produce a perfect *Volvariella surrecta* (Piggyback Rosegill) - a first documented record for Scotland!

Scotland - Highlands

Held: Foray, Talks and displays; Kingussie

Author: Ernest Emmett

The October date is not a good choice for the Highlands. Most mycorrhizal species are over and saprophytes just getting going. However, the event turned out better than expected. Preliminary checks were not very promising and even pre-collecting at local hot spots was very poor. These were set out at the exhibition hall while we had our foray on the Saturday. Also I urged folk who came to the Friday talk to bring anything they had of interest in their garden or other places.

With keen children as well as enthusiastic adults the collections covered four large tables and all of the participants enjoyed it, were complementary and want it every year!

Suffolk Fungus Group

Held: Foray and talk, Bentley Village Hall, Ipswich

Author: Neil Mahler

The Suffolk event attracted only a small amount of people but we had a very good foray with 55 species found. The event started with people showing me what they had found in their garden or on their travels followed by general casual talk about how to tell this species from the other.

After refreshments I gave an hour long slide show and talk after which we drove in convoy to a nearby mixed woodland - which was surprising rich in fungal species.

I’d never seen so many False Chanterelles in such a small area, plenty of Ceps and Bay Boletes to excite the group. I tried to make the point that although I occasionally enjoy the odd Cep if I find one, my main fascination with fungi is their sheer beauty and wanting to know which species they are and to take photographs, therefore it was important to leave them for other people to enjoy after we’re gone.
Thames Valley Fungus Group

Held: Foray, Chalk Hills Farm, South Oxfordshire

Author: Sandra Parkinson  (Thames Valley FRG)

A Fungus Foray in Maize Coppice was held for our UK Fungus Day event. An extensive display of fungi found and exhibited at Chalkhills Farm, attracting many visitors including the wildlife broadcaster and author Richard Fortey.

Warwickshire

Held: Fungi Foray and Mushroom Madness, Coombe Country Park

Author: Fiona Mackenzie

On Sunday 13 October a Fungi Foray and Mushroom Madness event. A short tour of the site complete with booklet for all participants. The booklet provided had some details of different types of fungi, dos and don’ts, and different fungi habitats at Coombe, there was also space available to, and participants were encouraged to, make notes on their findings from the day. The event was rounded off with looking at spore prints followed by a warming bowl of wild mushroom soup to finish the day.

West Weald Fungus Recording Group

Held: Stand at Surrey Hills Woodfair

Author: Dick Alder

The West Weald Group’s stall at the Surrey Hills Woodfair proved very popular. We were swamped for seven hours on both Saturday and Sunday from enthusiastic members of the public who wanted questions answered, further information literature and some of the free mushroom kits.
Be part of.... **Putting fungi on the map**

Get involved.

**UK Fungus Day 2014 - October 11th and 12th**

To find out more:

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