

Fungi Foray - Tuesday 19th September 2017

On a sunny afternoon we met in the Grub Street car park in Limpsfield Chart to begin our walk through the woods hoping to find some fungi.

Kay Singleton was our expert guide and began by giving us an overview of the world of fungi and their importance. They used to be classified as plants but they are now a kingdom of their own, separate from both plants and animals (in fact they are more closely related to animals than to plants). There are many thousand of types of fungi in the UK.

Fungi can take many forms, eg mould on foodstuffs, skin infections etc and Kay showed us sycamore leaves with tar spots, which are also a type of fungus.

Fungi do not use photosynthesis to get their energy but instead digest organic matter and help in the process of making it rot down. Without fungi, the woods would pile up with layer upon layer of leaves and other dead matter.



We looked at pictures of the most poisonous types such as Destroying Angel and Death Cap, a small piece of which will lead to kidney and liver failure and death. We also saw proof of how fungi spread their spores - Kay had left a couple of mushrooms turned upside down on paper overnight and showed us the impressive and beautiful spore prints which resulted.

We had not been in the woods long before we started to see different examples, in particular huge numbers of puffballs and earthballs.





This bracket fungus was actually much more solid than it looked.

We learnt that what we see above ground is actually a very small part of what exists underground or in a piece of wood. Fungus is apparently very strong and can push its way up through quite hard surfaces and we saw evidence of some breaking its way through bark.



During the afternoon we saw several different types of fungi, in a great variety of size, shape and colour and we were particularly fascinated by "dead men's fingers".



On our return route we visited and admired the Limpsfield Community Orchard, which also had a good display of different fungi.

We thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon and had much more appreciation of the importance, variety and fascination of fungi. We all left feeling motivated to keep looking for more specimens to admire when out walking.