



Harcourt Arboretum

5 October 2025

UK Fungus Day is celebrated at the Harcourt Arboretum every year by the Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire. Like previous years, the threat of rain and cold temperatures kept the large crowds away, but the group who did come enjoyed the presentation and showed great interest in the fungi arranged on the table. The fungal specimens were collected by Committee members in local woodlands and grasslands (and returned to those places after the day was over).



At 1:15, Caroline Jackson-Houlston gave a talk about fungi to the gathered audience, showing examples as she discussed various shapes, sizes and gills. On the right, Caroline is preparing to speak standing next to the Arboretum's Primary Education Officer, Catherine Vivian with President Judy Webb in the background.



This year the FSO added a new optional activity to its provision to attract public interest in fungi: an art class giving youngsters the opportunity to make coloured pencil drawings of fungi. All worked hard and approached their subjects from different angles as can be seen by their efforts below. There were three participants:

Pippa drew a range of growth stages of the Lilac Fibrecap (*Inocybe lilacina*), adding brief indications of a mossy habitat (right).



Georgia made an accurate study of the colour variations across one fruitbody of a mature Brittlegill (left).



Oliver managed to complete two drawings, one of a Waxcap both at life-size and enlarged (right), with a brief outline

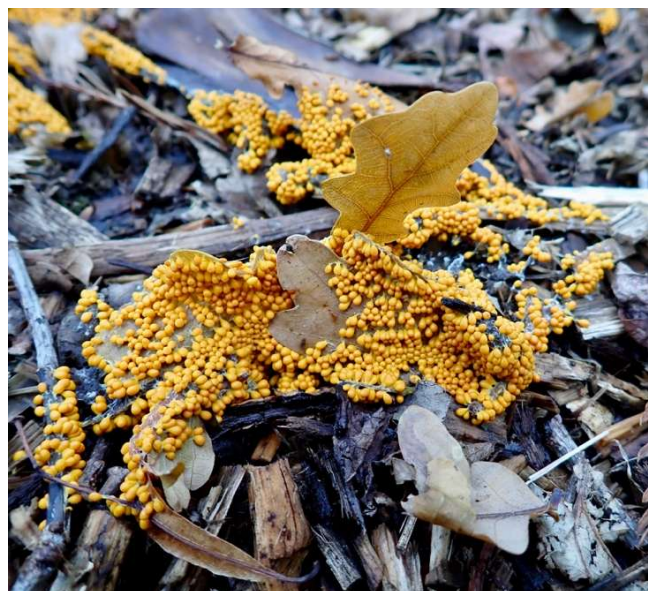
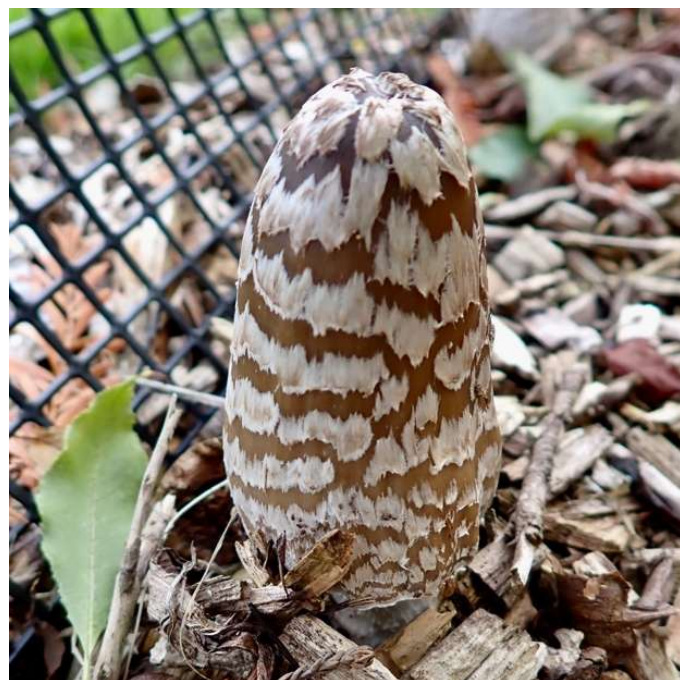


of its soil habitat, and one of a Bolete species (far right), showing how the specimen turned blue when handled. He paid special attention to getting the best mix of coloured crayons, experimenting with overlaying one colour onto another.

While Caroline was busy with the children, FSO Committee members talked to the public who thoroughly examined the fungi on the table. The attendees were encouraged to walk around the Arboretum and photograph their finds for identification.



Magpie Inkcaps (*Coprinopsis picacea*) were much in evidence, especially inside the protective cages surrounding some of the trees.



One of the attendees came back to the table in great excitement as he had made an unusual discovery on a path and adjacent grass. When examined, it was discovered that this beautiful find was the slime mould *Leocarpus fragilis* in various stages of maturity. When young, this myxomycete is bright yellow, gradually turning brown before it sporulates.



It was encouraging to meet so many people, including some young children, who expressed a real interest in the mycological world.

Text and photos by Linda Seward; drawings by the children.