

An important photograph of early mycologists

Editor's note

I am indebted to Professor Stefan Buczacki* for the wonderful and important early photograph shown below. I can do no better than quote his description to me of the photo:

"It was lying loose and badly faded in a plain-leaved book belonging to a family with connections to the Rev. Miles Joseph Berkeley and I have used Photoshop to enhance it.

It is captioned in pencil on the back with the names of the individuals, but nothing else — no date or location. They are listed (in reverse order from the image) as: 'Dr Cook, C. E. Broome, Plowright, Phillips, Walker' and they have obviously had a fruitful day as evidenced by the full collecting baskets. I do not recognise the handwriting.

The striking pipe-smoking Mordecai Cubitt Cook (1825–1915) is readily recognisable of course but I do not think I have ever previously seen a photograph of Berkeley's long-time collaborator Christopher Edmund Broome (1812–1886), or of William Phillips (1822–1905), author of 'A Manual of British Discomycetes' (1887). The uniquely beardless Charles Bagge Plowright (1849–1910) appears on other early photographs, but I have been unable to identify 'Walker' who does not feature in Geoffrey Ainsworth's 'Brief Biographies' or any other document of which I am aware. And as far as I can determine, there is no-one of that name in the membership lists of the Woolhope Club although I assume this must have been a



Early mycologists left to right: ? Walker, William Phillips (1822–1905), Charles Bagge Plowright (1849–1910), Christopher Edmund Broome (1812–1886) and Mordecai Cubitt Cook (1825–1915).

Woolhope meeting of some sort – all the other individuals were members. The location appears to be a garden because the wall behind bears a carefully trained plant – either a rose or possibly a soft fruit. As C. E. Broome died in 1886 at the age of 74, I would guess the photograph was taken in the late 1870s or early 1880s, probably on a fairly warm autumn day but with the threat of rain as Plowright has his umbrella”.

Perhaps one of our readers might have more information on the elusive Mr Walker or indeed on the photograph as a whole.

These early mycologists were among those who laid the foundations of much of our present knowledge about the fungi of Gt Britain and it is wonderful that such early photographs can be preserved, digitised and enhanced for future generations to admire. They certainly dressed for the occasion compared with modern day forays!

Geoffrey Kibby

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Russula messapica – Mediterrane *Russula vinosobrunea*-Gruppe. Foto Luciano MICHELIN; seltene und auffallend gelbende Art. Epikutisstruktur mit sehr kompliziertem Aufbau.