

35 years Mykologischer Arbeitskreis Rhein-Neckar e.V. (MAK)

BERNHARD OTTO, May 2021

Dedicated to my fungi friends Wolfgang Bewert and Tom Kirby, who passed away much too soon.

It was on December 9, 1985, when a group of mushroom-crazy people met in the inn "Krone" in Ilvesheim to found the Mykologischer Arbeitskreis Rhein-Neckar (MAK). The 16 founding members all came from Mannheim and the surrounding area, except for 2 people from the Palatinate.



Fig. 1: MAK logo
Design: MICHAEL HEINEMANN

But the history of our working group had already begun some years before. Mrs. Ahrends from Heidelberg organized in summer 1980 a first meeting for mushroom friends in Heidelberg in the restaurant "Neckar-Pfalz".

Soon the first joint excursions took place, first to the forests of Oftersheim. From this a circle of mushroom enthusiasts developed. In spring 1981 Hermann Häberle joined the group, and with him the excursion destinations soon expanded. The first documented excursion took place on October 3, 1981 at the "Alte Schmelz" near Bad Dürkheim in the Palatinate. The following meeting took place a week later in the restaurant "Neckar-Pfalz" in Heidelberg with about 10 mushroom friends. As a community the working group exists this year even more than 40 years. From the beginning, the aim was to get to know, identify and record mushrooms, and also to educate the population (KLEIN 1988).

From this time the group met regularly for meetings in Heidelberg, from June 1982 in the "Löwen" inn in Seckenheim and later in the "Krone" inn in Ilvesheim. Hermann Häberle and Ursula Sauter were responsible for organizing the meetings and forays.

Since 1982 there were official annual programs. Even then, the rhythm was to meet every 2 weeks on Monday evenings, with a forest walk once a month. From 1983 onwards the Monday meetings were held weekly in the autumn. This system seems to have proved very successful, as it has basically remained that way with some variations, until Corona threw a spanner in the works last year.

From 29.10. - 1.11.1983 the first larger event for the public was carried out together with Walter Pätzold, a mushroom exhibition in the festival hall Baumhain in the Luisenpark in Mannheim. Walter had brought many of the founding members from the region to our group through his courses at the Black Forest Mushroom School.

Even then, the group attracted a lot of attention in the mushroom world in southwestern Germany, and networking with other mushroom enthusiasts and groups has always been an important part of our community.

In general, the further education of the members as well as of the population played a major role in the entire history of the association. Excursion and seminar leaders during this time were:

- Jochen Janzer from South Hesse
- Walter Pätzold, long-time director of the Black Forest Mushroom School
- Prof. Wulfard Winterhoff from the Heidelberg University of Education
- Werner Pohl from the mushroom friends South Hesse Sulzbach
- German J. Krieglsteiner, President of the DGfM
- Manfred Enderle from the AMU Ulm
- Hans Dieter Zehfuß from the Palatinate region of Germany
- Jürgen Häffner from the association for mycology Wissen

In October 1984 a working group for herbs was formed within the community, which had existed for over 20 years and unfortunately no longer exists today.

In the meantime, the idea of founding a registered association was germinating more and more, and the discussions about it were lively. On October 28, 1985, a vote took place, which turned out narrowly (6 to 4 votes) for the foundation of the association. Thus it came then on 9 December to the foundation meeting of the "Mykologischen Arbeitskreis Rhein-Neckar e.V." (MAK), on which the statute was presented and the executive committee was selected. After some bureaucratic turmoil, we were then recognized as a registered, non-profit association in 1986.

Hermann Häberle was elected to the first chairman. He was a constant motivator and had a great influence on the association during his active time until 1996. Of the 16 founding members, seven still belong to the association. And since then, the secretary has been Walter Klein, whose signature is missing on almost every club document - just like our club logo, which was designed by our long-time board member Michael Heinemann.

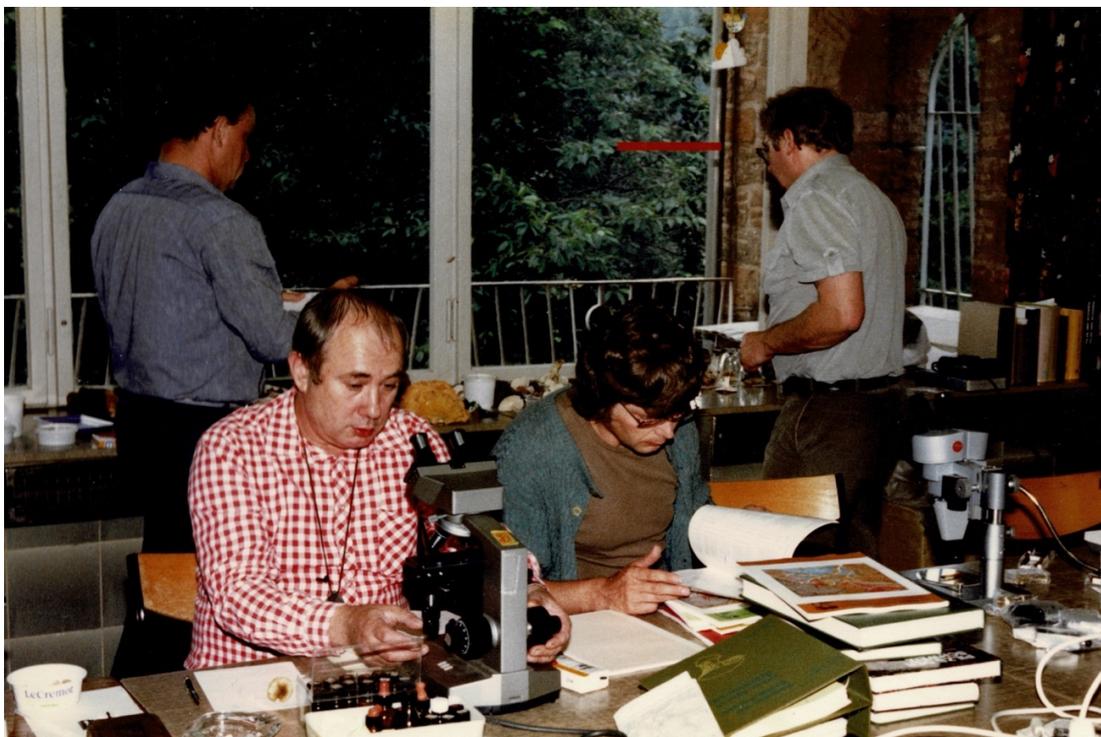


Fig. 2: left Hermann Häberle at the microscope, 1987

Photo: MICHAEL HEINEMAN

Hermann increasingly withdrew from the association for personal and health reasons, so that in 1996 Dr. Wolfgang Bewert was elected as chairman.

Until 1999, the mushroom expert meetings in the southwest German region had always been held at the Black Forest Mushroom School in Hornberg for 21 years, organized by Walter Pätzold. But in this year Walter Pätzold suggested to organize the meetings in future in turn by the four southwest German regional coordinators at that time (PÄTZOLD 1999). The first southwestern German PSV meeting outside of Hornberg was hosted by the MAK in Ilvesheim in spring 2000, and was followed by three more in 2004 at the Naturfreundehaus Kohlhof in the Odenwald, in 2008 at the Naturfreundehaus in Mannheim, and in 2013 at the Pollichia Museum in Bad Dürkheim, all of which were a great success.

Under the leadership of Wolfgang we started a nice community project for our association. We applied for the environmental prize of the city of Mannheim with the work "Recording of the mushroom population in the Mannheim area", which we also won immediately in 2002 (BEWERT 2002).

In 2002 we had to look for a new location for our meetings and our equipment. This we found in May 2002 in the city home of the nature friends Mannheim, where we are still at home today. Since then we are regularly represented at the summer festival of the Nature-friends with a mushroom stand, which is mainly looked after by Horst Staub, Georg Adler and Ursula Sauter.



Fig. 3: Certificate of the Environmental Award of the City of Mannheim, 2002

In 2003 we participated in the medical conference of the German-speaking Mycological Society (DMykG) in Heidelberg. (DMykG) in Heidelberg with a lecture and a small mushroom exhibition. From this grew a friendly exchange with Prof. Herbert Hof, which continues to this day, including a guided tour (2005) through the Institute for Microbiology and Hygiene of the Mannheim Clinic.

In 2004 Wolfgang resigned as 1st chairman for health reasons and I was elected as his successor.

Since 2004, under the direction of Paul Hennze, a joint mushroom excursion for families together with the NABU Mannheim and since 2010 the participation in the Day of Biodiversity of the City of Mannheim are fixed components of our annual program.

In 2006 my work took me to the UK where I stayed for a couple of years and Dagmar Gödert was elected 1st Chair that year and held that position with great commitment until 2020.

During my time in England I joined the North East Fungus Study Group (NEFSG) and met lovely people there who are just as enthusiastic about mushrooms as we are. From this came the idea of a joint mushroom weekend and the start of a wonderful friendship that has extended far into both clubs. There have now been four meetings and the fifth is currently being planned (BEWERT 2009, KIRBY 2009, NORTH EAST FUNGUS STUDY GROUP 2014, NORTH EAST FUNGUS STUDY GROUP 2017).

- 2008 in Kirkel (Saarland)
- 2014 in Kielder Forest (Northumberland, England)
- 2017 in Bad Berzabern (Southern Palatinate)
- 2019 in Brathay Hall (near Ambleside, Lake District, England)
- 2022 oder 2023 in Germany



Fig. 4: Visiting the English mushroom friends, Kielder Trip 2014

Photo: PAUL FORSTER

In 2010, the MAK received another award, this time from the state of Baden-Württemberg for our voluntary work.

In the Corona year 2020 I was elected as 1st Chairman for the second time, having retired from all honorary positions since my time in England.

A very important aspect of our association's work is mushroom mapping. From the beginning (1982) lists of finds were kept and archived by Peter Hollich on index cards. From 1989 onwards the lists of finds were electronically recorded by Horst Staub using the DGfM2000 program and the old data were manually transferred into this system. These data were given to the DGfM for the project "Distribution Atlas of Large Fungi of Germany (West)" under the direction of German J. Krieglsteiner (KRIEGLSTEINER 1991 u. 1993). This project merged seamlessly for us into the project "Die Großpilze Baden-Württembergs" (KRIEGLSTEINER & GMINDER 2000 - 2010). Since 2014, the mapping data of our club excursions are recorded in Mykis by Dagmar Gödert, who is also the responsible state coordinator of the DGfM for Rhineland-Palatinate and North Baden, and the older data were migrated into this system. In the meantime, we have about 93000 find data with almost 4000 species in our systems. Of these, more than 14000 finds are deposited with vouchers, which were given to the Palatinate Museum of Natural History (Pollichia - Museum) in Bad Dürkheim and to the State Museum of Natural History in Karlsruhe in about equal parts. From this collection some publications have been produced, e.g. together with Prof. Wulfard Winterhoff on the Bannwald Reißinsel in Mannheim (STAUB 2007).

Our latest mapping project is a collaboration with the German Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU). Since 2019, we have been mapping the fungal

occurrence in the Hirschacker nature reserve in Schwetzingen, a former US military site.



Fig. 5: Fungus foray Viernheimer Heide, 2009

Photo: BERNHARD OTTO

In addition to mapping, field trips and specialist meetings for fungi, the following events are highlights in our annual program.

First of all there are the family and mushroom weekends, which have been an essential part of our club life from the beginning and still are. Above are already listed the joint mushroom weekends with our English mushroom friends, which are a very special highlight. Apart from the places mentioned, we were on the way with our mushroom weekends in the whole southern German area: Odenwald, Palatinate Forest, Saarland, Black Forest, Steigerwald, Taunus, Vogelsberg and quite early also in the Bavarian Forest - most frequently in the Aschbacherhof near Kaiserslautern and in the nature friend house Kohlhof near Wilhelmsfeld in the Odenwald. During these weekends, everyone looked forward to the mushroom part as well as the social part, e.g. to the camping bus of the Hörhle family, which usually waited for us somewhere halfway with coffee and cake.



Fig. 6: Aschbacherhof 2007: from left Reinhold Geiger, Ursula Sauter, Walter Klein, Horst Staub
Photo: DAGMAR GÖDERT

Mushroom consultations played a big role from the beginning. Today (as of 2020) we have 22 mushroom experts, 3 of whom are also mushroom coaches, with a total of 47 members. It all started when Hermann Häberle took over the mushroom advisory service for Mannheim from about 1981 and Horst Staub took over the mushroom advisory service for Ludwigshafen am Rhein from 1984, where Horst was the official mushroom advisor until 2020. For this activity he was awarded the coat of arms plate of the city of Ludwigshafen in 2007. He was then succeeded in Ludwigshafen by our 2nd chairman Pablo Schäfer in mid-2020. In addition, the mushroom experts of our club offer mushroom consultation for the whole region in our clubhouse on Monday evenings during the mushroom season and most of them also privately, or at their residences in a wide radius. Some of them also take over the toxicological emergency consultation in cooperation with the poison emergency centers in Mainz and Freiburg and the local hospitals.

Many of our members also organize alone, together or with the support of the MAK numerous mushroom exhibitions, guided tours (with forest, school, kindergarten, other clubs, etc.), lectures, mushroom courses or participate in them. The first public mushroom courses took place from 1997 - 2000 at the Volkshochschule Ilvesheim and the Abendakademie Mannheim. Since 2000, courses have been held at the adult education centre in Wachenheim an der Weinstraße. Our members have also given courses at the adult education centres in Herxheim, Ladenburg, Dossenheim and others.

In addition to mushroom consultations, interviews and excursions with the local press (ROßNER 1995, HAAS 2010, REISER 2010), mushroom exhibitions were initially another element of our public relations work. The first mushroom exhibition in 1983 in the Luisenpark in Mannheim was followed in the 1980s by further mushroom and herb exhibitions in our club pub "Krone" in Ilvesheim, where even a stream was recreated.

Because of the enormous effort we paused in the 1990s with the mushroom exhibitions. But we were represented from 1988 to 1996 on the old town festival in Ladenburg with a stand. In the time we could say that it was even the annual highlight for our association. Here, however, it was not about a mushroom exhibition, but rather about the culinary aspect - we sold mushroom dishes. Our wild mushroom soup and the fried mushroom skewers were legendary and we had many regular customers from far away who always looked forward to our delicacies. The Ladenburg Old Town Festival greatly strengthened the sense of community, especially through the joint preparations on the evenings before.

In 2000 we took up the tradition of mushroom exhibitions again and since then have been regularly represented at the craftsmen's and farmers' market in the Herzogenriedpark in Mannheim. The driving force and main organizer for this was and is Walter Klein with many helpers. A recognition for us was the great public response, which was also expressed by the fact that we regularly won the 1st prize for the most beautiful stand.



Fig. 7: Mushroom exhibition Herzogenriedpark in Mannheim, 2004

Photo: MAK

A special highlight was the mushroom exhibition "Wonderful World of Mushrooms" in 2010 in the plant show house of the Luisenpark in Mannheim, which attracted much attention in the region (ZEHFUß 2011).

Another very important element of our association's work is the further education of our members. From the beginning this was an important part of our association life. This was done through lectures, mushroom courses and excursions from beginners' courses, microscopy weekends to special topics such as DNA analysis. Many further education measures were carried out by ourselves and it would go beyond the scope if one wanted to try to enumerate all active persons here. But we also regularly have external speakers and excursion leaders as guests. Apart from the above-mentioned speakers from the early days of our association, these were mainly:

- Hans-Dieter Zehfuß (microscopy courses, PSV advanced training, slide lectures and excursions)
- Jörg Hädeke (slide lectures on mushroom topics and excursions)
- Helga and Gerhard List (slide shows on nature topics)
- Prof. Wulfard Winterhoff (numerous mushroom lectures and excursions)
- Prof. Herbert Hof (Mycotoxins)
- Bernd Miggel (Russula)
- Andreas Gminder (microscopy and PSV advanced training)
- Dr. Lothar Kriegelsteiner (PSV advanced training)



Fig. 8: Aschbacherhof 2004: from left Horst Staub, Wolfgang Bewert, Hans-Dieter Zehfuß
Photo: REINHOLD GEIGER

We have not yet managed to have our own association magazine, but since January 1996 our association has been represented on the Internet with a homepage as one of the first German-language mushroom sites, together and at the same time with the

homepage of the DGfM. At the end of 1995 I had created the pages for the DGfM and the MAK, and the respective boards were fortunately open-minded and allowed the publication on the internet (OTTO 1998).

In 2010 Charlotte Gödert, the daughter of our founding member and long-time chairwoman Dagmar, transferred our pages into a contemporary structure and design and has been our webmaster since then. Since 2018 she has been additionally supported by our member Alexander Susdorf as webmaster. Alexander also created our Instagram account in 2018 with now more than 100 followers and maintains it with beautiful mushroom shots.

Finally, a cross-section of what our members say about why they are with us and what makes MAK special. Here, above all, the exchange and the common learning and sharing of such a beautiful hobby as mushrooms is mentioned again and again, especially the excursions. And because I could not formulate this more aptly, I would like to quote a few members here as representatives:

"... The nice exchange with people who share my interest in mushrooms is very important to me. This is exactly what our association makes possible."

"On our field trips I learn not only about mushrooms, but also a lot about flora and fauna. The large bookcase full of mushroom literature to borrow is great. I also like the fact that many in our club like to talk about food and drink, especially the many ways to prepare them ... and last but not least: Simply a club with very open, funny and down-to-earth members! I'm looking forward to seeing you again after the long corona-induced break."

"At MAK I feel in the best of hands, here I always find experienced experts who patiently listen to even 'stupid' questions and who give me competent answers. "

"What I particularly like about this group is that even as an interested layperson, you can find competent and helpful contacts for all your questions about mycology, and they can even help you with complicated questions about ecological forest conversion, for example."

Acknowledgements

Last but not least I would like to thank all former and current members who have contributed to the enormous accumulation of knowledge, from whom I have learned a lot and who have always supported the MAK with work, diligence, coffee, cake, open ears, fun and everything that makes us tick.

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Honorary members

Hermann Häberle († 2005)

Dr. Wolfgang Bewert († 2012)

Lore Stiehler († 2013)

Horst Staub

Walter Klein

Internet presence Mykologischer Arbeitskreis Rhein-Neckar e.V.

Homepage: www.mak-rn.de

Instagram: www.instagram.com/mak_rhein_neckar/

Abbreviations

DGfM German Mycological Society
MAK Mycological Society of the Rhine-Neckar Area
PSV certified mushroom expert/consultant

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