North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter No 118 Autumn 2025

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NEXT ISSUE: The deadline for articles for the Winter newsletter is 23rd February 2026
All contributions will be gratefully received!

Forthcoming Events

Annual General Meeting – Saturday 21st February 2026

Meet at Rainton Meadows Visitor Centre starting at 11am.
Grid Reference: NZ325486 Post Code:DH4 6PU

Waxcaps: The hidden jewels in Yorkshire's grasslands

Below is an extract from the latest newsletter of the North and East Yorkshire waxcap survey project which has been up and running since 2022. Some of you may remember Claire Bending coming to our AGM 2 years ago to talk about the project.

'Waxcaps: what's next?' summary

On Thursday 2nd October we held an informal online event, 'Waxcaps: what's next?', inviting anyone interested in the project to come along and learn more about where we're at and how far we've come since the project began in 2022, including plans for 2025.

In the first session, Clare L looked back at the baseline we started with in 2022, which was made up of very little 'waxcap assemblage' data – a problem we'd identified many years prior - and how the project came to fruition in 2022 with a successful application to Yorkshire Water's Biodiversity Enhancement Fund for three years of funding. Clare also chatted about how we came to have our own project version of Plantlife's WaxcApp, to allow people to get out and about and help identify potentially important sites based on fungi colour. Then, we looked at some of the data products created during the project, such as 1km mapping of grassland fungi site 'hotspots'. Finally, Clare featured some highlights from the Yorkshire Water funded project, including the creation of a database of over 400 waxcap grassland sites in North and East Yorkshire by the end of the project – up from just 8 known sites in 2022! This would have been impossible without the hard work and dedication of project volunteers scoping and formally surveying sites.

Claire B then took us through the project's plans for 2025, including how the work is now being funded since the conclusion of Yorkshire Water's three-year funding. Claire gave an overview of how the project works in terms of the process of identifying potential sites through to final reporting and mapping, and information about the events lined up for 2025 – see more on that below.

In the final session of the evening Clare L talked through why the NEYEDC project has switched to using the national version of Plantlife's WaxcApp, and the changes that have been put in place for this year. You can view and complete the desktop version of the new WaxcApp survey form here: https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/650873f9dbbb4be19511f24cda49d49c

You can watch a recording of the event using the link here:
https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/TwTNLMsTw5s9rbmDDlYL7dhCd5z86uwjM--sWlViVUYm0AVrt5UhbGLZQk0Qvw4V.vmUbGUG8n38fx1mC
and password **9b#%21+=**

2024 - the sites are in!

During the 2024 field season the project volunteers, along with Steve Hindle and Claire Bending, managed to record at over **70 sites** in North and east Yorkshire that contained at least one CHEGD species, nearly all of which were new discoveries. We received information on **31 sites** through Plantlife's WaxcApp and visited **over 40** more sites through events, forays, scoping surveys and full field-by-field surveys. Thank you everyone for this collective effort!

Steve Hindle visited some fantastic sites in Swaledale, finding two sites that he classed as 'special CHEGD sites' as both the rare Violet coral (Clavaria zollingeri), below left, and Blushing waxcap (Neohygrocybe ovina), below right, were recorded. All of the sites visited by Steve were recorded

as at least regional significance, with many reaching the thresholds needed for national significance.

Alan, Chris and Mal were busy looking at sites in the North York Moors for us – an area we know is under-recorded – routinely finding sites with over 14 CHEGD species, and some of which are of national significance.

Another site which was a great find thanks to Genny at the Yorkshire Dales National Park is our site at Carperby, which we used for the 'Getting to Grips with Grassland Fungi' training in 2024, returning a species richness score of 31 just from the single visit last October. Keep your eyes peeled in future newsletters as this site will be one of our 'Stories behind the Sites' features looking at how we found out about them and what CHEGD species have been recorded.

Changes to Plantlife WaxcApp

We have been working with Plantlife over the summer to integrate NEYEDC's version of the WaxcApp with Plantlife's national version. This has been at the request of Plantlife and is so new projects and initiatives elsewhere in the country can also join and obtain their records like we have been doing since 2022. However, this means that if you have previously been using NEYEDC's version of the WaxcApp you will need to update your survey. Open Survey123 and click on the NEYEDC WaxcApp icon, it will then ask you to update the survey, click OK to complete the process.

Other news and resources

Plantlife launched Waxcap Watch 2025 on Monday 6th October, holding a webinar to introduce the event for the 2025 season. You can read more about Waxcap Watch here: https://www.plantlife.org.uk/waxcapwatch/

Their Facebook Group '#WaxcapWatch: WaxcApp Surveyors' (https://www.facebook.com/groups/320585099005268) now has over 2,500 members, including many knowledgeable mycologists and is a good source for help with identification.

Thanks also must go to Kelly Harmar from Nidderdale National Landscape for the press release in The Stray Ferret this week (https://thestrayferret.co.uk/news/latest/eco-volunteers-wanted-to-join-in-nidderdale-autumn-fungi-hunt) – we have already received further enquiries about the project.

Please feel free to contact us at info@neyedc.co.uk with any interesting finds, photographs or information about a site you might have visited. You can find our X account linked below and we are also now on Blue Sky (@teamneyedc.bsky.social) - use the hashtag #YorkshireWaxcaps to tag us in your tweets and photos!

Stories behind the Sites #1

A new feature for this year's newsletters are the interesting stories about the sites we've visited over the course of the project.

Up first - Blubberhouses Cricket Pitch!

A mown and manicured cricket pitch in the small village of Blubberhouses, in the Washburn Valley hid some colourful surprises for the project.

The Cricket Club in Blubberhouses dates from the first half of the 1800's and the current pitch was first used in the 1880's. Before this time the area was part of the grounds of a five-storey flax mill, which had been built just before the turn of the 19th century. The remote situation of the mill meant it was difficult to find enough labour, and children from workhouses were brought in, working gruelling hours in terrible conditions.

Kelly Harmar, Biodiversity Officer from Nidderdale National Landscape, first gave the heads up for the site when she spotted clusters of bright red fungi and in November 2023 we held a volunteer survey session there and found 18 different CHEGD species.

When Steve Hindle visited the following year, he found a total of 20 different CHEGD species; and when the two species lists were combined a total of 26 different species had been found, including 7 in the Clavariaceae family which makes the site of national importance.

It's difficult to imagine now the changes the site has seen and how fungi can persist and thrive again when conditions become suitable.

The images below show a historical map of the area over the cricket pitch, an aerial image of the area as it looks today, and an abundance of Scarlet Waxcap (*Hygrocybe coccinea*).

Alan Simkins

Scarlet Splash *Cytidia salicina*

When I was surveying wildlife in Kielder Forest on one day I was walking along the base of the disused railway embankment on the east side. At NY631926 I found a scarlet fungus or lichen on dead, upright willow stem about 2.5cms diameter. One stem had broken off so I took a 10cm piece

of the stem home. I sent one piece in a match box to Alan Legg and another piece to my friend Colin Stephenson at Scarborough. Alan thought it might be a lichen so he sent his piece to a lichenologist at Newcastle University. Colin Stephenson found a spore and he decided it was Scarlet Splash (***Cytidia salicina)***. The only record for this fungus was at Kindrogan, Scotland in 1898. What a find but I eventually found at least four more sites in Kielder Forests. No living mycologist had seen this fungus.

I was contacted by one of the Kew Gardens mycologists asking if about 6 other mycologists could travel to Kielder Forest to see this fungus. He wanted to stay at a place where there was a range of bedrooms, catering for all the meals and rooms where the mycologists could display other finds. I suggested the hotel at Stannersburn. The hotel manager suggested a week well in advance where there were no bookings. A date was chosen. I was asked if I could spend a week with the mycologists and show them this rare fungus on one pleasant day. When we visited the site for this fungus on a pleasant day I was surprised at the way the fungus was photographed. Most of the mycologists had a foolscap sized piece of hardboard covered in tin foil and the board had a stick behind it so the light could be reflected in the required direction. For the rest of the 6 day stay I showed them interesting fungi. One mycologist identified fungi in the froth at the side of gutters and wet areas.

Gordon Simpson

CYTIDIA SALICINA: rediscovered in Britain after a hundred years

Alan W. Legg[1] & Peter Roberts[2]

[1] 36 Carleton Drive, Darlington, Co. Durham DL3 9QP

[2] The Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond TW9 3AE

It is rare that any fungus makes the news, let alone a corticioid species. But the rediscovery of *Cytidia salicina* (Fr.) Burt, last seen in Britain in 1900, received national coverage in the press (Times, Guardian, Independent) in January 2000, even prompting a well-informed editorial commentary in The Times promoting the importance of fungi and fungal research (Anon, 2000).

The fungus itself is a conspicuous, bright red species forming orbicular (later confluent) patches on the underside of dead or old branches of willow (*Salix* spp.) still attached to the tree (Fig. 1). It is not uncommon in continental Europe, at least in the north and east (Eriksson & Ryvarden, 1975) but was previously known in Britain from just two Scottish collections. Then, in September 1999, Gordon Simpson MBE, a retired forester and naturalist, found *Cytidia salicina* growing on *Salix cinerea* in Kielder Forest, Northumberland. Gordon sent specimens to one of us (AWL) and Colin Stephenson for identification. Colin recognized the species, and AWL, believing it to be of interest, forwarded material to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, where its rarity was confirmed (Legg, 1999).

The two Scottish collections in the Kew herbarium were both on *Salix aurita* from Speyside, Inverness-shire and it would be well worth re-visiting this area to see if the species still persists there. The new Kielder collections (it has been found at three close but separate sites) are far enough away from Speyside to suggest that *Cytidia salicina* has been reintroduced to Britain but it may be that the fungus occurs elsewhere in northern England and Scotland, still flourishing in sites unvisited by mycologists.

There are good descriptions of *Cytidia salicina* in Eriksson & Ryvarden (1975) and Breitenbach & Kränzlin (1986, with colour photograph). The following notes just cover its major features.

Cytidia salicina (Fr.) Burt, Ann. Missouri Bot. Gard. 11: 10 (1924).

Fruit bodies discoid at first, c. 10 – 20 mm wide, sometimes cupulate (*Peziza*-like) and attached by a stipe, often becoming effused and confluent, waxy to gelatinous, surface smooth, bright deep red (whitish on upperside, where not attached to branch). Hyphae hyaline, with clamp-connections, densely agglutinated in a gelatinous matrix. Hyphidia dendroid (strongly branched), forming a layer at the hymenial surface. Basidia very large, up to 100 µm long, with four large sterigmata. Spores allantoid, 12 – 18 x 4 – 5 µm, smooth.

Specimens examined

ENGLAND: Northumberland, Kielder Forest, on dead and old attached branches of *Salix cinerea*, 30 Sep. 1999, G. Simpson, K(M) 64674; SCOTLAND: Inverness-shire, Speyside, Kinrara, on *Salix aurita*, Aug. - Sep. [undated, but 1876 or earlier], Rev. J. Keith, K(M) 32812 & 68844; Speyside, Lynwilg, on *Salix aurita*, Sep. 1900, C.B. Plowright, K(M) 32813.

Thanks to Colin Stephenson for providing a photograph and information on the Kielder collection and to Dr R.W.G. Dennis and Alick Henrici for investigating details and locations of the older Scottish specimens.

References

Anon (2000). [Editorial] Mycological Marvel. *The Times*: 3 Jan. 2000

Field Mycology Volume 1(2), April 2000

Breitenbach, J. & Kränzlin, F. (1986). *Fungi of Switzerland 2.* 412pp. Lucerne: Verlag Mykologia.

Eriksson, J. & Ryvarden, L. (1975). *The Corticiaceae of North Europe* Vol. 3.

Legg, A.W. (1999). A momentous discovery in Northumberland. *The Vasculum* 84: 3.

Fig 1. *Cytidia salicina*, Kielder Forest collection. Photograph © Colin R. Stephenson.

Although the NEFSG is primarily about learning more about Fungi, identifying and recording where they are found, we also aim to have fun and connect with others sharing knowledge and skills, meeting like-minded individuals and networking with other organisations and groups.

Social events are a really good way to do this and following an idea gleaned from another fungi group, we held a Fun day and barbeque in July at the village hall in Snod's Edge, Consett.

Following months of dry weather and perfect barbeque conditions, the forecast for the weekend of the event was severe weather and possible flooding which consequently had me wishing we had just gone to a pub instead! especially when doing the mandatory risk assessment with thoughts of burns, electrocution and food poisoning!

However, we went ahead and the barbeque was moved indoors where volunteer cooks kept everyone entertained with plenty of food and lively conversation, in fact the kitchen banter was an unexpected bonus! Many kind folks brought home-made cakes, and we also shared some beer and wine.

Time passed too quickly as the hall itself was full of displays each of which could have taken hours to fully appreciate.

A brief foray in the woods beside the hall took place before the rain began. Throughout the day, three excellent and varied presentations were delivered, with the event concluding with an unexpectedly popular game of fungi-themed bingo!

A few of the highlights were

- A very beautiful display of wool and dying using fungi and lichens featuring some unique hand knitted items from Sheila Lillie,
- Fun fungi themed pop-up cards sent to Dr Gordon Beakes from his son who amongst his other talents is a paper engineer.
- Alan Simpkins brought along his wonderful Fungi themed stamp collection for display and some of the beautiful ceramics made by his late partner Gwen which he sold on behalf of NEFSG.
- There were realistic ceramic fungion display part of a collection gifted to NEFSG made again by the very talented Sheila Lillie.
- Andrew Thurn gave an inspirational talk on art and painting fungi and worked live throughout the day.
- Emanuele Vaccina presented a fascinating talk on mycorrhizal arbuscular fungi, which raised many interesting questions from the group.

- Sally Pattison led an entertaining presentation on the Earth Stare project which she founded, complete with a beautiful and interactive display of earth stars, including an award to a member who has recorded finding the most earth stars throughout the project.

Huge thanks to all those who helped or came along for your part in making the day so special, we hope to do something similar in 2026.

Catherine Gillie

Pilobolus crystallinus

HAT THROWER--Explosive reproduction

"The lives of fungi" by Britt A Bunyard

The dung of grazing mammals is a prime habitat for many fungi--known collectively as "coprophilous". The dung of grazing mammals is an excellent place to view a microcosm of many species of fungi that will come and go in quick succession. Pilobolus crystallinus ,known as the Hat Thrower, is a zygomycote mould and is often the first to colonise and the first to sporulate — usually within just a few days.

When fresh, the rich cellulosic substrate--poop--is already broken down mechanically, moistened, and at the perfect temperature, so it is colonised quickly by fungi. Its nutrition is used up just as quickly , so Pilobolus crystallinus has evolved a fascinating trick to ensure it is the first to colonise: it makes sure its spores are already inside the dung when it leaves the animal. To achieve that goal the fungus launches its spores in melanised packets called sporangia, making sure that it squirts them well outside the "zone of repugnance"--and into the lush ungrazed grass in the near vicinity of the dung--where they wait to be consumed by grazing animals.

So how does the fungus do it? To start with Pilobolus crystallinus is phototropic. It produces tiny stalked fruitbodies only a few millimetres tall that support a single apical sporangium spore packet and grow towards light. The end of the fruitbody is a bulbous vesicle that fills with liquid, causing it to swell in size. This "squirt gun" then acts as a lens; light shines through the outer wall and is focussed on the interior wall opposite. A photoreceptor transmits a stimulus down the stalk below the vesicle, which reacts by growing more quickly on the side opposite the light source. The result is that the fruitbody bends to take aim in the direction of the light. When the vesicle bursts it hurls the black sporangium towards the light [see photo below] up to 2 metres away from the substrate [the dung]--and the cycle starts again. The photo below nicely shows the black sporangium at the apex of the fungus , its stalk glistening with droplets of moisture.

There are some very similar species of Pilobilus that are hard to identify without controlled cultivation in a laboratory.

Alan Simkins

Psathyrella aquatica

AQUATIC MUSHROOM--Underwater Ballistospory

"The lives of fungi" by Britt A Bunyard

In 2005 Oregon's Rogue River was the setting for an unusual discovery--mushrooms were found there, underwater. Naturally it was assumed that the mushrooms were fruiting from woody debris that had fallen into the water, but this was not the case. Not only were the mushrooms new to science, but they have been seen every year since their initial discovery in 2005 and--most amazingly-- they fruit underwater.

While several ascomycetes are known to grow and fruit underwater, no aquatic gilled fungi had previously been known. The basidiomycete Gloiocephala aquatic--a tiny Marasmius-like species from eutrophic ponds in Patagonia comes close , but has no gills.

Psathyrella aquatica looks similar to most other species of the genus found in local woods and other habitats--but how it produces its spores is still not known. Ballistospory is not supposed to work underwater, so one theory is that this fungus must somehow create air bubbles on the gill surfaces and fire spores into them--rafts of spores have been seen floating in the vicinity of this fungus species. Alternatively, spores might also be spread as the fungus dacays and floats away.

Even when that question is answered, another remains. How are the spores transmitted upstream instead of further and further downstream? In an attempt to explain how the spores might counter the constant flow of water Oregon-based Jonathan Frank caught and dissected invertebrates associated with Psathyrella aquatica and found its spores in the guts of caddiosfly, mayfly, and black flies. This suggests that aquatic insects are involved in spore dispersal, either as mycophagists, grazers or filter feeders collecting spores as they move by the fungi underwater. M ore data is needed to confirm the roles of these invertebrates, but aquatic insects certainly have the ability to counter the flow of water and move spores upstream especially if they are also being consumed by fish or birds that could move the spores even further. Scientists are still investigating, and even Gordon Beakes, our own and only mycologist specialising in aquatic fungi may struggle to provide the answer.

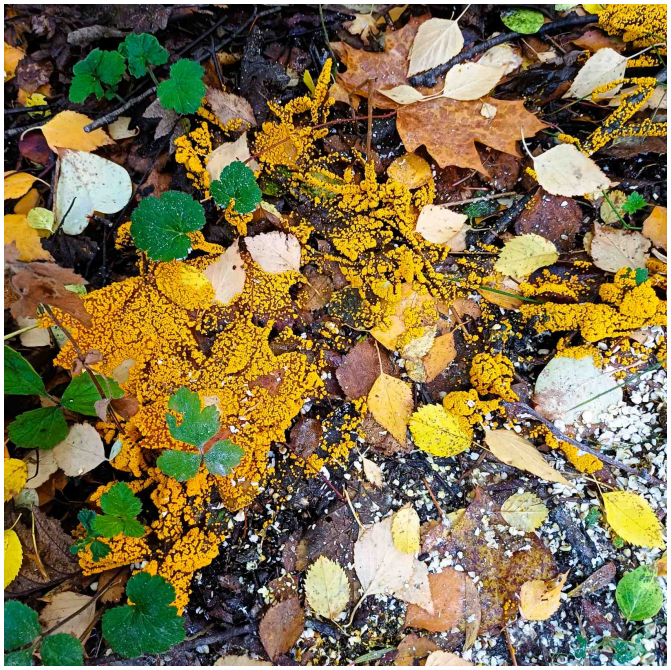
Alan Simkins

HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR PORRIDGE, WITH OR WITHOUT SLIME MOULD.

Putting porridge out for the birds in early November after rain Physarum slime mould appeared .

Googling ***Porridge Slime Mould*** , shows all sorts of experiments you can do with your porridge and resulting Physarum slime mould .

Something to try in the winter months .



Mike Cruse

The Wee, The Poo and the Pee!

A Sunburst on the Humble Nettle.

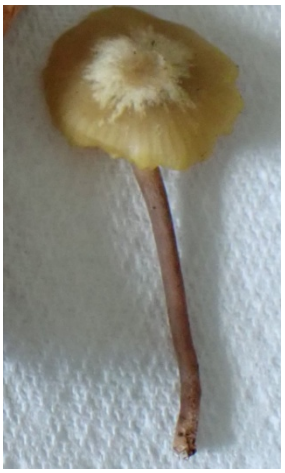
From Autumn through Winter, I generally lift a few promising *dead old* Nettle stems and have a quick lens view before the 'chuck' or 'bag' decision. Many species on Nettle are commonly found but this year a wee beauty that I'd never found before turned up on 3 different sites. The 1st from nettles in a damp bramble patch at the Chopwell Woods meet; the 2nd at Heddon on the Wall; and the 3rd in a damp gully at the Cockfield Fell meet. To the naked eye it looks like buff dots – hmm a hymenoscyphus or mollissia? The lens out, whoop of joy – each has an opalescent greyish disc surrounded with bright sulphur yellow hairs - Trichopeziza sulphurea. (Note - there are 2 on Nettle that look very similar, so the spores do have to be checked).

Mr Blobby!

Again, at the Cockfield Fell meet Lesley and I got a little bit diverted from the Waxcaps……well, there was this unusual 'orange blobby' stuff on droppings. We took photos and I gingerly potted the sample –thankfully, although it appeared to be dog faeces, it was quite dry and not smelly! A long search on the internet and both of us came up with the same ID, albeit different synonyms – Emericellopsis fimetaria/ Stilbella fimetaria, apparently not that common and usually on herbivore dung.

Another Parrot Waxcap?

On the edge of a woodland glade Mike called me over to ID a small cap. At first glance from above I dismissed it as another Parrot Waxcap, but something wasn't right – the stem was too dark and quite rigid, and it had a weird smell. Left, damp-boxed, on a slide overnight – the next day it showed its true colours – the gills now had a pinkish hue, and the spore-print was pink – an entoloma – and there is only one that resembles this – the Mousepee Pinkgill, entoloma incarnum.



Jill Cunningham

Mycena vitilis

A lovely fungus found on the foray to Sleightholmedale. About 20cm long.

Jo Scott

Foray Details for the Newsletter

Are there enough Forays near you?

If the answer is no, it may be that no one has suggested a good site. Local knowledge is key to finding these sites, so why not suggest one

Leading the Foray

You don't need to be an expert to lead a Foray. If you suggest a site, NEFSG can review it and appoint someone else to lead.

Foray Information required for the Newsletter

Please can foray leaders submit the following information for their forays in time to be included in the relevant Newsletter. This is to give members plenty of notice rather than relying on Mikes reminder e-mails which only get sent out about a week before the event.

A detailed title to include an exact location.
Grid Reference: Post Code and if possible 'What three words' and a map showing the location.
Parking details
Are dogs allowed on this walk.
A few indicators of terrain: Slopes, steps, stiles, tripping hazards for example

The newsletter dates for submissions are:

Winter mid February
Spring mid April
Summer mid August
Autumn mid November

Jo Scott

A Summary of the North East Fungus Study Group Committee Meeting.

22/11/2026 Potters World, Lanchester Garden Centre, Bargate Bank, Lanchester.

Financial update – investing in a stereoscope or microscope or lenses for workshops?

Foray Locations – to trial more forays early in the year and extra forays north + south in Autumn. Site suggestions and/or leader volunteers, ideas welcome from members, send to Mike.

Foray information – Leaders to give adequate info + state if dogs are allowed on each meet.

Workshops – Discussion re 2026 - Sally, Lydia, Jill to confer + locations to be decided.

Social Events – Summer Social -Snod's End again but lessen the workload.

Beginners Forays &new members–Discussed – UK Fungus Day being too overwhelming for beginners. Future to include a more basic pre-walk introduction to fungii.e. gills/pores/habitat etc with a few pre collected samples. To use Chopwell again as accessible.To review the Welcome Pack.

Group Identity – logo and profile – Acronym/logo/shortened name/professional advice discussed.

UK Fungus Day – feedback and plans for 2026discussed. To be held at theAlpine Garden Society of Great Britain event in Hexham 03/10/2026 to lessen workload/try something new.

New Committee– requirements – Discussed – we will need more support for these new north + south forays. Need more recorders. To run a CATE2 recording workshop in the Spring.

Data Protection – re email addresses.

Coalfield Project proposal–Involvement in a Coastal+ Coalfield Durham Wildlife Trust project mainly covering 13 public survey sites. Possible urban fungi identification DWT tutoring days, similar to Beginners; as a long-term project

Update on Photo Competition – few entries so far. Mike has emailed out reminders.

Rothbury Estate – NWT may require our involvement with baseline surveys.To make a £100 donationto the Rothbury fund.

AGM-Rainton Meadows Sat 21st Feb 2026.To have more time for AOB discussion.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the North of Tyneto include in the NEFSGprogramme.

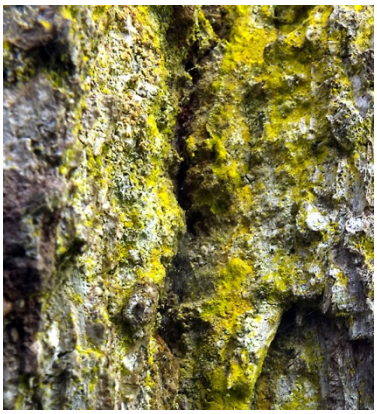
AOB- 'God's Own Acre'graveyard species recording, Sat 13th June, Jesmond Church. Beginner's forays at Low Barnes discussed.

Date of next committee meeting – Sat 16th May 2026.

Lichen Lookout

Some more lichens to look out for on trees.

Chaenotheca ferruginea– the thallus has a wart-like appearance. Light gray with yellow/orange patches. Its apothecia are black, tiny, stalked and pin-like.



Chrysothrix candelaris is a leprose lichen. A distinctive bright yellow sometimes with an orange tint. Powdery. Apothecia absent.

Lecanactis abietina has a grey thallus that sometimes looks slightly lilac coloured. Many wart like picnidia cover the thallus. If present the apothecia are grey with a lemon coloured prunina.