



North Eastern Fungus Study Group

Newsletter No 119 Winter 2025

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NEXT ISSUE: The deadline for articles for the Spring newsletter is 24th April 2026
All contributions will be gratefully received!



Forthcoming Events

Meet for events at 10:30am ready for an 11am start unless otherwise stated. Forays can last into the afternoon so bring a packed lunch. Good footwear essential as paths can be rough and wet.

Sat 28th Feb - East Hedleyhope

We will meet at the bus turning circle in East Hedleyhope, there's plenty of room to park on the roadside. Grid ref NZ156402, what3words spades.edits.encourage, nearest postcode DL13 4PT. IMPORTANT - if using a sat nav, and it tries to direct you along the back of Sunnyside down a narrow pot-holed road, then down a steep hill, ignore it and turn round, it's not fit for cars further down. Go via Stanley Crook or Tow Law instead. No dogs please.

There are several small patches of woodland which all join up, we can do a circular or figure of eight walk. It's boggy in places, waterproof footwear essential.

Lesley Hodgson

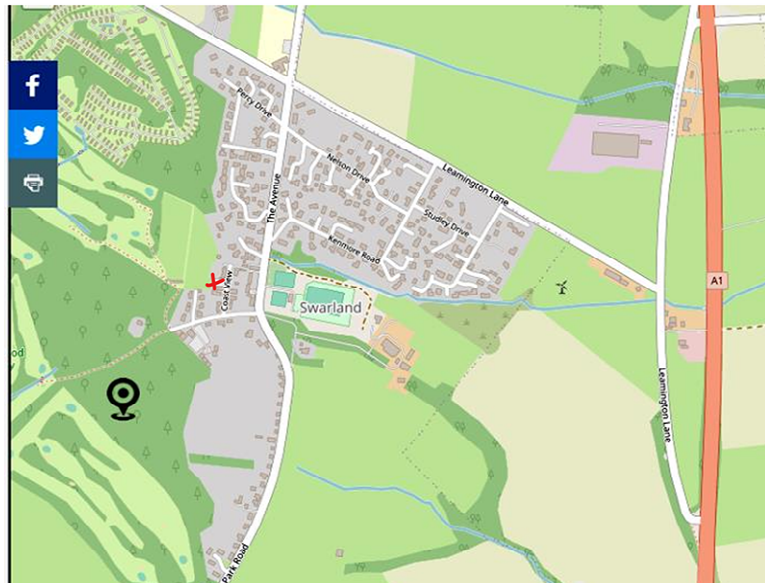
Sun March 8th - Swarland Woods , 5m S of Alnwick

Mixed Woodland a flat route different from the one taken on our last foray here on 13.08.2023 . Dogs welcome on a lead .

Take the Swarland exit off the A1 , proceed down The Avenue passing the Village Square , take a right turn and park at the Village Hall on Coast View .

Grid Ref :- NU 162 033 ; Postcode :- NE65 9TG ; what3words :- sprinkler.lookout.deliver

Mike Cruse :- 07748276183

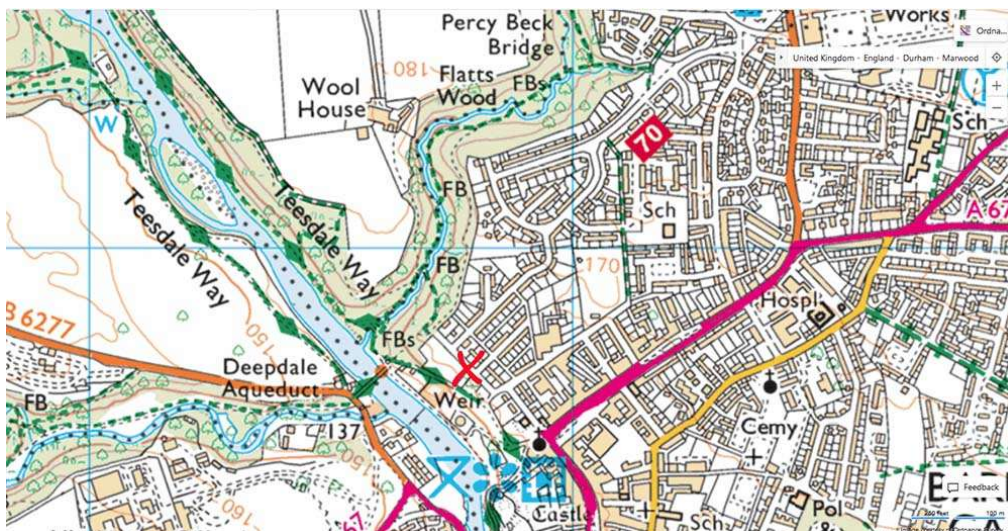


Sun 22nd March - Flatt's Wood , Barnard Castle

A foray to look for lichens and fungi in mixed woodlands along the River Tees at Barnard Castle. Dogs welcome on a lead.

Grid Ref: NZ047167. What3words - Path:fingertip:streetcar

Roadside parking in Raby Avenue. Alternatively Pay & Display car park in town.



Jo Scott (07413939729)

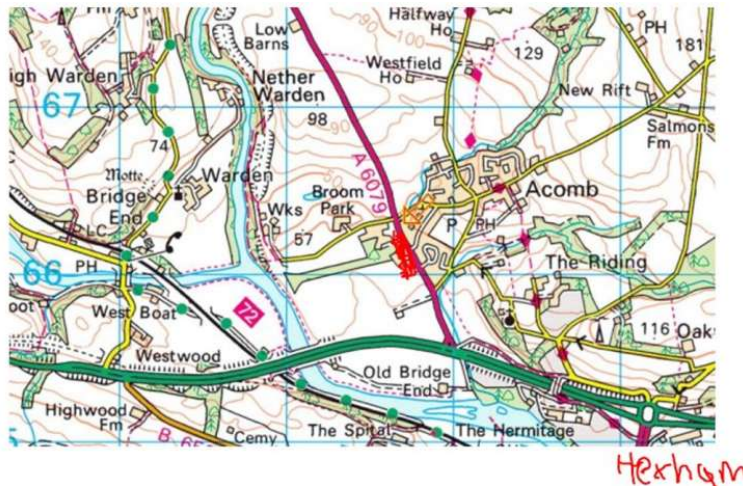
Sat 11th April - Tyne Watersmeet SSSI, Acomb, nr Hexham

A flat route walking from the main road through the planted woodland along the site of the old Acomb mine to the River North Tyne . Along wooded footpaths by the river . Seasonal fungi, spring fungi and Anemone Cup possible . Dogs welcome on a lead .

Park at the pull ins marked in red on the A6079 in Acomb, ½ mile up from the junction with the A69 just west of Hexham. Meet at the start of the path through the woodland .

Grid Ref :- NY 927 662 ; Postcode :- NE46 4QN ; what3words :- drooling.nicely.unfounded

Gordon Beakes :- 07708532129 (Mike Cruse :- 07748276183)



Sat 25th April – Chopwell Woods nr Rowlands Gill

Mixed Woodland , a popular foray site , mainly flat routes . Public invited (City Nature Challenge) . Dogs welcome on a lead . Signposted A694 Consett from the A1 , at Rowlands Gill take the B6315 up to Hookergate near High Spen (Brown tourist signs for the Wood) . Meet at the information point in the main large car park ½ mile from the entrance.

Grid Ref :- NZ 137 584 ; Postcode :- NE39 2AG ; what3words :- arching.tucked.tables

Mike Cruse :- 07748276183



Sat 25th April - Littlebeck Woods, 4m SW of Whitby

Primarily broadleaved woodland with a small pasture at the southern end . The nature reserve is split into two as the small river of Little Beck dissects it. Whist the majority of tree species here are oaks, ash, alder and cherry there is also an understory of hazel, holly and rowan. Footpaths are very good . Dogs welcome on a lead .

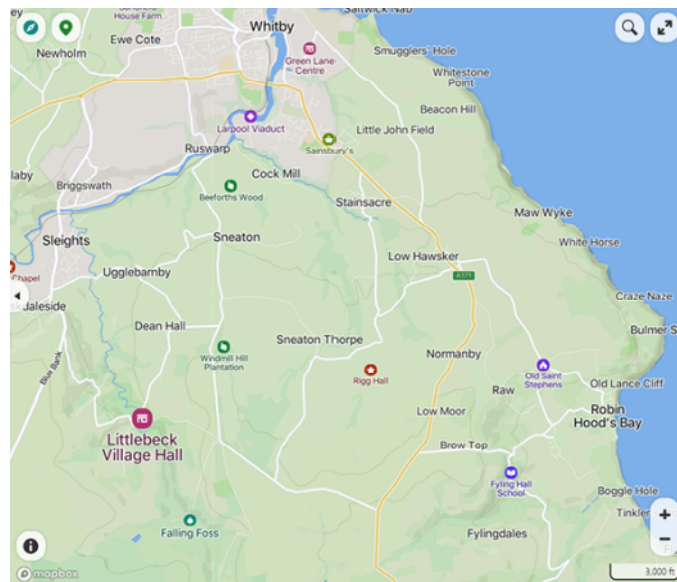
Meet in Littlebeck village hall car park.

Best car access is via the A171 Ruswarp to Scarborough road. Do not use the road from Bluebank above Sleights as it is very narrow, with very steep hills and tight bends !

Grid Ref :- NZ 880 050 ; Postcode :- YO22 5BP ; what3words :-
thanks.devoured.steroids

Graham Featherstone 07929589656

graham_sharon@btinternet.com



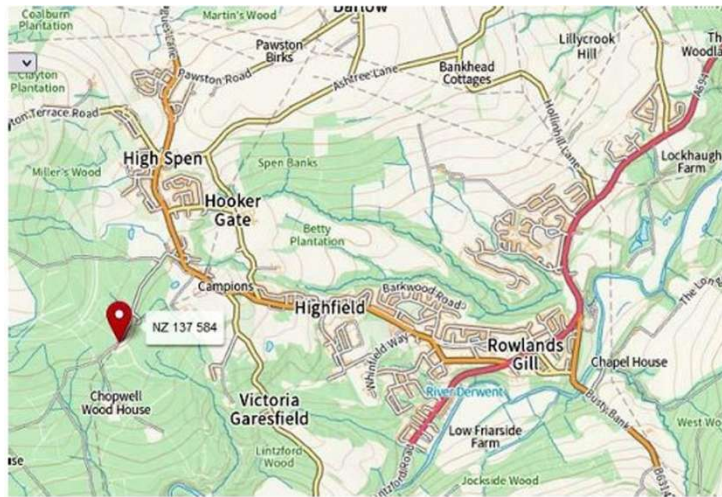
Sun 26th April - Chopwell Woods, Rowlands Gill

Mixed Woodland , a popular foray site , mainly flat routes . Public invited (City Nature Challenge) . Dogs welcome on a lead .

Signposted A694 Consett from the A1 , at Rowlands Gill take the B6315 up to Hookergate near High Spen (Brown tourist signs for the Wood) . Meet at the information point in the main large car park ½ mile from the entrance.

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arching.tucked.tables

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Beauveria bassiana

Graham Featherstone took Joyce and I and 2 other friends to May Moss on Sunday, 21st December. I spotted a 7-spot Ladybird (*Coccinella septempunctata*) attached to some pine needles on a fallen branch. I contacted Helen Roy, a Ladybird expert, at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) who confirmed that the Beetle had been infected by the fungal pathogen *Beauveria bassiana* and she sent me a link to a paper on the subject:-

[fungal pathogen in time and space: the population dynamics of Beauveria bassiana in a conifer forest | FEMS Microbiology Ecology | Oxford Academic](#)

Strangely enough a few days later Graham found another 7-spot Ladybird infected by the same fungal pathogen at Partridge Hill, North Yorkshire.



Daphne Aplin

Forays

One Saturday I received a telephone call from Heathrow Airport asking me to take over the fungus walk at Thorp Perrow Arboretum starting at 11.30am. I attended one of these walks a while ago and only a few fungi were named. NEFSG members attended a meeting at Newcastle Polytechnic where this member showed us how he assessed whisky but I cannot remember his name. He also had a request to make an alcohol free whisky by a Muslim person and he succeeded. I telephoned Thorp Perrow Arboretum and explained that I was leading a fungus foray at Hamsterley Forest starting at 2pm. I told Lady Ropner, who answered the telephone, that there was insufficient time for me to have a midday meal at a restaurant between finishing their foray and arriving at Hamsterley Forest for 2pm. Lady Ropner replied saying do not worry we will feed you. Sir John Ropner arrived so he took me round the Arboretum and I pointed out what I would show people on the foray. The foray ended at the café but the crowd asked lots of questions. The café staff kept coming to the door saying my meal was ready. In the end Sir John said Gordon must have his meal.

The result of this walk was Sir John asked me to lead a walk each month. I would be informed of the date of each walk well in advance. I had to be at the west door of his residence a couple of minutes before each walk where I would see catering staff who had been informed about my arrival. They served me a meal and took it into the dining room where there was a table with a chair leaning inwards. On the table there was as a glass of Coca Cola. Sir John was talking to a crowd who had paid £60 each to be informed on how he acquired the Hall. A crowd came into the dining room with their meal and sat at one of the tables. When the meal was finished Sir John stood up and thanked the people for attending. He then introduced me to members. I explained that I would show these people fungi, insects, birds and plants. I said at the start of the walk I have discovered a Weeping Widow and I hope a lady will console her. At the end of the walk I have a group of black fungi Called Miller's Thumbs the size of my finger and growing near a rotten tree stump. I said I want members to help me search for the body so that I can inform the police. At the café the staff kept coming to the door saying my meal was ready. Lady Ropner could not get near me at the café door. Sir John pushed his way through the crowd and explained I needed a meal before I left to go to Hamsterley Forest. Following this foray I was booked monthly well in advance to do similar walks. The number of participants increased for every walk. I finished up with 120 participants and Sir John said he was the sheepdog That would keep the participants rounded up. I just had to whistle and the 'sheepdog' took action.

Gordon Simpson

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 aquatica*--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 decays 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 caddisfly, 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. More 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.

Here is more info on this new fungus as reported in the last newsletter and gleaned from a Wikipedia source.

" It was officially described as a new species in 2010. *Psathyrella aquatica* has a small convex brown cap with gills beneath and a long fibrous stem that is anchored up to 1 ft. 6 inches [45 cms.] deep in the sediment of the riverbed in order to stand up to the fast moving river currents where it is primarily found. This species has a fruiting period from mid-June to late September with observations indicating that it can grow and mature underwater over an 11 week period. While it primarily fruits underwater, researchers have also found it growing on land near the riverbanks suggesting a potential for terrestrial growth as well. "

It begs the question - which came first ? The aquatic or the terrestrial form? - all the info. I have read implies it is the aquatic form.

Alan Simkins

PUCCINIA MONOICA

[Mustard Flower Rust] - Floral Mimic

Mimicry is the resemblance of one organism to another. Some fungi have evolved amazing tricks to coerce animals into transmitting their spores, and one extreme example of this is shown by the rust fungus *Puccinia monoica* [P.m.] - found in mountain habitats in western North America.



P.m. infects its host plant, *Arabis hoelboellii*, [A.h.] a rock cross which, when uninfected, is a tall erect plant which blooms with small white flowers. However when infected by P.m. the host plant is sterilised, remains short and is manipulated to produce yellow "pseudoflowers" as shown in the photograph. Close inspection reveals that these pseudoflowers are a rosette of petal-like leaves that are covered by fungal spermagonia [the source of the bright yellow colour]. Significantly, the fungal hyphae emit a fragrant odour and a sweet sticky substance that contains spermatia.

The flower mimicry attracts pollinators such as bees which inadvertently transfer fungal spermatia to alternate host plants, usually grasses, where the spermatia evolve into basidiospores which are released and may infect new A.h. plants thus completing the fungus life cycle. The infected A.h. plants "bloom" earlier than uninfected ones. The odour and sweet rewards may also be more enticing to pollinating insects and may therefore have a detrimental effect on the reproductive success of other plant species in

this habitat.

Alan Simkins

Field Trip in Scottish Highlands 20th -25th September

NEFSG/MAK

How did this all begin? sounds like call the midwife ! well every 2-6 years we have either been invited to join a fungi group MAK in Germany on their field trip or invited them to visit us on ours.

This came about due to one of our members Tom Kirby (sadly now deceased) making great friends with a mycologist named Bernhard Otto who was working over here and he invited Bernard on our forays.

Subsequently Bernhard and Dagmar Godbert who was the current leader of MAK (which by the way stands for Mykologischer Arbeitskreis Rhein-Neckar) invited Tom and any of those that wished from NEFSG to Germany to take part in one of their annual field trips to Kinkel in 2008.

They were fabulous hosts and looked after us so well, we were finding fabulous fungi not seen here and we learnt so much from them and made such good friends, that NEFSG felt we should return the offer.



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

Photo: PAUL FORSTER

However it took us a further 6 years to organise our first ever field trip which we invited them to and since that first trip which was to Kielder we have hosted 2 more return visits ,one in the lake district and this last years visit to Nethy Bridge in the highlands and had been invited to 2 more return trips to Germany (I believe MAK are planning another invite for us in a few years time)

2008 Kinkel(Sarland) 2014 Kielder Forest (Nothumberland) 2017 Bad Bezabern (Southern Palinate) 2019 Brathay Hall (Ambleside , Lake District) 2023 Grassellenback Germany

Scottish Highlands Visit Nethy Bridge

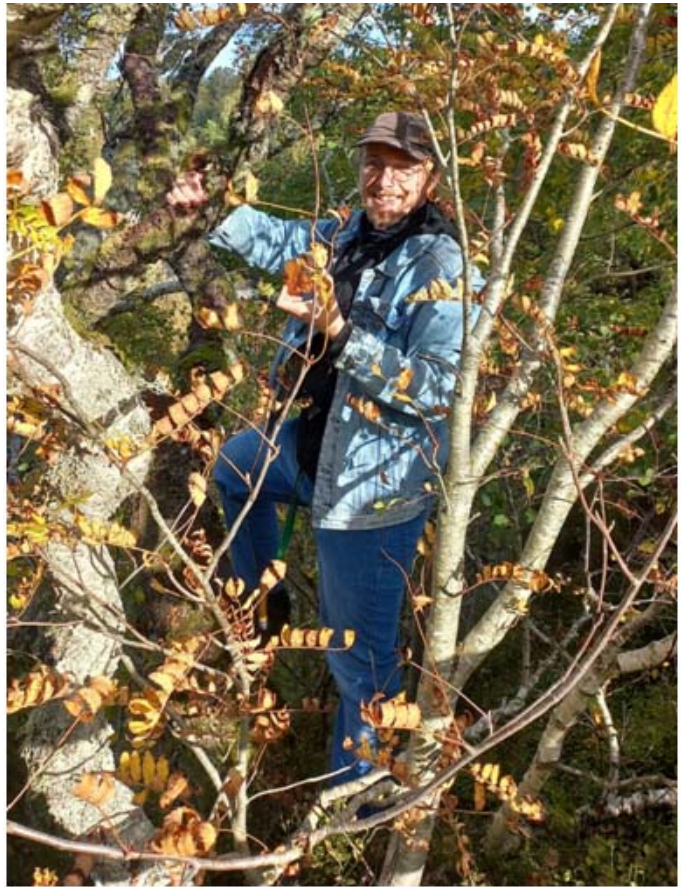
There were 16 of us from NEFSG including associates and 8 from MAK on most of the Forays.

As you can imagine organising an event like this takes quite a lot of planning, hotels, flights meals, transfers etc.

I could write a screen play on the trip ,what was funny went wrong or could have been disastrous, but thankfully as the saying goes all's well that ends well and we all had a fabulous time with three great forays at Loch Garten , Loch an Eileen and Culbin Forest , leaning a lot alongside great company with some fantastic fungal finds including many of the rare Scottish tooth fungi species.



They say a picture is worth a thousand words so here are a few for you and I will continue the narrative in future newsletters.



Alex Susdorf from MAK coming down from a tree having found Chaga for the first time ever courtesy of Sheila Lillie.



Shielas bad Lichen Day blown down in the storm
11.



Tree Hugging at Cawdor Castle Grounds

Phellodon tomentosus - Culbin Forest
taken By Rhona Sutherland



Culbin



A puzzling find!

Some photos from Rainton Meadows



Scarlet Elf Cup



Toothed Crust (*Basidioradulum radula*)



Coleroa robertiana - micro on
Herb robert



Orbilia and *Nectria* on *Ascodichaena rugosa*
black crust on an oak branch

Jill Cunningham

Results of the Photographic Competition 2026



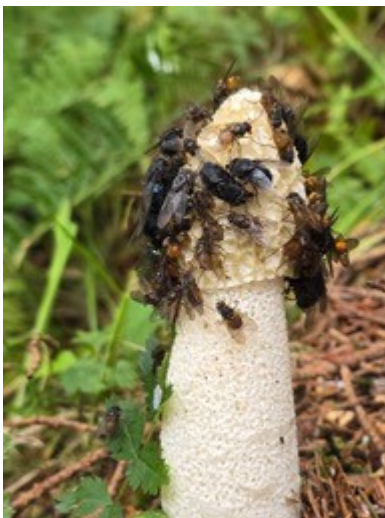
1st Place
Cameron Milby



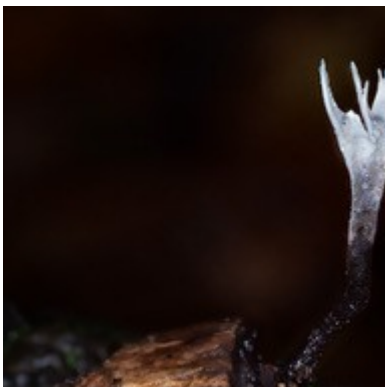
2nd Place
Doug McCutcheon



3rd Place
Wendy Ross



Highly Commended
Cameron Milby



Highly Commended
Paul Catterall

North East Fungus Study Group

Minutes of Annual General Meeting - Saturday 21st February 2026, Rainton Meadows.

1. Attended by 25 members.

2. **Apologies.** Jacqueline France-McNeil, Peter Holmes, Joannie McNaughton, Sally Pattison, Gabi Recknegel, Rachel Richards, John Robinson, Gordon Simpson, Richard Thompson.

3. **Matters arising from 2025 AGM Minutes.** Use of and continuation of fungal DNA analysis was discussed. Keith Thomas will write an article for a future newsletter.

4. **Chairpersons Report.** Cath Gillie in her first year as Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the committee experts and foray leaders for their work throughout last year. More forays were held in both North and South in 2025 and although more is not always better this did give people opportunities to attend a foray locally, most felt that this worked well although it did present challenges for our experts!

Cath gave an informative slideshow with images and discussion on the 2025 forays. The NEFSG/German Field Trip in Scotland was again a success and our links with other NE organisations should also be continued. The subject of Permissions from landowners was brought up and briefly discussed by members.

5. **Report of the Treasurer.** Ron handed out copies of the NEFSG 2025 accounts. Membership flourishing with 158 members as at the end of 2025. Funds healthy, £2930.

6. **Election of Officers.** All current committee, all agreed, proposed Val Standen, seconded John Sutherland. New Committee members to ensure a succession of younger members - Gary Howe + Farrah Burton; proposed Jill Cunningham; seconded Rhona Sutherland + Lydia Koelmans.

7. **Forays Planned 2026.** Trialling forays throughout the year in both the north and south. Completing the autumn programme later in the year/leaving slots open for possible links/requests from other organisations. Events include the July Summer Social and the UK Fungus Day at Hexham in October. Mike to organise a Recording Workshop to involve more members in Cate2; 9 members showed interest. Sally + club is likely to organise a study workshop e.g. a Waxcap study, or link with Coalspoil group. Dominique mentioned using Castle Eden for a public event as they have a knowledgeable ranger + microscopes - to be discussed at the May committee meeting. FCT matters, NEFSG calendar sale, Christmas meal, purchasing microscopes + loupes, new member welcome pack, possible Christmas card competition was also mentioned. Possible logo designs for the NEFSG were shown and discussed. Next year the club enters its 30th year + ideas needed on how we celebrate this, to be discussed at further committee meetings.

8. **Photo Competition winner.** 1st - Cameron Milby. 2nd - Doug McCutcheon. 3rd - Wendy Ross. Apologies to Walia for photo slide error. Paul Forster was thanked for judging and John Sutherland thanked for the prizes.

9. **AOB.** Keith Tulip offered a selection of free books and Sheila had magazines for sale.

Lunch was followed by a talk on Micro-fungi by Jill Cunningham.
All thanked for attending, and finally a walk outside.

Date of next Committee Meeting - Sat 16th May 2026.

Date of 2027 AGM - Sat 20th Feb 2027. (To be confirmed)

Lichen Lookout

Some lovely lichens to look out for on walls and rocks.



Lecanora rupicola

A crustose lichen often seen on gravestones and sciliceous rocks and walls.
Bobbly appearance with pinkish apothecia.



Opheoparma ventosa

Can have a grey or yellow/grey thallus depending on whether it contains usnic acid or not. Often found side by side. Beautiful red apothecia.

In upland areas on sciliceous rocks and walls.



Placynthium nigrum

A dark brown to black thallus with dark apothecia. Look out for the dark blue prothallus around the edge.

In upland areas on calcareous rocks and cement.