

Club visit to Pressmennan Lake

Saturday, 30 August 2025

A dozen members of the Club met up on a nice sunny morning to learn about all things fungal. The meeting point was the car park of the Woodlands Trust reserve at Pressmennan Lake near to Stenton in East Lothian. Our leader was, not for the first time, Cameron Diekonigin. Cameron is an amateur mycologist, by a fount of much learning and is a natural communicator.

Cameron started with a quick illustrated quiz about fungi whilst we were still in the car park. This laid the scene for the importance of fungi in the natural world and for human economy, including in medicines and brewing and bread baking.

We then started a leisurely wander along the main trackway through the woodland. As with any successful fungus foray, we stopped every few yards to look at something different. We probably travelled a total of less than one mile before we returned to the car park after several hours. On the way we had seen a large variety of fungi. Most of the fungi which we saw were of small size as the weather had been very dry for months prior to our visit. That did not detract from the interest of what we saw. These included a common autumn grass fungus, Ergot, which is reputed to have been responsible for the behaviour which it induced on people who ate tainted bread leading to the Salem Witchcraft trials.

We had another short quiz which paired deadly toxic and apparently similar innocuous fungi. Based on the answers given, the four pairs of species would have wiped out all the club members present if they had been ingested.

As Cameron is a non-drinking owner of almost as many BNC paperweights as we currently hold in stock who, by his own admission, has a serious cheese habit, he was presented with a small selection of cheeses to show the Club's gratitude.

We were very lucky with the weather. After a sunny walk, the clouds came over as we were returning to our cars. The first few spots were falling as I left the car park. By the time that I reached Dunbar, only about four miles from our foray, it was raining heavily. By the skin of our teeth, we managed to complete our three wild nature walks of the 2025 season in the dry.



Our leader, Cameron Diekonigin telling members about some of the fungi found.



A hoverfly which has been affected by a fungus which turns it into a zombie. It paralyses the insect, whilst keeping it otherwise healthy, so that the fly can become a factory for spores for the fungus to go out and infect other fungi.

Peter Macdonald.
President