

Bromyard Downs Walk-over Fungus Survey 2014

First visit 10 October 2014

The survey covered the full length of the western side of the road from the school to Park Head plus several smaller areas of common land on the eastern side. It was a dry day following a couple of days of heavy rain but after a very prolonged dry spell for many weeks beforehand.

Just one record for a grassland fungus was found: *Handkea (Calvatia) utriformis*, the Mosaic Puffball. Only other fungi recorded were on leaves, *Microsphaera alphitoides* on *Quercus* sp. (Oakleaf Powdery Mildew) and *Rhytisma acerinum* (Sycamore Tarspot) on *Acer pseudoplatanus*.

The southern parts of the common, from Turnpike Cottage south, had only recently been cut it would seem. Large areas of bare earth with flattened grassy clumps up to 6 or 7 inches long would seem to suggest that this area had been cut not long ago in a very wet condition thus scalping some areas whilst leaving long tussocks in others. There did not seem to be the same flora as the larger parts of the common to the north. No sign of any fungi whatsoever.

To the north of the cottage only one grassland fungus was recorded at SO67024 55288 *Calvatia utriformis*, the Mosaic Puffball, one fresh specimen (photo) and 3 specimens which had 'gone over', in a curve so probably part of an old ring.

A search of the two National fungi databases: CATE2 (Association of British Fungus Groups) and FRDBI (British Mycological Society), showed little historical data for CHEG species on Bromyard Downs, in fact most of the previous records for Bromyard Downs were actually woodland species thought to have been recorded on adjacent land rather than on the grassland itself.

Amongst these records only three CHEG species are to be found, all dated early September 2001.

Hygrocybe chlorophana

Hygrocybe conica

Hygrocybe psittacina var. *psittacina*

Second visit 2 November 2014

This was a much more successful visit, especially regarding numbers of fruit-bodies, some areas in particular being heavily covered in fungus species. The most notable area as far as actual numbers, not necessarily diversity of species, was just uphill and to the east of the main car park.

Walking north from there the number of different species improved especially down the hill to the west of the path. Moving northwards from there the numbers and diversity dwindled

especially around the wetter areas. The upper areas, just below the top path had a good quantity of fruit-bodies if not the diversity of different species. This also followed moving southwards towards the school where although a good diversity of species was found they were not in huge quantities with the exception of *Hygrocybe russocoreacea*, the Cedarwood Waxcap, which could be found in large numbers in several places.

It was particularly noted that the southern most parts of the downs which had been cut late and short had to some extent recovered and there were indeed several patches of fungi recorded in this area during this second visit with the exception of some rather wet areas where no fungi were seen.

In all this was a much better result for the second visit; being later in the year, much cooler and after a fair amount of rain. Overall 14 species of *Hygrocybe** on one visit is a very good count, 5 species of *Entoloma* identified plus the two different species of *Clavaria* proves the Bromyard Downs has regional importance for its CHEG* species, particularly for the Waxcap community.

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4th November, 2014

* The "CHEG" assessment system

In 1995, Rald proposed a simple count of the number of *Hygrocybe* species present at a given site in order to assess its value as 'a waxcap' grassland. He suggested that the presence of 17 or more species meant the site was of national importance, 9-16 species of regional importance, 4-8 species of local importance, and 3 or fewer of no importance.^[4] A year later, this system was modified by Rotheroe and others to include all the characteristic macrofungi and not just waxcaps. Known as the "CHEG" system, this is widely used in survey work today. The acronym "CHEG" stands for the main groups of relevant fungi: C – the *Clavarioid* species; H - *Hygrocybe* species; E - *Entoloma* species; and G - the Geoglossaceae (earthtongues).

Note: Book used for the identification of the Waxcap fungi – The Genus *Hygrocybe* by David Boertmann