

This is a copy of an article Tony Carter wrote over 20 years ago which was published in the Newsletter publication of The Association of British Fungus Groups (now Fungus Conservation Trust).

FUNGI AT CHLDWALL GOLF CLUB, LIVERPOOL.

The course was built in 1938, on farmland. As far as I can ascertain, there were no trees other than an orchard, of which only an odd apple and plum tree remains. There is also the remnant of the hawthorn boundary hedges. All the current trees were planted shortly after the course was opened and are now just over 50 years old.

Much of the planting is of birch and cherry with single specie copses, such as larch, sycamore, aspen, willow and poplar. Some of these, particularly the black poplar and crack willow, are showing their age. The last two are not considered suitable for golf courses because they become unstable and large bits, even whole trees have started to come down, creating a danger to golfers. The aspen throws up too many suckers and the roots are long and shallow, running into the fairways. I badly damaged a wrist when I struck an unseen root. There are only two pine trees. This lessens confusion in identification.

There are single specimens such as oak, horse chestnut and ash dotted about. Fortunately, there are very few ornamentals or exotics, mainly because they have difficulty coping with the conditions. The underlying soil is heavy clay and consequently can get very wet. Maintaining drainage is a constant problem.

The area is subject to constant maintenance, cutting the grass, clearing the copses and pruning trees, to remove dangerous low branches and to ensure that golf balls can be found more easily. This maintenance seems to benefit the fungi. It is very noticeable how many spring up when an overgrown area is cleared, particularly the Leccinum. Perhaps they like the sun or the spores are spread more easily. Perhaps it is because they are easier for me to see. I have spent unfruitful days foraging in an overgrown woodland with my Group, knowing that a game of golf would produce a basketful.

Most of my identification is of larger fungi. Maintaining the condition of small specimens, picked on a Saturday afternoon, until there is time for full examination, is a problem, particularly if there is a game on Sunday morning. Golf does require some time to be spent at the 19th (The Watering Hole). It is difficult to make meaningful notes of critical features while trying to get out of a bunker.

There are species that appear every year and some which appear for a few years and then disappear. Then there are the odd ones, which spring up once but are never seen again. The regulars that fruit in one spot every year interest me. *Clitocybe gibba*, *Lepista nuda*. Why there and why do they not spread to another part of the course, where the trees are of the same variety and age?

The first to appear is *Calocybe gambosa*. One group grew on a small hillock, which, six years ago, was reduced in size to aid mowing. The removed soil was used to lengthen a tee. In the first year the *Calocybe* grew quite happily on the tee, despite the move. Since then the grass has been cut daily. They may still be there. They no longer inhabit the hillock.

The next large flush, which can start in May, is of *Amanita rubescens*. I have counted well over fifty in a day. This is nothing compared to the *Amanita muscaria* which follow and hundreds grow all over the course. West Derby Golf Course, a couple of miles away, which is older and wetter, can produce *A. muscaria* in such massive numbers that it could be considered for SSSI status.

From June, the larch copse produces a healthy crop of *Suillus grevillei*. At the same time, the aspen produces *Leccinum duriusculum*. Of nine brown species of *Leccinum* I have identified, this is the most frequent and distinctive. The aspen also produces *L. aurantiacum* but this is restricted to one specific copse. It took me a few years to confidently identify this species because the characteristics change so rapidly after collection, particularly the stipe squamules. Now, I can tell it from *L. versipelle*, another regular, from the colour and texture of the orange cap.

Later in the year, the most frequent bolete is *Chalciporus piperatus*, although this is a recent addition to my list. My pride and joy, however, is one small birch tree which, for the last three years, has produced six or seven large *Boletus edulis*. Why just this one tree, I do not know but I am keeping it a secret.

I confess that I am not proficient in *Lactarius* and pre-Kibbykey *Russula*, so my list is small. The regulars in quantity are *L. turpis*, *L. tabidus* and *L. quietus*, *R. ochroleuca*, *fragilis* and *nitida*. For a short while, the aspen copse turned out a large number of *L. helvus* and I have recorded *R. velenovskyi*. Odd varieties of both genus appear from time to time.

Collybia of all species are frequent throughout the course in quantity.

Many grassland species are to be found, as one would expect. The back of a bunker, where the grass is cut a little higher, is a good spot for *Mycenae* and Waxcaps. All the usual suspects, the most interesting being *Hygrocybe quieta*. *Psathyrella* and *Coprinus* are also widespread.

Strangely, for a grassland area, numbers of *Agaricus* are not great and appear only sporadically. This may be due to lack of livestock. I had a nice group of *A. augustus* for a couple of years but they presumably ran out of sustenance. The current inhabitant is a large patch of *A. xanthodermus* that appeared after the construction of a path.

Parasitic fungi are becoming more frequent as the trees age. The most common is *Pholiota squarrosa*, which likes the cherry trees. I once saw a patch of *Armillaria mellea* spread across a green and fairway for fifty feet, during a rainy period when the mowers could not be used, showing the extent of the mycelium. The old ash in the car park sprouted a huge *Inonotus*

hispidus on the main branch. Although I warned the Greens Committee of the danger, they took no notice until the branch fell off and nearly demolished the Security Guard. The tree has now sprouted two more huge fruiting bodies right at the top. I have warned them. What more can I do?

Unusual species can appear and disappear. *Lentinus lepideus*, growing from wooden path surrounds. Hundreds of *Cyathus striatus* in the mulched flowerbeds (The gardener thought they were insect eggs and was puzzled about what to do with them). *Lycoperdon lividum* in a bunker. I later learned that the sand had come from the Birkdale area. This same bunker grows a small group of *Clitocybe dealbata*, same place, same time, every year. A *Ganoderma lucidum* made a short appearance until the stump was removed to aid mowing, a similar fate to that which befell a very nice *Pleurotus dryinus*.

This is the downside of a golf course. Maintenance and tidiness are regarded as virtuous. It is a golf course not a nature reserve. Without regular mowing, the site has even greater potential. A few years ago, it was so wet that the mowers could not be used for a week. Fungi grew everywhere, even in the middle of the fairways. I still have photographs of some, which I never identified.

My list of species has now reached 295. We have recently had a course inspection by an expert from the Turf Research Institute. I can now identify a number of fungal diseases of grass. My recent purchase of Ellis & Ellis adds to my potential ability to recognise microfungi. The next time I put my nose to the ground to line up a difficult putt I will still be foraying. I will not be throwing bits of grass into the air to test the wind but putting them into my little box for future examination.

Tony Carter

The total number of Fungi recorded to date is 437