

Troopers Hill March 2008 Species lists for two areas recently cleared of scrub.

Following on from ongoing scrub clearance works in 2007 I have recorded the most obvious plant species found growing in two of the areas of clearance. Although this is a rather subjective exercise the intention is to attempt to provide a baseline by which those managing the site may attempt to track changes in the successional colonisation of the areas cleared.

It is assumed that ideally an increase or return in plants associated with heathland in these areas would be regarded as a successful long term aim.

The species lists are not comprehensive, only the most prominent component of the vegetation was recorded to provide a coarse-grained snap-shot.

Quantity values found in the third column of the tables are as follows: *Abundant* – found throughout the area at high density, *Locally abundant* – a dense stand, *Frequent* – found almost everywhere but not necessarily in any great quantity, *Occasional* – scattered thinly about, but enough present that it is a noticeable component, *Rare* – very few plants found, some searching may be needed. Where the column contains a number this is total count of the plants found.

Without mapping the areas change will be hard to determine, but local knowledge should flag up any alteration in the size of the areas.

The areas are:

ST62997300

A south facing bank in Compartment 5 above the footpath adjacent to compartment 7. (The area of tall Broom at the top of the path from the middle gate on Troopers Hill Rd)

| <i>Common Name</i> | <i>Scientific Name</i> | <i>Quantity</i> | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Broom | Cytisus scoparius | Frequent | Seedling |
| Broom | Cytisus scoparius | Abundant | |
| Sheep's Sorrel | Rumex acetosella | Locally abundant | |
| Common Ivy | Hedera helix | Locally abundant | |
| Bramble | Rubus fruticosus agg. | Frequent | |
| Wood Sage | Teucrium scorodonia | Occasional | |
| Wavy Hair-grass | Deschampsia flexuosa | Rare | |
| Yorkshire-fog | Holcus lanatus | Rare | |
| Rosebay Willowherb | Chamerion angustifolium | Rare | |
| Juniper Haircap | Polytrichum juniperinum | rare | |
| Some bare earth | | | |

In this area the plants indicative of heathland are Sheep's Sorrel, Wavy Hair-grass and Juniper Haircap. Sheep's Sorrel is obvious and very prominent, Wavy Hair-grass is restricted to several small scattered tufts and there is a small patch and some scattered plants of Juniper Haircap. It will be worth watching these species to see if change in quantity occurs. This ought to be particularly noticeable in the case of the moss as it is present in a very low quantity.

Broom, being a member of the legume family is a "nitrogen fixer". Root nodules host a fungal symbiont which captures atmospheric nitrogen. This allows plants of this family to become active colonisers of nutrient deficient soils and as a result can cause a change in the soils which can lead to the exclusion other less competitive plants.

ST62937299

Along the northern edge of Compartment 8 adjacent to compartment 5.

(The area where the solitary Hawthorn surrounded by Bramble stood).

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Common Nettle | <i>Urtica dioica</i> | Occasional |
| Bramble | <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. | Occasional |
| Common Bent | <i>Agrostis capillaris</i> | Occasional |
| Ribwort Plantain | <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> | Occasional |
| Yorkshire-fog | <i>Holcus lanatus</i> | Occasional |
| Spear Thistle | <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> | Occasional |
| Creeping Thistle | <i>Cirsium arvense</i> | Rare |
| Cat's-ear | <i>Hypochaeris radicata</i> | Rare |
| Rosebay Willowherb | <i>Chamerion angustifolium</i> | Rare |
| Common Ivy | <i>Hedera helix</i> | Rare |
| Cleavers | <i>Galium aparine</i> | Rare |
| Wood Sage | <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i> | Rare |
| Heath-grass | <i>Danthonia decumbens</i> | Rare |
| Wavy Hair-grass | <i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i> | Rare |
| Herb-Robert | <i>Geranium robertianum</i> | Rare |
| Common Bird's-foot-trefoil | <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> | Rare |
| Mouse-ear-hawkweed | <i>Pilosella officinarum</i> | Rare |
| Nipplewort | <i>Lapsana communis</i> | Rare |
| Butterfly-bush | <i>Buddleja davidii</i> | Rare |
| Dandelion | <i>Taraxacum</i> agg. | Rare |
| Cock's-foot | <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> | Rare |
| Broad-leaved Dock | <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> | Rare |
| Cut-leaved Crane's-bill | <i>Geranium dissectum</i> | Rare |
| Bell Heather | <i>Erica cinerea</i> | 1 plant only on very edge of area |
| Bare earth | | Abundant |

Here, there are encouraging signs that heathland plants are beginning to colonise the bare ground. There are several small tufts of Heath-grass scattered about near the lower edge of the clearance area. These were not noted here last year (December). Similarly Wavy Hair-grass could be on the increase but whereas the Heath-grass appears to moving in to the cleared area, the Wavy Hair-grass is limited to the edge of the adjacent acid grassland. Several plants of Cat's-ear and two of Mouse-ear Hawkweed were also found. These are positive signs that the heathland flora of the hill is spreading in this area and that the strimming is retarding the growth of the bramble and the more "weedy" species further encouraging their return.