

Help Us Find - Cornish Churchyard Fungi

Unimproved, grazed grasslands are a unique and increasingly threatened habitat, and Britain has lost over 95% of them since 1939. They are characterised by short grass, low soil nutrients, and minimal other management such as the addition of fertilizer, reseeding, or ploughing.

Churchyards, particularly in older churches, can act as refugia and so play host to a range of fungi that are found uniquely in these sorts of habitats.



Where to look

Churchyards where minimal maintenance of grassy areas has taken place; aside from mowing. Very often short grass with a lot of moss in it is a good sign. The older the churchyard the better, as the time required for these fungi to establish may be decades.

In such a churchyard, look out for brightly coloured mushrooms in autumn and early winter, these are waxcaps and are the easiest to spot and identify. After those, you can look out for Spindles and Earthtongues

What to look out for

Waxcaps – *Hygrocybe* species

Waxcaps are very distinctive; most are brightly coloured all over (reds, oranges, yellows, and greens), often with a slimy or waxy cap. They can be from 0.5cm to 12cm across in larger specimens. When you record these as a find, you should note if the cap is slimy, waxy or dry.



What to look out for

Spindles – *Clavarias*

Clavarias can be found singly or in clumps of coloured spindles growing from the grass. They don't have any other features visible to the naked eye. They can be pale or brightly coloured.



Earthtongues – *Geoglossums*

Geoglossums are often black, brown or dark green. They can look like Clavarias, but they often have a flattened tongue-like ending. The colour is also a clear way to differentiate the two if they lack the rounded end.



Reporting your finds

We are asking for you to look for and report the three types of fungi in this leaflet. There are others, but they are harder to identify. These three are easy to spot, very distinctive and will give a good indication of which churchyards have the typical unimproved grassland fungi. With this data, we can plan for further in-person fieldwork at the most promising churchyards.

Over the coming autumn and early winter, get out and have a look. Photograph any of the key fungi you find and upload them to iNaturalist. The mycologists (fungi specialists) at Kew will keep an eye on the entries that you upload and will work on identifications.

Taking Photographs

For Geoglossums and Clavarias, photographs are straightforward; good quality, in focus, and close-up photos will give us a lot of information. For waxcaps, it is best to take a photograph side-on, and from underneath the cap itself to show the gills, and the attachment between the gills and stem. Please, only pick a waxcap for photography if there is more than one. If there is only the one, take as best photograph as you can of a side-on view.

iNaturalist

We have created an iNaturalist project page to record all the finds across the Diocese. Sign up, upload your pictures, and we can gather all the data together to begin looking for churchyards for further in-depth surveys to record and verify the communities of fungi present.

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iNaturalist Project Page