

Dean Hill Park - Identification of Roses - Sept 07.

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During the weekend of Sept 8/9 2007 botanists from Hampshire and Wiltshire met at Dean Hill Park to investigate the roses which grow on the site.

The site is at present particularly rich in roses for two reasons; the lack of deer browsing (because the site is fenced) and the relaxation of a long regime of severe strimming during the period when the site was owned by MOD. The areas of particular interest are the blast banks, the narrow and full gauge railway cuttings and sidings and the edges of the southern grasslands at the top of the hill.

Four species of rose have been identified on the site:

Rosa canina – the common dog rose is present throughout the site.

Rosa micrantha – harsh downy rose is also present throughout.

Rosa rubiginosa – Eglantine or sweet-briar - is far less frequent than the above species but can be found occasionally at all main locations.

Rosa stylosa – Short-styled Field Rose is possibly present as a pure species although it may be a hybrid which shows mainly 'stylosa' characteristics. Like *R. rubiginosa*, it is infrequent but well scattered on the site.

There are also hybrids on the site between *R. canina* and *R. micrantha*. A specimen from one hybrid has been collected for further identification. It may be a hybrid between *R. micrantha* x *rubiginosa* or possibly *R. micrantha* x *tomentosa*. Records for these hybrids are very rare.

Management implications are few. Roses will tolerate and even improve by cutting back. It is important to leave them for sufficient time to grow and fruit and a rotational management programme on a 5-7 year cycle would probably suit them very well.

Identification notes: The four main roses are relatively easy to tell apart when the hips are present. Two are sweet briars (*R. micrantha* and *R. rubiginosa*) and have numerous sticky glands on the leaflets, leaf-stalks, fruit / flower stalks and sepals. *R. rubiginosa* has short, straight prickles as well as curved ones and the sepals point forward when the hips are mature. *R. micrantha* has only curved prickles and its sepals are reflexed; its hips tend to be small.

Rosa canina has neither glands nor straight prickles and the tip of the hip has the remains of numerous styles. *R. stylosa* (and its close hybrids) has a hip with a strongly conical disc at the apex through which the styles protrude in a short column. Hybrids show some of the characteristics of both parents.