

Environmental Evaluation of ST Anthony's Parish Field

MNE Environmental were requested to assess the environmental condition and potential biodiversity value of the Parish Field. The Field was visited on three occasions; twice on Tuesday 7th January, and again on the 14th January. The field and all boundaries were inspected, and a visit was made during the hours of darkness (21.30h) to assess nocturnal use of the site by mammals.

General Description

The entire site is about 0.5ha in extent. The site is almost completely bounded by paved lanes and streets. Remains of old hedgerows occur along three of the field boundaries and the remaining central area is improved amenity grassland (see Photographs).



View of Parish Field looking North

Habitats Present

The linear strips of shrubs, with occasional trees, that form the field boundaries are remains of old, degraded hedgerows. They occur on raised banks of earth but there is no surface water drainage associated with them. They fall into habitat classification 'Hedgerows WL1' (Note habitats are as described in the Heritage Council's 'Guide to Habitats in Ireland', J.A. Fossitt).

Tree/shrub species present include Sycamore, Elder, Willow, Ash, Hawthorn, Privet, Box and Snowberry.

There is no shrub layer and the ground layer is dominated by Winter Heliotrope, Ivy, Cleavers, Nettles, Common Chickweed and Brambles with occasional Umbellifers (Alexanders / Cow Parsley), Red Dead-nettle and Petty Spurge. A number of garden escapes also occur including Feverfew, Honesty, and Three-cornered Leek.

The majority of the site is comprised of 'Amenity Grassland GA2'. This is improved, species-poor grassland and areas have been recently reseeded. It is regularly mown to maintain very short swards.

Observations on Fauna

The site was inspected for presence of scats, droppings, setts, or other evidence of use by mammals or birds (in particular Brent Geese).

There was no evidence of use of the site by mammals e.g. badgers or foxes. However, given the frequency of urban foxes in this neighbourhood, it is likely that foxes will traverse the site on occasions.

There was no evidence of use of the site by Brent Geese. The size and enclosed nature of the site, with restricted sight lines, probably renders it unsuitable.

Conclusions

Due to the degraded nature, and limited range of habitats present, the site is of little conservation interest. Biodiversity is low at the site and many of the species present are non-natives, and some are listed as invasive alien species (Sycamore, Winter Heliotrope and Three-cornered Leek).

The neighbouring garden landscapes provide similar, and in many cases more biodiverse habitat.

List of Plant Names Cited in Text

Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Willow	<i>Salix sp</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>
Box	<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>
Snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>
Winter Heliotrope	<i>Petasites fragans</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Common Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Brambles	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>
Alexanders	<i>Smyrniolum olusatrum</i>
Cow Parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>
Red Dead-nettle	<i>Lamium purpureum</i>
Petty Spurge	<i>Euphorbia peplus</i>
Feverfew	<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i>
Honesty	<i>Lunaria annua</i>
Three-cornered Leek	<i>Allium triquetrum</i>