

Management Plan for the Garthorne Road Nature Reserve, Lewisham



View of Garthorne Road Nature Reserve¹

Pam London
BSc Environmental Management, Birkbeck College, London
FCE Course Short course in management planning
April 2003

Total word count 2358

¹ Copied from Nature Conservation in Lewisham
<http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/natureconservation/GarthorneRoad>

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Location of the site**
- 3. Description of the site and summary of biological compartments**
 - Woodland
 - Grassland
 - Scrub
- 4. Evaluation of the site**
- 5. Long term objectives for managing the site**
- 6. Action plan for 2003/2004**
- 7. Previous management of the site**
- 8. Resources**
- 9. Project records and review**

Acknowledgements

References and sources of information

Annexes²

- Annex A: Map of Garthorne Road Nature Reserve showing relevant compartments
- Annex B: species list of flora and fauna of Garthorne Road Nature Reserve

² Information taken from the 1988 UESU Management survey of Garthorne Road Reserve

1. Introduction

1.1. The London Borough of Lewisham is situated in South East London and has 18 Nature Reserves, some of which contain features of Metropolitan, Borough and Local importance. Garthorne Road forms part of the Forest Hill to New Cross Gate Railway cutting which is of Metropolitan importance (*Nature Conservation in Lewisham, Ecology Handbook 30*). The Garthorne Road Nature Reserve was visited on 15 March 2003 to examine the site and current management regime. Details of the previous management plan were also obtained from a survey which was conducted by the Urban Ecology Study Unit in 1988.

2. Location of the site

The Garthorne Road Nature Reserve (Grid reference TQ 361 744) is 2.6 hectares in size and lies between the private gardens on the east side of the road and the railway (see figure 1).

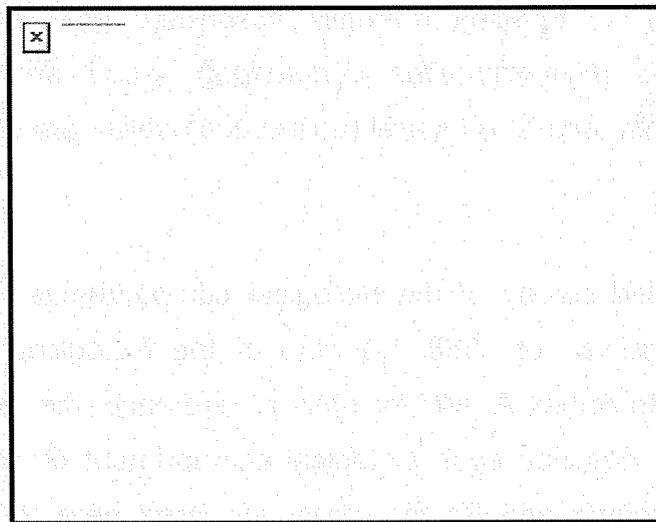


Figure 1 – Map of Garthorne Road Nature Reserve³

2.1. Lewisham Borough Council obtained a licence to manage the site as a nature reserve from Railtrack in 1987. A management plan was drafted by the Urban Ecology Study Unit (UESU) in 1988 after a detailed survey and this plan is currently being revised by the Nature

³ Source: Lewisham Borough Council www.lewisham.gov.uk/natureconservation/index.asp

Conservation Information Environmental Sustainability Unit (NCIEU),
Lewisham Council.

2.2. Access to the site is through a gate located on the corner of Beadnell Road and Ewart Road, but this is kept locked at all times. Access is limited to occasional guided walks run by the Friends of Devonshire Road, or by arrangement with NCIESU. No group is currently operating on the site.

3. Description of the site

3.1. The site consists mainly of mature scrub, grassland and a mixture of developing and mature woodland which has developed on the spoil left on completion of the London to Croydon Railway in 1839. The site contains good examples of plants one would normally associate with flora of secondary woodland. These include cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and Old Man's beard (*Clematis viticella*). Species normally associated with ancient woodland; bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), are all absent from the reserve.

3.2. A detailed survey of the biological compartments is detailed in the UESU survey of 1988. A map of the biological compartments is copied to Annex A, and for ease of reference, the references used in 1988 to describe each biological compartment **Gr** for grassland; **Wd** for woodland and **Sc** for scrub, are used here. A summary of the composition of each compartment is as follows.

- **Woodland**

The main swathe of woodland (Wd1b) stretches along the eastern side of the site but there also small areas of woodland located on the western side and in the middle of the reserve. Some of the hawthorns in Wd1b, line each side of the footpath and are probably the remnants of an old hedgerow. The woodland by the entrance of the reserve

(Wd1a) contains a variety of trees, but is mainly dominated by hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and wild cherry (*Prunus avium*). There is also a number of Pedunculate Oak trees (*Quercus robur*), Holm Oaks (*Quercus ilex*). The woodland which runs along the boundary fence nearest the railway lines (Wd2a) is largely composed of hawthorn, with patches of Holm oak. This area also contains small pockets of Silver birch (*Betula pendula*), immature Holm Oaks and shrubby hawthorns. Towards the North of the site, the hawthorns give way to Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) which is the dominant tree species.

- **Scrub**

There is an extensive swathe of scrub (Sc1a to Sc2a) which runs through the middle of the site mostly comprised of small hawthorns, bramble. There is also a dense area of scrub (Sc5) which runs between the two grassland areas Gr1a towards the South of the reserve. There are also raspberry canes (*Rubus idaeus*) in exposed areas of Gr4 and Gr5. In some parts of the site, the bramble scrub makes up most of the ground layer, but ground ivy (*Hedera helix*) is also present and is quite dense in patches, particularly at the northern boundary fence. Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) were also present.

- **Grassland**

There are approximately seven areas of grassland in the site. However, some of areas (notably Gr6 and Gr3) have been lost to woodland due to natural succession.

Plant species found at the southern end of the site (Gr1a) consist of common ragwort (*Senecio jacobea*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) and Michaelmas daisy (*Aster sp.*). However some of the grassland in this area has been invaded by bramble scrub, Canadian goldenrod

(*Solidago canadensis*), Michaelmas daisy and hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*).

There is also an area of coarse acid grassland (Gr7), which colonised the brick spoil, probably left behind following construction of the London to Croydon Railway in 1839 was constructed, or from the local tile works. This contains a number of diverse plant and tree species including gorse (*Ulex Europaeus*), short grasses, fescues and a Swedish Whitebeam (*Sorbus intermedia*).

4. Evaluation of the site

4.1. The reserve supports a wide variety of tree and plant species and there is a great deal potential for preserving the diversity of plant and animal species. For example the survey of 1988 recorded 28 different varieties of trees and scrubs; 66 different species of herbaceous plants⁴; 7 species of grasses; 2 species of fern; 11 types of mosses; 7 species of mosses and 23 species of fungi. The site contains tree species which are typical colonisers of secondary woodland such as sycamore, silver birch but it also contains other species which are important for site diversity; Goat Willows (*Salix caprea*) and the Swedish Whitebeam. The acid grassland site is considered to be of Local Borough importance as it contains a community of acid loving plants and is one of only two acid grassland areas in Lewisham.

The site also supports different species of bird, invertebrates, large and small mammals. There have also been efforts to encourage slow worms (*Anguis fragilis*) and common lizards (*Lacerta vivipara*) by stacking wood cuttings in various places in the reserve.

4.2. Several remedial measures which involved removing rubbish and installing an entrance gate have been carried out, but current management of the site has been undertaken on a minimal basis, due to the reduction of staff working on nature conservation.

⁴ Creeping Jenny (*Lysmachia nummularia*), Lungwort, (*Sticta pulmonaria*) and Stinking Iris (*Iris foetidissima*) were also identified on the day the site was visited.

4.3. The spread of the woodland could be managed by removing of smaller saplings, particularly sycamores in Wd1b and Wd3b. This is an option which could encourage greater ground flora diversity in these compartments. All spoil should be composted or retained on site. Larger cuttings (logs) should also be stacked on site to provide refuge for invertebrates and small reptiles.

4.4. The scrub on the site is a very important habitat as it provides food, shelter and nesting for birds and invertebrates. However, it can be highly invasive especially to sensitive areas such smaller areas of grassland. The denser areas of scrub can also be removed on the ground layer of woodland at Wd3b and Wd3c to encourage greater ground flora diversity.

4.5. The grassland areas are important features of the site as they contain a range of invertebrate and plant species, so these should be preserved. There is also potential for the creation of a larger grassland area towards the southern end of the site by increasing the size of Gr1a. Other areas should continue to be managed on a minimal regime.

4.6. There are no ponds on the site and whilst this would enhance the site, maintaining a constant water level of fresh water would be difficult as there are no natural water courses nearby to nourish a pond.

The gates are locked but the site is used (access gained through an unofficial entrance) to occasionally exercise a dog. This did not appear to be a problem at the time of the visit, but this should be monitored to establish the extent of any damage and impact on the flora and fauna of the site.

4.7. Current access restrictions should continue as this will prevent fly-tipping and vandalism on the site. However, the site could benefit from public involvement, particularly from local residents to promote the value of this reserve. This could range from:

- ❖ being involved in the management of the reserve (supervised volunteer days);
- ❖ Commenting on the management plan;
- ❖ Involvement in surveys, regular educational events (plant, insect and bird identification).

Local residents, are also more likely to become involved and accept management work (like the felling of a large tree) if the reasons for carrying out any work on the reserve, are explained on a regular basis.

5. Long term objectives for managing the site

Preserving and improving the character of the site and improve floral and diversity of wildlife by:

- Managing woodland, scrub and grassland compartments;
- Monitor and conduct periodic surveys on plant, tree, invertebrate, bird and small mammal species;
- Promoting greater local involvement in the management of the site by hosting conservation projects and events.

6. Action Plan

6.1. Efforts should be concentrated on improving the site's key areas such as the grassland areas. The site could also benefit from a survey of plant and animal species as this could be compared against the survey conducted in 1988 and would show how the site is developing.

6.2. The management tasks should be undertaken in a manner and at periods which cause the minimum disturbance to wildlife, i.e. any scrub or tree seedling clearance should be done outside of the breeding season of most birds, say late April to June.

Action plan for 2003/2004

<i>To be undertaken within the next year (2003/2004)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check condition of and repair fence along eastern boundary fence (if access is possible from the reserve) along eastern boundary fence by specialist contractor. Rubbish to be removed;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erection of clear signage at the entrance of the site. This should show who to contact for access, its biological compartments, and any key plant or animal species;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of general and fly-tipped rubbish near the entrance. Any dangerous material (glass etc.) to be removed by local authority or specialist contractor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduated removal of scrub area (Autumn 2003) at Sc5 to create larger area of grassland Gr1a.
<i>Tasks to be undertaken regularly over next 5 years</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General site maintenance – litter collection, removal of rubbish near entrance and on site; maintenance and improvement of paths to keep access open. To be undertaken 2-3 times per year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of hogweed in Wd2a, Gr7 and Gr5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of smaller oak tree and shrub seedlings in Gr1a; • Removal of young sycamore in Wd3b and Wd3c;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and controlling spread of scrub on acid grassland area Gr7;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of scrub and ground ivy in a small area in the north of the site (Wd3b and Wd3c)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting meadow areas on a hay cut basis in late summer; half to be left for to over winter for invertebrates. All cuttings to be composted on site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing local residents of management programme as necessary and on a regular basis.

7. Previous management

7.1. In the past, the site has been managed by Friends of Devonshire Road, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), London Wildlife Trust volunteers and Community Service Order volunteers. A specialist contractor undertakes the work currently.

8. Resources

8.1. One of the obvious constraints to the implementation of the plan is the availability of manpower and funding for any projects. As far as management of the site is concerned, this is performed by a specialist contractor. This has been found to be most efficient. However, local specialists and volunteers should be used as much as possible. This will help to promote the ecological value of the site. Lewisham Council are also planning greater public involvement which include volunteer and public events which will include local volunteers/specialists.

8.2. Plant and animal surveys should be undertaken on the site if possible, but this would again depend upon whether there are any grants available for conservation projects.

9. Project records and review

9.1. All work undertaken on the site should be recorded so that its impact can be monitored. The action plan should be regularly and as necessary – one option would be a 5 year review, but this is flexible according to the needs of the reserve.

Acknowledgements

Jill Goddard, Nature Conservation Information Environmental Sustainability Unit (NCIESU), Lewisham for allowing access, supplying the 1988 management plan for the Garthorne Road Nature reserve, and for her advice on this management plan; and

Nick Bertrand, local botanist for the guided walk of the site and for his advice on management of the site.

References

Archer, J and Yarham, I. *Nature Conservation in Lewisham Ecology* handbook 30. London Ecology Unit. 2000.

Brickell, C. *The Royal Horticultural Society Gardeners' Encyclopaedia of Plants and Flowers*. Dorling Kindersley. 1989

London Ecology Unit, *Garthorne Road Nature Reserve Management Plan* (1988)

Nordhuis, K. *Encyclopaedia of Garden Plants*. Rebo productions Limited. 1997.

Press, R. *Green Guide to Trees of Britain and Europe*. New Holland (Publishers) Limited, London. 1992.

Serry, R and Press, R. *A Photographic guide to wild flowers of Britain and Europe*. New Holland (Publishers) Limited, London. 1995.

Internet resources

Nature conservation sites in Lewisham

www.lewisham.gov.uk/natureconservation

Grieve, M. 'A Modern Herbal'. www.botanical.com

Bioimages. www.bioimages.org.uk

ANNEX A

Annex A: 1988 map of Garthorne Road Nature Reserve showing relevant compartments

ANNEX B

Annex B: species list of flora and fauna of Garthorne Road Nature Reserve

