

28 Verdon Street Recreation Ground

Introduction

Verdon Street Recreation Ground is a small rectangular open space immediately behind the Verdon Street Recreation Centre. The site has been levelled to create a playing surface for ball games. The land drops away fairly steeply along the southwestern and southeastern edges. There is a well-used footpath along the northwestern edge, which provides a convenient short-cut between Montfort Drive and Verdon Street.

Ecology

The site is of low ecological interest because the vegetation consists almost entirely of close-mown amenity grassland. There are a few herbaceous species within the turf, such as autumn hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis*) and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). Taller plants, scattered around the margins, include mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) and nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*).

Although the recreation ground itself is of low ecological interest, some of the adjacent areas of open space hold a greater diversity of flora and fauna. Immediately to the north lie the grounds of Pye Bank Trinity Church of England Junior School. The school is currently being re-built but the grounds were surveyed in April before public access was closed off. They hold a large area of (currently un-mown) amenity grassland, with scattered semi-mature trees (such as Rowan, *Sorbus aucuparia*) and a low hedge of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). Between the school sports pitch and the flats on Verdon Street (i.e. numbers 220 to 278) there is a narrow strip of long grass and scrub. This strip has been enclosed on both sides by security fencing so it forms an undisturbed sanctuary area. There are some low rock faces within the strip, where the sandstone known as the Silkstone Rock is exposed

Noteworthy species

None noted on Verdon Street Recreation Ground.

Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) seen hunting in adjacent school grounds.

Ecological recommendations

Protective actions

- safeguard the existing hawthorn hedge that runs around part of the school grounds;
- safeguard the strip of long grass and scrub between the school sports pitch and numbers 220 to 278 Verdon Street.

Potential improvements

- provide more cover around the fringes of the recreation ground by planting a belt of native shrubs;
- investigate the possibility of creating a range of habitats within the school grounds.

History and Geology

Geological survey

The solid geology of the site lies within the Lower Coal Measures of the Upper Carboniferous period and is characterised by flaggy sandstone

Archaeological survey

No archaeological or historical features were identified within Verdon Street Recreation Ground in the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service SMR or English Heritage National Monuments Record.

However, two features were identified within the limits of the site on historic Ordnance Survey maps.

A congregational church and school (OS 19 and OS 20 respectively) are shown at the junction of Andover Street and Montfort Street (now Montfort Drive) on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1905). These buildings now destroyed lie within the grounds of Pye Bank Trinity CE Junior School.

Historical survey

Verdon Street Recreation Ground was created on the site of former terraced housing on Bramber Street, Lopham Street, Montfort Road, Montfort Street and Nottingham Street. This housing was first shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1905). The site of the recreation ground is previously shown as agricultural land on Harrison's survey of Southall Soake (1637) and is labelled as *Spittle Fields*. It would appear to have remained largely unchanged until the late nineteenth century when residential development would appear to have encroached upon the site. Terraced housing is shown within the limits of the recreation ground on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1905). Some of this housing would appear have become derelict by the 1950s and is labelled as 'ruins' on the first 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey map (1955).

Recommendations

Verdon Street Recreation Ground is of limited archaeological or historical significance. It would appear to have been used for housing during the early to mid twentieth century. Following the demolition of the housing, the site remained undeveloped and has since become one of the many open or green spaces in the Burngreave NDfC area. Consultation of census records will help identify former residents of Bramber Street, Lopham Street, Montfort Road, Montfort Street and Nottingham Street. This information may help improve understanding of local social history.

Community

No community survey was carried out.