

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WENSUM PARK

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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Name:	WENSUM PARK
County:	Norfolk
District:	Norwich (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.640828 Longitude: 1.2859418 National Grid Reference: TG 22418 09856 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001346 Date first listed: 08-Oct-1993

Details

One of five registered sites in the city of Norwich which form part of a set of public parks laid out in the 1920s and 1930s by the then Parks Superintendent, Captain A Sandys-Winsch.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site of Wensum Park started to develop during the first decade of the C20, following the purchase of land by the City in 1907. Reflecting its locality, on the banks of the River Wensum, it was given a swimming bath, bathing pool, wading pool, and shelter, all of which were completed by 1910. By 1921 however the area around the pools had become used as a unofficial tip so a scheme was put forward to develop the site as a formal public park. The garden was designed by Captain Sandys-Winsch, a protégé of Thomas Mawson, to offer opportunities for passive recreation and was constructed over the next four years using unemployed labour. It was opened in 1925. The park remains (1999) in use as a public amenity.

The other four registered parks which make up the Sandys-Winsch series are Eaton Park; Waterloo Park; Heigham Park; and Mile Cross Gardens.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wensum Park lies on the north-west side of the city of Norwich and occupies a c 4ha sloping site which falls between Drayton Road to the north-east and the River Wensum to the south-west. St Martin's Road forms the east boundary whilst iron railings divide the park from neighbouring factories to the north-west. It is located in a part of the city which contains both residential and commercial development.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the park lies at the corner of Drayton Road and St Martin's Road, wrought-iron gates between piers surmounted with obelisks opening onto a balustraded viewing platform looking over the park. There is also an iron gate off Drayton Road further to the north, at the northern tip of the park, leading into the children's play area. A gate in the railings which mark the north-west boundary leads into adjacent factory grounds.

PARK From the main gates a pair of steps lead down either side of the shelter set beneath the viewing platform; the axial line is continued with semicircular steps from the shelter, and a further flight down to the circular rose garden, which forms the focus of the design. The garden was originally centred on a fountain and pool, but this was filled in to form a flower bed.

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Steps from the west side of the garden meet a long straight cross-walk orientated north-west/south-east, the southern end of which has been taken out.

Off the south side of the circular garden a straight walk leads to a yew-enclosed compartment which originally contained a flower garden; the flower beds have recently (1990s) been removed and a paddling pool constructed. Off the north side a straight path leads to a balancing octagonal yew-hedged enclosure, this remaining as a flower garden with a circular bed and box edging. A walk leads round the perimeter of the park from below the main entrance. It starts as a straight terraced path cut into the grassed sloping eastern bank which leads south from the shelter to a set of balustraded steps which run along the southern boundary of the site. The iron railings formerly alongside this part of the path leading west down to the River Wensum have been removed. The area has been subject to some recent (late C20) reworking which includes the addition of a picnic platform by the water's edge. The path then picks up the line of the edge of two paddling pools scooped out of the river bank, a feature pre-dating the 1920s work. Grass banks to the west run down to the river edge, on which stands the brick-built toilet block. Beside this is the southern end of a watercourse which was cut to channel river water through the park from the northern boundary in the form of a stream, widened in parts to create pools and with a small island. The watercourse was crossed by wooden footbridges (replacements of the originals now gone, 1999). The land between the stream and the River Wensum was originally planted up as a woodland water garden but is now (2000) overgrown. This was also the site of the original open-air swimming pool. To the north-east of the cut is an informal area of lightly wooded lawns and beyond this, occupying the north-east strip of land adjacent to the road, an enclosed children's playground. From here the perimeter path leads back, parallel to the road, to the main entrance.

REFERENCES

G Goreham, *The parks and open spaces of Norwich* (1961) *The Norwich Parks*, (Norwich City Council internal report 1993)

Maps A Sandys-Winsch, *Plan of Wensum Park*, 1928 (City Hall, Norwich)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 3rd edition published 1926

Description written: December 1999 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: March 2001

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.