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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BROCKWELL PARK

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Name:	BROCKWELL PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Lambeth (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.450011 Longitude: -0.10670015 National Grid Reference: TQ 31658 74036 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000794 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

A C19 park and gardens, since 1892 a public park. The park is noted for the late C19/early C20 adaptation of the walled garden by J J Sexby to a formal flower garden.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Chosen in favour of neighbouring Raleigh House, Brockwell Park was purchased in 1891 for £12,000 in order to provide a public park in the area east of Brixton in south London. The money was raised by the London County Council, the Charity Commission, Lambeth, Camberwell, and Newington Vestries, and the Ecclesiastical Committee. The main portion, comprising the C19 Brockwell Hall with its park, orchard, and kitchen garden (33ha), was opened to the public on Whit Monday 1892. A narrow strip of meadow land and two small plots of ground owned by the neighbouring Blackburn estate were acquired for the purpose of making a new entrance to the north, and this was opened in 1896. In 1901 Parliament sanctioned the purchase of a further 17ha of land, the remaining part of the Blackburn estate lying to the north of Brockwell Park. The purchase included Clarence House, Brockwell House, and two houses fronting Dulwich Road which were known as Brockwell Terrace. This land was conveyed to the Council in 1901 and about half was incorporated into the park; the extension was opened in 1903. The four houses were demolished as their leases expired, the last in 1923, and their sites incorporated into the park. In 1898 the Burroughs Wellcome Company (later becoming the Wellcome Trust) established their physiological research laboratory centre at Brockwell Park. They remained at the site until about 1919 before moving to Langley Court in Beckenham, after which the laboratories were subsequently demolished (Tansey, 1989; 16).

Brockwell Park is today (1997) managed by Lambeth Borough Council as a public park and retains much of its original design.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Brockwell Park is situated in the London Borough of Lambeth, in an area of high density residential housing. Three main roads skirt the park: Norwood Road to the south-east, Dulwich Road to the north-east, and Tulse Hill to the west, while a smaller residential road, Brockwell Park Gardens, provides the boundary to the south. The 50ha site is undulating, rising to an eminence in the south centre, in the region of the house, with open parkland, scattered mature trees, and tarmac paths between the main features.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance is to the north-east, at the junction of Dulwich Road and Norwood Road, 250m south-west of Herne Hill station. Three paths run from the entrance: two continue around the perimeter of the park to the north-west and south, while the third follows the line of the original entrance drive up the hill to the mansion to the south-west. Additional entrances include the Arlingford Road entrance situated to the north of the site. This was made in 1895 when an additional 3.5 acres (c 1.5ha) was purchased by the County Council. None of the lodges marked as such on the 1901 OS map survive today (1997), although New Lodge (listed grade II) on the east side of the park, recorded on the 1901 OS map but not identified as a lodge, remains.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The mansion which stood in Brockwell Park for some 300 years was pulled down after a Mr Ogbourne sold the property, in 1809, to John Blades, later Sheriff of the City of London. Blades had the present mansion (listed grade II*) erected to the designs of D Reddell Roper. The new house was built on an elevated position, well away from the site of the old one which lay close to what is now Norwood Road. The new mansion, Brockwell Hall, but by 1901 called the Hall, was further altered or repaired by J B Papworth c 1820. The two-storey mansion is built of greyish yellow brick with ashlar dressings. There are five stone steps up to the central north-west-facing porch, which has a pair of Ionic columns and a balustraded balcony over. The stable block and coach houses (listed grade II) of yellow brick, which lie to the south-west of the mansion, today (1997) house a restaurant, the stables providing storage and work space for the grounds maintenance staff.

There are good views out across the park and houses to Herne Hill church to the north-east.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the north-west of the mansion is massed annual bedding, to the south-east, terraces and further areas of bedding and borders. The C19 Gymnasium situated between the mansion and the stables was removed by the mid C20.

Some 70m to the west of the mansion is the Tritton Clock Tower (listed grade II), a square tower of cast iron on a square plinth with pinnacles at right-angles and ornamental panelling to the plinth and sides. The Tower holds four clock faces and a small plaque on the south-west side records that the clock was a gift of Charles Earnest Tritton, MP for Norwood, in 1897. Tritton was a prominent member of the committee which persuaded the LCC to purchase the remainder of the Blackburn estate in 1903. The rustic bandstand (the upper part of which was used as a pigeon house), was situated c 50m to the north of the mansion but by c 1960 had been replaced by an open-air theatre. This in turn had, by 1997, been replaced by basketball courts.

A path leads north-west past the Tower and the walled garden which has, in the centre of the south-east wall, a small stucco building with a blank pedimented portico on octagonal wood columns to the south (listed, with the walls of the garden, grade II). The path continues to a shallow concrete paddling pool and picnic area, enclosed by a clipped yew hedge and separated from the C19 water garden by c 15m of sloping grass and an iron fence.

The water garden consists of a large pond to the south and two smaller ones to the north, the third draining into a stream which runs under a late C20 stone bridge before disappearing into the ground. There is a good variety of trees and flowering shrubs planted around the edges of the pools. Three pools are marked on the 1st edition OS map of 1870. One was enlarged by 1894 (OS) to provide the Lake which was used, at certain hours, as a bathing pool. The water garden was further extended to the north when the small parcel of land from the Blackburn estate was added c 1896. The new ground contained two small pools which were later enlarged and formed into artificial lakes connected by a rocky channel and embellished with cascades and marginal planting. The waters in the new ground were connected to the bathing lake and other pools to the south by a miniature waterfall. The water left the last lake by a small stream which flowed out of the park near the Arlingford Road entrance. The pools were further described in 1898 (Sexby) as being artistically arranged with rustic bridges and waterfalls between them. Between 1921 and 1934 the small pools to the south of the Lake were made into a paddling pool and bathing was regularised when the open-air swimming pool was opened in 1937.

PARK When the site was purchased it was already laid out as parkland with old oaks, limes, and elms. Ninety old elms are recorded (Draper 1978) as being felled c 1970 because of Dutch elm disease. Open parkland, boundary belts, and scattered mature trees remain from the C19 landscape.

The late C19 tradition of sports in Brockwell Park is retained with the football pitches and their facilities to the north and north-east of the site. Tennis courts and a bowling green are situated c 300m to the north-west of the mansion, and a children's

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playground, established in the mid 1920s and later extended, is situated adjacent to the Arlingford Road entrance. The open-air swimming pool (opened 1937) still (1997) retains its popularity.

KITCHEN GARDEN Some 200m north-west of the mansion is the walled kitchen garden which J J Sexby of London County Council adapted in the late C19 to create a formal garden of massed bedding, rose beds, and topiary around a central fountain. The fountain has been replaced by a pool but the well which was retained from the kitchen garden survives in the south-west corner. The topiary no longer survives but a mature yew hedge has been fashioned into an arch with linear crazy paving paths leading around and between the rose beds, arbours, and herbaceous borders. The spire of nearby Trinity Church to the south, and the mansion to the east, can be seen (in the winter) when looking across the central pool.

REFERENCES

J J Sexby, *The Municipal Parks and Gardens of London* (1898), pp 71-9 E Cecil, *London Parks and Gardens* (1907), pp 170-4 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 2 South* (1983), pp 376-7 M P G Draper, *Lambeth's Open Spaces An Historical Account* (1979) Tansey, M *The Wellcome physiological Research Laboratories 1894-1904. Medical History*, Volume 33 (1989), 1-41

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1870 2nd edition published 1901 1916 edition OS 60" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1870 2nd edition published 1894 1920 edition 1934 edition

Description written: October 1997 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: July 2001

This list entry was subject to a Minor Enhancement on 23/04/2020

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.