

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CHURCHTOWN BOTANIC GARDENS

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Name: CHURCHTOWN BOTANIC GARDENS

District: Sefton (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.662005
Longitude: -2.9585821
National Grid Reference: SD 36754 18818
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1000995
Date first listed: 01-Feb-1986

Details

SUMMARY OF HISTORIC INTEREST

A public park formed from botanical gardens opened in 1875 which were laid out by John Shaw of Manchester (fl 1845-90). The gardens were acquired by Southport Corporation and opened as a public park in 1937.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Churchtown Botanic Gardens were formed from land acquired in 1874 by a group of local gentlemen and the gardens were run as a commercial venture funded from entrance fees. In 1932 they were sold to a private developer and Southport Corporation bought the site, with money raised by public subscription for the King George V Memorial Fund, to secure it as a public amenity.

DESCRIPTION LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Botanic Gardens are situated on the eastern edge of the centre of Churchtown, a suburb of Southport, in an area of low-lying flat land. The 32ha site is bounded by Botanic Road to the south and Bankfield Lane to the east, where the boundary is formed by a brick wall. The northern and western boundaries are formed by fences and walls dividing the park from playing fields and other open land to the west, and areas of parking and private housing to the north. To the south, on the south side of Botanic Road, are the grounds of Meols Hall, while to the east and north are residential areas; the centre of the village lies to the west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are three entrances to the gardens. The principal entrance on Botanic Road is formed by a pair of substantial lodges of c 1875 flanking ornamental iron gates. This was the only entrance to the site before it was acquired by Southport Corporation. An entrance on Bankfield Lane has ornamental iron gates and piers (early C19 with C20 reproduction gates, listed grade II). An entrance at the north end of the site consists of C20 ornamental iron gates and brick walls.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The principal buildings are ranged along the western side of the site. Some 60m north of the Botanic Road entrance is a museum designed by Mellor & Sutton c 1876. The museum originally occupied the upper floor of the building with refreshment rooms on the ground floor. Both floors are now (1997) used for museum purposes and a later C20 conservatory is attached to the front of the building, to the north side of the entrance.

Immediately north of the museum is a late C19/early C20 cafe with large windows affording views of the park for diners. Some 20m north of this is the Fernery (c 1876, listed grade II). This is a plain building externally since the eastern elevation was screened by a conservatory which appears on the large-scale OS map published 1911 but not on the later 6" edition of 1938.

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Inside it has rustic stone grottos, fountains, rockwork and mirrors. Immediately west of the Fernery is a working nursery which has glasshouses of various C20 dates.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The gardens are articulated around a lake formed from a stream called The Pool and known as the Serpentine for its shape, which runs north/south and divides the park into two distinct areas. There is a boathouse at the southern end of the lake. The museum and other main buildings are situated on the south-western side of the lake c 60m north of the main entrance; the layout here is of formal character, contrasting with a less formal layout on the east side of the lake. The main entrance on Botanic Road has a path leading north to the principal buildings and there are raised beds immediately to the north and east. A late C20 aviary is situated c 30m north-east of the entrance. To the north a terrace, laid out with geometric beds used for summer bedding displays, fronts the Fernery, and steps lead down to the Serpentine. To the north of the Fernery is an open lawn with specimen trees and a belt of trees screening the western boundary. Paths lead from here to the northern end of the lake.

The Serpentine is crossed by two ornamental cast-iron footbridges, one towards the south end of the lake c 50m east of the Museum, the other towards the north end c 200m north of the first bridge. They lead to walks along the lake's edge and to curving walks through the park. On the east side of the Serpentine rockwork and rustic tunnels are situated a few metres from both footbridges; adjoining the northern tunnel is a rustic stone arch. The area on the east side of the lake is characterised by banks formed from spoil from the lake planted with trees. These screen different part of the gardens from one another. In this way much of the Bankfield Lane boundary is screened and a succession of areas open into one another as curving paths are followed around the site and back towards the Serpentine. A bandstand is situated in an informal lawn c 70m west of the Bankfield Lane entrance and a red-brick lodge, shown on the 1911 OS map but not on the 1893 edition, is situated c 50m north of this entrance.

The King George V playing fields, which were created following acquisition of the gardens by the Corporation, are situated between banks planted with trees in the north-eastern corner of the site on an area shown as a recreation ground on the large-scale OS map published 1893. Immediately south of this area there are two bowling greens and a c 1937 pavilion. To the west of the greens there is a children's playground and 'crazy golf' course. These recreational facilities are on the site of glasshouses and an orchard or arboretum shown on the 1893 map. Apart from the area where the conservatory was removed, this part of the park is the only one to be substantially changed from the layout shown in 1893.

REFERENCES The Gardeners' Chronicle IV, no 86 (21 August 1875), pp 229-30 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North Lancashire* (1969), p 100 F A Bailey, *A History of Southport* (1992), p 219 R E Marston, *The Botanic Gardens Museum Souvenir Guide* (nd, c 1996)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: Lancashire sheet LXXV NE, 1st edition published 1848 Lancashire sheet LXXV NE, revision of 1926 with additions 1938 OS 25" to 1 mile: published 1893 published 1911

Archival items

Typescript historical notes mainly deriving from press reports, (nd) (Sefton Borough Council Planning Department)

Description written: April 1997 Amended: June 1998 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: March 1999

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.