

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE BARBICAN

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Name:	THE BARBICAN
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	City and County of the City of London (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.519900 Longitude: -0.093842851 National Grid Reference: TQ 32349 81831 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001668 Date first listed: 20-Feb-2003

Details

A group of public, communal, and domestic gardens, courtyards, and squares of 1962-82 forming an integral part of a housing estate designed by Chamberlin Powell and Bon with Ove Arup and Partners for the Corporation of London.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The Barbican encloses the medieval and later St Giles' church and the site of its former churchyard, and mainly covers the site of late C19 industrial warehouses which were bombed during the Second World War. After the bombing, the Corporation of London, who owned the area, identified it for commercial use (Forshaw and Abercrombie, 1943). In 1951 however part of the site was earmarked for residential development. Subsequently a competition was held which was won by the architect Geoffrey Powell, who had formed a partnership with the architects Chamberlin and Bon (CPB). The work of CPB was strongly influenced by the architecture of Le Corbusier (Building 1978). CPB produced their first detailed plans for The Barbican in 1956, which were revised in early 1959 and approved in December that year. In 1960, Ove Arup and Partners were appointed as structural engineers. Work on The Barbican did not start until 1963, and the estate was not completed until 1973.

The series of public, communal, and domestic gardens, courtyards, and squares forms an integral part of the architecture of The Barbican, focused on the public open space occupied by the main canal in front of the Arts Centre. Built-in plant boxes were specifically designed for the balconies of the residential blocks, as were large concrete planters to line the raised walks. Series of small private gardens were also designed, such as, for example, for the lower-level apartments in Andrewes House and the various mews houses.

The site remains (2002) in the ownership of the Corporation of London with properties being sold leasehold to individuals.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Barbican, which covers an area of c 15ha, is situated in a densely built up area in the City of London. Immediately to its north lies the YMCA building and Golden Lane Housing Estate (1950s). To the east the site is bounded by Silk Street and Moor Lane, with Moorgate Tube Station beyond. The southern boundary is formed by London Wall, Wood Street, and Fore Street, and the western boundary by Aldersgate Street and Barbican

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Tube Station. The site rises above street level, with car parking below it, and comprises terraces and buildings built on various levels linked by a network of steps, raised walks, and pedestrian bridges.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Surrounding roads, and in particular Barbican Tube Station situated to the west, or Moorgate Tube Station to the east of the estate, allow pedestrian access to The Barbican. The estate can also be approached by car from Aldersgate Street to the west or London Wall, Wood Street, and Fore Street to the south, where various entrances give access to the car parks situated below The Barbican.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS The Barbican is a largely residential estate set on a raised pedestrian podium above ground-level car parking, built 1962-82 by the architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon. It comprises 2113 flats, maisonettes, and terraced houses and a number of communal and public buildings including the Arts Centre, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the City of London School for Girls (all listed grade II), and St Giles' church (listed grade I). From within the various buildings of the estate are extensive and fine views of the gardens.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The main layout consists of two large lawns planted with trees, one in the east part of the site, surrounded by Speed House, Willoughby House, Andrewes House, and Gilbert House, and the other to the west surrounded by Defoe House, Seddon House, Thomas More House, and Mountjoy House. A formal canal running west to east through the centre of the site links the lawns, and at its east end, in front of Willoughby House, flows over a large cascade. From here the canal runs westwards underneath Gilbert House and is set with a series of fountains in a grid pattern. Along the north side of the canal, to the south of, and overlooked by, the Arts Centre, is Lakeside Terrace, incorporating a series of eight further fountains. Five are circular and recessed into the terrace with linked steps down to the canal. A further three, two semicircular, are set on the edge of the terrace. Along the south side of the canal, just east of Gilbert House, is a series of small circular islands constructed of red brick with seating areas and flower beds, which can be accessed from a spur on the north front of Andrewes House. Further westwards, west of Gilbert House, along the north side of the canal, are three semicircular fountains with a terrace beyond. A further L-shaped canal runs south from the City of London School for Girls, then to Mountjoy House; the eastern arm connects Mountjoy House and the terraced housing called Wallside and The Postern. The two canals surround a brick-paved square on three sides, known as St Giles Terrace, which covers the former churchyard of St Giles' church, the latter standing just off-centre in the square. Part of the building of The City of London School for Girls stands within the north-west corner of the square. In the square north of St Giles' church are a series of rectangular and semicircular raised beds in which C18 and C19 gravestones of the former churchyard are set. The beds are lined with Victorian-style lamp posts and bollards introduced in the late 1980s. On the south side of the square, small steps lead down through the retaining wall, in which old gravestones have been re-set, to the level of the canal from where a small bridge leads into a secluded communal garden which incorporates the excavated footings of the city's Roman wall (scheduled ancient monument). The remains of the Roman wall lead southwards, bounding the east side of a lawn to the east of the Museum of London, beyond which wall and lawn lies the garden of the Barber Surgeon's Hall (outside the area here registered).

In the northern part of The Barbican lies the Arts Centre with, adjacent to its east, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Attached to the south-east of the Arts Centre, several storeys above ground level, is a large conservatory housing a collection of tropical trees and plants, an aviary, and a small lake. Several doorways lead from the Conservatory south and south-east onto the roof of the Arts Centre, to an alpine garden with a pond, various sculptures, and a pergola walk. North-west of the Arts Centre lies Frobisher Crescent, which design is based on Jewin Crescent that formerly stood here and was damaged during the Second World War. The public sculpture display area planned by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon for Frobisher Crescent was never used as such. In the far northern part of the site stand three 125m high, triangular residential tower blocks: Lauderdale Tower, Shakespeare Tower, and Cromwell Tower, following the line of Beech Street, with John Trundle Court, Bryer Court, Ben Johnson House, and Breton House beyond the road. These residential blocks and the Towers are set in extensive terrace gardens paved in red brick and adorned with ponds, fountains, sculptures, flower beds, and borders. In particular Beech Gardens lies to the north of the estate, surrounded by Bunyan Court, Bryer Court, and John Trundle House, laid out to incorporate a small water feature with a fountain and various raised beds. The terrace gardens originate from the 1970s, and were refurbished in 1983 by Building Design Partnership for the Corporation of London.

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The Barbican includes various small private gardens, including roof gardens, attached to individual apartments or mews houses, and the balconies on the exterior of the residential buildings contain built-in concrete plant boxes creating an effect of hanging gardens. The design and structural planting of these gardens and balconies is uniform, and closely follows the lines and rhythm of the architecture.

REFERENCES

The Builder, (1 June 1956), p 623; (29 May 1959), pp 949-51 Architects' Journal, (7 June 1956), pp 632-6; (28 May 1959), pp 795-6; (4 June 1959), pp 34-41 Architectural Design, (October 1959), pp 416-19; (September 1960), p 365; (July 1970), p 354
E Carter, The Future of London (1962) F E Cleary, The Flowering City (1969), p 47 Building, (16 June 1978) S Bradley and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: London 1 The City of London (1997), pp 281-6

Maps Forshaw and Abercrombie, County of London Plan, 1943 (in Carter 1962)

Description written: March 2002 Amended: July 2002; February 2003 (SR) Register Inspector: FDM Edited: November 2003

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.