

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

NEWSHAM PARK

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| Name: | NEWSHAM PARK |
| District: | Liverpool (Metropolitan Authority) |
| Parish: | Non Civil Parish |
| label.localisation: | Latitude: 53.420033 Longitude: -2.9387894 National Grid Reference: SJ 37707 91881 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF) |
| label.overview: | Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001536 Date first listed: 27-Jun-2001 |

Details

A public park commenced in 1865 to a scheme by Edward Kemp with late C19 and early C20 additions. This may have been his first solo venture in public park design.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1846 Liverpool Corporation bought the bulk of the Newsham estate for £85,000 for the purpose of a public park (Porcupine 1867). The purchase of c 97ha included Newsham House, a late C18 mansion built for the Molyneux family, and adjoining farmland. In 1847 the Corporation purchased the Yellow House estate, some 18ha lying between the Newsham land and the turnpike road (Prescot Road) to the south. To the west of the Yellow House estate, on land outside the ownership of the Corporation, villas were built on Prescot Road, Elm Vale, Prospect Vale, and Fairfield Crescent in the period 1835-50.

In 1850 the Liverpool Improvement Committee advertised for plans to be submitted for the improvement of the borough and the laying out of unoccupied lands. The plan selected, by H P Horner, was for a 'belt of garden or parkland', including nine public parks, to be formed between the town, as it then existed, and any further urban development (The Builder 1850); the plan was not adopted due to lack of funds. Sheil Road was constructed in 1862 and the London & North Western Railway's Bootle branch opened in 1866, both running through and dividing the Corporation's land. The LNWR built a substantial bridge with castellated stone parapet to give access to the proposed park from the east. A small public park, Sheil Park, to the west of Sheil Road, was opened in 1864.

In 1864 Edward Kemp (1817-91) was commissioned to prepare a design for Newsham Park. Trained by Sir Joseph Paxton (1803-65), Kemp was responsible for the laying out of Birkenhead Park (qv), was appointed superintendent there in 1845 and, in 1847, also set up in private practice. Kemp was responsible for laying out Hesketh Park (qv) in Southport c 1864?8, although the design is thought to be by Paxton (Chadwick 1961). Kemp was responsible for designs for Stanley Park (qv), Liverpool in c 1866, Grosvenor Park, Chester (qv) in c 1867, and Congleton Park (qv) which opened in 1871.

Kemp's plan of 1864, submitted as a preliminary sketch, and a lengthy letter describing his design approach, were considered by the Liverpool Finance Committee in November 1864 and referred to the Borough Surveyor, Mr Weightman, and Architect, Mr Robson. These two conferred with Kemp whose revised plan was approved by the Finance Committee in December 1864. The revised scheme included c 22ha to be sold as building plots, to maximise potential income, and a reduced area of water in order to remove the need for an expensive road bridge. Work on the park commenced in 1865.

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Kemp proposed the demolition of Newsham House, but in 1866?7 it was refurbished for use as a Judges' Lodging. The sale of building plots, initially on seventy-five-year leases, was not successful and of ninety-one lots offered at auction in 1867 only five were sold at that time. The gradual sale of building plots resulted in substantial semi-detached houses being built around the park during the 1870s-90s, the last plots being developed in 1906. In 1870 the trustees of the Seamen's Orphanage were given land adjacent to the railway free of charge, and unsold plots were later incorporated into the park. In the late C19 Newsham Park received a number of royal visitors including Queen Victoria and the Shah of Persia, both of whom stayed at Newsham House. Newsham Park remains (2001) in use as a public park in the ownership of Liverpool Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Newsham Park lies 3.5km north-east of Liverpool city centre and is c 70ha in area. The boundary with Sheil Road is marked by 1.2m high railings of c 1900 set on a stone plinth. To the north-west and north substantial three- and four-storey semi-detached late C19 housing faces on to the park across Judges' Drive and Newsham Drive, with Newsham House set within wooded grounds at the north-west corner. To the north-east, Park Hospital, the former Royal Liverpool Seamen's Orphan Institution built by the trustees of the Seamen's Orphanage, faces onto the park across Orphan Drive. This substantial brick building with a five-storey square tower was built in 1871?4 to the designs of Alfred Waterhouse; it now has a late C20 single-storey extension to the north.

Within the park, the boundaries to the public roads of Judges' Drive to the west, Newsham Drive to the north, Orphan Drive to the east, Prescott Drive to the south, and Gardner's Drive at the centre are generally unmarked. To the south-east the boundary with the railway line is marked by a c 1.6m high stone wall and tree planting. To the south late C19 housing, some in derelict condition, faces the park across Prescott Drive, with late C20 infill to some plots. In the south-west, the boundaries adjacent to Prospect Vale and Fairfield Crescent are marked by c 1.2m high late C19 railings. The boundary with houses on Fairfield Crescent which back onto the park is marked by a c 2.2m high brick wall; the southern boundary to Carstairs Road is similar. The site rises to the west, generally in a gentle slope, with mounding around the lakes and pleasure gardens in the north-east of the park. The surrounding area is largely residential with late C19 terraced housing to the south and north and late C20 housing, including two tower blocks on the site of Sheil Park, to the west. To the east of the southern park area, an industrial area adjoins the railway line on the site of a former cattle market and abattoir.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance is from Sheil Road to the west, giving access to Gardner's Drive. A c 7m wide carriage entrance is flanked by two pedestrian entrances set between brick piers with stone detailing, all without gates. The outer piers are square in plan with the central piers cruciform and surmounted by iron three-lamp candelabrum. The entrance is set back from Sheil Road with late C19 railings to either side. South of the entrance there is a lodge with a range of stores; built in 1898, this is in Vernacular Revival style, with brickwork and half timbering below steeply pitched tiled roofs. In the south-east corner of the park the approach from Prescott Road gives access to Prescott Drive. The three entrances are again marked by piers similar to those on Sheil Road and, to the east, a small, late C19 single-storey brick lodge with late C20 alterations. A second entrance from Prescott Road 340m to the west has similar piers but with one central pier missing and with C20 bollards to control vehicular access. In the south-west of the park pedestrian entrances from Prospect Vale and Fairfield Crescent are formed by breaks in the railings. Gardner's Drive meets Balmoral Road to the south, again blocked with C20 bollards 180m east of the Sheil Road entrance. There are roads into the park at the north-west corner, from the junction of Sheil Road and Rocky Lane onto Newsham Drive, and at the north-east corner from West Derby Road onto Orphan Drive. To the east, Lister Drive enters the park over the railway bridge with a sharp bend to the south and descent to a junction with Orphan Drive; there is a ramped pedestrian entrance to the north. The high retaining wall to the road is in sandstone with a castellated parapet and buttressing. The bridge is on an axis with the principal Sheil Road entrance. The intention to join the two entrances in a direct line, indicated by two lines of trees on the OS map of 1893, was dropped in the late 1880s on the grounds of cost (Hughes 1995).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The park is divided into two irregular areas by Gardner's Drive, with the larger section to the north and the smaller to the south. The north area has a perimeter carriage drive formed by Judges' Drive, Newsham Drive, Orphan Drive, and Gardner's Drive with junctions marked by triangular grass beds planted with trees. Late C20 concrete

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barriers limit vehicle circulation through the park. In the north-east section of the park an irregular lake is surrounded by mounded grass banks with belts of mature trees. Some 200m north-west of the railway bridge, a pedestrian bridge with c 1m high metal railings crosses a narrow neck of the lake in two spans. To the east and south the bank of the lake is enclosed with c 1m high hoop-topped railings, similar to those shown on postcards of the park of c 1900. Adjoining Newsham Drive, to the north-west of the lake, an area of ornamental gardens is laid out with beds set in sloping lawns between curving paths. Immediately east of the lake winding paths lead through trees on contoured mounding. A circular grass bed in this area, 250m west-north-west of the railway bridge, indicates the site of a former aviary (OS 1905).

South of the lake a round pond is enclosed by a path and trees and with hoop-topped railings to the east bank adjoining Orphan Drive. West of the pond are two tennis courts and, 580m east-north-east of the main Sheil Road entrance, a C20 children's play area. The north-west area of the park is laid to grass and used in part for sports pitches. A path from the lake bridge leads west across this area to Denman Road at its junction with Judges' Drive. This path intersects with a path running south-west from Newsham Drive to Gardner's Drive 330m north-east of the Sheil Road entrance. Both paths and the boundary with adjoining drives are partially tree-lined. In the west of the park, from the high ground adjoining Judges' Drive there are views out to the east to distant hills.

Extending north from the main entrance a 50m wide strip of land between Sheil Road and Denman Drive is laid out with lawns enclosed by shrub planting. A central path running north from Gardner's Drive divides around three circular beds with stone surrounds marking former fountain positions. The area was laid out in 1902 on unsold building plots. A park compound lies immediately to the east of the Sheil Road lodge. East of the compound, a footpath runs parallel and centrally through the c 50m wide grassed area to the south of Gardner's Drive known as the Boulevard, with tree planting to the park boundary. The Boulevard continues south and south-west following the boundary with housing on Fairfield Crescent before terminating 50m east of the bandstand. Some 280m south-south-west of the railway bridge stands the circular stone base of a fountain, formerly one of four within the Boulevard (1905 OS). The Boulevard was laid out in c 1899 on unsold building plots.

In the south section of the park a tree-lined path follows the inner line of the Boulevard, dividing 380m south-west of the railway bridge where a further path leads south to Prescott Drive. To the south-west of this junction there are two bowling greens, with a small pavilion to the north, the whole enclosed by a low hedge to the east and by a line of trees to the north and south. To the north the greens are also enclosed by c 1900 railings. Similar railings are shown enclosing ornamental beds in the park on a postcard of c 1900. In the south-west area, adjoining Prospect Vale, a bandstand is set within a circle of 0.9m high hoop-topped railings. The late C19 bandstand is octagonal, with bracketed cast-iron columns on a brick base with stone detailing below a low bell-shaped roof. From the Prescott Road entrance in the south-east corner of the park, an informal path runs north-north-west adjacent to the eastern boundary to the railway. The area to the west of the path is laid to grass.

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Description written: April 2001 Amended: May 2001 Register Inspector: HMT Edited: April 2002

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.