

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

SEFTON PARK

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

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**SEFTON PARK**

Name:	SEFTON PARK
District:	Liverpool (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.381758 Longitude: -2.9387739 National Grid Reference: SJ 37652 87623 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1000999 Date first listed: 01-Feb-1986 Date of most recent amendment: 28-Aug-2013 Statutory Address 1: Sefton Park, Liverpool, L17 1AP

## Historique de la conservation

The idea of a belt of boulevards and parks around the City of Liverpool was proposed during the 1850s, but it was not until the 1860s that the Corporation responded by buying land for three parks in the city (including Stanley Park qv). Sefton Park was formed from agricultural land purchased in 1864 from Lord Sefton and Mr Livingstone. In 1866 a brief was issued for a public competition for the design of the park. There were twenty-nine entries and the winners were Edouard André (1840-1911) and Lewis Hornblower (1823-79), a Liverpool architect. Rockwork in the park was designed by a French craftsman, Monsieur Combaz (Land Use Consultants 1992). The park was opened by Prince Arthur in 1872, though it had not been completed by that time. Work proceeded but escalating costs meant that the plans had to be curtailed and the proposed botanic gardens, formal garden and grand conservatory had to be abandoned.

## Details

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Sefton Park is situated c 4km south-east of Liverpool city centre, in rolling land which falls slightly to the south and west and is bisected by a valley running from north to south across the site. The area is generally residential. The 108ha park is enclosed by a system of curving roads laid out to form its boundaries. These are, in clockwise direction starting at the northern boundary: Croxteth Drive, Greenbank Drive, Mossley Hill Drive, and Aigburth Drive. The setting of the park is formed by an encircling belt of land which was divided into building plots for villas overlooking the park. The money raised from the sale of plots was used to help pay for the construction of the park. Not all of the plots were developed as planned and there are areas of later C20 building, but where villas were built and survive they form an important planned element to the setting of the park.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The principal entrance is on the north-west side of the park on Ullet Road, at the head of a drive leading to the junction of Aigburth Drive and Croxteth Drive. It is marked by a stone screen with gate piers (c.1870, listed Grade II). On the south side of the entrance is a lodge called Princes Lodge (listed Grade II). Another entrance is situated on the south side of the site at the junction of Aigburth Drive and Mossley Hill Drive. This consists of a stone screen flanked

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*SEFTON PARK*

by gate piers (c.1870, listed Grade II). A lodge known as Fulwood Lodge (listed Grade II) is situated on the east side of this entrance. Both lodges were designed by Lewis Hornblower c 1870.

Entrances to the park are in many cases related to the entrances to the encircling belt of building plots. Thus at the junction of Lark Lane and Linnet Lane a drive leads towards the park; its entrance has stone gate piers of a similar design to those of the two principal entrances. Secondary stone gate piers of a different design mark the entrance to the park itself, and similar gate piers mark other entrances to the park or the points at which roads lead from it. The sweeping curved drives leading from the encircling roads are designed such that the boundary is integrated with the approaches.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The park is divided into interlocking elliptical and circular areas formed by the curving boundary roads and the paths which lead from them. This design has close parallels with Parisian parks such as Parc de Buttes-Chaumont designed by Jean-Charles Alphand (1817-91), and a number of design principles later published by Alphand were used in Sefton Park (Land Use Consultants 1992). These include the desirability of paths with easy curves, rather than straight lines, path intersections at acute rather than right angles, and the use of planting and mounding to conceal paths from one another. The enclosed spaces formed a series of discrete areas which could be used for different purposes, and sites for various sporting activities were quickly established within the park. Its design was seen as a useful way of accommodating sporting and other leisure or promenading activities on one site. The general character of the park is of open areas screened from one another by trees, with a core of more intimate wooded areas around the streams and lakes.

The main entrance on the north side leads to a straight avenue, which although not part of the original André and Hornblower design was already in existence by 1882 (Land Use Consultants 1992). At one end, c 40m south of the entrance, is a memorial to Samuel Smith in the form of a granite obelisk with drinking fountains at the base (1906, listed Grade II). Cast-iron lampstands survive along this route, and sporadically elsewhere. Replacement lighting has been reintroduced along key park drives. The path runs south-east and terminates at a fountain at the intersection of several curving paths. The fountain was formerly surmounted by a statue of Eros by Alfred Gilbert (1932, listed Grade II). The fountain base has been restored to working order and is surmounted by a replica of Eros; the original is with the National Museums Liverpool. Some 40m north of this is a cafe of mid C20 date which includes a ranger base/community room. The aviary that once stood behind the cafe has been removed and replaced by a sweeping wall.

On the north-west side of the site is a range of recreational facilities with tennis courts c 150m south-west of the cafe and bowling greens c 250m north-west of it. A separate bowling green with an octagonal pavilion is situated c 150m south of the cafe. In the north-east part of the site, c 200m west of the junction of Croxteth Drive and Greenbank Drive, is a large cricket pavilion, probably of early C20 date, and a fenced cricket pitch. Immediately south of this there is a fenced area of allotments. Some 250m west of the junction of Mossley Hill Drive and Ibbotson's Lane is a large conservatory called the Palm House which was designed by Mackenzie and Moncur and erected in 1896 (listed Grade II\*). It is positioned on a mound which André and Hornblower had originally intended for a bandstand (Land Use Consultants 1992) within a circular area bounded by cast-iron railings. The Palm House was fully restored and re-opened in 2001. Statuary around the Palm House was restored in the project and includes both internal pieces and eight external figures depicting scientists, explorers, artists etc. Views across the park are obtained from this building and it can be glimpsed from a variety of different positions. Some 30m south of the Palm House, on a promontory overlooking a stream, is a statue of William Rathbone (1787-1868), the Liverpool politician and social reformer, by J H Foley (1874-7, listed Grade II). The plinth on which it stands had inset panels with inscriptions and reliefs.

A stream runs south-westwards across the park from a point c 70m south of the junction of Ibbotson's Lane and Mossley Hill Drive and c 220m east of the Palm House. It emerges from beneath a bridge with cast-iron railings and trellis work (c 1870, listed Grade II) which carries Mossley Hill Drive, and as it enters the park it runs through a series of rockwork pools and cascades called The Dell (listed Grade II). It continues through the park and is crossed by stepping stones in various places before joining the north-east end of a large lake situated in the south-west part of the park. A second stream which bisects the site from north to south was used to form a series of cascades and pools as it runs to join the north end of the lake. The point at which the stream enters the park, close to the northern boundary c 100m east of the junction of Mossley Hill Drive and Croxteth Drive, is marked by a large rustic rockwork grotto (listed Grade II). The Grotto at the head of the main watercourse

is augmented by a reinstated 'mirror pond'. On the north side of a pool, c 450m south of the grotto, there is a replica of a statue of Peter Pan by Sir George Frampton. The original statue of 1928 has since been restored and moved to a location nearer the Palm House (listed Grade II\*). Further south along the course of the stream, is a pool with a large island on which is situated a 1910s bandstand (listed Grade II, restored 2009-10). Both streams are shown on the OS 1st edition map published 1850.

The lake is a long, narrow stretch of water with a sinuous outline and there is an island near the northern end. On the eastern shore at the south end was a boathouse which was destroyed by fire in 2002; a replacement building was built in 2010, situated c 100m north-east of the Aigburth Drive/ Mossley Hill Drive entrance. On the western shore c 220m north-west of the boathouse is a rockwork tunnel (listed Grade II). A path leads around the edge of the lake and steps lead up from the southern end. Between the steps and the southern park entrance there is a stone drinking fountain with entwined dolphins and a Gothic Revival-style canopy (1870, listed Grade II).

To the south-east quarter of the park is the Field of Hope, an area planted with thousands of daffodil bulbs through a charitable planting programme. A children's play area was introduced to the park and improvements made in 2012.

## Summary

A public park designed in 1867 which was the first to introduce French influence to the design of parks through the designer Edouard André, who had worked with Jean-Charles-Adolphe Alphand on the design of major Parisian parks.

## 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.

## Reasons for Designation

Sefton Park, Liverpool, opened in 1872, is designated at Grade I for the following principal reasons: \* Date: the park is an early example of a municipal park; \* Design: although enhanced, the park's design is essentially unchanged from its original layout of 1867; \* Designer: the park was designed by Edouard André who had worked on Paris's parks, and was the first to introduce French park design to England; \* Historic interest: the park was and is an important element of one of the England's great industrial cities, one of the parks designed to form a green belt around Liverpool; \* Structures: the park retains various C19 and later memorials and structures including the Grade II\* Palm House of 1896; \* Planting: the structural planting is retained and is an important feature of the park.

## Bibliographie

### Books and journals

Holme, CJ , *The Gardens of England in the Northern Counties*, (1911), pl 112

Pevsner, N, *The Buildings of England: South Lancashire*, (1969), pp 233-4

'The Gardener's Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette' in *The Gardener's Chronicle and Agricultural Gazette*: No 30 , (27 July 1872), pp 104-5

'Landscape Design' in *Landscape Design*: Number 139, (1982), pp 11-14

### Other

Anon typescript historical summary and notes on various items within Sefton Park, 1988 (Liverpool City Planning Department),

Collection of early and mid C20 postcard views of the park (Liverpool City Planning Department),

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*SEFTON PARK*

Sefton Park, Liverpool: Restoration Master Plan, (Land Use Consultants (LUC) 1992),

Title: Plan of Sefton Park by the Corporation Surveyor Source Date: 1882 Author: Publisher: Surveyor:

Title: Prize Plan for the Sefton Park Source Date: 1867 Author: Publisher: Surveyor: