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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

QUEEN'S PARK, BRIGHTON

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

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Name:	QUEEN'S PARK, BRIGHTON
District:	The City of Brighton and Hove (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.824681 Longitude: -0.12574810 National Grid Reference: TQ 32106 04467 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001319 Date first listed: 15-Nov-1994

Details

Early C19 park originally planned as the focus of a private housing development, extensively planted up when acquired by Brighton town council as its second public park in 1892.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The earliest park on the site was planned as part of a speculative housing development by John Armstrong. In 1822, Armstrong leased an area of downland on the eastern side of the Steine valley, his intention being to develop it as an area of the new Regency suburbs of Brighton. The central combe was enclosed and laid out as parkland with a carriage drive, and the surrounding plots were sold as development plots for the building of large detached villas. Each of these were to stand in its own garden and have 'an uninterrupted view of the varied scenery of the park, the downs, and the sea' (Brighton Gazette, 23 December and 6 January 1825). Access to 'Brighton Park' as it was called, was permitted by subscription. Armstrong leased an acre of land at the southern end of the site to the 'Royal German Spa', run by Hooper, Struve & Co.

Around 1830, the land was sold on to Thomas Attree, a local solicitor. Attree erected a substantial wall around the 25ha estate, planted a number of major tree clumps in the central park area and, in 1831, commissioned the architect Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860) to build a villa at the northern end of the site. While Attree intended this for his own personal use as a country house on the edge of Brighton, he also continued the original idea of promoting the commercial development of villas around the perimeter of the park. However Cowell's Villa, was the only one to be built at this time.

In 1836, the site's name was changed from 'The Park' to 'Queen's Park' in honour of Queen Adelaide. Visiting in the 1840s, Dr Granville said the park was the 'only decent plantation to be seen near or about Brighton' (quoted in *The Story of Queen's Park*, 1992). Although J C Loudon, visiting the park in 1842, admired the situation and thriving trees which had been established, he criticised their large massing which lacked 'single trees and small groups to break (them)' (*The Gardeners Magazine*, 1842).

Following Attree's death in 1861, the park was sold, the auctioneer suggesting its suitability either for the development of detached villas, or for use as a public park and place of recreation 'such as most large towns now possess'. The estate sold for well under the estimate, being purchased by a Mr Duddell of London. On his death in 1887, the estate failed to sell at auction. In 1890 after negotiations with Duddell's widow, the Race Stand Trustees, namely Aldermen Abbey, Brigden and Ridley and Mr Seymour Burrows purchased the 7ha of parkland including the Spa. The same Trustees had been responsible for securing Preston Park (qv) for the town, which opened to the public in 1883.

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The total cost of acquisition amounted to £13,500, of which £9,500 went to Mrs Duddell and £4,000 to the town council for their work on the roads, sewers, gas and water to be done on her behalf. A minimum value was fixed for the surrounding houses to be erected, with restrictions on design. The town borrowed a further £8,166 to complete the lay-out of the Park, and another £450 to repair the tower, entrance gates and lodges.

George Ward, the Borough's Head Gardener and Francis May, the Borough Surveyor prepared plans for the design of the public park. It was opened to the public on 10 August 1892. A new circular carriageway was formed round the park, its easy gradients involving considerable levelling of the ground surface and elsewhere extensive ground modelling enhanced the variations of the natural topography, particularly on the sides of the combe. A path system over 2.5kms in length of serpentine, gravelled paths leading from the boundary road through the park were laid out and a concrete lake was constructed with a rivulet planted with ferns and creeping plants, and crossed by rustic bridges. Much of the pre-existing planting was rearranged and over nine thousand new shrubs and trees were planted and new raised and mounded flower beds were formed.

Having passed into institutional use, Attree's villa was demolished in 1974. A successful local campaign in the 1970s improved the condition of the Park and led to the formation of the Friends of Queen's Park in 1988. Tree cover in the park was severely reduced as a result of the Great Storm of October 1987.

SITE DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORD, SETTING Queen's Park covering 7ha lies 1km to the east of Brighton town centre. It occupies a steep sided valley with a pronounced fall to the south. There are wide, open views from the park southwards to the sea.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The two main park entrances are at the south end of the site, through arched gateways, Egremont Gate at the north end of Egremont Place, and the second off the north end of Park Street. Five subsidiary points of access lead in from West Drive, North Drive, East Drive and South Avenue, the roads which encircle the park perimeter.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS A rivulet set with cascades runs through the centre of the park, along the course of a rock-lined bed. Originally, this feature started higher up the northern slope, but this northern section was covered over in the mid C20. At its southern end, the water flows over a fall issuing out into the north end of the serpentine lake which occupies 0.5ha at the centre of the southern half of the park. During the 1830s this area had been used for an Archery club, but by 1875 had been replaced by a roller skating rink. The lake was formed as part of the 1890-92 re-landscaping scheme associated with the establishment of the public park. Originally it had two islands, the southern one having been removed in 1900 to increase the area of water. Immediately to the west of the lake is the children's play area, constructed in 1914. It is accompanied by a terrace and cafe.

The circular carriageway constructed in 1892 is bounded along its inner edge by a low stone wall. Originally this was set with iron railings which have been removed. In the centre of the northern half of the site, at the bottom of the combe, stands a substantial drinking fountain, erected in memory of the Trustee's gift, and dedicated in 1893.

Along the eastern side of the park provision is made for games. In the north east corner of the park are hard tennis courts accompanied by a pavilion of the 1920s. Below them, a bowling green set into the hillside was added in 1909. To the south is the site of a second bowling green, now (1996) a scented garden, and further tennis courts. The provision for games was an aspect of the establishment of the public park in the 1890s when grass tennis courts were provided, with new courts and a croquet lawn being added in 1914. Also on this side of the park is the clocktower, erected in 1915 with a bequest from William Godleye, a Brighton tradesman.

At the southern end of the site stands what remains of the Royal Spa. The 'elegant Pump Room intended for the supply of the celebrated Mineral Waters of Germany' was erected on the part of Armstrong's original speculative development let to Hooper Struve & Co., and designed by Sir Charles Barry c 1830. It fell into disuse after 1962 and the façade (c1830 listed grade II), which was all that remained in a salvageable state, was converted as Spa Nursery School (opened 1977 and rebuilt following fire damage, in 1985).

Attree's own villa was demolished in 1974, but the gazebo which stood in the garden, and the Pepperpot, a folly constructed to house a wind wheel for raising water for the villa, survive outside the area registered here. Pennant Lodge (no.30, West

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Drive, 1850s, listed grade II) stands within the original plot of Attree's villa and was restored in 1983 as offices and renamed Queen's Park Villa.

REFERENCES:

Printed material The Story of Queen's Park, The Friends of Queen's Park (1992) The Gardeners Magazine, (1842), pp352-4 Brighton Gazette, 23 December and 6 January 1825

Maps Plan of the park, c.1826 Plan from the Parks Department, 1932

Illustrations Watercolour and lithograph, c.1834/6

Description written: 4 December 1995 Register Inspector: Dr H Jordan Revised HJ: 18 February 1996 Revised: KC January 2000

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.