

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SALTWELL PARK

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Name:	SALTWELL PARK
District:	Gateshead (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.944060 Longitude: -1.6044292 National Grid Reference: NZ 25438 61116 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001182 Date first listed: 01-Jan-1985

Details

Gardens of c 1853-70 incorporated into a public park by Edward Kemp, whose design of 1876 was implemented with some modifications and additions by Borough Surveyor James Bowyer.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The gardens around Saltwell Towers were laid out for stained glass manufacturer William Wailes from the 1850s onwards and were acquired by Gateshead Corporation in 1875 when Wailes ran into financial difficulties. The gardens were being developed before Saltwell Towers was built, and may have been designed by Wailes himself. Following acquisition by Gateshead Council, John Hancock and Edward Kemp (1817-91) were invited to submit designs for the existing gardens and an area of open fields to the north also bought from Wailes. Hancock declined and Kemp drew up a design which was submitted to the Council in 1876. This was implemented over the years which followed by the Borough Surveyor James Bowyer, who designed many of the park buildings. The garden of adjoining Saltwell Grove was added to the site in 1920. The park remains in the ownership of Gateshead Borough Council and is still in use as a public park (1998).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Saltwell Park lies c 1.5km south of the centre of Gateshead on land which slopes down to the west. The c 8ha site is in a residential area with allotment gardens and a cemetery to the west. The boundaries are formed by East Park Road, West Park Road and its continuation Saltwell Road South, Saltwell View to the north and by fencing dividing the park from nurseries and a crematorium to the south.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES An entrance with a lodge on East Park Road was the main entrance to Saltwell Towers and had been laid out by 1853 (OS); the lodge, designed by James Bowyer, was built in 1882. The drive runs westwards, looping southwards through woodland to the house entrance, as shown on the 1853 OS map. It continues to the west side of the site where there is an entrance with elaborate iron gates (Bainbridge & Co, late C19, listed grade II) and a lodge designed by James Bowyer of 1882. There is an entrance with primary and secondary stone gate piers at the north-east tip of the site with paths leading from it into the northern part of the park.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Saltwell Towers (listed grade II) was built in 1871 for William Wailes and lies slightly south of the centre of the park. It is of striking design with polychromatic brickwork and turrets. Wailes continued living in the house until his death in 1881 and the building was subsequently let and then became the subject of various plans for conversion. By 1977

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it had fallen into disrepair and it is currently (1998) in ruinous condition. A stable block (listed grade II) designed in the 1880s by James Bowyer lies c 80m north-east of the house.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The park falls into three main areas. In the centre the gardens relating to Saltwell Towers include a small valley or dene through which runs a stream. To the south are the former gardens of Saltwell Grove, and on the north side of the dene is the area laid out to Kemp's designs on open fields. The whole of the park is enclosed by a band of perimeter planting.

On the east side of Saltwell Towers there is a sunken rectangular garden enclosed by stone walls. A walkway runs around the perimeter and there are octagonal battlemented turrets at the corners with low viewing platforms reached by stone steps (walls, steps, turrets all listed grade II). The walls continue along the south side of the house, break forward (to the south) where they form a ha-ha, and a walkway and octagonal turrets at each end give views over grounds to the north and south. The outline of the walls, a clay pit on the site of the house, and planting along the sides of the dene, are shown on the 1853 OS map. The fact that the garden walls and turrets are of grey stone, contrasting with the polychromatic brickwork of the house, suggests that Wailes changed his plans for the house, or possibly wished to create the impression of a site with a complex history. On the east side of the house there are lawns and immediately north of these there is a large octagonal bowling green, which was designed by Kemp in 1876(7). A pair of cast-iron aviaries (1880s, both listed grade II) lie beyond the green, c 60m north-east of the house. The area south of the house, known as South Park, consists of lawns with winding paths leading through them. A Boer War Memorial (F W Boyle, listed grade II) of 1903 is situated c 100m south of the house.

A steep-sided valley with a stream running through it runs east/west through woodland on the north side of the house and paths run around it and lead over rustic bridges to a pool at the west end, where there are late C20 railings. This area was laid out for Wailes and is shown with paths and footbridges on a conveyance plan of c 1876 which shows some of Kemp's proposals as well as the general layout shown on the 1853 OS map. The path system around the dene was retained but widened in Kemp's proposals. The Charlton Memorial Drinking Fountain (listed grade II) lies alongside a path c 30m north-west of the house. It was erected in 1876 and dedicated to Gateshead's Mayor of 1874-5.

At the west end of the dene, immediately west of the pool, there is a drinking fountain (listed grade II) called the Salte Welle which was reconstructed on the site by Wailes in 1872, having been brought from the roadside nearby.

A brick wall runs along the southern edge of South Park and this formed the park boundary until the land beyond to the south was acquired by the Council in 1920. Openings in the wall lead to an area of open lawns with paths leading around them and a late C20 bandstand which lies c 200m south of Saltwell Towers, replacing a bandstand in this position shown on the 1939 OS map which was removed in 1976. Prior to 1920 this area was the gardens of Saltwell Grove, a late C19 villa which lies just off East Park Road on the eastern edge of this part of the park. The 1898 map shows that the gardens consisted of lawns enclosed by perimeter planting with a curving perimeter path, which was retained in modified form when the Council acquired the gardens. On the extreme west side of this area there is a late C20 maintenance yard.

The northern part of the park has a terraced walk, called the Broadwalk, running along the east side with rustic shelters (both listed grade II) at each end from which perimeter paths lead off. In the centre is a pavilion of 1880 now (1998) damaged by fire. A statue (1903, listed grade II) of Alderman John Lucas lies alongside the walk c 30m south of the pavilion. The Broadwalk gives views to the west over the lake and across falling land to open country beyond the town, partially obscured by a line of trees and shrubs along the edge. The eastern perimeter is banked and there is planting along the top of the bank. A central path, shown on the 1919 OS map but not on that of 1898, leads south from the pavilion across open grassland to a large lake with a central island. The lake is in the form of an irregular quatrefoil and was constructed in 1880 with advice on the detailed implementation of Kemp's plan from John Hancock. A perimeter path leads around the shore and branches off to an area of bowling greens with tennis courts alongside to the north and another set of bowling greens and tennis courts to the south, all of which are screened from the lake by planting. The southern set of greens is shown on the 1898 OS map, and those to the north on that of 1939. A late C20 cafe and playground lies immediately east of the southern set of greens.

KITCHEN GARDEN Saltwell Towers' kitchen garden is shown on the c 1875 conveyance plan as a rectangular area c 100m north of the house, on the north side of the dene. The area has become a formal rose garden with a grid pattern of paths and

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seating around the edges. Council records show that it was used as nurseries until 1934 when the area was cleared and the rose garden created. The grid layout, with three square compartments, is shown on the 1939 OS map.

REFERENCES

A Guide to the Historic Parks and Gardens of Tyne and Wear, (Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team 1995), pp 40(1 Saltwell Park Conservation Area Partnership Bid, (Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council c 1995) Saltwell Park Conservation Area Partnership Design History, (Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council 1996)

Maps [All reproduced in GMBC, Saltwell Park Described] Conveyance plan, c 1875

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1853, published 1856 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition surveyed 1913-14, published 1919 1939 edition 1955 edition

Archival items Saltwell Park Described and Detailed Chronology, (Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council) [unpublished extracts from report c 1997]

Description written: April 1998 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: September 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.