

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ROUNDHAY PARK

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

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

Name:	ROUNDHAY PARK
District:	Leeds (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.830833 Longitude: -1.4944989 National Grid Reference: SE 33368 37293 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001225 Date first listed: 01-Dec-1984

## Details

Early C19 parkland with lakes and a sham castle, early or mid C19 pleasure grounds with a canal, late C19 municipal gardens and park structures.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Roundhay Park was part of a deer park mentioned in documents of 1341. The area is shown as open land with quarries and mine workings on a map of 1803 (Leeds City Council 1995), when it was bought by Thomas Nicholson, a wealthy banker. Following his death in 1821 the estate passed to his son, and then in 1868 to William Nicholson who put it up for sale in 1871. It was purchased by Leeds City Council and remains in their ownership (1997) in use as a public park.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Roundhay Park is situated c 4.5km north-east of Leeds city centre in an area which is predominantly residential to the south and west, and is separated from residential areas to the east by agricultural land. To the north the Leeds ring road (A6120) separates the park from rural areas with pockets of suburban development. The c 200ha site is on land which slopes gently down from the north-west. The north boundary is formed by the A6120, the northern part of the east boundary by Elmete Lane and the southern part by fencing between the park and Elmete Hall School. The south boundary is formed by Park Avenue and part of Wetherby Road, while the west boundary is formed by Old Park Road, Park View Crescent and Park Lane.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The principal entrance to the site is on the west side from Mansion Lane, a public highway which runs east from Princes Avenue to the Mansion Hotel, as shown on the 1847 OS map. The other main entrance is from Park Avenue on the south side of the site which leads to a car park north of a cafe sited in a former boathouse on the western edge of Waterloo Lake. From this two drives lead to the Mansion, both of which have been planted as avenues, late C20. Middle Walk, created following the acquisition of the park by Leeds City Council, leads north, and the other, called the Carriage Drive, takes a curving route north-east and then north-west, as shown on the 1847 OS map. On the south side of the park, on Wetherby Road, a pair of classical lodges flanking gate piers and gates (listed grade II) lead to a drive which runs north alongside Waterloo Lake. Views to the north-east across the Lake to a sham castle on the edge of woodland are available from this drive. The drive joins those leading from the former boathouse on the western edge of the Lake. An entrance, with stone gate piers of late C19 date, is situated on Princes Avenue, c 150m south of Mansion Lane. From this a drive called New Walk leads east and north-east to the

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

Hotel. Another entrance, with an early to mid C19 lodge is situated on Old Park Road in the south-west corner of Canal Gardens. There are a variety of other entrances around the site, some of which relate to specific facilities such as the two golf courses.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** The principal building is a neo-classical house called the Mansion (listed grade II) which was designed by John Clark for Thomas Nicholson in 1826. The house was converted to an hotel in the 1870s following its acquisition by Leeds City Council, and continues in this use (1997). It was described by Sir Nicholas Pevsner as 'The grandest of the late Georgian mansions of Leeds' (1967). Some 250m west of the Hotel there is a stable block (early C19, listed grade II) which is currently (1997) disused.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Gardens are situated in the area between Mansion Lane and New Walk. In this area curving paths lead through a series of garden areas mainly of late C20 date, including gardens for less able people. An area called the arboretum, planted with trees and shrubs, probably originated in the late C19. A late C19 or early C20 cast-iron shelter is situated on the north side of New Walk c 200m south-west of the Mansion. Immediately south of the south front of the Mansion there is a lawn with shaped beds, probably of late C20 date.

Pleasure grounds called Canal Gardens are situated on the west side of Princes Avenue, immediately south of the kitchen garden. A canal runs east/west and at its west end there is a summerhouse which has been restored and altered late C20. On the west and north sides the area is enclosed by a brick wall which runs behind the summerhouse and joins with the south wall of the kitchen garden. A path leads around the canal and the area to the south of it is planted with shrubs and trees. The basic structure of this area with the canal and summerhouse is shown on the 1847 OS map.

**PARK** The park consists of woodland, open land and two lakes laid out in the early C19 by Thomas Nicholson, and golf courses and playing fields to the south and east added when the site was acquired by Leeds City Council.

The Mansion overlooks parkland on the south and east sides. This consists of open grassland with scattered trees. Some 120m to the north-east of the house there is a lake with an irregular shoreline called Upper Lake. On the north side of the Lake there is a wood called Ram Wood. On the east side Castle Wood is a belt of woodland running east and joining with Great Head Wood which follows the line of a stream running south through the site. The areas of woodland conform with what is shown on the 1847 OS map. Open land in the north-west corner of the park, between the areas of woodland, is laid out as a golf course.

The stream running through Great Head Wood passes through an area called The Gorge, and a path runs alongside the stream. This was laid out with waterfalls, naturalistic cascades and rockwork during the early C19 but little of this work survives. A stream which runs from Upper Lake eastwards to the head of a second, larger lake, called Waterloo Lake, has the remains of waterfalls and rockwork for part of its length, also of early C19 date. The remains of a cascade are situated at the point at which the stream leads from Upper Lake, and c 30m east of this, and visible from a path alongside the stream, there is a gorge and a waterfall.

Between Castle Wood and the northern end of Waterloo Lake there is an area of open grassland which slopes down to the shores of the Lake. On the edge of the woodland overlooking this slope and giving views of the Lake there is a sham castle of stone rubble (listed grade II) situated c 500m north-east of the Mansion. It consists of circular crenellated towers with mock arrow slits and stair windows flanking a central entrance which has a pointed arch, above which is a window with fanciful tracery. Some 500m south-east of the Mansion there is a drinking fountain in the form of a classical rotunda (listed grade II) which was erected in 1882 as the gift of the former Mayor of Leeds, John Barran.

The south-east side of the park is dominated by Waterloo Lake, created in 1815, which is J shaped and runs north/south through the eastern side of the park and has a perimeter path around it. The land rises steeply from the Lake's eastern shore and the wooded slopes provide a backdrop for views from the sloping parkland east and south-east of the Mansion. The Lake is c 900m long and c 250m wide at its widest part which is at the southern end, where there is a C20 dam with a path across it on the site of a cascade, demolished late C20. On the western shore of the Lake there is a former boathouse of early C20 date which has been converted into a cafe.

East of Waterloo Lake, beyond Braim Wood, there is a golf course formed from land outside the parkland of 1871. Land in the south-west corner of the park, laid out as playing fields, was also outside the parkland and both areas are shown as fields on the 1847 map.

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

**KITCHEN GARDEN** The kitchen garden is situated immediately north of the Canal Gardens and is walled in red brick. At the north end of the garden there is a glasshouse called Coronation Greenhouse. This is shown on the 1847 OS map and had been modified and extended late C20 to form an aviary and butterfly house. The garden is currently (1997) used as a rose garden. West of the kitchen garden an area between the garden wall and Old Park Road has been developed late C20 as a series of themed gardens. The 1847 map shows this area planted with trees or shrubs. North of this, at the north-west outer corner of the kitchen garden, there is a house of mid or later C19 date which was probably a gardener's house and is now (1997) in use as a private residence.

**REFERENCES**

N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire The West Riding* (1967), p 332-3  
K Lemmon, *The Gardens of Britain* 5, (1978), p 158-60, pl 19  
G Sheeran, *Landscape Gardens in West Yorkshire 1680(1880)*, pp 109-14  
*The Historic Parks and Gardens of Leeds*, (Leeds City Council 1995), pp 24-31  
Maps J Eddison, Plan No.1 for the sale of Roundhay Park Estate, 1871 (Leeds City Library)  
OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1847 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1908  
Description written: February 1998 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: November 1999

## 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.