

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

THE JELLICOE ROOF GARDEN, GUILDFORD

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Name: THE JELlicoe ROOF GARDEN, GUILDFORD

County: Surrey

District: Guildford (District Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.236092
Longitude: -0.57341865
National Grid Reference: SU 99691 49512
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001474
Date first listed: 30-Aug-2000

Details

Roof garden of 1956-7 designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe for Harvey's department store in Guildford.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Harvey's department store, now (2000) House of Fraser, was designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe and Partners in 1956-7. The owners of the store, who also owned the Derry and Toms Roof Garden on top of their store in Kensington High Street, London (qv), were in favour of a roof garden, and they approved of Jellicoe's proposals for the creation of a cafe surrounded by a water garden on top of their new store in Guildford.

As Jellicoe (1900-96) stated in his *Studies in Landscape Design* published in 1966, his design for the roof garden 'is primarily a sky garden and the underlying idea has been to unite heaven and earth; the sensation is one of being poised by the two'. The water in the garden was to reflect the sky with its different cloud formations, and to emphasise this, Jellicoe created a viewing platform on top of the cafe, so the garden could be viewed from above. He was also inspired by the launch of the first Sputnik, which took place while Jellicoe was designing the garden. The circular shapes in the design 'embody the idea of the planets spinning through space' (*Architectural Review* 1957).

Since the late 1970s, after the closure of the roof cafe, the garden has fallen out of use. The store is currently (2000) undergoing refurbishment works and the rooftop cafe (recently, April 2000, demolished), will be replaced by a new restaurant. As part of the works, it is intended that the roof garden will be restored.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The garden of c 770m² is situated above the former Harvey's department store (now House of Fraser), on the north side of Guildford High Street. It occupies one of the roofs of the building and is surrounded to the south, east, and west by plain cast-iron railings (c 1m high). From the various viewing platforms in the garden there are extensive views over Guildford and the surrounding countryside.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The site is temporarily, early 2000, entered via steps through the main building which provide access via the neighbouring roof to the south of the site. From here a small bridge leads into the garden. Formerly the garden was entered via steps that led up through the store into the roof cafe, which gave access to the garden.

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PRINCIPAL BUILDING The former Harvey's department store is one of the largest buildings in Guildford High Street. It is a five-storey shop with 'straightforward modern elevations' (Nairn and Pevsner 1990). It has a frame of exposed reinforced concrete with a glass and wood-board infilling. The roof garden is laid out on two layers of asphalt. The former cafe, which housed a tank room, boilers, pumps, and lift machinery, formed the main focus for the garden, and stood in the north-west corner of the site. Only the concrete-paved terrace that surrounded the cafe to the south and east remains. As the cafe was surrounded by water on three sides, with a terrace connecting various stepping stones situated in the water, it gave the impression of being afloat. The terrace, or viewing platform above the cafe could be accessed via outdoor steps from the lower terrace, situated along the west side of the cafe. The east wall of the cafe, which had a mosaic-like decoration, was designed by Mr Harvey and 'could be changed at will' (Architectural Review 1957).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The garden has an L-shaped floor plan following the outline of the underlying roof. Its main component is a shallow lily pool, which forms a large sheet of water covering the entire roof space, except for the site of the former cafe, in which various flower beds and viewing platforms are set, connected by stepping stones.

The depth of the soil in the garden is c 15cm, building up to c 45cm in a few places where there is a structural pier underneath (ibid). The floor of the pool used to be covered in different coloured gravels, traces of which in some places can still be found (2000). Lilies and various other water plants were set in the pool in shallow pans, and the water was kept clear by the introduction of fishes, snails, and other water flora and fauna. The water is drained through pipes that run through the inside of the building, but originally it was drained via overflow weirs along the southern edge of the roof, from where it ran along the south front of the store, down into the High Street to be drained off. This unique drainage system was abandoned shortly after installation.

The garden contains five flower beds in total: three situated in the eastern part of the garden, one in the southern part, and one in the western part. They are biomorphic in shape and have small holes in the curbs to allow water from the pool to seep through. The beds, now (2000) mostly overgrown with grass and weeds, originally contained water plants (some are named in the Architectural Review 1957). Linked to the beds are round waterproof containers which formerly held plants in pots to provide colour throughout the seasons. To prevent the plants from getting damaged by strong winds, Jellicoe introduced a specially designed bamboo screen which curved around the beds, now (2000) no longer there.

The flower beds in the southern part of the garden are linked by square stepping stones and three circular viewing platforms. The latter are paved with concrete slabs, laid in a decorative pattern and have a handrail on one side. A hole in the centre of the viewing platform allows for setting up parasols. The largest flower bed, situated in the southern part of the garden, can be reached via the three viewing platforms. Recently (early 1990s), when new lifts were introduced in the department store, a small rectangular building was erected on the southern half of this flower bed. The remaining parts of the bed contains grass and a c 4m high willow tree: one of three that stood in the garden originally. Linked to this side of the flower bed, which is paved along its western edge with small stone cobbles, are another two circular viewing platforms of the same design as those described above. These are linked with a series of circular stepping stones that lead in a north-westerly direction to the fifth flower bed, now (2000) temporarily used for storing building materials. This bed, partly covered in stone cobbles, is set against the western edge of the roof, and is connected with the terrace that formerly surrounded the cafe and the remains of the stairs that led to the former viewing platform on its roof. The pool in this part of the garden is adorned with six fountains, now (2000) out of use. They are made of fibreglass which is moulded into shallow dishes, with in the centre a tilting spout made of copper.

REFERENCES

Architectural Review, 122 (September 1957), pp 231-4 G Jellicoe, *Studies in Landscape Design* ii, (1966), pp 28-31 I Nairn and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Surrey* (5th edn 1990), p 282 M Spens, *The Complete Landscape Designs and Gardens of Geoffrey Jellicoe* (1994), pp 75-8 J Brown, *The English Garden through the Twentieth Century* (1999), pp 209, 222-4
Maps G Jellicoe, *Lower Plan Roof Garden*, 1/4" to 1', 13 March 1956 (drawing no 703/58A), (Landscape Institute Library)
Plan of the Roof Garden (in Architectural Review 1957) Plan of the Roof Garden (in Jellicoe 1966)
Description written: July 2000 Amended: October 2000 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: April 2003

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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.