

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

PHILIPS PARK

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Name:	PHILIPS PARK
District:	Manchester (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.488058 Longitude: -2.1947527 National Grid Reference: SJ 87175 99056 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001531 Date first listed: 01-Jun-2001

Details

Philips Park, with Queen's Park (qv), Manchester and Peel Park in Salford, was one of the first three public parks in the Manchester area, established at public expense as a single enterprise. All were designed by Joshua Major (1786-1866) following an open competition and opened consecutively on the same day in 1846, a year earlier than the official opening of Birkenhead Park (qv).

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Philips Park is named after the Manchester MP Mark Philips who promoted the need for public parks in Manchester and served on the 1833 Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Walks. In August 1844 a public meeting was held in Manchester at which £7000 was subscribed and a Public Walks, Parks, Gardens and Play-Grounds committee was formed to raise funds, select and purchase sites, lay them out, and convey them to the borough for 'the free use and enjoyment of the inhabitants in perpetuity' (Conway 1991). £1000 was given later by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. A further public meeting in September 1844 was attended by 5000 people and by Christmas 1845, over £30,000 had been raised including a £3000 government grant. Three sites were purchased. The land for Philips Park, purchased from Lady Hoghton for £6100 and comprising c 12.5ha (The Builder, 16 August 1845), was formerly part of the Bradford estate and included Bradford Hall, by then a dilapidated farmhouse (Manchester Guardian, 26 August 1846; Ruff 2000). A design competition was held for the three parks, with Philips the only one not already partially laid out. Each park was required to have playgrounds, including provision for archery and quoits, together with skittle and ball alleys, a refreshment room, one or more fountains, and retiring places (The Builder, 8 November 1845). At Philips Park, the Steam Engine Tavern at the north-west of the park was purchased from the Bradford Colliery to serve as a refreshment room. The competition was won by Joshua Major and Son of Knowsthorp, near Leeds, and the parks were laid out under Major's supervision in 1845-6, by the company of Pim and Richardson, Nurseymen, of Higher Ardwick. The majority of Joshua Major's work was for private clients; his plans for a villa garden were reproduced by J C Loudon in his Encyclopaedia of Gardening, and the Manchester parks probably represent his largest design commission (J Garden Hist 1987). In Major's *The Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, published in 1852, his ideal for a public park is based on the Manchester competition (ibid).

All three parks were officially opened on 22 August 1846 and ownership of Philips Park was transferred to Manchester Corporation. Limited funds had perhaps prevented Major including all the elements he might have wished at Philips Park

and it is thought that he would have approved of the creation in 1847 of ornamental beds which replaced sports areas in the amphitheatre overlooking the river, and a riverside walk (Ruff 2000). In 1849 work commenced to form a series of ornamental ponds on the line of a watercourse running through the south of the park.

In 1855 landscape gardener John Shaw was appointed as superintendent of the Manchester parks. Shaw resigned in 1863 due to the pressure of his private business (ibid) and was later the designer of Stamford Park (qv), Altrincham, opened in 1870. In 1872 Philips Park was the site of Manchester's first bowling green while in the late-C19 a bandstand was erected. In 1891 the city's first Open Air Bath, for men and boys, was opened in the park (ibid).

In the late-C19 flooding caused erosion damage to both the park and adjacent cemetery and in 1909 the riverbed was paved (ibid). In 1954 the Open Air Bath and all but one of the ponds were filled in to provide more play space and in 1983 extensive replanting was carried out (ibid). Philips Park remains (2001) in public use and in the ownership of Manchester City Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Philips Park is situated c 3.2km east-north-east of Manchester city centre and is c 12.5ha in area. To the north the park is bounded by the meandering River Irwell which separates the park from the 30ha Philips Park Cemetery, opened in 1867. The river flows west in an open culvert with level banks and central channel, all faced in red terracotta brick, at the foot of c 1.4m high stone walls which retain the base of c 2.5m high embankments to either side. Within the park 1.2m high C20 railings are set at the head of the embankment.

On the west side the park is bounded by Alan Turing Way (formerly Mill Street) and marked by a 1.4m high stone boundary wall topped with 0.3m high C20 railings between stone piers. From the south-west corner of the park the southern boundary is marked by a c 3.2m high C19 brick wall with C19 and C20 housing to the west end and a bus depot to the east end. Sections of the wall have been lowered opposite Kinloch, Clague, and Archer Streets, which run at right angles to the boundary, and replaced with C20 railings. Some 60m to the east of Archer Street the brick wall reduces to 0.15m above pavement level. To the south-east the park is bounded by a c 8m high early C20 brick-arched mineral railway viaduct with decorative brickwork panels and stone detailing. On the eastern boundary a small corner of the park extends south beyond the viaduct to Bank Street, with the boundary marked by a low brick wall with stone coping, C20 railings, and an evergreen hedge.

In the north-west the ground is undulating, rising c 9m to the centre of the park and the generally level area in the south-east. From the centre of the park the ground falls c 14m to the north with a steep east/west bank forming an amphitheatre bounded by the River Irwell to the north-west and north-east. The area around the park is in mixed use with a new stadium for the 2002 Commonwealth Games under construction to the west and the late-C20 British National Cycling Centre immediately to the south. Philips Park Cemetery lies on rising ground to the north, with views between the park and cemetery across the River Irwell valley. Former industrial sites along the river valley to the east are landscaped as a country park. The land to the south and south-east is in mixed residential and industrial use.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are two principal entrances at the north-west and south-west corners of the park, adjoining Alan Turing Way. Both are marked by a carriage entrance flanked by two pedestrian entrances set between stone gate piers with C20 metal gates. The north-west entrance is set flush with the boundary wall while the south-west entrance is set back c 8m from Alan Turing Way which at this point is set on a c 1.2m high grassed embankment above the park entrance; pedestrian access is via a C20 concrete stair and vehicle access is from Stuart Street to the east. OS plans up to 1980 show the south-west entrance lying at the junction of Stuart Street and Mill Street, the latter widened and raised in the late-C20 to form Alan Turing Way. To the north-east of the south-west entrance stands a two-storey lodge in brick with steeply gabled roof, now (2001) in a semi-derelict condition. The lodge was designed in 1868 by the Manchester architect Alfred Darbyshire to replace an earlier building designed by J E Cregan and was the residence of the head gardener (ibid). A C19 lodge which formerly stood at the north-west entrance no longer (2001) survives.

At the north-east tip of the park an iron girder footbridge over the River Irwell with C19 and C20 railings gives access from Philips Park Cemetery. The inventory of the park at its opening refers to a bridge and new cottage at this entrance (ibid) and both are depicted in an 1846 illustration (Manchester Central Library). The cottage no longer (2001) remains. From the east,

a carriage entrance from Bank Street is marked by cast-iron gateposts set inside capped stone gate piers without gates. On Fairclough Street to the south there is a vehicle entrance with C20 metal railing and barrier.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The principal feature of the park is the winding carriage drive forming a circuit around the perimeter of the park to the west, south, and east and running at the head of the steep east/west bank in the centre of the park. Except for a short section to the north-east, the line of the drive appears to match Major's 1846 design (Ruff 2000). To the north the main feature is the level oval area of ornamental gardens bounded by the river to the north and enclosed by a steep, curving wooded bank to the south.

From the south-west entrance the drive proceeds north-east for 40m before dividing at the circuit drive with a further tree-lined path leading directly north. The junction is marked by an ornate drinking fountain, in sandstone and red granite, with an engraved plaque recording that it was erected in 1896 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening. Between the west boundary and the carriage drive an area laid out for wildlife has an informal path through it. Glasshouses shown in this area on the 1893 and 1949 OS maps no longer (2001) remain. From the north-west entrance the drive runs east for 50m before dividing at the circuit drive with a further path leading north-east to follow the winding northern river boundary through a belt of dense tree planting. The path is partly embanked with rockwork before entering the north ornamental garden 280m north-east of the lodge.

From the north-west entrance the circuit drive rises gently for 180m to the east-north-east before rising more steeply to the centre of the park where it levels out at the head of the steep bank to the north. To the north of the drive, 180m from the north-west entrance, a level area indicates the site of the C19 refreshment room (OS 1893) from where a path leads down to the east-north-east and the lower, ornamental area of the park. Some 120m north-east of the lodge, within the circuit drive, are two embanked bowling greens set into the slope down to the north. The greens are enclosed by evergreen hedging and C20 railings with, to the east, a set of two C19 iron gates between stone piers. The eastern bowling green was constructed in 1872 and the second in 1894 (Ruff 2000). A path to the south of and overlooking the greens is partly embanked to the south with stonework. South of the greens and 100m north-east of the lodge is a C20 children's playground on a level area enclosed with 1.2m high C20 railings. This area is shown as tennis courts on the 1949 OS map.

To the east of the greens, c 160m north-east of the south-west lodge, is a large irregular pond with a small island and a belt of trees to the south and east; the whole is separated from an enclosing path with 0.9m high C20 railings. The pond is shown on the OS map of 1893 as the largest of a series formed c 1849 and is the only one now (2001) remaining. East of the pond the ground rises, with the south-east area of the park laid to grass with trees. There are occasional views, between trees to the north, across the river valley to the cemetery beyond. In the east of the park the area within the circuit drive is used as a sports area with belts of trees to the south boundary. No evidence appears (2001) to remain of the bandstand and Open Air Bath formerly located in this area of the park. The north-east corner of the park, to the west of the viaduct, is in use as allotments and is bounded by 2m high metal fencing. From a point 260m north-east of the south-west lodge an embankment runs 160m directly to the east-north-east across the open grassed area, on the line of a late-C19 path (OS).

The steep bank enclosing the lower, northern area of the park is densely wooded with evidence of paths running along the slope and, 280m north-east of the south-west lodge, a viewing platform (now, 2001, overgrown). A path at the base of the slope is raised c 1.2m above the lower oval area of ornamental garden. Stone steps at the centre of this path form part of a formal layout of paths through grassed areas with the dominant central feature of a large oval bed. The position of other formal circular beds are clearly visible in the surrounding grass. There are dense belts of trees to the river boundary. Paths lead out of the lower area to the west, to the footbridge to the north, and to the south-east, the latter rising steeply up the bank to the circuit drive. The layout of paths and oval bed in the ornamental garden are as indicated on the 1893 OS map; up to the mid C20 Philips Park was particularly renowned for its spring tulip display.

Serpentine paths, and in particular the winding circuit drive, were a main element in Major's 1845 design for Philips Park and their layout, as described in contemporary accounts (*ibid*), remains largely intact today (2001).

REFERENCES

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Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1848 1931 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1893

Archival items Photographs held at the Local Studies Library, Manchester Central Reference Library.

Description written: April 2001 Amended: May 2001 Register Inspector: HMT Edited: December 2009

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.