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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

POOLE PARK

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Name:	POOLE PARK
District:	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.718281 Longitude: -1.9666597 National Grid Reference: SZ 02450 90962 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001588 Date first listed: 06-Feb-2002

Details

A late C19 public park laid out to a design by the Borough Surveyor, John Elford.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

During the C19 the town of Poole expanded, with new residential suburbs being developed to the east of the medieval and C18 town and port. In April 1885 Lord Wimborne presented land and a salt-water lake adjacent to Parkstone Bay for the purpose of creating a 'People's Park and Recreation Ground' (Council Minutes, 1885) to serve these new residential areas. This land is shown on a survey of c 1885 (Waterfront Museum). Negotiations with Lord Wimborne continued throughout 1885, with agreement being reached for the construction of roads on the east and west sides of the lake (Council Minutes, 1885). A tidal sluice was constructed in the railway embankment by the Dorset Iron Foundry Co in February 1886, while the design for an arched subway beneath the railway embankment for the use of carriages was also approved (Council Minutes, 1886).

In October 1886 the Baths and Recreation Committee reported that designs for the proposed park had been submitted, of which the best were those by Robert Veitch and Son of Exeter, and Reginald Upcher of Poole, who later designed Morrab Gardens, Penzance (qv) in 1888; these plans do not appear to survive. The following year, in October 1887, the Borough Surveyor, John Elford, reported that neither of the selected plans for the park was capable of implementation and advised that his own revised plan, presumably incorporating elements from the Veitch and Upcher plans, should be adopted (Council Minutes, 1887). Work on the construction of the park progressed throughout 1888: the contract for landscaping was awarded to Veitch of Exeter, earthworks were undertaken by J C Rigler of Poole, and fences were supplied by W J Bacon. Ornamental gate piers were built by W H Gray, and cast-iron gates supplied by E Howell (Council Minutes, 1888). Tenders for the erection of the lodges, bandstand, shelter, cricket pavilion, and drinking fountain from J C Rigler were accepted in July 1888 (ibid), while planting of the park by Mr Ingram began in October 1888 (ibid). Further work including planting of shrubs supplied by David Stewart took place in October 1889, while Mr Rigler constructed a rustic bridge at a cost of £22 5s 0d (Council Minutes, 1889). The park was formally opened by the Prince of Wales on 18 January 1890. The ceremony scheduled to take place in a temporary pavilion in the park had to be cancelled due to storm damage, and instead took place in the waiting room at Poole Station prior to the Prince's departure (Borough of Poole 1989). Work on the completion of the park continued throughout 1890, with one of the last features, the cricket ground, being completed early in 1892 (Council Minutes, 1892).

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Today (2002), Poole Park retains its late C19 plan and many original features including the circuit of drives and walks, the lodges, and structural planting. Several new features were created during the C20 including the war memorial of 1927, an ice-cream kiosk of striking Modern Movement plan (c 1922), and a new park pavilion (1960). The late C19 bandstand was removed during the 1930s, its site being taken c 1992 by a cast-iron fountain. The layout of several of the park entrances was altered during the mid C20 to ease the flow of vehicular traffic; some restoration was undertaken in the late C20. Poole Park remains (2002) in municipal ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Poole Park is situated c 1km north-east of the Old Town of Poole, and immediately south-west of the C20 Civic Centre. The c 45ha site is bounded to the north by the A360, Parkstone Road and by C19 and C20 domestic properties. The boundary adjacent to Parkstone Road is closed by a late C20 wrought-iron fence, while the boundaries adjacent to domestic properties are fenced and planted with mixed belts of trees and ornamental shrubbery. To the north-west the park adjoins properties on the B3093, Mount Pleasant Road and Kingland Road, from which it is separated by hedges and fences. The western boundary is formed by early C20 properties to the west of Park Lake Road, while to the south the site is separated from the Baiter Recreation Ground and nature reserve by a mid C19 railway embankment; this serves as a dam to retain the salt-water lake in the park. To the east and south-east the site adjoins mid and late C20 domestic properties in Copse Close, Twemlow Avenue, and Orchard Avenue, while to the north-east the boundary is formed by the A35, Sandbanks Road which separates the park from the 1930s' Civic Centre. The site is generally level with extensive views from the principal walks and drives across the salt-water lake, and to the wooded Constitution Hill c 1km north-east of the site. There are also views south-west across Poole Harbour to the Purbeck Hills. To the west, adjacent to the boundary with Kingland Road, the ground is formed into a mound from which there are extensive views east and north across the park. Mature trees and shrubbery planted along the northern boundary of the site substantially screen adjacent late C19 and C20 properties.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Three vehicular entrances provide access to Poole Park from the west, north, and south-east. The western or Seldown Gate entrance, leading from Kingland Road at a point c 50m east of its junction with Mount Pleasant Road, is marked by a pair of elaborate brick and terracotta gate piers, each comprising a rusticated stone base, a brick shaft inset with terracotta relief panels showing fish, and a moulded terracotta cap surmounted by a terracotta eagle set on a rocky base. Each principal entrance to the park is marked by groups of similar gate piers which were constructed in 1888 by W H Gray (Council Minutes, 1888), probably to the design of the Borough Surveyor, John Elford, with terracotta ornaments by George Jennings of the South Western Pottery, Parkstone (Gillespies 2000). The original design for the Seldown entrance, and the other principal entrances, incorporated a symmetrical arrangement of five gate piers, two of which supported standard gas lamps, together with cast-iron gates decorated with the arms of the Borough of Poole. The gates were removed c 1939. To the south of the Seldown Gate entrance stands the late C19 two-storey Seldown Lodge. Constructed in brick with extensive terracotta ornament, the Lodge incorporates adjacent to the front door a Gothic-style terracotta panel commemorating the opening of the park by the Prince of Wales in January 1890, and on the south gable facing Kingland Road a terracotta panel showing the armorial bearings of the Borough of Poole. Immediately south-east of the Lodge is a contemporary stable and cart yard which is entered from Kingland Road through a pair of timber gates supported by tall brick piers surmounted by terracotta ball finials. From the Seldown Gate entrance the Park Drive extends c 900m parallel to the northern boundary of the park to reach the East Gate entrance which is situated adjacent to the junction of Parkstone Road and Sandbanks Road, immediately west of the Civic Centre. The East Gate entrance retains four of its original five brick and terracotta gate piers, two of which support ornamental cast-iron lamp standards; the central pier was removed to ease traffic flow in the early C20 (P Hillman pers comm, 2002). To the west of the entrance stands East Gate Lodge, a single-storey brick and terracotta structure which incorporates a canted bay window to the east and a square bay to the south. The north facade adjacent to Parkstone Road incorporates a terracotta panel with an inscription recording the donation of the site of the park by Lord Wimborne and its design by John Elford. Some 400m south-west of the East Gate entrance a further carriage drive leads c 270m south-east to reach the Whitecliff Road entrance which comprises five brick and terracotta gate piers; these were restored to the original plan in the late C20. To the south of this entrance, Whitecliff Road extends c 270m south-east to an arched subway which allows the road to pass beneath the railway

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embankment. The subway bridge, constructed in 1886 as part of the scheme for developing the park, is the effective entrance to the park from the south-east (Council Minutes, 1886).

In addition to the three present vehicular entrances to the park, three further formal entrances, two of which were formerly used for vehicular access, are situated on the northern boundary of the park. Norton's Gate, at the north-west corner of the park adjacent to the junction of Mount Pleasant Road and Parkstone Road, comprises five brick, terracotta, and concrete gate piers. These piers were rebuilt c 1990 to replace the original late C19 piers which were demolished in the 1960s. A flight of late C20 concrete steps descends from Norton's Gate allowing pedestrian access to the level of the park. Some 240m east of Norton's Gate, the War Memorial Gates comprise a pair of ornamental wrought-iron gates supported by a pair of tall brick and stone piers flanked by a pair of wrought-iron pedestrian gates which are supported by similar, shorter brick and stone piers. The War Memorial Gates were constructed to the design of James Allner in 1927, and were never used for vehicular access to the park. Bird's Hill or Middle Gate Entrance c 130m east of the War Memorial Gates is today (2002) a pedestrian entrance; it retains its late C19 plan with four brick and terracotta gate piers, the central pair of which support ornamental cast-iron lamp standards. There are further informal entrances to the park from Park Lake Road to the south-west, Copse Close to the north-east, Sandbanks Road to the north, and Park Lake Road to the south-west.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The pleasure grounds are laid out to the north and north-east of the extensive salt-water lake which occupies c 22ha at the centre of the site. The salt-water lake is irregular in outline with early C20 concrete edging; it was developed from an existing tidal lake when the park was laid out by Elford in 1886-90. To the north-east of the salt-water lake, and separated from it by Park Drive, are two informal fresh-water lakes. The larger, southern lake formed part of Elford's scheme (1887), although its outline was altered to its present form in 1890-1 (Council Minutes, 1890). An arm leading north-east from the main lake is crossed by a mid C20 brick and concrete bridge which replaced a rustic bridge commissioned from Mr Rigler in 1889 (Council Minutes, 1889) which had been destroyed by enemy action during the Second World War. The smaller, northern fresh-water lake contains two islands; although not shown on Elford's plan (1887), the smaller lake had assumed its present form by 1892 (Gillespies 2000). The margins of the fresh-water lakes are planted with mixed ornamental trees and shrubs, while a miniature railway forms a circuit round the southern lake. Constructed in the mid 1930s, the railway was restored in 1949. The area to the east of the lakes which is today laid to grass was developed in 1912-13 with a group of aviaries housing exotic waterfowl; these were replaced in 1963 by a small zoological garden which continued in existence until the late C20 (ibid).

The Park Drive, a carriage drive 24' (c 6m) wide, bordered on each side by a footpath, extends east from the Seldown Gate entrance parallel to the northern boundary of the park and to the north of the salt-water lake. The drive connects Seldown Gate entrance to the west, Norton's Gate and Bird's Hill Gate to the north, and East Gate entrance to the north-east and the various facilities within the park. It was a principal feature of Elford's scheme for the park and is shown on his plan (1887). The drive is partly planted with mature horse chestnuts and is bordered by lawns, with ornamental planting generally concentrated to its north. Immediately east of Seldown Lodge areas of lawn and beds for seasonal planting adjoin the south side of the drive. Some 130m north-east of the Lodge a late C20 public convenience incorporates salvaged late C19 materials. Of late C19 design with a circular turret to the north, the toilets are set within a metal-railed enclosure. Gently sloping lawns descend south-east from the drive towards the lake, while c 100m south an artificial mound is enclosed within late C20 metal railings and laid out as a children's play area. To the west mature trees and shrubs screen the nursery area. The mound formed part of Elford's scheme for the park (plan, 1887), and was originally surmounted by a summerhouse approached by curvilinear walks.

The drive continues c 130m north-east to reach a junction with an avenue of horse chestnuts which leads c 120m north-north-west to Norton's Gate. A triangular lawn at the centre of this junction surrounds a circular stone-edged basin containing a two-tier cast-iron fountain of C19 design. The fountain was donated to the park by Lord Wimborne c 1992 and occupies the site of a late C19 bandstand which was removed during the 1930s (P Hillman pers comm, 2002). To the south of the fountain, and on the axis of the avenue leading to Norton's Gate, a further drive extends to an area of car park on the lake-edge which occupies one of Elford's landing stages (plan, 1887). A significant reciprocal vista extends from Norton's Gate south-east along the chestnut avenue to the lake.

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The Park Drive continues east of the fountain, passing to the south of an artificially levelled terrace which supports two bowling greens. Surrounded by ornamental shrubbery, the bowling greens were constructed in 1909 and 1930 on the site of late C19 tennis courts (plan, 1887). To the south of the bowling greens a flight of steps descends to lawns adjoining the Park Drive, while to the north further steps ascend to a terrace and late C20 pavilion which replaces a brick and timber pavilion of c 1930 (Borough of Poole 1989). East of the bowling green hard-surfaced tennis courts occupy the site of tennis lawns shown on Elford's plan (1887), while to the south-east, immediately adjoining the drive, is an ice-cream kiosk of distinctive Modern Movement design. Originally planned in 1922, this single-storey concrete structure appears not to have been built until c 1945 (Gillespies 2000). Some 130m east of the bowling greens the Park Drive passes the early C20 war memorial which is aligned on the War Memorial Gates to the north. The memorial scheme comprises a flight of stone steps descending from the Memorial Gates to a low raised rectangular rose bed retained by a rustic stone wall and surrounded by crazy-paved walks. A low stone obelisk at the centre of the rose bed commemorating Earl Mountbatten of Burma was erected in 1980. To the south of the Park Drive the memorial scheme is continued by an axial walk which passes between panels of lawn set with circular beds for seasonal planting to reach a circular raised terrace supporting a slender tapering brick and stone cruciform obelisk. Stone steps descend from the circular terrace to the shore of the salt-water lake. The war memorial was constructed to the design of James Allner in 1927 on the site of a lake-side shrubbery which is shown on Elford's plan (1887).

East of the war memorial the Park Drive passes to the south of a mid C20 rose garden comprising geometric beds set in panels of lawn enclosed by beech hedges. Some 130m east-north-east of the memorial the drive divides, with one branch leading south-east between the salt-water lake and fresh-water lake to reach the Whitecliff entrance, and the other branch extending north-east to the East Gate entrance. The line of the Park Drive is continued south of the Whitecliff entrance by Whitecliff Road which is bordered to the west by the Model Yacht Enclosure. Separated from the salt-water lake by a concrete walkway, the Model Yacht Enclosure was constructed in 1952. A timber clubhouse stands among mature trees and shrubbery at the south-east corner of the enclosure, adjacent to a walk which extends from Whitecliff Road along the north side of the railway embankment which retains the salt-water lake. Some 270m south-west of Whitecliff Road the lakeside walk crosses the tidal sluice on a C20 metal bridge which replaces a late C19 timber structure (Gillespies 2000). The late C19 sluice is set in an ornamental brick structure with terracotta dressings. Immediately west of the sluice a semicircular bastion projects into the lake and is planted with a group of trees. This corresponds to Elford's scheme for 'naturalising' the margins of the lake (plan, 1887). The lakeside walk continues c 400m west of the sluice to reach Park Lake Road which returns c 270m north along the west side of the lake to re-enter the park at the east end of Kingland Road.

The Park Drive is adjoined to the north by mixed shrubbery and specimen trees, while to the south of East Gate Lodge it is bordered by a mid C20 rockery. Opposite the Lodge an early C20 stone pedimented structure with an arched niche formerly contained a drinking fountain; its design echoes that of the facade of the 1930s' Civic Centre which is visible outside the park to the north-east. East Gate entrance is adjoined by areas of lawn with geometric beds for seasonal planting. Some 120m south-east of the entrance the late C19 cricket pavilion comprises a single-storey structure with a verandah supported by cast-iron columns and balustrades. The pavilion formed part of Elford's design for the park and was completed c 1890; it was restored in 2001-2. To the south of the pavilion the cricket pitch is enclosed by a circular bicycle track which formed a principal feature of Elford's scheme for the park (plan, 1887). Some 240m south-west of the pavilion the Swan Lake Cafe stands at the north-west tip of the southern fresh-water lake. Surrounded by a group of mature pines and other specimen trees and ornamental shrubbery, the single-storey flat-roofed cafe was constructed in 1960 to replace an earlier refreshment pavilion which stood on a site to the north. The site occupied by the present cafe was designed by Elford as a children's gymnasium (plan, 1887). Some 270m south-east of the cricket pavilion a level area laid out with sports pitches (1934, 1957) extends c 250m east from the line of the late C19 park boundary. The park extension was acquired by gift and purchase in the late C19 (Gillespies 2000).

OTHER LAND The Park Nursery is situated to the south-east of Seldown Gate Lodge and is approached from Kingland Road. The irregularly shaped area is separated from the park by hedges, and retains several mid and late C20 glasshouses and other structures. The nursery is today (2002) in separate management, but remains in horticultural use. It occupies the site identified

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on Elford's plan (1887) for a nursery, but extends further north than envisaged by Elford. It had assumed its present area by 1933 (OS).

REFERENCES

Kelly's Directory for Dorsetshire (1935) Poole Park The People's Park, management plan and historical survey, (Borough of Poole 1989) Poole Park Historic Landscape Restoration Feasibility Study, management plan, (Gillespies 2000)

Maps Plan of Land situate in the Tithing of Parkstone in the Parish of Canford Magna in the County of Dorset Given by the Right Honorable Lord Wimborne to the Corporation of the Borough of Poole For a People's Park, c 1885 (Waterfront Museum, Poole) J Elford, Plan of a Public Park in the Tithing of Parkstone in the Town & County of the Borough of Poole as Proposed to be Laid Out by the Council of the Borough of Poole, 1887 (Waterfront Museum, Poole)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1938 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1902 1933 edition

Illustrations Late C19 and early C20 postcard views of Poole Park (private collection) Late C19 and early C20 photographs and postcard views of Poole Park (reproduced in Gillespies 2000)

Archival items Poole Borough Council Minutes, 1883-97 (DC/PL: B1), (Dorset Record Office)

Description written: January 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: January 2003

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.