

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

HEDGEMEAD PARK

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

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Name:	HEDGEMEAD PARK
District:	Bath and North East Somerset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.389050 Longitude: -2.3599234 National Grid Reference: ST 75052 65618 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001623 Date first listed: 19-Jun-2002

## Details

A late C19 public park laid out on the site of a mid C19 residential development destroyed by a landslip.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1788 John Eveleigh built Camden Crescent on a dramatic escarpment with wide views east and south across Bath. Everleigh's plan for a central crescent flanked by symmetrical side wings could not be carried to completion due to a series of landslips on Beacon Hill which meant that the eastern flanking pavilion could not be constructed. Despite these problems, by the mid C19 nearly 300 houses had been built on the steep slope below Camden Crescent known as Edgemead. Some of this development is shown on Thomas Moule's plan of Bath (1837) and the late C19 OS map (1885). From c 1865 a further series of landslips occurred in the Edgemead district, culminating in June 1881 in a slip which destroyed or seriously damaged 135 houses. In 1883 it was agreed that the City Corporation would acquire the unstable ground and plant it as a public park in order to consolidate the dangerous slope.

The Corporation cleared many of the remaining properties shown on the 1885 OS map and developed a strip of pleasure grounds extending across the slope below Camden Crescent and Lower Hedgemead Road. An existing footpath ascending from London Street to Lower Hedgemead Road was retained, with the sections of the park to each side of the path being linked by a footbridge. Some domestic properties, including Gloster Villas and some houses adjacent to the junction of London Street and Margaret's Hill survived, the latter only being cleared in the early C20. The site of these houses was added as an extension to Hedgemead Park.

The late C19 park was laid out by the Corporation Parks and Pleasure Grounds Committee between 1885 and 1889. When opened, the site was known as Hedgemead Pleasure Ground and was laid out with a series of contoured walks, a terrace walk and bandstand, an ornamental cast-iron drinking fountain, and terraces retained by stone walls and structural planting designed to consolidate the slope. These features remain largely unchanged today (2002). The early C20 park extension was laid out in a more simple style with sloping lawns and formal flower beds.

Hedgemead Park remains (2002) municipal property.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Hedgemead Park is situated c 0.75km north of the centre of Bath, to the north-west of the A3039, London Street. The c 1.75ha site is bounded to the north by Lower Hedgemead Road,

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from which it is separated by late C19 metal railings. To the north-east the park adjoins Margaret's Hill, while to the south-east and south it is bounded by London Street and Guinea Lane. These boundaries are closed by late C19 ornamental cast-iron railings set on stone plinths. To the west the site adjoins C18 and C19 domestic properties (many listed grade II) in Lansdown Road, Wellington Place, Caroline Place, and Ainslie's Belvedere. A partly sunken footpath crosses the site from east to west, ascending from London Street to Lower Hedgemead Road. This stepped, stone-flagged path is separated from the park to north and south by metal railings, and is crossed by a late C19 footbridge. The path pre-dates the establishment of the park (OS 1885). To the north of the path, immediately west of its junction with London Street, a C20 garage and a small group of mid C19 villas, Gloster Villas (listed grade II), project into the park. These buildings survive from the early and mid C19 residential development which took place on the slopes below Camden Crescent.

The park slopes steeply from north-west to south-east, and is partly terraced to accommodate the gradient of the land. There are extensive views east and south-east from the park across the late C18 and C19 buildings adjacent to London Street, and across the River Avon to Bathwick. The spire of St Swithin's church, Walcot c 50m south-east of the park is prominent in many of these views. Although separated from the park by Lower Hedgemead Road, the open grassy slope south of Camden Crescent and the mixed ornamental planting to the south-east have a visual unity with the park.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Hedgemead Park is approached from Lansdown Road to the west, London Street and Guinea Lane to the south and south-east, and Lower Hedgemead Road to the north. The principal entrance situated on Lansdown Road at a point c 80m north of its junction with Guinea Lane comprises a pair of ornamental wrought-iron carriage gates supported by a pair of square-section open wrought-iron piers surmounted by vase finials. The entrance leads to a walk which descends c 45m between lawns and shrubbery edged with rustic rockwork to reach the main body of the park. A further carriage entrance is situated on London Street opposite St Swithin's church. This entrance comprises a pair of ornamental wrought-iron carriage gates supported by stone piers surmounted by vase finials. The entrance leads to a ramped drive which ascends parallel to the railings separating the park from Guinea Lane for c 130m before reaching a junction with the walk leading into the park from Lansdown Road. To the south-east the ramped walk is flanked by grass verges planted with a single row of mature specimen trees, while to the north-west there are rocky banks and a high stone wall retaining the upper levels of the park. The metal railings following the London Street and Guinea Lane boundaries of the park south-west from the London Street carriage entrance are terminated to the south-west by a single ornamental wrought-iron pedestrian gate flanked by a pair of stone piers under domed caps. A similar pedestrian entrance is situated at the north-east corner of the park adjacent to the junction of London Street and Margaret's Hill. There are further pedestrian entrances leading north from the park to Lower Hedgemead Road, and on to the footpath which crosses the site from east to west. With the exception of the north-east entrance adjacent to London Street and Margaret's Hill, the entrances are of late C19 construction (OS 1902); the north-west entrance appears to date from the early C20, but is designed in identical style to the earlier entrances (OS 1930).

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Hedgemead Park is laid out in informal style with serpentine walks dividing areas of lawn and ornamental shrubbery. To the north there are extensive boundary shrubberies, while the picturesque potential of the sloping site is exploited by the use of terraced and contoured walks.

The walk leading east from the principal or Lansdown Road entrance to the park arrives after c 130m at a junction with the walk ascending from the London Street entrance, and a walk leading north to the main lawn towards the centre of the site. To the south of this junction, adjacent to the top of a flight of steps ascending from the walk leading to the London Street entrance, is an octagonal summerhouse of green-painted timber construction under a pyramidal tiled roof. The summerhouse has a panelled back and open front supported on timber columns. It appears to be of late C19 construction, and is shown on the early C20 OS map (1902). A further walk, partly lined with rustic stones, leads north-east from the shelter, passing along the summit of the stone wall which retains the upper level of the park above the walk leading to the London Street entrance. This wall is of battered and buttressed construction and is broken towards its central point by a circular castellated turret or prospect tower. The retaining wall and turret date from the construction of the park in 1885-9 and form part of the means by which the Corporation sought to stabilise the steep slope. The walk along the summit of the retaining wall passes to the east of a late C20 children's play area which occupies the site of a late C19/early C20 nursery and glasshouse (OS 1902, 1930),

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
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and leads c 100m north-east and north to emerge at the southern end of a lawn which forms the principal feature of the park layout. The walk divides, one branch sweeping north-east round the lawn to reach a flight of stone steps descending to a walk which follows a serpentine course south and east to reach the London Street entrance, while the other branch sweeps north-west past a mature specimen weeping ash to enter the southern end of a formal terrace extending c 122m along the west side of the east-facing sloping lawn. The terrace is retained above the lawn to the east by a low stone wall planted with ivy, while to the west a further low rustic stone wall retains a belt of evergreen shrubbery. The terrace itself is planted with a single line of mature specimen limes, while towards its central point an octagonal bandstand (listed grade II) breaks forward beyond the line of the retaining wall. The bandstand has ornamental cast-iron supports beneath a pyramidal copper roof which rises to a central acorn finial, and is of late C19 construction (OS 1902). At the northern end of the terrace a walk sweeps north-east and east, passing a flight of stone steps which descends to a late C19 metal gate leading to the footpath which passes through the site, but which is screened from the park by belts of evergreen shrubbery. After c 50m the walk reaches a junction, at the centre of which stands a late C19 cast-iron drinking fountain (dry, 2002). This structure comprises a central column surmounted by a gilded eagle, which rises from a quatrefoil-shaped basin supported on four lions. The fountain stands on a stepped octagonal stone base, and the junction at which it stands is surrounded by evergreen shrubbery and mature specimen trees. From this junction a wide tarmac walk follows a serpentine course south and south-east, descending the slope to reach the London Street entrance. A further walk leads north from the junction, crossing the sunken public footpath on a late C19 metal footbridge (OS 1902) to reach the northern section of the park.

The section of the park to the north of the public footpath is laid out with a series of curvilinear contoured walks and stepped paths which provide access to pedestrian entrances from Lower Hedgemead Road. The northern boundary of the park is densely planted with evergreen shrubbery and mature specimen trees and conifers, including picturesque groups of mature pines. Further trees and shrubbery screen the mid C19 Gloster Villas which occupy a site c 20m east of the footbridge crossing the public footpath. The design and planting of this area appears to have changed little since the park was laid out in the late C19 (OS 1902). To the north-east of Gloster Villas an open grass slope ornamented with geometric flower beds for seasonal planting descends to the level of London Street. A stepped path ascends from the pedestrian entrance at the north-east corner of the site, while a further path follows the street boundary south-west before turning west to reach a flight of steps which ascends to a terrace with provision for seats backed by further shrubbery. The grass slope and associated paths form the early C20 extension to the late C19 park; the layout of this area appears to have changed little since 1930 (OS 1902, 1930).

#### REFERENCES

N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol* (1958), pp 132-3 R Gilding, *Historic Public Parks - Bath* (1997), pp 35-9

Maps T Moule, *City of Bath*, 1837

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1885, published 1888 2nd edition published 1904 1932 edition 1952 edition

Illustrations J C Nattes, engraving of the site of Edgemead from *The Paragon*, 1806 (in Gilding 1997)

Archival items Bath City Council Parks Committee Minutes (Bath City Archive) Late C19 photograph of Hedgemead Park (in Gilding 1997)

Description written: March 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: November 2002

## 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.