

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ARNOLD CIRCUS, BETHNAL GREEN

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

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Name:	ARNOLD CIRCUS, BETHNAL GREEN
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Tower Hamlets (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.526048 Longitude: -0.074931561 National Grid Reference: TQ 33643 82549 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001300 Date first listed: 07-Apr-1994

## Details

A central open space, laid out as formal terraces, which acts as the focus of a late C19 housing improvement scheme.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1890, the London County Council, under Part 1 of the 1890 Housing Act, put forward a comprehensive scheme for the clearance and redevelopment of the Old Nichol slum area. The proposals, which became known as the Boundary Street, Bethnal Green Improvement Scheme, covered a large area (6ha) and involved the displacement of 5719 people. The original intention was to rebuild with a series of rectangular plots, but between authorisation for the work and the purchase of the land, a new suggestion was put forward. This took the form of a centralised plan, with blocks arranged down tree-lined avenues which radiated from a central circus. This arrangement incorporated an open central space and housed a greater number of people. The final total rehoused under the scheme was 4600. The revised plan was approved in 1893 and the first area was cleared in the same year. The scheme was completed by the end of 1900.

The Boundary Estate was the first major initiative undertaken by the LCC in the improvement of its housing stock. The scheme was handled by the council's new Housing of the Working Classes Branch, most of those involved having been trained at the Architectural Association, with Owen Fleming (head of the Branch until 1900) acting as architect-in-charge. The scheme was unusual for its date in providing open space, and being based on a road pattern, with buildings designed for the site rather than as standard blocks, relating architecturally with one another and the site as a whole. As such, the Estate provided the inspiration of many later housing developments.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Arnold Circus lies at the centre of the Boundary Estate and forms an integral part of the scheme. The seven main streets of the estate (from the north, clockwise: Hocker Street, Palissy Street, Rochelle Street, Club Row, Camlet Street, Navarre Street, and Calvert Street) converge onto the Circus, at the centre of which are the raised gardens surrounded by perimeter railings (listed grade II).

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The gardens are approached through wrought-iron overthrows (listed grade II with the perimeter fencing) and up four sets of steps, at the four main compass points.

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**PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS** The Boundary Estate buildings (listed grade II as a group) which surround the gardens of Arnold Circus include a number of buildings which front the Circus or line the streets radiating from it.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Earth from the foundations of the accommodation blocks was heaped up at the focus of the radial road plan to provide a raised central garden. Although this had the advantage of saving on carting costs, the primary purpose was to provide a unifying element in the new community. The four sets of steps lead up the two tiers of terracing, to the top level platform. Here stands the bandstand (listed grade II), erected in 1899.

**REFERENCES**

John Nelson Tarn, *Five per cent philanthropy* (1973) Susan Beattie, *A Revolution in London Housing* (1980)

Description rewritten: March 1999 Register Inspector: CB Edited: November 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.