

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Central Parks

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

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Name:	Central Parks
District:	City of Southampton (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.909312 Longitude: -1.4090495 National Grid Reference: SU4164512371, SU4206712195 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001323 Date first listed: 09-Feb-1995 Date of most recent amendment: 21-Aug-2013 Statutory Address 1: Central Parks, Southampton

Historique de la conservation

Archaeological excavations have revealed evidence of Roman occupation in the west area of Houndwell and the eastern part of Hoglands overlies part of the Anglo-Saxon town of Hamwic (C8-9), but the overall formation of the Central Parks originates with the medieval field pattern which surrounded Southampton. This medieval system, whereby the town was surrounded by open fields where burgesses had Lammas pasture rights, largely persisted into the C19. A map of Southampton of c 1600 (Welch 1964) shows a complex of paths and boundaries leading through and around all these Lammas lands, except for East Park. This complex of paths is very similar to that shown on the Royal Engineers' map of Southampton of 1846.

During the 1840s, several town improvement schemes which included open spaces for recreation were considered. The Marsh Improvement Act of 1844 provided the city authorities with the legislation necessary for acquiring and building on the Lammas lands, but following public protests at the council having ceded development rights to private builders, the authorities were forced to acquire 50 acres (c 20ha) of the lands for a public park. In the meantime, the process of buying out individuals' Lammas rights continued well into the early 1850s.

The laying out of the parks was equally protracted. Work started slowly in 1846 but gained momentum in the 1850s when they were depicted in a series of views by the artist and designer Philip Brannon. His painting dated 1850 and entitled, Suggested Planning of Parks, shows an elaborate scheme for their layout. Another, dated 1856, shows the layout of the parks as they might have been, while that of c 1861 shows them much as they are today. The OS map of Southampton of 1870 shows the path layout throughout the park complex and, except for minor alterations, this has not changed.

East Park and West Park (including the land on which the Civic Centre now stands) were the East and West Magdalens (or Marlands), lands granted for the maintenance of the leper hospital of St Mary Magdalene.

Palmerston Park and Houndwell Park together comprised Houndwell Field, the name being derived from the stream which rose close to the junction of what are now Pound Tree Road and Sussex Road. The eastern boundary originally lay in the western edge of Hoglands, where a fragment of a boundary bank still survives. The new boundary was established when the southern part of Palmerston Road was built in the middle of the C19, alongside an infilled canal.

Hoglands was originally known as Hogsland. The boundary bank near its western edge also marked the parish boundary and seems to be the remnants of a boundary referred to in the C13 and C14 and shown as a more significant, longer feature on the map of c 1600.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Urban Parks Programme secured funding for 28 items of restoration and improvement works and work started on site in late 1998 and was completed in June 2001. The parks have provided a suitable setting for a series of notable public memorials commemorating Southampton's role in international and national events, as well as others of a more civic nature.

Details

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The chain of Central Parks, altogether some 21 ha, lies mainly to the east of the main street, Above Bar Street, which runs through Southampton city centre. The exception is West Park which lies at the north end of Above Bar and at right angles to the main north/south chain. The boundaries are variously open to the pedestrian pavements and in other places bounded by railings.

The land is fairly flat and even and today forms a large, green oasis behind the main facade of post-war shopping development and department stores which line Above Bar Street. The latter is so called because it lies above the Bargate which still stands and marked the northern entry to the medieval city. This chain of parks echoes the green approach into the city further to the north, where Southampton Common provides a similar stretch of heavily wooded, public open space running north/south along either side of the main A33.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Southampton Civic Centre (E Berry Webber, listed Grade II*) was built between 1928 and 1939 on land formerly part of West Park. It stands at the south side of West Park (outside the area here registered) and is now divided from it by Commercial Road. The Civic Centre, which incorporates municipal offices, the Guildhall, Art Gallery, and Central Library, dominates the western approach to the city centre and is a prominent landmark from West Park.

PARKS West Park has entrances on Cumberland Place to the north and on Commercial Road to the south, from where paths lead to a junction with a central walk across the park. At this crossing is Watt's Monument (1861, listed Grade II), a statue of the hymn writer Isaac Watts (1674 -1748), to the design of Richard Cockle Lucas, erected by public subscription. The axial walk continues to the eastern end of the park where the Cenotaph (1919, listed Grade II*), designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, stands. The re-establishment of the park entrance and linking footpaths from the south-east corner resulted in the removal of previous underground toilets, dense vegetation and the re-location of the Age Concern building. The Millvina Dean, a titanic survivor, memorial garden sits in the triangle between Havelock Road and Commercial Road (added 2012, not part of the registered area). The line of this axial walk continues into East Park, crossing Above Bar Street, which divides the two parks, to East Park Terrace which forms the eastern boundary. The Andrews Monument (1860, listed Grade II) stands at the centre of this walk, where it forms a junction with paths along the main north/south axis of East Park. The statue by Benjamin Brain, erected by public subscription, is of Richard Andrews (1796 -1859), a coach builder and five times mayor of the city. Nearby, at the northern end of Above Bar Street, is the Titanic Engineers Memorial (listed Grade II), erected by subscription from 'fellow engineers and friends through the world', and unveiled in 1914 in memory of the disaster of the Titanic which sailed from Southampton on her maiden voyage in 1912, with many Southampton citizens on board as crew. South of the Titanic Memorial is a sundial (1901, listed Grade II), erected to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII. In the north-west corner of the park is a rock garden with lily pond and waterfalls, constructed in 1935. At the northern end of the north to south walk is a fountain (constructed 2001). There are also tennis courts and a pavilion and bowling green towards the south end of the park.

Palmerston Park lies to the south of East Park. A garden of acid-loving plants forms a recent (late C20) feature around the Palmerston Memorial (listed Grade II) at the north-west corner of the park. This statue of Lord Palmerston (1784 -1865), Foreign Secretary, Prime Minister, and owner of Broadlands nr Romsey (qv), robed in a quasi-Roman toga, was designed by Sharpe and unveiled in June 1869.

From Brunswick Place at the north end of East Park a straight walk runs north to south through the entire length of the parks, parallel with Above Bar Street. This long path leads across New Road which divides East Park from Palmerston Park to its south, and continues across Pound Tree Road into Houndwell. From here it continues, passing a drinking fountain (1859, listed Grade II) at the centre of Houndwell, to end at Hanover Buildings road which lies at the southern end of this chain. The path is planted with an avenue of limes (*Tilia x europea*), donated by Sir Frederick Perkins, mayor, in 1862. This axial walk is the major walk through the parks but each park is laid out with a number of lesser cross-walks. The focal point of the park is a new bandstand, introduced as the result of a public consultation exercise.

Hoglands lies to the east of Houndwell and is divided from it by Palmerston Road. The eastern boundary is formed by St Mary's Place and Kingsway, the latter constructed in the late 1950s as part of the reshaping and remodelling of much of the city layout and infrastructure following the devastation of Southampton during the Second World War. In Hoglands the path network crosses at a point marked by a central pavilion and the whole area is surrounded by a perimeter planting of specimen trees. This area has been used as a cricket ground almost without interruption since 1867, when the park hosted its inaugural cricket match between an All England XI and a Hampshire XVIII.

A gas column (listed Grade II) stands at the southern end of the north to south walk. It was re-erected in this position, having previously been located at several other sites in the city, and commemorates the installation of gas-lighting in the city in 1822.

Summary

Laid out between the late 1850s and early 1860s, the Southampton Central Parks: West Park, East Park, Palmerston Park, Houndwell, and Hoglands, provide a chain of public open space through the heart of the city. The parks are a good example of a mid C19 civic improvement scheme, possibly influenced by J C Loudon, who was engaged by the council to lay out Southampton Cemetery (qv) in 1843.

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.

Reasons for Designation

Central Parks, Southampton, developed on former common land from 1846, are designated at Grade II* for the following principal reasons: * Date: the parks are an early example of municipal parks; * Design: although enhanced, the parks' design is essentially unchanged from their original layout which developed in the 1840s and 1850s; * Historic interest: the parks' have rich time-depth, formerly having been part of the town's Lammas lands; * Structures and features: the parks have numerous listed structures, including the town's war memorial and the Titanic Engineers Memorial.

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