

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

DEVONPORT PARK

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Name:	DEVONPORT PARK
District:	City of Plymouth (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.376248 Longitude: -4.1745156 National Grid Reference: SX 45477 55189 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001657 Date first listed: 13-Nov-2002

Details

A mid C19 public park developed on land rented from the War Department, laid out with advice from William Ponty and, at a later date, by F W Meyer, landscape gardener to Robert Veitch & Son of Exeter.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Devonport, known until 1824 as Dock, developed in the C18 around the naval dockyards and naval buildings on Mount Wise. In the early C19 the town was provided with new civic buildings by the Plymouth architect, John Foulston. Development of the town was restrained by fortifications, including the 'Devonport Lines' which were originally constructed in 1756 and expanded in 1783 and 1810. By 1857 the War Department expressed concern to Devonport Corporation at the extent of public trespass on the defensive earthworks. The Corporation took the view however that limited public access was desirable, and in its response referred to the example of The Hoe (qv) (Minutes, August 1857). The Corporation requested the lease of the glacia between Tavistock Road and the road leading from Marlborough Street to Keyham Works, 'for the purpose of healthful recreation by the public' (ibid). A lease was conceded by the War Department, and in October 1857 the Town Clerk enquired when planting could begin on the glacia (Minutes, 28 October 1857); the following month the Clerk produced plans for the lodge and the general layout of the park (Minutes, 11 November 1857). Work began on laying out the park, with authorisation being given for the purchase of a fountain and four 'bases' in April 1858 (Minutes). Accounts published in November 1859 indicate that iron hurdles were supplied by Uphill of Birmingham, while iron gates, railings, vases and other, unspecified items supplied by the Coalbrook Dale Co cost £172 2s 0d. The architect responsible for designing the lodge and other park structures was Alfred Norman of Plymouth, with Messrs Arnold & Son and George Perkins being responsible for the construction work. The Plymouth Seed Company supplied plants.

In late 1859 a local resident, Thomas Hawker, challenged the legality of paying for the park through the rates in the courts. This appears to have delayed progress with construction of the park, which was to continue sporadically for a further thirty years (Guide to the Three Towns, 1874). In 1861 the Mayor of Devonport discussed the question of planting the park with the local nurseryman, William Ponty. A fountain commemorating Admiral Sir Charles Napier was erected adjacent to the entrance lodge in 1863. By 1874 the park was sufficiently developed with 'walks, trees, shrubs, arbours, seats, etc' to afford a 'splendid recreation ground and fine promenade, with a beautiful view of the surrounding scenery'; it was also the venue for the annual military review held on the Queen's birthday (ibid). Further developments were made c 1900 when a refreshment pavilion with

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elaborate cast-iron verandahs was constructed and an adjacent area laid out as a flower garden; the path pattern within the park was also considerably developed, and a new bandstand constructed (OS 1895, 1914). These features were laid out under the supervision of F W Meyer (d 1906), landscape gardener to Robert Veitch & Son of Exeter, who was also responsible for designing parks at Poole (qv) and Wellington, Somerset (qv) (*Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1906). A gun captured during the Boer War was placed near the refreshment pavilion, while c 1920 a war memorial was constructed near the eastern boundary. In the late C20 the Refreshment Pavilion and its immediate surroundings were sold and converted into an old people's home, and the late C19 bandstand was demolished.

Today (2002), Devonport Park remains in municipal ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Devonport Park is situated c 0.5km north-east of the centre of Devonport. The c 18ha site is adjoined to the east by Exmouth Road, and to the south-east by Fore Street. To the south-west the park is adjoined by late C20 domestic properties situated off Granby Street, which occupy the site of the Old Granby Barracks. The western boundary is formed by New Passage Hill, while to the north-west the park is bounded by the A374, Ferry Road. The northern boundary is formed by a mid C20 school and Milne Place. The boundaries are marked by a variety of metal railings of various dates, together with low stone walls which formerly supported railings. The park is crossed from north to south by the mid C20 A374, Park Avenue, which is open to the site. The site occupies the levelled summit of a hill, from which the ground drops steeply to the north, west, and south, allowing wide views west across the Tamar, north across Morice Town and the docks, and south-east towards the centre of Plymouth.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to Devonport Park is from Fore Street to the south, at a point c 50m west of its junction with Devonport Road. The entrance is flanked by low stone walls surmounted by hoop-topped railings which are supported by tall, pyramid-capped stone piers. A pair of similar, taller piers flanks the carriage entrance which is itself adjoined by two pedestrian entrances; all these entrances lack their original iron gates. To the east of the entrance stands a picturesque single-storey lodge constructed in polychrome brick with a tiled roof and projecting tile-hung gable above the entrance porch. Above the entrance is a commemorative inscription dated 1858. The lodge is set within its own gardens which are separated from the park by low stone walls surmounted by simple iron fences. The lodge was built to the design of Alfred Norman in 1858.

Three entrances are situated on the eastern boundary of the park. The south-east entrance is adjacent to the junction of Exmouth Road and Devonport Road, the east entrance is from Exmouth Road at a point opposite its junction with Stopford Place, while the north-east entrance is situated at the junction of Exmouth Road and Milne Place. Of these entrances, that to the north-east retains a pair of rusticated stone piers which formerly supported gates. A south-west entrance leads into the park from Fore Street at a point c 100m west of the principal entrance, while there are informal entrances from the unfenced Park Avenue which crosses the site from north to south. A north-west entrance gives access to the site from the junction of Ferry Road and New Passage Hill, and a west entrance enters the site from New Passage Hill at a point c 100m north-north-east of its junction with St Aubyn Road.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Immediately west of the principal entrance, an area enclosed by low iron fencing and containing a painted terracotta fountain is entered from the drive by a low wrought-iron gate. The fountain is approached by a cobbled path which leads to a paved area surrounding a raised circular basin from which rises a pedestal supporting a tazza and a figure of a boy holding a fish. The fountain was given in memory of Admiral Sir Charles Napier (d 1860) by seamen and marines based at Plymouth and erected in 1863. From the principal entrance a broad tarmac walk rises c 30m north before dividing to encircle a flower garden, from which it is separated by low metal railings set on granite copings. The garden is entered by a low, ornamental wrought-iron gate placed aligned with the walk ascending from the principal entrance, and is laid out with lawns on which are arranged large, picturesquely weathered rocks together with several pedestals formed from artificial stone. Specimen trees and ornamental shrubs surround a classical stone urn set on a square pedestal with a commemorative inscription, which forms the focal point of the garden. A guidebook of 1874 commented on the 'tastefully laid out flower

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gardens, in which are fountains and figures, a rockery and other pleasing embellishments' (Guide to the Three Towns, 1874). The entrance, lodge, Napier fountain, and flower garden form part of the mid C19 layout of the park (OS 1895).

Beyond the flower garden, walks ascend north-east and north-west. The north-east walk is partly lined by an avenue of mature limes, and leads c 200m north-east to reach the east entrance. A circular shelter shown to the east of this walk on the 1914 OS map does not survive, nor does the mid C19 bandstand which also stood to the east of the avenue. The walk itself appears to have formed part of the mid C19 design for the park. The north-west walk ascends c 190m to reach an elliptical walk laid out round the levelled summit of the hill. The north-west walk also appears to have formed part of the mid C19 design for the park, but the elliptical walk, which may have been intended to form a cycle track (as at Poole Park, Dorset qv) dates from Meyer's alterations of c 1900 (OS 1895, 1914). The area enclosed within the elliptical walk is laid to grass planted with groups of specimen trees and ornamental shrubs, and is crossed by several straight walks. Towards the centre of this area is the site of the late C19 bandstand, to the east of which is an early C20 bowling green with a 1920s single-storey pavilion under a hipped roof on its west side (OS 1933). At the eastern end of the area enclosed by the elliptical walk stands a fine early C20 granite war memorial in the form of a *lanterne-des-morts* raised on a stepped base. The memorial is placed aligned with the east entrance, forming a focal point when viewed from Stopford Place to the east of the park. From the elliptical walk a tree-lined walk descends c 220m south to reach a flight of stone steps which descends to the south-west entrance from Fore Street; this walk pre-dates Meyer's alterations to the park (OS 1895, 1914).

To the south-west of the elliptical walk, a further elliptical-shaped area enclosed by *Escallonia* hedges comprises a rose garden laid out with radiating segmental beds cut in grass, with a central raised, stone-kerbed pool surrounded by a gravel edging. To the south-west, overlooking the rose garden, is a substantial two-storey refreshment pavilion (today, 2002, converted for use as an old people's home) with elaborate cast-iron verandahs and balconies, and a central ornamental gable and weathervane. The refreshment pavilion and rose garden formed part of Meyer's late C19 or early C20 alterations to the park (OS 1895, 1914). Immediately north-west of the rose garden, a Boer War gun stands on a carved granite pedestal inset with plaques bearing commemorative inscriptions. The gun is placed within an enclosure formed by C20 hoop-topped railings. A late C20 children's play area is situated to the west of the Boer War memorial, while to the south-west of the play area is a group of C20 football pitches which occupy the site of C19 reservoirs (OS 1895, 1914, 1933). A tree-lined walk leads west from the elliptical walk to reach Park Avenue. It continues beyond Park Avenue, extending parallel to the south-west boundary of the site, to reach the entrance leading from New Passage Hill. The land to the west of Park Avenue, which was cut across the park in the mid C20, slopes steeply west towards the River Tamar, and is laid out with scattered specimen trees planted in mown grass. There are extensive views across the river from the area west of Park Avenue, and also from the area to the east of Park Avenue and west of the central elliptical walk. The land to the west of Park Avenue formed part of the mid C19 park (OS 1895).

The ground to the north of the elliptical walk slopes down to the north, and is laid out with a slightly curved walk extending from the south-west to the north-east entrance, and several straight walks running from the northern boundary of the park to converge at approximately the mid-point of the north side of the elliptical walk. This area is planted with groups of specimen trees and shrubs, and has extensive views north across Morice Town. Some 50m south-west of the north-east entrance, a derelict mid C20 toilet block or changing room of brick construction stands in an area of mixed shrubbery.

As originally laid out in 1857-8 the park appears to have had an area of ornamental gardens concentrated around the lodge and north of the principal entrance; these correspond to the surviving flower garden and the area around the Napier fountain. A series of straight radiating walks ascended to the summit of the site, which was crossed by further, straight, partly tree-lined walks (OS 1895). The main elements of this design survive today (2002), together with a series of new, predominantly curvilinear walks, introduced by Meyer c 1900 (OS 1914). The refreshment pavilion and the associated rose garden also survive from Meyer's improvements.

OTHER LAND An extensive nursery and depot is situated at the south-east corner of the park, immediately east of the lodge. This area contains several glasshouses, sheds, and other structures. The nursery is screened from the park by evergreen hedges. A smaller nursery or service yard is shown at the south-east corner of the park in 1895 (OS), but by 1914 it had expanded to cover its present area (OS).

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REFERENCES

Guide to the Three Towns (1874) N Pevsner and B Cherry, *The Buildings of England: Devon* (1989), p 677 'Park reminder of Devonport's glory', *Western Evening Herald*, 16 March 1991 S Pugsley (ed), *Devon Gardens An Historical Survey* (1994), p 152 *Devon Register Review*, (English Heritage 1999)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1895 3rd edition published 1914 1933 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published c 1860 OS 10' to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1857

Archival items Devonport Corporation, General Purposes Committee Minutes, 1857-61 (West Devon Record Office)

Description written: June 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: September 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.