

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

DULWICH PARK

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Name:	DULWICH PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Southwark (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.445635 Longitude: -0.078718335 National Grid Reference: TQ 33615 73600 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000416 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

A public park little altered from its original late C19 layout.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In 1606 Edward Alleyn, an actor and friend of Shakespeare, purchased the Manor of Dulwich which included the site of Dulwich Park. Alleyn founded a college for the maintenance of twelve poor men and women and the education of twelve children. In 1883 the governors of the now extensive Dulwich College, worried about the rapid expansion of building on the outskirts of London, appointed a committee to consider the possibility of donating a suitable portion of their estate for the purpose of a public park. In 1884, at the request of the governors, Charles Barry prepared a plan and report for a 29ha park. Barry was the son of Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860), and Surveyor to the Dulwich College Estates. The proposals were presented to the Metropolitan Board of Works by the governors who offered to donate the land on the proviso that the Board obtained from Parliament an enabling Act, and was prepared to take over the land, which was to be kept for the use of the public in perpetuity. The offer was accepted and in 1885 the transfer of the gift of land into public ownership was made complete by an Act of Parliament and work began on adapting the land for the purpose of a public park. The final designs, developed from Barry's plan probably by J J Sexby, Chief Officer of Parks for the London County Council (LUC 1997), were approved in 1888 and the park was opened to the public in June 1890. Queen Mary was a frequent visitor to Dulwich Park and much admired the rhododendrons.

The original layout is still largely intact (1998) and the site remains a public park managed by the local authority.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Dulwich Park is situated in south London, some 300m south-east of Dulwich village. The 29ha site is almost entirely enclosed by residential buildings fronting College Road to the west, Frank Dixon Way to the south-west, and Court Lane to the north-east, with the Lordship Lane estate to the east. The generally level ground, formerly meadow land, has a slight slope down to the north-west, scattered mature oaks surviving from the pre-park meadows. The extensive lawns of the park are enclosed by wooden fences with belts of trees or shrubberies along most boundaries.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance to the park is from College Road to the west at Old College Gate, opposite the Old College Chapel to the north of Dulwich Picture Gallery. To the north, Old College Gate is guarded by a late C19 lodge house built to accommodate the park superintendent. There are three further entrances to Dulwich Park, all four ways in having matching Italianate entrance piers with double central iron gates and single outer gates for pedestrians. Court Lane Gate, from Court Lane to the north, leads on to a 50m tree-lined avenue, while Queen Mary's Gate leads from Dulwich Common Road to the south of the park. The latter, formerly known as Dulwich Common Gate, was renamed (1954) in memory of her majesty's many visits to the park. Queen Mary's Gate leads up a longer avenue of c 150m, formerly known as Snake's Lane (Blashill, 1887). The Rosebery Gate to the south-east, named after Lord Rosebery, first chairman of London County Council, who opened the park in June 1890, leads straight into the park and is guarded by a C19 lodge house.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The Refreshment House, built in the 1890s, stands almost in the centre of the park c 50m to the north-east of the lake. Barry's proposals of 1884 were based around a large, centrally situated pavilion; this was still included on the estate map dated 1886 but an undated drawing made for the LCC (LUC 1997) shows the proposed refreshment house as built. The single-storey building has a tiled roof and tile-hung elevations. There are small attic windows under the eaves to the south and a clock on the plain pediment to the north. The building continues (1998) to be used as a refreshment house but the open arcades shown on the 1886 plan and on a photo of c 1900 are now incorporated in a glazed conservatory.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The entrances around the park lead onto a perimeter carriage drive with a pedestrian walk-way on the outside and a horse ride on the inner edge. This arrangement differs from Barry's proposals which showed two major carriage drives, one running east/west from College Road to Dulwich Common Road and the other north/south from Court Lane to Dulwich Common Road. The 1886 estate map shows the carriage drive rather like it is today (1998), winding around the perimeter rather than in the interior.

From the principal entrance the drive passes to the south of the brick-built lodge house, now privately occupied. It continues for c 100m before dividing, with lawns, cut beds, and shrubberies on either side. To the north, near to the junction, is the C20 brick-built lavatory block and the council depot and Ranger station. At this point the ground to the north of the drive is a grassed open space which early on in the history of the park was used for organised sports. By 1950 the fence which enclosed this area had been removed and today the space continues to be used as an informal recreation area. Looking south-east from here there is a fine view of the site of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, now marked by a television transmitter mast.

Almost immediately after the junction the northern drive turns to the north-east and continues for 400m before dividing again; to the north is the avenue leading to Court Lodge Gate. To the south a lesser drive runs southwards across the centre of the park in a fashion similar to that proposed by Barry in 1884. Some 50m to the west of this junction are shrubberies and the site of the mid C20 bandstand (now, 1998, gone) with a fine view south across the grass to the Refreshment House. The northern perimeter drive continues in a south-easterly direction for c 400m, flanked on either side by lawns and shrubberies, before curving to the south to Rosebery Gate. At this point it is crossed by a footpath from a children's playground attached to the mid C20 high-rise flats of the Lordship Lane estate. From Rosebery Gate the perimeter drive continues west; to the north of the drive is the c 1ha rhododendron garden, a lozenge-shaped area crossed by a number of footpaths and occupying a partially sunken area. The garden was much visited by Queen Mary in the first half of the C20. To the west of the rhododendron garden is a 2ha area of open grass where a row of six oak trees survive from an earlier field boundary (OS 1870). Some 350m west of the Rosebery Gate the drive divides around a triangular island of shrubs: the perimeter drive continues west in the direction of the lake, the southern spur leads to Queen Mary's Gate, and the northern spur joins up with the lesser drive which runs from the Court Lodge Junction.

The irregularly shaped 1ha lake has a long tradition as a boating lake and is fed by the headwaters of the River Effra. The overflow runs to the west under a C20 brick-built bridge, a replacement for the late C19 rustic wooden bridge, then over a weir and under the late C19 stone bridge which carries the perimeter drive. The resulting stream, which is enclosed within a late C19 water garden surrounded by a low iron fence, widens out after c 5m to accommodate a small island, and north of the island the water exits the park via a small sluice. Although the lake was made in the place indicated by Barry, his proposals were modified in 1886 when a less irregular shape was proposed. By the time it was constructed the shape had changed again, with

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the indentation of its banks becoming more pronounced and the construction of only one island instead of the two proposed in 1886. The lake is enclosed within low iron fencing and on a small promontory which juts out into the lake from the south bank is a late C20 2m high metal obelisk dedicated to peace. On a piece of lawn between the footpath south of the lake and perimeter drive is a piece of sculpture, *Divided Circle*, by Barbara Hepworth. The nine-foot (c 2.75m) high bronze was bought by the Greater London Council and erected in the park in 1970.

The perimeter drive continues for another c 100m from the stone bridge, past hard tennis courts to the south, before it rejoins the north perimeter drive.

The two ends of the lesser drive which bisects the park converge east of the Refreshment House. A circular aviary once stood c 50m south-east of the Refreshment House; built c 1900 and replaced in 1972, the aviary has since been removed leaving redundant areas of path. To the south-east of the Refreshment House are shrubberies and mature trees; one old coppiced oak is of particular note. To the east and north-east of the Refreshment House is the late C20 children's playground, and north of that the mid C20 bowling green and pavilions. The northern lakeside footpath leads west from the Refreshment House, past a small herb garden, and c 50m west of the Refreshment House it passes to the north two hard tennis courts constructed in the mid C20, and to the south a small shelter. The thatched roof of the shelter, a feature in the early C20 (photograph, c 1900), has been replaced with clay tiles. After c 100m the footpath joins the northern perimeter drive.

REFERENCES

J J Sexby, *The Municipal Parks of London* (1898), pp 80-90 E Cecil, *London Parks and Gardens* (1907), pp 174-7 Dulwich Park 1888-1988 [Local Authority leaflet published to commemorate the centenary of Dulwich Park.] Dulwich Park, Historical Background (Land Use Consultants 1997)

Maps [reproduced in LUC 1997] J Rocque, *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark and the country near ten miles around*, surveyed 1741-5, published 1746 Map of Dulwich Estate, 1876 C Barry, *Plan of Initial Proposals for Dulwich Park*, 1884 Map of Dulwich Estate showing proposed Dulwich Park, 1886 Thomas Blashill, *Contract Drawings for Dulwich Park*, 1887

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1870 2nd edition published 1896 3rd edition published 1914 1933 edition

Archival items Photographs, early 1900s (Southwark Local Studies Library)

Description written: July 1998 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: November 2001

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.