

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

SHEFFIELD BOTANICAL GARDENS

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Name: SHEFFIELD BOTANICAL GARDENS

District: Sheffield (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.371980
Longitude: -1.4971493
National Grid Reference: SK 33554 86242
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001162
Date first listed: 01-Jun-1984

Details

Botanical gardens laid out 1834(6 by Robert Marnock with contemporary conservatories by B B Taylor.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Sheffield Botanical and Horticultural Society was formed in 1833 to create a botanical garden and in 1834 18 acres (7.5ha) of farmland was bought for the purpose using money raised in shares. A competition held for the design was won by Robert Marnock (1800(89) who began work in the spring of 1834. The Gardens were opened in 1836 to shareholders and annual subscribers but the general public was only given access on four days per year. In 1898 the plant collections were sold and the future of the Gardens was uncertain until Sheffield Town Trust paid off shareholders and took over the management, from which time they were opened to the public. In 1957 the Gardens were leased to Sheffield Corporation and restored by the city architect Lewis Womersley. Sheffield City Council Parks Department currently (1997) maintains and manages the Gardens.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Botanical Gardens are situated c 2km south-west of Sheffield city centre in a residential area. The c 8ha site is on land which slopes down to the south-east towards Sharrow Vale and the boundaries are formed by Clarkehouse Road to the north, Botanical Road to the west, gardens backing from Wigfull Road and Thompson Road to the south, and gardens backing from Southgrove Road to the east. The boundaries are generally walled and those parts dividing the site from roads have walls surmounted by railings.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance is at the north-east corner of the site from Clarkehouse Road where there is a classical gateway with lodges and a screen wall (listed grade II) designed by B B Taylor c 1836. Secondary entrances are situated at the north end of Botanical Road on the west side of the site where there is an iron-caged turnstile (listed grade II with the gateway and screen walls) and on Thompson Road at the south-east tip of the site, where there is a gateway flanked by a low wall surmounted by railings (c 1900, listed grade II). Some 100m north of this entrance there is a Gothic Revival-style lodge (early C19, listed grade II).

PRINCIPAL BUILDING The focus of the Gardens is a range of three conservatories of 1837(8 designed by B B Taylor (each listed grade II*) which were linked by glazed walkways as shown on a photograph of c 1890 (Sheffield CC 1996). The walkways had been removed by the time a photograph of c 1910 was taken (ibid). A concrete colonnade of c 1935 links the eastern and central conservatories. The conservatories were based on the design of Paxton's glasshouses at Chatsworth and are referred to

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as the 'Paxton Pavilions' in C19 and C20 descriptions of the Gardens. They were heated and the central conservatory, known as the Palm House, was flanked by temperate houses. The western pavilion housed a locally famous example of the *Victoria Regia* waterlily during the later part of the C19.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The Gardens consist of a formal core surrounded by informal areas with winding paths.

A promenade runs along the front of the conservatories which are situated at the north end of the site, at its highest point, overlooking falling land to the south-east with views across the valley. Marnock mentioned this view in an article of 1836 (*Floricultural Mag*) in which he describes the 'beautiful sweep of villa landscape for which the western precincts of Sheffield are deservedly celebrated'. A path flanked by lawns leads south from the central conservatory to a Crimean War Memorial (listed grade II), c 120m to the south, which terminates the vista. This was brought to the site from elsewhere in Sheffield in 1960 replacing a circular pool with a fountain which is shown on the 1851 OS map and on an engraving of 1836 (*ibid*).

On the west side of the lawns, c 100m south-west of the conservatories, there is a rose garden enclosed by clipped yew hedges on the site of formal gardens shown on the 1851 OS map.

A system of curving paths leads around the site in a pattern which conforms closely with that shown on the 1851 OS map. From the Clarkehouse Road entrance a path branches westwards leading behind (to the north of) the conservatories through woodland, turning southwards over falling land as the site's perimeter is followed. Paths lead off into the gardens and some stretches have stone steps leading down the slope. A Bear Pit (early C19, listed grade II) is situated in the woodland c 120m south-west of the conservatories. This is a circular pit of coursed rubble sunk into the slope of the land which is entered from the south-east via a triple arched entrance. There are grassed clearings to the north and south of the Bear Pit. The south-west and south parts of the gardens generally consist of areas of woodland with clearings planted with specimen trees and shrubs, much as shown on the 1851 OS map. The land falls steeply south of the War Memorial from which steps lead down to join with paths through this part of the site. A description of 1836 (*ibid*) mentions ponds, rustic bridges and archways in this area which are shown on the 1851 OS map but have now (1997) largely disappeared.

The east side of the site is more open in character. Some 100m south-east of the conservatories there is a rock garden, probably of early C20 date, with a cascade at its north end feeding a narrow pool. East of this there is an area called Osborne Field which is divided from the Gardens by a fence, and immediately south of this the Robert Marnock Garden is also fenced. Both areas are outside the boundary of the Gardens as shown on the 1851 OS map, and were added during the late C20. Paths lead south to the Thompson Road entrance and there is a lawn called Bottom Lawn c 50m south-east of the War Memorial with beds and specimen trees and shrubs.

On the south-east side of the site nurseries and maintenance areas are divided from the Gardens by beech hedges and fencing. These are on the site of nurseries shown on the 1851 OS map. Glasshouses shown on the 1890 OS map have been replaced by late C20 structures.

REFERENCES

Floricultural Magazine 1, (1836) (quoted in SAC 1982, pp 57) N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire The West Riding* (1967), p 465 K Lemmon, *The Gardens of Britain* 5, (1978), pp 139-45 Sheffield Art Report (SAC), (Sheffield Society for the Encouragement of Art 1982), pp 3-12 A Strategy for the Heritage Parks and Green Spaces of Sheffield, (Sheffield City Council 1996), pp 163-7

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1851 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1890 OS 5' to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1851

Archival items [quoted in J Carder's article in the Sheffield Art Report (1982)] Prospectus of the Sheffield Botanical and Horticultural Society, 1833 Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, Sheffield Collection

Description written: June 1998 Register Inspector: CEH

Legal

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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.