

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

NEWARK CASTLE GARDENS

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

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Name:	NEWARK CASTLE GARDENS
County:	Nottinghamshire
District:	Newark and Sherwood (District Authority)
Parish:	Newark
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.077638 Longitude: -0.81226982 National Grid Reference: SK 79664 54038 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001318 Date first listed: 28-Nov-1994

Details

Public gardens surrounding castle ruins, laid out to the designs of Henry Ernest Milner and opened in 1889.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Newark Castle Gardens were laid out in the 1880s as a Jubilee Memorial. The background to their acquisition by the town is set out in a booklet entitled Newark Castle Gardens published in 1887 to promote the scheme. This states that the approaching Jubilee of the Queen has naturally aroused a deep and wide interest amongst all her loyal subjects and it is earnestly felt that Newark ought not to be behind other towns in its determination to provide a lasting Memorial of so auspicious an event.

The public were invited to contribute towards the project to convert the site of the Old Cattle Market round the foot of the Castle into 'public pleasure grounds for the free use of the people for ever'. It was suggested that the gardens would be 'a constant source of health and pleasure, an attractive resort for the inhabitants' as well as giving Newark 'one of the finest entrances of which any town can boast', and adding largely 'to its residential attractions'.

The Cattle Market site had been given to the town earlier in the 1880s by William Gilstrap as part of his gift of a Library, with the intention that the land would provide a stipend for a librarian. It was thought desirable however that the land become a garden and, to this end, the Viscountess Ossington offered £1200 on condition that the site was 'laid out, planted, improved and maintained, for the purpose of being used by the public, free in perpetuity, as public walks and pleasure grounds'. This gift was bolstered by a sum of £500 from Alderman Henry Branston, leaving a sum of £2500 to be raised by the town to complete the purchase of the desired area.

The Castle, and the Crown property embracing the ground lying between the ruins and Castle Gate, was acquired in 1889, and Henry Ernest Milner (c 1845-1906) was called in to landscape the site. The Castle Gardens were opened on Queen Victoria's 70th birthday, in May of that year, and have remained a public park ever since.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The Castle Gardens occupy a roughly rectangular site of c 1ha on the west side of the town of Newark. They are bordered by Beast Market Hill to the north and Castle Gate to the east.

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The River Trent forms the west boundary and the site is separated by a retaining wall from the buildings to the south. The grounds are divided from the public roads by railings which stand on a low wall, reinforced by a continuous screening band of trees and shrubs.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the site is at the eastern corner of the gardens where Beast Market Hill joins Castle Gate. From here a path leads through wrought-iron gates hung between stone pillars, into the gardens. At the southern corner of the site a gate leads through the retaining wall along the south-west boundary and there is also access at the northern corner from the riverside walk.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Newark Castle ruins (listed grade I; scheduled ancient monument) stand high above the River Trent along the length of the western edge of the site and dominate the gardens. Built in c 1133-48 for Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, the Castle was added to in the later C12, early and mid C14, and late C15, with further alterations in the late C16. It was left as a ruin following the siege of 1646, then restored 1845-8 by Anthony Salvin (1799-1881) for the government at which time it would seem likely that the initial improvement of the immediately surrounding land was carried out. The buildings were restored further by the Newark Corporation following purchase in 1889.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS From a circular bed at the east entrance, a system of curving paths provide walks through the lawns and shrub beds of the gardens. Along the foot of the east wall of the Castle is a terrace walk from which there are long views out to the north-west through the former window openings. Parallel to this, and separated from it by a grass bank, is a second formal walk linking from the south door of the gatehouse to the walk along the south-west edge of the site. The top walk is shown on an engraving of the 'Castle Grounds' dated 1860, as is the central flight of steps leading down the grass bank and the walk bordering the levelled lawn. The cross walk from the flight of steps leads south-east to the site of the former bandstand, bisecting lawns now planted with specimen trees. Several of the trees, standing on raised mounds, would seem to date from the mid C19.

Midway along the south-east side of the gardens, standing back off Castle Gate behind a boundary wall and gate piers (listed grade II), is the Free Library (listed grade II), now the Tourist Information/Gilstrap Heritage Centre. The gift of William Gilstrap, the library was built in 1882(3 by Henman and Beddoes of Birmingham. The Heritage Centre is linked to the gardens by a door on the west front. To either side of the building the ground is shaped and planted to help screen the road beyond. A mid C20 block of public toilets stands on the north-east edge of the gardens, close to the main east entrance.

REFERENCES

Newark Castle Gardens, appeal booklet, (1887) (Newark Local Studies Library) N Pevsner and E Williamson, *The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire* (2nd edn 1979), pp 190/1

Archival items Engraving of the Castle Grounds, 1860 (Newark Local Studies Library)

Description written: March 2000 Register Inspector: EMP Edited: January 2002

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.