

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STONEY ROAD ALLOTMENTS

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Name:	STONEY ROAD ALLOTMENTS
District:	Coventry (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.398462 Longitude: -1.5105020 National Grid Reference: SP 33403 77940 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001494 Date first listed: 07-Mar-2001

Details

A group of mid and late C19 detached urban pleasure gardens retaining a group of C19 and early C20 summerhouses and associated structures.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the late C18 and early C19, many larger towns had groups of small rented gardens forming a ring around the densely developed town centre. These pleasure-garden plots were typically subdivided by hedges into individual plots of between an eighth and a sixth of an acre, which were laid out for ornament and the comfort of the owner; the gardens were used to grow a mixture of productive and ornamental plants (Lambert 1994). The expansion of towns in the C19 destroyed the majority of C18 rented town gardens, but a number of gardens of similar size and function were laid out in the first half of the C19, including Hill Close Gardens, Warwick (qv), Hunger Hill Gardens, Stonepit Coppice Gardens, and Gorseyclose Gardens, Nottingham (qv), and Westbourne Road Town Gardens, Edgbaston, Birmingham (qv). A national survey (ibid) has indicated that very few of these sites survive in their original form, or, indeed, at all.

The site of the Stoney Road Allotments, also known as Park Gardens, lay within Cheylesmore Park which was situated outside the walls of the medieval city of Coventry. In the mid C12 the park belonged to the Earl of Chester, but in 1327-8 his heirs conveyed the manor of Cheylesmore and the park to Queen Isabel. The park remained a royal possession until 1549 when Edward VI granted it to John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, who in turn leased it to the mayor and bailiffs for ninety-nine years on condition that they allowed pasturage to the poor of the city. In 1609 Prince Henry, elder son of James I, recovered the park for the Duchy of Cornwall, and leases were granted to the mayor and bailiffs between 1620 and 1661, when Charles II granted the park to Sir Robert Townsend. In 1705 Anthony Townsend (inherited 1685) renewed the lease on its previous terms, while in 1787 the park was leased by the Prince Regent to the second Marquess of Hertford; it was subsequently sold to the Marquess in 1819. Under Lord Hertford the park was gradually divided into small gardens and paddocks, with some building taking place in peripheral areas such as The Quadrant, Warwick Road. These small gardens are shown on Thomas Sharp's Map of Coventry (1807) and a Board of Health map (1851). The London to Birmingham railway line was cut through the northern area of the park in 1837, and in 1844 a branch line to Kenilworth and Royal Leamington Spa was constructed parallel to and inside the west boundary of the park. By 1870 it was noted that there was 'a great number' of small gardens, 'all well cultivated, and much sought after in consequence of their easy distance and pleasant situation' (Poole 1870). The following year Lord Hertford sold

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the Coventry Park Estate to H W Eaton, who was created Lord Cheylesmore in 1887. By the early C20 extensive development had taken place in the area of the park to the north of the London to Birmingham railway; this continued with the construction of several large factories including the Armstrong Siddeley Motor Works, Parkside Works, and Quinton Works to the north-east. In 1934 the fourth Lord Cheylesmore sold much of his property to London and Home Counties Property Investments Ltd which developed an extensive housing estate in the south and south-west areas of the park in the years before the Second World War (VCH). In July 1935 the City Council acquired Stoney Road Allotments, then known as Cheylesmore Estate Allotments, from Mr A Robinson for £1100 (C Edwards (CCC Land and Property Section) pers comm, 2000).

Early and mid C19 maps of Coventry indicate a large number of detached town garden sites surrounding the city, with the greatest concentration in the former park to the south (Hodgetts 1994). Many garden sites survived to be shown on the 1886 OS map, but only the Stoney Road site survives today (2000). The Coventry gardens provided land for workers in the city's traditional industries such as silk weaving and watch-making, who tended to live in crowded conditions within the medieval city walls (Lambert 1994). The Stoney Road Allotments lie beyond the areas covered by Sharp's Map (1807) and the Board of Health Map (1851). The gardens appear to have been commenced shortly after 1853, and by 1887 the northern half of the site had been laid out as small gardens enclosed by hedges and divided by tracks and secondary walks (OS 1889). At this date the southern half of the site comprised seven meadow enclosures or paddocks. By 1913 a further area of hedge-enclosed gardens had been created in the southern half of the site, while conventional allotment plots were laid out adjacent to the railway (OS 1913). In the mid 1930s a strip of gardens fronting Stoney Road to the west was developed with semi-detached houses, and Stoney Road, which until this time had been a dead-end, was connected to streets which were being developed on the former park to the west.

The freehold of the gardens was acquired by Coventry City Council in 1935. Today (2000) the site remains municipal property, with individual plots cultivated by tenant gardeners under the supervision of the Coventry and District Allotments and Gardens Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Stoney Road Allotments are situated c 0.75km south of the centre of the city of Coventry, to the east of domestic properties in Stoney Road. The site comprises c 5ha and is bounded to the north-east and east by the Coventry to Royal Leamington Spa railway line. The boundary with the railway to the north-east is marked by a mid C19 low wall constructed from sandstone blocks under saddle-shaped stone copings. The boundary to the east is marked by hedges and C20 fences. To the south the site adjoins early C20 allotments, from which it is separated by a service path and hedge, while to the west the site is separated from domestic gardens belonging to 1930s houses in Stoney Road by similar paths, hedges, and fences. The site is generally level, with views north towards the cathedral spire and tall buildings in the city centre. To the east, south, and west the site is well screened by hedges and trees. A late C19 brick and slate-roofed summerhouse survives (outside the site here registered) in the rear garden of 63 Stoney Road adjacent to the north-west boundary of the site. This structure remains from the strip of gardens which were developed for housing in the mid 1930s.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Stoney Road Allotments are approached from Stoney Road to the west, with entrances leading into the site c 130m and 370m south of a bridge which carries Stoney Road across the London to Birmingham railway line. The northern entrance is closed by a late C20 metal gate and leads to a drive which passes between properties on Stoney Road to enter the body of the site. The drive is enclosed by high hedges. The southern entrance is similarly closed by metal gates and leads to a drive allowing vehicular access to the site. This drive also passes between properties in Stoney Road and is enclosed by high hedges. Passing c 130m east-north-east through the site, the drive joins a further drive which follows a curving course from north-west to south parallel to the eastern boundary of the site. This drive connects the northern pedestrian gate to the vehicular entrance. A late C20 car park has been created adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site; this occupies one garden plot.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The garden plots are arranged in five blocks which run from west-south-west to east-north-east, and are separated by gravelled tracks and walks. A further group of gardens adjoining the eastern boundary of the site abuts the principal drive. A strip of early C20 gardens one plot deep at the south-east corner of the site was sold to

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the railway company for the construction of a siding in the mid C20; although no longer cultivated, this land (included within the site here registered) retains several fruit trees.

The gardens are typically enclosed by hawthorn, holly, box, or privet hedges c 2m high, with a single entrance closed by a wooden door leading from a drive or secondary walk. The site remains (2000) in almost full cultivation, with a variety of garden layouts including both productive and ornamental subjects. The layout of one garden, plot 24, corresponds to that shown on the 1889 OS map with a central path passing through an avenue of standard apple trees to reach a small, pitch-roofed summerhouse. A range of mature fruit trees including standard pears, apples, and plums survives throughout the site.

The Stoney Road gardens preserve a significant group of seven summerhouses which survive from the large number of similar structures shown on the late C19 and early C20 OS maps (1889, 1913). These vary in both design and ornamental detail, and date from the late C19 and early C20. The most elaborate example, situated on plot 13(A), comprises an early C20 gabled building of half-timbered construction, some of the timbering being ornamented with dog-tooth moulding. The roof is formed with fish-scale tiles, while the windows in the west facade retain a panel of stained glass. The interior is panelled and has a fireplace. The building is first shown on the 1913 OS map. A further early C20 brick summerhouse on plot 9(A) is of a different design, having its entrance door and windows set in the long south-west facade, rather than in the gable end. The windows and door have concrete moulded lintels and sills, while the door is approached by a short flight of concrete steps with rounded edges which is flanked by a pair of later brick-built cold frames. Above the windows and door a decorative band of bricks ornamented with moulded rosettes runs below the remains of the early C20 cast-iron gutter. The interior of the summerhouse is panelled and retains a cast-iron fireplace. The foundations for a greenhouse adjoin the building to the south-east. This summerhouse is first marked on the 1913 OS map.

The summerhouse on plot 24 is of brick construction under a pitched roof (roof timbers only surviving), with chamfered blue-brick bands marking the corners and the sides of the central doorway. This summerhouse, which is marked on the 1889 OS map, stands against the eastern boundary of the plot, terminating a concrete slab path which passes through an avenue of standard apple trees. This arrangement reflects the late C19 layout of the garden (OS 1889). The contemporary summerhouse on the neighbouring plot (25) is also of brick construction under a pitched slate roof. Inside, it retains a tiled floor and cast-iron fireplace. Plots 39 and 47 each have summerhouses of Gothic design. In each case the building is of brick construction under a pitched slate roof, with a pair of gothic windows flanking a gothic doorway set centrally in the gable wall. The example on plot 47 has ornamental bargeboards and stone details, while that on plot 39 retains a fireplace and chimney stack. Both structures are marked on the 1889 OS map.

An altered and much-repaired summerhouse stands on plot 26, while on plot 22 (north), an early C20 metal-framed glasshouse of steeply pitched roof construction survives. Several C19 and early C20 wells, usually of brick-lined construction, survive on the site (M Lander pers comm, 2000). A Second World War hut remains on the site at the junction of the east drive and the south walk.

REFERENCES

B Poole, *Coventry: Its History and Antiquities* (1870), pp 16-19 *Victoria History of the County of Warwickshire VIII*, (1969), pp 182, 199-207 C Hodgetts, *Hill Close Gardens, Linen Street, Warwick* (Historical report 1994) D Lambert, *Detached Town Gardens*, (English Heritage theme study 1994), pp 26, 36-7 *Warwickshire Gardens Trust Newsletter*, (Autumn 1995), pp 3-4
Maps T Sharp, *Map of Coventry*, published 1807 (Coventry Local Studies Library) Board of Health Map, 1851 (Z734u), (Warwickshire County Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1887, published 1888 1938 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1887, published 1889 2nd edition published 1913

Archival items Thomas Bond to the Marquess of Hertford, account for laying out Cheylesmore allotment gardens, 1850 (238/7/1), (Coventry City Archives) Will of J Ballard, 1867, with bequest of a garden in Cheylesmore Park (101/4/200), (Coventry City Archives) Correspondence and other items relating to the construction of the railway through Cheylesmore Park, 1832-50, including letter of application for a garden (1850) (CR1709/407-10; 416/1(5), (Warwickshire County Record Office)

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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.