

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WANDSWORTH PARK

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Name:	WANDSWORTH PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Wandsworth (London Borough)
National park:	N/A
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.462417 Longitude: -0.20415142 National Grid Reference: TQ 24853 75245 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000285 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

An early C20 public park designed and constructed under the supervision of J J Sexby.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

At the turn of the C19 Wandsworth was a heavily polluted suburb centred around the River Wandle with its iron mill, brass industry, and brewery. The London County Council (LCC) saw the creation of public parks as one of its primary concerns and when, in 1897, Wandsworth District Board were given the opportunity to buy land for this purpose they contributed £15,429 towards the purchase price of £33,000. The 8ha of land lay between the south bank of the River Thames and Putney Bridge Road and consisted of allotment gardens interspersed with public footpaths (OS 1897).

The design and construction of the park was under the supervision of Lt Col J J Sexby, the superintendent of the LCC Parks Department, but as the purchase price of the site was more than had been expected the construction of the park was limited to £10,000. Sexby's design for Wandsworth Park responds to two main influences current at the beginning of the C20: firstly the increase in maintenance costs and the gradual disappearance of large numbers of gardening staff, and secondly the rise in interest in organised sport from the 1880s onwards. Wandsworth Park was formally opened on Saturday 28 February 1903 for the use and enjoyment of the people of London for ever.

The site has remained relatively unaltered, a shelter and public convenience being added in 1901 and a bowling green pavilion and two tennis courts c 1920. A five-year strategy plan was prepared by Land Use Consultants in 1995 and by 1999 a number of the recommendations had been implemented. These included the removal of small buildings constructed in the second half of the C20.

The park is currently (1999) owned and managed by the London Borough of Wandsworth.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Wandsworth Park is situated on the south bank of the River Thames in urban south London. Wandsworth town lies c 1km to the east and Putney c 2km to the south-west. Battersea Park (qv), also on the south bank, lies c 3km downstream and Fulham Palace (qv) lies 800m to the north-west, on the north bank of the Thames. The river provides the northern boundary of the park, Northfields Road and the late C20 office development of

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Prospect Reach the boundary to the east, and a major thoroughfare, Putney Bridge Road, the southern boundary. The park is overlooked by late C20 office and residential developments in Deodar Road to the west. The virtually level 8ha site is enclosed within a late C20 mild steel panel fence which replaced the original iron railings removed during the Second World War. The park is dominated by the central 3.5ha playing field which is enclosed within a roughly oval pedestrian path.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The park is approached from the south via one of four entrances on Putney Bridge Road. The main entrance, as determined by Sexby, is in the south-east corner at the junction of Putney Bridge Road and Northfields Road; its treatment is low-key. Two additional entrances have been made in the late C20 on the western boundary and another to the east via the Prospect Reach development.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS From the main entrance a tarmac path leads c 30m north-west to a c 0.25ha rectangle of lawn with an apsidal southern end enclosed by low iron railings. The lawn contains cut flower beds which have seasonal bedding displays. Triangular shrub beds lie west and north of the lawn. This area, which is little changed, was designed by Sexby to greet the visitor entering the park from industrial Wandsworth with a colourful display of horticultural expertise (LUC 1995). A number of semi-mature plane trees decorate the grass verges to the north and east of the entrance.

South of the lawn the path separates, leading west and north around the perimeter of the park. The former, the southern perimeter path, continues for c 30m where it divides around the western triangular shrub bed before continuing curving slightly to the north-west past, to the north-east, shrubberies which partly screen the hard tennis court made c 1920. To the south of the path is one of the lesser pedestrian entrances from Putney Bridge Road. The southern perimeter path continues west, bordered to the south by grass verges planted with holly trees and to the north by false acacia, beyond which are the grassed playing fields. Included as part of Sexby's original design the 3.5ha expanse of grass in the centre of the park was Sexby's response to the rising interest in organised sports. After another c 30m the path divides: one branch goes north-east, past the late C20 children's play area, to link up after c 100m with the eastern perimeter path, while the southern perimeter path continues west. After c 150m the path passes a pedestrian entrance to the south and the site of a drinking fountain (1903), removed by mid 1990s, to the north. At the south-west entrance the perimeter path divides around a triangular flower bed, roses having replaced the original scheme of carpet bedding. The southern branch leads to the south-west gate in Putney Bridge Road while the northern branch, bordered by sycamores as suggested by Sexby, continues alongside shrubberies. Planted along the western boundary in c 1903, the shrubberies were renovated in the late 1990s. After c 60m the tarmac path divides, the main path continuing north to the riverside, the north-east branch running c 60m, crossing over a lime avenue, before joining up with the Riverside Walk. The Lime Avenue, a tarmac path lined with lime trees, runs c 20m to the south of the Riverside Walk. The Riverside Walk was made when the foreshore was embanked in 1901-2 and features a tarmac promenade lined on the south side with London planes. The area between the paths was intended as a line of tennis courts with a bandstand as the centrepiece but the tennis courts were not made and the area between the limes and the planes was left as grass (OS 1916). Some 100m from the west end of the Lime Avenue is the site of the pavilion/shelter erected in 1910 and recorded on the 1916 OS map and an undated photograph (LUC 1995). The shelter was constructed in the then-popular Vernacular style with supporting corner pillars made from stone sleepers reclaimed from the Surrey Iron Railway, a primitive tramway which ran between Wandsworth and Croydon in the early C19. The building was removed during the late 1950s, leaving a tarmac rectangle to mark its place. The Riverside Walk, which is part of the c 343km Thames Path from Gloucester, provides the northern boundary of the park and offers splendid views of the Thames. After 700m the Walk passes a depression in the grass to the south, the site of the bandstand removed c 1950 (OS 1950). The bandstand, shown on the park plan in the Opening Day brochure, was surrounded by a chair enclosure and an oval path. The Riverside Walk continues for c 550m where, in the north-east corner, it turns to meet with the eastern perimeter path. A shallow depression to the south marks the site of a tennis court (c 1920) removed after 1995. A number of mid C20 buildings, including changing huts, a refreshment pavilion, and one which housed the One O'Clock Club, were also removed when the new pavilion situated to the west of the bowling green was opened in 1996. The area in the north-east corner has since been replanted and the paths renewed.

Some 30m to the east of the junction with the eastern perimeter path the Lime Avenue divides, the main branch continuing east. A secondary branch curves south encircling the east end of the playing fields with the new pavilion to the east, and after c

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300m joins up with the southern perimeter path. To the north of this junction is the children's playground established c 1960 on part of the original playing field area. The eastern perimeter path continues south with shrubberies replanted c 1995 to the east and the bowling green with flower and shrub beds to the west. The bowling green pavilion was originally erected in the 1920s but the present wooden structure with a central tiled roof dates from 1945. The bowling green pavilion and bowling green are largely screened from the perimeter paths by shrubberies. Some 50m south of the bowling green the eastern perimeter path passes the lawn and cut beds to the west and terminates at the main gate.

REFERENCES

A Amhurst, *London Parks and Gardens* (1907) A Amhurst, *Gardens, their Form and Design* (1919) Wandsworth Park, Strategy Plan, (Land Use Consultants 1995) [Contains a number of plans, illustrations, and photographs.]

Maps J J Sexby, Wandsworth Park, Plan from Opening Day Brochure, 1903

OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1916 1950 edition

Description written: January 1999 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.