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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

WHINFELL QUARRY GARDEN

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Name:	WHINFELL QUARRY GARDEN
District:	Sheffield (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.340553 Longitude: -1.5342103 National Grid Reference: SK 31111 82729 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001431 Date first listed: 17-Aug-1999

Details

Early C20 ornamental quarry garden containing rare trees and plant species, including a limestone rock garden of c 1912 designed by the horticulturist and plant collector Clarence Elliott.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Whinfell Quarry, formerly called Whirlow Quarry, as indicated on the OS map of 1893, was leased from the Fitz-William Estates by the steel industrialist Samuel Doncaster in 1897-8. The latter subsequently commissioned Norman Doncaster to design a new house and lodge for the site. The lodge was never built, but a large house in half-timbered style, named Whinfell House, was erected by 1902. Doncaster also planned for a garden to be laid out in the two disused quarries at Whinfell, named Big Quarry and Little Quarry.

The first phase of the layout of the garden was started in 1898: the ornamental terrace and the paddock at the south front of Whinfell House were created and c 10,000 trees were planted, mainly in Big Quarry. In c 1908, a major programme of thinning was undertaken in Big Quarry, by selectively removing c 9000 trees (Holtkott 1995). Subsequently, paths and steps and a sequence of rock pools were laid out by the James Backhouse & Co Nursery of York. In c 1915 the horticulturist, plant collector and nurseryman Clarence Elliott was commissioned by Samuel Doncaster to design a garden in Little Quarry. Elliott had worked for the Backhouse Nursery in the late 1890s and early 1900s and may have assisted with the creation of the garden for Big Quarry.

In 1933 the House and grounds passed from Samuel Doncaster to Frederick Neill, the first High Sheriff of Hallamshire, who undertook an extensive replanting scheme during the 1960s. In 1968 the Quarry Garden was given to the city of Sheffield by James Neill Holdings Ltd, as a memorial to Sir Frederick Neill. Since then the site has been a public park, owned and managed by Sheffield City Council. The House and the adjacent paddock remained in private ownership. In 1971 Whinfell House was destroyed by fire and subsequently demolished in 1979. In the 1980s flats and houses were built on the paddock and the site of Whinfell House. This new housing estate, called Whinfell Court, incorporates the stable block and the former drive with the remains of the tree belt to its east, formerly called Daffodil Wood (not included in the registered area).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Whinfell Quarry Gardens, a triangular-shaped site of just over 1ha, is situated to the south-west of Sheffield, on the western edge of the suburb of Whirlow. The garden lies within two

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derelict flagstone quarries (Big Quarry and Little Quarry). Because of its sheltered position and humid environment, it is ideal for growing a wide range of plants. It is bounded to the south and west by a hollow-way, called Fenney Lane, to the north by the Whinfell Court housing estate, and to the east by Whirlow Grange. Adjacent to the west lies Whirlow Brook Park (a public park). To the south and west, along Fenney Lane, the gardens are bounded by drystone walls c 1.5m high. Along the east boundary some stretches of the cast-iron railings which originally fenced off the paddock from the quarry garden below, remain.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance to the garden is situated to the south of the site on Ecclesall Road. A bronze plaque in memory of Sir Frederick Neill is attached to the boundary wall to the west of the entrance. A second entrance, cut through the boundary wall, is situated on Fenney Lane to the west of the site. This entrance was probably built in the 1960s and links Whinfell Quarry Garden with Whirlow Brook Park to the west, by two flights of steps on either side of Fenney Lane.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS From the main entrance to Whinfell Quarry Garden, a network of steep paths and steps, some with railings (installed after 1968 when the park became open to the public), lead up into the Big Quarry to the north and into Little Quarry to the west. At the highest point in the north-east corner of the site is a viewing platform with a seat, which offers fine views of the garden below. From the north corner of the site an artificial waterfall (laid out 1898-1902), runs down the quarry face along the eastern boundary of the site, into a series of four small pools. The water subsequently runs into the largest pool, situated in the south-east corner of the site. The garden in this area contains many rare trees and species (most of which have reached maturity), including bamboos, Japanese acers, cherries, rhododendrons and a variety of conifers. The trees and plants were mostly supplied by the James Backhouse & Co Nursery, who also assisted in the layout of the rockwork and the ponds. In 1908 they issued a collection of 'Coronation Heathers' for the celebration of King George V, one of which was named after Samuel Doncaster's wife (Holtkott 1995).

To the west of the site, in Little Quarry, are the remains of Clarence Elliott's rock garden. The garden is constructed of both Yorkshire limestone and sandstone from the Whinfell quarry itself. It contains a series of small pools and cascades, now (1999) partly filled in. Elliott's garden is now (1999) much overgrown, but consisted primarily of alpiners and conifers interspaced with shrubs and deciduous trees (ibid).

REFERENCES

S Holtkott, Whinfell Quarry Garden and Limb Valley (Management Plan and Database, (MA dissertation, Sheffield University 1995) J D Sewell, Register Review of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in South Yorkshire, (Sheffield University 1995) J D Sewell, A Strategy for the Heritage Parks and Green Spaces of Sheffield, (Sheffield City Council 1996) Sheffield's Historic Parks and Gardens, (Sheffield City Council UDP Policy Background Paper, no.4, 1998)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1875-90, published 1893 2nd edition published 1905 3rd edition surveyed 1935(6, published 1935-7 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1875-90, published 1893 2nd edition published 1905 3rd edition surveyed 1935(6, published 1935-7 1969 edition

Description written: July 1999 Amended: August 1999; September 1999 Register Inspector: FDM Edited: June 2000

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.