

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

KING'S GARDENS AND SOUTH MARINE GARDENS

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Name: KING'S GARDENS AND SOUTH MARINE GARDENS

District: Sefton (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.649011
Longitude: -3.0116620
National Grid Reference: SD 33226 17421
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001535
Date first listed: 21-Jun-2001

Details

A public park and lake, opened in 1887 and forming the part of a network of C19 and C20 seaside leisure facilities. The two were linked by King's Gardens, opened in 1913, and additional features were added in the inter-war period.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The development of Southport from a small fishing village to a seaside resort began in the early C19. The Promenade, a form of coastal protection which also created building plots above the beach, was laid out on former sandhills c 1834 by the then estate owner Peter Hesketh Fleetwood (Pevsner 1969). Silting of the Ribble estuary caused the shoreline to recede during the C19. A pier, designed by J Brunlees and built by W & J Galloway, was opened in 1860; it was extended in 1864 and 1868.

The foreshore was purchased by Southport Corporation in 1885 and a marine lake and park (South Marine Gardens) opened, adjacent to the south-west of the pier, in 1887. A further lake and park (North Marine Gardens), adjacent to the north-east of the pier, were opened in 1892. The two sections of lake were afterwards joined and Marine Drive was formed in 1895 (VCH 1907). The gardens are shown on the 1909 OS map as North Marine Park and South Marine Park (later Gardens) with two boatyards sited on the sands between South Marine Park and the Marine Lake. The Pier Pavilion was opened in 1902 and by 1909 (OS) a funfair had opened at the south-west end of the lake.

In c 1906 Thomas Mawson (1861-1933) was appointed to prepare designs for the Lord Street gardens at Southport. Mawson also prepared designs for the Promenade and Marine Park and Gardens which are illustrated and described in his book *Civic Art*, published in 1911. Mawson's proposals were not implemented but their influence can be seen in features of the Borough Engineer's design for King's Gardens: the lakeside walk, the use of compartments within hedged boundaries, and the siting of shelters between planting beds adjoining the Promenade. King's Gardens, sited between South Marine Park and the lake, were opened by King George V and Queen Mary in 1913.

Between 1914 and 1921 the foreshore to the north-west of the southern part of the Marine Lake was reclaimed as the site for Princes Park and the funfair, which was resited in c 1924. In 1911 the miniature railway had been opened on the north-west side of the southern Marine Lake. By 1955 (OS) a three-span bridge had been built providing access from King's Gardens to Princes Park.

In North Marine Gardens the Floral Hall was opened in 1928 and extended in the late C20. Today (2001) only a small part of North Marine Gardens remains, now known as Floral Hall Gardens (outside the area here registered), with the remainder

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in use for car parking. The Pier Pavilion was rebuilt c 1970. The pier (listed grade II), at c 1098m the second longest in the country, is currently (2001) undergoing refurbishment. In the late C20 further land to the north-west has been reclaimed, with Southport's Ocean Plaza due for completion in 2002 and the northern section of the Marine Lake enlarged. King's Gardens and South Marine Gardens remain (2001) in use as public parks and in the ownership of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING King's Gardens and South Marine Gardens lie c 200m to the north-west of Southport town centre. The total area of the gardens is c 14ha including the Marine Lake of c 5.5ha. The south-east boundary is open with c 5m wide island beds dividing the Promenade pavement from the parallel, perimeter path of South Marine Gardens. Set between island beds c 145m and c 320m south-west of the pier are two identical ornate covered shelters (c 1900, listed grade II). Also set between island beds, c 80m and c 235m south-west of the pier, are the Fernley Drinking Fountain (1861, listed grade II) and the Lifeboat Monument (1888, listed grade II). To the south and south-west of the Gardens the Esplanade road rises above the gardens with a stone retaining wall to the boundary, masked from below by dense tree and shrub planting. Sockets in the wall indicate that the boundary once had railings. Some 540m south-west of the pier a mid C20 two-storey shelter is set against the boundary wall with level access from the Esplanade to a first-floor viewing galley overlooking the gardens. The north-west boundary is marked by the miniature railway line protected by c 1.2m high C20 railings partly masked with informal shrub planting and with dense shrub planting in Princes Park beyond. The north-east boundary of the gardens is defined by the pier crossing the lake and, at the eastern corner, by the pier entrance range, rebuilt c 1970 but retaining some C19 bracketed cast-iron columns.

The whole of the site occupies reclaimed former foreshore. From the Promenade the ground slopes gently down to the south-west with a level plateau running from north-east to south-west between the Lower Promenade, which divides South Marine Gardens and King's Gardens, and the Marine Walk. The Lower Promenade runs from south-west to north-east between embanked shrub beds, with low stone retaining walls on the north-west side of the beds. Marine Walk, to the south-east and south-west of the Lake, is similar but with a c 1.2m drop to the adjacent lakeside lido. The ground to the north-west of the lake slopes gently up with a level lakeside path set into the slope, formed with a low stone retaining wall to the north-west. The surrounding area is in mixed residential and commercial use with a variety of tourist attractions and facilities including the Pleasureland funfair immediately to the west. Views out of the gardens to the south-east are contained by the line of four- to eight-storey buildings on the south-east side of the Promenade. These buildings are a mixture of C19 and C20 with the Royal Clifton Hotel (1854, listed grade II) at the southern end of the Promenade.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES From the south-east, breaks in the island beds forming the Promenade boundary with the gardens give access to the perimeter path running parallel and a variety of paths leading north-west through the gardens to the Lake. Of these, the main route into and through the gardens enters at the centre of the south-east boundary and leads over the bridge across the centre of the Lake. This entrance is located opposite Scarisbrick Avenue, which leads south-east to Lord Street, the main street of Southport. The axis of this direct route is also marked within the Gardens by the Lifeboat Monument located on the south-east Promenade boundary. This route leads to a further entrance at the centre of the north-west boundary from Princes Park where a C20 building is set on and terminates the axis.

From the south and south-west there are three entrances from the Esplanade. Two, c 550m and c 580m south-south-west of the pier, are provided by c 1.5m wide concrete steps leading down from the road. The other, c 560m south-west of the pier, is provided by a 6m wide path sloping down to the Marine Walk. From the north-east paths enter below the pier on either side of the Lake.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The site is dominated by the Marine Lake and bridge. To the south-east, South Marine Gardens and King's Gardens form two parallel linear compartments divided by the Lower Promenade running from south-west to north-east. Informal, dense screen planting on raised beds to the south-east side of the Lower Promenade provides a backdrop to grassed areas with planting beds in South Marine Gardens. Grassed areas are divided by a series of straight and curving paths leading from the Promenade across South Marine Gardens to the Lower Promenade, providing a variety of routes.

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The curving paths are indicated on the 1894 OS map as part of a more extensive network, and the straight paths are shown on the 1929 edition, following the creation of King's Gardens.

From the pier at the north-east corner of the gardens, the c 6m wide Marine Walk leads around the south-east and south-west of the Lake to the miniature railway station to the south-west. On the land side the Walk is bounded by dense shrub planting and on the lake side by a c 1.2m high tubular iron balustrade. From 340m south-west of the pier the balustrade is in stone. The Marine Walk overlooks a lido, c 6.13m wide, set c 1.2m below at the lake edge. From the miniature railway station a path c 3m wide follows the irregular bank of the lake with mid C20 naturalistic rockworks to the water's edge.

King's Gardens comprise four main compartments to the south and south-east of the Lake, generally bounded by dense shrub planting and by the lakeside walk to the north-west. Compartments are divided by wide paths between the Marine Walk and Lower Promenade. At the north-east end the first rectangular compartment is bisected by a path linking the Lower Promenade and the Marine Walk with crazy golf to the north and a bowling green to the south. The next compartment, enclosed with c 2.5m high timber fencing, contains a Model Village, opened in 1996; this area formerly contained tennis courts. To the south of the Lake the third compartment is laid to grass with a perimeter path. A central path through this, with central circular pond and fountain jet, links the Lower Promenade and the Marine Walk. The central area has curved planting beds, raised on an angle, set in grass. The fourth compartment, to the south-west of the Lake, is bounded by the retaining wall to the Esplanade and is ovoid in shape. This area contains two bowling greens, with a C20 pavilion to the north-west, and grassed areas with planting beds within a perimeter path.

At the north-east end of the Marine Walk, adjacent to the pier, there is a single-storey cafe (early C20, extended late C20) and 65m south-west of the pier, a c 1900 shelter (listed grade II). This shelter, together with a further five (all listed grade II) spaced between 330m and 480m south-west of the pier, are to the same design as those on the Promenade. Some 230m south-west of the pier a 6.5m wide, inter-war bridge crosses the Lake in three spans between two islands with shrub planting and rockworks. The central span is arched, carrying the timber-boarded path which follows the curve, the outer spans being level. The balustrade to the bridge is in timber with turned balusters between square, capped posts supporting decorative columns surmounted by Art Deco-style globe lights. The bridge is set on an axis with the main entrance path from the Promenade, which is lined with similar lights set on columns.

At the south-west end of the Lake, the junctions of two principal paths with the Marine Walk are each marked by a pair of semicircular extensions of the Walk, with one of each pair creating viewing areas to the lakeside with steps down to the lido. A further junction, 360m south-west of the pier is marked by a semicircular inset to the Walk, also with steps down.

REFERENCES

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OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1845-6, published 1848 2nd edition published 1894 3rd edition published 1912 1929 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1894 3rd edition published 1911

Description written: March 2001 Amended: September 2001 Register Inspector: HMT Edited: July 2002

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Legal

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