

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

PARADE GARDENS, BATH

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

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**PARADE GARDENS, BATH**

Name:	PARADE GARDENS, BATH
District:	Bath and North East Somerset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.381417 Longitude: -2.3568317 National Grid Reference: ST 75263 64768 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001630 Date first listed: 28-Jun-2002

## Details

Public gardens of early C18 origin which assumed their present form in the C19 and early C20.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In the C17 the site of Parade Gardens, Bath formed part of the Abbey Orchard and lay outside the city wall (Speed, 1610). A mill, known as Monk's Mill, stood at the northern end of the enclosure with steps leading down to the river. In 1709 Richard 'Beau' Nash encouraged Thomas Harrison to build an Assembly Room for fashionable visitors to the spa. A gravelled walk lined with sycamores, known as Harrison's Walk, was laid out along the west and north boundaries of the triangular site east of the Assembly Rooms; the remainder of the site appears to have been laid out with lawns. Admission to these gardens was by subscription, ensuring exclusivity. A further Assembly Room was built by John Wood (1704-54) in 1730, while at about the same date a formal grove was laid out as a public garden with gravel walks immediately east of Bath Abbey. Named Orange Grove in 1734 in honour of a visit to Bath by the Prince of Orange, 'Beau' Nash erected an obelisk at the centre of the Grove to commemorate the Prince's cure. The Orange Grove and the subscription gardens associated with Harrison's Assembly Rooms, known as St James' Gardens, provided space for the recreation of fashionable visitors to Bath in the early C18. When John Wood began to develop North and South Parades to the south of St James' Gardens in 1738, these achieved pre-eminence among the places of fashionable resort in the city. Wood planned North or Grand Parade as a shaded summer promenade with steps descending to St James' Gardens which were to be laid out with a central circular lawn or bowling green and a sheltered spring walk below the retaining wall of the Parade. Harrison's Walk was to be retained along the north-west boundary of the gardens and a further tree-lined walk was to be created along the river. Although Wood's scheme was not fully realised, it appears from C18 and C19 plans of Bath that the layout of the gardens was carried out in accordance with his plan (Moule, 1837; Gilding 1997).

In 1824 the Royal Literary and Scientific Institution was built on the site of Harrison's Assembly Rooms and the gardens were renamed Institution Gardens. The layout of the gardens appears to have changed little during the C19 (OS 1885), but c 1895 an improvement scheme led to the demolition of houses to the east of Orange Grove and Lot Lane, and the northern extension of the gardens. The Bath architect C E Davis constructed an Italianate colonnade along the western boundary of the garden which was continued beneath the new road, Grand Parade, forming a visual link with Pulteney Bridge to the north. Further highway improvements in 1932 led to the demolition of the Royal Institution, and the appropriation of a small area of land at the south-

west corner of the gardens. The following year the late C19 colonnade was extended south-west and a new entrance comprising a domed ticket office and a grand double staircase descending from Orange Grove was constructed. The layout of the gardens remains substantially unchanged from the C19, while significant elements of its design reflect the scheme devised in 1738 by John Wood as part of his development of North Parade.

Today (2002), Parade Gardens continue to operate as subscription gardens, while residents of North Parade have access to the gardens by a private gate. Parade Gardens have remained in municipal ownership since the 1930s. The gardens are particularly noted for their displays of traditional carpet and sculptural bedding.

During the C19 Orange Grove was reduced in area and replanned as a circular area of lawn and trees at the centre of a busy road junction. Nash's early C18 obelisk was retained as the focal point of this small garden which had assumed the form in which it survives today by 1885 (OS). Orange Grove is not included in the site here registered.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Parade Gardens are situated c 250m east of Bath Abbey, while Orange Grove is situated immediately north-east of the Abbey. Parade Gardens, which comprises an area of c 1.25ha, occupies an approximately triangular site bounded to the south by North Parade, to the north-east by the River Avon from which it is separated by grass banks and low late C20 metal railings, and to the west by Pierrepont Street and Grand Parade. Parade Gardens occupies a generally level site bordering the River Avon.

The adjoining streets lie at a significantly higher level than the gardens and are retained to the south and west by high stone walls. To the south the wall retaining North Parade (nos 7?12 listed grade I) forms part of the scheme designed by John Wood in 1738. A series of arched openings set into this wall give access to service areas below the road from the gardens. The wall is surmounted by late C19 balustrades and ornamental cast-iron lamp standards which were designed c 1895 by C E Davis. The retaining wall to the west of the gardens (listed grade II) incorporates at its southern end an open-colonnaded loggia (closed, 2002) which corresponds to the site of the early C19 Royal Institution which was demolished for highway improvements in 1932. The columns incorporated into the colonnade were salvaged from Nassau House, the property in Orange Grove occupied by the Prince of Orange in the early C18 (demolished late C19) (Gilding 1997). The western retaining wall is surmounted by further balustrades, stone urns, and cast-iron lamp standards which were erected in 1933 to the same pattern as those above the late C19 colonnade to the north of the gardens which had been designed by Davis c 1895. The balustrade thus extends along the entire street boundary of the site to the west and south, terminating to the south-east at North Parade Bridge (listed grade II) which abuts the south-east corner of the gardens. The gardens are visible from the adjoining streets, while from the gardens there are views east across the River Avon to recreation grounds and Bath Leisure Centre. There are also significant views north-west along the River Avon to Pulteney Bridge, built in 1770 to the design of Robert Adam, and south-east to North Parade Bridge which was originally built in 1836 to designs by Robert Tierney Clark and was encased in stone in 1936.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** Parade Gardens are approached from Orange Grove to the north-west adjacent to the junction of Grand Parade and Pierrepont Street. The entrance comprises a pair of cast-iron gates flanking a single-storey domed ticket office of neoclassical design (listed grade II). The gates are supported by tall stone piers surmounted by cast-iron lamp standards; these terminate the balustrades forming the north-west and west boundaries of the site (all listed grade II). The gates lead to a balustraded terrace from which a balustraded ramp descends south to reach the level of the gardens immediately north of the south colonnade. A pair of balustraded stone staircases aligned with the entrance descend south-east to join at a landing, from which a single broad balustraded stone staircase descends in two flights to the level of the gardens. Set at the central point of the lower flight of steps is a monument commemorating King Edward VII and his role in early C20 European diplomacy (listed grade II). The monument comprises a tall stone pedestal bearing a bronze plaque showing the king and a commemorative inscription, surmounted by a winged figure of Peace cast from a design by N A Trent. Originally placed in Milsom Street, this monument was transferred to Parade Gardens in 1933 when the present entrance, steps, and ticket office were constructed as part of an improvement scheme for Pierrepont Street, Orange Grove, and Grand Parade (ibid). In the C19 the gardens were entered from the buildings of the Royal Institution to the south-west, while in the C18 access was through Harrison's Assembly Rooms which stood on the same site.

A further double set of stone steps descends to the gardens from the junction of Pierrepont Street and North Parade. This entrance is closed by metal gates which form the private entrance to the gardens enjoyed by properties in North Parade. This entrance was constructed c 1933 as part of the adjacent highway improvements.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Parade Gardens is laid out with informal lawns to the north, a more formal circular lawn to the south, and perimeter walks following the west, south, and east (riverside) boundaries.

The steps descending from the north-west entrance lead to a broad tarmac walk which extends c 90m south-south-east parallel to the western boundary wall of the site. This walk corresponds approximately to the line of the early C18 Harrison's Walk associated with the Assembly Rooms built in 1709. To the west the walk is adjoined by a grass verge and a rectangular formal flower bed for seasonal planting immediately below the stone wall retaining the ramped walk descending from the entrance terrace. To the east of the walk is an area of lawn which is separated from a circular lawn at the southern end of the gardens by a curved shrubbery comprising mature evergreens and mature specimen trees. A border for seasonal planting extends along the north-west edge of the shrubbery. A sundial comprising an armillary sphere sits on an C18 marble pedestal originally intended for a fountain; this was transferred to the gardens in the mid C20 from the Victoria Art Gallery, Bath (ibid).

The western boundary walk leads south to a terrace which extends below the early C20 colonnade which occupies the site of the early C19 Royal Institution. This terrace in turn leads south to the private steps descending from North Parade, which are partly concealed by a group of conifers. To the east of the terrace, panels of lawn are divided by a walk aligned with the centre of the colonnade which leads east to join a circular walk enclosing a circular lawn forming the central feature of the southern section of the gardens. The centre of this lawn is occupied by an octagonal bandstand with a pyramidal tiled roof and simple timber supports. This structure replaced an earlier C19 bandstand on the same site in 1925 (OS 1885; Gilding 1997). The circular lawn corresponds to a circular bowling green which formed part of Wood's scheme for North Parade and St James' Gardens (1738), and which is shown on C19 plans of Bath (Moule, 1837). To the south of the circular lawn a belt of mixed shrubbery and specimen trees screens the wall retaining North Parade with its arched service entrances and a walk running immediately below it. This walk corresponds to the 'Spring Walk' proposed by Wood as part of his North Parade scheme in 1738 (Gilding 1997). Beyond the circular walk to the south-east, east, and north-east are further irregular-shaped lawns set with geometric flower beds for seasonal bedding displays. These lawns are backed by further mixed shrubberies and specimen trees. To the south-east of the circular lawn is a late C20 single-storey timber kiosk, while to the north stands a late C20 commemorative statue of W A Mozart.

From the south-east corner of the gardens a walk extends c 120m north-west parallel to the River Avon. The walk is separated from the river by a grass bank and low late C20 metal railings, and terminates at a small stone-walled bastion from which there are views north-west to Pulteney Bridge and south-east to North Parade Bridge. Beyond the bastion the walk sweeps west and north to the west of gently sloping lawns which run down to the river, to reach the southern end of the colonnade (listed grade II) which extends c 130m north-west beneath Grand Parade and parallel to the River Avon. The colonnade comprises a terrazzo-paved passage beneath the road, which is open to the east or river side with a series of columns and pilastered piers supporting a cornice and balustrade. The colonnade terminates to the north-west at Pulteney Bridge and allows views of the bridge and weir, although there is not, and was never planned to be, access from the colonnade to the bridge. The colonnade was constructed to the design of C E Davis from 1895. Some 30m south-west of the southern end of the colonnade and c 10m north-east of the entrance steps from Orange Grove, the fragmentary remains of the medieval Monk's Mill are preserved in a clump of bamboo and other ornamental planting.

#### REFERENCES

N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: North Somerset and Bristol* (1958), p 123 R Gilding, *Historic Public Parks - Bath* (1997), pp 1-7

Maps J Speed, *Map of Somersetshire*, 1610 T Moule, *City of Bath*, 1837

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1885, published 1888 2nd edition published 1904 1932 edition 1951 edition

Archival items City of Bath Parks Committee Minutes, 1930s (Bath City Archive) Late C19 and early C20 photographs published in Gilding (1997)

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*  
*Inventory of Great Britain*  
*PARADE GARDENS, BATH*

Description written: February 2002 Register Inspector: JML Edited: November 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.