

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

BOROUGH GARDENS, DORCHESTER

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

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Name: BOROUGH GARDENS, DORCHESTER

District: Dorset (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Dorchester

label.localisation: Latitude: 50.712944
Longitude: -2.4413558
National Grid Reference: SY 68935 90461
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1001559
Date first listed: 12-Nov-2001

Details

A late C19 public park laid out to the design of William Goldring.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Until the construction of the Great Western railway line from Dorchester to Weymouth in 1857, Dorchester's western boundary remained the line of the Roman town wall and embankment, the course of which had been adapted in the early C18 to form West Walks, one of the Town Walks (qv). The site of Borough Gardens lay outside the west wall and embankment, and is shown as undeveloped agricultural land on Hutchins' Map of Dorchester (1772), and the Tithe map of 1840. As the town expanded after 1857, residential streets were laid out parallel to the railway, while a house and nursery garden belonging to S R Harris were constructed on the southern half of the site of Borough Gardens (OS 1887; Colvin and Moggridge 2000). The northern section of the site remained the property of the Duchy of Cornwall, and was divided into several enclosures which were used as a fairground and cattle market (ibid). In March 1895, the Mayor of Dorchester, Alderman Gregory, purchased from the Duchy on behalf of the Corporation 4 acres (c 1.5ha) of land bounded by Cornwall Road, Albert Road, and West Walks for £3400. Later the same year the Corporation agreed to buy Mr Harris' nursery and house for £1800. The Corporation stated as its objective the construction of 'pleasure gardens for the health and recreation of the inhabitants' (inscription on fountain).

Plans for laying out the new park were commissioned from William Goldring (1854-1919), and were implemented by the Borough Surveyor, G J Hunt, who was also responsible for designing ornamental wrought-iron gates for the park. The park was officially opened on 30 July 1896. An account published in the Dorset County Chronicle on 6 August 1896 indicates that Goldring's scheme for the park incorporated gravel walks, a dell in which it was proposed to erect a fountain, a central bandstand, tennis courts, and bowling greens. Some of these features were not constructed at the time of the park's opening, but followed soon afterwards: the bandstand, a memorial to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, was opened in 1898, while the fountain was donated in memory of Alderman Gregory in 1898. Goldring incorporated existing mature trees on the site into his scheme, and disguised the narrow rectilinear shape of the site with boundary planting, modification to the ground levels, and curvilinear walks. The plants for the park were supplied by James Veitch and Son of the Royal Exotic Nursery, Chelsea, while the planting was personally superintended by Goldring (Gardeners' Chronicle 1898). Mr Harris, whose nursery had been purchased by the Corporation as part of the site for the park, was appointed first superintendent (Dorset County Chronicle 1896).

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Further features were added to the park in the late C19 and early C20, and changing requirements for sports facilities led to limited alterations to Goldring's design in the early C20. In 1899 an obelisk was erected in memory of men of the 1st Battalion Dorset Regiment who had died in India, while in 1905 Charles Hansford donated an elaborate cast-iron clock tower. Between 1902 and 1928 (OS), a new bowling green was constructed at the southern end of the site, replacing some of the nursery glasshouses and some specimen trees, while the croquet lawn south of the bandstand was replaced by tennis courts, and new tennis courts were constructed on an artificial terrace to the north of the bandstand. Today (2001), Borough Gardens retain their late C19 layout and features, together with its structural planting.

Borough Gardens remain the property of Dorchester Town Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Borough Gardens are situated c 250m south of West Gate at the western end of High West Street. The c 4ha site is approximately rectangular on plan, and is bounded to the north by Albert Road, to the west by Cornwall Road, and to the east by the early C18 West Walks. To the south the site is bounded by a footpath which links Bowling Alley Walk to the east with Cornwall Road to the west. The boundaries of the park are closed by a mixture of wire and metal fences and mixed hedges behind which are extensive areas of ornamental shrubbery and specimen trees which formed part of Goldring's original scheme for the park (Gardeners' Chronicle 1898). The Cornwall Road boundary is marked by a mature holly hedge. The site slopes from north to south, with an artificial declivity extending parallel to the north-east boundary; this forms part of Goldring's late C19 park design. There are few external views from the park, with mature trees in West Walks screening adjoining houses; to the west and north, late C19 and early C20 terraced and detached villas overlook the park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrances to the park are situated at the northern apex of the site, and at the mid-point of the western, or Cornwall Road boundary. The north entrance is aligned on Albert Road which leads south from West Gate. The entrance comprises a pair of late C19 stone square-section piers which support a pair of C20 wrought-iron gates bearing a cast representation of the seal of the town of Dorchester. The stone piers at the Albert Road entrance were designed by the Borough Surveyor, G J Hunt (Dorset County Chronicle 1896); the original wrought-iron gates manufactured by Hill and Smith, Brierley Hill Works, Staffordshire (ibid) were presumably removed during the Second World War. The western entrance, which is aligned on Westover Road leading west from Cornwall Road, is of similar design but with brick piers. There are further pedestrian entrances to the park from West Walks from the east and south-east, and from Cornwall Road at the south-west corner of the site. A further entrance at the north-west corner has been blocked in the late C20.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Borough Gardens are laid out with a series of curvilinear walks which enclose and separate areas of lawns, tennis courts, and bowling greens which are disposed from north to south through the centre of the site. The boundaries to the north, east, and west are heavily planted with ornamental shrubbery and specimen trees.

From the north or Albert Road entrance a wide tarmac walk descends into the park and divides, one branch leading south-west, parallel to the north-west boundary of the site, while another branch leads south-east into the fountain dell. Where the walk divides a mature beech survives from a group of existing trees which was retained when the park was laid out (OS 1887). The walk leading west from the entrance is screened from Albert Road by mixed ornamental shrubbery, and c 70m south-west of the entrance passes a mid C20 brick and concrete paddling pool which was constructed from a Second World War fire service reservoir. To the south-west of the paddling pool the vista south-west along the walk is terminated by a red granite obelisk. Placed at the centre of a circular lawn ornamented with geometric flower beds for seasonal planting, the obelisk commemorates the non-commissioned officers and men of the 1st Battalion Dorset Regiment who died in the Indian Northwest Frontier (Tirah) Campaign of 1897-8 (inscription). The obelisk forms a focal point in views from the lower areas of the park to the south and south-east. To the south-east of the obelisk a late C20 sensory garden comprises raised beds retained by low stone walls. The east-facing slope below the obelisk is terraced to form a level platform enclosed by a low wire fence which is laid to lawn with late C20 children's play equipment. The terrace was constructed in the early C20 as tennis courts (OS 1902, 1928) and did not form part of Goldring's original scheme for the park. To the east of this terrace the ground falls away to form a dell extending from north to south parallel to the eastern boundary of the park. Enclosed to the north, east, and west by mixed ornamental

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shrubbery and specimen trees, the focal point of the dell is a late C19 carved marble fountain (listed grade II) comprising three shallow basins supported variously on seated lions and birds, and surmounted by a cherub finial. The fountain stands on a square pedestal with a carved inscription recording its donation to the town by Charles Hansford in memory of Alderman Gregory, who had secured the site of the park for the town. The pedestal rests on a rocky base which is set in a quatrefoil-shaped marble basin (dry, 2001) enclosed within late C20 hoop-topped metal railings. The fountain was inaugurated in 1898 on a site identified for such a feature in Goldring's scheme of 1895 (Dorset County Chronicle 1896).

South of the playground terrace and to the south-west of the fountain dell, lawns planted with specimen trees and shrubs slope south and south-west towards a level area of lawns and geometric flower beds, to the south-west of which stands the late C19 bandstand (listed grade II). Comprising an octagonal rubble-stone drum surmounted by cast-iron columns linked by ornamental railings which support a leaded pagoda roof, the bandstand was donated to the town by Col W E Brymer and was opened in July 1898 (inscription) as a memorial to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The bandstand is located in the position identified for such a structure in Goldring's scheme for the park, and is surrounded by a circle of pollarded lime trees, beneath which are arranged a group of late C19 benches with elaborate cast-iron ends (listed grade II). The bandstand was designed by the Borough Surveyor, G J Hunt, and was manufactured by Messrs T MacFarlane of Glasgow (Colvin and Moggridge 2000). To the west and aligned with the bandstand is the Cornwall Road entrance, adjacent to which is an area of level lawn surrounding geometric beds planted in the summer with traditional carpet-bedding schemes.

To the south of the bandstand two sets of hard-surfaced tennis courts are enclosed by high wire netting. The present courts replace grass courts laid out in the early C20 (OS 1928), which had themselves replaced a croquet lawn which formed part of Goldring's park design; the possible replacement of the croquet lawn with tennis courts had been envisaged as early as 1896 (Dorset County Chronicle). Immediately south-west of the northern group of tennis courts stands the early C20 clock tower (listed grade II). Standing on a granite base, the octagonal cast-iron shaft is surmounted by a square-section clock tier with four clock faces, which is in turn surmounted by pediments and an onion dome with an elaborate weathervane. The clock tower is painted in red, green, and gold and is ornamented with panels bearing the Borough arms and an inscription recording the gift of the clock to the town by Charles Hansford in 1905. To the west and south the tennis courts are enclosed by ornamental shrubbery and trees, while to the south a bench on a raised platform affords views north across the park to the clock tower, bandstand, and fountain; the bench replaces a shelter presented by Miss Winifred Marsden in 1937 (Colvin and Moggridge 2000).

At the southern end of the park a raised terrace retained by rubble-stone walls and approached at the north-east corner by a flight of steps is laid out with a bowling green. A crazy-paved walk encloses the green to the east, south, and west, while a late C20 pavilion stands to the north-east. The south walk is bordered to the south by a beech hedge and a row of pleached limes. A bronze reduced copy of the Warwick Vase commemorating members of the Pope family who served as mayor of Dorchester (inscription) stands on the terrace. The terrace and bowling green were constructed in the early C20, replacing an area of lawns, flower beds, and glasshouses surviving from the Cornwall Road nursery; Goldring's southern walk was realigned to the north in this process (OS 1902, 1928).

To the west of the bowling green, at the south-west corner of the site, is a service and nursery area enclosed by hedges. Two mid C20 glasshouses replace late C19 houses which survived from S R Harris' Cornwall Road Nursery which existed on the site by 1887 (OS). The yellow Dorchester brick villa at the extreme south-west corner of the site adjoining the nursery was occupied by S R Harris as both nursery proprietor and first superintendent of the park; traces of a painted notice advertising the nursery survive on the west facade of the villa.

REFERENCES

Dorset County Chronicle, 6 August 1896 (Dorset Record Office) Gardeners' Chronicle, (22 October 1898) Historic landscape assessment and management plan for Borough Gardens, Dorchester, (Colvin and Moggridge 2000)

Maps Hutchins, Map of Dorchester, 1772 (Dorset Record Office) Tithe map for Dorchester parish, 1840 (Dorset Record Office) Plan of Dorchester, 1848 (Dorset Record Office)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1903 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887 2nd edition published 1902 3rd edition published 1928 OS 10" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1887

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Archival items Photographs and postcard views of Borough Gardens, Dorchester, late C19/early C20 (Dorset County Museum Collection)

Description written: August 2001 Amended: September 2001 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.