

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

RUSKIN PARK

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

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
RUSKIN PARK

Name:	RUSKIN PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Lambeth (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.465208 Longitude: -0.093905755 National Grid Reference: TQ 32503 75749 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1000831 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

An early C20 public park, designed by J J Sexby and named after John Ruskin who lived in the neighbourhood.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The ground that made up Ruskin Park was acquired in two portions. The original 10ha was considered for purchase by the London County Council in 1904 and was eventually acquired for £48,000, the LCC providing £25,000 and the balance being raised by contributions from various bodies and by private subscription. This section of Ruskin Park was laid out by J J Sexby and opened to the public in 1907.

Some 5ha of meadow land adjoining the park to the south-west was purchased c 1909 and this ground was opened to the public in 1910.

The site remains (1997) a public park, owned and managed by the London Borough of Lambeth.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Ruskin Park is situated in the London Borough of Lambeth, in an area of high density residential housing, 1km south-east of Myatt's Fields (qv) and 1.5km north of Brockwell Park (qv). It is enclosed by a railway line to the north, and beyond that King's College Hospital; by Denmark Hill (A215) to the east; Ferndene Road to the south-east; and the rear gardens of Herne Hill Road to the south-west and Finsen Road to the west. The northern part of the 15ha site rises to the east while the remainder is level. Belts of trees grow along most of the boundaries and the site is crossed by a number of tarmac paths.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There is no principal entrance to Ruskin Park. The main entrance, the one most frequently used, is from the northern end of Denmark Hill, and there are other, lesser entrances around the site: two further south along Denmark Hill, two in Ferndene Road, and one at the north end of Finsen Road. All the entrances link up with paths that cross the site.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING A late C18 entrance screen and flanking walls surviving from 170 Denmark Hill, demolished when the park was first made in 1907, now serves as a shelter near the middle entrance from Denmark Hill. Constructed from red

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England
Inventory of Great Britain
RUSKIN PARK

brick with four window arches altered to look like entrances, the central double screen is made up of two and two pairs of columns with feathered and wreathed capitals and Doric entablature.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS From the main entrance, tarmac perimeter paths link with numerous paths which cross the site. Many of the paths retain their original serpentine nature and meander through shrubberies and lawns.

From the middle gate in Denmark Hill a path leads c 50m to steps up to the shelter, the remains of 170 Denmark Hill. To the east of the shelter is a small paved rose garden (mid C20) which replaced the original shrubbery. Some 500m south of the shelter is the coach house (listed grade II), now used by site staff. A further c 10m south, on the inner edge of the perimeter path, are the remains of a terracotta sundial decorated with Tudor roses (listed grade II). The sundial was erected to commemorate Mendelssohn's visit to 168 Denmark Hill, Dane House, in 1842. Both the inscription recording this event and the brass dial have gone.

The bowling green on its original (1907) site is situated c 400m west of the shelter, enclosed on three sides by a clipped yew hedge and by a pergola on the fourth. The brick and timber pergola of 1907, with its notable wisteria, is said (Cecil 1907) to be built on the line of one of the boundary walls between two of the houses demolished to make the park. A plain wooden bandstand with a tiled roof (post 1909) stands c 200m to the north-west of the bowling green. It stands in a tarmac promenade surrounded by grass and a few of the trees which once encircled it. An oval pond (1907) enclosed within iron railings and bordered by a shrubbery with weeping willows lies c 200m to the north-east of the bowling green. It has a small centrally placed island.

OTHER LAND Between the northern perimeter path and the railway line is an area set aside for children's activities including an area for under fives which replaces an earlier putting green. The ground to the south-west of the bandstand and bowling green is separated from the pleasure grounds by fencing. The southern part of the area is grassed and is divided from south-west to north-east by a path lined with chestnut trees which were already on the site when the park was laid out (Cecil 1907). Part of the ground to the north-east of the chestnut avenue is set aside as an all-weather football pitch. The chestnut avenue meets a north-west/ south-east path which is lined with lime and ash trees and which runs from the Finsen Road entrance in the north to the westernmost entrance in Ferndene Road. Some c 5m to the south of this path, close to the backs of the houses in Finsen Road, is a notable oak tree. To the south-west of the path is the sports field, added to the main site in 1910 when 5ha of meadow land was levelled. This originally provided cricket and football pitches and a 900yds long running track.

REFERENCES

E Cecil, *London Parks and Gardens* (1907), pp 168-70 M P G Draper, *Lambeth's Open Spaces An Historical Account* (1979), pp 51-2 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 2 South* (1983), p 376

Maps J J Sexby, *Plan of Ruskin Park, 1907* [reproduced in Draper 1979]

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1914 edition

Description written: October 1997 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: July 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.