

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

TAYLOR PARK

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

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

Name:	TAYLOR PARK
District:	St. Helens (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.446710 Longitude: -2.7652014 National Grid Reference: SJ 49275 94711 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001632 Date first listed: 02-Jul-2002

Details

A public park opened in 1893, designed by the Town Surveyor, Mr Broom, on land formerly forming part of the grounds of Eccleston Hall.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Taylor Park occupies land which was formerly part of the Eccleston estate where the earliest record of a hall dates from 1374 (Casella 2001). The estate was divided and sold in the early C19 with a part, including the hall, purchased by Samuel Taylor VI (d 1820) in 1812. In 1834 a new hall was built by Samuel Taylor VII using stone from the quarry now within Taylor Park (ibid). In 1880 Samuel Taylor VII offered 37 acres (c 15ha) to the Town Council for use as a public park, but due to the many restrictions and conditions attached the offer was not accepted. In 1892 his grandson, Samuel Taylor VIII offered 47 acres (c 19ha), valued at £7000 and with fewer conditions, for the same purpose and this was accepted by the Council (newspaper cutting, 29 October 1892). The land was transferred to the Council on 13 May 1893 (King 1976) and the remaining estate sold to Sir Gilbert Greenhall (Casella 2001).

The irregular tract of land, running from north to south to the east of Eccleston Hall, included the main approach drive to the Hall from the south, and the right was retained for it to be used, by horse or carriage, in association with the Hall (King 1976). The site included three areas of water: from north to south these were Eccleston Bottom Dam (formerly the St Helens Waterworks Reservoir); Big (formerly Great) Dam on which the Council were granted fishing and boating rights but had a duty to maintain the structure while Taylor retained the water storage rights; and Little Dam which the Council were at liberty to fill in (newspaper cutting, 29 October 1892). Big and Little Dams were constructed by Basil Thomas Eccleston (d 1789) (Casella 2001) and are indicated on an estate map of 1770. Eccleston Bottom Dam (outside the area here registered) was built by Samuel Taylor VI and is shown on the 1850 OS map as 'The New Reservoir'.

The site for the new park was described in the St Helens Reporter on 4 November 1892 (King 1976): the carriage drive was lined with rhododendrons, the environs of the dams were in a natural state with timber, underwood, ferns, and bluebells and the quarry was a disused delf [a delving or digging]. Extensive views from ground above the quarry were also noted.

In March 1893 proposed plans for laying out the park were presented to the Council Parks and Markets committee by the Town Surveyor (newspaper cutting, 16 March 1893). The committee subsequently visited the site (newspaper cutting, 18 March 1893) and applied to the Local Government Board for a loan of £3000 for laying out the park (newspaper cutting, 5 April 1893). The

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

Town Surveyor, Mr Broom, also designed railings, entrances, shelters, and a lodge for the new park (Plans, St Helens Library Archives). The park was officially opened on 18 May 1893 by the Mayor, Mr A Sinclair, in the presence of Samuel Taylor and is shown as Taylor Park on the 1909 OS map.

Comparison of the 1894 and 1927 OS maps indicates the late C19 and early C20 alterations and additions to form the public park. These include the clearance of vegetation from Big and Little Dam, new entrances, new paths often lined with coniferous trees, planting and paths within the quarry, and a shelter and flagstaff on high ground to the north of the quarry. There is little evidence however that the northern section of land including Eccleston Bottom Dam and lying to the north of Chain Walk, running east/west between St Ann's Road and Holme Road (outside the area here registered) was included within the designed public landscape. The 1937 OS map indicates that the land immediately to the south of Eccleston Bottom Dam, adjoining Chain Walk, was in use as a nursery and it is understood that this use continued into the late C20 (B Johnson pers comm, 2002).

In 1926 Little Dam was converted into a paddling pool. In 1930 a boathouse was built on the south bank of Big Dam (Casella 2001) and by 1937 a tennis court had been added in the south of the park (OS). In 1920 and 1951 the Pilkington family donated two adjoining sections of land to the park, to the west of Big Dam, amounting in total to c 3ha; these form the area known as the Mount. In 1970 a cafe was built to the south of Big Dam. Taylor Park remains (2001) in use as a public park and is in the ownership of St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Taylor Park lies 2km to the west-south-west of St Helens town centre and the irregular T-shaped site is c 20ha in area. The short south boundary to Prescott Road is marked by a low late C20 brick retaining wall with steps giving access to a grassed area on which is sited a brick and stone plaque commemorating the centenary of the opening of the park in 1993. The southern section of the park adjoins a golf course to the west and housing, generally early C20, to the east. The golf course boundary is marked by C20 metal fencing and the eastern domestic garden boundaries by high brick walls and timber fencing. At the centre of the park the western boundary follows a stepped line to the south of the quarry before returning north. To the south and west of the quarry the boundary with the golf course is marked by a low stone wall, to the park side, and C20 metal fencing.

The northern section of the park is separated from the golf course to the west by a footpath, with the western boundary to the park marked by C20 metal railings. In the north of the park the east and north-east boundaries, adjacent to Big Dam, adjoin late C19 villa properties and are generally marked by high brick walls, and some late C20 brick outbuildings, at the foot of an embankment, within the park. The northern boundary of the park, marked by early C20 railings, adjoins the tree-lined Chain Walk which, within the park, leads east from Holme Road to St Ann's Road where, at the northern tip of the park a c 40m length of boundary is unmarked. The line of Chain Walk is indicated on the 1894 OS map and is shown with tree planting on the 1927 edition. The western and eastern boundaries of the park appear to follow field boundaries indicated on the 1770 estate map.

In the south of the park the ground is generally gently undulating, rising from east to west. In the north of the park the natural ground level falls to the north and, in the area to the west of Big Dam, rises to the east to a high point to the north of the quarry. From this point there is a panoramic view out from north-west to east with Billinge Beacon, c 8km to the north-east, prominent among the distant hills.

The surrounding area to the north, east, and south of the park is mainly residential with some industrial sites. To the east a private bowling green is sited immediately to the south of the park entrance from Grosvenor Road. Immediately to the north-west, former pleasure grounds adjoining Eccleston Hall have been developed for hospital and residential purposes.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The principal entrance gives access at the south-west corner of the park from Prescott Road. It is marked by three cast-iron bollards set across the entrance path, 10m north of the road. Immediately to the east of this entrance is situated a single-storey lodge in red sandstone with late C20 extensions. The lodge was designed in c 1893 by the Town Surveyor, Mr Broom, and bears a marble plaque commemorating the opening of the park.

At the north-west corner of the park two entrances give access from Holme Road, both marked by cast-iron bollards. At the southernmost of these entrances two small stone bollards, one set to either side of the entrance path, appear to be stops for former gates. The 1894 OS map indicates 'Eccleston Lodge' to the south of this entrance which was on the line of the approach

drive which continued north-west, across Holme Road, to Eccleston Hall. The lodge was demolished in the late C20. Some 10m to the north, the second entrance gives access to Chain Walk. The entrance from St Ann's Road to Chain Walk 140m to the east is marked with cast-iron bollards.

On the eastern boundary there are two entrances, at the north-east corner of Big Dam from Moxon Street, and, c 300m to the south, from Grosvenor Road. The Moxon Street entrance comprises a wide path leading between the high brick walls of adjoining house gardens and is marked by two central cast-iron bollards. The Grosvenor Road entrance is situated at the western end of the road adjacent to the junction with Regent's Road and is marked by a low C20 vehicle gate set between metal posts. To north and south of this gate the entrance is flanked by two late C19 gate piers in red brick each with stone cap, band course, and plinth, with iron gate tracks set into the roadway indicating a former carriage entrance flanked a further pair of piers and two pedestrian gates. The remaining piers are similar to those shown on a late C19 drawing of gateways for the park by Mr Broom (St Helens Library Archives). To the west of the quarry there is access into the park from the footpath leading south from Holme Road adjacent to the western park boundary.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS From the principal entrance on the south boundary a curving main drive leads north through the park to the north-west entrance on Holme Road. This, which is part of the former approach to Eccleston Hall, is indicated on the 1850 OS map and was possibly formed to avoid the toll bar that was situated to the west of the Prescott Road entrance.

The area which stretches for c 100m north of the south boundary is laid to grass with occasional trees. This area includes the site of a former villa property on Prescott Road incorporated into the park in the late C20. In the northern part of this area, c 450m north of the principal entrance and to the south of Big Dam, the park is densely planted with trees giving a woodland character with informal paths laid out to east and west of the main drive, with short sections of rockwork edging. The planting is mainly deciduous with paths partly lined with coniferous trees and rhododendrons providing dense screen planting to the main drive. Some 150m north of the principal entrance a short path with stone setts leads west from the main drive, down into a sunken oval area of ground now (2001) overgrown but with evidence of an enclosing oval path at the lower level. The 1770 estate plan indicates a small irregular lake and the 1894 OS map shows an area of marsh in this area. The 1909 and 1925 OS maps show an open area enclosed within an oval path; in 1937 a tennis court was laid out here.

Some 210m north of the principal entrance a winding path leads north-north-east off the main drive. Running to the east of Little Dam, this path continues northwards to the south bank of Big Dam. Two short paths to the west link to the irregular path encircling Little Dam which, with gently sloping sides, is lined with concrete to form a shallow paddling pool (now, 2001, dry). The encircling path is enclosed within a dense screen of tree and largely evergreen shrub planting. Early C20 photographs show similar, less developed, planting and rockwork edging to the path around Little Dam which no longer (2001) remains.

To the north of Little Dam an embanked path runs from east to west, linking the main path to the east of Little Dam to the main drive. From the latter junction a path leads north-west for c 50m to the quarry entrance where it divides, with one path leading west to encircle the quarry at the head of the c 11m high vertical stone quarry sides and a second path rising via a flight of stone steps to the north. At the centre of these two the quarry entrance is marked by late C20 metal gates and the whole of the quarry is enclosed at the top of the face by C20 metal fencing. From the entrance a sloping path leads west, down to the quarry floor where it returns north. The path is flanked by planting beds, with some mature conifers, now (2001) past their prime, and with partial rockwork edging. The central area of the quarry floor is grassed with a raised area to the north. The 1927 OS map and early C20 photographs show this area laid out with rockwork-lined island beds and conifers with an aviary sited on the raised area. The steps adjacent to the quarry entrance lead to a small irregular oval area to the north-east of, and above the quarry. A winding path slopes gently up through this area to a further set of steps to the north. The oval area is enclosed by embanked rockwork beds with dense evergreen shrub and tree planting around a central lawn. The northern steps lead north-west to an open area overlooking the quarry immediately to the south. This area is screened to the north by dense evergreen shrub planting and to the south-east is bounded by late C19 railings with the high-level path encircling the quarry leading in from the west. The railings accord with a late C19 drawing by Mr Broom (St Helens Library Archives). The 1927 OS map indicates a shelter and flagstaff within this area. To the west of the quarry a small wooded area adjoins the western park boundary. To the north and north-east

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

of the quarry area lies the open grassed C20 extension area of the park, the Mount, which slopes down dramatically to the north and east giving views to distant hills and to the expanse of Big Dam to the north-east.

At the foot of the Mount the main drive, flanked by trees and a dense screen of rhododendrons, curves north-west along the west bank of Big Dam and then slopes down through an informal wooded area to the north-west entrance from Holme Road. Within a narrow wooded area to the south-west of this latter section of drive an open stone channel is a former water feed to Big Dam. At the irregular north-west corner of Big Dam a path leads east from the main drive to form a perimeter path around the dam. On the north-west bank of Big Dam the perimeter path runs at the head of a steep wooded embankment which, with the main drive to the west and Chain Walk on the northern park boundary, encloses an undulating triangular grassed area partly laid out with children's play equipment. From this section of the perimeter path there are views out to the north over the lower triangular area to woodland adjoining Eccleston Bottom Dam (outside the area here registered), and south-west to the rising ground of the Mount. At the northern corner of Big Dam steps lead down from the perimeter path to the lower triangular area with, to the south-west, a stone-lined channel linking sections of a culverted outfall from Big Dam.

The north-west section of the perimeter path is bounded by a low hedge to the north and low metal hoop-topped railings to the dam side. The latter continue around the perimeter of the dam to the cafe at the southern corner; to the south these are late C19 in date and elsewhere late C20 replacements to the same pattern. To the north-east and east of Big Dam the perimeter path, lined with trees, runs at the head of a low embankment, falling to the adjacent park.

To the south-east of Big Dam the perimeter path divides, the two paths, separated by a lawned area with trees, forming a promenade leading south-west parallel to the dam bank. A third path, with part stone sett finish, curves southwards through an area of informal woodland to the entrance from Grosvenor Road. To the north-west of this entrance there is a small car park and, c 300m north-west, a one and a half-storey C20 former boathouse with brick and render elevations below a tiled roof with dormer windows. Tubular metal turnstiles attached to the south-west and north-east elevations give access to a hard-surfaced lido area which extends, within the perimeter railings, to the south-east corner of the dam. Early C20 photographs show Big Dam in use for boating. At the south corner of the dam is a flat-roofed cafe building in brick and concrete on pillars with accommodation at first-floor level overlooking the lake. This cafe was constructed in 1970 to the design of project architect, Edward Jones of St Helens Borough Council.

REFERENCES

R J B King, *A Short History of St Helens' Parks* (1976), pp 13-15, 17-18 Taylor Park, St Helens: Historical Addendum to Restoration Masterplan and Bid for Heritage Lottery Funding, (Casella 2001)

Maps Plan of land owned by Basil Thomas Eccleston, 1770 (Greater Manchester Sites and Monuments Record) Plan of the Park Presented to St Helens by Mr Samuel Taylor, c 1892 (A.78.(2)), (St Helens Library Archives)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1850 1909 edition 1937 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1894 1927 edition Archival items Eccleston Hall Sale Catalogue, 1799 (M/EC/1), (St Helens Library Archives) Late C19 drawings relating to Taylor Park: Shelter house (rolled plan 693a); Gate piers (rolled plan 694a); Railings (rolled plan 694c); Moxon Street Gates (rolled plan 694d); South lodge elevation (rolled plan 694e), (St Helens Library Archives). Newspaper cuttings: 2 July 1892 to May 1 1893, pp 87-90, 100, 196, 210; 2 May 1893 to 1 January 1894, pp 13, 17-20 (St Helens Library Archives) Early C20 photographs of the park (St Helens Library Archives) [reproduced in Casella 2001]

Information from Mr Brian Johnson, Manager, Parks, Open Spaces, Grounds Maintenance, Cemeteries and Crematoria, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council (December 2001).

Description written: January 2002 Amended: March 2002 Register Inspector: HMT Edited: February 2003

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.