



Historic England

Highfields Park

List Entry Summary

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 English Heritage for its special historic interest.

Name: Highfields Park

List entry Number: 1001350

Location

University Boulevard, Beeston, Nottingham, NG9 2GJ

The garden or other land may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: City of Nottingham

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II*

Date first registered: 26-Feb-1996

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: Parks and Gardens

UID: 2771

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Garden

A public park laid out to the designs of Percy Morley Horder.

Reasons for Designation

Highfields Park, Nottingham, opened in 1923, is designated at Grade II* for the following principal reasons: * Date: the park is a good example of an early C20 municipal park; * Design: the park's design is essentially unchanged from its original layout; * Designer: the park was designed and laid out by the well-known architect Percy Morley Horder; * Historic interest: the park was an important element of the Boots' vision of a planned community; * Structures: the park retains various park structures, notably the Lakeside Pavilion, from its early years; * Planting: the park retains earlier, C19 planting and avenues of trees and tree-lined walks from the park's creation.

History

estate with the intention of amalgamating the Highfield land with the Lenton Hall estate, which his son John had bought in 1919. They proposed to build a factory complex and planned community similar to that created by the Cadburys at Bournville. The United Drug Company, however, which had recently bought out the Pure Drug Company, would not agree to this so instead Boot formed the Sir Jesse Boot Property and Investment Company and developed the land as the site of the East Midlands University (now Nottingham University). Closely associated with the laying out of the campus was the creation of a public park on the lower slopes of the land, designed by Percy Morley Horder, architect of many of Boot's retail premises. W H Radford and Sons were commissioned to construct the boating lake and University Boulevard, the first proper road to link Nottingham and Beeston. The park's foundation stone was laid in 1922 and full public access to the park was established in 1923 when the deeds were transferred to the City Council. The Investment Company continued to manage the park and employ grounds staff until 1932. Boot additionally purchased 'Ivydene' on Beeston Road as a residence for the park keeper and bequeathed £30,000 solely for the upkeep of the park. In 1948, as part of planned additions to the university accommodation, Sir Perry Thomas devised a landscape plan for the entire campus including the park. This was revised by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (1900-96) in 1955 but his designs were not implemented. The site ownership was passed to the City Council in 1932 and they remain (2013) as the sole Trustee of the park, with ownership now with the Highfields Leisure Park Trust. The park is used as part of the university campus.

Details

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The 23ha Highfields Park lies on the south-east side of the Nottingham University campus, c 2km to the south-west of the city centre. The elongated site is orientated north-east/south-west around the boating lake. The north-west boundary is formed by West Drive and East Drive respectively, part of the internal road network of the campus. University Boulevard runs along the south-east boundary of the site. The ground falls steeply from the north-west boundary towards the lake which covers most of the park.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance gates to the park stand on University Boulevard, at the midpoint of the south-east boundary. The central double gates are flanked by ashlar piers set between side

paved walk leads to a second gate to the east of which are a pair of pavilions. On the pavement in front of the gates stands a bronze memorial bust of Jesse Boot by C L Doman (listed Grade II), dated 1934. A second gate links the south-west end of the park with the Boulevard, and there is a gate into the university campus to the north of the west end of the park lake. The Boulevard was laid out in 1920 along the line of an existing footpath which led south-west from Beeston Road to Beeston village, alongside the Tottle Brook. The road is raised above ground level, using material excavated during the extension of the existing fishpond to form the lake.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Highfield House stands outside the north-west boundary of the public park, to the north of the Trent Building, the main focus of the university complex. When purchased by Boot, the House stood in an essentially C18 landscape over which large-scale tree planting had been carried out in the mid C19. This formed the basis for the new public park. The Trent Building, outside the north-west boundary of the site here registered, forms the focus for the design of the park and dominates the site.

PARK To the east of the main entrance off University Boulevard lies the Croquet Club, to the west the Bowls Club and associated greens, the entrance pavilions serving as clubhouses. From the gate a paved walk leads over a bridge (listed Grade II) across the Tottle Brook to a large formal terrace or landing stage (listed Grade II) on the shores of the lake. The walk is flanked by grass verges and flower beds in front of low ashlar walls backed by yew hedges, the latter replacing the original iron railings. The axis is continued on the far side of the water, across a formal balustraded terrace (listed Grade II) and up a steeply sloping grass bank to the Trent Building. This stands overlooking the site at the centre of the north-west boundary, the rising ground placing it well above the main level of the park.

South of the main entrance, the cross axis is continued as an avenue of copper beech round the Middle Circus. Beyond, a double avenue of cedars marks the line across the playing fields and pitches associated with the park which lie to the south of the Boulevard, all land south of the entrance being outside the area here registered.

Highfields Park is dominated by the c 6ha boating lake which extends from north-east to south-west across the site. This replaced an existing fishpond formed c 1830 for Alfred Lowe, then owner of Highfield House, by damming

Brook and, being below the surrounding watertable, is filled by natural drainage. Its edge is retained by a Bullwell stone wall, as are the four islands which interrupt its surface. The largest island is linked to north and south shores by two balustraded bridges (both listed Grade II). Beyond the northern end of the water, set in a level area of car parking and lawns, is the Lakeside Pavilion, opened in 1925 as the Tea Pavilion, it was intended as a restaurant and ballroom although from the start was equipped as a gymnasium. The pavilion suffered from a fire in 1999 and was replaced by the D. H. Lawrence Pavilion in 2001. It is approached from the Boulevard to the south by a cherry avenue, and from the East Drive via a C20 tree-lined walk with putting green to the west and late C20 children's play area to the east. At the water's edge is a late C20 brick kiosk with, further to the west, a weatherboarded boathouse with pantile roof. A walk, lined with lime trees along the western section, leads along the southern shore, with the Tottle Brook running almost the length of this boundary between the park and the Boulevard. At the western end of the park the Brook leads under a concrete footbridge to a kidney-shaped paddling pool.

An area of rockwork closes the western end of the lake, a line of stepping stones across the cascade (listed Grade II) providing an alternative route to the perimeter path around the back of this feature. The walk continues along the northern shore to join with the bridge to the main island. Eastwards from here it becomes a winding walk along the foot of an exposed sandstone rockface, linking to the west end of the terrace below the Trent Building. The original scheme for the park included a Lido at the east end of East Drive. Designed by Morley Horder and opened in 1924, it was the largest inland open swimming pool in the UK, but was demolished in 1993.

Selected Sources

Books and journals

Bernes, F, Priory demesne to University Campus - a topographic history of Nottingham University , (1993), pps xii, 157, 171, 173, 397-403, 420

Mellors, R, Gardens, Parks and Walks of Nottingham and District, (1925), pp 73 - 5

Spens, M, The Complete Landscape Designs and Gardens of Geoffrey Jellicoe, (1994)

Williamson, E, The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire, (1979), pp 256-

The above map is for qualitative reference purposes only and may not be to scale. For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF -

[1001350 .pdf](#)

(http://mapservices.HistoricEngland.org.uk/printwebservicehle/StatutoryPrint.svc/477935/HLE_A4L_Grade|HLE_A3L_Grade.pdf)

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