



Historic England

# Urban Landscapes

Register of Parks and Gardens Selection Guide



# Summary

Historic England's selection guides help to define which historic buildings and sites are likely to meet the relevant tests for national designation. Four guides, of which this is one, deal with the types of site included on Historic England's *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England* which is a constituent part of the *National Heritage List for England*.

Each guide falls into two halves. The first defines the types of site included in it, before going on to give a brisk overview of how these developed through time, with notice of the main designers and some of the key sites. The second half of the guide sets out the particular tests a site has to meet if it is to be included on the *Register*. A select bibliography gives suggestions for further reading.

This guide covers urban designed landscapes, including town walks, squares, municipal parks and seaside gardens. The other three guides treat Rural, and Institutional, landscapes, and Landscapes of Remembrance, that is cemeteries and burial grounds.

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## Front cover

Morrab Gardens, Cornwall. A public park developed from the 1880s around a brewer's house and garden of the 1860s. Registered Grade II.

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# Introduction

The *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England* (now a component of the [National Heritage List for England](#)) was set up in 1983. It includes designed landscapes of many types, private and public, which are identified using explicit criteria to possess special interest. To date over 1650 sites have been included on the *Register*. Thereby Historic England seeks to increase awareness of their significance, and to encourage appropriate long-term management. Although registration is a statutory designation, there are no specific controls for registered parks and gardens unlike listed buildings or scheduled monuments. However, the [National Planning Policy Framework](#), gives registered parks and gardens an equal policy status with listed buildings and scheduled monuments.

This is one of four complementary selection guides which briefly describe the types of designed landscape included on the *Register*, and set out selection criteria for designation. This guide covers urban landscapes ranging from town squares to municipal parks, from private gardens to public walks. The other three guides treat [Rural Landscapes](#), [Institutional Landscapes](#), and [Landscapes of Remembrance](#). The listing of buildings in designed landscapes is considered in the [Garden and Park Structures](#) selection guide, and the scheduling of archaeological garden remains, principally but not exclusively earthwork remains, is dealt with in the [Gardens](#) scheduling selection guide.

# 1 Historical Summary

## 1.1 Town and suburban gardens

Excavations and survey over the last 20 years at Roman towns, including Silchester and Wroxeter, have begun to yield a better understanding of the nature of the urban experience in the first four centuries AD. At Wroxeter, for instance, geophysical survey and air photography has radically altered how the city is seen; now it is argued that it was jam-packed with buildings, rather than a spaciouly laid out place with (to use the modern term) much green space, which was the traditional perception of the town. Undoubtedly work in the future, and further technical advances in investigation, will add new sites and still greater detail to what is known, and enable better understanding of the nature of public and private spaces, and of how such changed over the Roman centuries.

Evidence for town gardens during the medieval period is limited, and derives from documents including maps and plans, and increasingly from archaeological excavations. Physical and cartographic evidence of medieval urban gardens show that these tended to be narrow but very long. Modern boundaries often preserve their lines, even if the plot has been truncated; these plan-elements contribute considerably to the 'grain' of historic places. Documents and archaeology indicate that urban gardens were used for growing food, for keeping animals, for small-scale crafts and industries, and for rubbish and night-soil disposal. It does not appear that ordinary households had pleasure gardens, although these were associated with the much larger properties maintained in towns and especially cities by aristocrats and leading churchmen. Documentary evidence shows that in London what we would today term professional gardeners were attempting to regulate their

trade from the thirteenth century, and the Royal Worshipful Company of Gardeners was established in 1605 in part to confine gardening to those with prescribed training, experience and knowledge.

From the mid sixteenth century our knowledge of gardens increases with the proliferation of gardening texts and descriptions, printed and estate maps, and documentation in general. Together the sources show that, especially in the suburbs of London and major provincial cities, pleasure gardens were evolving on the properties of the well-to-do with features such as walks, trellised alleys, bowling alleys, mazes, banqueting houses, and knots and mounts for looking over the garden wall to the countryside beyond. Pleasure gardens also appeared in association with commercial places of entertainment like inns and brothels.

The number and ambition of urban gardens increased in the eighteenth century, and commercially produced town plans like those of John Rocque are sometimes at a scale sufficient to show, at least schematically, the layout of the larger individual gardens. These typically complemented the fine town houses being commissioned by those wishing for a stylish urban base, especially in places of resort where there was a social season. For the expanding urban middle classes, gardening was one of the commercialised leisure activities recommended by eighteenth-century texts such as Thomas Fairchild's *The City Gardener* (1722). Whether occupying a medieval burgage or part of a new development, such gardens normally lay behind the house and were long, narrow, and typically defined by tall walls; Joseph Spence and Richard Horwood's eighteenth-century London town garden plans and maps show the popularity of

features such as gravel walks, terraces, water features, mounts, paved areas, lawns, flower beds and parterres. One garden had a covered way with vines, another a rectangular fish pond on its terrace. The concept of variety with the prospect towards, across and beyond the confining boundary was of primary importance. Recent studies such as Todd Longstaffe-Gowan's *The London Town Garden 1740-1840* (2001) have drawn attention to the wealth of documentary evidence, and to the potential interest of such gardens. The garden at Bourne Hill House, Salisbury (Wiltshire), designed by Richard Woods in the early 1770s (registered Grade II), is a good example of provincial, high-status, late eighteenth-century landscaping. Some Georgian town gardens, as at the Circus in Bath, have been the subject of archaeological excavations; features such as paths, flower beds, and building foundations have been found sealed beneath later lawns.

In the nineteenth century the writings of John Claudius Loudon and his wife Jane catered for the burgeoning interest in gardening, not least among the well-to-do occupying the new terraces and villas of England's expanding towns and cities. Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (1822) was a comprehensive guide and his *Gardeners Magazine* was established in 1826. In *The Suburban Gardener* (1838) he recommended symmetrical designs for shared front or rear gardens. Most garden owners, however, adopted fairly standardised layouts and, where evidence survives, decorative achievement is not always evident. An exceptional example is William Morris's garden at the Red House (1860; listed Grade I), Bexleyheath, south-east London, where the garden is treated as integral with the house, a series of exterior 'rooms': herb and vegetable gardens, two compartments full of old-fashioned flowers, and many fruit trees.

Especially characteristic of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were substantial edge of town villas, built by a wide range of middle-class patrons, for whom the building of a secluded suburban seat often represented the acme of social aspiration. Typically these were set within an acre or two of park-like

grounds, rarely laid out with the assistance of a professional designer. Most are very simple, with little beyond an imposing gateway and lawns with some specimen coniferous trees. Exceptionally, however, they could be improbably crammed with incident: whimsical buildings and other structures, specimen plants, elaborate compartmentation and, in picturesque examples, a maze-like combination of winding walks and dense shrubbery calculated to thwart perceptions of littleness. Few such gardens have been maintained since the nineteenth century in line with their original design principles; intact and unaltered examples are now rare.

In the twentieth century the commissioning of larger houses, with larger gardens, was less common than in the Victorian period, although examples can be found, such as Winterbourne, an Edwardian Arts and Crafts house and garden at Edgbaston, Birmingham (registered Grade II). Here, as so often, an industrialist moved to the urban fringe, or just beyond, for clean air and privacy. Many properties which now might be classed as urban were, in fact, built in the country. An example is Kearnsey Court, Dover (Kent), built about 1900 for Alfred Leney, a brewer and drinks manufacturer, the grounds of which (registered Grade II) were one of Thomas Mawson's earliest commissions. Modernist gardens of the 1930s were perhaps even rarer in the urban realm than the rural (for a brief summary of such see the [Rural](#) designed landscapes selection guide); certainly that seems true of survivals.

Especially in the decades either side of 1930, suburban developments (typified by 'Metroland' to the north-west of London), and council and private estates, saw the provision of standardised – but often generous – plots alongside the standardised houses. These, and the landscaping in the streetscape, contribute much to the character of these areas.

## 1.2 Detached town gardens

In the early nineteenth century landowners began to let out blocks of plots on the outskirts of expanding towns and cities to artisans and members of the skilled working class, such as the Sheffield cutlers and the Nottingham lace-makers, to cultivate as ornamental and productive gardens. The term 'detached town gardens' to describe these was used by J C Loudon, while elsewhere the relatively high rent which was charged gave rise to the alternative name of 'guinea gardens'.

Detached town gardens typically had a grid plan with the equal-sized plots accessed via main drives, paths and side alleys. Plots were defined by hedges, walls or boarded fences. They contained fruit trees, flowers and flowering shrubs, patches of lawn for sitting out on and areas for vegetable plots. The silk-weavers of Middleton (Lancashire) were noted for their cultivation of auriculas and other florists' flowers. Some had miniature knot gardens or parterres; one at Birmingham is reported to have had a fishpond. Many had buildings, sometimes architecturally characterful, such as residential cottages (families sometimes spent nights on site), summerhouses (with fireplaces or ranges for cooking), privies and glass houses; if of sufficient architectural or historic interest these may merit individual listing (see the [Garden and Park Structures](#) selection guide). While some town gardens do survive, others have subsequently been built over or become urban allotments devoted to purely horticultural production.

There are currently five sets of detached gardens on the *Register*: Hunger Hill and Stonepit Coppice Gardens and Gorsey Close Gardens, Nottingham, Grade II\*; Bagthorpe Gardens, Nottingham, Grade II\*; Hill Close Gardens, Warwick, Grade II\*; Westbourne Road Town Gardens, Birmingham, Grade II; and Stoney Road Allotments, Coventry, Grade II\* (Fig 1).



**Figure 1**  
Stoney Road Allotments, Coventry (registered Grade II\*). These detached town gardens opened in the 1850s; by 1887 the northern half of the site had been laid out as small gardens enclosed by hedges and divided by tracks and secondary walks. Here Mr Lander sits outside one of the ornamental summerhouses built by the silk weavers and watchmakers who rented the gardens.

## 1.3 Allotments

From the 1760s there were local initiatives to provide landless rural labourers with the means to support themselves via rented plots, and sometimes a cottage and cow. The first Enclosure Act to allot a portion of land for 'poor gardens' (a total of 8 acres out of 970 enclosed) was that of 1806 for Great Somerford (Wiltshire), while the Select Vestries Act of 1819 empowered parish wardens to purchase or lease up to 20 acres (increased to 50 acres by Act of 1831) to let to the poor, typically in quarter-acre blocks. By 1834 there were still probably fewer than 20,000 such plots in the country, although the total had risen to about 100,000 by the 1840s. Further provision was encouraged by legislation

such as the General Inclosure Act of 1845 which specified that commissioners must appropriate allotments for the labouring poor, and the 1887 Allotments Act which required councils to provide land for allotments. The 1889 county council elections were known as the 'Allotment Elections', with candidates standing on their position on allotment provision. By 1890 there were just over 440,000 allotments, and more followed further legislative provision.

During the First World War, local government requisitioned land to increase the number of allotments to 1.5 million. In the early twentieth century urban allotments were increasingly acquired by the 'respectable classes', and humorous postcards reflected the 'allotment craze'. After a renewed interest in allotments during the Second World War (those in London's Kensington Gardens and in the moat of the Tower of London were demonstrations that everyone was 'doing their bit' in the Dig for Victory campaign) the number under cultivation fell away, to a million in 1950, to 800,000 in 1960, and even fewer in the 1970s. The decline then slowed as the green movement emerged, and in many places demand now exceeds supply. Allotments, that is plots to grow fruit and vegetables on will generally fall outside the *Register* definition of 'designed landscapes' (here a distinction being made with detached town gardens, treated above).

## 1.4 Nurseries

Nurseries – enclosed ground for the successive cultivation of plants and trees – have similarly been reckoned to fall outside the remit of the *Register*, not being designed landscapes as they are understood. That said, in the absence of any general national survey (which has yet to happen) future inclusion may one day occur: some nursery buildings have already been listed.

In London, William the Gardener, active at the Tower of London and elsewhere in the capital in the 1260s and 1270s, supplied a wide range of trees, fruit bushes, herbs and flowers, presumably from his own nursery. Medieval 'impyards' seem

to have been tree nurseries, primarily for stocking woodland. Many later medieval nurserymen are known, and some families had long-lived nurseries such as the Banburys' in Westminster, operating in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But not until the 1640s and with Leonard Gurle's Ground in London's Whitechapel (where, as often, fruit trees were a staple) can a nursery be precisely located. The heyday of the capital's nursery trade was the mid eighteenth century, with the appearance of thousands of new townhouses and garden squares creating demand. As urban development continued so did a demand for the services of nurserymen and gardeners. For instance, between about 1820 and 1835 Thomas Cubitt built, designed and planted Gordon, Torrington, Woburn, Tavistock and Euston Squares in London, all supplied with plants from Cubitt's own nursery ground established expressly to supply his own developments. As well as supplying plants and laying out gardens, contract nurserymen-florists helped transform houses with elaborate floral arrangements for all-night balls during the Season. Most early nursery grounds have been lost to urban expansion. While the greatest concentration of nurseries, and the largest – those attempting to supply many of the 18,000 species under cultivation in Britain by 1839 – were found in and around London, most of England's larger towns were served by at least one.

## 1.5 Town squares

The first designed open space to be called a 'square' was London's Bloomsbury (formerly Southampton) Square (registered Grade II), conceived in 1647 but still incomplete in 1665 when John Evelyn visited and called it 'a noble square or piazza'. The typical internal arrangement of squares from the late seventeenth to the mid eighteenth century was of four grass plats (or lawns), often bounded by hedges or small trees, crossed by gravel paths and with a central feature such as a statue. There were over 30 squares in London by 1800, and over the previous century they had also begun to appear in cities like Bristol (Queen's Square, 1700) and Bath (Queen Square,



**Figure 2**  
Plymouth's Grade-II registered Civic Square (originally named the Great Square) was designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe as part of the city's post-war civic

reconstruction and laid out 1957-62. Jellicoe intended his design to embrace 'dignity and frivolity', and the hard landscaping incorporated a wide variety of materials.

1728). These squares were sometimes public, but in other cases formed private communal gardens, accessible only to residential key holders. Public squares often acquired hard landscaping, statuary and other memorials, along with seats (sometimes roofed) and other street furniture. These may be individually listable, as may perimeter features such as railings and gates.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century many new squares were laid out in a *rus in urbe* (country in the city) style, planted in a naturalistic, informal manner with shrubberies surrounded by a gravel walk and railings.

By the early nineteenth century the term 'square' was not used literally; many of the garden developments – synonymous with privilege, elegance and prosperity – were in fact crescents, widened terraces, circles or semi-circles. What they had in common was an enclosed garden for

the use of residents. They were usually shielded from the world beyond by shrubberies as well as railings. Nineteenth-century squares usually had a symmetrical design with an outer belt of trees and shrubs around the perimeter, to provide shelter and some privacy. A walk ran around the inside of the belt and the centre was laid to grass. There was usually a central feature, such as a statue, fountain or, more often, a flower bed or group of ornamental trees and shrubs. The garden was often crossed by further footpaths linking the centre of the gardens to the entrances. Numerous squares remain private, accessible only to key holders.

From the mid twentieth century, many existing squares, both public and private, were further revised or re-designed. Layouts were often characterised by strong angular or curved lines, a predominant use of hard landscaping with distinct materials, simple and/or minimal planting, and the use of water and/or water features. They

are often part of, or form the focus of, inner city views or vistas, and are usually integrated or closely linked with surrounding architecture. Examples in London include Parliament Square (registered Grade II), improved in 1949-50 by George Grey Wornum as part of the preparations for the Festival of Britain Year (1951), and the early nineteenth-century Bryanston Square, re-designed by John Brookes in 1965 with a strong curving pattern and a new planting scheme.

Squares were also created as part of New Towns or post-war planning schemes (see also below, Landscaping in the Public Realm), as at Plymouth where the Civic Square of 1962 by Geoffrey Jellicoe (registered Grade II; Fig 2) was part of Sir Patrick Abercrombie's post-war plan for the city's bomb-damaged centre. During the 1970s, as articulated by the landscape architect Nan Fairbrother in *New Lives New Landscapes* (1970), urban landscapes continued to be seen as 'chiefly architectural ... their essential materials are buildings and surfaced land-forms'; water and vegetation were secondary and decorative. More recent examples are often part of urban regeneration schemes. Examples can be found in London's Docklands development and at the former Arsenal Football Stadium in Highbury, London.

Currently 26 squares are included on the *Register*.

## 1.6 Public walks

In 1612 Northernhay (part of the later Northernhay and Rougemont Gardens, registered at Grade II), extending round the north and north-east sides of Exeter Castle (Devon), was levelled and laid out by the city authorities as a public walk with an avenue of elms and seats for the use of the elderly. This is a very early example of a public walk, the fashion for which – to enable social walking, the promenade – took off in the mid seventeenth century (Fig 3). The Mall in London was laid out by Charles II in 1660, and soon after examples began to appear across England in provincial towns and cities with aspirations to a polite society, especially in spas and resorts.

Only one walk is currently registered at Grade II\*, Richmond Terrace Walk, Greater London, laid out about 1700 along high ground to a viewpoint across the Thames; that has a high grade because of its early date, and because it was much celebrated in literature and art. Five other public walks on the *Register* are predominantly of the mid to late eighteenth century and registered at Grade II; others are elements within wider designated landscapes.

The appearance of such walks was initially defined by pedestrian paths, the planting of avenues of shade-giving trees, and the maintenance of open space around them although, as towns and cities grew, development occurred around the walks, and they became, in effect, linear urban parks. These were often flanked by fashionable housing laid out in accordance with covenants specifying where development could take place. The walk could be enhanced by paved surfacing materials, railings, bollards and ornamental lighting columns, and could incorporate features such as fountains and statues, as also found in public parks. Walks typically later passed into public ownership and evolved into public gardens or thoroughfares, like New Walk (created 1785) in Leicester (registered Grade II).

## 1.7 Pleasure gardens

Commercially managed pleasure gardens began to open in major towns and cities after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Those at Vauxhall, in Lambeth on the south bank of the Thames, opened (under the name New Spring Gardens) in 1661, and Ranelagh, with its great rotunda echoing the Pantheon in Rome, in 1742 (Grade II-registered as part of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea). Pleasure gardens' attractions included promenading, dancing, fireworks and concerts. At first the layout was simple with gravel walks, but later they contained ornamental buildings and varying landscape features such as Ranelagh's canal and Chinese bridge. Entertainment on offer there included the performance of new music by Handel and Mozart, but many pleasure gardens later became distinctly down-market.

The eighteenth century saw large numbers of provincial towns and cities provided with pleasure gardens of some sort, often named after the main London prototypes of Vauxhall, Ranelagh and Spring Gardens. St James's Gardens, for instance, was laid out to the east of the Assembly Rooms at Bath in 1709 and provided space for recreation (registered as Parade Gardens, Grade II). Admission to the gardens was by subscription, ensuring exclusivity. New gardens continued to be made, and old ones revived, well into the early nineteenth century. Town commons were also traditional places of recreation, until enclosure in the period 1750-1850 reduced the number of such open spaces: Quarry Park (registered Grade II), for instance, Shrewsbury's main open space, began to evolve from common ground in 1719 when tree-lined walks were planted. Both private pleasure gardens and commons were largely superseded

by public parks from the early Victorian period and many were built over; a few, however, remain as some form of open space.

## 1.8 Public parks and municipal gardens

The earliest examples of urban public parks were the Royal Parks; London's Hyde Park (registered Grade I), until then a hunting park, was open to the public from the 1630s. Such open access, however, remained exceptional for two hundred years, and otherwise open places for public access and recreation were limited to spaces like commons, urban squares, and walks (Fig 4).

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries a few more parks opened, and the opening of Kensington Gardens (registered Grade I)



**Figure 3**  
The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. A grass walk between a double row of trees was laid out as early as 1638. Here the company walked in intervals between taking the waters. By the 1680s tradesmen's stalls had

become permanent shops behind a colonnade, and the former walk paved over. Its built-up character means designation is via listing, not registration. It also stands within a conservation area.



**Figure 4**

The Quarry, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. A large area of common grazing outside the town walls, this began to be appropriated as a polite space in 1719 when tree-lined walks were planted. Tensions remained

throughout the eighteenth century between graziers, quarrymen, washerwomen (who used it as a drying ground) and leisure users. Registered Grade II.

for one day a week from the 1790s was not untypical of the gradually increasing access to what were previously exclusive spaces (and see Fig 5). Regent's Park (registered Grade I), designed by the leading architect John Nash about 1811 but not opened until 1835, was an important influence on the development of municipal parks, partly because of the way the integral housing in and around it helped pay for the creation of the park. Royal Victoria Park in Bath (registered Grade II), designed by Edward Davis in 1829, was among the earliest provincial examples of the new wave of public parks. Then, in the 1830s, concerns about urban overcrowding and the condition of the poor grew into the Public Parks Movement. In 1833, a Parliamentary Select Committee provided the first survey of the provision of public open space and took as the title for its study 'Public Walks', reflecting the main type of public open space then found in towns. The Committee recommended

greater provision of open spaces for leisure pursuits and suggested that parks would provide alternatives to drinking houses, dog fights and boxing matches. J C Loudon, who had a commitment to social improvement, was among the leading advocates of public parks. These were among the first elements of much-needed urban reform, and came to be among the main ways in which civic pride was expressed.

Common elements of such parks included boundary walls, gate lodges, separate carriage ways and inter-weaving paths, one or more lakes, grass to play on, ornamental trees to give instruction and form, rippling water to enliven the scene, shrubberies for year-round foliage, rock gardens, bedding and flowers intended to give seasonal colour. Buildings included shelters, seats, and often bandstands, while tucked-away service yards accommodated glass houses.



**Figure 5**

Green Park, London. Until the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 this was open waste or meadowland. King Charles II enclosed the ground with a high brick wall to form a deer park and the area became known

as Upper St James's Park. It was opened to the general public in 1826. Registered Grade II\*.

Theorists held there should be elements of surprise and vistas; that not all the park should be seen at once; that boundaries should not be immediately visible; and that views should look inwards from the perimeter carriageways – ambitions only possible in the larger parks.

Liverpool's Birkenhead Park (registered Grade I), designed by Joseph Paxton and opened in 1847, was very influential. It contained a grand entranceway and an innovative system of circulation and traffic segregation which divided the park into different character areas. He created a variety of landscapes by raising mounds from the lake spoil, framing views and using dramatic rocky outcrops to add variety and contrast. The circulation had a serpentine route for carriages and horse riders and a separate walk for pedestrians. Paxton's Crystal Palace Park in Sydenham, south-east London (registered Grade II\*)

– arguably the first 'destination park', drawing visitors from a wide catchment area – opened 1856, was also highly influential. Inspired by a visit to Versailles in 1834, Paxton's grand formal scheme had steps and cascades down a central axis the length of the park, either side of which were Italianate terraces with lawns, lavish floral displays, statues and fountains. Such requires a considerable park staff and ongoing financial support. Life-size models of prehistoric animals (listed Grade I) in their contemporary setting of rocks and plants provided an educational tableau. At Battersea Park (registered Grade II\*), in the London Borough of Wandsworth, Pulhamite rockworks (a convincing type of artificial stonework) were arranged to suggest a sandstone igneous fault. These fashionable landscapes brought together many of the Victorian passions including education using botany and geology, alongside innovative materials and techniques.

The early designs of Loudon and Paxton, especially Birkenhead, were being replicated elsewhere by the mid nineteenth century. Between 1845 and 1859 park creation accelerated, local authority activity increased, and further important promotional legislation was passed. The 1875 Public Health Act was particularly important, as it enabled local authorities to use income from the rates to develop and maintain public parks, part of a wider range of mid-Victorian measures to keep the populace fit, and the working class orderly and sober. A typical provincial example is Abbey Park, Leicester (registered Grade II), designed by William Barron and opened in 1882, where separate areas demarcated by paths and shrubberies were given over to different sports including bowling and tennis. In some parks there were lakes for bathing, and women were allowed

to cycle in London's Battersea Park. Many urban parks were adaptations of older, private, parks or villa grounds, and often mature trees, pools and other pre-existing features were incorporated in the new, public, landscaping.

For those living in the densest urban areas, smaller parks were provided from the 1880s thanks to the Open Spaces Act of 1881 (whose promoters included Octavia Hill, keen advocate of 'open air sitting rooms') and the Disused Burial Ground Act of 1884. The latter gave authorities the power to convert burial grounds into public gardens and parks; several are on the *Register* including Queen's Park, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent (Staffordshire; registered Grade II), opened in 1888. Queen Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees also stimulated public park provision, and a good number of towns



**Figure 6**  
A band performance, Heaton Park, Manchester, 1914. Towns and cities often made great efforts to organise activities in their parks. In the late nineteenth

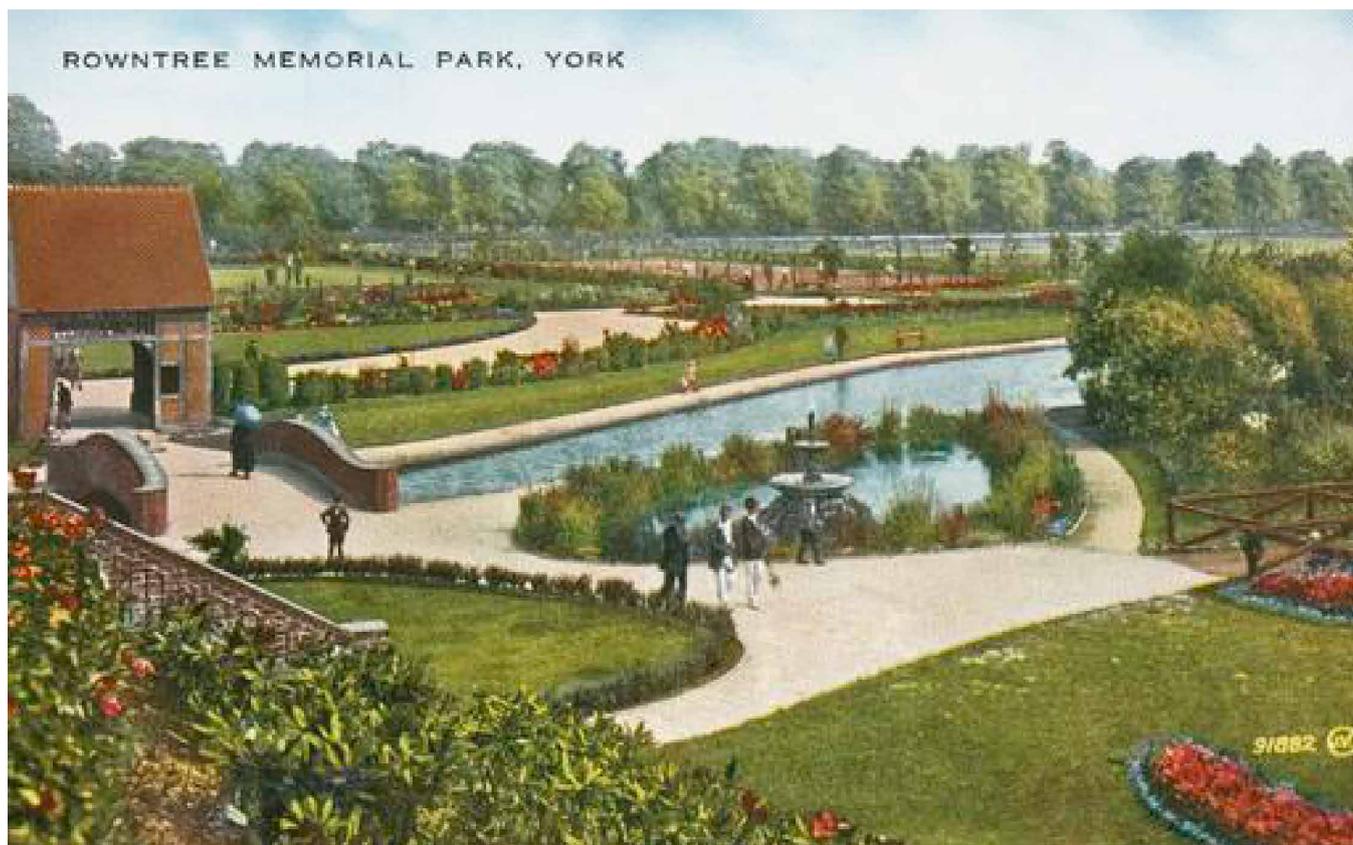
century Manchester placed great store on musical entertainments, and from 1921 began to invest in new, enclosed and sunken bandstands. Registered Grade II.

saw fit to celebrate the occasions in this way; most towns had at least one park by 1900. Now commonplace were bandstands, lodges, pavilions and refreshment rooms alongside shelters, lavatories and drinking fountains which enabled the use of parks in poor weather and demonstrated the authorities' concern for public health and morality (Fig 6). The political and social role of parks was codified through by-laws defining permitted activities, and reinforced by statues of local worthies and benefactors.

After the First World War, and to a lesser extent after the Second, war memorials, gates and other commemorative features and planting were added to the majority of parks. Purpose-designed memorial parks were also created, such as Fleetwood Memorial Park in Wyre, Lancashire, created in the 1920s by Patrick Abercrombie, and the Walsall

Memorial Garden, opened in 1952 to a design by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe (both registered Grade II; and see Fig 7). **Landscapes of Remembrance**, more generally, are considered in a separate designed landscapes selection guide.

Park creation continued between the two world wars. Thomas Mawson became one of the the leading designers; others of note were Percy Cane and Geoffrey Jellicoe. Especially after the Second World War local authorities started to identify derelict land including bomb sites, former industrial areas and railway land as suitable for public parks. In Swindon (Wiltshire), a former clay pit and brick and tile works had already been earmarked for this use in 1937; in the event the local authority created Queens Park (registered Grade II) in two phases, in 1949-53 and 1959-64.



**Figure 7**  
Rowntree Park, York. Opened in 1921, an example of a memorial park, gifted to the City of York by the Rowntree family in memory of members of the York

Cocoa Works staff who were lost during the First World War. Registered Grade II.



**Figure 8**

Clacton developed as a resort from the early nineteenth century, and pleasure grounds and cliff-top gardens were laid out in the 1870s. In 1921 the council spent ‘considerable sums ... laying out gardens,

providing shelters etc’, and Marine Gardens (seen here) were laid out overlooking the pier to designs by the County Surveyor. Registered Grade II.

The 1951 Festival of Britain was an important opportunity for garden designers and landscape architects to promote their work and their role in the rebuilding of post-war Britain. The site along London’s South Bank incorporated designs by many leading landscape designers including Frank Clark, Mary Shephard, Peter Youngman and Peter Shephard, and had a lasting influence on urban design in the second half of the twentieth century. The exhibition site also included Battersea Park. Some elements of the Festival of Britain landscape design survive here (notably elements of the Pleasure Grounds); other features (such as Barbara Hepworth’s Grade II-listed Turning Forms sculpture, now at Marlborough School, Hertfordshire) were moved to parks elsewhere in England. Later in the century there were a number of garden festivals, often to encourage regeneration, while London’s Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park became a key legacy of the 2012 Olympic Games.

Overall, there are currently some 225 urban public parks on the *Register*.

## 1.9 Seaside gardens

From soon after the emergence of sea-bathing and seaside resorts in the eighteenth century, gardens were used to enhance the genteel settings desired by promoters and visitors alike. Examples include the Pleasure Gardens in Bournemouth (Dorset; registered Grade II\*), laid out down the sides of the Bourne Stream from the 1840s, and the Valley Gardens and South Cliff Gardens in Scarborough (North Yorkshire; registered Grade II), developed from the 1860s to enhance the spa-town’s public facilities. In the later nineteenth century gardens running alongside elevated sea-edge promenades became commonplace, typically enlivened with spectacular summer displays of formal floral bedding (Fig 8).

Registered examples include Princess Gardens, Torbay (Devon; Grade II) opened in 1894.

The English seaside remained a favoured destination in the first half of the twentieth century, and resorts continued to invest in gardens and landscaping, sometimes of a novel character: the Venetian Waterways, Great Yarmouth (Norfolk; Grade II), a series of winding rivers for boating weaving through rock gardens opened 1926/1928. The 1930s saw the introduction of modernist and Art Deco-style pavilions, lidos and designated bathing stations. Their setting consisted predominantly of hard landscaping with walks, sun terraces, balustraded promenades and lawns, with limited planting, as at the Grade-I listed De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill, East Sussex of 1935. Examples of more extensive ornamental landscaping include the mid 1930s improvements to The Hoe in Plymouth (Devon; registered Grade II). Seaside

holidays remained popular in the 1950s, and resorts continued to make and extend gardens, as with the Lower, Central and Upper Gardens in Bournemouth (registered Grade II\*). From the 1970s, as the package holiday abroad became affordable, and as local authority spending on parks began to be reduced, English seaside gardens often started to fall into gentle decline.

## 1.10 Botanic gardens

The collection and curation of plants, primarily for medicinal applications and later for botanical study, was well-established in England long before Oxford's Botanic Garden (registered Grade I) was established in 1621. Other early examples include London's Chelsea Physic Garden of 1673 (registered Grade I), while the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (London Borough of Richmond on Thames) and Cambridge University botanic gardens (registered



**Figure 9**  
Birmingham Botanic Garden (registered Grade II\*) opened in 1832. The general plan, by J C Loudon, did much to disseminate his ideas on gardenesque layouts and plantings in the Birmingham area. The range of

glasshouses includes (nearest the camera) the Grade II listed Palm House of 1871; the Orangery, Tropical House, Cactus and Succulent House lie beyond.



**Figure 10**  
Hemel Hempstead was one of the post-war New Towns. Geoffrey Jellicoe's Master Plan envisioned 'a city in a park'. A key component of the city

centre was (and is) the Water Gardens of 1957-9, a sophisticated linear park. Registered Grade II.

respectively Grades I and II\*) followed a century later. Many more were set up in the Victorian period when, it was said, any city worth its salt had a botanic garden, part of the expected philanthropic and educational civic provision. Most were supported by public subscription, the first being Liverpool's of 1802 which was subsequently moved to become the Grade II registered Wavertree Botanic Garden, which opened in 1836. Some, like Birmingham's (established 1829; registered Grade II\*; Fig 9) survive, often with impressive glasshouses like the three conservatories of 1837 (each listed Grade II\*) in Sheffield's Grade-II registered Botanic Gardens. Others floundered entirely or, like Bath's, became public parks (Royal Victoria Park; registered Grade II).

### 1.11 Landscaping in the public realm: twentieth century

In the twentieth century designed landscapes became integral to areas of the public realm where, in the past, there had been far less emphasis on design and especially soft landscaping. Examples include open spaces (other than formal squares and the like) in towns and cities, housing estates, and new road corridors including by-passes with grassy, tree-lined verges and central reservations.

Early twentieth-century landscape design of this type can be found at industrial model villages such as Port Sunlight (the Wirral; registered Grade II), where the principal public open spaces of The Dell, The Diamond, and The Causeway lie within a garden village laid out in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as part of the overall plans of William Hesketh Lever. Similar examples



**Figure 11**  
The Palm House (listed Grade II\*) in Liverpool’s Sefton Park (registered Grade II\*), opened in 1872. Although the most prestigious of the city’s ‘ribbon of parks’, its

completion was protracted, and plans for a botanic garden were abandoned. The Palm House was designed and built by Mackenzie and Moncur of Edinburgh.

can also be found in garden cities created under the influence of Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928). At Letchworth (Hertfordshire), the first garden city, designed by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin in 1904, the main green spinal approach called Broadway (registered Grade II) is planted with trees and leads to a central square. Suburban developments, too, typically incorporated landscaping, albeit generally modest in ambition.

architect was to integrate existing landscape features (such as trees, streams and rivers) or surviving landmark buildings into the overall open spaces; to link houses, shopping centres and the like; and to create parks and planting schemes for open spaces including verges and streets. Among the best-known examples is the Water Gardens in Hemel Hempstead (1957), designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe (registered at Grade II; Fig 10).

After the Second World War, leading landscape architects such as Sylvia Crowe and Peter Youngman, together with leading planners, artists and architects such as Frederick Gibberd, were employed on large-scale public schemes focused on post-war reconstruction (including Coventry and Plymouth) and also on schemes to create new settlements. In 1946 the New Towns Act was passed, which resulted in the designation of eight New Towns a ring around London, followed by others elsewhere. The work of the landscape

Later twentieth-century urban landscape design can also be found in post-war housing estates, both public and private. Both can display a particularly strong interaction between architecture and landscape design – as at the Roehampton estate (London Borough of Wandsworth) and the private residents’ gardens at the Barbican in the City of London (1963-73; registered Grade II\*) – and reflect modernist design. New housing estates were also influenced by contemporary Scandinavian examples,

which included blocks of flats surrounded by communal gardens and play areas with an informal layout, 'land-shaped' and planted to relieve flat and featureless sites. Many prominent landscape architects, including Sylvia Crowe and Nan Fairbrother, wrote about such housing landscapes and promoted their introduction in England. Various local authorities, such as London County Council, commissioned modernist sculptures for the public realm in these estates, sometimes from leading contemporary sculptors. The designation of such public art is discussed in the [Commemorative Structures](#) listing selection guide.

In the 1960s, especially notable, and successful, were the seventy-plus private housing estates designed by Span Development Ltd, a partnership between the architect Eric Lyons and the developer Geoffrey Townsend. These aimed to recreate a 'village' character, with houses grouped in intimate relationships separated by open areas which were true spaces rather than gaps between buildings. Private gardens were small and used as an outdoor room (courtyard/patio), whereas the designers' vision was that the front gardens should be run together without fences. Span estates were often set in mature parklands, as at Highsett, Cambridge (listed Grade II), where the Danish landscape architect Preben Jacobsen was commissioned to remodel and enhance the planting of a Victorian landscape.



**Figure 12**  
Moorpool, Harborne, Birmingham. A private housing estate of 1908-13, in which gardens and public green spaces were, and are, important. Registration is

generally unsuitable for such places; Conservation Area designation, however – which Moorpool enjoys – can help maintain the estate's particular character.

# 2 Criteria for Registration

All sites included on the *Register of Parks and Gardens* must hold a level of significance defined as ‘special historic’ interest in a national context. Nine general criteria have been defined: five relating to date and four to other considerations, which have been used in assessing candidates for inclusion since the start of the *Register* in the 1980s.

## 2.1 Date and rarity

The older a designed landscape is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. Likely to be designated are:

- Sites formed before 1750 where at least a significant proportion of the principal features of the original layout is still in evidence
- Sites laid out between 1750 and 1840 where enough of the layout survives to reflect the original design
- Sites with a main phase of development post-1840 which are of special interest and relatively intact, the degree of required special interest rising as the site becomes closer in time
- Particularly careful selection is required for sites from the period after 1945
- Sites of less than 30 years old are normally registered only if they are of outstanding quality and under threat

## 2.2 Further considerations

Further considerations which may influence selection, and may exceptionally be sufficient by themselves to merit designation, are:

- Sites which were influential in the development of taste, whether through reputation or reference in literature
- Sites which are early or representative examples of a style of layout or a type of site, or the work of a designer (amateur or professional) of national importance
- Sites having an association with significant persons or historic events
- Sites with a strong group value with other heritage assets

# 3 Specific Considerations

In this section, more specific guidance is given relating to the registration of urban landscapes, which outlines our approach in assessing candidates for being added to the *National Heritage List for England*.

## 3.1 Documentation

Whatever its date and type, where a landscape's creation or development is particularly well documented, that will almost always add to its interest, and can merit designation at a higher grade.

## 3.2 Town squares

Many urban squares were conceived as an original part of a building development, and the survival of that architectural context has an important bearing on registration.

An early date, especially predating the proliferation of squares in the nineteenth century, will strengthen the case for inclusion on the *Register*. Very few of the early to mid eighteenth-century squares retain enough of their layout to make them registerable, although two exceptions in London are Grosvenor Square and Berkeley Square (both registered Grade II). Grosvenor's oval-shaped square formed the centrepiece to the Mayfair part of the Grosvenor Estate and was laid out in the 1720s, the only one at this time as a formal 'wilderness'. Berkeley Square retains its original layout of a simple oval plan with a centrepiece building: a pump house

with a chinoiserie tent roof (listed Grade II). Ornamental buildings such as these and other listed structures make a significant contribution to a square's character and will strengthen the case for registration. Railings, gates, lamp standards, statues, drinking fountains, memorials and ornamental buildings can all be listed in their own right. For the relevant criteria see the listing selection guide on [Street Furniture](#).

Important registered late eighteenth-century squares include several in London: Bedford Square (Grade II\*), Brunswick Square (registered at Grade II together with Coram's Fields and Mecklenburgh Square), Cadogan Place (II), Hans Place (II), Manchester Square, and Portman Square (II). Bedford Square carries a higher grade (II\*) as it was the focal point for a new grid of streets, part of the Bedford Estate. It was the first garden square with an imposed architectural uniformity and it set the style for garden squares in London through the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

The Bedford Estate comprising Bedford, Bloomsbury and Russell Squares, exemplifies a late Georgian planned estate with several squares. The Grosvenor Estate (its Belgravia and Pimlico Squares registered at Grade II) is a good example for the early nineteenth century, and the Ladbroke

Estate (its squares registered at II) for the mid nineteenth century. Where several squares form part of a single town planning scheme, and it is primarily the scheme as a whole that may be of special historic interest in terms of town planning and landscape design, then the squares should be assessed together as one site. They are more likely to merit higher grades on group value, providing each individual square registered in this way retains the majority of its architectural context and its original layout intact.

Specific English Heritage criteria for the registration of squares were established in 2002 and are still relevant today. For earlier squares, created before 1800, specific criteria include:

- The form of the square and its original architectural context should be still in evidence
- Enough of the original landscaping (paths, planting, statuary, railings), survives to reflect the original design

Many more regency squares survive, so criteria for squares from 1800 to 1830 include:

- The majority of the original architectural context and the original layout should be intact
- The square is of special historic interest (see below)

There are large numbers of squares from the 1840s onwards in England. Specific criteria for these are accordingly more stringent and include:

- The architectural context of the square should be intact
- The original layout of the square is intact
- The landscape design of the square is of special historic interest in its own right

Special historic interest can be defined as embracing:

- Influential, high quality architecture or landscaping
- An extensive or innovative planning scheme of special historic interest
- The involvement of a designer of national importance
- A clear historical association with persons or events of national importance
- Where high quality statuary, garden buildings and memorials make a contribution to the landscape
- Where later conversions and additions do not detract but add value
- Where an original planting scheme survives, this will add to the historic interest of the site; a particularly fine scheme might in itself make a site registerable or might contribute towards a high grade
- The existence of surviving documentation such as designs, plans, planting lists, and deeds relating to the square's layout

Sites most likely to merit a high grade are those where the design of the landscape component is of particular note; those where an early (pre-1830) design has survived intact; and those which represent a major work of a designer of national importance.

### 3.3 Public walks

Very few walks survive in anything like their original state. The criteria for designation require a good state of preservation of the original design, including planting, ancillary features, and the means of boundary delineation. There is not an expectation that original surfaces (perhaps cobbles) will necessarily survive. Association with

a designer of national significance considerably strengthens the case for registration, as does a contextual presence of listed buildings, monuments or street furniture of special interest.

### 3.4 Pleasure gardens

The same general designation principles as for public parks (below) would apply.

### 3.5 Public parks and municipal gardens

Municipal parks were systematically reviewed by English Heritage from 2003, when specific criteria for designation on the *Register* were developed. Most of the 225 sites currently designated are relatively early, with good survival of landscaping, planting and structures. Three separate date bands, and sets of criteria, were defined:

For sites with a main phase of development between 1833 (the date of the Select Committee on Public Walks) and 1875 (Public Health Act), specific criteria include:

- That enough of the landscaping survives to reflect the original design

Sites are likely to merit a high grade when typically more than one of the following is the case: where the condition of this primary phase remains good; where the design is of particular note; and where a designer of national importance was involved. Examples include Princes Park, Liverpool (Grade II\*; Fig 11) designed by Joseph Paxton and opened in 1842, and Sefton Park, Liverpool (Grade II\*) designed by Edouard Andre and opened in 1872.

For sites with a main phase of development between 1875 and the Second World War, specific criteria include:

- That significant attention was paid to the landscaping, and
- That the layout survives intact or almost intact

Such sites are likely to merit a high grade where the condition of this phase remains exceptionally good, where the design is of particular note, or where the landscape represents a major work by a designer of national importance. Examples include Stanley Park, Blackpool (Grade II\* ) designed by Thomas Mawson and Sons in 1922 which was intended to extend visitor facilities in Blackpool and to link with existing attractions. Opened in 1926, it retains all the principal features of the executed plan with a circular Italian garden and areas for games including a putting green and an athletic oval.

For sites with a main phase of development laid out post-war but more than 30 years ago, specific criteria include:

- The design is of exceptional note
- And that its key elements survive essentially intact

A major obstacle to the inclusion of garden squares on the Register is that they often lack prominent design features, and many have suffered from mid to late twentieth-century changes through Second World War bomb damage, the removal of railings in 1941, and more recently from development and inappropriate landscaping.

### 3.6 Seaside gardens

The same general designation principles as for public parks (above) would apply. Seaside gardens whose creation formed part a wider enhancement of a resort's public realm (say, alongside the provision of a pier) will gain interest thereby.

### 3.7 Botanic gardens

Most Victorian and earlier botanic gardens are already registered, several at a high grade. Early date and the degree of survival of the early design will be critical factors in designation assessment, as will the survival of key buildings, notably conservatories and other glasshouses. The significance or otherwise of modern botanic collections will play no part in assessment, although long-established specimen trees will add to a site's interest.

### 3.8 Town and suburban gardens

The most likely candidates for registration will be ambitious gardens attached to grand town houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The over-arching criteria set out above concerning date bands will apply. Good documentation, as always, will enhance the case for designation. More modest town house gardens may also be worthy of careful consideration for designation, especially those pre-dating the mid nineteenth century. Boundary walls (which may already be covered in the listing as curtilage structures) may be listable in their own right if of exceptional age and character (see the [Suburban and Country Houses](#) listing selection guide), as may individual structures such as summerhouses and gateways (both typically in end walls) and, in sloping gardens, ornamental flights of steps.

An example of a registered urban garden is 100 Cheyne Walk (London Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; registered Grade II) part of the seventeenth-century Lindsey House (listed Grade II\*). The garden was redesigned by Edwin Lutyens with planting by Gertrude Jekyll in 1909, and has later work by Lady Arabella Lennox-Boyd.

Where properties such as those of Edwardian industrialists, originally lay beyond the town edge but have later been enveloped by urban development, these should normally be assessed as rural rather than urban.

### 3.9 Detached town gardens

Although once very common, the survival rate of detached town gardens is poor. A national survey (Lambert 1994) indicated that very few sites survive in their original form. The five registered examples have been included as they retain a relatively high proportion of their nineteenth-century character, and some contemporary buildings. A high grade will typically indicate a site which survives especially well, with features such as boundaries and a range of built structures. Other than the five registered sites, known examples survive only as allotments with hedges and buildings removed. While of local interest and amenity value, these will not normally merit inclusion on the *Register*.

### 3.10 Allotments

The lack of designed elements with allotments (as opposed to detached town gardens) other than their boundaries means that designation would not generally be considered. Many local authorities have policies on allotments, and sites with a long history may merit especially careful management. Others lie in conservation areas; again, this offers the opportunity for local management.

### 3.11 Nurseries

As noted above, nurseries fall outside the remit of the *Register*, not being designed landscapes as there understood. However, upstanding structural features including walls, gardener's houses and sheds, may be eligible for designation as listed buildings. The selection criteria will generally be akin to those for walled gardens, given in the [Garden and Park Structures](#) listing selection guide. A particular factor when assessing nursery buildings may sometimes be historic association, that is where a nursery was run by well-known nurserymen, or regularly supplied well-known designers.

### 3.12 Sports grounds

Some sports grounds and the like have both cultural and historic significance: the Oval and Lord's for cricket, Wembley for football, Aintree, Cheltenham and Epsom for horse racing, London's Blackheath for golf – to offer just a few examples. All fall outside the remit of the Register in terms of designation in their own right, although many registered parks do include sports grounds within their boundaries. Structures associated with sports grounds such as stands and pavilions may be eligible for designation, and guidance on this is provided in the [Sports and Recreation Buildings](#) listing selection guide.

### 3.13 Listing

Many structures and features found in parks and other designed landscapes make a significant contribution to their landscape character, and their presence may strengthen the case for registration. Ornamental buildings, railings and gates, lamp standards, statues, drinking fountains, memorials, sundials, urns, bridges over lakes and Pulhamite rockwork can all be listed in their own right if they possess intrinsic special interest. Again, see the [Garden and Park Structures](#) listing selection guide.

### 3.14 Grading

While all registered sites are considered to be of a sufficiently high level of interest to merit a national designation, the sites included on the *Register* are divided into three grade bands to give added guidance on their significance. The three grades are Grade I (of exceptional interest), Grade II\* (of more than special interest) and Grade II (of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them). Having begun by assessing the best-known designed landscapes, we accordingly have a high percentage registered in the higher grades, and over 37 per cent of all such sites are Grade I or Grade II\*; by way of comparison, only 8 per cent of listed buildings are designated at these levels.

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## 4.8 Websites

[Parks & Gardens UK](#) is the leading on-line resource dedicated to historic parks and gardens across the whole of the United Kingdom.

# 5 Where to Get Advice

If you would like to contact the Listing Team in one of our regional offices, please email: [customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:customers@HistoricEngland.org.uk) noting the subject of your query, or call or write to the local team at:

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Figure 7: W W Pettigrew, *City of Manchester: Handbook of the City Parks* (1929), page 35

Figure 11: Rachael Stamper

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