Sussex Gardens Trust

Parks and gardens of local importance in Sussex

Parks and Gardens of the Sussex Coast
Research and Recording project

HOVE PARK



1879


2009

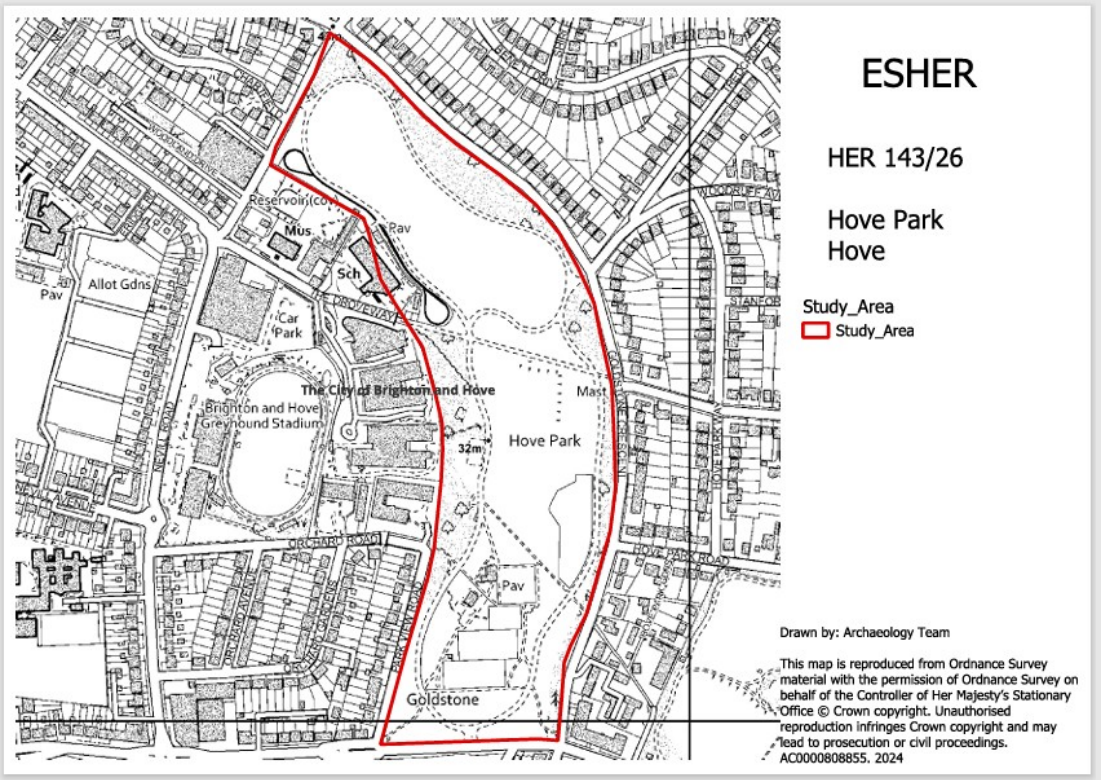
SUSSEX GARDENS TRUST

East Sussex County Council

west sussex county council

THE GARDENS TRUST

SITE BOUNDARY (1)



SITE BOUNDARY (2)



INTRODUCTION

Background to the 'Parks and Gardens of the Sussex Coast' Project

Our project aim, to research and record the parks and gardens of the Sussex coast, began in 2013 and is nearing completion. Most of the sites recorded are now in public i.e. local authority ownership where their special historic development is not necessarily recognised and therefore conserved. We hope our reports will help improve knowledge and guide their future management.

The variety and period of sites is huge, from C19 and early C20 town squares, 'Old English' and Italianate-style gardens with ponds, pergolas and seating, gardens with salt-resistant traditional bedding and C21 ecological planting, to large parks which began life as farmland owned by influential local families and aristocracy and provided the recreation and leisure space for new urban development.

The administrative areas covered are: Worthing and Adur jointly-run DC, Arun DC, Brighton and Hove City Council, Eastbourne and Lewes jointly-run DC, Rother DC and Hastings Borough. Only Brighton and Hove and Hastings hold a list of local heritage assets (see Historic England's guidance for a definition of local heritage assets and how to identify and protect them . https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/)

Brighton and Hove City Council's list is the most comprehensive (https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/planning/heritage/local-list-heritage-assets) so our project has not addressed their sites although we may select a few of the more major ones for a deeper level of research in the future.

Content

All research – in local and national archives and on site – is undertaken by a team of volunteers who have received training from professionals expert in appraising designed landscapes who have worked extensively for English Heritage (now Historic England) on sites on its National Heritage List for England. All reports are peer-reviewed.

Each report comprises the following:

- A site boundary map drawn on the current Ordnance Survey map.
- The area within the boundary represents the area of designed historic interest; it does not necessarily include all surviving elements of the historical landscape design, which may be fragmented. It takes no account of current ownership.
- A current aerial photograph with the boundary shown.
- An overview and statement of significance based on the guidance set out in the *National Policy Planning Framework* – the government's guidance for local planning authorities in discharging their planning responsibilities.
- A written description, derived from documentary research and a visual site survey, the format following that used by Historic England for sites on the national *Register of Parks & Gardens of special historic interest* 2nd edn.

Supporters and Acknowledgements:

The Trust would like to thank the volunteers, owners, local authority staff (especially the East and West Sussex Historic Environment Records) and the many Friends groups who have participated in this project and given time and effort to completing this challenging task.

Further information is available from: www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk

HOVE PARK

COUNTY East Sussex

ESCC HER REF 139620

DISTRICT Hove

OS GRID REF TQ 280 071

OVERVIEW

Hove Park covers almost 40 acres and features a mix of large areas of open grass, mature trees, flower beds, sports and play facilities. The park is home to the Goldstone, a roughly 20-ton natural rock in the south-west corner and features a miniature steam railway on its western edge and the *Finger Maze* public sculpture to the east. Popular with runners, dog walkers and families, Hove Park includes a football pitch, seven tennis courts, a children's playground, a café, accessible paths and public toilets.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Hove Park is a good example of a public park of its time, falling at the very end of the major Victorian period of park provision. Formerly part of the Stanford Estate and used for market gardening and agricultural land, the land was purchased by Hove Borough Council for use as a public park on 30 October 1899. The southern part of the park was officially opened on 24 May 1906 with further sports facilities and a drinking fountain added by 1908. Works to the northern half of the park continued over the next decade. Much of the original design and sport provision remains and the park is popular with local residents, dog walkers and runners.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The area where Hove Park stands today was originally open farmland in an area known as Goldstone Bottom. It was a shallow, chalky valley at the south end of Blatchington village. By the early 19th century, the land at Goldstone Bottom was owned by the Stanford family and it sat at the north-west edge of their extensive estate. An ancient droveway ran through the area running from Portslade to Saltdean which had associated rights of way (TK, BH/G/4/97; Berry, p. 118). In 1866 the Goldstone Pumping

Station was opened on the west side of Goldstone Bottom. This extensive facility was built to provide fresh water to Brighton and Hove and comprised tunnels, boilers, pumping machinery and reservoirs both below and above ground. The arable area and the water works can be seen on the OS maps of 1879 and 1899 (TK, SWA/4/2; Middleton, 2024). The name Goldstone was also given to a large geological sarsen stone that stood at farmland at Goldstone Bottom for many years. The farm owner became annoyed at repeated visits by archaeologists and buried it in 1834. By the end of the century there was a campaign for it to be recovered and after some searching it was found in 1900 by William Hollamby. Later it became part of the park (James Gray, 17.52-54).

On 30 October 1899, Hove Borough Council agreed by a majority vote to purchase land at Goldstone Bottom to create a public park. They took out a loan for £15,000 to purchase 40 acres of land from the Stanford Estate. This sum included compensation payments to market garden tenants who were cultivating the land. A clause in the conveyance stated that the council should make and retain two roads, one of which was on the east side of the park (now known as Goldstone Crescent). It was unusual to develop a public park some time before any roads or housing were built nearby – most other public parks in Brighton & Hove were developed at the same time as new housing and the Stanford Estate built roads in advance. Houses in Park View Avenue, overlooking the park, were not built until after 1928. Councillors had varying views about a name for the new park. Initially it was referred to as New Park, then Goldstone Park and finally Hove Park (TK, SFD 2/3/1068; TK, DO/A/9/6; James Gray, 17.40; Middleton, 2022, p.2).

In 1903 councillors paid Cheals of Crawley to draw up a scheme for the park. The plan included several lakes, tennis courts, a croquet lawn, a lodge and greenhouses. The scheme was turned down on cost grounds. Messrs Cheal had suggested a light suspension bridge over the valley to get round the issue of a right of way from the pumping station – this too was rejected. The official opening of Hove Park took place on Empire Day, 24 May 1906, led by the Mayor, Alderman Bruce Morison. A grand procession started off at Hove Town Hall and walked to the main entrance. Three thousand Hove children attended the event and celebrations included music and maypole dancing. At this stage only the southern part was developed due to issues around the right of way from the pumping station. Photographs from that day show the main entrance on Old Shoreham Road comprising metal gates and two sets of brick pillars with the rest of the park enclosed in wooden fencing. Paths had been laid out, trees and shrubs had been planted and it was still adjacent to market gardens and orchards with the pumping station the only large building in the vicinity. The water supply lines map for 1881 clearly shows the impact on the newly created park with the

right of way splitting the area in half. (Middleton, 2022, pp.2-4; Loock, 2021, p.2; James Gray 17.38-40; OS maps 1898 and 1909).

The northern section of the park was laid out from 1909 including significant tree planting along with paths and flower beds. Between 1906 and 1913 facilities were added to the original scheme including four lawn tennis courts, two bowling greens (one in the north area and one in the south) a shelter, seating and a dressing room, probably for the bowling green players, plus public conveniences (Middleton, 2022, pp. 4-6; James Gray 17.47; OS map 1911). The use of the park changed with the outbreak of the First World War. The RFA (section of the navy) held daily drills there and military personnel played football regularly. In 1917 some of the land was ploughed up for allotments to help with food shortages. These allotments continued until 1923. In recognition of Hove's work in fund-raising for the war effort, the town was awarded its own tank and 'Hova' was placed just inside the south-west gate of Hove Park. It remained there until 1937 (Middleton, 2022, p10).

In the 1920s further developments continued at the park. In 1925 a new pavilion was built and in 1928 a bylaw was introduced requiring dogs to be always kept on a lead following complaints about dog fouling. In the same year the Ancient Order of Druids paraded through the park and planted an oak tree near the Goldstone to celebrate King George V's recovery from a serious illness. They left a commemorative stone which later vanished. The footpath, with right of way, from the pumping station was now named as The Droveway and was tree-lined. In the 1930s the railings near the Old Shoreham Road entrance were taken down, as well as the wooden fencing, leaving the park fully open from the surrounding roads (OPS map 1932; Middleton, 2022, p.11).

Following WWII, when Canadian soldiers were stationed in the park, more improvements and additional facilities were constructed. In 1951 a miniature railway track was opened in the north-western part of the park. This was extended to two tracks a few years later and by 1972 the tracks were 333 feet long with numerous locomotives (TK, ACC 7505/100; Middleton, 2022, p.11). In the 1980s a 'Trim Track' for runners was created with exercise points at regular intervals. The council also invested £11,600 in floodlighting for the multi-sports area, enabling it to be used throughout the year. In wintertime it was used for football. In October 1987 the great storm struck the park area and two thirds of the trees, mostly elms, were destroyed. In the aftermath there were only 250 trees remaining. Local residents contributed to the cost of replanting 460 new tress of varying varieties. The storm also severely impacted the model railway as falling trees had devastated the track. It took five years to restore the track and cost £13,000. The whole incident forced a re-think about the park layout and one of the outcomes was moving the children's playground to a sunnier position on the east side

of the park adjacent to Goldstone Crescent (TK, 7505/26; TK, AMS 7037/3/7; Middleton, 2022, p.12).

Further developments continued at regular intervals with the addition of a new basketball court in1993 and an artificial climbing boulder in 2005. A 'finger maze' was created in the summer of 2006 by Chris Drury, an international environmental artist. It was situated on a south-facing slope in the northern part of the park. In 2023 Hove Park was one of only seven parks in Brighton & Hove that was awarded Green Flag status for being well maintained and having excellent facilities. Hove Park is listed as a local heritage asset (BHCC schematic map of Hove Park; BHCC news article, July 2024; BHCC, LLHA0150, 2023).

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location, Area, Boundaries, Landform, Setting

Hove Park is located approximately one and half miles (2.4km) inland from the seafront in Hove, immediately north of Hove Station and adjacent to the A270, Old Shoreham Road. It is 100m west of Hove Recreation Ground. The park covers an area of 40 acres (16.2 hectares). It is elliptical in shape, 744m long and 186m at its widest and is 1.9km round its perimeter. The park is oriented N/S at the Old Shoreham Road end and veers north-west at the northern end. The elevation is between 29m and 44 m above sea level across the park with the highest areas at the northern end and gentle slopes within different areas of the park.

The park is bounded in the south by the Old Shoreham Road, Goldstone Crescent to the east and Woodland Drive to the north-west. On its western boundary is Park View Road, then buildings at the back of the Greyhound Stadium and part of the Engineerium. The wider setting comprises a retail park on the south side of the Old Shoreham Road, housing along the surrounding roads and buildings associated with Brighton & Hove Greyhound Stadium to the west. The Engineerium (originally called Goldstone Pumping Station) lies to the north-west of the park together with retail outlets.

Entrances and Approaches

Three paths lead eastwards from King Edward's Parade across the Wish Tower slopes towards the tower. There are two entrances into the Peace Garden, one through an arch in the moat wall from Eastbourne Promenade and the other from a wide opening from the Bistrot Pierre Restaurant carpark.

Gardens

The park is laid out with a mix of large areas of open grass, mature trees, flower beds and sports and recreation facilities. At the Old Shoreham Road central entrance there is a terracotta structure housing a plaque commemorating the park's opening. Further to the left, in the south-west corner is the 'Goldstone' and to the east of that the rose garden and picnic area. North from there are the main sports facilities, the floodlit astroturf court, tennis courts and bowling green, overlooked by the pavilion café and public toilets. Continuing north on the main path is the climbing rock, a basketball court and the outdoor gym. In the central, open, grassed area is a marked-out football pitch. Further north, the circumference path meets The Droveway path running almost east-west. On the north side of this path is the miniature railway area running adjacent to the Engineerium complex. The path is lined on both sides by mature trees. At the north-west corner, the path turns northwards parallel with Woodland Drive and then curves to the east and then south. On the right of this path is the *Finger Maze* art installation, situated on an open grassed bank. Continuing on the path in a clockwise direction, it crosses The Droveway path again and on the right is the trim trail and beyond that the children's playground. After the playground the path returns to the Old Shoreham Road entrance.

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