

# REGISTER OF PARKS AND GARDENS OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST

## SOUTH PARK

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DURHAM

SOUTH PARK

DARLINGTON  
DARLINGTON  
NZ2813

GD2298  
II

A mid C19 municipal park, laid out in 1851.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

In his will, dated 1636, Sir James Bellases left a 10ha copyhold farm, Poor Howdens Farm, to the town for charitable purposes. In March 1850, the trustees of the charity recommended that the greater part of the farm 'be used as a park or promenade and a recreation ground for the public at large'. The suggestion was confirmed at a public meeting and in 1851 the land, now the southern part of South Park, was leased to the Board of Health for twenty-one years. The trustees contributed £100 towards its laying out and further funds came from Joseph Pease of Hutton Hall. The park, named Bellases Park, was opened two years later. A new lease was negotiated when the first came to an end, then in 1877 the Corporation purchased the site for £3075. Under their ownership it became known as People's Park and then South Park.

### DESCRIPTION

#### LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

South Park lies on the southern edge of Darlington. The 26ha park is bounded by Parkside to the south, a row of housing fronting Clifton Road to the east, and the River Skerne to the west, except for an extension across the river in the south-west corner.

#### ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The main entrances are through the gates at the lodge at the northern tip of the site, which once linked to the southern part via a tree-lined walk, and through the lodge and gateway in the railings on Parkside to the south. The south lodge marks the south-east corner of the site before it was enlarged by the incorporation of a strip of fields along the eastern boundary.

#### PARK

The path from the southern entrance joins the main avenue which, flanked by a low terrace, runs parallel to Parkside. Along the north side of this promenade are bowling greens and tennis courts. The path continues north-west to a pavilion with a clock tower, to the east of which is a refreshment kiosk dated 1908, surrounded by flower beds focused on a terracotta jardinière. North of the kiosk, on land added in the late C19, is a lake with three islands, the perimeter of which is planted with poplars, and at the south-west end of which is a cluster of forest trees. A cast-iron octagonal bandstand (late C19, listed grade II) stands to the west of the water. To its north-east is a tall, mid C19 terracotta fountain (listed grade II), brought from Pierremont House and presented to the Borough in 1925.

The eastern section of the park is left open as playing fields.

To the west of the pavilion, the ground slopes down to the river, the grass embankment being decorated with a bedding scheme in the form of swags and crests. This pattern has remained constant since the Edwardian period.

An iron footbridge provides access across the river to the south-west corner of the site. This is laid out as a rockery with a pool, to the north of which is a rose arbour. This area once formed part of the grounds of Polam Hall, now in use as a school (and outside the area here registered).

