

LANCASHIRE

HARRIS KNOWLEDGE PARK
(formerly THE HARRIS ORPHANAGE)

PRESTON
PRESTON
SD5130

GD3474
II

An early example of a charitable orphanage, laid out 1884–8 by Preston's Parks Superintendent, George Rowbotham, with a group of 'village homes' around a 'village green'.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Edmund Robert Harris was a wealthy lawyer who acquired a fortune through investment in the railways in the mid C19. At his death in 1877 he bequeathed £300,000 for philanthropic purposes in memory of the Harris family, including the formation of what became known as the Harris Museum in Preston and the Harris Orphanage. In 1881 a c 6ha plot of land in open agricultural land to the north of Preston was acquired by the Harris Trustees as the site for the orphanage. In 1884 a Building Committee was formed, and it was decided to build a village homes-type orphanage for 120 children in the domestic style pioneered by Dr Barnardo at Barkingside, north-east London, in 1876. Benjamin Sykes was selected to be the architect.

In October 1884 the Building Committee sought and gained permission from the Preston Corporation Parks Committee for their Public Parks Superintendent, George Rowbotham (1833–98), to provide 'advice and assistance ... for the laying out of the roads and grounds' (Minute Book, 1884–91). Rowbotham had come to Preston in 1864 to assist Edward Milner with the laying out of Avenham, Miller, and Moor Parks (qqv) (*Preston Guardian*, 1898). Early in 1885 Rowbotham is reported in the Minutes as having provided a report and sketch plan indicating the best mode of laying out the orphanage grounds, but it was not until early in 1888, with the buildings nearing completion, that this work began in earnest (the sketch plan does not appear to survive, 2001). Rowbotham employed and supervised the men working on the project, and in September 1888 advertised for tenders for the supply of 6000 trees and shrubs, for which a copy of the list of sixty-three species and varieties survives (Harris Museum). Woody material was also supplied from surplus at the nearby Whittingham Lunatic Asylum (letter, October 1888, Harris Museum). At least £660 was paid in men's wages for the manual work that year, with an additional £80 for trees and shrubs, and Rowbotham himself was paid £75 in February 1889 for 'his services and trouble in connection with laying out and superintending the formation of the grounds and selecting the trees and shrubs for planting the same' (Minute Book, 1884–91). The first child was admitted in November 1888.

In 1940 the orphanage school was leased by Lancashire County Council and after the Second World War the orphanage was renamed the Fulwood and Cadley County School (Harris Orphanage Department). It closed in 1982 and was leased to Preston Polytechnic, in 1985 being bought outright for student accommodation for the Polytechnic. The Polytechnic subsequently became the University of Central Lancashire, which is now (2001) converting the buildings to office use.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The c 7ha site lies 3km north of the centre of Preston adjacent to the west side of the main northern approach to Preston, Garstang Road, in the suburb of Fulwood. It occupies largely level ground, with a slight fall from east to west. The north side is bounded by a school and Regent Park road. To the west it is bounded by the gardens of houses in Black Bull Lane, and to the south by the gardens of houses in King's Drive. The east side of the site is bounded by Garstang Road, the boundary now marked by a clipped privet hedge and formerly by iron railings. The other boundaries are largely marked by C20 fences with mature trees along the inside of the fences. The setting is suburban, with the late C19 former Little Sisters of the Poor Convent, now (2001) the Jeanne Jugan Residence, standing in its own grounds on the east side of Garstang Road. The eastern edge of the site overlooks the Residence and its grounds.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The site is approached from the east off Garstang Road via a gateway (B Sykes 1885–8, listed grade II) set back off the road at the south-east corner of the site. The carriage entrance is flanked by c 3m high stone piers supporting iron railings. These piers are in turn flanked by further piers in similar style marking two pedestrian entrances, these in their turn flanked by low, convex stone walls leading back out to the pavement and terminated by further piers in similar style. The walls formerly supported iron railings, these having been removed in the late 1980s when the entrance was widened and the structures were moved and rebuilt slightly to the west. West of the southern wall stands a single-storey lodge (B Sykes, listed grade II), dated 1887 on the gable, with a weighbridge outside in the drive. The lodge is built in Vernacular Revival style, of red brick with stone dressings. Immediately west of the lodge the drive divides to north-west and south-west, forming a circuit around the buildings.

To the north-west the drive leads to a turning circle outside the former schoolmaster's house occupying the south end of the principal building which also contains the former schoolrooms and chapel. From the turning circle the drive continues north, along the east side of the principal building, with spurs leading west to the entrances to the girls' and boys' entrances respectively. The drive curves west around the north side of the chapel, continuing west in serpentine fashion, overlooked by the entrance fronts of a row of four villas to the north and overlooking the green to the south. Some 100m west of the chapel the drive curves south between the east side of the single-storey former laundry block and the west side of the green. The drive turns east 130m south-west of the chapel, to continue along the south side of the estate, overlooked by the entrance fronts of a second row of four villas. From here it returns north-east to complete the circuit north-west of the lodge.

Spurs off the main circuit drive give access to the northern, service sides of both rows of villas, as well as the rear, west side of the principal building. These spurs link together to form a further circuit for service purposes which intersects with the main drive west of the green, with short drives leading off to give individual access to the north, rear side of each villa and the west side of the principal building. A further spur leads west off the south-west corner of the main circuit drive, giving access to Pond House, the former orphanage infirmary, standing isolated 180m south-west of the chapel.

The drive system was laid out by Rowbotham in 1888 and survives as depicted on the OS 25" map of 1890–2.

PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS

The former orphanage buildings form a group around the central green. The largest, principal building forms the easternmost of this group and contains, from south to north, the schoolmaster's house, school, and chapel (B Sykes 1885–8, listed grade II). It is built of red brick with stone dressings in Gothic style. The entrance to the schoolmaster's house lies at the south-east corner, sheltered by a stained-glass porch. The schoolroom extends north from this, entered from the east via separate entrances for girls, at the south end, and boys, at the north end. Set in the lawn between these two entrances is the War Memorial (c 1924, listed grade II), with a 2m high granite pedestal supporting a white stone statue of a very youthful soldier, to commemorate the 'old boys' of the Orphanage who died in the First World War. At the north-east corner of the school a tall bell tower with a spire stands over the boys' entrance, this tower and spire being visible from much of the site and its surroundings. To the north of this is the chapel, aligned west to east and entered from the boys' entrance in the tower, and from the north end of the schoolroom.

To the north of the green stands a row of detached, two-storey, brick-built villa residences (B Sykes 1885–8, listed grade II), Glen Rosa, Oak House, Ashleigh, and Beech House, built for the male orphans. The villas are to several different patterns, of red brick with stone dressings, in Vernacular Revival style. They overlook and are entered from the circuit drive to the south running along the north edge of the green, with service entrances on the north sides. Glen Rosa, the westernmost of these villas, retains a stone-flagged path leading up to the front door. To the south of the green stands a further row of four villas (B Sykes 1885–8, listed grade II), Chestnuts, Poplar, Holly House, and Laurels. These were built for the female orphans, in similar style to those for the males, but with the service fronts overlooking the green to the north. Some 20m south-west of the principal building stands the brick-built Clayton Hall, the former gymnasium, built c 1914 and recently converted to offices (2001). To the west of the green stand two single-storey buildings (1880s), flanking the main drive, that to the west being the former laundry. The former stable block (1880s, now disused) stands 120m north-west of the chapel at the north-east edge of the playing fields.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The gardens and pleasure grounds are laid out informally and comprise several discrete areas which merge into each other: the eastern lawns overlooked by the front of the principal building and dividing it from Garstang Road; the individual garden areas around the villas; the green; and the recreation ground. A feature of the site is the ground modelling with raised beds planted with mature trees and shrubs; together these provide relief in an otherwise largely level site, both masking and directing views across the site.

The eastern lawns are bounded to the south and west by the drive, and beyond this are overlooked by the lodge and principal building respectively. The east boundary of the lawns, against Garstang Road, is marked by a clipped privet hedge and a line of mature trees. The southern section of the lawns, lying opposite the school entrances, occupies a dip which is bounded to the north and east by irregularly shaped raised beds containing mature trees and shrubs. The northern section of the lawns extends to the north-east corner as an open lawn surrounded by mature trees, entered via a grass path off the circuit drive at the north-east corner of the chapel. Formerly a rectangular perimeter walk from this path extended around this section (OS 1890–2). To the west of the principal building its serpentine service drive

sinks slightly in the middle, overlooking the green to the west, and is flanked by informal plantings of mature trees and shrubs.

Each detached villa has its own area of garden lawn on the south, entrance side, through which runs a path to the front door. Although some of these areas are now (2001) enclosed by low, clipped hedges, it appears that they were formerly open (OS 1890–2), the approach paths being flanked by raised shrub beds which in some cases survive. To the south of the female orphans' villas the perimeter planting of mature trees and shrubs along the south boundary is set at the top of a gentle grassed slope running up from the circuit drive. The north sides of the female villas are also ornamented with pronounced raised shrub beds, between which run the service drives and paths to the villas. Some of these beds are bounded by stone edging, possibly retaining for the beds, which is also a feature around various other beds. North of the male villas the ground has been cleared for car parking around a large play shelter, now (2001) used as a store and shortly to be demolished.

The green occupies the heart of the site. It is reached directly from the villas to north and south and is overlooked by the chapel spire. The former gymnasium, Clayton Hall, stands at the south-east corner, and west of this stands a further large wooden play shelter, now enclosed and converted to a store. Before the gymnasium was built (1914) a path led from the shelter to the site of the gymnasium, which was formerly occupied by a square, sunken feature (OS 1890–2, 1910). North-west of the play shelter stands a smaller, decorative wooden seating shelter. At the west end of the green stands a single-storey cottage, now (2001) an office, which formerly had a conservatory on the south side (OS 1910).

The green overlooks the recreation ground to the west, beyond the former laundry. The 180m by 180m recreation ground is laid to lawn and largely bounded by mature trees, with the remains of an orchard on the south boundary. At the south-east corner, north-east of Pond House, lies an irregularly shaped pond set in lawn, and at the north-east corner stands a late C20 cricket pavilion. Initially the recreation ground only extended 100m west of the laundry, when the boundary was marked by a line of mixed deciduous and broadleaf trees, and there was no pond (OS 1890–2), but the pond had been added by 1910 (OS). The recreation ground appears to have been extended further west to its present boundary in the early C20.

REFERENCES

Preston Guardian, Supplement, 18 July 1885; obituary, 28 May 1898
English Heritage, Conservation Bulletin, (October 1982), pp 18–19

Maps

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1938 edition
OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1890–2
2nd edition published 1910

Archival items

Sale particulars, 1984 (Preston Local Studies Library)
A collection of material relating to the Harris Orphanage is held at the Harris Museum, Preston, including Building Committee Minute Book 1884–91; tenders for supplying trees and shrubs, 1888; and other correspondence.

Further material is held at Lancashire County Record Office, Preston.

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Register of Parks and Gardens



Name: THE HARRIS ORPHANAGE

Number: PG3474
 Grade: II
 Registration date: 14/12/2001

County/UA: LANCASHIRE

District: PRESTON

Parish:

Notes:

For further information regarding this Park and Garden please contact English Heritage


Map centred on NGR: SD5323132614

Boundary captured at: 1:10000

Map scale: 1:10,000

Extract from OS sheet(s): SD53SW

Key:

 Designated Park and Garden

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

23 Savile Row, London W1S 2ET

Telephone 020 7973 3000 Fax 020 7973 3001