

**TL 539 384**

Public garden created in 1935 to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary.

**HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT**

Owned in the early C19 by Jabez Gibson (brother of Francis Gibson of Bridge End fame) the house and garden in Hill Street came into the possession of the Council in 1935 and a public garden was created to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. In *Saffron Walden's History* by Malcolm White 1991 we are told 'The gardens were to be equipped with seats, and a new gateway was made from Hill Street. The gardens were opened by the Mayor and named 'Jubilee Gardens' as a permanent commemoration of that event'.

In 1991/92 a bandstand was added with funds raised by an appeal set up by Mayor Ron Dean. A tunnel leading out of the garden on the southern side shows where Jabez Gibson accessed an extension to his original garden. This area was later added to the Elm Grove garden where his son, Edmund, lived.

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

**LOCATION, AREA, LANDFORM AND SETTING**

Jubilee Gardens covers an area of 0.25 hectares and is situated on the S side of Hill Street from which it is separated by a high red brick wall in English bond. There are buildings of various dates on the north, east and west sides of the garden, and a row of lime trees on a bank from the south boundary. The land rises to the south, and there is a fine view over the town from this side of the garden.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES**

There is an entrance with a gauged brick lintel from Hill Street through the wall. The present wrought iron gate probably replaces a door, as a rebate for a substantial frame is visible. There are two entrances from the south side, one through the tunnel (*vide infra*), the other an oblique path running through to the multi-storey car park.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS**

The main house is in the north-east corner. It has tuck pointed red brick, C18 façade and has been much altered on the garden side, where there is a delicate Regency porch, badly mutilated by a C20 addition. A C19 yellow brick extension of the house, probably a service wing, with rusticated keystones to the ground floor windows, runs along the east side. There is a brutally utilitarian mid C20 extension at its south end. The public lavatories in Hill Street protrude through the boundary wall but are well screened by shrubs. In the north-west corner is an early C19 red brick, neo-Tudor building with elaborate pierced bargeboards. To the south of this is utilitarian mid C20 building. At the highest point near the south-west corner, there is a bandstand of traditional construction (dated 1991-2) and in the south-east corner is a vandalised timber structure, providing a store and a covered bench.

## GARDEN

The central lawn is an irregular polygon, surrounded by a path, possibly tarmac. Five small round beds on the north edge of the lawn appear to be on the line of a long narrow bed, faint traces of which can be seen. On the west side is a substantial man-made bank (crowned with three horse chestnut trees). This curves east at the south end and continues as a low bank along the south boundary where it is planted with a row of lime trees. In the angle at the south-west corner, the bank is faced with large irregular stones, and pierced by a tunnel. The north entrance, now largely concealed by ivy, is rusticated with alternating bands of ashlar and flint nodules. The tunnel itself is about 3 metres long and is built with a shallow barrel vault of stone. The upper part of the internal walls (also of stone) has an elaborate frieze with classical scenes and decorative detail, possibly in Coade stone. The south entrance is faced in brick and has been crudely narrowed to take a modern iron gate. Generally this remarkable structure is in good condition, but it is threatened by sycamore saplings in the overlying bank. There are several planted lines of butcher's broom in the garden, and a purple wisteria against the yellow brick service wing. The area occupied by the vandalised timber seat and store is surrounded by large embedded stones (including one massive flint nodule), suggesting that this area formerly housed some structure or feature. There is a scatter of flint nodules in the bed running north from this point.

## REFERENCES

Stacey, H C., *Saffron Walden in Old Photographs*  
White, M., 1991 *Saffron Walden's History*  
Brightwen Rowntree, C., 1951 *Saffron Walden- Then and Now*  
Official Guide Saffron Walden, c.1954

## Maps

OS 25" to 1 mile, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1896

Researchers: John & Gloria Hammond. Site visit: John & Gloria Hammond, & Michael Leach 2003