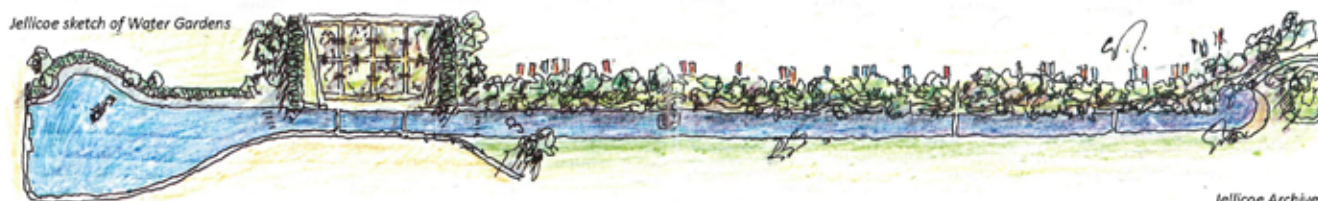


Jellicoe's Serpent

Geoffrey Jellicoe, Master Planner of Hemel Hempstead



The Water Gardens were designed by one of the greatest 20th century landscape designers, Geoffrey Jellicoe. In 1947 Jellicoe prepared a plan for the new town of Hemel Hempstead based on the idea of a town within a park, with the generous use of gardens and open space to give townspeople a green, spacious and healthy environment. For the town centre he proposed the 'seven water gardens of the Gade', a series of recreation spaces divided by a canal with various civic and public buildings including restaurants, offices and theatres located through the gardens. He commented that his garden plan was intended 'to weave methodically the new town with the old', from north to south and from east to west with paths and views to connect the two sides of the Gade Valley.



In 1949 the Ministry of Town and Country Planning instead chose Hemel Hempstead District Council's plan for the town. This was broadly similar to Jellicoe's original plan, but with smaller housing neighbourhoods and a different design for the town centre.

In 1957 Jellicoe was approached by Henry Wells, Chairman of the Development Corporation and persuaded to develop new proposals for a Town Centre Park and work started on designing the Water Gardens.



Jellicoe's Legacy

Jellicoe's Water Gardens were completed in 1962 and were one of his favourite projects. In 1965 the Gardens received a Civic Trust award in recognition of their imaginative and elegant design. The plaque is fixed on the riverbank wall and can be seen across the water from the pedestrian crossing by Bank Court. Today the Gardens remain one of Jellicoe's most intact schemes and an important example of post war twentieth century garden design. In 2010 Hemel Hempstead Water Gardens were included on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest at Grade II, which attributes special interest.