

# HEMEL HEMPSTEAD WATER GARDENS

In 1957 Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, one of the greatest 20th century landscape architects, was asked to design a new town centre park, transforming an area of orchards, watercress beds and ironworks into the Water Gardens. Jellicoe based his design on a serpent, channelling the River Gade to bring visitors closer to water and nature. His ideas were influenced by the experimental artist Paul Klee and the role of the sub-conscious. Opened in 1962, the Gardens are a rare post-war Modernist landscape and one of Jellicoe's most intact schemes.

## LAKE WITH FOUNTAIN (EYE OF SERPENT)

Jellicoe built a new straight channel for the River Gade, to create the impression of a long stretch of water. At the southern end, it opens out into a lake with wide views and a fountain marking the eye of the serpent.



## PLAY AREA

This exciting new facility was specially designed for the Gardens with play features based on Jellicoe's serpent theme. Surrounded by sensory planting, the play structures dip in and out of the ground snaking up to a high look out point.



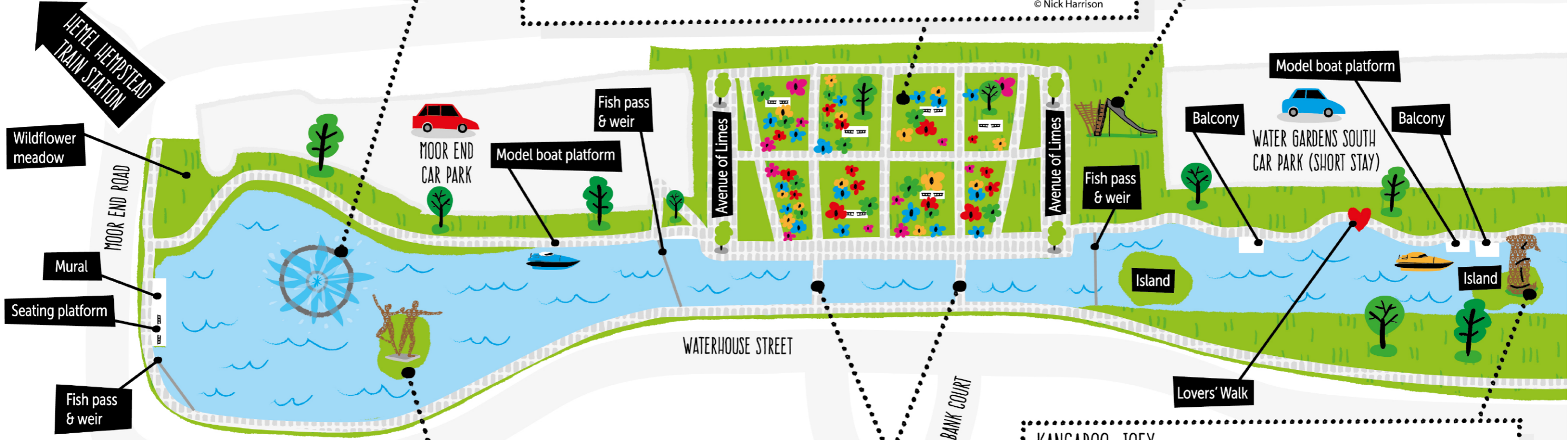
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## FLOWER GARDEN

The ornamental flower garden forms a 'howdah' on the back of the serpent. (A howdah is a grand seat carried on an animal's back, such as an elephant or camel). Its layout follows a symmetrical grid over which Jellicoe's wife Susan planted bright swathes of flowers, shrubs and roses to break up the formal pattern. Susan Jellicoe worked very closely with her husband, designing the planting for his garden projects. The current planting scheme is inspired by Susan's original plans, *Rosa* Susan Jellicoe can be found by one of the seating areas in her memory.



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## ROCK & ROLL SCULPTURE

Hemel Hempstead Development Corporation commissioned this sculpture for the Water Gardens from the French sculptor Hubert Yencesse. It was positioned on the lake, as Jellicoe wanted the figures to appear as if they were 'dancing on the surface of the water'.



## BRIDGES & TERRACE

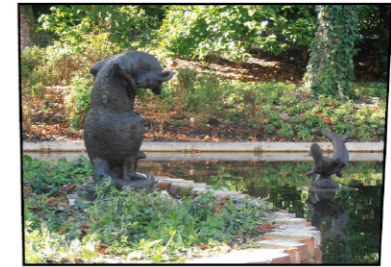
Jellicoe designed delicate arched bridges with white railings that float across the water. Here they form the fastenings to the howdah and link the flower garden to Bank Court. At the restoration, new feature benches were added to the terrace to create space for groups of visitors.

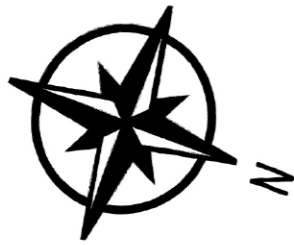


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## KANGAROO, JOEY & PLATYPUS SCULPTURES

Designed by Australian sculptor John Downie, the New Town of Elizabeth in South Australia presented these sculptures to the people of Hemel Hempstead in 1963, receiving a copy of Rock and Roll in return. Originally sited in Albion Court they were moved to the Water Gardens to make way for the Marlowes Shopping Centre.





### MURAL

A new mural commissioned for the restoration features unique images from the history of Hemel Hempstead from Gadebridge Park's Roman villa, up to the development of the New Town.



### FRIENDS' BUILDING

This new building for volunteers and maintenance operations features a striking geometric pattern similar to 1960s designs. Close by, the curving tail of Jellicoe's serpent rests on the mound by Combe Street.



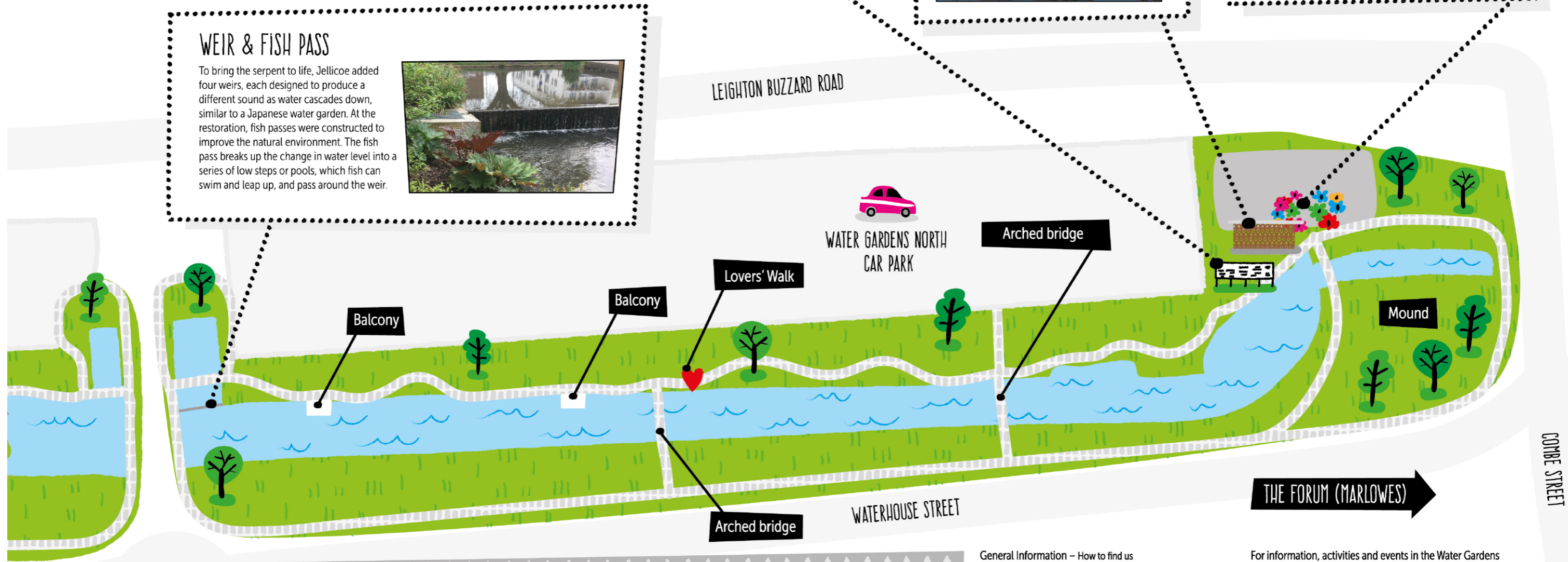
### FRIENDS' GARDEN

This new community garden has raised beds for growing flowers, vegetables and sensory plants, cared for by Friends and volunteers. Heritage fruit trees from the local area demonstrate cordon growing, and there are houses for nesting mason bees.



### WEIR & FISH PASS

To bring the serpent to life, Jellicoe added four weirs, each designed to produce a different sound as water cascades down, similar to a Japanese water garden. At the restoration, fish passes were constructed to improve the natural environment. The fish pass breaks up the change in water level into a series of low steps or pools, which fish can swim and leap up, and pass around the weir.



### RESTORATION

Fifty years after their completion, the Water Gardens were showing their age. In 2017, the Water Gardens reopened following a restoration project to return them to their former glory, funded by a £2.4 m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund, topped up by an investment of more than £1 m by Dacorum Borough Council. The restoration reinstated Jellicoe's original design and added new features making the Gardens once again an outstanding public space.

### AWARDS

The Water Gardens achieved a Civic Trust Award in 1965 and joined Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in 2010 as an important example of 20th century urban design. Following the restoration the Gardens received the Heritage and Conservation Landscape Institute Award in 2017 for, "the preservation and comprehensive restoration of a significant mid-20th century design".

#### General Information – How to find us

The Water Gardens are located in Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

**By car:** The Water Gardens are 3 miles from J8 of M1

**Parking:** Water Gardens North Car, HP1 1EF  
Water Gardens South Car Park (Short Stay), HP1 1EF  
Moor End Car Park, HP1 1BT

**By train:** A 25 minute walk from Hemel Hempstead Train Station

**By bus:** 320 or 500 from Train Station to Marlowes  
Nearest Bus Stop Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead Town Centre

#### Other Jellicoe gardens open to the public

Cliveden Rose Garden, Maidenhead  
The Jellicoe Roof Garden, House of Fraser, Guildford  
Lime Walk, Mottisfont Abbey Garden, Romsey  
Kennedy Memorial, Runnymede

#### For information, activities and events in the Water Gardens

[www.dacorum.gov.uk/watergardens](http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/watergardens)

[www.facebook.com/jellicoeatergardens](https://www.facebook.com/jellicoeatergardens)

E-mail: [watergardens@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:watergardens@dacorum.gov.uk)

Tel: 01442 228000

#### Friends of Jellicoe Water Gardens

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[www.jellicoeatergardens.org.uk](http://www.jellicoeatergardens.org.uk)



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