

Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park



Trail Route

Beginning at the lower car park, take the path to the right of the buildings, leading behind the works yard. At the first junction turn right up the azalea walk **(1)**.

At the end of this path turn left through the small gate, and then left again at the fountain **(2)**. This leads to the walled garden **(3)**.

Retrace your steps to the fountain, turn right and follow the path between the yew hedges. Half way along is an opening on your left, follow this to Wilmont House **(4)**.

To the left of the house, across the lawn you will see the first of the rose gardens **(5)**: take time to admire the roses before returning to the main driveway. Close by are the only public toilets in the park.

Route description

This route takes you through a former estate rich in horticultural and historic interest, on surfaced and grass paths with some hills.

Distance

2.5 miles 4 km.

Average Time

1 hr 10 mins – 1 hr 20 mins (More if you spend time in the rose gardens).

Access

By bike - The park is accessible from NCN Route 9.

By bus - Metro service 8A, 8B, 8C from City Hall. Get off at the junction of Upper Malone Road and Finaghy Road South: walk along the Upper Malone Road for one mile (1.6 km) to the start of the route. Ulsterbus service 21 to Drumbeg from Europa bus station (Mon-Fri only).

By car - Entrances signposted off the Upper Malone Road. Enter at lower car park.

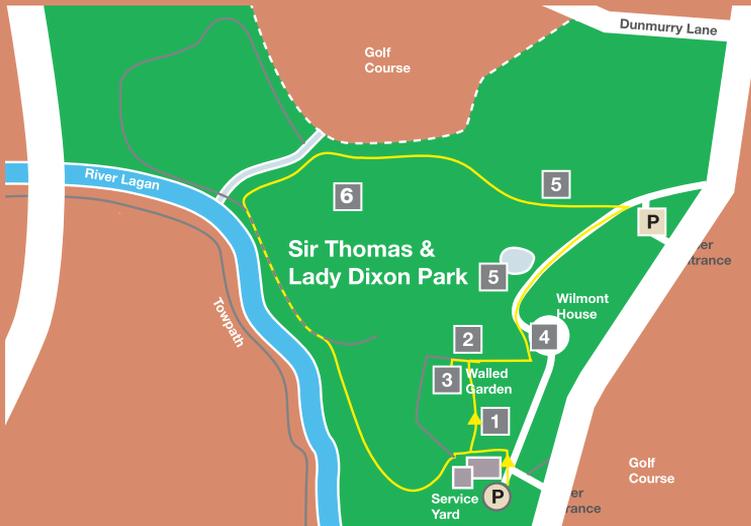
Continue along the main driveway, turning left into the Japanese Garden. Pause to enjoy the garden then return to the main driveway, turning left.

After some distance, a path on your left leads down to a stone patio - this makes a good base to explore the remainder of the rose gardens to the left and right of the patio.

Walk straight ahead from the patio, keep to the right beyond the rose beds and follow a grass path around the hay meadows **(6)**.

Before you reach a low-lying belt of trees, the grass path continues to the left, sweeping round the meadow. Shortly you will see the River Lagan ahead: walk on round the edge of the meadow, keeping the river to your right. Turn right through the woodland and soon you will pick up a gravel path which leads back to the lower car park.

Trail 18



History

Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park was given to Belfast by Lady Dixon in 1959, in memory of her late husband. Originally formed in the mid-eighteenth century as Wilmont Estate, this area was first inhabited by the Stewarts, a farming family from Scotland. In the mid 1800s the estate was bought by the Bristow family, who built a new house – Wilmont House, completed in 1859.

The estate then also comprised a walled garden, informal planting and gate lodges. The house and estate changed hands several times, finally coming to the Dixons in 1919.

Things of Interest

Azalea Walk (1)

These beds look their best in spring, when the azaleas and rhododendrons are in flower.

Fountain (2)

This pool was renovated and a new fountain commissioned for the Queen's Golden Jubilee year.

Walled Garden (3)

This walled garden, once used to provide fruit and vegetables for Wilmont House now contains a variety of shrubs and herbaceous plants.

Wilmont House (4)

Built in 1860, Wilmont was the home of the Bristow family, then the Reades and finally the Dixons.

Rose Garden (5)

The world famous rose gardens contains over 40,000 roses. International rose trials are held here every year featuring the best new varieties from around the world.

Meadows (6)

These extensive meadows contain many wild flowers such as orchids, speedwells, clovers and hayrattle.

Look out for

- the dummy window, painted on the brickwork of Wilmont House to balance the exterior.
- the top roses sent for trial each year from around the world.
- red and grey squirrels in the wooded areas of the park.