



Park House, Park Road, Shepton Mallet

The current owner of Park House has agreed to temporarily open the garden during the Snowdrop Festival giving visitors special access to view the exterior of this historic property.

Park House probably dates back to the mid 1700s. A Wesleyan Chapel was situated at this location from the 1740s and it is possible that it was converted into this house. At this time all of the Allen family were nonconformists.

Park House was the home that James and Ellen Allen lived in for most of their married life. They probably bought the house around the time of their marriage and lived here for 41 years until just after the death of James' brother John in 1894.

James Allen married Ellen Burt on the 21st June 1853 at the Independent Chapel Shepton Mallet. She was the daughter of Richard Burt who owned a draper's shop in the Market Place in Shepton Mallet, and was well known in nonconformist Circles.

All of James' and Ellen's eight children were born here.

It was in this garden that James Allen started his obsession with snowdrops. In his time at Park House he developed a huge knowledge of and extensive skills in growing snowdrops, and successfully hybridised scores of new varieties from all the wild species known at the time.

His method involved sowing his seeds in brandy boxes with holes drilled in them for drainage. The precise location where his glasshouses stood in the grounds of Park House is uncertain.

Although completely self-taught, James Allen was so highly regarded by his contemporaries that he was considered the chief authority on the genus at the time, as well as holding the largest collection in the country – more than 100 varieties. James wrote papers on snowdrops and in 1891 one of his papers was read at the first ever Snowdrop Conference presented by the Royal Horticultural Society, a clear mark of the respect in which he was held.

Allen's most famous snowdrops that are still available include *Allenii*, 'Magnet' and 'Merlin'. *Galanthus Allenii* is reputed to have been spotted in this garden in 1890. His hybrids 'Merlin' and 'Magnet' were also bred in the 1890s and most likely would have started life as seedlings here - both have gone on to receive the RHS Award of Garden Merit (AGM). At the point that 'Magnet' and 'Merlin' were being classified as new varieties, James and Ellen moved over Park Road into Highfield House following the death of his older brother John, who had previously resided there.

In March 1891, at about the same time as Merlin and Magnet were being identified, a fellow grower wrote to Allen to describe how he was 'pestered with diseases of the snowdrop' and how 'this fungus will, I fear, work havoc with my bulbs'. The same fate went on to befall the Allen collection, which meant that most of the varieties he created, with such magical and imaginative names as 'Omega', 'Titania', 'Afterglow', 'Lazybones' and 'Balloon', now appear to have been lost to the dreaded botrytis or, a little later, the narcissus fly.

Across the road are the buildings that used to be the Allen brothers' mill, known today as "Old Mill", but in their day they were referred to as "The Corn Stores".

Opening Times

12:00 to 4:00 – Saturday 16 & Sunday 17 February 2019

Admission

Admission is free but we would encourage a donation towards the Festival funds

Parking

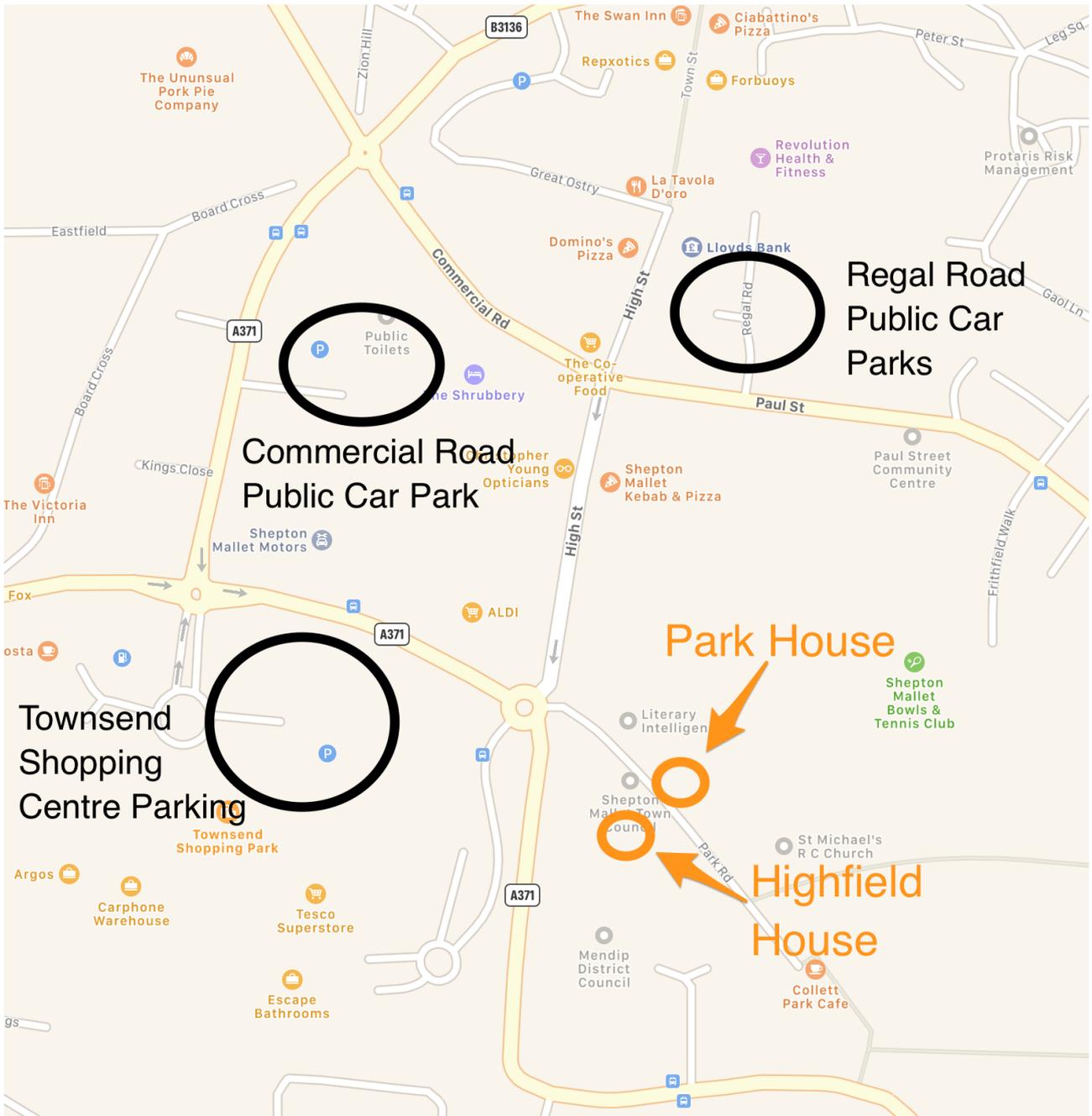
There is plenty of car parking available around the town near this location, and some time limited parking on Park Road.

The Address

Park House, Park Road
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 5BP

Finding the Property

Park House is a reasonably short walk from any of the town centre car parks – public or retail. Park Road adjoins the top of the High Street, close to the Tourist Information Centre, Cenotaph and Mendip District Council offices at SHAPE.



Regal Road
Public Car
Parks

Commercial Road
Public Car Park

Townsend
Shopping
Centre Parking

Park House

Highfield
House