

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

CROW NEST PARK

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Name:	CROW NEST PARK
District:	Kirklees (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.689056 Longitude: -1.6480335 National Grid Reference: SE 23341 21458 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001516 Date first listed: 02-Apr-2001

Details

A public park laid out by the Borough Engineer in the early 1890s, incorporating features from the grounds of an earlier country house.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

A house has been associated with this site since the C16. The first definite information however comes from the early C18, when Crow Nest was in the Bedford family. C18 field boundaries still define the shape of the park's eastern perimeter. A drawing of 1761 shows the house, garden, and grounds, including a gazebo and an adjacent farm. In 1798, Crow Nest was purchased by John Hague, the lands including 'the Bowling Green, the South Garden, the Paddock, the Rye Close' (Womersley 1996).

Improvements were made over the following century, including the remodelling of the house and development of agricultural land into parkland. In January 1893, the 74 acre (c 31ha) Crow Nest estate, which included formal gardens and parkland, was bought by Dewsbury Corporation, though evidence indicates that plans were laid for the public park by 1891. The interior of the house was altered by the Borough Engineer, H C Marks, who, with the assistance of Mr Daniels, the park superintendent, was also responsible for laying out the public park. A plan of the park appeared in the local newspaper in 1891 (The Reporter, 12 December 1891) showing a range of features, including a lake, a bandstand, entrance lodges, and several areas set aside for sporting activities. The C18 'Temple' gazebo, as well as service buildings and the kitchen garden, were retained for the park. Selected tree belts and copses were also retained and enhanced by additional planting. The park was officially opened, though not yet complete, in September 1893. For the occasion, Mr Daniels introduced extensive carpet beds, including one which featured the borough's coat of arms (Dewsbury Reporter, August 1993).

The park was enlarged during the C20. Tennis courts and allotments had appeared on the west side by 1931 and by the same date, what were designated 'Play Lawns' in 1891 had become the site of housing on the east side of the park. The Recreation Ground was allocated to rugby. In 1960, land to the west was given up for an extension to the crematorium. The park remains (2000) essentially as it was laid out in 1893 and is still in public use.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Crow Nest Park lies c 1.5km west of Dewsbury. It sits above the Calder Valley on the southern tip of a peninsular of upland which overlooks the valley to the south.

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The park's boundaries are formed by Heckmondwike Road and Cemetery Road to the south-west and south, the crematorium to the west, and Boothroyd Lane to the north. The site is separated by a recreation ground and allotments from housing on the east. When the site became a public park, urban development was approaching from the east, but most of the park was surrounded by agricultural land and parkland. It is now set in urban development.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Four entrances serve the park. Access from the north is gained via the Boothroyd Gate, which lies c 350m north of the mansion. The wrought-iron gates and stone piers (listed grade II) are by H C Marks. A half-timbered 'Jacobethan' lodge stands c 20m south-west of the gate. The West Town Gate, c 200m south-east of the mansion, provides access from Cemetery Road to the south-east of the park, and was originally part of the mid C19 layout. The stone piers and wrought-iron gates (listed grade II) are again by H C Marks. A lodge in the 'Jacobethan' style is situated c 15m north of the gates. The principal entrance to the mansion (now, 2000, a museum) is from the Heckmondwike Road. The entrance is located c 80m south-west of the mansion and, together with its approach drive, again formed part of the mid C19 layout. The West Lodge, in the Classical style, was retained from the mid C19 estate until it was demolished after 1950. The Burgh Lane Gate is also on the Heckmondwike Road, c 200m north-west of the West Gate and c 200m west of the mansion. The gates and piers (listed grade II) by Marks remain (2000), though the lodge which stood to the north-west of the entrance has been demolished.

PRINCIPAL BUILDING Crow Nest mansion (listed grade II) stands towards the southern end of the site and is possibly on the site of an earlier house of late C16 or early C17 date. The core of the present building at ground and first-floor level dates from c 1710. The Hague family remodelled and extended the house, probably in the 1820s, adding the present facade. When it came into the ownership of the Corporation, the house was used as a tea room and a depot. By 1896 it had opened as a museum and still serves this function today, with a cafe and lavatories in adjacent buildings. The mansion commands important views to the south.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The park has an irregular outline. Within the park, two straight drives run to the Boothroyd Gate in the north, one from the West Town Gate in the south-east and one from the Burgh Lane Gate in the south-west. These formal promenades enclose pleasure gardens, the principal landscape features, and the mansion. Some of the garden features adjacent to the mansion, including the 'Temple' gazebo, trees, and formal terracing, were retained when the estate was acquired by the Corporation.

The gazebo (listed grade II) stands a few metres south of the Heckmondwike Road entrance and c 80m south-west of the mansion. The square building, with a basement that forms a plinth and access provided by an elegant flight of stone steps, probably dates from the C18. It appears to be this same building that is included on the 1761 drawing. Photographs indicate that the former roof, with its distinctive ogee profile, survived in the public park, but it has now (2000) been replaced with a flat roof. A narrow terrace runs along the south front of the mansion, overlooking the main lawn which features bedding displays. The southern end of the lawn is retained by a rockery wall. Early OS plans (1850, 1894) suggest that this wall formed part of the mid C19 layout. When incorporated into the public park, a length of this rockery wall was employed to form the northern perimeter of the walk round the new lake to the south. In places, the rockwork is irregular, in the Picturesque style. A flight of stone steps down through the centre of the rockery gives access to the lakeside walk to the south.

The lake, lying c 70m south-east of the mansion, features an island on which several mature beech trees remain from the earlier estate. Three glazed shelters stand to the west, south, and east of the lake. OS plans indicate that they were introduced between 1915 and 1931. The southern edge of the lake is retained above the level of the surrounding land. The walk laid around the southern end of the park lies below the lake, and is screened from the land outside the park by a belt of trees and shrubs, much of which was retained from the earlier estate.

A curving drive leads from the lodge at West Town Gate past the lake. From a point c 100m to the east of the mansion, the drive forks, westwards towards the mansion and north-west to the Boothroyd Gate. The latter is a wide, straight promenade, c 350m long. This was one of the principal design elements of the public park (plan, 1891). It was intended to be flanked by an avenue of trees, and separate the formal park layout from the area to the east, dedicated to cricket, football, tennis, and bowls; this area is now used for football and rugby (2000). The current tree cover is dense but irregular. No formal avenue is shown on the 1907 OS plan suggesting the planting design was probably never fully executed.

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The junction between this broad eastern promenade and the drive leading to the south front of the mansion is punctuated by a Boer War memorial (listed grade II): a bronze figure standing on a polished red granite pedestal located c 100m east of the mansion. This is first shown on the 1922 OS plan.

The eastern promenade also led past the bandstand, which formerly stood c 140m north of the mansion, at the heart of one of the most formally ornamental areas of the park, framed by shrubs and floral displays. The bandstand has now been removed (2000), but its raised platform and some of the evergreen planting which encircled it remain.

At the Boothroyd Gate on the north boundary, the eastern promenade meets the broad, tree-lined western promenade, running from the Burgh Lane Gate on the south-west boundary. The 1891 plan indicates that, like the eastern promenade, this was also intended to be flanked by an avenue of trees; these were not mapped until 1931 (OS). A neo-classical war memorial (listed grade II) stands c 50m south of the Boothroyd Gate. In 1924 this was introduced in place of a drinking fountain which now (2000) stands c 170m north-west of the mansion. Some 50m to the east of the Burgh Lane Gate stand a bowling green and pavilion, introduced by 1905 (OS).

The western edge of the park features tennis courts, an all-weather pitch, and a children's playground (2000). In 1960, the area further to the west, originally designated the Review Ground, was set aside as an extension to the crematorium, separated from the park by hoop-top fencing. St John's church (1823-7, listed grade II) to the north is still visible in places as an eyecatcher.

REFERENCES

N Pevsner and E Radcliffe, *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire West Riding* (2nd edn 1967), p 153 Crow Nest, *A Brief History of the Mansion and the Park*, guide leaflet, (Kirklees Museums Service 1985) 'A Park We Can Be Proud Of', *Dewsbury Reporter Special Publication*, August 1993, pp 18(19 M Womersley, Crow Nest / Dewsbury Park, (unpublished Restoration and Conservation Management Plan 1996), (copy held at Dewsbury Museum)

Maps Parsons and Thompson, *The Mannoir of the Rectory of Dewsbury, 1761* (see Womersley 1996) 'The Proposed Public Park for Dewsbury', *Dewsbury Reporter*, 12 December 1891 (see Womersley 1996)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1850 2nd edition published 1894 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1907 3rd edition published 1922 1933 edition 1938 edition

Archival items Postcard collection, late C19/early C20 (YE 190(RD)), (Huddersfield Reference Library) [samples held at Crow Nest Park] Postcard collection (Dewsbury Museum)

Description written: December 2000 Register Inspector: HAT Edited: May 2001

Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.