

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

THOMPSON PARK

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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**THOMPSON PARK**

Name:	THOMPSON PARK
County:	Lancashire
District:	Burnley (District Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.795046 Longitude: -2.2367520 National Grid Reference: SD 84502 33219 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001496 Date first listed: 16-Mar-2001

## Details

A public park opened in 1930 with the aim of providing pleasant walks and sitting areas with high standards of horticulture, and also to promote more active leisure pursuits for both adults and children.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Thompson Park was conceived in 1920 when James Witham Thompson left £50,000 in his will for the Council to build a public park. The Council obtained an option to purchase the site, adjacent to Burnley College, from local mine owner Sir J O S Thursby in 1920 and approved the purchase in October 1922. The land was the site of Sand Holme farm, a plantation, and allotments, with the area to the north-west of the River Brun formerly part of the grounds of Bank Hall, the home of General Scarlett, a hero of Balaklava in the Crimean War.

Work on the park began in 1928 and the official opening took place on 16 July 1930. Construction workers were largely recruited from the unemployed, with supervision, and it is presumed the design, coming from the Borough Council. The Borough Engineer named on the gate plaque commemorating the opening is Arthur Race, with the Town Clerk, Colin Campbell, and the Mayor, Alderman H R Nuttall JP, also listed.

The River Brun runs through the park and a dam was formed to enable water to be diverted to the c 1.2ha boating lake and children's paddling pool. The park also included a boathouse, a 22m by 8.4m conservatory, a tea-room pavilion, a rose garden, herbaceous garden, Italian garden, a lodge house, an ornamental bridge over the lake, and two further bridges over the river. Over 5000 trees and shrubs, plus about 7000 privets of different varieties, and 5000 rose trees were planted in the park, in addition to bedding and exotic plants in the conservatory.

During the Second World War the park was used for growing vegetables and the only bomb to fall on Burnley landed near the conservatory on 27 October 1940.

In c 1972 Bank Hall Open Air School, adjoining Thompson Park to the north, was demolished and the area incorporated into the park. The 1893 OS map shows glasshouses on this level area which had formerly formed part of the grounds of Bank Hall. In the early C20 Bank Hall became a Maternity and Children's Hospital and the site of the glasshouses was developed as the Open Air School.

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In 1998 improvements were made to the herbaceous garden, shrub beds, rose beds, and flower beds, and in the winter of 1999/2000 tree planting was carried out under the Forest of Burnley project.

Thompson Park remains (2000) in the ownership of Burnley Borough Council.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Thompson Park lies about 0.5km to the north-east of Burnley town centre. The park occupies low-lying ground on either side of the River Brun, which runs through the c 10ha site from north-east to south-west. The surrounding area is in mixed use, with Queen's Park to the east, Burnley College to the south-west, Bank Hall Hospital, now (2000) an elderly person's home, to the north-west, and residential properties on Ormerod Road to the south-east. The original Burnley Municipal College and School of Art, now Burnley College, was designed by the Borough Surveyor G H Pickles and was built between 1905 and 1909. The College has been extended in the second half of the C20 on land originally within the park. The stone, Jacobean-style elevation of the original building, together with later buildings and a car park area immediately adjacent, form a backdrop to part of the park.

On the north-west boundary a wooded bank rises steeply towards Bank Hall Hospital and Colne Road, neither of which is visible from the park. The hospital is on the site of Bank Hall, a former home of the Thursby family, with the steep bank and area of lower land at the north of the park originally forming part of its grounds.

Houses opposite the park on Ormerod Road were constructed in c 1886-7 by the architect Thomas Bell. Their design is distinctive and advantage has been taken of this in the siting of the main park entrance opposite a classically composed house entrance, which provides a focal point from the park.

To the east Thompson Park is bounded by the Leeds & Liverpool Canal which, set on an embankment, does not in itself form a feature of the park. At the north-east corner of the park however the canal is carried over the River Brun on the rusticated sandstone Sandy Holme Aqueduct (listed grade II) of c 1790-6 by engineer Robert Whitworth. Together with rising ground to the north-west and south-east, this closes views out of the park. Boundaries to Ormerod Road, the canal, and a part of the south bank of the river are marked by simple iron railings and boundary planting. The latter, as was presumably intended, presents restricted views, with the exceptions of the view out at the main entrance and towards the original Burnley College building.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The park originally had four entrances, the principal one from Ormerod Road marked by a formal arrangement of one double and two single iron gates set in brick and stone gateposts with short return walls on either side. To the north of the principal entrance is a lodge in brick and pebble-dashed render below a hipped blue slate roof with red clayware detailing; windows are late C20 replacements. The lodge was left empty between 1974 and 1982 when it was restored and has since been occupied by tenants.

Other less formal entrances are from Colne Road, to the west, down a sloping footpath, from Shorey Bank to the south, now part of the curtilage of Burnley College, and a third from the footpath running below Godley Bridge to the north-east. In c 1998 a new access was formed onto the towpath of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** There are two principal buildings: the Rangers' Centre (converted in 1971 from the former tea-room pavilion); and the boathouse. Both are contemporary with the original park design, with Art Deco styling in brick, artificial stone, and pebble-dashed render. The Rangers' Centre has a hipped main roof in blue slate with plain red clayware detailing, and a flat-roofed entrance porch and side wings. The north-west elevation has arched fanlights over french doors set between semi-classical artificial stone pilasters, leading to a terrace overlooking the lake. Similar arch-headed windows and pilasters were a feature of a conservatory (see below), now lost. The boathouse has a flat roof with simple pediment and is predominantly in pebble-dash with brick quoins detailing simple rectangular openings; it closes the view at the north end of the lake from the rose garden (see below). Some window openings on the north elevation have been filled in.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** At the centre of the park lies the irregular boating lake, constructed in concrete with battered stone-faced banks, which covers about 1.2ha. The lake was originally provided with twenty rowing skiffs and ten Canadian canoes from Salter Bros of Oxford. Motor boats were introduced in 1933 but were phased out in 1973 due to vandalism.

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From the main entrance on Ormerod Road, a wide footpath and steps lead directly north-west to a substantial double-span 'Venetian' bridge, built in reinforced concrete with an artificial stone balustrade, over the lake, from where paths lead off to both sides, between the lake and the River Brun. To the south-west of the entrance is the site of the conservatory, demolished in 1975. To the north-east is the lodge and, at a lower level, the Rangers' Centre. A bank of limestone rockworks below the Centre's terrace has been very largely removed.

To the north-east of the Centre a path at a higher level follows the outline of the lake before dropping to meet a lakeside path opposite the boathouse. On the south-east side of the lake there is a sheltered semicircular formal rose garden; its central feature is the Mackenzie Memorial (listed grade II), erected in 1931 in memory of the heart specialist Sir James Mackenzie who practiced in Burnley from 1897 to 1907. It comprises a bronze bust by F Roslyn set in a granite niche mounted in a sandstone ashlar wall.

At the north-east end of the lake, adjacent to the boathouse, is the children's paddling pool, c 14m long by c 7.5m wide and surrounded by a c 3m wide concrete path. To the south-west there is a circular rustic timber shelter nearby probably dating from the early 1930s. Between the boathouse and the river lies the children's playground, a tarmac area with various play equipment. The playground, planned as part of the original design, was opened in June 1932.

Two bridges with low parapets and iron balustrades cross the River Brun at either end of the lake and are linked on the far bank by a riverside walk. To the north-west of the lake is the sunken Italian Garden, laid out with formal beds set in grass between stone paths and flanked by raised paths on all four sides. The lily pond which formed the central feature has now been filled in as a planting bed. At each end is a loggia in brick and artificial stone set behind a small raised terrace separated from the lower garden by steps and a pergola with artificial stone columns and timber trellis-work. The use of steps and pergola is repeated at the centre of the long sides of the garden. Timber-work to the loggias has been replaced in the late C20 with central brick seats. To the north-east of the Italian Garden is a grassed area now used as a putting green. In the north-west corner of the park is the site of the Bank Hall Open Air School which now forms an extension of Thompson Park and includes a basketball court. There is a narrow belt of trees between this newer area and the original park. In 1998 the Burnley and Pendle Miniature Railway Society were given permission to operate a miniature railway temporarily and a permanent track is now proposed (2000) in this area, when finances permit, with long-term plans to extend the track into other areas of the park.

To the south-west of the Italian Garden is a circular garden with tall beech hedges enclosing a herbaceous border set around an inner circular path.

Thompson Park is planted with many mature trees and shrubs in belts around the boundaries, lake, and river, with some along the river banks predating the formation of the park. To the south-west of the main entrance a belt of trees adjacent to Burnley College and the groundsmen's compound has been lost. In 1953, land at the south-east end of the park was sold for extensions to Burnley College, and, in 1957, greenhouses in the south of the park were relocated to the nearby Queen's Park. In the winter of 1999/2000 a large number of specimen trees were planted in the park under the Forest of Burnley Project, including a 'Community Orchard' in this area of the park.

In 1999 the Italian Garden in Thompson Park won the North West in Bloom award for the best feature in a public park. In 2000 the park received, for the second year, a Civic Trust Green Flag Award, awarded in recognition of high standards of environmental protection and enhancement, community use, landscape design and maintenance, safety and accessibility in public parks.

#### REFERENCES

Official Opening of The Thompson Park, Souvenir Brochure, (County Borough of Burnley 1930) J Lowe, Burnley (1985), pp 144, 156 B Hall and K Spencer, Burnley: A Pictorial History (1993), figs 135, 136 Images of Burnley, (Burnley Express 1996), pp 117(19 An Introduction to Thompson Park, leaflet, (Burnley Borough Council, nd) K Spencer, Brief history of Thompson Park and Chronology (1998) [copy held by Burnley Parks Technical Section]

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition surveyed 1890, published 1893 3rd edition published 1912 1931 edition

Archival items Photographs of Thompson Park, including views during construction and opening ceremony (Burnley Reference Library)

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Description written: November 2000 Amended: January 2001 Register Inspector: HMT 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.