

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

BISHOP'S PARK

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

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Name:	BISHOP'S PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Hammersmith and Fulham (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
National park:	N/A
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.469921 Longitude: -0.21684398 National Grid Reference: TQ 23951 76058 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001677 Date first listed: 20-Oct-2003

## Details

A public park developed from land adjoining the medieval Fulham Palace in 1893. The park was added to in 1900 and 1903.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The expansion of the, then largely rural, settlement of Fulham accelerated in the late C19 after the building of the extension to the London and South-Western Railway in 1880; the population of Fulham more than doubled between 1881 and 1891. The English clergy were at this time leaders in promoting parks for public recreation. In 1884 Bishop Jackson, the then Bishop of London, persuaded the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to donate, to the District Board of Works, Bishop's Meadow, a strip of land of c 2ha situated between the moat, the south-west boundary of the grounds of Fulham Palace (qv), and the River Thames. Fulham Palace was, between the late C13 and 1973, a residence of the Bishop of London. The meadow was to be laid out as a recreation ground and maintained in perpetuity. Formerly a picturesque osier and grazing ground, by the late C19 the meadow had become a refuse tip and the low-lying land was marshy being regularly flooded by the adjoining River Thames. The offer of land from the Bishop had the proviso that a riverside embankment would be built to prevent further flooding. This had major financial implications for the District Board of Works and, during the period of their deliberations, Bishop Temple enlarged the proposed park by adding further land, the West Meadow, to the scheme. The West Meadow, situated to the north-west of the main approach to the Palace, increased the total area of the proposed recreation ground to 5ha. In 1886 the newly formed Fulham Vestry applied to the London County Council (LCC), in the hope that they would take over the project. The LCC declined but eventually gave a grant of £5000 and loaned the Vestry the remaining £15,000 to complete the works and in 1889 work started on the wall to be erected along the riverside frontage of the site. The embankment was completed by 1893, the park being formally opened in December of the same year. The park, by then known as Bishop's Park (OS 1897), was laid out by Mr J P Norrington, surveyor to the Fulham Vestry, the works supervised by Mr Webb, their chief outdoor assistant, with plants supplied by Robert Neal, nurseryman of Wandsworth.

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Soon after the opening of Bishop's Park in 1893 the Vestry, encouraged by the popularity of the new park, bought the house and gardens of Pryor's Bank which occupied the land between the south-east end of Bishop's Park and Putney Bridge. At around the same time the borough was able to provide safe access to the park from the nearby Putney railway station when they purchased a small piece of land, John's Place, which ran under the recently constructed Putney Bridge. Pryor's Bank garden was opened in 1900, by which time a further extension to the park was being planned. In 1899 Bishop Jackson had given a further two riverside meadows (c 4ha) to the Vestry in order to extend the park from Bishop's Meadow to the site of Craven Cottage in the north; this extension was opened in 1903.

The park continues (2000) as a public open space retaining much of its original design.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Bishop's Park is located in Fulham, c 6km south-west of central London on the north bank of the River Thames with Putney Bridge adjoining the south-east boundary. The ground plan of the largely level c 10.5ha site represents an inverted letter T, the long axis being made up from two unequal strips of land running north-west to south-east along the north bank of the River Thames and the central stem, the former West Meadow, lying between Bishop's Avenue and Bishop's Park Road (to the west). The north-east end of this area is bounded by a commercial garden centre in Fulham Palace Road. Fulham Palace provides the boundary to the north-east of the south-east arm. Craven Cottage, the home of Fulham Football Club, is set on the boundary with the north-west arm, while Stevenage Road forms the north-east boundary of the same piece of land. Putney Bridge Approach forms the south-east boundary and Church Gate, the approach from the same road to St Luke's church, the boundary to the north of Pryor's Bank. The site is enclosed within late C19/early C20 iron railings.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** There are a number of entrances and approaches to Bishop's Park. The main entrance is approached from the north-east along Bishop's Avenue. High iron railings and double iron gates hung on tall brick piers (early C20) guard the entrance into the park. The c 350m long Bishop's Avenue, also the main approach to Fulham Palace from Fulham Palace Road, is largely lined with mature plane trees and passes, to the north-west, twelve tennis courts, two bowling greens, and the sports pavilion made on the former West Meadow. The bowling greens were opened in 1908, the tennis courts shortly afterwards. The southernmost of the two bowling greens partially occupies the site of late C19 greenhouses which provided the bedding plants needed for the floral schemes which decorated Pryor's Bank.

Additional entrances provide access to Pryor's Bank, Bishop's Walk, and the north-west meadow. The entrance to the gardens around Pryor's Bank, the south-east element of Bishop's Park, is from the south-west side of Church Gate where late C19 iron gates hung from brick piers lead past the principal building into the garden. A lesser entrance, guarded by a mid C20 iron gate is approached from two directions: a steep flight of steps lead down from Putney Bridge Approach, with a second approach, under the same road, from Gonville Street. This path was made at the end of the C19 when Fulham Vestry purchased a small piece of land, John's Place, in order to provide safe access under the approach to Putney Bridge. The entrance to the southern end of Bishop's Walk, the C18 public right of way from All Saints' church to Bishop's Avenue, is approached along Church Gate. The late C19 iron gates and brick piers match those guarding the main entrance to Pryor's Bank. Minor entrances from Stevenage Road give access to the north-west end of the park.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Pryor's Bank is situated to the south of Bishop's Park. The building is faced with red brick with Portland stone dressings up to the first floor, the upper part being half-timbered in oak filled with roughcast. A two-storey tower decorates the north-west side; a first-floor balcony and a ground-floor verandah overlook the garden to the south. The building replaced an earlier house which was, when purchased by Fulham Vestry, 'unfit for public purposes and no amount of reconstruction or alteration would make it suitable or safe' (Fulham Chronicle, 22 June 1900). The new building was designed by the Borough Surveyor, C Botterill. It was made to house a public reading room and refreshment room, with staff accommodation on the first floor. The building currently (2000) houses private offices.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** From the main entrance at the west end of Bishop's Avenue the tarred path immediately divides. A branch runs to the north-west, while the main path, which follows the boundary between the original (1893) Bishop's Park and the 1903 extension, continues south-west between an open play area, formerly the site of the bandstand,

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and a grass-covered mound at the north-west end of the former Bishop's Meadow. The bandstand, a popular place for concerts in the 1920s, was removed in 1959 and replaced with a small open-air theatre which itself was removed c 1970. The main path continues for c 80m when it again divides, the main branch terminating after c 20m at the riverside embankment and a branch to the south-east running for c 400m alongside the iron railings which mark the boundary with Fulham Palace. A footpath, Bishop's Walk, had been established as a right of way along this route in the C18. Although the Palace grounds are now (2000) largely screened by shrubs planted on the site of the ancient moat (drained in the mid 1920s), in the early C20 it was possible to view the Palace and its grounds through regularly spaced trees and iron railings (Crutchlow 1998). The elongated rectangle of ground to the south-west of Bishop's Walk, the former Bishop's Meadow, is laid to grass and enclosed with mature plane trees. The last c 80m of Bishop's Walk runs to the north of the garden of Pryor's Bank before terminating at the iron gates which guard the Church Gate entrance.

The small, c 0.5ha, formal garden of Pryor's Bank is set to the south, east, and west of the principal building. To the far west is a raised paved garden planted with small plants. The centrepiece of this area is a memorial (erected 1997) to local residents who between 1936 and 1939 joined the International Brigade and fought in the Spanish Civil War. To the east of the memorial a paved path leads through a curved iron arbour and down stone steps to the Rose Garden. Enclosed within a low stone wall the paved rose garden is on two levels, connected by a short flight of stone steps, the lower level being decorated with a stone urn and a number of wooden seats. Prior to the mid 1970s the area was devoted to ornamental bedding, each year commemorating a particular event and always including the Fulham coat of arms. From the Rose Garden a third flight of steps, this time made from concrete, leads down to a largely grassed area to the south of the house. The level lawn is enclosed with shrubs and trees which screen the view of the river. To the east of the house, at a slightly higher level, a further grassed area is decorated with a central marble fountain and a number of stone figures. When the garden of Pryor's Bank was added to Bishop's Park in 1900 the main area was laid out to lawn and decorated with roses centring on the marble fountain. The roses were largely removed in 1953 when the area was redesigned with the stone figures presented by the sculptor J Wedgwood to celebrate the coronation of Elizabeth II. A further statue, Mother and Child by Hermon Cawthra, was added in 1963 (Cherry and Pevsner 1991).

To the south-west of Pryor's Bank and the former Bishop's Meadow is the Embankment Walk. Separated from the River Thames by C19 iron railings, the wide tarred path runs for c 1km along the length of the park, from Pryor's Bank in the south to Craven Cottage in the north. The Walk is at a higher level than the adjoining ground and screened from it by a narrow shrubbery with regularly spaced mature plane trees and wooden seats. The seats face the south-west with views across the river to the buildings, boathouses, and slipways which line the south shore of the Thames. The embankment wall was built in concrete with a facing of concrete blocks and Portland stone, the Cornish granite coping being finished with iron railings and ornamental lamps; the embankment was completed in 1893, in time for the formal opening of the park.

From the main entrance in Bishop's Avenue, the north-west branch of the path continues, running between, to the south-west, the site of the bandstand and, to the north-east, an early C20 refreshment house and an adjoining late C20 single-storey brick building used by the staff of the park. Immediately to the north-west of the site of the bandstand the area is given over to a children's playground. Enclosed within early C20 terracotta balustrades decorated with the arms and insignia of Fulham Vestry, the area, remodelled in the mid C20, includes a paddling pool, sandpit, boating pool, an all-weather play area, and a shelter. The banks of the boating pool are decorated with shrubs and ornamental trees and enclosed within low iron railings. The area was originally designed by the then Borough Surveyor, Mr Francis Woods and made on the southern end of the final extension to the park which was opened in 1903. His design included a roughly crescent-shaped lake decorated with a rustic bridge and a grotto of wild flowers. A pair of swans was given by the king to celebrate the opening. Part of the lake was set aside for children, with a paddling area and a sandy 'beach'. To the north-west of the lake was a viewing platform with a wooden shelter set facing south-east across the lake. Between the two arms of the lake a square of ground was set aside for a bowling green. Although the bowling green and the shelter continued in use until the 1960s the facilities for children were gradually altered to the present configuration from the early 1950s onwards.

To the north-west of the lake is a further area of grass. Set lower than the surrounding tarred paths and screened from the Embankment Walk by narrow shrub beds and mature plane trees, the area is still largely used for football and other informal

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games. To the north-west the sports field is overshadowed by the buildings of Fulham Football Club, Craven Cottage, the name being that of the property on whose ground it was built at the beginning of the C20.

#### REFERENCES

Fulham Chronicle, 22 June 1900 [quoted in Crutchlow c 1998] The London Argus, 25 July 1903 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 3 North-West* (1991), p 238 Bishop's Park, Conservation Area and Character Profile, (Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Council 1998) S Crutchlow, *A Short History of Bishop's Park Fulham*, (student dissertation for Diploma in Garden History, Birkbeck College, London c 1998)

Maps J Rocque, *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark and the country near ten miles around*, surveyed 1741-5, published 1746

OS 25" to one mile: 1st edition published 1867 2nd edition published 1897 3rd edition published 1919

Description written: June 2000 Register Inspector: LCH Edited: November 2003

#### 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.