

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

STAMFORD PARK, ALTRINCHAM

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Name:	STAMFORD PARK, ALTRINCHAM
District:	Trafford (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.384126 Longitude: -2.3414322 National Grid Reference: SJ 77387 87530 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001508 Date first listed: 02-Apr-2001

Details

Stamford Park, opened in 1880 with a design by John Shaw Snr which was implemented by his son, was at the forefront of a trend to make a major provision for sports and games within a public park (Elliot 1986).

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The idea of a public recreation ground was first raised with the Altrincham Local Board of Health in 1866 and again in 1869 when a meeting of ratepayers voted against the idea. In 1878 Lord Stamford offered c 3.2ha of land at Hale Moss for a public park and recreation ground. There had been an ongoing dispute regarding public claims to Hale Moss and when the offer was finally enlarged to c 6.5ha it was accepted by the Local Board as a final settlement. The site was on low-lying waterlogged wasteland noted for producing abundant noxious gases and considered to be a health hazard. The draining and reclamation of the land served the dual purpose of providing a park for recreation and a valuable sanitary measure. At the opening of the park some areas of parched turf were attributed to the effect of poisonous water remaining in the soil (Altrincham and Bowden Advertiser). The design for the park was prepared by landscape gardener John Shaw Snr, a member of the Local Board, and was executed by his son and business partner, also John Shaw. The latter, born in 1851, had trained at Chiswick and Kew and had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society at the unusually young age of twenty-three.

The ground was drained using over 1.5km of pipes, and gentle planted undulations were formed between the various elements of the design. The two largest features were the ovals of the football field, at the east end of the park, and the cricket ground in the centre which was designed to be flooded in winter for skating. The oval bathing pond had separate changing sheds for men and boys only suggesting that women and girls were not expected to use this facility. Other areas provided for lawn tennis, croquet, and quoits, and there were flower gardens and separate playgrounds for girls and boys. Two plans, both dated 1879 and published in the Gardeners' Chronicle (1881) and Altrincham and Bowden (Ingham c 1896), show serpentine paths leading around, and linking between, the different areas of the park with planting to either side and to the boundaries. Also shown are formal circular planting beds, three small irregular ponds, a pavilion and other circular features, and a lodge, as well as new roads, 12m wide, to be constructed around the park.

The two plans, both dated 1879 but with slight variations and not published until later, show some elements which are now lost or may never have been completed. The lodge had not been built at the time of the opening in 1880 and does not appear on the 1897 OS map. This map shows a reduced number of curving paths, a single informal pond with islands linked by footbridges,

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adjacent to the Bathing Pond, irregular open games areas at both the west and east ends of the park, and glasshouses close to the south boundary. An 1881 description of the park (Gardeners' Chronicle) refers to simple bridges connecting walks through the lakes, which accords with what is shown on the 1897 OS map rather than the 1879 plans.

The 1897 OS map also shows the bowling greens with a pavilion between, to the south of the park, and a bandstand set between the cricket and football areas. The bandstand design is shown in the 1907 illustrated catalogue of Milton Castings foundry with a note that the model had been erected at Altrincham. Marshy areas of Hale Moss still adjoined the park to the east and north at this time, the surrounding roads were incomplete, and a Gas Works lay close-by to the north-east.

The 1910 OS map shows a nursery on Moss Lane, to the north-east of the park, and a gun, now removed, as a feature to the west of the oval cricket field. Three swans were given to Stamford park in 1914 by H Goodbrand. By 1936 the nursery to the north-east had been replaced by a factory.

While the rectilinear forms of later elements such as bowling greens and tennis courts do not conform to the series of ovoid compartments shown on the 1879 plans the good use of planting prevents them from intruding on the overall flowing character of the original circular and serpentine walks.

Stamford Park is in the ownership of Trafford Borough Council (2000).

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Stamford Park lies c 0.5km to the south-east of Altrincham town centre and is bounded by public roads, laid out in conjunction with the park. The c 6.5ha site is on low-lying level ground in a predominantly residential area with a school to the south-east and some industrial premises to the north-east. As indicated on the 1910 OS map, the boundary roads had been completed by that date with terraced and semi-detached housing facing the north-west, west, south, and east boundaries. The park perimeter is generally planted with trees and a dense hedge c.1.8(2m high with a c 50m length of the original iron railings remaining on the north boundary with Moss Lane allowing views into the park opposite the eastern pond.

There are subtle level changes within the park particularly between the football and cricket areas, to the north of the cricket ground, and along the south boundary adjacent to the bowling greens. These are achieved by gentle mounding and the use of low stone retaining walls to raise ground levels at the sides of paths.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are two corner entrances, one to the north-west at the junction of Charter Road and Mayor's Road and the other to the south-west at the junction of Stamford Park Road with Charter Road. Of the two, the former might be regarded as the principal one as the path leading into the park is longer and thus more impressive and a lodge was originally planned at this location, although there is no evidence that it was ever built. An early photograph (SLSC) shows ornate metal gates and gateposts at a corner entrance but both now have only modern bollards to prevent vehicle entry. There are three other similarly informal entry points on the southern boundary with Stamford Park Road, plus one from Mayor's Road and one from Moss Lane both on the north boundary. The latter has a semicircular section of original railing which, it is presumed, marks the position of a turnstile or kissing gate.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Stamford Park is laid out around the original main feature of the oval cricket ground of c 1.23ha, with other activity and garden areas set between it and the park boundary. The largest of these is the football pitch of c 0.86ha which occupies the east end of the park. The plans of 1879 show the football pitch as an oval with a path around the periphery inside dense boundary planting. In 2000 the football area is an informal space extending to boundary planting to the north, east, and south. This accords with the 1897 OS map and the more formal design may never have been implemented. From the north-west entrance the main path leads in a straight line directly towards a triangular bed in front of the cricket ground, both path and bed being planted with mature specimen hollies which frame and screen the view into the park. At the triangular bed the path divides into two with each route leading to the main path following the outer line of the cricket ground. To the north of the cricket ground there is a children's play area on the site of the original Boys' Playground although this area has been reduced by a late C20 two-storey Darby and Joan Club constructed within the north-west boundary, but with access from Mayor's Road. A plaque records that the play area was opened in 1984 and was given by staff of the Altrincham Marks and Spencer Store to mark the company's centenary.

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To the east of the play area are two ponds, one formed from the original bathing pond with a secondary path leading around it and over a timber footbridge where the two ponds join. Simple modern railings are set around the ponds and there are some modern animal sculptures adjacent to the south. Early accounts of the park describe arched stonework screening the bathing pond but none remains apart from low stone edging to the paths.

Between the cricket ground and football pitch the former bandstand site has been planted with an island bed and to the south of this are two formal linked circular elements set on a north-north-west to south-south-east axis within an oval path, as shown on the 1879 plans. The area closest to the cricket ground is laid out as a rose garden with a circular bed and three outer beds set in grass and divided by paths. This adjoins a second circular bed and path enclosed by a low evergreen hedge. Early plans and photographs show a pond at the centre of the rose garden and more complex formal bedding, but apart from these losses, the main elements of the design remain.

A late C20 brick building has been constructed adjacent to the south boundary, on the site of earlier glasshouses, with store, public conveniences, and small parking areas for staff and public.

To the south of the cricket ground lie the bowling greens enclosed with low evergreen hedging and with an ornate cast-iron drinking fountain in the location shown on the 1910 OS map. The original pavilion between the bowling greens has gone, but the second pavilion, indicated on the 1936 OS map, overlooking the cricket ground, remains. This is a single-storey building in red brick with decorative timber panelling below a blue slate roof. The south section of the building originally had open sides which were subsequently infilled with timber panelling and now with brickwork.

The entrance from the south-west corner is similar to that at the north-west but with a shorter approach path. Along the west boundary there are formal hard-surface tennis courts, first indicated on the 1936 OS map, a paddling pool, and a second children's play area, the latter on the site of the original Girls' Playground.

There are a variety of trees and shrubs, many evergreen, which screen and define the many elements of the design as well as the views within and across the park and contrast with areas of formal bedding. The use of individual and groups of mature hollies trimmed to solid green cylindrical forms are of particular note.

REFERENCES

Altrincham and Bowden Advertiser Special edition, 25 October 1880 *Gardeners' Chronicle*, i (8 Jan 1881), pp 44(5 [includes plan dated September 1879] A Ingham, Altrincham and Bowden (c 1896), pp 220-1, 291 [includes plan dated September 1879 but with some variation from that in *Gardeners' Chronicle*] Lancashire Faces and Places (January 1901) C Nickson, *Bygone Altrincham Traditions and History* (1936), pp 119-20 C Weir, *Village and Town Bands* (1981), p 26 B Elliot, *Victorian Gardens* (1986), pp 211-12 H Bayliss, *Altrincham a Pictorial History* (1996), figs 120, 121 H Conway, *Public Parks* (1996), p 25

Maps OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1910 1936 edition

Archival items Photographs of Stamford Park, late C19/early C20 (Sale Local Studies Centre) Transcript from Sale and Altrincham Guardian, 1897 (Sale Local Studies Centre) Advertisement for 'John Shaw, Landscape Gardener and Garden Architect' (Sale Local Studies Centre)

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.