

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

VICTORIA PARK, TIPTON

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

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Name:	VICTORIA PARK, TIPTON
District:	Sandwell (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.525696 Longitude: -2.0616407 National Grid Reference: SO 95915 91982 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001504 Date first listed: 30-Mar-2001

Details

A late C19 public park laid out to designs by William Barron and Sons.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Victoria Park was laid out on a derelict colliery site to the south-east of Tipton which still retained old mine shafts and a substantial spoil heap (OS 1886). In 1898 a plan for the site was commissioned from the firm of William Barron and Sons of Elvaston Nurseries, Derbyshire; a perspective view of the proposed layout for the park was published in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* (1898). William Barron (1805(91) and his son, John (1844(1906) had in 1886 provided plans for Brunswick Park, Sandwell (qv), which was also developed on a redundant mining site.

Victoria Park was opened in 1901 at a cost of £6500. Laid out with curvilinear walks which describe areas containing a lake, cricket ground, and lawns for recreational use, the design of Victoria Park closely resembles that of Queen's Park, Chesterfield (qv), laid out by Barron in 1892-3. In 1905 a public library designed by George Wenyon (Pevsner 1974) was constructed on a site at the south-east corner of the park, while in 1932 public baths designed by H N Woodard were built at the north-west corner of the site. A bandstand (demolished c 1960) was erected c 1910 (OS 1921), while other early additions to the park layout including a children's gymnasium and a shelter have not survived (2000). A shelter for the Sons of Rest, a society for retired men, was constructed in the park in 1961. The boundary of the park was extended to the south-west in the late C20 when C19 properties on Park Lane West were demolished.

Today (2000), the site remains in municipal ownership.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Victoria Park is situated immediately south-east of Tipton Green, to the north-east of the A457 road (Park Lane West) and c 130m south-west of the Birmingham Canal (Birmingham Level). The c 13ha site is bounded to the east by Victoria Road, and to the south-east by Mayfair Gardens. To the north the park adjoins domestic properties in Queen's Road, while to the west it similarly adjoins early and mid C20 properties in Hill Street and Manor Road. The southern boundary of the park adjoins late C19 houses in Brewery Street, and late C20 houses in Boscobel Avenue which has been constructed on the site of the early C20 Model Sausage Factory which formerly stood at the junction of Park Lane West and Mayfair Gardens (OS 1921). The park boundaries remain fenced, with early C20 spiked metal railings surviving on the Victoria Road boundary. The park is generally level, with a slight rise towards the southern boundary

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adjacent to Park Lane West. The tower of the public library at the south-east corner of the site, and the more distant tower of St Matthew's church c 0.75km north-west in Tipton Green serve as eyecatchers from various points within the park, while other internal vistas are focused on features such as the lake, drinking fountain, and war memorial.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES Victoria Park is approached from Victoria Road to the east. The principal entrance to the park is situated opposite the junction of Victoria Road with Park Road, and is marked by elaborate late C19 cast-iron gates comprising a pair of carriage gates supported by tall cast-iron piers with crocketed finials (formerly supporting gas lamps) flanked by a pair of pedestrian gates supported on smaller cast-iron piers surmounted by ball finials. A tarmac walk flanked by lawns and rectangular beds for seasonal planting leads c 20m south-west to join the principal perimeter walk adjacent to a late C19 cast-iron umbrella (listed grade II) which formerly sheltered a drinking fountain; the Victoria Road entrance is aligned on the umbrella. The elaborate cast-iron umbrella is to a design of 1860 by Walter Macfarlane & Co of Glasgow (Dr Hilary Taylor pers comm, 2000), and matches an example in Handsworth Park, West Midlands (qv). The umbrella comprises a domed superstructure supported on eight slender cast-iron columns linked by arched openings. Roundels above the arches contain shields ornamented with herons in relief, while one shield contains a commemorative inscription recording the donation of the fountain to mark the golden wedding anniversary of Mr and Mrs C M Waring. The late C19 lodge shown on the 1886 OS map to the north of the Victoria Road entrance does not survive.

An entrance leading into the park from Park Lane West to the south-west is marked by a pair of elaborate late C19 or early C20 cast-iron carriage gates supported on plain metal piers. The entrance is flanked by early C20 cast-iron spiked railings, and leads to a tarmac walk which extends c 80m north-east to join the principal circuit walk round the park. Some 50m north-east of the entrance an early C20 two-storey brick park-keeper's house stands off-set to the north-west of the walk. This structure is not recorded on the OS 25" map published in 1904, and appears to date from c 1920.

Further entrances lead to the park from Queen's Road to the north and Mayfair Gardens to the south. The northern entrance comprises a pair of early C20 carriage gates constructed from spiked cast-iron rails matching those used for the adjacent boundary fences. Within the park and to the west of the entrance, a refreshment pavilion of c 1935 is in a derelict condition (2000). This single-storey structure is built in a picturesque vernacular style with rough-cast walls above an exposed brick plinth, a gabled tiled roof, and a circular brick-edged window set in the gable-end. A walk leads c 20m south from this entrance between lawns planted with specimen trees to join the perimeter walk. The southern entrance comprises a similar pair of early C20 carriage gates which match the cast-iron boundary fence. Within the park and to the north-east of the entrance stands an early C20 two-storey brick lodge (extended late C20). A walk flanked to the north-east by lawns set with circular beds for seasonal planting leads c 25m north-west before dividing to the north and west-north-west to enclose an area of lawn planted with specimen trees; there are views across the cricket pitch and lake towards the tower of St Matthew's church from this junction.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The park comprises three areas linked by a curvilinear perimeter walk and secondary curvilinear walks: to the north-west the lake, to the south-east the cricket ground, and to the south-west tennis courts and lawns for recreational use.

The Victoria Road entrance leads to the curvilinear perimeter walk adjacent to the late C19 cast-iron umbrella c 20m south-west of the entrance gates. The walk sweeps south and is aligned on an early C20 war memorial which comprises a pale granite obelisk set on an inscribed grey granite tapered plinth. The memorial stands on a circular mound ornamented with flower beds for seasonal planting, which is retained by a stone wall. From the war memorial the perimeter walk sweeps south-east to pass along the east side of the cricket ground. The walk is lined on the side adjacent to the cricket ground by regularly spaced mature specimen trees, while to the east it is adjoined by lawns and specimen trees planted parallel to the boundary fence. There are views south-east across the cricket ground to the tower of the early C20 library at the south-east corner of the park. Some 130m south-east of the Victoria Road entrance, the perimeter walk passes to the south-west of the single-storey, flat-roofed, brick Sons of Rest pavilion, constructed in 1961. A footpath leads along the south-east side of this building to reach Victoria Road, while adjacent lawns extend south-east along the street facade of the early C20 library; the library garden is separated from the park by simple metal railings.

The cricket ground is elliptical on plan and is bordered from north-east to south-west by the perimeter walk; a further curvilinear walk sweeps from south-west to north-east, passing the south-east end of the lake and joining the perimeter walk adjacent to the war memorial. The walks enclosing the cricket ground are planted with mature trees on the inner side. From the walk to the south-west of the cricket ground there are views across the field to the war memorial, which is framed by adjacent specimen trees. To the south of the cricket ground, the brick boundary wall which in the early C20 separated the park from the neighbouring Model Sausage Factory is screened by specimen Lombardy poplars and mixed shrubbery.

The principal walk extends c 130m north-west from the cricket ground, passing to the south of early C20 hard-surfaced tennis courts enclosed by late C20 wire-mesh fences. The courts are arranged on two terraces cut into a shallow north-facing slope to the south of the lake. The upper terrace is retained by a rubble-stone wall, and is reached by two flights of brick steps. The lower courts are reached from a curvilinear walk which follows the southern shore of the lake by a similar flight of blue-brick steps with red-brick and terracotta-coped flanking walls. West of the tennis courts, and separated from them by the principal circuit walk, a level area of lawn is used for recreational purposes; a further, similar area of grass extends to the west of the lake. A late C20 single-storey brick pavilion stands at the north-east corner of the site adjacent to the rear of the swimming baths, overlooking this area of grass.

The lake is situated c 100m west of the Victoria Road entrance. Irregular on plan, it contains two islands planted with willows and specimen conifers; the islands lie towards the north and south ends of the lake. When viewed from the circuit walk to the north of the lake, the islands serve to screen the early C20 tennis courts on the south side of the water. To the south-east of the lake lawns planted with specimen trees run down to the water, while c 50m south-west of the entrance and immediately behind the umbrella, a steep west-facing slope running down to the lake is developed as a rockery, with specimen shrubs, small trees, and herbaceous plants. This appears to date from c 1930. To the south of the rockery, c 130m south-south-west of the entrance, a series of shallow concrete steps ascends from the water to a level grass platform on the north-east boundary of the cricket ground. This was the site of the early C20 bandstand which was removed c 1960.

To the north-east and east of the lake the principal circuit walk sweeps east and south-east through areas of lawn bounded by specimen trees and mixed ornamental shrubbery. Some 150m north-west of the Victoria Road entrance, an early C20 bowling green is situated at the northern apex of the site, adjacent to the junction of Victoria Road and Queen's Road. The bowling green is screened by mixed shrubbery, and separated from the park by a tall late C20 metal security fence; the green retains perimeter walks and a set of early C20 bench seats. Adjacent and to the south-east of the bowling green is a service yard, with several mid and late C20 structures; these are (2000) in a derelict condition. To the south-east of the service yard, the wide lawn bordering the walk to the east is ornamented with a series of geometric beds for seasonal planting, while to the west of the walk a late C20 children's play area with lawns and play equipment is enclosed by a low beech hedge and specimen conifers. As it returns towards the Victoria Road entrance, the eastern perimeter walk focuses on the late C19 cast-iron umbrella, which acts as an eyecatcher.

REFERENCES

Gardeners' Chronicle 24, (1898), p 99 N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Staffordshire* (1974), p 282 S Whitehouse, *Historic Public Parks in the West Midlands* (unpublished dissertation, De Montfort University, Leicester 1994) J Lovie, *West Midlands Register Review* (English Heritage 1996)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1881, published 1886 2nd edition revised 1901, published 1904 3rd edition revised 1913-14, published 1921 OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1904

Illustrations Engraved perspective view published in *Gardeners' Chronicle* 24, (1898), p 99

Description written: July 2000 Amended: October 2000 Register Inspector: JML Edited: May 2001

Legal

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