

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Alexandra Park

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

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Name:	Alexandra Park
District:	Oldham (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.533131 Longitude: -2.1042120 National Grid Reference: SD 93190 04058 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001338 Date first listed: 17-Jul-1995 Date of most recent amendment: 27-Aug-2013 Statutory Address 1: Queens Road, Oldham, OL8 2BN

Historique de la conservation

The idea of creating a public park in Oldham was first suggested in 1846. When, in 1863, the Government offered loans at 3.5% for public works to relieve unemployment, the project was revived. An area of agricultural land, the Swine Clough Estate, owned by a Mr Cocker, was purchased on condition that the creation of the park was undertaken by operatives temporarily out of work due to the Cotton Famine. An additional twenty acres (c 8ha) of adjacent land was purchased, making a total area of seventy-two acres (30ha), and a total acquisition cost of £18,000. Nearly sixty acres (25ha) of this was designated for use as a public park, the remainder to be used for building plots.

A competition was held for the design of the park and, of the plans submitted, two were adopted: one by William Henderson of Birkenhead Park (qv), the other by Messrs Woodhouse and Potts of Oldham. Work began on the park in 1863, and it was officially opened in August 1865 by the Mayor, having been completed at a cost of £31,000. The park was named after Princess Alexandra of Denmark to commemorate her marriage to the Prince of Wales.

The park was re-opened in 2004 following a restoration funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Details

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Alexandra Park occupies a triangular-shaped plot of 23ha, located within the urban area of Glodwick in Oldham. The park is bordered by King's Road and a disused railway to the west and south, playing fields and C19 villas along Alexandra Road to the east, and a row of large villas along Queen's Road to the north. These houses enjoy fine views across the park and, through a screen of trees, form the backdrop to the park. The land falls markedly from north-east to south-west.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance is on Queen's Road and leads into the north-west corner of the park from the eastern end of Park Road. It is marked by a sandstone lodge (listed Grade II) in Italianate style, erected in 1863 to the designs of Woodhouse and Potts. A second entrance, accompanied by a lodge, Glodwick Lodge (listed Grade II), provides access off the eastern end of Queen's Road into the north-east corner of the park. Both entrances formerly had cast-iron gates

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hung on stone piers, the gates having gone but the piers surviving. There are also entrances off Alexandra Road, and off King's Road.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS From the main entrance a grand stone staircase leads up to the Top Promenade. This terrace walk, c 300m long by c 14m wide, leads through an avenue of black poplars, the vista at the eastern end having originally been closed by a refreshment room of brick with stone dressings (now demolished). To the north of the walk, tree-planted lawns lead up to the park edge.

From the Top Promenade the park falls southward, providing views out over the town. Standing on the northern edge of the terrace, towards the western end, is a bronze statue of John Platt MP (dated 1878, listed Grade II) supported by four bronze female figures, by D W Stevenson of Edinburgh, sculptor. Balancing this at the eastern end of the Promenade is a granite and bronze statue of Robert Ashcroft (listed Grade II) by E W Pomeroy, sculptor, erected in 1903 and inscribed, Robert Ashcroft, MP for Oldham, 1895-1899, 'The Workers' Friend'.

At the centre of the walk is the Lion's Den, a stone plinth with low wall and seating area having been all that remained following the dismantling of the original arcaded shelter in the 1970s. The Lion's Den was rebuilt and restoration completed in 2002. This forms the termination of the Broad Walk, a straight cross walk which leads down the centre of the park. Part way along this walk is a stone and granite fountain (listed Grade II) with a statue of boy and dolphin, set on a stepped plinth, presented by Joseph Radcliffe, Mayor of Oldham, in 1865. The walk continues south to the site of a statue of Flora (now gone), close to the southern boundary.

The bandstand which stood to the east of the Broad Walk, south of the fountain and on the site of the present paddling pools, has also gone, as have the cannon which originally stood on the top terrace.

From the Glodwick Lodge entrance less formal walks lead down the eastern side of the park, joining with the paths from the east end of the Top Promenade. The main walk passes alongside an area of rockery on its western side, while to the east are the sites of the former gymnasiums, separated for females and males. This perimeter path then leads past the gardener's cottage, now in use as the park office. The accompanying nursery area, which occupies the south-east corner of the park, is still used as such (1990s) and retains some of the early Messenger glass. The path continues round to the west, passing the Conservatory (listed Grade II), supplied by Messengers in 1907. The Conservatory comprises a large central pavilion with a hipped roof and a lantern, flanked by smaller square pavilions, with pyramidal roofs and lanterns. The area in front (to the north) of this glasshouse has always been the part of the park most intensively used for flower gardening, and has recently (1994-5) been redesigned.

The next feature on the route is the Observatory (listed Grade II). Built in the style of a pagoda, it was put up in 1899 in commemoration of the jubilee of the incorporation of Oldham Borough 1849-99. It bears the names of the members of the Borough Sanitary Committee. Opposite stands the statue (listed Grade II) of 'Old Blind Joe', Joseph Howarth, bellman for Oldham 1820-60. The statue, by H Burnett of Oldham, was erected by public subscription in 1868. There are also two large geological specimens on this lower path, the larger of the two boulders, at 21,336kg (21 tons), having been put into position in 1874, the smaller, 10,160kg (10 tons), having been introduced in 1882.

The perimeter path leads via a bridge with pierced cast-iron balustrades over Lovers' Walk, formerly a shrub-planted gulley with rockwork sides, infilled by 1990s. Close by is a wooden shelter. To the north-west of the bridge are the bowling greens with, further to the north-west, the ornamental lake. The lake is irregular in outline, the expanse being broken by two small islands and a tiered stone fountain set on a plinth. This was donated to the park in 1910 by Councillor William Schofield and replaces the original pond fountain.

Dominating the western side of the park is a second, larger pool, the boating lake. Added in the first years of the C20, this forms a curved strip round the edge of the park with, at its northern end, a half-timbered boathouse.

In the north-western corner of the park is a play area, at the centre of which stands a shelter with polychrome tiled interior.

The centre of the park is laid out with undulating lawns. Levelled games areas with accompanying pavilions, and children's playgrounds, were introduced in the C20. These facilities include the hard tennis courts and a miniature golf course to the south of the eastern half of the Top Promenade.

Summary

A public park laid out in the 1860s to the designs of William Henderson, and opened in 1865.

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.

Reasons for Designation

Alexandra Park, Oldham, opened in 1865, is designated at Grade II* for the following principal reasons: * Date: the park is an early example of a municipal park; * Design: although enhanced, the park's design is essentially unchanged from its original layout of the early 1860s; * Designer: the park was designed by William Henderson, a leading landscape designer; * Structures and planting: the park retains a large number of listed C19 structures and statues.

Bibliographie

Other

Alexandra Park Conservation Area report, (Oldham Metropolitan Borough 1978),
C19 and early C20 postcards,
Oldham Corporation Parks Department Centenary Year Handbook 1865-1965,