

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

West Park

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

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Name:	West Park
District:	City of Wolverhampton (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 52.589717 Longitude: -2.1400372 National Grid Reference: SO 90610 99111 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001206 Date first listed: 01-Jul-1986 Date of most recent amendment: 20-Aug-2013 Statutory Address 1: Park Road West, Wolverhampton, WV1 4PW

## Historique de la conservation

The land now occupied by West Park was previously known as the Broad Meadows. From 1825 it had been used for horse racing, but this use came to be seen as having an adverse moral influence on the population and in 1860 - three years after Birmingham's first park had opened - it was suggested that a municipal park be laid out on the site. Over the previous half century Wolverhampton had begun to expand towards the Broad Meadows along the Tettenhall and Compton Roads, some of the residential development being villas for those who wished to remove themselves to the outskirts of town. The creation of the Park provided a catalyst to further development in the area.

Negotiations to buy the 50 acre (c 21ha) site from the Duke of Cleveland were only successfully concluded in the later 1870s, when he agreed to lease it to the Corporation for sixty-three years with an option to purchase the site for £20,000 at the end of the term. From the outset the Corporation wanted to create a thoroughly modern park, and a sub-committee visited a half dozen towns and cities to see their pleasure grounds as well as circulating a questionnaire about design, maintenance and entertainments to other municipalities. A broad specification, influenced by Edouard Andre's ideas about the integration of spaces for sports within parks, was decided upon, with an ornamental lake, space for volunteer drill, archery and bowls, refreshment rooms, shelters and lavatories, and a £50 prize competition was launched. The winner, selected in June 1879 with an entry entitled 'Spe Labor Levis', was R H Vertegans of Chad Valley Nurseries, Edgbaston. West Park was opened on 6 June 1881 by the town Mayor. Various gifts were made to help adorn and equip the park: swans, ducks and peafowl; drinking fountains; large boulders from around the borough; and tree roots, used by Vertegans to create rooteries.

In the 1970s the park was greatly affected by 'Dutch Elm Disease' that significantly damaged and altered the trees and design within the park. In the following 40 years there has been efforts to increase the diversity and stock of trees. During the 1980s the park underwent a restoration of its buildings. In 2000 West Park received funding from a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) scheme which was completed in 2006 and restored the park back to its Victorian splendour. This included the restoration of the bridge, bandstand, gates and railings, paths, horticultural features (using plants contemporary with the period of 1881-1910) and for the chalet to be re-opened as a tearoom.

## Details

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** West Park lies c 1km north-west of the centre of Wolverhampton, to the north of the A41 Tettenhall Road. Residential streets off the A41 connect with Park Road East and Park Road West, the circuit road around the exterior of the Park. Those streets, like much of the residential area around the Park, contain many good suburban residences of the later C19 and early C20. The park is of c 20ha.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The circuit road around the outside of the Park allows easy access to any of its entrances. The Park itself is entirely surrounded by a low wall with substantial spear-like iron railings of 1880 by Bayliss, Jones and Bayliss of Cable Street, Wolverhampton (listed Grade II). There are two main entrances, at the north and south ends of the Park, with two-storey brick lodges of c 1880 and double iron gates. There are in addition six lesser entrances, some with double gates and some with single. The Albert Road entrance was built in 1883 and the Summerfield Road entrance was opened in 1913.

**OTHER LAND** The Park was laid out with few amendments to Vertegans's original plan, and since that time there have been relatively few alterations. At the north end of the oval site is a figure-of-eight plan Boating Lake, with a timber shelter (listed Grade II; restored 1992-3) of c 1881 at its east end. A circular island lies in the centre of each of the two pools, the short link between the two being spanned by a cast-iron bridge (listed Grade II) of 1880 designed by the Borough Engineer and built by Messrs. Bradney and Co. This carries the main axial drive which runs down the centre of the Park between the two lodged entrances. Another drive, like many of them tree lined, runs around the inner perimeter, while subsidiary drives loop off this to the centre of the Park and its formal gardens.

North of the Boating Lake was a complex of glasshouses, which was not a public area of the park, where bedding plants for the town's parks were propagated. The glasshouses were demolished in the 1980s and the area was converted for use as the park maintenance depot.

Just to the south is the earliest and most impressive glasshouse which still survives, which is a tall and elaborate conservatory (listed Grade II) of 1896 designed by Dan Gibson, the architect partner of Thomas Mawson. Its construction was funded by the proceeds of an annual floral fete, held in West Park between 1889 and 1939. Restored in the mid 1990s this now houses displays of plants from around the world and is a rare survival of a Victorian timber structure conservatory still in use.

South-west of the Boating Lake is a children's playground, with modern equipment installed in the early C21. Late C19 iron benches stand around the edge, apparently the only original park furniture to survive. The playground is surrounded by a privet hedge and round-topped railings installed in 1992. To its south-east is a cast-iron bandstand (listed Grade II) manufactured by McDowell Stevens & Co of Glasgow, presented in 1882 by the town's MP Charles Pelham Villiers and extended 10 to 15 years later; restored in 2002. Another structure, a brick chalet with verandah of 1902 (with late C20 extension to rear for use as a nursery) was known as the Zebedee Club but was built originally as a refreshment room, lies c 70m to the south-east, roughly midway down the west side of the Park. The 1902 building contains original floor and wall tiles and a plaque commemorating its opening. It has since been reverted back to a tea-room as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund restoration scheme. This lies at the north end of the open sector of parkland intended by Vertegans to be used for cricket and as a Volunteers' drill ground.

Midway down the east side of the Park, in the area intended as a bowling green (with archery ground to the north), six hard tennis courts lie within a tall beech hedge. Within the hedge on the north side of the courts is a small wooden changing room, probably of the 1960s and repaired in 1991. A further public shelter, wooden, with a hipped tiled roof and perhaps late C19, lies c 50m to the south-west on the east side of the main axial drive.

The centre, and centrepiece, of the Park is concentric paths and drives around a great wheel-plan scheme of formal flower beds, with carpet bedding beyond. Mature specimen trees and shrubs around the edge screens off this central area from the rest of the Park. On the north side of the wheel beds is a cast-iron clock tower (listed Grade II) donated in 1883. To its north-west is a statue of C P Villiers (d 1898) (listed Grade II) by W Theed, moved to the Park in 1931. Also placed around the edge of the wheel beds are some of the rock specimens donated c 1880, most notably a monolithic block of Felsite found in Oak Street in 1881.

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Other structures in the park were C20 brick toilet blocks on the south-west (refurbished) and north-east perimeters (demolished early C21). A C20 building for park staff north of the South Lodge has also been demolished (early C21) and the site grassed over to form part of the events field.

## Summary

A municipal park of 1881 designed by R H Vertegans with serpentine paths, formal bedding, lakes, bandstand, shelters and a conservatory of 1896.

## 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

West Park, Wolverhampton, opened in 1881, is designated at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons: \* Date: the park is a good example of a late Victorian municipal park; \* Design: the park's design is essentially unchanged from its original layout; \* Designer: the park was designed by the Edgbaston nurseryman R H Vertegans; \* Historic interest: the park was an element of Wolverhampton's expansion and improvement after the mid C19; \* Structures: the park retains various C19 park structures, notably a listed conservatory of 1896, statues, and geological specimens installed for their educational value; \* Planting: large numbers of mature and specimen trees remain.

## Bibliographie

### Books and journals

Conway, H , *People's Parks: The Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain*, (1991), pp 24-5

### Other

West Park: Management Plan 1991-2000, (Wolverhampton Council 1991-2),