

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

STAMFORD PARK, STALYBRIDGE

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**STAMFORD PARK, STALYBRIDGE**

Name: STAMFORD PARK, STALYBRIDGE

District: Tameside (Metropolitan Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

label.localisation: Latitude: 53.487900  
Longitude: -2.0693475  
National Grid Reference: SJ 95496 99023  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000856  
Date first listed: 20-Feb-1986

## Details

Stamford Park was designed by Gregory Hill of Stalybridge and opened as a public park in 1873. The park was extended in 1891 and in 1898 an area of rockwork and cascades was improved by George Briggs.

### CHRONOLOGY OF HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The site was owned by the Earl of Stamford and is said to have been part of a deer park in 1668 when it was leased by Robert Lees of Hazelhurst (Cassidy 1973). In the early C19 Highfield House was built and this and its grounds, together with additional adjoining fields, formed the original public park which was designed by Gregory Hill of Stalybridge and opened in 1873. The purchase of the house and land was made using a bequest of £7000 left by Samuel Oldham of Audenshaw and public subscriptions which had been raised in a campaign which began in 1855. The park was initially run by a board of trustees and control passed to a joint committee of members of both Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge Corporations in 1891 as the park straddles the boundary between the two townships.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Stamford Park is situated between the townships of Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge in a built-up area of generally residential character. It is situated on sloping land which rises to the north and there is a steep valley on the west side of the southern part of the site through which runs the Cock Brook. The northern part of the park is situated in a less densely developed area and there is open land linking with farmland on part of the north-eastern boundary. The c 26ha site is bisected by Darnton Road which runs approximately from east to west through the site. The park to the south of Darnton Road is bounded by Stamford Street to the south, Mellor Road to the west, and Astley Road to the east. There is a stone retaining wall along Stamford Street and the remainder of the boundary is marked by simple cast-iron railings. The northern part of the site, sometimes known as Upper Park, has a boundary formed by Tameside Hospital and Mellor Lane on the west side, with a late C20 wooden fence along that part of Mellor Lane to the north of the hospital. The north and north-east side merges with a public open space known as Silver Spring which is being developed (1997) as an ecological park. The east side is defined by private gardens backing onto the park and by a hedge and path where the park abuts with playing fields.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main entrances are on Stamford Street, one on the corner of Stamford Street and Mellor Road and another on the corner of Stamford Street and Astley Road. These have ornamental stone piers and wrought-iron

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gates dated 1953 which commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Some 75m to the west of the Astley Road entrance is a third entrance from Stamford Street which was formerly the main entrance to Highfield House. A lodge was situated on the west side of the entrance until its demolition in the 1980s. The Stamford Street/Mellor Road entrance is overlooked by a former superintendent's house, probably of early C20 date, which is situated within the park just beyond the gates. There are two entrances to the southern park from Darnton Road; these are simple iron gates. There are three entrances from Darnton Road to the Upper Park, all formed by simple iron gates. Entrances to Upper Park on the north-western and north-eastern sides are informal.

The approach to Highfield House from Stamford Street shown on the large-scale OS map surveyed 1861 was a drive which divided, with one branch leading to the house and the other curving to the west leading to service buildings. These survive as part of the network of paths through the site.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** In the southern part of the park, c 150m north-east of the Stamford Street/Astley Road entrance, in an area which is now occupied by lawns and beds, is the site of Highfield House. Built in the early C19, this was the residence of Abel Harrison. After the public park was formed it became a museum and a centre for local botanists who introduced native plant species to selected parts of the park. It fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1955.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The park falls into two distinct areas on either side of Darnton Road. The ornamental gardens are in the southern part of the park and include the steep-sided valley of the Cock Brook on the western edge of this part of the site. The entrances on Stamford Street lead to a succession of areas linked by curving paths; the perimeter of the park is generally wooded and paths through this branch off to open areas in the centre and to areas once used for ornamental bedding. There is a rose garden in the south-east corner. Items of local interest have been placed at some of the path intersections at various times. These include large granolithic boulders, monuments to local notables, stocks dated 1730 (listed grade II), and a former market cross (late C18, listed grade II). A large conservatory is situated in the central area of the southern park overlooking lawns to the west of the site of Highfield House. This was the gift of John Nield in 1907 and was rebuilt in 1985. It is possible to trace certain features of the grounds of Highfield House as shown on the 1861 OS map. The shape of a former bowling green is discernible where an aviary is now sited c 150m east of the conservatory, while some belts of planting are in positions which suggest that existing planting was incorporated into the 1873 design, particularly on the south-eastern boundary and to the north-east of the site of Highfield House.

North of the conservatory and the site of Highfield House is a series of recreational areas. Close to the centre of the park is a bowling green with a viewing pavilion and 'Old Veterans' pavilion. To the north are two more bowling greens, a putting green on the site of a bandstand shown on the 1911 (2nd edition) and 1932-3 OS maps, a children's play area and, close to the Darnton Road end, tennis courts.

The western valley forms a discrete area within the park and is known as The Valley or The Dingle. The Cock Brook runs through the valley and was formerly exploited by three mills which are shown on the OS map of 1861. The Dingle is approached through a separate entrance to the north from Darnton Road and can be reached from linking paths with the main park, some of which descend down flights of stone steps. The Cock Brook emerges from a sluice close to the entrance from Darnton Road and is channelled down a steep chute and thereafter into a series of water courses and pools, disappearing and reappearing in a system of tunnels. The valley is wooded with rhododendron and laurel underplanting, and there is extensive ornamental rockwork along the entire route. A path leads down the slope beside the brook and along its course certain areas have been modelled to form viewing places, some with bridges across the brook formed from artificial stone moulded to appear to be rustic logs, others with balustrading in the same style. A flight of stone steps with rustic-work balustrades and piers supporting large rustic urns leads down the slope c 100m south of the Darnton Road entrance. The path emerges at the southern end of the park, close to the Stamford Street/Mellor Road entrance.

The Upper Park north of Darnton Road is dominated by a large boating lake to which access is gained from a central entrance on Darnton Road leading to a kiosk of late C19/early C20 date. On the west side of the lake is a large boathouse of similar style; the refreshment rooms of 1897 which stood on the east side opposite the boathouse were demolished in 1995. The steep sides of the lake are wooded, there is a large central island and the whole is surrounded by cast-iron fencing. The land on either side

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and beyond the lake is treated informally; it is open grassland with paths and appears to have been so since this part of the park was formed. There is a fishing lake to the north of the boating lake and the land continues to rise on the north and west sides of this, giving views out to the Pennines to the south-east. Both the lakes were formed after 1892 from Chadwicks Reservoir following the acquisition of the land by the Stamford Park Joint Committee. The reservoir is shown on the 1861 OS map as two stretches of water divided by what appears to be a dam.

#### REFERENCES

S Hill, *Bygone Stalybridge* (1907), pp 187-95 H Holland in J W March (ed), *Stalybridge Centenary Handbook* (1957), pp 112-14 J Cassidy in S A Harrop and E A Rose (eds), *Victorian Ashton* (1973), pp 50-7 *Lancashire Life*, (August 1982), p 41 H Conway, *People's Parks* (1991), p 138

Maps OS 6" to 1mile: Cheshire sheet II NW, 2nd edition published 1911 Lancashire sheet CV NE & Cheshire sheet III NE, provisional edition revised 1932-3, with additions 1938 OS 25" to 1 mile: Lancashire sheet CV.7, 1st edition surveyed 1861, published 1885 Lancashire sheet CV.7, 2nd edition surveyed 1891-2, published 1894

Archival items J H McDermott, *The Origins of Stamford Park* (1990) (typescript and map held in Tameside MBC Planning Department file) Photograph of the refreshment rooms of 1897, demolished 1995 (Tameside MBC Planning Department file)

Description written: February 1997 Register Inspector: CEH Edited: March 1999

#### 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.