

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

ROKER PARK

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

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**ROKER PARK**

Name:	ROKER PARK
District:	Sunderland (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 54.924843 Longitude: -1.3691328 National Grid Reference: NZ 40530 59088 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001325 Date first listed: 30-May-1997

## Details

A municipal park opened to the public in 1880, making use of a deep natural ravine.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

By the late C19, Roker Dene had become one of the few green spaces available in Sunderland for recreation. The land for the park was presented to the town jointly by the Hedworth Williamson family and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, in the hope that such a facility would help upgrade the surrounding area, and a condition of the gift was that a road bridge was built spanning the valley, providing access to the land and enabling the expansion of quality housing in Roker. The park was opened to the public in 1880, and remains (1999) in public use and ownership.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Roker Park lies to the north of the River Wear, in a densely residential area 3km from Sunderland city centre, being screened from the surrounding housing by a perimeter belt of trees and shrubs. The 6ha site is enclosed by public roads: Side Cliff Road to the north, Park Parade to the south, Roker Park Road to the west, and Roker Park Terrace and Ravine Terrace to the east. The southern section of the park is level, while the northern half occupies a deep ravine, Roker Gill, which runs from west to east down towards the beach at Roker Rocks.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** There are entrances into the park from all four sides, the main entrances being from the west, off Roker Park Road, which leads to the late C19 lodge, and from the east via the set of gates within the railed boundary wall on Roker Terrace.

**PLEASURE GROUNDS** The deep ravine, Roker Gill, dominates the northern end of the park, its sides planted up with shrubs. Through the bottom of the cut, a walk leads eastwards, under first a metal footbridge, then an arch carrying the public road above, down to the beach at Roker Rocks and the promenade along the seafront. The promenades were built during the recession of 1885(6 and provided work for an employment scheme.

At the western end of the Gill, set on a small promontory looking out to sea, is a bandstand (listed grade II), dated 1880. Two life-sized lead statues representing haymakers, the 'Babbies', formerly stood in the park, one on either side of the Gill, to the east of the bandstand.

A path from the entrance off Roker Terrace leads along the top of the south side of the Gill curving south, with flower beds set in lawn between it and the boundary, to a substantial drinking fountain (listed grade II) erected in 1880, commemorating

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the opening of the park and the centenary of the Sunday Schools. Past this, the path continues down the east side of the park to meet with the south entrance on Park Parade. To the north of the Gill, from a second entrance on Roker Terrace, a walk leads along the north side of the gorge, then down the west side of the park, to also join with the south gate.

To the south of the path leading from the west entrance to the lodge lies a bowling green with associated late C20 park buildings; south of this lies a second bowling green, the accompanying pavilion having been completed in 1902. There is also a tennis court in this area. Beyond, running through the centre of the park and joining with the west end of the Gill, is a sunken walk leading through an area of rockwork.

In the centre of the southern part of the park, a lake provides the main focus. At its southern end, enclosed by planting, is the site of a depot and greenhouses, subsequently cleared and replaced by a garden for the blind. Mid C20 tennis courts occupy the south-east and south-west corners of the site.

#### REFERENCES

W C Mitchell, *History of Sunderland* (1919) T Corfe, *History of Sunderland* (1973), p 88 S Miller, *The Book of Sunderland* (1989) S Reeder, *Whitburn and Roker in Old Picture Postcards* (1992) *A Guide to the Historic Parks and Gardens of Tyne and Wear*, (Tyne and Wear Specialist Conservation Team 1995), pp 37(8)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1897

Description written: November 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: September 2000

#### 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.