

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Corporation Park

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

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Name:	Corporation Park
District:	Blackburn with Darwen (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.756244 Longitude: -2.4957799 National Grid Reference: SD 67409 28990 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1001344 Date first listed: 26-Nov-1996 Date of most recent amendment: 22-Aug-2013 Statutory Address 1: Park Crescent, Blackburn, BB2 6DQ

Historique de la conservation

Corporation Park was opened to the public in 1857, having cost a total of £14,701 to purchase and complete. It forms part of the extensive improvements and expansion of Blackburn in this period. The land had been purchased by the Corporation from the Lord of the Manor, Joseph Fielden, in 1855, a third of the total funds needed having been raised through the sale of the Town Moor, c 1845, to the East Lancashire and Blackburn railway companies. P McGregor and T Jenkins were responsible for the laying out under the direction of William Henderson of Birkenhead.

J Thompson Jnr, when writing his history of the park, published in the Preston Guardian (1857), explained that previous to the provision of a park, there had been a 'great scarcity of walks for the people in the immediate vicinity' and 'no recognised walks and grounds to which the overwrought artizan could repair, on the cessation of his daily toil, where he could please the eye and invigorate the body, and for awhile forget the strife, and din, and trouble of human existence'. The founding of the park, 'a park replete with grounds for the enjoyment of the visits, with walks and sights and everything else that can please the eye and improve the intellect', which was 'not only an ornament but an honor to Blackburn' (The Blackburn Weekly Times 1857), was in response to this need.

An area of land, which had been part of Red Rake Farm, was added to the northern end of the park shortly after the initial opening. This extension was used for a playground, a bowling green later being constructed here as work for the unemployed, the money for wages being found by the Distress Committee from the Queen's Unemployed Fund.

Details

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING The park of c 18ha is located in a residential area 600m to the north-west of Blackburn town centre. The park has an irregular outline, the boundaries being defined by the surrounding roads: Park Crescent and West Park Road to the west, Brantfell Road and East Park Road to the east (both laid out by the Corporation as part of the park's development), Revidge Road to the north, and Preston New Road to the south. The park is laid out on sloping ground, generally falling from north-west to south-east.

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ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main gate stands at the southern, town end of the park, off Preston New Road, a triumphal archway with flanking lodges (listed Grade II), dated 1855, marking the entrance. To either side of the arch, outside the park, were a pair of lime trees, planted in 1869, removed in the C21. To the north-west of the gateway, within the park, is the formal Garden of Remembrance, laid out in 1922, and the War Memorial (listed Grade II). To the east is sited a circular pond with fountain, one of four fountains gifted to the Borough for the park by the then Mayor, William Pilkington, who performed the opening ceremony. The fountain, constructed of iron by Messrs W and K Dewhurst of Blackburn, formerly had a gravity-fed jet which rose 23m into the air.

There are two other main entrances, both with wrought-iron gates set between stone piers. One is located on East Park Road, opposite the north end of Shear Bank Road. The other stands at the West Lodge, off West Park Road at the west end of the site, this gateway being accompanied by the park depot.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS From the arch at the principal entrance the main drive, set with seats, leads northwards up through a narrow steep-sided valley into the park. A stream, broken with falls and pools, forms a feature along the ornamentally planted western bank.

The drive leads below the substantial dam of the main lake, passing 'a romantic little cascade, formed by discharging the waters of the lake over a sloping rockery' (Preston Guardian 1857). Adjacent to this fall stands a statue of Flora by Thomas Allen of Liverpool, presented to the park by T H Fairhurst in 1871. The main lake, known as the 'Big Can', which covers c 1ha, has an irregular outline with a small island. It was formed from a pre-existing reservoir, Pemberton Clough, created in 1772. This reservoir was the town's water supply until the installation of the water mains in 1847. To the west of the lake lies a second, smaller piece of water, the 'Can', with two islands and a restored fountain at its centre.

At the heart of the park the drive forks, the western branch leading west across the park and swinging round to the west end of the Broad Walk, the eastern branch leading between the two ponds, then serpentine north-eastwards to join with the east end of the Walk.

The Broad Walk, laid out in the early 1860s as part of the improvements undertaken by unemployed operatives, forms the main axis of the park layout, a row of lime trees marking its southern edge. Here, on Sundays, 'crowds of young men and maidens would walk four or five abreast, promenading from end to end between 3 o'clock and 4.30' (Blackburn Times 1936).

To the north walks cut into the rock lead between rocky outcrops, up the steeply sloping ground to the top level of the park. The main route up is a diagonal walk from towards the eastern end of the Walk, which runs west to the north-west corner of the site. This northern area of the park was improved in 1863 through the efforts of unemployed operatives during the Cotton Famine. According to Thompson, 'a ramble on the upper promenades of the Blackburn Park is sure to dispel hypochondriacism, and cure dyspepsia for a week at least' (Preston Guardian 1857).

The main path leads in front of an underground reservoir, the embankment of which juts into the northern end of the park, to a stone-built battery. This viewing platform stands 213.5m above sea level, compared to the main entrance at just on 130m, allowing of long views out across the town below. The two cannon captured at Sebastopol, presented to the Borough by Lord Panmure, Secretary of War and brought to the park to be placed on the platform in 1857, have gone. The park has one of four regional 'panopticons' which sits within the cannon battery area.

At the east end of the reservoir a path leads in from the Revidge Road entrance. East again are the tennis courts, terraced into the hillside, these dominating the north-east corner of the park, occupying an area of land taken into the park in the early C20. A further set of hard courts lie below the eastern end of the Broad Walk, above the three bowling greens. The Bowls House dates from 1921, while these tennis courts were added in 1922 and 1924. The putting green was opened in 1925. When the park opened there were two bowling greens in addition to recreation grounds; the drinking fountain installed in 1858 at the corner of one of the greens is no longer present.

At right angles to the centre of the Broad Walk a path leads south down a flight of steps and across the centre of a levelled lawn, defined on its southern side by the Pine Walk. The central path continues south through less formal lawns to the north bank of the larger of the two lakes.

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From the west end of the formal terraced lawns, paths lead to the Corporation Park Victorian Palm House, known as 'the Conservatory' (listed Grade II), supplied by W Richardson and Sons of Darlington and opened in 1902. The Conservatory has a double height atrium, flanked by two lower wings on the east and west. This stands on a raised platform, reached by a flight of steps on its southern side. During WWII the planting beds were turned to food production. To the north of the structure is the former nursery area; to the west an aviary erected in 1957.

South of the lakes is an open space, screened from West Park Road by a belt of trees and shrubs. At its western end (outside the registered area) is a school building, the use of this site for a school dating from the 1930s. A shelter formerly stood at the eastern end. A bandstand was erected in the centre of the open area in 1880. In 1909 it was replaced by a larger model, which was demolished in 1941.

Summary

A public park laid out by William Henderson and opened in 1857.

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

Corporation Park, Blackburn, opened in 1857, 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 landscape design is essentially unchanged from its original mid C19 layout; * Historic interest: Corporation Park was integral to Blackburn's mid C19 expansion and improvements, and was and is an important public amenity; previously Blackburn had no park or walks; * Structures and features: the park retains structures (some listed) and planting from the mid C19 onwards.

Bibliographie

Books and journals

Abram, W A, History of Blackburn, (1877)

Other

'A History of the Public Park', Preston Guardian, October 1857,

'A History of the Public Park', Preston Guardian, October 1857,

'Memories of Sixty Years Ago', Blackburn Times, 29 August 1936,

The Blackburn Weekly Times, 24 October 1857,

Title: A Map of the Glebe of the Rectory of Blackburn Source Date: 1739 Author: Publisher: Surveyor:

Title: Plan of land in Blackburn purchased by the Corporation for a Public Park Source Date: 1852 Author: Publisher: Surveyor:

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