

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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**WEST PARK**

Name:	WEST PARK
District:	Cheshire East (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Macclesfield
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.263433 Longitude: -2.1356810 National Grid Reference: SJ 91047 74057 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001495 Date first listed: 15-Mar-2001

## Details

West Park, opened in 1854, was the first public park in Macclesfield and was funded by public subscription. The design by William Barron integrates formal and informal areas with a deliberate emphasis on combining ornamental gardens with active outdoor pursuits.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

The idea of a public park in Macclesfield, which was first mooted by John May in 1850 to commemorate the late Sir Robert Peel, caught the public imagination, with £300 collected in small amounts over a few weeks by working men. Due to a slump in the economy it was not until early in 1853 that a public meeting determined to purchase land known as Town Field and an adjoining 8 acres (c 3ha) from the Westbrook Estate to form a park. Part of the site was formerly known as 'Town Field' or 'Lammas Land' where the town retained ancient rights of access in the winter and horse racing had been held from 1828 to 1853. The original intention was that the adjacent Westbrook House and grounds would also be included but these were retained as a residence for the Headmaster of the Free Grammar School. Work commenced in early 1854 and the almost completed park opened with great public celebration on Monday 2 October of the same year during the local 'Wakes Week'. West Park was originally named Peel Park, but for many years was simply known as The Park.

Earl Harrington of Elvaston (qv), who also held land close to Macclesfield, provided the services of his principal gardener, William Barron, to design the park, with Barron's foreman, Mr Sturdy, supervising the works. The park retained the approach to Westbrook House with a gothic lodge and adjoining exhibition pavilion by Macclesfield architect Mr Stephens, although the latter was to a design by Pugin. More formal areas of the park were formed around a large bowling green with open areas to the west for cricket and other games.

A description of the park opening in 1854 (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald*) indicates that it included the wooded dell and stream to the north-west of the present boundary, and a survey plan of 1864 (Botheras) shows a path running through part of the dell. In the 1860s a cemetery was formed to the north-west of the park and the formal boundary was altered to exclude the dell. A number of ornamental additions were made in the early years: rustic timber pavilions with thatched roofs by the first Superintendent, John Middlebrook, and in 1857 two Russian cannons captured in the Crimean War together with a boulder of about 30 tons brought from a field adjoining Oxford Road, under the direction of the Borough Surveyor. Three pre-Norman

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cross shafts (scheduled ancient monument) originally sited at Ridge Hall in Sutton and a former market cross from Macclesfield were also moved to the park by 1864.

The 1911 edition OS map indicates that the pavilion adjoining the lodge, which at one time was used as a tea room, had been taken down by that date. The lodge itself has been greatly remodelled, if not rebuilt, in a simple buff brick domestic style in the C20.

In October 1898 a museum (listed grade II) was opened in the park to the north of the main entrance, donated by sister and brother Marianne and Peter Pownall Brocklehurst. In 1904 a bandstand was purchased, mainly by public subscription, to celebrate the park's jubilee. This was dismantled in the 1970s and replaced with a cycle track, with a BMX and skateboard track added later. The cannons were removed during the Second World War.

West Park was funded by public subscription and on opening, in 1854, ownership was transferred to the local Council and in 2000 remains in the ownership of Macclesfield Borough Council.

#### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** West Park lies c 0.6km to the west-north-west of Macclesfield Town Hall. The park was formed on gently undulating ground to the south-east of Whitfield Brook, which runs in a small, steep-sided valley (now part of Macclesfield Cemetery grounds). The original park area was c 6.5ha; it now covers c 8ha. The area is in mixed use, with the cemetery, crematorium, and modern housing to the north-west; Macclesfield Hospital (formerly Macclesfield Union Workhouse) to the south-west across Prestbury Road; and mixed housing and commercial uses across Cumberland Street to the south. The site of Macclesfield Infirmary, immediately adjoining the park to the east, was redeveloped in the mid 1990s with a Sainsbury's Superstore.

To the north there are Council compounds and offices in the former grounds and outbuildings of the now-demolished Westbrook House. Greenhouses were built in part of the grounds of Westbrook House in 1949 and in 2000 still produce up to 200,000 plants a year for Council displays. A terraced rose garden was created on a further part of the grounds in 1983. Also in 1983, in the dell adjacent to the north-west boundary a Garden of Remembrance was formed between the park and the cemetery and with the planting of commemorative trees a terraced arboretum has been created.

Natural stone walls c 1.65m high to the pavement act as retaining walls to the embanked screen planting within the park of mature trees and shrubs onto both Prestbury Road and Cumberland Street. Boundaries to the cemetery and Sainsbury's have modern metal railings and the new rose garden, while linked to the north-east boundary of the original park, is clearly defined by a stone wall and embanked hedging.

The bowling green is set at a lower level than the surrounding walks and it is probable that part of the excavation material was used to form the viewing mound to the north-east. In 1984 the lookout mound in the park was transformed into the 'North West Castle', built as part of a Youth Training Scheme. In the early 1990s a children's playground was formed to the north of the bowling green and, between the two, a new refreshment pavilion built. A picnic area was also created to the north-west of the playground, again within the former grounds of Westbrook House.

The park site is at a higher level than the town centre and a newspaper account of the opening (*Macclesfield Courier and Herald*) remarks on the attractive and extensive views over the surrounding countryside. Views are now largely lost due to development and maturity of planting but there are occasional glimpses of the Pennine foothills towards Bollington to the north-east and Tegg's Nose to the east. The latter view has very probably been improved however by the redevelopment of the former Infirmary (built 1867/72) site to the east of the park.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The park retains its two original entrances, the principal one from Prestbury Road and another from Cumberland Road, both with iron gates set between large decorative stone gateposts. The Cumberland Road entrance also has a turnstile gate to one side and the gates to Prestbury Road are the original ones from Coalbrookdale in a gothic design.

The Prestbury Road entrance is accompanied by the West Park Museum building, in red brick with terracotta dressings and clerestorey. This building would have presented a strong contrast to the 1854 Gothic-style lodge opposite but is now dominant over its two-storey buff brick replacement (let as a private dwelling), with adjoining small aviary and public toilets facing onto

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the park. The plan of 1864 by Botheras is decorated with illustrations of features of the park, including the highly ornate gothic lodge and pavilion, both now lost.

Informal paths now link the park with the cemetery grounds, one adjacent to the cemetery lodge and another close to the rose garden, the latter leading to steps and a bridge across Whitfield Brook. A single pedestrian gate links the park to Sainsbury's car park to the north-east of the viewing mound.

Outside the park boundary the cemetery lodge (listed grade II) built c 1860-70 provides a focal point from the west area of the park.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS West Park is divided into two halves by the drive serving Westbrook House. To the east of the drive lie the more formal areas of the park, with a grass terrace area overlooking the bowling green and serpentine paths flanked by areas of formal bedding. The bowling green, one of the largest in England, measures c 87m by 56m, and retains formal quadrant planting beds on each corner. Some of the formal setting has been lost however, particularly at the southern end where early plans show return walls framing the composition and a central fountain. The latter has been replaced with late C20 rectangular raised planters. The 1864 Botheras plan also shows a rustic timber pavilion with a thatched conical roof surmounted by a short flagpole. There were two of these pavilions, one on either side of the bowling green, but only the eastern one survives, now with open sides and a felted roof.

Beyond the north-west corner of the bowling green is a small Park Ranger's office of timber construction with a steep hipped roof of Rosemary tiles which was formerly a taxi drivers' shelter re-sited from the town in the 1980s. At the north end of the bowling green a late C20 refreshment pavilion dominates, sited and designed to form a symmetrical element in the design. The single-storey pavilion is in orange brick with a steep hipped roof of grey tiles with terracotta ridge and surmounted by a ventilation vane.

The area to the west of the drive was described at the park's opening as more open and park-like, with winding paths leading around a central area set aside for cricket and other games and with a gymnasium sited on the return path to the entrance, adjacent to Prestbury Road. This area remains largely open with a few individual trees and the skateboard facility located adjacent to the Museum. The two access points into the cemetery grounds lead to narrow paths along and across a small, steep-sided valley with a stream and pool at the bottom thus providing a contrast of scenery and route. The park is enclosed by strong mature planting along the boundaries with adjoining roads, the supermarket site, and with the rose garden, except where the north boundary has been extended adjacent to the children's playground in the north-east of the park.

Much of the original ornament of the park, including hooped iron edging to beds, circular tree seats, urns, and fountains have gone. Evergreens, including several varieties of yew, remain a feature of the park, and together with a number of specimen trees including a cut-leaf beech, are possibly part of the original planting.

While some of the detail has been lost the main elements and organisation of the original design remain with, in particular, the division of formal elements, including the bowling green to the east, from the more informal areas and those for active pursuits to the west.

#### REFERENCES

Macclesfield Courier and Herald, 7 October 1854, p 7 I Finney, Notes on the Antiquities of Macclesfield, (4th edn 1871), pp 51, 56-7 C S Davies, A History of Macclesfield (1961), pp 279-82 E Hubbard and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Cheshire, (1971), p 270 N Pevsner and E Williamson, The Buildings of England: Derbyshire (2nd edn 1979), p 210 I C Laurie, East Cheshire Parks and Gardens (1987), pp 140-2 Let's Go to the Park, (West Park Museum exhibition booklet 1994) The Garden 124, (December 1999), pp 912-17 West Park Museum Introduction, (Macclesfield Museums Trust 2000)

Maps A Plan of Macclesfield Public Park from Actual Survey 1864 by R Botheras (copy held by Macclesfield Park Ranger Service)

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1911 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870-1, published 1873 3rd edition published 1909

Archival items Early photographs of West Park taken from postcards (Macclesfield Park Ranger Service) Macclesfield Park Ranger Service Notes

Description written: November 2000 Amended: January 2001 Register Inspector: HMT Edited: May 2001

## 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.