

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

Royal Victoria Park

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

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Royal Victoria Park

Name:	Royal Victoria Park
District:	Bath and North East Somerset (Unitary Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.386137 Longitude: -2.3714544 National Grid Reference: ST 74248 65298 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: I List Entry Number: 1001257 Date first listed: 26-Jun-1992 Date of most recent amendment: 28-Aug-2013 Statutory Address 1: Marlborough Lane, Bath, BA1 2NQ

Historique de la conservation

Royal Victoria Park was intended to add to Bath's attractions for would-be permanent residents as its popularity as a spa waned. It was laid out on common land belonging to the Freeman of Bath, and was initially only rented to the Corporation. It was opened by Princess (later Queen) Victoria in 1830. The park was managed by a committee of wealthy Bath inhabitants and financed by voluntary contributions until taken over by Bath City Council in 1921. The design for its layout was drawn up by Edward Davis (1802-52), City Architect (Plan, 1829). The Upper Common to the north of the park (now, 2001, a public golf course), was originally to become part of the park and to be linked to the southern part by a viaduct under Weston Road. This part of Davis' design however was never implemented because the Freeman who owned the land and the Park Committee could not come to an agreement regarding the inclusion of this area into the park. The Royal Victoria Park Committee wanted the park to become the major arboretum of the west of England, and thus a wide variety of unusual trees and shrubs were planted. In 1839 the Royal Victoria Horticultural and Botanical Garden was formed in the park. These were redesigned and extended in 1887 by John Milburn and J W Morris to receive the plant collection donated by C E Broome. In 1857 Frederick Hanman produced his Manual for the Park, a handbook to the park's trees and shrubs, including biographies of the Bath citizens who donated them. The park is run by, the local authority, Bath & NE Somerset Council (2013).

Details

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Royal Victoria Park, a site of c 23ha, lies on the north-west side of the city of Bath, to the south of High Common from which it is separated by Weston Road. It occupies a gently sloping, south-facing site, edged by Park Lane to the west, a children's playground and allotments between it and Upper Bristol Road to the south, and more allotments and a row of houses fronting onto Marlborough Lane to the east. A strip of land on the eastern side of Marlborough Lane links the main body of the site with Queen's Parade. On the rising land to the north of this extension of the park stands Royal Crescent. The far north-east boundary of the extension is formed by the Gravel Walk, which runs along the rear garden walls of the houses along Brock Street, The Circus, and Gay Street. This Walk dates from the late C18 but was

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adopted into the park as part of Edward Davis' design. The park's railings and gates, a few sections of which survived in store since being taken down during the Second World War, have been restored and replaced in the recent restoration work (2013). From the park there are fine and extensive views towards Royal Crescent to the north, and over the hills to the south of Bath.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are entrances into the site from all the public roads surrounding it, the main entrance being Rivers Gate (listed Grade II) off Queen's Parade, at the far eastern tip of the site. This entrance, marked by two stone gate piers topped with lions, is flanked to its south-east by a war memorial commemorating the two world wars (1830, listed Grade II). From here Royal Avenue (the main approach) leads in a westerly direction across the extended eastern arm of the park to Victoria Gate (1830, listed Grade II*); through a pair of stone arches at Marlborough Lane (mid C19, Grade II).

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS To the south of Royal Avenue is a lawn with a perimeter walk, planted with mature single trees. This lawn was previously fenced and was not open to the public until 1852. In the centre stands a wooden bandstand (listed Grade II), made to the designs of C E Davis, son of Edward Davis, and erected in 1880. It is accompanied by a pair of large classical vases (listed Grade II) which, according to the inscription on them, were presented by Napoleon to Josephine in 1805; these were brought from France by Colonel Page after the Peninsular War. To the north of Royal Avenue lies Crescent Lawn, which was first incorporated into the park in 1846. It is separated from the private lawn in front of Royal Crescent (outside the area here registered) by an C18 ha-ha. Crescent Lawn is crossed by a footpath which leads to the Gravel Walk to the east. In 1850 a proposal was published to lay out Crescent Lawn with formal gardens (Pound 1986) but this was never implemented. To the west of Victoria Gate stands Victoria Column (listed Grade II*), a stone obelisk with three lions at its base, the whole being enclosed by a balustrade. The column, designed by G P Manners, was erected in 1837 to celebrate Princess Victoria's eighteenth birthday. West of the Column the walk continues into the main part of the park, passing Park Cottages (listed Grade II*) to the north, a building originally known as the Gothic Farm House, probably designed by Davis and dated 1831. It now forms part of the area used by the council as a plant nursery.

The open expanse of grass which forms the main body of the park is divided by three straight, tree-lined paths which run diagonally across it. A carriage drive leads round the perimeter of the site, through a thick belt of mature trees planted along the edge of the park. It leads below the south side of the irregularly shaped lake, constructed in 1878-9 by Edward Milner in imitation of that shown in the Chinese Willow Pattern. On the small peninsula in the lake stands the Victoria Vase (listed Grade II), placed here to commemorate the park's fiftieth anniversary in 1880. Milner's lake replaced an earlier body of water shown on Edward Davis' plan for the park (1829).

A number of lesser paths lead off the perimeter drive providing access to the various features within the site. One of these is the Botanic Garden, a fenced inset in the north-west quadrant of the site. Within the Botanic Garden paths wind through the ornamental plantings and rockwork which surrounds a spring-fed stream. The stream is crossed by stone bridges and with a pond, forms the central feature of the garden. From the pond views focus in a north-easterly direction on the Temple of Minerva (listed Grade II), which was first erected in 1924 by Bath Corporation at the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley; it was re-erected here in 1926. A sundial stands c 60m south-west of the pond. The east corner of the Botanic Garden is marked by a statue erected in 1988 as a Peace Pole. The design for the Botanic Garden was put in place by John Milburn under the direction of J W Morris, and was intended to display a gift of 2000 plant specimens which had been presented to the Victoria Park Committee by the widow of the amateur botanist C E Broome in 1886. Milburn, who came from Kew Gardens (qv) to work on the project, subsequently became Park Superintendent at Royal Victoria Park. He was a friend of Canon Ellacombe who contributed plants to the gardens. In 1926 the Botanic Garden was extended eastwards, as it was again in 1987.

To the north of the Botanic Garden is the Great Dell, a wooded quarry, the planting of which, like that of the Little Dell which lies on the western perimeter of the site, was done with advice from William Beckford (d.1844), the vastly wealthy owner of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire (qv). Two pieces of statuary stand within the Great Dell: 'Shakespeare's Monument' (listed Grade II) by C E Davis, erected in 1864 to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth; and 'Jupiter's Head' (listed Grade II*) by John Osborn, which stands on a tall ashlar pedestal designed by Thomas Barker. The latter was already present on the site in 1839, which suggests that the Great Dell had been laid out by that date (Grant application, Bath City Council 1993).

Summary

A public park laid out to a design by Edward Davis and opened by Princess Victoria in 1830.

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

Royal Victoria Park, Bath, opened in 1830 to a design by Edward Davis, is designated at Grade I for the following principal reasons: * Date: the park is an especially early example of a municipal park; * Design: although enhanced, the park's design is essentially unchanged from its original layout of 1830; * Designer: Edward Davis, who planned the park in 1829, was the City Architect and thus closely associated with Bath; * Historic interest: an important new component of early C19 Bath, and the first park in England to be named after the then Princess Victoria; * Structures and features: the park has numerous listed structures; * Planting: beginning with the founders' ambition for this to be a major arboretum, and via the creation of a Horticultural and Botanical Garden in 1839 (extended 1887 and later), Victoria Park is richly planted; * Group value: the park lies centrally within the Bath World Heritage Site, and is overlooked by the Royal Crescent.

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