

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

VICTORIA PARK

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

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Name:	VICTORIA PARK
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Hackney (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
County:	Greater London Authority
District:	Tower Hamlets (London Borough)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 51.536105 Longitude: -0.040347668 National Grid Reference: TQ 36012 83731 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II* List Entry Number: 1000178 Date first listed: 01-Oct-1987

Details

Mid C19 public park designed by James Pennethorne, with planting by Samuel Curtis and John Gibson, further developed C20.
HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Victoria Park was first proposed in 1840 as a 'Memorial to the Sovereign', which could be used by the population of the east end of London. It was one of three new parks proposed by a central government initiative to serve the expanding population in the suburbs. The park was designed by James Pennethorne (1801-71), with planting by Samuel Curtis (1779-1860). Pennethorne's plan of 1841 was modified several times before work started in 1842. The park was opened to the public in 1845. In the 1850s the horticultural control of the park was directed by John Gibson (1815-75), who had worked with Pennethorne on the design and laying out of Battersea Park (qv). The initial park area of 77ha was increased to 87ha in 1872, incorporating ground which had previously been brick fields, market gardens and farmland. In 1887 the management of the park was transferred to the Metropolitan Board of Works, which was succeeded by the London County Council in 1889.

The park suffered badly from bomb damage during the Second World War and much of the grassland was used for allotments for the war effort. After the war further buildings had to be demolished due to structural damage. There were insufficient funds to reinstate the park properly and its condition began to deteriorate. Management of the park was transferred to the Greater London Council in 1965, which started to rehabilitate it from 1973. After 1986, ownership of the park was divided between the London Boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets. Restoration has continued throughout the 1990s under the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, which now has sole ownership of the park.

DESCRIPTION

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LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Victoria Park, c 87ha, lies between South Hackney to the north-west, Homerton to the north-east, Globe Town to the south-west, and Bow to the south-east. The park has a boot-shaped configuration and lies on a south-west to north-east alignment, on generally level ground. It is divided by Grove Road (A1205) which runs north/south, with the smaller, western section lying in the London Borough of Hackney and the eastern section in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The park is bordered by the Grand Union Canal to the south-east and south-west, by Cadogan Terrace to the north-east, and by Gore Road, Iveagh Close, Guinness Close, and Victoria Park Road to the north. The park is bounded by metal park fencing, most of which was renewed or restored in the 1990s.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES There are entrance gates on all sides of the park. These are, from the north-west corner, clockwise: St Agnes' Gate (with lodge), Gore Gate, Royal Gates, Rockmead Gates, Crawley Gate, Queen's Gate, St Augustine's Gate (with White Lodge), Molesworth Gate (with Molesworth Lodge), Riseholme Gate, Cadogan Gate, St Mark's Gate (with Morpeth Lodge), Lockhouse Gate, Gunmaker's Gate, Terrace Gate, Crown Gates (with mid C19, brick Llanover Lodge to north-west, listed grade II), Cricketers' Gate, Arcade Gate, Bonner Gate (gate piers, listed grade II), and Canal Gate.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS The park is divided by Grove Road into western and eastern sections. Both of these sections are further divided by roads which cross them: the Night Walk across the western section, and a drive, running between Queen's Gate and St Mark's Gate, across the eastern section. For the sake of clarity in this description, the two parts of the western section are referred to as the north-western part of the park (to the west of the Night Walk) and the western part of the park (between the Night Walk and Grove Road), and the two parts of the eastern section are referred to as the central part of the park (to the east of the Grove Road and west of the drive) and the north-eastern part of the park (to the east of the drive). All parts of the park are linked by a mid C19 carriage drive which runs around the entire park, on or within the park's boundary. There are avenues of mature plane trees along much of this drive, as well as perimeter shrubberies, and late C20 avenues of limes and cherry along some sections. The C19 pattern of paths within the park has been retained. Much of the park is open grassland with mature trees including planes, holm oak, chestnut, lime, thorn, flowering cherry and alder and willow beside the lakes.

The western section of the park is approached from Grove Road, which runs between Royal Gates (at the northern end) and Crown Gates (at the southern end). To the north-west of the Crown Gates is the West (or Llanover) Lodge and the Park Manager's Office. A path leads from the corner of Grove Road and Old Ford Road onto the perimeter drive, which runs along the south and west sides of a 3ha lake, formed in the mid C19 from a disused gravel pit. On the south-east side of the lake there is a lakeside restaurant (1991), on the site of the C19 boathouse (1870, demolished 1990), which overlooks the lake, and a C19 fountain (restored 1990s) in the centre of the east side of the lake. The lake has two islands in the centre but originally had a third (the largest), at the western end. The island is now joined onto the land along its north-eastern length. Various features on this island, including a cascade (1846) at the northern end, and a pagoda (1847) and ornamental footbridge (1849) at the southern end, no longer exist. The footbridge was replaced in 1910 by a suspension bridge which led to a Japanese garden (1910-11, laid out as a temporary feature following an Anglo-Japanese exhibition), but the C20 bridge was removed, together with the cascade and pagoda, in the mid C20. The perimeter drive circuits the southern shore of the lake, past the site of a Moorish Arcade Shelter (between Cricketers' Gate and Arcade Gate) in the southern tip of the park. Along the south-west shore of the lake there is planting of tall, ornamental grasses along part of the lake edge and a linear rose bed along the other side of the perimeter drive. To the west of the lake is The Glade, a grassy clearing backed by shrubberies and mature trees, which runs between the northern and southern perimeter drives and is backed to the west by the Night Walk.

The Night Walk, which crosses the western section of the park, was formerly a road but is now pedestrianised. At the southern end of the Night Walk is the Bonner Gate and bridge and the site of Bonner Lodge (1845-1941). Either side of the Night Walk on the north side of the perimeter drive stand the Dogs of Alcibiades (a pair of statues, each of a dog on a brick pedestal, donated by Lady Regnart in 1912, restored 1991). The north-western part of the park is mostly open lawn, with some mature trees and much new (1990s) tree planting. The Grand Union Canal runs along the southern perimeter and can be accessed from the park by Bonner Gate or from Canal Gate in the south-west corner. At the west end of this part of the park there is a picnic area, with a lodge at the north end, which is adjacent to St Agnes' Gate (in the north-west corner of the park). Shore Place Field occupies the centre of the north-western part and is crossed by a path leading south-east from St Agnes' Gate to the southern

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perimeter drive. A further path skirts the east side of the Field and links the northern and southern perimeter drives. In the area between this path and the Night Walk lies a hedged Rose Garden to the north and, to the south and east, the site of an aviary (1895-1950s), rabbit enclosures (1965-89), sand pit and then children's play area (until 1989) and Palm House (1892-1941), now open lawn backed by shrubberies along the east side, adjacent to the Night Walk.

The northern perimeter path crosses the Night Walk at Gore Gate and returns into the western part of the park, passing a bedding display consisting of geometric beds cut in the lawn. The carpet bedding is backed by the shrubberies at the northern end of The Glade to the south, and by the perimeter drive and shrubberies along its outside to the north. A path leads south-west from the perimeter drive and joins with other small paths which run around the north shore of the lake, through lawns with shrubberies and mature trees. Where the paths join, there is a small shelter and, to the west of this, the remains of rockwork on the northern shore of the lake. Paths lead from the shelter eastwards around the northern and eastern shores of the lake and north-westwards, returning to the perimeter path. A deer enclosure was sited on the lawn between the shelter and the northern perimeter path until 1991, when it was relocated (to the north of the small lakes in the central part of the park). In the north-east corner of the western part of the park is the Victoria and Albert Playground, adjacent to the Royal Gates at the northern end of Grove Road. To the east of Grove Road is the larger, eastern section of Victoria Park. The perimeter drive runs along the northern, eastern and southern edges joining the central and north-eastern parts of the park. Along the western edge of the central part is a car park on the site of Clifton Cottage (which pre-dated the park; demolished 1863) and the Lido (1936, demolished 1989). The western part of the central section is open grassland, crossed by paths and with scattered mature trees. The main path is known as Central Drive and runs south-west to north-east across the central part of the park. Groves of trees, including poplar, plane trees, oak and holly, straddle Central Drive, and to the north of the drive are a bandstand (1990s, on the site of a late C19 bandstand), and the Baroness Burdett-Coutts drinking fountain (H A Darbyshire 1862, listed grade II*), at a point where four paths meet. The fountain is built of sandstone, in an elaborate Victorian Gothic style with Moorish touches. It has an octagonal central chamber, surrounded by an octagonal vaulted arcade, and a pointed ogee roof.

Occupying the centre of the eastern half of the central part of the park are two lakes. In the mid C19 the lakes were both more extensive and extended to the west to approximately double their present size. The western lake has an informal outline and a central island and is situated to the north of Central Drive. It was known as the Old Bathing Lake (1846-7, extended 1868), and the west part of this lake was filled in 1933. In 1940 a refreshment pavilion and open-air dancing area were built on the site. These were demolished in 1989 but part of the associated lakeside balustrade along the western shore survives. The eastern lake is situated to the south of Central Drive and was known as the New (or Men's) Bathing Lake (1860s). In 1937 the lake was altered to form three lakes: a paddling pool, model yachting pool and juvenile boating lake. Between 1983 and 1985 the central and western of these three lakes were filled in and re-landscaped as an extensive playground (Pools Playground) and the remaining lake became a model boating lake. On the north edge of the boating lake is an associated boathouse.

Occupying the space between the boating lake and the southern perimeter drive is an athletics track, with a maintenance store immediately to the north-west and an athletics pavilion immediately to the south-west. To the north-east of the boating lake is a One O'Clock Club, with enclosed ground and associated buildings. To the north of the boating lake is an enclosure for deer, relocated to this site in the 1990s from its C19 location in the western section of the park. To the west of the deer enclosure and north of the playground is the Old English Garden (laid out after 1916), which is surrounded by a yew hedge and laid out with paths of crazy-paving, topiary and beds of roses, mixed borders and bedding. All these features lie to the south of Central Drive. To the north of Central Drive and south of Crawley Gate and Queen's Gate, is a bowling green, with a pavilion to the north.

Along the north-east side of the drive that divides the central and north-eastern parts of the park are cricket nets, tennis courts, and a changing pavilion. The north-eastern part of the park is divided by two paths, with lines of trees, which radiate from the south side of the tennis courts to St Augustine's Gate (to the north-east) and Cadogan Gate (to the east). The western part is used for cricket and the central part for football, with White Lodge and Molesworth Lodge (surrounded by deep shrubberies) at the northern end. The southern part is open ground. Between the eastern perimeter drive and the eastern boundary is a War Memorial and south of this (c 80m north-west and south-west of Cadogan Gate), are two Portland stone alcoves (listed grade

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II) from the parapet of London Bridge (Sir Robert Taylor and George Dance the younger 1760, demolished 1823 and erected in the park in 1860).

REFERENCES

Gardeners' Chronicle (1871), p 1548 Garden 1, (1872), pp 327-9 Gardeners' Chronicle ii, (1874), pp 227-8 J Horticulture and Cottage Gardener 56, (1876), pp 489-90 J Horticulture, Cottage Gardener and Home Farmer NS 36, (1898), pp 155-6 N Cole, The Royal Parks and Gardens of London (1877), pp 27-30 Gardening World 14, (1897), p 74 J J Sexby, The Municipal Parks ... of London (1898), pp 553-71 E Cecil, London Parks and gardens (1907), pp 135-9 C Poulsen, Victoria Park (1976) Landscape Design, 159 (February 1986), pp 11-13 Victoria Park: Restoration, Development and Management Plan (report by RMJM for London Borough of Tower Hamlets Bow Neighbourhood, August 1989) Victoria Park: English Heritage Pilot for a Scheme of Grants for Outstanding Historic Parks and Gardens Restoration Proposals, (report by Travers Morgan for London Borough of Tower Hamlets Bow Neighbourhood, May 1992) B Cherry and N Pevsner, The Buildings of England: London 4: North (1998), pp 503-5, 522

Maps Plan of Freeholder's land, 1840 (PRO: LRRO papers) Plan for Laying out the proposed Eastern Park to be called Victoria Park, 1841 (LMA: Victoria Park Papers) Plan of Victoria Park showing the contemplated improvements connected therewith, 1850 (LMA: Victoria Park Papers)

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1870 2nd edition published 1894-6 3rd edition published 1916

Description written: April 1998 Register Inspector: CB Edited: May 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.