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Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England

Inventory of Great Britain

FARNWORTH PARK

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Name:	FARNWORTH PARK
District:	Bolton (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish:	Non Civil Parish
label.localisation:	Latitude: 53.550915 Longitude: -2.3999326 National Grid Reference: SD 73600 06106 Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1001540 Date first listed: 27-Jun-2001

Details

A public park designed by William Henderson and Robert Galloway and opened in 1864 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Ewart Gladstone. It was extended in the early and late C20.

HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

Thomas Barnes JP, three times MP for Bolton, continued the cotton-spinning and weaving business established by his father, James Rothwell Barnes in Farnworth in the early C19. In 1860 Thomas Barnes announced his intention to lay out a portion of his Birch Hall estate as a park for the use of the people of Farnworth, to mark his son's coming of age and in memory of his father. Barnes appointed landscape gardener William Henderson of Birkenhead to design and lay out the grounds. Henderson was also responsible for designs for Corporation Park (qv) in Blackburn (1857), Alexandra Park (qv) in Oldham (1865), and Queen's (formerly Bolton) Park in Bolton (1866). Henderson did not complete his engagement at Farnworth and Robert Galloway was appointed to complete the park. Galloway was originally from Liverpool where he trained at Scirving's nurseries and had worked with Henderson. In 1844 Galloway moved to Farnworth where he was gardener at Birch House and subsequently at Birch Hall (Farnworth J 1899).

In 1863 Farnworth elected a Local Board and, for the first time, had a public body which could accept the park, which it did in 1864. Robert Galloway was appointed park superintendent, a role in which he continued until his retirement in c 1895. The official opening of the park, by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon William E Gladstone took place on 12 October 1864 with some 100,000 people present (Barnes 1865). In his opening speech, Gladstone remarked that 'The presentation of this Park by Mr Barnes is happily not an isolated act; it is part of a great system, part of a great movement' (Jubilee Souvenir 1914). Barnes' gift of c 4.5ha of land was valued at £11,284 with a further £2000 for the cost of laying out the park (ibid). Two small additional areas of leasehold land made the total area, in 1864, c 5ha.

The park was laid out with a continuous belt of boundary planting and intersecting asphalt walks. From the main entrance from Bolton (also referred to as Manchester) Road the main path divided to encircle an 81m diameter mound beyond which a broad walk led south-west to a raised viewing terrace (Barnes 1865). In the south-east of the park an irregular lake c 117m long was replaced in 1949 with a paddling pool (Beevers 1997). Cricket was not allowed, only games of a quiet nature (Barnes 1865).

In 1888 Farnworth Local Board purchased cottages and land amounting to c 0.5ha to the south of the park, adjoining Albert Road and known as Snail Hill. The cottages were demolished and the area incorporated into the park in 1907. To the north

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of the park, the properties Birch Hall and Gladstone Villa were acquired by the Council in 1893 and an adjoining area, on Gladstone Road, was given by a member of the Barnes family in c 1914. Parts of these two areas are now (2001) incorporated into the park. Birch Hall was demolished in the late C20. The Barnes Memorial, in the south-west of the park, was erected in 1895, the Cenotaph in 1924, and a Garden of Remembrance after the Second World War. Two further extensions have been made to the park in the late C20: the area to the east bounded by Bolton Road and Park View (formerly Middle Street), and a further area adjoining Albert Road to the west.

Farnworth Park remains (2001) in use as a public park and is in the ownership of Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council.

DESCRIPTION

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING Farnworth Park is situated in the centre of Farnworth, on Bolton Road. To the north-east is a group of public buildings comprising Farnworth Baptist Chapel, the Public Library, and the Town Hall (each listed grade II). The total area of the park today (2001) is c 9ha.

To the north-east the park is bounded by Bolton Road, the boundary being unmarked except for hedging at the main entrance. To the south-east the park is bounded by a c 6m high brick retaining wall to the former gasworks and a c 1m high stone wall to Wellington Street. In the south-west the boundary line is irregular where a dwelling and a commercial property on Albert Road extend into the park. The boundary with these properties is generally c 2m high late C20 timber fencing with a c 1m high stone wall and hedging marking the C19 park boundary to Albert Road. To the west-north-west a c 1.2m stone wall forms the boundary between the park and early C19 two-storey stone housing in the Greenside area.

To the north-west a former cotton-mill site, Albert Mills, extends into the park. The mill buildings are now demolished (2001) and the site is being redeveloped with two-storey brick housing. A c 50m length of c 2.4m high C19 stone walling remains on the north-east boundary to the park. The north corner of the park adjoins Gladstone Villa and a park depot in the former grounds of the dwelling. A c 20m length of C19/early C20 c 1.2m high iron railings remain adjacent to the north-west entrance from Gladstone Road.

Overall the park rises c 7m from Bolton Road in the north-east to Albert Road in the south-west. The south-east section of the C19 park is laid out with sweeping mounds creating the effect of an undulating valley between the broad walk and the south-east boundary. The park is set in an area of mixed C19, C20, and C21 residential development, interspersed with industrial and commercial uses, public buildings on Bolton Road, and retail shops on Market Street to the east.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES The main entrance is at the centre of the north-east boundary with Bolton Road and is marked by a low semicircular hedge set back from the road. Photographs (Briscoe) show a high stone wall and gates to this entrance in 1914 which were altered in c 1930 to leave a low wall and railings. An informal entrance from Bolton Road has been added in the late C20 80m to the south-east of the main entrance.

On the south-east boundary a path enters the park from Wellington Road c 360m south-south-west of the main entrance, marked by a break in the stone boundary wall. From the north a path leads into the park from Gladstone Road to the north-east of the former Albert Mill site and from the west a path enters the park from Albert Road to the south of the boundary to Greenside. The latter two entrances are marked by C20 bollards and all three are indicated on the 1891 OS map. A second entrance from Albert Road, in the south corner of the park, is marked by C20 bollards in a break in the stone boundary wall. This entrance was formed with the extension of the park in the early C20.

Informal access into the park is possible across unmarked boundaries to the north-east with Bolton Road and Park View and to the west for c 45m along the boundary to Albert Road, immediately to the south of the Greenside area.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS Farnworth Park has many mature trees and is dominated by the tree-lined 6m wide broad walk which commences c 120m south-west of, but slightly off-set from, the main entrance and extends 180m to the south-west to a raised terrace. The terrace, which runs from north-west to south-east, is at a right-angle to the broad walk with views out to the north-east.

From the main entrance from Bolton Road a 5m wide path runs 25m south-west to, and on an axis with, the Cenotaph (1924, listed grade II), set at the entrance to the Garden of Remembrance. The path then divides to enclose a roughly circular area, c 90 in diameter, before rejoining at the north-east end of the broad walk, 120m south-west of the main entrance. The

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Cenotaph comprises an ashlar Stanton gritstone column surmounted by a bronze sculpture and was designed by J and H Patterson of Manchester. The Cenotaph stands at the head of shallow steps and marks the entrance to the raised ovoid Garden of Remembrance, set within the circular area to the south-west. The Garden of Remembrance rises gently to the south-west with a perimeter path raised above and enclosing planting beds. The whole is enclosed by a brick retaining wall, with brick piers, at a height of c 0.9m above the perimeter path allowing views out over the surrounding park. The 1865 description of the park opening (Barnes 1865) notes a mound within the circular area, which now includes the Garden of Remembrance, and the 1909 OS map indicates a bandstand and flagstaff to the south-west of the area, terminating the north-east view along the broad walk. These features no longer (2001) exist. The Garden of Remembrance was dedicated in September 1951 and a Book of Remembrance, at first kept in a case in the garden, was later transferred to the library (Beevers 1997).

To the south-east of the broad walk and Garden of Remembrance paths wind along and across the contours of the grassed mounds which form an informal valley gently ascending from the north-east to the south-west. A path leading north-west through this area from the Wellington Road entrance meets the broad walk 175m south-west of the main entrance. Paths in the park are generally asphalt but where this path rises up to the broad walk the surface is of stone setts laid diagonally to the route. To the north-east of this path deciduous trees form small informal groups in grass and define the lines of paths. To the south-west of the path, in the southern half of the park, tree planting to the boundary and along the broad walk defines a more open area of undulating grass and winding paths. The 1891 OS map shows an irregular lake at the south of the park and a smaller pond to the north-east, each with rockwork and a fountain. These features no longer (2001) exist but the outline of a paddling pool, formed in 1949 at the south-west end of the lake, can be discerned. Small areas of rockwork remain c 50m to the east and 35m to the north-east of the Barnes Monument.

In the south-west of the park, c 300m south-west of the main entrance, the broad walk meets a path running from south-east to north-west at the base of, and parallel to, a two-tiered grassed embankment below the terrace. On an axis with the broad walk, 2m wide stone steps rise in two flights to the terrace and the Barnes Memorial (1895), terminating the view along the broad walk from the north-east. Some 2m to the north-west and south-east of the steps a low wall of dressed stone follows the line of the flights. The c 5m high square stone memorial is set on a square brick upper plinth and an extended lower brick plinth with battered sides. An inset relief portrait of Thomas Barnes and inscriptions commemorate the park's benefactor and Gladstone as its opener. The north-east side of the terrace is marked by a low wall of dressed stone extending 24m to either side of the steps. A photograph of c 1914 (Jubilee Souvenir) and the 1891 OS map show that the steps were formerly 6m wide; the photograph also shows a stepped base to the Memorial.

To the south-west of the Memorial is an asphalt children's play area with low hedge surround. The 1891 OS map indicates two children's playgrounds in this area, one for boys and one for girls, but extending further south-west towards Albert Road. A church and a grammar school which lay on Albert Road to the north-west of the play area were demolished (C20) and the sites incorporated into the park.

North of the terrace, and to the north-west of the broad walk, the ground slopes gently down to a circular bowling green with C20 pavilion. The bowling green and an earlier pavilion are shown on the 1891 OS map. In the northern section of the park, the area c 140m west-north-west of the main entrance is laid out with a 30m diameter circular path enclosing planting beds set in grass. This area was added to the park in the early C20 and the circular feature is shown on the OS map of 1930.

REFERENCES

T Barnes, Proceedings at the Opening of Farnworth Park (1865), pp 6-9, 12-14 Farnworth Journal, 7 April 1899 [extract at Bolton Local History Library] Souvenir of Farnworth Park Jubilee 1864-1914 (Farnworth Library) K Beevers, Farnworth (1997), pp 27-36 E Briscoe, Farnworth Town Trail: The Park (nd, late C20) Greenside Conservation Area, (Bolton Metro Environment Department report, nd) A G Crosby, The Landscape History of Bolton (LA report, nd)

Maps OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1850 1930 edition OS 25" to 1 mile: 2nd edition published 1909 1937 edition OS 1:500 1891 edition

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Legal

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