

Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

West Yorkshire		Bowling Park
Bradford		GD3332
Bradford	II	
SE1731		

A public park opened in 1880 with additional features added in the early C20.

Historic Development

In the late 1870s Bradford Council purchased large areas of land, including part of the former grounds of Bolling (or Bowling) Hall (listed grade II), which had been mined for coal and ironstone during the early C19. Competitive plans for a new public park were invited in March 1878 and those of Kershaw & Hepworth of Brighouse were accepted in June of that year (Bentley 1926).

A plan dated c 1880 in the Bradford Archives Guide shows Kershaw & Hepworth's design for the park, together with illustrations of entrance gates, a lodge, and band pavilion. Bowling Park Road, which was to follow the north-east boundary of the park and divide it from Bowling Hall, is shown as an 'intended road 40ft wide'. Park entrances are shown from the intended road and from New Hey Road (now Bowling Park Drive) to the north-west. Otherwise this design is very different from that which, from the evidence of the 1893 OS map, was executed. The c 1880 plan shows formal, symmetrical elements arranged on strong axes in the south-east of the park and a perimeter carriage drive punctuated with formal planting. The design includes a croquet lawn and cricket ground. A large 'intended reservoir' is shown adjoining the park to the east.

The design executed (OS 1893) did not include a croquet lawn or a cricket ground and the proposed reservoir was not constructed. Bowling greens, tennis courts, and a new promenade were added in the 1920s. During the C20 the irregular ponds were infilled and now (2001) none remain. The area within the carriage drive in the south-east of the park is now laid out for golf.

Bowling Park remains (2001) in public use and is in the ownership of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

Description

LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING

The c20ha park lies c 1.5km to the south-south-east of Bradford Town Hall and is bounded by Bowling Park Road to the north-east and Bowling Park Drive and allotments to the north-west. To the south-west of the park lie open playing fields with late C20 housing beyond and a wooded area, 'The Roughs'. Burras Road, the approach to Bowling Cemetery, lies to the south-east. North of the park, on Bowling Park Road, lies Bolling Hall (now, 2001, a museum), school, and C20 terraced and semi-detached housing. The Hall is set on rising ground overlooking the park, but it is not incorporated as a feature in the late C19 design.

A late C20 industrial development lies to the north-west of the park on the site of the former Bowling Dye Works.

Boundaries with roads and The Roughts are marked by c 2m or c1.2m high stone walls. The lengths of 1.2m high walls formerly supported railings and a short section of these survives on Bowling Park Road. The boundary with the playing fields to the south-west is open and the 1932 OS map indicates that an area of ground to the south-west of the carriage drive formed part of the park at that time.

The irregularly shaped site lies on sloping ground, rising to the south-east. In the north-west of the park the ground rises gently, but with a steep rise adjoining the north-east boundary to Bowling Hall Road. In the south-east of the park the ground rises steeply to the south-east corner.

Paths follow gentle gradients around the site with gently undulating open areas between. Steps are only used where embankments have been constructed to form level areas for more formal areas within the design.

ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES

The principal entrance is off Bowling Park Road on the north-east boundary. It is marked by a carriage entrance flanked by two pedestrian entrances set between stone gateposts, not (2001) without gate, at the centre of the semicircular inset from the road. A second entrance from the north-west off Bowling Park Drive is in similar style but with one pedestrian entrance. Both have stone lodges of two storeys set just inside the entrances. The lodge at the Bowling Park Road entrance is larger and is not used as offices while the other remains a dwelling.

To the west, from West Bowling, the park is approached by straight, 280m long, tree-lined embanked approach which is on an axis with, but not directly linked to, the park entrance on Bowling Park Road.

GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS

The park is designed around a serpentine carriage drive set within strong belts of boundary planting. Within the drive are a series of inter-linked curving paths and sections of dense tree and shrub planting enclose a series of irregular spaces.

From the junction of the carriage drive with the entrance drive from Bowling Park Road on the north-east boundary, a winding path leads west down through a grassed open oval space, punctuated by a fountain and specimen trees, while mature trees planted along the carriage drive in the lower section of the park frame distant views over the town to the west. To the south-east of the Bowling Park Road entrance there are island beds with some small areas of rockwork, set in undulating grass with specimen evergreen trees and mainly deciduous boundary planting. On high ground in the east corner of the park, c 120m south-east of the Bowling Park Road entrance, there are disused (2001) tennis courts set on a raised terrace reached by stone steps, on the site of a former promenade. A 1926 description (Bentley) records that the promenade was very windy and had, therefore, proved unpopular for walking. To the south-west of the tennis courts a large open area within the carriage drive has been laid out as a small golf course with a small timber pavilion adjacent to the path.

Beyond the south corner of the park a late C19 stone lodge (outside the area here registered) to Bowling Cemetery is sited at a higher level. It is clearly visible from the south-east section of the park.

Along the south-west boundary with The Roughs the ground rises steeply beyond the park boundary wall providing a wooded backdrop. Going north-west, following the boundary with The Roughs, the carriage drive falls gently before reaching a level embankment, open to playing fields to the south-west (outside the area here registered).

In the north-west of the park the carriage drive slopes gently down to the entrance from Bowling Park Drive, at the centre of the north-west boundary. Some 100m to the south of this entrance, the depression of a former serpentine pond (OS 1893) is clearly visible, now densely planted with trees, while small informal groups of trees are planted within the larger areas of grass. The north corner of the park rises steeply towards Bowling Park Road with some deciduous boundary planting.

Between the carriage drive and Bowling Park Road, in the north of the park, the ground is steeply banked up to the north-east. Set into the bank c 360m north-west of the Bowling Park Road entrance is part of a stone drinking fountain, inaugurated in 1883 and the gift of Alderman William Holdsworth, Chairman of the Corporation Water Committee. Only stone steps and a semicircular bowl set in a short run of walling remain.

Within the carriage drive, in the north of the park, there is a formal tree-lined promenade c 15m wide and some 280m long, running from shallow steps at the north-north-west end to south-south-east, terminating adjacent to the site of a former bandstand. The promenade is indicated on the 1921 OS map and, it is presumed, was constructed to replace the windswept promenade in the south-east. To the north-east of the promenade a shallow depression marks the location of a former serpentine pond (OS 1893) and to the south-east of these there is a small, late C20 children's play area.

Within the central area of the park, to the south-east of the promenade, a number of curving paths provide a choice of routes to and around bowling greens and a formal oval flower garden. The latter, c 140m to the west of the Bowling Park Road entrance, occupied a level terrace entered via short flights of stone steps and comprises an oval path inside dense perimeter shrubbery enclosing a grassed area inset with rose beds. Specimen evergreens are a feature of the central area and perimeter planting. To the south-west of the oval garden lie three square bowling greens, with a small pavilion.

The view above the steps leading out of the oval garden to the north-east was originally terminated by a conservatory sited across the carriage drive to the north-east and c 120m north-west of the Bowling Park Road entrance. The conservatory no longer exists and this area of high ground, to the north-west of Bowling Park Road lodge, is now laid out with island beds containing an attractive range of predominantly evergreen shrubs and specimen trees.

To the south of the oval garden and c 144m south-west of the Bowling Park Road entrance, there is a late C19 stone drinking fountain, no longer working and with

fittings removed. The fountain is set on octagonal stone steps and is square in plan with diagonal corner buttresses supporting round pilasters and a double barrel-vaulted capping with a central column surmounted by a metal finial. It was erected in memory of Councillor John Roberts Johnson who on 2 October 1893 contracted smallpox while helping to rescue patients from an Isolation Hospital and died on the 27th of the same month (Bentley 1926). To the south-west of the fountain there is a fossilised tree stump and roots which the 1926 description (ibid) of the park records as being found in the stone quarries at Clayton (the same origin as the fossilised roots at Horton Park (qv) and similar to that in Lister Park, Bradford (qv) and presented to the park by Messrs John Murgatroyd & Sons.

References

J Bently, *Illustrated Handbook of the Bradford City Parks, Recreation Grounds, and Open Spaces* (1926), pp 45-9

H Conway, *People's Parks: The Design and Development of Victorian Parks* (1993), p 232

Bradford Archives 1974-1995: an illustrated guide to Bradford District Archives, (West Yorkshire Archive 1996) , p 24

Maps

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1852

1932 edition

OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1893

1921 edition

1934 edition

Description written: January 2001

Amended: February 2001

Register Inspector: HMT

Edited: May 2001