

## Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England

West Yorkshire

Horton Park

Bradford

GD3331

Bradford

II

SE1431

A public park laid out in the mid 1870s, opened in 1878, with additional features of the early to mid C20.

### Historic Development

Land for the purpose of providing a public park was purchased by Bradford Council in 1873. Horton Park was opened on 25 May 1878 by the Mayor, Briggs Priestly, MP (Bentley 1926). Areas for specific sporting activities including bowling greens, tennis courts, a putting green, together with a children's play area, were added during the first half of the C21 (OS 1921, 1932).

Horton Park remains in use as a public park (2001) in the ownership of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

### Description

Location, area, boundaries, landform, setting

The c 16ha park lies c 1.6 km to the south-west of Bradford city centre and slopes gently up from north-east to south-west. The area is predominantly residential with some industrial development on Horton Park Avenue to the north-east. The park is bounded by Horton Park Avenue to the north-north-east and Powell Avenue to part of the east boundary. C19 and C20 housing backs onto the north-west boundary which is marked by a c 2m high stone wall. To the south-south-west a footpath divides the park from Joseph Nutter House (formerly Nutter Orphanage) and a playing field. A low stone boundary wall and embankment form the boundary of the park with the footpath. A further area of playing fields lies to the south-east, separated from the park by a c 1.8 high stone wall. The boundaries of the park to Powell Avenue and Horton Park Avenue have low stone walls with curved stone copings, stepped to follow the sloping ground, with sockets as evidence of iron railings, now removed.

The 1893 OS map shows the park adjoining a cricket ground and a football ground along the northern half of the east boundary. By 1908 (OS) the park boundary had been moved to the west to allow Powell Avenue to be constructed.

From 1908 to 1932 (OS) Horton Park Avenue was served by a tramway. Open land to the south-east of the park has been developed for housing in the C20.

### Entrances and Approaches

The principal entrance lies at the centre of the north boundary on Horton Park Avenue. The entrance is set back off the road, flanked by stone gate piers supporting

two pairs of late C19 iron gates, in turn flanked by c0.7m high stone walls marking an approximately semicircular forecourt. The tall central gatepost is cruciform in plan and is surmounted by a cast-iron candelabrum light fitting while the outer posts are square in plan, all with classical detailing. To the west of this entrance stands a two-storey stone lodge; the building is used as offices by Bradford Council (2001).

A second entrance at the west corner of the park gives access from Cousen Road. This is marked by two pairs of ironwork gates between stone gateposts, in similar style to those at the main entrance. A stone terrace of small, two-storey cottages, Well Close House (23-29 odd Cousen Road, listed grade II), lies to the south-east of this entrance.

Two pedestrian entrances on the south-south-west boundary, giving access to the footpath adjoining Joseph Nutter House, are marked by pairs of stone gateposts in similar style to those at the main entrances. The entrance from the footpath at the south corner of the park is mirrored by an entrance to the grounds of Joseph Nutter House, opposite.

Two further entrances, formed by breaks in the boundary wall, give access from Powell Avenue to the east and Cecil Avenue to the north-west.

#### Gardens and Pleasure Grounds

The park is laid out around a broad, straight promenade with a winding carriage drive around the periphery, the two linked by a series of curving pedestrian paths.

The broad promenade rises up through the park from the principal north-east entrance to the south-west. The carriage drive meets with the promenade at the Horton Park Avenue entrance where the intersection is punctuated with a circular planting bed. The lower, north-east section of the promenade is c 9m wide with stone steps situated 234m south-west of the main entrance leading up to a double-span late C19 cast-iron bridge which carries the promenade over an irregular lake at the centre of the site. The bridge has an ornate cast-iron balustrade. South-west of the bridge, an open area to the north-west of the promenade contains a circular grassed bed which marks the location of a former bandstand, first shown on the 1908 OS map. To the south-west of this area, 343m south-west of the main entrance, is a fossilised tree stump and roots which are marked on the 1893 OS map. A 1926 description of the park (Bentley) records that this was dug up during quarrying operations in the adjacent township of Clayton and was purchased and given to the park by the late Ezra Waugh Hammond, a Councillor for the Little Horton Ward. The promenade continues south-west, here c 7m wide, terminating 29m from the south-south-west boundary at the junction with the curving carriage drive which is set within the boundary of the park.

The promenade and carriage drive are linked by several curving paths. Additionally, a straight path leads south-east, from the lower promenade 119m south-west of the main entrance, to three bowling greens and associated timber pavilions. The bowling greens are first indicated on the 1921 OS map, with two shown as square and one circular on the site of a former bandstand (OS 1893, 1908). The bowling greens are now square (2001) and are enclosed with hedges and shrubs.

In the north of the park, to the north-west of the lower promenade, a stream from the lake winds alongside the promenade down a stone culvert with a number of small cascades. OS plans of 1932 and earlier show a series of four ponds in this area, embanked to the north-west and linked by the waterfalls. Bentley's 1926 description of the park refers to these as duckponds formed on the falling gradient of a running stream. Shallow depressions, partly masked by dense tree and shrub planting, can be discerned in the area of the ponds.

Two further informal ponds are shown to the south-west of the lake, continuing the line of the other cascades to the south-west (OS 1893). By 1908 these two ponds had been filled in and a bandstand erected in that area, which is shown in a photograph of c 1926 as being of part masonry construction under a conical roof. The bandstand to the south-east of the lower promenade had been removed by 1908 (OS) and it is possible that it had been moved to the new site.

South-east of the upper promenade, 380m from the main entrance, the ground is terraced to form four shallow platforms. The 1932 OS map shows that platforms as tennis courts which is confirmed by a photograph of c 1926 (Bentley). The lower three are now laid to rough grass and the upper terrace is used as a basketball court. The south-east corner of the park has a grassed area, formerly a putting green (OS 1932).

A former circular pond lies to the north-west of the upper promenade, 470m south-west of the main entrance (OS 1893). A central fountain in stone and polished red granite has scalloped lower basin supported on four columns with classical capitals, from which rises a single column supporting a smaller circular basin and baluster. The fountain no longer functions and the circular pond has been filled in, with the outline marked by a grassed area with rose beds. The 1926 description (Bentley) records that a central ornamental memorial fountain was added to this pond in 1886 as a combined gift from Alderman Morley and Councillors Firth, Fletcher, and Hammond of the Little Horton Ward.

To the south-west of the fountain lies a shallow terrace with two sets of stone steps which lead up to a grassed area laid out with formal beds to form a rose garden. This area is bounded by dense shrub and tree planting to the north-west and south-east and by the carriage drive to the south-west.

The north-north-west corner of the park, adjacent to Horton Park Avenue, is used as a Local Authority depot. This area was formerly the site of a number of glasshouses and Bentley (1926) refers to a fine conservatory with a drinking fountain set into the wall close-by. The glasshouses and conservatory have been removed but the stone drinking fountain survives, although without its fittings and inscription plate. The inscription on the fountain is recorded in 1926 as reading 'Presented by Thomas Mills, Esquire, of Flettong Tower, Peterborough (formerly of Bradford). Erected 1878'.

A children's play area and a shelter are located to the south of the entrance from Horton Park Avenue; although now provided with modern play equipment this feature was present by 1932 (OS).

#### References

J Bentley, *Illustrated Handbook of the Bradford City Parks, Recreation Grounds, and Open Spaces* (1926), pp 37-44

H Conway, *People's Parks: The Design and Development of Victorian Parks* (1993), p. 231

#### Maps

OS 25" to 1 mile:      1<sup>st</sup> edition published 1893  
                                 2<sup>nd</sup> edition published 1908  
                                 3<sup>rd</sup> edition published 1921  
                                 1932 edition

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