

Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

West Yorkshire

Roberts Park

Bradford
Saltaire

GD2233
II

(Formerly know as Saltaire or Salts Park)

Summary of Historic Interest

Public park opened in 1871 and designed by William Gay (1814-1893) for Sir Titus Salt (1803-76) with buildings and structures by Lockwood & Mawson, as part of the model industrial town of Saltaire.

Historic Development

Saltaire was laid out by Lockwood & Mawson as a model town around Salts Mill for Sir Titus Salt during the years 1851-71. An undated map by Lockwood & Mawson shows the executed plan. The park was one of the last parts of the town to be completed and at the opening ceremony Salts Mill closed so that the workers could attend. Initially called the Peoples Park or Saltaire Park, it was given to Shipley Urban District Council by their newly elected chairman, James Roberts, who was also the manager of Salts Mill, c1910. Following a quarrel with the Council he took it back and presented it to the City of Bradford in 1920 from which time it was called Roberts Park. The park remains (1999) in the ownership of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

Site Description

Location, Area, Boundaries, Landform, Setting

Roberts Park is situated on the north side of Saltaire on land which slopes southwards down to the banks of the River Aire. The c6ha site is bounded by Victorian Road on the east side, Higher Coach Road on the north side and a fence dividing it from housing and a recreation ground on the west side. The southern bank of the Aire and the precincts of a boat house on the bank form the southern boundary.

Entrances and Approaches

There are two entrances into the park. The principal entrance, at the midpoint of the east side, has a stone lodge (by Lockwood & Mawson, c1870, listed grade II). The other entrance is via a C20 cast iron footbridge over the river, which is reached from a path running west from Victorian Road. The path divides with one branch leading north-west to a boat house and the other leading north to the footbridge, which replaced a road bridge.

Principal Building

The principal building of the park, which acts as a focus for the design, is a tea room designed by Lockwood & Mawson, c1870 (listed grade II). It is built into a terrace with the roof, which projects as a balustraded semicircle, acting as a viewing platform. Steps lead down on either side and large windows give views over a cricket

ground to the south. The integration of the building in the park's design suggests that Gay must have collaborated closely with the architects.

Gardens and Pleasure Grounds

The park is divided into three areas: gardens, sports fields and the river. The plan is articulated around an east/west axis with a terraced walk which runs from one end of the site to the other, terminating with shelters (both listed grade II). At the midpoint of the terrace the projecting semicircular viewing platform is formed by the roof of the tea room, which gives the views over the town to the south. On the platform there is a statue of Sir Titus Salt (F. Derwent Wood, listed grade II) which was erected in 1903 to commemorate the centenary of his birth.

To the north of the viewing platform is the site of a bandstand, which was demolished during the Second World War. North of this a shrubbery replaces an axial path leading north, shown on a late C19 plan by Lockwood & Mawson, which terminated with a shelter (listed grade II), which survives. The land north of the terrace, which occupies approximately one third of the park's area, is laid out with gardens and curving paths, edged with rocks in places. These are shown in similar form on the Lockwood & Mawson plan. In a book published in 1895 the educational nature of this part of the park was stressed; at that time all the plants were labelled, to facilitate the 'acquisition of botanical knowledge'.

To the south of the terrace there are sports grounds and a cricket pitch with a cricket pavilion overlooking it from the south-west corner of the site. The area was designed to accommodate various sports including croquet and archery as well as cricket.

On the southern edge of the site the River Aire was widened to provide facilities for boating and swimming. On the south bank there is a boathouse, probably of late C19 date.

References

Anon, Saltaire, Yorkshire A Sketch History, Sir Titus Salt, Bart., Sons & Co. Ltd, 1895, pp 24, 29.

Holroyd, Saltaire and its Founder, Sir Titus Salt, Bart., n.d. Late C19, pp 62-70

C.F. Chadwick, Park and Town, 1966, pp. 108-9.

J. Reynolds, Saltaire, Bradford Art Galleries and Museums, 1976

W.E. Alderson, Salt and Saltaire, 1986

Saltaire Trail, Bradford Metropolitan Council, 1996, pp. 1, 29, 32.

Maps

Lockwood & Mawson, Plan Showing the Town and Works of Saltaire, n.d. late C19

OS 6" to 1 mile surveyed 1848

OS 25" to 1 mile 1934

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