

BRYNMILL PARK

Ref number	PGW (Gm) 46 (SWA)
OS Map	159
Grid ref	SS 634 925
Former county	West Glamorgan
Unitary authority	City and County of Swansea
Community council	Uplands
Designations	None
Site evaluation	Grade II
Primary reasons for grading	A small but well preserved Victorian urban public park dominated by an attractive tree-fringed lake which is home to a range of wildfowl.
Type of site	Public park
Main phases of construction	1872

Site description

Brynmill Park lies on a south-facing slope in central Swansea, to the west of the city centre and immediately east of Singleton Park, from which it is divided by Brynmill Lane. It is situated in a residential area and on the remaining sides it is surrounded by housing. The park is quite small, triangular in shape and centred on a rectangular lake, the Brynmill reservoir.

The nine-acre park is laid out informally, with winding tarmac paths, the lake, lawns, ornamental trees and shrubs, a bowling green and a few buildings. There are four entrances, in the south, east and west corners and towards the east end of the north side. The park is bounded by iron railings on all but the west side, where there is a stone wall. The entrance at the south end is flanked by simple square stone piers with pyramidal tops, with simple iron gates between. Curving paths lead north-eastwards and divide around a sinuous tree and shrub bed which contains a mature lime and two pines. Further on, to the north-west of the path, is a small lawn planted with a wellingtonia that has lost its top. A belt of trees, including mature chestnuts and beech trees, runs up the west side and trees and shrubs are planted along the south-east side, including an oak tree of considerable age. To the north of the path is a steep bank with a low stone revetment wall at its foot, which is the southern edge of the dam of the lake. The bank is planted with evergreen shrubs, mainly laurels, below which are pines. A sloping path leads up the bank to the lake.

The lake, or reservoir, occupies most of the western half of the park and is roughly rectangular, with smoothly curving sides edged with stone. At either end of

the north side are narrow inlets, giving the lake a horned outline. At the north end of the western one, which has very little water in it, is an arched culvert, now dry. In the middle of the western one is a circular islet with concrete 'dry-stone' edging, planted with a weeping willow and shrubs. The lake is populated with a variety of wild fowl, in particular ducks and swans, including Canada geese, black swans, teal, pochard, widgeon and shoveller ducks. Against the south-east side and at the north-east end are three small circular islands, also with stone edging, built for nesting purposes. A tarmac path runs round the lake. On the east side it is curving, with benches on a raised concrete platform backed by concrete walling of 'dry-stone' construction. The lake is surrounded by ornamental trees and shrubs, giving it an attractive semi-natural character.

The north-eastern end of the park consists of a large lawn fringed by trees, with a bowling green on its western side, next to the lake. The lawn is flat, a scarp on the north boundary of the park showing that it was levelled by cutting into the slope. It has a few oak trees planted on the southern side and two spindly pines at the eastern end. Near the eastern end of the south-east side is an entrance of simple iron gates flanked by square stone piers with rusticated panels and gabled tops. In the east corner is a small children's play area, a stand of tall pines and a red brick maintenance building on slightly higher ground on the boundary. Along the north boundary are a row of pines and more brick huts screened by a shrub bed. Near the north-west end of the lawn is a simple iron-gated entrance leading to Knoll Avenue to the north, opposite which are some oak trees.

The bowling green is surrounded by a narrow tarmac path and aluminium railings, with a cypress hedge on the south-east and trees and shrubs to the north-east and south-west. On the north-west side is a single-storey red brick pavilion with a pent-roofed, wooden-framed verandah on all sides but the back. Behind are a large pine and copper beech. Concrete steps in the west corner lead down to the path around the reservoir. In a westwards direction the path has a revetment wall and three bench recesses on the north side built with 'dry-stone' concrete slabs. At the north-east corner of the reservoir, where it has low iron railings around it, there is a small disused fountain standing in a circular stone-edged basin, now concrete filled. The fountain consists of an iron pillar with four attached columns on which is a lipped iron basin, with a smaller bowl on a short column above. There is pipework for two spouts, but these are not working. To the north is a gently sloping lawn with rose beds cut into it, to the west of which are three *Trachycarpus fortunei* and some oak trees. To the north is a further path bounded by a mixed tree and shrub border on the perimeter. Plants include large pittosporums.

To the west, in the centre of the north-west side of the lake, is an aviary. This houses peacocks, hens and pheasants and consists of some modern breeze block and cage buildings, incorporating two large conifers - a wellingtonia and fir - which dominate the skyline on the north side of the lake. In front, on the south side, is a wide, concrete-paved promenade with benches and low railings along the water's edge. To the north is a wide tarmac and bedding plant area. On the west side is a small separate garden with raised beds and crazy paving paths. To its north, surrounded by trees, shrubs and a tall hedge, is a lodge or gardener's house. It is a small two-storey building, the ground floor of brick, the upper half-timbered.

At the west end is an area of tall trees, including sycamore, oak and chestnut. The entrance here is splayed and set back from the line of the boundary wall. It has modern concrete square piers with pyramidal tops, and simple iron gates. The narrow

strip between the west boundary and the lake is planted with mixed trees and shrubs, with a concrete-paved area next to the lake with two raised beds planted with *Trachycarpus fortunei* and ash trees. The ground slopes westwards from the path down to the boundary. In the south-west corner is a large evergreen oak tree.

The park was created in two phases during the second half of the nineteenth century. It was opened as a public park in 1872, £25,000 having been spent in its creation. The reservoir, belonging to the Swansea Water Works and fed by the Glanmor stream, had been in existence since 1828. A plan of the 'Bryn Mill reservoir property' of 1835 shows that at that time the reservoir was already slightly ornamented, with fringing woodland, an entrance in the north-west corner and a path all around it. The 1878 Ordnance Survey map shows the recently created public park. It occupied the present area of the park around the reservoir and was landscaped with walks and planting, the layout being more or less as it is now. There was no aviary or bowling green at this stage, and the reservoir was surrounded by fields, with the gardens of Parc-wern to the north-west and Singleton Park to the west. By 1913 (2nd edition Ordnance Survey map) the area had been officially named Brynmill Park and had acquired the bowling green, pavilion and aviary buildings, then to the south of the lodge or gardener's house. The bowling green, made in 1907, was the first one in Swansea. The entrances had been made, the path system slightly altered at the east end, and housing had sprung up to the north and east. Since then the main changes have been the rebuilding of the aviary, the surfacing in concrete and tarmac, some new planting and the addition of the children's play area.

Sources

Primary

Plan of Bryn Mill Reservoir Property, 1835: West Glamorgan Record Office D/D WCR/PI 20.

Documents and old photographs relating to Brynmill Park: West Glamorgan Record Office D/D RMD 1/10, 12, 14, 15

Old postcards of the park

Secondary

Davies, R.R. and J. Roberts, *Prize essays on the desirability and advantages of recreation grounds for Swansea* (1875).