

## PORT TALBOT, TALBOT MEMORIAL PARK

<b>Ref number</b>	<b>PGW (Gm) 45 (NEP)</b>
<b>OS map</b>	170
<b>Grid ref</b>	SS 773 892
<b>Former county</b>	West Glamorgan
<b>Unitary authority</b>	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
<b>Community</b>	Port Talbot
<b>Designations</b>	None
<b>Site evaluation</b>	<b>Grade II</b>
<b>Primary reasons for grading</b>	Small, well preserved urban public park with a fine central bandstand and war memorial. The commemorative character of the park is emphasised by the main gate, which is dedicated to Rupert Price Hallowes, VC (1881-1915).
<b>Type of site</b>	Urban public park
<b>Main phases of construction</b>	1925

### Site description

The Talbot Memorial Park, or Taibach Park, is a small urban public park situated on the east side of the A48, towards the southern end of Port Talbot, opposite the steel works. On 3 September 1925 the Trustees of the Margam Estate gave the land for the park to the Port Talbot Borough Council as a memorial to Emily Charlotte Talbot, of Margam Castle, who died on 21 September 1918. The area, a field called Cae'r bont a'r sguor, was at first laid out as a simple open space with a central war memorial to the dead of the First World War. The park was then laid out in its present form, at a cost of £13,000, and opened to the public on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1926.

The park is situated on level ground on the north side of the Ffrwd Wylt river, with the large St Theodore's church to the north. It is L-shaped, the main axis being south-west/north-east and with an arm at the north end out to the north-west. There are several distinct areas, with sports and play facilities at the northern and western ends. The main entrance, on the A48, is recessed from the front boundary, a low concrete block wall topped by iron railings, and is flanked by tall octagonal stone piers with gothic tops. It consists of a wide, stone Tudor archway flanked by gothic side entrances. This gateway commemorates the First World War hero Rupert Price Hallowes, VC (1881-1915), who in 1909 became assistant manager at Port Talbot Mansel Tinplate works. Over the whole is a carved inscription - PORT TALBOT MEMORIAL PARK 1925 - above which is a row of quatrefoil panels. All three archways have recently been rebuilt and repaired, following an accident in which they

were severely damaged. Next to the side entrances are similar openings into the gardens of the flanking lodges. These are identical, mirror image, small, two-storey buildings of grey stone with lighter dressed mouldings. They have pitched slate roofs, mullioned windows and small bay windows on their inward-facing sides. On their gable ends facing the main road they have circular panels carved with 'Borough of Port Talbot' and the Port Talbot coat of arms. Inside the front boundary is a belt of mixed trees and shrubs, with evergreens predominating.

A wide central tarmac path leads north-eastwards from the main entrance to a War Memorial statue and beyond it a bandstand. On either side are lawns dotted with specimen trees and beds for bedding out displays. Curving paths run up the north and south sides, through specimen trees such as sycamore, monkey puzzle, birch, holly, variegated golden holly, evergreen oak, beech and flowering cherry (prunus). On the south-west side are privet hedges and mixed shrub and tree borders on the boundary. On the north-west side, next to the churchyard, is a fence and an elder hedge.

The main walk leads first to a large War Memorial statue, commemorating the dead of both the First and Second World Wars. A life-sized bronze statue of the Angel of Victory stands on a tall, square, granite plinth with bronze panels on the sides. The angel holds a laurel wreath in one hand and a small winged victory in the other. The statue is signed by L.F. Roslyn and dated 1925. Roslyn was also the designer of the bronze panels. The architects Lanchester, Lucas and Lodge designed the granite plinth, using granite from the same Scottish source as for Balmoral Castle.

On the south-east side is a belt of mixed trees and shrubs. About half-way along is a granite drinking fountain on a stepped plinth. It has a semi-circular bowl and metal plaque set in an alcove above it. This is sculpted with the head and shoulders of a man and is inscribed 'John Hopkin Davis 1910'. It was first erected, in July 1910, near the old police station in Taibach, to honour Taibach's doctor (died 1920). The bronze bust was designed by Sir William Goscombe John. It was moved to its present position in the park in 1926. Behind is a brick wall enclosing a maintenance yard, with a brick and rendered toilet block to the north.

At the north end is a fine bandstand surrounded by two concentric circular paths with a strip of grass with beds for bedding out between them. The bandstand is octagonal, standing on a brick plinth. The curving lead roof is supported on ornate iron pillars with railings between them and a frieze of decorative ironwork around the top and on the eaves of the roof. At the top of the roof is a bell-shaped dome topped by a weather vane. Behind the bandstand, to the north-east, is a beech hedge.

To the north-east is a separate compartment of lawn dotted with specimen trees, including prunus, malus, holly and monkey puzzle. On the north-east side are two raised beds of rockwork, with another in the north corner. Towards the west end is a slight mound with a hollow top. In the west corner is a weeping ash with a rockwork bed behind it. This area was used for the National Eisteddfod in 1932. To the north-west a tarmac path flanked by privet hedges leads to a children's playground to the east and hard tennis courts to the west.

The north-westward extension to the park is laid out with a central tarmac path flanked by lawns with rose beds and prunus trees. On the south side is a modern single-storey brick building and car park and two bowling greens, side by side. These are surrounded by raised tarmac paths and privet hedges on all but the north-east side, where there is a wooden fence. To the north-east of the path and lawn are three structures - a wooden pavilion with a narrow verandah on its south side, a brick and rendered pavilion to its west, with a central verandah and pitched roof, and to the west

of that a small modern aviary with a brick building and cage. The aviary is disused at present.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

Newspaper cuttings and order of dedicatory service in Port Talbot Public Library.  
Information from Mr S. O'Donovan.

### **Secondary**

Evans, A.L., *The history of Taibach and district* (1982), p. 109.