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OF SPECIAL HISTORIC INTEREST IN WALES

REGISTER ENTRY

YNYSANGHARAD PARK

Ref number PGW (Gm) 3 (RCT)

OS Map 170

Grid ref ST 075 900

Former county Mid Glamorgan

Unitary authority Rhondda, Cynon, Taff

Community council Pontypridd

Designations None

Site evaluation **Grade II**

Primary reasons for grading Well preserved 1920s public park, with numerous sports facilities and ornamental features, including bandstand and sunken rockwork garden. Contains some good mature trees, and retains its traditional flowerbeds.

Type of site Public park

Main phases of construction 1923-25

Site description

Ynysangharad Park is a public park of the 1920s, laid out in Edwardian style and situated on level ground on the east bank of the river Taff in the centre of Pontypridd. The park was opened on 6th August 1923 by Field Marshal Viscount Allenby as a war memorial park. He also unveiled the memorial to the 5th Welch Regiment in the town. It was laid out on fields, allotment gardens and an orchard in the triangular area between Ynysangharad House and the Brown Lenox Chain and Anchor Works on the east and the river Taff on the west and south. Gordon Lenox, who helped to establish the ironworks, had come to live at Ynysangharad House in 1873, and from then on the area was partly used by the public. In 1890 Mr Lenox allowed Pontypridd's 'First Annual Flower, Fruit, and Vegetable Show' to take place. The house and contents were sold, however, in 1904.

A public park for Pontypridd was debated by the Council as early as 1903. The present site or the Common were proposed locations. A map of May 1909 shows that already a number of recreational areas had been created between the house and the river: there was a field used by the Pontypridd Cricket Club and another by the Pontypridd Tennis Club at the south end of the area, and Ynysangharad Tennis Court was on the

west side. The east bank of the river, on the west side of the area, was all allotment gardens. In 1893 a huge pavilion had been erected on the area for the National Eisteddfod. In December 1919 33 acres were bought 'for providing enjoyment and pleasure for its [Pontypridd's] inhabitants'. The full price of £23,318 3s. 6d. was paid by 1924. The suggested layout was formal, with straight tree-lined walks around the various sports grounds. The final layout was less formal, with the major sports grounds at the southern end. Photographs of the opening show tennis courts, a toboggan slide, see-saws, swings, a 'hand-ladder', bowling green, paddling and swimming pools and a 'rocking horse'. On 3rd May 1925 the bowling green was officially opened, and on 11th November 1925 a footbridge over the river, on the site of the present bridge and of an earlier plank bridge, was opened. The cricket ground was opened in 1924, and the first county match was played against Derbyshire in August 1926. The house, formerly lived in by the Lenox family, was situated on the north-east side of the park and remained in use until the 1960s as a health centre. The park has been reduced in size by the building of the A470 road across its eastern side in the early 1970s. Ynysangharad House was demolished to make way for it. Access is via a vehicular and pedestrian entrance at the north end and a footbridge over the river near the south end.

The park is laid out with sports facilities and ornamental features, with a framework of tarmac paths, some straight, some curving. It is well planted with trees of various ages, both deciduous and coniferous. The main entrance is at the north end, flanked by modern square stone piers and modern iron railings. A wide tarmac path flanked by oaks leads from here southwards along the west side of the park. Below the path, between it and the river, are three large raised beds aligned north-south. The northern two are rectangular, with concrete block sides and some shrubs planted on them. The southern one is mounded and larger, with curving sides of rubble stone walling. At its north end is a recess and a circular pool surrounded by rockwork. Above this is a dried out water channel leading from a small circular pool fed by a water pipe. Both pools are lined with plastic indicating that they and the rockwork have been rebuilt. The flat top and sloping sides of the bed are planted with mixed trees and shrubs. To the south is a recently built clock golf course.

The north end of the park is occupied largely by a pitch and putt golfing area of gently sloping grass. Some young trees have been planted in this area, and there is a large mature ash on a low mound at the south end which may be part of the original planting. At the south end is an old wooden pavilion with a red tiled roof and open verandah, now used as a ticket office for the golf. The area is flanked on the east by a row of conifers and a tarmac path bordered by planes. Between this and the east boundary is a grass area laid out with tarmac paths and specimen trees. A path runs along the east boundary of the park.

The river is flanked in the northern half of the park by a row of mixed trees, including pines and sycamores, with an underplanting of shrubs, particularly laurels. Set against the laurels is a small pavilion with an open wooden verandah on the east side, a rendered back and red tiled roof. This has suffered from vandalism and some of the woodwork of the verandah is missing. Further south the river is bordered by a row of cypresses, next to which is another pavilion of the same materials as that to the north, with an open front on the east side and a low bench around the walls. It is surrounded on all but the open side by clipped privet hedges, and is in better condition. The walk is flanked by a children's playground and paddling pool, and by an outdoor swimming pool, now closed, on the east. This has a long open verandah facing south along its south side, also built of wood with a red tiled roof and with a long bench along the wall.

The verandah overlooks a large lawn laid out with circular and rectangular island beds for roses and bedding plants and a number of isolated cypresses. This is bounded on the south side by a wide tarmac path flanked by horse chestnut trees leading at the west end to the footbridge to the centre of town, built in 1991 to replace an earlier one.

At the east end of the chestnut avenue, to its north, is a small triangular sunken garden, the Sunken or Italian Garden, reached through an entrance flanked by low stone piers and walls with crenellated tops at its east end. Photographs from the 1930s show that this garden has changed very little since it was built. The garden is edged on the outside with a low wall of stone setts set diagonally. From the entrance curving paths of crazy paving stone, bounded on their outer sides by crenellated stone walling, run north and south down to the lower part of the garden. This is laid out with narrow triangular beds for bedding plants, edged with stones, separated by narrow grass paths. A crazy paving path runs around the perimeter. In the centre is a small bed raised on rockwork. Traditional bedding out is practised, giving a brilliant display of seasonal flowers. The sloping sides of the garden are planted with low ground-cover plants, and at intervals at their foot are recesses for benches. To the east is an area of grass and plane trees.

From the Sunken Garden a path runs northwards past the east side of the swimming pool. It is flanked on its east side by rockwork planted with conifers and shrubs. In one place the rockwork is *c.* 2.5 m high, with a wall of large slabs of stone. To the east is an area of grass with mixed specimen trees planted informally, east of which is a war memorial (including the Falklands War). This was unveiled on 31 July 1989 by the Duke and Duchess of York.

In the centre of the park, north-west of the cricket pitch, is a large formal circular sunken area, in the middle of which is a bandstand. It is surrounded by a path and iron railings, inside which is a gentle grass slope down to a circular tarmacked area revetted by a low drystone wall. There are four radial paths (two paved with stone, two tarmac) leading down to the central area, and one around the circumference. The radial paths and the central area are bordered by narrow flowerbeds for bedding, and the grass slope is planted at intervals with weeping willows in threes. The bandstand is octagonal, set on a slightly raised crazy paving plinth, with two flights of stone steps leading up to it. It has a conical red tiled roof, iron piers and railings and is surrounded by narrow flowerbeds used for bedding. Old photographs show that this bed and the radial paths were originally edged with rockwork.

To the north of the bandstand area the ground rises gently. The area is laid out to lawn and circular rose beds, with a curving tarmac path leading through it. At the top of the slope is a memorial by Sir W. Goscombe John to two notable residents of Pontypridd, Evan James (1809-78) and his son James James (1832-1902), author and composer respectively of the Welsh national anthem. It consists of two flights of stone steps flanked by low stone walls and yew hedges leading up to the blue Pennant stone and bronze memorial topped by bronze statues of a harpist and the draped figure of a woman representing music and poetry respectively. The memorial was unveiled on 23 July 1930 by Lord Treowen.

To the south of the chestnut avenue the north-south path continues along the edge of the river, flanked by pollarded limes on the west and planes on the east. A grass bank runs down to the river. The southern end of the park is occupied by tennis courts, a bowling green surrounded by a privet hedge, a cricket pitch and a rugby football ground at the eastern end. The north side of the cricket pitch is backed by a laurel hedge, and a modern pavilion, built in 1961, stands in the north-west corner on the site of the original wooden pavilion. To the north-east of the cricket pitch is a small public lavatory

building, with the maintenance area to the north. The eastern half of this area was formerly the walled garden of Ynysangharad House, and two sections of stone walling remain at its north and south ends.

Sources

Primary

Map of 'Ynysangharad Farm and Newbridge Chain & Anchor Works', May 1909. Pontypridd Public Library.

Sale Catalogue of Ynysangharad House, 14 April 1904. Pontypridd Public Library.

Photographs of house and park, 1930s onwards. Pontypridd Public Library, photo file 15.

Secondary

Glamorgan Free Press and Rhondda Leader, 10 August 1923.

Pontypridd Observer 21 June 1930, 6 May 1961, 30 November 1963, 4 June 1971.

Evans, C.J.O., *Glamorgan, its history and topography* (1943), p. 384.

Pontypridd Cricket Club booklet (1870-1970).