

## **BARRY, COLD KNAP PARK**

**Ref number** PGW (Gm) 58 (GLA)

**OS Map** 171

**Grid ref** ST 101 663

**Former county** South Glamorgan

**Unitary authority** The Vale of Glamorgan

**Community council** Barry

**Designations** None

**Site evaluation** **Grade II**

**Primary reasons for grading** Well preserved urban public park of the 1920s with a unified and distinctive style. The design of the park takes good advantage of its seaside position and includes a magnificent promenade from which there are fine views of the shore and Bristol Channel.

**Type of site** Urban public park

**Main phases of construction** 1920s

### **Site description**

Cold Knap Park is a small urban park situated on the sea front to the north-west of Cold Knap Point, at the west end of the town of Barry. The main area of the park is triangular in shape, with streets and built up areas to its east and north-west and a long, straight pebble beach to its south-west. The ground is more or less level, with a gentle slope southwards at the north end and a raised bank, on which is a wide promenade, next to the beach along the south-west side. South-east of the lake is an irregular-shaped area of the park, in the neck of land to the north of Cold Knap Point. This is largely occupied by a lido, with swimming pool, paddling pool and changing rooms, which is at present not in use.

The park is in three sections: the main area, which is dominated by a boating lake, a small sunken triangular area to the west, separated from the main area by a broad promenade, and the lido.

The sunken area lies at the west end of the promenade. The sloping grass sides are cut into three narrow terraces with ribbon beds of brightly coloured annuals on each terrace and at the bottom. Flights of brick steps, flanked by brick parapets, alternating with concrete paving, lead down to the floor of the garden at each corner. The floor has three island beds cut in a small lawn and a central triangular pool. A concrete path around the edge has recesses for seats. The area is bounded by a road on the north, a wide tarmac walk and escallonia hedge on the east and an escallonia hedge and the promenade on the south-west.

The wide, tarmac promenade is the main axial feature of the park. It is c. 400 m long and runs from the small roundabout west of the sunken area past the park and the lido to the foot of Cold Knap Point, where it terminates in a very wide flight of concrete steps leading up on to the point and another leading on to the beach. From here a tarmac walk leads eastwards past a 1930s lifeboat station to Watch House Bay. The promenade forms a very attractive culmination to the park; it provides a very attractive place to walk and from it there are fine views out over the bay and the Bristol Channel. It is bounded on the seaward side by the pebble beach and on the landward, between the sunken area and the lido, by a low wall of reconstituted stone blocks. It has square piers with triangular tops at regular intervals and between the piers the top of each section of wall is slightly dished. The style and materials of this wall are repeated throughout the garden. Opposite the lido the promenade is bounded by a chainlink fence. Three wide flights of concrete steps, flanked by similar walls, lead down to the lake on either side of and between two pavilions built against the bank below the promenade. The flat roofs of these pavilions form two wide platforms extending into the park from the promenade. They are bounded by concrete balustrading. At the south-east end of the park a wider flight of concrete steps leads down from the promenade to the concrete apron at the end of the lake. Opposite this, on the seaward side of the promenade, a flight of steps leads down to the beach.

The main area of the park is dominated by a boating lake, fed by a small stream at its north end, which occupies most of the southern, wider, half of the park. The lake, which attracts sea birds and water fowl, including swans, is concrete edged, with straight sides on the east and south-west and a curving north-west side. There is a tarmac path all the way around the edge of the lake. To the south-west of the lake is a bank leading up to the promenade. The upper part is planted with a mixture of salt-tolerant shrubs, dominated by *Euonymus japonicus*, with some escallonia and tamarisk. Towards the east end of the promenade, beyond the lake, there is more dense and more mixed shrub planting. Below, the slope is grass, with a concrete and tarmac path, with recesses for benches, half way down the slope, level with the pavilions. Below it the steps are continued down to the lakeside path, which has recessed platforms for benches. There are two original cast iron benches in this area and there are further similar benches throughout the park.

In the centre of the south-west side, built against the bank, are two shelters or pavilions. These are in simple classical style, built of concrete, with flat roofs and Doric columns on square plinths. The columns are doubled at the corners. Curved revetment walls flank the shelters. In front of each central shallow concrete steps with low parapets lead down to the lake. Their parapets have sockets, indicating that they once may have held railings.

In the west corner of the park, opposite the sunken area, is a concrete platform next to the lake backed by a high concrete wall with ramps down to lake level on either side of it. This area was originally used for boat storage but is now a skateboard park. At the south end of the lake is a boat storage concrete apron backed by a row of shacks for boat hire, refreshments and storage. At the east end of the row flights of steps on an axis with those up to the promenade and on to the beach lead up to the east boundary.

On the east side of the park there is a narrow strip of ground, sloping gently up to the east, between the lake and the boundary. This is a grass bank with a belt of mixed shrubs, in particular *Griselinia littoralis*, escallonia, tamarisk, hebe, olearia, viburnum and berberis. Half way along the lake there is a flight of steps, similar to the

others, up from the lakeside path to a gate in the boundary wall. This is also similar to that along the promenade.

The north end and west side of the park has less the character of a seaside park and more that of a standard urban park. The area is laid out informally, with lawns, curving paths, informally planted trees and some island beds. The one formal element is a straight, narrow canal which feeds the lake. Water enters the park at its north end, fed into the round-ended canal through an iron pipe. It then runs down the concrete canal over five small cascades. Next to the lake the path is carried over the canal on a low concrete bridge with low parapets and piers. Higher up another path crosses it on a flat bridge with latticework iron railings. To the east this continues up the slope to a gate in the boundary wall, next to which is a mature elm tree. The canal is flanked by paths and next to that on the east side is a fluted iron drinking fountain (out of use) with two bowls on one side. To the east of the canal is a narrow lawn backed by a mixed shrub border and privet hedge. At the north end is a lawn with a hawthorn tree and sycamore planted in it and a rose bed next to the boundary. The east boundary north of the lake is different from the remaining boundaries in being constructed of latticework iron railings between reconstituted stone piers.

At the north end are two simple pedestrian exits, with a tree and shrub border between them. The trees include pine and sycamore. To the west of the canal curving paths lead across the gently sloping lawn. The boundary wall is similar to that along the promenade and next to it is an open belt of trees, including pine, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, poplar, lime, sycamore and elm. Towards the south end is a row of *Cupressus macrocarpa* then a few shrubs and trees. A cross path has an olearia hedge next to it and a circular bed of bedding plants is sheltered by a privet hedge. Near the south end are two flights of steps, flanked by brick walls, carrying paths from lake level to higher ground and an exit north of the skateboarding area.

The third area of the park is the lido. This is an integral part of the park, although now separated from the main area by fences and buildings. It mainly consists of a large rectangular, concrete-lined swimming pool, 120 x 30 yd, orientated west-north-west/east-south-east, with a small paddling pool, with rounded ends and a dolphin statue in the middle, at its south-west end. In the centre of the long sides are semi-circular, separate, men's and women's changing rooms. These are of simple, flat-roofed, box-like design, built in concrete, but are made more attractive by being stepped up the slopes on either side of the pool. At the east end of the area there are some intrusive post-Second World War buildings, such as a sewage pumping station, which detract from the historic character of the park.

Cold Knap Park was created from open farmland in the mid 1920s, when funding for it was obtained from the government (Unemployed Grants Committee). The work was undertaken by the Welsh Town Planning and Housing Trust, which handed over the completed park to the Urban District Council. Mr L.G. Mouchel was the consultant engineer for the lake and lido and the borough surveyor, Major Hinchschliff, designed the pavilions, which are similar to his contemporary ones on Barry Island, and later the chalets and changing rooms of the lido. At the same time a stepped concrete wall was built along the top of the Watch House Bay beach. A plan of the original layout, attached to the deeds, shows the park, without the pavilions, much as it is now.

The lake was designed in the shape of a Welsh harp but a triangular island, shown on the original plan, was never made. The triangular sunken area is not shown as part of the park on the plan nor on the 1936 25 in. Ordnance Survey map and was

not developed until after the Second World War. The path layout differs slightly between the original plan and the 1936 map, which shows the paths more or less as they are now, with some additional ones along the east side that have gone. The 1936 map also shows the pavilions and a large building, presumably a shelter, at the south end of the lake, where the concrete apron is now.

The original design for the lido area differs only from the present arrangement in that the semi-circular changing rooms and paddling pool are not shown on the plan. The pool was built in 1926 and until 1929 it was tidal, filled through a sluice gate by sea water at high tide. In 1929 a gas engine was installed to pump the sea water in. Interestingly, the 1936 Ordnance Survey map shows a path layout to the north of the pool, with a semi-circular path corresponding exactly to the position of the later changing rooms. The changing rooms and chalets were added in 1937 and opened in 1938. They were designed by Major Hinchsliff in a simple, modernist, functional style. The paddling pool was added after the Second World War and the dolphin statue was made from recycled concrete by Mr R. Lalande, supervisor at the destructor site in Barry Road.

The old cast iron seats in the park are of late Victorian/Edwardian date and are similar to some in Victoria Park, on the east side of Barry. They may have been brought here from Victoria Park or from Romilly Park just to the north. The original walling remains in place except in the north-east, where it has been replaced with piers and railings. There appears to be little original planting left in the park, apart from some trees at the northern end and some of the larger *Euonymus japonicus* and *Griselinia littoralis*. Most planting is post Second World War.

## **Sources**

### **Primary**

Plan of original layout, attached to deeds: The Vale of Glamorgan County Council.

### **Secondary**

Burrow, E.J., *Guide to Barry and Barry Island* (Borough Guides no. 158).

Luxton, B.C., 'Barry', *South Glamorgan: a county history* (ed. S. Williams) (1975).

Luxton, B.C., *Barry in old photographs 2* (1978), p. 48; 3, p. 65.

'The Knap Lido -history and heritage' (Knap Pool Restoration Group, 1998).