

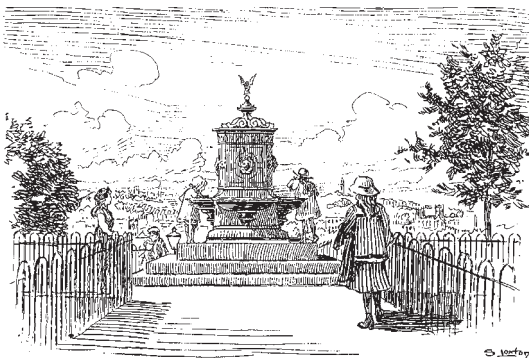
Factsheet - Victoria Park

By 1850, Bristol was declared the third most unhealthy city of mid-19th century England. Many people had left the countryside and moved into the city to find jobs in industry. There were no dustmen to take away the rubbish, drinking water was polluted and there were not enough drains to take away the sewage. So much land had been built on that there was little room for recreation.



1 Bedminster was one of the four oldest parishes in Bristol. It was also one of the most insanitary. To try to improve conditions in the area, 51.5 acres of land was bought from the estate of a local landowner in 1889. It cost £20,678. The first grasscutters were grazing sheep!

2 The school was built in 1885 — about the same time as the idea to lay out Windmill Hill as a park.



3 In 1889 a Liberal councillor presented a drinking fountain that he had designed himself.

4 In 1890 a bandstand was built and a park ranger appointed.

5 Entrance gates, seats, mens' toilets, shelters, planting and fencing were added in 1891.

6 In 1897 iron fencing was put around the flower beds and shrubberies. Tar paving and gravel paths were laid, and swings, see-saws and horizontal bars were put in.

7 By 1898 there were also four permanent park rangers, another drinking fountain, a cannon left over from the Crimean War, and a circular pond with rails around it was installed near the St. Luke's Road entrance.

8 In 1905 an open air swimming pool was built. Swimming in cold water was thought to be good for many illnesses including chest diseases.

9 The gates at the Somerset Terrace entrance to the park were as imposing as the keeper's lodge and the nearby school.

10 Between 1905 - 1918 tennis courts, a bowling green and a quoit ground were added. The layout and pathways of some of the park was altered to draw attention to the cannon and new flower beds with rockeries and stumperies (little upside down tree stumps with flowers planted among the exposed roots).

11 Most of the railings and the cannon were taken away and melted down to make weapons for use in the Second World War. The swimming pool was damaged by bombs and knocked down.



12 Modern features include the pond, wildlife garden, planting of shrubs, more children's play equipment, and a sports pitch. The water maze was built to mark the end of sewage being discharged into the River Avon. The pattern of the maze is based on one of the roof bosses in the church of St Mary Redcliffe. Water is supplied by a spring on Knowle Hill. Near the maze, the surface has been moulded to echo the ripples a millstone would make if it were dropped in a pool of water.

