



Parks and Gardens

Weston's open spaces are one of its greatest assets. This information sheet focuses on our town's main public parks.

Alexandra Parade

The gardens of Alexandra Parade, Weston's oldest public park, cover the site of our first railway station. The station was moved in 1866, and unsuccessful attempts were made to sell the old site for development. The land was laid out as open space instead, and Old Station Square became known as The Plantation.



The Floral Clock on Alexandra Parade © courtesy of Weston Library

Weston's Commissioners bought the land from the Bristol & Exeter Railway Company in September 1871, aiming to create public gardens. Maps of the late 1800s show The Plantation had a drinking fountain and three rows of trees.

In 1909 shrubs were planted and benches were added. The Plantation was renamed Alexandra Parade after Queen Alexandra, wife of Edward VII.

A large tank was sited at the western end of Alexandra Parade after World War I to celebrate local contributions to War Savings. By the 1930s it was a rusty, scruffy, unwelcome reminder of war. The tank was removed in January 1935, and was replaced with a large floral clock. During World War II the clock was planted with propaganda slogans such as "Lend to Defend" and "National War Savings". The cuckoo clock was added in June 1951, to mark the Festival of Britain.

The floral clock's original shape remains today, but it has been missing its hands since the late 1990s.

Ashcombe Park

Ashcombe Park, on the lower slopes of Worlebury Hill, opened to the public in 1902. The land, part of the ancient manor of Ashcombe, was bought by Weston's Town Commissioners in 1886-1888 to prevent development.

The park has open stretches of grass, groups of trees, and a central tree-lined avenue. It has been home to Ashcombe Bowling Club since the early 1900s. Tennis courts were added at the top of the park in the 1940s. Sadly, the large 1930s boating pond and the putting green created in the 1960s have both disappeared.

Clarence Park

Rebecca Davies donated 16 acres of land to Weston in 1882 in memory of her late husband, Henry. The land, on Weston's southern edge, opened as Clarence Park in September 1889. It was named after the Duke of Clarence, a grandson of Queen Victoria.

The parks are now divided by Walliscote Road. The East Park became a recreation ground in 1911. It hosted cricket matches, including home games for Somerset County Cricket Club from 1914 – 1996. The West Park has shrubbery, flower beds and lawns and is home to Clarence Bowling Club, founded in 1907. The fountain in the lily pond was put up in memory of Rebecca Davies, who died shortly before the park's grand opening.

An elaborate floral crown was planted in the West Park in 1911 to celebrate the coronation of King George V.



*Coronation Crown, Clarence Park,
Weston-super-Mare*

The Coronation Crown © courtesy of Weston Library

Ellenborough Park

Ellenborough Park was created in 1856 as the private gardens for residents of Ellenborough Crescent. There were gravel paths, pools and fountains, shrubs and flower beds. Access to the gardens was given to the owners of the large houses that were built around the park in the later 1800s.



Ellenborough Park East, 2019 © Tom Simpson

The park was divided by Walliscote Road in the 1860s. Over time the land has returned to a more natural state. The western park remains private, and is home to several rare plant species. It was created a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1989. The eastern park has been open to the public since 2005.

Grove Park

The grounds of the Smyth-Pigotts' Weston home, The Grove, were given to the town in 1889 in return for an annual rent of £300. Grove Park opened on 20 June 1891.



Grove Park bandstand, 1964 © Weston Mercury

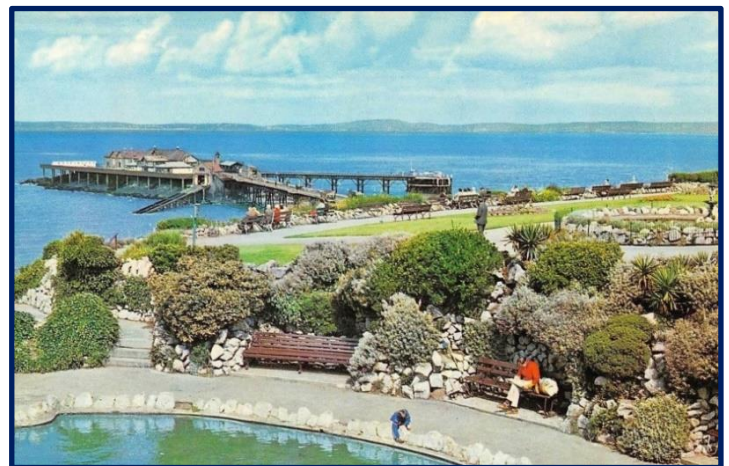
The park's higher northern area is wooded with paths and steps. To the northwest is a rock garden. The formal gardens in the middle have memorials to both world wars. The southern part has a bandstand and a large lily pond. The Garden of Fragrance nearby was created in 1958 for the benefit of visually impaired people.

The bandstand cost £135 to build in 1891, and is still used for free summer concerts. It was the venue for the ceremony in 1937 when Weston received its Borough Charter. The bandstand was restored in 2014, costing almost £100,000. The iron structure was repaired, new stone flooring laid, and the weathervane was re-cast and gilded.

Jill's Garden is dedicated to the memory of Jill Dando. Born in Weston, Jill worked for the local newspaper before becoming a popular television presenter. The garden was created by the BBC Ground Force team, and was opened in August 2001.

Prince Consort Gardens

Prince Consort Gardens overlook Birnbeck Pier on the north-western edge of Weston. They are named after Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, who died in 1861. In 1862 the Smyth-Pigott squire at the time enclosed Flagstaff Hill, a former coastguard lookout and a popular walking place for local people.



A postcard showing Prince Consort Gardens

Paths, flower beds, rockeries and ponds were created, and entry became subject to a fee. In 1882 the cash-strapped Smyth-Pigotts gave the gardens to the town.

The gardens were awarded protected Town Green status in 2013. Modern artwork has been added in recent years. The Victorian shelter on the lower terrace was reopened in 2016 after restoration.

