

Golden Acre Park

A brief history

1932-2012, 80 YEARS IN THE MAKING

Golden Acre Park was once a large pleasure park, being officially opened on the 29th March 1932. Developed under the auspices of Frank Thompson as an American styled amusement park, Golden Acre Park had a range of outdoor leisure facilities hoping to match the success of the recently opened Blackpool Pleasure Beach. The lake, formerly Black Hill Dam, was then about half a mile long and about a quarter of a mile wide. Motor launches, rowing boats and dinghy's sailed the length and breadth of the lake whilst in the centre stood a large music tower from which music and announcements were relayed to visitors. Circling around a distance of just over a mile ran a miniature railway connecting the many attractions (including the Blue Lagoon open air swimming pool, Helter Skelter, and Zoo) to the rest of the park. The Park closed after a relatively short life at the end of the 1938 season and lay derelict until 1946 when the land was purchased by Leeds City Council. Over the forthcoming years the original intentions were to restore some of the attractions and re-open the pleasure park in a modified form. However subsequent decisions favoured the development of a botanical garden which gained prominence in 1947 and set it on its current course with the appointment of the park's first Head Gardener.



A horticultural experience

Ornamental Gardens

Concentrated within the heart of the park lie the main ornamental gardens. Situated on a gentle south facing slope and spiralling outwards from the main hub of the park's facilities, the gardens provide a wealth and



range of horticultural features in close proximity for visitors to explore.

Contained within is a wide range of extremes from the exposed dry shallow soils of the Limestone Rock Garden, to the heavy clay, wet and shaded soils of the Bog Gardens each reflected by the choice and diversity of plants used.

Since the late 1990s the whole area has seen much transformation. Existing features have been upgraded, beds and borders re-organised and new themes added.

Features include - Lime and Sand Stone Rock Gardens, Waterfalls and Fountain, Bog Gardens and Seasonal Borders, Courtyard and Display House, where the interior has been inspired by climate change and transformed into a planted rocky outcrop and scree bed depicting a dry temperate region, typical of the Mediterranean.

Display Gardens

At the rear of the Bungalow are the Display Gardens. Launched in 1982, the idea at first was for a simple labelled flower and vegetable garden to demonstrate to visitors what can be done with a small garden in suburbia. The gardens soon became very popular and as a response to public demand in 1999 the whole garden underwent a total transformation.

Today the overall use of the garden hasn't changed in principle from its original idea, horticultural trends and fashions are followed, and it provides inspiration and ideas for the many visitors, as well as providing two National Societies (Dahlias and Chrysanthemum) display plots within.



The area consists of various gardens and planting styles ranging from a Potager to Tropical gardens to Cottage and Prairie style plantings as well as an area devoted to Container and Basket plants. Nothing is permanent in here and every year we try to add something new.

National Plant Collections

Leeds Parks and Countryside in 1982 accepted an invitation from the newly formed National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (N.C.C.P.G) to take part in the preservation and protection of our garden plants.

As with our native species, many of our cultivated plants are under threat, some have already been lost from cultivation. To prevent further erosion of our floral heritage, a network of national collections, each dedicated to one particular group of plants was established country wide. 25 years on, Leeds Parks are proud to hold 11 nationally recognised collections, 3 of which are held in Golden Acre Park.

The National Collection of Hemerocallis and Hosta (large leaved) are held within the newly created collections garden and Syringa (Lilacs) are located at the South East sector of the Arboretum.

Parkland

Distinctive features of the parkland are the areas surrounding the lake, arboretum, woodland and picnic area, where the local flora is encouraged to go wild. Reduced mowing has seen a vast increase in the biodiversity. In the low-lying wet meadows of the picnic site, Ragged Robin and sways of wild Orchid flourish. In the higher dry meadows of the arboretum, Scabious and Harebells abound. In contrast the Woodland provides a network of terraced shaded pathways lined with many species of Rhododendron and Azaleas provide pleasing areas for visitors to explore. Golden Acre is home to an abundance of wildlife including numerous wild birds, deer, fox, rabbits and squirrels. The popular wildfowl around the lake includes swans, grebes, geese, heron and various species of duck.

