

The history of Barking Park

Barking Park opened its gates to the public in 1898 and since then this 30 hectare community park has played a central role in the lives of many Barking and Dagenham residents.

Barking Town Urban District Recreation Ground, as the park was originally known, was the first council owned park in the Borough. It was created to be a classic Victorian park with a lake, ornamental gardens and avenues lined with London plane and false acacia trees. Other original features included a band stand, miniature railway, entry lodge, children's paddling pool, putting green and sports facilities.



By the 1950s the park was one of the finest municipal parks in East London, but afterwards entered into a period of decline. However, between 2010 and 2012 the park was restored with the help of a £3,500,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund's Public Parks Initiative, and Council capital funding bringing the total project budget to just over £7m. Key elements of the project involved improvements to the park infrastructure, lake and ornamental gardens.

New buildings and facilities included the Barking Park Centre, a café, boating pontoon, an exciting children's play area and the conversion of the former lido pool complex in to a family orientated splash park.



The completion of the restoration work in May 2012 was celebrated with a launch event organised to coincide with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations between 1 and 4 June.



Aerial view of lido and paddling pool, 1950s.

"You'd have to queue up to get in the lido, and we didn't mind how long we stood there queuing to get in..."

Memories of the lido - Margaret

Barking Park Oral History Project

In March 2011 Barking Park was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund 'Your Heritage' grant to establish an oral history and photographic library, create historic interpretation throughout the park, conserve and display a historic rowing boat and digitise archive film footage of the park.



The main aim of the project was to celebrate and preserve the history of Barking Park whilst encouraging all sections of the local community to learn about and participate in the park's rich heritage.

Working in partnership with Eastside Community Heritage the Council organised a number of reminiscence sessions and individual interviews involving around 100 local people who shared their unique experiences, personal stories and historical photographs of the park.

All this historical material is now stored in the archive at Valence House Museum in Dagenham and is accessible to the general public so that future generations can enjoy the heritage of Barking Park.

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Barking Park Heritage Trail



Barking Park boundary ceremony.

"I used to go over there every Sunday, when a band was playing, with my Nan"

Memories of the bandstand - Frances



Circular flower beds and gardens.



LOTTERY FUNDED

Introduction to the Barking Park Heritage Trail

Park opening times

Summer (April to September): 6.30am to 10pm

Winter (October to March): 6.30am to 7pm

Learn more about Barking Park's rich heritage by following the park's Heritage Trail and share the memories and experiences of local people as they tell their unique personal stories of Barking Park.

The Trail starts outside the Barking Park Centre and follows a circular route using the surfaced network of paths through the restored ornamental gardens. The Trail is easy to follow through the ornamental gardens, and can be done in any order. There are six interpretive panels in total, each containing interesting stories and photographs relating to a different theme:

1. Introduction
2. Leisure activities
3. Community events
4. Facilities and war time memories
5. Lido and paddling pool
6. Park management and maintenance

For comments and enquiries please contact us on:

Park Manager
(Park management and development):
020 8227 5289

Ranger Team
(Events, activities and meeting room hire):
020 8227 5290

Heritage Trail key:

1 Interpretation panel locations
1 to 6

i Barking Park Centre

☕ Café

♿ Public toilets



a Places of Interest
a to i

- a. Splash Park
- b. Play area
- c. Boating pontoon
- d. Multiuse courts
- e. Skate park
- f. War Memorial
- g. Indoor bowls centre
- h. Bowling green
- i. Light railway