

Guided Walk - Prince of Wales Park, Bingley Sunday 9 November 2014

We were delighted that Pam and Linda (both committee members of the Friends of Prince of Wales Park) were on hand to lead us around the park, pointing out historical landmarks and highlighting the work being undertaken by the Friends in returning the site to its prime. The park takes its name from being initiated on the very day of Edward the Prince of Wales' Wedding Day in 1863. The Enclosure of Gilstead Moor allocated 10 acres of the former Brown Hill Quarries for allotment amongst Bingley's Labouring Poor.

To this was added by public subscription, another 8 acres to form a People's Park, which was opened on 6 June 1865 thanks to voluntary labour. The Prince had sent trees from Sandringham and thus the woodland park is registered as a Grade II park of special historic interest. The friends plan to celebrate the park's 150th anniversary next year with a series of events.

There are a number of historical landmarks, including:

Close to the entrance a stone drinking fountain, no longer functioning, is set in low rockwork at the side of the path. An inscription records that it was presented by the Total Abstiners of Bingley in 1866; A little further up is an ancient stone chair engraved with a petroglyph;

At the side of one path, a spring known as Brown Hill Well is formed into a small late 19th century waterfall within a semicircle of rockwork ornamented with a stone birdbath.

We set off along the main path and immediately spotted a tree creeper, a mouse-like bird that hugs tree trunks as it climbs. It moves with 2-footed hops, feeding as it goes and typically starting near the bottom of the trunk, working upwards before flying down to start again on a neighbouring tree. Unlike the nuthatch, it cannot climb down head first.

The top of the park backs onto moorland where, at certain times of year, upland birds can be sighted. A woodcock was flushed out. Oddly for a wader, this bird breeds in damp woodland.

We visited the area known as The Quarry. This was originally a recreational area, a set of cricket stumps painted on a rock highlighting one of the pastimes undertaken. It was also the site of the Bingley Market Hall, Butter Cross and Stocks after they were removed from the town centre in 1888 and before being returned there in 1984. →

We got close-up views of a number of jays, which were very active and extremely noisy! Returning to the entrance we were rewarded with superb views of a pair of goldcrests feeding on the yew berries.

It is definitely a hidden gem and as one of our members said, it is encouraging to know that there is a group of selfless volunteers taking it in hand.

The Friends of Prince of Wales Park organise work parties every Wednesday and Saturday morning.

Birds seen:

blackbird, jackdaw, black-headed gull, wood pigeon, song thrush, redwing, tree creeper, blue tit, nuthatch, jay, crow, magpie, wren, robin, goldcrest, great tit, sparrowhawk and woodcock.

friendsofpowp.org.uk/



Report and Photos: Paul Barrett