



◀ Like all buildings in the public realm, pavilions in London's parks and recreation grounds are having to adapt to leaner times, and also to changes in sporting culture.

Most susceptible of all to change are those pavilions specifically designed to serve bowling greens.

Built in 1936, the pavilion seen here at **Acton Park** – typical of the restrained, bungalow style adopted by parks departments between the wars (Battersea Park has another example) – is leased by Ealing Borough Council to **Acton Park Bowls Club** (formed in 1910).

Should membership numbers fall, as has occurred at so many other parks clubs (see *Chapter 18*), the question will arise of how this, and other historic bowls pavilions, might function in the future.

(Its end bay, it should be noted, already houses a small café.)

One model is to emulate what is common practice for tennis provision in parks, as at Regent's Park's pavilion for example; that is to cater not for exclusive club use but for 'pay and play'.

This is the approach adopted at **Brockwell Park** (left), where the bowls club recently disbanded.

Its simple, flat-roofed pavilion, incidentally, is a characteristic LCC design of the 1960s (seen also at Normand Park, West Kensington).

Another option is the adaptive re-use of a pavilion, but with no sporting element. Examples of this are the bowls pavilions at Clissold Park, now an education centre, and Wandsworth Park, now a café.

At the other end of the spectrum, larger pavilions with multiple dressing rooms increasingly face being mothballed, or demolished.

Or, in the case of the pavilion at **Paddington Recreation Ground** (left), being completely remodelled.

As detailed on two plaques on the pavilion walls, Paddington Rec was opened in 1888, largely thanks to the efforts of Richard Beachcroft, and Lord Randolph Churchill (see *page 34*).

As commemorated by two further plaques, it is also associated with athlete **Sir Roger Bannister** (see *page 312*) and cyclist **Sir Bradley Wiggins**, who grew up in the neighbourhood.

The Paddington pavilion originally faced west, with a balcony overlooking a cricket pitch, while on its east side it backed onto a banked cycle track.



Since 1987, however, the Rec has changed completely.

The old cricket pitch has been covered by an athletics track and an artificial hockey pitch. Where the cycle track lay – taken up just before Wiggo's time – is now a turfed expanse, curiously called the **Village Green**.

For its part the pavilion, as part of a £3.5 million renovation, now has a balcony on its east side, overlooking the Green (as shown here during a cricket match in 2011), flanked by two new bays and gables, to create a mirror image of how the west elevation looked previously.

Only the roof, clock tower and chimney are as before.

Inside, the pavilion's ground floor still houses dressing rooms, while the former club rooms upstairs are used as offices for the City of Westminster's Sports Unit.

The **Beachcroft Pavilion**, as it was renamed in 2010, is now a round the week operation.

Run on Westminster's behalf by GLL, since the latest renovations the number of active sports users at the Rec has more than doubled annually from 125,000 in 2006 to 273,000 in 2013.

This includes users of the gym, which forms part of an extension at the rear of the pavilion, cricket nets, tennis courts and a bowling green (which has its own pavilion).

The pavilion has thus become the hub, not of a club, nor of a conventional leisure centre, but of a reinvented rec; a complete turnaround in an operational sense as well as a structural one.

Our fourth example represents another route for parks pavilions.

Also dating from 1936, but in a stripped Art Deco style, this is the pavilion at the **Sir Joseph Hood Memorial Playing Field on Marina Avenue, Motspur Park** (below left).

Dusted down and revitalised by a combination of a Friends group, Merton Council and various funding bodies, the pavilion serves sport at the weekend but during the week is hired out as a nursery.

Poignantly, on display in the main hall, its floor cluttered with toys, are the honours boards of two former bowls clubs based at the playing field; Motspur Park (1937-81) and West Barnes (1944-96).

And so the old give way to the young. But the pavilion moves with the times.



▲ In Chapter 12 we will show how London is especially well endowed with pavilions built by companies, institutions and public bodies for the benefit of their workforces. These pavilions were mostly built to high specifications and so continue to render good service, although rarely for their original owners.

On **Lindisfarne Road, West Wimbledon** (above), is the former pavilion of **George Brettle & Co.**, makers of hosiery, built in 1931 for its sports and social club, the **Oberon Athletic Club** (named after Brettle's best selling range of underwear and socks).

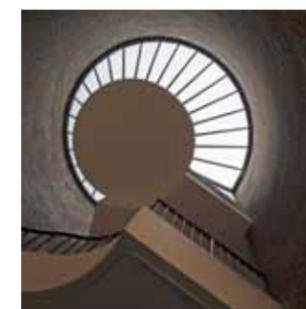
Designed by George & TS Vickery architects, it is a classic institutional pavilion of its period; once again offering an elevated view, a terrace sheltered under an extended concrete balcony – which proved its worth when torrential rain fell during the opening ceremony – a clocktower (bearing the date 1931), and extensive club rooms for all those staff events that were later written up in the company's staff journal, *Yarns*.

During the war the Oberon pavilion served as an isolation hospital, until in 1945 both it and the nine acre playing fields were donated by Brettle to the local education authority.

For the next 65 years Raynes Park High School were tenants, while in recent years the pavilion housed a judo school.

Its current owners, who bought the site in 2013, are the **Hall School, Wimbledon**.

Quite a contrast is the former concrete and glass pavilion of the **Civil Service Sports Ground on Duke's Meadows** (top right).



Following a trend set in the early 1960s, the former Civil Service pavilion at Duke's Meadows has its changing rooms in a single storey block on the right, thereby keeping muddy boots away from the hospitality areas in the main block. Offsetting the pavilion's horizontal emphasis, access to the upper lounges is via concrete spiral stairs, one external, the other internal... and quite wonderful (left).



Contemporary pavilions of note are surprisingly rare too, but 'The Hub' at Regent's Park definitely stands out. Or rather, does not. Designed by David Morley Architects and opened in 2005, its reception area, dressing rooms and function rooms are submerged under a turf mound, topped by a rotunda housing a café. Seen above in 2014 emerging from its depths are the boys from Mazars, about to see

action in the London Accountants Football League, Division Three. As they do so, 500 runners are circling The Hub as part of a 10k run. Regent's Park, a Grade I listed parkland and central London's largest sports facility, already has the capital's oldest functioning pavilion, over at the tennis centre. Now, arguably it has the most innovative, and yet also the most discreet. Not even a clocktower.