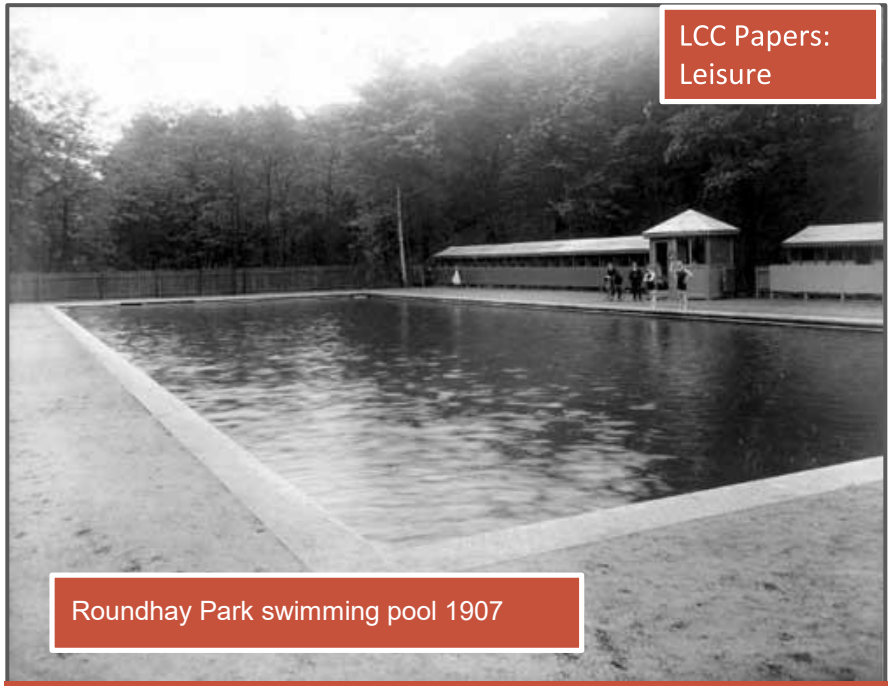
Some Key dates:

1835 - Municipal Corporations act established the Council as we know it today
1856 - Leeds Improvement Amendment Act which enabled the Corporation to designate spaces for leisure and recreation
1863 - Woodside Moor designated under the above Act
1871 - Roundhay Park purchased by the Corporation for £139k (£21m in today's money)
1953 - Roundhay Park hosted a programme of Coronation Festivities
1966 - 438,000 attendances for school swimming in Council pools.
1992 - A 150 page list of all events across the parks in Leeds was produced. Ranges from over 60 events at Temple Newsam to 2 at Horsforth Hall park. Mostly galas, funfairs and runs.

Opening times

Monday – 9.00am – 8.00pm
Tuesday – 9.00am – 8.00pm
Weds – 9.00am – 8.00pm
Thursday 9.00am – 8.00pm
Friday – 9.00 – 5.00pm
Saturday – 10.00am – 4.00pm
Sunday - Closed

For more information
Local and Family History
Leeds Central Library, Calverley Street,
Leeds, LS1 3AB
T: 0113 378 6982
E: localandfamilyhistory@leeds.gov.uk
W: www.leeds.gov.uk/libraries
Blog: secretlibraryleeds.net
Tickets:
ticketsource.co.uk/Leedslibraryevents



Roundhay Park swimming pool 1907

Leeds City Council Papers: Leisure

Our Research Guides list some of the most useful, interesting and unique items in at Leeds Central Library. Many others are listed in our online and card catalogues. Items marked * may require 24-hours notice to view.

Contact us for more information:
Visit: www.leeds.gov.uk/localandfamilyhistory
Email: localandfamilyhistory@leeds.gov.uk
Tel. (0113) 378 6982

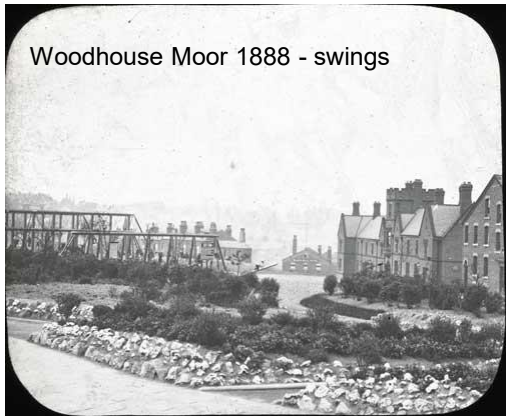
Over 200 years of Council papers are lodged in the Central Library, and these give details of how it has contributed to making the city what it is today.

19th Century

Leeds in the 19th century was a rapidly developing town, with the population increasing from 30,000 in 1800 to 250,000 by 1850. When Leeds Corporation (now City Council) was set up in 1835, leisure activities were mostly confined to the monied classes. As the Corporation found its feet in the second half of the century having gained new powers to meet the needs of Leeds, things started to change. Initially, the Corporation focussed on improving the health of the population and this is when they realised that leisure was important to health of all the population. Swimming pools were introduced alongside established public baths, wash-rooms, and outdoor spaces were bought and made available for people to take the air, meet others, play games etc.

Alongside this, the Corporation started to host music and art festivals; opened the Art Gallery and libraries across Leeds. These activities are covered in separate research guides.

Woodside Moor was designated a place for public use or recreation, under the Leeds Improvement Amendment Act 1856


Woodhouse Moor 1888 - swings

Early on, bye-laws were introduced to control behaviour. Woodside Moor banned shooting and games of knor and spell! This involved hitting a small ball as far as possible, and originated in the Yorkshire Moors. In 1888, General Rule 23 said “No gypsy or beggar, and no rogue or vagabond shall enter any Recreation Ground”.

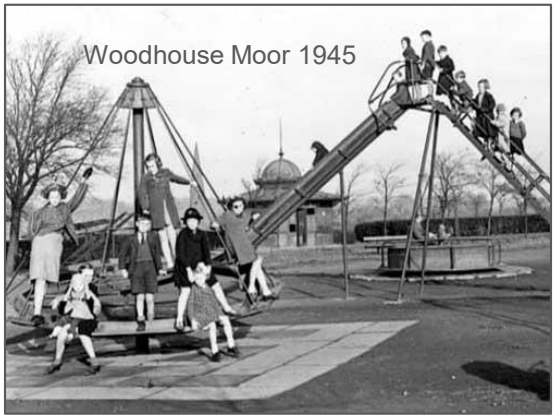
20th Century

By 1933, there were 84 City Council recreation areas, covering over 3,000 acres. This included the Temple Newsam Estate, which covers 917 acres, and was purchased at a knock down price of £35k in 1923 (£2.6m in today’s money).

By 1953, things had expanded greatly. The number of people employed in the Leisure Department was 576, of which 14% were disabled persons. Facilities included: 24 venues for tennis courts, 4 golf courses, 25 bowling greens, 8 putting greens, 22 senior sports pitches (for cricket, football and hockey), 42 junior football pitches (3/- per match - 15p) and 5 Feast sites.

Parks etc available to the public in 1963 totalled 195, covering 4,914 acres.

Today there are 15 Leisure Centres across Leeds with 9 major parks and a further 65 community parks.


Woodhouse Moor 1945