



Lancashire Gardens Trust NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 16 SUMMER 2015

CONTENTS

- Page 1 Heritage Lottery Fund
Awards this summer
- Page 2 The State of Britain's Parks
AGM and Whitworth Park
- Page 4 The Gardens Trust
Our new organisation

Heritage Lottery Fund – Awards this summer

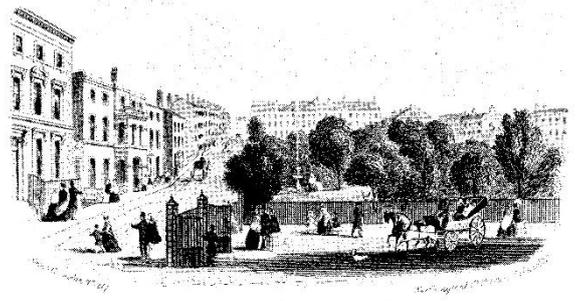
Of 16 historic parks and gardens gaining an award of substantial funding, 3 are in the North West – Peel Park (Salford), Thompson Park (Burnley) and Winckley Square (Preston). Government minister for Heritage, Tracy Crouch, said:

This will breathe new life into valued open spaces ... so important for people to relax, get together and exercise: parks have a vital role in strengthening our local communities.

Winckley Square

£942,600 has been awarded to one of northern England's finest Georgian squares and the most exclusive Preston address in the 19th century. Residents included Edith Rigby, suffragette, Thomas Miller, head of the Horrocks's mills group, and Nicholas Grimshaw, 7 times mayor. The square was originally divided into private gardens complete with railings, gates and keys, and there was a 3-tier fountain. It formed part of a promenade leading from Fishergate to Avenham Walk, where Preston society walked to socialise.

The grant will be used to remedy flooding, improve paths and access, repair railings and re-invigorate planting.



The square in 1850, engraving by J.Rock

Peel Park

£1,572,800 has been awarded to one of the earliest municipal parks in England. Peel lies beside the river Irwell and under the shadows of the University of Salford. 1845 saw the foundation in Manchester of the Committee for Public Walks, Gardens and Playgrounds, promoted by the Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel and Liberal MP for Manchester, Mark Philips. This was in recognition of the shortage of open spaces where workpeople could relax and enjoy some fresh air on a Sunday.

Money was raised by public subscription and a competition launched to find a designer. Joshua Major & Son, Leeds, won this and the contract for 2 more Manchester parks, Philips and Queen's; the builders were Messrs Pim & Richardson, nurserymen of Higher Ardwick, and all 3 parks were built in 1 year. They opened together in 1846, a Herculean achievement.

Another claim to fame is that the Salford Technical College opened in the park, and in the 1920s a famous art student was L.S.Lowry; 11 of his works feature Peel Park.



A view of Peel Park by L.S. Lowry

Thompson Park

£860,100 has been awarded to this 1930s park in a densely populated part of Burnley, the former weaving town. It was designed for pleasure and recreation, with a boating lake, sports grounds, play areas and a bandstand.

Restoration projects will include a re-furbished boat-house, repairs to the paddling pool, cleansing of the lake, renewal of the play area, and improvement of the Italian garden's columns, shelters, pool and fountain.

Memories have been collected of local people who used the park and all its facilities in its better days.



The paddling pool at Thompson Park

The State of Britain's Parks

This is a challenging time due to local authority budget cuts. The Heritage Lottery Fund commissioned a report in 2014, and warned that unless innovative ways of funding parks can be found, they are at serious risk of decline or even loss. This research shows that maintenance budgets are being reduced, capital will be less available for improvements, and some parks may simply be sold or transferred to the care of others. Park usage is increasing, and communities are also taking on a greater role. The study ends with

a call to action, and the commitment to commission and publish a 2nd report in 2016 to monitor changes in their condition and resourcing.

New Initiative assisted by the National Trust

Following on from this report, a consortium has met to develop ideas. The expertise of the National Trust has been pledged in an advisory capacity, and funding has been pledged by the HLF, overseen by a government body, NESTA. NT will advise local councils which own parks on the setting up of endowments, which is how the NT has always funded the maintenance of its historic houses and gardens. It has also proposed advice on the training of volunteers, something it does well.

Pilot schemes are being run over 11 sites, to include Manchester, Liverpool and Burnley. Contributions are being sought from health, environment and sports organisations, philanthropic and corporate bodies. The scheme, Rethinking Parks, could provide the vehicle for arresting their decline. A conversation on Twitter has revealed an interesting model set up in Milton Keynes, where 5,000 acres of public open spaces are managed using the endowment structure – see d.foster@theparkstrust.com

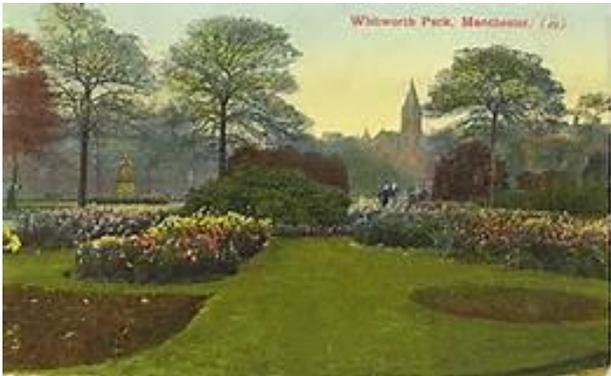
Editor

AGM and Visit to Whitworth Park

Following our Annual General Meeting on 5th October we had the pleasure of hearing about the restoration work taking place in Whitworth Park, the oasis of green surrounding the art gallery in Oxford Road, Manchester. Thanks to our member, Gill Crook, who is the editor of the Whitworth's Newsletter, we were introduced to the team which is responsible for shaping and managing the park's new look.

Firstly, Ken Shone, chairman of the Friends' group, outlined the history, starting with the vision of Edmund Potter and Joseph Whitworth whose land and money made its creation possible. The first plan dated 1890 showed an approximate square with paths crossing like a Union Jack, and in the centre a smaller and larger circle; this

outline survives mostly today. This haven of green became popular immediately; reports in the Manchester Guardian and Manchester Courier praised ‘as much green turf as children would wish for’, ‘a wild clematis bower’, and that the park was ‘resorting to Art only where Nature failed’. By 1894 a small lake to the west had been made, with a central corona fountain and two islands, a large pavilion stood beside it and also a bandstand. The Observatory of 1893 was used daily and a weather report published.



Postcards showed well-spaced young trees and circular island flower beds with ‘bright flowers in abundance, a pretty, soft expressiveness being preferred to glaring exhibitions’; this is a reference to the prevailing fashion for exotic bedding schemes in other parks. We saw also postcards of children in Edwardian dress playing on the grass, and adults sitting in deck-chairs listening to the band. Sing-songs were very popular, and it is recorded that one concert attracted 12,000 people on a day in 1912. Already in 1904 the upkeep was becoming too costly, and a lease was negotiated with Manchester Corporation. Pictures showed that the place remained attractive in these years, the trees growing fuller and flower beds well-planted; ‘the aim has been to avoid formality and allow the place to look as natural as possible’.

A very different story emerged about the post-war years, and the 1940s onwards marked a slow descent into decay. Newspapers reported ‘theft and vandalism getting worse’; ‘the empty paddling pool, the threadbare greensward’. The residential area on the periphery changed in character, and people did not respect or value the asset on their doorstep. A council improvement plan resulted only in the removal of paths, the infilling of the pool, the demolition of the buildings and a reduction in the workforce.

The catalyst for change came in 2002 when a planning application was submitted to turn much of the space into a carpark. A resounding protest grew, until the director of the gallery met with council officers to negotiate the park’s future; a Friends group was formed and a wish-list outlined, to include working towards Green Flag status, the benchmark for park maintenance. A Conservation Management Plan, the result of 3 years’ preparation, was ready in 2011 and grant-aided by many funding bodies; today we see the vision becoming reality and the park has regained its role as the centre of its local community and become the fit surround to a top-class art gallery.

Four more speakers gave separate views of the cultural and aesthetic life of the park. Ruth Colton, a PhD student with the University of Manchester, painted a picture of the Victorian and Edwardian children who might have played there, and imagined their games and pastimes. Their crowded homes and insanitary streets would have made an afternoon playing on the grass seem idyllic.



Francine Hayfron, Cultural Manager, outlined the activities which were drawing in families with children from the surrounding area of Rusholme; they could enjoy art and craftwork using plant material, learn some horticultural techniques (growing and planting), listen to storytelling outdoors and play organised games. Adults could practise yoga and Tai Chi outdoors, and volunteer to help with the gardening. The workshops were proving popular and attracting many participants.

Bryony Bond told us about new sculptures in the park. Works have been created and installed recently by C. Gaillard, M. Lyon, H. Schottlander and S. Hereford.

Editor



This is the new name of the two merged organisations, the Association of Gardens Trusts and the Garden History Society. In July meetings were held to make the decision, and voting was clearly decisive for the proposed merger. The Garden History Society celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, and was responsible for persuading government in 1995 that historic gardens should be protected from destruction by means of statutory powers in the planning process. 36 county Gardens Trusts have grown since then, some being of 25 years' standing, some having formed only in the last few years; they grew from a need to work at county level, researching the history of their gardens and parks, and monitoring planning applications which concerned them. Many of us have long been members of both, and see the merger as entirely logical.

The benefit will be a stronger, co-ordinated voice in favour of Historic Designed Landscapes, especially when government legislation is being modified; the Gardens Trust, as a Statutory Consultee in the same way as the Campaign for

the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the Victorian Society (to name but 2 of several), will be invited to add its comments to consultations on government White Papers.

Since July there has been much work to create a united image; a new website is underway, a new logo has been chosen (above), and committees have been set up which comprise people from both organisations with expertise in various fields

finance, administration, publications, conservation and planning.

A very useful innovation is the Regional Forum. 6 of these have been held this year in different parts of the country, and the benefit is an exchange of views and experience between members from 3 or 4 counties. Professionals from the Heritage Sector are invited to speak, and in York officers from Historic England, Natural England and the Heritage Environment Record gave an overview of their work in the north of England. They highlighted areas in which they could assist us in our research and conservation activities, and took questions.

Editor



Members of the combined organisation

at the annual conference; visit to Alnwick

COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT

Chairman Richard Jennison
Vice-chairman Elaine Taylor
Company sec. and
Secretary vacant
Membership Diana Stenson
Conservation Stephen Robson
Newsletter, Elaine Taylor
Research
Website Sue Woodhouse
Events team
Treasurer Martin Hawkins
Steve Taylor
Audrey Dawson

Key members can be contacted via:

chairman@lancsgt.org.uk

membership@lancsgt.org.uk

01253 876 484

Our events appear on our website, and you can print a Membership Application Form to give to anyone who shares our interests and aims.

The editor is seeking articles for the next edition, so if you have anything in mind do let us know.

Editor Elaine Taylor

Any articles, snippets of news, reminiscences about gardens and parks?

We want to know what is happening near you

Items please for the next issue to the editor

enq@lancsgt.org.uk

All the articles in this magazine are the property of the Lancashire Gardens Trust. It is forbidden to reproduce them in any way, whether in written, electronic or oral form.

The Gardens Trust

Find out more about the organisation and its work at:

www.gardenstrusts.org.uk

or contact the Administrator:
70 Cowcross Street, London EC1, 6EJ