



ENGLISH HERITAGE

PUBLIC PARKS REVIEW: SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

Very few public parks were included on the *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England* when it was first published between 1983 and 1988. This was primarily a result of the general lack of appreciation of the interest and quality of this category of designed landscapes. Knowledge increased rapidly through the 1990s however, the development being reflected in a number of ‘spot registrations’ of public parks in this period the decade, and the preparation of a broad set of criteria against which sites could be assessed (see Annex A). It was clear, though, that a more concerted consideration of the type was needed if public parks were to be properly represented on the *Register*.

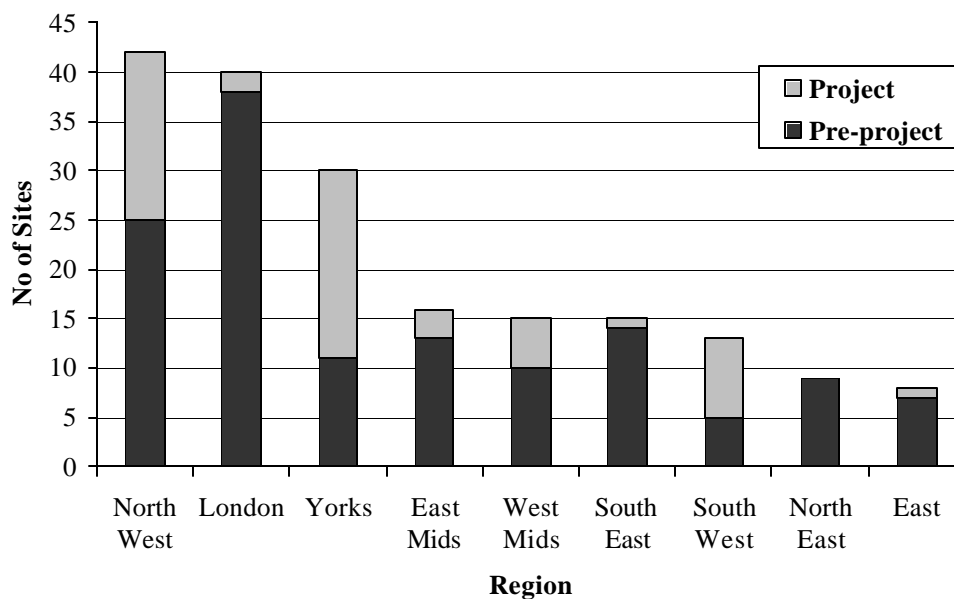
THE THEMATIC SURVEY

Between 1999 and the end of 2002, the Designed Landscapes team at English Heritage carried out a thematic survey intended to track down the majority of public parks which should be classed as being ‘of special historic interest’ as defined for the *Register*. Some 120 sites were short-listed for detailed assessment, of which 56 have so far been formally registered; a further 39 are still pending. The regional breakdown of those registered is given in Table 1.

The public parks identified during the survey offer an impressive range of examples of the provision of public open space since the beginning of the 18th century. This summary discusses the main categories of site which have emerged and illustrates these with brief notes about examples registered during the project.

TABLE 1

Public Park Registrations



DATE RANGE

Those sites which are included on the *Register* are identified in bold.

Even back into medieval times, certain areas of open space, often common land, were used regularly for recreation by the general public.

* **The Hoe, Plymouth** (Hoe Park, The Hoe, the Lido, and West Hoe Park) is one such area. During the medieval period, the headland known as The Hoe was used for recreation by the residents of Plymouth. In 1530, Westcote reported that 'Here the townsmen pass their time of leisure in walking, bowling and other pleasant pastimes' (quoted in Worth 1890, 3). In 1588, Sir Francis Drake famously played bowls on The Hoe while awaiting the arrival of the ships of the Spanish Armada. The area continued to be used as an informal place of recreation during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries then, in the early 19th century, the Corporation sought to develop it in a more formal way with walks and gardens. Improvements continued through the 1830s and 40s and there was also an increase in the size of the area owned or managed by the Corporation. By 1873, Jewitt noted that The Hoe 'is converted into public gardens ... and forms one of the most delightful and inviting ... promenades in the Kingdom' (Jewitt 1873, 663). The end of the 19th century and start of the next saw further improvements and extensions to create the public park, with its group of public monuments, that the 15ha of land south of the mid 20th century civic centre offers today.

In 1833, a Parliamentary Select Committee was held to inquire into the provision of public open space and took as the title for its study 'Public Walks', reflecting the predominant nature of the provision prior to this date. Several examples of these early 'Public Walks' came forward through the survey.

- * **Northernhay, Exeter.** In 1612, the area north of Rougemont (or Exeter) Castle and beyond the city wall was levelled and laid out by the city authorities as a public walk planted with an avenue of elms. This walk was restored and replanted in 1644 following the loss of the avenue during the Civil War. In 1860, the London and South Western Railway was constructed to the north of Northernhay and new walks were planted and gardens laid out on the slope above the track. In 1911, Thomas H Mawson, garden architect and town planner, published proposals for the improvement of Northernhay in his book *Civic Art*, but these were not implemented. In 1910, Rougemont House, to the south-east of Northernhay, was acquired by the City Council and its gardens linked to Northernhay to give a total area of 4ha of gardens encircling the Castle from north-east round through west to south-west.

In the 18th century, walks, usually privately owned, were an important amenity for spa towns to offer and not infrequently such sites have passed into public ownership and evolved into public gardens and parks.

- * In 1709, Thomas Harrison built an Assembly Room for visitors to Bath spa some 250m east of Bath Abbey. A gravelled walk lined with sycamores was laid out to the east of this and, by the end of the 1730s, the area had become the most fashionable part of the resort. John Wood, who was responsible for much of the building work here, devised a plan to improve the area still further which included North or Grand Parade, a shaded summer promenade with steps down to St James' Gardens (for which he drew up a design), and a tree-lined walk along the river. The scheme was not fully realised but the Gardens were laid out in accordance with his plan and today the **Parade Gardens, Bath** retain significant elements of this mid 18th century design, entry to the site still being by subscription, as it was from the beginning, despite having been in municipal ownership since the 1930s.
- * The **Town Walks, Dorchester** are a group of early 18th century public walks first laid out c 1712. The defences of the Roman town were reused for the medieval town with the ditch being recut in the 14th or 15th century, and again in the mid 17th century during the Civil War. By the early 18th century, though, they were no longer required for defensive purposes and the tops of the embankments were flattened and planted to form the series of six tree-lined walks which continue to enclose the ancient centre of the town. Later, in 1895, the Corporation purchased a 2ha site adjacent to the West Walk in order to provide 'pleasure gardens for the health and recreation of the inhabitants' (inscription on fountain). Plans were commissioned from the landscape gardener William Goldring (see also below) and, after implementation by the Borough Surveyor, G J Hunt, using plants supplied by James Veitch and Son of the Royal Exotic Nursery, Chelsea, the **Borough Gardens, Dorchester** opened to the public in 1896.
- * In 1753, the owner of the Hexham estate in Hexham, Sir Walter Blackett, opened the area known as the Sele to the public, laying out footpaths and planting trees. By the early 19th century, it was 'the mall of the fashionables, the privileged playground of the bwer classes, and the place of amusement for all' (Wright 1823, 62). The area continued in public use and in 1908 was gifted to Hexham Urban District Council. The parks were registered through the thematic survey as the **Hexham Parks**.

While the thematic survey identified some very early sites of the type as being registerable, equally at the other end of the date range, several 20th century public parks have been added to the *Register* as a result of the study.

- * Shortly after the Second World War, a disused claypit in a residential area in the southern part of Swindon New Town was bought by the Borough Council through a compulsory purchase order. This was laid out as a public park by the Borough Architect, J Loring-Morgan, working with the park superintendent, Maurice J Williams. The design included a Garden of Remembrance, opened in 1950 in advance of the rest of the site which was opened as **Queen's Park, Swindon** in 1953, to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.
- * The draft layout for **Friarwood Valley Gardens, Pontefract**, which lie some 300m south-south-east of the town hall, was prepared in 1947 by the borough engineer. Three years later this was implemented by the parks and cemeteries superintendent, Mr R W Grubb.
- * The **Memorial Gardens, Nottingham** were laid out at the eastern end of a larger area of land 2km south of the city centre, donated to the town by Sir Jesse Boot of chemist fame. Mr J Parker, superintendent of the Public Parks Committee, was responsible for the laying out of the 2.7ha Gardens which were officially opened on Armistice Day 1927.

GIFTS

Many of the parks registered through the survey offer examples of Victorian philanthropy, having been donated in whole or in part by local landowners or wealthy citizens, this often, but by no means always, being reflected in their naming.

- * In 1860, Thomas Barnes, MP for Bolton, who ran the cotton spinning and weaving business started by his father, announced his intention to lay out a park for the use of the people of Farnworth to mark his son's coming of age and in memory of his father. The proposed site formed part of Barnes' Birch Hall estate and lay in the centre of the town. Birch appointed William Henderson, landscape gardener of Birkenhead (who had already laid out **Corporation Park, Blackburn** (opened 1857), and who went on to lay out **Alexandra Park, Oldham** (opened 1865), and **Queen's Park, Bolton** (opened 1866)) to design and layout the grounds. Henderson didn't complete the engagement so Robert Galloway from Liverpool, who had trained with Henderson, was appointed to finish the work. The election of a Local Board for Farnworth in 1863 gave the town a public body which could accept the park, which it did in 1864, the year **Farnworth Park** was opened. A later gift of an additional 4.5ha brought the area of the park up to 9ha.
- * In 1872, Col Edward Akroyd, businessman, made a promise to construct **Shroff's Park, Halifax** on a rough, irregularly shaped piece of waste land 2km to the north of the town centre of Halifax. The proposed Midland Railway scheme, which intended to build a line through this area, threatened to put an end to this offer. Akroyd, however, was not to be put off and, giving evidence to the House of Commons of his intention, saw the railway scheme turned down leaving the way clear for work to start on the park. The latter was opened in 1881 having been handed over partially complete to the town in 1879.

The conversion of an existing quarry into **West View Park, Halifax** (opened 1896), was also financed by local businessmen, Mr H C McCrea and Mr E Robinson. The park occupies a 3ha site north-west of the town centre on high ground looking south-west to the Pennines.

- * Miss Ryland not only presented to the Corporation of Birmingham some 24ha of meadowland at Cannon Hill, 3km south of the city centre, for use as a public park, but also paid for the preparation and laying out of the park. The design was drawn up by John Gibson who, after training under Joseph Paxton at Chatsworth, Derbyshire, had gone on to superintend and design a number of other prestigious public and royal parks in London. **Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham** was opened in 1873.
- * On his death in 1881, John Hargreaves Scott, businessman and mayor of Burnley 1871-3, determined in his will that the residue of his estate, on the death of Mrs Scott, be used for the purchase and laying out of a public park for the people of Burnley. Mrs Scott died only three years later and, after a short delay, Scott's trustees purchased 7.3ha of the Halstead estate which lay a little under 1km to the south-west of the town centre. The design for the park came from Robert Murray, designer also of **Queen's Park** in the north-east part of the town, opened in 1893, and Murray became the first superintendent when the park, named **Scott Park, Burnley**, opened in 1895.
- * The 6ha area for **Lund Park, Keighley** (opened 1891), 1km south-west of the town centre, was donated in 1888 to the Corporation by the landowner James Lund who accompanied this gift with a sum of £6000 for its laying out.
- * In 1892, Samuel Taylor offered a piece of land 19ha in extent to the Town Council of St Helens for use as a public park, an offer which they accepted. The land, part of Taylor's Eccleston estate, included the main approach to Eccleston Hall and several pools and lay 2km west-south-west of the town centre. The Town Surveyor, Mr Broom, was responsible for adaptations to the site to fit it for its new purpose, and these were in place in time for opening what was named **Taylor Park, St Helens**, to the public in 1893.
- * The arrival of the railway and the development of extensive quarries outside the town meant that in the late 19th Okehampton was expanding and there was much new residential development south of the ancient centre of the town. Locally born businessman Sydney Simmons, who had made his money in London, donated land ?a meadow and copse to the west of the East Okemont River on this the south side of town ?plus an endowment, for the formation of a public park. Opened in 1907, Borough Architect and Engineer Francis Worden's picturesque riverside walk with its accompanying amenities, included, as specified by the donor, a set of five almshouses. An additional plot to the south-east, presented two years later by the Okehampton United Non-Ecclesiastical Charity, brought the total area of **Simmons Park, Okehampton** up to 4ha.

Gifting land and, or funds for the establishment of a public park is not exclusively a Victorian phenomenon.

- * Opened in 1930, thirty-five years after the opening of **Scott Park**, and on the opposite side of town, **Thompson Park, Burnley** for example, was created using money, a sum of £50,000, gifted in the will of James Witham Thompson for the Council to build a public park. The purchase of a 10ha site 0.5km to the north-east of the town centre was approved in 1922 and the development of the land commenced with the aim of providing walks and sitting areas and high standards of horticulture, along with provision for more active leisure pursuits for visitors of all ages.

More common than gifts, though, in the 20th century, is for provision to have been made by local government, often assisted by national schemes.

- * The 3.6ha site of **Central Park, Haworth**, in the centre of Haworth village, Bradford, was funded with the assistance of grants from the Ministry of Health and Unemployment Grants Committee in 1926, and was opened the following year.

SUBSCRIPTION GARDENS

Several of the parks added to the *Register* through the survey were first laid out as subscription gardens, only later becoming open freely to the wider public.

- * **Wavertree Botanic Gardens** started life as a private, walled botanic garden. The Liverpool Botanic Gardens were first opened by a group of Liverpool botanists including William Roscoe, in 1802, making them the first of their kind in the world, being developed by public subscription to a private society. In the 1830s the Gardens were moved to a larger site at Edge Lane laid out by the curator, John Shepherd, and opened in 1836. In 1840, Liverpool Corporation paid a debt of £3800 incurred by the Gardens' proprietors, in return for the right of public access two days per week. The Corporation took full charge of the site in 1846 providing full public access seven days a week to the Gardens and one day per week to the conservatory. In 1843, the Corporation purchased the site of Wavertree Hall to the south of the Gardens for use as a gaol; in 1856 this land was laid out as Wavertree Park. By 1894 the OS map shows that this had expanded to adjoin the Gardens.
- * In 1821, Nathaniel Hodson established a botanical garden to the east of the Great Churchyard on the site of St Edmund's Abbey in the centre of the town of Bury St Edmunds. The ruins of the Abbey lay to the north of the Churchyard and formed part of the garden of Abbey House. The latter was inherited in 1806 by the Marquis of Bristol who, in 1831, offered Hodson a larger area for his garden at the north end of the Abbey Precinct on the site of the former Great Court. Hodson rented the land and the adjacent Alwyne House and laid out a garden here financed by subscribers. By the end of the 19th century the Abbey Grounds were opened to the public but at a high entrance fee. Following a public campaign, in 1912 the Borough leased the gardens and opened them as a public park. After a reworking of the layout in 1936, in 1953 the Gardens were purchased by the Borough which also took on management of the Abbey ruins. Two lime avenues had been planted in the Great Churchyard on the south side of the site of the Abbey Precincts in the

early 1720s for use as town promenades and the Great Churchyard had subsequently (1798) been purchased by the Town Corporation. Between 1863 and 1885 an additional two avenues had been planted here. The purchase by the Borough of the Botanic Garden thus reunited ownership of the two areas now known as **Abbey Gardens and Precincts, Bury St Edmunds**.

- * Despite its name, there was no particular scientific purpose or collection behind the **Walsall Arboretum**, rather, this followed a limited fashion in so naming public parks. The Walsall Arboretum and Lake Company was formed in 1870 to provide the town with a public park and, in 1873, a lease was taken for c 3ha 0.5km to the north-east of the town centre, which were to be laid out as a public pleasure ground. The scheme for the layout was drawn up by Richard Lowe, a nurseryman with premises in Wolverhampton. The park opened in 1874, an admission fee being charged and the lodge in Lichfield Street serving as a private entrance for subscribers. By 1878, the Company was in financial difficulty, and the site passed into public ownership six years later. Purchase of a further c 3.5ha of land to the south-east in 1891, and several further acquisitions in the 20th century brought the total area of the park up to 11ha.

DESIGNERS/COMPETITIONS

As with **Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham**, mentioned above, designed by John Gibson, some of the sites newly registered illustrate the work of the leading designers of their times:

- * Joshua Major, responsible for **Philips Park, Manchester** and **Queen's Park, Manchester** (both opened 1846), having won the competition for their design along with that for Peel Park, Salford.

Philips Park was named after Mark Philips MP, who promoted the need for this provision and who had served on the 1833 Parliamentary Select Committee on public walks. In 1844, a public meeting was held which led to the setting up of a Public Walks, Parks, Gardens and Play-Grounds Committee to raise funds, select and purchase sites, lay out parks, and convey them to the Borough. Over £30,00 had been raised by the end of 1845, with a donation of £1000 by the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, amongst the sums coming in later.

Major's design for Hendham Hall and grounds, 4km north of the centre of Manchester, purchased in 1844 and opened as **Queen's Park**, were strongly criticised in the gardening press. Significant alterations to the 11ha site were carried out by John Shaw in the 1850s and 60s. The Hall was demolished c 1880 and replaced by the present Museum and Art Gallery building.

- * John Shaw, responsible for **Stamford Park, Altrincham**, opened 1880.

The suggestion of a public park for a town was not always universally welcomed. At Altrincham, for example, a meeting of ratepayers held in 1869 voted against the idea of establishing a park. Nine years later, an area of Hak Moss, 0.5km south-east of the town centre, over which there was an ongoing dispute regarding public claims to the Moss, was offered by Lord Stamford for use as a public park. Draining and reclamation of the low-lying and waterlogged wasteland, noted for producing abundant noxious gases, served

the dual purpose of a valuable sanitary measure and provision of a site for a park, and this scheme did go ahead, with **Stamford Park** being opened in 1880. The design, which offered substantial provision for sports and games, was drawn up by the landscape gardener John Shaw, who was a member of the Local Board, and was implemented by his son, also John. Shaw had been appointed superintendent of the Manchester parks in 1855 but resigned in 1863 due to pressure of private business as a landscape gardener.

- * Edward Kemp, responsible for **Newsham Park, Liverpool**, commenced 1865, **Grosvenor Park, Chester**, opened 1867, and **Congleton Park**, opened 1871.

The purchase of the bulk of the Newsham estate by Liverpool Corporation in 1846 for use as a public park was followed the next year by the purchase of 18ha of the Yellow House estate which lay to the south of the Newsham land. It was not until 1864, however, that Edward Kemp was commissioned to prepare a design for **Newsham Park**. This plan, in its revised form, included 22ha to be sold as building plots.

In 1867, the second Marquis of Westminster commissioned Edward Kemp and the local architect John Douglas, to lay out **Grosvenor Park** on land he owned c 250m south-east of the centre of Chester. He then gifted the park to the Corporation hoping, as he expressed it, that the amenity might afford health and recreation to the citizens of the city and their families. The deed of gift stipulated the name for the park and free entry for every day of the year; it also allowed music but strictly forbade dancing.

Kemp, working alongside the Town Surveyor, William Blackshaw, was also the designer of **Congleton Park, Congleton**, which opened in 1871. Town Wood, which lies some 0.5km to the north-east of the town centre, is mentioned in the Domesday Book as belonging to the people of Congleton. In October 1860, James Bateman of Biddulph Grange (the garden of which is also included on the *Register*) and other members of the Park Committee, visited Town Wood to assess its potential for use as a public park. Their report was favourable and in 1865 the Town Council purchased additional land adjacent to the Wood and work commenced on clearing the site and laying out a network of paths. The offer of an additional 1.2ha by the owner, Sir Charles Shakerley, completed the 10.5ha site.

- * William Barron (later in partnership with his son), responsible for **West Park, Macclesfield** (opened 1854), **Locke Park, Barnsley** (opened 1862), **People's Park, Grimsby** (opened 1883), **Queen's Park, Chesterfield** (opened 1893), and **Victoria Park, Tipton** (opened 1901).

William Barron, and subsequently the firm William Barron and Son, were leading providers of public park designs over a long period and several sites of theirs have been added to the *Register* through the survey. Of these, the earliest is **West Park, Macclesfield**, funded by public subscription and opened in 1854 on an 8ha site 0.6km west-north-west of the Town Hall. Barron was, at the time, gardener to Earl Harrington of Elvaston, the Earl lending Barron's services free of charge. The design integrated formal and informal areas with the emphasis on combining ornamental gardens and active outdoor pursuits.

Locke Park, Barnsley lies on the south-west edge of Barnsley, 1km from the town centre. The original 7ha park known as Barnsley Park or the People's Park opened in 1862, on land donated by the widow of Joseph Locke, engineer and one of 19th-century Barnsley's most prominent citizens. It was to a layout by Mr Edwards of the London office of Locke and Errington. In 1874, a further 8.5ha was donated by Phoebe Locke's sister, Sarah McCreery, and for the design of this, Barron and Son, then of Elvaston Nurseries, were called in, the extension being opened in 1877.

The 1880s saw Barron and Son, following a successful competition entry, working on **People's Park, Grimsby**. The Great Grimsby Improvement Act of 1869 had empowered the Council to put aside part of the Grimsby West Marsh Area for a public park but by the mid 1870s the land had been appropriated for other projects. Local landowner and MP Edward Heanage, on agreement that the Council would take financial responsibility for establishing the infrastructure and laying out of the park, provided an alternative site: somewhat over 9ha of land in the residential area of south Grimsby. Barron's design was in place in time for the opening in 1883; further small additions later brought the total area of the park up to its present 19ha.

Queen's Park, Chesterfield is another Barron and Son design. The park lies 300m south of the centre of Chesterfield and, in addition to marking Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, was intended as a measure to help ameliorate the overcrowded conditions in the centre of the town. Although dedicated in 1887, the opening of the 9ha park actually came six years later, in 1893.

In 1886 Barron and Son provided plans for **Brunswick Park, Sandwell**, the land for which was a redundant mining site. This commission was followed shortly after by that for neighbouring **Victoria Park, Tipton**, which likewise required the conversion of a derelict colliery site. Here William Barron and Son provided a plan, commissioned in 1898, to transform the 13ha plot immediately south-east of Tipton Green, a view of the proposed layout being published in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* in 1898. The park was formally opened in 1901 at a cost of c £6,500.

* William Goldring, responsible for Endcliffe Park in 1885, within the **Porter Valley Parks, Sheffield**.

In the 18th century, cutlery manufacture in Sheffield was centred around steep, fast-flowing streams coming off the moors to the west of the town. The Porter Brook on the south-west side of the town was a typical example, dammed to provide power to a series of small grinding mills. During the 19th century, industry relocated to the east side of town and these earlier works were abandoned. In 1885, the Corporation purchased c 8ha of land at Endcliffe Wood in order to improve sanitation and to provide walks and pleasure grounds to serve the rapidly expanding western suburbs. The following year, William Goldring was commissioned to adapt the Wood for public use. Another year on and the Queen Victoria Jubilee Committee purchased an additional c 3.5ha to the south-east as an extension of the public open space. As the intensity of the surrounding housing development increased, and the town's new tram system provided better access, other parks were developed along the valley: Bingham Park acquired between 1911 and 1927, and Whiteley Woods between 1897 and 1932, such that a site with an overall area

of 71.5ha was created which could be described as the 'Porter Brook Parkway' in the words of the town planner, Patrick Abercrombie, 'a string of contiguous open spaces' which were 'the finest example in this country of a radial park strip, an elongated open space, leading from a built-up part of the city direct into the country' (Abercrombie 1924).

- * Henry Ernest Milner, responsible for **Howard Park, Glossop**, opened 1888.

Howard Park, with its integral baths and hospital, was laid out on land offered by Lord Howard of Glossop to help realise the proposal made by the Wood family, cotton industrialists and prominent employers in the town, to provide a hospital, baths and public park. The gift from the Wood family included an endowment of £20,000 for the maintenance of the 5ha site which lies 0.5km to the north-west of the town centre. In addition to benefitting the people of Glossop, one object of creating Howard Park, common elsewhere, was to increase the value of adjoining potential building land. Another was to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee and, indeed, the park was originally to be named Victoria Park.

- * Thomas Hayton Mawson, responsible for **Falinge Park, Rochdale**, opened 1906.

Falinge Hall was built by James Royds in the late 18th century. The Hall and grounds, plus £3628 towards laying out, were presented to the Corporation by Alderman Samuel Turner in 1902. The Hall, already in a dilapidated condition, was subsequently partially demolished such that the facade, side walls and two pavilions only remain. Mawson was thus adapting an existing designed landscape for new use: his principal contribution was the walled and sunken Sun Garden. The park was extended in 1911 and again in 1912 to reach its present extent of 11ha.

LESS WELL-KNOWN DESIGNERS

Other parks placed on the *Register* as a result of the thematic survey work offer examples of designs drawn up by lesser-known practitioners.

- * **Broadfield Park, Rochdale** occupies former glebe land on a spur of the River Roch, acquired by Rochdale Corporation in 1860 and designed by Messrs Stansfield and Son, landscape gardeners of Todmorden as a setting for the town hall which lies to the north. The 1890s saw the addition of further land laid out to the design of, and at the expense of, Mr J Ogden Kilnerdeyne, but this area was remodelled in 1910. Further land was presented to the town in 1893, bringing the total area up to 6.8ha, the latter laid out to designs from the borough surveyor's department.

- * Seedley Park, Manchester, opened in 1876, was laid out on a 5.3ha plot 4km west-north-west of Manchester city centre, purchased by Salford Council for this purpose in 1872. Work commenced in 1874 under the direction of Henry Moore, head gardener at Peel Park, who was also responsible for laying out two other parks opened in Salford in the late 1870s, Albert Park (opened 1877) and Ordsall Park (1879). Moore had been in service with Lord Stanley at Alderley Edge, Cheshire, and a market gardener in Kent, and was responsible for the layout of gardens at Lancaster Asylum and Cemetery, and superintended the construction of the Botanical Gardens at Sale, Cheshire. The

gardens of Buile Hill House were added to Seedley Park after purchase of the estate by Salford Council in 1902, and converted for public use by the then parks' superintendent, A Wilsher and opened as **Buile Hill Park, Salford** in 1903, the house being used as a museum. With a later extension to include land from the Hart Hill estate, purchased in 1924, the total area of the park is 35ha.

- * Kershaw and Hepworth of Brighouse provided plans for **Bowling Park, Bradford** in the late 1870s, and Kershaw also provided plans for **Ropner Park, Preston**, which opened in 1893.

Kershaw and Hepworth's was the winning entry for the **Bowling Park** site, a plot of 20ha purchased by Bradford Council lying 1.5km to the south-south-east of Bradford Town Hall, comprising part of the grounds of Bowling Hall. Map evidence, however, suggests that their design was not actually that used.

H Kershaw, then of Bradford, was also a winner in the competition for the design of Preston's new public park in the 1890s. A committee appointed in 1890 was convened to consider the purchase of land for recreation. This alighted on Hartburn Fields 0.8km south-west of the town centre, but concerns were raised by the Council regarding the financial burden the creation of a park might place on the town. An offer from Major Robert Ropner of Preston Hall, to pay the cost of the ground, was thus warmly welcomed. Competitive designs were invited for the design of the park, first prize being awarded to Messrs Backhouse and Co, York and second place going to Mr H Kershaw of Bradford. In third place came Mr G I Rose of Manchester. The Borough Surveyor, Mr K F Campbell, was asked to prepare the final plan on the basis of these three entries, the 15.5ha park being ready for opening in 1893.

AS PART OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

Some of the parks placed on the *Register* as a result of the survey work were devised as an integral part of housing developments.

- * The intention behind the creation of both **East Park, Kingston-upon-Hull**, which lies 6km east of the city centre, and **Pearson Park, Kingston-upon-Hull**, which lies to the north of the city, was that land adjoining should be developed for housing. The 36ha **East Park** was opened in 1887 to the designs of Joseph Fox Sharp, Borough Engineer, but the hoped for development was slow in coming and the surrounding land was sold off piecemeal over a number of years. **Pearson Park** was laid out on land gifted to the Corporation by Zacharia Pearson, mayor, and opened 1861 with the layout being to a design by James Craig Niven, curator of the town's Botanic Gardens. This included a broad carriage drive around the perimeter linking the park with surrounding plots for housing.
- * **The Dell, The Diamond and The Causeway, Port Sunlight**, are the principal public open spaces of the garden village laid out in the late 19th and early 20th century largely to the overall plans of William Hesketh Lever, its founder. The designs for these formal spaces were based on the winning competition entry of 1910 by Ernest Prestwich.

ROYALTY AND JUBILEES

The creation of a public park has often been seen as an admirable means of marking a national figure or event, and, in particular, members of, or events connected to, the royal family. A number of parks, identifiable by their appropriate naming, are mentioned elsewhere in this article. Below are some others in this class which the *Register* thematic survey has singled out as being of special historic interest.

- * In 1860, the Enclosure Commission vested 4ha of land to the trust of the churchwardens and overseers of Bingley for the benefit of the public. A further 3.2ha was purchased by public subscription. The first turf of the unenclosed rough moorland, 1km to the north-east of the town centre, was cut on 10 March 1863, the wedding day of the Prince of Wales, hence the naming of the park as **Prince of Wales Park, Bingley**.

It was, however, Queen Victoria's Golden and Diamond Jubilees which were most linked to the public park movement, and a good number of towns saw fit to celebrate the occasions in this way.

- * **Handsworth Park, Birmingham** (until the mid 20th century called Victoria Park), was opened in 1888. R H Vertegans of the Chad Valley Nurseries, Edgbaston was called in to provide a plan to convert the existing estate to public use. The 8ha of The Grove Estate included existing pleasure grounds and lay in a desirable residential suburb of Birmingham 3km north-west of the city, to which the railway came in 1852, and where residential development was at its peak at the end of the 19th century. The Grove mansion, incorporated into the park in the original scheme, was replaced by a sports centre following its demolition in 1976. Extensions included the pleasure grounds of a rectory adapted to a plan provided by the Borough Surveyor, Edwin Kenworthy, in 1893, and an area to the west added in 1897 which brought the total area of the park to 24ha.
- * **Queen's Park, Burnley** was designed by Robert Murray of Stockport, following a competition for the laying out of the 11ha area, valued at £27,000, which was offered to the Burnley Corporation by Sir John Hardy Thursby, local mine owner, in 1888 to mark the jubilee.
- * Blackburn opened their **Queen's Park** in the Diamond Jubilee year, 1897. The layout of the 13ha site on the outskirts of the town, 1.75km to the south-east of the town hall, came from J B McCallum, Borough Engineer. The scheme included a new road to the site and one round its perimeter, while the land within was designed to provide both ornamental gardens and sporting facilities.
- * Work on the 16ha site 250m east of the town centre for **Victoria Park, Tunstall** began in 1897, the surveyor to the District Council, A R Wood, an architect with an extensive local practice, being responsible for the scheme. This included a new road and the transformation of the 8.5ha of industrially blighted land, with its former mine workings, to form the public park. Shortage of funds slowed the work and the formal opening was delayed until 1908.
- * Unlike the majority of 'Queen's' or 'Victoria' Parks, **Queen's Park, Rochdale** was not a 'jubilee park'. Laid out by Major Cartwright, Surveyor

General to the Duchy of Lancaster, this park was on land (13ha including an early 20th century extension) presented to the town by Queen Victoria, as Duke of Lancaster, in 1878. These former grounds of Heywood House (situated 5km north of Rochdale town centre; demolished 1956) were opened in 1879.

RECLAMATION

As indicated above, reclamation lay behind the choice of a significant number of sites for public parks.

- * By the mid 19th century, almost 300 houses stood on the steep slope below Camden Crescent (built 1788), 0.75km north of the centre of Bath. From the 1860s on, a series of landslips occurred in the Edgmead district culminating in a slip which, in 1881, destroyed a substantial proportion of the housing. In 1883, the City Corporation acquired the unstable ground in order to consolidate the slope and to convert the land to a public park. Between 1885 and 1889, a strip of grounds, now **Hedgemoor Park, Bath**, were laid out by the Corporation Parks and Pleasure Grounds Committee.

Commonly, the reclaimed land was former quarries or mined ground.

- * The earliest part of **Town Gardens, Swindon**, a park laid out on the site of former stone quarries lying in the south-west corner of the Old Town, was designed by Mr Morris, Old Swindon Local Board's surveyor, and Mr W H Read, architect. This area was opened in 1894. The northern extension, which brought the total area to 5ha, was laid out in 1902 by Mr A John Gilbert who won first prize in the competition organised by Swindon Borough Council.

PRE-EXISTING DESIGNED LANDSCAPES

Rather the reverse of the use of blighted land, a number of public parks have taken as their starting point an existing designed landscape, and this frequently has offered a base of considerable amenity value on which to build. In many cases, an existing mansion was included as part of the purchase for use as a museum. Conversions of existing parkland or gardens into public provisions identified in the thematic survey include the following:

- * **Peel Park, Bradford**. Peel Park was the town's first publicly owned park. Using a combination of funds from public subscription, government grant, and several major donations, in 1850 land to the north-east of the town centre of Bradford was purchased for use as a public park. Named Peel Park in memory of Sir Robert Peel, the 22.5ha purchased included Bolton House and its existing grounds.
- * **Greenhead Park, Huddersfield**. On viewing the housing developments proposed by the Ramsden Estate for the parkland of Greenhead Hall, a property standing just under 1km north-west of Huddersfield Town Hall, Alderman and JP Thomas Denham recommended that the Corporation should buy the land for use as a public park. Concerns over costs and conditions delayed the purchase, so for three years, from 1870 to 1873, Denham rented the land and opened it to the public for recreational use. The Corporation took over the tenancy at this point and in 1884 finally bought 12ha. Work on converting this for its new purpose was carried out by the Borough Surveyor,

Mr Dugdales.

- * **Boston Park, Rotherham.** A forty-year lease of 8ha of parkland and Boston Castle, a shooting lodge of 1775 standing 1.5km south of the town centre, was granted, at an annual rental of £50, by the Earl of Effingham to Rotherham Town Council in 1876. Originally known as Rotherham Recreation Ground or the People's Park, the site was opened to the public in the same year, the improvements having been carried out by Mr Albiston, head gardener. The Castle and Park were acquired by Rotherham Corporation in 1902.
- * **Clifton Park, Rotherham.** Clifton House, in use as a museum, stands in the south-west corner of Clifton Park. The house, built in 1783~~4~~, was purchased by Rotherham Council in 1891, along with 22.5ha of the estate for use as a public park.
- * **Crow Nest Park, Dewsbury.** Some 31ha of the Crow Nest Estate lying 1.5km west of the town, including gardens and parkland, were bought by Dewsbury Corporation in 1893. The house was opened as a museum and the grounds adapted for public use by the Borough Surveyor, H C Marks, with the assistance of Mr Daniels, park superintendent.
- * **Roundwood Park, Willesden** Hunger Hill Common Field was purchased by Willesden Urban District Council for recreational use in 1892 in response to public pressure following the laying out of nearby Queen's Park. The 13ha plot was laid out by Oliver Claude Robson, surveyor, and opened in 1895.
- * **Belgrave Hall Gardens, Leicester** The Queen Anne-style Belgrave Hall, standing 3.5km north of the city centre, was, with its accompanying walled garden, purchased by Leicester City Council for £10,500 in 1936. The Hall was made into a museum and the 2.5ha of gardens, the west boundary of which is the River Soar, were opened as a public amenity in 1936 as period and botanical gardens.
- * **Dunorlan, Tunbridge Wells.** Henry Reed, in the late 1830s and early 1840s, engaged Robert Marnock to lay out the grounds of his Italianate-style house, Dunorlan, and commissioned James Pulham to provide rockwork. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council purchased the site, which lies on the east side of the town, 0.75km from the town centre, in 1945, making only a few changes in order to adapt the 20ha park to its new role as a public amenity. The house was demolished in 1958 and its site sold to private developers; this area, with the eight new houses which were subsequently erected on it, remains in private ownership today.

COASTAL AND SEASIDE RESORTS

Practically absent as a type from the *Register of Parks and Gardens* as originally published in the 1980s, the survey identified several public gardens and parks of special historic interest occupying coastal locations.

- * In 1827, the Cliff Bridge Company was given control of the Spa, a mineral spring at the foot of Scarborough's South Cliff, and also the adjacent cliff walks, in exchange for building the Cliff Bridge which links these facilities to the town. A new Spa Promenade opened in 1839, and gardens were laid out on the cliff by George Knowles of Woodend, The Crescent, where his own

gardens were at the time under development. In 1856, Sir Joseph Paxton built a new Grand Hall (itself burnt down in 1880 and replaced) to replace the earlier Gothic Saloon, and extended the promenade and gardens. At the north end of South Cliff, leading down to the seafront, the People's Park (now Valley Gardens) was laid out in 1862 by the Town Corporation. At the same time, land along the top of the South Cliff was developed with an esplanade, private residences, and hotels. The year 1874 saw the coming of the first cliff tramway in Britain transporting visitors up the cliff face. In 1880, the Town Corporation commissioned William Skipsey to lay out Holbeck Gardens (extensive parts of which, along with the Holbeck Hall Hotel, went into the sea in 1993), marking the beginning of further developments to the south of the Spa. The Belvedere Rosary was established from 1883 by the art dealer George, Lord Beeforth, these gardens being purchased by the Corporation in 1912, the year the Corporation also bought 2.4ha of the undercliff from the Cliff Bridge Company. Using the money from this sale, the Company enlarged and improved the Spa Promenade. The Corporation then embarked on a scheme to unite the individual gardens and improve the cliffs between the Spa and the Holbeck Gardens to the south. From 1910, Harry W Smith, Borough Engineer, laid out the South Cliff Gardens, including the Italian Garden. The Grand Hall, Spa and Gardens were themselves purchased by the Corporation in 1957, so uniting the whole of the Valley Gardens, Spa Gardens, and South Cliff Gardens under one ownership. The site has been added to the *Register* as **Valley Gardens and South Cliff Gardens, Scarborough**.

- * Southsea began to develop from the 1810s as a residential suburb of Portsmouth and as a seaside resort. The area of **Southsea Common**, former hospital land surrendered to Henry VIII in 1540 in order that he might strengthen his coastal defences ?Southsea Castle was built in 1544 as part of these ? was levelled in 1831⁴³ and was gradually laid out for recreational purposes. In 1884 the Council took a lease of the Common and planting and other amenities were added, especially after 1922 when the Council purchased the site from the War Office.
- * Lowestoft Improvement Committee chose a piece of open common land on which to create what they described as a symbol of the town's growing civic pride. Opened in 1874 as Arboretum Hill, but not long after becoming known as **Belle Vue Park, Lowestoft**, the public park occupies a 3ha site on the north side of the town at the top of the cliff which leads down to the Denes and the beach.
- * The development of Southport from a small fishing village to a seaside resort began in the early 19th century, but it was not until the last decades of that century that substantial pleasure gardens were developed. The foreshore was purchased by Southport Corporation in 1885 and the first stage of **King's Gardens and South Marine Gardens, Southport**, a marine lake and park, South Marine Gardens, opened adjacent to, and to the south-west of, the pier, in 1887. A further lake and park, North Marine Gardens, on the north-east side of the pier, opened in 1892, the two sections of lake afterwards being joined. (Only a small part of the North Marine Gardens now remains.) Thomas Mawson was appointed to prepare designs for the Lord Street Gardens in the town c 1906, and also prepared designs for the Promenade, Marine Park and Gardens, these being illustrated in his book, *Civic Art* (1911). Although not

implemented, their influence can be seen in the borough engineer's design for King's Gardens, opened in 1913, sited between the South Marine Gardens and the lake.

- * Penzance, towards the end of the 19th century, was seeking to provide better facilities for its visitors. As the town developed as a popular seaside resort, a park was seen as a necessary facility especially for when poor weather rendered the promenades unusable. A villa and walled garden 0.25km south-west of the town, totalling 1.5ha, was purchased in 18889 by the Corporation for this purpose and a competition was held in 1889 for the design to transform the site into a public park and library. This was won by a London-based designer, Reginald Upcher, and the gardens, **Morrab Gardens, Penzance**, were opened later the same year.
- * Upcher also successfully submitted designs for the competition held in 1886 by the Baths and Recreation Committee, for a public park for Poole. Land 1km north-east of the Old Town had been presented the previous year by Lord Wimborne for this purpose to provide an amenity for the new residential areas on this side of the historic town and port. Robert Veitch and Son, Exeter were awarded first place and Upcher second, but the Borough Surveyor, John Efford, reported that neither scheme was capable of implementation and advised his own revised plan be adopted using Veitch and Son as contractors. The park, **Poole Park**, 45ha including a 22ha salt lake, was opened in 1890.
- * As Torbay continued to develop as a seaside resort through the second half of the 19th century, there was a need for further visitor facilities. In 1883, the town acquired control of the harbour and planned a scheme of improvements which included public gardens. Laid out by Major Garrett, Borough Engineer, and named **Princess Gardens, Torbay**, after Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Louise, the Gardens were opened in 1894, the later final phase of improvements, which included the terraced walks known as Royal Terrace Gardens, being also by Garrett.
- * Great Clacton began to develop as a seaside resort in the mid 19th century, becoming known as Clacton-on-Sea. In 1864, a railway engineer, Peter Schuyler Bruff, acquired the land at Clacton Beach and began to plan a new resort, his plan of 1871 marking the site of the Seafront Gardens as 'pleasure grounds'. In 1921, the Urban District Council decided to spend considerable sums in laying out gardens and, in line with this, four formal gardens, the Marine Gardens, were laid out to the designs of the County Surveyor, Daniel J Bowe. These, **Clacton Seafront Gardens**, occupy a 0.5ha long thin site in the centre of the resort on the south-west side of the Pier.
- * During the 1920s, Great Yarmouth Borough Council began to construct a major new sea wall along the length of the town. The reclaimed land between this and the seafront promenade was developed progressively as public gardens. The **Venetian Waterways, Great Yarmouth**, a series of winding rivers for boating weaving through rock gardens along the northern half of the seafront, formed part of relief work for the unemployed during the winter of 1927/28. The site, a little over 4ha, was designed by the Borough Engineer, S P Thompson.

- * **Connaught Gardens, Sidmouth**, named in honour of HRH the Duke of Connaught, were opened in 1934. Sidmouth had enjoyed the provision of a public walk before the main public park movement of Victorian England, having had, since the first decade of the 19th century, a fine, railed, gravel mall. A small fishing village in the late 18th century, Sidmouth developed only slowly during the 19th century as a seaside resort. On account of this gradual development, which continued into the 20th century, in 1930 the Urban District Council bought for £3500 on the open market, 'Sea View', a marine villa dating from c 1820 and occupying a coastal headland 0.5km south-west of the centre of the old town, for the purpose of creating public gardens. The house was demolished and the 1.25ha park, laid out by the Gardens Department of Dartington Hall Ltd, was opened in 1930.

CONCLUSION

While English Heritage is concerned to promote the importance of the historic interest of any designed landscape, the *Register of Parks and Gardens* seeks to do a very specific task, that is, to identify those designed ornamental landscapes which are of special historic interest in the national context. As the public parks thematic survey has demonstrated, amongst these are many municipal parks and gardens. When looked at together, it is clear that England has inherited an infrastructure of public parks of priceless value. It is hoped that this survey will help ensure that these places are suitably recognised and treasured at local, regional and national level.

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ANNEX A

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING PUBLIC PARKS FOR INCLUSION ON THE REGISTER

The criteria against which we assess municipal urban parks are intended only as a guide and their application has to be accompanied by expert and extensive knowledge of the country's historic public parks as a whole to ensure that sites are indeed of special historic interest and that decisions are consistent. The criteria are broadly the same as those used for the wider range of parks, gardens and other designed ornamental landscapes eligible for inclusion on the *Register*, but they are fine-tuned to assist us evaluate this distinct sub-category of landscape, taking into account the early 19th century origins, and subsequent development of the public park movement.

Urban municipal parks likely to prove of sufficient historic interest to merit inclusion on the *Register* include:

Sites with a main phase of development laid out between 1833 (the date of the Select Committee on Public Walks) and 1875 (Public Health Act) where enough of this landscaping survives to reflect the original design. Such sites are likely to merit a high grade where the condition of this phase remains good, where the design is of particular note, or where a designer of national importance was involved.

Sites with a main phase of development between 1875 and 1939, where significant attention was paid to the landscaping, and where the layout survives intact or almost so. Such sites are likely to merit a high grade where the condition of this phase remains exceptionally good, where the design is of particular note, or if they represent a major work of a designer of national importance.

Sites with a main phase of development laid out post-war but more than thirty years ago, where the work is of exceptional note. Such sites are likely to merit a high grade where the design is of exceptional note or where they represent a major work of a designer of national importance.

Sites which were influential in the development of taste whether through reputation or references in literature.

Sites having an association with significant persons or historical events.

Sites with strong group value.

Where the laying out of a public park is particularly well documented, this can contribute to its historic interest.

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