

# Political Pressures and Civic Pride

The Development of Public Green Space in Norwich 1866–1974

by

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## **Abstract**

The 1833 Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Walks is generally credited with initiating the nineteenth-century urban movement which led to the development of public parks. Public walks, or parks, were seen as a partial remedy for the disease and early mortality suffered by the working poor and cities and large towns were expected to make generous provision. A number of wealthy areas responded positively to the initiative, but by the close of the nineteenth century public parks in Norwich comprised only three small gardens and a large tract of enclosed heathland. This state of affairs was publicly criticised at the time and the view-point has been reflected in local history research.

This thesis explores the national and local factors that governed the creation of public parks and gardens from 1866 to 1974 and analyses Norwich City Council's approach to the development of green space over that period. Although urban parks are the most obvious aspect of public green space, other gardened aspects of municipal responsibility are woven into the narrative, such as allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, as well as tree-planting, roundabouts and social housing. These are important aspects of urban living but remain less commonly explored in research terms.

This chronological analysis of public green space, from the high ideals of early Victorian reformers to the legislation which brought about the demise of Norwich as a unitary authority in 1974, examines the interplay between national government and local politics, and the resulting urban recreational landscape. Seen through the prism of Norwich, the East Anglian regional capital, it reveals the local obstacles and national circumstances that undermine the best-laid plans and discloses the critical roles played by the component parts of local government: committees, councillors, officers and the public.

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**‘For Health, Comfort and Content’<sup>1</sup>**

Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, said that she would never forget her first visit to London, when she walked through Hyde Park looking for Speakers’ Corner, which she described as ‘legendary, the very symbol of free speech’.<sup>2</sup> Parks are ‘places where history is made, both in terms of major public events – political rallies, mass meetings, demonstrations and civic celebrations – and in terms of people’s intimate lives – their romances, friendships, family outings and personal commemorations.’<sup>3</sup> They can also serve as instruments of civic pride, personal prestige and political manipulation, as this research will demonstrate.

English Heritage states that there are approximately 27,000 public parks in Britain and 2.6 billion visits are made to them each year.<sup>4</sup> Many are of historic and cultural significance and for over a century the vast majority have been introduced and managed by local authorities, despite the fact they have no statutory duty to do so. Since their introduction in the nineteenth century, public parks have been an important part of urban living. The essence of a public park is its accessibility to its users. Its relationship to civic governance is critical in understanding its rationale and effectiveness. Studies of public parks, and indeed private parks, concentrate largely on the outcome of the design process. Elite landscapes are frequently analysed from the perspective of the designer or placed in a historical context. Although the resulting landscape is of prime importance, how it emerges, is shaped and used is also highly significant. John Dixon Hunt has adapted the literary usage of reception theory to historic landscapes: he argues that visitors may not have interpreted gardens such as Stowe or Stourhead with any degree of consistency and that differing responses might well have influenced changes in these landscapes. In the same way, changing patterns of societal expectations in recreation and leisure over time have influenced the green spaces of towns and cities as much as the elite classical landscapes which have been altered by later owners and subsequent

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<sup>1</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Public Walks; with the minutes of evidence taken before them*, 1833.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Speech by Federal Chancellor, Angela Merkel, 27 February 2014’ (accessed at <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/addresses-to-parliament/Angela-Merkel-address-20130227.pdf>).

<sup>3</sup> As described by the City of Leeds: House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee, *Public Parks*, 11 February 2017, 17 (accessed at <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/45/45.pdf>).

<sup>4</sup> Historic England, *History of Public Park Funding and Management*, Research Report 20/2016 (accessed at <https://research.historicengland.org.uk/Report.aspx?i=15442>).

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landscapers.<sup>5</sup> Public parks have tended to be less well researched than privately owned landscapes, although more recently this has begun to alter. The parks that have been well-documented tend to be those created by a well-known designer or those that have been chronologically significant in the development of the urban public park.

Today, if the word ‘park’ is mentioned, the automatic assumption of the ordinary listener will be the public parks managed by a town or city. They are an urban and particularly a British phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> The origin of the term ‘park’ was a legal description of land ‘held by royal grant for keeping game animals’.<sup>7</sup> It is a stroke of landscape irony that the word would be applied to the municipal, proletarian landscapes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### **Thesis Terms**

The most recent statutory definition of ‘park’ in England and Wales is contained in the Local Government Finance Act of 1988. The definition is useful, if functional: ‘a recreation or pleasure ground, a public park, an open space and a playing field provided ... for free and unrestricted use by members of the public’.<sup>8</sup>

The term ‘public park’ or ‘public open space’ implies a right of free access for all sections of the public for the purposes of general passage, recreation or leisure.<sup>9</sup> The concept of free access is critical. It is a historic ideal that harks back to the Greek *agora* and the Roman *forum* but it is also a democratic statement of public entitlement. The early Royal Victoria Park in Bath, opened in 1830, was not freely open to Bath’s general public until the second decade of the twentieth century, when the City Council finally assumed responsibility for the park.<sup>10</sup> Some of the earliest parks funded by local corporations, such as Nottingham Arboretum, charged for entry. Norwich councillors, following the 1866 enclosure of Chapel Field Gardens, strove to ensure that parks

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<sup>5</sup> J. Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 218, 219.

<sup>6</sup> H. Conway, ‘Parks and People: The Social Functions’, in J. Woudstra and K. Fieldhouse, *The Regeneration of Public Parks* (London: E. & F.N. Spon for Garden History and English Heritage, 2000), 9.

<sup>7</sup> *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs: memorandum by the Open Spaces Society, Section 2 paragraph 2, 3 April 1999.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, *Improving Urban Parks, Play Areas and Green Spaces* (London: HMSO, 2002), 22–3.

<sup>10</sup> Historic England, *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest*, Royal Victoria Park: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001257>.

remained freely accessible to all sections of the public throughout the period covered by this research.

The words ‘municipal’ ‘public’ and ‘civic’ are used in this research to describe the parks and other recreational spaces developed, funded and managed by local authorities: boroughs, councils or corporations. The term ‘public green space’ is employed to denote municipal space which has been landscaped or gardened in some form. This includes elite landscapes that later become public cityscapes, such as Brockwell Park and Holland Park, and newly created civic landscapes that emulate and occasionally rival the gardens of grand estates, such as Birkenhead Park.<sup>11</sup> The phrase encompasses intimate public gardens and local authority allotments, cemeteries, churchyards and municipal roadside planting. Some aspects of public green space have emerged in the twentieth century, such as council nature reserves and riverside walkways. Today the term can embrace a catholic range of urban green spaces, areas such as community gardens, gardened roundabouts and even guerrilla gardening, where it is legitimised by the relevant local authority. These aspects of urban living contribute to the citizen’s pleasure and recreation. The 2002 government survey undertaken by Sheffield University concluded that green space played a major role in urban renewal; that their ‘free, open, non-discriminatory access all day, every day’ were ‘visible representations of neighbourhood quality’.<sup>12</sup>

In ‘The Invention of the Park’, Karen Jones and John Wills suggest that the evolution of public green space incorporates temporal, spatial, environmental and political dimensions.<sup>13</sup> They argue that the range of public green space is a particular strength of cities— ‘a city without parks is not a city, at least not a modern one’—and the term ‘park’ has a flexibility that can accommodate both social evolution and cultural change.<sup>14</sup> Versailles and Central Park, The Peak District and Disneyland, even a virtual park, Dreamland, are included in their homage. The writers perceive the continual appropriation of the park as a cause for celebration and conclude that ‘ the park concept has been and will continue to be reinvented to suit our intellectual whims’.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> H. Conway, *People’s Parks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 88–9.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, *Improving Urban Parks*, 16.

<sup>13</sup> K. Jones and J. Wills, *The Invention of the Park* (Cambridge: 2005 Polity Press).

<sup>14</sup> *Topos*, European Landscape Magazine 2005, . cited by K. Jones and J. Wills, *The Invention of the Park*, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Jones and Wills, *The Invention of the Park*, 176

## **Precursors to the Public Park**

Although the public municipal park had its origins in earlier urban landscapes, which are described below, a critical staging point was undoubtedly a national parliamentary initiative, the 1833 Select Committee on Public Walks (SCPW) described below.<sup>16</sup> The Committee did not use the term ‘park’ in their report, employing the phrase ‘public walks’, which drew on its direct experience of existing green spaces, usually a promenade of some kind, commonly bordered by trees and sometimes grass. The therapeutic aspects of the environment have a respectable history. Karen Jones points out that the concept of nature as a tonic was widely shared from early times and the respiratory metaphor ‘lungs of the city’ had widespread use by Victorian times.<sup>17</sup> The opportunity to partake of gentle exercise in an environmentally congenial green space was perceived as a considerable benefit to health. Hospitals and asylums often had gardens for this reason.<sup>18</sup> Until 1974, when the period covered in this thesis ends, the Norwich Parks Committee occasionally employed the term ‘public walks’, interspersed with ‘park’, ‘garden’, ‘recreation ground’, ‘playing field’ and ‘playground’.<sup>19</sup> It was understood that the word ‘park’ embraced all these terms.

The earliest walks predated the public parks by 200 years. They consisted of boulevards planted with trees and shrubs and were introduced to enable the fashionable to promenade. Northernhay, at Exeter Castle in Devon, is reputed to be one of the oldest surviving walks, a perambulation laid out by the city corporation in 1612, with an elm avenue and seating.<sup>20</sup> Walks became popular in provincial cities, particularly spa towns and those urban areas which had aspirations to be part of ‘polite’ society. The extensive New Walk at Leicester, created in 1785 close to the town boundary, was financed by a combination of corporation and individual sponsorship.<sup>21</sup> King’s Lynn, a prosperous and historic trading town situated on the Wash, possesses the sole surviving eighteenth-century walk in Norfolk: the lime-planted New Walk or Mall was laid out in 1713

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<sup>16</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Public Walks.*

<sup>17</sup> K. Jones, “‘The Lungs of the City’: Green Space, Public Health and Bodily Metaphor in the Landscape of Urban Park History”. *Environment and History* 24:(2018) 43.

<sup>18</sup> C. Hickman, ‘The Picturesque at Brislington House, Bristol: The Role of Landscape in Relation to the Treatment of Mental Illness in the Early Nineteenth Century Asylum’, *Garden History* 33 no. 1 (2005), 48–50.

<sup>19</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2–10.

<sup>20</sup> Northernhay and Rougemont Gardens: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001631>.

<sup>21</sup> New Walk, Leicester: Parks and Gardens UK, Record ID 2423, accessed at <https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/new-walk>.

(Figure 1).<sup>22</sup> *The Old Curiosity Shop*, written by Dickens in 1841, but set some twenty years earlier, mentions that ‘In the public walks and lounges of a town, people go to see and be seen.’<sup>23</sup> Although the term was appropriated by the Committee, it is unlikely that the poor and dispossessed frequented such places; many were private enterprises and even those laid out by a corporation restricted access to people of rank.<sup>24</sup> As the name suggests, walks provided for walking and little else; the grass was for viewing and to set off the fine trees, shrubs and flower beds, which could be enjoyed in the company of like others, the fashionable or the respectable. Johnston suggests that the earliest tree-lined walks marked a transition between the enclosed landscaped space and the later public area.<sup>25</sup>

Although the term ‘walk’ was used consistently by the parliamentary committee, it is possible to detect antecedents in other designed landscapes. Many of the earliest designers of public parks – Joseph Paxton in Birkenhead, Joshua Major at Manchester and James Pennethorne at London’s Victoria Park – had extensive experience in park design. As a result, and possibly more by accident than design, the template for the



**Figure 1.** The Walks, King’s Lynn (Friends of the Walks, [www.thewalks.uk/walk-in-the-walks/contemporary](http://www.thewalks.uk/walk-in-the-walks/contemporary) photograph)

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<sup>22</sup> The Walks, Kings Lynn: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001374>.

<sup>23</sup> C. Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (London: Clarendon Press, 1997), vol. ii, chapter xlv, 37.

<sup>24</sup> M. Johnston, *Street Trees in Britain* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2017), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Johnston, *Street Trees in Britain*, 14.

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resulting urban parks became a fusion of landed estate and elite urban garden, such as the Exclusive King’s Garden, running alongside St James’s Park and the ornamental parterres at the Officers Terrace at Chatham in 1774, which closely resembled a walk.<sup>26</sup>

The early botanical gardens can also be considered forebears of the public park. Magdalen College Botanic Garden in Oxford was the earliest in the country, endowed in 1621 ‘to promote the furtherance of learning and to glorify nature’.<sup>27</sup> The original interest in such gardens was scientific; plant classification tended to be the guiding principle, shaping the way in which such gardens were organised and presented, grouping like-plants in clusters of flower beds. Over time, aesthetic considerations influenced the plant displays and tree planting and botanical gardens gradually evolved into aesthetic designs.<sup>28</sup> The Garden History volume dedicated to the history of tree collections, *Cultural and Historical Geographies of the Arboretum*, gives detailed credence to this fascinating evolution in articles by Paul Elliott, Charles Watkins and Stephen Daniels and Brent Elliott.<sup>29</sup>

Jan Woudstra describes the emergence of the Sheffield Botanical and Horticultural Gardens in 1836, funded by a share option.<sup>30</sup> This necessarily restricted the clientele to the Sheffield cognoscenti, although in debates the society’s founders speculated earnestly on the ways in which the working classes might benefit from access to such horticultural treasures.<sup>31</sup> Funded by their scientific membership and the occasional wealthy patron, such gardens were open to the general visitor on open-days when members of the public were able to purchase an entry ticket.<sup>32</sup> Woudstra perceives the gardens as an early display of Sheffield civic pride and Marnock’s design reconciled scientific classification with a lavishly ornate parkland setting, which included a hermitage, a rustic bridge and a cottage orne. Entry was restricted to those who could afford to pay, in much the same way as entry to the pleasure gardens, despite the

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<sup>26</sup> T. Longstaffe-Gowan, *The London Town Gardens* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2001), 102 and 114.

<sup>27</sup> [www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/home](http://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk/home).

<sup>28</sup> P. Elliott, C. Watkins and S. Daniels, ‘Preface’ *Garden History* 35 Suppl. 2 (2005), 3; C. Quest-Ritson, *The English Garden: A Social History* (London: Penguin, 2003), 203–4.

<sup>29</sup> Elliott et al, “‘Combining Science with Recreation and Pleasure’: Cultural Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Arboretums’, *Garden History* 35 Suppl. 2 (2005)6-27; B.Elliott, ‘From the Arboretum to the Woodland Garden’ *Garden History* 35 Suppl. 2 (2005) 71-83

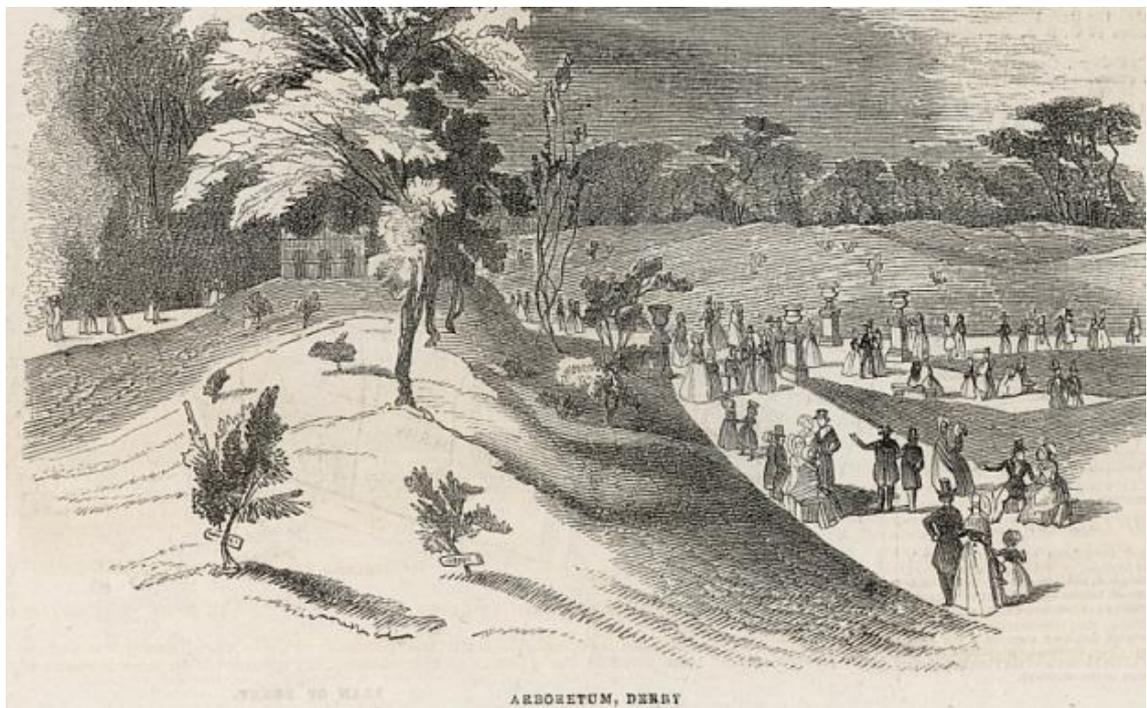
<sup>30</sup> J. Woudstra, ‘Robert Marnock and the Creation of the Sheffield Botanical and Horticultural Gardens, 1834–40’, *Garden History* 35.1 (2007), 2–36.

<sup>31</sup> Woudstra, ‘Sheffield Botanical Gardens’, 4.

<sup>32</sup> G. Chadwick, *The Park and the Town: Public Landscape in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: Architectural Press, 1966), 95.

difference in audience and attractions. The word ‘arboretum’ was coined by John Claudius Loudon in 1838 to describe a scientifically ordered botanical tree collection, but the eventual layout of the Loudon-designed Derby arboretum, proved to have strong similarities with the earliest parks.<sup>33</sup> Today it is described by Derby Council as the UK’s first public park.<sup>34</sup> As with many public parks, Derby Arboretum (Figure 2) was gifted to the town by a local philanthropist, Joseph Strutt. Although Strutt financed the arboretum’s construction, as a point of principle he did not endow the maintenance, and public access was strictly limited until Derby Council assumed responsibility for the arboretum in 1882.<sup>35</sup>

Nottingham Arboretum opened twelve years later, in 1852, employing a large-scale enclosure act to provide an imaginative series of recreational spaces, of which the



**Figure 2.** Derby Arboretum, 1843

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/wellbeing/outdoors/11908169/Britains-public-parks-175-years-old-but-will-they-survive.html>)

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<sup>33</sup> J.C. Loudon, *Arboretum et fucicetum Britannicum*, 1838; *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>34</sup> In Derby, ‘Derby Arboretum’, accessed at <https://www.inderby.org.uk/parks/derbys-parks-and-open-spaces/derby-arboretum/>; Margaret Willes, *The Gardens of the British Working Class* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2014), 213.

<sup>35</sup> Derby Arboretum Grade II\*: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000677>.

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Arboretum occupied seventeen acres.<sup>36</sup> Once more it is described by the Council as Nottingham’s ‘first public park’.<sup>37</sup>

The commercial pleasure gardens are another public park precursor but derived from a more populist tradition than the arboretums. These opened in London and in a number of the more fashionable provincial cities during the late seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and provided citizens with the opportunity to sample the delights of a garden, with some incidental entertainments. The gardens became increasingly extravagant and included balloon ascents and firework displays, elaborate pageants and theatricals.<sup>38</sup> In theory, the gardens were publicly accessible, but as they were privately owned commercial enterprises they charged for entrance, thus eliminating the ‘humbler classes’. In their eighteenth-century heyday, they were a bastion of exclusivity. By the end of their life the pleasure gardens had degenerated and entrance could be gained very cheaply. Bath’s Sydney Gardens is a rare survivor of a late eighteenth-century commercial pleasure garden which eventually evolved into an Edwardian public park. Today elements of its earlier Georgian landscape continue to delight (Figure 3).<sup>39</sup>

Most research on pleasure gardens focuses on London, which boasted numerous and heterogeneous pleasure gardens, but such gardens were also popular in some provincial cities, particularly the fashionable spa resorts of Bath and Cheltenham and, notably, the rather less fashionable Norwich. James Curl’s *Spas, Wells & Pleasure Gardens of London* is rich with detail, but focuses exclusively on London and the areas of the south-east patronised by Londoners. Curl describes their evolution from the earlier medicinal spas, via fraudulent spas with fake waters, walks which evolved into tea-gardens which in turn evolved into less decorous taverns with assembly rooms.<sup>40</sup> The horticultural elements eventually proved insufficient to maintain custom and the outside arbours and walk-ways gradually gave way to schemes to out-rival competitors

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<sup>36</sup> Nottingham Arboretum Grade II\*: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001083>.

<sup>37</sup> Nottingham Arboretum’, accessed at <https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/events-markets-parks-and-museums/parks-and-open-spaces/find-your-local-park/nottingham-arboretum/>.

<sup>38</sup> J.S. Curl, *Spas, Wells, & Pleasure Gardens of London* (Whitstable: Historical Publications, 2010), 144–59; T. Fawcett, ‘The Norwich Pleasure Gardens’, *Norfolk Archaeology* 35.3 (1972), 382–4.

<sup>39</sup> S. McNeil-Ritchie, for Historic England, *Bath* (Stroud: Amberley, 2017), 55.

<sup>40</sup> Curl, *Spas, Wells*, 144.



**Figure 3.** Sydney Gardens, Bath (The Hulbourne Museum)

by providing entertainments. Gardeners and entrepreneurs came together to create a formidable industry of eclectic gardens, featuring spectacular and increasingly non-horticultural attractions. Alton Towers is possibly their twenty-first-century heir.

London’s royal parks are commonly described as the earliest public parks, although even at the time of writing they remain officially in Crown ownership and, in theory, the public has no legal right of access, except for those areas designated as ‘rights of way’. In practice they operate as public parks and the Royal Parks Charity, set up in 2017, is responsible for their oversight.<sup>41</sup> In the early nineteenth century they consisted of eight parks spread over 5000 acres and were under the direct control of the monarch. Landscapers such as Henry Wise, Charles Bridgeman, William Kent, John Nash and Decimus Burton had variously contributed alterations to the parks.<sup>42</sup>

For most of their existence, the general public was unable to avail itself of these lush green spaces, although Hyde Park was opened to privileged sections of the public

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<sup>41</sup> The Royal Parks, [www.parks.org.uk](http://www.parks.org.uk), except for those areas designated rights of way.

<sup>42</sup> S. Lasdun, *The English Park, Royal, Private and Public* (New York: The Vendome Press, 1992), *passim*.

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as early as the 1630s.<sup>43</sup> The key word is privileged: at various times in their history kings and queens extended favours that allowed members of the elite to use the parks, but this was rarely granted for the general masses, and only on royal sufferance. The favour could be withdrawn, and frequently was, as monarch succeeded monarch.<sup>44</sup> The SCPW noted that in Europe royal parks operated more democratically. In 1826 *The Gardener’s Magazine* published an account by German landscaper Peter Joseph Lenne, which was highly critical of the exclusive culture of London parks and gardens.<sup>45</sup> Resentment at restrictions on admission undoubtedly festered. Some attempts at breaching the boundaries of the parks took place during the eighteenth century. One of the most successful was made by a brewer, John Lewis, who, in 1758, achieved access to Richmond Park for the nearby villagers of Sheen and Ham.<sup>46</sup>

The date of public access to the Royal Parks is mired in confusion. This is partly because the term ‘public access’ tends to be loosely defined and ranges from occasional public, selective public and comprehensive public access. St James’s is frequently described as a royal park designed for public access.<sup>47</sup> The SCPW states that Regent’s Park was a private space in 1833, although it mentions that Green Park and Hyde Park were open to ‘all classes’ and St James’s to those who met the prescribed dress code. Susan Lasdun’s research contradicts any notion of early public access.<sup>48</sup> Her work provides useful evidence of the volatility of the successive royal families in their attitude to public access and draws on a range of primary sources to support her argument.<sup>49</sup> As late as 1841, Richmond park-keepers were ordered to restrict public access. In the case of Regent’s Park, 1838 is given as the eventual date of the park’s designation as a public space (the proximity to the date of the SCPW is significant and suggests the report was influential).<sup>50</sup> In 1841 correspondence in the influential *Gardeners’ Chronicle* debated the proposal to open up the royal parks. Fearmongering was rife, but the editorial stance was resolute in support. On the frequently expressed concerns that public traffic would render the parks ‘unusable’, the magazine was

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<sup>43</sup> The Royal Parks, royalparks.org.uk.

<sup>44</sup> Lasdun, *The English Park*, 127.

<sup>45</sup> *Gardeners’ Magazine* 1, 26 July 1826, cited by Sarah Dewis in *The Loudons and the Gardening Press* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 144.

<sup>46</sup> R.D. Fordham, J. Hearsum and A. McCullen, *Parks, Our Shared Heritage*, exhibition catalogue (London: Government Publications Office, 2017), 13, 34.

<sup>47</sup> Conway, *People’s Parks*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Lasdun, *The English Park*, 127, 131.

<sup>49</sup> Lasdun, *The English Park*, 119–34.

<sup>50</sup> Lasdun, *The English Park*, 131.

dismissive: ‘disorderly and ill-disposed persons abound in all places’.<sup>51</sup> In 1846, restrictions on access were still evident: a letter to *The Times* complained that St James’s Park continued to be exclusive and ‘a perfectly decently dressed mechanic was turned out of Hyde-park’, lending strong credence to Lasdun’s claims.<sup>52</sup> Over forty years later, Reynolds News, a Sunday newspaper favoured by the working class, was still arguing that ‘all classes’ should be able to use Regent’s Park, which suggests that dress-codes were still in force.<sup>53</sup> Karen Jones states that Richmond Park only became fully accessible to all-comers, as late as 1904.<sup>54</sup> The SCPW had been trenchant in its criticism of the contempt shown by the establishment to the poor: when it used the term ‘public’ it meant ‘all the public’. Inclusivity was essential.<sup>55</sup>

### **The Select Committee on Public Walks, 1833**

This committee is generally credited with giving impetus to the movement that was to result in a major British nineteenth-century urban landscape development, the public park. Parliament had set up the Select Committee in 1833 for the express purpose of ‘securing open places in the neighbourhood of great towns for the health and exercise of the population’.<sup>56</sup> There was considerable public concern over the cramped and overcrowded conditions in which the urban poor lived, and the public parks movement, supported by social reformers such as the influential writer and landscaper John Loudon, grew out of this social concern.<sup>57</sup> The survey of urban facilities provides a snapshot of social conditions in London, the Midlands and the north of the country. The French writer Hippolyte Taine graphically describes mid-Victorian Leeds Street in Liverpool in a passage that could have come from Dicken’s *Hard Times*: ‘Bands of children swarm on every flight of steps ... they are all shockingly dirty; their faces and

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<sup>51</sup> *The Gardeners’ Chronicle*, 24 April 1841: ‘Editorial on the opening up of Regents Park’.

<sup>52</sup> *The Times*, 10 July 1846: Letters to the Editor C.D. ‘The Parks’, 6.

<sup>53</sup> *Reynolds News 1889*, 3 cited by P. Thorsheim, in ‘Green Space and Class in Imperial London’ A. Isenberg, *The Nature of Cities*, (New York:Rochester Press; Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer 2006), 30.

<sup>54</sup> K. Jones, *Lungs of the City*, 2018, 46.

<sup>55</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Public Walks*.

<sup>56</sup> *Hansard*, HC Debate Ser. 3, Vol. 15 cc 1049, February 1833, Public Health, accessed at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1833-02-21/debates/4b63af84-a623-4439-a912-7e4879f36058/PublicHealth>.

<sup>57</sup> *The Gardener’s Magazine* 5, ‘Hints for Breathing places for the Metropolis and for Country Towns and Villages, on fixed principles’ (December 1829), 686–90, cited by Dewis, *The Loudons and the Gardening Press*, 142.

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hands appearing to be encrusted with dust and soot.’<sup>58</sup>

Fortunes had been made through industry in the industrial cities, yet the SCPW charged these same cities with damning terms such as ‘neglect’, ‘destitute’ and ‘offensive’. The witnesses included reliable members of the educated middle class, not generally given to exaggeration or hyperbole; surveyors and land agents, magistrates, doctors and coroners. They provided poignant illustrations of how grievously the poor had been affected. The enclosure of Tower Hill had removed a previously safe bathing place; when the poor attempted to use the familiar location, the police drove them into deeper water, ‘resulting in many deaths by drowning’.

Some recommendations were eminently practical: Theodore Price proposed the creation of two types of public garden: playgrounds – although such dedicated provision for children was some decades away – and gardens for walks. Another witness pointed out that the Terrace at the back of Somerset House provided an ideal location for a garden. Bonners Field was also noted as a possible location for a walk (and was later used for Victoria Park). *Quid pro quo* schemes were recommended for the wealthy, in order to solicit the donation of suitable land. The early importance of river access for public bathing was stressed, as well as the potential of the River Thames as a public walkway. A more radical proposal was for a dedicated act of parliament to ensure that large towns guaranteed a public right of way by protecting land on either side of a turnpike. Given that living conditions in the working-class areas of London were among the worst in the country, the 1833 Select Committee’s conclusion that all the royal parks should be opened to the general public was bold and enlightened, helping to secure the royal parks as publicly accessible in perpetuity.<sup>59</sup>

Although the report did not lead directly to legislation, and the financial difficulties in the development of urban parks continued to be a major challenge for local corporations, it contributed to a culture of social change and wider recognition of the social and health needs of the ‘humbler classes’. Then and now, parliament proved more effective in documenting the parlous state of public green space in reports and inquiries than in legislating. This lack of resolution lay less in acknowledging the scale of the problem than in reaching agreement on how such parks might be funded. This omission was to undermine both the creation and the survival of public parks into the twenty-first century. *The Times* greeted the report with measured approval, referring to

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<sup>58</sup> H. Taine, *Notes on England* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1885), 281–2.

<sup>59</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Public Walks*.

the report’s praiseworthy objects, which it stressed were ‘attainable ... at a very trifling expense’ but disingenuously expressed two caveats: ‘Many of their plans, however, are too costly to be carried into effect by the government and hardly promising enough to attract private speculation.’<sup>60</sup> Despite this pessimistic prophecy, some urban areas were to rise to the challenge.

### **The Victorian Public Park**

There are a number of claimants to the title of the country’s first public park. In the same year as the Select Committee, although four years before Victoria’s accession, the new industrial town of Preston resolved to establish a park at Moor Park, then a large tract of heathland. The town ingeniously argued that it did not require an act of enclosure, as it was owned by royal charter.<sup>61</sup> It proceeded to lay out a simple design with public walks and drives, tree planting, a serpentine walk and a lake, with lodges at the south and west approaches.<sup>62</sup> It was municipally owned but not all accord it the status of the first public park.<sup>63</sup> Conway, who draws a distinction between ‘municipal’ and ‘public’ parks, recognises it as the first municipal park.<sup>64</sup> By 1857 Charles Hardwick described the park as having ‘an ornamental character’ but being in need of landscape gardening.<sup>65</sup> The borough’s opportunistic coup was never legally challenged and the park was later upgraded in the 1860s with a more sophisticated design by Edward Milner.<sup>66</sup>

Three parks, Phillips, Queens and Peel at Salford, were opened in Manchester in 1846. They were achieved through a combination of local fundraising and a government grant. Although donations were made from a wide sector of the local community, including local councillors, the three corporations were not directly responsible.<sup>67</sup> Birkenhead Park opened in 1847. It is another strong contender for the title of first British public park and Brent Elliott is a staunch advocate: it was designed as a public

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<sup>60</sup> *The Times*, 7 September 1933: ‘Public Walks’, 3.

<sup>61</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>62</sup> Moor Park Grade II\*: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001309>.

<sup>63</sup> Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*, 106; Conway, *People’s Parks*, 18, 19.

<sup>64</sup> Conway, *People’s Parks*, 17.

<sup>65</sup> C. Hardwick, *History of the Borough of Preston and its Environs* (Preston: Worthington & Co., 1857), 326–9, cited by Historic England.

<sup>66</sup> Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*, 107.

<sup>67</sup> Conway, *People’s Parks*, 50.

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park, owned by the local authority and freely accessible to all-comers.<sup>68</sup> Three dedicated acts from the Improvement Commissioners (*q.v.* Appendix) enabled Birkenhead to use public funds to purchase the 225 acres required, of which 125 acres were for the new park.<sup>69</sup> The resulting Paxton-designed landscape (Figure 4) was dominated by two large ornamental lakes with rustic bridges, fringed with trees and a few large buildings, so that the eye was drawn inwards to the landscape.<sup>70</sup> The park boasted four imposing main gates (Figure 5) and five smaller entrances. Within the park there were numerous footpaths and narrow drives allowing considerable freedom to walk in comfort and safety.<sup>71</sup> The town ingeniously recouped the expenditure by the sale of land for handsome upper-middle-class villas accessed via a carriage drive, the proximity to the park proving a considerable attraction. This was innovatory, as in the first half of the nineteenth century houses for the affluent tended to be built along the main carriage drive into the town.<sup>72</sup> Conway notes that Paxton was particularly concerned to ensure that maintenance of the park was guaranteed after its opening.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 4.** Paxton’s plan for Birkenhead Park

<sup>68</sup> B. Elliott, *Victorian Gardens* (London: Batsford, 1986), 53; Conway, *People’s Parks*, 49–51; .

<sup>69</sup> Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*, 57; Conway, *People’s Parks*, 48, 49.

<sup>70</sup> J. Paxton, ‘Plan of Birkenhead New Park’, in Conway, *People’s Parks*, 88, fig. 21.

<sup>71</sup> Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*, 67–8.

<sup>72</sup> S. Muthesius, *The English Terraced House* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1984), 173.

<sup>73</sup> Conway, *People’s Parks*, 90.



**Figure 5.** Grand entrance, Birkenhead Park (contemporary photograph)

Taigel and Williamson are sceptical about Birkenhead’s claim to be ‘a park bought by the people for the people’. They argue that its main functions were ‘to serve the aims of developers and the ambitions of the affluent middle classes’ rather than public recreation.<sup>74</sup> This is short-sighted. The avenues open to local authorities in funding such recreational spaces were highly restricted at that time. Unless the land was *largesse* from a wealthy donor, as happened in 1880 at the small Yorkshire town of Keighley, the financial options for local government were limited.<sup>75</sup> Public subscription and donations were options, as with the first Manchester parks, a philanthropic gift another, or government and/or royal intervention, as with the Royal Victoria Park at Lambeth. In the case of the Oxford University Parks, the university colleges owned the land.<sup>76</sup> Speculators in Birkenhead, including the local commissioners, made lucrative investments from the exercise, but, given the stringent restrictions in operation at the time, it is doubtful whether Birkenhead had other financial options at its disposal.

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<sup>74</sup> A. Taigel and T. Williamson, *Know the Landscape: Parks and Gardens* (London: Batsford, 1993), 123.

<sup>75</sup> L. Macgill, ‘The Emergence of Public Parks in Keighley, West Yorkshire, 1887–93: Leisure, Pleasure or Reform?’ *Garden History* 35.2 (1997), 145–59.

<sup>76</sup> J. Steane, ‘The Oxford University Parks’, *Garden History* 32.1 (2004), 87.

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Taigel is particularly scathing about the layout of Birkenhead Park, describing the imposing gateways and classical pavilions as the ‘architecture of the elite’.<sup>77</sup> This outcome is hardly surprising, as the designers of all the earliest public parks had honed their skills on creating the landscapes of the wealthy and successful. Decision-makers would have expected them to apply those same skills to these new public commissions and a scaled-down *modus operandi* could well have been deemed patronising. Given the enthusiasm with which Eastenders flocked to Victoria Park in 1846 (‘25,000 persons on Good Friday’), with its eight vast and daunting gateways, the general public appeared highly appreciative of their new park and its august design.<sup>78</sup> The great American park designer Frederick Law Olmsted employed a more naturalistic approach in his layout of New York parks, but he was particularly inspired by his visit to Birkenhead Park in 1850, writing that ‘in democratic America, there was nothing to be thought of as comparable with this Peoples Garden.’<sup>79</sup>

Until the Public Improvement Act of 1860, towns experienced difficulty in funding the ongoing maintenance of public parks because of government restrictions on the application of the rate, the mechanism for raising revenue.<sup>80</sup> The only alternative was application to parliament through an Improvement Act, a costly business.<sup>81</sup> After the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, which introduced greater public accountability into civic finances, ratepayers, even in the wealthy northern cities, became increasingly vocal about the rate burden.<sup>82</sup>

### **Critical Perspectives on Nineteenth-century Public Parks**

Conway’s *People’s Parks* undoubtedly did much to ensure that the study of urban parks gained landscape respectability, and the breadth and scope of Conway’s empirical research on the emergence of the Victorian park in Britain is unique. She is particularly strong on the early park designers and the legislative and regulatory framework in which towns operated. She also considers how parks became emblematic aspects of

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<sup>77</sup> Taigel and Williamson, *Parks and Gardens*, 123.

<sup>78</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, 2 May 1846; C. Poulsen, *Victoria Park* (London: Stepney Books and the Journeyman Press, 1976), 40.

<sup>79</sup> C. Beveridge and C. Hoffman (eds), *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 69.

<sup>80</sup> J.A Chandler, *Explaining Local Government: Local Government in Britain since 1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 22–4.

<sup>81</sup> Public Improvements Act 1860 (see Appendix).

<sup>82</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 39–42.

civic pride and explores different aspects of park making, such as design and designers, park structures and park maintenance. Some of the parks are tellingly described, particularly where she provides contexts which reveal the complexity of the political and financial issues at the time; her coverage of the burgeoning industrial northern heartlands is particularly fine. However, because *People's Parks* is comprehensive, it necessarily operates with a light touch in its consideration of individual towns and can provide only tantalising glimpses of the particular urban context.

George Chadwick's research on public landscape in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *The Park and the Town*, was published over three decades before Conway wrote. It remains highly relevant as a detailed analysis of some of the most important and influential urban parks and gardens both in this country and abroad. He ranges authoritatively across continents and themes such as the 'Italianate influence' or the 'gardenesque', and his research is supported by a wide range of contemporary sources. The juxtapositions in his work are arresting, as when he moves from Blackpool to Sydney and then from Hestercombe to Delhi in the same chapter, drawing stylistic parallels and contrasts.<sup>83</sup> His range of source material is formidable, especially as his research pre-dates the establishment of English Heritage's authoritative register of sites. His description of Scandinavian parks provides a useful counterpoint to the English park tradition, which city planners are only emulating 50 years later.<sup>84</sup> The work has scarcely dated except in the final chapter which anticipates future trends in urban parks, many of which have been overtaken by events: clean air legislation and the increasing role of the motor car. Even in the 1960s, Chadwick foresaw the role of green chains and linear parks and how they might be particularly germane to cities, despite using different terminology to describe such developments. The combination of Chadwick's and Conway's research provides an authoritative and wide-ranging database from which to research an urban area in more detail.

Hilary Taylor adopts an aesthetic approach in her analysis of a selection of Victorian parks.<sup>85</sup> Although she discusses the social rationale for their introduction, she is particularly concerned to explore park design and its relationship to contemporary philosophic thought. The concept of *Rus in urbe* and the links between art, science and other aspects of the Victorian cultural sensibility, such as virtue, are considered in her

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<sup>83</sup> Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*, ch. 10.

<sup>84</sup> Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*, chs 11, 12.

<sup>85</sup> H. Taylor, 'Urban Public Parks, 1840–1900: Design and Meaning', *Garden History* 23.1 (1995), 201–21.

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descriptions, which include the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, the People’s Park in Halifax and the Miller and Avenham Parks at Preston. The article introduces concepts which are staples of renaissance and eighteenth-century landscape history, which she relates to both Repton’s principle of ‘appropriation’ and even Oscar Newman’s ‘defensible space’ theory in relation to Pearson Park in Hull. She makes a powerful indictment of the neglect suffered subsequently by parks. Taylor’s description of the statue-clad terraces at People’s Park, Halifax, with the sculptures enclosed by wooden boxes to protect them from constant vandalism, conveys a picture that reception theory might find challenging to accommodate.<sup>86</sup>

Social historians have often focused on the concept of ‘rational recreation’ and what is perceived as the coercive and civilising agenda of the Victorian public health reformers. Malcolmson’s study of recreation from 1700 to 1850 surveys popular sports in both rural and urban communities and emphasises the paternalistic culture that obtained, particularly in the latter. He provides extensive evidence for the partisan and discriminatory attitudes which influenced legislation on working-class sports, such as bull-baiting to the exclusion of field sports. His detailed exploration of blood sports reveals Norwich as one of the bastions of cock-fighting and bull-baiting in the early nineteenth century, perhaps unsurprising in an urban area surrounded by an agricultural landscape.<sup>87</sup> He describes the cultural change brought about through an increased focus on Christian values: in his words, ‘moral earnestness’.<sup>88</sup> Malcolmson’s history ends before the public park movement gathered significant momentum, but he vividly demonstrates the vitality and gusto with which the working class engaged in their chosen pursuits and provides a useful counterpoint to the picture of repressed confinement outlined later by Peter Bailey. Bailey’s research on leisure and class also details, at length, the controls employed over the period 1830–1885 and perceives the concept of ‘rational recreation’ as largely shorn of benign motives.<sup>89</sup> On the rare occasions Bailey mentions public parks, it is to impugn the motives of the reformers, perceiving parks as a form of recreational sabotage for the working man. It would be difficult to doubt the sincerity of Robert Slaney, the Whig MP who chaired the 1833

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<sup>86</sup> Taylor, ‘Urban Public Parks’, 221.

<sup>87</sup> R.W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 81, 120, 123.

<sup>88</sup> Malcolmson, *Recreations*, 120–3.

<sup>89</sup> P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

Select Committee. Pragmatism can be a persuasive counter to entrenched establishment attitudes.

However, Malcomson’s account of the early reception to Peel Park in Manchester reveals how the principle of Sunday opening became a battleground between radicals and the influential Temperance Movement. This consequently undermined working-class support for the proposed park: ‘the churches had sunk Peel Park’.<sup>90</sup> The hostility with which publicans greeted the changes in leisure and recreation as they unfolded over the Victorian period may possibly explain why Norwich, rich in public houses, maintained illegal blood sports into the early twentieth century.<sup>91</sup>

This paradox is exemplified in David Lambert’s subtle article on transgressive rituals in public parks. He draws attention to the dichotomy between the desire for order and civility and the appropriation of place by the rougher classes. Lambert points out that as local authorities attempted to define the social codes for their newly enclosed public spaces, such encodement generated working class resistance and appropriation in the form of transgressive behaviours. He cites the case of the notorious Battersea Fields, an informal area of land later incorporated into Battersea Park. As ‘Fields’ it hosted a multiplicity of functions from duelling to carnival. Given this provenance Lambert suggests that it is unsurprising that transgressions should continue to flourish in the later, more respectable public park.<sup>92</sup> Likewise the ousted Pockthorpe labourers continued to vent their frustration on the fabric of the heath for some years after Norwich’s first public park, Mousehold Heath, was enclosed.<sup>93</sup>

It was not only parks and gardens that attracted behaviour that breached the accepted codes of behaviour. In the later part of the nineteenth century, following the Burial Acts, a number of the closed burial grounds in urban areas became increasingly derelict and subject to antisocial and illegal activity. In ‘The Corpse in the Garden’ Peter Thorshelm catalogues some of the contemporary descriptions of nightly desecration of the sites, behaviour which provided useful ammunition for the green space advocates and the reformers of the period.<sup>94</sup> Thorshelm is one of a number of writers who discuss health and the environment in relation to the transformation of the

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<sup>90</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 52.

<sup>91</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, passim.

<sup>92</sup> D. Lambert, ‘Rituals of Transgression in Public Parks in Britain, 1846 to the Present Day’ in *Performance and Appropriation: Profane Rituals in Gardens and Landscapes* (Washington: Dunbarton Oaks and Spacemaker Press, 2007) 195-210.

<sup>93</sup> See Chapter 2

<sup>94</sup> P. Thorshelm, ‘The Corpse in the Garden: Burial, Health and the Environment in Nineteenth-century London’, *Environmental Health*, 16:1, (Oxford University Press, 2011), 47-49.

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capital’s burial grounds into small city gardens the latter part of the nineteenth century. Tim Brown in ‘The making of urban ‘healtheries’: the transformation of cemeteries and burial grounds in late-Victorian East London’ describes the work of campaigners such as Lord Brabazon, the chair of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Society, and M.K. Vernon, supported by organisations such as the Commons Preservation Society, the Kirle Society and the National Health Society. The connection made between peoples’ health and the environment in which they lived and worked was perceived as a crucial stage in improving the lives of the poor and the provision of parks and gardens were a logical consequence. Interestingly, Brown emphasises that in order to be successful, such green spaces required order and management.<sup>95</sup>

The National Health Society was established in 1871, largely at the initiative of the first female doctor to be included on the General Medical Council’s register, the American trained, Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910). The society was a campaigning organisation and set up to spread good practice in the area of public health. The environmental and medical historian, Clare Hickman, scrutinises the papers of the National Health Society to explore the relationship between medical professionals and green space campaigners. Her article confirms the views of Thorshelm, Driver, et alia in their analysis of the importance of health and sanitation in the thinking of the environmental reformers and the influence of physicians and sanitation experts in the mission to improve the urban fabric of towns and cities.<sup>96</sup> Felix Driver’s somewhat dense paper argues that modern sociology has misinterpreted earlier thinking on the relationship between disease, the environment and moralism. Nevertheless, his impressive range of source material reveals the sophisticated relationship between differing bodies of knowledge in the nineteenth century such as medicine, sanitary science, geography and statistics.<sup>97</sup> Disease, for example, was more evident in areas of high population density and reform of housing also granted the opportunity to improve water supply and effective waste disposal. Driver nicely observes that ‘sewage itself

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<sup>95</sup> T. Brown, ‘The making of urban ‘healtheries’: the transformation of cemeteries and burial grounds in late-Victorian East London’ in *Historical Geography* 42 (2013) 13, 14, 23.

<sup>96</sup> C. Hickman, ‘To brighten the aspect of our streets and increase the health and enjoyment of our city’: The National Health Society and urban green space in late-nineteenth century London’

*Landscape and Urban Planning* 118, (2013), 112, 113.

<sup>97</sup> F. Driver, ‘Moral geographies: social science and the urban environment in mid-nineteenth century England’, in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1988) 276-279

acquired a cosmic significance’.<sup>98</sup> In nineteenth-century Norwich, sewage was to prove more politically expedient than parks.

Horticultural knowledge and practice also underwent a gardening revolution in the nineteenth century. In his authoritative *Victorian Gardens*, Brent Elliott provides a panoramic sweep of elite and middle-class gardening in England over a sixty-year period and describes the rich horticultural background from which public parks emerged.<sup>99</sup> It remains the definitive writing on Victorian horticulture to date. Elliott makes particularly effective use of archival sources (when he wrote he was the librarian at the Lindley Library and is today the historian of the Royal Horticultural Society) and, consequently, his evidence base is rich and varied. He considers both the aesthetic and philosophic bases of the landscape movement, including the transition to *picturesque* and *gardenesque* landscapes. Elliott does not patronise the reader: in the early chapters some of the subject headings are unnecessarily obscure: ‘from the picturesque to transcendentalism’ and ‘the aesthetics of scatter’.<sup>100</sup> Elliott is an unabashed devotee of the Victorian period and perceives it as the ‘golden age of English gardening’. He asserts that Victorian gardens were a revolution against the landscape tradition of the eighteenth century and describes the years 1850–60 as a decade dominated by flower beds in gardens.<sup>101</sup> Undoubtedly, there was a considerable amount of revisionism in the gardening of the period; flower borders are richly evident in descriptions, paintings and photographs of the time. However, patterns of change tend to be gradual, as Williamson points out, with the slow demise of the geometric garden in the eighteenth century and the survival of the landscape garden well into the nineteenth century and beyond.<sup>102</sup> Not only do styles linger; they also anticipate later fashions. In Repton’s later designs, such as the plan for a greenhouse at Gunton Hall, dated 1816, the elaborate floral garden could easily have been insinuated into an 1860s Victorian public park.<sup>103</sup>

Elliott approaches his subject largely chronologically but perceives subtle changes in period style, such as the introduction of rockwork landscapes, the deployment of

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<sup>98</sup> Driver, *Moral geographies*, 280

<sup>99</sup> Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*.

<sup>100</sup> Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, 23, 34.

<sup>101</sup> Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*.

<sup>102</sup> T. Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1995), 19, 161, 163.

<sup>103</sup> S. Bate, R. Savage and T. Williamson, *Humphrey Repton in Norfolk* (Aylsham: Barnwell Print 2018), 155, fig. 185.

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carpet bedding and the use of the conservatory.<sup>104</sup> He is particularly astute in the extensive use he makes of the nineteenth-century media: gardening journals and magazines, which became popular at this time with the expanding gardening middle class and gentry and those who influenced popular taste, such as Loudon, Paxton, Nesfield and Robinson. Unusually, he introduces Victorian ventures into garden history, conservation and restoration. It is disappointing that he is comparatively frugal in his references to public parks, but his description of the relatively late (1860) introduction of flower beds in parks is a useful demarcation.<sup>105</sup>

The poor, the dispossessed, the lower orders and the humbler classes are all terms applied to those who were intended to benefit from the health-giving properties of the public parks. Margaret Willes’ social history of the gardens of the working class over a four-century time-scale is a marked contrast to Elliott’s subject matter, but in a few places their research overlaps.<sup>106</sup> It is a difficult area to research, as many documentary sources necessarily rely on non-working class chroniclers and images are relatively rare. As Willes herself points out, the term did not exist until the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>107</sup> Her work goes some way to redressing the balance in terms of the importance of gardening to a large and often absent stratum of society and provides a welcome counterbalance to the more typical portrayal of elite gardens. The most successful chapter focuses on the growth of the florist societies and horticultural competitions over the nineteenth century. The accounts of floricultural successes and rivalries were well documented in local newspapers and, because of the richness of the source material, possess a vitality and coherence which is less evident in some of the earlier chapters.<sup>108</sup> Willes devotes only ten pages to the public parks, but her description of the enthusiasm with which the local population responded to Victoria Park is particularly illuminating: the new gardening audience had a major influence on planting styles in public parks; a form of working-class populism that unleashed a gardening style that has continued in municipal planting to the present day (Figure 6).<sup>109</sup>

The pressing need for the repair and renewal of these heritage assets and how such parks might best be re-interpreted for later generations is the rationale for *The Regeneration of Public Parks*. Its contents cover key constituents of the early public

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<sup>104</sup> Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, passim.

<sup>105</sup> Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, 134–5.

<sup>106</sup> Willes, *Gardens of the British Working Class*.

<sup>107</sup> Willes, *Gardens of the British Working Class*, 2.

<sup>108</sup> Willes, *Gardens of the British Working Class*, 224–45.

<sup>109</sup> Willes, *Gardens of the British Working Class*, 214–21.



**Figure 6.** Parade Gardens, Bath, sculptural bedding (contemporary photograph)

parks, such as buildings and hard landscaping.<sup>110</sup> Although the volume as a whole fails to explore in any detail how regeneration might best be funded and managed, individual chapters are excellent: those on bedding, ironwork and paths are particularly strong and draw useful attention to the range of materials and skills the Victorians employed in park-making.<sup>111</sup> In a too-brief chapter on play and sport Elliott perceptively notes the considerable contribution made by the Manchester parks superintendent, W.W. Pettigrew, in the interwar period, in his rare writings on the management of the public park.<sup>112</sup>

By contrast, Lynn MacGill’s vivid essay on the introduction of public parks in the small manufacturing town of Keighley in the 1880s is a fascinating historical and social analysis and synthesises Victorian park-making in a fourteen-page article.<sup>113</sup> The desire of Henry Butterfield, a wealthy manufacturer, to ensure residential privacy resulted in

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<sup>110</sup> J. Woudstra and K. Fielding, *The Regeneration of Public Parks* (London: E. & F.N. Spon, 2000).

<sup>111</sup> E. Diestelkamp, ‘The Use of Iron’ and B. Elliott, ‘Paths’, both in Woudstra and Fielding, *Regeneration*.

<sup>112</sup> B. Elliott, ‘Play and Sport’, in Woudstra and Fielding, *Regeneration*, 153–4.

<sup>113</sup> MacGill, ‘Keighley’.

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an act of philanthropy that led to the town’s acquisition of three considerable parks:

‘Keighley had become a large triangle with a park on every corner’.<sup>114</sup> The manipulation of the Town Council, the loss of public rights of way and the design of the parks are neatly dissected. MacGill concludes that, for the people of Keighley, the ends justified the means.

Children’s play and playgrounds were not a preoccupation of the 1833 Select Committee, although advocated by one witness. By the end of the nineteenth century children were frequently allocated some space within parks and by the mid-twentieth century the government advocated dedicated playgrounds. Linden Groves’ chronological survey of play provision within public parks focuses on three local authorities: Manchester, an early pioneer of playground provision, Newcastle and Bournemouth. Groves’ research draws widely on minutes of the various council committees which oversaw playgrounds and includes primary evidence of their decision-making and their efforts to regulate behaviour and manage costs. There is little analysis of the respective roles of the local councils, nor are comparisons drawn between the three. However, many of the issues which taxed the three local authorities are echoed in Norwich, particularly the problem of vandalism, and it provides a rare insight into a particular aspect of public park-making.<sup>115</sup>

### **Critical Perspectives on Twentieth-century Green Space**

The engagement of urban councils in park-making accelerated at the beginning of the twentieth century, partly assisted by greater freedom in the use of local rates and the opportunity to borrow capital sums from government. The popularity of public parks had become a particularly strong political motivator. The role of local councils underwent large-scale changes over this period and the relationship between local and national governments altered in response to increased central control. O’Reilly’s tantalisingly brief essay on the concept of urban citizenship and its application to the urban park argues that a significant change in values emerged with the introduction of the Edwardian park, as typified by the creation of Heaton Park, Manchester.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> MacGill, ‘Keighley’, 153.

<sup>115</sup> L. Groves, ‘The History of Children’s Play Provision in Public Parks’, unpublished internal report (English Heritage, 2013), 2–9.

<sup>116</sup> C. O’Reilly, ‘From “the people” to “the citizen”’: Municipal leisure in Manchester’s urban parks’ (Manchester: University of Salford, 2010), accessed at <https://usir.salford.ac.uk/>.

O’Reilly’s essay is particularly relevant because it is one of the few which explores the park in relation to the council at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Harriet Jordan’s article on ‘Public Parks’ focuses on the highly productive period from 1885 to the beginning of the First World War.<sup>117</sup> The article provides an excellent complement to *People’s Parks*, which concluded its timeframe in the early 1890s. Jordan’s study includes pressure groups and the legislative changes which helped to lubricate local authority finances. She also provides an analysis of the strategies and policies undertaken by some authorities towards land acquisition and draws attention to the fact that the London pattern of park development tended to differ from that of the rest of the country as a result of dedicated legislation. The article considers the design of parks and introduces the role of park superintendents in designing and laying out parks. Jordan devotes some time to Mawson and his wide experience in public park design, which is particularly relevant to Norwich and its park superintendent, Arnold Sandys-Winsch, who was apprenticed to Mawson’s practice. Jordan’s article alerted me to the similarity between the design for the twelve-acre park of Cleethorpes, opened in 1905 (Figure 7), and Eaton Park in Norwich.<sup>118</sup>

Draconian legislation for the defence of the realm was introduced during both world wars. As a result, structures and military personnel abounded in many urban parks. The government was ambivalent: parks were not merely instrumental in providing a base for the machinery of war but also had a symbolic value in terms of raising morale in a time of crisis, representing the green and pleasant land the country was pledged to uphold. Sophie Seifalian examines the role of the royal parks, particularly Regent’s Park, within the timeframe of the First World War.<sup>119</sup> She suggests that only Hyde Park was spared large-scale military incursion; Regent’s Park, which had survived virtually intact since Nash had laid it out in the early nineteenth century, was the most extensively affected of all the royal parks. Seifalian describes the staffing and planting economies made (some of which were undertaken as a public relations exercise). The article provides rich detail on the range of war-time activity in the park and the effects of war on the gardeners, not only those who were conscripted or volunteered but those left behind. It was some eight years before Regent’s Park returned to any vestige of normality and the Second World War was only a decade away.

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<sup>117</sup> H. Jordan, ‘Public Parks 1885–1915’, *Garden History* 22.1 (1994).

<sup>118</sup> Jordan, ‘Public Parks’, 98.

<sup>119</sup> S. Seifalian, ‘The Role of London’s Royal Parks during the First World War with Particular Reference to Regents Park’, *Garden History* 44.1 (2016), 115–33.

The importance of food production was a major theme running through both wars. Caroline Foley’s *Of Cabbages and Kings*, a concise history of the allotment movement from feudalism through to the present day, considers the impact of the two World Wars, including the responses of those London authorities which were less persuaded of the importance of food production, and the shocked responses from the owners of London’s exclusive garden squares.<sup>120</sup>

Lesley Acton’s *Growing Space*, exceptionally, explores in detail the role of the local authority in the allotment movement over the twentieth century and in particular the work of various allotment committees. She documents the pivotal role of councils in the twentieth century and provides hard evidence of middle-class activity between the wars.<sup>121</sup> Both wars had a profound effect on the national psyche and the centenary commemoration of the First World War generated a plethora of publications on the war years. Despite the fact that allotment gardening and home cultivation played important roles in both campaigns, however, the majority of garden history studies have focused on the Second World War.

The brilliance of the political propaganda campaign of the Second World War is captured in *The Spade as Mighty as the Sword*, a twist on the slogan coined by a young journalist, Michael Foot. The book captures some of the exigencies of war and raises an important question mark over the extent of the food campaign’s success.<sup>122</sup> Ursula Buchan’s highly readable *A Green and Pleasant Land* analyses the Second World War from the gardeners’ perspective and is particularly rich on the role of women and horticultural colleges. Buchan assesses the impact of the war on country estates and the involvement of notable gardeners in the war effort, such as Valerie Finnis, Maurice Mason and David Scott, although she avoids any judgement on the overall efficacy of the war-time crop production campaign.<sup>123</sup> Her gardening focus is particularly effective, as are her exemplars from gardening magazines and the media.

The role of the County War Agricultural Executive Committees and their efforts to boost crop productivity in both rural and urban areas was an important aspect of the food imperative during both world wars. These committees had a considerable impact

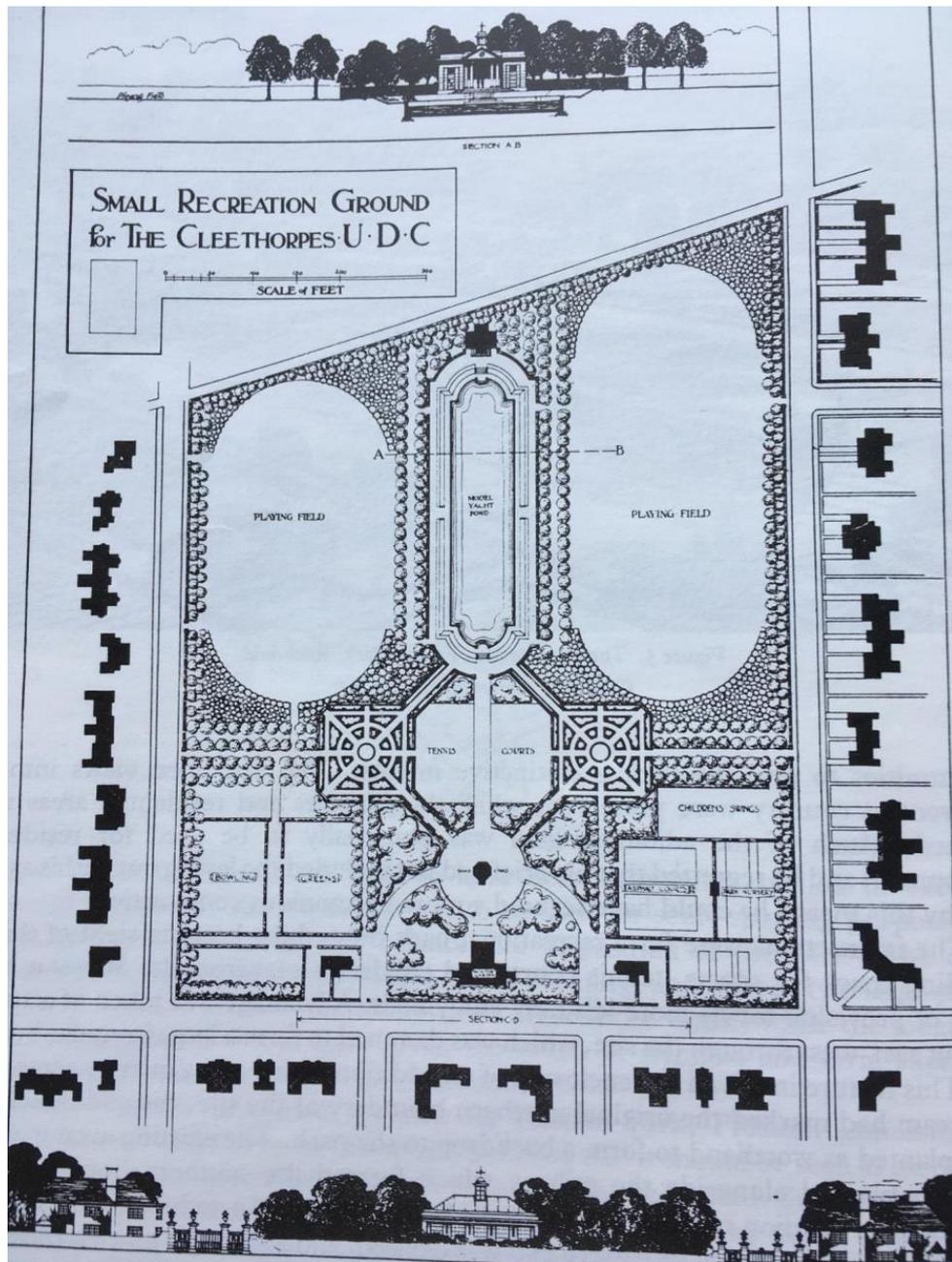
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<sup>120</sup> C. Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings: The History of Allotments* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2014), 146–59.

<sup>121</sup> L. Acton, *Growing Space: A History of the Allotment Movement* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2015).

<sup>122</sup> D. Smith, *The Spade as Mighty as the Sword* (London: Aurum Press, 2011), 225.

<sup>123</sup> U. Buchan, *A Green and Pleasant Land* (London: Windmill Books, 2014).



**Figure 7.** Mawson’s Plan for Cleethorpes Recreation Ground

on urban green space, as experienced in Norwich, as well as on rural life. *British Farming in the Second World War* provides a rigorously researched farming perspective revealing the radical transformation of British agriculture during this period to ensure food production for the nation.<sup>124</sup> *Heartbreak Farm*, by contrast, provides a partisan account of a farm’s sorry experience of the War Agricultural Executive Committee. The

<sup>124</sup> B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming in The Second World War* (Exeter: British Agricultural History Society, 2006).

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description of the stigma of losing a farm may be sentimental, but it provides a salutary reminder of the human context.<sup>125</sup>

The conclusion of the Second World War witnessed the start of a major shift in public attitudes and political priorities, which affected urban green space, particularly the ornate public parks. At the millennium, *Garden History*, the research journal of The Gardens Trust, devoted an entire journal to a review of the most significant landscape developments in the twentieth century: Harwood’s ‘Post-War Landscape and Public Housing’ considers the inter-relationship of landscape and architecture; Conway, in ‘Everyday Landscapes’, addresses the condition of the twentieth-century urban parks, including two of the Sandys-Winsch-designed Norwich parks, described as exceptionally ‘lavish’.<sup>126</sup> The article is wide-ranging and discusses park specifics such as adventure playgrounds, but also touches on macro-issues such as recreational changes, public health, the post-industrial landscape and urban regeneration, although these important themes require rather more space than Conway has at her disposal. The article concludes by stressing the importance of integrating parks within urban regeneration programmes, something both governments and local authorities have singularly failed to do, despite the aspirations and exhortations of Ebenezer Howard and the Garden City pioneers. By the close of the century many parks were suffering the effects of decades of under-investment. Lifestyles, incomes and recreational interests had undergone a radical transformation since the Victorian and Edwardian periods and political and financial intervention was critical if historic parks were to be rescued. A campaigning report in 1993, *Public Prospects: Historic Urban Parks Under Threat*, by Conway and David Lambert, Director of the Parks Agency, described in graphic detail the widespread degradation of historic urban parks across the country and drew welcome attention to these frequently under-appreciated local assets.<sup>127</sup>

## **Governance**

Governments may have encouraged the early parks, but their approach to their survival has been limited at best, uninterested at worst. In 1983 the government established English Heritage. This non-governmental advisory body assumed a statutory role in

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<sup>125</sup> F. Mountford, *Heartbreak Farm* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997).

<sup>126</sup> E. Harwood, ‘Post-war Landscape and Public Housing’, *Garden History* 28.1 (2000): 102–17; H. Conway, ‘Everyday Landscapes: Public Parks from 1930–2000’, *Garden History* 28.1 (2000), 117–34.

<sup>127</sup> H. Conway and D. Lambert, *Public Prospects: Historic Urban Parks Under Threat* (London: Garden History Society and The Victorian Society, 2003).

overseeing the protection of historic buildings and monuments in England and Wales and established a register of historic buildings and monuments. In response to concerted public lobbying on the need for similar public protection for designed landscapes a national register of historic parks and gardens was established in 1984. In 2015 the role of English Heritage was redefined: English Heritage continues, but as an autonomous charity managing a number of historic properties and monuments, adopting the model provided by the National Trust. Historic England assumed the statutory planning and heritage functions and maintains the two registers.<sup>128</sup> The Gardens Trust (formerly The Garden History Society), albeit a voluntary organisation, currently has the role of statutory watchdog for all historic parks and gardens.<sup>129</sup>

By 1995, partly stimulated by *Public Prospects*, concern over the state of public parks had been expressed at a national level. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) launched an urban parks programme inviting local authorities – of which Norwich was one – to bid for generous grant funding.<sup>130</sup> Local authorities were expected to undertake a detailed review of their individual parks, listing the significant features which had been lost, and to commit to a ten-year management and maintenance plan; the latter was a novelty for most councils. This rich evidence base (recently destroyed by the HLF)<sup>131</sup> stimulated the body to commission a report which revealed that roughly 60 per cent of significant historical features, including bandstands, pavilions, paddling pools and glasshouses, had disappeared, while 25 per cent of latrines, tennis courts, model yacht facilities and cafes had also been lost.<sup>132</sup>

It was some time before English Heritage took assets such as urban public parks seriously. The 1995 Environment Select Committee criticised the agency for this failure and in response Historic England increased the numbers of municipal parks listed, expressed concern over the maintenance of these urban sites and commissioned research to draw public and political attention to the situation.<sup>133</sup> These documents have provided a timely research perspective. A series of conservation reports include subjects such as

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<sup>128</sup> Historic England and the English Heritage Trust, [historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk); National Heritage Act 1983, [legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk).

<sup>129</sup> The Gardens Trust, <http://thegardenstrust.org/about-us/>.

<sup>130</sup> K. Layton-Jones, *Uncertain Prospects: Public Parks in the New Age of Austerity* (London: The Gardens Trust, 2016).

<sup>131</sup> *The Times*, 29 March 2019, ‘National Lottery Heritage Fund destroys historic record of park life’.

<sup>132</sup> D. Lambert, ‘The Repair and Regeneration of Public Parks’, *Context* 118 (March 2011), 20–3, accessed at <http://www.ihbconline.co.uk/context/118/#22/z>.

<sup>133</sup> Department of the Environment, *People, Parks and Cities: A guide to current good practice in urban parks*, 1996.

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the role of the park keeper and golf in historic landscapes, as well as the definitive conservation handbook on designed landscapes, *The Management and Maintenance of Historic Parks, Gardens and Designed Landscapes*. The publication concludes that it is imperative to construct a conservation plan before formulating a management plan: a beguilingly simple recommendation, but one rarely practised.<sup>134</sup> Today, the Register provides an authoritative description of historic parks and gardens and is a reliable index of the most important parks and gardens in the country. Unfortunately, the archival background relevant to the original listing is destroyed after ten years, which means highly significant original material is lost.<sup>135</sup>

More recently, the social and cultural historian Katy Layton-Jones has been commissioned by both Historic England and, latterly, The Gardens Trust to undertake a series of research reports on urban parks. Her writing employs a campaigning style, echoing *Public Prospects*. Together with Hazel Taylor, she perceives a much wider role for municipal parks than many recreation departments appreciate. Layton-Jones does not shy away from critical and sensitive issues, stating that the common approach of local authorities in managing such assets is to ‘compromise their historical integrity’, thereby reinforcing the notion of their inherent unsuitability of such assets for modern living.<sup>136</sup> She is particularly astute in recognising the iconic contribution made by Conway to the Victorian park and the contribution of parks in enhancing and cementing civic life. Her writing is always arresting, sometimes pioneering and usually provocative. Her most recent report inverts the Conway and Lambert title. *Uncertain Prospects* explores the scope for action but also reveals the limited capability of local authorities in arresting the late twentieth-century decline.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Historic England, *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*, accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>; Historic England, ‘Historic Public Parks: Improving a Vital Community Asset’, *Conservation Bulletin* 43.18 (2002): 18–21; Historic England, *Change and Creation: Historic Landscape Character 1950–2000* (English Heritage, 2005), accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/change-and-creation-historic-landscape-character/>; Historic England, *The Park Keeper* (Historic England, 2005), accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/the-park-keeper/>; J. Watkins and T. Wright, *The Management and Maintenance of Historic Parks, Gardens and Landscapes* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007); Historic England, *Golf in Historic Parks and Landscapes* (Historic England, 2007), accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/golf-in-historic-parks-and-landscapes/>.

<sup>135</sup> Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2014 (in conversation).

<sup>136</sup> K. Layton-Jones, *National Review of Research Priorities for Urban Parks, Designed Landscapes and Open Spaces* (English Heritage, 2014), 31, accessed at <https://research.historicengland.org.uk/Report.aspx?i=15236>; Historic England, *History of Public Park Funding and Management*.

<sup>137</sup> Layton-Jones, *Uncertain Prospects*.

### **Critical Perspectives on Norwich**

Local historians have tended to suggest that Norwich responded sluggishly to the public walks proposals of the SCPW and that, when it eventually acted, it did so only at the instigation of a local pressure group, the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society (NPF OSS) founded in 1891, and later as the result of a gifted superintendent of parks.<sup>138</sup> Most research focuses on the creation of the city’s parks and gardens, and the earliest and most comprehensive work on this subject can be found in Norwich’s heritage archive: a single copy of a detailed but unreferenced history of the creation of the parks in Norwich undertaken by Geoffrey Goreham in the 1960s.<sup>139</sup> Goreham’s account is chronological, unreferenced and thorough, and has been locally influential. He identifies a particularly parochial factor in Norwich’s history: the altruistic and energetic local pressure group mentioned above, the NPF OSS.<sup>140</sup> This society was perceived to have exerted considerable influence among local councillors at the turn of the twentieth century, although this thesis suggests the role played by the society has been misinterpreted. Denise Carlo researched the Norwich parks in the 1980s, again focusing on the parks and accusing the city of slowness in creating parks and gardens for its citizens. Carlo underlines the significant achievements of Captain Arnold Sandys-Winsch, the parks superintendent between the wars.<sup>141</sup>

In 1996 A.P. Anderson made a notable contribution to the history of four of the Norwich parks laid out by Sandys-Winsch (Heigham, Eaton, Waterloo and Wensum) in a finely produced monograph. This unreferenced publication was written to coincide with the city’s application for Heritage Lottery Funding in 1996 and described the creation of the four parks, which were the subject of the successful Heritage Lottery bid.<sup>142</sup> Anderson had the good fortune to meet some of Sandys-Winsch’s team of gardeners, recalled the parks superintendent from his own training at Norwich City College and was able to interview Sandys-Winsch’s son. His selection of photographs and plans brilliantly illustrate his thesis, which largely attributes the development of the

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<sup>138</sup> D. Carlo, ‘Development of public parks and open spaces in Norwich, 18th–20th centuries’ (unpublished diploma thesis, Architectural Association, 1980); G. Ishmael, ‘Public Paradeisos’, *Norfolk Gardens Trust Journal* (2002): 45–9; A. Anderson, *The Captain and the Norwich Parks* (Norwich: The Norwich Society, 2000).

<sup>139</sup> G. Goreham, ‘The Parks and Open Spaces of Norwich’ (unpublished manuscript, Norwich, 1961).

<sup>140</sup> Goreham, ‘Parks and Open Spaces of Norwich’, 64.

<sup>141</sup> Carlo, ‘Public parks in Norwich’.

<sup>142</sup> Anderson, *The Captain*.

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parks to the long-serving parks superintendent.<sup>143</sup> The study recognised the fine landscaping and imaginative use of classical influences in the hard and soft landscaping undertaken by Sandys-Winsch and succeeded in drawing public attention to a major heritage asset within the city. Anderson’s research echoed Carlo’s view that Norwich failed to grasp the political challenges as laid down by parliament and the Open Space Movement in the nineteenth century, and only gained momentum following the appointment of an exceptionally talented council officer.

The Norfolk Gardens Trust, established in 1989, publishes a yearly journal containing Norfolk-based articles, but its emphasis has been largely on rural and elite landscapes, although a handful of unreferenced articles on municipal green space found their way into the publication. Some, particularly those by George Ishmael, a former conservation architect with the City Council, provided insight into the twentieth-century approach by Norwich to its green space management across subjects as eclectic as roundabouts and churchyard gardens. The focus on the latter was to raise awareness of their role as significant contributions to Norwich’s urban regeneration today.<sup>144</sup> Sarah Spooner, in a fascinating essay on Norwich suburban gardens of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, used maps to demonstrate the evolution of private city gardens, in some cases from pleasure gardens, which complements this research on public gardens.<sup>145</sup> Similarly, the journal *Norfolk Archaeology* has also included occasional articles on green space in Norwich, such as Trevor Fawcett’s ‘The Norwich Pleasure Gardens’, an early, illuminating and finely researched study.<sup>146</sup>

The recent comprehensive but, again, unreferenced *Designed Landscapes and Gardens of Norfolk* was the cumulation of the articles published in the Norfolk Gardens Trust Journal, and brought together the University of East Anglia (UEA) Landscape Group with members of the Norfolk Garden Trust to research notable gardens and landscapes across the county.<sup>147</sup> The wide range of gardens includes many of the historic Norwich parks, though not all, together with the Earlham Road and Rosary cemeteries. It also features non-municipal gardens in the city, such as the Plantation Garden and the Bishop’s Garden. Both are open to the fee-paying general public and

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<sup>143</sup> Anderson, *The Captain*, 6.

<sup>144</sup> G. Ishmael, ‘Heavenly Gardens’, *Norfolk Gardens Trust Journal* (2010), 40–51; Ishmael, ‘Public Paradeisos’, 46.

<sup>145</sup> S. Spooner, ‘Small Designed Landscapes around Norwich 1780–1830’, *Norfolk Gardens Trust Journal* (2012), 31–41.

<sup>146</sup> Fawcett, ‘The Norwich Pleasure Gardens’.

<sup>147</sup> P. Dallas, R. Last and T. Williamson, *Norfolk Gardens and Designed Landscapes* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2013), 296–333.

offer a point of comparison with the municipally designed landscapes which emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Rawcliffe and Wilson’s seminal edited collection of essays *Norwich Since 1550* covers a range of municipal themes.<sup>148</sup> The political analysis is richly parochial and has provided a historical framework within which to shape this study of Norwich green space. Chapters on ‘Architecture’, ‘Employment’, ‘Education’, ‘Church and Chapel’, ‘Politics’ and ‘Population’ have proved invaluable, but there is relatively little on the development of public green space.<sup>149</sup> An otherwise fascinating chapter on ‘Sport and Games’ fails to address in any detail the important contribution of parks and recreation grounds to the development of sport in the city.<sup>150</sup> Allotments are also given scant attention despite their particular importance in the twentieth century and the city’s particular achievements in this field. Peter Townroe’s concluding chapter, in which he identifies the key aspects of the city’s growth since the Second World War, resonates in terms of the city’s changing emphasis in reconciling the old and the new, which has been a constant theme in the development of green space since the earliest public park in 1866.<sup>151</sup>

Town planning, as we currently understand it, came of age in the period immediately after the First World War. From that point on the planning process had an impact on the aspirations and achievements of the City Council for the remainder of the twentieth century. The recently published work *The Old Courts and Yards of Norwich* throws into sharp relief the impact of slum clearance on the local population and describes the city’s efforts to rehouse a disadvantaged section of its population between the wars.<sup>152</sup> The book draws on local archival material but also weaves into the narrative the reminiscences and attitudes of those who were rehoused, providing a salutary

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<sup>148</sup> C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004).

<sup>149</sup> A. Armstrong, ‘Population, 1700–1950’, in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 243–70; S. Muthesius, ‘Architecture since 1800’, in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 323–42; B. Doyle, ‘Politics, 1835–1945’, in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 343–60; C. Clarke, ‘Work and Employment’, in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 385–468.

<sup>150</sup> R. Munting, ‘Sports and Games’, in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 437–60.

<sup>151</sup> P. Townroe, ‘Norwich Since 1945’, in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 461–83.

<sup>152</sup> F. and M. Holmes, *The Old Courts and Yards of Norwich: A Story of People, Poverty and Pride* (Norwich: Norwich Heritage Publications, 2015).

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counterpoint. This concentration on a particular programme of slum clearance in the interwar period complements the work of the City Council in park creation at the time: the role of the parks superintendent in designing some of the green spaces in the housing environs such as Mile Cross; and the part played by the city’s gardeners in maintaining the greenscape of grass verges and avenues in which the new social housing was sited. Similarly, the important role of allotments, in peace and war, was catalogued by a local research group. *Norfolk Allotments* provides a picture of allotment development across Norfolk, segueing from county villages to Norwich. As with much writing on allotments from those who are ardent practitioners, some judgements on their importance are partisan. However, its minutiae of allotment recording have been particularly useful.<sup>153</sup>

‘The Battle for Mousehold Heath, 1857–1884’ has proved particularly pivotal to this thesis.<sup>154</sup> Neil MacMaster’s analysis of a specific period in the corporation’s history of park-making, the Pockthorpe claim to Mousehold Heath, portrayed the event as an exercise in popular politics. His use of a specific archival source, although interpreted in a very different register for this thesis, provided the impetus for a close textual and discourse analysis of the city’s extensive collection of archival records. Closely read and carefully analysed, it is these wide-ranging municipal records, from the exquisite ink-script of the minutes of the nineteenth-century City Committee to the more anonymous and truncated records of the late twentieth-century planning committees; from the 1850s note book of the Dean of Norwich Cathedral to the maps and plans of the City Engineer’s Department, which form a major evidence base for this thesis. Used in conjunction with Ordnance Survey records, press reports, postcards, paintings and photographs, this rich repository of ‘small records’ has frequently proved revelatory.

## Conclusion

The following seven chapters review the city’s performance in developing public green space, against the back-cloth of the national picture. Overall the thesis challenges many earlier assumptions on Norwich’s role in park-making. In chapters 2 and 3, the convoluted process through which the early parks emerged is described and contextualised, including the important contribution of an early civic society, the role of

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<sup>153</sup> Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments: The Plot So Far* (Norwich: Norfolk Recorders, 2007).

<sup>154</sup> N. Macmaster, ‘The Battle for Mousehold Heath, 1857–1884: “Popular Politics” and the Victorian Public Park’, *Past and Present* 127 (1990), 117–54.

which is analysed in detail. Chapters 4 and 6 reveal the considerable impact of two world wars on the city’s provision of recreational space (up to now undocumented) and generally under-researched. The Norwich parks superintendents played an important role both in park and allotment creation and management: the involvement of three superintendents is described and evaluated from chapters 2-8, and the considerable contribution of Captain Sandys-Winsch is documented and re-assessed. The critical (and sensitive) working relationship between officers and members is explored, an area ripe for research but rarely undertaken and which requires extensive discourse analysis to yield fruit. Chapter 6 and 7 also explore the changing attitudes of the press, citizenry and politicians to the public parks, shifting priorities and the cultural shift towards more functional recreation. The penultimate chapter concludes with local government reorganisation in 1974, in which Norwich lost its centuries-old unitary role and, as a result, experienced a diminished civic status. The thread which binds all of these key players is the City Council, featuring both as a corporate entity, as a number of discrete committees and its councillors, who assumed responsibility for the promotion, oversight and accountability for the green spaces in the city..

Even this outline fails to reveal the complexity of a seemingly simple subject: memory is unreliable, misconceptions abound and the selection of evidence can lead to differing interpretations of history. The recent critical emphasis on the redesigned parks and gardens of the 1920s and 1930s has tended to obscure the period from the end of the nineteenth century to the outbreak of the First World War, which laid important foundations for the significant landscaping achievements over the following two decades.<sup>155</sup> There are a handful of admirable accounts of an individual city’s achievement in park-making: notable amongst which are David Lambert’s all-too-brief summary of the nineteenth-century Bristol parks and the fine monograph by Katy Layton-Jones and Robert Lee of the development of Liverpool’s park heritage over three centuries.<sup>156</sup> Both accounts introduce the respective city councils into their work and provide a picture of the local political context against which the parks were created. However neither analyse the important bureaucratic aspects of this provision in any significant measure, nor do they feature the diversity of municipal green space, such as the churchyard gardens, road-side tree-planting and social housing which constitutes

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<sup>155</sup> Anderson, *The Captain*, 15–19.

<sup>156</sup> D. Lambert, *Historic Public Parks: Bristol*, (Bristol:Avon Gardens Trust: 2000); K.Layton-Jones and R.Lee, *Places of Health and Amusement: Liverpool’s historic parks and gardens*, (Swindon: English Heritage 2008)

‘For Health, Comfort and Content’

such an important part of urban living and which played a vital role in Norwich. Such an approach to garden and landscape history provides an original and significant counterbalance to the traditional focus of design, park-maker and place.

The Oxford classicist Mary Beard states that historians should employ ‘new ways to look at old evidence’, meaning that it is important to ask different questions of the material we assemble.<sup>157</sup> The writer’s decision to focus the primary research on Norwich provides an opportunity to construct a chronological narrative of public green space in a single urban area and to establish the interplay between local politics and national legislation; to analyse the urban fabric and its scope for change and development; to consider the economic and social pressures that dominated political thinking and decision-making; to explore the political context and municipal committee structure through which civic governance is directed by elected councillors and administered by appointed officers; to evaluate a single city’s achievements, failures and tribulations in public green space; and to consider the implications for local government recreational provision. Although Norwich provides the main focus for this research, the city is scrutinised in the context of other local and national developments. This in-depth but small-scale approach has the potential to yield rich insight into the role of public parks and bears valid comparison with the accumulation of empirical evidence.

Over the 120 years since Norwich began to develop its public green space for the public good the powers of a local authority have been curtailed through regulation and budgetary restrictions. National governments can legislate and exhort, impose targets, reduce grant income and draw up regulations: these are powerful tools in the arsenal of government. Local government freedom has always been circumscribed by central government to a greater or lesser extent, but the twentieth century introduced greater accountability and scrutiny and outcomes. This circumscription is not always productive, but, despite this, many corporations and councils have seized the opportunity to create sublime green spaces within the urban environment. Norwich City Council was one, and this green-space history of Norwich local government interrogates both the process and the result.

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<sup>157</sup> M. Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome* (New York: Profile Books, 2015), 16.

### Nineteenth-century Norwich

In 1832 parliament passed the Great Reform Act removing ‘rotten boroughs’. The legislation followed a year of serious riots in cities as diverse as London, Bristol, Exeter, Leicester and Nottingham, protesting about the corruption in the electoral system.<sup>158</sup> In Norwich the disturbances were largely motivated by the economic situation, as in 1815 and 1827, when the Norwich weavers rioted against the corn laws.<sup>159</sup> It was a time of considerable social unrest. The Reform Act paved the way for the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act, which began the lengthy process of dismantling corruption in local politics, reducing the number of boroughs and laying the foundations for the twentieth century’s complex local government system. Councillors were to be elected by ratepayers, funds were to be properly audited and the Council’s role separated from that of the magistracy.<sup>160</sup> In essence, the corporations had a public property function rather than a social role. In 1848, following public concern, the Health of Towns Act established locally elected Boards of Health.<sup>161</sup>

National progress on developing public parks continued to be slow after the Select Committee’s call to arms. Eventually, parliament was prevailed on to introduce measures which enabled urban authorities to develop parks and eventually to improve and maintain them. The legislative instruments were contained in a number of Acts (*q.v.* Appendix), the most helpful of which included the Recreation Grounds Act 1859, which allowed local authorities to receive bequests up to £1,000 for public parks and playgrounds; and the Public Health Act of 1875,<sup>162</sup> which although largely concerned with introducing a wide range of measures relating to sanitation and medical care, contained a single critical paragraph entitled ‘Public Pleasure Grounds’ that finally allowed urban authorities the power to use the rate to develop and maintain parks (as well as to regulate such grounds).<sup>163</sup> These dates are significant in terms of how Norwich proceeded to develop its public parks over the nineteenth century.

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<sup>158</sup> Chandler, *Explaining Local Government*, 37–39.

<sup>159</sup> *The Morning Chronicle*, 18 June 1827: ‘Riots at Norwich’; Mark Knights, ‘Politics, 1660–1835’, in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 188.

<sup>160</sup> B. Keith-Lucas, *English Local Government in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: The Historical Association, 1977), 5, 7–12.

<sup>161</sup> Chandler, *Explaining Local Government*, 53–6.

<sup>162</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>163</sup> UK Legislation, [legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk): Public Health Act 1875 (38 & 39 Vict. Ch.55) Part IV, S.164. The legislation uses the terms pleasure grounds, walks and recreation, not parks.

### **The Norwich Corporation**

Norwich was a parliamentary borough. It had been incorporated as a city under royal charter by Henry IV in 1404. The charter confirmed the city of Norwich as a county in its own right, with the power to elect a mayor and two sheriffs from its population.<sup>164</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century the population of Norwich stood at less than 36,000; less than a decade after the report it had almost doubled and by the end of the century over 100,000 were registered as residents.<sup>165</sup> The strictures of the 1833 Select Committee on growth had proved correct for the city. Agricultural changes had led to an influx of rural workers into the city searching for work. Nevertheless, compared with the population growth of major manufacturing towns such as Nottingham and Manchester, the rise in population was modest.

Whigs and Tories tended to alternate in local elections. In 1833 Norwich was subject to a major political inquiry which established the pervasive nature of corruption in local elections, including bribery and abduction ('cooping').<sup>166</sup> Despite the reforming legislation of the 1830s corruption continued to pervade aspects of political life in Norwich over much of the nineteenth century.<sup>167</sup>

In the city, in contrast to the county, where politicians tended to be drawn from the aristocratic elite and gentry, councillors and aldermen were usually drawn from the professional middle classes: lawyers and doctors, manufacturers and shopkeepers. Many were dissenters, which traditionally imbued a strong sense of social justice (sometimes as a result of personal discrimination) and the desire to achieve change.<sup>168</sup> Norwich possessed some evangelical figures, such as R.H. Gurney, who petitioned parliament against corrupt practices in elections, and Henry Tillet, the radical owner of *The Norwich Mercury* in the latter half of the century, but there was no single *credo* to which the full corporation was committed. Although *The Norwich Mercury* campaigned against corruption over the nineteenth century, Tillet himself was exposed for dispensing sinecures in 1875.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> NRO, N/CR Case 26 a, 'Royal Charters and Letters Patent'.

<sup>165</sup> Census of England and Wales 1801, 1811, 1901, accessed at <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>.

<sup>166</sup> Doyle, 'Politics, 1835–1945', 350.

<sup>167</sup> Doyle, 'Politics, 1835–1945', 350.

<sup>168</sup> W.L. Guttsman, 'Aristocracy and the Middle Class in the British Political Elite 1886–1916: A Study of Formative Influences and of the Attitude to Politics', *The British Journal of Sociology* 5.1 (1954), 12–32; Knights, 'Politics, 1660–1835'; Doyle 'Politics, 1835–1945'.

<sup>169</sup> *Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette*, 2 February 1872, 7.

By the start of the nineteenth century Norwich had lost its former economic pre-eminence. In the 1840s the Royal Commission on the State of Large and Populous Districts boldly stated that ‘Norwich ... has seen its best days as a place of commerce’, and that ‘neglect and decay are now conspicuous’.<sup>170</sup> However, Norwich was no provincial backwater; the city had established a reputation for culture, with an urban elite which had emerged in the eighteenth century and had become consolidated into the political establishment by the nineteenth century.<sup>171</sup> After the textile industry lost its dominant national position in the late eighteenth century the economy needed to diversify.<sup>172</sup> This diversification gradually led to a range of smaller but prosperous businesses, from leather-working and shoe-making to banking and insurance, brewing, mustard-making and confectionery, many of which continued to prosper into the late twentieth century.<sup>173</sup> Outside the city walls were a number of market gardens and nurseries. Norwich remained the centre for a highly prosperous farming region; animals and crops were traded and auctioned within the city walls.<sup>174</sup> It was the sort of urban economy which might have been expected to respond positively to the wave of national public park exhortations promoted by the early Victorian reformers. At least one response was made: Mousehold Heath, an area of common land, was proposed as a site for public walks (Figure 8), but in 1850 a government inspection of public health ruled it unsuitable for this purpose.<sup>175</sup> Thirty-three years were to elapse before Mousehold Heath finally became a park.

The Select Committee had made explicit its concern for the congested and unhealthy environments in which inner-city dwellers existed and the importance of open green space to physical well-being. These words must have resonated with the nineteenth-century Norwich elite; sickness, disease and antisocial behaviour were rife within the crowded city, albeit in common with other urban towns.<sup>176</sup> In 1844, the Health of Town Commissioners reported the shocking statistic that the annual death rate

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<sup>170</sup> *The Royal Commission into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts (Second Report)*, 1845.

<sup>171</sup> M. Allthrope-Guyton, ‘The Artistic and Literary Life in Norwich during the Century’, in C. Barringer (ed.), *Norwich in the Nineteenth Century* (Lavenham: The Lavenham Press, 1984), 1–46.

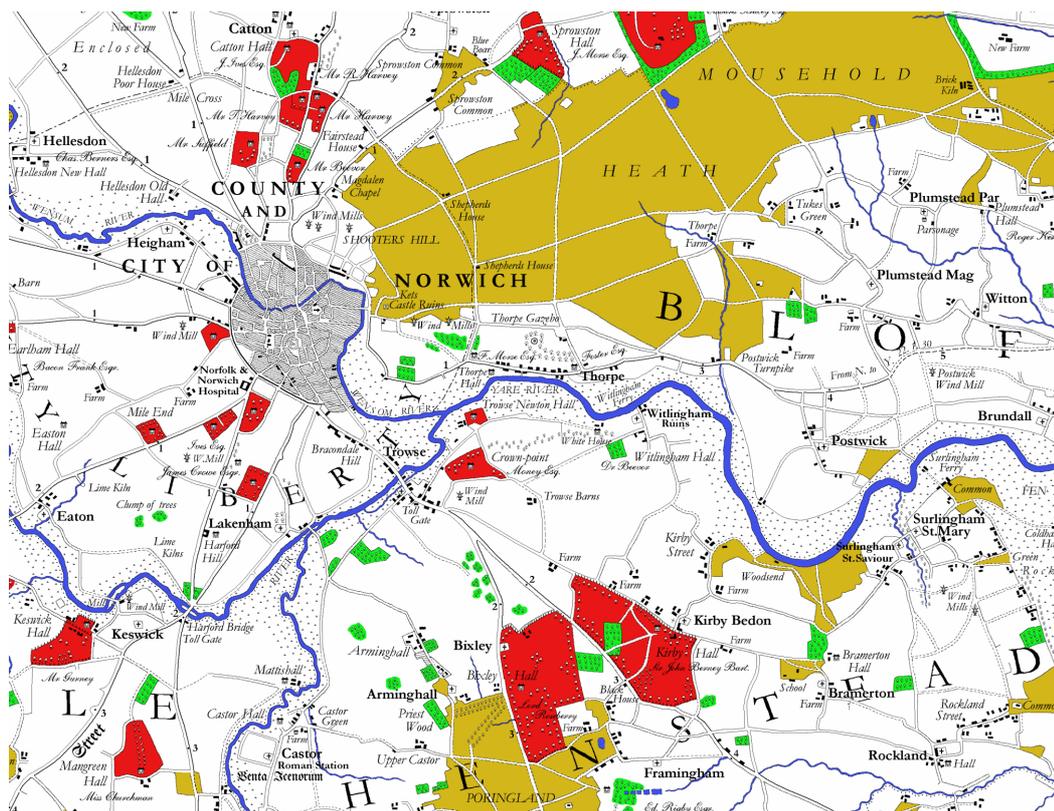
<sup>172</sup> Clarke, ‘Work and Employment’, 388–96.

<sup>173</sup> P. Tolley (ed.), *Norfolk 1890* (Norwich: Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society, 2016); C.B. Hawkins, *The Victorian Traveller’s Guide to Norwich*, first published 1910 (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2014), 11–12.

<sup>174</sup> Clarke, ‘Work and Employment’, 388.

<sup>175</sup> *The Norwich Mercury*, 5 May 1850.

<sup>176</sup> *The Royal Commission into the State of Large Towns*.



**Figure 8.** Faden’s Map of Norfolk, 1797, redrawn by Andrew Macnair (originally in colour)

from typhus in Norwich was double that of the allies at the Battle of Waterloo.<sup>177</sup> The discharge of sewage into public watercourses was chiefly responsible and four years later the Public Health Act imposed strict specifications for local water supply and sewage dispersal. Norwich was slow to introduce effective sanitation, but by the last quartile of the nineteenth century the Health and Sanitary Committee and Sewerage and Irrigation Committee were established.<sup>178</sup>

The number of paid officers employed by municipal authorities was initially small. By the 1850s there were five senior officers in Norwich, including a legally qualified town clerk, a surveyor and twelve separate committees, meeting monthly. Officers were usually professionally qualified and part-time; their role would be to attend formal meetings, offer advice and oversee the discharge of instructions. A city architect was not appointed until 1865 and a city engineer as late as 1872, both critical

<sup>177</sup> J. Pound, ‘Poverty and Public Health in Norwich 1845–1880’, in C. Barringer (ed.), *Norwich in the Nineteenth Century* (Lavenham: The Lavenham Press, 1984), 47.

<sup>178</sup> Doyle, ‘Politics 1835–1945’, 355.

personnel for the development work on public parks.<sup>179</sup> The priority given to drainage and sanitation, continual pressure from the ratepayers and legislative restrictions on maintenance provide some context for the delays in park development in Norwich, although they were far from unique. However, there were other factors which may have persuaded the city to adopt a less than dynamic approach to creating its first public park.

The Select Committee on Public Walks in 1833 was highly critical of both government and large manufacturing towns:<sup>180</sup> the former for neglect; the latter for promoting prosperity with scant regard for the health of their fast-increasing populations. A handful of towns escaped criticism, of which Norwich was one, along with Bristol, Nottingham, Liverpool and Shrewsbury. None was exempt from addressing the matter, ‘however advantageously situated in this respect as compared with many others’, because of the projected increase of their populations. The five favoured towns were warned that their existing provision was inadequate for the projected increase. As the committee identified urban green space of which it approved, it is possible to deduce what had allowed Norwich its reprieve from public humiliation. Commons, moors, lammas land, public walks and river bathing all gained approving nods from the SCPW.<sup>181</sup>

Some of these clearly applied to Norwich. It was a river port with an extensive river network: the River Wensum meandered through the city centre to meet up with the Yare, which skirted its western boundary. River bathing was common: one of the few ways in which the poor were able to wash. Norwich Corporation reimbursed landowners with river frontages where the water was habitually used for bathing.<sup>182</sup> In 1833 the majority of the Norwich population was resident within the city walls, although over the nineteenth century the colonisation of the suburban area became more rapid. Access to the countryside was easy. As late as 1908 the local paper reported that ‘one can access the countryside in a fifteen-minute brisk walk’.<sup>183</sup> There was an extensive area of heathland on the north-eastern margin, the historic common of Mousehold Heath. Lastly, the city was one of the very few that possessed a ‘walk’,

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<sup>179</sup> J.K. Edwards, ‘Developments in Local Government 1800–1900’, in C. Barringer (ed.), *Norwich in the Nineteenth Century* (Lavenham: The Lavenham Press, 1984), 86.

<sup>180</sup> *Hansard*, HC Debate Ser. 3, Vol. 15 cc 1049–59, 21 February 1833, accessed at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1833-02-21/debates/4b63af84-a623-4439-a912-7e4879f36058/PublicHealth>.

<sup>181</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Public Walks*, paras 375, 444, 516, 611, 662, 665.

<sup>182</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/4.

<sup>183</sup> *Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette*, 11 July 1908, 3.

which must have played well with the campaigning parliamentarians, although, as with many other ‘public walks’, it was unlikely to be used by the public at large.

### **Gardens and Pleasure Grounds**

Norwich citizens were enthusiastic gardeners. The Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society had been established as early as 1829, making it the second oldest such society in the country, second only to the Royal Horticultural Society in 1804.<sup>184</sup> The society’s records show that it was thriving. In 1891 *The Gardeners Chronicle* referred to the society as ‘Happy Norwich’, with reserves of £257 7s 3d and takings of over £150 at the door for its Chrysanthemum Show.<sup>185</sup> The Ordnance Survey reveals elaborate gardens on the edge of the city wall, particularly on the south-western approach to the city at Heigham Grove and at Thorpe Hamlet in the north-eastern suburb close by the Rosary Cemetery, which were developed over the nineteenth century.<sup>186</sup> The Plantation Garden, an elaborate four-acre quarry garden at Heigham Grove created 1857–1897 by Henry Trevor, a prosperous furniture-maker, was frequently open to the public for charitable purposes.<sup>187</sup> Close by were two other fine formal gardens.<sup>188</sup> The large gardens along the affluent Newmarket Road, such as Claremont Lodge, Holly Lodge and The Chestnuts, were well-wooded and finely laid out, with extensive lawns, flower beds and ornamentation.<sup>189</sup>

The Castle Mound had captured the imagination of keen local nurserymen as early as the late eighteenth century, when it had escaped the horticultural ambitions of William Aran, who proposed that it be planted with larch and pine.<sup>190</sup> In 1840 James Grigor, an eminent Norfolk nurseryman and botanist, had published his acclaimed *Eastern Arboretum*, a register of notable trees and garden features in Norfolk. He also advocated the planting of a large number of trees on the Castle Mound (trees that, as a

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<sup>184</sup> Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society, <http://nnhs.org.uk>: strap-line ‘Inspiring Gardeners Across Norfolk Since 1829’; NRO ACC 2007/320, Records of the Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society.

<sup>185</sup> *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* 1 (1891), ‘Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society’, 28 February 1891.

<sup>186</sup> Ordnance Survey Norwich, 1st edition County Series, 1:2500, 1886.

<sup>187</sup> S. Adam, *The Plantation Garden: A History and a Guide* (Norwich: The Plantation Garden Preservation Trust, 2009).

<sup>188</sup> S. Spooner, *The Plantation Garden, History and Landscape* (Norwich: Landscape Group UEA and Plantation Garden Preservation Trust, 2018), 59.

<sup>189</sup> Ordnance Survey Norwich Town Plan, 1st edition 1:500, 1884.

<sup>190</sup> T. Williamson, *The Archaeology of the Landscape Park* (Norwich: Centre for East Anglian Studies, 1998), 120.

nurseryman, he was ready to supply). In his arboreal encyclopaedia he devoted a paragraph to the prospect of a botanical garden in Norwich.<sup>191</sup> Grigor lamented the irony of Norwich being variously referred to as a ‘city in a garden’ and a ‘city in an orchard’, but a city without a public garden. He bemoaned the citizens’ preference for flowers above uncommon trees. In the concluding lines of the *Gardener’s Magazine’s* generous review it includes, verbatim, Grigor’s ambition: ‘the time is not very distant when every town and village shall have its ... public pleasure garden.’<sup>192</sup>

Norwich was no stranger to the concept of a pleasure garden. Commercial pleasure gardens flourished in the city from the eighteenth century until 1850, when the last remaining garden finally closed. Although pleasure gardens were strictly commercial ventures, ranging from genteel tea-gardens to extravaganzas, in Norwich they generally consisted of designed landscapes open to members of the public upon payment of an admission charge.<sup>193</sup> London was famous for its pleasure gardens at Ranelagh, Vauxhall and Marylebone, but Norwich was one of the earliest provincial cities to establish such gardens, which were highly popular, rivalled those of other provincial cities and closely emulated those of the metropolis.<sup>194</sup>

The first of these, My Lord’s Garden, originally a private royal garden near the River Wensum at King Street, was created in the seventeenth century for Henry Howard, the sixth duke of Norfolk. It was eventually opened to the public in 1714. The New Spring Garden, later to become Vauxhall Gardens, followed nearby in 1739.<sup>195</sup> Ten years later The Wilderness opened on Butter Hill, near Ber Street. Smith’s Rural Gardens, later known as Quantrell’s and Ranelagh, and eventually as the Royal Victoria Gardens, came next in 1766, near St Stephen’s Gate, and there were others. All these pleasure gardens operated in a highly competitive climate. Following the template of the London pleasure gardens, from which many of their names were derived, they gradually evolved into spectacular attractions: fine ornamental gardens with walkways and extravagant floral displays, illuminations and an ingenious range of entertainments such as cascades, ballooning (Figure 9) and even historical re-enactments.<sup>196</sup> One such

<sup>191</sup> J. Grigor, *The Eastern Arboretum: Or Register of Remarkable Trees, Seats, Gardens, Etc. in the County of Norfolk* (first published 1841) (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Legacy Reprint, 2010).

<sup>192</sup> *The Gardener’s Magazine and Register of Rural and Domestic Improvement*, Article V (June 1940), 352.

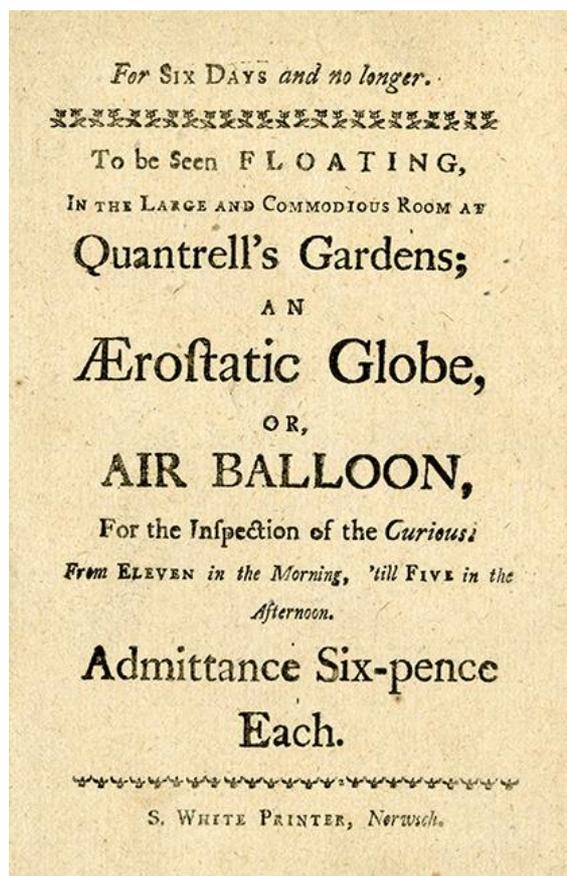
<sup>193</sup> Fawcett, ‘The Norwich Pleasure Gardens’.

<sup>194</sup> G. Jellicoe, S.P. Goode and M. Lancaster, *The Oxford Companion to Gardens* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 442; Fawcett, ‘The Norwich Pleasure Gardens’.

<sup>195</sup> NRO, BR 2785, ‘The Spring Gardens Mountergate’.

<sup>196</sup> Fawcett, ‘The Norwich Pleasure Gardens’; Knights, ‘Politics, 1660–1835’, 205–7.

spectacular at Ranelagh, which by 1810 possessed a rotunda with cover sufficient to accommodate 2000 people, was attended by over 3000 which was a twelfth of the Norwich population at the time. A favourite with the Norwich public (not unacquainted with civic dissent over the previous century) was the storming of the Bastille, in which Norwich citizens relished playing the French revolutionaries.<sup>197</sup> Such was the success of the gardens that, despite changes of ownership and near ruinous attempts to outdo each other for custom, the gardens survived into the nineteenth century and well after the SCPW report.<sup>198</sup>



**Figure 9.** Quantrells Garden, Norwich: poster advertising balloon ascent in 1787 (Picture Norfolk)

In 1849 the last surviving pleasure garden, the Royal Victoria Gardens at St Stephen's Gate, closed. The land was purchased by the Eastern Union Railway Company and Victoria Station rose in its place. The contents, sold by public auction, included a range of 'drinking boxes, seats and table, scenery, fittings and machinery in the theatre, the fittings, benches & etc in the circus and saloon, the materials of the firework house, the polar bar, cake room in their hey-day', providing an explicit picture

<sup>197</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 24 July 1790, cited by Fawcett, 'The Norwich Pleasure Gardens', 392.

<sup>198</sup> Fawcett, 'The Norwich Pleasure Gardens', 398.

of the range of activities that took place in the gardens.<sup>199</sup> These commercial venues offered Norwich citizens fine gardens for recreational use, although entrance charges and dress codes would have prevented the poorest residents from attending. By the mid-nineteenth century the Norwich pleasure gardens had been an intrinsic part of Norwich's recreational life for well over a century. Their presence and popularity may well have lessened the urgency to develop public gardens and parks following the SCPW report.<sup>200</sup>

### Public Parks

In 1853 the corporation received the Royal Assent to enclose what was to become its first public park. Chapelfield Gardens, the site of the walk, was a distinctive triangular area against the south-western city wall (Figure 10). Had enclosure immediately followed the statute, Norwich would have become one of the earliest towns in the country to create a public park.<sup>201</sup>

Chapelfield was not a common or green in the legal sense, but it was regarded as such by Norwich citizens. It was originally the site of a collegiate church and by 1569 had become vested in the city on condition that the townsfolk could use it for recreation.<sup>202</sup> The corporation gave this caveat scant respect over the following centuries. Initially used for sports such as archery in the seventeenth century, it had made a convenient location for a mass grave for victims of bubonic plague. In the eighteenth century three elm avenues, running along the triangular boundary, were planted by Sir Thomas Churchman, the lessee.<sup>203</sup> Taigel states that during this period it became a well-used place for Sunday afternoon promenades and arguably a Norwich 'walk'.<sup>204</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century it was leased to a private utility company and functional structures such as a water tower and reservoir appeared.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> C. Mackie, *Norfolk Annals: A Chronological Record of Remarkable Events in the Nineteenth Century. Volume II 1851–1900* (Norwich: Norfolk Chronicle, 1901), 'Victoria Gardens', 2 October 1849, Norwich. Accessed at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files>.

<sup>200</sup> R. Last, 'The Pleasure Gardens of Norwich', *Norfolk Gardens Trust Journal* (2010).

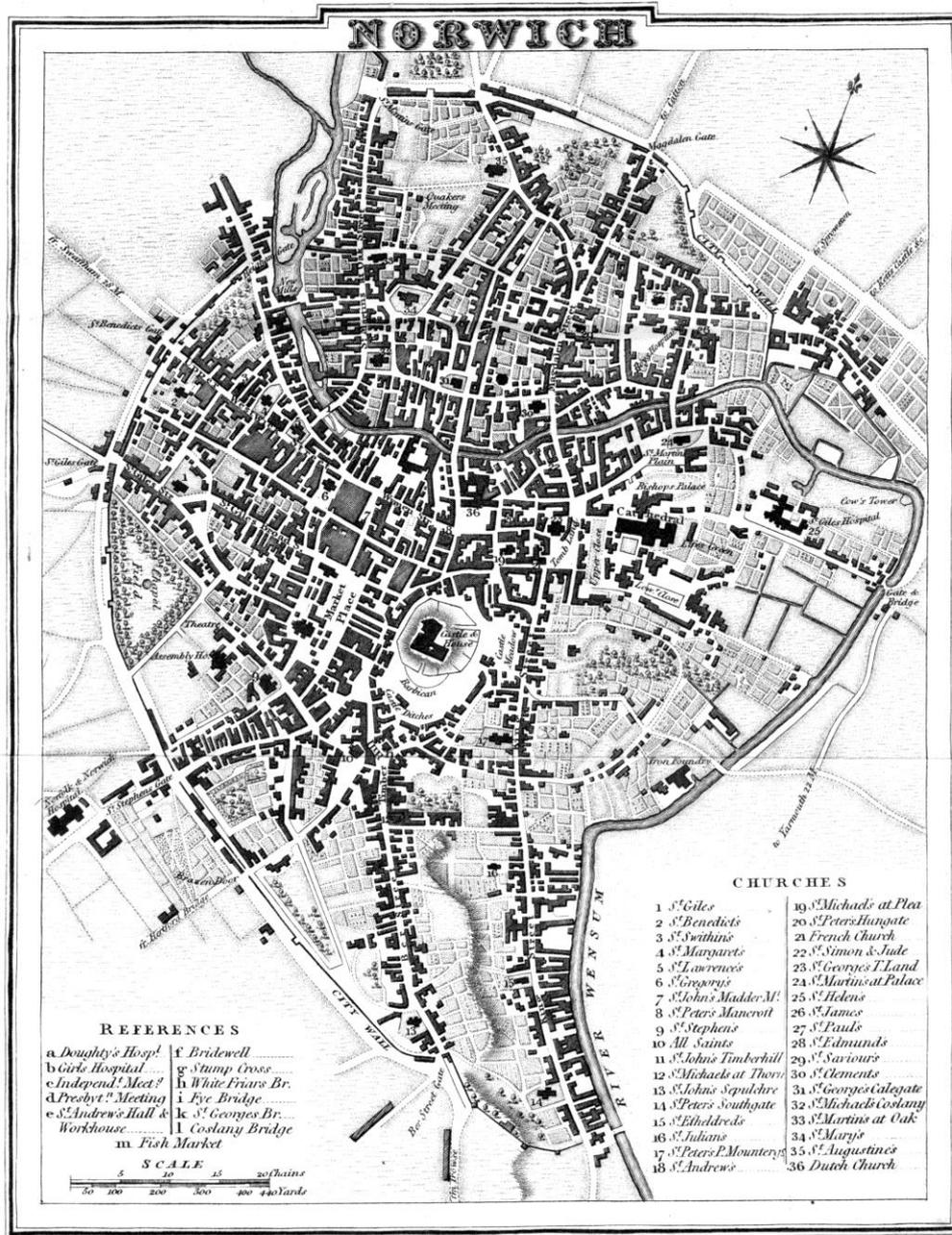
<sup>201</sup> H. Conway, *Public Parks* (London: Shire, 1996), 228.

<sup>202</sup> A. Stephenson, *A History of the Assembly House Norwich* (Dereham: Larks Press, 2004), 3–5. Frank Meeres, *A History of Norwich* (Chichester: Phillimore and Co., 1998), 172.

<sup>203</sup> Stephenson, *Assembly House*, 17.

<sup>204</sup> A. Taigel, 'Town Gardens Survey: Norwich' (unpublished report for Norfolk Gardens Trust, 1997); Dallas et al., *Norfolk Gardens*, 'Chapelfield Gardens', 308.

<sup>205</sup> Taigel, *Norwich*; Dallas et al., *Norfolk Gardens*, 'Chapelfield Gardens', 308.



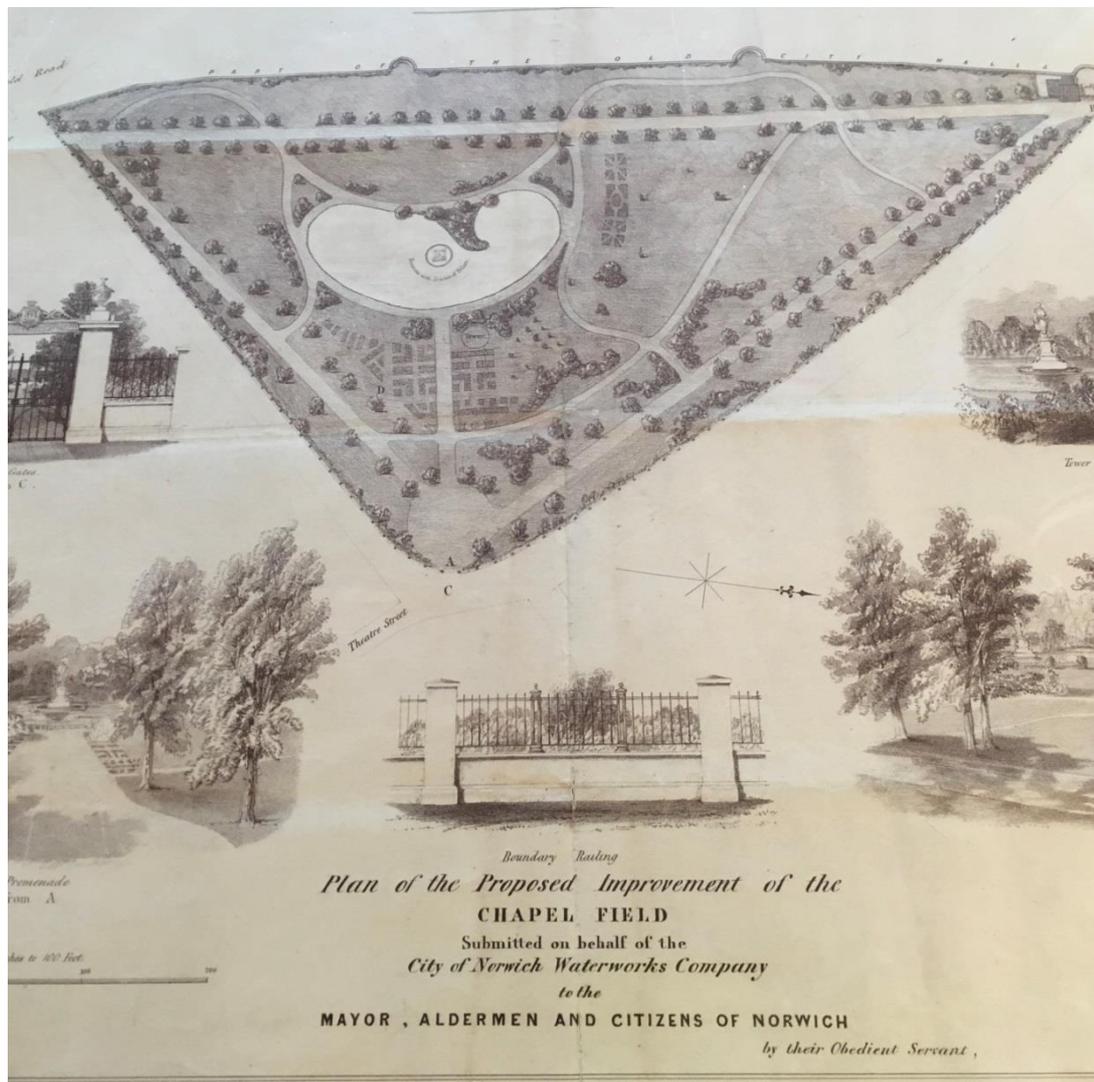
Published May 1<sup>st</sup> 1819 by Messrs Longman & Co Paternoster Row.

**Figure 10.** Longman’s 1819 Norwich map (georgeplunkett.co.uk)

In 1852 the city received a stroke of good fortune: the lessee, a waterworks company, had succeeded in purchasing a new site and, as a piece of planning *quid pro quo*, was prepared to offer the lease of the now redundant site back to the corporation on condition that a public pleasure ground be created as an ‘ornament to the city’.<sup>206</sup> This was no idle offer. An engineer, James Lynde, was commissioned to produce a plan

<sup>206</sup> Mackie, *Norfolk Annals*, 11, 1901.

which was submitted to the council in April of the same year (Figure 11). The design retains the avenues but shows serpentine walks lined with trees and shrubs, a lodge and a complex pattern of floral beds with a central assembly area, dominated by a kidney-shaped pond and fountain. In the centre of the pond was placed, bizarrely, a sculpture of the local and national hero Horatio Nelson. ‘The Promenade’ is indicated at Theatre Street, with an ornate pillared entrance flanked by urns and an entrance lodge.<sup>207</sup> The corporation responded with some celerity and royal assent for the enclosure was received promptly in June 1853, which suggests a measure of civic enthusiasm. A survey was requested, levelling of the site took place, even seats were purchased.<sup>208</sup>



**Figure 11.** James Lynde 1852 Plan for Chapelfield, submitted by Waterworks Company (Norfolk Heritage Centre, Norwich Central Library)

<sup>207</sup> J. Lynde, *City of Norwich Waterworks Plan of the proposed improvement of the Chapel Field*, 12 April 1852, Norfolk Heritage Centre.

<sup>208</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/3 City Committee 1854.

Yet the work was not completed until 1866, when a scaled-down version of the original Lynde design was laid out by the city council.

In the intervening period it was hard to ignore Chapelfield. The site, vacated by the waterworks company, became a public nuisance. The city committee had to address numerous problems, from the loitering of ‘idle characters’ and ‘rubbish dumping’ to the discharge of effluent from neighbouring properties.<sup>209</sup> In January 1866 the council finally posted an advertisement to enclose the area and the council’s surveyor produced a watered-down plan which went out to tender. Mr Boulton agreed to undertake the work for £520 to the plans drawn up by the City Surveyor, and the council approved the installation of a footpath outside the park railings.<sup>210</sup> Chapelfield Gardens finally became the city’s first public park; a triangular area of six acres on the south-western edge of the old city, bounded by the three tree-lined avenues. A mark of approval was the visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales (accompanied by the queen of Denmark) who, in an elaborate ceremony, used two silver spades to plant two *Wellingtonia gigantea* to inaugurate the new drill hall and set the seal on the first Norwich ‘people’s park’.<sup>211</sup>

Once the gardens were enclosed, the corporation’s enthusiasm was boundless. Councillors were preoccupied with all aspects of the layout, from the drainage to the grassing. In 1866 this enthusiasm led the city, with cavalier disregard for the surveyor’s concerns about the propriety of the proposal, to remove a large section of the medieval city wall fronting the roadway and make it into a generous twenty-four-foot entrance, easily accessible to the public.<sup>212</sup> A public urinal was installed in the park in 1867.<sup>213</sup> Not all went smoothly, despite the hands-on political involvement: the original stonework for ‘palisading’ was discovered to be faulty and not according to the original specification, with the contractor required to replace much of it, and the turf was reseeded on numerous occasions because of inadequate drainage. In April 1867 the condition of the park caused sufficient concern for the mayor’s request for a military parade on the royal birthday to be summarily rejected by the prudent committee.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/4, City Committee 1864–66.

<sup>210</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/4, 10 January 1866.

<sup>211</sup> *The Morning Post*, 27 October 1866: ‘The Royal Visit to Norwich’, 5; *Daily News*, 2 November 1866: ‘Royal Visit to Norwich’, 9.

<sup>212</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/4, December 1866, 381.

<sup>213</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/4, 18 April 1867, 410.

<sup>214</sup> NRO, NTC 6/4, 18 April 1867.

Over the following decade, enthusiasm waned. Horticultural societies and other exhibitors made use of Chapelfield Gardens, but ‘the field remained in a wild and untended state’.<sup>215</sup> Peter Eade, who lived in the neighbouring road, St Giles, records that it was used by lads for cricket, schools for a playground and by labourers ‘in the intervals of their work, to lounge on the grass and smoke their pipes in the open air’. He also adds that it was monopolised in the evening by discreditable persons.<sup>216</sup> Eventually, and possibly prompted by the ‘discreditable’ activity, the corporation was moved to restore its neglected park, stating that the field should be ‘made worthy’ of the city and a place of recreation ‘not only for the children but the inhabitants at large’.<sup>217</sup> The council appointed a special sub-committee to oversee the process and, in 1879, Chapelfield Gardens was closed for seeding and planting. Donations of shrubs and trees were requested after Elphinstone’s exorbitant estimate of £1010 was rejected and his ‘elaborate’ plan revised by a self-confessedly ‘amateur’ landscaper, Mr Birkbeck.<sup>218</sup> An area close to the drill hall was enclosed for a children’s playground.<sup>219</sup> Mr Elphinstone was finally confirmed as the park’s head gardener, with Mr Snelling his deputy. The castellated brick and flint drill hall (Figure 12) hosted the reception for the mayor’s formal opening of the park (brought forward as a result of pressure from the press) on 4 November 1880,<sup>220</sup> by which date the ‘transformation of the shabby field into a handsomely laid out public pleasure garden was finally complete’.<sup>221</sup> The park had also acquired a stunning iron pavilion: Thomas Jekyll’s pagoda was designed and forged in Norfolk but had been exhibited at the Philadelphia Exhibition before the city managed to negotiate its purchase at a highly economic price.<sup>222</sup> The unique structure became the main focus of the garden, providing a supplementary bandstand and seating area (Figures 13 and 14). The engineering was undertaken by the local firm of Barnards, Bishop and Barnards at the St Miles Ironworks at Coslany. The intricate ironwork had become famous through international exhibitions and the pagoda became a much-admired centrepiece.<sup>223</sup> Sir Peter Eade described it as a ‘striking object ... very peculiar

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<sup>215</sup> Sir P. Eade, *Some account of the parish of St Giles, Norwich* (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons, 1896), 58.

<sup>216</sup> Eade, *St Giles*, 58.

<sup>217</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/7, 2 September 1879.

<sup>218</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/7, 26 September 1879.

<sup>219</sup> NRO N/TC 6/7, 29 October 1880.

<sup>220</sup> NRO N/TC 6/7, 13 September 1880

<sup>221</sup> Eade, *St Giles*, 58.

<sup>222</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/7, 2 February 1880.

<sup>223</sup> *The Ipswich Journal News*, 23 February 1867, 10.

and not altogether in harmony with the surrounding scenery',<sup>224</sup> while later Pevsner saw it as a 'gorgeous ... monstrosity'.<sup>225</sup> The pagoda was slightly damaged at the opening ceremony by children, who used it as a playground.<sup>226</sup> Although the gardens were popular with the public and local politicians, there were criticisms. The Norwich antiquarian and later mayor Walter Rye (1844–1929) described the gardens pejoratively as 'cockneyfied' (by which he meant the use of carpet bedding) 'and badly laid out', but he appears to have been in the minority.<sup>227</sup> With its fine trees, sinuous paths and tree-lined avenues – some elms retained from the earlier layout – coupled with floral displays, thatched tea pavilion and Japanese pagoda, it was much celebrated by the town, used for concerts in the summer months and the subject of numerous donations from prosperous residents, including both a drinking and an ornamental fountain.<sup>228</sup>



**Figure 12.** Chapelfield postcard with crenellated Drill Hall and iron 'palissades' (Picture Norfolk)

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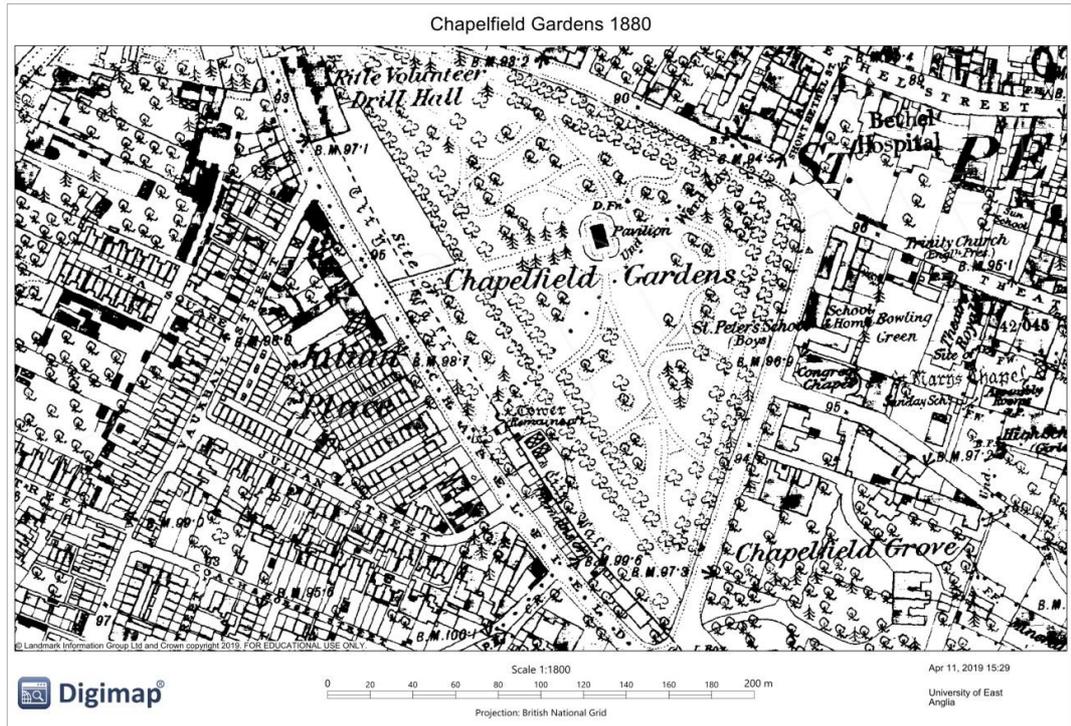
<sup>224</sup> Eade, *St Giles*, 64.

<sup>225</sup> N. Pevsner, *Norfolk 1, Norwich and N.E.* (London: Allen Lane, 1962).

<sup>226</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/7, 26 November 1880.

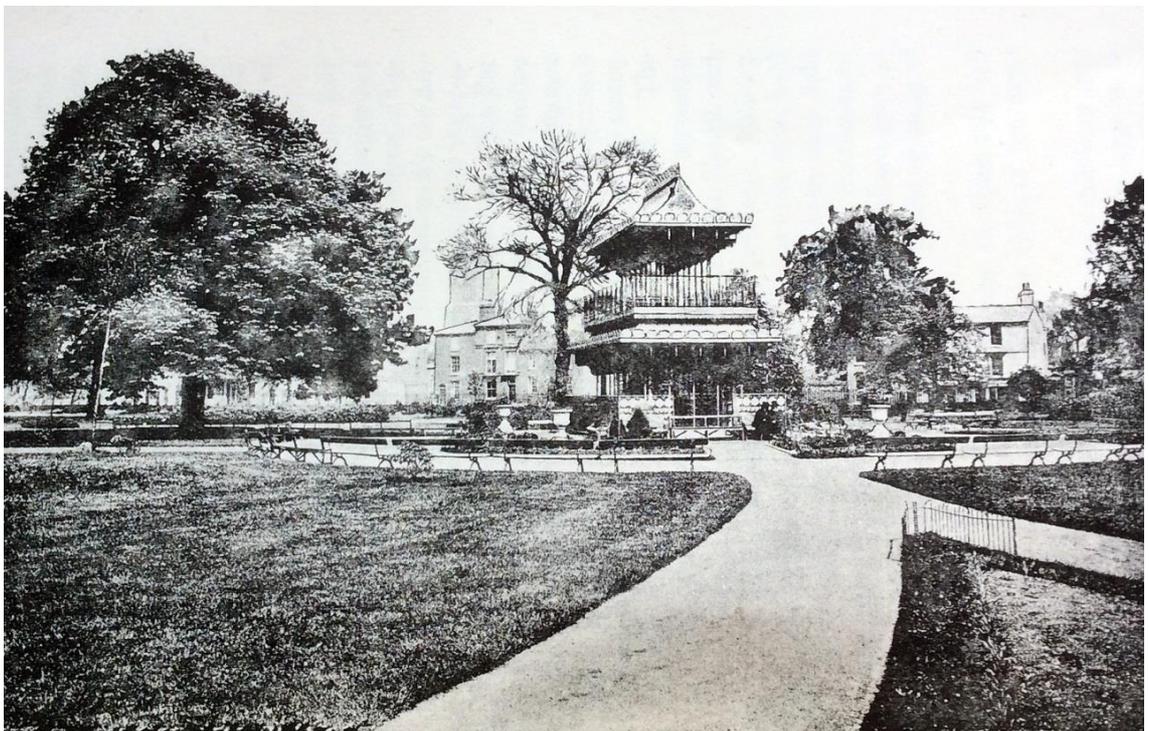
<sup>227</sup> *Times Obituary*, 'Walter Rye', 1929; cited in Carlo, 'Public parks in Norwich'; George Bernard Shaw, *Candida* (London: Penguin, 1987), Act 1, Moncrieff Parsonage, scene-setting.

<sup>228</sup> Eade, *St Giles*, 58–60.



**Figure 13.** Chapelfield Gardens, Ordnance Survey 1st edition, 1887

**Figure 14.** Chapelfield Gardens, pre-1886, early sketch 'after Valentine', The Parish of St Giles Norwich, Sir Peter Eade



The initial delay between the permission to enclose and enactment and the subsequent twelve-year hiatus is puzzling but undoubtedly a result of fiscal stringency and an expensive and unsuccessful sanitation project. The rate in the city was perceived to be extremely high and its burden fell particularly heavily on retail establishments and smaller businesses. In Norwich such businesses were on the rise; the owners were self-made men, probably with a Smilesian belief in self-help. Complaints over the rates were commonly voiced and enthusiasm for enclosure appear to have been held by the Norwich elite rather than the general electorate.<sup>229</sup> The neglect of the gardens from 1867 is particularly bewildering given the panoply of the first royal opening ceremony. The proximity to the city guildhall and marketplace, two of the busiest places in Norwich, meant it could not easily be ignored. Yet by the garden's second incarnation councillors clearly relished their role as custodians of green space, and the liberality of the donations to the park reveals that this spirit was reflected in its more affluent citizens. The ornate pagoda suggests that the corporation wished the park to be distinctive and the approval of a hot-bed in 1891 denotes considerable horticultural aspirations.<sup>230</sup> The civic sub-committee, which oversaw the gardens, continued to take a proprietary interest in the condition of its small park well into the new century, with constant requests to the overarching city committee for re-grassing, tree planting and floral displays.<sup>231</sup> In the summer of 1891, for example, '50 dahlias, four dozen calceolarias and 100 geraniums' at a total cost 'not exceeding £2' were approved for the Chapelfield summer bedding.<sup>232</sup>

Despite the popularity of the gardens, the maintenance was put out to tender in 1891. Having accepted the second-lowest tender, the sub-committee, with apparently little compunction, instructed the town clerk to dismiss the head gardener, Mr Elphinstone, and his team of seven.<sup>233</sup> Contracting did not always prove to be a straightforward alternative to a direct labour force, as was illustrated by the lengthy saga of Mr Lacey and Mr Saul when work and materials exceeded the original tender price.<sup>234</sup> Nevertheless, by the new century the first city park had become a source of

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<sup>229</sup> Briggs, *Victorian Cities*; P.J. Waller, *Town, City and Nation: England 1850–1914* (London: Clarendon, 1992); Hawkins, *Guide to Norwich*; Doyle, 'Politics, 1835–1945', 358. The rates were the subject of widespread complaint in many provincial cities of the period.

<sup>230</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/10, Chapelfield Gardens Committee, 3 May 1891.

<sup>231</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/10, City Committee; Chapelfield Gardens Committee, 1891, *passim*.

<sup>232</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/10, 26 May 1891.

<sup>233</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/10, 18 February 1891.

<sup>234</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/10, 18 February 1891.

civic pride.

In 1864 Norwich received a second offer of green space. Mousehold Heath was a common of 190 acres and the proposal presented the city with a considerable challenge, as the transformation from common to park was to prove politically and legally complex. The heath originally covered an area of some 6000 acres, encompassing part of north Norwich and extending over a wide area of north-east Norfolk. Its origins are uncertain, although Rackham and Williamson consider that it was initially wooded, then wood-pasture, before degrading to open heathland.<sup>235</sup> The General Enclosure Act of 1801 had made land enclosure much simpler and accelerated the destruction of the heath: a rapid series of parish enclosures from the early 1800s meant that it had dwindled to just under 200 acres by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>236</sup> Despite this, Rackham describes the remaining heathland as ‘a wild and glorious place’.<sup>237</sup> Immortalised in paintings by John Sell Cotman and John Crome in the early years of the nineteenth century, it was roamed over by the romantic writer and traveller George Borrow (1803–1881) in the same century (Figure 15).<sup>238</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century the heath had become associated with working-class sports such as boxing, prize fighting and gambling, and was so dangerous that ordinary citizens were deterred from using it.<sup>239</sup> The illicit use of the heath for quarrying of gravel and sand had accelerated to such a degree that numerous small brickmakers were supplying building material for the expansion of the Norwich suburbs (systematically destroying the fabric of the heath at the same time).<sup>240</sup> The cathedral chapter, had surrendered any attempts at management and the ‘glorious place’ was rendered unsightly and dangerous by the effects of quarrying and lawlessness.<sup>241</sup>

In 1864, in a shrewd move, the cathedral offered the freehold of the increasingly troublesome heath, located at the disreputable hamlet of Pockthorpe, to the city. There was one major stipulation: the land was to become a ‘people’s park’ with the optimistic

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<sup>235</sup> O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1896), 301; T. Williamson, *An Environmental History of Wildlife in England 1650–1950* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 25.

<sup>236</sup> NRO holds many enclosure awards relating to the heath: D/CN 53/1/4, Great Plumstead and Postwick, 1810, ‘certain commons and waste ground’; D/CN 53/1234, 1810, details ‘extinguishing right of sheep walk and shackle’ over 20 acres; D/CN 53/1/3, Thorpe and Sprowston, 1812, acreage for public roads.

<sup>237</sup> Rackham, *Countryside*, 302.

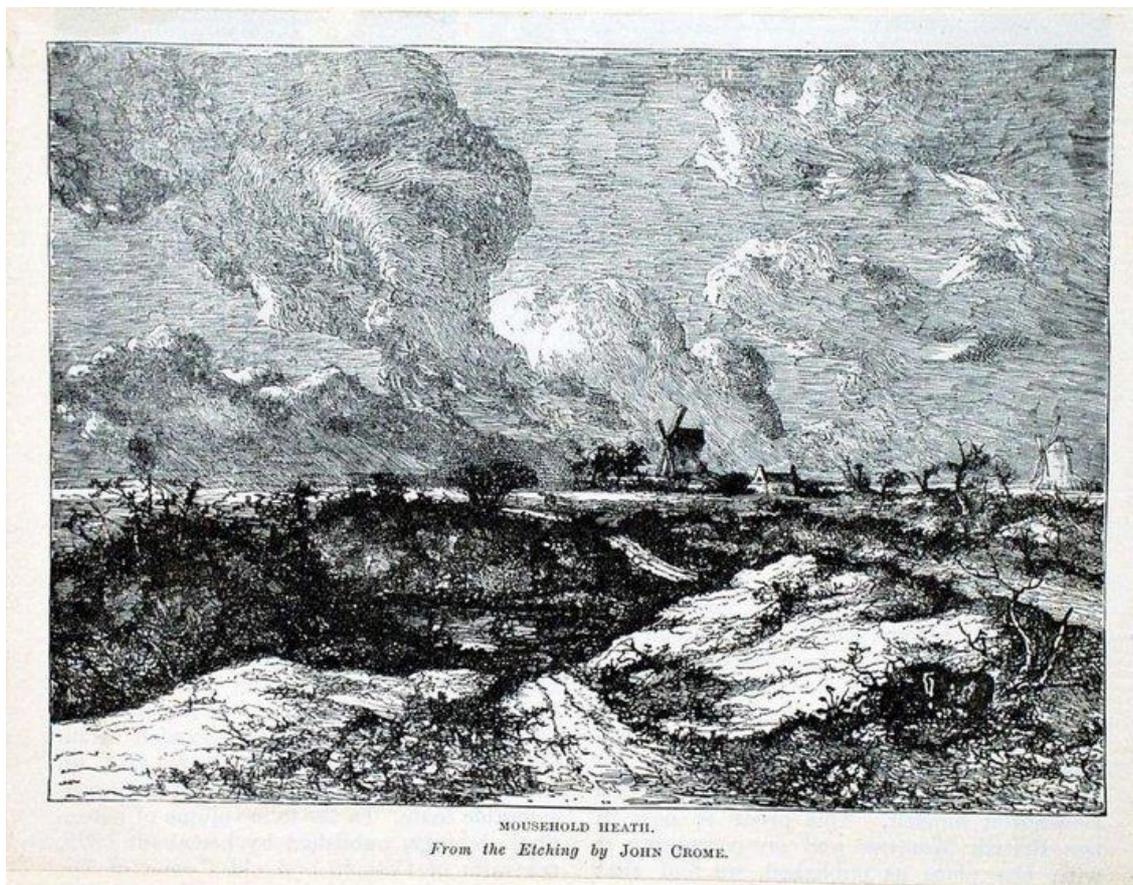
<sup>238</sup> Allthorpe-Guyton, ‘Artistic and Literary Life’, 26–9.

<sup>239</sup> Macmaster, ‘Mousehold Heath’, 118, 127.

<sup>240</sup> NRO, N/TC 50, cited by Macmaster, ‘Mousehold Heath’, 126–7.

<sup>241</sup> NRO, D/NEST 56/1, Records of the estates of the Bishop of Norwich.

proviso that the corporation took ‘all lawful measures to prevent the continuance of trespasses, nuisances and unlawful acts and to hold the heath for the advantage of lawful recreation’.<sup>242</sup> An early reply was requested. The charitable gift presented the councillors with a dilemma; 190 acres of green space was a tempting offer, yet the council delayed its response, undoubtedly pondering the implications of the cathedral chapter’s onerous stipulations of law, order and finance. The dean and chapter were disgruntled by the city’s failure to respond with alacrity and a reminder was sent in April 1866.<sup>243</sup> The corporation, suitably chastised, acquiesced and established a People’s Park Committee to prosecute the project later that year.<sup>244</sup>



**Figure 15.** Etching of Mousehold Heath, John Crome (The British Museum, [www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection-onlinecollection](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection-onlinecollection))

The gift of Mousehold Heath provided an unparalleled opportunity for Norwich to fulfil the government’s exhortations at a relatively early stage in the public park movement. However, the venture presented a significant challenge if the heath was to

<sup>242</sup> NRO, D/CN 120/1/7 ‘Dean’s Notebook’.

<sup>243</sup> NRO, D/CN 120/1/7, ‘Dean’s Notebook’, 4 April 1866, ‘Letter to the Mayor of Norwich’.

<sup>244</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13 People’s Park Committee, 1866.

be transformed into recreational space. An appraisal of the site's potential for recreational development was set in train. By the second half of the nineteenth century development outside the city walls was beginning and the committee also considered other sites, including Magdalen Street to the north and Heigham to the west.<sup>245</sup> Mousehold was in many ways the most appropriate site; it was extensive, and was now owned by the city. In 1867 the corporation submitted the proposal for a park on Mousehold Heath to the Land Commissioners of England (Enclosure Commissioners) and the City of Norwich Act 1867 was drawn up, laid before parliament and passed. This granted the commissioners the powers to settle and approve a scheme for conservators to be appointed to manage the heath, even detailing the names of the appointees.<sup>246</sup> The creation of the park must have appeared imminent. Yet, by 1876, twelve years after the initial donation, the park remained a pipe dream. The delay was caused by a legal challenge. Labourers in the hamlet of Pockthorpe had appropriated the heath for work and recreation in the first half of the nineteenth century; they were a well-organised group which employed solicitors and, in 1868, submitted a claim for deed of title for the heath. This convinced the commissioners and, by extension, the corporation of the legitimacy of their claim. Proceedings were curtailed.<sup>247</sup>

Other civic matters had become more pressing. Norwich had a chequered history in undertaking essential sanitation works. Disease had been rife in the congested city over the nineteenth century.<sup>248</sup> The River Wensum had been polluted for decades by the discharge of raw sewage and the city's response to the situation had been fraught. The inhabitants had been forbidden to use the river and the city engineer, Mr Morant (cartographer of the 1873 plan of Norwich) had embarked on one of the most expensive construction projects in the city. Sewerage works had begun in 1868 in response to an injunction from disgruntled Thorpe residents. They were technically complex because of the river; the sewers needed to be between twenty and fifty feet deep. They were laid from Pottergate in the west to King Street to the north-east and the sewage was finally pumped out to Whitlingham. However, despite the expense, the rate increase and a capital loan of £153,000, the project had proved an expensive failure.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 1866–7, *passim*.

<sup>246</sup> <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1884/feb/14/city-of-norwich-household-heath>.

<sup>247</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, Recreation Committee, 24 November 1876.

<sup>248</sup> Armstrong, 'Population, 1700–1950', 252.

<sup>249</sup> W. White, *Norwich since 1890: History and Directory*, facsimile edition, first published 1890 (Norwich: Hindsight, 1988), 56; Hawkins, *Guide to Norwich*, 81–2.

Nine years elapsed but the issue of the heath clearly rankled. In 1876 the committee was resurrected by the council and circumspectly retitled the Recreation Committee, with a nucleus of aldermen and councillors and strengthened by the addition of some weighty public figures, such as John Gurney, a wealthy banker, Peter Eade, a physician (both future MPs and mayors), and Jeremiah James Colman, a wealthy manufacturer and MP for Norwich. The committee was mandated to consider the scope for making Mousehold Heath a 'recreation ground'. The clarity of the brief and the stature of the committee membership indicates a keen desire for resolution by the corporation.<sup>250</sup> The Recreation Committee began work and sensibly requested background information from the earlier meetings. The city engineer was instructed to survey access routes to the heath, including the necessity of making new roads and bridges.<sup>251</sup> At this stage it emerged that an application to progress the matter had been made the previous year by the town clerk, who had subsequently died, and all background material (including the original submissions to the enclosure commissioners) had been lost.<sup>252</sup> Fortunately, the commissioners were more efficient and explained that in 1867 the then town clerk, Mr Mendham, had withdrawn the scheme as a result of the Pockthorpe claims and his successor, Mr Miller, advised that the likely costs of compensating the Pockthorpe resistors would be £2000, a considerable sum. Undaunted, the Recreation Committee instructed the town clerk to approach the church estate for a formal conveyance and to report on the heath's potential as a public park, including the creation of lodges and fencing.<sup>253</sup>

The city's earlier capitulation might have been fiscally prudent, but the second People's Park Committee was less easily discouraged and progressed the plans for lodges and fencing for Mousehold while also investigating the alternative option at Heigham on the western boundary of the old city. By this stage the estimate for all essential work had reached a dizzying £6600.<sup>254</sup> This sum proved to be the breaking point. The alternative site at Heigham was discounted on the grounds of cost and the council was informed that, unless a generous donation was forthcoming, the scheme was too costly.<sup>255</sup>

A further three years elapsed before the committee was reconstituted with a new,

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<sup>250</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 9 September 1876.

<sup>251</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 4 September 1876.

<sup>252</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 24 November 1876.

<sup>253</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 29 June 1877.

<sup>254</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 21 August 1877.

<sup>255</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, Recreation Committee, 22 August 1877.

committed, chairman and a pledge of £1000 from J. Gurney. Peter Eade was by this stage the sheriff and made his personal commitment to ‘pleasure grounds ... at four corners of the city’ explicit at the first meeting. He also stated that he had the full mandate of the council behind him.<sup>256</sup> Prompted by Eade, the town clerk had already written to ‘all the principal towns in the kingdom’ requesting information on recreation grounds and playing fields, a formidable administrative task. Eighty had replied and responses had proved useful.<sup>257</sup> In the meantime, the energetic Mr Eade had visited three putative sites: Heigham Causeway, an area of water meadow; an area between Earham Road and Unthank Road owned by the Ecclesiastical Commission; and a privately owned site at Ipswich Road. The newly appointed city engineer had been instructed to inspect the sites and, although the low-lying Heigham site was deemed too marshy, the other two locations were considered suitable.

For almost a year the second committee was in a state of dynamic activity, debating land acquisition and negotiating property conveyance with a range of parties, most of which came to nothing.<sup>258</sup> During this time it made overtures to purchase land which would later come to fruition as Eaton and Wensum Parks.<sup>259</sup> The corporation was in possession of a recent protest letter from Norwich ratepayers which mentioned the ‘alarming fact’ of the levy and questioned the expensive purchase of the Wingfield estate, which would ‘add to the present burthen’ of the rate-payers.<sup>260</sup> Eventually, Mousehold must have appeared as the sole solution and the corporation, perhaps secure in the knowledge of the Gurney donation at its behest, finally resolved to confront the Pockthorpe claims. Their reluctance was merited: it took three years and a high court action of labyrinthine complexity to wrest ownership of the heath from the persistent Pockthorpe rebels. By 1884 the council was finally declared the owner of Mousehold Heath.<sup>261</sup> The original chapter gift must at times have seemed like a poisoned chalice.

The long delay in transition from common to park may well have contributed to the subsequent twentieth-century belief that the city had shown little interest in the promotion of public open space for its citizens. On the contrary; the saga reveals considerable tenacity from a small group of local politicians in the face of legal obstacles and local objections. The near success of the Pockthorpe residents is

<sup>256</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 31 December 1880.

<sup>257</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 10 December 1880.

<sup>258</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, Recreation Committee 1890–1891, *passim*.

<sup>259</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 11 April 1881; 11 July 1881.

<sup>260</sup> NRO, N/TC 28/13, 4 July 1881.

<sup>261</sup> Macmaster, ‘Mousehold Heath’, 144 onwards.

particularly surprising. Macmaster reasons that the composition of the later grouping (clearly the members had altered over the lengthy incumbency) may have become more socially diverse. However, the Pockthorpe committee members of 1881 were all manual labourers, with the exception of a publican and a boot-riveter.<sup>262</sup> The claimants were supported by the embryonic union movement and some local politicians, with interests ranging from social solidarity to political expediency.<sup>263</sup> In the first incarnation of the People's Park Committee, Councillor Tillet had been an enthusiastic promoter of the new public park. By the second committee he had switched sides and became one of a number of public figures who supported the Pockthorpe residents in their crusade to retain the heath for sand and gravel extraction. Macmaster considers that Tillet, an evangelical figure, was eventually persuaded of the rights of the Pockthorpe rebels, but his change of heart also proved a highly convenient vote-winner in the Pockthorpe constituency.<sup>264</sup>

Mousehold Heath, the logical solution to the city's need for a park, fell victim to competing priorities and political interests. The initial creation of the park committee had been an astute move: an act of consensus across political parties that, over time, became fragmented by a range of partisan views and legal complexities. Nor was the outcome overwhelmingly popular. At the moment of legal success there were political schisms within city hall. A cartoon represented the heath as a white elephant presented to the city by the town clerk, H.B. Miller, with the ongoing cost of maintenance passed on to the city ratepayers.<sup>265</sup> It proved a pyrrhic victory. The city wisely chose not to ask for costs against the Pockthorpe committee on condition of no trespassing, and bylaws were immediately set in place to prohibit destructive activity on the heath. Conservators were appointed to oversee the site. In total, 350 unemployed men were employed in restoration and development work, including returfing and tree planting. W.H. Fletcher was commissioned to design the park, including lakes, lodges and cricket pitches, and it was emphasised that the wild character of the heath should be retained.<sup>266</sup> (This commitment was not idle; it was reinforced when William Goldring, the eminent naturalist, was commissioned to produce an extensive report on the management of the

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<sup>262</sup> NRO, NTC 28/13, 4 July 1881.

<sup>263</sup> S. Cherry, *Doing Different: Politics and the Labour Movement in Norwich 1880–1914* (Norwich: Centre for East Anglian Studies, 1989), 5–26; M. Shoard, *This Land is Our Land: The Struggle for Britain's Countryside* (London: Paladin, 1987), 90.

<sup>264</sup> Macmaster, 'Mousehold Heath', 143.

<sup>265</sup> *Daylight*, June 1883: 'The Mousehold White Elephant', cited by MacMaster, 'Mousehold Heath', 126.

<sup>266</sup> NRO, N/TC 5/11, Mousehold Heath Conservators: Minutes, 1886–1897.

heath in 1906.)<sup>267</sup> In May 1896 John Gurney, by then mayor, opened the new road leading up to the park and dedicated Mousehold Heath to ‘the free use of the people as a recreation park for ever’.<sup>268</sup> In time, the People’s Park became very popular with the public, especially the cricket pitches, although extensive vandalism continued for some years, largely carried out by disgruntled Pockthorpe residents and the military riding across the heath from the adjoining Britannia Barracks.<sup>269</sup>



**Figure 16.** Pavilion, Mousehold Heath (early postcard, Picture Norfolk)

By 1891 Norwich possessed three small public parks within the built-up area of the city, together with Mousehold Heath on the outskirts of the walled city (Figure 16). Apart from Chapelfield, which continued to be the city’s star attraction and commanded much of the councillors’ time, there were also the Gildencroft and the Castle Gardens. The eleventh- and twelfth-century Norman castle was originally built as a royal palace on a high mound surrounded by dry defensive ditches.<sup>270</sup> From the fourteenth century it functioned primarily as the county gaol and it was converted into a museum when a

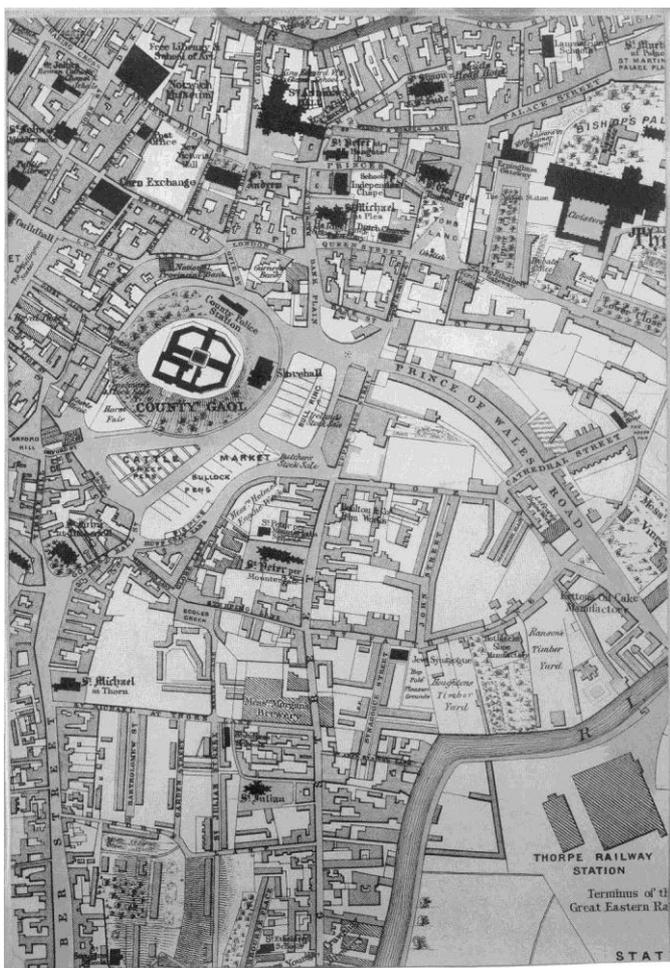
<sup>267</sup> NRO, N/TC5/12, 16 October 1906. William Goldring, ‘Mousehold Heath: Report upon the Improvement of the Heath by Planting’.

<sup>268</sup> Mackie, *Norfolk Annals Volume II*, May 1896, 369.

<sup>269</sup> NRO, N/TC 5/11; N/TC 5/12 January 19 1904, 28 March, 1905

<sup>270</sup> Norwich Museums Service, ‘Norwich Castle: 950 years of history’, accessed at <https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/norwich-castle/castle-keep-transformation/castle-archives/timeline>; Robert Liddiard, *Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape, 1066 to 1500* (Macclesfield: Windgather Press, 2005).

larger purpose-built prison was erected on the edge of Mousehold Heath, at the site of the Britannia Barracks, the original base for the Royal Norfolk Regiment.<sup>271</sup> The mound appears to have been cultivated for some time: the Hochstetter map of 1789 reveals that this area was terraced and gardened for allotments by the end of the eighteenth century, and Morant's map of 1873 (Figure 17) shows that fairly extensive tree planting had already taken place by that period.



**Figure 17.** Detail of castle and mound, Morant's Map of Norwich 1873

The mound, the object of Grigor's earlier railway suggestion, was a convenient location for a public garden, particularly after the relocation of the prison to Mousehold Heath.<sup>272</sup> In 1889, as a result of Gurney's intervention and funding, the mound and the ditches below became a public garden and the four acres were landscaped with steps,

<sup>271</sup> Norwich Museums Service, 'Norwich Castle'.

<sup>272</sup> NRO, C/SAA, 2/40, Various documents concerning Castle and Prison including letter from Town Clerk requesting use of part of grounds for pleasure gardens, 1888.

walkways and terraces.<sup>273</sup> By 1891 the yearly cost of maintaining the gardens was £159 and they had become so popular that an increase in the area open to the public was agreed, together with wastepaper bins.<sup>274</sup> By the early twentieth century the landscaped ditches had become the picturesque subject of numerous postcards (Figure 18).

The area in the north of Norwich, near St Augustine's Church, Coslany, has been known as the Gildencroft since the late thirteenth century and originally comprised a large area of open land bounded by the city walls to the north and Jenkins Lane to the



**Figure 18.** Castle Gardens, showing terracing (early postcard)

<sup>273</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/8, 7 November 1886, 'Letter from John Gurney'; Mackie, *Norfolk Annals volume II*, 24 May 1901, 401.

<sup>274</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/10, 19 March 1891; 2 April 1891.

south.<sup>275</sup> It had been used for jousting and firing crossbows, but over the centuries most of the area had been parcelled up and sold for development.<sup>276</sup> The few acres of remaining open space were used by the public for various activities, such as informal games and sport. It was also used for burials by the Quakers from the late seventeenth century and the Jewish community in the early nineteenth century.<sup>277</sup> The Hebrew cemetery was sited at Talbot Square and, at first, the land was so impassable that coffins had to be carried manually.<sup>278</sup> The Quaker cemetery remains today.

The 1852–7 Burial Acts were introduced to end urban burials within closed graveyards and ensure that all cemeteries operated under the jurisdiction of local authorities through Sanitation Boards.<sup>279</sup> After city interments ceased the Jewish graves were maintained by the Hebrew congregation, which employed both a gardener and caretaker for the task up to the 1940s.<sup>280</sup> By 1889 one of the few remaining open areas was safeguarded by the corporation, when the Gildencroft plot of approximately six acres was purchased from the Great Hospital Trust and converted it into a public park, with walkways, shrubberies, flower beds and bowling greens, at a cost of £2700. The children's gymnasium was to follow.<sup>281</sup> The work involved in clearing the site and removing unwanted buildings continued through to 1891 and there were regular discussions on rights of way, which suggests that some residents objected to the change of use. The Gildencroft was formally opened in 1892.

In 1890 the city's growing commitment to its parks and gardens was underlined by the appointment of a generic sub-committee for their collective governance. This was an important milestone, as the corporation still operated with a relatively lean committee structure. The newly established Gardens and St Andrews Hall sub-committee rationalised a number of individual sub-committees and working groups and was to continue in that role, accountable to the city committee, for another twenty years. The following year it approved the introduction of musical fetes across the four city parks.<sup>282</sup> Four bands were appointed, which rotated around the parks, and entrance fees

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<sup>275</sup> E.A. Kent, 'The Gildencroft in Norwich', *Norfolk Archeology* XXIX (1946).

<sup>276</sup> C. Parkin, *The history and antiquities of the city of Norwich in the County of Norfolk* (W. Whittingham, London, 1783), 289.

<sup>277</sup> Kent, 'Gildencroft', 225.

<sup>278</sup> H. Levine, *The Norwich Hebrew Congregation 1840–1960* (privately published, 1961).

<sup>279</sup> C. Brooks, *Mortal Remains: The History and Present State of the Victorian and Edwardian Cemetery* (Exeter: Wheaton, 1989), 47–50.

<sup>280</sup> Levine, *Norwich Hebrew Congregation*.

<sup>281</sup> Mackie, *Norfolk Annals Volume II*, 12 May 1892; NRO, N/TC 6/10, 9 April 1891.

<sup>282</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/10, 4 December 1890.

of 3d and 6d were charged for the performances.<sup>283</sup> The committee's pride in the events was spoiled by the news that a caretaker had requested a bribe from the Mancroft Works Band.<sup>284</sup>

### **Burial Grounds**

Chapelfield Gardens, Mousehold Heath, Castle Gardens and the Gildencroft comprised the city's public parks in 1891. However, parks and gardens were not the only source of green space within the city: burial grounds, church graveyards and cemeteries all contributed green space to nineteenth-century Norwich. The thirty-five medieval churches and graveyards, with a combined area of around twelve acres, formed a significant area within the ancient city.<sup>285</sup> These consecrated grounds could not be developed, but by the close of the nineteenth century they were becoming recognised by conservationists and social reformers, such as Octavia Hill, as areas for general reflection and retreat.<sup>286</sup>

By the first decades of the nineteenth century, and well before this initiative of Hill and the members of the Commons Preservation Society, church graveyards had become overcrowded and unhygienic after centuries of close burial in confined spaces. New cemeteries were gradually established well away from the town centres. Liverpool constructed the grand St James Cemetery in a disused quarry in 1825, the monumental Glasgow Necropolis was opened in 1832 and, after considerable debate and disagreement, London consecrated the ornate, Gothic revival Kensall Green Cemetery in 1833. A separate fifteen acres was reserved for 'dissenters' or nonconformists.<sup>287</sup> The Rosary Cemetery in Norwich, however, pre-dated all of these grandiose municipal cemeteries and was the first non-denominational cemetery in the country. It opened on the eastern edge of Norwich in 1819.<sup>288</sup>

Nonconformism in Norwich had flourished over the eighteenth century.<sup>289</sup> By 1851, the numbers attending nonconformist chapels and churches on a given Sunday in

<sup>283</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/4, 26 May 1891.

<sup>284</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/4, 2 July 1891.

<sup>285</sup> Ishmael, 'Heavenly Gardens', 40.

<sup>286</sup> 'Octavia Hill, Housing and Social Reform', accessed at <http://infed.org/mobi/octavia-hill-housing-and-social-reform/>.

<sup>287</sup> J.S. Curl, *The Victorian Celebration of Death* (Trowbridge and London: David and Charles, 1972), 45–57.

<sup>288</sup> The Rosary Cemetery Grade II\*: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001568>.

<sup>289</sup> *Census of England and Wales, Census of Religious Worship 1851*, accessed at <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>.

Norwich were drawing close to those attending the established church.<sup>290</sup> Many of the city's most prosperous and influential citizens in the later part of the nineteenth century were prominent nonconformists, yet experienced discrimination in areas such as church burials.<sup>291</sup> This prejudice created the impetus for the five-acre Rosary Cemetery in the south-east of Norwich on the site of a former market garden. The enterprise was funded through shared ownership: individuals and families purchased shares which entitled them to a space in the cemetery. By the mid-nineteenth century this approach became more common, as enterprising commercial companies were formed to finance the development of urban cemeteries, but in 1819 the raising of money in this way was a pioneering concept.<sup>292</sup> The Reverend Thomas Drummond, a Presbyterian minister, took the initiative and established the Rosary Trust, which oversaw the design and layout of the cemetery landscape.

Victorian burial grounds and cemeteries had an aesthetic as well as a functional purpose and were landscaped with many features of a public park. Those of Norwich were no exception.<sup>293</sup> The 1841 Rosary regulations detailed the powers of the trustees to lay out the cemetery 'for the purposes of beautifying the appearance thereof'.<sup>294</sup> By 1845 trees, shrubs and walkways with other ornamentation were in place, reflecting some of the gardenesque principles advocated by John Claudius Loudon in his seminal work on the design of cemeteries, published in 1843 and incorporated into Derby Arboretum two years earlier.<sup>295</sup> Over the next forty years the Rosary was improved. A new lodge, designed by Ernest Benest, the city surveyor, was erected in 1860 and the chapel was remodelled into a flint Gothic fantasy by the eminent Norwich architect Edward Boardman in 1879 (Figure 19). Over the intervening years further ornamental

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<sup>290</sup> Horace Mann, *Census of Great Britain, 1851, Religious Worship in England and Wales* (1852), 126, table F, accessed at <https://archive.org/details/censusgreatbrit00manngoog/page/n145>.

<sup>291</sup> *Census 1951*, 176; Kent, 'Gildencroft', 8–9.

<sup>292</sup> Julie Rugg, 'The Origins and Progress of Cemetery Establishment in Britain', in G. Jupp and P. Howarth, *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 105–15.

<sup>293</sup> *Census 1851*.

<sup>294</sup> NRO, MF/60 397/6, City map, 1830 W.S. Millard and J. Manning; NRO, N/TC 62/2, A.W. Morant, Map of the City of Norwich, 1873; NRO, N/C, Cemeteries 1830–1974; A. Taigel, 'Beautifully Laid Out', *Norfolk Gardens Trust Journal* (2001), 12.

<sup>295</sup> J.C. Loudon, *On the Laying Out, Planting and Managing of Cemeteries and on the Improvement of Churchyards, with Sixty Engravings*, facsimile edition, first published 1843 (London: Forgotten Books, 1918).

planting took place.<sup>296</sup> Consequently, it attracted numerous visitors who enjoyed the designed landscape as well as paying their respects, in much the same way as envisaged by the 1833 Select Committee in describing the benefits of parks and gardens.<sup>297</sup>

After the passing of the Burial Acts and the moratorium on burial within the city walls, a second Norwich cemetery was established in 1856. The Earlham Cemetery was planned and laid out by Benest, the city surveyor, on thirty acres at the western outskirts of the walled city, in an area that was gradually being developed. The design allowed for entrance lodges at the north and south entrances, with fine ornamental gates and twin-linked Anglican chapels, as well as a separate Jewish mortuary, serpentine pathways and extensive tree and shrub planting.<sup>298</sup> In 1874 a Roman Catholic chapel was erected on the site to a design by Mr Pearce (Figure 20). The cemetery provided



**Figure 19.** The Rosary Cemetery: Edward Boardman's Gothic Chapel (geograph.org.uk)

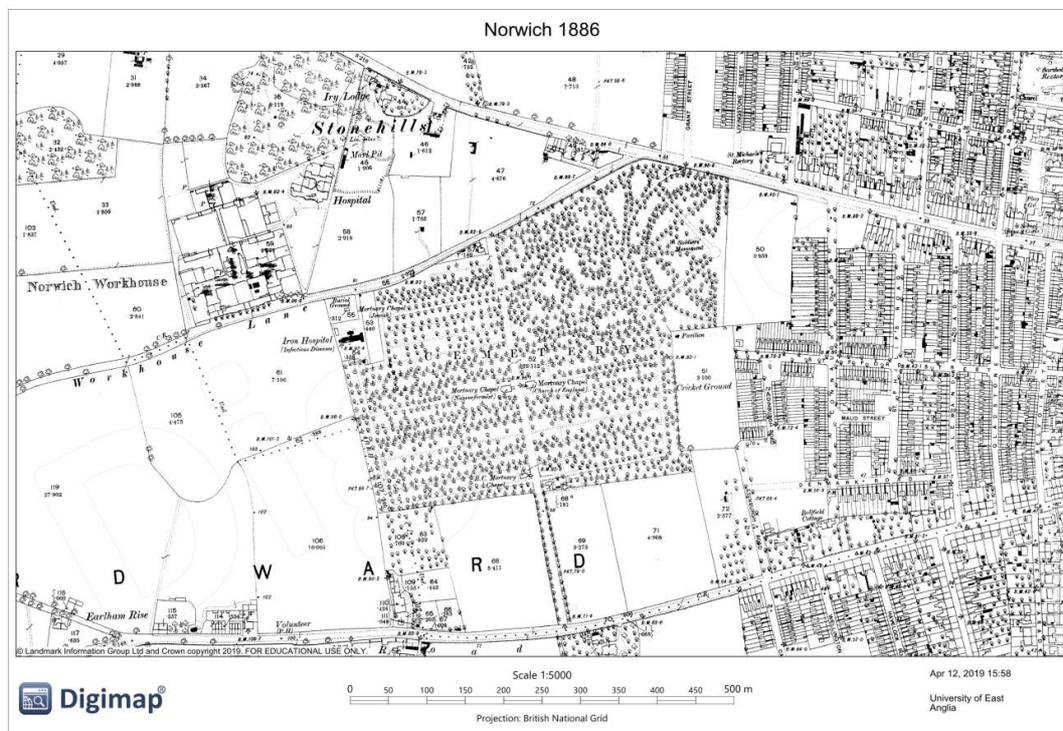
<sup>296</sup> The Rosary Cemetery Grade II\*: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001568>.

<sup>297</sup> Dallas et al., *Norfolk Gardens*, 324.

<sup>298</sup> Ordnance Survey 6 inches to 1 mile 1st edition, surveyed 1880–2, published 1888; Dallas et al., *Norfolk Gardens*, 309.

## Nineteenth-century Norwich

another pleasant green space for mourners and others to visit. The first person to be interred at the cemetery, in 1855, was an unfortunate workman, James Baldry, who fell from the scaffolding during construction.<sup>299</sup>



**Figure 20.** Earham Cemetery, Ordnance Survey, 1886

### The Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society

This assortment of public parks and consecrated burial grounds comprised the green space that the Norwich citizens were able to use for ‘rational’ or polite recreation (walking, sitting, listening to the Sunday bands) as the nineteenth century drew to a close. There was some opportunity for sport, notably bowls (and boules) at the Gildencroft, cricket at Mousehold Heath and the children’s play areas in Chapelfield. However, the scope for sports was limited. Foot-racing and pugilism were popular with the working classes, both as a spectator sport and for gambling; a rough form of football was peculiar to Norwich, as was coarse fishing, which never lost its popularity.<sup>300</sup> The Newcastle Report on Schooling in 1861 had accepted the importance of sport as an educational concern, but the subsequent 1870 Elementary Education Act had done little

<sup>299</sup> Grave-stone photograph, The Plunkett Collection. Norfolk Heritage Centre.

<sup>300</sup> Munting, ‘Sports and Games’, 439–43.

to address the issue.<sup>301</sup> Public education at the time focused on drill rather than games.<sup>302</sup> By 1880 discussions on the future of elite games such as cricket and rugby revealed a strong desire among many in the upper and middle classes to protect the respectability of such sports: in 1880 *The Times* noted that ‘artisans and mechanics have, almost by general consent, been shut out from the privileged inner circle’ and then went on to justify such discrimination on the grounds of the superior muscular prowess of the artisan class.<sup>303</sup>

In the latter part of the nineteenth century sports such as rugby, football, hockey, boxing and athletics had established governance and rules: the Football Association was established in 1863 and the Rugby Football Union in 1871.<sup>304</sup> These activities tended to be the preserve of the middle and upper classes; facilities at private schools were often excellent, but opportunities for members of the working classes were almost non-existent, except for the sporting facilities occasionally provided by the churches and the often-linked temperance movements, paternalistically by employers, and occasionally by the trade unions.<sup>305</sup> In Norwich at this time, boys’ clubs could only make use of playing fields in private or charitable possession. These comprised J.J. Colman’s superior cricket grounds at Lakenham, as well as sports grounds at Newmarket Road, Stafford Street, Plumstead Road and Earlham Road. The first football club was established in Norwich in the 1860s with sixty members (although Norwich City Football Club was not formed until 1902).<sup>306</sup>

This void in public provision did not go unnoticed. Nine years before the nineteenth century drew to a close an important public meeting took place in the ancient guildhall in the centre of Norwich. The assembly was chaired by the mayor and attended by many of the Norwich elite, including the high sheriff of Norfolk, the sheriff of Norwich, aldermen, councillors and clergymen. The local paper provided advance notice and gave the debate considerable prominence, reporting that it carried the goodwill of a far larger constituency than were able to attend. The convenor was a local solicitor, W.E. Hansell, whose objective was to draw attention to the limited provision of public open space for the male youth of the city. The outcome of the meeting was the

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<sup>301</sup> The 1870 Act provided elementary education under the supervision of School Boards.

<sup>302</sup> Derek Gillard, *Education in England: The History of our Schools*, chapter 3 ‘Education in England’, accessed at [www.educationengland.org.uk/history](http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history).

<sup>303</sup> *The Times*, 26 April 1880, quoted by Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 135.

<sup>304</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 140, 199.

<sup>305</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 137.

<sup>306</sup> Munting, ‘Sports and Games’, 446.

formation of the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society, which continued to wield influence and contribute financially to the civic development of green space in the city for some thirty-five years.<sup>307</sup>

The London Playing Fields and Open Spaces Committee (later Society) had been established only the previous year and may well have provided a template for the Norwich initiative. Its objectives were to encourage ‘manly games’ and ‘healthy pastimes’ and the provision of fields on which to play the sports.<sup>308</sup> Walter Hansell was a charismatic figure; he lived in the Cathedral Close and was a family member of an established Norwich-based legal firm. He had been a footballer and cricketer of some note and was also a gifted amateur musician; in later life he was to strike up a close friendship with Edward Elgar, but, by 1891, he was actively involved in promoting football as a recreational sport.<sup>309</sup> The Liberal mayor Mr Earnest Wild, in his introduction, stressed that the enthusiasm Hansell had shown in his sporting prowess was to be harnessed for the benefit of the city and deplored the fact that Norwich was ‘one of the large towns worse off in regard to the supply of open space’. He pointed out that it was hardly surprising that the young people of the city had appropriated the cattle market as a makeshift gymnasium and questioned whether there was ‘sufficient public-spiritedness’ to remedy the situation.<sup>310</sup>

After the mayor’s direct appeal to hearts and minds, Mr Hansell read out letters of support from absent luminaries, such as J.J. Colman and other eminent businessmen and politicians. He drew attention to the limited provision of suitable open space under the direct aegis of the City Corporation: Chapel Field (sic) Gardens, Castle Gardens and the Gildencroft were cited; Mousehold Heath, recently enclosed as a public park, was discounted for sports use as ‘so rough and cramped ... just better than nothing’, and the layout was criticised for its concentration on aesthetic considerations such as tree planting, lakes and lodge buildings rather than sporting facilities.<sup>311</sup> The mayor’s *pièce de résistance* was the revelation that the city’s provision of playing fields compared poorly with that of Nottingham. His correspondence with the Midlands town was dramatically flourished and revealed that there was not only more generous municipal

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<sup>307</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 11 November 1891: ‘Playing Fields and Open Spaces for Norwich’, 2–3.

<sup>308</sup> *The Times*, 6 March 1890: ‘Playing Fields for London’, 8.

<sup>309</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 July 2011: ‘Walter Hansell’.

<sup>310</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 11 November 1891, 2.

<sup>311</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 4 November 1891, 2.

provision in the Midlands town but also a policy of public subsidy for club rental.<sup>312</sup>

The discourse focused on public green space as an essential prerequisite for young people's participation in sporting activity, games and exercise. The speeches were explicitly directed towards concerns about health, fitness and providing the means to alleviate the conditions in which most young people lived and played. The meeting pursued a radical agenda; there was little evidence of the desire for social control and moral betterment cited by historians as an objective in their analysis of the Victorian parks and leisure movement.<sup>313</sup> Conway refers to the 'civilising influence on those urban citizens most thought to be in need of improvement';<sup>314</sup> Macmaster describes the Victorian expectation that parks would function as 'moral enclaves and attract the working class away from 'crude pleasures ...';<sup>315</sup> MacGill, in her research on public parks in Keighley at the end of the nineteenth century, states that 'the park was another means of controlling and regulating the behaviour of the townspeople'.<sup>316</sup> The Guildhall discourse was couched in altruistic terms, although private views may have been more disparate than the report suggests.

The meeting also highlighted the rich potential of churchyards for open space which was to prove a *leitmotif* for recreational provision in Norwich (and is developed further in the following chapter). Space for development within the city walls was limited and the mayor anticipated twentieth-century planning gain when he proposed that the salubrious Town Close development in the southern suburb, which had begun in the 1840s but was still being developed in the 1890s, should include generous open-space provision as a *quid pro quo* for development.<sup>317</sup> Three formal resolutions were passed and carried unanimously: to establish the committee of the new Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society; to emulate the role of the London Playing Fields Society in order to achieve an increase in sporting facilities in the city; and – which appeared to be an astute afterthought – to entreat the Norwich Corporation to cooperate with the newly established society.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 4 November 1891, 2.

<sup>313</sup> Conway, *Public Parks*; Conway, 'Everyday Landscapes'; John Steane, 'The Oxford University Parks', *Garden History* 32.1 (2004).

<sup>314</sup> Conway, *Public Parks*, 5.

<sup>315</sup> Macmaster, 'Mousehold Heath', 117–19.

<sup>316</sup> MacGill, 'Keighley'.

<sup>317</sup> S. Muthesius, 'Nineteenth Century Housing in Norwich', in C. Barringer (ed.), *Norwich in the Nineteenth Century* (Lavenham: The Lavenham Press, 1984), 94–118.

<sup>318</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 4 November 1891, 3.

## Conclusion

Norwich had been exempted from swingeing criticism by the SCPW and the local circumstances provide some explanation for its delay in public park-making. Although it is not easy to reconcile aspects of the corporation's neglect of Chapelfield Gardens after the initial enclosure and opening ceremony, the opening date has been widely misinterpreted, and probably contributed to later perceptions of civic failure. The city's political, legal and financial difficulties over the enclosure of Mousehold Heath proved an almost insurmountable hurdle, eventually overcome. Despite the political success of the 1891 Guildhall meeting, which was shrewdly planned to achieve its recreational objective, Norwich had established four public parks by that date, which bears not unreasonable comparison with other towns of equivalent size (Figure 21). The selective comparison with Nottingham, at that period a town considerably more populous and wealthy than Norwich, was a master stroke of persuasive rhetoric.<sup>319</sup> Walter Hansell secured an influential display of public support for his aims, a clear mandate for action and the explicit commitment of the political establishment of Norfolk and Norwich. More importantly, the meeting provided the spring board for practical support for the creation of parks and recreation grounds in Norwich over the following 30 years.

The Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society, with its membership of councillors, mayors and the local elite, was an integral part of the political establishment of the city. Its message would have resonated with the many readers of *The Norwich Mercury*, which provided verbatim coverage of the occasion. The discourse underlined the importance of public open space for young people and the central role of the local authority in the creation of such provision, highlighted the complexity of needs and values within a crowded urban city, and also anticipated many of the national and local pressures that were to dominate political discussion in the provision of green space in Norwich, and elsewhere in the country, for the next eighty years. The Norwich meeting was to prove a watershed for the city through not only its influence but also its practical and financial support. The scorned green spaces were to form the historic nucleus of an extensive range of public green space in Norwich over the next forty years. This provision and these political pressures are explored more fully in the chapters that follow.

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<sup>319</sup> [www.cityofnottingham.gov.uk/history](http://www.cityofnottingham.gov.uk/history).



**Figure 21.** Norwich map showing locations of parks, 1891 (originally in colour)

**Norwich: Working in Partnership, 1892–1914**

The Boer War (1899–1902) dominated British foreign policy at the turn of the century, but its outcome cemented the expansion of the British empire.<sup>320</sup> At home, three late nineteenth-century pieces of legislation consolidated the role of local government in the provision of services to its citizens. In the reforming Local Government Acts of 1888, 1894 and 1899 Norwich retained its role as a county borough. The three acts vested in local government greater scope for providing services to its citizens than at any earlier time. Both major political parties were inclined to allow local government considerable freedom to discharge their role, while continuing to restrict their funding.<sup>321</sup>

The nineteenth-century exodus from the countryside to the town had particularly affected Norwich and outlying rural communities. The city's population expanded by almost 40 per cent between 1881 and 1911.<sup>322</sup> Although the Norwich manufacturing and mercantile classes were prosperous, the number of paupers in Norfolk was recorded as higher than in any other agricultural county, and rural flight depressed wages.<sup>323</sup> Farm workers in East Anglia had consistently been badly paid and the city followed suit, accelerated partly by the influx of people, partly by the comparatively large numbers of women workers and partly by the relative isolation of the county.<sup>324</sup> The impact on the local economy was considerable. A thriving middle class developed, while working people suffered.

Cities with similar industries, such as Leicester and Nottingham, are recorded as paying workers significantly more than the parsimonious Norwich manufacturers.<sup>325</sup> Trade unionism was limited; given the abundant supply of labour, many employers, with a few notable exceptions (Colman's, Howlett and White), were able to outlaw or undermine the development of unions in Norwich. Unofficial and inconclusive strikes through the 1890s led to a drop in union membership. Doyle points out that, while Birmingham and Glasgow invested heavily in utilities, capital projects and social

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<sup>320</sup> *The Times*, 28 May 1902: 'The War', 7.

<sup>321</sup> Chandler, *Explaining Local Government*, 97–119.

<sup>322</sup> Registrar General, *Census 1911*, Norwich Population, table 3, *Census of England and Wales*, accessed at <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>.

<sup>323</sup> A. Ashby, *A Survey of Allotments and Smallholdings in Oxfordshire, Oxford 1917* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 5, quoted by Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 45.

<sup>324</sup> Clarke, 'Work and Employment', 398; Cherry, *Doing Different*, 10.

<sup>325</sup> Clarke, 'Work and Employment', 398.

amenities, until the turn of the twentieth century older cities such as Norwich were reluctant spenders.<sup>326</sup>

Against this economic backcloth, Norwich politics was changing and Labour was establishing a toe-hold in the city. By 1903, Herbert Witard had been elected as its first Independent Labour Party (ILP) councillor and by 1906 its first ILP member of parliament.<sup>327</sup> The depression of the 1920s and 1930s has been well chronicled. What is less well known is the privation experienced by many in the years preceding the outbreak of the First World War. Norwich was no exception and the concern of some local politicians culminated in the formation of council-funded schemes of work for the unemployed.<sup>328</sup>

### Political Priorities

In the decade immediately following the 1891 inaugural meeting of the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society (NPF OSS), the Corporation's approach to recreational development underwent little change. Other towns were more dynamic. Leicester had been later than Norwich in creating its first public park: in 1880 it opened the twenty-nine-hectare Victoria Park close to the city centre on the site of a former racecourse; Abbey Park was to follow soon afterwards.<sup>329</sup> Despite being twenty years behind Norwich, it compensated for the late start by implementing a major review of its green spaces. Over the next four decades, Leicester systematically purchased land explicitly for recreational use and by so doing created a national reputation for generous green space provision.<sup>330</sup> Few local authorities adopted such a coherent strategy, although Joseph Chamberlain, as mayor of Birmingham, was outspoken in emphasising the important role of public parks as 'lungs for great cities, breathing spaces for their toiling and industrious populations' when opening Highgate Park in 1876.<sup>331</sup>

Nottingham had been an early developer of parks: Nottingham Arboretum opened in 1852 under the 1845 General Enclosure Act, but had levied entrance charges and

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<sup>326</sup> B.M. Doyle 'The Changing Functions of Local Government', in M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol. III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 294.

<sup>327</sup> Cherry, *Doing Different*, 25.

<sup>328</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/52, 256.

<sup>329</sup> I. Strachan and J.R. Bowler, 'The Development of Parks in the City of Leicester', *East Midlands Geographer* 6 (1976), 275–83; Conway, *People's Parks*, 283. The site of Abbey Park had been purchased before Victoria Park but was opened later.

<sup>330</sup> Strachan and Bowler, 'Parks in Leicester'.

<sup>331</sup> C. Chinn, *A History of Birmingham's Municipal Parks, 1844–1974* (Studley: Brewin Books, 2012), 76 and 77.

## Working in Partnership

subscriptions until 1875. It continued to open a number of small parks and recreation grounds for sports use in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>332</sup> In London, under pressure from the redoubtable Commons Preservation Society, the Metropolitan Board of Works had opened both Finsbury Park and Southwark Park in 1869. By 1873, in a flurry of activity, it had brought a further 850 acres of commons and open spaces into public access.<sup>333</sup> However, in the last decade of the nineteenth century the overwhelming priority of the Norwich Corporation was sanitation rather than parks.

After an expensive sanitation failure in the 1860s the city had no alternative but to undertake expensive remediation, which required costly legislation. The Norwich Corporation Act 1889 enabled the city to begin the new works in 1890, under the aegis of Mr Marshall, a city engineer with previous experience in similarly complex circumstances. Given this situation, it is unsurprising that the city's priorities lay in drains rather than recreation. Over the following decade the Norwich Health and Sanitary Committee met frequently, often twice weekly.<sup>334</sup> The workload of the surveyor and engineer would have been formidable: they were the key personnel in the assessment and development of land for recreational purposes. By 1892 even the NPF OSS concluded that with the 'present condition of the rates' the time was not yet ripe to make suggestions involving considerable expense.<sup>335</sup>

Nevertheless, over the following two decades the city acquired a number of new parks and garden sites. The Norwich approach was pragmatic, rather than strategic. There was no overarching plan, no statement of recreational aims. Its acquisitions owed much to the intriguing arrangement between the Norwich Corporation and the NPF OSS, and which involved the council in minimal expense. Society members were well placed to exploit their political and social connections to advantage. The *modus operandi* was two-fold: to identify potential land donors and to generate funds through a mixture of private gifts and public subscription. The donations largely took the form of memorial bequests for deceased family members, as enabled by the 1859 Recreation Grounds Act and the 1871 Public Parks Act. The Society was less a pressure group and more an ally, or collaborator. Despite the financial priority given to improving the sanitary conditions of the city, within twenty years of the inaugural meeting of the NPF OSS the city had

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<sup>332</sup> R. Mellors, *The Gardens, Parks and Walks of Nottingham and District* (Nottingham: J. & H. Bell, 1926).

<sup>333</sup> H.L. Malchow, 'Public Gardens and Social Action in Late Victorian London', *Victorian Studies* 29.1 (1985), 104.

<sup>334</sup> NRO, N/TC 15, Health and Sanitary Committee, *passim*.

<sup>335</sup> NRO, N796, Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society Annual Report, 1892.

expanded its recreational green space at minimal expense. By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century it had also established a dedicated committee to oversee a portfolio of parks.<sup>336</sup>

A month after the 1891 meeting the council received an early land donation: not a field suitable for play or sports, which would have been welcomed, but, equally as important to the council, two strips of land along the narrow Unthank Road, one of the busiest roads into the city. The eponymous Colonel Unthank, who was actively engaged in the profitable business of developing land just outside the city wall, was gratefully thanked for this tactical gift, which enabled road widening.<sup>337</sup> The local paper would later be grieving for the loss of the rural landscape and the changes that had been wrought by such building development – for ‘the fine views obstructed by the cottages springing within the triangular area’ – and warning that the builder ‘was trenching at a phenomenal pace’ upon the countryside.<sup>338</sup> In 1898 another donation was to introduce the city’s first churchyard garden.

### **Churchyard Gardens**

The transformation of churchyards into pleasant civic gardens was particularly notable in Norwich, if not unique. The late nineteenth-century civic reform movement, led by Robert Hunter, Octavia Hill and other liberal activists of the Commons Preservation Society, had advocated these overcrowded and unhealthy burial grounds for this purpose. In the wake of an earlier cholera epidemic Octavia Hill’s earlier initiative had been given practical scope through the passing of the 1877 Metropolitan Open Spaces Act, which enabled closed burial grounds to be used for public gardens.<sup>339</sup> Octavia Hill had argued that the best escape from infection lay in making ‘the places inhabited by the poor healthy, to let them have open spaces where the fresh wind may blow over them’.<sup>340</sup> The Open Spaces Act of 1881 extended the 1877 legislation and enabled both the transference of the grounds to the local authority for use as public gardens and the power to use the rates to maintain them as gardens.<sup>341</sup> Fortuitously, the use of such

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<sup>336</sup> *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* 48 (1910), lecture by W.W. Pettigrew to the Horticultural Club on ‘Our Public Parks’, cited by Jordan in ‘Public Parks’, 113.

<sup>337</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/36, (Council) 19 January 1892.

<sup>338</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 March 1904.

<sup>339</sup> Metropolitan Open Spaces Act 1877, legislation.gov.uk.

<sup>340</sup> O. Hill, *Our Common Land, and Other Short Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1877), 137.

<sup>341</sup> Open Spaces Act 1881, legislation.gov.uk.

grounds for building development was prohibited by the Disused Burial Grounds Act 1884, largely in deference to their consecrated status.<sup>342</sup>

London was the first urban centre to exploit fully the opportunity provided by the legislation. As early as 1876 the rector and churchwardens had succeeded in converting the churchyard of St George's in the East into a garden. As documented in Chapter 1, the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, formed in 1882, was underpinned by statute and was to become an influential and highly effective organisation in securing new parks and playgrounds in London.<sup>343</sup> By 1893 *The Quiver* was devoting lyrical space to describing some of the transformed churchyards in London, such as St Andrew's on Gray's Inn Road, with shady walks 'and a pretty arbour beside its flower beds'.<sup>344</sup>

Norwich possessed a large number of medieval churches, for its size proportionally more than any other city in the country (Figure 22).<sup>345</sup> Anglican Church congregations had been in decline since the mid-nineteenth century and congregations were finding it difficult to raise sufficient funds for maintenance.<sup>346</sup> The churchyards had rich potential as highly accessible sites, albeit with limited recreational potential. Although small in area, defunct and derelict churchyards were not only a ready source of land but in Norwich were generously distributed within the cramped city walls. A park or garden inaccessible to much of the population can be of little benefit to a local community: the churchyards had the merit of being the original neighbourhood gardens. Although some might have felt uncomfortable relaxing in a consecrated spot, others must have welcomed the opportunity to relax in a gardened space. Hill referred to them as 'beautiful outdoor sitting rooms', a phrase hardly designed to resonate with the poor, who were unlikely to experience at first-hand the luxury of such domestic provision.<sup>347</sup> This marriage of convenience, however, in the congested city where green public space was at a premium, must have seemed heaven-sent.

In 1898 the NPF OSS seized the initiative by undertaking the laying-out of the churchyard of St Augustine's Church at Coslany. The city had agreed to take on the

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<sup>342</sup> Conway, *People's Parks*, 215.

<sup>343</sup> Malchow, 'Public Gardens', 110–13. Malchow nicely draws attention to the distinction between Hill's philanthropic concerns and the particular priority of the CPS for the legal rights of house owners.

<sup>344</sup> *The Quiver*, 28 January 1893: 'Some London Churchyards', 101–4.

<sup>345</sup> The 1851 Census records 41 Church of England churches: quoted in R. Hale, 'Nonconformity in Nineteenth-Century Norwich', in C. Barringer (ed.), *Norwich in the Nineteenth Century* (Lavenham: The Lavenham Press, 1984), 177.

<sup>346</sup> Hale, 'Nonconformity', 177.

<sup>347</sup> Malchow, 'Public Gardens', 108.



twenty-one-year lease so long as the Society undertook the layout and maintenance.<sup>348</sup>

Before long, the churchyard garden was absorbed into the overall recreational estate managed by the Corporation.<sup>349</sup> St Mary's churchyard, also at Coslany, close by the Gildencroft and St Peter Hungate in Princes Street, were both early beneficiaries of the fundraising prowess of the Society, working in close cooperation with the City Corporation; many more churchyards were to follow. In 1908 the local paper wrote approvingly that:

no greater improvement has been effected in Norwich than the transformation of grimy city burial grounds which for years had been used as places for the dumping of rubbish and litter into pleasant gardens with trim lawns and flower borders.<sup>350</sup>

In time, as legislation relating to redundant consecrated ground progressed, the city instituted a three-point grading system to denote the level of grounds maintenance undertaken by the gardening staff. Level 1 maintenance, as at Simon and St Jude, indicated neat flower beds, sometimes heart-shaped, as well as shrub and tree planting. Level 3 was the most basic. St Augustine was gardened at level 2 and an undated postcard shows trees and shrubs, grass well maintained and grave stones up-ended against the church wall or railings to facilitate grass cutting. These intimate, enclosed and tranquil spaces in the heart of the city were well within the reach of the citizens (Figure 23).<sup>351</sup> However, such was the number of churchyards that the Corporation found itself inundated with requests from clerics and vergers to maintain their derelict burial plots, and was unable to accept all of the requests.

## **Parks and Gardens**

Many municipal parks across the country were acquired through land donations, such as Joseph Strutt's Derby Arboretum and Pearson's Park Hull, donated by Zacharia Charles Pearson.<sup>352</sup> In some rare cases the gift had the added bonus of being a designed landscape, as was the case of Norfolk Park, donated to the people of Sheffield by the duke of Norfolk in 1909, although conceived and designed as a park for the public in

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<sup>348</sup> NRO, N/796, NPFOSS, Annual Report 1892.

<sup>349</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/4, N/TC 6/13, City Committee.

<sup>350</sup> *Norwich Chronicle and Norfolk Gazette*, 5 May 1908: 'Topic of the Times', 5.

<sup>351</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, Town Clerk briefing paper, 8 September 1953.

<sup>352</sup> Pearson Park, Kingston upon Hull: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001520>.

the 1840s.<sup>353</sup> Norwich proved no exception to this convention, but the twentieth-century gifts tended to be modest in size and, although welcome, were unplanned and not always in the most accessible location for the poorest inhabitants, who lived within the city walls. The majority were brought about through the efforts of the NPF OSS, the symbiotic relationship between the Norwich Corporation and the Society proving highly successful. The Society used its influence both to solicit donations of land and to raise money to purchase land through public sponsorship.



**Figure 23.** Churchyard garden, St Simon and St Jude, Wensum Street (Jarrold's postcards of Norwich, Peter Salt Collection)

One such purchase was a large area of land at Eaton. In 1898 the Society launched a major appeal to purchase a large tract of land well outside the city walls at Eaton, close to the city's western boundary and the River Yare. The undeveloped farmland was owned by the Ecclesiastical Commission, with unmade farm tracks that would later become the two avenues that border Eaton Park. The Society had been preparing for the purchase for some time: a plan dated 1900 had been commissioned by the members

<sup>353</sup> Norfolk Heritage Park Grade II\*: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001302>.

well before the eventual conveyance.<sup>354</sup> By 1903 the Society had raised sufficient funds to enable a significant contribution to the funding of the Eaton land. By 1906 the near-eighty-acre site had become absorbed into the City's land portfolio, as shown by a map produced by the city engineer, Arthur Collins.<sup>355</sup> The only major difference was one of nomenclature. The NPF OSS map referred to a park, whereas the engineer's map specified 'Eaton Playing Fields'. The name attributed to the area abutting the Bluebell Road (and which today includes a pitch and putt course and car park) underwent linguistic gentrification: in three years 'Eaton Hangs' became 'Bluebell Hollow'.<sup>356</sup> The Commissioners requested that the area be partly enclosed for allotments and playing fields when the conveyance was finally completed in 1906, along with a double hedge of beech, although later the Parks and Gardens Committee was to gain permission from the Church for the planting to be reduced to a single hedge row.<sup>357</sup>

At the turn of the century the Corporation received, or purchased, a parcel of land in the north of the city at Angel Road.<sup>358</sup> Initially this was named Catton Park, confusingly, as the historic parkland attributed to Humphry Repton at Catton Hall lay some five miles to the north and well outside the city boundary. The land was formerly owned by the Preachers' Money Charity, a charitable trust set up in the seventeenth century by a wealthy city luminary and former mayor of Norwich, Sir John Pettus.<sup>359</sup> The Angel Road site may well have been an outright donation, as the objective of the Preachers' Charity trust deed was, and still remains, to commit a third of its income for the benefit of the inhabitants of Norwich.<sup>360</sup> Whether the NPF OSS had a direct role in negotiating the acquisition of Waterloo Park or funding any part of it is uncertain but probable. The new park was also outside the city walls but close by the Aylsham Road in an area that was ripe for development.<sup>361</sup> In 1904 this recreational green space was formally opened by Mayor Buxton (both the Buxtons were NPF OSS members and also

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<sup>354</sup> Norfolk Heritage Centre, Morgan and Buckenham (hon. surveyors to the Playing Fields Society), 'Plan of Proposed Park for Norwich', 1903.

<sup>355</sup> Norfolk Heritage Centre, 'City Engineer's Plan for Eaton Playing Fields', 1905; NRO, N/TC 6/13, 1 March 1906.

<sup>356</sup> Norwich Heritage Centre, Morgan and Buckenham (architects and surveyors to the Council and the NPF OSS), Plan, Eaton Park, 1900; A. Collins, 'City Engineer's Plan for Eaton Playing Fields', 1905 (78½ acres).

<sup>357</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 1 March 1906.

<sup>358</sup> G. Goreham, 'Parks and Open Spaces of Norwich'. Goreham states that the site was increased to eleven and a half acres only after WWI (p. 27).

<sup>359</sup> Adam, *The Plantation Garden*, 8.

<sup>360</sup> Charity Commission ([www.charitycommission.org.uk](http://www.charitycommission.org.uk)); The Preachers Charity at the Great Hospital Trust ([www.thepreacherscharity.org](http://www.thepreacherscharity.org)).

<sup>361</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 3 March 1904.

owners of Catton Hall) as Waterloo Park (name changes were to be a regular occurrence with the Norwich parks).<sup>362</sup> Public urinals were installed shortly afterwards at a cost of £175 and such was their significance that these were also opened by the mayor (something no contemporary politician would dare to undertake).<sup>363</sup> Water closets and drinking fountains were an integral aspect of the sanitation policy and a vital facility at a time when urination and defecation in public spaces were not uncommon. A month later the city committee approved the erection of a ‘stand for vocalists’ near the existing bandstand and a dozen seats. The new park was clearly popular, because a further twelve seats were promptly ordered.<sup>364</sup> All this activity suggests that the site was perceived as a recreational and ornamental park, as opposed to a simple games field. In fact, the committee initially showed little enthusiasm for games use, but by 1905 cricket was being played at Waterloo Park.<sup>365</sup>

In the same year as Waterloo Park opened, the city received another land bequest in the shape of Woodlands Plantation Park, close to the Earlham cemetery in the west of the city.<sup>366</sup> This area of six acres was presented by Mrs Radford-Pym, daughter of a local man. Robert Finch had purchased the site, opposite the family house The Woodlands, in 1867 as recreational space for his children. The site was well wooded, with pine and beech predominating, and carpeted with primroses, bluebells and ‘wild hyacinth’ (Figure 24). It was acknowledged that some development work would be necessary to make it publicly accessible, but it was perceived as a considerable asset for the city. The negotiations that had led to this ‘munificent gift’ were attributed to the indefatigable NPF OSS, and its influential role in the expansion of public green space in Norwich was the subject of an encomium by the local paper.<sup>367</sup> A year later, in 1905, Walter Hansell, the energetic founder member of the NPF OSS, was consulted by the city committee on an appropriate form of words for the stone plaque that would commemorate the Radford-Pym gift.<sup>368</sup> The relationship between the city and the Society was as harmonious as it was financially beneficial.

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<sup>362</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, City Committee, 7 April 1904.

<sup>363</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, February 1903.

<sup>364</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 8 September 1904.

<sup>365</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, *passim*.

<sup>366</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 7 July 1904.

<sup>367</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 March 1904: ‘The New Norwich Pleasure Ground’.

<sup>368</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/20, Inscription to read ‘Six acres, one rod and twenty five perches to the Corporation of County and City of Norwich: Mary E. Pym donation for father and mother (Fitch) to be thereafter maintained as a public park’, 6 April 1905.

## Working in Partnership

By 1908 an eight-and-a-half-acre site close to Waterloo Park and bordering the River Wensum in the north-west of the city had been acquired by the Norwich Corporation,<sup>369</sup> primarily to provide access to water for public amenity. Over a busy three-year period Wensum Park acquired a range of water facilities, utilising the river to create a rudimentary swimming bath and children's wading area. A public shelter was also constructed.



**Figure 24.** Woodlands Plantation Park (postcard, 1900s)

Shortly after the opening of Wensum Park two well-known Norwich families and supporters of the NPFOSS, the Sewells and the Buxtons, joined forces to offer the city a small plot of land in the north of the city.<sup>370</sup> The Quaker Sewells lived at Catton; E.G. Buxton was a former city mayor from an illustrious family of sheriffs and mayors.<sup>371</sup> The donated area consisted of a small triangular plot of land at the junction of Constitution Hill and St Clement's Hill.<sup>372</sup> Sewell Park was formally opened in 1908 as

<sup>369</sup> NRO, N/TC/6/13, 5 September 1907; N/TC 1/52, 16 June 1908.

<sup>363</sup> Allthrove-Guyton, 'Artistic and Literary Life'.

<sup>371</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 4 November 1891, 3, 4; Norfolk Heritage Centre, Sewell Park (8999/5) City Engineer Plan, 20 December 1911.

<sup>372</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 4 March 1909.

a memorial to Philip Sewell (Figure 25). Shortly afterwards the simple green space sparked local opposition when nearby residents objected to the city's proposal to create a 'juvenile playground' on part of the site.<sup>373</sup> This was not the last time the city had to negotiate the delicate path of reconciling the differing interests of its citizens.



**Figure 25.** Sewell Park c. 1910 (early postcard)

As the number of parks burgeoned oversight and accountability became increasingly important, but the Gardens and St Andrews Hall sub-committee continued to report to the all-embracing city committee, which acted as an executive committee of the council and oversaw numerous and superficially unrelated aspects of city administration. The sub-committee was regularly confronted with the range of civic responsibilities that were to be a constant feature of parks administration for the next seventy years, including wage demands, staff discipline, children and dog nuisance, as well as the less taxing oversight of grass cutting and plant purchasing.

### **Playgrounds**

It is a truism that children can play happily regardless of equipment or landscaping, but the need for some form of structured space for children had been advocated by parliament at an early stage in Victoria's reign. In 1840 the Select Committee on the

<sup>373</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 4 March 1909.

Health of Towns (chaired by Mr Slaney, of the 1833 Select Committee on Public Walks) opined that playgrounds were a medical necessity to enable the children of the poor to play; outside exercise was perceived as an important health benefit.<sup>374</sup> The report castigated a number of large towns for their lack of provision, including Birmingham, Bolton, Hull and Leeds. (Norwich was not included in the committee's sample.) Four years later the competition specification for the three new Manchester parks (Peel Park, Philips Park and Queen Park), won by Joshua Major, included an explicit requirement for playgrounds. These early playgrounds appear unsympathetic to children's needs, 'laid in gravel with substrata of cinders, bordered by a bank of 1 foot, planted with privet'.<sup>375</sup> *The Gardeners Chronicle* criticised Major's layout for employing straight lines in Queens Park. Major retaliated, saying that linear curves and sinuous walks of the sort recommended by Loudon, would be damaged by impetuous youths let out from employment.<sup>376</sup> Although his argument was ridiculed, the exchange draws attention to the tension implicit in the early parks: reconciling active physical activity with sedate rational recreation. By 1859 the Recreation Act had specifically mentioned the importance of land near 'populous places ... for ... playgrounds for poor children'.

Manchester's enthusiasm for such provision does not appear to have percolated through to many other parks created in the Victorian period, although a gymnasium was created at London's Primrose Hill as early as 1847.<sup>377</sup> Playgrounds were rare and, where they did exist, they tended to be a sub-set of the adult park, which itself contained restrictions hardly conducive to children's play, such as the prohibition of ball games or walking on the grass. 'Gymnasia' was a much-used term for playground equipment in the Victorian period and probably derived from the equipment in boys' public schools at the time. The equipment consisted of wooden structures such as horizontal climbing frames with ropes and ladders attached, swings and giant strides – a popular piece of equipment combining a merry-go-round with ropes or chains that children jumped on or off while in motion.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on the Health of Towns; together with the minutes of evidence taken before them, and an Appendix and Index* (1840), 'Playgrounds', 247, accessed at <https://archive.org/details/b24398044/page/246>.

<sup>375</sup> Groves, 'Children's Play Provision', 1.

<sup>376</sup> *Gardener's Chronicle*, 1847, cited by Elliott, 'Play and Sport'.

<sup>377</sup> Elliott, 'Play and Sport', 150.

<sup>378</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 15 August 1946, cited by Groves, 'Children's Play Provision'.

Although there was some overlap between the provision of public sports fields and children's play spaces, a particular area for young children had been a late nineteenth-century concern of the city. In 1891 the Liberal mayor Mr Wild had lamented the lack of recreational space for children in Norwich in a speech advocating the provision of both playgrounds and playing fields.<sup>379</sup> The NPF OSS had identified three recreational priorities for the council at its 1892 AGM: sports grounds, children's play areas and breathing spaces. Both Chapelfield and Gildencroft had play areas, and a number of swings were *in situ* by 1894 (Figure 26). By the twentieth century the Gildencroft had a fully equipped playground (or gymnasium) with swings, strides and parallel bars, in addition to bowls, tennis and boule pitches for adults.<sup>380</sup> Norwich's first dedicated playground was the Jenny Lind playground at Pottergate, a populous area in the west of the city. The playground was a donation from Mr J.J. Colman as a *memento-mori* to his son, Alan Cozens-Hardy-Colman, who had died in 1897. It replaced the original Jenny Lind Infirmary for Sick Children, which transferred to a fine new building in the Unthank Road on land once again donated by J.J. Colman.<sup>381</sup> The playground, which was laid to grass and asphalt and contained strides and swings, was officially opened in 1902.<sup>382</sup> It was entered through a monumental Arts and Crafts pedimented arch recording the dates of the opening and the memorial inscriptions: a daunting play invitation for young children (Figure 27).

### Allotments

Parliamentary enclosures in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century had removed a key source of sustenance for many of the rural poor.<sup>383</sup> In rural areas, Sanitation Authorities had been charged with the oversight of allotments following the 1887 allotments legislation, which was particularly designed to address food poverty in rural areas.<sup>384</sup> However, for most of the nineteenth century allotments were not

<sup>379</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 28 September 1891: 'Account of Speech by the Mayor Mr. Wild'.

<sup>380</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 1903–1908; N/TC 22/1, 'City Engineer's briefing paper', 17 October 1911; N/TC 6/13, *passim*.

<sup>381</sup> Norwich Heritage Centre, Bolingbroke Collection. The original hospital was achieved through the combined efforts of the popular Norwegian opera singer Jenny Lind and her friend Bishop Stanley, with money raised through a public concert.

<sup>382</sup> NRO, N/TC 56/12, 1903; N/TC 22/6, 9 September 1947.

<sup>383</sup> *Report of a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments 1968–6* (Thorpe Report) (London: HMSO, 1969), 1–3.

<sup>384</sup> Allotment Extension Act, 1887 This gave Sanitary Authorities, originally established to promote general public health, the power to purchase land for allotments should six rate payers so request it.

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generally perceived as an urban issue. Towns had been slow to make public allotment provision, with some notable exceptions. Sheffield had provided over a thousand allotments on the urban fringes in the late eighteenth century; Birmingham had a history



**Figure 26.** Swings (Gymnasium) at Chapelfield Gardens (postcard, 1900s)



**Figure 27.** Monumental entrance to Jenny Lind Playground, 1930s (Picture Norfolk)

of ‘guinea gardens’; Nottingham supported the Hunger Hill Gardens, laid out in the mid-nineteenth century and used for both productive and ornamental horticulture.<sup>385</sup> In nineteenth-century Norwich most of the allotments were privately owned, with the possible exception of the early allotments that featured on the terraced site of the castle mound. Railway workers at Trowse were particular beneficiaries, as were the dwellers at the Great Hospital, where twenty-six allotments can be seen on the 1883 Ordnance Survey sheet. The Carrow Road site also featured some twenty allotments, again privately owned and part of the Colman empire.<sup>386</sup> The search for municipal allotment sites was to become a major preoccupation of local government in the early twentieth century.

The provision of allotments had become a key priority for national government long before the definitive 1908 Allotment Act, which consolidated the earlier legislation. The Act was seminal; it boosted the numbers of allotments in urban areas, paved the way for later allotment legislation and is the foundation of contemporary allotment regulation today.<sup>387</sup> The Norwich press was a staunch defender of the importance of allotments, as was J.J. Colman, the Norwich industrialist and philanthropist, who encouraged other landowners to provide allotments for the rural poor.<sup>388</sup> Samuel Hoare, the Norwich Conservative MP in 1891, was castigated by the local Liberal press for equivocating on the subject. Conservative farmers and landowners were reluctant to relinquish land for allotments, unless at extortionate cost to the local authorities. The 1887 Act was dismissed as weak (it gave local authorities the power to provide allotments, rather than a duty to do so) and the newspaper argued that landlords needed to accept the obligation.<sup>389</sup> Local authorities had traditionally been reluctant to intercede in this tricky arena and a patronising 1880s article in *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* debated whether the working classes were capable of the land husbandry involved.<sup>390</sup> Even the radical Chartists were unconvinced of the merits of allotments, interpreting them as a sop, a substitute for fair wages and workers’ rights.<sup>391</sup> A combination of vestigial feudalism, natural conservatism, self-interest and the

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<sup>385</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 138; Hunger Hill Gardens Grade II\*: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001479>.

<sup>386</sup> Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 39.

<sup>387</sup> The 1908 Small Holdings and Allotments Act. See Appendix.

<sup>388</sup> H.C. Colman, *Jeremiah James Colman: A Memoir* (London: Chiswick Press, 1905), ‘Speech on Allotments 1892’, 356.

<sup>389</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 29 September 1891: Editorial.

<sup>390</sup> Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 40.

<sup>391</sup> Willes, *Gardens of the British Working Class*, 264.

presence of landowners on local councils would have contributed to this stasis.

However, by 1909 even the prestigious Royal Horticultural Society had been won over and issued formal guidance for allotment judges.<sup>392</sup>

Once granted legal powers, the Norwich Corporation used them to considerable effect. The oversight of allotments was initially under the aegis of the Housing of the Working Class and Allotments Committee (HWCA), although later it was to transfer to the Parks and Gardens Committee. Between 1903 and 1908 the HWCA was active in identifying suitable sites for allotments: Hellesdon, Lakenham, Earlham Road, Hall Road, Dereham Road, Aylsham Road and Catton Grove were selected and applications invited through public notices, of which the Earlham site generated the greatest interest.<sup>393</sup> In the event 157 allotment plots of twenty rods were provided on the Earlham Road site and 153 on the Dereham Road site.<sup>394</sup>

### **Managing the Parks**

Although the day-to-day management of parks and gardens might be presumed to be the responsibility of officers, councillors played an active role in their oversight. Having taken their time in creating the city's first public parks, councillors became diligent custodians. Managerial concerns were those that cities still face today, such as finance, staffing, theft and petty vandalism. Dog nuisance was reported at both Eaton and Waterloo Parks and was to prove an intractable problem for park-keepers up to the mid-twentieth century, as dogs were frequently allowed to roam the city streets unattended, particularly at night.<sup>395</sup> General 'people nuisance', such as flouting the by-laws or vandalism, was commonly observed and the city agreed to ban intrusive roller skating at Chapelfield Gardens.<sup>396</sup> The local constabulary was regularly despatched to oversee the parks in response to such reports; conveniently, the Watch Committee was under the direct control of the City Corporation. The Gildencroft was subject to numerous bouts of stone throwing over 1903 and 1904 and assaults were also reported for the first time in 1904. Officers were blithely instructed to 'resolve the situation'.<sup>397</sup>

It was not merely the general park users who gave the councillors cause to fret. The behaviour of the caterers, employed to dispense refreshments in the park, was

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<sup>392</sup> RHS Show Handbook, 1909, cited in Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 40.

<sup>393</sup> NRO, N/TC 29/1, *passim*.

<sup>394</sup> Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 49.

<sup>395</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 1 April 1909.

<sup>396</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 1 April 1909.

<sup>397</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 5 November 1903; 7 July 1904.

called into question,<sup>398</sup> and the HWCA also received regular complaints of nuisance at its allotments. Vandalism became such a problem that barbed wire was erected around the boundary to deter miscreants. In a reminder of the close proximity to the countryside, bullocks and rabbits also proved problematic – the Earlham allotments were adjacent to farmland.<sup>399</sup>

Staffing the parks also posed difficulties. Apart from Mr Elphinstone, much of the initial development work on the parks had been undertaken by contractors, tenders being submitted to the committee for approval. By the first decade of the twentieth century Mr Ward, the Superintendent of Parks, was in office and the Corporation had reverted to a direct labour force.<sup>400</sup> With pressures on its budget, the sub-committee was burdened with personnel matters. Salary increments were referred to the committee for decision, with the frequently absent superintendent facing serial rejections to his personal requests. In 1906 the committee eventually relented and Mr Ward secured a rise of five shillings per annum.<sup>401</sup> The council see-sawed between the direct labour model and contracting out its work for most of the pre-war period, which created a precarious working environment for the employees.

Much of the councillors' time was spent on matters horticultural, for the politicians' preoccupation with detail extended to the subject of plant purchase. In 1903 it was agreed to lease a plant nursery in Oak Wall Lane for £20 per annum, which indicates that the city was actively propagating its own plants.<sup>402</sup> The greenhouses were clearly capacious, as later the sub-committee agreed that the city engineer could utilise any spare greenhouse space for the Corporation's school gardens. In 1903 trees, shrubs and plants for the parks, churchyards and streets were ordered at a cost not exceeding £40, a considerable sum at the time. Excess plants were regularly distributed to the Norwich citizenry.<sup>403</sup> When the head gardener asked if it would be possible to purchase his seeds directly, rather than working through the established bureaucracy, the sub-committee complacently replied that 'present practice cannot be improved upon'.<sup>404</sup> Lawn maintenance in the larger parks was managed through the use of sheep, but in a

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<sup>398</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 2 July 1908.

<sup>399</sup> Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 49.

<sup>400</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 3 March 1904.

<sup>401</sup> NRO, N/TC, 6/13, 4 January 1906.

<sup>402</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 5 November 1903.

<sup>403</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 7 June 1906.

<sup>404</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 7 June 1906.

radical move the city agreed to the purchase of a forty-two-inch motor lawn mower.<sup>405</sup> A year later the mower was cancelled, although whether because of a delay in delivery or subsequent enquiries into the effectiveness of the machine is unspecified. The deliberations on the effectiveness of motor mowing did not fade away and by 1907 the issue had resurfaced, again without resolution, when the city engineer reported that a lawn mower under consideration for purchase was deemed unsuitable for Eaton Park.<sup>406</sup>

Tree planting and arboricultural maintenance were frequently mentioned in the development of the early parks and gardens. A large poplar on the north side of Chapelfield Gardens was examined and discovered to be dangerous. The response of the committee was cautious; it was agreed that the tree should be trimmed ‘as far as only absolutely necessary’.<sup>407</sup> The council was not at this stage much influenced by litigation or insurers and it dealt directly with matters of compensation. In 1906 a beech tree in Chapelfield Park damaged a nearby house and the sub-committee immediately agreed compensation with the house owner.<sup>408</sup> Elm trees in the city were occasionally lopped and the resulting firewood was sold, raising revenue of £6.<sup>409</sup> Tree inspections were an early feature of the committee’s role. Following an inspection, street trees in Tombland and Edinburgh Road were pruned and a tree was transplanted to Riverside Road. Some decisions appear quixotic: in 1907 ‘the church’ was asked if it wanted the trees changed in College Road; in Unthank Road it was suggested that existing trees be replaced by acacias and a tree from the Mile End section of the Unthank Road was transplanted to the Mount Pleasant section.<sup>410</sup>

The architect Edward Boardman, mayor in 1906, took a personal interest in trees, raising his concerns regarding the proposal to plant conifers in Chapelfield Gardens. Conifers were particularly susceptible to coal pollution and some were averse to lime-rich soil, so Boardman was well informed. Pollution caused by the burning of coal within the city walls meant that most trees were not expected to thrive and regular tree and shrub replacement was a feature of early urban parks maintenance.<sup>411</sup> On this mayoral intervention the committee was in a quandary: the easy solution was to

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<sup>405</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 5 November 1903.

<sup>406</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 26 July 1907.

<sup>407</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 7 January 1904.

<sup>408</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 2 February 1906.

<sup>409</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 3 December 1903.

<sup>410</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 7 March 1907.

<sup>411</sup> M. Johnston, *Trees in Towns and Cities: A History of British Urban Arboriculture* (Oxford: Windgather Press, 2015), 75.

delegate arbitration to the parks superintendent and the head gardener, who tactfully suggested that such trees could do well, as long as ‘planted correctly’.<sup>412</sup> In 1911 the city committee approved a grand purchase of 500 Corsican pines for Eaton Park at a cost of ten shillings, to be planted around the shelter and pavilion.<sup>413</sup> The statuesque pines (a mix of Scots and Corsican pines) that today enclose the circular rose garden may well be those planted at this early period, well away from city-centre pollution.

Councillors were involved in a wide range of park-related activity: some mundane, such as approving the watering of paths, agreeing the replacement of uniforms or deciding on the rotation of bands; some politically sensitive, such as agreeing entrance charges on the bank holidays when the bands were playing and ruling against jesters and stereoscopic machines.<sup>414</sup> Illuminations were briefly allowed, but discontinued two months later.<sup>415</sup> The influence of the chapel and temperance movement was still in evidence in early twentieth-century Norwich: despite the offer of a free band and the sale of soft drinks, the Anchor Brewery Band was roundly rejected. Refreshments were sold in parks at an early stage and precipitated much debate; concerns about drunkenness and loutish behaviour meant that alcohol was strictly forbidden and fizzy drinks were favoured.<sup>416</sup>

Despite the proscriptions on lights and jesters, the Norwich parks and gardens were lively places in the first decade of the twentieth century. The Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society regularly held their chrysanthemum shows in Chapelfield Gardens. Bunting fluttered, bands played regularly and vocalists sang in the city gardens. The military were accustomed to practising their drill in the park, on Sundays the Cooperative band played sacred music in Chapelfield Gardens, and a collection was approved for the new Jenny Lind hospital on the Unthank Road.<sup>417</sup> The licensed bands had become such a success at Mousehold Heath that the entrepreneurial Electric Tram Company laid on dedicated excursions for the populace. Such commercial nous did not endear itself to the ever-vigilant councillors: the sub-committee promptly requested a donation from the company to underwrite the hire charge; when this was refused the

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<sup>412</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 1 March 1906.

<sup>413</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 2 March 1911.

<sup>414</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 5 May 1904.

<sup>415</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 7 July 1904.

<sup>416</sup> Conway, *Peoples's Parks*, 124.

<sup>417</sup> See NRO, N/TC 6/13, *passim*.

sub-committee, petulantly, cancelled the band.<sup>418</sup> Frugality continued to be the watchword for the Norwich Corporation and its citizens.<sup>419</sup>

Despite the priority the NPF OSS attached to the provision of playing fields, the sub-committee initially took a low-key approach to sports in the parks. Bowls proved to be eminently acceptable, a favourite with the councillors and with the users. Take-up was carefully monitored. In 1904 it was reported that 469 people had made use of the bowling green at the Gildencroft.<sup>420</sup> All the bowls greens were reported as ‘very much used’. Bowls was a highly popular leisure pastime in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>421</sup> Boules (or petanque, as it is referred to in southern France) is a more surprising entry in the list of twentieth-century Norwich pastimes. Very much a Gallic sport, it is not mentioned by Munting in his essay on Norwich recreational pursuits, nor by Bailey or Malcomson in earlier generic works on popular recreation in the parks. Whatever the explanation, it appears that Norwich was unique, or serially misreported.<sup>422</sup> After repeated requests cricket was eventually sanctioned at Waterloo Park, although both sports required a high level of greens maintenance.<sup>423</sup> By 1911 at least four games pitches at Mousehold Heath had been established (Figure 28); contemporary photographs and plans suggest these were for cricket, football and tennis); a boule court, bowling green and tennis court were in operation at Gildencroft, in addition to the playground gymnasium. Waterloo Park possessed bowling greens and two tennis courts in addition to the cricket pitch; Heigham Playing Fields provided bowls and cricket. By 1912 Eaton Park, which hosted the Royal Norfolk Show, offered nine pitches for football, cricket and hockey (on the sheep-maintained grass) and twelve tennis courts as well as three basketball courts and a running track. The Priory Gymnasium gave instruction to almost 1500 gymnasts a year. In addition to the open-air swimming baths and paddling pool at Wensum Park, there was an open-air pool at Lakenham, in the south of the city, created using the same basic method of damming the Yare.<sup>424</sup> Model yacht-racing was a very popular recreational pastime in the country over

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<sup>418</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 4 April 1907.

<sup>419</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 6 December 1907, 395.

<sup>420</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 6 October 1904.

<sup>421</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*. It is possible that the French Huguenot weavers who settled in Norwich at the end of the seventeenth century were responsible for the introduction of boules.

<sup>422</sup> Munting, ‘Sports and Games’; Bailey, *Leisure and Class*; R. Malcomson, *Popular Recreations in English Society 1700–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>423</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 1 March 1906.

<sup>424</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/36, Report by A.E. Collins, M. Inst (City Engineer) presented to the first meeting of the Parks and Gardens Committee (NRO, N/TC 22/1), 5 December 1911.

the turn of the century and flourished in Norwich. The city lacked a purpose-built public facility and the model yacht aficionados were forced to use the rivers. This state of affairs meant that by the close of 1908 the Corporation had received a petition that attracted over 7500 signatures in support of a Council-constructed model yacht pond.<sup>425</sup>



**Figure 28.** Sports field, Mousehold Heath (postcard, 1900s)

A particular feature of the Norwich parks were the school gardens, which continued to flourish up to the Second World War. By 1911 three parks, Waterloo, Wensum and Chapelfield Gardens, had a portion fenced off for children to garden, an educational activity promoted at the 1891 inaugural Open Spaces Society meeting.<sup>426</sup> In Waterloo Park a school garden was allocated to the nearby Angel Road Elementary schoolchildren, who made it ‘a beautiful spot’. Likewise, the children of Crooks Place School had been granted a slice of Chapelfield Gardens. Under imaginative teacherly guidance, children had created a small pond and planted it with water plants.<sup>427</sup> The provision of children’s gardens is unusual and the glasshouses were not only used to

<sup>425</sup> NRO, N/TC 1, Town Clerk, ‘Annual Report to Council’, 17 June 1913.

<sup>426</sup> See the 1870 Elementary Education Act, which offered a narrow 3Rs curriculum up to the age of 11; the 1899 Board of Education Act, which raised the school leaving age to 12; the 1902 Education Act, which introduced local education authorities and secondary education schools, and paved the way for a broader subject-based secondary curriculum modelled on the established sector.

<sup>427</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 5 December 1911.

produce plants for the parks and gardens but monies were regularly allocated for the purchase of plants for the schoolchildren gardeners.

Leisure provision in Norwich had improved significantly since the city's first parks had been opened. By 1911 it was evident that the recreational estate necessitated a more direct oversight than the assorted working parties and subcommittees that had been in place since the 1860s, when the first Peoples Park Committee was established. In 1910 the 'public gardens of Chapelfield Gardens, Castle Gardens, Waterloo Park and Eaton Park' were promoted in a *Guide to Norwich* and the following year the road plans for North Park and South Park Avenues were approved, creating greater access to Eaton Park for members of the public.<sup>428</sup> Following several staffing complaints from Mr Ward, the city engineer undertook a full investigation and reported to the city committee that the complaints had been exaggerated and misleading. It is possible that financial mismanagement, or worse, might have been suspected, for at that point the council decided that the overall costs of the parks and gardens should be subject to a more rigorous scrutiny.<sup>429</sup> These concerns, coupled with the rapid expansion in recreational provision, highlighted the need for a more effective and accountable structure for oversight of the parks.

In a significant move, the Norwich Corporation approved a new standing committee for parks and gardens, which would administer its own budget, possess decision-making powers and report directly to the council. The decision underlined the considerable developments that had taken place in Norwich since 1891 when the inaugural meeting of the NPFOS had sought to make the provision of parks and gardens a more prominent item on the city's agenda. The establishment of the new committee highlighted the importance of parks and gardens to Norwich and was an explicit expression of civic pride in the parks estate.<sup>430</sup>

### **The Parks and Gardens Committee**

The newly constituted Parks and Gardens Committee had its inaugural meeting on 5 December 1911, with Sir Eustace Gurney, scion of the eminent banking family, as its first chairman. The city engineer, Arthur Collins, provided a briefing paper to the

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<sup>428</sup> Norfolk Heritage Centre, ref. N 942615: *Guide to Norwich* (Jarrols).

<sup>429</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/13, 18 June 1911.

<sup>430</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 'A special standing committee ... to have the care and management of the open spaces, public parks, gardens and pleasure grounds of the Council including the churchyards', 17 October 1911.

councillors, summarising their green-space responsibilities.<sup>431</sup> Twenty years after the NPFOS had deplored the lack of recreational space in Norwich the situation had been transformed, largely through the contribution of the Society. Norwich now boasted a parks portfolio. Churchyard gardens numbered eleven; ‘parks, gardens and open spaces’ had increased to sixteen, an exaggerated total as the castle grounds were listed separately as Castle Gardens, Castle Walks and Castle Museum Gardens, suggesting a touch of aggrandisement. Villa Gardens and Heigham Playing Fields were both included, as were small gardens close to Wensum Park, variously described as Wingate and Greenhill Gardens. Mousehold Heath brought the legitimate park total to fifteen. In addition, there were twelve city shrubberies and ‘a very large number’ of street trees. The total area covered 360 acres. The new committee assumed accountability for the problematic parks superintendent and a direct work force of thirty-seven gardening and forestry staff, including a nurseryman, boy gardeners, drivers, labourers and temporary staff, together with three horses and a flock of sheep, to tend its green acreage. The latter were used to maintain the grass at Eaton Park until the Second World War, although the hard-pressed city engineer was charged with their feeding.<sup>432</sup>

Swimming baths also came under the aegis of the Parks Committee, partly because of their location in parks and partly because of their recreational importance. The school open spaces and games fields remained under the control of the Education Committee, another important standing committee. This division of labour would eventually lead to collegial tensions. It is clear from the briefing paper and the meetings that the Norwich Corporation perceived both street-tree planting and shrubberies as important in their own right, suggesting an intrinsic interest in the horticultural components of green space and their importance to the appearance of the city. A further responsibility was cabmen’s shelters. As their name suggests, these attractive iron structures provided shelter and were originally commercial units. The cabmen had presented them to the city in 1891.<sup>433</sup> By 1911 they numbered five and were stationed at prime points in the city, including St Giles Gate on the western wall entrance, Tombland (Figure 29) and the busy Market Square; they were seen as playing a role in the beautification of the City as well as offering a functional service. Plants were made regularly available to the cabmen, who were remunerated for the maintenance of floral tubs and baskets decorating the shelters.

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<sup>431</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 5 December 1911.

<sup>432</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 17 October 1911.

<sup>433</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/36, Norwich City Council, 9 November 1891.



**Figure 29.** Cabman's Shelter, Tombland (Picture Norfolk)

Given the problematic personnel record of the parks superintendent, the city engineer had wisely allocated the new committee an extra officer to support its endeavours. Assistant engineer K.A. Winfield was assigned to take responsibility for the oversight of the parks and gardens, consolidating the convention of placing parks within the engineer's department.<sup>434</sup> The new committee found itself responsible for a staffing complement that comprised not only gardeners but caretakers, swimming bath attendants (male and female for the sake of propriety) and gym instructors, together with a parks superintendent who remained absent on sick leave for the first few months of the committee's life. There were also two 'semi-compassionate men': the transferred epithet indicates that they were employed on compassionate terms, were disabled in some way and therefore unable to fulfil the full range of recreational work, which indicates that staff welfare was an occasional consideration. The overall wage bill amounted to £1900 per annum and hours appeared to be variable, so that gardeners worked a gruelling twelve-hour day in the summer months and less in the winter.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 5 December 1911.

<sup>435</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 5 December 1911.



**Figure 30.** Bedding, Chapelfield Gardens, 1912 (Picture Norfolk)

The size of the Corporation's weekly and annual wages bill generated considerable heart-searching, although at £36 7s 6d weekly it appears modest.<sup>436</sup> A year later, in 1912, just as Mr Winfield decided to exchange his customary mode of transport, Jack the horse, for a bicycle, the council, once again, decided to bring to an end the employment of a direct labour workforce and decreed that only those employed in the construction, repair, sweeping and maintenance of street roads and yards would be exempt from this directive. Whether the contracts of the thirty-seven recreational employees were terminated is unclear.<sup>437</sup>

The new chairman took his duties seriously and, as befitted the status of the new committee, a number of site visits were made to ensure that decisions were made on an informed basis, a convention that continued for many years. One of the first tasks was bureaucratic but essential: to draw up rules for the use of the city's games pitches, playgrounds, swimming baths, model yacht sailing and gymnasiums. These specified

<sup>436</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, Chief Engineers Paper, 5 December 1911.

<sup>437</sup> NRO, N/TC, 22/1, 11 June 1912.

time slots and booking times and made it clear that users were expected to conform to an appropriate standard of behaviour when playing on the football and cricket pitches. This exercise in rational recreation undoubtedly banished youthful high jinks but was perceived as contributing to a greater good.

The new committee's *modus operandi* continued much as before but with increased dynamism. Enthusiasm for increasing the parks estate did not abate but frugality continued to be the watchword. The opportunistic offer of four extra acres adjoining Woodlands Park for the extortionate price of £2000 was roundly rejected. There was considerable debate on the siting of a new greenhouse, essential for plant propagation; some rationalisation of the city's sites had taken place and the heated greenhouse at Oak Wall was no longer deemed essential to requirements. The officer proposal of a nursery bed at Eaton Park was dismissed and in the event it was agreed to house the new greenhouse at Chapelfield, an idiosyncratic decision given its small size and the popularity of the location. However, its proximity to the city's guildhall and other Corporation offices meant that councillors could monitor the work very easily. The upkeep of Chapelfield was deemed too costly and gardeners were instructed to substitute perennial plants for the annual bedding cycle.<sup>438</sup> They were also informed they would do better to purchase new trees and shrubs and grow on the young plants at the Waterloo Park nursery, rather than propagate at source. Whether this proved more economical or not, such debate suggests a city that was fully engaged in the craft of horticulture and a Corporation in which civic pride in its green spaces was becoming manifest (Figure 30).

### **Distress and Job Creation**

Unemployment was a major concern for Norwich during this period and, despite the thriving local economy, the Distress Committee met regularly to consider ways of alleviating poverty. Expressions of concern were formally raised by Labour's Councillor Smith at a full council meeting in June 1908, when he proposed that the council should devise job creation schemes to provide employment for those destitute and without work.<sup>439</sup> The Distress Committee enquired, not unreasonably, if the 'distressed' could undertake work on park maintenance. The Parks and Gardens Committee replied, in proprietary mode, that the park work required skilled

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<sup>438</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 17 June 1913.

<sup>439</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/52, Council, 16 June 1908.

maintenance and was therefore inappropriate employment for unskilled men. Unemployment was pursued further by Councillor Moore in September the same year, together with a novel proposal that the council should ‘brainstorm’ some work projects.<sup>440</sup> Although the brainstorming tactic was not used, the Tory-led council was finally persuaded to act on the schemes. The town clerk reported back to the October meeting with thirteen costed options in which work on the city’s green spaces predominated, with an estimated expenditure of £9000. The proposals included work on the construction of a children’s bathing pond at Wensum Park; more prosaically, ‘couch grass removal’ at Eaton, Waterloo and Gildencroft Parks; and cutting of ‘big furze’ at Mousehold Heath.<sup>441</sup>

The city engineer, Arthur Collins, was charged with compiling the list and was sufficiently inspired to insert the creation of an ‘ornamental park’ into the proposals. Eaton Park was clearly the intended site, as Collins also submitted detailed plans for a grand model yacht-pond.<sup>442</sup> The earlier petition had achieved a result. The proposed pond measured  $165 \times 62\frac{1}{2}$  yards, closely approximating the measurements of the eventual model boating lake included in the 1926 Sandys-Winsch design for Eaton Park.<sup>443</sup> By the close of 1908 half of the Collins’ schemes had been approved: the ornamental park featured on the agreed list, along with tree planting at Eaton, playgrounds on Mousehold Heath and allotments at Angel Road. There was a cursory nod to sanitation matters with the inclusion of street sweeping, traditionally a stalwart of work creation schemes.<sup>444</sup> It is surprising, given the focus on sanitation and the basic labouring activity usually involved in job creation schemes, that park initiatives were those finally selected, but it suggests that the creation of green space was rising in the Corporation’s list of priorities, that the parks and gardens were in the ascendancy and that the Council had ambitions to enhance the quality of its land holding.

## Conclusion

All the green spaces described in this chapter were consistently referred to as ‘parks’ at an early stage by the councillors, although in the years prior to the First World War Waterloo, Eaton, Heigham and Wensum Parks bore little resemblance to the stylish

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<sup>440</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/52, 15 September 1908.

<sup>441</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/ 52, 20 October 1908.

<sup>442</sup> A year earlier, two separate plans for such ponds had been submitted for both Wensum and Mousehold Parks; both had been rejected. NRO, N/TC 6/13, 26 July 1907.

<sup>443</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/52, 1908, p. 300.

<sup>444</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/52, p. 305.

ornamental parks they became in their twentieth-century heyday, between the wars. Nevertheless, ornamental features were gradually insinuated into the grounds at an early stage. Chapelfield Gardens retained its ranking as the city's premier park, its proximity to the Guildhall making it an important civic cynosure (Figure 31). It remained a confection of formal tree-lined avenues, well-maintained lawns, shrubberies, feature trees and elaborate flower beds, very much in the high Victorian style. The bandstand with its extensive seating, the serpentine pathways, the extraordinary iron pagoda and the drill hall created vistas and a sense of occasion. There were regular concerts and a rota of bands. None of the other city parks in the first decade of the twentieth century could compare with Chapelfield. Yet all contained at least some of the characteristics associated with a designed landscape: enclosure, ground levelling, boundary marking and tree planting, shelters, pavilions, bandstands and drinking fountains. Mousehold Heath, the second of the Norwich parks, contained all of these features coupled with regular concerts, which were extremely popular with the city. Although the model boating lake was not implemented before the war, the proposal clearly resonated with the councillors. It was debated on a number of occasions and remained on the political agenda until its realisation in the 1920s.<sup>445</sup> The proposal for the lake, the engineer's



**Figure 31.** Chapelfield Gardens, 1900s gathering (Picture Norfolk)

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<sup>445</sup> Boating lakes and model yacht racing appear to have started at the end of the Victorian period and were very popular in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Eaton Society still exists.

ambition to create another ornamental park and the priority given to parks in work creation schemes all suggest an aspirational Corporation, actively engaged in green-space creation and utilising job-creation schemes to refine and develop their recreational portfolio.

The city's success over two decades in expanding its green space from a low baseline to a respectable portfolio of public green space was facilitated by the enterprising efforts of the NPF OSS. The council exploited the connection to the full, in what could be considered an early example of a not-for-profit, public/private partnership, working for the benefit of the people of Norwich. The enthusiasm of the council, the society and the public for the nascent green spaces successfully challenges the view that Norwich achieved little of note in parks and gardens until after the First World War.<sup>446</sup> In the years following the establishment of the NPF OSS, the society appeared to undergo a sea-change. In 1891 its stated priority was the 'provision of playing fields'; by 1898 it had expanded its mission to that of an early heritage or civic society. Correspondence between its chairman, Mr E. Wild, and the librarian of the city's namesake, Norwich, Connecticut, reveals that in 1898 the society's mission was for a 'more widespread appreciation of our ancient and ... unique city'.<sup>447</sup> This expansion would explain its endeavours in mediating land for parks and transforming church graveyards into gardens: it had moved from sports-ground advocate to partner; insiders rather than outsiders.

In August 1912, after prolonged rain, the Wensum broke its banks and devastated the city and its inhabitants. Over 15,000 people were directly affected, many losing their homes.<sup>448</sup> The damage to Wensum Park is unminuted, but over 230 loads of soil were washed away from the Castle Gardens. Undeterred, the Parks and Gardens Committee continued with an optimistic programme of horticultural improvements, allocating £175 to the 1.346-acre Villa Gardens in Martineau Lane, near the River Yare, and approving shrub planting in the churchyards and street-tree planting in the suburbs.<sup>449</sup> A new slide was agreed for Chapelfield Gardens and a sand-pit for the Gildencroft.<sup>450</sup> The committees had received regular requests from the military for the use of the city's

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<sup>446</sup> Anderson, *The Captain*. 'At the time of his appointment (Sandys-Winch), the city possessed only Chapelfield gardens, the Gildencroft, Sewell Park and one or two small playgrounds' (p. 15); 'the care of what few gardens the City then possessed' (in 1919) (p. 16).

<sup>447</sup> *Norfolk Chronicle and Norwich Gazette*, 2 July 1898: Letters, 2.

<sup>448</sup> NRO, City of Norwich, Illustrated Record of the Great Flood of August 1912 (Roberts and Co.).

<sup>449</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 10 September, 12 November 1912.

<sup>450</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 9 September 1913.

parks for artillery practice and drill training, to which it invariably acquiesced. In 1912 the War Office requested the extension of the Mousehold Heath rifle range for further training.<sup>451</sup> Although the proposal was not implemented on the grounds of public safety, it was a prescient omen. The events of 1914–18 may not have been anticipated, but they were soon to alter everything. Civic pride in the developing parks and gardens would be displaced by more pressing concerns.

**Figure 32.** Norwich parks by 1911 (originally in colour)



<sup>451</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 14 May 1912.

**Trees to Trenches, 1914–1919**

The royal assassinations in Sarajevo in June 1914 featured prominently in the British press and the prospect of war preoccupied the nation over the summer of 1914. The House of Commons met twice on 3 August: war was finally declared the following day. *The Times* reported that ‘the position in Europe is one of breathless anticipation of the beginning of hostilities on a large scale’, and, by the second week of August, almost all of the major European powers, with the exception of Italy, were actively engaged.<sup>452</sup> A year later H.H. Asquith’s Liberal government formed a coalition government with the Conservatives, and in December 1916 David Lloyd George replaced Asquith as prime minister, with the support of Labour, but with a deeply divided Liberal Party.<sup>453</sup>

By 1914 the Norwich Corporation had increased its left-wing representation to six councillors and the city had its first Labour MP, George Roberts, partly achieved by a tactical alliance with the larger Liberal group. Labour experienced particular difficulty in recruiting council candidates because of their reliance on day-time employment. Although the Independent Labour Party (ILP) opposed participation in the war, Robert’s personal stance reflected the overwhelming national support for the war, sedulously fostered by the press.<sup>454</sup> The first official debate came a month later, on the subject of War Loans, the government’s money-raising initiative.<sup>455</sup> At first, the Finance Committee was unpersuaded. It argued, prudently, that there should be a *quid pro quo*: a financial subsidy to enable further labour schemes for the unemployed. Eventually, the council resolved not to make the purchase, although later it was to become an enthusiastic promoter.<sup>456</sup> The corporation did not lack a sense of public duty. In October 1914 it agreed on a variation in its employment scheme to ensure that all conscripted or enlisted employees should have their wages made up to their full salary for the duration of the war, together with a guarantee of reinstatement on discharge. The manufacturers Colman’s made the same commitment. It is unlikely that the councillors, or the nation, expected to carry this financial responsibility for over four years.<sup>457</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> *The Times*, 4 August 1914, 4; J.-J. Becker and G. Krumeic, ‘1914: Outbreak’, in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>453</sup> *The Times*, 8 December 1916: ‘Mr. Asquith Resigns, December, 1, 1916’ and ‘Mr. D.L. George in Office’.

<sup>454</sup> Cherry, *Doing Different?* Chapter 7 ‘Labour Representation, 1903–1914’.

<sup>455</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/57, 15 September 1914. War loans were promoted in both world wars.

<sup>456</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/15, 3 June 1915.

<sup>457</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/57, 20 October 1914.

Towards the end of September 1914 the local press reported that troops were to be billeted in Norfolk and that the county had already suffered seven casualties from the war.<sup>458</sup> The following day the same paper reassuringly carried a large advertisement by Daniels Nursery recommending autumn planting of roses and fruit trees.<sup>459</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, by contrast, published a poignant letter from the celebrated French nurseryman, M Emile Lemoine of Nancy, which detailed 'death and destruction' on his doorstep.<sup>460</sup> Military recruitment became a highly visible matter, both nationally and locally (Figure 33). In Norwich, recruitment took place in the Market Square and conscripts were marched through the city in their civilian dress prior to having their hair shaved to the requisite length outside the guildhall.<sup>461</sup> It would have been difficult for young men to resist the national mood of optimistic euphoria and fervent patriotism. The effect on the corporation's workforce was soon to become evident.

### **Parks and Gardens**

In December 1914 an esplanade park in Scarborough inadvertently experienced the effects of the war. The eastern seaboard was bombarded by the German navy and fourteen people were killed, including a young child.<sup>462</sup> It was to provide a chilling foretaste of the indiscriminate effects of war on people and places. The coastal resort of Great Yarmouth in Norfolk suffered a similar attack and in September 1916 Nottingham's parks became the target of a Zeppelin raid.<sup>463</sup> Whether the sites were selected intentionally to undermine morale is moot. Given the size of the airships – approximately that of an ocean liner – and the pilots' poor visibility, chance seems the most likely explanation. In one of the last aerial bombardments of the war, on the night of 19 May 1918, Regent's Park sustained extensive damage from two successful bomb strikes.<sup>464</sup> At the outbreak of the war urban parks continued to be used for gentle recreation or sporting activity and in some urban areas, particularly London, visits to

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<sup>458</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 25 September 1914, 8.

<sup>459</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 September 1914, 9.

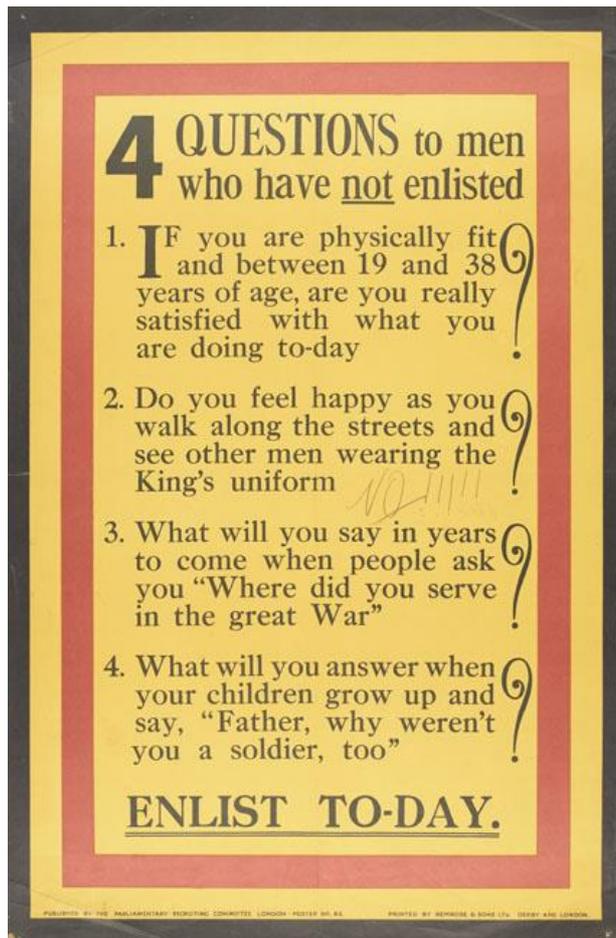
<sup>460</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 31 October 1914.

<sup>461</sup> Norfolk Heritage Centre, Photographic Collection World War I Photographs.

<sup>462</sup> P. Elliott, 'What happened to our Urban Parks as a result of the war?', paper presented at Garden Museum Conference: Memorial Landscapes of the First World War, 8 November 2014; [historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/first-world-war-home-front/what-we-already-know/sea/scarborough-bombardment-1914](http://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/first-world-war-home-front/what-we-already-know/sea/scarborough-bombardment-1914).

<sup>463</sup> Elliot, 'Urban Parks'; <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/airship-attacks-england-first-world-war/>.

<sup>464</sup> Seifalian, 'London's Royal Parks', 125.



**Figure 33.** World War I recruitment poster, 1915, Imperial War Museum

parks were becoming more popular for women, children and the elderly.<sup>465</sup> Before long, however, the government found itself in urgent need of accommodation to house those instrumental in directing the war effort, and London parks hosted numerous new structures designed to meet the exigencies of recruitment and administration. The wildfowl lake in St James's Park was drained to house the Admiralty, Richmond Park acquired a bombing instruction school and Kensington Gardens became home to a camouflage training centre. Regent's Park was particularly affected. It was earmarked soon after the declaration of war and ceded almost a tenth of its land for a military post office.<sup>466</sup> Although Seifalian states that Hyde Park alone was spared, a 1915 photograph reveals that it was used regularly by the military for manoeuvres (Figure 34).<sup>467</sup>

The landscape was evoked to underline the importance of the war effort with a recruitment poster that featured a soldier pointing to an idyllic backcloth of cottages and

<sup>465</sup> Elliot, 'Urban Parks'.

<sup>466</sup> Seifalian, 'London's Royal Parks', 118.

<sup>467</sup> Fordham et al., *Parks, Our Shared Heritage*, 133.



**Figure 34.** Army manoeuvres in Hyde Park, 1915 (Fordham et al., *Parks, Our Shared Heritage*)

gardens in a bucolic setting. The wording was explicit: ‘Your Country’s Call: Isn’t this worth fighting for? Enlist Now’.<sup>468</sup> Even C.P. Scott, the first editor of the left-leaning *Manchester Guardian*, maintained the country diary column during the war because he considered it invaluable for morale.<sup>469</sup> For many soldiers, a public park was likely to be one of their last memories of home, albeit while drilling and practising manoeuvres. ‘Send me sweet-peas’, pleaded a letter from a German internment camp, revealing the inmates’ desire to stay in touch with normality, as well as the therapeutic properties of gardening.<sup>470</sup> At Ruhleben, prisoners gardened and mounted flower shows and, when

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<sup>468</sup> 1915 Parliamentary Recruiting Committee poster, featured in K. Grieves and J. White, ‘Useful War Memorials, Landscape Preservations and Public Access to the English Countryside: Fitting Tributes to the Fallen of the Great War’, *Garden History* 42.Supp. 1 (2014), 20.

<sup>469</sup> Grieves and White, ‘Useful War Memorials’.

<sup>470</sup> R. Clark, ‘Gardens and Gardening in the experience of the 1st World War’, paper presented at Garden History Conference: Memorial Landscapes of the First World War, 8 November 2014; J. Lewis-Stempel, *Where Poppies Blow* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2017), Chapter V ‘The Bloom of Life’.

they were finally repatriated, continued to garden in hospital.<sup>471</sup> As early as 1915, *The Times* celebrated the ‘innocent pleasure’ of the British soldier planting primroses on his dug-out, interpreting it as a quality synonymous with Englishness and intrinsically alien to the German soldier.<sup>472</sup> The architect Clough Williams-Ellis, writing retrospectively, and often sceptically, about the Great War, said that ‘we believed we fought better ... if we had an England worth preserving.’<sup>473</sup>

In this heady atmosphere of public sacrifice, it was generally accepted that public parks and gardens were fitting locations for use by the military and for food cultivation. Begonias and pelargoniums gave way to potatoes and cabbages. By 1917 Nottingham’s parks, playing fields and the grounds of the Bagthorpe Military Hospital provided more than 100 acres for the creation of allotments.<sup>474</sup> The Pavilion Gardens in Buxton, Derbyshire, with its ornamental Serpentine Walk, was used by the Royal Engineers to practise building pontoons and bridges.<sup>475</sup> The military takeover of the peoples’ parks did not completely escape criticism, but most reservations were expressed later, as the war took its toll on life, and the optimistic mood of the earlier war years declined. At the war’s outbreak almost a quarter of Regents Park was restricted to the general public because of occupation by private owners and societies and the gradual military appropriation of the park compounded the problem. James Boyton, the Conservative MP for Marylebone East, was moved to deplore the depredations of Regent’s Park, pleading, ‘The amenities of the park have been completely destroyed ... do not visit all the sins upon one particular park and upon my constituents.’<sup>476</sup>

As food shortages became more acute, so did people’s ingenuity: a *Pathe News* item in 1917 depicts people fishing the ornamental lakes in Windsor Park for food.<sup>477</sup> Carrier pigeons, essential for the transmission of information during the war, became another food casualty. The government resorted to punitive penalties, with a £5 reward

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<sup>471</sup> S. Barnard, ‘Planting the Seed of Horticulture at Ruhleben Internment Camp, near Berlin, Germany, 1914–18’, *Garden History* 42.Supp. 1 (2014).

<sup>472</sup> *The Times*, 5 April 1915: ‘Gardening at the Front’, 9.

<sup>473</sup> Clough Williams-Ellis, *England and the Octopus* (London: Richard Clay and Sons, 1928), 20.

<sup>474</sup> BBC, ‘World War I At Home’, accessed at <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/england/ww1/bbc-world-war-one-at-home.pdf>.

<sup>475</sup> BBC World War I At Home, WWI postcard ‘Building Buxton Bridge’, courtesy of R. Farman, 30 July 2014, accessed at <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/england/ww1/bbc-world-war-one-at-home.pdf>; Pavilion Gardens, Buxton Grade II\*: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000675>.

<sup>476</sup> Seifalian, ‘London’s Royal Parks’, 116, 118.

<sup>477</sup> <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/netting-the-kings-lake>.

for information leading to prosecution and the threat of two years' imprisonment and hard labour.<sup>478</sup> Sparrows were deemed major food predators and on allotments their poisoning was officially encouraged.<sup>479</sup>

### **War-time in the Norwich Parks, 1914–1916**

Initially, the prospect of war appeared to have minimal impact on the customary civic duties of the Parks and Gardens Committee. The popularity of the Norwich parks over the summer of 1914 had reached its apogee. A musical fete at Chapelfield had attracted over 35,000 people, an extraordinary number given that the population of the city was only 110,000.<sup>480</sup> The Priory Gymnasium had been recently refurbished to provide dressing rooms, the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association had held its grand summer show at Eaton Park and Villa Gardens in Martineau Lane had been allocated £175 for 'improvements.'<sup>481</sup> Churchyards at St Andrew in St Andrew's Street, St Gregory in St Benedict's Street, St Swithin in Pottergate and St Edmund at Fishergate, in the heart of the city, had recently been added to the Parks and Gardens estate, bringing the churchyard gardens to a total of fifteen. There were plans to improve St Gregory's and transform St Edmunds into a 'pleasant garden', including the erection of 'unclimbable' wrought iron fencing to deter miscreants.<sup>482</sup> These garden additions ensured that almost all parts of the city had access to a park or garden, however small. Finally, Arthur Collins' long-term plan for developing Eaton Park had been approved and by December a sketch for a new walkway progressing up to the pavilion was agreed.<sup>483</sup>

The new committee had established an important niche among the more traditional council committees, such as the Markets Committee and the Finance Committee. Despite earlier complaints, Mr Ward remained in place, working alongside the assistant engineer, Mr Winfield, two-thirds of whose time was allocated to the Parks Committee. Both men monitored the sites and supervised the gardeners and park-keepers. Mr Winfield had proved a success in his deployment to the Parks Committee and a salary upgrade was recommended. Mr Ward had been appointed in 1902 with a rent-free house and a salary of £107, but for some time had found it difficult to

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<sup>478</sup> Defence of the Realm Regulation 21A (Shooting Homing Pigeons), cited by Lewis-Stempel, *Poppies*, 76.

<sup>479</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 4 April 1917: War Notice.

<sup>480</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/57, 15 June 1914, 'Annual report of the Parks and Gardens Committee'.

<sup>481</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/57, 21 April; 19 May 1914.

<sup>482</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/57, 17 March 1914.

<sup>483</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 10 October, 8 December 1914.

discharge fully his responsibilities. He was severely incapacitated and unable to walk, and his allocated pony and trap was an additional expense (Figure 35). The practical Mr Collins recommended to the ambitious new Parks Committee that a replacement, able to ride a motorbike, would be more cost effective.<sup>484</sup>

However, as the months passed, the effects of the war on the city, particularly in the larger parks, could not have escaped the notice of Norwich residents. Troops were initially billeted in St Andrews and Blackfriars Halls (despite their recognition as ancient monuments by the Commissioner for Works); the 5th Bedfordshire Regiment occupied stables in Tombland.<sup>485</sup> Applications to use the parks for military practice snowballed and the Parks and Gardens Committee readily acquiesced to numerous requests, including that to reopen a former rifle range at Mousehold Heath for military target practice. The military authorities appear to have appreciated the folly of this particular initiative; the park was well used by the local populace and the agreement was not initially enacted.<sup>486</sup> By the autumn of 1915 the Norfolk Regiment and the Anglian Field Artillery were regularly tramping the paths of Chapelfield; the East Anglian Royal Engineers East were drilling in Eaton Park; Blackfriars Hall and Priory



**Figure 35.** Parks superintendent James Ward, with pony and trap (Picture Norfolk)

<sup>484</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 21 July 1914.

<sup>485</sup> NRO, N/TC 6/15, March–June 1915, *passim*.

<sup>486</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 10 October 1914.

Gymnasium (which also operated as a playground) were given over to the military, with the agreement that children should be excluded from the yard; the 4th Northamptonshire Regiment was using Waterloo Park and the Norfolk Division of Royal Engineers had parked 300 vehicles, tents and horses on Heigham Playing Fields. The Royal Engineers were granted permission to erect a shed for storage at Eaton Park and St James Hollow, a former gravel and chalk pit on Mousehold Heath, was redeployed by the Norfolk Volunteer Force for a miniature rifle range. The former Cavalry Drill Ground on an unenclosed part of the heath was transformed into an airfield for the Royal Flying Corps.<sup>487</sup> The long-standing children's playground in Chapelfield was no longer sacrosanct, as the army was allowed to use it for storage facilities and the military was allowed free use of the popular swimming baths.<sup>488</sup> The parks had been commandeered by the military with little or no resistance from the Parks and Gardens Committee, which, in common with the national mood of sacrifice, held it to be their patriotic duty.

The effects of enlistment took their toll on the council's staffing complement. The government's rhetoric had a persuasive effect on the younger men who formed part of the horticultural team. The *coup de grace* came in April 1915, when the estimable Mr Winfield asked permission to enlist.<sup>489</sup> By September the number of workers within the horticultural department had plummeted from forty to twenty-eight, partly as a result of council policy. Subsequently, it was decided that the parks and gardens staff could manage with even fewer personnel, and a target of twenty was set by the city engineer.<sup>490</sup> By the close of 1915, all men of military age were ruthlessly marked for immediate council discharge, whether they wished to enlist or not, on the basis that they had a choice of alternative employment in war service. The elderly swanherd who maintained the swans on the Wensum, close by the Bishop's Palace, was also included on the Robespierrian list, despite his age and apparent frailty. He was later reinstated – whether from human or avian solicitude is unclear.<sup>491</sup> Enlistment was seen as a moral duty: resources, whether financial or human, were directed towards the war effort and the city policy was one of civic compliance.<sup>492</sup> However, when Sir Eustace Gurney, a

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<sup>487</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, February–June 1915, passim.

<sup>488</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 8 June 1915.

<sup>489</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 13 April 1915.

<sup>490</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 14 September 1915.

<sup>491</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 14 September–12 October 1915.

<sup>492</sup> In *Akenfield* (London: Penguin Books, 2005) R. Blythe describes young agricultural workers whose working conditions were such that joining up appeared a far more attractive option than farm labouring.

former mayor, a member of the eminent banking family and chairman of the Parks and Gardens Committee, received his conscription notice towards the end of the war, the council resolved to appeal: this was successfully accomplished and Sir Eustace gained exemption from conscription.<sup>493</sup>

It was not only the staffing that suffered: finances were also affected. In 1915 the city council established a special committee with responsibility for effecting cuts in expenditure ‘in non-essential areas’.<sup>494</sup> Public open space was deemed a prime candidate, and the park bedding schemes were seized on as an area for retrenchment. Further investigation discovered that immediate cessation was futile. The department’s horticultural expertise was such that the corporation glasshouses already contained thousands of young plants in readiness for the 1916 season (‘five thousand geraniums, two thousand begonias, a very large number of wallflowers’) and the floral displays were safeguarded for a further year.<sup>495</sup> A number of projects were successfully cancelled, including programmed work on Mousehold Heath and Wensum Park, repairs to Waterloo Park and the approved work at Eaton Park. The Parks and Gardens Committee revealed some ingenuity when it permitted the 4th Provisional Battery and Armaments Column to use Waterloo Park; it attached a clause to the agreement making the column responsible for making good the long-standing problems with the park’s drainage.<sup>496</sup> Despite the ease with which the committee sanctioned military use of the parks, it proved to be a hard taskmaster in drawing up leases and imposing compensation payments for subsequent damage. The parks superintendent’s telephone was removed as part of the austerity programme and, more significantly, gravediggers and caretakers were dismissed. As the war progressed the committee became increasingly assertive in all its negotiations; it had initially allowed some limited musical activity to take place in the parks, but by 1916 refused to countenance any financial contributions to the bands, as had been the custom pre-war.<sup>497</sup> The *impasse* continued for well over a year, but the committee’s perseverance eventually proved successful when the band of the Royal Artillery played *pro bono* in Chapelfield Gardens and Mousehold Heath on 19 July 1917. In an outbreak of exceptional conviviality, and

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<sup>493</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 27 September 1918.

<sup>494</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 8 June 1915.

<sup>495</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 14 September 1915.

<sup>496</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 13 April 1915.

<sup>497</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 5 May 1916.

possibly relief, refreshments were provided afterwards.<sup>498</sup> As a result of the imposed reduction in horticultural activity, the Parks and Gardens Committee meetings became increasingly sporadic. By 1916 members who had previously met monthly, interspersed with regular site visits, were reduced to quarterly meetings and had largely delegated their overseeing of the city's parks to the council officers. In resignation at their changed fortunes, the previously dynamic committee was on the verge of reducing meetings to twice yearly when the government was forced to introduce radical emergency measures that were to have profound implications for local authorities.

### **Food Production and Allotments, 1916–1918**

Food production had proved a conundrum for successive administrations in war and peacetime. At the outbreak of war almost two-thirds of the country's wheat and flour had been imported for a decade, and food blockades were inevitable.<sup>499</sup> The potato situation was deemed so parlous that hotels were instructed to restrict servings to customers, although the government decided that formal rationing was unnecessary and urged the public to reduce its intake of staple foodstuffs such as meat, sugar and tea through voluntary (and largely unsuccessful) restrictions.<sup>500</sup> The issue dominated the pages of *The Times* over the war years. As late as May 1916, parliament and the nation were still being reassured that 'with judicious economy in consumption ... there need be no alarm as to starvation in this country.'<sup>501</sup> Four months later a national committee was in place.<sup>502</sup> When German naval blockades escalated in early 1917 the situation became critical. The country had experienced devastating weather conditions in 1916 which resulted in a pitiful harvest. The National Farmers' Union (NFU) reported that supplies of wheat were reduced to six weeks.<sup>503</sup> Debates in parliament became increasingly accusatory, with indiscriminate recruitment perceived as a major part of the farming difficulty.<sup>504</sup> Reluctantly, the Lloyd George coalition government was eventually forced

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<sup>498</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 6 November 1917.

<sup>499</sup> National Farmers Union, 'World War One: The Few That Fed the Many', n.d., accessed at <https://www.nfuonline.com/the-few-that-fed-the-many-ww1-report/>.

<sup>500</sup> P. Cornish, 'Rationing and Food Shortages During the First World War', Imperial War Museum, 5 January 2018, accessed at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/rationing-and-food-shortages-during-the-first-world-war>; *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 22 August 1914, 148; Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 158.

<sup>501</sup> *The Times*, 11 May 1916: 'Secret Session', 7.

<sup>502</sup> *The Times*, 15 September 1916: 'British Food Supplies', 3.

<sup>503</sup> *The Times*, 4 August 1914: 'Our Food Supplies', 2; National Farmers Union, 'World War One'.

<sup>504</sup> *The Times*, 17 November 1916: 'Food Control', 9 and 'The Farmers Part', 5.

to introduce food rationing, which it implemented in gradual stages from the end of 1917. Immediately, queues began to form outside food shops.

At the end of 1916 the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was passed, enabling the government to employ a regulation that was to alter dramatically local authorities' role in land acquisition and food production.<sup>505</sup> The Cultivation of Land Order (COLO) was a radical solution.<sup>506</sup> Gerald Butcher, the superintendent of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society and an activist in the Open Space Movement, described the orders as a drastic, if necessary, reform. He pointed out that 'state appropriation of land for the common good before the war was unheard of'.<sup>507</sup> These legal instruments were to change the face of allotment provisioning in the country and galvanised the almost defunct Norwich Parks and Gardens Committee into action. The responsibility for allotments in Norwich, previously under the aegis of the Housing and Allotments Committee, was swiftly transferred to the almost moribund Parks and Gardens Committee. The members sensibly seized the newly increased powers with relish, agreeing to meet weekly in the first instance.<sup>508</sup>

With the new powers came renewed zeal. The COLO order gave councils the authority to order owners of vacant plots of land to turn them into allotments with a management plan. Norwich councillors would have understood the urgency of the food situation: it was the capital city of a major agricultural county and region; potato queues were lengthening in poorer urban areas and the *East London Advertiser* reported an ugly incident in Spitalfields, in which panic led to a major disturbance and police had to be called.<sup>509</sup> The allotment movement, which had originally been seen as a largely rural enterprise, was to prove popular with the urban classes, nationally and locally, and the public's enthusiasm was evident from the speed and number of early applications. In Tooting the London County Council (LCC) frustrated hundreds of applicants for allotments by its reluctance to requisition land from uncooperative owners, with whom its sympathies lay. When part of the designated allotment land was eventually let, the

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<sup>505</sup> *The Times*, 17 November 1916: 'The New Regulations', 9; *The Times*, 13 December 1916: 'More Allotments Advice to Local Councils', 12.

<sup>506</sup> Defence of the Realm Act, 5 December 1916. The Board of Agriculture was empowered to take possession of unused land and to ensure its cultivation for food. The powers were delegated to allotment authorities in urban areas. Mr Acland, Hansard, accessed at <https://hansard.parliament.uk/>, 'Written Answers', House of Commons; *The Times*, 13 December 1916: 'More Allotments', 12.

<sup>507</sup> G. Butcher, *Allotments for all: The Story of a Great Movement* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1918), Preface.

<sup>508</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 29 December 1916.

<sup>509</sup> Willes, *Gardens of the British Working Class*, 271.

tenants worked throughout their Christmas to ensure the ground was prepared for planting.<sup>510</sup> Not all local authorities shared the dismissive response of the LCC; many took unilateral action to create allotments, although Battersea Council was reported as describing vegetable growing in the city as madness and residents in salubrious Kensington refused to allow their private squares to be cultivated.<sup>511</sup> The *London Evening Standard* was particularly supportive of the government's efforts at homegrown food production and domestic propaganda was particularly effective: the royal family ordered vegetable plots to be created in the grounds of Buckingham Palace and Lloyd George was reported as growing potatoes at his Surrey home.<sup>512</sup>

Butcher suggests that a number of local authorities gave a cool reception to DORA.<sup>513</sup> The Norwich Parks and Gardens Committee, however, showed considerable enthusiasm for its new powers, immediately agreeing to plant vegetables in the park flower-beds. Liberated from inactivity, it met three times in the first week of 1917, and swiftly initiated an action plan. The workload of the committee was considerable. The Board of Agriculture exercised a rigorous monitoring role on the effectiveness of local food cultivation through the War Agricultural Executive Committees (War Ags), which in turn placed further pressures on the Parks Committee to deliver rapid solutions. The Cultivation of Land Sub-Committee, which was designed to oversee the allotment activity, officially reported to the Parks and Gardens Committee, but was effectively identical, as the same councillors met under the new guise.<sup>514</sup>

In April 1917, concerned by food shortages and the lack of enthusiasm of some local authorities, the government gave further impetus to the powers of land appropriation, with the significant exception of 'gardens and pleasure grounds'.<sup>515</sup> The exception suggests political recognition of the morale-building role of these assets, but it was too late for Norwich. By this time the pleasure grounds of Eaton Park, Wensum and Heigham Playing Fields were already being used for allotments and Chapelfield for vegetable-growing demonstrations.<sup>516</sup> Councillors were focused on vegetable production at all costs. In the weekly and occasionally twice-weekly meetings,

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<sup>510</sup> Butcher, *Allotments*, 19.

<sup>511</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 148.

<sup>512</sup> Butcher, *Allotments*, 13; Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 152.

<sup>513</sup> Butcher, *Allotments*, 13.

<sup>514</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 29 December 1916, 1 January 1917, 3 January 1917, 8 January 1917, meeting regularly until 21 December 1917.

<sup>515</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 13 April 1917.

<sup>516</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 1917 passim.

suggestions for potential plot-holdings were enthusiastically identified. The committee placed early newspaper advertisements soliciting allotment applications and within eight days had interviewed more than fifty applicants. It was agreed that plots of twenty rods each would be made available and fencing would be provided, although the new tenants were expected to erect the fencing themselves.<sup>517</sup> The 500 loads of manure which had been purchased by the city engineer at 1/6d per load, and road sweepings (horse droppings) were transported to the already well-used six-acre Heigham Playing Fields, which was designated the base for storage and recirculation. The voluntary Norwich Food Production League had 650 members by April 1917 and the Norwich Allotments Association was requested to arrange for the distribution of manure among the Earlham Estate allotment holders.<sup>518</sup> Twelve tons of seed potatoes were ordered for resale, which was later reported to have made a profit for the Corporation. The sourcing of manure and ordering of seed potatoes proved to be an ongoing task for the city engineer over the war years, and the hard-pressed Mr Collins was charged with arranging central depots for storage.<sup>519</sup> The Sewerage and Irrigation Committee provided a further 200 tons of farmyard manure for the nascent urban allotment movement. A stall was set up in the market to sell surplus food and lectures on food growing were widely promoted. Perhaps inspired by an earlier *Gardeners' Chronicle* report on American boy scouts, the local scouts were invited to be vigilantes to keep an eye on damage to allotments.<sup>520</sup> Members became increasingly authoritarian and wrote to the principal of the Ely and Norwich Training College in College Road, reminding him of the desirability of growing vegetables for the student teachers. Vacant plots of land at College Road and Eaton were identified and another sharp letter was despatched to the landowners reminding them of the committee's powers.<sup>521</sup> The parks superintendent, Mr Ward, was instructed to increase the cultivation demonstrations and to erect information boards on vegetable growing in Chapelfield Gardens.<sup>522</sup> The small city-centre park was becoming exceedingly congested.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 3 January 1917, 8 January 1917.

<sup>518</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 1 January 1917.

<sup>519</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 15 January 1917.

<sup>520</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 26 March 1917; *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 6 June 1914, reported that Philadelphia had recruited boy scouts to become tree and plant guardians.

<sup>521</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, passim.

<sup>522</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 13 April 1917.

<sup>523</sup> The RHS in leaflets and through the pages of its journal, *The Garden*, produced guidance for the amateur gardener – e.g. 'Vegetables and How to Grow Them' – in the early years of the war. Cited by Willes, *Gardens of the British Working Class*, 52.

Some of the city landowners showed immediate public solidarity. Mr Langham agreed to cultivate his land at Grove Walk and 'place it at the disposal of the City', and Major Monteith requested permission to cultivate a portion of cottage farms to supply troops with free vegetables. The military was granted leave to cultivate the already crowded Heigham Playing Fields.<sup>524</sup> There were also some blatant attempts at profiteering by offering land at inflated prices. Some landowners proved recalcitrant: Mr Adcock was informed that if he did not cultivate his land immediately a COLO would be issued and his land immediately commandeered.<sup>525</sup> Eaton Golf Club, which lay between the Ipswich and Newmarket roads, was identified as particularly dilatory on food cultivation and directed to put part of its course into vegetable production. Resistance proved futile; at the first sign of reluctance, the relentless committee promptly issued the golf club with a COLO. Mr Holmes at Hall Road and Mr Nash at Plumstead were two more recipients of the orders.<sup>526</sup>

Not all resistance was unreasonable. The committee, having failed to persuade the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to apply pressure on their lessee, Mr Makins, the latter appealed against his COLO and successfully argued that his twenty acres of meadow at Recreation Road were essential to pasture his herd of seventy cows. Initially, the committee ruled that cemetery land should not be cultivated, out of respect for the dead. Reports of fatalities at the Front were increasing. Death would have been constantly on the minds of the Norwich citizenry and the press carried daily reminders under inspirational headings, such as 'Gallant Norfolks'.<sup>527</sup> Even this exception was later relaxed, however, in the committee's pragmatic efforts to secure an increase in allotment land.<sup>528</sup>

In April 1917 the city's allotment estate consisted of 86.25 acres encompassing corporation land, war allotments and volunteer plots, as well as four acres of school gardens. By the year's end, the allotment acreage had doubled. Although the Parks and Gardens estate remained largely static over the four years of the war, at 360 acres, by the close the committee was the temporary custodian of 536 acres of land.<sup>529</sup> The COLO and plot holders had swelled the war-time figures but by the end of the war the total number of permanent tenants had increased minimally, to just under 600, surprisingly

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<sup>524</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 13 April 1917 onwards.

<sup>525</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 11 November 1917.

<sup>526</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 13 April 1917.

<sup>527</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 12 October 1917.

<sup>528</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 232.

<sup>529</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, City Engineers report, 8 January 1918.

close to the earlier figure. Reasons for this are unclear: initial enthusiasm might have waned; original tenants would have died (many in the war) and been replaced by new applicants; earlier figures may have been grossly inaccurate and staff supervision during the war years minimal, with only fifteen full-time gardeners and an incapacitated parks superintendent. The probable reason was that existing holders doubled their holdings. Experienced and keen gardeners were the most productive and easiest to manage.

Although the committee continued its frantic allotment drive it found difficulty in keeping up with demand from the public, pressure from the Board of Agriculture and from the local War Ags. A note of desperation entered the discussion when a narrow, un-named strip of potential COLO land owned by the Church of England Young Men's Society was identified between railings and a cycle track. Many such unpromising sites, such as rubbish dumps, were to be transformed into vegetable plots.<sup>530</sup> The allotments supervisor, who worked under the parks superintendent, was allowed £3 a year for his bicycle upkeep, deemed essential for plot vigilance.<sup>531</sup> Some of the new Norwich ploholders may well have been women, as they were elsewhere, but this is unrecorded. The Women's Land Army had been established at the beginning of 1917 (Figure 36), and in Putney large numbers of women were described as measuring out their new plots.<sup>532</sup> A brand new publication, targeted at the novice allotment holder, showed staged photograph of a man digging and a woman raking the soil alongside him.<sup>533</sup> The role of women in both food production and clerical work was actively promoted, particularly as military recruitment drained the labour force.<sup>534</sup> In Norwich, a polite enquiry from a female applicant to cultivate playing fields at Eaton Park suggests Norwich was less enthusiastic: 'Miss Hills proposal be not entertained'.<sup>535</sup>

The expansion of the allotment movement was perceived by the local and national government as a critical mechanism in winning the war and a prime means of vegetable production. Food, rather than flowers, became an all-pervasive culture which was to have a major consequence for plant nurseries. The allotment movement, which had

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<sup>530</sup> *Country Life*, 29 September 1917, 193, reported in Butcher, *Allotments*, 21.

<sup>531</sup> NRO, N/TC/22/6, 11 December 1917.

<sup>532</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 151.

<sup>533</sup> *Allotments and How to Work Them* (cost 1d) cited by Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 146. A recruitment poster for the First World War shows a woman tilling the soil with a plough dressed more sensibly in jodhpurs and sturdy boots.

<sup>534</sup> *The Times*, 3 January 1917: 'Women as Food Producers', 11; *The Times*, 7 May 1915: 'Soldiers for Civil Work', 9.

<sup>535</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 12 March 1917.



**Figure 36.** Women's Land Army in Norfolk, 'Picking sugar beets' (Picture Norfolk)

faltered before the war, proved a highly popular strategy and the government and the city council were galvanised as a result. The committee's work did not go unnoticed. In a *Times* article of January 1917 Norwich was featured (alongside the large municipalities of Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield) as a leading and early authority in the cultivation of wasteland for food production.<sup>536</sup>

Supplies of food continued to be a pressing concern for the nation and the city up to the declaration of peace on 11 November 1918 and beyond.<sup>537</sup> Food rationing generated its own set of punishments and the Ministry of Food published lists of successful convictions in an effort to shame the perpetrators and warn others.<sup>538</sup> Over the summer of 1918 the greenhouses at Chapelfield produced sufficient tomatoes to supply some of the city hospitals, potatoes were sold in the market and the acquisition of allotment land continued inexorably.<sup>539</sup> Despite these efforts, members were informed that Norwich had still not requisitioned sufficient allotment land. In the words

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<sup>536</sup> *The Times*, 11 January 1917: 'More Allotments, Municipal Schemes in the Country', 10.

<sup>537</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 15 February 1918.

<sup>538</sup> Ministry of Food poster, 'Breaches of the Rationing Order', Imperial War Museum.

<sup>539</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 15 July 1918.

of the Inspector, Mr Hudson, ‘some grassland remained that could be broken up’.<sup>540</sup> By this stage, the committee, together with the country, was becoming war-weary. The enthusiasm for requisitioning land was beginning to wane and the earlier alacrity with which the committee responded to the demands of war was declining. The War Office was refused permission to acquire more land at Eaton Park, with the recreational needs of the Women’s Training College, girls’ schools and clubs cited as justification (school gardens had always been regarded as inviolable). Children were granted permission to share tiny Sewell Park with the soldiers and the Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society was granted permission to use Chapelfield Gardens for their annual show. The earlier readiness to accommodate the military had dissipated and the mutinous committee was prepared to interview personally the presumptuous Mr Hudson of the Board of Agriculture.<sup>541</sup> Even on the cusp of peace, the *Norwich Mercury* reported the continuing concern over food: ‘one lesson to the people of this country, the slenderness of the world’s present food supply.’<sup>542</sup>

### **Staffing and Workload**

Oversight of the allotments dominated the Parks and Gardens Committee’s workload over the last two years of the war but other work continued, albeit in a minor key. The agreement to assume horticultural responsibility for the maintenance of yet another churchyard, the historic St Clements in Colegate, added another churchyard garden to the Parks and Gardens inventory. The graveyard was leased at a peppercorn rent for twenty-one years, the mechanism by which the Council assumed horticultural control of diocesan property.<sup>543</sup> In addition, the council entered into what were to become protracted negotiations with the Ecclesiastical Committee to secure the freehold of Waterloo Park, although on this occasion the request was rejected.<sup>544</sup> The shrubberies planted at Palace Road were also due for lease renewal and the cabmen’s shelters continued to be monitored for their floral artistry, although by 1917 they ceased to be listed in the committee’s responsibilities. Indeed, so punctilious was the scrutiny, despite the shortage of manpower, that the shelters were listed in order of floriferousness: the Cattle Market secured first place, with the Market Square shelter

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<sup>540</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 19 March 1918.

<sup>541</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 27 September 1918.

<sup>542</sup> *Norwich Mercury*, 11 May 1918.

<sup>543</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 21 December 1917, 246.

<sup>544</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 13 February 1917.

described as ‘a disgrace’. As a result, it was proposed to divide up the forty-five shilling bonus four ways only, omitting the negligent marketplace cabman.<sup>545</sup>

There was one addition to the city-centre gardens over this period: a small garden of less than half an acre in Recorder Road, close to the Cathedral Close, in the north-east of the city. This was yet another donation from the Colman family, made by Laura Stuart on the death of her husband, James, a Cambridge professor and former MP. Her husband had managed Colman’s following the death of his father-in-law, the illustrious J.J. Colman. The site was conveniently opposite Stuart Court, almshouses which had also been developed by the Colman family, and the garden was possibly intended as a quiet retreat for the elderly residents. The gardens were simple, with a pathway encircling the bowling green, chestnut trees and shrubs. The date of the city’s eventual acquisition is uncertain, although it was at some stage during the war.

The traditional work of the department did not cease during the war but basic maintenance replaced the more elaborate horticultural activity. The premier road into the city was exempt. The mature elm trees that lined Newmarket Road required urgent replacement and the committee sensibly followed horticultural advice, substituting the Cornish elm (*Ulmus minor* ‘*Stricta*’), for the conventional English elm (*Ulmus minor* ‘*Atinia*’) because of its fastigiate habit; a rare example of the committee discussing plant species in detail (Figure 37).<sup>546</sup> A month later, the issue reared its head again, given the difficulty of sourcing the approved replacements in war-time. On this occasion it was agreed that Wheatley elms (*Ulmus minor* ‘*Sarniensis*’) would in future be used for street planting, with the typically prudent proviso ‘unless *monumentalis* can be got cheap’.<sup>547</sup>

Councillors continued to address outbreaks of vandalism which continued over the war period. A report of damage to trees in Eaton Park by soldiers and two children was described as ‘objectionable conduct’ and a summons was promptly issued. The response was prompt: both parents and soldiers immediately provided financial recompense: the parents professed that their children were suitably repentant and, perhaps more ominously, the military stated that it was ‘dealing with the soldiers’.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> NRO N/TC 22/1, 14 September 1915. Shelters were based at Tombland, St Giles Gate, The Cattle Market and Redwell Street (close to Bank Plain), as well as in the Market Square.

<sup>546</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 14 December 1915.

<sup>547</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 1 January 1916.

<sup>548</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 12 June 1916.



**Figure 37.** Elm-trees, Newmarket Road (Picture Norfolk)

The new allotments at Eaton Park proved particularly problematic for the customary mode of grass-cutting. The farmer, Mr Pinfold, explained that he would be unable to implement the regular grazing programme as fencing would be required to protect the new allotments from the sheep. The committee attempted to rescue the schedule by offering free grass to whoever was ready to cut the grounds. This may well have led to the premature and short-lived purchase of a mechanical mower at the war's close.<sup>549</sup>

The workload of the parks superintendent increased considerably over the final two years of the war. The allotment estate required continual monitoring to prevent pilfering and ensure compliance with the assiduous War Ags; the reduction in staffing and the challenge of maintaining a semblance of normality among the military incursions had all taken their toll. Mr Winfield had not been replaced and the department urgently required new leadership. In 1917 Mr Collins, the city engineer, under whose aegis the parks and allotments department continued to function, produced a comprehensive report on the work of the department, drawing attention to the responsibilities of the parks superintendent. The new post had responsibility for

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<sup>549</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 8 May, 10 July 1917.

financial matters, reporting directly to the Parks and Gardens Committee and the city accountant: a significant alteration in status.<sup>550</sup>

By 1918 the staffing complement had dwindled to fifteen full-time gardeners with two part-timers and two boys. The engineer observed that all men were well over military age (brutally described as ‘old men past maximum efficiency’). The superintendent, ‘a keen head gardener’, had direct supervision of all gardeners and gardening in the 900 acres of parks and allotments, of which the latter numbered 1300: this included greenhouse propagation, street-tree planting and pruning, and shrubbery maintenance. Apart from his responsibilities to the Parks and Gardens Committee, he was accountable to a further four bodies: he oversaw the work of the school gardens scheme for the Education Committee; advised the Hellesdon Asylum and Isolation Hospitals on gardening matters; worked for the Household Heath Conservators and for the Markets Committee as the Local Authority Inspector for gooseberry mildew and wart potato disease (at the time a statutory responsibility), with resulting increments to his salary. Such a wide-ranging workload necessitated an active man who was capable of discharging the managerial, administrative, inspectorial and horticultural skills required for the post. Mr Ward had indicated his readiness to resign on payment of a year’s salary in lieu. It was recommended that the Parks and Gardens Committee advertise for a new, clearly defined post of parks superintendent at an enhanced salary, with the intention of attracting candidates of ability and good health.<sup>551</sup>

The report pointed out that the war allotments (temporary plots) would continue until at least 1920 and there would need to be a strategy in place to manage the interregnum at the close of the war, when plots would be returned to their original owners. Collins emphasised that the allotments would require close supervision and able administration both to ensure good husbandry and to forestall sub-letting, which was rife despite being forbidden. He underlined the need for an expansion of the educational work currently undertaken by the superintendent, particularly in the ‘science of horticulture’. The report impressed on the committee the import of appointing someone with sufficient expertise, commended the school gardens scheme, ‘which had made great progress’, and stressed that it was impossible to overstate its

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<sup>550</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 8 January 1918, Chief Engineer’s Report (December 1918) to the Parks and Gardens Committee.

<sup>551</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 8 January 1918, Chief Engineer’s Report. In *The Captain and the Norwich Parks*, Anderson suggests that Sandys-Winch was the first parks superintendent appointed to oversee the Norwich parks. In fact, the council used the term from the beginning of the twentieth century.

importance. Although managed by the superintendent, the school gardens came under the aegis of the Education Committee. The chief engineer suggested that the scale of the work was such that the parks, gardens and allotments and other open spaces work merited two separate departments. He concluded by outlining a long-term role for the Parks and Gardens Committee and the city: given that Norwich was at the heart of a vast vegetable-growing area, there was a need for an experimental station where new varieties of vegetables could be tested and new methods of horticultural production introduced. Such an institute would be of significant assistance to the market grower and undoubtedly place Norwich at the forefront of horticultural trading and research. It was a visionary ideal, consolidating Norwich's historic position as a 'city in an orchard' and exploiting more fully its existing nursery and market-garden economy.<sup>552</sup>

There is no evidence that the city councillors were impressed by the chief engineer's vision. Forty years later Norwich welcomed the John Innes Centre for Plant Science and Microbiology into the city, by which time Mr Collin's words would have been remembered by none.<sup>553</sup> The councillors were, however, persuaded to address the staffing issues. They agreed to the termination of Mr Ward's contract and to advertise for a new parks superintendent. The comprehensive post specification was widely advertised at an annual salary of £275, with annual increments of £15 rising to a ceiling of £350. It was placed in both the local press and the prestigious national journals: *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, *The Journal of Horticulture* and the RHS magazine *The Garden*.<sup>554</sup> Some concession to the engineer's concern regarding the magnitude of the responsibilities was made: it was agreed that Mr Wilde would continue as the superintendent's assistant to oversee the allotment work. Five candidates were shortlisted but, despite the efforts of officers and councillors, the successful candidate, Mr Felstead from Wolverhampton, was to prove a major disappointment. He started work in May 1918 and departed within a year. In his brief term of office he applied for, but was not granted, a council-funded automobile, secured new offices and office furniture at St Peter's Street and demanded the services of a clerical assistant.<sup>555</sup> The city engineer continued to service the Parks and Gardens Committee and, meanwhile, Mr Ward attempted to negotiate an increase in his pension of ten shillings a week.<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>552</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 8 January 1918, 'Chief Engineer's Report'.

<sup>553</sup> John Innes Centre, <https://www.jic.ac.uk>.

<sup>554</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 29 January 1918.

<sup>555</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 19 March 1918; 15 July 1918; 27 September 1918.

<sup>556</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 29 January 1918.

## War Memorials and Commemoration

By mid-1918 the country was ready for peace. The local press ran the headline ‘Peace Talks’ over a report of a meeting of the Trades Union Council with council representatives to discuss the political *leitmotif* of ‘peace with honour’. The meeting deplored the continued ‘slaughter of manhood of all nations’.<sup>557</sup> In August Lloyd George exhorted the nation to hold fast ‘and all will be well’.<sup>558</sup> On 11 November 1918 King George V announced that Germany had acknowledged defeat.<sup>559</sup> The following day, the Armistice was officially declared and Norwich celebrated in the Market Square with the mayor, sheriff and chief constable in finest regalia.<sup>560</sup> *The Manchester Guardian* described the war in sardonic terms, suggesting that saving had become a national duty in order to fund the government’s venture into the costliest war ever waged.<sup>561</sup> The Norfolk press was more circumspect. Over the four years of the war the local papers had featured weekly photos of the Norfolk dead or severely wounded under various headings, such as ‘The Price of Victory’ and ‘East Anglian Heroes’.

In this mood of requiem and remembrance, public desire for a fitting commemoration of the war dead led many to a rejection of conventional stone memorials, and a number of living memorials were planned. Trees of remembrance were planted along roadsides, as promoted by the *Roads of Remembrance as War Memorials* pamphlet, published after the war.<sup>562</sup> In Norwich, two years earlier, the city engineer had been instructed to plant two double white cherries at the entrance to St Andrews Churchyard; these were undoubtedly forerunners of the numerous trees of remembrance that were to spring up across the country as part of a massive wave of arboreal memorials after 1918.<sup>563</sup> In 1919 Wandsworth and Wimbledon, jointly, were the first boroughs to agree to establish a memorial garden, in the form of a stone memorial erected on Wimbledon Common with planting sections at the base. The forty-two acres surrounding the memorial were dedicated for public use.<sup>564</sup> In the same year,

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<sup>557</sup> *Norwich and Norfolk Mercury*, 11 May 1918.

<sup>558</sup> *The Times*, 12 August 1918: ‘Mr. Lloyd George on the Battle’, 8.

<sup>559</sup> *The Times*, 12 November 1918: ‘King’s Thanks to the Force’, 8.

<sup>560</sup> *Norwich and Norfolk Mercury*, 16 November 1918.

<sup>561</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 5 August 1918.

<sup>562</sup> D. Lambert, ‘A Living Monument: Memorial Parks of the Great War’, *Garden History* 42.Supp. 1 (2014), 34–57.

<sup>563</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 7 April 1917, 224.

<sup>564</sup> Wimbledon Common War Memorial Grade II: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1458959>.

the Norwich Parks and Gardens Committee had approved a ‘war shrine’ to be erected in a small city garden in Coburg Street, close to Chapelfield Gardens.<sup>565</sup> After the war Norwich was the object of national interest as the final resting place of the war-time resistance worker and nurse Edith Cavell. Her body was returned to her native county from Belgium, where she had been buried in 1915, to be reinterred in a simple, grass-enclosed grave at Life’s Green, in the shade of Norwich Cathedral.<sup>566</sup>

The International War Graves Commission (IWGC) had been established in 1917, largely at the instigation of Major General Sir Fabian Ware, who had set out to ensure appropriate burial in perpetuity for the thousands of British and Commonwealth military personnel killed overseas (Figure 38). As the leader of a Red Cross unit, Ware saw at first hand the scale of the casualties and, prior to his compassionate intervention, military corpses had usually been interred where they had fallen, in mass graves.<sup>567</sup>



**Figure 38.** Ovillers Military Cemetery (First World War) War Graves Commission, Imperial War Museum

<sup>565</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 13 February 1917. The shrine has since disappeared, probably during the twenty-first-century Chapelfield development.

<sup>566</sup> G. Swain, ‘The Funeral of Nurse Edith Cavell in May 1919’, East Anglian Film Archive, catalogue no. 295.

<sup>567</sup> English Heritage, *Caring for Historic Cemetery and Graveyard Monuments* (Historic England, 2016). Accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/cemeteries-and-burial-grounds/monuments/>; [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org).

Landscape designers Edwin Lutyens, Reginald Blomfield and Herbert Baker were appointed to design the memorials. Gertrude Jekyll was also involved in a horticultural role through her connection with Lutyens. It was decided that there should be no discrimination in rank or provenance, that commemoration should be democratic (illustrated by the tomb of the 'Unknown Soldier' at Westminster Abbey) and, at Jekyll's suggestion, the planting domestic. A non-denominational and non-religious headstone for each grave was agreed, although not all were happy with this stance.<sup>568</sup> Originally annuals were used to decorate the tombs and planting was undertaken at an early stage, to raise post-war morale; eventually maintenance became a problem and a range of simple perennials, appropriate for the location, became the norm.

Burial for soldiers who had died in Britain was also overseen by the IWGC, and Earlham cemetery became one of the many sites used across the country. The corporation was charged with keeping the 259 graves in Norwich 'in good order' and was paid for ongoing maintenance, which was undertaken by the parks department. The many Australian, Canadian and other empire soldiers were also joined by two German soldiers.<sup>569</sup>

Memorials took many forms after the First World War, including an initiative entitled 'Tanks for Towns'. This bizarre War Office project distributed war-battered tanks to the cities and towns which had done most to raise money through the war bonds scheme (Figure 39). It was promoted as both a reward and to remind the public of the war and human sacrifice. Norwich, after some initial caution, had successfully promoted war bonds to the Norwich public through a series of 'Tank Days', where they drew enormous and enthusiastic crowds. The *Diss Express* reported that £250,000 was raised in fifteen minutes, following a rallying speech by George Roberts, the Labour MP and minister of labour.<sup>570</sup> Norwich thus became one of the 264 urban beneficiaries: the tank, once received, was placed for all to see in Chapelfield Gardens, where in time the initial enthusiasm for its presence waned.<sup>571</sup> The Chapelfield tank failed to dispel

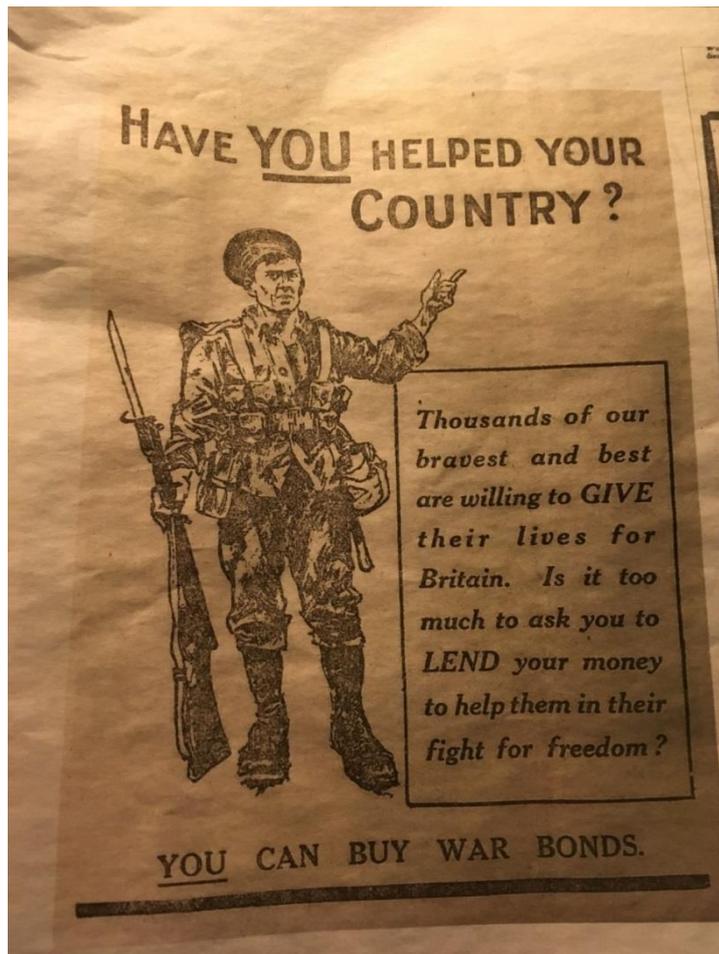
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<sup>568</sup> J. Lorie, 'The War Graves Commission', paper presented at Garden Museum Conference: Memorial Landscapes of the First World War, 8 November 2014; S. Joiner, 'The Evolution of the Planting Influences of the Imperial War Graves Commission from its Inception to the Modern Day', *Garden History* 42.Supp. 1 (2014).

<sup>569</sup> NRO, ACC 1997/143, Norwich City and Rosary Cemetery Records, 'IWGC/ War Graves'.

<sup>570</sup> NRO, N/EN 20/49: *Diss Express*, 5 April 1918.

<sup>571</sup> *The Times*, 4 April 1919: 'Tanks for Towns', 9; Lambert, 'Memorial Parks', 37; NRO, N/TC 22/2, passim: Sandys-Winsch proposed the removal of the tank on two occasions; Lambert, 'Memorial Parks'. By 2014 only one tank remained at Ashford in Kent, now listed by Historic England.



**Figure 39.** War bonds poster (Picture Norfolk)

local calls for a more conventional memorial and the council's lack of action led to widespread criticism from the Norwich public, which was finally appeased in 1927 by Lutyen's classical stone sarcophagus set against the east wall of the medieval guildhall.<sup>572</sup>

### Aftermath

The death toll did not cease with the Armistice. Almost three-quarters of a million British citizens died during the war but even more were to die as a result of the lethal influenza epidemic which swept the country alongside the jubilant celebrations. It was responsible for a quarter of a million deaths, to add to the 886,000 British fatalities in the war. The widespread Armistice celebration compounded the spread of the virus. The ambulances of the Red Cross were recommissioned as funeral hearses and few families

<sup>572</sup> L.K. Cunneen, 'The War Memorial Gardens', *Norfolk Gardens Trust Journal* (2010), 29.

emerged unscathed by death or serious injury.<sup>573</sup> Lloyd George had promised the country ‘homes fit for heroes’ as part of his election platform in the December 1918 campaign and his Liberal/Conservative coalition won with ease. The election was notable for being the first in which women were able to cast their votes and the comparatively strong showing of the Labour Party.<sup>574</sup> The war had rendered the country heavily in debt and, after a brief period of boom and bust, the economy found it hard to recover. Private house building had ceased during the war years and, as a result, there was an acute shortage of homes. Despite the political rhetoric, the building programme soon faltered; public finances were in a parlous state and there were over 2 million unemployed.<sup>575</sup> The gloomy national picture was mirrored in provincial Norwich, which had lost 3500 people in the war and approximately the same number to influenza – 6 per cent of its population.<sup>576</sup>

The concept of memorials for life in the form of trees or homes for the living was an embryonic movement at the close of the war, but in 1919 war veterans used the concept to protest about their jobless situation. Uprisings took place across the country and veterans demanded living memorials in the form of employment (and, in the West Country, an end to the continued employment of women).<sup>577</sup> The London demonstration resulted in a march on Westminster and a riot ensued, which was finally dispersed by the police. Representatives eventually met with a sympathetic MP, Mr Hogg, who pacified them by promising their demands would be brought to ministerial attention.<sup>578</sup> Civil unrest was in the air and the government needed to act. Meetings were held with local authorities which made it clear that employment schemes were essential, should be managed by councils and required generous subsidy. In June a secret Cabinet memorandum recommended that grants should be offered for a number of work

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<sup>573</sup> J. Nicholson, *The Great Silence 1918–1920, Living in the Shadow of the Great War* (London: John Murray, 2010).

<sup>574</sup> Representation of the People Act 1918: The Act extended the suffrage by abolishing most property qualifications for men (otherwise millions of ‘war heroes’/returning soldiers would have been ineligible to vote) and allowing the vote to women over thirty who met property qualifications. Accessed at [http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/brave\\_new\\_world/transcripts/rep\\_people.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/brave_new_world/transcripts/rep_people.htm).

<sup>575</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 160.

<sup>576</sup> Norwich Roll of Honour. This unique oak memorial, designed by Lutyens in the form of a monumental book, stands at the entrance to Norwich City Hall and lists the names of the 3,544 men from Norwich who died in the war. Norwich Heart, [www.heritagecity.org](http://www.heritagecity.org).

<sup>577</sup> The National Archives, Cabinet Papers, ‘Unemployment’, CAB/24/82/46, 3 June 1919.

<sup>578</sup> *The Times*, 26 May 1919: ‘Ex-Service Men’s Demand for Work’, 9; *The Times*, 27 May 1919: ‘Parliament Square Riot’, 12.

schemes and parks were included in the utilitarian list, although the schemes were not implemented until 1922.<sup>579</sup> The insolvent government passed the Land Settlement (Facilities) Act in 1919, which enabled war veterans to become smallholders.<sup>580</sup> The act was a desperate measure, designed to offer a lifeline to the returning servicemen, and, while initially popular, it did little to alleviate the long-term problems of unemployment and incapacity. It also placed pressure on local authorities to identify suitable smallholding land at a time when temporary allotments were being reclaimed. The scheme faltered after two years.<sup>581</sup> The allotment picture itself was volatile and operated against the backcloth of rising unemployment and destitution. Newspapers which had vaunted the war heroes now wrote of strikes; some veterans were refused employment in their former jobs. Landowners were anxious to reclaim their land and tenants were equally anxious to establish security of tenure.

The end of the war did not bring an immediate end to the temporary war allotments. The popularity of the allotment movement was reflected in the 1.5 million national allotments, with the majority located in towns and cities. A survey undertaken by the Board of Agriculture at the mid-point of the war had established that urban allotments were much more efficient than those in rural areas and comparable to the most productive market gardens.<sup>582</sup> The overall success of the allotment movement appeared to have taken the government by surprise. The Board of Agriculture prudently extended the term for the war allotments until the autumn of 1920, although overall numbers declined from their peak in the immediate aftermath of the war, probably because of the removal of plots in the public parks, where most local authorities, including Norwich, were keen to resume normal service. This was deplored by many: the editor of *Amateur Gardening* criticised the move, suggesting that the continuation of domestic food production was a patriotic duty.<sup>583</sup> Butcher envisaged the allotment holders as national saviours, abolishing ‘the potato queue’, and claimed that allotments were a ‘national necessity’.<sup>584</sup> Even *The Spectator* joined in the allotment eulogies by

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<sup>579</sup> The National Archives, Cabinet Papers, ‘Question of assistance to local authorities’, CAB/24/82/45, 23 June 1919.

<sup>580</sup> Land Settlement (Facilities) Act, 1919, accessed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/9-10/59/contents>. The Act gave local authorities the power to acquire land specifically for smallholdings and waived the requirement for the applicant to have previous experience in farming (see Appendix).

<sup>581</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 162.

<sup>582</sup> *Report of a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments*, para. 41.

<sup>583</sup> Cited by Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 162.

<sup>584</sup> Butcher, *Allotments*, 36.

urging that allotments should ‘not only be continued but expanded’.<sup>585</sup> Vegetable growing had crossed class barriers; the middle classes had become enthusiastic, anticipating the national allotment profile of the twenty-first century.<sup>586</sup> The 1919 Act had already recognised this cultural shift by redefining the category for allotment users as ‘all’, rather than the term ‘labouring population’, which had been employed in the seminal 1908 Allotment Act.<sup>587</sup>

## Conclusion

Norwich had demonstrated considerable commitment to the war effort in both fundraising and food production. It had employed drastic measures to ensure military enlistment and readily sacrificed its newly developed parks to soldiers and vegetables. However, in common with the country at large, the council was keen to return the parks and gardens to pleasure grounds and sports fields, and to remove the evidence of the military invasion and war-time privations. The war had taken its toll of fit and able men and the appointment of a new parks superintendent was essential to set in train a programme of work.

The post had been vacant since the departure of Mr Felstead. The job description had been subject to detailed scrutiny and discussion by officers and members over the previous two years, to ensure that the recreational estate could be more effectively managed.<sup>588</sup> Recruitment for such a skilled role would have been more difficult than five years earlier. Once again the council advertised widely, with an advertisement placed in the *Gardeners’ Chronicle*. The advertisement, which was eye-catching on account of its size, central position and length, detailed the extensive duties required of the ‘Parks and Allotments Superintendent of the City of Norwich’. On this occasion nothing was to be left to chance. Despite the city engineer’s earlier recommendation that the role should be divided into two, allotments remained a key aspect of the post. The starting salary was listed as £300 per annum, but, mindful of Mr Ward’s expensive

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<sup>585</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 162.

<sup>586</sup> Willes, *Gardens of the British Working Class*, 276; Acton, *Growing Space*.

<sup>587</sup> Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs, Fifth Report, *Modern Allotment Legislation*, published June 1998. Accessed at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmenvtra/560/56002.htm>.

<sup>588</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, January 29 1918–September 1919

pony and trap, the appointee was expected to use a motorbike in the performance of his duties.<sup>589</sup>

Two candidates only were interviewed by the Parks and Gardens Committee: Captain Arnold Sandys-Winsch, a returning soldier, was to prove the successful applicant. He came from a middle-class mercantile background in Manchester<sup>590</sup> and was well qualified, having graduated from Cheshire College of Horticulture and Agriculture in 1908, gaining a gold medal for his work in botany and etymology before becoming articled to Thomas Mawson, the celebrated landscape designer and town planner.<sup>591</sup> As a territorial he had been called up at the outbreak of war and had seen active service, serving in the army as a fighter pilot in the Royal Flying Corps and in the Royal Artillery in the Army of Occupation. During the war he had been advised to alter his name and had adopted 'Sandys' as a prefix, his mother's original name.<sup>592</sup> His rank indicated that he had management experience, albeit in a command and control environment. By the autumn of 1919 Sandys-Winsch was in post and at last the committee had an officer capable of managing the parks estate. The thirty-two-year-old would remain in Norwich for considerably longer than his predecessor and was to oversee a programme of work that would make a lasting contribution to the green spaces of Norwich.<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 16 August 1919: 'City of Norwich Town Clerk job advertisement for Parks and Allotments Superintendent', vii.

<sup>590</sup> <https://www.ancestry.com/>, baptism and census records 1888, 1891.

<sup>591</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 July 1953: 'Captain Sandys-Winsch Retirement Interview'; J. Waymark, *Thomas Mawson: Life, Gardens and Landscapes* (London: Francis Lincoln Ltd, 2009). Mawson headed two large landscape practices; T. Mawson, *The Art and Craft of Garden Making* (Batsford, London, 1901); *Civic Art. Studies in Town Planning, Parks, Boulevards and Open Spaces* (London: Batsford, 1911).

<sup>592</sup> Sandys-Winsch at <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/>: RAF record for 'Arnold Edward Sandys Wunsch', Medal roll card for 'Arnold Edward Wunsch, RFA Lieut. 'Identical'; Census return, 'Jane Wunsch, nee Sandys'.

<sup>593</sup> NRO, N/TC 14/, Norwich General Purposes Committee, 26 September 1919; *Norfolk News and Norwich Mercury*, 29 May 1953: Retirement Interview with Captain A. Sandys-Winsch.

**Growing Space, 1919–1938**

Lloyd George and the coalition government remained in power until 1922, when the Conservatives withdrew and formed a minority government. The Conservative party retained national power through successive elections, apart from a brief period in 1924 when Labour's Ramsey Macdonald became prime minister, and remained as the governing party until 1929. In 1918, with the passing of the Representation of the People Act, some 8000 women had secured the vote; women had played an active role in the war, undertaking many jobs previously held by men, but this was not always appreciated when veterans returned home to discover they had no work. In the election of November 1923 Labour gained the second largest number of parliamentary seats and the Liberals were never again to win office. After the countrywide 1919 business bonanza, the national economy declined almost as quickly as it had risen. Lloyd George had introduced the Housing and Town Planning Act in 1919 in response to the Tudor Walters Commission of 1917.<sup>594</sup> Tudor Walters, chair of the eponymous committee, was also chair of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust and a number of the planning principles adumbrated in the report were those of the Garden City movement, such as well-laid-out streets, generous room sizes and gardens and the concept of state subsidy for working-class housing.<sup>595</sup> The benevolent Addison Act speedily proved unacceptable to the post-war government, as it was supported by a considerable financial subsidy and set what were perceived to be unrealistically high targets. It was replaced by Neville Chamberlain's more modest Housing Act of 1923.<sup>596</sup>

Unemployment became the dominant issue of the interwar years and the sheer numbers of unemployed ex-servicemen took the government by surprise; a cabinet-level working party proposed a contributory work creation scheme and servicemen were made a priority.<sup>597</sup> In January 1922 the House of Commons devoted a large portion of its parliamentary time to the 'menace of unemployment' and the inevitable implications for income tax generated by the job creation schemes.<sup>598</sup> Two months later the unemployment totals were reported as having fallen by 123,000 in the intervening eight

<sup>594</sup> Housing and Town Planning Act 1919, accessed at [legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk) (see Appendix).

<sup>595</sup> B. Cullingworth and V. Nadin, *Town and Country Planning in the UK* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 17.

<sup>596</sup> S. Ward, *Planning and Urban Change* (London: Sage, 2004), 38–39.

<sup>597</sup> The National Archives, Cabinet Papers, CAB/4/120/2, 11 February 1921, T.J. Macnamara, 'Special Weekly Report on Unemployment no 17'; CAB/24/1/82, 30 January 1922, A. Mond, 'Schemes of Work for Relieving Unemployment'.

<sup>598</sup> *The Times*, 10 February 1922.

weeks, a fall attributed to the newly subsidised employment programmes, introduced by the government in partnership with the local authorities.<sup>599</sup> Despite the reduction, the overall total remained critically high, at almost 2 million. The 1922 and 1925 Allotment Acts were two of the mechanisms introduced by the government with the vain intention of bringing a measure of respite into the difficult domestic situation.<sup>600</sup> Although both Acts undoubtedly strengthened the position of allotment holders by specifying security of tenure, fair rents, notice periods and compensation terms, the overall effect on the country's peace of mind was eclipsed by the continuing rise in unemployment. *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, a staunch advocate of the domestic allotment, argued strongly for limits in size and crops grown solely for home consumption. It also called for greater flexibility for local authorities in the purchase of allotment land and for allotment provision to be incorporated into town planning legislation, as followed in the member-initiated 1925 Allotment Act.<sup>601</sup>

### Interwar Norwich

Morton's portrait of Norwich in the 1920s describes a city on the brink of change: 'Norwich', he wrote, 'had a capacity to reinvent itself in the face of adversity.'<sup>602</sup> In fact, the city was on the cusp of major political change. The Labour Party was rapidly extending its base and Norwich returned two Labour MPs in the 1923 elections, including Dorothy Jewson, one of the first women MPs. The following year the Norwich Liberals decided their fortunes were best served by a realignment with the Conservatives. By 1928 the share of Labour councillors had increased, although a Tory/Liberal coalition was to lead the council until 1933.<sup>603</sup> Growing union strength bolstered Labour; in 1929 it became the largest party on the city council and, by the early 1930s, had established itself as the dominant political party.<sup>604</sup> By 1930 the Norwich council had been transformed. This change in political culture was epitomised in the figure of Mabel Clarkson. First elected as a Liberal councillor in 1913, she

<sup>599</sup> The National Archives, Cabinet Papers, CAB/24/82/45, *War Cabinet Memorandum*, 23 June 1919.

<sup>600</sup> *q.v.* Appendix.

<sup>601</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 24 June, 4 February, 11 February, 4 March 1922; 1922 Allotment Act; 1925 Allotment Act, *q.v.* Appendix.

<sup>602</sup> H.V. Morton, *In Search of England*, first published 1927 (London: Methuen, 1984), 229–34.

<sup>603</sup> F. Whitmore, *The Labour Party, Municipal Politics and Municipal Elections in Norwich 1903–1933*, Kent Papers in Politics and International Relations, ser. 1, 13 (Canterbury: University of Canterbury, 1992); Doyle, 'Politics, 1835–1945', 358–60.

<sup>604</sup> Whitmore, *Labour*.

abandoned the Liberals after their Tory alliance. As a Labour-elected mayor in 1930 she nominated ‘unemployment, housing, slum clearance, education and health’ as her priorities.<sup>605</sup> The Parks and Gardens Committee membership reflected this changing balance of political representation, which was to give rise to split voting on committees.<sup>606</sup>

The unemployment situation in Norwich at this time was particularly grave; in 1921 a demonstration by 1200 unemployed men took place in the marketplace. The men demanded immediate entry to the workhouse and waved red flags in a manner ominously reminiscent of the revolution taking place in Russia.<sup>607</sup> The Norwich Distress Committee, which, prior to the war, had identified work for the unemployed, was resurrected with another raft of projects, of which a number were to be park-related initiatives under the financial oversight of the council’s General Purposes Committee and the Unemployment Grants Committee.<sup>608</sup> Government subsidy was to prove a financial lifeline for the straitened councils but administratively problematic for officers and councillors, as funds were speedily exhausted and new proposals had to be submitted to complete each scheme. Work programmes were subject to frustrating delays because of this piecemeal transfer of money from the treasury and the requirement to draft detailed funding proposals for each parcel of work. The work proceeded slowly and, for the most part, with an unskilled labour force.

### **Job Creation and Staffing Issues**

Not everyone was enthusiastic about the job creation schemes: MPs from both sides of the house had been highly critical because it distorted the labour market, undermined apprenticeships and was a temporary palliative, as it failed to translate into permanent employment.<sup>609</sup> The Trade Unions had consistently argued for the creation of authentic work, not temporary schemes. Nor were all local authorities successful in securing grants: Leicester submitted six schemes in 1922, none of which achieved funding

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<sup>605</sup> P. Scrivens, *The Lady Lord Mayors of Norwich 1923–2017* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2018), 30.

<sup>606</sup> Doyle, ‘Politics, 1835–1945’, 147, 149.

<sup>607</sup> *The Times*, 10 February 1921: ‘Unemployed Fight with Police’, 10.

<sup>608</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/ 63, 1922, *passim*.

<sup>609</sup> *Hansard*, HC debate 21 May 1924, vol. 173 cc 2175–6; 22 March 1920, vol. 127 cc30–3, accessed at <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1924/may/21/employment-exchanges-jobs-found>.

because the local unemployment situation was considered insufficiently parlous.<sup>610</sup> Norwich was not the only authority to make use of the government's unemployment grants for work on parks. In Birmingham the grant was used partly to renovate Aston Hall and partly to create a new formal garden with fountains and sculptures; the garden was designed by William Bloye, an eminent local artist, not the parks superintendent.<sup>611</sup> Many authorities used the grant for renewal planting, as at St James's Park, London, where planting was partly used to counteract the unsightly war buildings and to replenish trees and shrubs.<sup>612</sup> In Bath, where the local authority had only assumed responsibility for the Royal Victoria Park in 1912, they needed to refurbish the rose-beds.<sup>613</sup> Manchester and Nottingham secured generous approval for park improvement schemes, with grants of £52,900 for the former and £208,000 for the latter. Nottingham was awarded the sum to improve its parks and purchase the Elizabethan Wollaton Hall and Park, but no major redevelopment took place.<sup>614</sup>

In Norwich the city council prioritised both parks and house building as development areas for the employment schemes, and the Parks Committee selected four existing parks as candidates for redevelopment: Heigham, Eaton, Wensum and Waterloo Parks.<sup>615</sup> The following year, Sandys-Winsch complained to the Parks and Gardens Committee about the indiscipline of the workers on his schemes, who 'did but little work for the first few days and then refused to work at all'.<sup>616</sup> The superintendent's complaint was taken seriously and referred to the council's Unemployment Committee, which authorised all work programmes. An investigation was launched and names of 'shirkers' were solicited, but the complaint appears to have been set aside.<sup>617</sup> One can imagine the highly disciplined former soldier somewhat out of his depth when confronted by a conscripted and sometimes mutinous workforce, with little enthusiasm or expertise for the skilled work that was to occupy him and the council for the

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<sup>610</sup> *Hansard*, HC debate 29 November 1922, question to the Minister of Labour by Captain A. Evans vol. 159 cc 686–7 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1922/nov/29/leicester>.

<sup>611</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 26 April 1924; Aston Hall: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001199>. Aston Park was the first historic country house to pass into municipal ownership, in 1864.

<sup>612</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 14 June 1924.

<sup>613</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1 November 1924,

<sup>614</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 15 November, 29 November 1924.

<sup>615</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/65, N/TC 22/2.

<sup>616</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 9 September 1922.

<sup>617</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 10 October 1922.

following decade. By his own admission in later life, Sandys-Winsch was a stern taskmaster.<sup>618</sup>

Unlike his immediate predecessor, Mr Felstead, Sandys-Winsch had become integrated into Norwich's gardening milieu, having accepted the role of honorary secretary of the still-thriving Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society, of which Sydney Morris, the crocosmia specialist and incumbent at Earlham Hall, was president.<sup>619</sup> The Committee sanctioned the appointment on condition that the work was undertaken in the superintendent's own time. Just as the Parks and Gardens and Allotments Committees must have been congratulating themselves on the success of their 1919 appointment, they were dismayed to learn that their parks superintendent had applied for a job as a town planner.<sup>620</sup> On learning the unsettling news from the town clerk, and despite describing him as an 'excellent candidate' for the post, the councillors made a number of counter-suggestions, which included a salary rise. A novel proposal was to retain his services in a job-share, managed by appointing a full-time assistant, which would enable the officer to undertake a part-time planning role.<sup>621</sup> What the superintendent thought of the unusual, if flattering, proposal is undocumented. In the event, his application was either unsuccessful or withdrawn and he continued in the role of superintendent of Norwich parks for a further thirty years. As a measure of their relief, the Parks and Gardens Committee recommended that Sandys-Winsch's salary be increased by £100 per annum from £246 to £346.<sup>622</sup> This would have been a munificent rise for any local authority, let alone the traditionally frugal Norwich. The council was unconvinced, but awarded him a 10 per cent rise, taking his salary to £276 (still lower than the advertised starting salary of £300 per annum). It was some years before he achieved £300. The salary differential may have been one factor contributing to his decision to apply for the town planner job; another could have been the challenges presented by managing a large, unskilled labour force in a very different environment from the military milieu with which he was familiar.

Sandys-Winsch's designs (see below), particularly those containing ambitious building schemes such as Eaton Park, would have been challenging for skilled builders to accomplish. Although some of the men may have had experience in building or

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<sup>618</sup> *Norfolk News and Norwich Mercury*, 29 May 1953: 'Retirement Interview with Captain Sandys-Winsch'.

<sup>619</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 19 December 1921.

<sup>620</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 10 April 1923.

<sup>621</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 10 April 1923.

<sup>622</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 10 April 1923.

gardening, the majority would have been complete novices and the workforce was numerous: overall, over 600 men were involved in the redevelopment of the Norwich parks over this period.<sup>623</sup> The superintendent was consistently urged to maximise the numbers of unemployed men used, regardless of their expertise. In addition, he used novel and unfamiliar materials, such as cement mortar, as recommended by the Ministry of Housing at the time.<sup>624</sup> Sandys-Winsch was not alone in his difficulties with unskilled labour. The city engineer had, on more than one occasion, stated that unskilled men were unsuitable for parks schemes, and the gardening press also deplored their use, uncharitably observing that the unemployed lacked even the skill to dig.<sup>625</sup> By 1928, difficulties with absence had become so pronounced that the council introduced a reward system: a half-day holiday for every month completed without absence.<sup>626</sup>

Sandys-Winsch's workload was considerable during the 1920s. As war allotments were returned to their owners, new city allotments were acquired; gardening staff required supervision and training and designs for the parks were being produced without the benefit of technical assistance. Civic plans would usually be a team effort, with the detail filled in by junior draughtsmen: the superintendent was working alone with only a typist for support. Additionally, the process of submitting proposals for the work schemes was onerous. Funds were apportioned gradually, so that staff had to be laid off and then re-employed. It would have been a piecemeal approach to park creation that Mawson, his illustrious mentor, was unlikely to have experienced in his various schemes for wealthy private individuals and large cities.<sup>627</sup>

There is little doubt that Sandys-Winsch felt ill-served by his remuneration for, at his request, the issue of salary resurfaced in 1924. The Parks and Gardens Committee decided to resolve the matter. A comprehensive survey of park superintendents was commissioned. The document must have taken considerable time to compile, as it included the returns from twenty-six provincial authorities, including large metropolitan authorities such as Birmingham and Manchester, as well as smaller municipalities such as Bournemouth and Wolverhampton. The final chart lists population density as well as acreage of parks and staffing establishment. It is an invaluable historical record and confirmed that not only was the Norwich superintendent at the lower end of the salary

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<sup>623</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 13 September 1921.

<sup>624</sup> Norwich Records, City Hall, Captain A. Sandys-Winsch, Building specifications for Eaton Park (photocopy of original plans), Green Spaces folder.

<sup>625</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 3 October 1914.

<sup>626</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/65, 17 January 1928.

<sup>627</sup> Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, passim.

scale but that Sandys-Winsch was unusual in being expected to draw up design plans for new parks.<sup>628</sup>

In the nineteenth century park superintendents habitually drew up plans.<sup>629</sup> By the twentieth century fewer were equipped to undertake ambitious designs with a significant architectural component, although there were exceptions, such as W.W. Pettigrew at Cardiff and, later, Manchester. By the 1920s, when town-hall staffing increased exponentially, such plans, particularly those involving complex schemes and structures, became the role of the city surveyor, architect or occasionally the engineer, all of whom would have been on a much higher grading and salary than a park superintendent. Mawson, who designed a number of public parks and lectured widely on park making, was adamant that landscape design should not be undertaken by amateurs, by which he meant horticulturists and park superintendents.<sup>630</sup> By the time Sandys-Winsch started work on his last major scheme, Waterloo Park, in the late 1920s, he was subject to council criticism for delays in execution and his appeal for technical support was rejected. When he proved either unable or reluctant to prepare the plan for Waterloo Park to the agreed deadline, the council finally relented and a draughtsman was employed to support his work.<sup>631</sup>

Despite these considerable frustrations, in the early years the superintendent enjoyed a degree of latitude from both the council and Parks and Gardens Committee, possibly as a result of his particular expertise. On a number of occasions he changed his mind and was forced to rescind earlier proposals: one such was the provision of refreshments at Eaton Park. This had been leased to a private contractor, but Sandys-Winsch unwisely proposed that this could be better managed in-house. A budget and staffing detail was finally presented for approval. At a later meeting he withdrew the proposal, as it had proved impossible to achieve in the time frame. On another occasion he announced that he had undertaken research which showed that a lawn mower would prove more efficient as a means of grass cutting than the traditional use of sheep grazing and a horse-drawn mower, and was mandated to purchase a costly Dennis mower for £75. Somewhat prematurely, the horse was committed to the knackers and the cart sold.

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<sup>628</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/ 2, Feb 12, 1924, Survey of Parks Superintendents.

<sup>629</sup> Conway, *Public Parks*; Jordan, 'Public Parks'.

<sup>630</sup> *The Builder* 99 (22 October 1910), 15; Thomas H. Mawson, 'Public parks and gardens: their design and equipment', in *RIBA, Town Planning Conference, London, 10–15 October 1910: Transactions* (London: RIBA, 1911), 482–3; Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 195–221; Jordan 'Public Parks', 95–99.

<sup>631</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/65, 15 January 1929.

However, the Dennis mower failed to meet the municipal standard and again the committee had to bail him out. On this occasion there was undoubtedly a touch of hubris, as Sandys-Winsch was instructed to share the horse and harness belonging to Hellesdon Hospital, rather than being permitted to purchase a dedicated parks work-horse. In Eaton Park Sandys-Winsch recommended a novel form of surfacing for the new hard tennis courts, which later proved to be impractical. On other occasions estimates provided for the council proved to be inaccurate and Sandys-Winsch was forced to resubmit requests for funding, which elicited some pointed questioning from the council members.<sup>632</sup> In local government, tight budgeting is a prerequisite of management. These administrative weaknesses were clearly outweighed by Sandys-Winsch's many strengths, but the fact that they were recorded in the committee minutes suggests that they were a cause of some concern.

### Allotments

The committee's war-time commitment to allotments continued after the war. Although councillors were disposed to remove the allotment land from the city parks, they were keen to augment the permanent allotment holding. The newly appointed superintendent moved speedily into action and allotment land was negotiated, leased and requisitioned to meet the demand for plots and the privations of the post-war years.<sup>633</sup> In July 1921 the council was notified by MAFF (the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food) that the withdrawal of COLO war plots must be implemented by March 1923.<sup>634</sup> Plot holders in the west, south and south-east of the city were those particularly affected, and three options were agreed: to lease land back to the corporation or continue to accept rent; to give allotment holders a year's notice with the offer of compensation; to provide alternative plots.<sup>635</sup> The superintendent was mandated to persuade landlords to allow the tenancies to continue. This strategy was highly resource intensive. Not all owners were so persuadable, but the philanthropic Colmans were, predictably, one of the landlords who allowed their war-time allotments to remain in use.<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 22/3, passim.

<sup>633</sup> Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 52, 58, 89; NRO, N/TC 22/2, 1921, 1922 passim.

<sup>634</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 7 July 1921.

<sup>635</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 12 July 1921.

<sup>636</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 7 July 1921; NRO, N/TC 22/2, 9 October 1921, The Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act 1919, accessed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1919/57/enacted>.

Early in 1922 Mr Bailey was appointed as assistant to the superintendent, with a brief of overseeing the allotments.<sup>637</sup> In May 1922 the park superintendent was able to report to the committee that the Ministry of Agriculture had announced that Norwich, in proportion to its population, was second only to Leicester in the acreage of land provided for allotments.<sup>638</sup> The largest allotment authority overall was Birmingham, with its nineteenth-century tradition of ‘guinea gardens’.<sup>639</sup> Leicester had a proud record in allotment provision: in the mid-nineteenth century it had established allotments and orchards at Old Town Place and in 1845 it had an allotment society with 860 members, ‘who rent and cultivate 100 acres by spade husbandry’.<sup>640</sup> The accolade was a considerable achievement for Norwich, given its brief history as an allotment authority and its strained relationship with MAFF during the war. The notification was timely; the 1922 allotments legislation required the establishment of a separate committee to oversee allotments, with the clear expectation that the status of allotment work would be strengthened.<sup>641</sup> The Parks and Gardens Committee was reluctant to cede its new responsibility for allotments, hard-won during the war years. The matter was resolved by duplicating the membership of the new Allotments Committee, retaining the same chairman and vice-chairman; the overlapping committee meetings were frequently scheduled together for mutual member convenience.<sup>642</sup> The council moved quickly to extend its allotment estate in the wake of the ongoing site reclamations. A number of new sites were created, including some now outside the city boundary at Thorpe and Hellesdon. Hill Farm, at Sprowston in the north of the city, and Bluebell Allotments were both opened in 1924 and continue to be gardened today (Figure 40).

Norwich’s first purpose-built allotment site took shape on four fields in the then undeveloped area east of Earlham Hall and west of Heigham Park, and was laid out under the government’s new job creation programme. The council prudently decided to extend Avenue Road westwards, creating The Avenues, which bisected the allotment site. The sites thus created consequently became Bluebell North and South, named after

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<sup>637</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 14 February 1922.

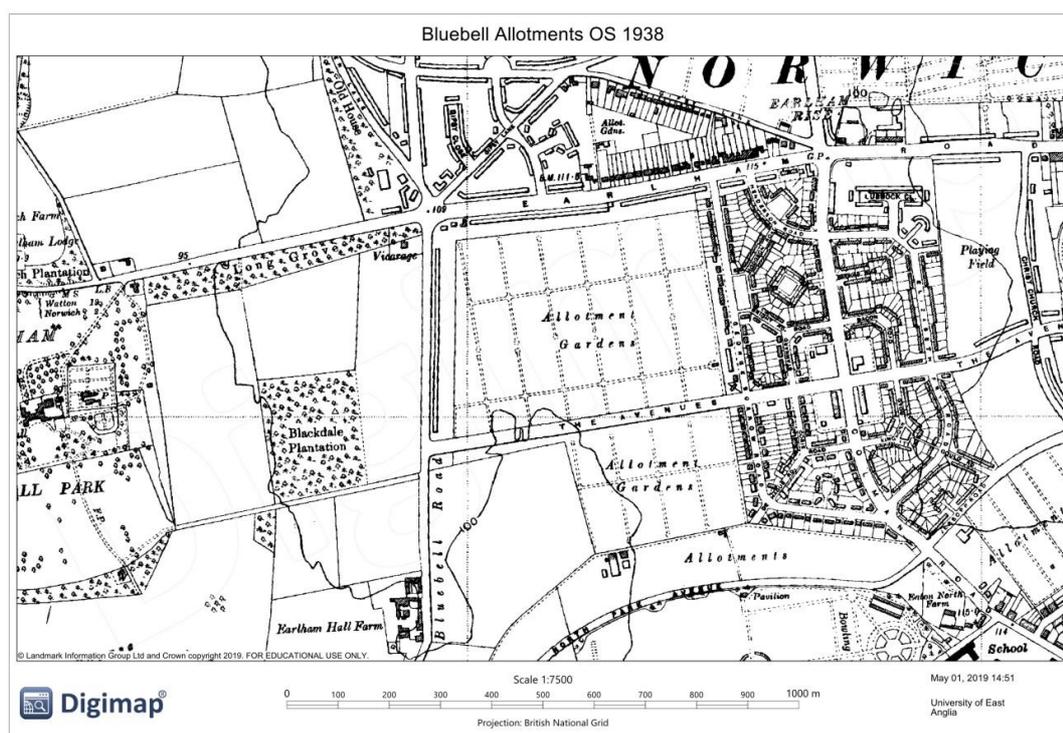
<sup>638</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 13 June 1922.

<sup>639</sup> *The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Allotments*.

<sup>640</sup> *White’s Directory of Leicester*, 1846, quoted by J. Simmons, *Leicester Past and Present*, Vol. 1 (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974).

<sup>641</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 1922, passim; Allotments Act 1922, Section 22 (see Appendix), accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/12-13/51/contents>.

<sup>642</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 23 March 1925.



**Figure 40.** Bluebell Allotments, Ordnance Survey, 1938

the sleepy lane that bounded Earlham Hall,<sup>643</sup> and were divided into 500 plots of twenty rods each, totalling seventy acres.<sup>644</sup> The plan was based on a grid, with generous pathways to provide for occasional deliveries of manure or soot and using the traditional boustrophedon numbering system.<sup>645</sup> Each of the model plots had an individual hut in an ingenious and attractive design that comprised a quarter of a larger hut, sited at point where four allotment plots met. This prevented the need for the ramshackle accommodation frequently constructed by tenants and abhorred by Sandys-Winsch. An assembly hut for tenants was also provided (Figure 41), which was initially commandeered for storage by the horticultural staff. Water was provided on-site by standpipes and there were properly constructed kerbed pathways, which allowed easy wheelbarrow access.<sup>646</sup> The committee approved £400 to lay out fruit trees, which were

<sup>643</sup> See NRO, N/EN 24/136, 24/138, 24/164: plans by G. Skipper that show that the council had considered the road extension as early as 1910; NRO, N/TC 30/1; Norwich Society, *The Bluebell Allotments*.

<sup>644</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 14 March 1922; NRO, ACC 2012/213 Box 3; the rod is an Anglo-Saxon unit of land measurement equivalent to 5½ yards.

<sup>645</sup> Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 59. Boustrophedon derives from ancient Greek writing in which the return line starts immediately below the finish word of the line above (left to right and right to left). It is occasionally used in street numbering.

<sup>646</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 14 March 1922.



**Figure 41.** Bluebell Allotments, ornamental stained glass in assembly hut (contemporary photograph, Roger Last)

planted along the main thoroughfares; there were many specialist Norfolk varieties, with the less hardy fruiteders, such as medlar and quince, planted in the shelter of the huts. The fruit trees, some of which survive today, were an inspired touch, creating a productive bounty for the plot holders as well as providing an aesthetic link with Norwich's horticultural past as an orchard city.<sup>647</sup> The beautifully designed allotments at Bluebell would have been one of the most impressive allotment sites in the country in

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<sup>647</sup> NRO, ACC 2015/182, Minutes and papers of Bluebell Model Allotments Association; Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 62.

the interwar period. Professor Thorpe's recommendations on excellence in allotment provision over forty years later echo much of the original layout of the Bluebell Allotments<sup>648</sup> (*q.v.* Chapter 7).

### Norwich Parks, Old and New

As early as 1921 the first of the major post-war designed parks was taking shape at Heigham Playing Fields, to the west of the city.<sup>649</sup> This was the forerunner of the cluster of Norwich parks that have been the main preoccupation of earlier local research.<sup>650</sup> However, in addition to undertaking the design and overseeing the labour, the superintendent was negotiating the provision with local residents, including the Heigham Playing Fields Bowling Green Committee.<sup>651</sup> Heigham Park, a site just under six acres and close by the newly developed but still embryonic Avenue Road, which ran parallel with Earlham Road and abutted Recreation Road, was the first Norwich park completed under the government's employment schemes.<sup>652</sup> Allotments flourished on the south boundary leading to the undeveloped Jessopp Road. Other sites, such as Eaton Park, were being developed simultaneously and Heigham took some time to complete. It was officially opened in 1924 and over the next ten years a number of existing parks underwent similar transformations. The original Sandys-Winsch plan for Heigham Park is no longer extant but the Ordnance Survey map of 1928, coupled with later council plans, provides a useful indication of his imaginative and individual approach to park design (Figure 42).<sup>653</sup>

Sandys-Winch was constrained in his plans for this site: a bowling green (and possibly tennis courts) was already in regular use on Heigham Playing Field and the parks superintendent had not only to ensure these spaces continued but was directed by the committee to consult with the users on the proposals.<sup>654</sup> At six acres, Heigham is the smallest of the early parks: the Ordnance Survey sheet, coupled with photographs dating largely from the 1930s, reveal Sandys-Winsch's preference for a combination of architectural classicism (or *Beaux Arts*) melded with Arts and Crafts, also favoured by

<sup>648</sup> *Report of a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments*, 278–82.

<sup>649</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 14 June 1921.

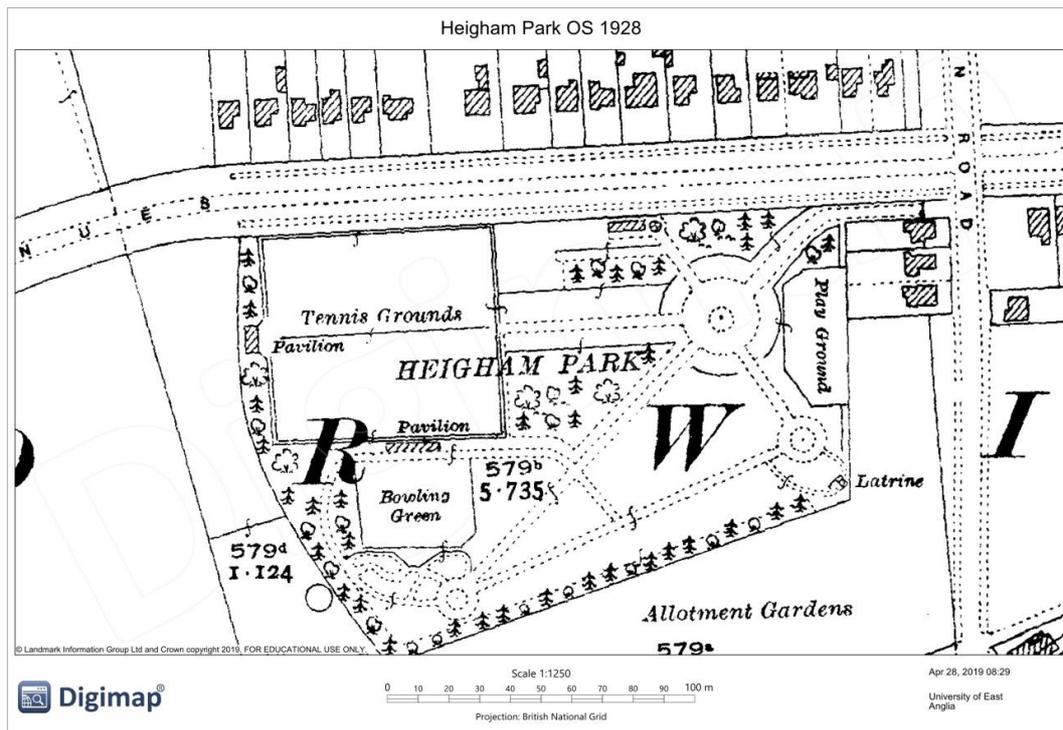
<sup>650</sup> *q.v.* Ch 1; Anderson, *The Captain*; Carlo, 'Public parks in Norwich'; Ishmael, 'Public Paradeisos'.

<sup>651</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 6 June 1921.

<sup>652</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 11 October 1921. The Unemployment Grants Committee allowed roughly two-thirds of the labour costs up to £650 for laying out the Heigham Park Scheme.

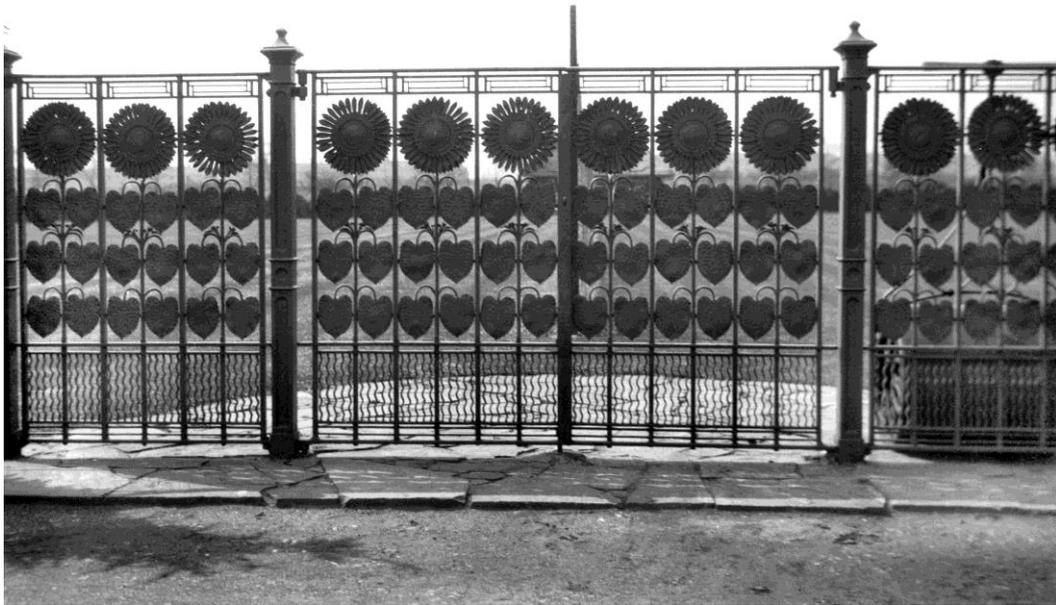
<sup>653</sup> Ordnance Survey, Norwich, 1928, 1:2500, <https://digimap.edina.ac.uk/roam/map/historic>.

<sup>654</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 10 January 1922.



**Figure 42.** Heigham Park, Ordnance Survey, 1928

his mentor Thomas Mawson. Circles with radiating avenues were a particular Sandys-Winsch characteristic, which he was to employ on a grander scale at Wensum and Eaton Parks. From the main entrance at the eastern boundary on Recreation Road (in the 1920s largely undeveloped) little is initially visible. A simple curved path leads the unsuspecting visitor to a circular rose garden containing a central pool with a simple fountain and four further vistas provided by spacious paths radiating outwards; the south and south-west paths lead to circular beds. The path from the second to the third circular bed at the west forms a pleasing triangle as the site narrows. It also disguises the latrine situated at the rear of a discreet pathway that rejoins the main path. The bowling green and grass tennis courts occupy almost a third of the site, but the design masks the sports provision beautifully, partly through the use of eye-catching vistas and walkways and partly by enclosing the greens with hedging. A stone and wood pergola divided the bowling green from the tennis courts (and on the 1928 map is shown cutting across the two pathways). The pergola artfully integrates a second pavilion that faces the bowling green, so that the casual visitor is not necessarily aware that Heigham Park is dominated by bowls and tennis courts.



**Figure 43.** Heigham Park, sunflower gates from pagoda, 1932 (georgeplunkett.co.uk)

The main vista from the circular rose garden revealed a generous double-sided herbaceous border sweeping down from the pool towards grassed courts with an attractive Arts and Crafts pavilion at the western boundary, providing the small park with a pleasing cynosure.<sup>655</sup> This walkway was clearly intended to be the dominant viewpoint and, by the 1930s, had been reinforced by new gates formed from the panels of the famous but degenerating Chapelfield Pagoda (Figure 43).

A small cluster of interlocking paths on the south-western boundary encloses a rockery (a gardenesque wilderness in miniature), although this was slightly altered after a few years and the original, rather fussy construction, seen in a contemporary photograph, was replaced by a simpler formation.<sup>656</sup> A children's play area with 'gymnastic equipment' was part of the original plan and, as the surrounding roads were developed over the following decade, proved popular with families. A handful of beech trees was left *in situ* by the superintendent and supplemented by further beeches, so that the tree-lined boundary formed a coherent whole. The 1928 Ordnance Survey map shows conifers interspersed by deciduous trees, of which a singleton remains. An avenue of lime trees accentuated the south-western pathway and generous tree planting

<sup>655</sup> J. Asher, in unpublished research on Heigham Park, suggests that sunflowers became a craze in Norwich.

<sup>656</sup> G. Plunkett, *Photographs of Norwich*, 'Third Circular Bed 1931' (B 189); 'Heigham Park Rock Garden' 1931, georgeplunkett.co.uk.

## Growing Space

shielded the small park from the new residential roads, which were to make this area of Norwich one of the most popular with middle-class home owners by the 1940s. The extensive tree planting in Heigham Park alone is evidence of the superintendent's tree-planting proclivities, which would be given full rein over his thirty-four-year tenure of the Norwich parks. In common with other Sandys-Winsch designs, the overall effect of Heigham Park is that of a romantic pleasure garden. Visitors can wander among flower beds and shrubberies, under plant-covered pergolas and between tree-lined avenues, free from the distraction of the tennis and bowls players considered by the Parks Committee to be such an important aspect of the park's genesis. It is an imaginative and successful design which has made the small park very popular over the years.

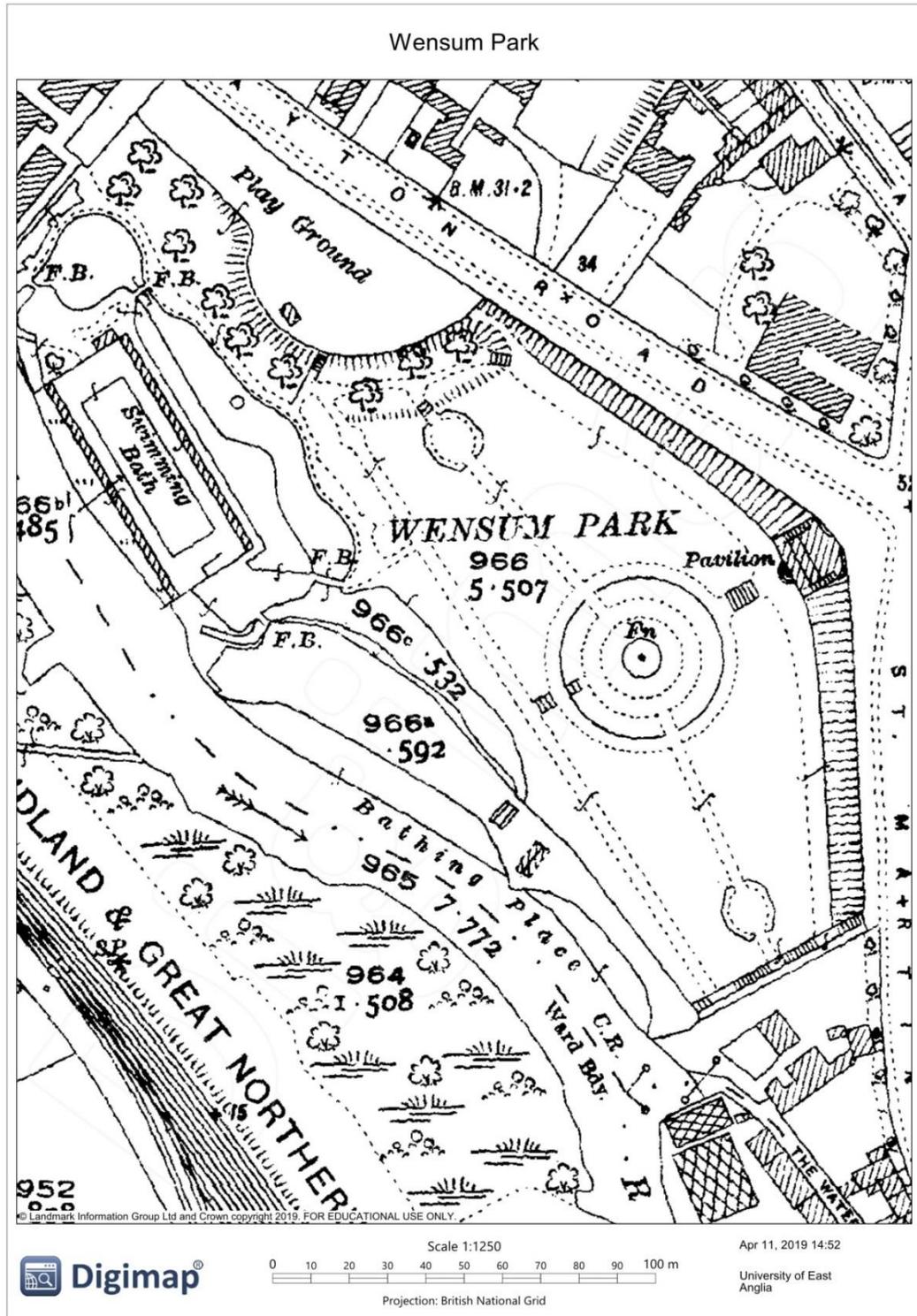
Wensum Park was the second park to be completed in this fertile period for the superintendent. This ten-acre site in the north-west of the city, off the Drayton Road, was another established public open space and particularly ripe for improvement after the war. The area, dominated by light industry on the north-western boundary and dense terraced housing to the east and south, had fallen into disrepair over the war years, when it had been used as a dump by both the council and, subsequently, local firms and residents. This deterioration of the public amenity had been of some concern to councillors and in the earlier work schemes the clearing of refuse from the grounds had been a constant refrain.<sup>657</sup> Wensum Park had the natural benefit of an undulating site and the eponymous river, which forms the park's western boundary, had previously been utilised as a public bathing pool, wading pool and swimming bath. The original plan is again lost but contemporary photographs, postcards and the 1928 Ordnance Survey (Figure 44) provide a picture of the park's redesign, which was first presented to the Parks and Gardens Committee by Sandys-Winsch in May 1924.<sup>658</sup>

The approach from the main gates at the junction of St Martin's and Drayton Road on the eastern boundary is via mirror steps that lead down from either side of a balustraded viewing platform; these return to meet below the belvedere in a classically colonnaded pavilion. Formal steps continue down and conclude at a large circular pool and fountain, accentuated by circular pathways and echoed by steps on the western approach to the pool (Figure 45). Within ten years the original water feature was replaced by another Sandys-Winsch favourite, a rose garden. The map reveals a long walkway bisecting the park, linking the north-west and the southerly areas of the park,

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<sup>657</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 14 June 1921.

<sup>658</sup> Ordnance Survey Norfolk, 'Wensum Park' 1:2500, Second Revision; Picture Norfolk: 'Wensum Park from the viewing platform'; NRO, N/TC 22/2, 13 May 1924.



**Figure 44.** Wensum Park, Ordnance Survey, 1928

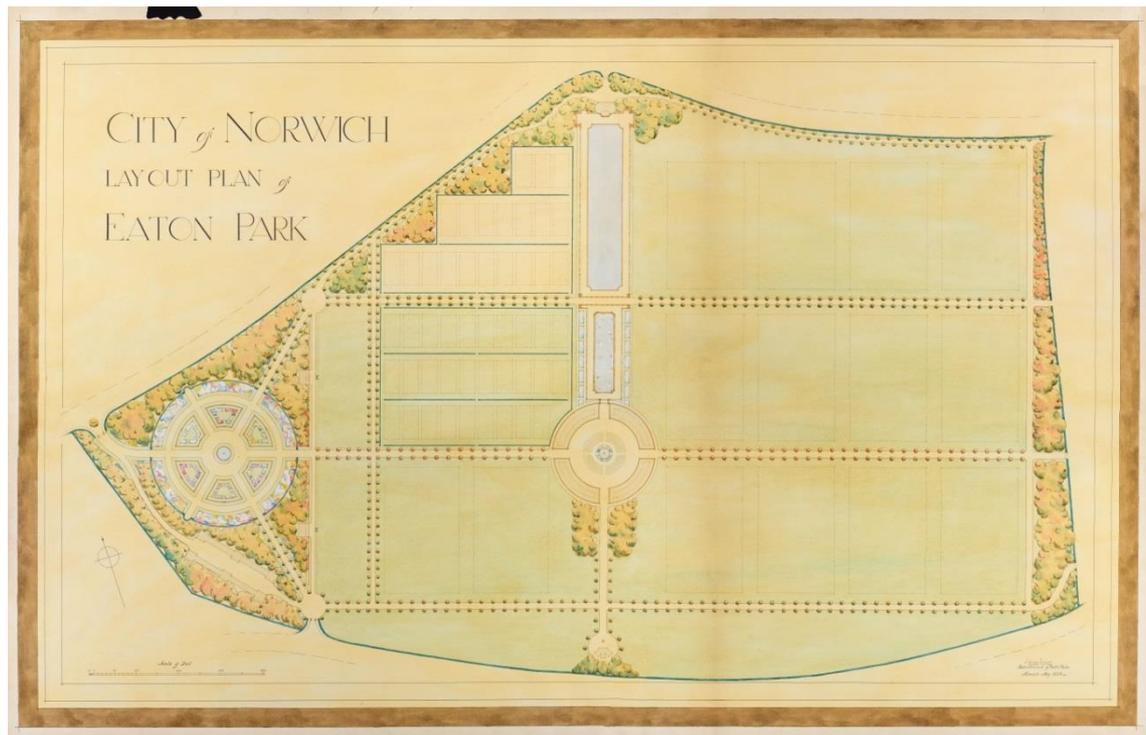
each culminating in a smaller, octagonal area of hedged flower gardens. A new watercourse was channelled from the river at the northern boundary and traversed by a number of rustic footbridges; a perimeter walkway passes through wooded copses. An extensive bog garden on the river’s western edge is visible, close by the former Midland



**Figure 45.** Wensum Park aerial photograph (Picture Norfolk)

and Great Northern Railway. A generous children's playground features at the raised north-east site boundary, level with the road, from which it can be easily accessed, and masked by planting, which in time would have rendered it invisible to the main park visitors. A large rectangular swimming bath was added to the two original paddling pools. The park was enclosed by iron railings and reopened a year after Heigham Park in 1925. The design makes felicitous use of the site's natural features, exploiting the backdrop of the river to magnificently off-set the sweep of the paths and the scale of the central pool. Despite its semi-functional role as an early 'water park', the combination of the water, informal walkways and wooded areas give a rural quality: a *rus in urbe*, which echoes some aspects of Heigham Park and sets it apart from Sandys-Winsch's more formally designed parks.

In 1924, Bluebell Road, running along the boundary of Earlham Hall, was widened and Eaton Park, which it also bordered, was formally nominated for a further employment scheme. The area to the north of the park was agreed as a major development site, as were the eastern and western boundaries. The intention was to maximise sporting facilities at this site, the largest of the existing parks. Although Eaton Park was some distance from the city walls, it was served by buses. The extant Sandys-Winsch plan is dated May 1928 (Figure 46), but the transformation of the park had



**Figure 46.** Original plan for Eaton Park, Captain Arnold Sandys-Winsch, 1928 (NRO, ACC 2013/112)

Playing Fields recommendation that local authorities adopt a minimum ratio of playing fields per capita.<sup>659</sup>

The map reveals a wide range of sporting facilities: over forty grass tennis courts, cricket and football pitches, as well as bowling greens; yet, despite the sports pitches, the overall impression is that of a grand pleasure garden.<sup>660</sup> This effect was partly achieved by placing an ornamental circular rose garden at the prime easterly position, midway between the two imposing entrances from North Park and South Park Avenues. Early on the effect may have been diluted by some existing work buildings, but these were gradually removed as other purpose-built structures were completed. The rose garden contained a simple circular pool with generous sweeping pathways bisecting beds of roses, edged with flowering plants and enclosed by hedging to provide a discrete space for reflection and enjoyment; the radiating pathways provide the illusion of a sundial (Figure 47). The eye is drawn from the pool beyond the gardens to a tree-lined avenue, which in turn leads to a grand central bandstand and circular colonnade

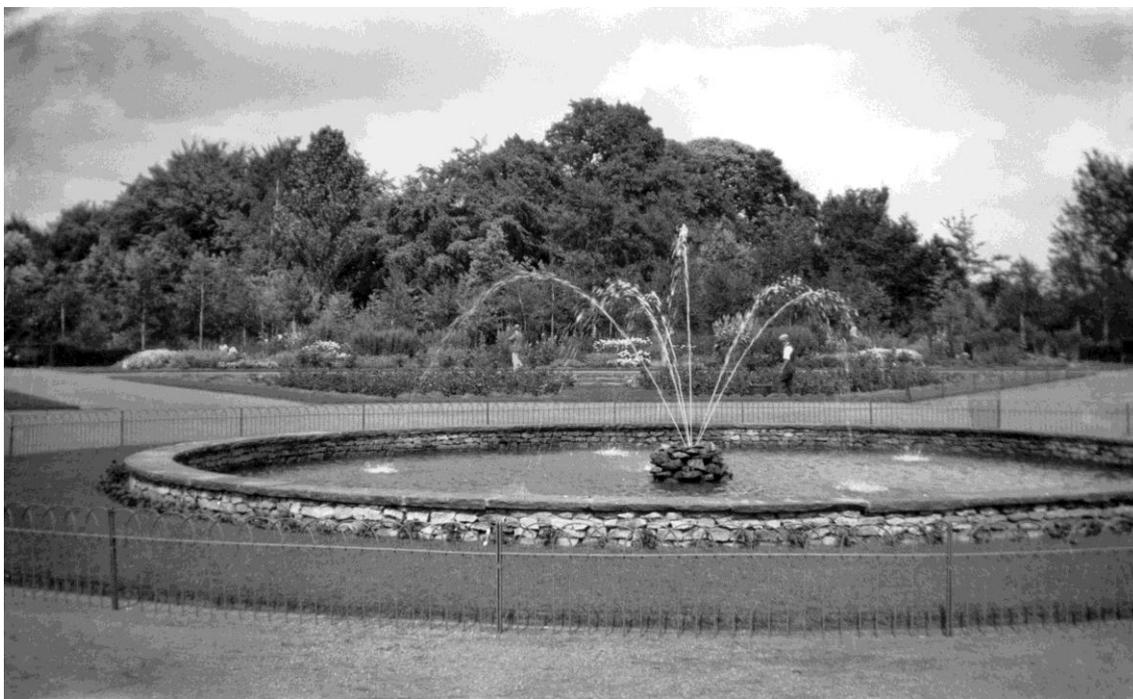
<sup>659</sup> The National Playing Fields Association, now Fields in Trust, was established in 1925 and received early royal patronage. Standards on outdoor play space were formulated at an early stage and recommended for local authorities (five acres per 1,000 persons), of which the major part should be designated for team games. See [www.fieldsintrust.org](http://www.fieldsintrust.org).

<sup>660</sup> NRO, ACC 2013/112, Eaton Park Plan by Sandys-Winsch, 1928.

## Growing Space

with ample seating space, very much in the Beaux-Arts style: a design of classical elegance, constructed entirely in concrete and which belies its utilitarian function as changing rooms and water-closets. The upper level of the colonnade also provided a viewing point that was amply exploited at the opening ceremony.

The second *pièce de résistance* was undoubtedly the much anticipated arrival of the model yacht pond, which had first surfaced in the city engineer's proposals of 1903 and which had been the subject of a well-supported petition at the turn of the century.<sup>661</sup> At one point in the design process the Town Planning Committee instructed the city engineer to excavate a site for the yacht pond; the superintendent hastily interjected that he had already designed the area.<sup>662</sup> Just as the superintendent had been instructed to consult with the local community in Heigham Park, again he was required to consult fully with the model yachtsmen. A not insignificant alteration in the pond's design was the result: a straight line rather than the gracious curve originally planned, providing a practical finishing line for the boat races that otherwise would have been scuppered by the more ornamental outline. A *tromp l'oeil* bridge divides the waterlily pool from the yacht pond and leads the eye to the bandstand, which forms the centrepiece of the park.



**Figure 47.** Eaton Park rose garden and fountain, 1931 (George Plunkett)

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<sup>661</sup> *q.v.* Chapter 3.

<sup>662</sup> NRO, N/TC 24/1, Town Planning Committee, 19 June 1925; NRO, N/TC 22/2, 12 January 1926.

The Sandys-Winsch design provides little intimation of the splendid yachting pavilion, which balances the impressive bandstand with its monumental cupola and colonnades. The imposing pavilion, with its Raj echoes in the ornamental detail, came about as the result of an eleventh-hour plea by the model yachtsmen, who had recently lost their summer house on Thorpe Island and were desperate to find replacement accommodation (Figure 48).<sup>663</sup>

The influence of the superintendent's former trainer, Thomas Mawson, then reaching the close of a celebrated career, is particularly apparent in this landscape, especially in the use of strong axial vistas punctuated by architectural formality, seen in Mawson's plan for the twelve-acre sports park at Cleethorpes on Humberside, undertaken somewhat unwillingly by him in 1905/6<sup>664</sup> (*q.v.* Chapter 1). Sandys-Winsch reinforced the classical illusion by a deceptively simple layout, majoring in straight lines that run east to west, dividing the three major sports fields with tree-lined avenues, accentuated by avenues running north to south. The abundance of avenues lining the main walkways within a predominately flat terrain contrasts with the earlier tree planting of pines and beeches clustered in a few picturesque stands at the perimeter of the park, the pines creating an effective copse between the rose garden and bowls greens. The overall effect of the sports pitches is of streamlined elegance. The location of the rose garden in the difficult triangular and foreshortened section at the east of the park provides an impressive entrance. Although it occupies a small proportion of the overall park, it influences the overall perception. The fine avenues that later bordered the tennis courts, games pitches and bowling greens; the groupings of beeches at the north of the bandstand which help to balance the yacht pavilion to the south; the wooded area around the elegant rose garden; the imposing brick-pillared and wrought-iron entrance gates: all create the illusion of private parkland rather than municipal sports fields and reveal that Sandys-Winsch was incapable of providing utility without elegance.

The post-war government was keen to encourage the use of new materials. Addison had recommended concrete and steel construction, partly because such materials were cheaper than costly brick. Such materials did not require the same level of individual craftsmanship, but they did require exactitude in specification and use and

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<sup>663</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 11 January 1927; 12 April 1927.

<sup>664</sup> Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 196.



**Figure 48.** Yachting pavilion, Eaton Park, 1928 (Picture Norfolk)

the superintendent applied these construction techniques for the ambitious Norwich improvement works.<sup>665</sup> The plans reveal the complexity of the technical task involved and the amount of work required in advance preparation, in addition to the oversight of the construction work and landscaping (Figure 49). The engineering for the construction of the water system was, however, outsourced to an engineer.<sup>666</sup>

It was as a sports ground that Eaton Park first came to national prominence. In 1926 General Kentish, the much-decorated secretary of the National Playing Fields Association, visited Norwich in the company of the lord lieutenant (the earl of Leicester) and Walter Hansell (the originator of the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society). Kentish was so impressed by the amenities of Eaton Park that he asked for a set of maps in order to promote Norwich as a model achievement in the provision of civic recreational space.<sup>667</sup> It was also one of the last times that the NPF OSS was

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<sup>665</sup> Norwich City Council Records, Green Spaces Records, Eaton Park Folder: Norwich Heritage Lottery Fund proposal 1995: copies of original construction specifications for the Eaton Park bandstand, colonnade and yacht pavilion.

<sup>666</sup> Norfolk Heritage Centre, Box XI, 'Kelly Engineering Map for Eaton Park', 1926.

<sup>667</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 12 January 1926.

mentioned in connection with the financial development of the city's parks, its *raison d'être* realised. It was noted that it had recently become affiliated to the National Playing Fields Association.<sup>668</sup>

**Figure 49.** Detailed specification for the Eaton Park Colonnade, Sandys-Winsch (Green Spaces Department, City Hall)



Norwich achieved another public relations coup by inviting the Prince of Wales to preside at the official opening ceremony on 30 May 1928.<sup>669</sup> The protocol for the future king's visit was established in liaison with the council and the mayor, and the members of the Parks and Gardens Committee were assigned preferential seating for the ceremony.<sup>670</sup> Tickets were allocated for the roof of the colonnade (Figure 50), from which the view would have been spectacular. As part of the preparation it was agreed that there would be a tour of the facilities, and the superintendent, with military

<sup>668</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 12 January 1926.

<sup>669</sup> Picture Norfolk, souvenir programme of the Royal Visit.

<sup>670</sup> *q.v.* Chapter 3.



**Figure 50.** Lily pond, colonnades and band stand, Eaton Park, 1931  
(georgeplunkett.co.uk)

flourish, pledged that he would arrange for the model yachts to be sailing on the lake at the very moment the Prince of Wales passed by.<sup>671</sup> The status of the parks superintendent in 1928 was at its zenith. Contemporaneous photographs show Sandys-Winsch on the right hand of the prince during the tour of the park. At one point a trio of gardeners was presented.<sup>672</sup> The committee, in a burst of patriotic enthusiasm and unusual generosity, decreed that the Eaton park-keepers could be granted a day's holiday following the ceremony 'at the parks superintendent's discretion'.<sup>673</sup>

Mile Cross Gardens was one of the smallest of the green spaces created by Sandys-Winsch in the 1920s. The gardens were also one of the most significant, largely as a result of their genesis, which was part of an innovative city housing scheme in the north of the city, sandwiched between Wensum Park to the west and Waterloo Park to the east. Most of the pre-war housing schemes in the city had been the result of entrepreneurial private developers. Nevertheless, new ideas had gradually percolated their way into the mainstream of civic planning. Historically, both Liberal and Conservative politicians had largely avoided the matter of social housing for the poor.

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<sup>671</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 19 April 1928.

<sup>672</sup> Picture Norfolk, photographs of the opening ceremony 1928.

<sup>673</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 19 April 1928.

The streets and terraces outside the city walls were largely occupied by skilled artisans and the rising middle classes; the poor remained concentrated in sub-standard, crowded and unhealthy conditions within the city walls. In 1919, the year of the parks superintendent's appointment, the medical officer had reported that at least 4000 dwellings in the city were grossly inadequate.<sup>674</sup> The scale of the impoverished local conditions, the changing political complexion in the council and the prospect of government subsidy pushed the council to respond dynamically to the city's housing needs. It acquired four large sites for house building in the vicinity of public green space: Harford Hall, south of the city with Harford Hall Park nearby; Earlham to the west, close by Eaton Park; Angel Road, the location of Waterloo Park in the northern suburb, and Mile Cross in the north-west. Having taken its time to commit to social housing, the speed of the new building programme suggested a city galvanised into action. By 1921 the town clerk was able to report that over 1200 council houses had been completed, a considerable achievement as the city had started from such a low base and minimal experience.<sup>675</sup> Nottingham vaunted almost 1500 houses under the same legislation but was, by that time, over twice the size of Norwich.<sup>676</sup>

Professor Stanley Adshead, professor of civic planning at University College, London, was an imaginative appointment to oversee development in the Norwich suburbs. He was a proponent of Howard's garden city movement but was committed to ensuring that, unlike in Letchworth Garden City, Bedford Park and Hampstead Garden Suburb, Howard's principles should be economically applied to social housing. In conjunction with four local architects, he set about producing the designs for the new Norwich estates, including Mile Cross (Figure 51).<sup>677</sup> All four developments were close by existing parks and all were endowed with broad tree-lined streets and generous grass verges, but in Mile Cross the parks superintendent became directly involved. The names of Adshead and Sandys-Winsch are used interchangeably in a number of references to the design, but the boundary footprint of the gardens is Adshead's outline plan of the area and the layout of the gardens the work of Sandys-Winsch. The Parks and Gardens Committee authorised the garden plan, with the judicious caveat that it was to be topped

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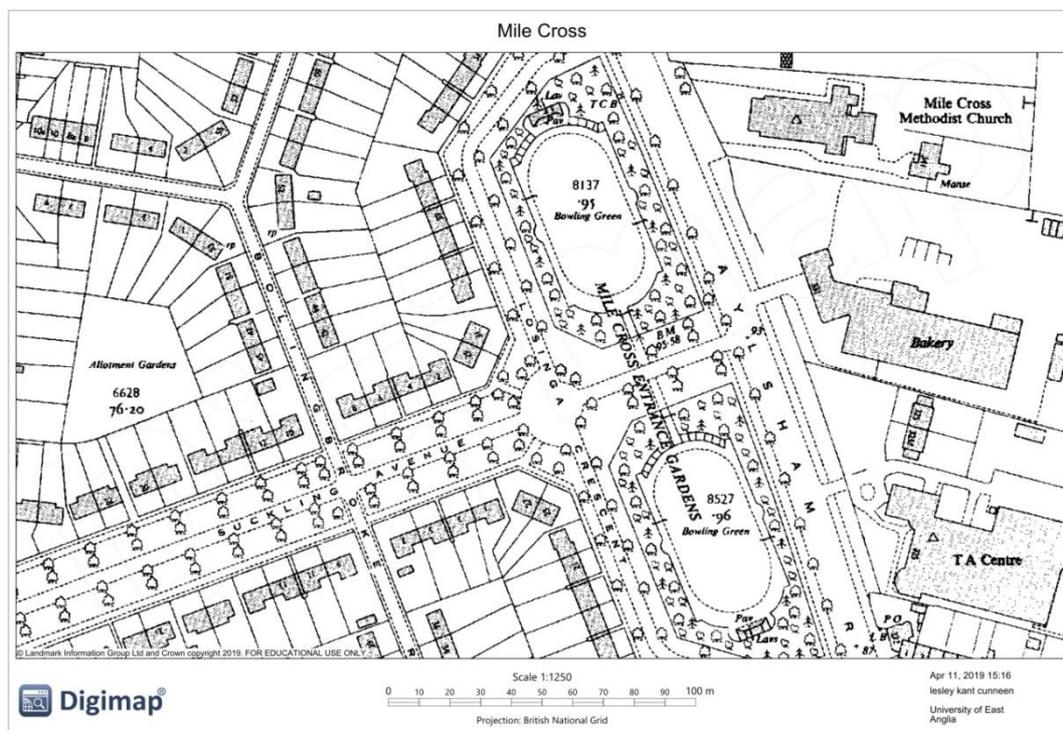
<sup>674</sup> Holmes and Holmes, *Old Courts and Yards of Norwich*, 11.

<sup>675</sup> Holmes and Holmes, *Courts and Yards*.

<sup>676</sup> R. Smith and P. Whysall, 'The Addison Act and the Local Authority Response: Housing Policy Formulation and Implementation in Nottingham 1917–1922', *Town Planning Review* 61.2 (1990), 185; *Census, 1921*, accessed at [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table/EW1921GEN\\_M13](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table/EW1921GEN_M13).

<sup>677</sup> Norwich City Council, *Mile Cross Conservation Area Appraisal June 2009*.

up by the city's Unemployment Committee, which oversaw the disposal of the grants.<sup>678</sup>  
 The overall cost of the gardens was £4873, of which £3095 was labour costs, with a governmental contribution of £1840.<sup>679</sup>



**Figure 51.** Mile Cross Gardens, Ordnance Survey, 1938

The resulting two mirror gardens at Mile Cross, each of an acre, used some of the design features that were to become recognisably Sandys-Winsch. Suckling Avenue became the main entry road leading directly into the new estate from Aylsham Road and was endowed with a generous boulevard: the houses were set well back from the road, divided from the highway by wide green swards, with paired avenues of trees lining the verges. The development itself was symmetrical, employing sweeping curves, and the two intimate public gardens were arranged on each side of the gracious avenue with identical entrance pavilions, in classical formula, with pediments and columns. These in turn led to brick and wood Arts and Crafts pergolas covered with climbing plants. Sunken bowling greens, flower borders and yew hedging completed the enclosed gardens. The gardens provided an attractive entry point into Mile Cross, which was designed with civic amenities as an integral part of the estate and included a school,

<sup>678</sup> Norwich City Council, *Mile Cross Conservation Area Appraisal June 2009*.

<sup>679</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 19 November 1925; *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 May 1929.



**Figure 52.** Terracing on Mile Cross Estate, (NRO, Norwich Plan)

a library, shops, allotments, gardens, a church and a community hall, reflecting the spirit of Ebenezer Howard if not the overall concept.<sup>680</sup> The houses themselves echoed the design of privately built houses elsewhere in the city and employed local building materials, such as red brick (Figure 52). The houses had three or five bedrooms, and all were equipped with indoor bathrooms. Mile Cross is significant because it translated a number of the garden city concepts into a city council estate and Norwich was one of the first authorities in the country to integrate such thinking into a municipal mainstream housing programme.<sup>681</sup> In May 1929 H.P. Gowan, the lord mayor, formally opened the gardens, stating that ‘he did not see why a man living in a council house should not have as close as possible to his home such pleasant public gardens as were now provided at Mile Cross’.<sup>682</sup> This democratic leitmotif was to influence city planning and recreational provision over the following ten years and would only be eroded by the Second World War.

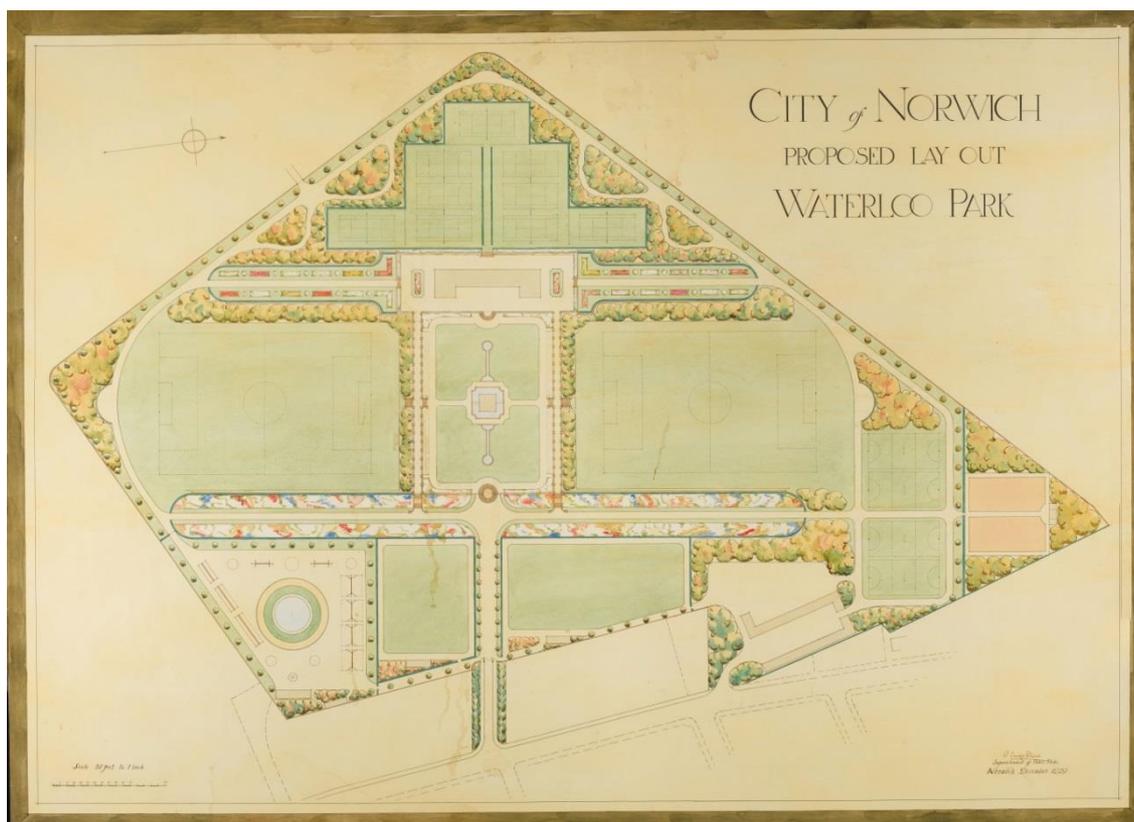
<sup>680</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 May 1929: ‘Mile Cross Gardens’.

<sup>681</sup> Norwich City Council, *Mile Cross Conservation Area Appraisal June 2009*.

<sup>682</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 May 1929.

## Growing Space

The plan for Waterloo Park is dated December 1929 (Figure 53) and redevelopment took place from 1931 to 1933.<sup>683</sup> Unlike Eaton Park, which was to prove the focus for later housing, Waterloo Park was in a well-populated residential area to the north of the city. As with Eaton Park, it had previously been used for some sports, although football had been specifically excluded. The new design included tennis courts, netball courts, bowling greens and football pitches. The eighteen-acre site is dominated by two structures: an elevated two-storey pavilion, which faces east to an unadorned bandstand. At first sight the art deco pavilion appears a more modest

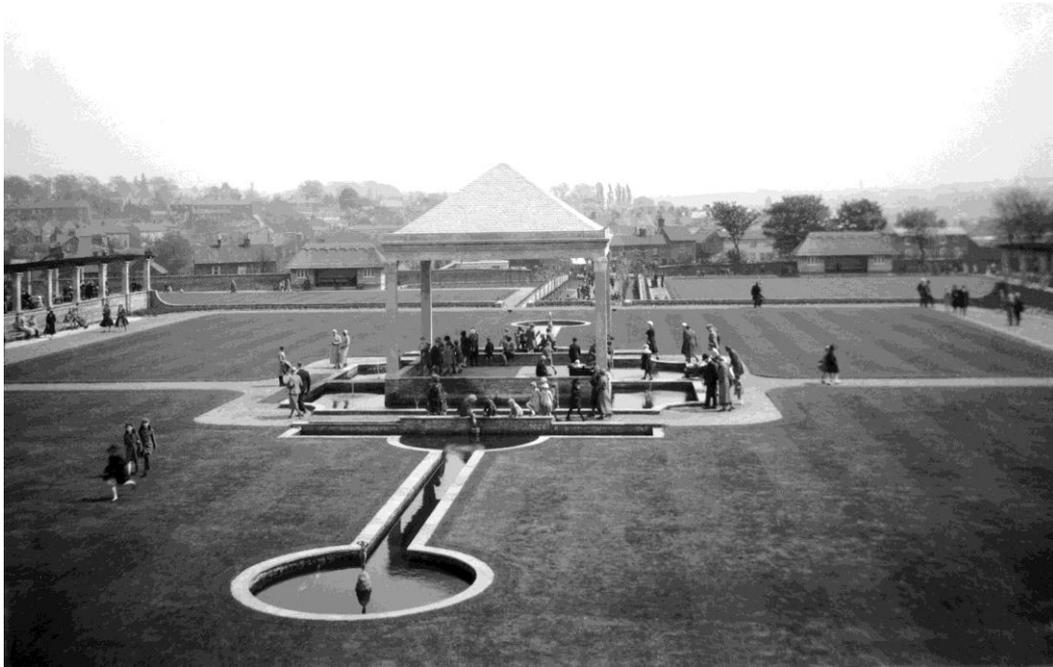


**Figure 53.** Original plan for Waterloo Park, Sandys-Winsch, 1929 (NRO, ACC 2013/112)

construction than the Eaton Park extravaganza, but the detailing is subtle rather than ostentatious, with large rectangular windows on the ground floor off-set by curved wooden relief. This curvature is echoed on the first-floor windows and an iron balcony runs along the front elevation with a classical balustrade at the roof line. The design is ingenious, as the roof encloses a garden terrace, accessed from the first floor, with lights set into the first-floor ceiling, which was originally conceived as a palm or garden court.

<sup>683</sup> NRO, ACC 2013/112, Captain A. Sandys-Winsch, Superintendent of Public Parks 1931, Map 'Waterloo Park'; contemporary postcards in the Salt Collection (NRO).

The simple bandstand, consisting of four pillars and a tiled roof, is eye-catching because of its locus, marooned on a dais set within a square pool with rills to the west and east and approached via narrow stone paths (Figure 54). The overall concept is a watery conceit. Sandys-Winsch later disowned the bandstand, stating that his original design (probably more ornate than the later model) was replaced by a plainer design from the city architect's department.<sup>684</sup>



**Figure 54.** Waterloo Park bandstand from pavilion roof (georgeplunkett.co.uk)

As with Sandys-Winsch's other designs, a tree-lined avenue leads the eye from the main easterly entrance in Angel Road to the central bandstand and the pavilion, which cleverly masks an intriguing zigurat of tennis courts, another contemporary stylistic influence. Two impressive raised stone and wood pergolas, similar in style to those in Heigham Park, enclose the bandstand area and a boundary path encircles the park. To the south-west is an attractive paved area with a Sandys-Winsch statement circular pool. A lavish 300-foot herbaceous border bisects the park from north to south, making a significant impression on the many visitors the park attracted. The design is elaborate, with a myriad flower beds lining the sports pitches, providing the overall effect of a pleasure garden. Waterloo Park would have required considerable maintenance from the city's team of skilled gardeners in its heyday: it was a

<sup>684</sup> *Norfolk News and Norwich Mercury*, 29 May 1953: 'Retirements Interview with Captain Sandys-Winsch'.

horticulturally flamboyant park, much praised at its opening and consequently much simplified over the last thirty years.<sup>685</sup>

Despite these signal achievements in the transformation of the existing park estates, the most significant long-term recreational acquisition by Norwich proved not to be the Sandys-Winsch-designed parks but the council's purchase of Earlham Hall and its parkland in 1925.

### **The Earlham Hall Estate and Other Acquisitions**

The historic hall and parkland (Figures 55–57) had strong local connections, particularly to the influential Gurney family (*q.v.* Chapter 2).<sup>686</sup> The estate occupied a rural position on the city's westernmost boundary at Colney. It was bounded by the River Yare and possessed fine parkland, woods and pleasure gardens, which had attracted horticultural interest some five years earlier, when Mr Morris, the then tenant, had hosted an illustrious gathering of the National Rose Society.<sup>687</sup> By the mid-1920s city development had yet not reached Bluebell Road.<sup>688</sup> The historic house, along with the surrounding gardens and parkland, was first mentioned as a possible sale in 1924 and the council expressed an immediate interest in its acquisition, with the town clerk conducting the negotiations.<sup>689</sup> The city was not the only urban area extending its recreational estate in this post-war period. Eastbourne Corporation purchased the Manor House and its nine-acre gardens to extend Gildredge Park, which it had purchased in 1908,<sup>690</sup> Nottingham purchased the spectacular Elizabethan mansion of Wollaton Hall and park in 1924,<sup>691</sup> affluent Birmingham, which had previously been blessed with numerous and generous park donations, purchased Pype Hayes Hall and parkland in two stages in 1920 and 1928,<sup>692</sup> and Ipswich Corporation, which already boasted Christchurch Mansion and part of its parkland, acquired the upper and lower arboretums over five years in the 1920s.<sup>693</sup> The Parks and Gardens Committee, which had become

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<sup>685</sup> NRO, ACC 2013/112, Map 'Waterloo Park'.

<sup>686</sup> Earlham Hall Grade II\* Historic England Listed Building register reference 229031. Listed in 1954.

<sup>687</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 19 July 1919, 'Meeting of the National Rose Society'.

<sup>688</sup> Ordnance Survey 1926, Earlham Hall.

<sup>689</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 9 September 1924.

<sup>690</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 19 May 1923, 273.

<sup>691</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 22 November 1924, 358.

<sup>692</sup> C. Chinn, *Free Parks for the People: A History of Birmingham's Municipal Parks 1844–1974* (Brewin Books 2012), 128.

<sup>693</sup> <https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/content/history-park>.

increasingly predatory in its search for new green spaces, was quick to respond to the possibility of another acquisition and signalled a strong claim for the grounds.<sup>694</sup>



**Figure 55.** Earlham Hall, pre-1910 (Jarrolds post-card, Picture Norfolk)

In 1925, as soon as the conveyance had been completed, the Parks Committee paid a speedy inspection visit to assess the scope of the estate for recreational use. Initially, councillors had envisaged that the gardens, greenhouses and parkland alone would become part of the parks' portfolio, but following the visit the committee conveyed its readiness to assume responsibility for the entire estate, including the hall, the gardeners and, somewhat incongruously, the butler, who appeared to have been included as part of the sale package. The committee recommended that the seventy-six acres of parkland and thirty-five acres of woodland, which included the areas of Blackdale Plantation, The Heronry, Violet Grove and Long Grove, should come under the aegis of the Parks Committee and expressed the view that a further fifty-three acres could be used to create a municipal golf course. A municipal golf course had long been a council

<sup>694</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 10 February, 10 March 1925.

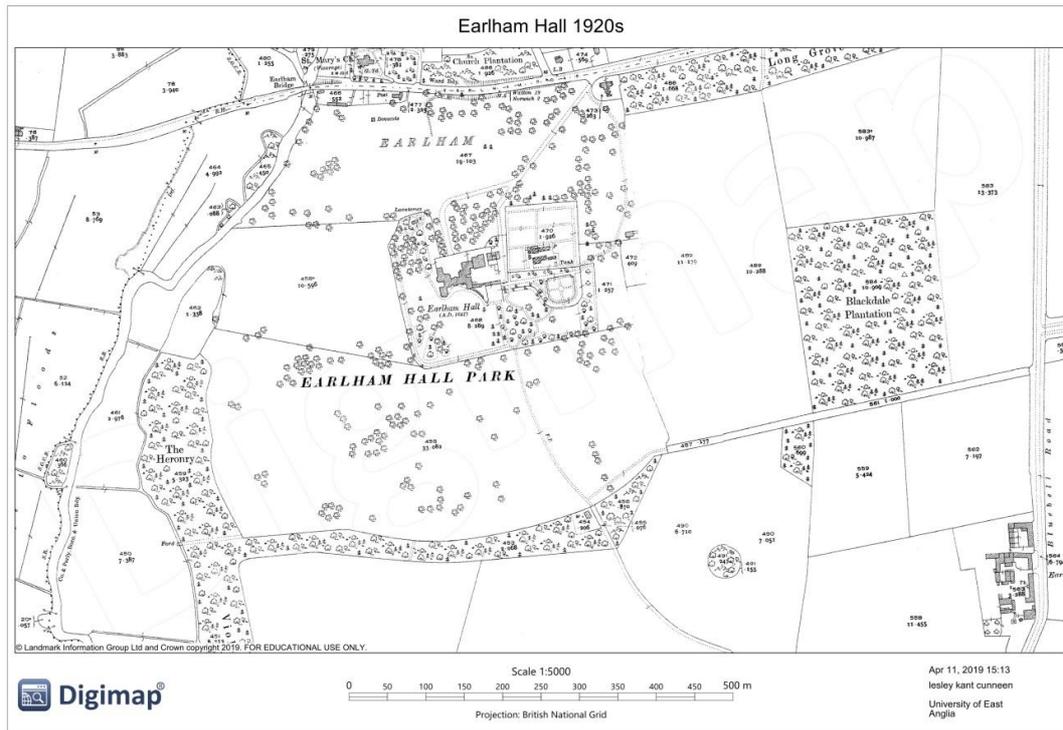


Figure 56. Earlham Hall and parkland, Ordnance Survey, 1928



Figure 57. Earlham Hall parkland (Jarrols post-card, collection of Peter Salt)

aspiration and this may have been a motivation for the purchase.<sup>695</sup> Land at Nottingham's Wollaton Hall had recently been designated for a municipal golf course.<sup>696</sup>

Other council committees also had aspirations for the hall. The Town Planning Committee was given the task of deciding how the buildings were to be allocated as, inevitably, other claims had surfaced. Eventually it was agreed that the hall should be shared: Parks and Gardens was assigned the lion's share, largely for staffing use and the essential lavatories; Museums won space for a nature museum; and Libraries were assigned a library outpost. The purchase proved highly popular within the council: applications for the use of the house and gardens were not long to surface, councillors considering that the attractive environment would enhance a number of personal community projects.<sup>697</sup> Alderman Wood made an early request to use the hall for a children's gala to celebrate the jubilee of the cooperative movement in Norwich. The Parks Committee, which had become proprietary about their holdings since the war, pompously stated that, were a formal request to be submitted, the park would 'not be closed against the general public' and in a populist move speedily agreed to open the grounds to the public from 24 July 1925, daily from 11 o'clock.<sup>698</sup> This was not purely expedient: the Parks Committee had traditionally been advocates for increasing public access from its earliest inaugurations and had proved robust on public access on numerous other occasions, even during the war years.<sup>699</sup>

The gardens and the parkland were a great success with members of the public. The bus services to Earlham and Bluebell Roads were extended to the hall gates in the summer months and photographs from the 1930s reveal the high standard of horticulture maintained by the gardening team.<sup>700</sup> The herbaceous borders, sunken rose garden and rock garden, on the edge of the tranquil, well-wooded parkland, afforded an idyllic experience (Figure 58). The coveted greenhouses boosted municipal propagation work and the hall and grounds provided the council with ample space to stage civic functions.

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<sup>695</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 23 March 1925.

<sup>696</sup> Mellors, *Gardens, Parks and Walks*, 75–8.

<sup>697</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 23 March, 14 April 1925.

<sup>698</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 14 July 1925.

<sup>699</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 10 June 1924; 6 July 1924; 11 November 1924.

<sup>700</sup> *Norwich Official Guide* 1939, 55.



**Figure 58.** Rose garden, Earlham Hall, Jarrolds post-card, collection of Peter Salt

It was not long before the city grasped a further opportunity to increase the land-holding of the Earlham Hall estate.<sup>701</sup> In 1928 Earlham Hall Farm, close to the Bluebell Road boundary, came up for sale: 193 of its 289 acres had initially been leased and this additional land nicely rounded off the council's estate holding. Following the purchase, forty-three acres were allocated to the Parks and Gardens Committee's portfolio and the extra land provided the momentum for the development of the new golf course.<sup>702</sup> The golf landscapers, Hawtree and Taylor, were employed to design the layout of the course and the parks superintendent was placed in charge of the £33,000 project.<sup>703</sup> The work took three years to complete and the full-sized, eighteen-hole course was finally opened in 1932 by the Lord Mayor G.E. White, who played the opening drive.<sup>704</sup> The golf course was to consume a large part of the parkland and not all approved of the change of use. The council's purchase of the hall was described as ambitious and visionary (or

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<sup>701</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 9 June 1925.

<sup>702</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/65, 11 April 1928.

<sup>703</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 10 February 1931.

<sup>704</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 9 February 1932.

profligate and grandiose), depending on contemporary opinion.<sup>705</sup> The course was known as the Norwich Municipal Golf Club, was subsidised by the council for most of its existence and was originally intended to cater for the working-class residents who found private clubs too expensive. It is moot whether this was the outcome; for most of the interwar years the course attracted a small membership of approximately 140. Given the council's commitment to accessibility and public use, it is intriguing that such a large proportion of the Earlham Park grounds was given over to a middle-class sport. It may be significant that many councillors were golfers, and Sandys-Winch was an early club secretary.<sup>706</sup> Nevertheless, although the estate was purchased at a time of considerable financial stringency, the Earlham Hall grounds were to become a much-loved and well-used public leisure space, although the golf course consumed an inordinate amount of the committee's time.

During this productive interwar period Sandys-Winch was instructed to provide two further designs for brand new parks, one of which was gifted by another local resident. The Jeremiah Woodrow Memorial Ground was a donation by Mary Pilling in memory of her late father, who had left the city some decades earlier but had retained fond memories of Norwich. Mrs Pilling initially offered the council £3000 to purchase an appropriate site, with the prospect of some further funding to assist with the layout.<sup>707</sup> By the mid-1920s land costs in Norwich had soared and the parks superintendent, who was charged with the search, had some difficulty in locating an appropriate parcel of land. Land at Harvey Lane, to the east of the city, was eventually found, and the ten-acre park was opened in 1929, 100 years after Jeremiah had departed Norwich as a young man.<sup>708</sup> The design shows nine tennis courts and two football pitches, with a large, raised ornamental shrubbery with steps and paving at the eastern boundary, a pavilion at the west and an ornamental flower bed running along the full northern boundary, punctuated at the corners with shrubs (Figure 59). The ten-acre park was later renamed Woodrow Pilling Park in 1937 at a ceremony attended by HRH

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<sup>705</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 25 March 1925.

<sup>706</sup> Earlham Park Golf Club Norwich (1931–66) accessed at [https://www.golfsmissinglinks.co.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=613](https://www.golfsmissinglinks.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=613); M. Sanderson, *The History of the University of East Anglia, Norwich* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2002); NRO, N/TC 1/, Norwich City Council, October 1959.

<sup>707</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 9 February 1926.

<sup>708</sup> NRO, ACC 2004/113, A. Sandys-Winch, 'The Jeremiah Woodrow, Memorial Recreation Ground'; NRO, N/TC 22/2, 13 July 1926.

## Growing Space

Princess Mary, the sister of Edward VIII, who had earlier launched Eaton Park to great publicity.<sup>709</sup>

The Hellesdon Recreation Ground, as with Mile Cross, was the result of the city's expansion into social housing. The area selected for the Hellesdon estate was Drayton Road and, although Wensum and Waterloo Parks were fairly close by, the city's vision still lay along garden suburb lines, with integrated recreational space as well as shops, schools and other community facilities. As soon as the purchase of between twenty and forty acres of land was proposed, the chairman of the Parks and Gardens Committee restated the importance of ensuring that recreational space should be factored into the plan, given the heavily populated area.<sup>710</sup> The result was a ten-acre site and scope for another Sandys-Winsch design, which included eight tennis in a centrally raised position with steps on either side, leading to six football pitches. The plan shows the site bordered by a tree-lined avenue, with a central classical pavilion at the eastern entrance



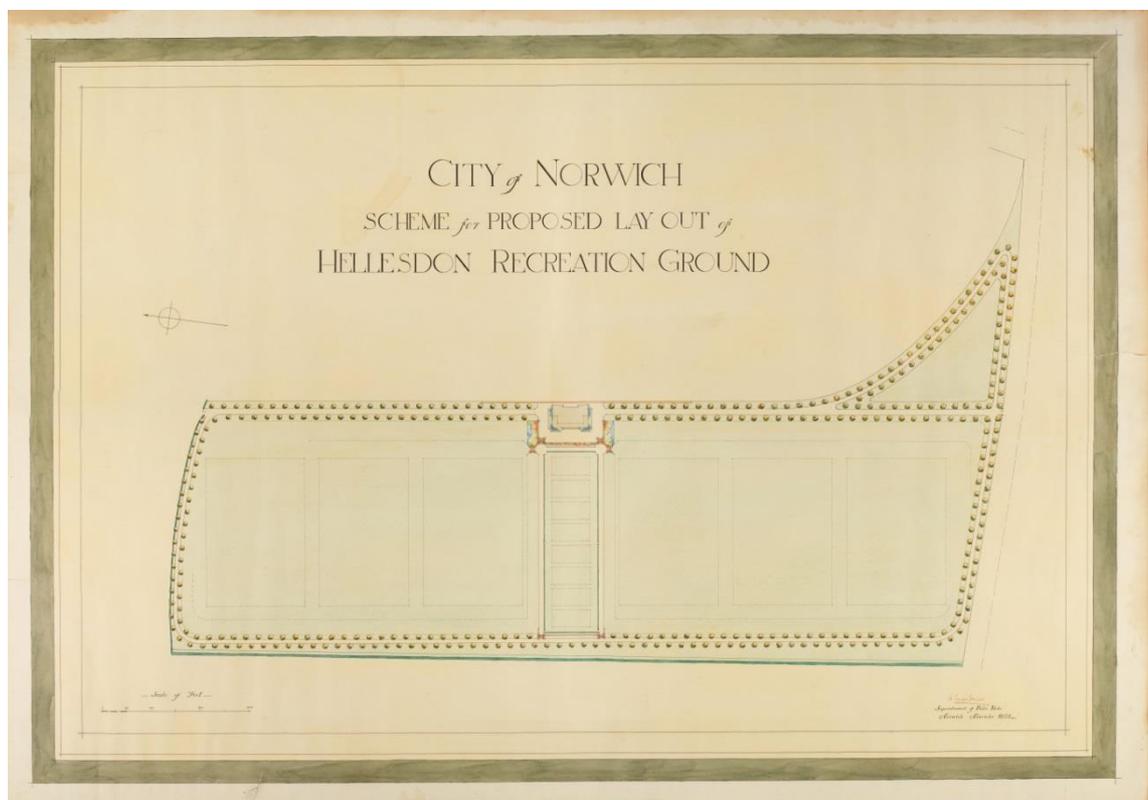
**Figure 59.** Original plan for Jeremiah Woodrow Memorial Recreation Ground (Pilling Park), Sandys-Winsch, 1928 (NRO, ACC 2004/113)

<sup>709</sup> Metal commemorative plaque, Woodrow Pilling Park.

<sup>710</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 9 December 1924.

dominating the park and ornamental flower beds surrounding the pavilion (Figure 60).<sup>711</sup> At one stage, the newly formed Town Planning Committee intervened to instruct Sandys-Winsch that his design for the pavilion should be undertaken in liaison with the council architects; whether this occurred is moot.<sup>712</sup> The development was delayed because of funding difficulties but was finally opened in 1932, close by the track of the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway.<sup>713</sup> In the 1950s it was renamed Sloughbottom Park.

In addition to these parks, Sandys-Winsch's talents were utilised in laying out numerous smaller projects, such as churchyard gardens and at least one school sports ground, the Blyth School at Constitution Hill, close to Sewell Park (Figure 61). The resulting design shows eight tennis and three netball courts set within a largely

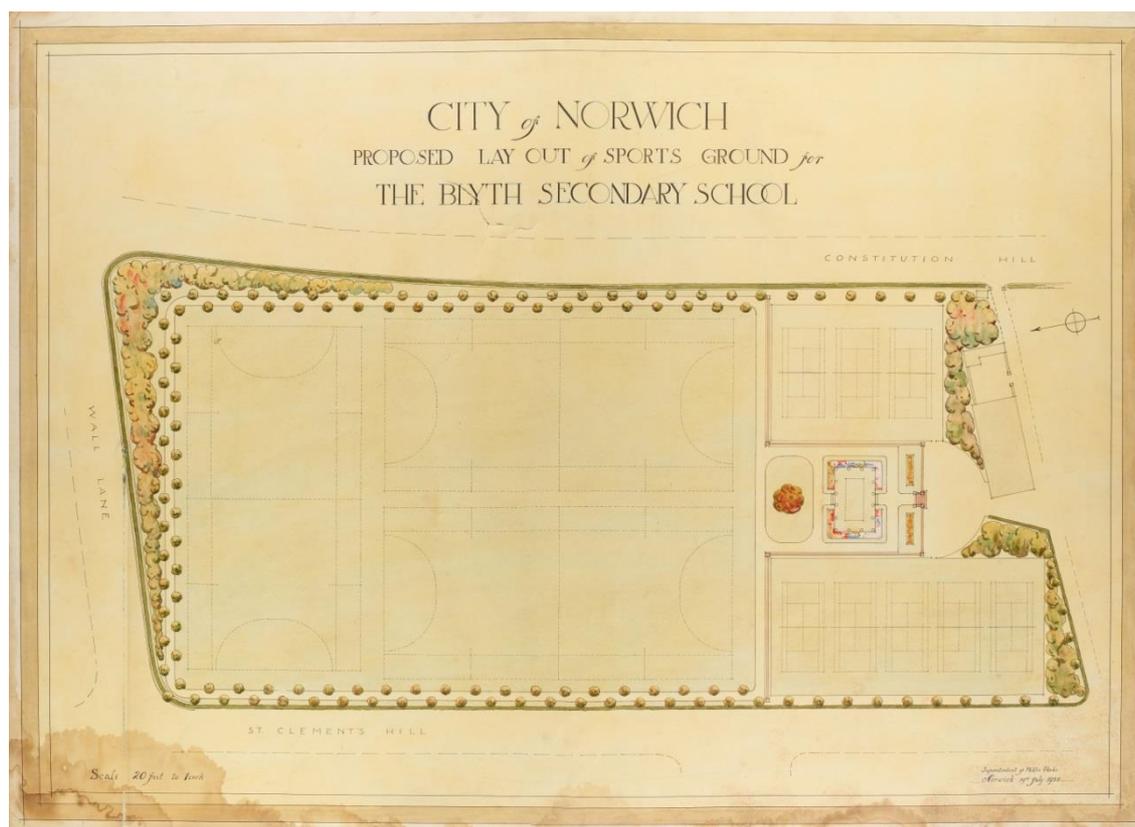


**Figure 60.** Original plan for Hellesdon Recreation Ground, Sandys-Winsch, 1928 (NRO ACC 2013/112)

<sup>711</sup> NRO, ACC/2013/112, A. Sandys-Winsch, 'Hellesdon Recreation Ground', 1928.

<sup>712</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 8 October 1928.

<sup>713</sup> NRO, N/TC 1/65, 15 January 1929; NRO, N/TC 52/26.



**Figure 61.** Original plan for Blyth Secondary School Sports Ground, Sandys-Winsch, 1928 (NRO ACC 2004/113)

rectangular plot framed by an avenue of trees and extensive shrubberies at the north and south boundaries. Enclosed by the tennis courts is a paved sunken garden with flower beds and a single specimen tree, creating a haven for post-activity relaxation.

A number of smaller additions to the parks estate were made during the interwar period, including a compact recreation ground at Hall Road, Lakenham, in the grounds formerly used by the Waterworks Company.<sup>714</sup> The James Stuart Gardens, originally donated during the First World War, were finally completed in 1922 when the Norwich architect E.T. Boardman (son of Edward Boardman) designed an imposing gateway combined with office space (Figure 62). The Parks and Gardens Committee's attitude to the bequest was churlish. It complained that the delay was caused by an insufficient endowment in Mrs Stuart's legacy. In fact, the gardens were completed only after the Colman family made up 'the deficiency' in 1921.<sup>715</sup> Six months later the committee pointedly enquired about the cost of maintaining the modest site. Boardman's grandiose entrance for his sister-in-law's donation was possibly compensation for the committee's

<sup>714</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 11 April 1933.

<sup>715</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 1922, 106.

gracelessness. The monumental archway, with its memorial coat of arms, swags and festoons, overwhelms the simple gardens.<sup>716</sup> The garden layout is also occasionally attributed to Boardman.<sup>717</sup>

Despite the appetite for recreational expansion Sandys-Winsch's commission for the former pleasure garden of the Wilderness on Carrow Hill, first approved in the 1920s, was later rescinded owing to financial constraints.<sup>718</sup> Churchyard gardens were approved at St Peter Mancroft in the city centre, and St John Sepulchre was identified as a possible children's playground 'as Ber Street lacked such facilities', as was St Peter Southgate.<sup>719</sup> Children's playgrounds were in the ascendancy in this period and the committee proved zealous when acquisition was afoot. The former gravel pits at Long John Hill, south of the city, were approved for playgrounds in 1922 and became Jubilee Park. Chapelfield acquired new playgrounds in 1927, in preference to a putting green, and the superintendent suggested that the bowling green at Ketts Cave could be turned into a playground on the retirement of the caretaker.<sup>720</sup> In 1933 the newly created Woodrow Pilling Park also gained a playground.<sup>721</sup>

On the eve of the Second World War a small city-centre garden was added to the Parks and Gardens portfolio. The Ornamental Gardens were neither solicited by the committee nor designed by Sandys-Winsch. The small, paved area was sited in St Peter's Street, opposite the new city hall, and overlooked the market square, to which they were linked by steps. The gardens formed a small part of a major town centre planning initiative by the city council in the 1930s to create a new city hall, improve the old market square and replace a ramshackle arrangement of old buildings.<sup>722</sup> In 1931 the architects C.H. James and S. Rowland Pierce were awarded the contract, selected via a national competition from 141 entries.<sup>723</sup> It took time to raise the funds for the major building works; the government was reluctant to provide a capital loan and consequently work was delayed until 1937. On the recommendation of the Royal

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<sup>716</sup> Gateway to James Stuart Gardens Grade II: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1372488>.

<sup>717</sup> Norfolk Heritage Explorer, 'James Stuart Gardens', NHER no. 26480. Accessed at <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF26480-James-Stuart-Gardens-Recorder-Road&Index=2&RecordCount=1&SessionID=7729a527-3a7e-4471-904b-1d807015cee0>.

<sup>718</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 14 April 1925.

<sup>719</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 8 January 1924; 14 April 1925.

<sup>720</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 10 January 1922, 11 January 1927; NRO, NTC 22/3, 9 May 1933; NRO, N/TC 22/2.

<sup>721</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 13 June 1933.

<sup>722</sup> Kant Cunneen, 'War Memorial Gardens', 28–31.

<sup>723</sup> *The Times*, 24 October 1938, 11.

**Figure 62.** Entrance and lodge, James Stuart Gardens (Picture Norfolk)



Institute for British Architects, the programme was overseen by Robert Atkinson (1883–1952). The new city hall was completed in less than two years and later described by Pevsner as the finest municipal building to emerge between the wars.<sup>724</sup> *The Architectural Review* devoted a single issue to the building and compared it to the De La Warre Pavilion at Bexhill.<sup>725</sup>

The gardens provided a new home for the 1928 Lutyens war memorial, originally sited in front of the guildhall (Figure 63). In the successful entry the gardens are barely visible, but James and Pierce are credited with the gardens' design, although Atkinson was responsible for the layout of the market square and could well have contributed to the small garden, raised well above the market place. Atkinson was a landscape architect of some eminence and head of the Architectural Association, and he had hoped

<sup>724</sup> Pevsner, *Norfolk 1, Norwich and NE*.

<sup>725</sup> *The Architectural Review: A Magazine of Architecture and Decoration* LXXXIV.504 Special Issue for Norwich City Hall (November 1938).

to be the eventual designer of the new civic hall. Coincidentally, he was also trained by Mawson and it is likely that Sandys-Winsch and Atkinson were attached to the Mawson firm at the same time, although with a rather different employment status, as Atkinson was an established landscaper, Sandy-Winsch a mere apprentice.<sup>726</sup>

**Figure 63.** War Memorial Gardens, St Peter's Street (Picture Norfolk)



The national visibility of the new modernist civic building and gardens was ensured when George VI and Queen Elizabeth attended the opening ceremony in October 1938; the event was to prove the largest gathering of people in Norwich's history.<sup>727</sup> The design of the Ornamental Gardens (later termed 'The War Memorial Gardens') is of the period and borrows strongly from Art Deco and neoclassicism, with graceful flights of steps accommodating the awkward slope of the site and a rhythmic use of pillars and urns. The exposed site and extensive hard landscaping offers little scope for planting, unlike the Sandys-Winsch schemes, where plants are insinuated at every opportunity. The designers did not specify any planting scheme and the Markets

<sup>726</sup> Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*, 59.

<sup>727</sup> *The Times*, 31 October 1938: 'Editorial', 13.

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Committee, one of the oldest committees, resolved not to bear the cost of the gardens, informing the Parks Committee that it was not responsible for the maintenance; yet another territorial dispute.<sup>728</sup>

At short notice, close to the opening ceremony, the Parks Committee assumed responsibility and Sandys-Winsch improvised the plant scheme for the important civic ceremony, with small cypresses at the head of each small bed and red salvias filling the urns and borders.<sup>729</sup> The simplicity of the planting and the contrast of green and red would have provided a poignant and symbolic touch at George VI's wreath laying before the Lutyens First World War Memorial on 29 October 1938.<sup>730</sup> In less than a year the country would be at war once more.

## Street Trees

The superintendent's tree planting was not merely confined to the Norwich parks and gardens, as the planting of street trees in Norwich burgeoned in the interwar period. Urban tree planting had been much encouraged by consecutive post-war governments and fifty years earlier the Public Health Act of 1875 had created some limited opportunity for tree planting as part of street improvement. By 1890 the amended Act granted towns the specific power to undertake tree planting along roadsides. The 1890 Act had been an important clarification of urban powers, much needed after Lewes Borough Council had been successfully prosecuted for causing a nuisance with some of its urban tree planting.<sup>731</sup> Mawson frequently incorporated generous tree plantings into his civic schemes.<sup>732</sup> By the beginning of the First World War street trees had become a staple of urban planting and their planting was much influenced by continental practice, particularly the wide French boulevards, with matching trees placed symmetrically on either side.<sup>733</sup> Unfortunately, few roads in the most historic British towns were as generously proportioned, except in the new town and garden suburb developments.

In 1925 Baldwin's government passed the Roads Improvement Act, which empowered local authorities to plant up roadsides with trees and shrubs and to provide

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<sup>728</sup> NRO, N/TC 8/14, 1938, The Markets Committee.

<sup>729</sup> Kant Cunneen, 'War Memorial Gardens', 34.

<sup>730</sup> *The Times*, 31 October 1938, 13.

<sup>731</sup> W.W. Pettigrew, *Municipal Parks: Layout, Management and Administration* (London: Journal of Parks Administration, 1937), 182.

<sup>732</sup> Mawson, *Civic Art*, appendix: 'List of Recommended Species'.

<sup>733</sup> Johnston, *Trees in Town and Cities*, 183; see Appendix.

and protect grass margins on any land maintained by them.<sup>734</sup> The Ministry of Transport gave generous subsidies to local authorities for tree planting over a five-year plan, alluded to by the parks superintendent when justifying the cost to the committee.<sup>735</sup> The government's commitment to tree planting was fostered by an elite pressure group, the Roads Beautifying Association (RBA); the name was probably influenced by the North American 'City Beautiful' movement, which was highly influential in civic planning in the USA at the time. Founded by the 1928 minister of transport, Lord Mount Temple, distinguished members included Lionel de Rothschild, the chairman of the Royal Horticultural Society, W.J. Bean, the recently retired Curator of Kew and author of the definitive text on trees and shrubs, and Dr Wilfred Fox, creator of the Winkworth Arboretum and the organisation's first secretary.<sup>736</sup> The RBA and the Ministry of Transport worked closely together over the next twenty-five years, the former offering expert advice to local authorities both in person and through a guide to suitable urban trees, *Roadside Planting*.<sup>737</sup> The manual contained lists of tree species and offered expert advice on appropriate siting, functions and maintenance. Safety was perceived as an important criterion for planting; rural roads were prescribed larger trees than urban roads and smaller species recommended for urban schemes, such as magnolias and flowering cherries. The manual is comprehensive and contains some imaginative suggestions: using silver birch trees on the outside of a road curve so that car headlights would pick up the white trunks and Lombardy poplars as a warning marker at cross roads. The writers warned of the dangers of leaves on the roads; the renowned tree expert Ernest Wilson had been killed when his car skidded on wet leaves.<sup>738</sup>

Norwich had shown some early, if selective, commitment to tree planting in the city: late Victorian and Edwardian photographs reveal fine avenues of elm trees bordering the main arterial roads and mature trees shading Chapelfield Gardens, Castle Gardens and the city cemeteries. In 1890 the *Daily News* specifically highlighted the green city trees on Gladstone's visit to Norwich.<sup>739</sup> In the early 1900s the town clerk had detailed the park supervisor's responsibilities as including 'a very large number of

<sup>734</sup> Roads Improvement Act 1925.

<sup>735</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 12 April 1927, 10 January 1928.

<sup>736</sup> M. Spitta, *A Quarter of a Century of Highway Planting: the Work of the Roads Beautifying Association* (London: The Royal Horticultural Society, 1952); W.J. Bean, *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles* (London: John Murray, 1914).

<sup>737</sup> Roads Beautifying Association, *Roadside Planting* (London: Country Life Association, 1930).

<sup>738</sup> Johnston, *Trees in Towns and Cities*, 188.

<sup>739</sup> *Daily News*, 17 May 1890.

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trees', and thereafter councillors on the Parks and Gardens Committee had taken a keen personal interest in tree planting and strongly resisted requests for tree removal, as did the London County Council's parks department.<sup>740</sup> It employed skilled gardeners to undertake propagation and budget statements reveal that bulb, seeds and plants bought in for growing on included tree whips.<sup>741</sup> The park superintendent's tree-laden designs for Norwich parks and gardens accounted for a large rise in the number of trees owned by the city council, as did the city's roadside planting, particularly in the new estates between the wars.

Few Norwich tree-planting records survive. In 1926 2500 six-inch English yews were purchased from Messrs Reeves at Old Catton for £43 7s 6d; it is possible they were intended for College Road, where yews were subsequently mentioned.<sup>742</sup> In 1925 an avenue of *Mespilus floribunda* (medlars) was planted along the newly developed George Borrow Road to the west of the city.<sup>743</sup> Tree donations by the Norwich elite were customary: Alderman Walker, chair of the Parks and Gardens Committee, presented fifty lime trees in 1926; E.J. Boardman of How Hill donated sixty lime trees in 1927; and in 1936 the sheriff of Norwich offered trees for Ber Street, 'sufficient to be planted at twenty yards apart'.<sup>744</sup> Otherwise, tree species are rarely mentioned, except when mature trees were removed. Elms, a tree that were as much a feature of towns as the countryside at this period, were frequent removals, as were oaks (Earlham Road), beeches, sycamores and occasionally chestnuts.<sup>745</sup> The grand chestnut avenue at Eaton Park was removed in 2018 and replaced by an avenue of walnuts. In the early part of the twentieth century dynamite was the chief substance used for stump removal. One such incident in Waldeck Road in 1938 caused considerable damage to adjoining property and led to an internal investigation. By January 1939 the town clerk reported that the council was liable for both damage to persons and premises, an early foray into health and safety about which the council had previously been somewhat cavalier.<sup>746</sup> It is

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<sup>740</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/1, 5 December 1911; *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 193, Report of the tenth ordinary meeting: 'Trees and Flowering Shrubs in London County Council Parks'.

<sup>741</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 8 October 1940.

<sup>742</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 9 March 1926.

<sup>743</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 10 February 1925.

<sup>744</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, 11 January 1926, 12 December 1927; NRO, N/TC 22/4, 4 January 1936.

<sup>745</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 19 October 1933, 3 July 1934, 13 November 1934; NRO, N/TC 22/4, 9 January 1940.

<sup>746</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 13 December 1938, 10 January 1939.

unsurprising that the parks superintendent negotiated an extra one penny an hour for those men engaged in ‘the hazardous work’ of maintaining the Norwich trees.<sup>747</sup>

Trees are less ephemeral than other plantings and, fortunately, evidence of some of the superintendent’s planting is still visible in the city. At Heigham, Eaton and Waterloo Parks, mature Scots and Corsican pines, planes and beeches dominate the landscape, as does a fine avenue of whitebeams at Eaton Park. Chestnuts and oaks remain the dominant trees in The Avenues, which was developed between the 1920s and the 1950s. In Jessopp Road, towering beeches overhang the houses, long pre-dating the 1940s post-war housing. Smaller flowering trees that have a shorter life-span than ‘forest trees’ are currently undergoing a sustained process of removal: in North Park Avenue the gnarled prunus are regularly replaced, although an impressive ancient oak tree, undoubtedly a survivor from a rural field boundary, forms a way-mark at the junction where North Park Avenue meets Bluebell Road. Hybrid London planes were selected to line the houses built along the wide Earlham and Colman Roads in the post-war period. Today they stand erect, pruned goblet shape, in the Italian fashion. Limes were used along Drayton Road. Elsewhere, smaller ornamental trees, which could easily have hailed from the RBA’s manual, prevailed and were defended by the superintendent as a practical concession to the crowded city.

Trees in urban situations often have a tendency to outgrow the original, optimistic siting. In the 1930s, as the city’s housing expanded, so did the complaints from residents requesting that trees be removed or cut back. In Elm Grove Lane and Chapelfield, permission for tree removal was refused by the superintendent and he remained implacable, despite repeated requests.<sup>748</sup> In Doris Road and Grove Avenue residents complained about their darkened rooms as a result of the close proximity of the trees. On this occasion, councillors decided to pay a site visit and agreed that the trees could remain, but the superintendent could ‘lop the trees at his discretion’.<sup>749</sup> This was probably small comfort; Sandys-Winsch had earlier resisted lopping of trees in Aylsham Road after repeated complaints from tram drivers. He argued that ‘to deal effectively he would need to lop trees in such a way as to render the trees spoiled’.<sup>750</sup>

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<sup>747</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 December 1935.

<sup>748</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 July 1934, 11 September 1934.

<sup>749</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 15 November 1932.

<sup>750</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 8 October 1929.

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Even Post Office authorities were told to run their wires underground rather than lop the city's trees.<sup>751</sup>

Council officers require a degree of pragmatism in the exercise of professional judgement, sandwiched between the wishes of members and the expectations of the public. In 1933 the superintendent unwisely took up cudgels against the highly influential Town Planning Committee, which he reported had countermanded an earlier refusal to remove some trees in The Avenues. Sandys-Winsch was adamant that trees came under his professional jurisdiction. The Parks Committee loyally supported their lead officer and, in a misguidedly high-handed minute, instructed the Town Planning Committee to defer to the parks superintendent in such matters.<sup>752</sup> Two months later the Parks and Garden Committee formally rescinded the instruction and gnomically recorded that 'had it been in full possession of the facts it would not have authorised such a response'.<sup>753</sup> It appeared that the superintendent had misrepresented the Town Planning Committee's decision, a serious error and one that would not be forgotten. Five years later, when residents in Waverley and Claremont Roads, in the middle-class residential area south of the city, complained about their trees, the committee had learned its lesson and responded diplomatically: an early public opinion survey was conducted in the roads affected, offering the residents the options of lopping, replacement or status quo. Happily, this strategy resulted in a hung verdict and the trees were saved.<sup>754</sup>

## Management Issues

By the beginning of the 1930s the gardening staff numbered seventy-one men and four boys, with eight staff working exclusively on the street shrubberies (which sometimes served as WC camouflage) and churchyard gardens. Some gardeners were allocated to a particular park: Eaton boasted seven gardeners, Earlham six and the smaller Wensum Park had three full-time gardeners. In addition, there was a hedger, horseman and woodman. The staff had increased in line with the development of the parks, which required much more intensive horticultural intervention than previously. By 1928 the wage bill of £8799 was causing concern and the superintendent was instructed to reduce

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<sup>751</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 14 October 1931.

<sup>752</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 11 April 1933.

<sup>753</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 13 June 1933.

<sup>754</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 2 February 1938.

expenditure and maintain the budget within the estimates.<sup>755</sup> Grazing rights at Earlham and Eaton Parks were extended, possibly in response to this directive, as sheep, in particular, were a traditional mechanism for grass cutting. However, the town clerk reported that entertainments in the parks were at last making a profit.

Petty pilfering and low-level vandalism continued to be a frustrating aspect of overseeing the parks. In 1929 Cllr Walker, the chairman of the Parks and Gardens Committee, had tactfully raised the matter at the Mile Cross Garden opening when he pleaded with residents to keep the gardens tidy and in good order.<sup>756</sup> In 1921 the female employees of Caley's were reported to their employers for littering Chapelfield Gardens in their lunch hour and, in an early attempt at entrapment, the committee suggested that a plain clothes police officer should be sent to Castle Gardens to catch male miscreants in dangerous stone throwing.<sup>757</sup> The issue of dogs in the public parks generated particular concern and suggestions of muzzling greyhounds, restricting access to dogs on leads and an outright ban were all considered.<sup>758</sup> The committee finally resorted to a sign requesting park visitors to keep dogs under control.<sup>759</sup> The perpetrator who stripped four beds of narcissus in full bloom at Wensum Park was never identified.<sup>760</sup> After a number of trees had been damaged at Wellesley Avenue in the north-east of the city the superintendent proposed the drastic solution of fencing off the planted area with chain link and barbed wire. The councillors, remarkably, agreed to this extreme and unsightly measure.<sup>761</sup> Offenders, if caught, were invariably prosecuted and fined, regardless of their age. Even the municipal golf club became the subject of complaints about misbehaviour and the obstreperous Mr Edwards of Bethel Street was threatened with exclusion: the suggestion that a retired gentleman golfer be appointed to offer etiquette advice to members was finally agreed.<sup>762</sup>

The Norwich parks were not alone. Nottingham recorded numerous such issues in their meetings and the situation was to worsen during the war.<sup>763</sup> Vandalism is rarely mentioned in garden and landscape histories and Brent Elliott suggests that the advent of the Second World War introduced the phenomenon but, although it escalated during

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<sup>755</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 10 January 1928.

<sup>756</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 May 1929: 'Mile Cross Gardens'.

<sup>757</sup> NRO, N/TC 2/, 9 May 1922.

<sup>758</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 9 March 1927.

<sup>759</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 9 March 1927.

<sup>760</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 12 April 1927.

<sup>761</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 8 November 1938.

<sup>762</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 22 August 1934.

<sup>763</sup> *The Social World of Nottingham's Green Spaces*, accessed at <http://www.ng-spaces.org.uk>.

the war, it is unlikely that Norwich and Nottingham were atypical at this period. From the start of the twentieth century the letters column of *The Times* provides a catalogue of complaints about damage and public littering, such as visitors creating unofficial paths where none were intended and treasure seekers digging holes.<sup>764</sup> In May 1935 the LCC was sufficiently concerned to distribute a circular to all its schools instructing headmasters to warn children of the dangers of littering parks in the school holidays.<sup>765</sup> Letters and articles also deplored what writers perceived as institutional vandalism: unwarranted tree removal, unsightly buildings and poor gardening practice; while periodicals such as the 1914 *Gardeners' Chronicle* lament the 'wanton act of destruction' of removing a poplar avenue in Finsbury Park.<sup>766</sup>

By 1938, in a bold move for Norwich, the committee approved mixed bathing at set times and, despite protests from the Evangelical Christians, the General Purposes Committee finally allowed Sunday games in the parks and Sunday play at the municipal golf course, a decision the London County Council (LCC) had reached almost twenty years earlier.<sup>767</sup> **close-up** The Education Committee had, from an early stage, used some areas of the parks for school gardens. Unaccountably this was an ongoing source of provocation to the Parks Committee, which had territorial designs on the land for new allotments. When the situation became deadlocked, the Parks Committee resolved to refer the matter to the Education Secretary, who sensibly referred the matter straight back to the council for resolution.<sup>768</sup> It was an embarrassing episode that officers should have resolved. Rather more cooperative strategies were employed in 1925 after the establishment of the Town Planning Committee: occasional joint meetings were used to identify open space within the civic boundary. These meetings highlighted informal and undeveloped areas, classified as green space, totalling approximately 500 acres, all with the potential for future projects. The areas included Marsham Marshes, between the Ipswich and Newmarket Road, today classified as a nature reserve, and other environmentally desirable areas. The report also listed 600 acres of private open space. No longer would councillors and officers have to scour the city for suitable

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<sup>764</sup> B. Elliott, 'Bedding Schemes', in J. Woudstra and K. Fieldhouse (eds), *The Regeneration of Public Parks and Gardens* (London: E. & F.N. Spon, 2000), 117; e.g. *The Times*, 5 February 1903: 'Kensington Gardens', and 25 January 1904: 'The treasure hunter is becoming a serious nuisance' 7; 1 June 1926: 'Litter in Parks', 10.

<sup>765</sup> *The Times*, 24 July 1935: '500,000 children on holiday', 11.

<sup>766</sup> *The Times*, 25 March 1920: 'Trees or Games' 13; 16 May 1921: 'Parks and Open Spaces' 4; *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 14 February 1914: 'Finsbury Park', 110.

<sup>767</sup> NRO, N/TC 14/, 12 July 1938; *The Times*, 7 July 1922, Sunday Games in the Parks, 7.

<sup>768</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2; NRO, N/TC 22/3, 10 January 1928, 14 April 1931.

development sites. Land was clearly available for recreation, so long as the will and resources existed.<sup>769</sup>

### Conclusion

By 1938 the population of Norwich stood at just under 130,000. According to its calculations, the council owned thirty-two public parks, gardens and recreation grounds; these included eighty-five tennis courts and a comprehensive range of football, cricket, netball and hockey pitches and bowling greens.<sup>770</sup> Small intimate churchyard gardens were easily accessible in the narrow streets of the walled city and Mousehold Heath continued to be a popular recreational area on the north-eastern limits of the city. The newly designed parks catered for both active sports and passive recreation and the municipal pleasure gardens provided for horticultural delight. Children also had play areas with a range of play equipment. With 740 acres of green space the council was comfortably within the increased target set by the National Playing Fields Association of five acres per thousand people (although not as impressive as Leicester, which managed seven acres, or Leeds, which had achieved a magnificent nine acres per thousand).<sup>771</sup>

The contribution of Sandys-Winsch in the development of the Norwich parks in the 1920s and 1930s has been noted in the local histories mentioned to date. Additionally, Conway and Elliot refer to him as maintaining stylistically the Mawson tradition and Conway refers to him as ‘gifted’.<sup>772</sup> His work deserves particular commendation in terms of his designs and in the context of the period in which he worked. He is sometimes credited with the design of four parks, possibly as a result of the prominence given to these parks in Anderson’s publication. However, Sandys-Winsch designed at least seven of the larger parks, three large-scale allotment sites and at least one school sports ground and possibly more. He laid out a number of smaller spaces, including churchyard gardens, children’s play areas and other gardens. He also created designs for spaces that were not implemented, such as The Wilderness at Carrow Hill. All this was accomplished without the technical assistance on which his

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<sup>769</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2, Report on Open Spaces, 1 December 1925.

<sup>770</sup> *Official Guide to the City of Norwich* (Norwich: A.E. Soman and Co., 1939), 55.

<sup>771</sup> Strachan and Bowyer, ‘Parks in Leicester’, 282.

<sup>772</sup> H. Conway and D. Lambert, ‘Buildings and Monuments’, in *The Regeneration of Public Parks*, 49; Conway, ‘Everyday Landscapes’, 119; Elliott, ‘Play and Sport’, 153.

mentor Mawson relied.<sup>773</sup> His workload in this area was formidable because he was also running an extensive horticultural and grounds maintenance department as well as overseeing the development and administration of an eighteen-hole golf course. His plans, which he supervised with exacting oversight, were implemented by a team of unemployed conscripted workers, a number of whom were being taught a new craft.<sup>774</sup>

Considerable industry does not by itself confer exceptionality. However, Sandys-Winsch operated under typical local government constraints, which included national bureaucracy over grants and war damage restitution, public expectations and political input. He did not have a free hand: the council's prime concern was to augment its sporting provision and the superintendent was expected to shape sports parks and playing fields to cater for tennis, cricket, football, bowls, netball, hockey and model yacht racing. Jordan notes that Mawson's numerous public schemes favoured passive rather than active recreational pursuits.<sup>775</sup> All the parks designed by the Norwich parks superintendent contain extensive provision for the range of games played in Norwich in the early part of the twentieth century, incorporated into designed landscapes that blur the distinction between gardens and sports park without sacrificing one to the other. Although his plans were subject early on to adjustment and alteration by sports users, he softened the transition between the discrete spaces. After his first plan was accepted, the Parks Committee's confidence in their superintendent's capacity for park-making grew, as scheme after scheme fell from his pen.

Sandys-Winsch's style was not original. It was of the period in which he trained and was untouched by the modernist culture that influenced Geoffrey Jellicoe's approach to landscape design. However, Jellicoe's major works were much later, and he undertook few public ventures and no public parks, unless his allegorical landscaping of the Kennedy Memorial at Runnymede is included, or his two Italian park designs at Modena and Brescia.<sup>776</sup> Unsurprisingly for a landscaper who had been unable to develop a practice after training but was propelled into war, Sandys-Winsch's designs are evocative of Mawson's work, such as Ballimore and Cleethorpes, particularly in the use of circular set pieces and classical avenues.<sup>777</sup> However, Mawson, who was also a

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<sup>773</sup> Waymark, *Thomas Mawson*.

<sup>774</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 22 September 1961.

<sup>775</sup> Jordan, 'Public Parks', 92.

<sup>776</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 'Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe'; J. Dixon Hunt, *The Making of Place* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), 49; Geoffrey Jellicoe: Parks and Gardens UK, accessed at <https://www.parksandgardens.org/people/geoffrey-alan-jellicoe>.

<sup>777</sup> Mawson, *Civic Art*, 402–4.

prodigiously hard-working landscaper, worked in less circumscribed territory even when undertaking civic commissions. Many of his designs were laid out by others and, where he was directly involved, he was able to use his own staff, unlike the insular Norwich situation.

In Wensum Park the accommodation of the river and the children's bathing area was achieved with rare finesse for a local authority riverside park. Eaton Park, with its grandiose Beaux-Arts central bandstand and colonnade, today appears an architectural folly in the light of later civic financial stringency, but achieved the effect of offsetting the otherwise unremitting dominance of the important game's pitches, which stretch out for seventy of the park's eighty acres. The colonnades also had a practical function, providing extensive changing rooms, a cafeteria and a viewing platform.

Norwich was far from a pioneer in its provision of green space, but by the outbreak of the Second World War it had compensated for a laggardly start and made steady progress in the expansion of recreational space since the turn of the century. The city had developed a sensibility to the importance attached to recreational space by the general public, consulting with residents and making provision for the sports they favoured. The city began to compensate for its historic failure in the provision of social housing and the development of the four new council estates at Earlham, Lakenham, Angel Road and Mile Cross reflected the importance of integrating recreational space into housing development and landscaping the immediate environment. Recreational space was becoming better distributed across the city and this allowed for convenient public access, essential in encouraging usage. It had responded constructively to the austere local political climate through mutually beneficial partnerships: exploiting the governmental employment schemes and working in close collaboration with the local **civic** society and the Anglican church, where the translation of local churchyards into pleasant city-centre gardens was a signal achievement. Nottingham had none, Manchester had rejected the concept out of hand, and they are rarely mentioned in Birmingham and Leicester documents, although London and Bristol were persuaded of the merits of churchyard gardens.<sup>778</sup>

Norwich, in 1938, presented ample testimony to the important role of green space in fostering a culture of civic pride.<sup>779</sup> Apart from the early and problematic donation of Mousehold Heath in 1866 from the Ecclesiastical Commission, Norwich had received

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<sup>778</sup> *The Times*, 10 March 1906: 'Open Spaces', 5; Mellors, *The Gardens of Nottingham*, 134–7.

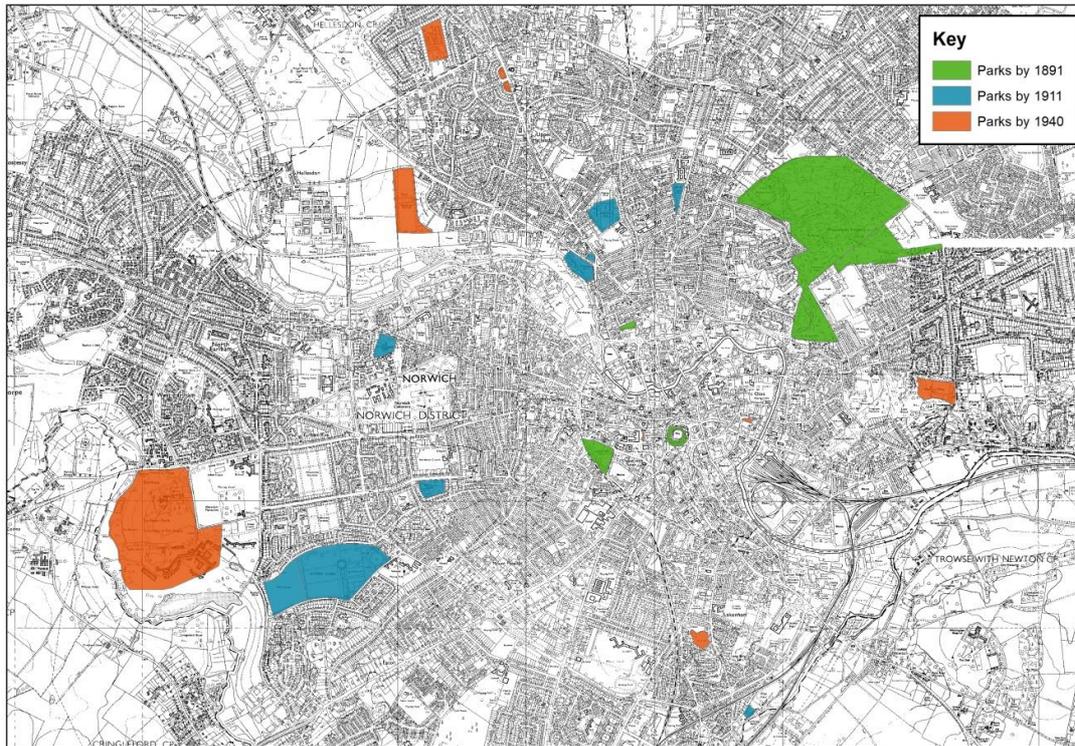
<sup>779</sup> In 1938 the Parks and Gardens Committee became the Parks Committee.

## Growing Space

no major land bequests such as those which enabled the majority of the grand nineteenth-century parks in Manchester, Sheffield, Nottingham and Leicester, but it had been the grateful recipient of many smaller acts of philanthropy, which enabled recreational activity to flourish. By the outbreak of the Second World War, provision in Norwich had fared better than Walter Hansell could have predicted in the significant public meeting fifty years earlier, in 1891. The second major war within twenty years was to challenge the city and its public green space once again.

**Figure 64.**  
Norwich  
churchyards  
maintained by  
the council,  
1939  
(originally in  
colour)





**Figure 65.** Norwich parks maintained by the council, 1939 (originally in colour)

**Baedeker and Bureaucracy, 1939–1952**

By the summer of 1939 Britain's entry into the Second World War was widely expected. The government had recognised that there would be considerable disruption to the civilian population and had anticipated the war by recruiting people into specialist positions such as air raid wardens and local defence volunteers.<sup>780</sup> In August, the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act was passed, despite opposition by many Labour MPs. The act granted sweeping powers to the government, enabling it to implement any regulation it felt necessary to support its military operations abroad and at home. The consequent debate in the House of Commons on 31 October 1939 makes fascinating reading for its contemporary resonance on matters of censorship and detention without trial.<sup>781</sup> The formation of the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), or the Home Guard, as they were popularly called, was one of the many measures facilitated by the new legislation. On 3 September 1939 Chamberlain sent his doomed ultimatum to Hitler for the withdrawal of German troops from Poland.<sup>782</sup>

The national and local press had been anticipating the declaration of war for some weeks. On the day following the announcement the evacuation of half a million children began, with Norwich – at the time perceived as a safe haven – one of the destinations.<sup>783</sup> Numerous towns and villages across the country received evacuees from London and Birmingham, among them Leicester and Nottingham, both of which were to prove safer than Norwich.<sup>784</sup> Although the government promoted a picture of bucolic enchantment, the reality was different and many evacuees preferred to risk life at home.<sup>785</sup> The air raid sirens had undergone a test-run and information to citizens was hot off the press: fines for not complying with the blackout regulations and warnings about censorship

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<sup>780</sup> *The Times*, 4 September 1939: 'Britain's Fight to Save the World', 3, 4; T. Charman, *The Day We Went to War* (Croydon: Virgin & IWM, 2010), Introduction, xiv.

<sup>781</sup> *Hansard*, Emergency Powers Defence Act 1939, accessed at <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/emergency-powers-defence-act-1939>.

<sup>782</sup> *The Times*, September 4 1939, 2.

<sup>783</sup> *The Times*, 4 September 1939: 'Children in New Homes', 5; J. Bangor, *Norwich at War* (Cromer: Poppyland Publishing, 2003), 11; Charman, *The Day We Went to War*, 68.

<sup>784</sup> A. Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 23–8; R. Rodger, 'Reinventing the City after 1945', in R. Rodger and R. Madgin (eds), *Leicester: A Modern History* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2016), 177; BBC Radio Nottingham, accessed at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/43/a4890143.shtml>.

<sup>785</sup> *The Times*, 4 September 1939, 5; Charman, *War*, 68.

were prominently displayed.<sup>786</sup> It also proved necessary to correct the widely held, though erroneous, belief that domestic animals had to be exterminated.<sup>787</sup>

In contrast to the First World War, local government was generally prepared and measures had been planned over the previous year. In Norwich blackouts were in place in most council buildings, the local Air Raid Precautions Committee (ARPC) was ready for action and gas masks had been distributed to adults and children some months beforehand.<sup>788</sup> The Parks Committee pledged to maintain its policy of keeping the Norwich parks open and maintaining the popular musical entertainments; in many other cities, including London, closures were advertised.<sup>789</sup> By 1940 Birmingham had closed down all entertainments in its parks.<sup>790</sup> At the start of the war many theatres were closed, later to reopen, and professional sports were curtailed owing to the conscription of key players, travel restrictions and regulations on crowd assembly. As a result, the BBC became the major source of information and entertainment for the population.<sup>791</sup>

The freezing winter of 1939 proved a difficult year for gardening, and public parks across the country had suffered extensive damage.<sup>792</sup> By May 1940 the effects of the war, described by the *Gardeners Chronicle* as ‘wide-spread devastation’,<sup>793</sup> were visible: petrol restrictions made grass cutting problematic; financial restrictions had curtailed staff employment; trees had been cut down to make room for barrage balloons; and anti-aircraft units and other military installations had taken up occupation. Sandys-Winsch had been *en route* to a parks conference in Blackpool at the time of the official announcement of the outbreak of war, only to discover on arrival that it had been cancelled. At the next meeting of the Parks Committee he enquired whether the authority would underwrite his aborted travel costs. The Parks Committee’s response was crisp and negative. It stated that it ‘could not be justified in the circumstances’. It was a portent that the relationship between the long-serving council officer and members was changing.<sup>794</sup>

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<sup>786</sup> *The Times*, 4 September 1939: ‘Children in New Homes’, 6.

<sup>787</sup> *The Times*, 7 September 1939: ‘Many Cats and Dogs Destroyed’, 3.

<sup>788</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 January 1939; Bangor, *Norwich at War*, 10.

<sup>789</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 January 1939; *The Times*, 2 September 1939: ‘Points from Letters’, 6.

<sup>790</sup> Chinn, *Free Parks*, 142.

<sup>791</sup> A. Mason, *Popular Pastimes and Entertainment in the Second World War*, Imperial War Museum, 10 January 2018. Accessed at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/popular-pastimes-and-entertainment-in-the-second-world-war>; E. Stourton, *Auntie’s War* (London: Doubleday, 2017).

<sup>792</sup> *The Gardeners’ Chronicle*, 6 January 1940.

<sup>793</sup> *The Gardeners’ Chronicle*, 1 May 1940.

<sup>794</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 October 1939.



**Figure 66.** Chapelfield trench, ‘Norwich Under Fire’ (*The Daily Telegraph* photographic archive)

### **War-time in the Parks**

Some time before the formal outbreak of war the process of trenching the parks had begun (Figure 66). The rudimentary trench designs were intended to provide an alternative to the conventional brick shelters in the event of bomb strikes. The brick shelters were feared by many people and the simple earth-based protections were

believed to be less likely to crush the inhabitants during a direct hit from the air. This was to prove a fallacy. During a Blitz attack in London the trench in Kennington Park collapsed and many local residents were killed outright.<sup>795</sup> Responsibility for trench construction rested with the local Air Raid Precautions Committee (ARPC), which had announced its intention to start work on the Norwich parks at the beginning of 1939. The Parks Committee was particularly concerned about the likely impact of the trenching in Chapelfield Gardens, which continued to be its showpiece site. The councillors prevaricated; maintaining a public presence in the gardens had been a commitment since the opening of the small park over seventy years earlier. Eventually it was forced to concede and requested that the park be given priority in the timetable so that it could be reopened as soon as possible. By March 1939 trenches and fencing were in place and the gardens had reopened.<sup>796</sup> In optimistic spirit the committee gave permission for the Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society to use Chapelfield Gardens for their annual rose show later the same year.<sup>797</sup>

The Parks and Gardens Committee strove to ensure that the public's enjoyment of the parks continued unabated, but a home-grown invasion soon became visible. The Home Guard took up residence in the club house of the municipal golf club at Earlham Park, despite the superintendent's truculent opposition to the move.<sup>798</sup> The Ministry of Home Security considered golf courses a particularly high security risk, as the green swards were viewed as potential sites for the landing of enemy troops. In addition to the ubiquitous trenches, barrage balloons and other obstructions were employed to prevent the landing of enemy aircraft. With planes frequently flying overhead, concentration for golfers must have proved difficult.<sup>799</sup> James Rose was thirteen when war broke out and a year later became a groundsman at the club. He phlegmatically recalled war-time gardening at Earlham Hall:

There were always planes in the sky ... . The siren would sound about 20 minutes before any enemy activity, but it was wasting so much working time

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<sup>795</sup> R. Pateman, 'Kennington's Forgotten Blitz Tragedy', BBC Radio London, 13 October 2010, accessed at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/london/hi/people\\_and\\_places/history/newsid\\_9087000/9087660.st](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/london/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_9087000/9087660.st).

<sup>796</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 14 March 1939.

<sup>797</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 19 January 1939, 14 February 1939.

<sup>798</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 13 May 1941.

<sup>799</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 11 June 1940.

going into the shelter, so we would wait ... word would go around 'the balloons are up', then you would watch and listen.<sup>800</sup>

The pavilions at both Eaton and Waterloo Parks were identified as possible sites for mortuaries, and officers and councillors were engaged in long negotiations about adaptations for the grim role.<sup>801</sup> Although the Ministry of Health initially reprieved Eaton Park, declaring the pavilion unsuitable, it had a later change of heart and both buildings were finally adapted for the storage of corpses.<sup>802</sup> The presence of the mortuaries in such a prominent position in the parks must have blighted the public's enjoyment of the facilities, although it is possible that they gradually became inured to the constant reality of death and destruction. The process of dealing with numerous outside agencies was particularly time-consuming for council officers: one sympathised with the parks superintendent when he discovered that the popular dancing area close by the bandstand in Chapelfield Gardens had been covered with tar and gravel as a camouflage against air attack. The culprit was the zealous ARPC, which on this occasion had exceeded itself and undone at a stroke all efforts to maintain normality in the city's prime location. The committee ordered the ARPC to clean off the damage and the town clerk sensibly instructed it to be painted black instead.<sup>803</sup>

Apart from the trenches, drilling and exercising, it was agreed that games facilities for troops would be made freely available.<sup>804</sup> This was generous: the wealthy LCC had only reduced charges for the military to half-price.<sup>805</sup> As with the First World War, parks continued to be used as military bases and the RAF now joined the army in occupation. Eaton Park housed both the RAF and the National Fire Service, while Earlham Hall, the Parks Department's main base, was requisitioned early on as a war-time hospital and a year later accommodated the Heigham Grove Nursing Home after it was destroyed in an air raid. The Home Guard, which mirrored the activity of the forces in training and manoeuvres, occupied part of the municipal golf club, and the professional's shop became the base for the important postal communications operation. An artillery battery was based by the lake at Eaton Park and a pavilion in Chapelfield

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<sup>800</sup> J.A. Rose, 'People's War', Norwich, BBC website, accessed at [www.bbc.co.uk/historyww2peopleswar](http://www.bbc.co.uk/historyww2peopleswar).

<sup>801</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 October 1939.

<sup>802</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 12 March 1940, 412; 14 November 1939.

<sup>803</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 12 December 1939.

<sup>804</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 12 September 1939, 14 May 1940.

<sup>805</sup> *The Times*, 24 August 1942: 'Games for the Troops', 2.

Gardens was requisitioned.<sup>806</sup> Not only was land commandeered but equipment was borrowed: the Regimental Training School requested the loan of gym equipment and the mayor asked for gardening tools for the recuperation centre at Saxlingham Hall.<sup>807</sup> Even the city treasurer, second only in importance to the town clerk, whose finance staff were also based at Earlham Hall, demanded the use of the Earlham Hall café crockery. Despite Sandys-Winsch's misgivings, this was agreed. The final straw was the request to use the tennis courts at Eaton Park as a decontamination base for vehicles. The committee's tolerance snapped and the request was emphatically rejected.<sup>808</sup>

Norwich was not alone. Parks across the country were used for a wide range of war-time purposes. In 1940 the *Gardener's Chronicle* recorded that nearly all parks departments were facing difficulties because of the war, mentioning 'trees ruthlessly cut down' and 'scenes of desolation' as a result of the installation of barrage balloons and anti-aircraft units (Figure 67).<sup>809</sup> In Leicester, Braunstone Park was used as a military

**Figure 67.** Chapelfield, barrage balloon and soldiers (Picture Norfolk)



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<sup>806</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 1940, passim.

<sup>807</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 13 January 1941.

<sup>808</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 13 July 1943.

<sup>809</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 11 May 1940, 233.

park for both English and American personnel.<sup>810</sup> Some of the Birmingham Parks hosted steel shelters in addition to the trenches, as well as anti-aircraft units.<sup>811</sup> In Manchester the Special Correspondent was able to furnish hard data on impediments to recreation, with sports grounds reduced by almost half.<sup>812</sup> The Royal Parks were recommissioned for war-time use: Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park became the base for the GHQ Liaison Regiment, which used the terrain to practise tank manoeuvres. Air raid trenches were dug in Green Park and made available for public inspection.<sup>813</sup> Not all were well maintained: in Ealing a waterlogged trench became the site of a local tragedy when a child was drowned.<sup>814</sup> As early as 1939 the ravages of trenching in the parks were the subject of a deputation to Sir John Anderson, the minister for civil defence, which described them as ‘scars on the landscape, blots on the scenery, eyesores, and impediments to recreation’.<sup>815</sup> Military attachments undertook drills and made bases. Hyde Park was utilised as a giant dump, a storage site for the salvage from bombing raids (Figure 68). In 1941 *The Times*, in a propaganda piece, suggested that the eyesores served as ‘honourable wounds ... in a worthy cause’ and the ravages were borne stoically by many Londoners.<sup>816</sup> A surreal photograph of two women quietly reading in Hyde Park against a backdrop of a barrage balloon suggests that the public were resilient.<sup>817</sup> Given Norwich’s compact size and relatively modest population, however, the visibility of the military presence, together with other war-time encroachments, was overwhelming, and the effect on the parks disproportionate.

### **Food Production and Allotments**

The government had learned a bitter lesson from the First World War about the dangers of political procrastination and measures to raise food production had been subject to considerable forethought. The County War Agricultural Committees (War Ags) were resurrected and the Agriculture Acts of 1940 specified in detail the powers that were vested in the county bodies.<sup>818</sup> The impact of the war on agriculture was considerable.

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<sup>810</sup> Leicester City website: [Leicester.gov.uk](http://Leicester.gov.uk).

<sup>811</sup> Chinn, *Free Parks*, 142.

<sup>812</sup> *The Times*, 26 October 1940: ‘Needs of City Youth’, 2.

<sup>813</sup> *The Times*, 19 July 1939: ‘Trenches in the Parks’, 11.

<sup>814</sup> *The Times*, 17 May 1939: ‘Boy Drowned in ARP Trench’, 16.

<sup>815</sup> *The Times*, 12 January 1939: ‘Home News: Waterlogged trenches’, 7.

<sup>816</sup> *The Times*, 5 April 1941: ‘The Patient Parks’, 5.

<sup>817</sup> Fordham et al., *Parks, Our Shared Heritage*.

<sup>818</sup> Agriculture (Miscellaneous War Provisions) Act 1940, accessed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/3-4/14/contents>; J. Waymark, ‘The War Agricultural



**Figure 68.** Hyde Park, salvage depot (Fordham et al., *Parks, Our Shared Heritage*)

At its outbreak the country was importing a third of its food: a scant tenth of wheat, a basic staple, was grown at home.<sup>819</sup> This made the country particularly vulnerable to blockades. Farmers were expected to farm efficiently and set crop targets; those that failed to comply with the new regime could have their farms confiscated. Expertise was available, specialist equipment supplied where required and grants available to those in need. All farms of five acres or more were recorded and output was monitored, in a war-time Domesday survey.<sup>820</sup> Farmers were warned: ‘The Minister of Agriculture has more or less complete power over the farming of this country. County authorities will have a difficult and thankless task.’<sup>821</sup> The overall policies benefited the large-scale

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Executive Committee in Dorset: state-directed farming or the preservation of the landed estate?’ in B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming in The Second World War* (Exeter: British Agricultural History Society, 2006), 143–57.

<sup>819</sup> <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1939/sep/28/food-production>. Lord Denham informed the Lords that there were 3,000,000 fewer acres under the plough than at the end of the last war. The new target was an increase of 1,500,000; Mountford, *Heartbreak Farm*.

<sup>820</sup> The National Archives, Cabinet Papers, MAF 48/406, ‘Cultivation of Land Orders’, 1939–1948.

<sup>821</sup> *Farmers Weekly leader*, cited by D. Hart-Davis, *Our Land at War: A Portrait of Rural Britain 1939–45* (London: William Collins, 2015), 19.

arable farmers, particularly those in the east of the country, including Norfolk. The number of tractors alone increased from 12,500 at the war's outset to 35,000 by the war's conclusion.<sup>822</sup> It was not merely the farms that underwent radical change during the war. Commons and enclosure allotments were also appropriated by the powerful War Acs: in Norfolk thirteen commons (658 acres) were put to the plough.<sup>823</sup> The NFU complained bitterly about the damage wreaked by troop movements during manoeuvres: crops damaged, livestock lost, trenches left unfilled, produce purloined and fences damaged. The occasional deployment of troops to help with harvesting, as at the Stanford Battle Area in south-west Norfolk, was considered insufficient compensation.<sup>824</sup>

Urban communities were not exempt and the evocative phrase coined by the minister of agriculture, 'Dig for Victory', soon resonated across the country. During the First World War, the number of allotments in cultivation had soared to 1,500,000. Despite the interwar legislation and the sterling efforts of the newly formed Allotments Society, by 1939 a mere 750,000 allotments were being cultivated.<sup>825</sup> The number was well below the new government target of one allotment for every five families and the Minister of Agriculture announced an ambitious target of half a million plots.<sup>826</sup> In an echo of the First World War, the 1939 Cultivation of Land (Allotments) Act gave local councils the power to appropriate unused land and Defence Regulation 62A gave councils the right to make use of other council-owned land, such as recreation grounds

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<sup>822</sup> J. Martin, 'The Structural Transformation of Agriculture', in B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming in The Second World War* (Exeter: British Agricultural History Society, 2006), 26–32; B. Short, 'The Dispossession of Farmers in England and Wales during and after the Second World War', in B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming in The Second World War* (Exeter: British Agricultural History Society, 2006), 158–62; S. Dewey, 'The Supply of Tractors in Wartime', in B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming in The Second World War* (Exeter: British Agricultural History Society, 2006), 89–100.

<sup>823</sup> *Hansard*, Emergency Powers Defence Act 1939, accessed at <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/emergency-powers-defence-act-1939>; S. Birtles, "'A green space beyond self-interest": the evolution of common land in Norfolk' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2003), 252.

<sup>824</sup> W. Foot, 'The Military and the Agricultural Landscape', in B. Short, C. Watkins and J. Martin (eds), *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming in The Second World War* (Exeter: British Agricultural History Society, 2006), 139.

<sup>825</sup> T. Way, *Allotments* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2008), 19; *Report of a Departmental Enquiry of Inquiry into Allotments*.

<sup>826</sup> Sir R. Dorman-Smith, BBC Home Service, 3 October 1939, quoted by Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 176.

and public parks, for the purpose of providing allotments.<sup>827</sup> There was considerable political unity on the necessity of such intervention. Just three days after the declaration of war Michael Foot, then a young journalist, had coined the evocative phrase ‘The spade may prove as mighty as the sword.’<sup>828</sup>

A combination of leaflets, posters, broadcasts and film maintained pressure on the urban population to play its part and the food production imperative was couched in militaristic language: ‘the Battle on the kitchen front’.<sup>829</sup> Potatoes once again became the key food staple and the ubiquitous Potato Pete helped the national consumption increase by almost two-thirds.<sup>830</sup> Plant nurseries were particularly affected by the ultimatum to grow vegetables. At the outbreak of the war, presciently, *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* and the Royal Horticultural Society pleaded for ornamental plant orders to be sustained, apprehending the devastating impact of the COLO restrictions on horticultural trade.<sup>831</sup> Fred Wheatcroft, the famous rosarian, mourned the loss in an elegiac postscript, ‘pigs now wander about where our polyantha roses bloomed ... onion plants have taken the place of roses’. Douglas Gandy, a successful rose grower in Leicestershire, was threatened with prosecution unless his roses were converted to cabbages. Cecil Middleton, the wireless *Mr Middleton*, of the first generation of broadcasting gardeners, was more stoical: ‘the harder we dig for victory, the sooner will the roses be with us again.’<sup>832</sup> A regular ‘Garden in Wartime’ column was introduced by the *Gardeners’ Chronicle*, although knowledgeable readers frequently disagreed with the advice issued by the Ministry of Agriculture.<sup>833</sup>

Local authorities were expected to play a major role in supporting the government’s mission. In common with London’s Royal Parks, local authority green spaces across the country were volunteered or requisitioned for food. Hyde Park had extensive allotments and in Nottingham ‘vast tracts’ were ploughed up for allotments by 1940.<sup>834</sup> The Norwich parks were no exception. The Allotments Committee was active in identifying appropriate land. In 1939 the allotment acreage was reported as 365 and allotments in the city numbered 2500, a fraction of the national 1939 urban allotment

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<sup>827</sup> *Report of a Departmental Enquiry of Inquiry into Allotments*; see Appendix.

<sup>828</sup> *Evening News*, 6 September 1939: Editorial, quoted by Smith, *The Spade*, 44.

<sup>829</sup> Acton, *Growing Space*, 102.

<sup>830</sup> [www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/35979](http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/35979).

<sup>831</sup> Willes, *Gardens of the Working Class*, 285.

<sup>832</sup> F. Wheatcroft and C.H. Middleton, both cited by Hart-Davis in *Our Land at War*, 136, 150.

<sup>833</sup> *The Gardeners’ Chronicle*, January 1940, 11–12.

<sup>834</sup> M. Prosser and J. Coope, ‘Parklands in WW2’, in *The Social World of Nottingham’s Green Spaces*, 3 April 2016, accessed at [www.ng-spaces.org.uk/parklands-in-ww2](http://www.ng-spaces.org.uk/parklands-in-ww2).

holding of 60,000 acres and 570,000 individual plots.<sup>835</sup> In a break with the former practice of targeting urban plot holders, some of the city's parkland at Eaton and Earlham Golf Club was leased to a favoured local farmer, Mr Wilson and son.<sup>836</sup> The convenience of using farmer tenants already known to the council would have made it cost effective in officer time, possibly the main rationale for this unusual city approach.<sup>837</sup> The amateur allotment holder would have been hard pressed to compete with the more efficient farming practices.

The committee agreed that all the larger parks should be used for food production alongside the traditional recreational pursuits. The one exception was Hellesdon, where Sandys-Winsch encountered particular difficulty in persuading farmers to take over the nominated acres owing to the poor quality of the soil.<sup>838</sup> Not all councils appeared so ready to surrender their hard-won parks, however. Reading Council was adamant that Forbury Gardens should not become allotments. The small public park had much in common with Chapelfield Gardens, including a nineteenth-century date and a town-centre location, but Reading was eventually forced to concede.<sup>839</sup> The government recognised that sport and recreation were important ingredients for health and morale, but the parks served as important propaganda vehicles. By the time the Ministry of Information had publicised photographs of plucky London boys turning bomb sites into allotment plots resistance from any quarter would have been futile (Figure 69).<sup>840</sup> The municipal golf course at Earlham was a late capitulation to food cultivation. The council's General Purposes Committee had pointedly suggested that the golf club might be closed in early 1940 on the grounds of cost, rather than solidarity. The parks superintendent had countered the proposal, arguing that it would save a derisory £500, and the biased members of the committee tenaciously supported the officer, minuting somewhat gnomically that 'No good purpose would be served' by such action.<sup>841</sup> The golf course remained sacrosanct until the powerful County War Agricultural Committee visited and in 1941 the committee had no choice but to relinquish all but nine holes to

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<sup>835</sup> *Report of a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments*, para. 47; NRO, N/TC 30/3, 31 March 1950.

<sup>836</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 14 March 1941. The total acreage is not documented, but estimating the acreage and sites ploughed suggests c. 100 acres: i.e. most of the golf course and a third of Eaton Park.

<sup>837</sup> T. Way in email correspondence with the writer, 2016.

<sup>838</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 8 April 1941; NRO, N/TC 22/5, 19 April 1942, 13 October 1942.

<sup>839</sup> Way, *Allotments*, 5.

<sup>840</sup> Imperial War Museum, 'Photograph of schoolboys gardening', accessed at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205199417>.

<sup>841</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 12 March 1940.

the Wilsons' plough.<sup>842</sup> Norwich was not the only local authority committed to preserving its golf course. Richmond Golf Club, in Surrey, constructed an ironic war-time golfing etiquette in which Rule 2 read: 'In competitions, during gunfire or while bombs are falling, players may take cover without penalty for ceasing play.'<sup>843</sup>



**Figure 69.** Boys creating allotments on bomb sites (Imperial War Museum Historic Archive)

In 1942, at the height of the Blitz, the government redoubled its efforts to increase food production and the committee immediately approved the cultivation of tennis courts and football pitches in addition to the earlier earmarked acres. At Waterloo Park half of the glorious herbaceous borders were sacrificed; the Chapelfield and Earham glasshouses were planted with tomatoes instead of bedding plants; and for a time the

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<sup>842</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 8 April 1941.

<sup>843</sup> Richmond Golf Club, cited by Hart-Davis, *War*, 292.

committee even pondered the practicality of running a piggery at Earlham Hall.<sup>844</sup> All gardening staff were directed to spend as much time as possible on food production, rather than their conventional duties. The parks by the close of the war must have presented a sorry picture, far removed from the immaculate images seen on postcards and in photographs of the period between the wars.<sup>845</sup>

By 1945 the number of Norwich allotments had increased to almost 4000 from the earlier 2500, and the overall acreage increased to 473 from 365 through a combination of private tenancies as well as council-owned land. Compared with the expansion over the First World War, this appears unremarkable. By 1946 the numbers had reverted back to the 1939 total.<sup>846</sup> The success of the food production campaign is difficult to quantify and government statistics are ambiguous. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) surveyed allotment take-up during the war and monitored the effectiveness of the public propaganda. The results would have made disappointing reading. In 1942 just over half of urban households were growing food and only a sixth of allotment holders attributed it to the government's campaign.<sup>847</sup> However, 'Dig for Victory' captured the public imagination and raised morale; it created a cultural shift in the people's general attitude to food, and there was less food waste. Although it never succeeded in making the nation self-sufficient in food, the calorific value of food intake increased by a third over the war and the people never experienced the malnutrition suffered by the Germans and the Dutch.<sup>848</sup> The government, using draconian measures, succeeded in achieving a rare alignment of agricultural production and food consumption (Figure 71).

### **War-time Bureaucracy**

Early in the war the catch-all General Purposes Committee had directed the council's committees to consider ways in which savings might be made. This was a constant refrain of local government and echoed the stringencies imposed during the First World War. By 1940 the Parks Committee had taken up this request with considerable zeal, resurrecting a defunct Administrative Sub-committee for the purpose. By 1939 the

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<sup>844</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 19 March 1942.

<sup>845</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 19 March 1942.

<sup>846</sup> NRO, N/TC 30/2, 1946, *q.v.* Ch. 6.

<sup>847</sup> MAFF, 'An Enquiry into the Effects of the Dig for Victory Campaign', cited by Buchan, *A Green and Pleasant Land*, 76.

<sup>848</sup> Smith, *The Spade*, 222–6.



**Figure 70.** Healthy Eating poster, Hans Schlegel (Imperial War Museum Historic Archive)

department had approximately a hundred manual workers on its books and the sub-committee began the task of scrutinising all aspects of the organisation of the Parks Department, continuing its painstaking endeavours for a further two years. Office staff were required to detail their duties to the town clerk and the superintendent was directed to collate and present the work of outside staff.<sup>849</sup> It is unlikely that in 1940 there would have been detailed job descriptions, so it was a formidable exercise. Not content with the first-stage feedback, the sub-committee proceeded to interview the workers in person in order to root out anomalies and cut extravagance. In an earlier council-wide austerity initiative annual increments had been frozen and the workforce wages reduced to their basic salary while the investigations were underway.<sup>850</sup>

Local government administration is rarely addressed in garden histories, except perhaps to document staffing and expenditure. The whole exercise sits at odds with the conventional picture of war-time solidarity. The workload of the department and superintendent was increased exponentially at a time of considerable stress and there is little doubt that aspects of the exercise amounted to humiliation for the superintendent. It had been evident for some time that as the political complexion of the council changed from a largely upper-middle-class elite to a political class drawn partly from the trade unions, the relationship between officers and members was altering.<sup>851</sup> This cultural change could be detected in the Parks Committee. Sandys-Winsch's reputation, which had reached its zenith in the 1920s, had waned. No longer were resolutions carried unanimously; frequently alternative motions were raised. He had been subject to a public rebuke by the town clerk when he had twice failed to abide by a clear ruling on the taking of annual leave, and his recommendations no longer commanded the unequivocal agreement of the committee members, as they had in the dynamic early years.<sup>852</sup> This could be perceived as a more robust overview by local politicians, but the climate of mistrust would have made the management of the war-time retrenchment challenging. A particular indignity for Sandys-Winsch occurred when the head green-keeper at the golf club resigned after a relatively brief period in post.<sup>853</sup> The loss did not go unremarked: the man was subsequently interviewed and he made it clear that he objected to a lack of autonomy in carrying out skilled work. Rather than lose the green-

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<sup>849</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 September 1940.

<sup>850</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 12 September 1939.

<sup>851</sup> Norwich Council had become a Labour administration in 1933.

<sup>852</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 3 September 1936.

<sup>853</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 9 September 1941.

keeper, his line management was altered so that he worked under the parks superintendent's deputy, a decision that must have been mortifying for Sandys-Winsch.<sup>854</sup>

The outcome of the laborious two-year exercise effected some improvements to the administration of the Parks Department. No longer did workmen have to leave early on a Friday to collect wages but, rather, pay packets were delivered to the workplace. Duplication of office procedures was curtailed. Some cost centres were introduced, whereby the functions of the parks superintendent were charged against the budgets of the commissioning committees, in place of the earlier *laissez-faire* approach, which aggregated expenditure to the Parks Department; this also enabled greater oversight of the superintendent's time. Occasional misuse of tools by gardening staff was identified and eliminated. The superintendent's clerk was transferred to the Treasury. Although manual staff numbers were retained, the majority were downgraded, allowing for some departmental savings.<sup>855</sup> The outcome was humiliating but, in a slight concession, paragraphs that were critical of Sandys-Winsch were, at his request, removed from the public domain.<sup>856</sup>

Sandys-Winsch did not let the regrading rest, however, and continued to argue his gardeners' case. He had unsolicited support from the National Union of Public Employees, which by this period had become the recognised union for manual staff. The Norwich council had chosen to use grading criteria drawn up by the Eastern District Council (EDC) and so was able to distance itself from its recent decision by citing the generic criteria. When the superintendent took his case to the EDC the city treasurer surveyed similar councils to discover that only Norwich and Ipswich appeared to employ its formula. Eventually, and largely as a result of Sandys-Winsch's efforts, a new grade was ratified and many gardeners were upgraded.<sup>857</sup> A typist was restored to the parks superintendent some months later and his salary, which had been reduced by one-third over the period of the investigation, was finally made good, but only after he had petitioned, with some pathos, for its restoration.<sup>858</sup>

Given the time and effort incurred and the consequent lowering of morale, the war-time exercise was perplexing. It underlined the increasing bureaucracy of central

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<sup>854</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 9 September 1941.

<sup>855</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 14 January 1941.

<sup>856</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 12 December 1940.

<sup>857</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 26 June 1942.

<sup>858</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 February 1942.

and local government, with new systems designed to ensure that rules were implemented and to mitigate fraud and corruption. Some of this was understandable. Frugality in war was a constant *leitmotif* and fraud was perceived as tantamount to treason. Bureaucracy can be an important mechanism for ensuring consistency, fairness and effectiveness, but it can also impede immediacy and flexibility, essential elements of war-time administration. Usually the prerogative of the non-elected administrator, the saga of the Administrative Sub-committee showed that the elected councillors were capable of exploiting the system to the full. At one point in negotiations with NUPE, the officials pressed for an increase in wages for Sunday working. Members acquiesced with surprising grace. After the NUPE officials had departed, the committee approved the closure of a number of parks on a Sunday, negating the bonus at a stroke.<sup>859</sup>

### **Managing the Parks**

The municipal golf club escaped the scrutiny of the sub-committee, but its administration consumed a disproportionate amount of time, as the Parks Committee managed all the club's staffing matters.<sup>860</sup> A large part of every meeting was consumed by golfing minutiae and the item was invariably placed first on the agenda. It is debatable whether it was the most productive use of the committee's time, but, as one of the relatively few municipal golf courses in the country, it had been a hard-won asset. By the autumn of 1941 the councillors, finally appreciating the ever-more onerous workload, decided to delegate the administration to the club members. The council promptly overturned the recommendation, stating that war-time was not the most opportune period to be making a major change of policy.<sup>861</sup> Instead, a compromise was agreed: a sub-committee of councillors and golf club members was established with delegated powers. Although matters involving the golf club continued to be brought to the Parks Committee, much of the day-to-day business was handled by the new body.<sup>862</sup>

In the meantime, the business of managing the parks continued, with no apparent lessening of the workload. Information supplied by disgruntled gardeners during the administrative investigation reveal the supra-horticultural activity undertaken by the gardening staff at the time. This included setting up and clearing up after concerts, cleaning lavatories, and undertaking floral decorations at city hall and in the town

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<sup>859</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 23 October 1941.

<sup>860</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 12 December 1939, 10 September 1940.

<sup>861</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 1/77, December 1941.

<sup>862</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 9 December 1941.

centre. Sandys-Winsch had been appointed chief air raid shelter warden in early 1940, with oversight of 700 day and night shelter wardens, and he continued to be accountable for the allotments and parks and to the Household Heath Conservators. In addition, he was responsible for hospital grounds, was the link officer for the small aerodrome at Horsford St Faiths and had to ensure floristry was provided whenever it was required for special mayoral occasions.<sup>863</sup> It was expected that charity fêtes, galas and the occasional allotment competition would be mounted in the parks to raise public morale, despite the fact that it was proving difficult to recruit qualified café staff,<sup>864</sup> and Sandys-Winsch's request to close the café at Earlham Park because of staffing difficulties was rejected. He also managed the budget for the sales of excess food generated during the food production drive, which was monitored by the General Purposes Committee, and was directed to attend the War Aps regular meetings. When concerns were raised about the safety of the ancient Swan Pit at the Great Hospital, the Parks Department incurred an additional responsibility when the cygnets were transferred to the Earlham Park Heronry.<sup>865</sup> The substantive work of managing parks, gardens, the golf course, playgrounds, churchyard gardens, two swimming baths and paddling pools, as well as advising the markets on plant diseases, continued in principle, even though it doubtless assumed a lower priority than before the war.

Although the parks estate remained almost static during the war, the gardening complement had been radically reduced and those that remained tended to be superannuated or youths. In 1943 the committee was forced to agree to the appointment of women to replace any man called up, where 'it is possible for women to carry out work'.<sup>866</sup> To add to the war-time pressure, the reliable allotments deputy, Mr Bailey, was taken ill in 1942 and proved unable to return to work.<sup>867</sup> He was eventually granted early medical retirement in 1944, although the superintendent was not allowed to replace him until the end of the war, by which time Mr Bailey had died.<sup>868</sup> Delay in the discharge of duties was not countenanced and there was a clear expectation of prompt delivery and rigorous efficiency. Neither were to prove the superintendent's forté. The Parks Committee maintained considerable administrative pressure on Sandys-Winsch over this period. He was repeatedly asked to provide detailed written reports, maintain

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<sup>863</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 8 October 1940, 14 January 1941.

<sup>864</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 30 January 1941, 13 May 1941, 8 July 1941, 19 March 1942.

<sup>865</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 12 March 1940.

<sup>866</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 8 April 1943.

<sup>867</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 13 October 1942.

<sup>868</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 11 January 1944.

and monitor inventories, provide analysis of claims to the War Office and ensure that all reports were put in writing and circulated before meetings.<sup>869</sup> When the RAF finally moved out of the pavilion, extensive damage was discovered. The council was unable to exact compensation because it lacked an inventory of goods and the superintendent was held responsible, as he was when it was discovered that he had failed to ensure a water-tight farming contract with the slippery Wilsons.<sup>870</sup>

### War-time Destruction

As early as May 1940 the government instigated the 'Railings for Scrap' scheme, which called for iron to be surrendered for essential foundry work.<sup>871</sup> Even before the scheme some modernist landscapers had been calling for railings to be dismantled as part of an increased democratisation of the parks. This view was upheld by Margot Oxford, who argued that railings were insular and their removal had added to the beauty of London.<sup>872</sup> In an impressive public relations coup, a set of railings from Buckingham Palace was dismantled.<sup>873</sup> In September 1940 the Parks Committee was first notified that the Victorian railings of Chapelfield might have to be sacrificed.<sup>874</sup>

The committee made a robust resistance. Apart from aesthetic importance and historical tradition, the railings served a number of practical functions: ensuring night-time security; protecting allotments against theft; enabling the council to make a small charge for the important morale-boosting concerts at the weekends. Arguments continued well into 1942 and included a special petition to the Minister of Works and Buildings.<sup>875</sup> In Nottingham the railings at Nottingham Forest were also scheduled for removal.<sup>876</sup> As with Norwich, protests failed and across the country thousands of tons of

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<sup>869</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 8 December 1942.

<sup>870</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 8 July 1941.

<sup>871</sup> Imperial War Museum, Ministry of Air Production Poster, ref. 14281, accessed at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/32035>; *The Times*, 14 October 1940: 'Iron Railings as Scrap', 6.

<sup>872</sup> *The Times*, 4 September 1942: Margot Oxford, 'London Squares', 5.

<sup>873</sup> *The Times*, 4 October 1941: 'Removal of Palace Railings', 2.

<sup>874</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 September 1940.

<sup>875</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 14 April 1942.

<sup>876</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 'Iron railings removal, The Forest 1940', <https://picturenottingham.co.uk/image-library/image-details/poster/ntgm011131/posterid/ntgm011131>; NRO, N/TC 22/5, 10 September 1940, 3.

exquisite Victorian iron work were sacrificed.<sup>877</sup> It was an act of singular, if well-intentioned, governmental vandalism.

London, Birmingham and Coventry suffered more from enemy action than other areas of the country. Norwich, a small city of limited strategic importance, experienced disproportionate damage to life and property from the air raids (Figure 71).<sup>878</sup> In total 365 Norwich residents were killed outright and 1092 were injured.<sup>879</sup> Comparisons in this context are unpalatable, but, to set the casualties in context, Nottingham, over twice the size of Norwich, lost 155 people to air raids and Leicester fewer still.<sup>880</sup> The first bombs fell in Norwich on 9 July 1940, the last on 5 November 1943. Over 2000 houses of the city's 30,000 houses were destroyed and more than 20,000 were damaged.<sup>881</sup> A number of historic buildings, including St Julian in King Street and St Mary's at Palace Plain, which were both sites of churchyard gardens, were condemned to rubble. The most extensive series of air raids took place in 1942 and were dubbed the Baedeker Raids because the cities selected (Bath, Canterbury, Exeter, York and Norwich) were heritage locations and featured in the famous Baedeker tourist guide; their destruction was apparently intended to lower morale in the local citizenry and reduce the public's stoicism in the face of war by obliterating beautiful architecture.<sup>882</sup> Villa Gardens was an early casualty in 1941. The loss of the fine Georgian house with gardens at Martineau Lane close to the Yare and the Lakenham swimming pool caused the committee particular anguish. Although there was hope that it might be salvaged, after a site appraisal the architects reported it to be beyond repair.<sup>883</sup>

Elizabeth Marais, who worked for the Fire Service, described the war-time experience vividly:

It was horrendous driving over rubble, lengths of wood and what remained of the many buildings in the heart of the city. There was a ghastly smell of burning, buildings and bodies. As we drove through some of the streets there were people

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<sup>877</sup> *The Times*, 14 October 1940: 'Iron Railings as Scrap', 6; *The Times*, 12 May 1942: 'London Railings for Scrap', 2.

<sup>878</sup> Chinn, *Free Parks*, 170.

<sup>879</sup> Bangor, *Norwich at War*.

<sup>880</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 17 May 1945: map of localities affected by bombing; Wartime Leicestershire, Civilian Roll of Honour, accessed at <http://www.wartimeleicestershire.com/pages/croh.htm>.

<sup>881</sup> Bangor, *Norwich at War*.

<sup>882</sup> Hart-Davis, *Our Land at War*, 109.

<sup>883</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 June 1941, 11 November 1941.

crying, trying to gather up a few of their belongings from the shattered remains of their houses.<sup>884</sup>



**Figure 71.** ‘The Blitz-From Castle Mound 1942’, Stanislaw Mikula ( post-card, Norwich Museum Service)

The Jenny Lind children’s playground in Pottergate scored a direct hit in 1942.<sup>885</sup> A contemporary photograph reveals the extent of the physical devastation and also captures some of the bewilderment of local residents (Figure 72). In April 1942 a Baedeker Raid successfully targeted the bathing pond at Wensum Park, one of many occasions on which there was bomb damage to the parks.<sup>886</sup> Eaton Park, Wolfe Road, Turner Road, King Street playgrounds, Woodrow Pilling, Earlham, Sewell and Waterloo Parks, as well as Mousehold Heath and the city glasshouses, were all casualties of the air raids.<sup>887</sup> In June 1944, just as the city was recovering from the

<sup>884</sup> BBC ONE (East), People’s War, accessed at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2005/04\\_april/27/peopleswar.shtmlwww.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2005/04_april/27/peopleswar.shtmlwww.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar).

<sup>885</sup> Bangor, *Norwich*, 74; *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 October 1942: ‘Norwich Under Fire: The Jenny Lind Playground’.

<sup>886</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 12 May 1942; Bangor, *Norwich at War*, 56.

<sup>887</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 12 May 1942; Bangor, *Norwich at War*, passim; NRO, N/TC 22/4; NRO, N/TC 22/5, passim.

bombing raids and the country sensed the end of the war was in sight, a fire at Heigham Park destroyed the workmen's huts and tool sheds and the ladies' bowls pavilion.



**Figure 72.** Jenny Lind Playground, 1942 (Picture Norfolk)

### **Aftermath and Restitution**

The surrender of Japan in August 1945 marked both the end of the Second World War and celebrations across the country. In London large crowds surged towards Buckingham Palace. Clement Attlee, who had led the Labour Party to an unexpected landslide victory in July the same year, appeared on the balcony of the Ministry of Health and made a low-key speech to the cheering crowds: 'we have a great deal of work to do to win the peace as we won the war. The quality of unity and self-sacrifice, putting the common weal before private interest, must continue in the peace.'<sup>888</sup>

In Norwich, Peter Thrower, a sixteen-year-old visiting Norwich relatives from Wolverhampton, wrote of congas in the Haymarket and 'no rancour just joy and relief'. He also wrote of his shock at the extent of the destruction of the agricultural city.<sup>889</sup> As Attlee had said, sacrifice was to continue.

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<sup>888</sup> *The Times*, 16 August 1945: 'Big Crowds at the Palace', 4.

<sup>889</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 31 May 2005: 'Your Memories of VE and VJ Days'.

The pressure on food production was maintained after the war and food rationing was to continue for a further nine years.<sup>890</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture remained committed to the retention of the war-time allotments, but in Norwich the immediate priority facing the Parks Department was the reinstatement of the parks and gardens, the sports fields and playgrounds and, predictably, the golf course. They were not alone. The National Playing Fields Association was equally determined to return playing fields to recreational use, and Sir Lawrence Chubb, their general secretary, urged that this should happen ‘as quickly as possible’.<sup>891</sup> There was much to be done. Apart from the bomb damage, there were the shelters to dismantle, trenches to be filled in and the closure of the temporary allotments, in the face of considerable resistance. The allotment holders had become attached to their war-time plots and the War Agricultural Executive Committee and the relevant Ministries did not make restitution easier. The municipal golf course became a Norwich priority and the superintendent, rashly, advised the committee that the golf course was no longer required for crop production. The War Ags disagreed and promptly requisitioned the golf course for a further year.<sup>892</sup> The disappointed committee could only make the lame pledge that the golf course must be returned by 1946 at the latest.<sup>893</sup> The municipal golf course was eventually vacated by the Wilsons in 1948, and the barley fields restored to grass, but by that time the attendance numbers and membership had fallen dramatically.<sup>894</sup>

Significant demographic changes were taking place within the city, largely as a result of the movement of the city population through slum clearance and the extensive rebuilding programmes. This resulted in some historic provision proving surplus to requirements: although bowls was still played at the Gildencroft, the children’s playground was underused and the Jenny Lind playground in Pottergate was no longer required.<sup>895</sup> The playground was less easy to resolve, as it had originally been gifted with a restrictive legal covenant. Although the war had ended, interdepartmental warfare resurfaced. Land-swaps between Parks and Education departments were deemed necessary, where Sandys-Winsch’s history of hostility to his Education colleagues made negotiation difficult. The increased use of the motor-car resulted in further city-centre road widening and Chapelfield Gardens, in particular, was

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<sup>890</sup> *The Times*, 5 July 1954, ‘“Derationing Day” Celebrations’ 3

<sup>891</sup> *The Times*, 24 July 1945: ‘Allotments in Public Parks’, 2.

<sup>892</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 10 April 1945.

<sup>893</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 9 October, 11 December 1945; 8 January 1946.

<sup>894</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 14 September 1948.

<sup>895</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 9 September 1947.

vulnerable. In the midst of all this pressure, the final indignity for the military Captain arose when a forthcoming peace campaign at St Andrews Hall requested free floral decorations. The response of the committee was succinct: flowers to be charged at the normal rate.<sup>896</sup>

It was imperative that the necessary expenditure for restoration be underwritten by the government's War Damages Commission and the procedures for itemising damage and submitting claims took time as, once submitted, claims were often contested by the ministry.<sup>897</sup> At the Larkman Estate, on the council's North Earlham development, residents and their local councillors campaigned for a children's playground. This accorded with the stated aim of the Parks Committee to ensure that recreational space was integral to any new housing development, but was ignored by the Housing Committee, which had submitted proposals for temporary housing at Hall Road and had omitted any mention of recreational facilities from its plans. A site for the Larkman playground was eventually secured by releasing allotment land close by, but the superintendent discovered that the residents expected to be fully consulted on the proposed equipment.<sup>898</sup> The old order was changing.

The momentum for change was fostered by the Parks Committee's response to the city council's ambitious post-war social-housing programme. The Parks Committee had adopted a policy that every new housing development should contain a playground. This was strongly supported by residents of the new estates and, as building within the city increased, so did the demand for improved provision. In 1948 the Ministry of Education had issued a timely report that strongly advocated the importance of improving play facilities for children. The report made a firm recommendation that authorities should build new provision into their planning considerations and 'secure open space ... for providing facilities ... for schoolchildren'.<sup>899</sup> By the 1950s adventure playgrounds and junk playgrounds had emerged in London, mostly on bombed sites, where the emphasis was on facilitating children's play using found materials, natural or junk, rather than through traditional play equipment (Figure 73).<sup>900</sup>

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<sup>896</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 14 September 1948.

<sup>897</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 12 December 1944, 19 January 1945, 10 April 1945.

<sup>898</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 15 May 1945, 105.

<sup>899</sup> Ministry of Education, *Out of School* (The Clarke Report) (London: HMSO, 1948).

<sup>900</sup> R. Kozlovsky, 'Adventure Playgrounds and Postwar Reconstruction', in M. Gutman and N. de Coninck, *Designing Modern Childhoods* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007), ch. 8.

The message resonated in Norwich and a comprehensive programme of playground creation took place after the Second World War. By 1950 the number of children's playgrounds overall had risen to seventeen and these made a considerable improvement to children's recreation<sup>901</sup> (*q.v.* Chapter 7). However, budgets were so tight that the existing children's playgrounds could not be upgraded and had to wait their turn.<sup>902</sup> Even when finance became available, equipment often proved unobtainable.<sup>903</sup> Austerity had become a British way of life.

The Heigham Grove Maternity Home had established a proprietary claim on Earlham Hall after its war-time transfer, so valuable office, storage and refreshment facilities had been lost by the parks estate. A prefabricated hut was purchased for storage and the parks superintendent and the inside staff moved to Chapelfield East, where only a single telephone extension was allowed. The demise of the glorious iron pagoda in Chapelfield Gardens as a result of general wear and tear was recommended by the superintendent and authorised by the Parks Committee with minimal debate. Sandys-Winsch had hoped to replace the pagoda with a workman's hut, but the cheapest tender proved useless as the electrics, installed earlier in the century for night-time illuminations, created insurmountable complications.

Post-war, the electorate became more assertive. The new fee structure for the use of courts and pitches generated objections and petitions. At consecutive meetings representatives from a local bowling green club and a local tennis society lobbied the committee about the increased charges. Councillors proved more responsive to Sir R. Barrett-Lennard (Bart) (representing lawn tennis players) than the Bowling Green Association by reducing the fees for tennis but not bowls.<sup>904</sup> At Heigham Park, the ladies' bowls club proved particularly difficult to mollify, rejecting the superintendent's explanations for the delays in restoration following the 1944 fire.<sup>905</sup> Complaints were rife: unhygienic WCs, lack of play-space, the need for an indoor swimming bath, the poor condition of the churchyard gardens and even restrictions on use of the parks while repairs were taking place.<sup>906</sup> The stoicism that had characterised the war years appeared to have evaporated with the peace. However, the fiscal stringency, combined with the backlog of degradation and neglect, made instant repair impossible and the

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<sup>901</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/10, 13 June 1972.

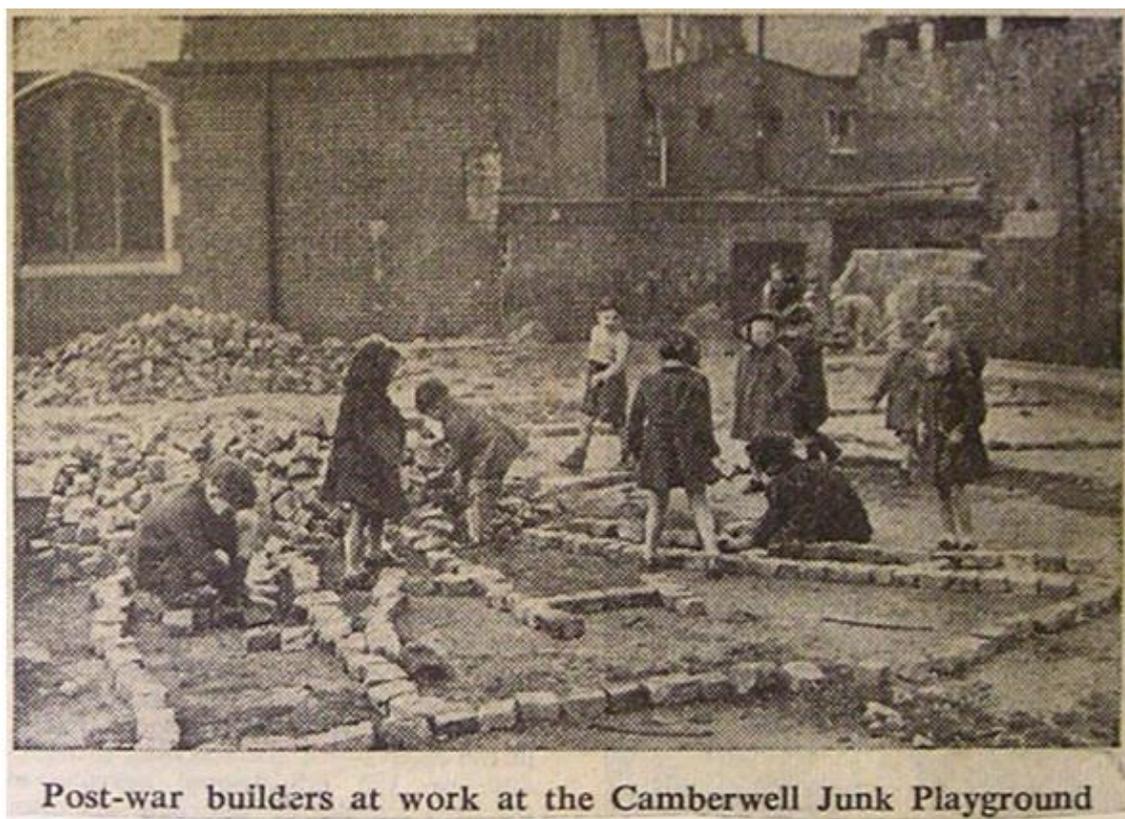
<sup>902</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 10 February 1948.

<sup>903</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 10 February, 13 July 1948.

<sup>904</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 13 April 1948.

<sup>905</sup> NRO, N/TC, 22/5, 12 June 1945.

<sup>906</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, *passim*.



**Figure 73.** Junk playground (*Illustrated London News, Times Educational Supplement* 1948)

transformation into the hoped-for urban Eden was a long way off. It was not merely the electorate that complained: Cllr Eaton complained about the condition of the cricket pitches at Eaton Park, a state compounded by the fact that expensive machinery had not been put away and was rusting.<sup>907</sup> There was a sense that the parks superintendent was losing his grip.

The superintendent's deputy was eventually appointed at the close of 1945 but the councillors, clearly frustrated by Sandys-Winsch's administration, drew up a job description for a chief clerk rather than a deputy superintendent and restricted the appointment to internal candidates. Undaunted by this sleight of hand, Sandys-Winsch requested a staff foreman, a *quasi* deputy: someone to supervise staff and equipment. Surprisingly, this was added to the estimates. Despite the austerity, Sandys-Winsch produced a 'Guide to the Parks and Gardens of Norwich' for the summer of 1947. The parks superintendent was proud of his initiative. It had, he assured the committee, 'been well received by thirty other local authorities, New Zealand and the national press'.

<sup>907</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 11 July 1950.

Although only 3000 of the 5000 printed copies had been sold – at 6d a copy – the committee agreed to produce the handbook the following year.<sup>908</sup> Pettigrew had stressed the value of effective public relations to the Parks Department and perhaps the superintendent, conscious that retirement was not far away, was pondering his legacy.<sup>909</sup>

After the euphoria following the declaration of peace the reality of the bleak post-war years was grim. Marwick argues that there were three underlying impulses to the social revolution that took place in Britain after the war: the challenge to the power of the establishment; the participation of the underprivileged (including women as well as the working classes); and a strong moral imperative to improve society.<sup>910</sup> Rarely can such sentiments be detected in the Parks Committee discourse. What is apparent is an overwhelming desire to return to normality: to play golf uninterrupted by barrage balloons and gun fire; to play football where potatoes and barley grew.

Norwich, as with the country at large, desperately needed housing, and house-building became the major priority. The clearance of bomb-damaged property provided immediate scope within the city wall for new building at sites, as at Pottergate and King Street. Major suburban social housing schemes in Hellesdon, Catton, Costessy and Thorpe were proposed, many on greenfield sites. The St Andrew and Heartsease development, close to Mousehold Heath on the fringe of the city, also went ahead during the post-war period.<sup>911</sup> Eaton Park, formerly isolated, became fully integrated into the cityscape when North and South Park Avenues were finally developed.<sup>912</sup> By 1955, when the slum clearance programme was relaunched by the new Conservative government, over 6500 new homes had already been built in Norwich, many at the expense of the surrounding countryside.<sup>913</sup>

Although housing was the major priority, leisure facilities were seen as extremely important for the generations whose youth and middle age had been dominated by the war. These became defined by sports fields and children's playgrounds, rather than parks and gardens. The high-rise residential towers employed in 1960s London became an occasional feature of social housing in Norwich, but the predominant housing style tended to echo, if not mimic, the simple Norwich vernacular style employed in the interwar period. The lavish green swards and double-tree lined verges used so

<sup>908</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 13 January 1948.

<sup>909</sup> Pettigrew, *Municipal Parks*, 193.

<sup>910</sup> A. Marwick, *The Explosion of British Society 1914–1970* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 106.

<sup>911</sup> Townroe, 'Norwich Since 1945', 463.

<sup>912</sup> NRO, N/AR 4/9, Plan of North Park Avenue estate 1951.

<sup>913</sup> Townroe, 'Norwich Since 1945', 463.

effectively in Mile Cross after the First World War became less generous as the city wrestled with the continual conundrum of housing need and financial pressures, although the maintenance of grass verges was to become a constant refrain in the dialogue between the Parks and Housing Committees.<sup>914</sup>

An expensive priority was the upgrading of the swimming provision. The situation was precarious because of the health risks and ongoing complaints from the public and the city's Health Committee. The Wensum pool was silted up from the adjacent river overflow and dredging became necessary; furthermore, broken glass had been discovered.<sup>915</sup> A search for a new site commenced. The existing parks, somewhat run down and in need of renovation, did not escape scrutiny, with Eaton Park identified for an open-air bath, and for a time the Plantation Garden at Earlham Road was a candidate for a bathing pool.<sup>916</sup> Both projects were finally vanquished by the Ministry of Works, which indicated that filtration improvements to the existing baths might be as much capital lending as the government would permit.<sup>917</sup>

Tree planting resumed after the war. The Parks Committee approved an increase in the budget for both the purchase of plants and the employment of additional men for planting.<sup>918</sup> Residential complaints over trees continued. Sycamores at Waterloo Park proved a vexing issue for adjoining dwellings because of light loss and the superintendent agreed to thin the trees out 'to abate the nuisance'. The parks superintendent, possibly mindful of the constant concerns of residents, bus companies and planners, proposed seconding two staff to the London County Council's arboricultural department for specialist training in the pruning of plane trees.<sup>919</sup> The plane trees planted along the Colman and Earlham Roads some twenty years earlier might well have been the candidates for such work. Today these beautifully pruned goblet-shaped trees reveal ghostly grey trunks in winter and brilliant green foliage in summer, a tribute perhaps to that secondment. However, the internal disputes over trees continued to resonate. At Lakenham the influential Town Planning Committee requested the removal of elm trees, a request that was promptly rejected by the Parks Committee.<sup>920</sup>

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<sup>914</sup> NRO, N/TC 30, Town Planning Committee.

<sup>915</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 14 September 1948.

<sup>916</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 9 July 1945.

<sup>917</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 11 April 1953.

<sup>918</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 13 January 1948.

<sup>919</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 14 September 1948.

<sup>920</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 22 July 1948.

Resolution of arboreal responsibility was finally achieved after the superintendent proposed replacing the large trees along the middle-class streets of Branksome, Claremont, Camberley and Waverley Roads. One of the Parks Committee, perhaps bruised by earlier cross-committee disagreements, judiciously suggested that clarification on the matter should be solicited.<sup>921</sup> In December 1948 it was reported that the Executive had adumbrated that the Parks Department was responsible for all the arboricultural aspects of the city's trees, such as planting and felling; however, decisions on the preservation of trees and woodlands 'in the interests of amenity' rested with the Town Planning Committee.<sup>922</sup> A major power of the Parks Committee, together with the authority of the parks superintendent, was emasculated at a stroke. Despite this erosion of his power base, Sandys-Winsch was undaunted: he continued to argue his case whenever he considered tree removal a crime. Only a month after the definitive adjudication of responsibility, he is recorded as expressing his hostility to the removal of trees in Cadge and Cecil Streets to accommodate the requirements of the new bus routes. His words have the ring of integrity, but would have been considered provocative to both councillors and senior officers: 'I consider this destruction of beautiful trees to be a matter of supreme importance and one which should have been given the fullest consideration by the Council before approval.'<sup>923</sup> He was correct: the 1947 Planning Act had introduced both the concept of arboreal significance and the Tree Preservation Order.<sup>924</sup>

The occasional churchyard continued to be accepted for a garden, such as St Michael at Plea. The Woodlands, an area of mixed woodland at Lower Earham, became an informal green-space acquisition when the land was transferred to the Parks Committee by the Town Planning Committee.<sup>925</sup> On a more mundane note, horticultural maintenance for the increasing number of new housing estates was transferred to the Norwich Parks Department. These introduced new maintenance responsibilities for the horticultural team. Sandys-Winsch complained about the Parks Department's role in the city's newly grassed areas, arguing that it was unreasonable to expect him to maintain verges that he had not established, and that the meanness of the grassed areas bordering the new housing developments precluded effective greens' management. Councillors,

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<sup>921</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 14 September 1948.

<sup>922</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 14 December 1948.

<sup>923</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 11 January 1949.

<sup>924</sup> Town and Country Planning Act 1947, accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1947/51/enacted> (see Appendix).

<sup>925</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 8 November 1948.

possibly exhausted by war and its aftermath, acquiesced, even if the internal tender proved more expensive than an external contractor.<sup>926</sup>

By 1950 the annual report of the Parks Committee stated that the parks estate stood at 540 acres, a reduction of a quarter from the 700 acres recorded in the 1930s.<sup>927</sup> The erosion was largely driven by allotment decline, road widening, new housing estates and parking spaces, with smaller green spaces swallowed up by the pace of development. The larger parks had so far remained untouched. The sporting and leisure provision in that year included a wide range of games facilities in the Norwich parks: bowls, cricket and football pitches, the last used by twice the number of clubs, demonstrating that football was fast overtaking cricket as the general public's sport of choice. Tennis continued to top the ratings, with eighty-four courts, and netball, hockey and lacrosse provision also featured in the sports inventory, together with a putting green and the struggling municipal golf course. Boules was no longer listed. However, there were seventeen children's playgrounds and a large programme of organised games, representing an array of sporting facilities that might have placated the inaugural meeting of the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society sixty years previously.<sup>928</sup> The new street trees in the Norwich suburbs numbered, according to Sandys-Winsch's assessment, over 20,000.<sup>929</sup>

One small horticultural innovation in Norwich at this time merits attention: the gardening of traffic islands. The first traffic island (or circular junction) in the UK was created in Letchworth Garden City as early as 1909.<sup>930</sup> Some years previously Norwich had created island beds along some of its wider roads, such as The Avenues and along Prince of Wales Road, using them as stepping stones at the widest point. Larger islands were introduced later at the junctions of the main arterial roads into the city. The term 'traffic island' is indicative of its original function: a pedestrian refuge from the flow of traffic and a term still used by the city of Birmingham in preference to the more recent 'roundabout'. Today it would be a rash walker who attempted to navigate a road via a roundabout, but the public visibility of the roundabout in the UK, coupled with the element of a public garden, seen more frequently in urban than rural environments,

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<sup>926</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5, 12 February 1946.

<sup>927</sup> NRO N/TC 1/82, Parks Committee, Annual Report for 1949/50.

<sup>928</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 11 April 1950.

<sup>929</sup> *Norfolk News and Norwich Mercury*, 29 May 1953: 'Retirement Interview, Captain Sandys-Winsch'.

<sup>930</sup> Traffic islands (circular junctions or roundabouts) were first suggested by Ebenezer Howard in *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898). His plan of Ward and Centre shows a distinct circular traffic island from which wide boulevards radiate outwards.

makes them prime candidates for inclusion as elements of urban green space. In 1950 the Parks Committee suggested that they might be laid out with flowers and asked the superintendent to return with costings.<sup>931</sup> The request was greeted with muted enthusiasm. Four months later, Sandys-Winsch reported that the proposal required approval from the Executive Committee and the matter did not resurface for another year. By 1951 the Executive had finally approved the planting of seven traffic islands on the major arterial roads leading into Norwich for the forthcoming festivities.<sup>932</sup>

### **Post-war Planning**

The national focus on post-war reconstruction began in 1940, when there was nationwide optimism that the war would be over within a year, but hopes were soon dashed. By 1943, when the balance of the war had begun to shift in favour of the Allies, there was a resurgence of optimism and Norwich began planning for the post-war years.<sup>933</sup> ‘Planning for peace’ was a council-wide project; all committees had been asked to contribute their post-war priorities. The priorities of the Park’s Committee were prosaic. The major priorities of new swimming baths and playgrounds were supplemented by an ice skating rink, a sports stadium and the commitment to recreation grounds and sports fields ‘wherever new housing estates might be created’. As an afterthought, the committee proposed decorative trees and gardens ‘wherever it was possible’. Councillor Braund dissented, perhaps viewing gardens and trees as luxuries rather than functional necessities: a hint of attitudes to come.

The council placed its faith in two architects with whom it had previous experience: C.H. James and S. Rowland Pearce. These had been responsible for the design of the 1938 city hall and gardens in St Peter’s Street. They were charged with conceiving a plan for the redevelopment of the entire city. The assignment was challenging and on an entirely different scale from the earlier commission. James and Pearce had proved that they were sympathetic to old buildings over the city hall design and stated that they were equally concerned with respecting, wherever possible, the existing city heritage. ‘Buildings are the cultural manifestations of the internal conditions of a city; they express the quality of its aesthetic ability and appreciation, the

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<sup>931</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 14 July 1950.

<sup>932</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 9 January 1951.

<sup>933</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/4, 10 December 1940.

degree of prosperity and its civic sense.’<sup>934</sup> The architects rose to the challenge and produced an elegant and modern solution. *The Norwich Plan*, in principle a major contribution to town planning, and the largest such exercise ever undertaken by the city, was published before the end of the war and provided a blueprint for Norwich (Figure 74). Their vision was to conserve much of the past, while eliminating the mediocre and meretricious. The foreword credited two earlier pieces of city planning, undertaken in 1928 and 1939 but only partially realised, and expressed the hope that the plan would form the basis for growth in the city for the following fifty years. Their optimism was undermined by an appendix from Rowley, the city engineer, who considered they had been insufficiently radical in planning for increased city-centre industry and traffic.<sup>935</sup> *The Norwich Plan* contained visionary elements: numerous traffic-free areas within the city walls; wide boulevards in the immediate suburbs and, in an echo of Ebenezer Howard’s original vision for garden cities, cohesive neighbourhood estates in which all classes were integrated, rather than the socially stratified housing developments typical of Norwich and many other towns and cities. The plan showed respect for the existing green spaces and proposed an increase in greenscaping, but at the expense of considerable swathes of Victorian housing, which at that period held little interest for conservationists.<sup>936</sup> Norwich was one of many cities to address its future role through urban planning. Many urban areas were faced with bomb damage and the resulting challenge of housing the homeless. In company with cities such as Warwick and Worcester, Norwich was generally perceived as adopting a conservationist approach. The cities of Birmingham, Bristol, Coventry, Leicester, Manchester and Nottingham also produced an architectural vision for their collective futures. Bristol, unusually, used its own city engineer and architect.<sup>937</sup> In Nottingham, far less damaged than Norwich, the plan was more radical: large swathes of historic buildings were demolished, to be replaced by large-scale retail outlets; Maid Marian Way, a brutalist thoroughfare, was constructed through the centre of the city, cutting across the historic street plan and isolating the ancient castle.<sup>938</sup> This ran counter to government advice that planners

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<sup>934</sup> NRO, ACC 2002/310, C.H. James, S. Rowland Pierce and H.C. Rowley, ‘City of Norwich Plan 1945’.

<sup>935</sup> NRO, N/EN 28, City of Norwich Plan 1945.

<sup>936</sup> NRO, N/EN 28, City of Norwich Plan 1945.

<sup>937</sup> D. Kynaston, *A World to Build* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 160–9.

<sup>938</sup> Beckett and Brand, *Nottingham*, 115.



**Figure 74.** Example of redevelopment area, City of Norwich Plan

should retain historic street patterns and a reasonable proportion of old buildings.<sup>939</sup> Exeter, another Baedeker city, lost 1500 buildings and a large swathe of the historic city centre, including part of the cathedral.<sup>940</sup> In the 1947 Exeter plan Thomas Sharpe argued that to ‘rebuild the city on the old lines ... would be a dreadful mistake’.<sup>941</sup> Leicester established a Reconstruction Committee with a brief to develop a housing strategy, deploying the city engineer. The plan was practical but lacked aesthetic inspiration. In order to counter the shortage of building material, Leicester purchased chalet-style prefabricated houses that were not reliant on traditional materials. Although this expedient approach enabled Leicester to create 5,000 new homes in a short time-scale, Leicester emerged drab and undistinguished, damningly described by J.B.Priestley as ‘characterless’.<sup>942</sup> London was particularly ambitious. Abercrombie’s famous regional GLC plan for London proposed ‘a continuous green background of open country in which are embedded buildings’ – an elemental reconciliation between the urban and the

<sup>939</sup> Ministry of Housing and Local Government, *Advisory Handbook for the Redevelopment of Central Areas* (1947).

<sup>940</sup> T. Sharp, *Exeter: Phoenix, A Plan for Rebuilding* (Exeter, Architectural Press, 1947).

<sup>941</sup> Sharp, *Exeter*, quoted by Cullingworth and Nadin, *Planning*, 21.

<sup>942</sup> Rodger, ‘Reinventing the City after 1945’, 184–7.

rural.<sup>943</sup> Despite the intensive preparation, the Abercrombie plan was never implemented in its entirety.

The City of Norwich Plan was not received with immediate local acclaim. Responses were mixed. For many councillors and citizens, it was perceived as too radical and costly. The plan was put on hold and was immediately followed by a detailed survey of the city, which occupied surveyors and draughtsmen for two years. The 1 inch to 1,000 foot map produced a wealth of illuminating detail, a snapshot of the city at a critical point in history. It included all aspects of the cityscape, including buildings and their dimensions and uses, war-damage and open spaces.<sup>944</sup> Although the exercise could be perceived as a delaying mechanism, it succeeded in making a rational assessment of the Norwich population at that time and was used to justify some later planning developments.

It is a remarkable city that can predict its future with any degree of accuracy. In London, in a highly rigorous exercise, the survey measured not only the cityscape but also its population: work, commuting patterns and mortality were included and the results altered the eventual design significantly.<sup>945</sup> In Norwich, Rowley was eventually proved mistaken. The predicted traffic growth accelerated beyond expectation, but was directed away from the city centre; industry moved from central locations into functional business parks in the suburbs. Rowley's legacy to the city was the Magdalen Street flyover, a brutal contribution to civic life that destroyed ancient street patterns in a historic area of the city.

The two-year delay was to prove fortuitous. The Labour government's 1945 election victory heralded a radical programme of reconstruction and nationalisation. The promised land nationalisation did not take place, but, as in the war years, the pressures on farmers to increase productivity continued, which had implications for wildlife and the rural landscape for decades to come.<sup>946</sup> In 1948, before the future shape of Norwich could be resolved, The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 (See Appx 1) came into operation and altered completely the rules of engagement for the city, and the country at

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<sup>943</sup> P. Abercrombie, *The Greater London Plan* (London: University of London Press, 1944); G. and E. McAllister (eds), *Homes, Towns and Countryside: a practical plan for Britain* (London: Batsford, 1945). This collection of articles was the template for the Act. Abercrombie was the author of Chapter 1.

<sup>944</sup> NRO, N/EN 28, Basic Survey, 1946–1948; NRO, N/TC 30, Town Planning Co. Annual Report.

<sup>945</sup> R. Keane (dir.), *The Proud City: A Plan for London* (Ministry of Information film, 1944), accessed at <https://archive.org/details/ProudCity>.

<sup>946</sup> Kynaston, *A World to Build*, 169.

large.<sup>947</sup> The Norwich Town Planning Committee wrote its own postscript in 1947, acknowledging that town planning had reached a transitional stage, noting the death knell of ‘bold planning’ and predicting that the impact of the country’s economic crisis had yet to be fully appreciated. It ended on a cautionary note, uncertain whether the plan was ‘doomed to frustration’.<sup>948</sup> Key elements of The City of Norwich Plan would be resurrected over the following three decades.

### **New Towns and the Town and Country Planning Act 1947**

The Labour Party had been concerned over the siting of new housing estates far removed from workplaces and other community facilities and the urban sprawl that had eroded the rural landscape on the urban outskirts. *Homes, Towns and Countryside* expressed a socialist vision in addressing thorny issues such as planning, industry, agriculture and the countryside.<sup>949</sup> The 1947 Town and Country Planning Act reflected some, if not all, of these ideals. The Act was radical. The requirement to house people was the dominant catalyst, but other factors prevailed. The interwar years had witnessed the building of almost 4 million houses and one in three of the population had been rehoused.<sup>950</sup> Private suburban development had particularly flourished after the First World War in developments such as ‘Metroland’, the colloquial name given to an entrepreneurial initiative by the Metropolitan Railway Authority, in which suburban housing had colonised Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Open greens and landscaped front gardens prevailed; greenery and gardens sold homes.<sup>951</sup> In Outer London, Hampstead Garden Suburb had been largely completed by 1935: a settlement of 800 acres that stretched from Golders Green to East Finchley and in which elements of the original countryside, such as woodland, mature trees and ancient hedgerows, were woven into the fabric of the estate.<sup>952</sup> The resulting North London suburb achieved Henrietta Barnett’s ambition of ‘a garden in which building took place’, although it failed in her aspiration to house a mix of classes, as the exquisite attention to detail and

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<sup>947</sup> The Town and Country Planning Act 1947, accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1947/51/enacted> (see Appendix 1).

<sup>948</sup> NRO, N/EN 28, ‘City of Norwich Plan 1945, Basic Survey 1946–48’.

<sup>949</sup> McAllister and McAllister, *Homes, Towns and Countryside*.

<sup>950</sup> G. and E. McAllister, ‘Introduction’, in G. and E. McAllister (eds), *Homes, Towns and Countryside: a practical plan for Britain* (London: Batsford, 1945), xix.

<sup>951</sup> S. Seifalian, ‘Gardens of Metroland’, paper presented to The Garden History Society Conference, Oxford, 30 May 2016.

<sup>952</sup> Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, ‘The History of the Suburb’, accessed at <http://www.hgstrust.org/the-suburb/history-of-the-suburb.shtml>.

the generous green space proved too expensive for social subsidy. The garden image was appropriated in the GLC's *The Proud City*, using the metaphor of plant husbandry and gardening to express empathy for people's needs in building the new post-war metropolis.<sup>953</sup>

The government had stated its commitment to providing 'pleasant homes for all in beautiful towns and villages and in noble cities – an echo of the 'homes for heroes' promised optimistically by Lloyd George at the close of the First World War.<sup>954</sup> The new planning framework had a powerful effect on the local authority role in town and country planning.<sup>955</sup> The Labour government was attracted to the New Town model and the 1944 Greater London Plan, driven by Patrick Abercrombie, was a major influence on this movement, which drew in part on the garden cities ideals.<sup>956</sup> The Reith Committee, which sat from 1945 to 1947, proposed a template for self-contained, socially mixed new towns that would reflect the new democratic consensus and assist community cohesion.<sup>957</sup> Despite these principles, the New Town Movement was essentially a state-led strategy, rather than a harmonious socialist ideal, and was largely driven by the desperate housing shortage.<sup>958</sup> The attractive and historic market town of Stevenage, the first of the new towns, became a public relations disaster when it was announced without public consultation. Despite its architectural shortcomings, Stevenage pioneered the first town centre free of cars; as with other despised new towns, such as Harlow and Hemel Hempstead, the ratio of greenscaping was generous, with recreational areas integrated into the plan.<sup>959</sup>

These urban developments took place against a growing awareness of the importance of protecting the countryside. A catalyst had been the 'mass' trespass of Kinder Scout in Derbyshire in 1932 and the even greater assembly of 10,000 walkers on Winnats Pass a few weeks later, following the jailing of the Kinder Scout ringleaders.<sup>960</sup> On the cusp of the 1950s the Attlee government introduced The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. This designated ten national parks and green belts

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<sup>953</sup> Keane, *Proud City*. P. Abercrombie, the Director of the Greater London Plan, and J.H. Foreshore, the GLC principal architect, are shown in staged discussion.

<sup>954</sup> McAllister and McAllister, 'Introduction', xix.

<sup>955</sup> See Appendix; Cullingworth and Nadin, *Planning*, 23; S. Ward, *Planning*, 99–100.

<sup>956</sup> S. Rutherford, *Garden Cities and Suburbs* (New York: Shire Publications, 2014), 8, 28; McAllister and McAllister, 'Introduction'.

<sup>957</sup> Ward, *Planning*, 94.

<sup>958</sup> Ward, *Planning*, 96–8.

<sup>959</sup> Ward, *Planning*, 98.

<sup>960</sup> R. Lennon, 'People's Landscapes', *National Trust Magazine* (Spring 2019), 28–31.

around London and the major conurbations. The national parks of Dartmoor, Snowdonia, the Lake District and the Peak District came on stream in 1950.<sup>961</sup> The introduction of the national parks generated an enthusiastic response in the populace, which coincided with the beginning of mass motor-car ownership and increased participation in cycling.

In 1947 the Attlee government, encouraged by Herbert Morrison, had conceived the idea of a spectacular national event that would restore optimism in a nation worn down by a brutal war and prolonged austerity. The Festival of Britain, which marked the centenary of the 1851 Great Exhibition, opened in April 1951 during a period of economic crisis but was to prove a considerable success.<sup>962</sup> It was conceived as a nationwide celebration and was supplemented by a touring display, unimaginatively entitled *The Land Travelling Exhibition*, visiting the major industrial centres of Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Nottingham.<sup>963</sup> The main London site was the South Bank, recently shored up from the Thames by a barrier wall and identified as a major redevelopment area. Imaginations were fired by the 1951 exhibition: the South Bank featured large-scale exhibits of art, architecture, science, design and technology, and the accompanying booklet, which emphasised a ‘corporate reaffirmation of faith in the Nation’s Future’, stressed that more people were taking part in organised games than ever before.<sup>964</sup> A highly popular aspect of the Festival was the Battersea funfair, which featured a range of imaginative entertainments and gardens, including a theatre grotto and beer garden. Morgan likened the funfair to the former pleasure gardens at Vauxhall and Ranelagh.<sup>965</sup>

Provincial towns and cities were encouraged to participate by launching their own festivals. Norwich, in a burst of local pride, together with the smaller centres of Canterbury, Cambridge and Chichester, staged its own Norwich Festival, opened by Princess Elizabeth on 17 June 1951.<sup>966</sup> Unlike the national exhibition, The Norwich Festival was nostalgic and focused on the history of the city, re-enacting significant

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<sup>961</sup> National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/97>: this act was introduced by L. Silkin, the Labour Minister for Town and Country Planning, and was part of the then government’s planned post-war reconstruction.

<sup>962</sup> K.O. Morgan, *Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 110.

<sup>963</sup> *The Guardian*, 4 May 1951: N. Shrapnel, ‘Festival of Britain’.

<sup>964</sup> I. Cox, *The South Bank Exhibition* (Festival of Britain Guide) (London: HMSO, 1951), 6, 79.

<sup>965</sup> Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, 110.

<sup>966</sup> A.B. Cope, *The Norwich Festival* (Norwich: Norwich Festival Society Ltd., 1951).

events such as the Roman settlements, Boudicca and Kett's Rebellion. It also featured the River Wensum, with a procession of small and large boats and naval vessels, commemorating the central role played by the river in Norwich's history. The council went to considerable effort to ensure that the city looked attractive for the royal visit. Opulent floral decorations, lavishly placed around the city, could not have escaped the princess's attention. Provided by the superintendent and his staff, they drew widespread compliments.<sup>967</sup>

The legacy of the war and the austerity of the post-war years continued to exert their effects on local and national government for some years afterwards.<sup>968</sup> The dominant culture of the post-war period celebrated the new and emphasised the utilitarian. Recreation was perceived as primarily a vehicle for outdoor exercise and games. The recreational dichotomy was epitomised by the archbishop of York Cyril Garbut, who was an advocate of national parks and planning controls to limit the despoiling of the countryside. He argued that people needed more than homes and that recreation was not merely about sporting facilities.<sup>969</sup>

## Conclusion

The council and its skeleton staff had stoically weathered the war and an agenda dominated by the military presence and food production, which altered both the use and appearance of the city's parks. The war years were characterised by damage: enemy action, institutional and individual vandalism and bureaucracy. The immediate post-war years were dominated by reparation, remediation and complaint. Despite the optimism of the immediate post-war society, the devastation of war proved harder to remedy than expected and the administrative demands of local government posed new managerial challenges for the changing society. The scope for recreational innovation was limited both by austerity and the functional post-war agenda set by the Parks Committee, epitomised by the city's parochial response to the Festival of Britain. The final years of Sandys-Winsch's incumbency provided little scope for the grand schemes executed with such flair in the first decade of his service. The profile of the Parks Committee slipped in the council's hierarchy of importance, replaced by Town Planning, Housing

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<sup>967</sup> East Anglian Film Archive, 'Norwich Festival: 1951 Norwich, Norfolk', cat no. 470, accessed at <http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/470>.

<sup>968</sup> A. Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1996), xii; Kynaston, *A World to Build*, 20–2.

<sup>969</sup> C. Ebor, 'Postscript: Planning for Human Needs', in G. and E. McAllister (eds), *Homes, Towns and Countryside: a practical plan for Britain* (London: Batsford, 1945), 160–2.

and Education: the work of these committees dominated resources, both in terms of the range of their responsibilities and the major expansion of their budgets.<sup>970</sup> The gracious parks so celebrated in the 1920s and 1930s were beginning to lose their attraction.<sup>971</sup> The parks superintendent had been in post for thirty-two years, and his earlier achievements were fading from collective memory.

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<sup>970</sup> Rab Butler's progressive Education Act extended schooling from five to fifteen and introduced pre-school and post-school education.

<sup>971</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/5; NRO, N/TC 22/6, *passim*.

### New Brooms, 1953–1974

Attlee's government served a brief second term, from 1950 to 1951, but unexpectedly lost to the Conservatives, who were to remain in power for the next thirteen years. In 1952 the Town Development Bill was passed, supported by the Labour Party, as it had been drafted before the election.<sup>972</sup> The act enabled the consolidation of the New Towns initiative and also reduced some of the centralisation embedded in Labour's 1947 Act, restoring some planning responsibilities to local authorities.<sup>973</sup> Norwich remained politically split, with both a Conservative and Labour MP returned to parliament.<sup>974</sup> The city council remained Labour-led until 1968; its major priority over this period continued to be housing and the creation of a major ring-road to combat the increasing demand for motor-car use in the city.<sup>975</sup>

In June the city, in common with other local authorities, had arranged for trees to be planted in municipal parks and gardens as part of the local celebrations for the 1953 coronation of the new queen. Sandys-Winsch was part of the tree-planting party, alongside the lord mayor, the sheriff and the chair of the Parks Committee.<sup>976</sup> These events, two years after the Festival of Britain, brought some light relief to a country still crippled by debt and post-war austerity.

### Managerial Change

The parks superintendent's nostalgia was increasingly evident: 'There will come a time ... when gardeners will be paid what they are worth and be treated as the craftsmen they are.'<sup>977</sup> His wistful words at his retirement are as much a personal reflection on his relationship with the council as a comment on conditions of service for his horticultural staff. Throughout his tenure he had argued repeatedly for what he considered to be appropriate grading for skilled employees, sometimes aligning himself with the relevant worker's unions to do so. He had also shown considerable tenacity in furthering his own terms and conditions: minute records are packed with comparative analyses of horticultural posts in equivalent local authorities following a Sandys-Winsch salary or

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<sup>972</sup> Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, 118.

<sup>973</sup> Ward, *Planning*, 103–4.

<sup>974</sup> *The Times*, 27 October 1951, 13.

<sup>975</sup> Townroe, 'Norwich since 1945'.

<sup>976</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 12 May 1953, 4.

<sup>977</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 July 1953: 'City Parks Chief Retires After 34 Years' Service'.

grading appeal. Neither was he a proverbial ‘soft touch’. Staff who were perceived as uncooperative or incompetent were recommended for dismissal.

The previous month, shortly before his scheduled retirement at sixty-five, the superintendent was subjected to a humiliating experience at the hands of the Parks Committee. The meeting was called to discuss matters relating to the officer and followed the protocol of a disciplinary enquiry, concerning Sandys-Winsch’s use of kitchen gardens at Earlham Hall for a personal allotment. The superintendent argued that he had received permission and cited two meetings of the Parks Committee in support of his claim. He was then instructed to withdraw. On his return he was informed that after his retirement he would not be allowed to visit Earlham Park except as an ordinary member of the public and that he must employ a person, not a council employee, to gather his crops and clear his plot. The grapevine in the greenhouse, planted by Sandys-Winsch for his domestic use, must not be removed. Furthermore, he must submit a list of the personal items he proposed to remove and must await official approval before removal.<sup>978</sup>

Councillors clearly considered that the superintendent had exploited his position by using council land for his personal benefit. It would not have been the first time that the long-serving parks superintendent had erred: he had been reprimanded in committee for taking holiday at times outside of the agreed holiday period, criticised in council for failure to meet a deadline and sanctioned for misusing a council employee’s time on personal business; councillors complained that staff borrowed council equipment for private work. He had been warned earlier not to use council facilities for private use when it was discovered he was growing his own vegetables in Chapelfield greenhouse and reminded that he must not misuse council resources, and he had contested his own salary and the employment terms of his staff over many years.<sup>979</sup> His reluctance to compromise and his combative responses might well have rankled with officers and councillors over time. He was an awkward colleague and an opinionated employee, with administrative skills that were frequently found wanting. Over thirty-four years the superintendent of parks had probably exceeded the regulations on a number of occasions and doubtless he ran the Parks Department as his personal fiefdom. Nevertheless, given Sandys-Winsch’s status, his considerable achievements in park design and development and the extraordinary burden of the war-time service, the

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<sup>978</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 12 May 1953.

<sup>979</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/2; 22/3; 22/4; 22/5; 22/6, (1921–52) *passim*.

matter could have been handled with discretion. His retirement was imminent and the timing of the disciplinary intervention was calculated to demean the parks superintendent and ensure an ignominious conclusion to his career. His reputation was secured in the columns of the local press, however, which proved far less hostile. The *Eastern Daily Press* published a lengthy retirement interview and in an editorial detailed his contribution as a great artist and visionary. It commended the great parks at Eaton and Waterloo, the Castle Gardens and the imaginative terracing of Wensum Park. It referred to the beauty of the city churchyards, the numerous small gardens in his care and the tree-lined suburban streets. In conclusion, the local paper stated that the Norwich parks were one of the city's finest achievements since the First World War.<sup>980</sup>

At his retirement presentation in 1953 over ninety members of staff were assembled, but councillors were conspicuously absent. In his speech the superintendent drew attention to his 'harshness' in his dealings with his workers and in a moment of rare sentiment (on receipt of a fishing rod and reel as a staff retirement present) he alluded to their 'kindness and forgiveness'.<sup>981</sup> The presentation was made by his deputy, Mr Chesterson, rather than a senior officer, which would have been the customary choice for a long-serving staff member. Captain Arnold Sandys-Winsch, whose contribution to the Norwich parks over thirty-four years had been so significant, passed into retirement. His apparent lack of capacity to keep pace with a changing clientele and a political constituency very different from that present at his appointment, the post-war recreational culture and the increased bureaucracy and accountability of local government revealed him to be, by the 1950s, a man out of his time. The elegant parks and tree-lined streets of Norwich were his legacy.

Towards the end of the Second World War, when thoughts turned to the future, the *Gardeners' Chronicle* had run a lengthy correspondence on the changing role of the parks superintendent.<sup>982</sup> The correspondence, dominated by past and present parks superintendents, was wide-ranging and focused on whether the role was to continue as largely horticultural, in the Wisley tradition, or to develop into that of an administrative supremo.<sup>983</sup> The overall consensus was that the status of the profession needed to be improved overall and qualifications updated to take account of developments in local

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<sup>980</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 July 1953: 'Captain Sandys-Winsch Retirement Interview'.

<sup>981</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 July 1953: 'City Parks Chief Retires After 34 Years' Service'.

<sup>982</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, CXIV, 17 July 1943.

<sup>983</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 22 May 1943; *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 29 April, 6 May, 17 June 1944; *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 3 February, May 5 1945.

government. At the very least in the large authorities (defined as half a million inhabitants or more) the role required a first-rate administrator. There was general pessimism over the future of public parks, largely because the war had seen ‘an orgy of destruction and pilfering’.<sup>984</sup>

With the retirement of Sandys-Winsch, the Parks Committee had the opportunity to appoint a successor who reflected the changing times. Sixty applications had been received, a number that suggests that the Norwich parks were known on the local authority gardening circuit. Sandys-Winsch had been a keen exhibitor of daffodils at the Royal Horticultural Society shows and had been awarded a rare fellowship by the Institute of Landscape Architects for his landscaping of the Norwich parks.<sup>985</sup>

Six candidates were shortlisted for interview: all were well qualified horticulturally and in two cases existing parks superintendents, including one from Nottingham, a very much larger authority than Norwich in 1953. Forty-two-year-old Mr J.M. Anderson – despite being the most junior of the shortlisted applicants, as an assistant parks superintendent in the small local authority of Cheltenham – was finally selected.<sup>986</sup> The committee had chosen a candidate in the traditional horticultural mould. Anderson came from a gardening background: his father had been a head gardener on a large Yorkshire estate and he had joined his father as an apprentice. He had worked at Sutton Place in Surrey, at that time the home of the duke of Sutherland, from where he moved to Manchester, the largest municipal authority outside of London. At twenty-three he transferred to The Royal Botanic Gardens at Edinburgh, where he took his horticultural qualifications. After the war he was recruited by Cheltenham as an assistant parks superintendent.<sup>987</sup> He had sound local government and gardening experience and was appointed on a salary of £815 per annum to start work in July, overlapping with his predecessor for a few weeks.<sup>988</sup> He presented his first, non-committal report to the Parks Committee in August 1953.<sup>989</sup>

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<sup>984</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 22 May 1943.

<sup>985</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 July 1953: ‘Captain Sandys-Winsch Retirement interview’; RHS international Daffodil Register, A. Sandys-Winsch: Daffodils ‘Auric’, ‘Edward Buxton’, ‘Simon’. Accessed at <https://apps.rhs.org.uk/horticulturaldatabase/daffodilregister/daffsearch.asp?name2=Sandys-Winsch&Search=>.

<sup>986</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 13 April 1953, 24 April 1953.

<sup>987</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 2 April 1974: ‘Twenty-one years Director of Parks’, 9.

<sup>988</sup> *Norfolk News and Norwich Mercury*, 29 May 1953.

<sup>989</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 13 April 1953.

The new superintendent did not wait long before making some assessments of his new department. Over the first six months he produced a range of policy papers in which he advocated a number of changes. His first significant paper was on the condition of the gardening machinery and was implicitly critical of past practice. In the same paper Anderson remarked on the improper appropriation of allotments at Earlham Park by the foremen (a remnant of the cavalier approach taken by Sandys-Winsch) and tactfully requested guidance from the committee. The tactic was non-confrontational and achieved its aim.<sup>990</sup> By December of the same year the committee agreed that in future all the machinery would be maintained by the engineer's department; the days when machinery was allowed to gather rust in the parks were over.<sup>991</sup> By January 1954 the foremen had vacated the allotments.

In December 1953 Anderson presented a substantial paper on the parks, proposing some horticultural changes.<sup>992</sup> One of the main recommendations was greater use of permanent planting. Historically, the use of annuals was a means of compensating for the toxic air pollution in urban areas, which meant that few perennial plantings survived long term. Until the eventual passing of the Clean Air Act 1956, gardeners became expert in creating landscapes with a short time-scale in mind.<sup>993</sup> Pettigrew had earlier suggested that shrubs and trees were themselves a form of bedding, requiring replacement every three years or so because of pollution.<sup>994</sup> Rather than rely on the resource-intensive bedding-out system, the superintendent recommended substituting shrubs for flowers on the difficult Castle Mound and permanent planting of trees and shrubs in the churchyard gardens, rather than the traditional annual floral displays. The privations of war, coupled with the loss of the protection offered by railings and the space given to allotments and food production, had contributed to a decline in floral bedding, but there had been a general expectation that, once the war was over, the parks would be back to normal.<sup>995</sup>

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<sup>990</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 13 October 1953.

<sup>991</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 4 December 1943; N/TC 22/6, 8 December 1953.

<sup>992</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 8 December 1953.

<sup>993</sup> Johnston, *Trees in Towns and Cities*, 75; Clean Air Act 1956, accessed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/4-5/52/enacted>.

<sup>994</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 1928 Part ii, contribution by W.W. Pettigrew, 308, cited by Elliott, 'Bedding Schemes', 115.

<sup>995</sup> Elliott, *Victorian Gardens*, 118.

Bedding-out had reached its apogee in the Edwardian period but had always been subject to criticism on the grounds of taste.<sup>996</sup> It was carried out by some councils to extraordinary lengths in three-dimensional sculptural arrangements, such as steps carpeted in plants, floral clocks and even a floral cenotaph.<sup>997</sup> Conway argues that bedding also represented the Victorian expectation that gardening perfection would encourage perfect behaviour, though the railings that ensured people kept to pathways may be a more likely explanation.<sup>998</sup>

Anderson advocated a more flexible approach to staff deployment and sensibly recommended the centralisation of the greenhouses, which at the time were sited over three locations, including Chapelfield Gardens. He confirmed the need for an increase in children's playgrounds close by the burgeoning housing estates but proposed surfacing with concrete, a cleaner material than bitumen and less hazardous to children's limbs. Playground equipment was to be gradually replaced with steel, by then commercially available.<sup>999</sup> Some criticisms were trenchant: he pointed out that, despite the large numbers of bowls clubs that flourished in Norwich's parks, none was up to English Bowls Authority (EBA) standard. As a result bowls players were restricted from participating in official tournaments. He criticised the condition of the golf course and the grass tennis courts (although he cautioned that their replacement by hard surfacing could lead to a sense of desolation in parks). He also recommended that cafés in parks should be improved. In an echo of Pettigrew's 1930s manual, Anderson recommended that the balance between sports provision for younger people and restful retreats for the older population should be carefully managed, so that the older people did not feel excluded from the green spaces.<sup>1000</sup> This legitimate concern was never articulated in later reports, nor raised by the committee.

On a more aesthetic note, he suggested planting a woodland glade by Woodrow Pilling Park and the use of aviaries to stimulate the interest of younger children. Aviaries had been introduced into some of the larger nineteenth-century public parks, such as Sefton Park in Liverpool (1872), Victoria Park in London (1898) and Lauderdale House (1889) in Camden, where a fine octagonal aviary was installed when

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<sup>996</sup> Elliott, 'Bedding Schemes'; Conway, *Public Parks*, 65–8.

<sup>997</sup> Elliott, 'Bedding Schemes', 113–15.

<sup>998</sup> Conway, *Public Parks*, 68.

<sup>999</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 8 December 1953.

<sup>1000</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 8 December 1953.

it was in transition from a private house to Waterlow Park.<sup>1001</sup> Aviaries are, however, resource intensive and in the frugal 1950s would have been an unusual priority.

The new superintendent's approach was more strategic than that of his predecessor, and his recommendations on planting reflected the horticultural developments that had already taken place in numerous large and small private gardens over the twentieth century.<sup>1002</sup> The recommendations complemented the local authority emphasis on costings and value for money.<sup>1003</sup> For the Parks Committee it was invigorating to have a fresh opinion on custom and practice.

Anderson's approach to staff deployment was realistic and his managerial approach was better suited to the mid-twentieth century than his predecessor. His relationship with members over his twenty-one years' incumbency was civil and professional, free of the numerous disputes and reprimands that had characterised his predecessor's thirty-four years of service. There was some Parks Committee prevarication, probably owing to budgetary restrictions, but over the following decade most aspects of the new superintendent's recommendations were introduced. An aviary was finally erected at Earlham Park in the 1960s, when peacocks roamed the gardens in an echo of a more gracious age. After one of the birds lost his mate, a community group presented the Parks Department with a peahen mate called 'Ad Hoc'.<sup>1004</sup> In 1972 the superintendent reported that all the aviary birds had been stolen overnight.<sup>1005</sup>

### **Burial Grounds and Cemeteries**

In the past the council had tended to establish new committees as needs arose. By the 1950s, however, the complex committee structure had become administratively cumbersome and some rationalisation was inevitable. In 1954 the Parks Committee, perhaps to compensate for the decline in acreage and prompted by the council's recent acquisition of the Rosary Cemetery, was assigned responsibility for the cemeteries and burial grounds within Norwich. That had previously rested with the historic city committee, which could trace its genesis back to the eighteenth century.<sup>1006</sup>

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<sup>1001</sup> Conway 'Parks and People'; Conway, *Public Parks*, 197; Waterlow Park: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000849>.

<sup>1002</sup> Pettigrew, *Municipal Parks*, 4, 25, 115.

<sup>1003</sup> Conway, *People's Parks*, 37.

<sup>1004</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 8 June 1965.

<sup>1005</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/7, 1959; NRO, N/TC 22/8, 13 February 1962; NRO, N/TC 22/10, 12 September 1972.

<sup>1006</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 8 June 1954.

In principle, the amalgamation made some sense. Cemeteries and burial grounds were originally conceived as memorial gardens for the dead and contained many elements of a designed landscape, such as trees, hedges, statuary, follies and classically designed buildings.<sup>1007</sup> Their maintenance had been taken over by the Parks Department shortly after the war and was viewed as a considerable improvement in horticultural practice by the grateful Registrar of Cemeteries. By 1954 the city was responsible for three cemeteries: thirteen acres at the Rosary Non-Conformist Cemetery at Thorpe; the Earlham Cemetery, which had expanded to eighty-six acres by 1903; and the thirty-acre Costessey Cemetery off Dereham Road, which Norwich had acquired in 1949. As Costessey required considerable work to bring it up to standard, it had been let for farming, and subsequently languished, as most of the committee's proposals for upgrading the grounds failed the stringent hurdle of the Finance Committee.<sup>1008</sup>

The formal transfer of the church burial grounds to the committee was logical because they provided valuable green space within the city walls and the majority had been maintained by the Parks Department since the NPF OSS created the first Norwich churchyard garden at the turn of the century. By 1953 the gardening staff were tending some twenty-six churchyards, a number on twenty-one-year leases, many of which had been laid out as public gardens by the previous parks superintendent. Burial grounds, however, were an area governed by numerous legal and financial regulations, including elements of ecclesiastic law which pertained over consecrated areas such as the Chapel of Rest and Anglican services for burial of the dead. Just as the municipal golf course had tested the management capacity of the Parks Committee for some twenty-five years, a preoccupation with the niceties of interment, closed and open burial grounds, headstones and cremation were to preoccupy the Parks Committee for the following twenty years (*q.v.* Appendix).

The Registrar of the Burial Grounds was directly accountable to the committee, rather than to the parks superintendent, up to that point the most senior officer under their purview. The key legislation drew on a number of acts but particularly the Norwich Improvement Act of 1879, the Open Spaces Act of 1906 and the Local Government Act of 1933. Churchyards transferred to the city under the eighty-year-old

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<sup>1007</sup> Loudon, *On the Laying Out of Cemeteries*; Historic England, *Paradise Preserved: an Introduction to the Assessment, Evaluation, Conservation and Management of Historic Cemeteries*, edited by J. White and J. Hodsdon (English Heritage, 2007); Curl, *Celebration of Death*, 83; J. Rugg, 'Defining the Place of Burial: What Makes a Cemetery a Cemetery?' *Mortality* 5.3 (2000), 261–3.

<sup>1008</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 10 April 1962.

Norwich Improvement Act of 1879 and the Open Spaces Act of 1906 allowed local authorities considerable scope to manage the churchyards for public enjoyment, with the flexibility to allow both seating and games if required.<sup>1009</sup> The more recent Local Government Act gave statutory definition to Norwich as a county borough, but was also more restrictive in its definitions of lease management, employing the words ‘good decent state’ to describe expected outcomes.<sup>1010</sup>

The maintenance charges for the small gardens varied considerably: larger churchyards, such as St Giles, were laid out as miniature gardens and were the most costly; mid-range churchyards with minimal bedding and shrubs were charged less; some nine churchyards that were largely grassed were the cheapest. Gravestones continued to be relaid against the church walls, which assisted grass cutting. The overall cost to the budget was £3,850 per annum. Bristol, the city that overtook Norwich in both population and economy in the late eighteenth century, charged the same maintenance figure for a mere eight churchyards, which suggests that Norwich ran an economical service. Norwich’s custodianship of churchyard gardens had contributed to public pleasure and church convenience from the early twentieth century, but enthusiasm for taking responsibility for new churchyards declined noticeably during the war and continued to do so into the 1960s. In its efforts to minimise expenditure, the committee specified that costs should not increase over the coming year and requested a report from the new superintendent on managing this financial target at a time when inflation was rapidly rising.<sup>1011</sup>

Despite the pressure on burial land, Norwich was a late entry into the provision of cremation. In 1902 the Home Secretary was finally granted the power to regulate cremations in England and Wales through the Cremation Act of 1902.<sup>1012</sup> Much of the impetus was the growing problem of space involved in the interment of the dead, a matter that had tested local authorities from time immemorial. Cremation was a functional and efficient solution.<sup>1013</sup> A few large authorities, such as Manchester (1892) and Liverpool (1894–6), had opened crematoria by the turn of the century and the

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<sup>1009</sup> Norwich Improvement Act 1879; Open Spaces Act 1906 s.10 Local Government Act 1933 (see Appendix).

<sup>1010</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, ‘Report of Town Clerk’, 8 September 1953.

<sup>1011</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 8 September 1953.

<sup>1012</sup> The Cremation Act 1902, accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/2/8/contents>.

<sup>1013</sup> Curl, *Celebration of Death*, 161–7.

carnage of the First World War contributed to a shift in social attitudes.<sup>1014</sup> By 1930 a twentieth of funerals in England and Wales used cremation.<sup>1015</sup> After the Second World War the popularity of cremation rapidly increased, so that, by the late 1950s, despite continued Church of England opposition, a third of funerals were cremations.

In 1958 the Registrar reported concerns raised at a recent conference of Burial and Cremation Authorities over the factory-like appearance of many new crematoria, as opposed to the more dignified church-like atmosphere of the chapels.<sup>1016</sup> His report also made clear that the cremation movement was unstoppable. The county council had approved a crematorium at St Faiths as early as 1935.<sup>1017</sup> The city, once again hard-pressed for burial space, was forced to accept the inevitability of a crematorium in Norwich.

The Earlham Crematorium's eventual opening took place in March 1964, by which time the projected Garden of Remembrance, and an opportunity for the parks superintendent to demonstrate his expertise, had been postponed on grounds of cost.<sup>1018</sup> By June 1965 the simple garden was not only in place but required expansion, as mourners were anxious to plant roses for the deceased.<sup>1019</sup> This scheme proved so popular that a year later the superintendent was able to inform councillors that a profit of £890 had been raised.<sup>1020</sup> A Crematorium Sub-committee was promptly established, which, together with the Swimming Baths Sub-committee and the Allotments Committee, kept the Parks Committee and the superintendent fully occupied.<sup>1021</sup>

The range and complexity of the Parks Committee's new responsibilities did not mesh easily with the more traditional horticultural activity and in part suggests why horticulture became subordinate over last two decades of the unitary authority.<sup>1022</sup> Norwich residents were to prove reluctant converts to cremation and it took some years before the local use of interment declined. This was a particular concern for the Parks

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<sup>1014</sup> Manchester Crematorium: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1207836>; Crematorium at Anfield Cemetery, Liverpool: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1072972>.

<sup>1015</sup> BBC News Magazine, 'How cremation became the way to go', 25 March 2009, accessed at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/7963119.stm>.

<sup>1016</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 'Report of the Registrar of Cemeteries', 14 October 1958. By the millennium this figure was to rise to three-quarters.

<sup>1017</sup> NRO, BR 307, 'Norwich Crematorium Ltd', 1935–1994.

<sup>1018</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 24 April 1963.

<sup>1019</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 4 June 1965.

<sup>1020</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 27 June 1966.

<sup>1021</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 9 April 1963, 14 December 1965.

<sup>1022</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 9 April 1963.

Committee, which believed that part of the problem lay with the crematorium site, which was in drastic need of levelling, a scheme that would require an expensive Private Act and unforthcoming government finances.<sup>1023</sup>

### Allotments

As the responsibilities for interment and cremation increased, the post-war enthusiasm for allotments was waning. The allotment gardens in Jessopp Road, which had been retained when Heigham Park had been landscaped, were developed for private housing in the 1940s, although the impressive beech trees that lined the road were retained. The unused allotments near Lakenham baths were passed to the Town Planning Committee in 1961 and no protest was made in 1962 when allotment land at Philadelphia Road by Waterloo Park was appropriated for residential housing.<sup>1024</sup> This decline was mirrored by the national picture. Not only had the temporary plots been lost, 12,000 of the statutory allotment sites had been sacrificed, of which the bulk had gone, as in Norwich, to meet the post-war housing boom.<sup>1025</sup> As a change of use required ministerial approval, both national and local government contributed to this decline. Many plots were poorly maintained and some resembled rubbish dumps rather than allotment gardens. Increased affluence and general lifestyle changes, with a greater range of leisure opportunities, contributed to the change, echoing the public response to public parks.<sup>1026</sup> The situation was compounded at the 1961 annual conference of the Institute of Parks Administration in a thought-provoking address by the treasurer of Manchester City Council. Mr Page questioned the morality of retaining allotments when cities such as Manchester possessed 60,000 slum dwellings and its 250 acres of allotments could provide over 4000 houses.<sup>1027</sup> In 1964 the public scandal over the Lavender Hill Allotments in Enfield gave rise to difficult parliamentary questions over land appropriation and land values, and the respective roles of government and local authorities.<sup>1028</sup> It was probably a combination of all these factors that led to the establishment of the Committee of Enquiry into Allotments and the appointment of Professor Harry Thorpe of Birmingham University as its chairman.

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<sup>1023</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 14 December 1965.

<sup>1024</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 13 February 1962.

<sup>1025</sup> Acton, *Growing Space*, 145.

<sup>1026</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 195–6; Acton, *Growing Space*, 130–6.

<sup>1027</sup> *The Times*, 8 September 1961: 'Land Use for Cemeteries and Golf Courses Criticized', 5.

<sup>1028</sup> *Hansard* 29 January 1964, accessed at <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1964/jan/29/lavender-hill-allotments-enfield>.

The enquiry finally reported in 1969. The report was authoritative and exhaustive. It provided a historical summary of the allotment movement, analysed the legislation and surveyed local authority and private allotments across the country and on the continent. Thorpe admired the Continental system of chalet gardens but concluded (one senses regretfully) that they would not succeed in Britain. The Thorpe report documented case studies, produced numerous, often highly technical tables and analyses, and ran to almost 500 dense and admonitory pages. It criticised the legislation, the data collection, local authorities and central government and concluded that the decline in allotments since the last years of the war had been dramatic, that they served an importance recreational service but that there was no significant waiting list. Allotment holders came in for particular censure for their lack of husbandry. Recommendations alone ran to almost fifty paragraphs, and it advocated repealing all previous legislation and moving to a new system of leisure gardens. Thorpe recommended a minimum provision for local authorities of half an acre of leisure gardens per 1000 head of population.<sup>1029</sup>

The lengthy report was a formidable challenge for government and received a muted welcome, with little press attention.<sup>1030</sup> Allotment holders were unhappy with Thorpe's scathing criticism of their practice and the prospect of relinquishing their home-made shanty structures; politicians, local and national, did not relish the prospect of a major upheaval.<sup>1031</sup> It was, however, welcomed by the National Allotment and Garden Society (NAGS), whose membership had undergone a decline in the 1960s and which subsequently incorporated Leisure Garden into its title (NALGS).<sup>1032</sup> A few local authorities made some site improvements and Coventry undertook an allotment layout based on the Thorpe recommendations, but the report was allowed to gather dust by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (which had not commissioned the original report).<sup>1033</sup>

Norwich had agreed to be involved with the enquiry and it emerged as one of nine towns, including the large cities of Manchester, Bristol and Cardiff, that had a separate section handling allotments, which was perceived as more managerially efficient. It was also one of fifteen local authorities that prohibited flower cultivation and, uniquely,

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<sup>1029</sup> *Report of a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments.*

<sup>1030</sup> *The Times*, 5 November 1969: 'Plant for Leisure', 2; Way, *Allotments*, 33.

<sup>1031</sup> Way, *Allotments*, 30.

<sup>1032</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 196.

<sup>1033</sup> The Ministry of Land and Natural Resources commissioned the report in 1965 but was dissolved in 1967.

specified the overall size of hut that an individual could erect on the plot.<sup>1034</sup> North Walsham was the sole town in Norfolk, among sixty-seven urban authorities nationwide, without an allotment – unusual for the eastern region, where allotments were historically bountiful. Thorpe drew no conclusions regarding such anomalies but disputed the explanation that the absence of allotments was linked to alternative leisure provision nearby, citing Norwich as an example of a town ‘equally close to popular recreational areas’ that contains ‘far more allotments’.<sup>1035</sup>

Once again, Norwich emerged as a leading provider of allotments: its ratio of statutory plots was just over two acres per 1000, trailing Leicester at almost three acres per 1000 population, the highest of the larger towns.<sup>1036</sup> By the following year the total number of allotments across the country stood at 532,000, just over one-third of the war-time total.<sup>1037</sup> In 1973 Norwich purchased land in the west of the city where the new Bowthorpe estate was to be developed, with integral if small allotment sites. The allotments failed to materialise.<sup>1038</sup> This estate might well have been the one visited by the Labour MP for Norwich, George Wallace, in 1974. Two years later, as Lord Wallace of Coslany, in a speech promoting the value of allotments and home food production, he recounted a conversation with a resident. Despite possessing every amenity, the occupier said, ‘Well, my boy, I suppose I should be grateful, but I would love a bit of land to grow something on.’<sup>1039</sup>

### **The University of East Anglia**

The proposal to establish a university in Norwich and the consequences for their prized Earlham Hall Estate was to prove the most contentious issue for the Parks Committee since its establishment in 1911. It was surprising that Norwich, with its long history, boasted no university. By the time the swathe of red-brick universities, including Bristol, Manchester and Nottingham, were created in the industrial heartlands of the North and Midlands at the end of the Victorian period, Norwich was no longer a serious higher education contender. The ambition, however, had never gone away. Universities

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<sup>1034</sup> *Report of a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments*, 96, para. 241; 100, table 19.

<sup>1035</sup> *Report of a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments*, 81, para. 210.

<sup>1036</sup> *Report of a Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments*, 82, figure 12.

<sup>1037</sup> Foley, *Of Cabbages and Kings*, 196.

<sup>1038</sup> Norfolk Recorders, *Norfolk Allotments*, 89.

<sup>1039</sup> *Hansard*, 17 March 1976, HL Debate vol. 369 cc 226–63, ‘Allotments and Food Production’. accessed at <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1976/mar/17/allotments-and-home-food-production>.

conferred status, prestige and economic and population growth: all important ingredients of a dynamic and successful urban community.

In June 1959 Gordon Tilsley, the town clerk, submitted a paper to the Parks Committee containing the proposal to create a university in Norwich.<sup>1040</sup> This was not the first time the city had made such an application. Two previous overtures to the powerful University Grants Committee (UGC), an advisory body that administered the funding of universities on behalf of the government, had been unsuccessful.<sup>1041</sup> During the 1940s the coalition government commissioned a number of educational reports as part of its comprehensive programme for reconstruction. The Barlow Commission, which reported in 1946, was charged with planning for expansion in science and technology and a major recommendation was a significant increase in the higher education sector.<sup>1042</sup> By 1958 a large group of influential Norwich citizens, spearheaded by Tilsley, Lincoln Ralphs, the county education officer for Norfolk, and Lord Mackintosh, the successful confectionary manufacturer, revived the plan for a Norwich university and established a University Promotion Committee (UPC).<sup>1043</sup>

The proposal required considerable financial backing, which was solicited from neighbouring local authorities and manufacturers, as well as major landowners and other affluent citizens. The city council made a major commitment to contribute land for the new buildings and, after considerable deliberation, the UPC reviewed four potential sites: the airfield at Horsham St Faith's, north-west of the city; an area of land south-west of the city at Martineau Lane on the Bungay Road; land at Eaton, off the Newmarket Road and close to the Eaton Golf Course, owned by the affluent Gurney family; and the municipal golf course at Earlham Hall (Figure 75).<sup>1044</sup>

In many ways the Eaton site was preferable. The new university would have been more closely integrated into the city, the acreage was extensive and available, and the Earlham Hall land was scenically attractive and environmentally valuable, with the

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<sup>1040</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/7, 'Gordon Tilsley Confidential Report', 10 June 1959.

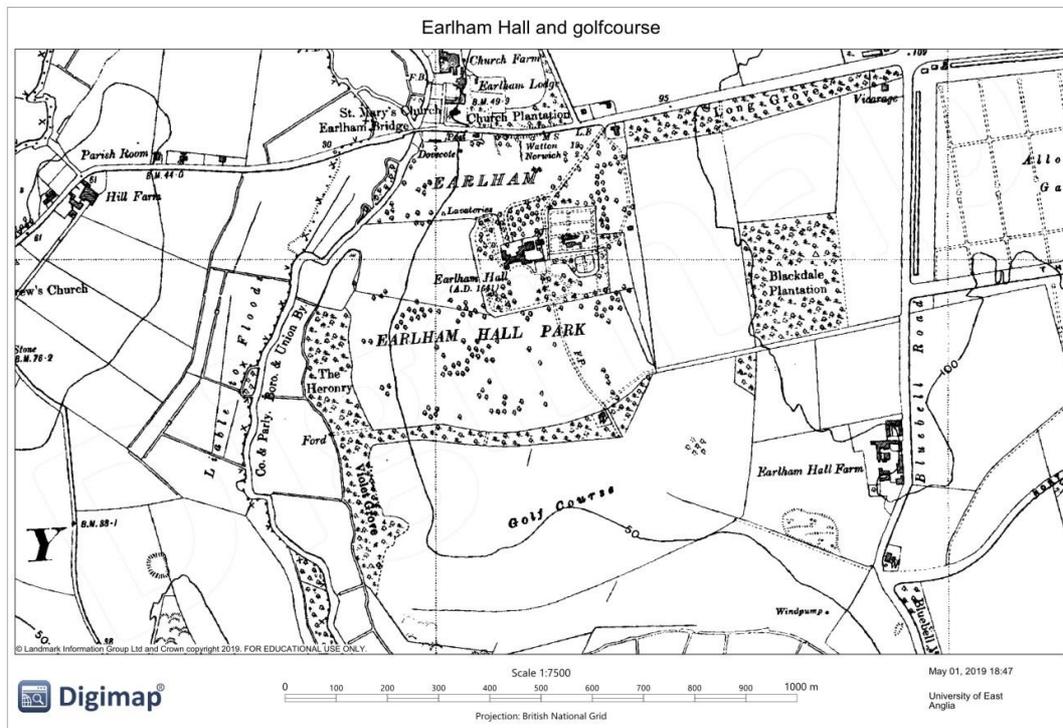
<sup>1041</sup> Sanderson, *University of East Anglia*, 6–10; *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 March 2014, 'Gordon Tilsley Obituary', accessed at <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/obituaries/gordon-tilsley-obe-the-man-who-helped-change-the-face-of-norwich-1-3401882>.

<sup>1042</sup> Morgan, *Britain Since 1945*, 240; The National Archives, The Cabinet Papers/After the Second World War, accessed at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/before-after-second-world-war.htm>; Sanderson, *University of East Anglia*, 6.

<sup>1043</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 March 2014, 'Obituary, Gordon Tilsley'.

<sup>1044</sup> Sanderson, *University of East Anglia*, 26; NRO, ACC 2007/33, 'Papers of Sir Lincoln Ralphs' Drawer 3: UGC 1965 and press cuttings UEA 1960s; NRO, E/TN 1/7/5, Planning Co File, 1959–1962.

River Yare forming a natural boundary to an undulating landscape with woodland, marshland and pasture.<sup>1045</sup> It was also a significant distance from the city centre. The Earlham site, however, had one over-riding advantage: it was already in the ownership of the city authority and required no further financial outlay. The UPC recommended the Eaton location, but procedurally both the Town Planning and Parks Committees had



**Figure 75.** Earlham Hall and golf course, Ordnance Survey, 1938

to ratify the proposal. At the meeting of the Parks Committee on 22 June 1960 members were presented with a confidential paper written by the town clerk. The Newmarket Road site, the recommendation of the UPC, provided the highest acreage, at over seventy hectares, but was deemed politically unacceptable. The location, the town clerk disingenuously argued, would precipitate public objections and the lack of a direct road frontage would create difficulties of access. The only solution was Earlham Hall Park and the site of the cherished municipal golf course. The decision was foregone. The Parks Committee had no alternative but to accept the loss of its golf course, which at this point numbered 326 members, one of the highest memberships in its history. The Parks Committee gave grudging and qualified approval to its decision, stating that the committee ‘view the proposal ... with grave reluctance and only agree having been

<sup>1045</sup> R. Hoggett and T. Williamson, *Forgotten Heritage: The Landscape History of the Norwich Suburbs* (Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2002), accessed at <http://hbsmrgateway2.esdm.co.uk/norfolk/DataFiles/Docs/AssocDoc2269.pdf>.

assured that no other site is suitable'. One councillor formally opposed the decision, so the motion was carried by six to one.<sup>1046</sup> Earlham Hall, the gardens and the immediate parkland remained as part of the Parks estate.

The site of the municipal golf course was eventually agreed by the full council, facilitated by the muscular backing of the town clerk. Members of the UGC took part in an extensive site tour and were seduced by the Earlham Hall location. Norwich committed itself to finding £54,000 annually to fund the university, adding a considerable 2d to the rate. A local planning enquiry was scheduled for 13 December 1960 and, despite some local objections, not only from the golf club but also from those concerned about the environmental loss, it was recommended to the minister that the creation of the University of East Anglia should proceed.<sup>1047</sup>

The loss of the land continued to rankle with the Parks Committee for some years. In 1962 the university bursar wrote to the Parks Committee to express his concern at the future of Bluebell Wood. He requested the opportunity to 'reach agreement on the retention of the area'. The committee took umbrage at the request, interpreting it as a slur on their civic husbandry. Its response was curt. As it had every intention of maintaining the woodland, 'no good purpose would be served by contemplating such an agreement'.<sup>1048</sup> On another occasion, when the university politely asked if the refreshment facility at Earlham Hall could be kept open during winter months for the use of site workers, the committee brusquely declined, responding that if the university required winter refreshments then it should take over responsibility for the catering outlet.<sup>1049</sup> By 1963 the university needed approval for a new access route from the Earlham Road. The most convenient and logical approach ran from the university 'Village' on the northern side of the road, but the route would cut through the now centralised greenhouses, alongside the walled garden of Earlham Hall. The Parks Committee, exhibiting none of the council's previous generosity, made it clear that, if selected, full compensation would be expected, including to the tenants of the estate cottages, who were the main parks gardeners.<sup>1050</sup>

Denys Lasdun, the site architect, made several conciliatory attempts to enable the golf course to remain in use. Initially, play continued on eighteen holes, then nine. By

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<sup>1046</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/7, 22 June 1959.

<sup>1047</sup> Sanderson, *University of East Anglia*, 77–9.

<sup>1048</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 11 September 1962.

<sup>1049</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 9 October 1962.

<sup>1050</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 9 July 1963.

the time earth-moving equipment was finally required, Lasdun suggested it would be wise to issue quarterly subscriptions to club members.<sup>1051</sup> In the final run-down to closure tickets were provided on a monthly basis. The Parks Committee did not give up hope of retaining some golf: a final, futile request from the committee was made to UEA at the end of 1963, when it suggested that the university should retain a nine-hole golf course in perpetuity.<sup>1052</sup> Eventually a pitch and putt course was created on the third field at Eaton Park, close by the Bluebell Wood. Golf, which had been a minority sport up to the 1960s, was to expand as a recreation over the next thirty years, when new private golf courses were developed across Norfolk. The issue of a replacement golf course was still being pursued by the authority up to local government reorganisation ten years later. Anderson, on retirement, mentioned the loss of the golf course and his inability to replace it as his one regret.<sup>1053</sup> Some aspects of the original 1930s layout of the golf course can still be detected in aerial photographs.<sup>1054</sup> The golf course is still remembered with nostalgia in Norwich and its loss with resentment by those who were post-war members, unassuaged by the significant changes that followed in the 1960s and 1970s. The city's land transference stipulated the continuation of public access and, in 1965, when serious building activity was underway, the Parks Committee, concerned to ensure that this important requirement was not forgotten, asked for a guarantee that public access would be maintained and that an alternative route for park users be publicised in the local press.<sup>1055</sup>

The first vice-chancellor, Frank Thistlethwaite, was determined that the new buildings and the environment in which they were stood should be stimulating for students and staff. Lasdun studied the site carefully, both from a helicopter and on foot, and opined that it was 'an exceptionally fine landscape', charging the UEA to act as a site custodian.<sup>1056</sup> Lasdun had a strong belief in the genius loci and was determined to preserve the flat, marshy and open valley landscape and the line of the Norfolk and

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<sup>1051</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/7, 12 February 1963.

<sup>1052</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 12 November 1963.

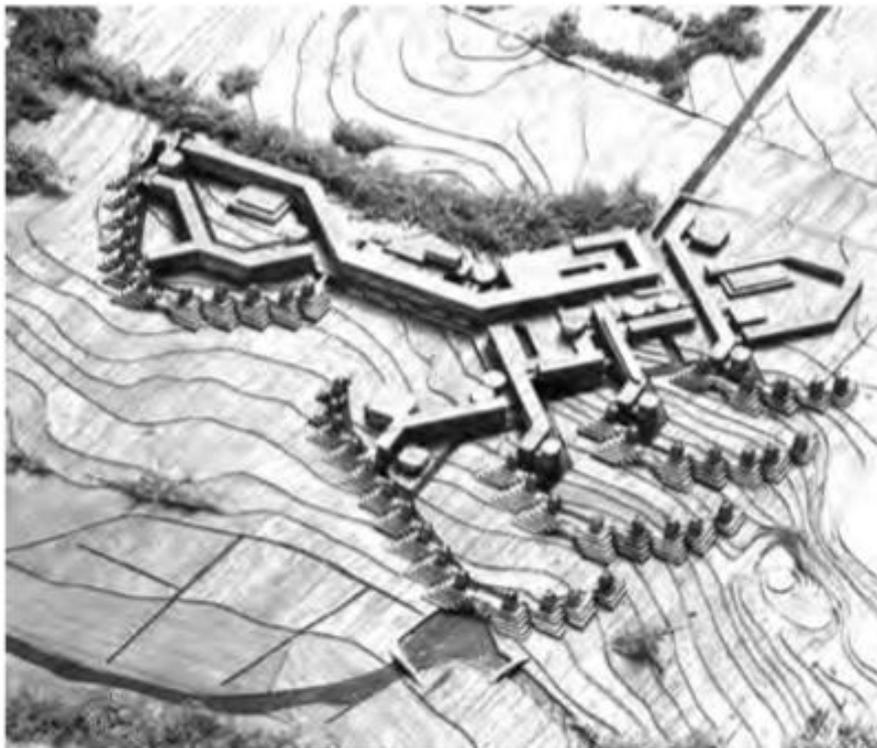
<sup>1053</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 2 April 1974: 'Twenty-one Years', 9 (retirement of parks superintendent John Anderson).

<sup>1054</sup> L. Broom-Lynn and C. Coupland, *University of East Anglia Landscape Strategy* (Norwich: Bidwells, 2010).

<sup>1055</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 13 July 1965.

<sup>1056</sup> Sanderson, *University of East Anglia*, 139, 168; T. Gibson and B. Colvin, *A Career in Landscape* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2011), 145.

Suffolk Terraces was carefully placed where the valley begins to rise.<sup>1057</sup> He conceived the famous design for the Norfolk and Suffolk Terraces, referred to as the ziggurats, as geological strata, and manipulated concrete to embrace the landscape (Figure 76).<sup>1058</sup> Lasdun recommended that Brenda Colvin should be appointed to produce a landscape plan for the university. Colvin was a pioneering landscape architect who had set up the Institute of Landscape Architects (today the Landscape Institute). Between the wars Colvin, with Sylvia Crowe, had been critical of the efforts of the Roads Beautiful Association, seeing their work as domestically decorative and parochial in concept.<sup>1059</sup> Colvin, possibly in agreement with Lasdun, conceived of a large lake or broad, but its development was initially rejected as too costly. She appears to have been the first to recommend mining the natural materials to offset construction costs.<sup>1060</sup>



**Figure 76.** Detail from Lasdun's first draft development plan (Broom-Lynne and Coupland, *University of East Anglia Landscape Strategy*)

<sup>1057</sup> Norfolk Terrace and Attached Walkways at the University of East Anglia: accessed at <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1390647>.

<sup>1058</sup> P. Dormer and S. Muthesias, *Concrete and Open Skies: Architecture at the University of East Anglia* (London: Unicorn Press 2001), 70.

<sup>1059</sup> *q.v.* Chapter 5.

<sup>1060</sup> Gibson and Colvin, *Career*, 10.

Colvin was a meticulous researcher: she undertook a comprehensive site survey before commencing her designs, analysing the entire university site, not merely the area delineated for building. She held it essential to preserve as much of the natural land form, ecology and history as possible, and speculated that the species represented in the historic names such as Violet Wood and the Heronry, which had virtually vanished from the 1960s landscape, were capable of reintroduction. She carefully evaluated the ways in which the site would be used, which gave rise to some profound disagreements with Lasdun. The latter was adamant that the landscape to the south of the buildings should remain undeveloped; Colvin accepted that this would be more pleasing visually, but argued that in practical terms student movement required footpaths to prevent the inevitable wear and tear caused by movement across the campus. She proposed basing the eventual hard landscaping on desire lines, a Japanese landscaping approach at the time little employed in the UK but today common.<sup>1061</sup> Her landscape report was a model of exactitude, including a painstaking tree survey detailing long-term care for each significant tree and species.

In 1968 Colvin, frustrated at the delay in implementing her plans, wrote to Frank Thistlethwaite that ‘any landowner, more especially a university, has the responsibilities of ensuring for the future the benefits inherited from the past.’<sup>1062</sup> The Parks Committee had particularly valued the land for its utilitarian application as a recreational amenity, rather than for its picturesque location. Colvin was eventually replaced as landscape consultant, although some of her influence lives on in the habitat work of the UEA Schools of Environmental and Biological Sciences, and, according to the 2010 UEA landscape strategy, was fully implemented by her successors.<sup>1063</sup> It is ironic that in 1960 the new owners of the site appreciated the landscape quality of their Waveney Valley setting rather more than the council had on acquiring the land in the 1920s. The respect for the historic landscape shown by Colvin, Lasdun and the university pioneers is no longer evident on the 2019 university site, although public access, as stipulated by the council, has remained.

After a series of delays, budgetary difficulties and student unrest, in which criticisms of the newly occupied campus had been voiced, Lasdun’s contract was terminated in 1968, his plans for the additional ziggurats abandoned and the local firm of Fielden and Mawson appointed to oversee and develop the UEA campus (Figure

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<sup>1061</sup> Gibson and Colvin, *Career*, 148.

<sup>1062</sup> Gibson and Colvin, *Career*, 146–50.

<sup>1063</sup> Broom-Lynn and Coupland, *UEA Landscape Strategy*.

77).<sup>1064</sup> The Broad was eventually realised in 1973, funded by Fielden through gravel extraction; it was sited due south of the ziggurats, rather than east, and dammed the adjacent River Yare to provide a regular water supply (Figure 78).<sup>1065</sup> Colvin withdrew in 1970, unhappy that her early landscape vision for the site was unfulfilled.<sup>1066</sup> At the time, few would have anticipated that by the twenty-first century the university would occupy 320 acres and boast a student intake of 15,000.<sup>1067</sup>



**Figure 77.** Earlam Hall and UEA, Ordnance Survey, 1971

### Changing Priorities

The impact of the new university, with its modern buildings and students, was not the only change taking place in Norwich in the 1960s. The city, in common with the rest of the country, was gradually moving from austerity to prosperity, and values were shifting.<sup>1068</sup> Since the 1930s modernism in the arts and architecture had had a subtle influence on expectations of what constituted contemporary gardens in the public sphere. Conway suggests that this led to a mass replacement of floral decoration with

<sup>1064</sup> Dormer and Muthesias, *Concrete*, 140.

<sup>1065</sup> Dormer and Muthesias, *Concrete*, 100.

<sup>1066</sup> Broom-Lynn and Coupland, *Landscape Strategy*.

<sup>1067</sup> University of East Anglia, <http://www.uea.ac.uk/about>.

<sup>1068</sup> D. Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Abacus, 2006), 108.



**Figure 78.** UEA Broad from south, looking towards ziggurat (contemporary photograph)

‘bold sweeps of grass’, although in the public sector this was probably more a reflection of financial stringency than a stylistic approach.<sup>1069</sup> However, there is little doubt that the grand civic park was increasingly perceived as redundant and the population of Norwich appeared to share this attitude.

One explanation was the growth in motor-car ownership; in 1957 the government had begun to build the first motorways and in the same year Richard Hoggart documented the meretricious impact of mass media and its effects on close-knit urban communities.<sup>1070</sup> Inexpensive shilling guidebooks aimed at the car-owning family were published by the oil company Shell during this time, and proved highly popular.<sup>1071</sup> There was greater participation in sports, particularly by working-class men and boys. House-building increased, together with the drive for owner occupation. Local authority

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<sup>1069</sup> Conway, *Public Parks*, 37.

<sup>1070</sup> D. Kynaston, *Family Britain, 1951–57* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 442–3; Sandbrook, *Never Had it So Good*, 121; Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*; R. Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Penguin, 1960).

<sup>1071</sup> *The Guardian*, 15 May 2008: ‘Golden Guides to Britain’.

rehousing programmes had significantly improved the standard of living for many working-class people, but often at the expense of social cohesion.<sup>1072</sup> All these factors combined to develop a differing concept of leisure. Horticulture became a poor relation to other recreational amenities.

The workload of the Parks Committee reflected this shift. The dominant issues in the late 1950s and 1960s were less to do with public pleasure gardens and ornamental parks than with the growth of sports and children's playgrounds. Councillors grappled with all these issues against a national backdrop in which the future shape of local government was subject to the sustained scrutiny of a Royal Commission.<sup>1073</sup> In 1967 Norwich became the first urban centre in the country to introduce an element of town-centre pedestrianisation, along London Street, a major city-centre shopping thoroughfare.<sup>1074</sup> The project was masterminded by the innovative director of planning Alfred Wood. The motor-car may have been a liberator for the driver but it became a tyrant for local government, as city-centre roads needed widening and parking became a constant conundrum. The Town Planning Committee proposed a car park using part of Chapelfield Gardens, which up to that date had been considered sacrosanct. The proposal was initially, and surprisingly, approved by the Parks Committee, which later rescinded the decision, although a corner of the triangular plot was eventually sacrificed for a new road layout.<sup>1075</sup> Although the distinctive triangular template of Chapelfield Garden remained largely unchanged, by 1974 the park had been subject to considerable alteration in planting and use. The avenues remained, but the grass was colonised by people rather than flowerbeds. In 1972 the historic park, which had been criticised in the nineteenth century for its floral excesses, was granted permission for a demonstration in favour of the legalisation of cannabis, to the dismay of the gardeners, who subsequently had to make good considerable damage.<sup>1076</sup>

Over this period of considerable change the parks superintendent presided with measured calm. Anderson's professional style tended to be flexible and accommodating. He appreciated the importance of prioritising work programmes and managing budgets. Under his jurisdiction the planting in the parks gradually became

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<sup>1072</sup> Kynaston, *Family Britain*, 176–7.

<sup>1073</sup> *The Royal Commission on Local Government* (The Redcliffe–Maud Committee), 1966–8.

<sup>1074</sup> Norwich Society, *The Foot Street Revolution* (Norwich: Norwich Society, 2017).

<sup>1075</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 12 July 1955.

<sup>1076</sup> NRO, ACC 2012/13, 3 September 1972.

more practical.<sup>1077</sup> He was committed to in-house training and early in his appointment introduced horticultural classes for school leavers and a day-release scheme for trainees.<sup>1078</sup> When a new roundabout was installed at the junction of Earlham Road it was initially used as a pedestrian shortcut. Sandys-Winsch might well have advocated fencing; Anderson proposed bringing flower beds to the boundary on the basis that pedestrians, who took shortcuts across grass, would not wilfully trample over plants. The strategy was less successful at Castle Gardens, where Anderson's experiment in removing the railings that had protected the flower beds drew adverse comments from other councillors. This contemporary response to public space, open and democratic in tone, was in marked contrast to that of his predecessor and reflected the spirit of the age.<sup>1079</sup>

Anderson was not completely unaffected by the difficulties that his predecessor had experienced. The cost of living spiralled during the 1960s and 1970s and the parks budget was consistently overspent at a time when the park facilities required repair and replacement. To compound the situation, vandalism became increasingly destructive. Over a single night, the café in Sloughbottom Park (Hellesdon) was broken into and robbed and the grounds subject to widespread devastation: trees dug up, grass on the tennis courts and cricket square ruined, rose bushes trampled.<sup>1080</sup> Even the War Memorial Gardens were not immune to desecration.

Anderson was unconstrained by his predecessor's long and generally formative association with the designed landscapes; he was able to view them with a disinterested eye. It was an eye apparently unconstrained by significant design prowess, although Anderson had none of the opportunities for large-scale park design enjoyed by his predecessor. At this period the majority of layouts were for roundabouts and playgrounds, and his earlier aversion to the grand classical pavilions and colonnades designed by Sandys-Winsch are revealing.<sup>1081</sup> His opportunity to make a significant contribution to Norwich's public green space occurred in 1968, when the Parks Committee proposed establishing a botanic garden at Earlham Hall.<sup>1082</sup> Committee visits to the Botanic Garden at Cambridge duly followed and a brief outline paper produced by the superintendent in 1968 reappeared at a number of subsequent meetings

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<sup>1077</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 19 January 1954.

<sup>1078</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 13 October 1953.

<sup>1079</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 10 May 1955.

<sup>1080</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 3 July 1963.

<sup>1081</sup> *q.v.* Ch 7.

<sup>1082</sup> NRO.N/TC 22/9 11 July 1968

but was never amplified or implemented.

### **Public Expectations**

At the time of Sandys-Winsch's retirement in 1953 the tone of the local press in relation to the city's parks had been not merely complimentary but eulogistic. In less than a decade, attitudes had altered. By the early 1960s the *Eastern Daily Press*, reflecting concerns expressed in meetings, started to question the value and cost effectiveness of the parks. The increase in car ownership had led to a considerable evacuation of the city at weekends and a journalist drily observed that if the journey to the parks had involved half a tank of petrol it might then be considered worthwhile. 'Norwich Paying too Dearly for Looking Beautiful' was the provocative headline in 1961.<sup>1083</sup> Some council members were also beginning to regret the upkeep of the major parks and structural repairs were proving burdensome. At a tense meeting of the Parks Committee in 1961 the members had taken the difficult decision to dismantle the iconic wooden bandstand on Mousehold Heath, rather than replace or repair it.<sup>1084</sup> The bandstand had featured in numerous photographs and postcards of the 'People's Park' at the time of King George V's visit to the city in 1911. The repairs to the pavilion at Waterloo Park had already cost £1000 and the committee was well aware that the use of the parks was in decline.

The chairman of the Parks Committee was defensive, pointing out that in 1936 the city's recreational provision had stood at 740 acres, an all-time high, and had declined by almost two hundred acres in the intervening twenty-five years. The forthcoming loss of the municipal golf course at Earlham Park would leave the parks estate at little over 400 acres.<sup>1085</sup> But the tide had turned, and the *Eastern Evening News* ran similarly critical articles the following year. A two-page spread, packed with photographs and entitled 'White Elephants', focused on the pavilions and pergolas, asking rhetorically if they 'should be swept away in a parks modernisation programme?' The paper leapt on a populist bandwagon, suggesting that legacies from the past had no place when financial stringency should be a 'municipal watchword'.<sup>1086</sup> The buildings and hard landscaping were not the only objects of contumely: the borders and flower beds came in for further criticism and the cost of maintaining such features was robustly challenged. Four years

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<sup>1083</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 July 1961: 'Norwich Parks Paying Too Dearly for Looking Beautiful'.

<sup>1084</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/7, 26 June 1961.

<sup>1085</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/7, 26 June 1961.

<sup>1086</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 16 March 1962: 'White Elephants?'

later the paper resumed its attack, this time in a more thoughtful article that documented patterns of use and queried the rationale for the parks, given the changing pattern of leisure, the ubiquity of the motor-car and the urgent need for building land. The headline, however, was confrontational: ‘Why Not Build on Part of the Norwich Parks?’<sup>1087</sup> The photographs presented a sorry picture, revealing the concrete structures to be in dire need of restoration. With the parks shorn of the crowds that had thronged their pavilions and sauntered under their pergolas in the 1930s and 1940s, its rhetoric was persuasive. The ornamental pavilions and bandstands were criticised for lack of use and the word ‘arid’ was used to denigrate the parks.<sup>1088</sup>

Norwich was not alone among urban authorities in reassessing its priorities at this time. In Leicester, a city with generous and planned recreational provision, the 1960s witnessed an emphasis on sporting and play provision at the expense of designed landscapes.<sup>1089</sup> Lambert notes a similar decline in Bristol after the Second World War, although this was partly redeemed by the imaginative purchase of Ashton Court in 1959, an 850-acre country estate of formal gardens, woodland and pasture, acquired by Bristol as Norwich was transferring part of Earlham Hall to the new University of East Anglia.<sup>1090</sup> The large municipal authority of Birmingham, with its generous provision of sports grounds, was one of the few local authorities that continued to maintain a labour-intensive annual bedding-out programme over this period, in areas such as Cannon Hill Park, Pypes Hayes Park and Rookery Park.<sup>1091</sup> By 1969 it was reported to the committee that a speaker at the Annual Conference of Parks and Recreation Administration had recommended releasing large areas of parks in towns in response to the increasing use of the motor car.<sup>1092</sup>

### **Publicity and Play**

In 1965 the Parks Committee, under pressure to reduce labour costs and increase public usage, established a Publicity Sub-committee with the paradoxical task of promoting the ‘People’s Parks’ to the people. The sub-committee’s eventual recommendations ranged

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<sup>1087</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 6 May 1966: K. Holmes.

<sup>1088</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 March 1966: ‘Why Not Build on Part of the City’s Parks?’

<sup>1089</sup> Strachan and Bowler, ‘Parks in Leicester’.

<sup>1090</sup> D. Lambert, *Historic Public Parks: Bristol* (Bristol: Avon Gardens Trust with Bristol City Council, 2000); Ashton Court, Bristol: Parks and Gardens UK, Record ID 162, accessed at <https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/ashton-court>.

<sup>1091</sup> Chinn, *Free Parks*, 128, 145, 150.

<sup>1092</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/9, 12 September 1969.

from the mundane – placing advertisements in the local press, erecting promotional notice boards, mounting fireworks displays – to the quixotic – planting rhododendrons in Wensum Park, reintroducing paddling pools, creating model villages.<sup>1093</sup> The list included one strategic concept – developing play leadership in the parks. This was not a new idea; it had been germinating in Britain since the 1930s and the early days of the National Playing Fields Association, which in 1934 spoke of the ‘insistent demands ... for play-leaders’.<sup>1094</sup> The concept had been reaffirmed in 1948 by the Ministry of Education’s report entitled *Out of School*.<sup>1095</sup> By the late 1960s the concept had become refined. Children required skills to play creatively and the support of play-leaders, who provided the contexts to encourage this facility, without the requirement of capital outlay and expensive equipment. In Norwich, play leadership was strongly advocated by Anderson and first mentioned as early as 1957.<sup>1096</sup> After a series of meetings had failed to agree on a solution, and with an increasingly strident local press, the city council agreed to invest in a Parks Publicity Officer and play-leaders were introduced in school holidays. In 1971 the post was advertised, with Mr Chesterfield as the successful appointment.<sup>1097</sup>

The new Entertainments and Recreation Officer moved swiftly into action by proposing a grand August Bank Holiday attraction in Earlham Park as the first of a number of events scheduled throughout the year. Catering proved problematic, so the officer pragmatically suggested that the public should be allowed to picnic in the park if a commercial provider was unforthcoming. Mr Chesterfield was not short of ideas and the committee, delighted by his dynamism, recorded numerous congratulations on his achievements in the years leading up to reorganisation. Mr Chesterfield’s imagination knew no bounds and thenceforth the parks hosted an eclectic programme of attractions, from soccer coaching to Acker Bilk; model aircraft demonstrations to Morris dancing; exhibition soft ball at Eaton Park and canoeing at Earlham. With the exception of the play-work with children, which proved successful in school holiday periods, the grounds were chiefly used as venues for large-scale occasions.<sup>1098</sup> The combination of one-off events and summer-holiday play schemes at Eaton, Wensum, Waterloo and

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<sup>1093</sup> Model villages became popular after the Second World War. T. Dunn, *Model Villages* (Stroud: Amberley Books, 2017).

<sup>1094</sup> *The Times*, 29 May 1934: ‘National Playing Fields’, 9.

<sup>1095</sup> Ministry of Education, *Out of School*.

<sup>1096</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 9 July 1957.

<sup>1097</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/9, 21 July 1971.

<sup>1098</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/10, 13 June 1972.

Earlham Parks sufficed to provide some breathing space for the beleaguered Parks Committee (Figure 79).

Although the concept of creative play was not dependent on traditional equipment, more conventional playgrounds continued to be a staple of the parks programme. As early as 1954, the year following Anderson's appointment, sports and playgrounds were listed as the Parks Committee's first priority, above gardens and pleasure grounds. New playgrounds were opened at Tuckswood and Clarkson Road in 1954, following those at Catton. In the estimates for the 1955 financial year a further three playgrounds were included.<sup>1099</sup> However, the committee was unable to rest on its laurels. Its legal liability for the use of apparatus was becoming more onerous. Recently councillors had learned that a thirteen-year-old child had unsuccessfully endeavoured to jump from a plank-swing in mid-air, breaking two limbs.<sup>1100</sup> At the following meeting the town clerk updated the committee on a recent appeal court hearing that had profound implications for local authorities. A child blinded while using a local authority slide had recently been awarded £9,000 in compensation. The injury was a tragedy for the child and parents, but the ruling was sobering and for the local authority, introduced a legal precedent of reasonable care.



**Figure 79.** 'Wild West Event', Earlham Park, 1970s (Picture Norfolk)

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<sup>1099</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 12 October 1954.

<sup>1100</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 12 October 1954.

In the past, Norwich had tended to be cavalier about the concept of responsibility and legal liability. Notification of accidents had become a regular aspect of Sandys-Winsch's post-war reports to the committee, often with the cryptic comment that 'no blame could be attached to the equipment or department'. On a number of occasions it had independently made *ex gratia* payments in the cases of those few incidents it had judged serious. However, it was now recognised that greater diligence was clearly required. Even before his retirement, Sandys-Winsch had begun to reflect on the possibility of corporate culpability and had made his own enquiries about local authority indemnification.<sup>1101</sup> The Parks Committee debated the safety of park equipment with greater scrupulousness and, in an effort to mitigate accidents, approved signage, asking for defects to be brought to the attention of the staff. The playgrounds were, once again, to be littered with notices, as Anderson recommended prohibition notices on the larger slides to prevent their use by very young children. The committee mooted the financially onerous possibility of appointing attendants in all parks and playgrounds, an expensive suggestion that was later pursued by the Finance Committee, to no avail.<sup>1102</sup> With this new fiscal sensibility, the reporting of accidents became more rigorous and in consequence reported accident rates soared. In September 1955 twenty-three were notified to the committee (although all were categorised as minor). By 1957, payments required the endorsement of the Finance Committee, another layer of bureaucracy.<sup>1103</sup> However, the health and safety issues merely reflected a major development over this period: the increase in legislation and the regulatory responsibilities of local government.

### **Sports and Swimming**

Sport had not been the dominant aspect of the nineteenth-century public parks but the twentieth century had witnessed a new emphasis on the inclusion of sports provision.<sup>1104</sup> In 1907 the government had amended the earlier Public Health Acts and enabled local authorities to increase sporting provision.<sup>1105</sup> Stamford Park at Altrincham was the first public park to major on sports facilities and by 1910 the policy of the

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<sup>1101</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 11 April 1950.

<sup>1102</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 8 March 1955.

<sup>1103</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 9 April 1957.

<sup>1104</sup> Chadwick, *The Park and the Town*, 235; Jordan, 'Public Parks'; Conway, *Public Parks*.

<sup>1105</sup> Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907, accessed at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/7/53> (see Appendix).

MPGA emphasised organised games as a priority.<sup>1106</sup> By that time, Battersea Park in London offered a wide range of sporting opportunities, including skating in winter, as well as football, tennis, cricket, riding and cycling.<sup>1107</sup> By the 1930s Sandys-Winsch's designs had ensured a considerable increase in sports provision for Norwich, but thirty years later it was clear that this was insufficient to keep pace with contemporary demands and public expectations.

In 1963 the city established a new joint committee to address areas of under-provision. The Open Spaces Sub-committee, which comprised members of the Town Planning, Education and Parks Committees, concluded that the city possessed ample parks and gardens but a deficit of playing fields, playgrounds and small gardens for the elderly. The planning officer reported that the allocation of sports fields within the borough stood at three acres for every 1000 people while governmental guidance had laid down a recommendation of six acres. The council's development plan revealed that the shortfall was particularly concentrated in the older residential areas and concluded that there was a need for the better planning of playing fields across the Education and Parks departments.<sup>1108</sup> The Parks Committee faced yet another pressure. In order to facilitate the development of playing fields it decided to identify informal open space that could be utilised for games provision.<sup>1109</sup> The building of the Heartsease Estate on the former cavalry drill grounds on Mousehold Heath in the 1950s and 1960s had already substituted three high-rise towers and some medium- and low-rise houses for a large area of informal open space, but the creation of the capacious recreation ground had failed to offset the new formula (Figure 80).

Improvements to the rudimentary public swimming pools at Wensum Park and Lakenham had become critical. In the 1950s the Yare at Earlham Park had also been dammed to provide a basic but highly popular paddling pool. The dangers of river bathing assumed a new urgency as the committee's understanding of the duties of reasonable care deepened. Filtration and cleanliness, and the constant criticisms of the city's own Health Committee over water quality and sanitary provision, became particularly pressing: 'disgusting' was reported back to the Parks Committee.<sup>1110</sup>

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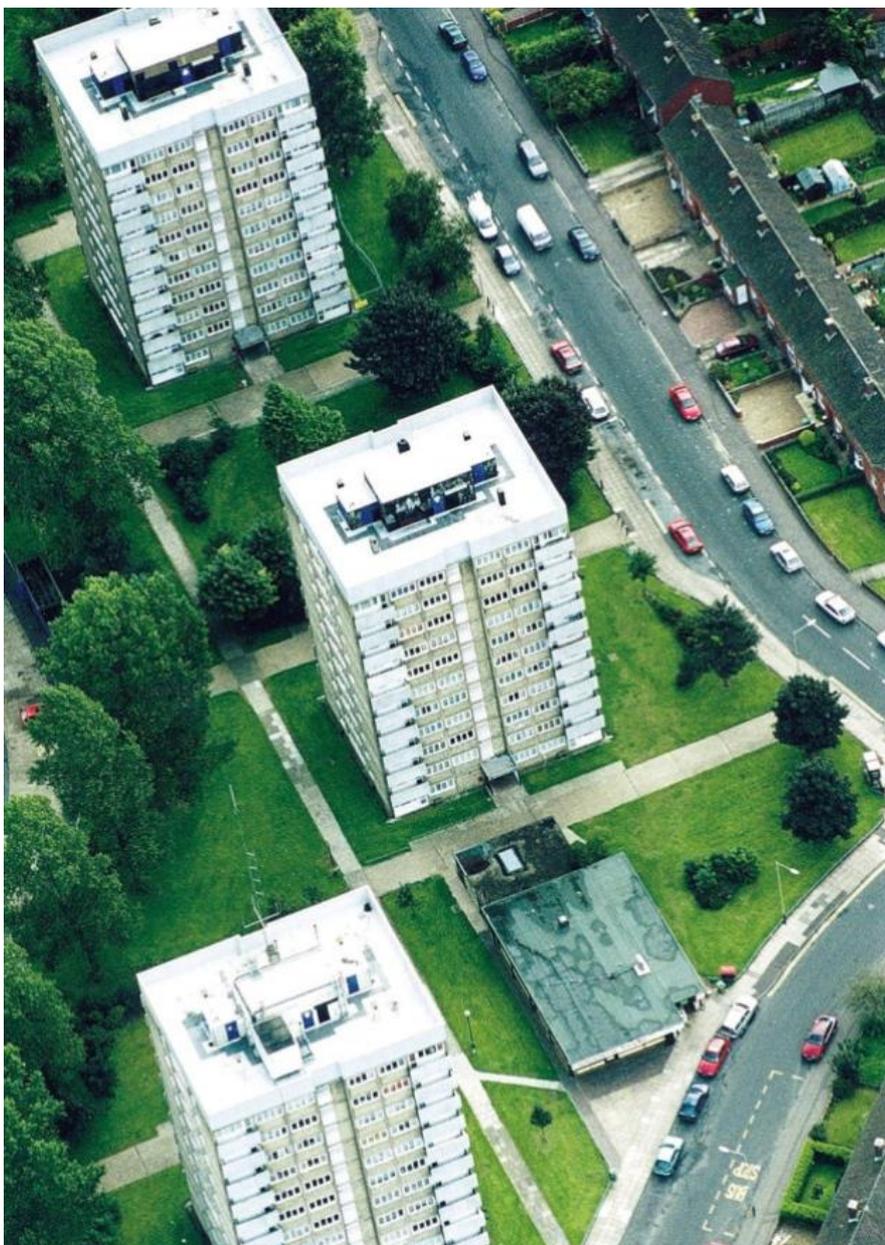
<sup>1106</sup> Jordan, 'Public Parks', 86.

<sup>1107</sup> Jordan, 'Public Parks', 86.

<sup>1108</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/7, 22 December 1965.

<sup>1109</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/8, 7 January 1973.

<sup>1110</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 11 December 1956.



**Figure 80.**  
Heartsease  
Towers:  
Ashbourne,  
Compass and  
Burleigh, Derek  
James, ‘A Tale of  
Two Towers’  
(*Eastern Evening  
News*, 22 January  
2013,  
[www.evening  
news24.co.uk/  
views](http://www.evening<br/>news24.co.uk/<br/>views))

The eventual solution was a new pool on the site of the former St Augustine’s School on the Aylsham Road, although it was 1955 before Norwich Penguins and Swans were able to enjoy the delights of an indoor heated pool.<sup>1111</sup> The debate on swimming facilities did not end with the splendid new baths. Discussions with UEA continued to the 1970s in the hope of a joint initiative at Earlham Hall. This was finally scuppered when the two organisations finally appreciated the financial contribution each was expecting the other to make. Eaton Park remained blighted by the discussions, as it

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<sup>1111</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 13 September 1955.

continued to be listed as a potential location for an outdoor swimming pool complex until the early 1970s.<sup>1112</sup>

The quest for improved swimming provision and the lessons raised by public safety issues in playgrounds typified the increased complexity of the challenges facing councils in the post-war period. Local government not only had to manage the increase in bureaucracy brought about by legislation and case-law but inevitably began to consider ways of streamlining their organisation. Committees that had existed almost as long as the original corporations were disbanded and matters of nomenclature and job titles assumed a new prominence. Norwich had hitherto looked to justify existing procedures and forestall radical change by sampling the practices of other authorities (witness the searches undertaken to establish the pay of the parks supervisor, the charges levied for use of sports fields and swimming baths, and the deference to regional wage protocols), but even Norwich was slowly changing. By the 1970s, though the rivers no longer provided places for swimming in Norwich, a new role was emerging.

### **The Riverside Walk**

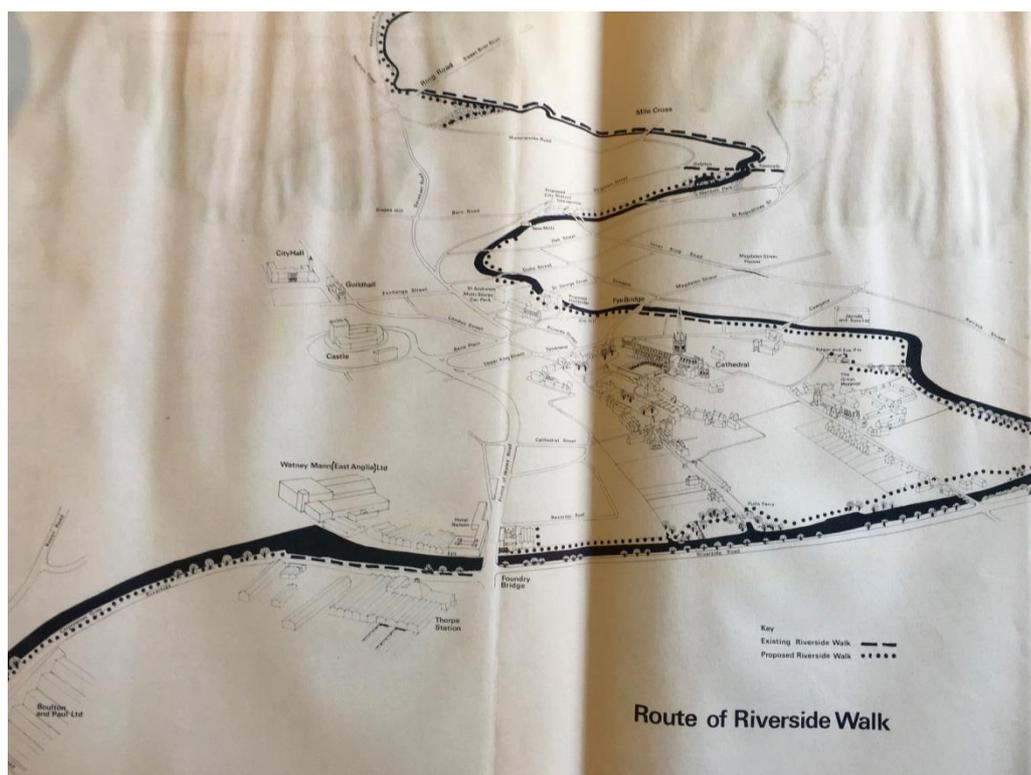
Norwich owed its original existence to its rivers, which provided both protection and livelihood in earlier centuries. The two main river valleys of Wensum (Figure 81) and Yare, the smaller river valleys of the Tud and Tas and other, lost waterways, such as the Cockey, which runs under London Street, have influenced the geographical and geological development of Norwich.<sup>1113</sup> The movement of industry to the city outskirts following the Second World War became the impetus for the improvement of the riverside and its development as a recreational facility. Some parts of the river had always provided picturesque vistas, such as the view across the grammar school playing fields. The cathedral and the rivers had featured prominently in the paintings of artists of the Norwich School in the first half of the nineteenth century – paintings which revealed a range of daily pursuits on the rivers, from fishing to industrial activity.<sup>1114</sup>

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<sup>1112</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/10, 21 November 1972.

<sup>1113</sup> Visit Norwich, 'Norwich Rivers', accessed at <https://www.visitnorwich.co.uk/get-to-know/about-norwich/norwich-rivers/>; *Norwich Evening News*, 5 July 2017: 'Lost Norwich river remembered as latest changes to city centre streets are completed'; M. Pelling, 'Health and Sanitation to 1750', in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson (eds), *Norwich Since 1550* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 117, 137.

<sup>1114</sup> Such as J. Crome, *New Mills, Men Wading*; J. Thirtle, *View on the River near Cow's Tower Norwich*; G. Vincent, *Trowse Meadows near Norwich*.



**Figure 81.** River Wensum and Proposed Riverside Walk, 1971 (Norfolk Record Office)

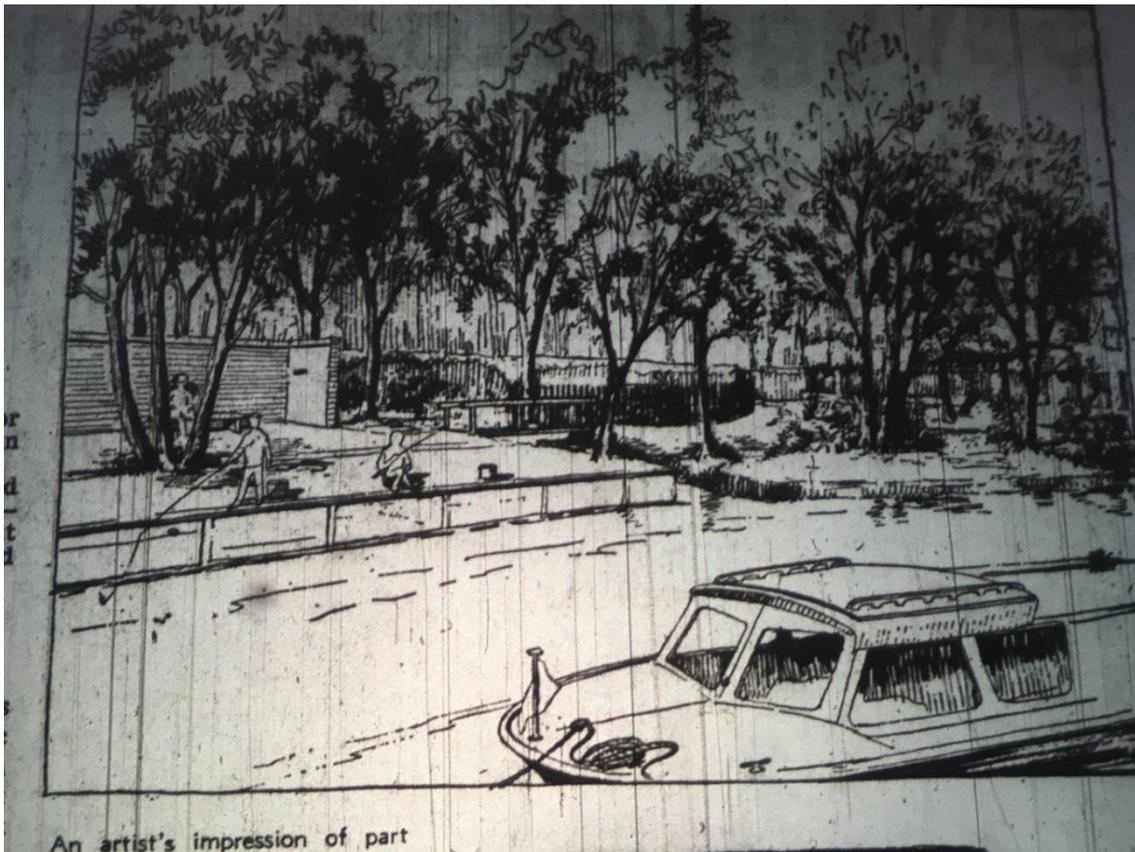
The Norwich Plan had suggested that better use might be made of the river and by the 1950s the council was systematically rejecting planning requests along the riverside: ‘It is the policy of the Council to maintain and improve the amenity of the riverside along riverside road and Bishop Bridge Road.’<sup>1115</sup> The Wensum was neglected and the banks were disintegrating. The riverside development had become an imperative for both the council and the city’s inhabitants.

In the 1960s, when the river port was still used by both large industrial vessels and smaller recreational craft, a promotional pamphlet was published: a product of a partnership between the Town Planning and Parks Committees, the River Boards and civic societies such as the Norwich Society.<sup>1116</sup> It drew attention to the opportunities provided by river reclamation and repair. In an eclectic collection of articles and advocacy, it highlighted some possibilities of such a scheme, including a new landing place at Quayside, an increase in pleasure boats, improved fishing with salmon and sea-trout lifts, and a yacht station. It also conceived more modest and realisable options, such as footpaths and landscaping, although it conceded that some access routes might

<sup>1115</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/6, 10 December 1957.

<sup>1116</sup> Riverside Committee, *The River Wensum through Norwich*, pamphlet (Norwich: Riverside Committee, n.d. c. 1960s).

never materialise. It did not shrink from criticising some of the run-down areas: ‘the present scene is dreary in the extreme’, it noted, alongside a photograph of a neglected slice of river bank, a derelict view from Bishop’s Bridge, the only surviving medieval bridge of the fifteen Norwich bridges.<sup>1117</sup> The concept was radical and, at the time, novel. Planning and funding constraints meant that it was impractical to develop the site in a sequential manner: the proposed walk was divided into six sections, using the city’s bridges as the key markers (Figure 82).



**Figure 82.** Riverside Walk, artist’s impression of part of new Riverside Walk (*Eastern Evening News*, 1971)

Obstacles to progress proved considerable and the city planning officer’s reports in the period up to 1974 provide an illuminating picture of the challenges. Much of the river frontage was owned by a wide range of industries and owners and the consequent difficulty of access as well as the long-standing fiscal challenges were legion. In some cases, extensive negotiation on a one-to-one basis was required; in others, land was secured on the basis of a *quid pro quo*. The sea scouts occupied council-owned land at the rear of Elm Hill, which if released would have provided access to the river bank;

<sup>1117</sup> S. Cocke and L. Hall, *Norwich Bridges Past and Present* (Norwich: The Norwich Society, 1994).

however, an alternative and acceptable site would need to be identified to maintain general goodwill. A number of owners donated land, but not all offers proved beneficial: Boulton and Paul's offer of land near Wherry Road was gratefully received, but the land from Lawrence Scott and Electro Motors was in such a dilapidated condition that it was rejected as requiring major and expensive restoration.<sup>1118</sup> Illicit car parking was a long-term problem for city planners and committees at this time, but proved particularly problematic along stretches of the river such as Quayside, particularly from workers at Boulton and Paul until the company provided an official car park in 1973.<sup>1119</sup>

Some stretches of the river were later to become integrated into the walk as part of major redevelopment that was reliant on private development. Norwich north of the Wensum, where the Gildencroft was sited, was an area that had been extensively damaged during the bombing of the Second World War, and recovery took time and resources. The Magdalen Street Redevelopment Plan and the subsequent unsympathetic remodelling of this particularly historic part of the city following the war had generated considerable public hostility. It resulted in the Norwich Society, the city's civic watchdog, taking uncharacteristic legal action to halt the planners. Partly as a result of this action, further high-density proposals were resisted by the Town Planning Committee. The council purchased the site of the former Jewson's Timber Yard, between Fye Bridge and Sir John Soane's eighteenth-century St George's Bridge at Colegate, and commissioned Fielden and Mawson (the UEA architects post-Lasdun) to design an attractive terraced housing development. Friar's Quay was subsequently celebrated as a model for sensitive city-centre development and other residential riverside conversions were to follow.<sup>1120</sup>

By 1971 the planning officer was able to report good progress on realising a continuous walk through the centre of the city. He also expressed optimism about achieving public river access from Carrow Bridge to Hellesdon Mill – in other words, the full stretch of the Wensum within the city boundary.<sup>1121</sup> Two years later considerable progress had been made, with further stretches brought into operation. The

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<sup>1118</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/10, Reports of the Acting Planning Officer D. Elliot, 10 December 1971, 12 September 1972, 12 December 1972.

<sup>1119</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/10, 11 April 1971, 21 November 1972.

<sup>1120</sup> *Architectural Review*, 1975: 'Dream city: rehabilitation of Friars Quay, Norwich', 311–15; Townroe, 'Norwich Since 1945', 479.

<sup>1121</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/9, 11 April 1972 'Report of D. Elliot Acting Chief Planning Officer', 10 December 1971; *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 January 2017: photographic archive; *Eastern Evening News*, 20 February 1971: 'Whiffler's City'.

Parks Committee was concerned at the imminence of local government reorganisation and anxious that progress be accelerated so that it could be completed before a new, slimline authority came into being. It pressed for funding to be made available as a one-off rather than in smaller financial packages of £10,000 and £15,000 in the annual capital programme, so that the walkways could be completed. The funding was never realised and the grand project was still incomplete by the time the Local Government Act of 1972 was implemented in March 1974.



**Figure 83.** Riverside Walk (contemporary photograph)

Although the project remained incomplete by 1974, some inner-city sections, such as the stretch from Fye Bridge to Trowse Station, skirting the cathedral and the Great Hospital, were developed.<sup>1122</sup> Today this walk passes by the medieval Cow Tower, built as a protective garrison at a vulnerable point in the river, and the site of the former Swan Pit, the object of safeguarding concerns for the council during the Second World War. The walk was simply landscaped and reinforced the proximity to the river, revealing some of the most historic aspects of the cityscape (Figure 83). Some parts of

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<sup>1122</sup> Dallas et al., *Norfolk Gardens*, 314.

the riverside remained a work in progress, such as the north-west stretch from Barn Road to Wensum Park. Although the full concept of a linear park along the banks of the Wensum was not achieved before reorganisation, even incomplete it was an heroic achievement, especially for a city that had finally learned in 1972 that it was to suffer the indignity of downgrading.<sup>1123</sup> The Riverside Walk proved the last landscape hurrah of the Parks Committee and the historic Norwich county borough. The unitary status of the historic city corporation was about to alter forever.<sup>1124</sup>

### **Local Government Reorganisation**

On 28 January 1971 Reginald Maudling, the Conservative home secretary, circulated a confidential memo to the cabinet entitled Local Government Reorganisation.<sup>1125</sup> The shape of local government had been simmering as a potentially explosive item since the First World War. Most of the earlier proposals were attempts at rationalisation. Apart from the Local Government Boundary Commission's aborted recommendation of new county boroughs in 1947, none of the later proposals affected Norwich.<sup>1126</sup> Reform of the anachronistic pattern of local government was long overdue, but there were many vested interests, particularly where boundary changes altered political control. Concerns related to local authority accountability, the suitability of councillors, rationalisation and greater equity in population, size and resourcing.<sup>1127</sup> In 1966 The Redcliffe–Maud Report had proposed the abolition of the existing provision, which had remained virtually unaltered since the end of the nineteenth century. Activists and local councillors of all persuasions were, unsurprisingly, unhappy, but the Labour government pressed ahead with a White Paper and minor alterations.<sup>1128</sup> Against all predictions, the 1970 elections returned a Conservative government to power with a presumption that the original proposals would be neutralised or abandoned.<sup>1129</sup>

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<sup>1123</sup> Local Government Act 1972, accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/contents>.

<sup>1124</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 February 2016: report by Dan Grimmer. In 2015 the Riverside Walk returned to the City Council's agenda with a new draft strategy for completing the missing links at St Georges Street, Fishergate and White Friars; the content little changed from the vision of the 1970s.

<sup>1125</sup> Reginald Maudling memorandum to Cabinet, 11 January 1971. Accessed at The National Archives, CAB 129/155; original reference CP 1-25, 1971 1 January–26 February.

<sup>1126</sup> H. Elcock, *Local Government* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), 25–9.

<sup>1127</sup> Keith-Lucas, *English Local Government*; K. Young and N. Rao, *Local Government Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 197–201.

<sup>1128</sup> Young and Rao, *Local Government*, 201.

<sup>1129</sup> *The Times*, 20 June 1970: 'Mr Heath goes to Downing Street', 11.

Reginald Maudling's five-page cabinet briefing rejected the Labour White Paper proposals but substituted a broadly two-tier structure of counties and districts with some newly defined metropolitan regions. The counties assumed responsibility for the major services: education, social services, strategic planning, highways and police and fire services. The districts retained housing, planning, refuse and environmental services and 'certain other services best administered at a local level'. Recreational provision fell into these dismissive words. Parish councils were to be retained.<sup>1130</sup> The county boroughs, such as Norwich, York, Exeter and Lincoln, which had evolved from the pre-1835 municipal corporations and early royal charters, ceased to exist as unitary bodies and became mere district councils.<sup>1131</sup> Even the large cities of Nottingham and Leicester were subsumed within county control.

Less than three weeks later the future shape of local government in England and Wales was announced to the public. *The Times* interpreted the proposals as a major reform, although one less radical than either the Redcliffe–Maud recommendations or the earlier Labour solution. Its editorial was cautiously approving and accepted the importance of respecting the existing historic county boundaries. The response from the urban authorities was hostile. With the change of government there had been an expectation that the recommendations would be less radical. *The Eastern Evening News*, which reported the news the day before the national press, screamed the word 'Maud Bombshell' in large headlines on its front page, describing the proposals as a 'revolution'; stripping Norwich of its powers and a war with Whitehall were likely outcomes.<sup>1132</sup> Both Norwich MPs deplored the proposals, as did the Norwich town clerk, Gordon Tilsley. Interestingly, only the visionary Norwich chief planning officer, Albert Wood, who had pioneered pedestrianisation in the city centre in 1965, saw some merit in the changes.<sup>1133</sup> The letters column of the local press suggested that the general public was rather less interested in the subject than was the political class. Decimalisation and the long-running postal workers' dispute proved to be more important issues for comment. It had been a good day to bury bad news.<sup>1134</sup>

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<sup>1130</sup> The National Archives, CAB 129/155, Reginald Maudling memorandum to Cabinet, 11 January 1971.

<sup>1131</sup> Keith-Lucas, *English Local Government*, 9.

<sup>1132</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 16 February 1971, front page.

<sup>1133</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 16 February 1971, 3.

<sup>1134</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 17–21 February 1971.

The 1972 Local Government Act specified that shadow administrations should be established from 1972 in readiness for the new organisations.<sup>1135</sup> Norwich, although unreconciled to the loss of its historic powers, had been slightly appeased by the retention of the traditional offices of lord mayor and sheriff, of which the latter had been in existence since the fifteenth century. In readiness for the transfer a new local government vocabulary was born. In the smaller, streamlined Norwich authority there was to be an Amenities and Leisure Services Department, with sub-committees for Allotments, Grants, Recreation and Parks and Community. The roles of chairman and director of parks, the latter a more recent title change, were no more. In this significant legislation one small paragraph placed some restrictions on the disposal of public open space by local authorities.<sup>1136</sup>

The Act was to prove politically disastrous for the Conservatives and compounded many of the tensions that had historically existed between the traditional counties and the larger, more progressive towns. Understandably, the Norwich councillors viewed the loss of the city's historic status with resentment and sorrow. Cllr Walker, the chairman of the Parks Committee, expressed his concerns shortly after the Bill had been enacted, particularly over the future of the areas to be removed from the city's control, such as the school sports fields, which were to be subsumed in the county system. He also fretted over the future of the numerous street trees and hard-won grass verges, given the new highways role allocated to the county authority. He urged the council to speed up the allocation of resources to complete the Riverside Walk before the transfer of powers and budgets took place.<sup>1137</sup>

Alderman Walker, who had served as Labour councillor, mayor and devoted chairman of the Parks Committee for many years, stood down from the council in 1974. His legacy was safeguarded by the recreation ground at Heartsease, north-east of the city, which bears his name. Mr Anderson, the parks director (and superintendent of Norwich parks for twenty-one years) retired at the same time. Unusually for an officer, his name was attached to the large water meadow adjoining Wensum Park. In his retirement interview with the local paper he singled out the 'floral displays of begonias' along Castle Meadow and stated that his aim as parks superintendent had been 'to bring

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<sup>1135</sup> Local Government Act 1972, accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/contents>.

<sup>1136</sup> Local Government Act 1972, Section 123, accessed at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/contents> (see Appendix).

<sup>1137</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/9, 11 April 1972.

New Brooms

flowers into the everyday life of people': a modest aspiration for twenty-one years of local government service.<sup>1138</sup>

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<sup>1138</sup> *Eastern Evening News*, 2 April 1974: 'Twenty-one years'.

## Conclusions

This study of a local authority's provision of public green space over a timescale of 120 years has yielded a rich vein of civic material and has shed light on the complexity of the various processes through which such spaces come into existence. It has provided insight into the roles of the key players in this arena: councillors and officers, park users and donors of land, as well as national governments. In particular, it is the story of the Norwich Parks Committee, in its various guises: Peoples Park Committee; Gardens and St Andrews Hall Sub-committee; Parks and Gardens Committee; Allotments Sub-committee; Allotments Committee; Parks Committee; and, eventually, by 1972, the Amenities Leisure and Community Services Committee. The changes of title are a revealing shorthand for the changing status of parks and gardens over this period. In Norwich, the part played by the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society (NPFOSS), which motivated and financially lubricated the council's endeavours over almost four decades, proved to be instrumental. This society has been identified by other researchers, but the subtlety of its relationship with the city council has been clarified in this research.<sup>1139</sup>

Local government did not remain untouched by national and world events over the period of this study; events as diverse as wars and coronations have had a particular impact on civic green spaces. The name changes for local government, in the case of Norwich in particular (chartered corporation, local council, unitary authority, district council), reflect the role of local government over time. The legislative and cultural changes that have taken place over the 120 years covered by this research have exerted a powerful effect on governance and correspondingly on the development and management of public green space. This thesis has demonstrated the effects on Norwich. Despite the overwhelming centrality of local government in the creation of public parks, the extent of its role has rarely emerged in public parks research. Where public green space is researched, significant officers such as parks superintendents or charismatic and individualistic councillors have tended to be the focus, rather than the council as the prime agency. Although the personnel and values alter over time, the institution of local government, itself subject to redefinition during this period, has been a constant. This study of Norwich redresses that balance, revealing the interplay

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<sup>1139</sup> See Anderson, *The Captain*; Ishmael, 'Public Paradeisos'; Doyle, 'Politics, 1835–1945'.

## Conclusions

between the various participants in the gradual development of a local authority parks estate.

The early rationale for public walks and the nineteenth-century development of public green space has been the subject of much fine garden history research, documented in Chapter 1. Social historians have used the nineteenth-century public parks to analyse the motives of the Victorian reformers, changes in recreational pastimes and the ways in which public parks were modelled. Histories of local government have concentrated on political, legislative and structural changes over time. This thesis includes aspects of these historical approaches (part of the ‘new way to look at old evidence’ identified in Chapter 1) in addition to more conventional landscape and garden history analysis. The archival minutes of committee meetings, albeit recorded in bureaucratic prose, have yielded evidence of values and attitudes unrecorded elsewhere. They not only provide a record of achievements and failures, important as they are, but also shed light on local and national government’s particular preoccupations over a period of 120 years, including the relentless increase in time-consuming bureaucracy. The records also reveal the changing values in civic governance in Norwich over a period of immense social and political change, providing an aspect of green space research that has been largely ignored.

One of the most enlightening aspects of tracking the chronology of a single city in a specific area over decades is the accumulation of seemingly inconsequential material that over time assumes importance. Shining a probing light on a single city may provide only a partial picture of the history of the public park movement in Britain, but it provides the impetus for similar studies in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain. Fascinating, if incidental, details have emerged, which may merit further research: the floristry role of cabmen’s shelters; the gradual evolution from road islands to fully fledged gardened roundabouts, or circular gardens; the contribution made to urban park development by city engineers (an early and important role, which increasingly has disappeared from the local government staffing complement); roadside shrubberies, in some cases incorporating water closets; urban plant nurseries; the role of planning in the evolution of public green space; even boules, a game that was, it appears, exceptionally, played in Norwich.

### **Political Pressures**

The convoluted routes that led to the establishment of the first two public green spaces in nineteenth-century Norwich, the small Chapelfield Gardens and the large Mousehold

Heath, were an inauspicious entry into public park-making. Barry Doyle states that both were ‘driven forward by the personal zeal of individuals’, although, tantalisingly, he fails to identify the individuals concerned.<sup>1140</sup> It is possible that he had two former mayors in mind: Sir Peter Eade, a medical doctor, and John Gurney, a prominent Quaker and wealthy banker. Both were tenacious politicians and played significant roles in the establishment of Chapelfield Gardens and Mousehold Heath as public parks. This research suggests that they were not alone.

However, the two-decade hiatus leading to the enclosure of Mousehold Heath in 1888 and the neglect of Chapelfield Gardens over the same period give some credence to Carlo’s suggestion that Norwich was a ‘slow and reluctant’ entrant onto the public parks stage and to Goreham’s statement that at the end of the nineteenth century Norwich was viewed as one of the worst places in the country for public parks.<sup>1141</sup> These assertions, however, failed to explore the context. The nineteenth-century local circumstances detailed in Chapter 2 of this research, coupled with a legislative framework which offered minimal scope for municipal park-making, provide a partial explanation and undoubtedly contributed to Norwich’s difficulties. Faced with a choice between effective sanitation and public parks, the city chose the former. It is no accident that the three pieces of legislation which were instrumental in the development of public parks – the Recreation Grounds Act, 1859, the Public Improvement Act 1860 and the Public Health Act of 1875 – coincided with the city’s bursts of activity in the sphere of park development. The pressures on the Norwich council in the nineteenth century were not merely party political in nature. Financial constraints provide a major explanation for Norwich’s delay in the creation of the earliest parks, pressures that were not unique at the time and remain familiar today.<sup>1142</sup> Political pressures in the shape of the twentieth-century war-time regulations also played their part and recovery after the Second World War was profoundly handicapped by administrative constraints which eroded goodwill and sapped the capacity for municipal reparation.

The earliest public parks, Manchester’s Peel, Philips and Queen’s Parks, Birkenhead Park and Nottingham Arboretum, were laid out in the 1840s and at that stage there is no evidence that Norwich had embraced the concept of creating new public walks. However, the wealthy industrial North had received a public rebuke from

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<sup>1140</sup> Doyle, ‘Politics 1835–1945’, 355.

<sup>1141</sup> Carlo, ‘Public parks in Norwich’, 5; Goreham, ‘Parks and Open Spaces of Norwich’, 65.

<sup>1142</sup> Briggs, *Victorian Cities*; T. Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The Rise and Fall of the Victorian City* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2005); Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, passim.

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the Select Committee and would have been anxious to restore its reputation. Norwich escaped such public censure. Nevertheless, although Norwich was far from a pioneering authority in the creation of public parks, its entry into public park ownership was mainstream in chronological terms. The bulk of the national parks movement took place after 1870, as described in Chapter 1. Norwich's first public park, Chapelfield, opened in 1866 and assumes a median position in terms of park creation. Conway mistakenly lists the date of Chapelfield's opening as 1880 rather than 1866, which would confirm it a laggard, but Chapter 2 provides clarification on the date of opening. Had Norwich not encountered considerable social resistance, and consequent political and legal repercussions, to the gift of 190 acres of troublesome Mousehold Heath in 1864, it might have been celebrated as a relatively early parks begetter.

The creation of a small park or garden, such as the two donated gardens of Woodlands Park and James Stuart Gardens, or the War Memorial Gardens, which were part of a major civic reconstruction scheme, may at first glance appear a simple matter. The apparent simplicity is deceptive. The imposition of retrospective restrictions by the donor created management problems for Woodlands Park. The development of James Stuart Gardens was interrupted by war, financial shortfall and political change. The War Memorial Gardens were originally intended to be ornamental gardens: its last-minute change of status was politically expedient and its proximity to a busy market place proved problematic for a garden of remembrance. Such examples give particular credence to Dixon-Hunt's thesis on the 'interactivity' of a garden, or park, with the user. His concept has a particular application to the public park and its capacity to alter and accommodate without destroying the original 'thing' or creation.<sup>1143</sup> As public expectations alter and lifestyles demand new recreational pastimes, the pressure on local government to accommodate can lead to a change of use and consequently a reshaping of the landscape. In Norwich, as elsewhere, the period after the Second World War proved particularly problematic in the management and retention of the city's parks and Eaton Park was fortunate to escape the proposed swimming pool.

Vandalism proved a constant provocation: it was in evidence from the earliest stages of Norwich's parks and, as Chapter 2 reveals, provoked the original ecclesiastical donation of Mousehold Heath. Committee meetings received regular reports on the issue and, until the late 1950s, took prompt and swingeing action, reporting incidents to the local constabulary and expecting due diligence in return. Antisocial behaviour was

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<sup>1143</sup> Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, 236.

speedily addressed, fines were often punitive and young children were invariably prosecuted. Up to the Second World War prohibition notices were standard and small railings frequently confined the visitor to the main pathways. Certain standards of behaviour were expected and park-keepers, often with tied residences attached to the park, had a public control function. The official attitude was one of draconian enforcement and zero tolerance. Yet, despite sanctions, controls and societal expectations, vandalism continued: from littering, flower-picking, tree damage, pilfering and pillage, to break-in and arson; wanton destruction was the lot of the park-keeper and the council. The two World Wars, particularly the Second World War, when many of the physical restrictions such as park railings were removed, witnessed a major increase in vandalism. Vandalism was not confined to the general public. Corporate vandalism, as witnessed in the removal of avenues of plane trees and poplars in Finsbury Park in 1919, or Sheffield's tree removal programme today, can be even more destructive.<sup>1144</sup> Vandalism, both individual and corporate in the Second World War, was perceived as serious enough to be debated in the columns of the *Gardeners' Chronicle* and for the Institute of Parks Administration to initiate a public campaign.<sup>1145</sup> Despite the war-time picture of public compliance promoted by politicians and marketed by the press, not all members of the community felt themselves to be an integral part of the corporate commonwealth.

The direct involvement of elected councillors in the operational aspects of the parks has been a particular revelation for the writer. In the nineteenth century the search for suitable land was largely undertaken by councillors, who actively identified locations for parks, although officers undertook the technical appraisal of site suitability. Parks were regularly and formally inspected by the Parks Committee, a responsibility that continued well into the 1960s, and members took decisions on wide-ranging areas of parks administration, including specialist areas such as plant purchases, compensation payments for injuries and the day-to-day administration of the municipal golf course. The pettiness of some of the political interventions, such as the petulant cancellation of the public transport to Mousehold Heath described in Chapter 3, or the truculent early communications with the new University of East Anglia detailed in Chapter 7, are alien to a twenty-first-century culture, where professional discretion and 'need to know' are staples of local government behaviours. As recently as the 1960s

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<sup>1144</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 14 February 1914, 110.

<sup>1145</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 22 May 1943, 204.

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councillors could feel it was appropriate to intervene directly in the deployment of staff, or discipline a gardener.

The 1980s are generally believed to be the apogee of the move to privatisation and the death knell of local government horticulture. The requirement to expose employed gardeners to competitive tendering (and the cheapest tender regardless of quality) led to the widespread dismantling of municipal horticultural teams in the 1980s. However, tendering of horticultural services has a long history in Norwich and this research reveals that it was practised sporadically from the mid-nineteenth century up to 1911. Such practices continued up to the First World War, as the council vacillated between a directly employed workforce and contractors. In large-scale horticultural maintenance this lack of consistency and experience would have generated considerable difficulties in the oversight of the city's parks and gardens. Even after the war, specific areas continued to be contracted out: the provision of refreshments in parks and swimming baths had a chequered history in Norwich, where the profit motive continued to hold good. Directly employed labour was continually dropped and reinstated, partly in recognition of the inability of staff to manage the operation, partly as an exercise in frugality and cost-cutting.

The 120-year passage of time also reveals a number of important developments in the field of health and safety, and the consequent rise in associated administration and bureaucracy: from the casual use of dynamite in roadside tree removal, via the injuries suffered by legions of Norwich children on lethal playground equipment, to the sober realisation of corporate culpability in the 1960s, the changes in regulation and legislation have had a significant influence on the use of public parks. At the same time, the role of the councillor and the officer has gradually altered to reflect these changes. The growth in bureaucracy enhances the role of the professional officer at the expense of the politician.

## **Public Pride**

This thesis is entitled 'Political Pressures and Civic Pride' because these are the main drivers of the parks movement in Norwich. Civic pride is a term used in connection with a municipality, but rarely defined. It is most frequently interpreted through some physical statement of civic provision, such as a monumental building (Manchester's 1850s grand Free Trade Hall) or library (Norwich's very early, 1608 reference library). The early public parks became rich candidates for an expression of civic achievement. It is unsurprising that the model of public parks adopted over the Victorian period

exhibited features deployed in the private parks. The large urban centres had been named and shamed by the 1833 Select Committee, and wealthy individuals, motivated by altruism, self-interest and sometimes self-aggrandisement, and occasionally all three, made reparation.

The term ‘civic pride’ is also employed to describe the esteem felt by those who are responsible for the governance of the city and the response of the general public. Civic pride can be fostered in many ways. In Norwich the endeavours of writers such as George Borrow, the painters Crome and Cotman, and the architects Skipper and Boardman have all contributed to a sense of civic self-worth. The mid-Victorian period has been identified as the time when this sensibility became highly visible in towns and cities, although Briggs nicely points out that in pre-Victorian Birmingham civic pride was perceived less through the trappings of municipality and more through independence of ideas and public discourse.<sup>1146</sup> This observation might well be applied to nineteenth-century Norwich, where intellectual achievement and rational discourse flourished among the city elite.<sup>1147</sup> In the twenty-first century, towns and cities continue to foster a spirit of municipal pride through enterprises such as UNESCO’s city of culture, Birmingham and Manchester’s renowned symphony orchestras, Glasgow’s Rennie Mackintosh School of Art and Norwich’s City of Literature status. Civic pride can be easily undermined. In 2016 Sheffield, long recognised as a tree-rich green city with a long tradition of urban tree planting, succeeded, through a privatised and highly publicised tree-felling programme, in destroying this image.<sup>1148</sup>

The Reverend George Dawkins, the idealistic supporter of Joseph Chamberlain in Birmingham, interpreted the role of a great town in moral terms, achieved by developing institutions and opportunities that enabled residents to thrive.<sup>1149</sup> Chamberlain is generally regarded as exemplifying these principles in his influence on Birmingham, where he introduced a form of municipal socialism and, *inter alia*, schools and public parks.<sup>1150</sup> Chapter 2 demonstrates that there was ample evidence of incompetence and corruption in nineteenth-century Norwich. However, despite venality,

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<sup>1146</sup> Chandler, *Local Government*, 90; Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, 185.

<sup>1147</sup> C. Barringer (ed.), *Norwich in the Nineteenth Century* (Lavenham: The Lavenham Press, 1884).

<sup>1148</sup> Johnston, *Street Trees in Britain*, 178–80; BBC Radio 4 News, 23 March 2018, reported that the Secretary of State for the Environment, Michael Gove, had accused Sheffield City Council of environmental vandalism.

<sup>1149</sup> Quoted by Hunt, *Building Jerusalem*, 315.

<sup>1150</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ‘Joseph Chamberlain’; Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, 215–30.

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there was commitment from some councillors and frustration at inactivity. Unlike Birmingham, in the second half of the nineteenth century there was no single dominant politician or party in Norwich driving the city forward in the arena of public open space. Unlike Nottingham, which promoted the 1845 Nottingham Enclosure Act, leading to the opening of Nottingham Arboretum seven years later, there was no concerted civic momentum across Norwich for a new park.<sup>1151</sup>

The nineteenth-century Norwich corporation was driven less by a response to public welfare and more by initiatives from elsewhere. Norwich's first two parks were typically both donations. Atypically, they were not from a wealthy individual who wished to recompense the city in which a fortune had been made, but from a diocesan authority frustrated by vandalism on its green space and a water company that had no further use for the site, although both donors hoped they could prove of some public benefit. Today, such action might be interpreted as a public relations exercise, but nevertheless the two gifts precipitated the city into half-hearted action. Once the city corporation perceived the value to the public and the prestige gained from municipal parks, civic pride began to grow. Civic commitment followed park success; as Norwich became an active member of the park-owning democracy, civic pride flourished, particularly when corporation efforts were reciprocated by public enthusiasm in the early twentieth century.

The Parks and Gardens Committee brought zeal and commitment to their role from 1911: generating allotments in war-time; expanding the park portfolio in peacetime; securing one of the few municipal golf courses in the country. From the first park opening in the mid-Victorian period to the 1974 reorganisation Norwich was unwavering in its commitment to widespread and free public access to its Peoples' Parks. This belief was unequivocal, maintained in war and peace, and remained pre-eminent and non-negotiable. It was a rare and signal achievement. A public park without free and open access is not worthy of the name.

It is suggested, with some pride, that Norwich is a city that 'does different', in the words of its truculent Norfolk catchphrase, adopted by the University of East Anglia in 1963. In the area of public space the city has proved to be largely in the mainstream of national developments. However, there have been elements that have lifted it above the ordinary and these are worthy candidates for the accolade public or civic pride. Some achievements can be seen in the quotidian and understated aspects of the parks' estate.

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<sup>1151</sup> J. Beckett, *The Centenary History of Nottingham* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2006), 404, 377.

In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 the Parks and Gardens Committee's role in the horticultural maintenance of a number of the city's graveyards, both before and between the wars, led to a small-scale inner-city transformation. Twenty-six of the thirty-three medieval church graveyards finally metamorphosed into small gardens. They ranged from simple grassy enclaves planted with a few trees and shrubs to small floral gardens, depending on the legislative agreement and initially on the contribution made by the individual church. It was a particularly felicitous accommodation between the local Anglican diocese, the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society and the city council. The arrangement modelled the nineteenth-century prescriptions of the Open Spaces Society and was an early example of a community-based public/private partnership, lubricated by small-scale philanthropy, almost a hundred years before it became a term of twenty-first-century abuse. It was a seminal achievement. Outside of London, where the Metropolitan Public Gardens Committee flourished, the only other authority that adopted church graveyards on such a scale was Bristol.

Unlike the early involvement in churchyard gardens, the Norwich corporation was a late entrant in the public provision of allotments, but compensated for this thereafter. The corporation was precipitated into the provision of allotments by the First World War, when the Norwich Parks Committee's dynamic endeavours brooked little resistance from the local population. The allotments at the south of Heigham Park could easily have been absorbed into the redeveloped park in 1922, but remained sacrosanct for another twenty years. The 1922 Allotment Act introduced a duty to provide allotments where requested and Norwich created many new sites during this period, some of which lie outside the city boundary today. By 1922 Norwich was recorded as the second urban centre in the country in the provision of allotments and the new superintendent was instructed by the new Allotments Committee (the Parks Committee in guise) to identify further land suitable for allotments (*q.v.* Chapter 5). As a result, by 1924, the first purpose-built, designed allotments of unique quality and imagination were taking shape on four large fields to the west of the city and the Bluebell site has continued to attract a waiting list of putative plot-holders up to the present day.

The city's efforts to accommodate children in the Norwich parks are another example of commitment over time. Despite the pioneering example of Manchester in the first half of the nineteenth century, such areas were not *de rigueur* in Victorian parks and the enthusiasm shown in Manchester was not generally reflected elsewhere. Even in Manchester's Philips Park, the early playgrounds were shunted elsewhere a few years

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after their creation, in favour of a more aesthetic riverside walk.<sup>1152</sup> The issue of children's recreational needs was raised at the Norwich 1891 meeting (*q.v.* Chapter 2) in terms that were socially as well as politically liberal. By 1902 Norwich, unusually, possessed a dedicated children's playground at Pottergate, donated as a memorial for a deceased son.<sup>1153</sup> It remained in place through Second World War bombing and until the 1960s, when the area was redeveloped. The playground was eventually resurrected in 1972 at Vauxhall Street. Today the original monumental entrance arch recording the dates of the former playground's opening stands awkwardly, stranded on the site among the contemporary sports provision and informal gardens (Figure 84). It is largely ignored by contemporary park users, but provides a poignant reminder of the passage of time.

Although later than Manchester in the creation of public parks, Norwich was assiduous in establishing playgrounds in its early parks: Chapelfield, Gildencroft, Heigham and Woodlands hosted simple examples, in the latter upsetting the donor, who preferred less active pursuits. By the early twentieth century the Priory Gymnasium was in full operation, with male and female instructors. As new parks were approved, the Committee continued to install and provide play areas, and the children's paddling pools and sandpits at Wensum Park gave pleasure to many young children. By the 1920s Charles Wicksteed was manufacturing large wooden bolted slides and strides on a national scale, and these became the *sine qua non* of play equipment. It is encouraging to note that in Chapelfield, in the early 1920s, unsafe ironware was being replaced by a sand pit.<sup>1154</sup> By the 1930s and the opening of the dedicated Jubilee playground at Long John Hill, the playground was described as 'an area for disorganised games', with the lord mayor pointing out that widespread provision of such spaces should lead to a significant decrease in childhood accidents.<sup>1155</sup>

After the Second World War the corporation actively pursued the integration of play areas within the new housing estates, albeit fostered by prescriptions from central government. At the same time, children's play became a priority of the Parks Committee. The introduction of children's gardens as small but dedicated spaces within a park or garden was another aspect of child-centred thinking that appears to have been an early twentieth-century policy, and was reached in unusual harmony with the

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<sup>1152</sup> Groves, 'Children's Play Provision', 4.

<sup>1153</sup> NRO, N/TC 56/12, 'Jenny Lind Playground'.

<sup>1154</sup> Elliot, 'Play and Sport', 155; NRO, N/TC 22/2, 13 September 1921.

<sup>1155</sup> *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 June 1935: P.W. Jewson.

Norwich Education Committee. The children's gardening programme had become so well established that between the wars it was regularly featured by the BBC. By the early 1970s the Norwich parks, vulnerable from lack of use, predatory development interests and media criticism, were granted a reprieve. Programmes of play were



**Figure 84.** Jenny Lind Arch, Vauxhall Square (contemporary photograph)

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introduced by the Parks Committee, and play-leaders were appointed to reintroduce the younger residents to the delights of play in the parks.

Tree planting (and removal) is a constant thread throughout this thesis. Other local authorities have been justifiably celebrated for their tree-planting programmes, including, *inter alia*, Nottingham and Sheffield, the latter particularly along the Rivelin Valley corridor.<sup>1156</sup> By 1872 Coventry had formed a dedicated committee to ensure the planting of street trees.<sup>1157</sup> Although nineteenth-century Norwich never achieved Sheffield's urban forest, early photographs and the 1885 Ordnance Survey sheets reveal that street trees abounded along the Newmarket Road, Yarmouth Road and Unthank Road. By 1911 the city corporation had identified street-tree planting as an integral responsibility of the new Parks and Gardens Committee. The latter's commitment to trees, and street trees in particular, did not waver and between the wars reached a crescendo of planting in the newly developed streets. Although the 'very large number' of 1911 was never quantified, trees in Norwich, whether on the street or council property, were a constant preoccupation of the Parks Committee. At reorganisation, the chairman's prime concern for the future was the possible fate of the street trees under the transition to the new authorities.

As detailed in Chapters 5 and 6, Sandys-Winsch stated that he had planted some 20,000 trees during his time as superintendent of parks, and the enthusiasm for the grant-funded 'Trees Beautifying Campaign' of the 1920s proved a fitting match for the Norwich council, complementing the priority given to the interwar social housing.<sup>1158</sup> As new houses appeared, so trees quickly followed. The Parks Committee, both councillors and officers, saw their role as protectors of trees in the face of private and corporate vandalism. Despite the clarification of responsibilities mediated by the city engineer after an extensive period of bruising inter-departmental disputation, disagreements did not cease. Even under the more tempered supervision of Mr Anderson arguments over tree removal continued, which suggests that the issue was as important to members as to officers. The Parks Committee adopted a highly proprietary approach to the trees in their care and trees were popular subjects for donation by the city's elite. The legacy of this extensive arboreal programme remains evident in Norwich today.

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<sup>1156</sup> Johnston, *Street Trees in Britain*, 144, 178.

<sup>1157</sup> *The Garden*, 1872, 76, cited by Johnston, *Street Trees in Britain*, 107.

<sup>1158</sup> *Norfolk News and Norwich Mercury*, 29 May 1953: 'Captain Sandys-Winsch'.

The *ad hoc* pattern of green-space development in Norwich mirrored the pattern of most other local authorities.<sup>1159</sup> Despite sustained efforts to identify informal green space as early as the 1920s (some of which is today retained as an environmental asset, such as Marston Marshes) there was no overarching strategy on parks and green spaces. The James and Pearce Plan of 1946 was the first city-wide attempt to identify a green-space strategy. Many authorities adopted a similar *ad hoc* approach, accepting donations and purchasing land when available. Not all, however: Leicester adopted a three-stage approach to green-space development and Liverpool proposed a ring of park provision around the northern boundary in the nineteenth century.<sup>1160</sup> In Norwich, even where there appeared to be the will, identifying land for park acquisition proved highly problematic in the nineteenth century, despite the generous land-holding of the city corporation. Leicester managed to open two substantial parks in the nineteenth century, Victoria Park and Abbey Park – a move deliberately undertaken to balance a middle-class park with one sited close to working-class residences. In Norwich, the small land donations from donors were a welcome, if haphazard, addition to the parks portfolio.

By the 1920s the council was sufficiently persuaded by the public park credo and so ambitious to create a golf course that it initiated one of the most strategic purchases in its history: for thirty-five years the historic hall, parkland and gardens at Earlham provided extensive and exceptional green space for its citizens (and later the site for the city's first university). Even in this it was not alone. Many municipal authorities acquired large private parks during the interwar period: Bristol purchased Blaise Castle in 1926; in the same year Manchester acquired the 250 acres of Wythenshawe Park through a munificent donation; and Leicester citizens were able to use Bradgate Park as a result of a gift in trust.<sup>1161</sup> In Norwich, by the outbreak of the Second World War, the seemingly random distribution of parks, gardens and playing fields across the city began to form a more coherent whole, as residential areas grew up around the earlier, isolated parks. Jordan suggests that national enthusiasm for park-making waned by the end of the First World War.<sup>1162</sup> In Norwich, it accelerated.

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<sup>1159</sup> Jordan, 'Public Parks', 87.

<sup>1160</sup> Strachan and Bowler, 'Parks in Leicester'; K. Layton-Jones and R. Lee, *Places of Health and Amusement: Liverpool's Historic Parks and Gardens* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2008), 24, cited by C. O'Reilly in 'Consumption of Leisure and Popular Entertainment in Municipal Public Parks in Early Twentieth Century Britain', *International Journal of Regional and Local History* 8.2 (2013), 112–28.

<sup>1161</sup> Simmons, *Leicester*, 77.

<sup>1162</sup> Jordan, 'Public Parks', 85.

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The redevelopment of the earlier parks and the creation of new green spaces in the 1920s and 1930s were generated through the Unemployment Grants Scheme. In some cases the original plans have been lost but maps of the period, civic archives and the extant parks, as detailed in Chapter 5, enable an assessment to be made of the quality of these surviving landscapes. The park designs, all of which had to function as sports parks, easily merit comparison with other urban park designs of the period and comprise a considerable civic achievement. Five parks are listed on the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens, two at Grade II\*. Sandys-Winsch's designs for Heigham, Eaton, Waterloo and Wensum Parks effectively remodelled the existing parks estate. Over the 1920s, the mundane parks purchased twenty years earlier were transformed into the sports parks deemed essential by the council, but masqueraded as elegant landscape gardens. The metamorphosis attracted a much larger visiting public than a simple sports ground and drew wider attention beyond its Norwich clientele. The plans for the new parks of Hellesdon (Sloughbottom) and Jeremiah Woodrow (Woodrow Pilling) and the gardens at the social housing development at Mile Cross reveal Sandys-Winsch's skill in rendering an attractive combination of games provision and pleasure gardens at the economic cost essential for grant funding. It would be fascinating to view the lost design for the former commercial pleasure garden at The Wilderness, which was approved by the Parks Committee but never executed, to see what Sandys-Winsch might have made of the hilly, wooded, city-wall terrain.

Jordan's study of park design and designers from 1885 to 1915 suggests that a range of professionals was involved in the design of public parks, while Conway states that park superintendents generally undertook the designs for civic parks in the twentieth century.<sup>1163</sup> Although Mawson designed local authority parks from 1891 until the late 1920s, Lutyens, the other great landscaper of the period, undertook no civic parks, unless his masterplan for Delhi is taken into consideration. According to the survey commissioned by the Norwich chief engineer in 1924, park superintendents as designers were in a minority at this period. Other local authority officers, including engineers, surveyors and architects, were more likely to be employed for the task.<sup>1164</sup> Mawson was scathing in his estimation of those he considered 'amateurs' in park design, by which he appears to be singling out head gardeners and park

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<sup>1163</sup> Jordan, 'Public Parks', 92; Conway, 'Everyday Landscapes', 119.

<sup>1164</sup> NRO, N/TC 22/3, 12 February 1924.

superintendents.<sup>1165</sup> Anderson, who succeeded Sandys-Winsch, was asked to provide the occasional plan, but for small areas only. It is significant that by 1928 Sandys-Winsch had been directed not to design buildings without the involvement of the architects' department.

Conway and Jordan jointly cite Lieutenant Colonel J.J. Sexby at the London County Council and W.W. Pettigrew at Manchester, together with J.W. McHattie of the Edinburgh Parks, as outstanding park superintendents in the twentieth century.<sup>1166</sup> Pettigrew is the only one of these who was contemporary with Sandys-Winsch (at Manchester from 1915 to 1932), although by the time he left Cardiff to assume the premier municipal horticultural post outside London he had achieved his best work at Roath Park, Waterloo Gardens and Dunkeld. He was highly regarded in the profession, was awarded the Royal Victoria Medal by the RHS and wrote both the Manchester parks primer *The Handbook of the City's Parks* and later the influential *Municipal Parks, Lay-out, Management and Administration*, which became a bible for the hard-pressed park superintendent.<sup>1167</sup> He was a major influence on his contemporaries, both through his writings and as the superintendent of one of the largest park estates in the country.<sup>1168</sup> In terms of influence and national esteem, Pettigrew's status is absolute. Sandys-Winsch's failings as an administrator have been exposed in this research, although he had the professional accolade of being appointed as a Fellow of the Institute of Landscape Architects for his work on the Norwich Parks, an institution of which Jellicoe and Mawson were founder members and presidents.<sup>1169</sup> Chapter 5 describes how Eaton Park was used in the 1920s as a template for other local authorities by the National Playing Fields Association, an exemplar for sports-park design. In 1928, the city and its superintendent also had the acclaim of the plans and photographs of the site being displayed at the International Exhibition of Garden Design at the RHS's newly acquired Westminster Halls.<sup>1170</sup> In park design, Sandys-Winsch undoubtedly merits the epithet 'gifted'.

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<sup>1165</sup> *Town Planning Review* 1, 'The Design of Public Parks and Gardens' (1910–11), 208, cited by Jordan, 'Public Parks', 92.

<sup>1166</sup> Conway, *Public Parks*, 36.

<sup>1167</sup> Elliott, 'Play and Sport', 153; Jordan, 'Public Parks', 110–11.

<sup>1168</sup> *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, 41 (1907), 'Public Parks and Gardens', 23, quoted by Jordan, 'Public Parks', 86; Pettigrew, *Municipal Parks*.

<sup>1169</sup> ODNB, Sir G. Jellicoe; T. Hayton Morton; *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 July 1953: 'Captain Sandys-Winsch Retirement Interview'.

<sup>1170</sup> *The Times*, 18 October 1928: 'Garden Design: International Exhibition Opened', 19; NRO, N/TC 22/3, 3 October 1928, cited by Carlo, 'Norwich Parks'.

## Conclusions

One of the most significant achievements for Norwich, in this narrative of green-space provision, was the opportunity granted to the park superintendent from 1922 for the major redevelopment of existing parks. After the success of Heigham Park the superintendent was given considerable scope to press forward with his lavish designs up to 1930, which suggests considerable civic confidence in his abilities. Moreover, during a thirty-four years incumbency the superintendent was able to see his original designs come to fruition and adapt and alter, as needs changed. However, the use of the government unemployment grant, wrung from Lloyd George's government under some duress, was a political decision taken by the Norwich council not of the parks superintendent's making and it was in line with earlier city-led unemployment schemes. Although the number of designs and the oversight of their construction was a heroic achievement, this was no hero innovator. The unemployed labourers who acted as builders and gardeners were a cause of considerable frustration for the hard-pressed and irascible superintendent. The focus on redeveloping the existing parks was a council decision: the take-up of the generous grant was widespread across areas of high unemployment, and was usually, though not invariably, deployed for a wide range of urban purposes. Norwich further capitalised on the scheme by using it for social housing, where the landscape skills of the park superintendent and those of the contracted landscape architect combined to produce a generous and gracious council development at Mile Cross. One assumes that, after the first parks had risen, transformed in a remarkably short timescale, the councillors would rightly have been congratulating themselves on their initiative. It is fair to say that much of the early twentieth-century status of Norwich as an attractive green city was a serendipitous combination of national and local government, local philanthropy and a highly talented officer whose skills were successfully exploited, culminating in a partnership for the public good.

## Postscript

Research undertaken in 2017 revealed that the reductions in local government finance over the last two decades have, by 2018, precipitated public parks into a state of crisis to the point where the future of many is in doubt.<sup>1171</sup> In the wake of budgetary cuts Newcastle has recently transferred all of its parks and allotments into a charitable trust,

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<sup>1171</sup> Report of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, *Public Parks* (2017).

which will take over their responsibility and management from 2019.<sup>1172</sup> A number of other local authorities are predicted to embark on a similar approach with their parks and allotments.<sup>1173</sup> Norwich is one of many urban areas where parks are vulnerable and the city has adopted ‘partnership schemes’ in which private bodies take over responsibility for the management of a section of the park: tennis courts, clock-golf and music festivals are recent examples at Eaton and Earlham Parks. Lambeth council plans to hold eight major events a year in Brockwell Park, which amounts to a loss of over eighty days’ green space a year for Lambeth residents.<sup>1174</sup> Dr Andrew Smith describes such usage as ‘creeping privatisation’ and suggests that parks may need to be protected from exploitation by local authorities.<sup>1175</sup> Over the last two decades, two successive Governmental Select Committees on Public Parks, under different political administrations, have failed to recommend that local authority responsibility for public parks should be a statutory duty. This absence of public protection, coupled with budgetary austerity, suggests that the integrity of the public park as a green space, providing public access for free, will become increasingly precarious.

Ironically, parks prove to be more popular now than at any other time in their history. Almost a quarter of the local population visits their local park daily and close to a half visit two or three times a week. Most significantly, only 1 per cent report that they have never visited their local park at all.<sup>1176</sup> This significant increase in urban use may be attributed to the general public’s experience of austerity over the past decade. Given that the most commonly cited reason for visiting parks is the beneficial effect on health and well-being, and that walks in the parks are the most popular form of exercise, it appears that the 1833 Select Committee’s vision for the public park, or walk, has finally been translated into practice, but at a time when their future is most in jeopardy.

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<sup>1172</sup> The Newcastle Parks Trust, ‘The Future of Newcastle’s Parks and Allotments’, accessed at <https://naturvation.eu/nbs/newcastle/future-newcastles-parks-and-allotments>

<sup>1173</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 September 2018: T. Richardson, ‘Is your park a pleasure ground or a profit centre?’, 20.

<sup>1174</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 September 2018: T. Richardson, ‘Is your park a pleasure ground or a profit centre?’; *The Guardian*, 31 August 2018: E. Hunt, ‘Growing use of parks for music linked to privatisation of public space’, 7.

<sup>1175</sup> Dr A. Smith, paper presented to Royal Geographic Society Annual Conference, Cardiff University, 31 August, cited in *The Guardian*, 31 August 2018; *The Guardian*, 1 September 2018: A. Clark, Opinion: ‘Our precious parks need protection from organised fun’.

<sup>1176</sup> Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, *Select Committee Report into Public Parks: Survey of Individuals*.

## Appendix

### Guide to the Key Legislation Passed over the Period 1832–1972

#### **Inclosure Acts**

Individual acts that authorised the enclosure of open fields and common land in England and Wales, creating property rights to land on which previously people had rights of common, such as cattle grazing or foraging. Between 1604 and 1914 over 5200 enclosure bills were enacted covering over a fifth of the total area of England.

#### **General Inclosure Act 1845**

This act consolidated the 1836 Inclosure Act by introducing further restrictions to the process of enclosure. Both acts restricted enclosure of open fields and commons in the proximity of towns on a sliding scale: the greater the size of town, the greater the distance before enclosure could be undertaken. In addition, the principle of public compensation was introduced for recreational land, a form of *quid pro quo*. This rarely operated in practice. The act also appointed permanent enclosure commissioners who were authorised to issue enclosure awards without the matter being referred to parliament, a process of legislative simplification.

#### **Improvement Acts**

These were particularly popular in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century to secure an aspect of urban improvement such as road widening. These private acts of parliament were generally commissioned by a town corporation and enabled the town or city to levy an additional rate. Over the period 1700–1840 parliament passed over 600 Improvement Acts. The powers to pursue improvements were generally vested in dedicated bodies, referred to as Improvement Commissioners: local boards that undertook the applications to parliament for a local act and oversaw the resulting ‘improvement’. Many of the early industrial cities, despite their size and wealth, frequently lacked the borough status that would have given them greater powers. Birkenhead, for example, submitted three Improvement Acts for Birkenhead Park.

#### **Norwich Improvement Act 1879**

Legislation that finally secured the title of Mousehold Heath for the City of Norwich.

#### **Great Reform Act 1832**

This reformed parliamentary constituencies by abolishing rotten boroughs, increasing the voting population and enabling the new industrial towns to become parliamentary boroughs. It marked an important transition to modern government.

**Municipal Corporations Act 1835**

This legislation consolidated the Great Reform Act by reforming democratic processes in the boroughs that had been established by royal charter (such as Norwich) over the preceding centuries. It required members of municipal boroughs (town councillors) to be elected by the rate payers, and enabled unincorporated towns such as Manchester to become boroughs. Overall it increased the powers of local government and enabled towns to undertake improvements without the need for costly legislation. However, not all aspects of urban improvement were covered and Improvement Acts for public parks continued for some time.

**Poor Law Amendment Act 1834**

This transferred responsibility for the poor to locally elected Poor Law Guardians. The act ensured workhouse accommodation for the destitute, plus clothing and food. Children taken in received some rudimentary education. Adults had to undertake some work.

**Towns Improvement Clauses Act 1847**

This act largely dealt with streets and sanitation. However, it was the first act to refer directly to the provision of urban public green space by towns. It allowed for the purchase or leasing of land, within a restricted radius, for the provision of pleasure grounds, or public resort or recreation, and also the improvement of the land, for example by planting, for public enjoyment. (However, urban authorities were unable to maintain the land from the rates if the land had been gifted.)

**Public Health Act 1848**

This act was concerned with the improvement of the health of the poor and established Local Boards of Health which oversaw the provisions for the poor and destitute, including the Poor Law Guardians. The Boards of Health had the power to oversee wide-ranging areas of sanitation, including burials, and to provide and maintain land for public parks.

**The Recreation Grounds Act 1859**

This dedicated and brief piece of legislation was expressly designed to facilitate the creation of recreation grounds and playgrounds in towns. It enabled land to be bequeathed for this purpose up to the value of £1000 for the provision of recreation grounds and playgrounds and for the managers to draw up and enforce regulations to enable effective management.

### **Public Improvements Act 1860**

This was an adoptive act and applied to larger towns. It allowed corporations to use the rates for the purchase and maintenance of land for public walks, playgrounds and parks, provided that 50 per cent of the value had been raised by donations. Borrowing funds was outlawed. Using the rates for maintenance required the agreement of two-thirds of the rate payers.

### **Public Parks, Schools and Museums Act 1871**

This act enabled towns to receive donations of land up to twenty acres for the provision of a park.

### **Parks Regulations Act 1872**

This act applied only to the Royal Parks and Gardens and was designed to increase the security of the parks by granting additional powers of policing to the park-keeper or park constable.

### **Public Health Act 1875**

This wide-ranging legislation extended earlier public health legislation and regulation and underlined the local government's responsibility for the health of its citizens. Towns replaced Boards of Health as sanitation authorities. The act included wide-ranging powers and duties in relation to effective sewerage, refuse, highways, streets and buildings and charged local authorities with the prevention of disease and epidemics and the appointment of suitably qualified medical officers of health. A single but critical paragraph, entitled 'Public Pleasure Grounds', finally granted urban authorities the power to purchase or lease land for public walks and the ability to borrow funds (including from the public exchequer) to develop and maintain parks, as well as to regulate grounds. The 1875 Act implicitly created limited opportunities for tree planting as part of street improvement because of the increased role of the local authority in relation to housing and streets.

### **Metropolitan Open Spaces Act 1877**

This act was encouraged by the Commons Preservation Society and it enabled London authorities to convert closed churchyards into public gardens.

### **Open Spaces Act 1881**

This extended the scope of the Metropolitan Open Spaces Act 1877 so that urban authorities could convert closed graveyards into public gardens; it also enabled neglected gardens to be transferred to local authorities.

**Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1890**

Among a number of detailed provisions related to sanitation, streets and buildings, the act extended the scope of urban authorities to undertake roadside tree planting. It also made clear that local authorities had a duty of public care in relation to the trees. It granted local authorities the power to close parks and pleasure grounds for up to twelve days a year for shows, with the exception of Sundays. A little-mentioned paragraph referred to the power granted to local authorities to provide, maintain or remove cabmen's shelters.

**Burial Acts 1852–1885**

As church graveyards became increasingly congested disease became rife and a series of acts was passed to place restrictions on burials in towns; to establish Burial Boards; and to enable towns to create new cemeteries outside the overcrowded areas. This legislation gave rise to numerous new cemeteries across the country.

**Cremation Act 1902**

This granted local government the power to establish crematoriums within established cemeteries.

**Open Spaces Act 1881**

This act made it possible for closed burial grounds to be converted into public green spaces and churchyard gardens.

**Open Spaces Act 1906**

This act was largely concerned with the power to transfer open spaces and burial grounds to local authorities and their subsequent powers. The act defined an 'open space' as land on which there were either no buildings or where buildings existed but no more than a twentieth of the area was covered by buildings, the remainder forming either a garden or recreation area; or unoccupied waste ground. The implication was that if used for recreation it should continue to be so used. It allowed a town to manage the open space or burial ground for public enjoyment; to maintain and keep the open space or burial ground in a good and decent state; to enclose with railings and gates; and to undertake necessary improvements such as drainage, levelling, grassing, planting, providing seats etcetera. It restricted the playing of games, subject to certain permissions, and allowed the movement of tombstones, again subject to detailed consultation and advertisement.

**Public Health Acts Amendment Act 1907**

This was a significant piece of legislation in terms of extending the powers of local government for the development of parks and pleasure gardens, as it enabled the

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generation of income. It allowed charging for games and sports in public parks; for the use of apparatus; for seats; for the use of specified park buildings, such as a reading room or public conveniences; and for the provision of refreshments. Importantly, income from such charges was hypothecated to the parks account. The act also gave towns the power to regulate the route taken in the movement of animals and extended the powers of local authorities in terms of public nuisance, such as dangerous dogs, indecency, litter etcetera. Powers in relation to the regulation of pleasure boats, the sea shore and promenades were also extended. (These powers were particularly helpful for seaside resorts and towns with rivers, as with Norwich.)

### **Allotment Act 1907**

This imposed a duty on urban authorities to provide allotments.

### **Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908**

This important act established the framework for the modern allotments system, repealing and consolidating earlier allotment legislation. It reaffirmed the obligation of the local authority to provide allotments and gave local authorities the power to compulsorily purchase land for allotments.

### **Housing, Town Planning Act 1919**

This legislation, known as the Addison Act after the Liberal MP and minister of housing Christopher Addison, was a direct response to the Tudor Walter Committee Report of 1917, which reviewed the living conditions of the working classes and recommended major post-war construction. (Tudor Walters was also chair of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust.) The act was a radical piece of legislation: it placed a duty upon local authorities to prepare and carry out social housing schemes for the 'working classes' and introduced surrogate powers should councils prove recalcitrant and default on their duties. It also provided for the inspection of dwellings by the medical officer of health. The act was prescriptive and generous in funding terms. It was later repealed and replaced by legislation more acceptable to the post-war Tory government. A number of the planning principles adumbrated in the report were those of the Garden City movement, such as well-laid-out streets, generous room sizes and gardens.

### **Defence of the Realm Act 1914 (DORA)**

Emergency war-time legislation, designed to give the government of the time wide-ranging powers in relation to communications, such as limiting freedom of expression and movement.

**The Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of Land Act) 1916**

This gave the government wide-ranging powers to requisition land or buildings. The act also detailed the mechanism for arbitration and compensation. It gave rise to the Cultivation of Land Order 1916 (COLA), which granted local government extensive powers to confiscate and/or redeploy land for food production and regenerated the war-time allotment movement.

**County War Executive Agricultural Committees (War Acs)**

These were employed during both the First and Second World Wars under the DORA regulations. They were county-led panels that oversaw food production in their areas. They had wide-ranging enforcement powers. The Acquisition of Land Compensation Act provided a mechanism for resolving disputes over payments to owners after the end of the war.

**Land Settlement Facilities Act 1919**

This act assisted returning ex-servicemen with the setting up of smallholdings (farmland) without the requirement of previous farming experience. It also deleted the term 'labouring population' from the 1908 Act. Allotments in the future could be worked by anyone, regardless of occupation.

**Allotments Act 1922**

The act introduced the term 'allotment garden' and defined the maximum size of a plot as not exceeding forty poles (quarter of an acre). It provided security of tenure for allotment holders and the right to compensation following the end of the tenancy. It also required councils with a population of over 10,000 to appoint an Allotments Committee with responsibility for all allotment matters, with the exception of finance. (This separation of allotments and parks led the Norwich council to establish a separate Allotments Department, as had been recommended by the city engineer eight years previously).

**Allotments Act 1925**

This act reinforced the responsibility of local government in allotment provision. It forbade councils to dispose of allotment sites without permission from the relevant government minister. The latter would want to be satisfied that there remained in the council sufficient provision to meet the needs of allotment holders.

**Housing Act 1923**

This act reduced the subsidy set in the 1919 Act.

### **Roads Improvement Act 1925**

This act had the explicit intention of enabling local authorities to acquire land for amenity value and to plant up roadsides with trees and shrubs by empowering local authorities to provide, maintain and protect grass margins on any land maintained by them.

### **Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1939**

As with the 1914 legislation, this act enabled the British government to introduce the measures it deemed necessary to safeguard the war effort.

### **Cultivation of Land (Allotments) Order 1939 and Defence Regulation 62A**

These two orders allowed local authorities to take over unoccupied land for the purposes of providing allotments. Councils were authorised to convert other land they owned to allotment use, including parks and recreation grounds.

### **Agriculture Acts (1940s)**

A range of legislation which laid the foundations for the large-scale expansion of farming after the war. One of the earliest was the **Agriculture (Miscellaneous War Provisions) Act 1940**, which detailed the County War Executive Committee's powers.

### **Allotments Act 1950**

This extended the scope of allotment use by allowing allotment holders to keep hens and rabbits on their allotment. It also clarified security of tenure and compensation payments.

### **New Towns Act 1946**

This established an ambitious programme to create new towns. It gave the government the power to designate the areas and establish Development Corporations to oversee the process. Sixteen towns in England were developed under the act, of which Stevenage was the first.

### **Town and Country Planning Act 1947**

This act introduced the concept of planning for development over time and the identification of sound planning principles. It strengthened many of the regulations introduced during the war years, such as compulsory purchase, together with the concept of development rights and values. Planning permission was required for building and development; ownership of land was not a qualification. The act introduced the concept of tree protection for individual trees, groups of trees or woodlands and the tree preservation order, which is still in force today. Building preservation orders for buildings of special architectural or historic merit were also introduced in this wide-ranging and generally enlightened act. Powers were transferred

from the smaller district councils to the county councils (although the county boroughs, such as Norwich, retained their planning function). However, it failed to abolish private ownership of development land as many had anticipated and also removed some of the financial incentive for development.

### **National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949**

This legislation was part of the post-war government's planned post-war reconstruction programme. Urban sprawl, whereby towns continued to encroach into the countryside, was checked. A National Parks Commission was established with the role of proposing and protecting areas of 'natural beauty' that were to be designated the new national parks\*. A Nature Conservancy was established to protect the countryside and local authorities granted powers to establish nature reserves. Local authorities were also charged with mapping public rights of way and they were granted powers to create new ones.

\* The first four national parks were designated in 1951: Peak District, Lake District, Snowdonia and Dartmoor. By 1957, a further six areas had been added: Pembrokeshire Coast, North York Moors, Yorkshire Dales, Exmoor, Northumberland and the Brecon Beacons.

### **Clean Air Act 1956**

This long-awaited legislation introduced measures to reduce air pollution through controls on the burning of certain fuels in designated areas. It was introduced after the very high number of deaths (circa 12,000) caused by the great smog of London in 1952.

### **Local Government Act 1888, Local Government Act 1894 and London Government Act 1899**

These three acts consecutively introduced a three-tier system across local government in England, with county councils, county boroughs such as Norwich, and civil parishes. The new County of London came into being, subdivided into new districts (metropolitan boroughs). Despite the **Local Government Act 1933** and the **Local Government Act 1958** this system remained largely unchanged until 1972.

### **Local Government Act 1972**

This established an essentially two-tier system of local government (new county councils and metropolitan boroughs, with district boroughs). District boroughs lost their unitary status (single tier of administration) and lost a number of major functions, such as education and social services. Civil parishes were retained. Section 123: 'Disposal of land by principal councils' introduced some restrictions on the disposal of open space

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and playing fields, requiring application to the secretary of state and public consultation. Legislation in the 1980s emasculated this regulation.

### **Elementary Education Act 1870**

This laid the foundation for a universal, progressive and compulsory system of basic education for all children between the ages of five and twelve, to be monitored through local councils but administered by Education Boards. Public subsidy was administered through local government. Parents who could afford to pay were expected to contribute.

### **Board of Education Act 1899**

Consolidated the 1870 Act and established a register of qualified teachers.

### **Education Act 1902**

This act standardised educational provision across England and Wales and encouraged the growth of secondary schools.

### **1944 Education Act**

This pioneering act provided free secondary education for all pupils up to the age of sixteen (although children were able to leave at fifteen until the Raising of the School Leaving Age regulation, introduced in 1972). It introduced a three-tier system of education at eleven, selection being undertaken by an independently marked examination at eleven, designed to provide equality of access for all children regardless of background.

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