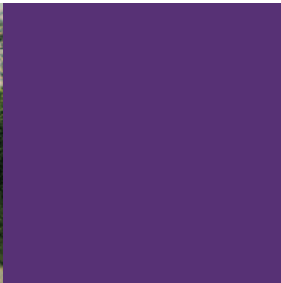


# WHITWORTH PARK COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY PROJECT



## Whitworth Park Community Archaeology & History project

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Whitworth Park opened in 1890, at the height of Manchester's Industrial Revolution. It was designed to improve people's health (and their behaviour), mixing together people of different classes, incomes and ethnicities. The colourful flower beds and radial paths encouraged people to 'promenade', dressed in their best clothes.



Promenading in the woodland park with its colourful formal flower beds.

Courtesy of Bruce Anderson

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The impressive main gates on Oxford Road led into this 'woodland' park. People could admire the lake and fountain, sit in the pavilions, listen to music from the Bandstand or visit the Whitworth Gallery, as long as they observed the by-laws – no dogs, no bike riding, no picking of flowers!



The Whitworth Art Gallery.

Courtesy of Bruce Anderson

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The park looks very different in the old postcards people sent or kept as mementos. There was a Meteorological Observatory where records of local weather were taken. Nearby, children fed the ducks and played at the lake-edge with toys. In the 1920s the lake became a model yachting pond and then a paddling pool.



Children playing near the Observatory with the lakeside pavilion in the background.

Courtesy of Bruce Anderson

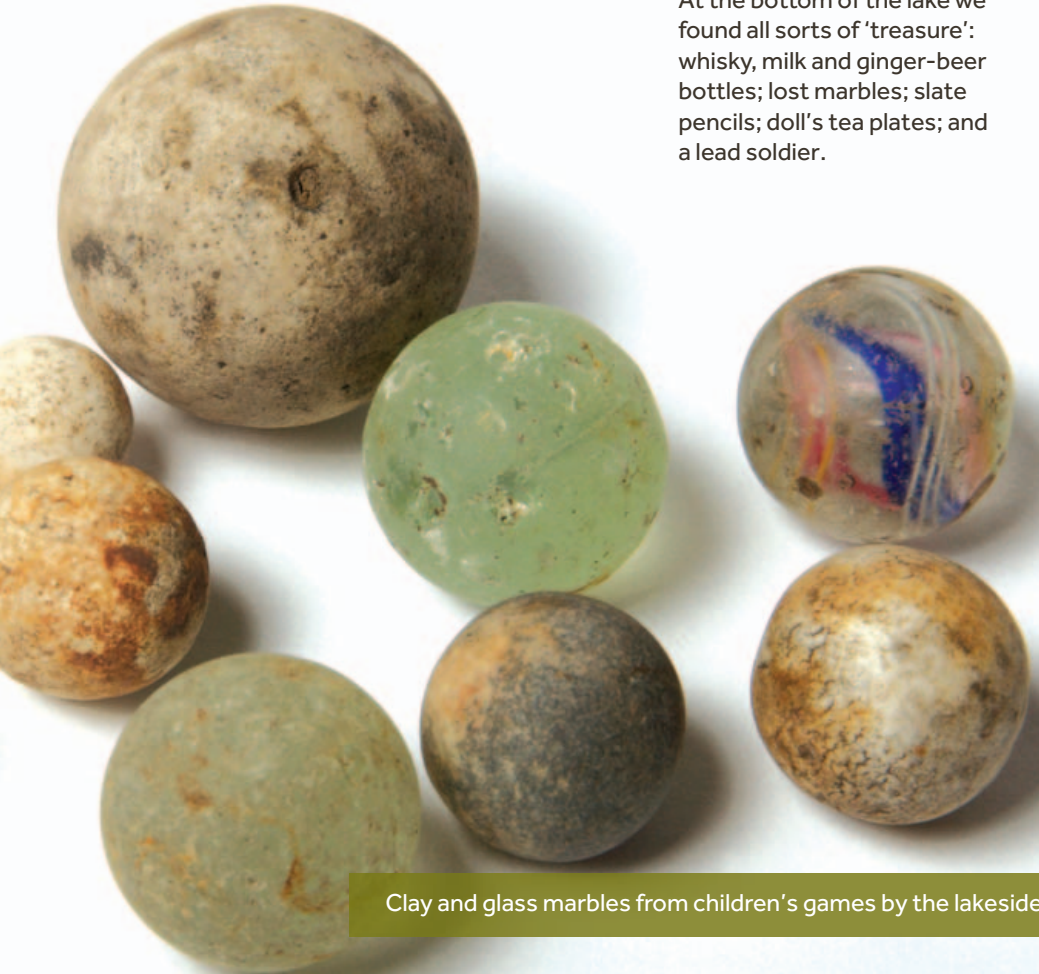
4



The lake and fountain.  
Courtesy of Bruce Anderson

# WHITWORTH PARK: PAST LANDSCAPES

Water symbolised purity, refreshing both body and soul, and drinking fountains tempted people away from nearby pubs! At the bottom of the lake we found all sorts of 'treasure': whisky, milk and ginger-beer bottles; lost marbles; slate pencils; doll's tea plates; and a lead soldier.

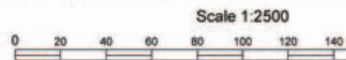


Clay and glass marbles from children's games by the lakeside

# WHITWORTH PARK: THEN & NOW

These two maps show you the park in 1922 and the park today. See if you can find the Victorian park features mentioned in this booklet and use the images to imagine what it was like in the past!

1. Flower beds and radial paths
2. The Whitworth Gallery
3. The Meteorological Observatory
4. The Lake
5. Statue of 'Christ Blessing the Children'
6. The Bandstand
7. Park Benches
8. The Mound



# Whitworth Park Community Archaeology & History project



## Key features of Whitworth Park today:

- A. Central flower bed
- B. Play Area
- C. Picnic Area
- D. Wildlife Area

May 23, 2014 11:41

160 180 200 m

The park's monuments were meant to command respect for the British Empire and commemorate its monarch, Edward VII. The terracotta statue of Christ promoted Christian ideals and helped Whitworth to become known as 'the Children's park'. It was removed after the war and 'Obelisk' by Cyprian Gaillard now occupies its old plinth.



5

Statue of 'Christ Blessing Little Children'.  
Courtesy of Bruce Anderson

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People could rest in the park's beautifully glazed and tiled pavilion near the lake, picnic on the artificial mound or listen to music from the Bandstand. After WWI, elderly veterans used a shelter as a meeting place, located close to the war memorial for the 7<sup>th</sup> Manchester Battalion.



6

The Bandstand.  
Courtesy of Bruce Anderson

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The park also had many benches like these on the path leading from the Rusholme entrance, where gentlemen could watch the world go by, and enjoy a solitary smoke. We have found many fragments of their clay pipes, many of which were made in Manchester.



7

Gentlemen smoking on park benches.  
Courtesy of Bruce Anderson



The Wildlife Area by the Mound.  
Courtesy of Ken Shone

# WHITWORTH PARK: PAST LANDSCAPES

The Observatory, pavilions and Bandstand were demolished in the 1950s. Once the Gardeners and Park Wardens disappeared, crime increased and the park declined. The Friends of Whitworth Park formed in 2005 to revive its fortunes for 21st century multi-cultural Manchester. They have worked hard to improve play equipment, plant colourful flowers and encourage wildlife. The ecologically re-designed Whitworth Art Gallery once more brings art and culture into the park, realising the vision of the Victorians!



'For Auld Lang Syne' and 'Death & Glory' clay pipe bowls

# WHITWORTH PARK COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY PROJECT

The Whitworth Park Community Archaeology and History Project has investigated the Victorian park using survey, excavation, archival research and oral history. It was led by archaeologists from The University of Manchester, working with the Friends of Whitworth Park, Manchester Museum, The Whitworth Art Gallery and the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre, assisted by Manchester City Council. It was supported by a Heritage Lottery Fund Your Heritage grant. Thanks to all of our community volunteers and the local schools who took part.



## Park Access

Whitworth Park can be accessed from Oxford Road, Moss Lane East and Denmark Road.



A café, toilets and shop are located in The Whitworth Art Gallery as well as Manchester Museum.

Why not visit them both?



Friends of  
**Whitworth**  
P A R K

Join the Friends of Whitworth Park and see what they plan next (contact Kenneth Shone at [shones@altrincham.freesevice.co.uk](mailto:shones@altrincham.freesevice.co.uk)) and check-out the project blog to learn more about our dig!

[www.whitworthparklife.wordpress.com](http://www.whitworthparklife.wordpress.com)