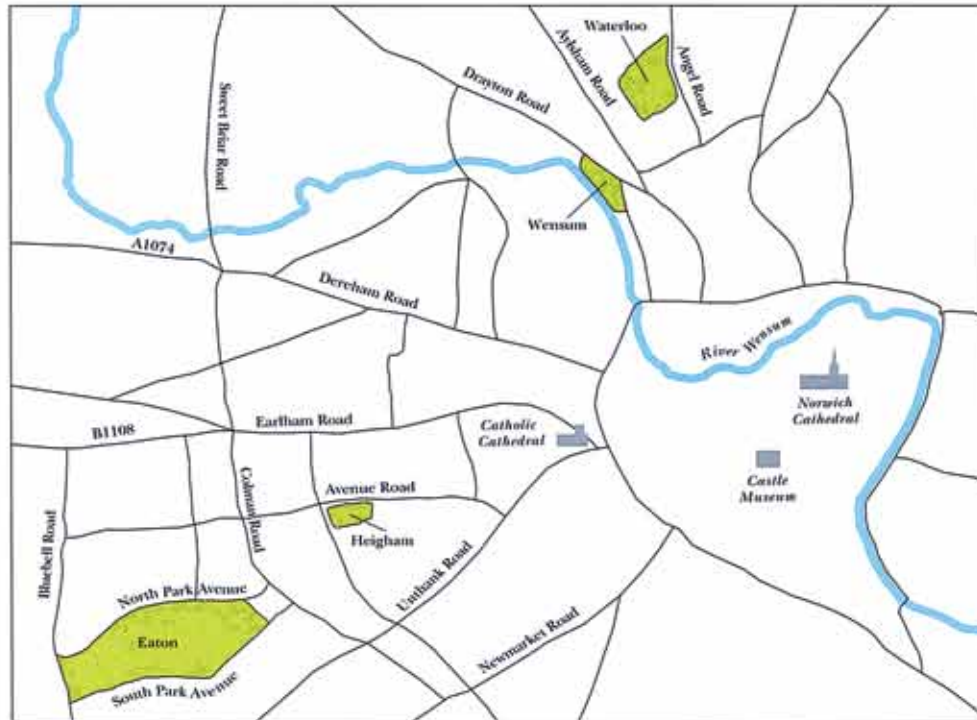


THE  
CAPTAIN  
— AND THE —  
NORWICH  
PARKS

by  
A. P. Anderson



Map showing location of Sandys-Winsch parks



# THE CAPTAIN AND THE NORWICH PARKS

*by*

A.P. Anderson

*photography*

*by*

Sarah Cocke



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*To the memory of:  
Geoffrey Goreham and Arnold Sandys-Winsch, who worked for a fairer City*

*Acknowledgements*

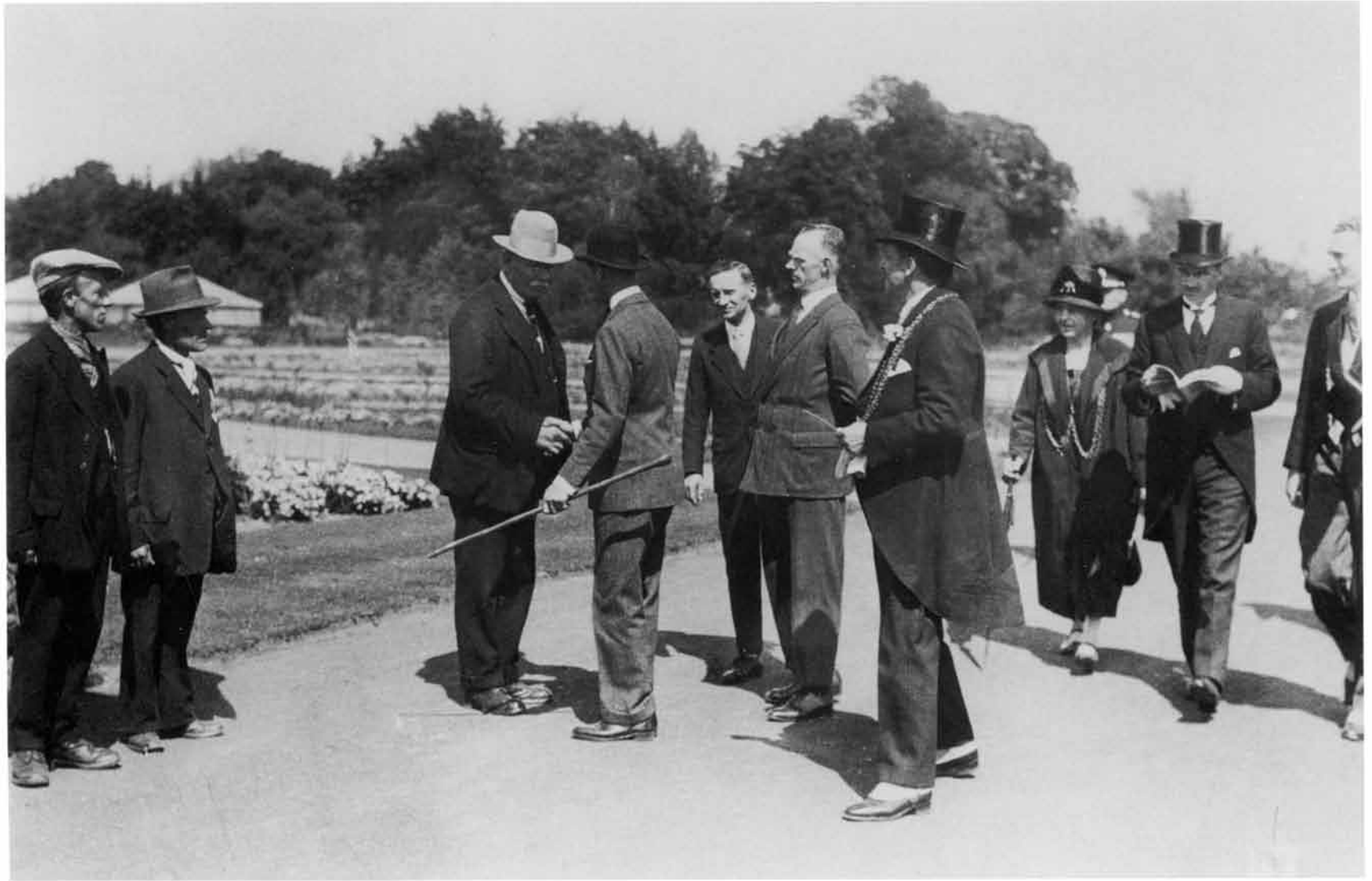
I am indebted to many people. Godfrey Sandys-Winsch for helpful comment and stories about his father's life; Peter Fletcher, Charles Youngs and Brian Sewell for their reminiscences of working with the Captain in the Parks and Gardens Department; and to members of today's Norwich Green Spaces, such as Clive Olley, George Ishmael, Andrew Slaughter and Ali Dore, who have been unfailingly helpful throughout the preparation of this book. Alan Wright of the City Architects Department, through his enthusiasm and knowledge of the structures within the Parks, has enabled me to appreciate anew the qualities of the inter-war Norwich Corporation and the manifold abilities of Captain Sandys-Winsch. Dr. Richard Cocke has kindly read the text and brought some necessary discipline to my prose style.

Thanks are also due to the Norfolk Record Office, Norfolk Local Studies Library and the Library of Eastern Counties Newspapers, for permission to use materials, and to their staffs for making research such a pleasant task. I am also grateful to Peter Larter for making photographs available from his splendid collection on the City of Norwich, to the Norwich City Council for reproduction of the Sandys-Winsch plan of Eaton Park and line drawings of park structures, and to Peter Goodson for letting me see the early C20th minutes of the Norfolk & Norwich Model Yacht Club.

I should also like to thank Dr. Hazel Conway for writing the foreword and her general encouragement. Lastly, but most certainly not least, I must record my thanks to both the Town Close Trust and the Thomas Anguish's Educational Foundation for the generous grants which made the book possible.

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Captain Sandys-Winsch (centre right without hat) with the Prince of Wales and Lord Mayor at the opening of Eaton Park, 1928

## *Foreword*

To many of us who live in towns public parks are so much part of the landscape of our lives that we accept them unquestioningly. How they were created, or whether they will always be with us, is not generally something that we concern ourselves with. The story of park creation in the nineteenth century is one of triumph over adversity, and of vision over *laissez-faire*, for the early public parks were created at a time when local government itself was struggling to become established. It was not until the last quarter of the century that it achieved full powers to acquire and maintain public parks. While many of these public parks were donated or funded by entrepreneurs and philanthropists, by far the majority were created by the local authorities themselves and designed by borough surveyors and engineers.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the key influence on town planning was the Garden City Movement and the building of Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb. The generous parks, gardens and boulevards that were such a feature of the garden city, became an ideal for new developments and an important influence on later town planning. After the First World War the slump of 1929 was followed by a period in which the figure for unemployment reached three million. Some of these unemployed were engaged on park creation schemes in a number of cities, including Norwich. Indeed all of the parks designed by Captain A. Sandys-Winsch in Norwich between 1921 and 1933 used unemployment relief labour. The slump affected the manufacturing industries most. By contrast those working in the service and manufacturing industries stayed in employment and saw their incomes increase in purchasing power. As a result the demand for private housing increased and there was an enormous growth of the suburbs around the major towns and cities. In the inter-war period some four million houses were built on greenfield sites across the country.

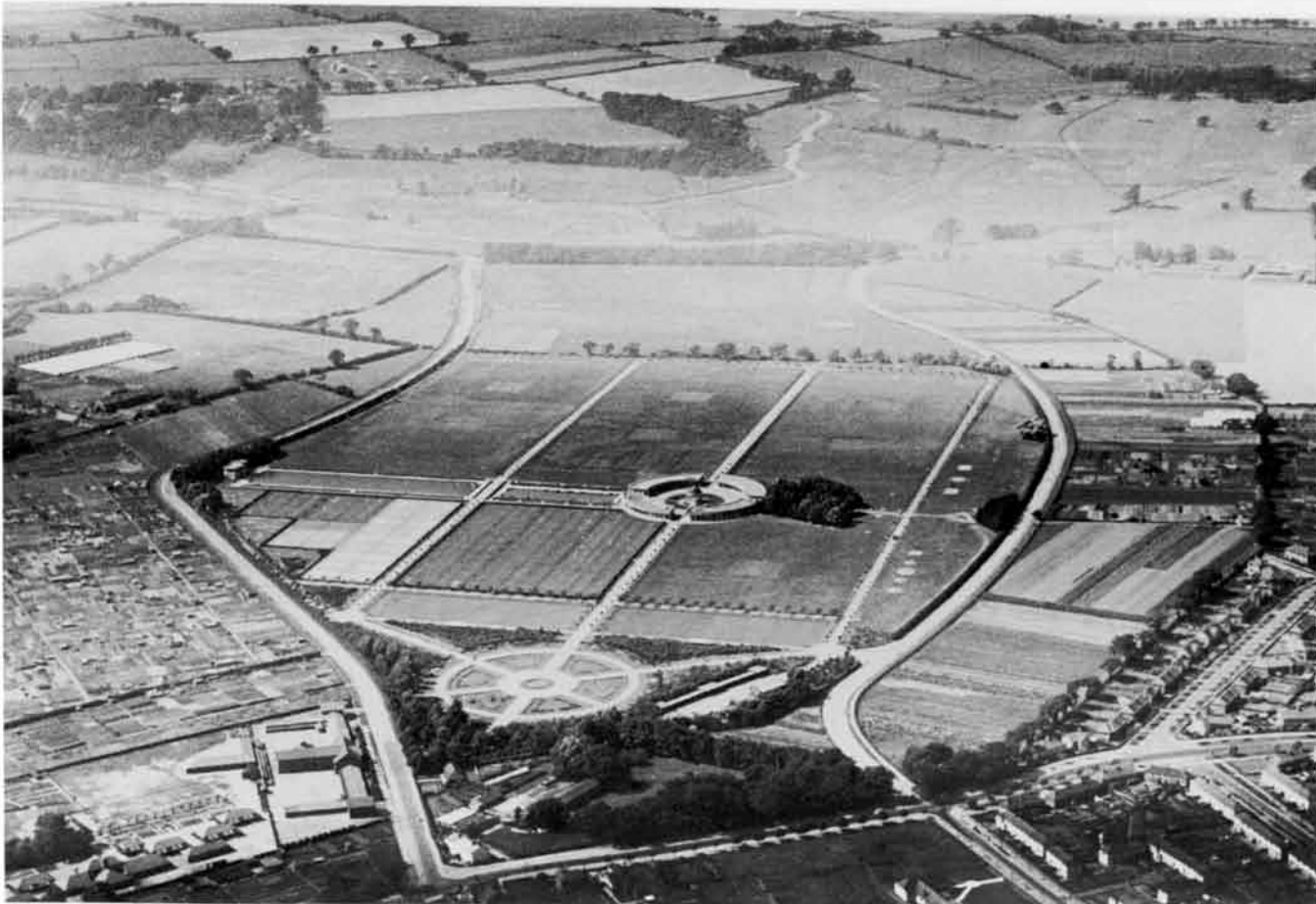
The link between public health and recreation was an important influence on parks during the 1920s and 1930s. The National Playing Fields Association, set up in 1925, promoted its Open Space Standard of five acres per 1,000 population. Out of these five acres, four were intended for playing fields and recreation grounds for the recreation of adolescents, adults and children, and one acre was recommended to be

laid out as parks and pleasure grounds for those who did not wish to play sports. A further impetus to provision for sports and playing fields came from the King George V Memorial Fund set up after the death of the King. The large scale of the open spaces needed to accommodate numbers of tennis courts, football pitches, cricket pitches and bowling greens posed problems for park designers and Eaton Park, Waterloo Park and the other parks designed by Captain Sandys-Winsch in Norwich illustrated how this problem could be resolved.

The designs of the Norwich parks that are the subject of this book are exceptional for Captain A. Sandys-Winsch was a gifted horticulturalist, who trained at Wisley and then worked with the well-known and prolific park and garden designer, Thomas Mawson. Thomas Mawson became President of the Town Planning Institute in 1923 and the first President of the Institute of Landscape Architects in 1929. Captain A. Sandys-Winsch's work reached a wider audience in 1928, when twenty photographs and five plans of his designs for the Norwich parks were exhibited at the International Exhibition of Garden Design. He was subsequently elected a Fellow of the Institute of Landscape Architects in recognition of his work in Norwich.

The key issues that are setting the agenda for parks today at the beginning of the twenty-first century include the proposal to build four million new homes, the growing volumes of traffic, and the importance of the environment, sustainability and Local Agenda 21. The Government has affirmed its commitment to good quality, well managed parks and open spaces, but the question of funding for all public park maintenance remains unresolved. The recent Select Committee Report on Town and Country Parks (1999) recommended setting up a Green Parks and Open Spaces Agency, but so far the government is considering a Champion for parks, rather than an Agency. The Norwich parks that are the subject of this book are of significant historic importance and it is important to ensure that they will be pleasant, safe, well-maintained and enjoyable to use in the future.





Aerial view of Eaton Park  
showing a more restricted  
urban area than exists  
today

*Norwich Green Spaces*



The building of  
Eaton Park

*Norfolk Record Office*

# · THE CAPTAIN AND THE NORWICH PARKS ·

## *Introduction*

Municipal Parks are taken for granted, their role sadly diminished by cutbacks in maintenance and by the car, which has brought coast and countryside within easy reach. It is therefore easy to forget the reasons for the creation of these splendid gardens and open spaces and the foresight of those, long passed from the scene, who made that creation possible.

The making of the Norwich Parks and Gardens is a fascinating story. It is larger than the parks with which this short work is concerned: Eaton, Waterloo, Wensum and Heigham. Nevertheless these are the parks which, although different in size and character, were the main creations, in the attempt to bring beauty and relaxation to the citizens of Norwich often living in difficult urban conditions. It was a noble concept, which at the time succeeded brilliantly.

All four parks were given their present form and character in the first third of the twentieth century, but it was not until the 1990s that they were noted as parks of special significance by English Heritage. By this time there was much to cause concern. Vandalism and that late twentieth century curse, graffiti, had done their work, aided no doubt by the inability of a financially hard-pressed City Council to employ park keepers in their traditional role. Some of the structures within the parks were showing their age, particularly where the design had perhaps been superior to the materials used. Another change in habits had an effect. Eaton Park in particular had, in addition to its scenic and architectural qualities, been a superb venue for football, cricket, tennis and hockey. A restriction on the monies available for the maintenance of pitches and a greater ambition and expectation on the part of the clubs caused many users to seek their own grounds.

There was an opportunity and indeed a need for a drastic rethink on the Norwich Parks.

Because of the importance of the built structures to these four parks, an application was made to the Heritage Lottery which brought about one of the largest

grants to English Parks and Gardens, approximately four million pounds made available to the Norwich City Council for restoration within the Parks.

There is an interesting contrast between the parks and the old City which they were intended to serve. Norwich in the period following the Great War was a tight, concentrated urban area, with at its core the medieval City of winding streets and narrow lanes. The parks had a spacious, classical feel, with radiating avenues and structures that were neo-classical in style. There was and is a detectable unity within the four parks. Was there a desire for a fresh start, a reaction against a picturesque, beautiful even, but sometimes not very sanitary old City? One can but wonder. What is clear is the major role played by the City's Parks and Gardens Superintendent, Captain Sandys-Winsch. Appointed in 1919, he was to serve until after the Second World War. Others had secured the ground but it was the work of the Parks Superintendent, often working at home in the evenings, who was to plan the parks and bring them to completion in such an impressive way.

# — · U N E M P L O Y M E N T I N N O R W I C H I N T H E 1 9 2 0 s · —

Those Norwich men and their families, who had survived the War and the miseries of the previous decade, including the influenza epidemic, may well have looked forward to the 1920s with optimism. Many were to have their hopes denied by unemployment and the hardships arising from it. Immediately after the Great War, the country had experienced full employment, but this did not last for long. As the decade opened the troubles began: in 1920 unemployment went to over one million, in 1921 to over two million, throughout the 1920s, it never fell below one million. A.J.P. Taylor in his book, *The First World War and its Aftermath*, says, "Unemployment between the Wars became the great social evil that poverty had been before the First World War". Norwich did not escape the rigours of unemployment but there is much to admire in the way the City authorities faced the problem and did their best to alleviate it.

There was of course national unemployment benefit, one of the great reforms brought about by David Lloyd George during his time in office, although it is likely that Lloyd George had not envisaged the scheme as having to deal with mass unemployment. 1921 had seen a Parliamentary Bill to increase the rates of unemployment benefit to 18 shillings a week for men and 15 shillings a week for women, with half these rates respectively for boys and girls. The third reading of this Bill was secured after the acceptance of amendments that raised the levels of benefit to 20 shillings for men and 16 shillings for women. This was too good to last. Calculations were soon upset by a coal strike and a new bill was introduced, which reduced the rates to the previous levels of 15 shillings for men and 12 shillings for women, *with* an increase in contributions.

In Norwich, the minutes of the Council give ample testimony to the concern felt. In September, 1920, the General Purposes Committee noted a resolution of the full Council which said: "...having considered the serious state of unemployment existing in the City of Norwich, we demand from the Government that payment be made to all unemployed persons at such a rate as will maintain them in health and efficiency until work is provided for them". This resolution was forwarded to the Prime Minister, the Ministers for Health and Labour, and the two members of Parliament for the City. The General Purposes



The hard work begins –  
men pushing barrow  
along temporary railway,  
an age before the JCB,  
Eaton Park 1920s

*Norwich Green Spaces*

Committee was instructed, “to consider and expedite all schemes of work which can be put in hand or facilitated with the object of relieving the unemployment in this City”. One proposal was to level Wensum Park and lay it out as a park with tennis courts and bowling greens – not the way this park was later to develop. The Council was sincere in its efforts to help and imaginative in finding schemes. It gave consideration to a new road between the then Half Mile Lane, to cross the river and railway line and reach Nelson Street; on Mousehold Heath the filling in of the path of a tramway, presumably the Mousehold Light Railway, which had served the munitions factories at the end of the First World War, and the levelling of the Fountain Ground; and in the old City, the setting back of Churchyards for footway improvements. Later in the decade, in discussion with the Directors of the Norwich City Football Club, it even considered the building of a modern football ground for the City with two locations in mind, Aylsham Road or the Jessopp Road/Portersfield Road area. This was one project not to be progressed!

In 1921 there was no doubt that action was needed in Norwich. The City had 7000 unemployed people with another 1040 on short time, 1500 married men and 1200 single men were registered for relief work. These figures excluded the 500 men engaged in Corporation relief work with another 220 men on Board of Guardians ‘test work’. In July of that year, the Guardians – responsible for relief under the Poor Law whereas unemployment benefit was a matter for the Government’s Employment Exchanges – had expressed their concern about the Norwich situation in a letter to the Minister of Health and had been referred to Norwich Corporation. The Government had stated in its response to the Guardians that local authorities were being encouraged to provide work for the unemployed. Norwich hardly needed prompting, and indeed in August sought to send a deputation to the Prime Minister, which was not granted, although Ministers stated they fully understood the City’s concern.

The problem of unemployment was a large one, which clearly needed major schemes of relief work to remedy it. The stage was set for the creation of the modern Norwich Parks – and for Captain Sandys-Winsch.

“Right gentlemen, let’s  
look at the bandstand”

The opening day at Eaton Park.  
HRH The Prince of Wales,  
centre with cane, on his right  
Captain Sandys-Winsch, on  
his left the Lord Mayor  
Herbert Witard.

*Norwich Green Spaces*





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# · THE MAN WITH THE VISION ·

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The man who did more than any other person to create the Norwich Parks was Captain A.E. Sandys-Winsch, a native of Cheshire. On demobilisation at the end of the Great War, Captain Sandys-Winsch saw advertised, applied for and was appointed to the post of Parks Superintendent to Norwich Corporation. At the time of his appointment, the City possessed only Chapelfield Gardens, the Gildencroft, Sewell Park and one or two small playgrounds. When he retired it could boast about 600 acres of parks, recreation grounds and open spaces. The Captain had made new parks from rubbish dumps, rough ground, and a place filled with trenches where soldiers had trained for the Great War. Model allotments, the first in the country, were another product of his progressive thinking. Through the years he held his post in the City, he planted 20,000 trees. He had been in post but a few months when the Town Clerk, Arnold Miller, put to him the notion that the growing number of unemployed men in the City could be put to useful work improving the City's amenities by building new parks. The Town Clerk told the new Parks Superintendent,

“Now is your chance. Take it.”

Who was this man who was to rise to the occasion with such success, and what was his background? It seems that Arnold Edward Sandys-Winsch was passionately fond of gardening from an early age and was the constant companion of his parents' gardener. Although he was apt to describe himself as none too bright at school, he gained a scholarship to the Cheshire Horticulture and Agricultural College in 1905. After taking a three-year course, he gained his diploma and also a gold medal for research work in botany and entomology. It was the only gold medal ever awarded to a student of the College at that time. After some practical experience in nursery work, the young Sandys-Winsch then took articles with Thomas Mawson, the renowned landscape architect. His articles were completed in 1914 and the young Sandys-

Wunsch may well have pondered what his next career move should be. Events made up his mind for him. Already a Territorial, he was called to the colours at the end of July, 1914, and served until June, 1919, in the Royal Field Artillery, later as a fighter pilot in the Royal Flying Corps, and lastly in the Army of Occupation. After demobilisation, the Captain took a well-earned three-month holiday and it was during this time that he saw advertised the post of Parks Superintendent to the Norwich Corporation.

The appointment of this, the first of the City's Parks and Gardens Superintendents, says something of the time. It was a bold step on the Corporation's part, previously the care of what few gardens the City then possessed was the responsibility of the City Engineer's Department. Much was to change and change quite quickly. Fortified by his starting salary of £300 per annum, with annual increments of £10 to a maximum of £350, and the solemn resolution,

“The Superintendent to ride a motor-cycle”,

the Captain set about his duties with a will.

In two years, Parks and Gardens became a separate department in its own right. The great task could begin.

Sandys-Wunsch's achievements are there for all to behold. What was he like to serve with and under? On the Captain's retirement from the City's service in 1953, when he received a gift from the members of his department, he took the opportunity to plead for decent wages for the good gardeners on his staff and also to acknowledge that he might have appeared harsh at times. He said that his staff had understood his ways. Something of the military remained with him, tallish, erect and severe in his public countenance.

Peter Fletcher and Charlie Youngs both joined the Norwich Parks Department as boys and were to spend their working lives there. They became the two Area Superintendents, with responsibilities for the north and south of the City. Although

sharing the sadness that many have felt at the decline of the parks, they remember their time within the Department with affection. Sandys-Winsch was a stern taskmaster but there were still opportunities for fun. Young men returning from the Second World War were not too worried by a brusque manner nor easily overawed. A prank involving the Parks Superintendent's beloved motor-car, when the play-actors remembered everything except the need to set the handbrake, is still recalled with fondness. Brian Sewell was another to join the Department as a boy and describes himself as the "Go for". He remembers Sandys-Winsch for his 'stern glances over his glasses' and commands such as, "Boy, fetch me a barrow". All three men share an admiration for the skill and professionalism of the Captain which has not lessened with time.

The writer remembers him from his own schooldays, when a pupil at the Norwich Junior Technical School, which had moved from St. George's to the unfinished buildings of the new City College on Ipswich Road. One period a week was set aside for the pupils' own choice – if misdemeanours didn't consign them to 'compulsory prep.' – and the writer had joined the gardening class under the fondly remembered mathematics teacher, Jessie Hammond. The site was still largely green and the group set about cutting sticks for the anticipated runner beans from the copse bordering the site. A man dressed in a trench coat, known to some of the whispering boys as "Sandys-Winsch", stepped from the trees, raised his hat, and engaged our teacher in conversation. It was plain that the group had transgressed and a blushing Jessie shepherded us away to another task.

He could be a little terse. The Captain's son, Godfrey, tells of the day when a lady approached his father for advice,

“Oh, Captain Sandys-Winsch. I’ve got such a problem with a dreadful weed in my garden. I think it’s called ground elder. What do you think I should do?”

The answer was prompt,

“Leave home!”

In common with most successful men, Captain Sandys-Winsch has had his critics. He had caused the planting of 20,000 flowering trees in the City, not only in the parks to often spectacular effect, but also in the streets. Some said that his love of the flowering tree indicated a dislike of the forest tree. This was always dismissed by the Captain who stressed his love of the forest tree, but also his belief that a narrow city street was not where it should be placed. He reminded his critics that next to wider roads on the City outskirts, such as Drayton Road, he had planted forest trees.

Such criticisms do not diminish the size of his achievement. Perhaps Sandys-Winsch was a difficult man. He knew what he wanted to achieve and this may well have made him impatient with those who did not wholly share his vision or see it quite so quickly. A little of the Army officer, together with the title, may have stayed with him in his civilian tasks that must, in themselves, have been almost military in scale.

Thoughts have been entertained by some that the layout of the parks and the design of their buildings, the geometric dependence of the former and the classical theme of the latter, owe something to political thinking. If it were so, it would not be too surprising. Captain Sandys-Winsch had seen the horrors of the Great War at first hand and he would not have been alone in seeking a cleaner, more ordered world. The parallels are all too obvious. It is a nice theory but remains quite unproven. What is far more likely is that the time Sandys-Winsch spent with Thomas Mawson as a young man gave him ideas that stayed with him until, later in Norwich, he was able to put

them into practice. Much of Mawson's own work was characterised by his use of classical design.

What is clear about Sandys-Winsch's work in Norwich is that in his thirty-three years as Parks Superintendent he brought about a profound change in the appearance of the City and in the scale of facilities available for the enjoyment of the citizens. If the restoration of these Norwich parks, which will be part of the general re-appraisal of the public park in England taking place at this time, leads also to a new appreciation of the work of Captain Sandys-Winsch, then it will be no more than his memory deserves.

Enjoyment for young and old, the model yacht pond, Eaton Park 1950s

*Courtesy of the Eastern Daily Press*



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## · EATON PARK ·

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Compared with today, when the City within its local government boundaries comprises but two-thirds of the urban area, the City of Norwich in the earlier part of this century, then not only a county borough but possessed of its cherished Charter of 1404 which made it a county of itself and wholly independent of Norfolk, still had much that was rural in character. As that meticulous Norwich historian, the late Geoffrey Goreham has told us in *The Parks and Open Spaces of Norwich*:

“In 1906, when the City Authorities bought 80 acres of fields and arable land from the Church Commissioners south-west of the City, they had plenty of land from which to make their choice.

The county of Norwich was, in that year, truly rural with scattered farms, large houses and woodlands. It was only after the first World War that the vast housing estates spread across the green meadows within the boundary and the need for land for residential development became a serious consideration.”

An organisation blessed with remarkable foresight, the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society, saw the need for space (even in the midst of seeming plenty) to be set aside for recreational use. It was this Society's prompting, together with the enthusiasm of Alderman Wild and other prominent citizens of the time, such as Walter Hansell, that made the purchase possible. The Society raised £900 towards the cost. The land was enclosed and its familiar rectangular shape became a feature of Norwich.

Geoffrey Goreham has given a picture of the southern outskirts of Norwich in the first decade of the century: the fine houses of Earlham Hall and Eaton Hall, the villages of Earlham and Eaton linked by a narrow Blue Bell Lane, woods and meadows with cattle grazing. For eighteen years after its purchase by the City, Eaton Park



The Prince of Wales  
addresses the crowd, the  
opening ceremony at  
Eaton Park, 1928

*Norwich Green Spaces*



remained a part of this rural scene. It was a roughish piece of grass suitable for carefree games and on more than one occasion used for the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Show. It was well away from what most people thought of as the City and not the sort of place on which prudent City Fathers would want to spend money. During the Great War it was used for training soldiers, in preparation for trench warfare and the horrors of Flanders and Picardy.

The year of 1924 brought great change: the country lane was widened and became Blue Bell Road, the builders moved into the fields to the north of the Park to build the Colman Road Estate. From being detached from the City, the Park changed to being part of it. The spread of houses gave the Park a new life and purpose and the City Fathers began to think again. In this year the Parks and Gardens Committee gave approval to plans prepared by Captain Sandys-Winsch for the development of the Park. For the next three and a half years, one hundred and three men found employment every week. In the middle of the Park a domed bandstand, surrounded by quadrant pavilions, was erected. These structures were all designed by Sandys-Winsch. Also to the Captain's designs, A.E. Collins, the then City Engineer, was responsible for the building of the model yacht and lily ponds on a radial from the bandstand, terminating with a water pavilion, serving as a club house for those using the yacht pond. Separating the lily and yacht ponds, was a charming mock bridge. There was a splendour about these constructions which gave to the Park a character it has never lost, albeit that the structures themselves are in need of renovation. George Ishmael, in an Essay for the Norfolk Gardens Trust Journal, has described the design of Eaton and the other Norwich Parks, "...all exhibit the strong geometry of formal Beaux Arts planning, softened by the use of an Arts and Craft approach to materials and detailing".

The completion of the model yacht pond and club house must have brought great pleasure to the members of the Norfolk and Norwich Model Yacht Club. Its present-day Honorary Commodore, Peter Goodson, still possesses the minute book

and other documentation from the Club's earliest days. The Club had adapted its insignia, effectively the Arms of the City of Norwich, from a twelfth century relic of stained glass in Norwich Castle. This had "...passed the City Committee in 1907...". The Club's President for 1908 was Russell J. Colman, who had been latterly Sheriff and Mayor of Norwich and High Sheriff of Norfolk, with the Mayor and Sheriff of Norwich, and Lt. Colonel Harvey as the three Vice-Presidents. The Commodore was Russell Steward, for many years a leading solicitor in the City. Committee meetings were held at the Bell Hotel. Mr. Colman had helped the Club to find a sailing broad at Whitlingham but the Club remained ambitious for other venues. Model yachting was seen as a healthy interest for all, particularly the potentially disaffected City youngster and a petition seeking a pond, which gained eight hundred signatures in ten days, was presented to the City Council.

The Minute Book has a press cutting of the Rev. John Callis, Rector of Holy Trinity Church since 1875, writing to the press during 1908, extolling the possibilities presented by Eaton Park.

He saw,

"...something like Chapelfield Gardens at the lower end, with a yacht pond in the dip in the land on the upper side of the pretty little wood. I hope some day our more venerable citizens may be seen in goodly numbers resting on seats beneath the shadow of the trees... The tram line will terminate near that spot some day I hope, and Eaton Park will become one of the glories of Old Norwich in its later days."

Many thought as John Callis. Indeed a specification and estimate for a model yacht pond in Eaton Park was obtained during 1908 – for £2840. However twenty years were to pass before the Eastern Evening News, on May 16th, 1928, could carry a photograph of the pond and club house, and proclaim that, "The work at Eaton Park is nearing completion".

There was both a decorative and recreational aspect to the Park, tennis courts in abundance, cricket squares and bowling greens, balanced by fine gardens, particularly near to the South Park Avenue entrance where a fountain was a prominent feature of the display. The reputation of Eaton Park was not confined to the City: people from the surrounding country area would come in to the City at the weekends to enjoy the parks and listen to the bands performing in Eaton and Waterloo Parks, in marked contrast to today when the fashion is to escape from the urban area. In the early years, those seeking Eaton Park could make their way by tram to the terminus by the Jenny Lind Hospital and then walk along Colman Road to the Park. The writer has happy memories of being taken to the Park by his mother at a time when housing was being built on Colman Road, with boards showing the long leases which were available to those wanting to live in modern dwellings on the edge of the City.

The great achievement that the Park represented received royal recognition in 1928, when the then Prince of Wales officially opened it. He had been to the park five years before, when it was but rough land, to attend the Royal Norfolk Show. In his speech the Prince said,

“It is a scheme that has provided a great slice of the country almost in the middle of a great City.”

One portion of the original rectangle was not developed as part of the modern park. Sometimes known as the third field, the area close to Blue Bell Road remained a place of rough grass separated from the rest by its original field hedge. Circuses were held here until after the Second World War, its Ipswich Road site being denied to it by the building of the City College, at least in skeletal form, just before the War started. This last area has been used in recent times for the pitch and putt-course, which has completed the recreational pattern of the Park.



Classical beauty in the making, the building of the mock bridge in Eaton Park

*Norwich Green Spaces*

Today the Park is almost surrounded by houses. It impresses with its spaciousness. The amount of land made available originally for games, football, cricket, tennis, bowls, was truly generous. The decorative parts of the park were undoubtedly pleasant, but not such a high proportion of the whole as to be found at Waterloo Park. The Park was sufficiently large to demand the focus that the pavilions, bandstand, and the two lakes gave it. These structures still fascinate today, the concept so bold and imaginative. If ever self-deprecating voices whispered to Sandys-Winsch that the whole scheme was a little too grand, then he ignored them. There is nothing of the pinched or ungenerous about Eaton Park, it was meant to impress and it still does. Today if the visitor enters by the car park near the pitch and putt-course, the old 'third field', and walks towards the lakes, it is the generosity of space that impresses. Then the eye is caught by the avenues of trees, although some of these are showing their age and gaps have appeared. The best way to enter the Park is in the manner that Sandys-Winsch intended, through his wrought iron gates at the City end of South Park Avenue – both gates and piers, now listed Grade Two. A short walk brings the visitor to a circular garden, designed on a grand scale and approximately 100 metres in diameter. The whole is enclosed by a fine yew hedge. Immediately inside this hedge is a herbaceous border, as notable in its own way as the long straight border at Waterloo park. The centre of this garden was originally a water fountain and pool, which is to be restored, although probably in a manner more in tune with today's tastes and uses. The main body of this grand circle is made up of a rose garden divided into six equal parts by radiating paths, all of which is in keeping with the Sandys-Winsch geometric plan. This is a circular garden only rarely equalled in England. Although restoration in Eaton Park is to be concentrated on the structures and lakes, it is to be hoped that the opportunities this grand garden represents will not be overlooked. There are plans to introduce more seating and it is a 'sun trap'. It could also be a 'circle of excellence', pleasing the user by its magnificence, and playing a major part in restoring the prestige of the Park to the standards of its glory days.

From this garden there is a pleasant avened walk to the bandstand and the colonnaded quadrant pavilions. When the buildings of Eaton Park were considered, in recent years, by the then Department of National Heritage, all were listed Grade Two, that is to say, the bandstand, the quadrant pavilions, the yachting and lily ponds, the mock bridge and the water pavilion. Well may they be described as, “a significant group of structures”. There is still a stunning vista to be seen when standing in the centre of the bandstand, looking past the mock bridge to the water pavilion. In a technical sense, the vista goes on as there is a passageway through the pavilion looking on to South Park Avenue. The pavilion is a charming termination but there is a difference between this building and the other structures in the Park. The listing description is interesting,

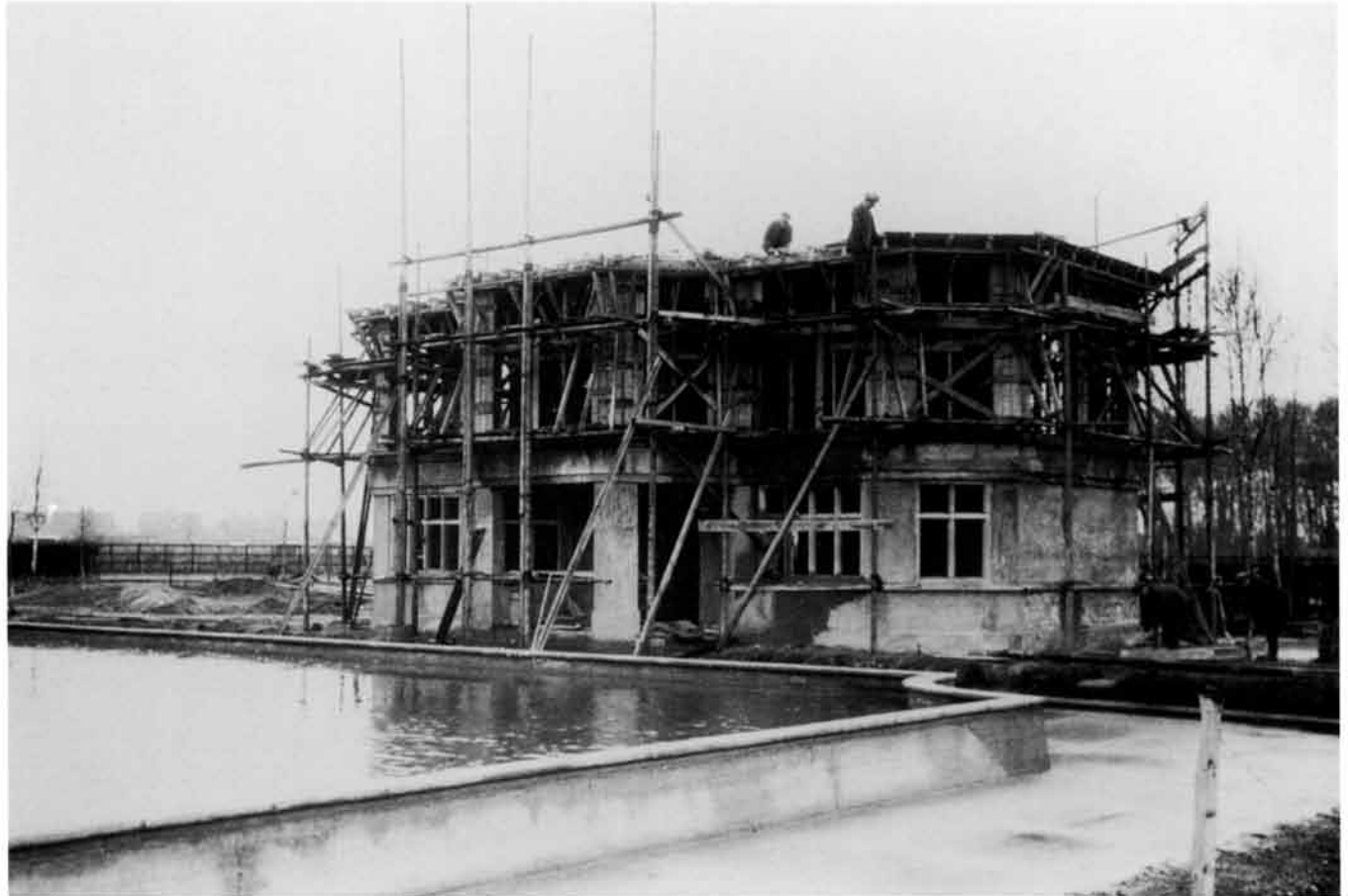
“Park pavilion. 1924-8. By A Sandys-Winsch. Concrete with parapeted roof. Modern style recalling Mogul India. 2 storeys. the upper forming a verandah all round. Boarded windows to ground floor which has central passageway leading to internal stairs either side. Passageway leads to canted front which faces the yachting pond and which has flat-roofed clock tower above. Roof has balustrade”.

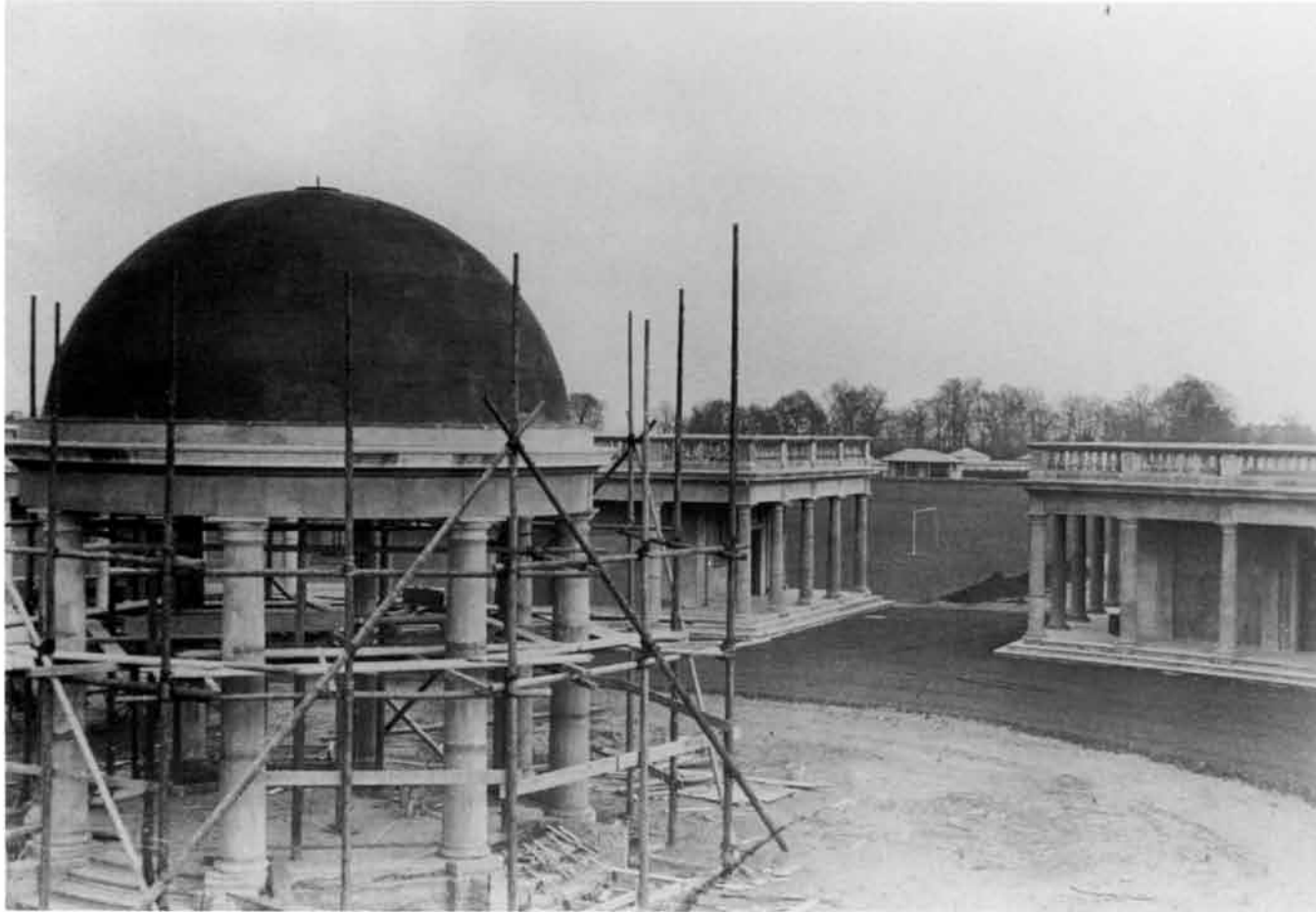
It is to be hoped that a much-travelled Prince of Wales had time to notice this touch of Empire in an East Anglian scene.

These structures, together with the geometric layout of the Park, are a strength and the key to its character. The other great strength is in the spaciousness. The community which lives around the Park must be consulted on contemporary needs.

“The modern style recalling Mogul India”, the water pavilion, to be used as the model yacht club house, under construction at Eaton Park

*Norwich Green Spaces*





The classical style exemplified, the domed bandstand and the quadrant pavilions taking shape at Eaton Park

*Norwich Green Spaces*



Looking towards model  
yacht pavilion from the  
bandstand





The entrance gate on South Park Avenue, both piers and gates are listed



*above*

The bandstand before restoration

*bottom middle*

At work on the restoration of the model yacht pond



*above*

A gardener at work in the herbaceous border



The recently restored bandstand from the pavilion roof with brass band playing



*above*

Detail of the recently restored gate on Angel Road

*bottom middle*

The pergola before restoration, looking towards the pavilion



*right*

Gardener at work in the herbaceous border





*top*  
The pavilion before restoration

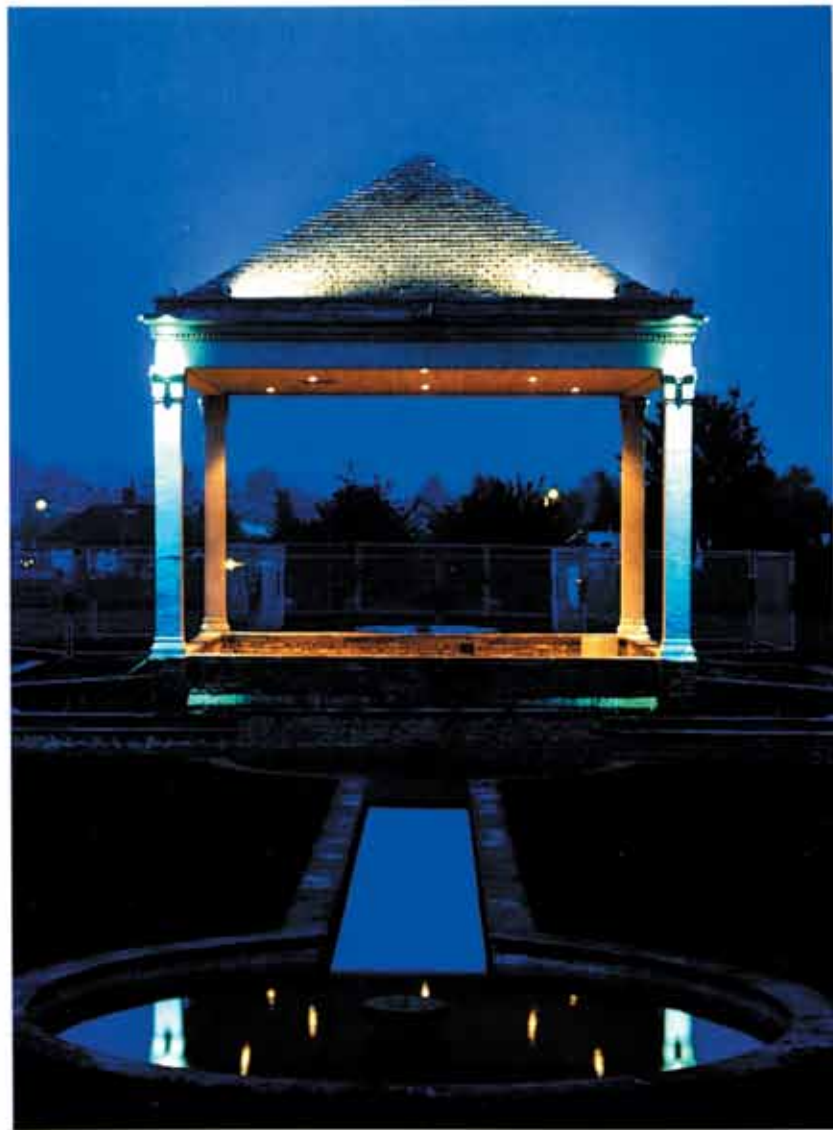


*right*  
The bandstand before restoration

*below*  
During restoration



*above middle*  
Enjoying the brass band



*above right*  
The new fibre-optic lighting on the bandstand at night

· PEOPLE IN THE PARKS ·



*top left*  
American football Eaton  
*below left*  
model yacht club Eaton



*above*  
bowls Waterloo



*above*  
fishing Wensum



*top right*  
brass band Waterloo



*bottom right*  
pitch and putt Eaton

*below*

children help plant zodiac  
beds Wensum



*above*

a stroll in Waterloo



*top middle*  
miniature trains Eaton

*bottom middle*  
children's playground  
Waterloo



*top right*  
croquet Eaton

*bottom right*  
germination project for  
schoolchildren Heigham





*left*  
Playing hide-and-seek  
under the pergola



*above and top right*  
Families enjoying the park



Restoration of  
the pergola



Spring by the river  
in Wensum Park



The pavilion after  
restoration

*below*  
before restoration  
*below bottom*  
during restoration





detail of the restored gate  
on Drayton Road

*above middle*  
The river walk



*bottom middle*  
Artist Jane Sunderland  
supervises volunteers  
laying out the labyrinth  
April, 2000



*far right*  
Swans nesting near  
the river



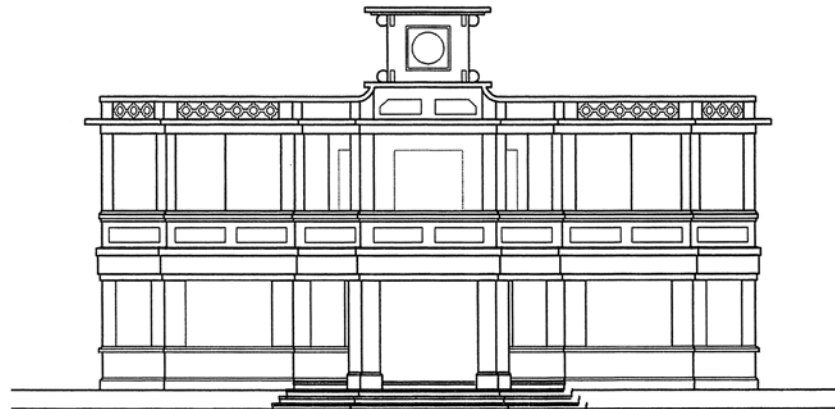
There is room to accommodate them, here perhaps more than anywhere else, but such ventures must go with the grain of the Park. It is a pity that a community centre, built close to the pitch and putt course, and undoubtedly serving a real need, should be so visually intrusive. New buildings need not offend, perhaps renovation of the existing structures will bring with it a new realisation of the character of the Park. It seems plain that Eaton Park was the prestige project of Sandys-Winsch, over seventy years ago. How appropriate it will be if fine renovation, coupled with continued relevance, sees Eaton Park leading the way, as a great urban park, into a new era. The aim must be to serve the whole community, athletic endeavour and John Callis' "venerable citizens" taking their ease.

*drawing below*

Front elevation, model  
yacht pavilion, Eaton Park



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# · WATERLOO PARK ·

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Horticultural excellence,  
the long herbaceous  
border at Waterloo Park,  
1952

*Courtesy of the  
Eastern Daily Press*

In its modern reconstructed form, Waterloo Park may be seen as a smaller, more intimate, partner to Eaton Park, set to the north of the City. It still had room for bowls and tennis as well as a bandstand. In the glory of its gardens, it outshone Eaton and a noted feature was the long herbaceous border.

As at Eaton, the Park's existence is due to the foresight of the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society. Until about 1820, the population of the City of Norwich, then about 50,000 people and still constituting one of the larger English provincial cities, was mostly confined within the bounds of the medieval City wall. Overcrowding with all its accompanying evils brought about strong calls for development into the green areas between the settlement and the City boundary. To the south appeared new suburban areas very close to the medieval City: the 'New City' near to Chapelfield and the 'Peafields' of Southwell Road and Trafalgar Street. To the north of the City, development outside the wall was more sporadic with builders establishing small residential pockets, one of which was the group of cottages known as Philadelphia Lane facing St. Clement's windmill. Although the features have changed, these are still names which resonate in the north of the City to this day. Much of the land remained in agricultural use. Magdalen Road was the highway, in Geoffrey Goreham's words:

"....of hedgerows and rough farm gates opening into fields...."

Angel Road served as a short cut to the village of Catton for those leaving the Market Place by way of Pitt Street. By the late nineteenth century, development was spreading out along the roads and fields from the line of the City Wall into land owned by the Trust of the Great Hospital. As it became clear that the area was to be thickly populated, it was again the urging and persuasion of the Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society that was so important to the developing City. The suggestion of

the Society that a 'lung' would soon be needed led to negotiations between the Corporation of the City and the Trustees of the Great Hospital and in 1899, eleven acres of land were leased to the City.

There was nothing elaborate about the first park which came into being, named Catton Recreation Ground and later Waterloo Park. It did provide a breathing space and a place of recreation for the people of the area, and it was opposite the Park in Wild Road, that the first Corporation-built houses were later to appear, intended to relieve the poor condition of housing in the area, particularly in Philadelphia Lane. In 1904, the Mayor of Norwich, accompanied by the Sheriff of Norwich, the High Sheriff of Norfolk and the City Engineer, formally opened the Park. It served its early purpose well and was brightened in those early days by some gardens created by enthusiastic school-children from the nearby Angel Road School.

Following the Great War, when those returning from the battlefields were seeking better conditions for themselves and their families, the provision of parks and playgrounds became a matter of priority for the Corporation. Fourteen children's playgrounds were built and a fine one was intended for Waterloo Park. In the late 1920's it was decided to completely remake the Park, to plans prepared by the Parks Superintendent, Captain Sandys-Winsch. From this came the splendid park which was to give such pleasure to thousands of Norwich people, and others, over the years. As at Eaton Park, the work was carried out by men from the ranks of the unemployed. The work cost £37,000 and at its completion in 1933, the Park was re-opened by the Lord Mayor (Mr. H.N. Holmes). It is reported that hundreds of children were waiting at the gates of the Park, eager to enjoy the delights of the new playground. Enlarged to eighteen acres, it was a particularly happy blend of the decorative and the recreational, gardens of real distinction with the happy sounds of the games players filtering through.

After the second World War, Norwich began to struggle to maintain its collection of fine parks. Although many people, including the writer, look back to the days of

"Walks raised on rubble stone plinths" supporting wooden pergolas from which the pavilion can be seen, Waterloo Park 1930s

*Norwich Green Spaces*





The park matures, walking  
under the pergolas,  
Waterloo Park 1956

*Courtesy of the  
Eastern Daily Press*



Norwich's complete independence with some longing, it must be admitted it was a difficult period for the City Council as it tried to keep its general rate within reasonable bounds. Waterloo Park provided a good illustration of those difficulties. The local newspaper archives possess photographs and press comments for these years. The great feature and pride of the Park gardens, the herbaceous border, was illustrated with the comment that for all its glory it was costly to maintain. There was undoubted concern for the future. In 1962 the City Council spent one thousand pounds on repairs to the Park's pavilion and the press reported that,

“A chorus of committeemen declaimed, ‘It can't go on!’”.

The press also remarked that the pavilion had never really recovered from its use as a temporary mortuary during the air raids of the War. The late Mr. Donald Martin, a former sergeant of the Norwich City Police, has told of the first aid raid on the City, on a sunny afternoon in July, 1940. This caused significant loss of life at Boulton and Paul's factory and to staff leaving Carrow Works, horribly caught by the bombs as they thronged along Carrow Hill. The dead were taken, with a police escort, to Waterloo Park and, as the vehicles entered the Park, the tennis courts were full of people enjoying themselves quite unaware of the true horror of the events on the other side of the City.

It is not difficult to see the pattern of decline within the parks in the post-war years. What started as no more than a search for economies accelerated into something more damaging as social needs and attitudes changed. Along with Eaton, Waterloo Park and other public spaces in the City saw really destructive vandalism as bowls' pavilions were lost to the arsonist. The public, with its disregard for regulation and its capacity for 'desire paths' began to damage much that had formally been the citizens' pride. As elsewhere, much deterioration was unforced as buildings started to show their age and rose beds lost their beauty as they became 'rose sick'.

In spite of the post-war press comment about the pavilion, it is included in the group of significant structures that Waterloo Park possesses, all ascribed to 'A. Sandys-Winsch', and all listed Grade Two. The wrought iron gates with red brick piers are included in the listing for group value, but the other listed structures are all concerned with the central area of the park. As in the other parks, the material is reconstituted stone, but in Waterloo Park, the quality is so good that the observer may well mistake it for real stone. The largest of the structures is the central Pavilion. The listing description is,

"Park pavilion, 1929-33. Concrete with flat roofs. Classical style. 2-storey central block has single storey long wings with colonnades to front and ends. Central block is a 5-window range of round-arched windows with long balcony in front over shuttered windows and central doorway. Small central feature which rises above flat roof has clock face. Similar windows on either end. Wings have colonnades supported on square piers and balustrades to flat roofs".

It seems likely that Sandys-Winsch's original intention for this building was to give it a glazed roof and create a 'palm court'. This was not proceeded with, either on grounds of cost or because he just changed his mind. A pleasant theory is that the 'small central feature' of the description was not at first meant for a clock, but a sculpture with the heads of three City 'worthies' of the day. Perhaps it is not too late for the original idea to be revived – with 'worthies' of today!

The central area of the Park is delightfully set off by two long pergolas which border the north and south side of the main lawn. The listing describes them as,

".....walks raised on high rubblestone plinths from which square piers with simplified capitals rise to support wooden pergola frames. Steps descend to the lawn in the middle and at both eastern ends further flights descend to the long border and link

with a retaining wall which, on the centre axis of the Bandstand and Pavilion, has two flights of curved steps....”.

There is a story that Sandys-Winsch rather disowned the Bandstand in Waterloo Park and had superior plans of his own which were never implemented because of time constraints before the official opening of the Park. True or not, the listing description holds him responsible! A square structure, it is of stone and concrete with a plain-tile pyramidal roof and entablature supported at each corner by a single pier. The classical bandstand is an important feature in the general focus of the Park and it will be enhanced by the restored water feature which accompanies it.

There will be considerable upgrading of the pavilion but it will continue to be used as a multi-purpose space, and there is a play-group already using the building. Plans for an open-air stage combined with a revitalised pavilion and bandstand, should make for good community facilities, and already events are being held in the Park, which in terms of numbers involved, recall former days.

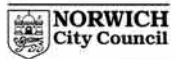
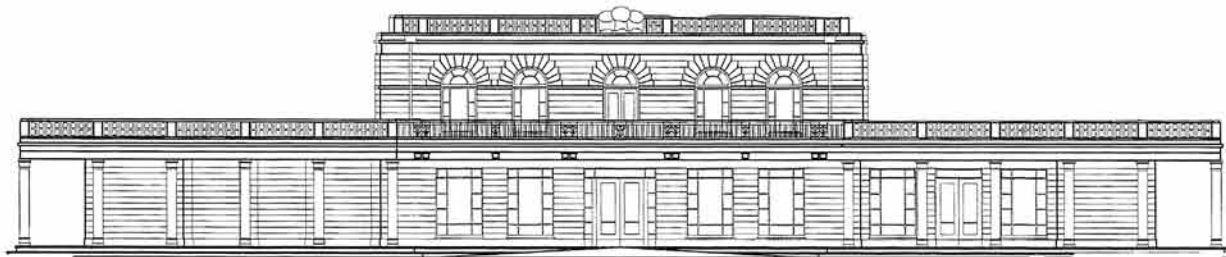
The structures are important but it is good that restoration will also concentrate on the horticultural excellence of the Park, for which it has always been noted. The long herbaceous border is particularly impressive and deserves the standard of care that Sandys-Winsch originally envisaged. The tree-lined avenue from the main gates remains welcoming, and there are good greens for the bowls players. Some of the former tennis courts have been removed as demand declined, and there is therefore more open grass space available for general use and enjoyment. With its restoration, Waterloo Park will still be an urban park of which the City can be proud, and to which its citizens should repair in realisation of the beauty which lies close to home.



Games were always an important part of the parks' life, bowls at Waterloo Park, 1983

*Courtesy of the Eastern Daily Press*

Proposed elevation east, pavilion Waterloo Park



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## · HEIGHAM AND WENSUM PARKS ·

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With Eaton and Waterloo, these two smaller but delightful parks were the result of early foresight, which paved the way for a later refounding as modern urban parks for a developing City. Indeed Heigham Park has the distinction of being the first modern park to be opened (in 1924) in the City. Geoffrey Goreham has written of the Victorian School Board opening elementary schools in Norwich during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century, and says it was very difficult for the Board to be other than institutionally minded:

“....generally functional in design, Gothic-styled and usually gloomy and unattractive with small windows, an asphalt playground and imposing railings.”

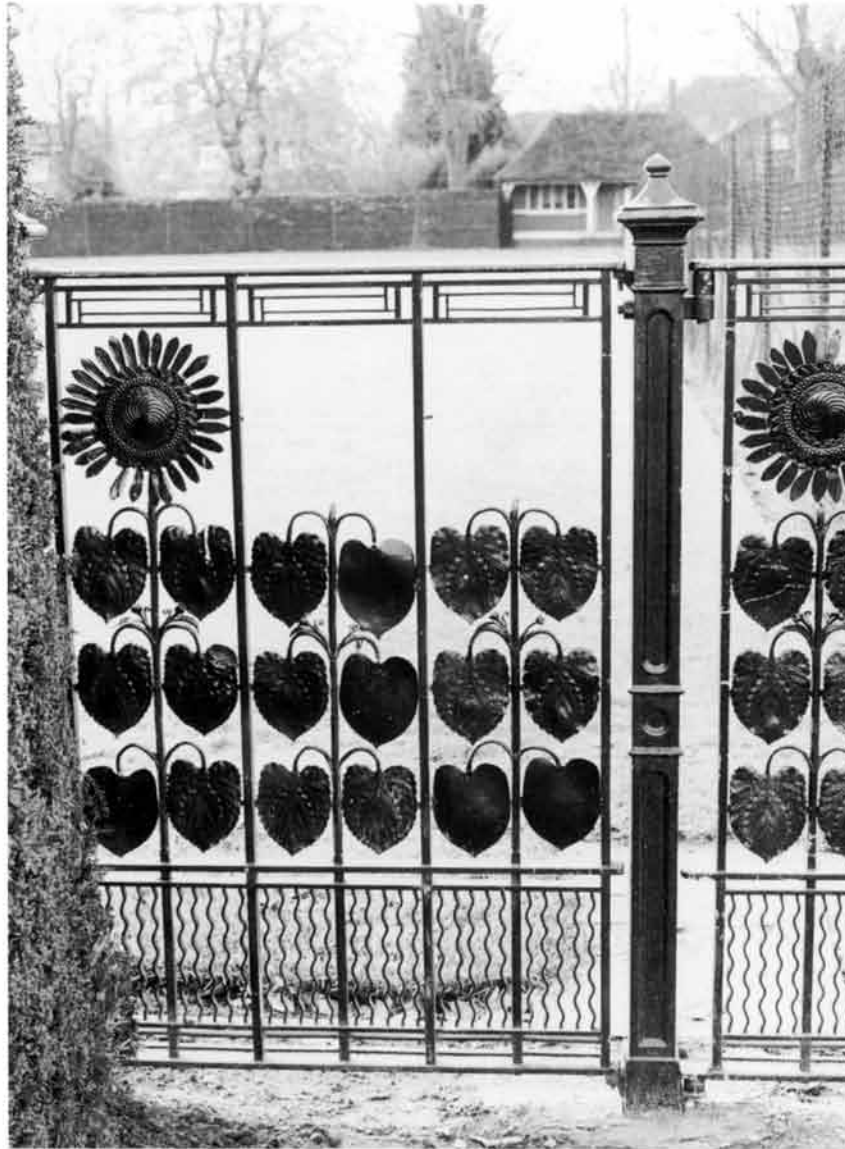
The railings at least showed civic pride and as for the rest, the little beggars didn't go to school to enjoy themselves. What the schools in almost every case lacked was the semblance of a playing field. Only the private schools had such facilities. Again it was the estimable Norwich Playing Fields and Open Spaces Society which saw the need and sought to purchase land in South Heigham as a playing field for the Crooks Place and Avenue Road Schools. The choice of the site, now Heigham Park, was the idea of the Reverend John Callis, the forward thinking and public spirited Rector of Holy Trinity who had entertained such hopes for Eaton Park. Together with the Headmasters of the two schools, Mr. Callis called a meeting of parents to consider ways of raising money to purchase the land. The Society was in every way encouraging and on the 24th November, 1909, the Mayor – this year raised to the dignity of Lord Mayor by Edward VII on his visit to the City – Dr. E.E. Blyth, unlocked the gates of the playing field watched by the pupils of the two schools.

For twelve years, the site served its purpose as a playing field but, during the 1920's development started in and around Colman Road and its area. Colman Road itself was extended as far as Earlham Road. What had been farm land west of

Recreation Road and Glebe Road became decidedly urban in character. The Avenues came into being as a junction road between Avenue Road and Blue Bell Road. This road separated the site from the CEYMS playing field on Recreation Road. Coupled with new municipal housing and schools at last equipped for the recreational needs of their pupils, this new area structure made the City Council think again about the site and what it could provide for the new residential community coming into being between the older housing limits and Colman Road.

In 1924 Heigham Park was opened as six acres of gardens, tennis courts, bowling greens, rock garden, and space for casual, unorganised games. What it lacked in size, Heigham Park more than compensated in charm. A truly delightful small park of peace and beauty, it also possessed quality in its gardens and in the standard of its tennis courts. The courts were to gain a distinguished entrance. A feature of Chapelfield Gardens, still fondly remembered by many, was the great cast iron pavilion, made in Norwich by Barnard, Bishop and Barnard for the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876 and later exhibited in Paris. Chapelfield Gardens gained it after Norwich Corporation purchased it in 1880 for £500, a shrewd buy as its original cost had been £2000. This remarkable structure, in the form of a pagoda, has been referred to by both George Plunkett in his *Rambles in Old Norwich* and Frank Meeres in his recent *History of Norwich*. It was certainly worthy of note, highly ornamented, with the brackets supporting the upper floor and roof bearing designs of flowers and birds. There was a spiral staircase and a wrought iron railing of rows of sunflowers. The pagoda was taken down in 1949 and it was the railing, bearing the sunflowers, which was kept and set up as the entrance gates to the tennis Courts in Heigham Park. After damage, the gates were removed and are in store awaiting restoration. It would be pleasant indeed, if something manufactured in Norwich, which has graced Philadelphia and Paris, could again be on public view in our own City.





Part of a structure that had graced Philadelphia and Paris once provided the gates to the tennis courts at Heigham Park – the sunflowers from the Chapelfield pagoda

*Michael Brandon-Jones*

The most intimate of the  
four parks providing  
relaxation for all ages,  
Heigham Park 1956

*Courtesy of the  
Eastern Daily Press*



Heigham Park was the first Norwich 'modern' Park and it remains the most intimate. The essential unity of the 'Sandys-Winsch' parks is evident here as elsewhere, Heigham Park has its herbaceous border and had its circular rose garden with a fountain as its centrepiece. It is a well-loved park and regular users speak of the quality and dedication of its gardeners. Not all the work of restoration has been as appreciated as it should have been. Sometimes the modern user has become fond of the park as it has become rather than the park as originally designed. Steering a path between restoration of parks of national importance because of their planning and characteristics, and contemporary desires, is not always easy. The rock garden at Heigham Park is a case in point. Restored and fenced off to mature, it will need time to convince of its importance to the Park, but the initiative of restoration deserves to be applauded. The bowling green, close to the tennis courts, is an attractive and essential feature of the Park, and an area for play, usually of informal football, is certainly well used.

This is the one park of the four which does not possess the trademark Sandys-Winsch structure of classical style, built of reconstituted stone. His presence is rather in the clever use of the six acres, and certainly in the rose garden area. It is certainly right that at Heigham, restoration is to centre on this garden and its water feature. There is less room in this Park, than in the others, for additional, contemporary uses, although a maze is planned in the rose garden area. This lack of opportunity should not concern us, Heigham Park will succeed best by remaining what it has always been, a place of charm and quiet beauty.

Like its larger neighbour, Waterloo Park, Wensum Park had its origins in the City Council's awareness of the needs of an expanding City, early in this century. The Corporation bought the site for £1650 in 1907, intending to build a swimming pool. This was built, together with children's bathing pool, a wading pool, and a shelter. Some of this work at least was carried out, using unemployed labour, during the winter of 1908-1909. It is surprising that, having got thus far, work ceased in 1910 and the site became very untidy, used indeed by the City Engineer's Department as a storage ground and by the general public as a rubbish tip. It would appear that the site held just about everything, a minute of the General Purposes Committee of 28th May, 1920 spoke of 'Government Stores' being present and the Town Clerk was instructed to press for their removal. There was a predictable public clamour for the whole thing to be tidied up. The opportunity came at the end of 1921, when it was decided to develop Wensum Park at a cost of £10598, defrayed by a Government grant of £4464.

As in other places, the development provided employment for workless men in the City, an average of 25 men were used over a period of 122 weeks. The Park was planned by Captain Sandys-Winsch, the Council having decided that a decorative park was more suitable for the site than playing fields, although a children's playground was included.

Although the distinctive 'Sandys-Winsch' style is plainly discernible at Wensum Park, it is the most natural of the four parks. This comes largely from the river, it is the only one of the four parks to adjoin either of the two Norwich rivers and this fact gives the Park its character. The site slopes from the formalities of the main entrance, from whence fine views across the river can be gained, down to the dyke which running from the river and parallel to it was the site of the water garden, Sandys-Winsch at his most imaginative. At the City end of the Park, the slope is to the river itself, or more precisely, to the former paddling pool, which has been commandeered by the numerous ducks. Nevertheless the Park does possess another paddling pool which is sited over the original rose garden. This is well used in the summer months.

The paddling pool, later surrendered to the ducks, Wensum Park 1920s

*Courtesy of Basil Gowen*





Norwich begins its response to severe unemployment, the entrance and pavilion under construction, Wensum Park in the 1920s

*Norwich Green Spaces*

The main gates of the Park, on Drayton Road, together with viewing terrace, and attached steps and pergola, are all listed Grade Two. The listing description is,

“Park gates, viewing terrace, steps and pergola. 1921-5. By A. Sandys-Winsch. Stone, wrought-iron and wood. Classical style. A pair of ashlar gatepiers with obelisk tops have wrought-iron gates. Attached to these is a balustraded viewing terrace from which descend 2 flights of steps to a lower level where there are an open pavilion and pergola supported on Tuscan columns with balustrading between. Wooden pergola frames. Central semicircular steps lead down to the park”.

These structures are being restored. Other emphasis within the Park is to restore as a ‘garden park’, with water features, a water garden and horticultural excellence. This last is to be welcomed as quite a lot has been lost over the years, including that Sandys-Winsch standard, the herbaceous border. New planting is intended to re-establish the original design intention. A large central bed in the formal part of the Park is being laid out as a labyrinth which should provide an attractive feature.

Another entrance to the Park, close to the former Shoe Factory on Drayton Road, gives access near to the dyke’s junction with the river. Here the feel is very naturalistic, emphasised by a City Council Board giving details of the wildlife frequenting the Park. The dyke appears stagnant although the ducks appear quite happy with it. The need here is to re-vitalise the water garden, of which only remnants remain, and it would be advantageous if the missing bridge could be reinstated.

This is a park where community involvement would be especially beneficial as there is much to be built upon. The wildlife features in a park so close to the old City are most interesting and can be both entertaining and educational. Access within the park needs to be improved and there are plans for a new footpath, which will be true to the original design, in providing a circular route.



Captain Sandys-Winsch at his most imaginative, the water garden parallel to the river at Wensum Park 1964

*Courtesy of the  
Eastern Daily Press*



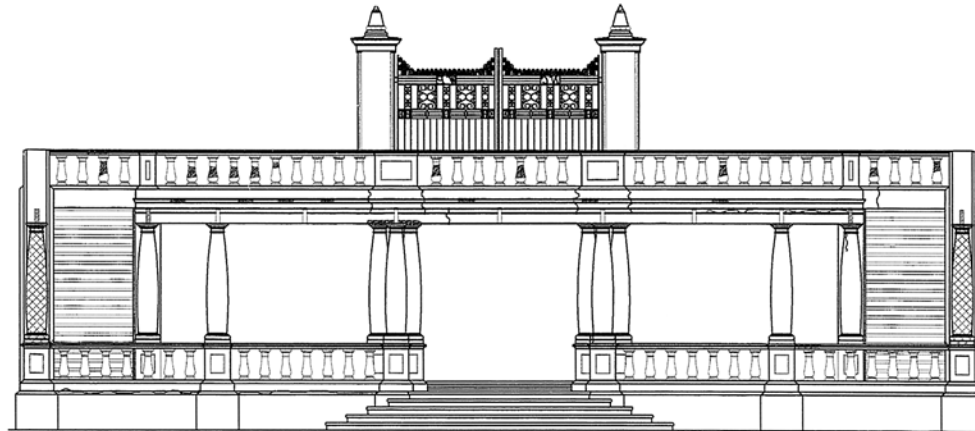
*drawing below*

Front elevation, entrance  
and pavilion, Wensum  
Park



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Wensum Park, although quite close to Waterloo Park, is quite different from it and has its own excellences. Indeed it is different from and complementary to the other three parks. It is a Park to be treasured, and its restoration will be of value both to its immediate vicinity and the City as a whole.



Eaton Park  
August Bank Holiday 1941  
Due to petrol rationing  
during the War, people  
were encouraged to take a  
holiday at home

*George Swain*



# LESSONS FROM THE PAST - HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

The Norwich Parks, in common with urban parks throughout the land, were the product of local government, operating in a quite different way to that demanded by central government in the final years of the twentieth century. Parks were not built to be 'cost-effective', indeed their management was not likely to bring great revenue to the local authorities owning them. Rather they owe their genesis to a simpler concept: that of service to the public. Once created, the parks were maintained by devoted and *constant* attention, the use of the hoe before weeds appeared, the attention to lawns and edging, the seasonal planting to achieve results of the highest standard using plants reared in the Authority's own nurseries and greenhouses. As already shown, men gave all of their working lives to a magnificent expression of civic pride.

Such a system was ill-equipped to deal with the radical local government changes of the 1970s and 1980s. As financial support from central government became a larger proportion of total local government income, parks and gardens suffered through under-funding as their maintenance was not a statutory responsibility. Expenditure on parks and gardens was not taken into account in determining the Government's Standard Spending Assessment (SSA). If a City such as Norwich wanted the luxury of parks and gardens, then it had to pay for them from its own resources. The age of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) had also dawned, and this of necessity had its effect on the skilled and constant attention to the parks' maintenance which they had enjoyed for so long. Even if local authority staff won the contract, they were, as Hazel Conway and David Lambert have pointed out in *Public Prospects: Historic Urban Parks Under Threat*, "...forced to mimic contracting practice and put profit, in the form of a surplus in the discrete accounts, before service". What was lost above all was the tender care that permanent horticultural staff can bring to an individual park.

A case can be made that the countryside legislation of 1970, which included the creation of the Countryside Commission, had put the urban park at a decided disadvantage. Country parks, countryside rangers, and amenity tree-planting were all aided by grants from Government sources. Not surprisingly, there has been a

concentration on the provision of such facilities which are economical to maintain and popular with the car-owning population. The ideal of the urban park, such as those in Norwich dealt with here, well-maintained, served by good public transport, and readily available to those without cars, the elderly and children, is much more difficult to attain.

As the new millennium opens, there are some reasons for optimism as far as the urban public parks are concerned. In spite of all the pressures, particularly an ever present, aggressive commercial thrust, there does seem to be a greater awareness of the threat to a finite countryside and of the qualities of our cities and towns. We may yet see the urban renaissance which can do so much to save the face of England, and which is the great hope of so many people. Through this, the Norwich parks may emerge not only restored but valued anew as a sustainable public resource.

Looking to the specific needs of these four Norwich parks, the City can build upon:

- the Heritage Lottery grant itself, which marks by national recognition the quality of the parks,
- a firm 'bedding' of the parks within the community which surrounds them,
- increasing co-operation between the City Council and the police to prevent spoilation by vandalism,
- some adaptation of the parks to provide for contemporary needs without prejudicing their essential character.

That character is very important. George Ishmael, Landscape Group Leader of Norwich City Council, is right to describe the Norwich parks, not only the four which are the subject of the grant but also Sloughbottom Park, Mile Cross Gardens and Woodrow Pilling Park, as having great stylistic unity. These parks not only represent the achievement of a gifted Chief Officer of the Corporation but the confidence and enterprise of the authority itself. The years between the two World Wars were a time

when municipal government in Norwich was at a peak. Norwich had entered the twentieth century as by far the largest place in East Anglia, but with some dreadful slums. After the first World War, unemployment added to the great problems confronting the Corporation, but its response was admirable. At the same time as Sandys-Winsch was planning the City's modern parks, Professor Adshead of Liverpool was overseeing the planning of a modern housing estate of quality at Mile Cross. Later in the 1920s, the Corporation began to consider the need for new municipal offices, which brought into being the City Hall in the next decade. Norwich was a different place at the start of the second World War to that at the end of the first.

The new task confronting the City Council is to use and maintain these fine assets, the Parks, that the inter-war years have given us. It would be both pointless and sad if the restored parks are again to be sacrificed to low interest and the vandal. The dangers are here, work of restoration at Wensum Park has already been daubed with graffiti. There are plans for floodlighting of avenues and structures within the parks, which will help. CCTV is being considered. The Police will be able to help to some degree. Something more will almost certainly be needed. It may well be as necessary to employ someone to protect the park as it is to tend the flower beds. If the local communities are to be involved with the parks, then perhaps they can help to protect the parks. Homewatch and Schoolwatch exist, it may be that 'Parkwatch' is a logical step. No one should doubt the damage that can be caused to a park which is insufficiently supervised. A delightful part of the Adshead scheme for Mile Cross was Mile Cross Gardens, a termination for the central spine of the Estate, Suckling Avenue, as it met Aylsham Road. This is another Sandys-Winsch park, unfortunately not included in the Heritage Lottery application; it had pavilions, pergolas, good gardens and bowling greens, all reduced by uncaring use to a sad reminder of its former excellence. To its credit, the Mile Cross community wants to put things right, and it is to be hoped it will be helped to do so.

One good way of protecting the four parks will be to restore their popularity with

*drawing below*

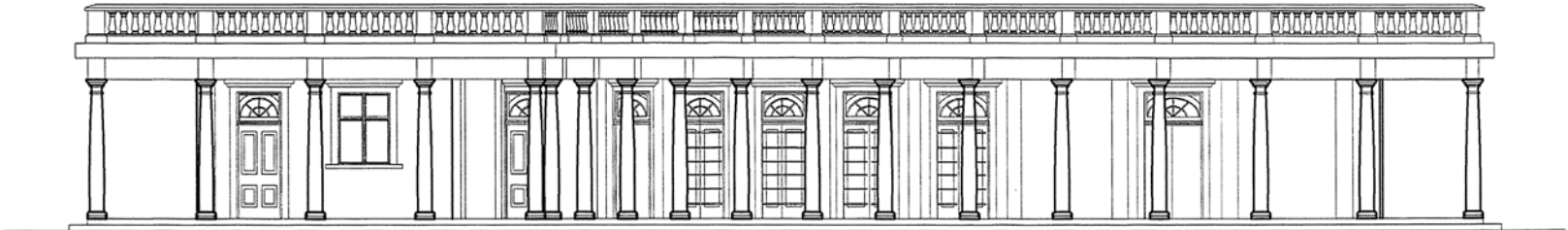
Existing elevation of  
inner southern quadrant,  
Eaton Park



Architectural Services

the public they are intended to serve. Meeting contemporary needs – often those of a generation which did not know the parks in their prime – will help with this, concerts, new features, new ideas. Another way is to return to the old horticultural excellence, gardening is more popular than ever, and the parks can be places of great prestige of which the Norwich community will be proud. The plans for using the Lottery money, divided between the structures and the gardens, encourage the view that this will be achieved.

The parks were originally conceived to bring enjoyment, through recreational pursuits and the beauty of the surroundings, to people who sometimes lived in difficult conditions. Today the parks are no less important in providing, close to home, a refuge from the sheer stress of modern living. It is good that the courage and vision of seventy years ago will, through this restoration, give pleasure to new generations of Norwich citizens in the years to come.



## Further Reading

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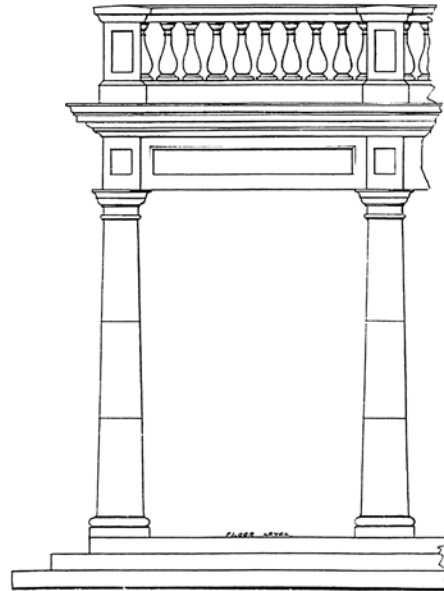
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**A quotation from Thomas Fuller –  
on the City of Norwich.**

*“Norwich is (as you please) either a City in an Orchard,  
or an Orchard in a City,  
so equally are Houses and Trees blended in it.”*



Part of the original plan  
for Eaton Park 1925





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*photo: Barbara Pollard*

A major civic society. **The Norwich Society** was founded in 1923, in response to fears that the quest for social improvement – much needed – would put the historic fabric of the City at risk. Throughout its life it has fought for the highest standards in architecture and town planning and has sought to protect both the natural and built environment. The Society was a partner with the City Council in founding the Norwich Preservation Trust, one of the most successful building preservation trusts in the country, which has done much to maintain the historic buildings of the City. Today the Society remains involved in many aspects of the City's life, as interested in renewal as it is in preservation, and still working for 'a fairer City'.



Boy fishing  
Wensum Park



This Norwich Society publication is intended as a useful accompaniment to the restoration of four Norwich Parks, made possible by a grant from Heritage Lottery Fund. At the time of publication work on the pavilion in Wensum Park and the bandstand at Waterloo Park has been completed. All the other structures are in the course of restoration.

*Front cover:*

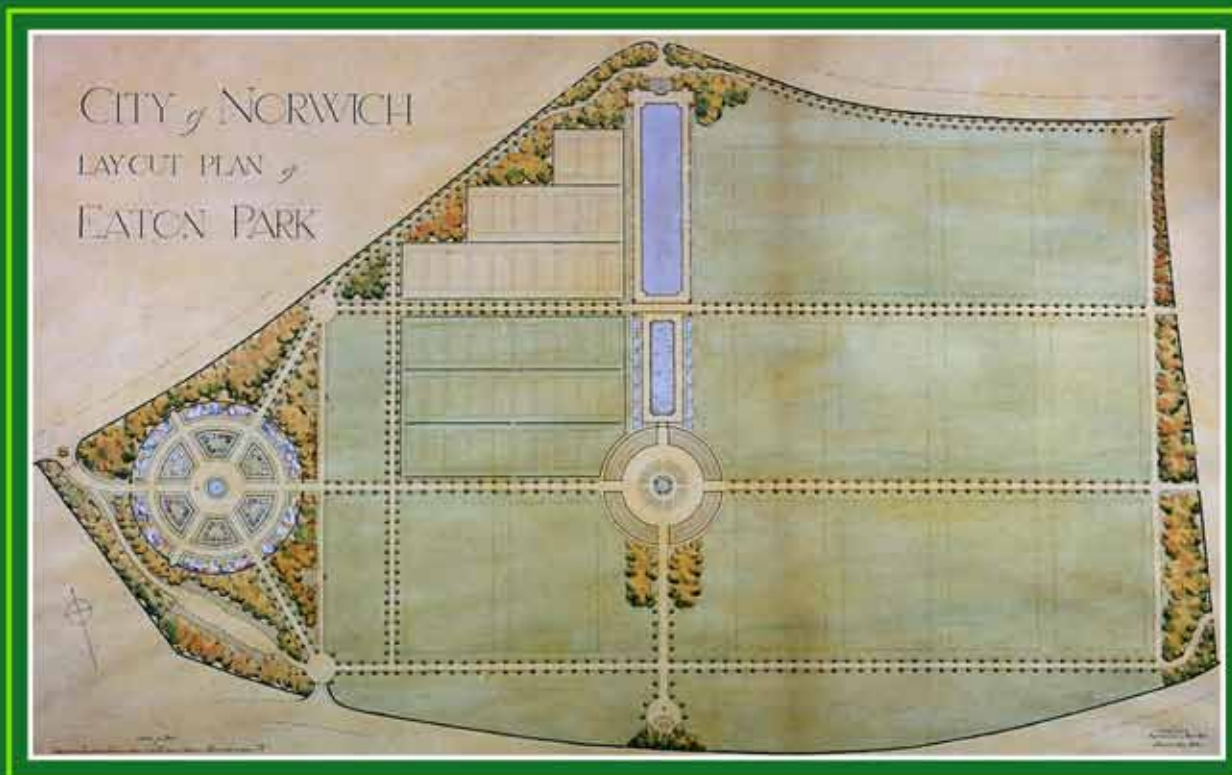
Model yachts  
in Eaton Park

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The original  
Sandys-Winsch  
plan of  
Eaton Park, 1928



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