

**Iron Park Furniture in
Public Parks 1860-1914:
Providing for the People?**

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Garden and Landscape History

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Chapter One Introduction

The aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between iron park furniture, public parks and their users by considering three questions.

What furniture was provided and how did it vary?

Who commissioned it, with what intent?

Who produced park furniture and how were users involved?

1860-1914 was the period of major public park development and the simultaneous flourishing of the British iron industry.¹

Background and Context

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the UK population was increasing rapidly. By 1851 it was equally divided between town and country, but by 1911, 80.1% was urban.² This expansion resulted in poor living conditions and reduced access to open green spaces for a major part of the working population.³

As Diestelkamp states, 'Iron was *the* material of the nineteenth century'.⁴ It was essential for almost every industry and by the 1860s Britain was the pre-eminent iron producer in Europe and exported throughout the world. The development of cast iron facilitated the mass production of a wide range of decorative iron work including park furniture, with some of the largest foundries located in Glasgow, Falkirk and Shropshire.⁵ The economic and social consequences of this industrial development were felt throughout the British

¹ Hazel Conway, *Public Parks*, (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications Ltd, 1996), pp. 63-64; Barrie Trinder, *Britain's Industrial Revolution*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing Ltd, 2013) p. 349.

² Hazel Conway, *People's Parks: The Design and Development of Victorian Parks in Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) p. 20.

³ Conway, *Public Parks*, p. 5.

⁴ Edward Diestelkamp, 'The Use of Iron', in *The Regeneration of Public Parks*, ed. by Jan Woudstra and Ken Fieldhouse, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 59-77 (p. 59).

⁵ Georg Himmelheber, *Cast-iron Furniture*, (London: Philip Wilson Publishers Ltd, 1996), p. 21; Barrie Trinder, *Britain's Industrial Revolution*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing Ltd, 2013) p. 291.

Isles and had a strong impact across the political and social spectra. The Trade Union Movement gathered momentum and the Chartist riots took place.⁶ Utilitarians supported social organization adjusted to maximise human happiness.⁷ Many expressed concerns over the poor living conditions of a large section of the working population, others were more worried about threats to security, potential revolution and the preservation of property rights.⁸

In 1840 the Select Committee on the Health in Towns identified the dual need of 'improvement for the sake of the poor' and 'the safety and security of the rich'⁹ However, the General Enclosure Act of 1845, which was ostensibly to protect open spaces near towns, in practice led to less land being set aside for recreation.¹⁰ Open areas for 'Public Walks' were promoted as a means of providing physical, social and health benefits.¹¹

The belief in controlled, ordered and improving activities, termed 'Rational' recreation, was supported by social reformers, including the Temperance Movement, which saw it as a means of diverting the working man from the public house.¹² According to Conway rational recreation could be interpreted as a 'form of social control through the imposition of middle-class cultural values' or, a 'means of offering a wider cultural experience to the working class.' Although, if the latter was the result of middle-class patronage, it was simply a more subtle form of social control.¹³ What exactly it meant in practical terms was contested.¹⁴

⁶ G.M. Young, *Portrait of an Age, Victorian England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 31-33.

⁷ David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law in 19th Century Britain*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 119.

⁸ Hilary, A. Taylor, 'Urban Public Parks, 1840-1900: Design and Meaning', *Garden History*, 23:2 (1995) pp. 201-21 (p. 202).

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 56.

¹¹ Conway, *Public Parks*, p. 7.

¹² Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c. 1780-c. 1880*, (London: Croom Helm, 1980) p. 90; Conway, *Public Parks* p. 41.

¹³ Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 30.

¹⁴ Nick Pearcey, 'A brief history of parks before 1870', <https://www.playingpasts.co.uk/articles/the-great-outdoors/a-brief-history-of-british-public-parks-before-1870/> [accessed 19/6/22].

After a slow beginning, the Public Park Movement gradually gained momentum facilitated by the changing economic, social and legislative framework.¹⁵ The 1859 Recreation Grounds Act aimed to encourage the donation of money or land for recreation, and with the Public Improvements Act of 1860 local authorities were granted the legal right to levy rates to maintain these open spaces.¹⁶ In the 1860s and 1870s donations of land for parks by individual benefactors and communities increased. In the 1880s the number of small parks and recreation grounds proliferated in inner cities.¹⁷ Glasgow's Lord Provost (mayor) made a speech in 1896 highlighting the need for these spaces saying,

‘while poorer people contribute their share of the rates they could not afford nurse-maids to take charge of young children in the parks and must be given the means of enjoyment elsewhere now children are not allowed to play in the streets.’¹⁸

Many parks were opened as part of the celebrations for Queen Victoria's golden (1887) and diamond jubilees (1897) and became a source of civic pride.¹⁹ The jubilees also provided important commercial opportunities for iron foundries as memorial park furniture was commissioned. In the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries provision for sport in public parks greatly increased.²⁰

Visitor numbers in parks peaked on Sundays, as this was the rest day for most people. However, for reforming evangelical movements, what was considered appropriate for a Sunday could impact on parks. Music in Glasgow parks had been permitted from 1845. Band performances, however, were forbidden on Sundays, as was any sporting activity. The grip of Sabbatarianism, the doctrine of Christians who believed that the sabbath

¹⁵ Frank Clark, 'Nineteenth-Century Public Parks from 1830', *Garden History*, 1:3 (1973) pp. 31-41 (p. 34).

¹⁶ Conway, *People's Parks* pp. 34 & 63.

¹⁷ Carole A. O'Reilly, *the Greening of the City*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2019) p. 142.

¹⁸ *Daily Record*, 6 August 1896, p. 9. col. 1.

¹⁹ David Lambert, *Jubilee-ation*, (Swindon: English Heritage, 2012). p. 4; Conway, *Public Parks*, p. 7.

²⁰ Conway, *Public Parks*, pp. 33 & 80.

(Sunday) should be a day of rest in line with the fourth commandment was particularly strong in Scotland.²¹

Gradually as time available for recreation increased it was of sufficient interest to generate articles in the local press but working hours could be a bone of contention. In 1901 the Shop Assistants Union in Hull complained that because of late working hours 'girls of 13 and 14 years never have a chance to hear any music' a columnist in the *Hull Daily Mail* campaigned for concerts to be moved to a Thursday, which was early closing day.²² Competition between the general public and the organized sports teams to take advantage of the few short hours 'when the labours of the day ended' had to be managed by the Park Superintendents.²³

Initially, a primary aim of parks was to provide for those living in overcrowded and poor housing. But it is difficult to find first-hand accounts of the experiences of those users. However, a Mrs Layton, looking back on her childhood in Bethnal Green in London in the early 1860s described how Victoria Park provided a respite. On washing day, large families kept the older children home from school so that they could look after the younger children. She and her sister looked after her younger siblings. They didn't own a pram, but a single pram could be hired for 1d an hour or 1½d for a double pram. So, several mothers would each pay a few pence and they would pack as many children as possible into the prams. Mrs Layton describes how happy they were spending the day in the park with a picnic of bread and treacle under the trees.²⁴ No doubt a drinking fountain would have provided welcome refreshment, and possibly a source of fun for the children, but they probably did not take advantage of the seating.

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sabbatarianism> [accessed 5/6/22] ; Irene Maver, 'Glasgow's Public Parks and the Community, 1850-1914: A Case Study in Scottish Civic Interventionism', *Urban History*, 25:3 (1998) pp. 323-347 (p. 341).

²² Mary Fowler, *The story of East Park, Hull*, (Cottingham: Highgate Publications (Beverley) Limited, 2002) p. 6.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Life as we have known it*, ed. by Margaret Llewelyn Davies (London: W. W. Norton & Company Ltd, 1931), pp. 4-5.



Figure 1. Crowded entrance to Victoria Park, 1893. <https://romanroadlondon.com/victoria-park-bathing-lakes-and-lido/> [accessed 12/3/22].

Literature Review

In 1822 J. C. Loudon (1743-1843) published his *Encyclopaedia of Gardening*, in which he classified the purposes of public parks as recreational, instructional or commercial. The former he identified as requiring ‘equestrian and pedestrian promenades’, the second included ‘botanic and experimental gardens’ and the third encompassed ‘public nurseries, market gardens, florist gardens, orchards, and herb gardens’.²⁵

Joseph Paxton (1803-1865) after Loudon’s death, became the leading influencer with numerous designs for English and Scottish parks, including two in Glasgow.²⁶ Kate Colquhoun has written a comprehensive biography of Paxton and describes how his principles of ‘separating vehicular and pedestrian routes, the inclusion of water, landscaping open meadow, juxtaposition of private and open space, wide views and winding paths’ underpinned all his future park designs.²⁷ She highlights that his first

²⁵ John Claudius Loudon, *Encyclopaedia of Gardening* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1835) Revised ed. p. 1206.

²⁶ Conway, *Public Parks*, pp. 15 & 20.

²⁷ Colquhoun, *A Thing in Disguise, The Visionary Life of Joseph Paxton*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2004) p. 118.

municipal commission for Princes Park in Liverpool included the principle of exclusive housing round the edge with the plots sold for profit.²⁸ The impact that this was to have on differing views of park use was not an issue pursued by Colquhoun but is considered in this research in relation to park furniture provision in Kelvingrove, Glasgow.

Even leading park designers could be subjected to rancorous criticisms in the horticultural press. Jan Woudstra described the attacks in 1847 by John Lindley in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* on the design by Joshua Major (1786-1866) for Queen's Park, Manchester (1846).²⁹ Robert Marnock (1800-1889), who supported Major, became associated with a school of gardening characterised by a focus on plants and trees ensuring harmony with the nature of the site.³⁰ The Paxton school, exemplified by the re-erected Crystal Palace at Sydenham, was criticised for being formal and grandiose even though he also used a more natural and informal style, for example in Birkenhead Park (1847).³¹ Design aesthetics were the subject of these opposing views rather than consideration of the users' experience.

Edward Kemp (1817-1891), who was for twenty years the superintendent of Birkenhead Park became an important park designer in his own right.³² Woudstra maintains that Kemp's book *How to Layout a Garden* (1858) became one of the most influential books on landscape gardening in the second half of the nineteenth century.³³ According to Katy Layton-Jones, Kemp appreciated that parks and gardens had mental, moral and health benefits.³⁴ The main components of his designs were, 'greensward, winding paths and carriageways, water and naturalistic groupings of trees'. He recognised the need to

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jan Woudstra, 'One of the Ablest Gardeners' *Garden History*, 46 Suppl.1: Edward Kemp (1817-91) Landscape Gardener: The Proceedings of a Symposium held at the Floral Pavilion. New Brighton, Wirral, October (2017) pp. 31-50 (p. 40).

³⁰ Jacques Carré, 'The Public Park' in *Victorian Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History*, ed. by Boris Ford, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp. 76-86 (p. 84).

³¹ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

³² Jan Woudstra, 'One of the Ablest Gardeners', pp. 33-41.

³³ Edward Kemp, *How to Layout a Garden*, (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1858); Woudstra, 'One of the Ablest Gardeners', p. 48.

³⁴ Katy Layton-Jones, 'How to layout a very large garden indeed: Edward Kemp's Liverpool Parks, their History and Legacy.' *Garden History*, 46 Suppl.1: Edward Kemp (1817-91) Landscape Gardener: The Proceedings of a Symposium held at the Floral Pavilion. New Brighton, Wirral, October (2017) pp. 72-82 (p. 73).

balance the requirements of different park users and demonstrated the flexibility and pragmatism essential for park designers and managers dealing with the practical challenges of wide public access to parks in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century.³⁵

Edouard André (1840-1911), the French garden designer, was the author of a comprehensive text *L'Art des Jardins* (1879) and had an important influence on public park design.³⁶ Conway describes how his principles involved the use of ellipses and arcs of circles to provide areas for different sports and other facilities and 'carefully interrelating these within a tight frame provided a solution to the problem of accommodating sports and playgrounds into parks'.³⁷

Designers such as Loudon, Paxton and Kemp applied the same principles to their work in parks as they applied to private estates and landscapes although public park design brought particular challenges, for example, the large number of people expected to use the walks and the incorporation of varied activities.

Duncan M'Lellan (1814-1897), with forty years' service in the Public Parks of Glasgow including thirty-eight years as Superintendent of Kelvingrove Park, wrote a number of articles for the *Glasgow Herald* which were then published in his book *Glasgow's Parks* in 1894.³⁸ He described the origins, development and existing condition of the parks and gave some insights into their use.

Hazel Conway's book, *People's Parks* remains almost the only comprehensive book on the genre of Victorian public parks. It focuses on the period up to 1885 covering origins, design and planting. She describes what she terms 'permitted pastimes' in parks and identifies that the voice of the user was rarely heard. She does not, however, explore the interrelationships between provision, park furniture and the user. Conway contended that in the 1860s the terms park and recreation ground were interchangeable as the

³⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

³⁶ Edouard André, *L'Art des Jardins*, (Paris: G. Masson, 1879).

³⁷ Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 103.

³⁸ Duncan M'Lellan, *Glasgow's Parks*, (Glasgow: John Smith & Son, 1894).

latter 'did not necessarily provide only playgrounds, gymnasia and sport.'³⁹ However, O'Reilly notes that the small parcels of land in deprived urban areas, called recreation grounds or 'pocket parks', were meant to provide 'basic recreational environments for deprived children' which was usually just a few swings and a seesaw.⁴⁰

Carole O'Reilly's book, *The Greening of the City*, covers the period from 1840 up to 1939 and examines public parks and leisure in terms of health, behaviour and culture. She concludes that the public park was a microcosm of civic life in the nineteenth and early twentieth century when the emphasis on passive activity kept the working class on the periphery and the needs of women were not considered.⁴¹ She points out that parks sometimes developed as locations for meetings, games and criminal behaviour which were unintended and concludes that parks were 'highly contested, divisive and often controversial spaces.'⁴² This is the theme of David Lambert's examination of behaviour in public parks in which he uses Catherine Bell's concept of ritual-like activities 'formalized, traditionalized, rule-governing and invariant patterns such as the promenade or civic ceremonies which park authorities were trying to engineer'.⁴³ He refers to the 'paradigm of ritual transgression', such as banned political meetings, which Bell describes as the 'social' work of ritual activities that provided for the maintenance of social bonds.

There have been several articles in *Garden History* on different aspects of public parks in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Frank Clark, the first President of the Garden History Society, summarised the genesis and development of public parks in a lecture in 1973 reported in *Garden History*.⁴⁴ In 1994, Harriet Jordan wrote a review of the development of the Public Park Movement from 1885-1914, highlighting the increasing emphasis on active recreation with horticulture and promenading taking more subsidiary roles.⁴⁵ Hilary Taylor wrote about the design and meaning of Urban Public Parks from

³⁹ Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 209.

⁴⁰ O'Reilly, *Greening the City*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2019), p. 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁴³ David Lambert, 'Rituals of Transgression in Public Parks in Britain, 1846 to the Present', in *Performance and Appropriation: Profane Rituals in Gardens and Landscapes*, *Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium Series in the History of Landscape Architecture*, 27, ed. by Michel Conan (Cambridge (Mass): Harvard University Press, 2007) pp. 195-210 (pp. 196 & 201).

⁴⁴ Clark, 'Nineteenth Century Public Parks' pp. 31-41.

⁴⁵ Harriet Jordan, 'Public Parks, 1885-1914', *Garden History*, 22:1 (1994) pp. 85-113.

1840-1900 arguing that understanding the original vision and changes over time can contribute to maintaining civic pride and community values.⁴⁶ Irene Maver's article in *Urban History* used the public parks in Glasgow as evidence of Scottish interventionism.⁴⁷ None of these publications reference the association between park furniture, public parks and users, the object of this research.

Published literature on types of park furniture has tended to relate to specific items such as bandstands, which Paul Rabbitts has studied extensively.⁴⁸ Malchow wrote about public drinking fountains with a focus on London and stone fountains.⁴⁹ Limited references to park seating appears in books about furniture in general, such as Aslin's *19th Century English Furniture* or books on garden ornaments, such as George Plumptre's, *Garden Ornament*.⁵⁰ Lisa White in 2014 wrote about seating in the context of conservation, largely focusing on eighteenth century gardens and parks. She highlights the importance of the mass manufacture of cast iron seating by the fact that one hundred and sixty-one different garden bench designs were registered from the middle of the nineteenth century.⁵¹ Her reference to the private clientele for iron seating indicates that the overall market for seating was wider than the public park. This research aimed to consider seating within the context of the overall provision of utilitarian park furniture.

Methodology

The research methods used were designed to investigate relationships between park furniture, public parks and users. Quantitative analysis of key data was followed by qualitative assessment of information from primary and secondary sources.

⁴⁶ Hilary Taylor, 'Urban Public Parks' pp. 201-21.

⁴⁷ Irene Maver, 'Glasgow's Public Parks and the Community, 1850-1914: A Case Study in Scottish Civic Interventionism', *Urban History*, 25:3 (1998) pp. 323-347.

⁴⁸ Paul Rabbitts, *British Bandstands*, (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2017) and *Bandstands of Britain*, (Brimcombe, Port Stroud: The History Press, 2014).

⁴⁹ Howard Malchow, 'Free Water: the Public Drinking Fountain Movement and Victorian London', *The London Journal* 4:2 (1978) pp. 181-203.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Aslin, *19th Century English Furniture*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1962); George Plumptre, *Garden Ornament*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1989).

⁵¹ Lisa White, 'Perished Perches: Historic Garden Furniture', in *Gardens & Landscapes in Historic Building Conservation*, ed. by, Marion Harney, (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2014) pp. 79-89 (p. 87).

Data on public parks is widely scattered, hence a database was compiled from a variety of sources. The database ran to 433 lines, hence an extract of the first 27 lines is shown in Figure 2 to illustrate the structure and content.

PARKS DATABASE																		
Location		Date Opened	Designer	Bandstand Date	Manufacturer	Model	Fountain	Drinking Fountain	Seats	Sport	Pavilion	Bowling	Statue	Aviary	Shelter	Convenience	Greenhouses	Gates
Aberdare	Aberdare Park			1910	Hill & Smith Ltd													
Aberdeen	Victoria Park/Glennie's Park	1871	J Robertson															
Aberdeen	Duthie Park	1883	William R McKelvie	1893	McDowell, Stevens & Co. Milton Ironworks		x											
Abergavenny	Bailey Park	1883		c. 1909														
Abertillery, Gwent	Abertillery Park, Monmouthshire			c.1910														
Abingdon	Albert Park	1862	Mr C Chapman of Dulwich										X					X
Accrington	Milnshaw Park	1880																
Accrington	Oak Hill Park	1892							X									
Accrington	Higher Antley Rec. Ground	1880																
Airdire, N Lanarkshire	Public Park	1907		1897	Walter Macfarlane & Co. Saracen Foundry													
Altrincham	Stamford park	1880	John Shaw and father															
Ashford, Kent	Victoria Park	1898		1901	Lion Foundry Co. Ltd													
Barnsley, S Yorks	Locke Park	1877	John Edward Errington (Barron)	1908	Lion Foundry Co. Ltd	23	X						X					
Barrhead, E Renfrewshire	The Cowan Park	1890s		1911														
Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria	Barrow Public Park	1908	Mawson	1911														
	Hanley Park	1891	Mawson															
Barry, Vale of Glamorgan	Victoria Park aka Romilly Park	1898-1911		1910	Hill & Smith Ltd													
Basingstoke, Hants	War Memorial Park	1921		1902														
Bath	Alexandra Park	1902							x			X						
Bath	Hedgemoad Park	1883-89		1889	George Smith & Co. Sun Foundry			X		X								
Bath	Henrietta Park	1897							X									
Bath	Royal Victoria Park	1830	Edward Davis, City Architect	1903	Walter Macfarlane & Co. Saracen Foundry				X									X
Bedford	Bedford Park	1888		1888														
Bedford	Russell Park																	
Bedford	Mill Meadows Recreation Ground	1890																
Bideford, Devon	Victoria Park	1912		1912														
Bingley, W. Yorks	Myrtle Park	1908		1913	Walter Macfarlane & Co. Saracen Foundry	279												

Figure 2. Extract from the Author's Parks database.

The initial source was the Gardens Trust web site which provided a list of local Gardens Trust online sites that were then explored individually.⁵² The difficulty with these sites is that they have no standard format and some of them do not contain any inventory or direct link to an inventory of sites. The second source consulted was the Parks&Gardens inventory which enabled a search by county.⁵³ The third source, often cited in the above inventories, was Historic England's List of Historic Parks and Gardens.⁵⁴ In depth investigation of the Glasgow case study area identified parks not listed elsewhere, hence detailed research of other centres could yield additional data in future. Paul Rabbitts'

⁵² <https://thegardenstrust.org/> [accessed 6/1/22 – 14/1/22].

⁵³ <https://www.parksandgardens.org/> [accessed 10/1/22 - 24/2/22].

⁵⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/> [accessed 6/1/22 – 24/2/22].

gazetteers of parks with bandstands and Conway's chronology of municipal and public parks between 1800 and 1885 provided additional information for the database.⁵⁵

Glasgow was selected as a case study area because of its importance in ornamental iron production and the number of local public parks, some by leading designers (Figure 3).

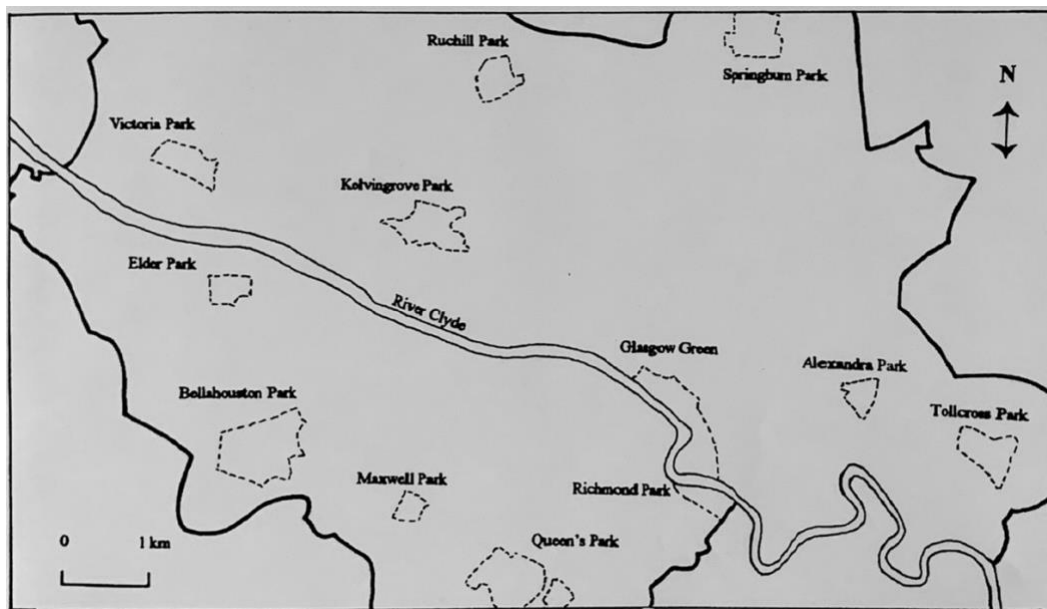


Figure 3. Map of Glasgow's larger municipal parks by 1914. Irene Maver, 'Glasgow's Public Parks and the Community, 1850-1914: a Case Study in Scottish Interventionism', *Urban History*, 25:3, 1998, p. 327.

The database highlighted Kirkintilloch and Falkirk (Figure 4) as equally important in terms of iron production, including park furniture and hence they were also selected as case study areas. Coalbrookdale in Ironbridge, Shropshire, (Figure 5) was chosen as a further case study area because it had a very important iron foundry particularly well known for its decorative ironwork, including seating.⁵⁶ The location of the important Quarry Park, in Shrewsbury, offered the possibility of examining links to a local public park. However, because all the foundries supplied a national market, some parks outside the case study areas were used as additional examples.

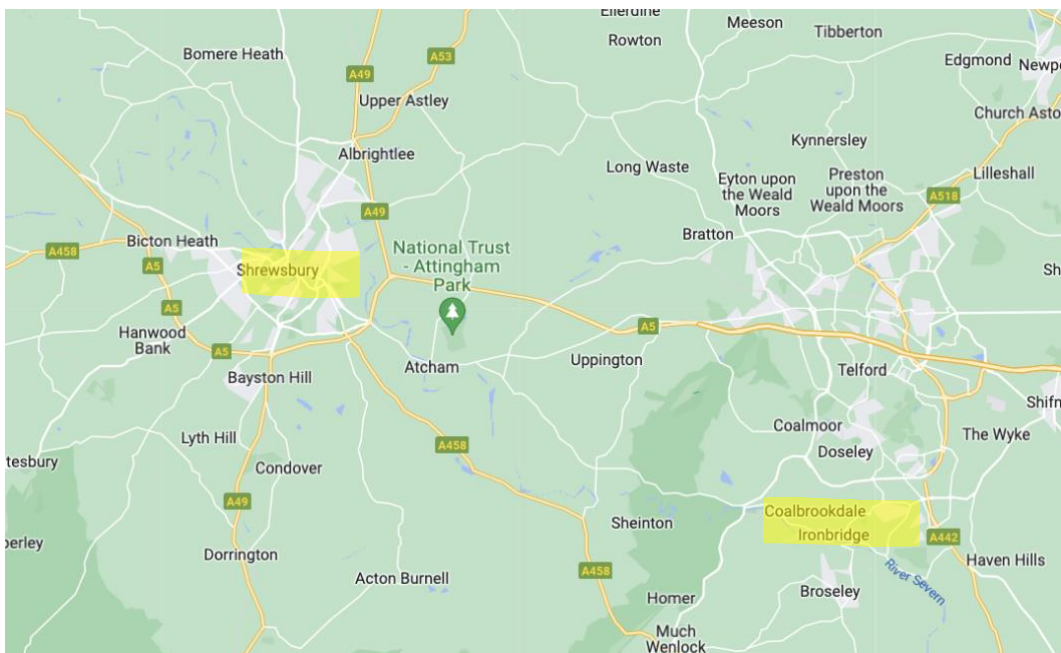
⁵⁵ Rabbits, *British Bandstands*, pp. 190-226; Rabbits, *Bandstands of Britain*, pp. 95-108; Conway, *People's Parks*, pp. 238-234.

⁵⁶ Christine Vialls, *Coalbrookdale and the Iron Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 13-14.



Scale: 1:250,000

Figure 4. Map showing locations of Glasgow, Kirkintilloch, and Falkirk. © Printmaps.net OSM contributors.



Scale: 1:200,000

Figure 5. Map of location of Shrewsbury and Coalbrookdale. Google.com/maps/place/Shropshire [accessed 20/7/22].

The next stage was to identify archives in the case study areas for relevant primary sources. Despite considerable effort to investigate local archive material, journals and newspapers they provided only glimpses of users' views and these tended to be associated with special occasions such as opening ceremonies or royal events in parks. Given the fragmentary nature of the information it was necessary to investigate more widely than the case study areas. As written information about everyday experiences in parks was extremely limited, information from postcard collections of the Royal Horticultural Society at the Lindley Library, the Nigel Temple Collection of Historic England and Virtual Mitchell of the Mitchell library in Glasgow was collated. These provided data on the prevalence and location of park furniture which was added to the parks database.

Coseby's and Yen's theses on diversity in women's fashions and roles in society provided information on gender stereotypes in the period and the cultural significance of dress codes which were used to identify the potential influence on women's use of parks.⁵⁷ The significance of visual images to 'recapture *choses véçues*, the physical conditions of everyday life and the options for action of different groups' is part of a material culture approach.⁵⁸ In these terms costume is indicative of social status which was relevant to understanding the role of women as users of public parks and park furniture.

The research is set out in the following chapters. Chapter two examines the provision and range of park furniture. Chapter three explores the influence of commissioning, design and purpose on furniture provision. Chapter four examines the relationship between producers of park furniture and park development. Chapter five discusses the range of park furniture and the users. Chapter six presents the conclusions on the relationships between iron park furniture, public parks and their users.

⁵⁷ Sarah Louise Coseby, 'Diversity in Fashion and Women's Roles from 1873-1912' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University, 1997), pp. 1-411 (pp. 2-5 & 9-11) ; Ya-Lei Yen, 'Clothing Middle-Class Women: Dress, Gender and Identity in Mid-Victorian England c. 1851-1875, pp. 1-318. (pp. 18-22 & 236-238 & 257-271).

⁵⁸ Richard Grassby, 'Material Culture and Cultural History', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 35:4 (2005) pp. 591-603 (p. 593).

Chapter 2 The provision and range of park furniture

This chapter defines the category 'park furniture' and examines the influence of recreational activities, the title 'garden', and the origin from a private estate on the range of park furniture.

Because it is not a term in general use park furniture could be interpreted in a variety of ways. Paul Rabbitts has written about 'Parkitecture' in which he describes park buildings, monuments and features such as bowling greens, lidos, aviaries and children's play areas.⁵⁹ These are not what would be described as 'furniture', which, in a normal definition, refers to items that are put into a house or other building to make it suitable and comfortable for living and working in'.⁶⁰ But public parks are not living spaces, they involve work for some groups but their main use is for recreation.

'Street furniture' has a legal definition and covers items that collectively could be termed utilitarian, such as benches, bus shelters, waste bins, post boxes, drinking fountains, items for public safety such as traffic signals, lighting, and bollards, and a category of aesthetic features, such as planters, clocks and statuary.⁶¹

Park furniture is analogous to this definition. In this research, utilitarian features, including those for comfort and safety, were the focus. These included seating, drinking fountains, conveniences, lighting, railings, fencing, gates, botanical labels, signage and waste baskets.

Wood or stone could also be used for park furniture in the era under consideration but the most universally utilised material was iron, hence this material was the focus of this study. Iron park furniture was mainly cast iron, although wrought iron and galvanized wire were also used. Chapter four presents more details on these materials.

⁵⁹ Paul Rabbitts, *Parkitecture*, (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2017).

⁶⁰ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/furniture> [accessed 8/6/22].

⁶¹ <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/street-furniture> [accessed 8/6/22].

The interpretation of the term 'recreation' influenced what park furniture was required. The Public Parks Act passed in 1871 used the words 'public park' to include 'any park, garden, or other land dedicated, or to be dedicated, to the recreation of the public'.⁶² A definition of the term 'recreation' was not given and how it should be interpreted was not specified, although an element of variety is perhaps inherent in the use of 'recreation' rather than 'exercise'. Whether sport was envisaged in the Act is not clear.

Early park designers focused on aesthetics presenting nature 'organized and artfully displayed' providing the visitor fresh air, an elevation of the spirit and an opportunity to have a 'mind-full of improving information'.⁶³ Recreation involved carriage riding, walking or sitting to observe, not active participation. Park furniture was restricted to seating, fencing round grass and flowerbeds, boundary railings, gates and possibly signage.

As the term 'Public Walks' continued to be used throughout much of the nineteenth century, it suggests that walking was still identified as a central form of recreation in all parks. Many postcards of parks examined in this research illustrate walks and associated seating. In the mid 1800s women were rarely pictured in parks. Women's fashion at the time involved tight corseting and, for many decades, a wide crinoline, ensuring a good figure, upright posture and the necessity of walking slowly.⁶⁴ The limitation of leisure beyond sedate promenading reinforced the view that women should be associated with the domestic environment, not a public park.

The different names given to public parks in the period from 1860 – 1914, identified from the literature research and the author's parks database, are listed in Table 1. At the time of their creation the titles 'park' and 'recreation ground' were synonymous and didn't distinguish provision. As the diverse needs of the urban population began to be recognised, designs, although still predominantly ornamental, included provision for less energetic games, such as bowls, croquet and archery and this distinguished the park from the garden.⁶⁵ In terms of park furniture seating was the most universal provision for both

⁶² <https://vlex.co.uk/vid/public-parks-schools-and-861252578> [accessed 29/5/22].

⁶³ Taylor, 'Urban Public Parks', p. 204.

⁶⁴ Yen, 'Clothing Middle-Class Women' p. 51.

⁶⁵ Jordan, 'Urban Public Parks', p. 90.

men and women. Bowling greens were always associated with seating, evidenced by contemporary photos and postcards, such as in Figures 6 & 8.

Type of Public Park	Numbers identified
Park	389
Gardens	19
Recreation Grounds	18
Other	7

Table 1. Nomenclature for public parks 1860-1914. Author's Parks Database.



Figure 6. Postcard of Springburn Park, Glasgow, 1908. Mayjay Dunn, Pinterest.

Even by the end of the nineteenth century women's participation in sport was restricted to tennis, croquet or green bowls (Figures 7 & 8). In the case of tennis, spectators needed some form of manoeuvrable seating for matches, as seen in the photo (Figure 7). Whilst the seating from Coalbrookdale and the Glasgow foundries was largely relatively heavy cast iron and often ornate, Boulton & Paul in Norwich, had two styles that were labelled tennis chairs (Figure 9). This company produced a vast range of products for public parks

and gardens.⁶⁶ They advertised seats for parks and other public spaces with the seats ‘inclining backwards to prevent water remaining on them and rendering the seat very comfortable’ or folding over ‘thus keeping them dry during a shower of rain’.⁶⁷



Figure 7: Victorian ladies tennis match. <https://ateliernostalgia.wordpress.com/2019/06/04/victorian-tennis-dress/> [accessed 15/7/22].

⁶⁶ *Boulton & Paul, Ltd. 1898 Catalogue*, (Ottawa: Algrove Publishing Limited, 1998).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 227 & 227C.



Figure 8. Craigmillar Bowling Club, Edinburgh c.1910.
http://www.edinphoto.org.uk/0_a_o/0_around_edinburgh_-_where_is_it_bowling_ladies.htm [accessed 15/7/22].

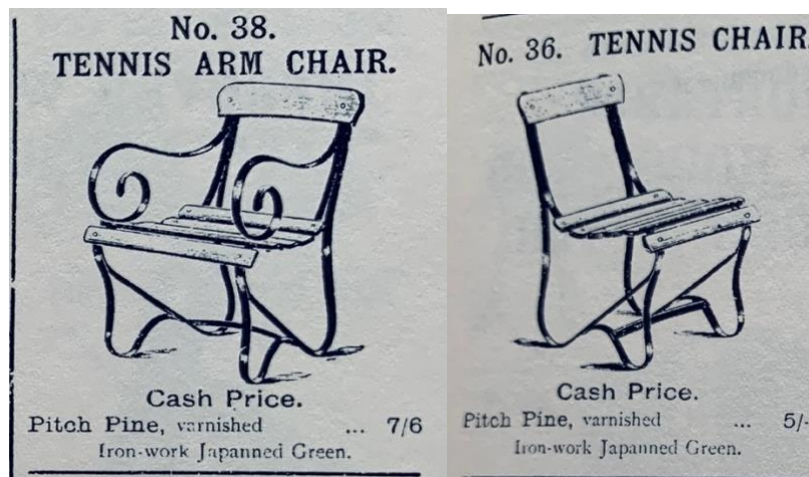


Figure 9. Tennis Chairs. 1895 Catalogue, Boulton & Paul, Norwich, (Ottawa: Algrove Publishing Limited, 1998), p. 229.

An issue in parks was separating sporting from other areas and Boulton and Paul also produced fencing for tennis courts and cricket fields (Figures 10 & 11). Given their utilitarian and temporary nature, illustrations of the products in situ have not been identified. It is reasonable to hypothesise that the market for tennis court fencing would have included recreation grounds and public parks, as well as private estates.

The catalogue indicated that the movable fencing for cricket fields (Figure 11) allowed sheep to pass in and out for feeding, useful in parks where sheep were used as a means of reducing maintenance costs. Joshua Major proposed an inner wire fence in his design for the three Manchester parks 'to divide the pleasure ground from the open area or general playground so that sheep could be let in when the area was not in use to keep the grass short'.⁶⁸

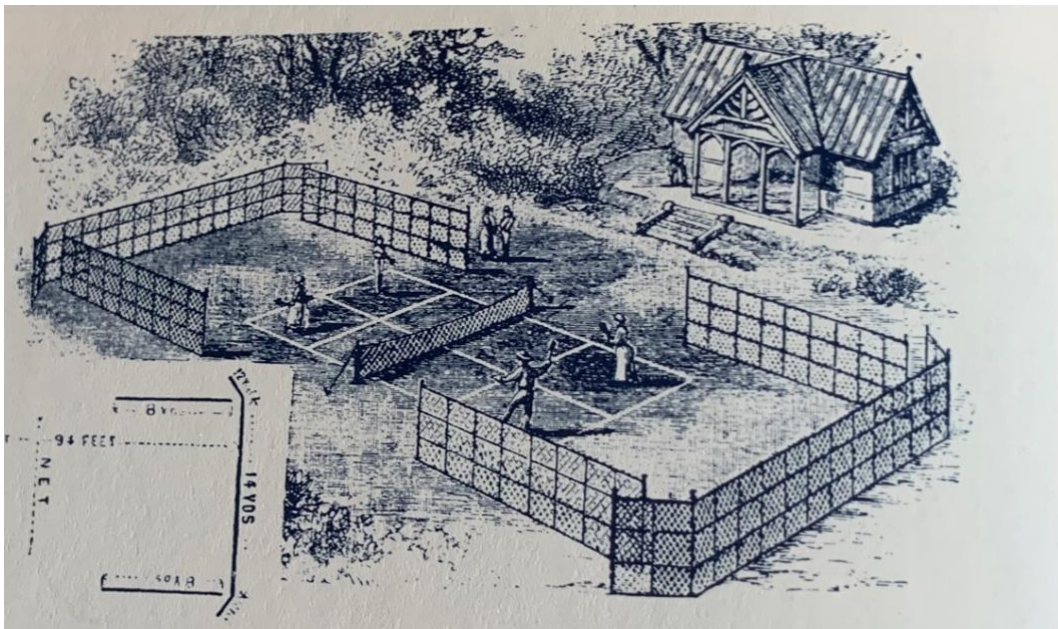


Figure 10. Fencing for enclosing tennis courts. 1895 Catalogue, Boulton & Paul, Norwich, (Ottawa: Algrove Publishing Limited, 1998), p. 222.

⁶⁸ Joshua Major, *Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852) pp. 193-4.

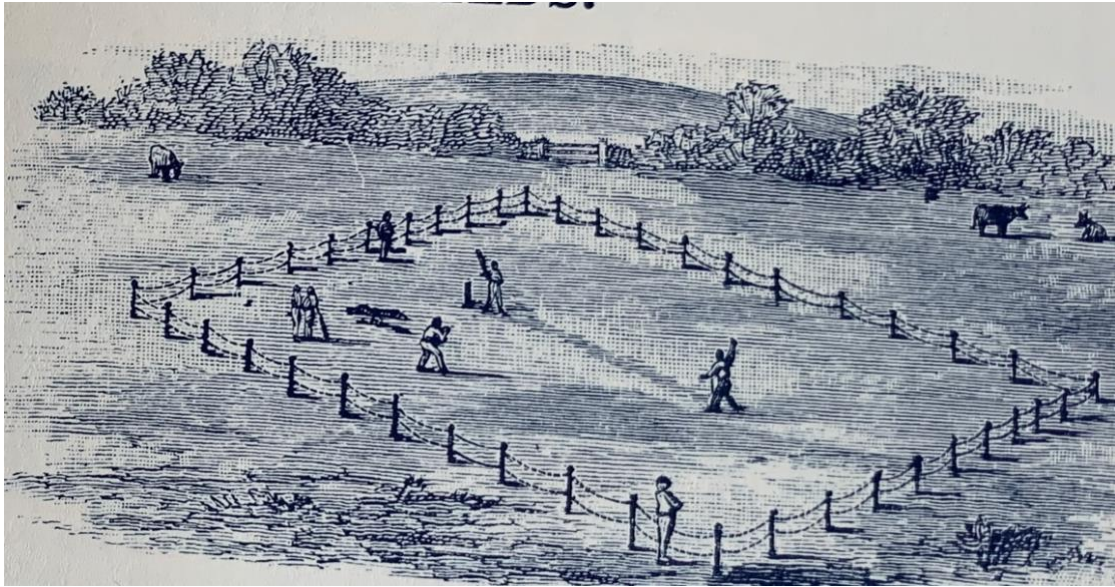


Figure 11. Movable fencing for cricket fields. 1895 Catalogue, Boulton & Paul, Norwich, (Ottawa: Algrove Publishing Limited, 1998), p. 222A.

A pastime that had become open to women in the late nineteenth century was bicycling. It was associated with changes in ladies fashion and greater visibility of women in parks (Figure 12). Long, generally heavy and restricting dresses proved dangerous. Decency dictated that a woman's legs should be covered so a split skirt was introduced, this proved generally more acceptable than the knickerbockers, or bloomers, designed by Mrs Bloomer a pioneer of the Dress Reform Movement, although both can be discerned in the photo in Figure 12.⁶⁹ The photo also shows that seating was located on the edge of the bicycling carriageway for spectating and as a resting place, as a bicycle is shown propped up behind the seat.

⁶⁹ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/whanganui-chronicle/news/how-the-bicycle-changed-womens-fashion/7GNYSJKKFU54F4UNC67NNIIQYM/> [accessed 3/7/22].



Figure 12. Figure 'A Sunny Morning in Battersea Park. *Cycling World Illustrated*, 18 March 1896. Glen Norcliffe 'Flâneurie on bicycles: acquiescence to women in public in the 1890s' *Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien*, 2006 pp. 1-22 (p. 31).



Figure 13. Cast iron bike stand made by Willbro of Norwich c. 1880
<https://norfolkvintiques.co.uk/product/willbro-norwich-antique-bicycle-stand/> model no. [accessed 13/7/22].

The need to 'park' a bike may have introduced another cast iron item, the bicycle stand, that could possibly have appeared in parks. Research has not identified evidence of a park location, although cast iron stands produced by a Norwich foundry in the nineteenth

century did exist (Figure 13). These may, however, have only been used for bike display as the design appears quite robust and possibly heavy.

Huge numbers of seats, usually of a simple folding type, were required for the band concerts which attracted huge crowds (Figure 14). Music was seen as the 'safest and surest method of popular culture' and a rational form of recreation. Bandstands became an almost universal provision in parks.⁷⁰ As the time spent in the park increased, conveniences, drinking fountains and access to other acceptable refreshments became part of the provision.



Figure 14. Corporation Park, Blackburn providing seating for 2,000 people, 1909. Paul Rabbitts, *Bandstands*, (Swindon: Historic England, 2018), p. 91.

Gradually leisure provision became increasingly diverse with areas for more active team sports and playgrounds incorporated into designs. The amount, rather than the range, of park furniture was affected by this development. While this evolution of recreational activity took place some of the public spaces created were given the title of 'gardens'. A

⁷⁰ Rabbitts, *Bandstands of Britain*, p. xi.

botanic garden and two other examples of gardens were examined to identify if this title implied different park furniture provision.

In Glasgow's Botanic Gardens, taken over by the Council in 1891, some park furniture items (Figure 15), such as plant labels, signage and protective fencing were particularly important. The Gardens' dual role as an educational and recreational facility with an extensive horticultural area, conference hall and bandstand made seating as essential as in parks.

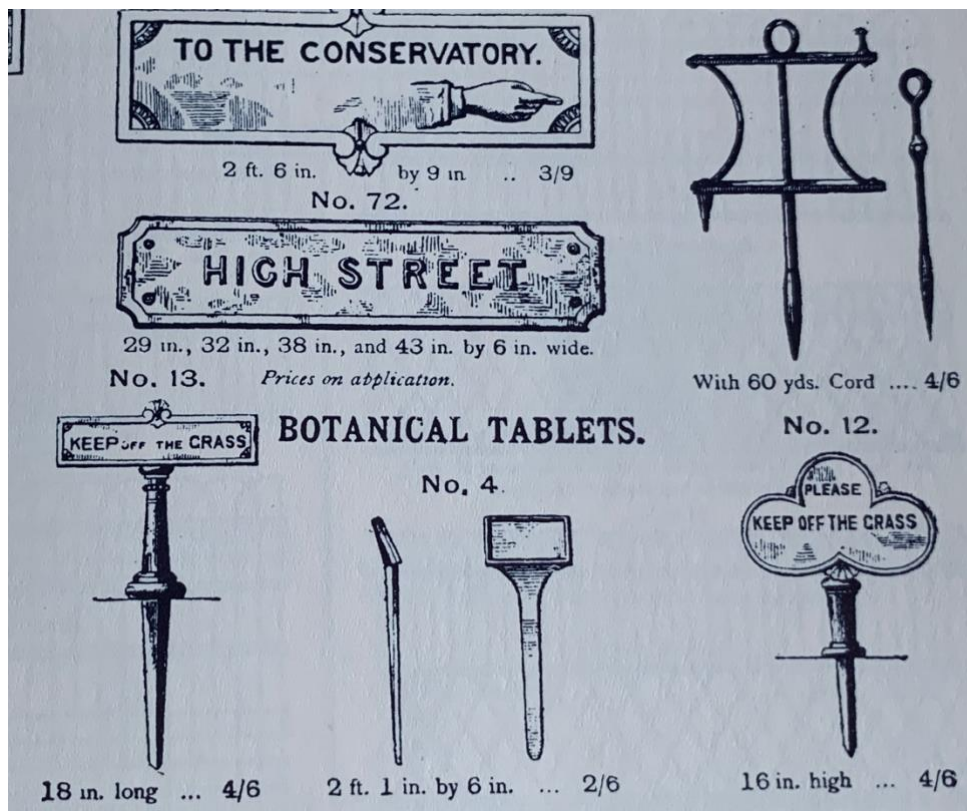


Figure 15. Examples of signage and plant labels. 1895 Catalogue, Boulton & Paul, Norwich, (Ottawa: Algrove Publishing Limited, 1998), p. 233.

Fountain Gardens in Paisley, about twelve miles west of Glasgow, began in 1866 when Thomas Coats, the important local industrialist, purchased grounds which had contained a museum and bowling green and donated them to the people of the town. He employed James Craig Niven to redesign the gardens, opened in 1868, with a new design (Figure 16)

that contained broad walkways, rock and alpine gardens, drinking fountains and plenty of sheltered seating (Figure 17).⁷¹



Figure 16. Original lithograph of Fountain Gardens 1868. Maclure & Macdonald, Lithographers, Glasgow <https://www.ragpickinghistory.co.uk/2012/03/19/utopian-ruins-fountain-gardens-paisley> [accessed 17/6/22]

An ornamental fountain in the centre of the park was a major feature, produced by the Sun Foundry of George Smith and Company in Glasgow. Other elaborate iron work (Figure 18), all by the same foundry, was incorporated into the park, including lamps, gates, railings, seats and fountains.

A newspaper report commented on the care and expense lavished on the ‘striking and beautiful appearance of the floral planting’.⁷² At the grand opening ceremony Mr Coats stated,

‘I trust that under the proper management these grounds may have an improving and healthy influence on the community by familiarising their minds with what is beautiful in nature and in art’.⁷³

⁷¹ <https://www.paisley.org.uk/paisley-history/fountain-gardens/> [accessed 18/6/22].

⁷² ‘Opening of the Fountain Gardens, Paisley’, *Glasgow Herald*, 27th May 1868, p. 5 cols 1-2.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, cols 3-4.

This statement is a clear illustration of how a philosophy of social improvement was seen to underpin the creation of the public garden as it had in the proposal for Public Walks referred to in chapter one.

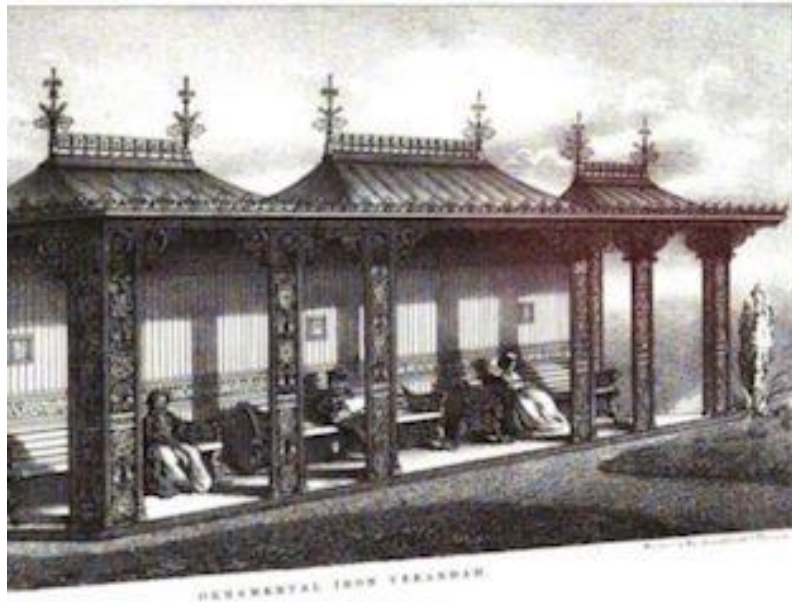


Figure 17. Sheltered seating in Fountain Gardens. <https://www.paisley.org.uk/paisley-history/fountain-gardens/> [accessed 18/6/22].



Figure 18. A grouping of iron work decorations in Fountain Gardens. <https://www.paisley.org.uk/paisley-history/fountain-gardens/> [accessed 18/6/22].

Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh (Figure 19) were studied to identify if the range of park furniture mirrored that in Paisley. When formally adopted by the Council in 1876 seating along a terraced walk, boundary fences and gates were the main items of park furniture. There were sweeping lawns, flower beds and an important monument and fountain. Opening hours were controlled, activity was monitored and subject to byelaws, mirroring public parks.⁷⁴ In 1851 there was already a council committee responsible for the East Gardens and they unanimously agreed a set of regulations which indicated an expectation of demure enjoyment within the parameters of respectable behaviour, with children admitted only if accompanied by a responsible adult.⁷⁵ In 1892 the *Edinburgh Evening News* noted that, following the addition of a new entrance, 'no one will be prevented from going into the garden and using it to the full' but anyone 'defacing or injuring the place or conducting themselves in an unseemly manner will be dealt with rigorously'. They reported that at the new entrance 'a large number of boys and girls are in the habit of sliding down the hill and have nearly worn away the grass and spoilt the appearance of the hillside. 'It is hoped that the public will co-operate and prevent the abuse'.⁷⁶

The emphasis in both the Paisley and Edinburgh gardens was on aesthetic and horticultural provision. The expectation was that they were to be experienced through promenading as they provided public walks through scenery 'heightened and rendered more interesting by art' to use Loudon's description.⁷⁷ The provision of seating, boundary railings and gates were common factors in both gardens, although Paisley had a wider range of iron furniture. A range of furniture found equally in parks.

⁷⁴ <https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/new-town-gardens-the-princes-street-gardens> [accessed 30/5/22].

⁷⁵ 'East Princes Street Gardens' *Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 11 September 1851, np. col. 2.

⁷⁶ 'Abusing a Princes Street Gardens Privilege', *Edinburgh Evening News* 2 October 1892, np. col. 4.

⁷⁷ Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 11.



Figure 19. Present day East Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Princes_Street_Gardens.jpg#/media/File:Princes_Street_Gardens.jpg [accessed 12/6/22].

A further comparison with parks can be made using Arnold van Gennep's model of separation, transition and incorporation.⁷⁸ The elements of design, such as imposing entrance gates, elaborate bedding and ornamental fountains made entrance into the park a rite of separation from the surroundings; the experience in the area was a rite of transition with the final incorporation, if compliant, into the dominant ethic of the authorities. Non-compliance would be termed transgressive behaviour according to Lambert's nomenclature.⁷⁹ The concepts apply equally to the gardens described. Sporting facilities in parks, however, provided the opportunity for a more relaxed attitude and a broader range of acceptable behavioural norms.

Some parks originated from private estates that were donated to, or purchased by, councils. To consider whether these were associated with a specific type of park furniture two Glasgow examples, Tollcross Park, purchased in 1897, and Rouken Glen, gifted in

⁷⁸ Lambert, 'Rituals of Transgression', p. 202.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 205-6.

1906, were examined. In each case the park was little altered on transfer to the Council although paths were widened to make them suitable for the increased number of visitors. Both included a mansion house, fine tree collections and a glen (narrow valley) with a stream. No written descriptions of the park furniture have been found for either park. There are, however, photos of entrance gates and railings, rustic seating in Tollcross (Figure 20) and folding seats for visitors outside Rouken Glen mansion (Figure 21). Apart from seating there is no evidence that initially any additional park furniture was provided. However, within a few years Tollcross had the gift of a large glass house and plant collection and a bandstand was erected in 1906. These developments were associated with an increase in seating for the bandstand and additional furniture such as signage, drinking fountains and plant labelling.



Figure 20. Tollcross Park. Sandy Stevenson, tour-scotland-photographs.blogspot.com [accessed 15/7/22].



Figure 21. The mansion house, Rouken Glen,
<http://www.gerryblaikie.com/southglasgow/thornliebank.htm> [accessed 15/7/22].

Seating was a universal provision for all types of recreational activity. The furniture in gardens tended to include mainly seating, railings and gates, although the range and degree of ornamentation varied considerably in the two examples examined. In parks musical entertainment and sport were both associated with increased numbers of seats and in the latter case additional fencing. An origin from a private estate was not linked to a particular range of furniture.

Chapter 3 Commission, design and purpose of park furniture

This chapter examines the roles of commissioners and designers and the impact of their underlying intentions on park furniture.

The open spaces that became public parks generally varied in size from 10 to 50 acres.⁸⁰ Larger areas of countryside were often preserved in a more natural state. For example, Mr James Dick donated the land for Cathkin Braes Park, Glasgow, in 1887 and he stipulated that it should be kept as nearly as possible in its natural state.⁸¹ The Council had commissioned seats 'here and there and swings for the amusement of the younger generation'.⁸² But, by 1894 the park was attracting an average of 150,000 visitors a year, mainly for picnics connected with churches and schools.⁸³ A correspondent to the *Glasgow Herald* noted, while enjoying the 'real music of the park provided by the birds', he lamented the lack of a shelter. M'Lellan, the Parks Superintendent, agreed this should be remedied.⁸⁴

The extensive 136 acres of Glasgow Green (Figure 22), traditional open common land, was used in a very different way. It was the responsibility of the Council and maintained under a uniquely Scottish institution called the 'Common Good' that comprised of assets, funds and property holdings of the burgh. It was the traditional location of the City Fair, travelling shows, circuses and other entertainers.⁸⁵ This was typical, as Lambert points out, of informal open spaces that pre-dated the urban public park.⁸⁶ It was also where women went to dry their clothes after washing them in communal sinks. A unique form of park furniture provided by the council were the metal poles for this purpose (Figures 23 & 24) and, if the poles were all in use, women would simply dry their clothes on the

⁸⁰ Jordan, 'Public Parks,' p. 90.

⁸¹ James Whitton, 'The Public Parks of Glasgow', *The Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, 45 (1919) pp. 39-55 (p. 44).

⁸² M'Lellan, *Glasgow Parks*, p. 96.

⁸³ *Glasgow Herald*, 22 February 1894, p. 4. col. 7

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Maver, 'Glasgow's Public Parks', p. 331.

⁸⁶ Lambert, 'Rituals of Transgression', p. 196.

ground. The poles are still maintained and the right to dry clothes is still enshrined in the city's byelaws.



Figure 22. A View of Glasgow Green 1840s. The drying green and folk making their way along the promenade to the Fair. Mitchell Library, Glasgow City Library and Archives.



Figure 23. Drying Poles on Glasgow Green. <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-drying-green-glasgow-scotland> [accessed 4/7/22].



Figure 24. The poles in use. c. 1940.
<http://www.glesga.ukpals.com/green/greenwashing.htm> [accessed 20/7/22].

There is no date for the origin of the seating shown in Figure 24 but the very simple design is likely to reflect the original style. The photo suggests the poles also provided play opportunities for the children.

Despite its popularity Councillors' concerns about the negative moral impact of the Fair led to it being banned from 1871 and moved elsewhere.⁸⁷ A census of 6 August 1893, however, recorded the numbers of visitors in the various Glasgow Parks and indicated the continued popularity of the Green (Table 2). There was, however, tension between the order of the 'rational' enjoyment of the extensive floral bedding provided by the commissioners and the more disorderly public meetings.

⁸⁷ Maver, 'Glasgow's Public Parks,' p. 331.

PARK	NUMBERS
Glasgow Green	78,420
Kelvingrove Park	48,175
Queen's Park	43,300
Alexandra Park	15,810
Maxwell Park	9,500
Ruchill Park	3,790
Springburn Park	2,097
Cathkin Braes	2,725
Maryhill Park	1,089
Total	204,906

Table 2. Visitor Numbers to Glasgow's Public Parks 6 August 1893
Duncan M'Lellan, *Glasgow Public Parks*, (Glasgow: John Smith & Son, 1894) p. 154.

In 1867 the *Glasgow Herald* published a letter commenting on the fact that there 'were about a dozen orators holding forth to the assembled multitudes' and the correspondent went on to state, 'not one of whom appeared to have got even an ordinary education, for in not a few instances they murdered the Queen's English most abominably'.⁸⁸ Although this doesn't seem to have worried the crowds as there were apparently thousands moving back and forth between the speakers. The music from the bandstand also attracted very large numbers, possibly making up for the fact that the Fair was no longer permitted. The volume of visitor numbers must have had a significant impact on the infrastructure of the park, increasing the need for utilitarian park furniture such as seating, drinking fountains and conveniences.

The location of Glasgow's parks influenced not only what was commissioned but impacted on whether good intentions were achieved, and if the views of users were considered. Glasgow Green was located in an area of slums with factories and workshops close by. However, it was truly a people's park actively used by the community. Kelvingrove, as a contrast, was designed and maintained as a meticulously landscaped setting considered appropriate for the middle-class residential houses on its periphery. Their owners paid a feu, a Scottish form of land tax, to the landowner and had

⁸⁸ 'The Glasgow Green and the Public Parks', *Glasgow Herald*, 24 June 1867, p. 5. col. 3.

expectations of the suitability of 'their' park provision. A correspondent to the *Glasgow Herald* in 1857 expressed concern about the suggestion that 'licence be given to the public to walk and lounge upon the grass of West End Park' (re-named Kelvingrove). He affirms that the area has 'more properly the character of a GARDEN than a PARK' and that the perception of what is right can be awakened in the 'lower orders' by 'teaching them to feel an interest and pleasure in the beautiful order and careful keeping of pleasure grounds in their own right'.⁸⁹ In 1860 a move by a Councillor to propose an area of the park be set aside for 'amusement and recreation' was condemned in an article, again in the *Glasgow Herald*, because it would 'affect in a prejudicial way' the Park which is 'fitly termed a flower garden and ornamental policy' (Scottish word for pleasure ground).⁹⁰ Clearly the users were not a homogenous group and had competing ideas on what a park should provide. A focus on horticulture was associated with restrained enjoyment, learning and an aesthetic emphasis, all epitomising a garden. The provision of park furniture was limited to seating.

The best intentions of commissioners could be thwarted as in Alexandra Park (Figure 25), opened in 1866, in the southeast of Glasgow with the aim of providing a healthy open space.⁹¹ However, the park lay directly in line with the prevailing winds and on the opening day smoke from local factories blew right across the park, blocking the views and causing choking fumes. This became a regular occurrence.⁹² The population must have been a hardy lot, or the pollution was eventually controlled, because a census on 13 August 1893, records 15,810 entered by several gates.⁹³

It is ironic that Macfarlane's Saracen Foundry, one of the most important producers of ornate cast iron furniture used in public parks, was a major polluter of Springburn Park and the surrounding area (Figure 26).

⁸⁹ 'The Regulations in the West End Park', *Glasgow Herald* 24 June 1857, p. 5 col. 1.

⁹⁰ *Glasgow Herald*, 18 July 1860, p. 4. cols 3-4.

⁹¹ Maver, 'Glasgow's Public Parks', pp. 327-335.

⁹² Clare Willson, 'The Rebirth of the Dear Green Place: Parks and Well-being in 19th Century Glasgow.' Lecture given on 16 May 2022 for the Glasgow and West of Scotland Family History Society.

⁹³ M'Lellan, *Glasgow's Public Parks*, p. 91.



Figure 25. Alexandra park postcard c. 1908 on a clear day. mitchelllibrary.org, C638 [accessed 16/7/22].

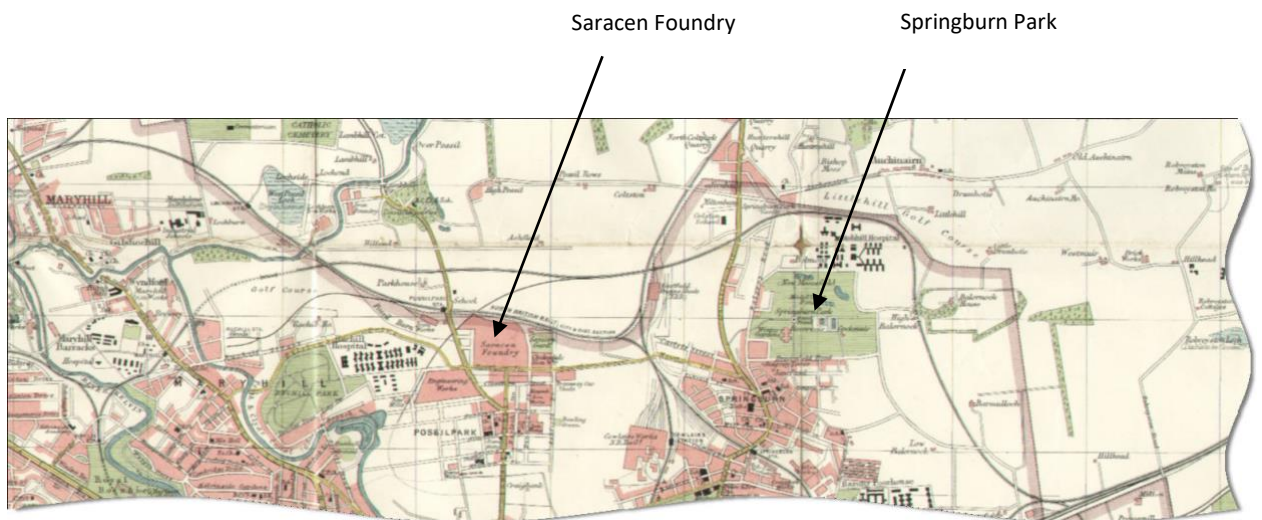


Figure 26. Saracen Foundry and Springburn Park. PD Crown Copyright (expired) – Glasgow Street Plan, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w//index.php?curid=3014810> [accessed 12/7/22].

Given the legal framework existing at the time, it is not surprising that direct acquisition by Local Authorities was the most frequent means of obtaining land for public parks

between 1860-1885 (Table 3). It continued to be the most important means between 1885 and 1914.⁹⁴

Mode of Acquisition 1860-1885	Number of cases
Local Authority Acquisition	83
Gifts: donation of land or money for Acquisition	34
Land leased before final acquisition by Local Authority	7
Funds raised by Subscription	3
Speculative Development	3

Table 3. Data extracted from Hazel Conway, *People's Parks*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) pp. 228-234.

Bedford Park (Figure 27) is an example of acquisition by a Local Authority. In this case the local Bedford population was involved in some aspects of the decision-making.⁹⁵ In 1881, as part of a scheme to improve control of the administration of a charity hospital property, a request was made to the Attorney General for the appropriation of 60 acres of that land for a 'Public Recreation Ground'.⁹⁶ The Attorney General insisted on the town being consulted and a public meeting was held 'with a thoroughly representative gathering of inhabitants'. The resolution in favour was carried unanimously and enthusiastically.⁹⁷

Competitions were a popular way of obtaining design schemes for public parks and this was the method used in Bedford.⁹⁸ The plans submitted were exhibited in 1882 at the Corn Exchange and Messers. Barron & Son of Elvaston were the winners.⁹⁹ The fact that a public exhibition was held suggests that the public's views on the proposals played at least a part in the final decision.

Barron's proposal included carriage drives and walks, sports areas, a bandstand and various buildings, but apart from fencing, he does not mention park furniture.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Jordan 'Public Parks', p. 88.

⁹⁵ Draft instructions to Counsel, Bedford Archives [BA], BorBE13/4/2(ii).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Jordan, 'Public Parks', p. 92.

⁹⁹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001331> [accessed 12/5/22].

¹⁰⁰ Report and Estimate of Messrs. Barron & Son, BorB H3/110 [BA].

However, the report of a Council meeting 25 June 1890 records the agreement to purchase fencing (£60), seats and fittings for the pavilion (£70) and seats in the grounds, (£50).¹⁰¹ In this case the commissioners made the purchasing decision for park furniture. Whether they were involved in the specification is not clear. The West Lodge and gates (Figure 28) were, however, funded by the public as a commemoration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887.¹⁰²



Figure 27. Bedford Park. Historic England Archive, EPW026476



Figure 28. Bedford Park Gates and Lodge. Photo From Bedford Archives, Z50/9/77.

¹⁰¹ Resolutions of the Park Committee 25 June 1890, BorBE13/4/10 [BA].

¹⁰² <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001331> [accessed 12/5/22].

The method and source of acquisition were often associated with specific requirements or restrictions that influenced the final provision. For example, the demands of the patron of Chester Park, the Marquess of Westminster who gifted the land, required significant compromise by Edward Kemp, the designer, over the layout. The re-siting of a large statue, which affected the planned location for the belvedere and blocked both of Kemp's two key axes, was refused.¹⁰³ Council decisions on the byelaws led to many arguments that continued for several years.¹⁰⁴ The Marquess's son when opening the park had expressed the hope that the very poorest of the population 'would be able to enjoy fresh air and sunshine.'¹⁰⁵ However, an area for a gymnasium or playground for children which had been a specific requirement of the Marquess was not included in the park when it opened for no clear reason. Furthermore, public access was restricted to gravel paths and in 1868 new byelaws were being debated and the desirability for 'keep off the grass' regulations were considered and finally agreed. This led to an opinion piece in *The Chester Observer* stating 'What a select place the New Park is. One would fancy it had been presented to the gentry of ChesterI am told that people won't be allowed on the grass, without they obtain the license of the park keeper.'¹⁰⁶ Agitation for a children's playground continued but to no avail.¹⁰⁷ In this case the voice of the user for whom the park was originally intended was ignored. It appears that the park was developed with an aesthetic purpose rather than to fulfil the original intention. Kemp's role in Chester demonstrated how designs were often subject to significant change, due to the commissioners' visions, and their views, rather than those of the users, were the most influential.

Designers of public parks did, however, have an influence on the style and range of facilities provided. The author's database includes 433 public parks with the designer identified in 103 cases. Table 4 identifies the designers who were responsible for more than one park between 1860 and 1914 and those who were the most prolific. In this list

¹⁰³ David Lambert, 'A Beautiful Balance? Edward Kemp and Grosvenor Park, Chester' *Garden History*, 46 Suppl.1: Edward Kemp (1817-91) Landscape Gardener: The Proceedings of a Symposium held at the Floral Pavilion. New Brighton, Wirral, October (2017) pp. 83-98 (p. 90).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

of 54 three were not professional landscape designers, J. B. McCallum, was a Borough Engineer, Henry Moore a Head Gardener at Peel Park, Salford, and John James Sexby was a civil servant serving as the first Chief Officer for Parks for the London County Council. Robert Murray, before turning to design, had been a head gardener at a private estate.¹⁰⁸ Also involved were the owners of nurseries, such as Veitch & Son, involved in Devonport Park in Devon from 1895, and Lister Kershaw who laid out Moor Park Bradford to the design of the Borough Surveyor.¹⁰⁹

Thomas H Mawson	11
Edward Milner	5
Joseph Paxton	5
Alexander McKenzie	4
Edward Kemp	4
Robert Marnock	4
William Barron	4
Henry Moore	3
William Henderson	3
Edward Kemp	3
William Barron & Sons	2
John Claudius Loudon	2
J B Mc Callum	2
Robert Murray	2
James Craig Niven	2
John James Sexby	2

Table 4. Designers of Public Parks 1860-1914. Author's Parks Database

As Conway points out only major parks involved high-profile designers.¹¹⁰ The majority of designers of public parks were employees of local authorities and are not easily identified. As local employees they were likely attuned to the needs of the local population and able to balance the views of the municipal commissioners with budgetary restrictions. Not much is known about the influence of these designers, but J. J. Sexby (1847-1924) who had a major influence on London's municipal parks in the nineteenth

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/queens-park-blackburn-1> [accessed 12/4/22]; <https://www.parksandgardens.org/people/henry-moore> [accessed 12/4/22]; Jordan 'Public Parks', pp. 99 & 111.

¹⁰⁹ Jordan, 'Public Parks' pp. 99 -101.

¹¹⁰ Conway, *Public Parks*, p. 36.

and early twentieth century is an exception. He demonstrated practicality in his designs as he took account of restricted budgets and the reduced number of gardening staff. His design for Wandsworth Park, opened in 1903, incorporated from the outset plans for a bandstand with an enclosure designed for seating, toilet facilities and railings with insets to incorporate simple metal framed timber slatted seats (Figure 29).¹¹¹

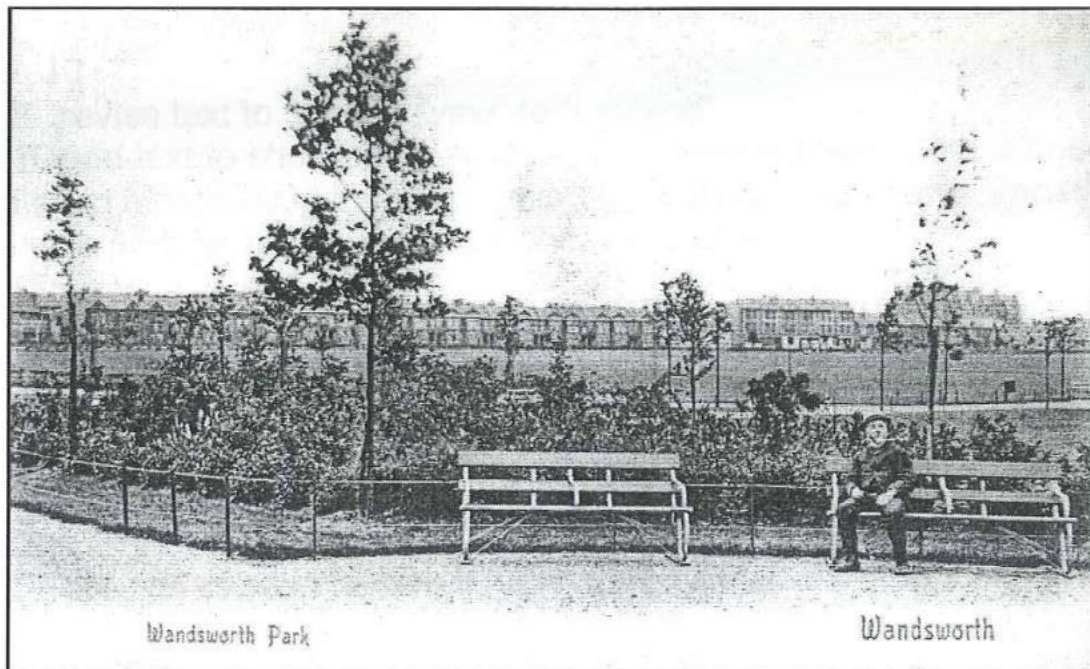


Figure 29. Wandsworth Park seating. Wandsworth Park Strategy Plan 2004, p. 6.
https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/media/4780/wandsworth_park_strategy_plan_2004.pdf [accessed 16/7/22].

The low railings, presumably to keep people off the grass and away from the flower beds, appear to have a diamond shaped top rail that was designed to make it difficult to walk along and uncomfortable to sit on.

The leading professional designer, Thomas Mawson (1861-1933) was not impressed by those he considered ‘amateurs’ stating, ‘in no department of municipal enterprise is there such lamentable absence of artistic expression, or even reasonably convenient

¹¹¹ Wandsworth Park Strategy Plan 2004 p. 4.
https://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/media/4780/wandsworth_park_strategy_plan_2004.pdf [accessed 16/7/22].

planning, as in our public parks'.¹¹² Mawson was not only a leading park designer of this era but he was influential through his writing and lectures. He saw parks within the wider view of town planning. In 1904 he drew up a plan for Pittencrieff Park, Dunfermline including its integration into the town. The commissioners, however, did not accept his plan as he had overstepped his brief.¹¹³

In his book *Civic Art* he devoted one chapter to the design and construction of public parks and another to their adornment and equipment.¹¹⁴ He proposed the combination of formal and landscape styles as a logical development 'to meet the purposes required of it [the park] in this country.'¹¹⁵ He was supportive of cricket, tennis, bowls, hockey and croquet as they demanded 'stretches of close shaven greensward' and boating and model yachting which required open stretches of water as he felt 'we secure in amplitude two conditions for a beautiful park'.¹¹⁶ He expressed strong views on park furniture stating,

'it is often the equipment of needs and the ornament of our parks....even to such small details as the design of park seats, which make the difference between a park which is a delight to the artistically educated, and that which is uninspiring and devoid of interest'.¹¹⁷

He might have applied the latter to the line of seats in Battersea Park (Figure 30). He felt that seat design and placement was important to give an 'air of ordered completeness without which the park cannot be satisfying to the eye or restful in effect.'¹¹⁸ Accepting bandstands as essential features he identified the need for ample gravel space around them for seating. He declared that 'the garden seat [had been] too long almost exclusively in the hands of the iron founders' and that 'the absurdities and extravagances of rustic work builders and iron founders are becoming too apparent.'¹¹⁹ No doubt he would have disapproved of the rustic seats in Ruskin Park (Figure 31).

¹¹² Thomas Mawson, *Civic Art*, (London: B. T. Batsford, 1911) p. 161.

¹¹³ Jordan, 'Public Parks', p. 95.

¹¹⁴ Mawson, *Civic Art*, pp. 161-208.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

¹¹⁹ Mawson, *Civic Art* p. 185.



Figure 30. Line of seats in Battersea Park. <https://www.shutterstock.com/search/battersea-park> [accessed 21/7/22].



Figure 31. Rustic seats and iron railings in Ruskin Park, designed by J.J. Sexby, opened in 1907. Brent Elliott, 'The Victorian Period: Victorian Parks' in *London's Pride*, ed. by Mireille Galinou, (London: Anaya Publishers, 1990) p. 157.

Although he was denigratory of 'stock patterns' of iron seats, he was against the prevailing designs, not the material itself.¹²⁰ He supported the development of wooden

¹²⁰ Thomas Mawson, *The Art and Craft of Garden Making*, (London: B. T. Batsford, 1912), p. 169.

seats by 'two or three enterprising manufacturers.'¹²¹ Designs from the Pyghtle Works of John White, Bedford, a company renowned for furniture production, including that for the garden (Figure 32) resemble Mawson's own sketches of seats 'for woodland walks' (Figure 33). In contrast to the Coalbrookdale and Glasgow foundries, Pyghtle had a strong Arts and Crafts influence with Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott (1865-1945) one of their important designers.¹²²



Figure 32. Arts and Crafts style bench. John P. White Catalogue No. 2, 1902, Z319/1/3 [BA] p. 2.

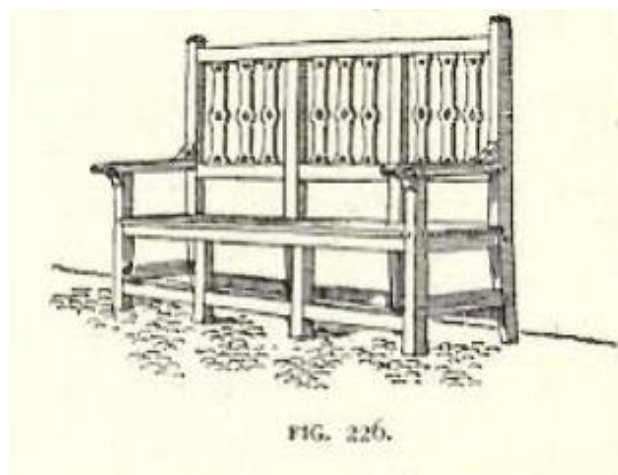


Figure 33. Sketch of a Garden Seat. Thomas Mawson. *The Art and Craft of Garden Making*, (London: B. T. Batsford, 19120 p. 169

¹²¹ Mawson, *Civic Art* p. 206.

¹²² 'White, J.P., The Pyghtle Works (1896-1960)', <https://bifmo.history.ac.uk> [accessed 29/3/22].

A contemporary design, the Thakeham bench, almost universally now referred to as the Lutyens bench, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (1864-1944) was created in 1903 for his work at Little Thakeham. To this day reproductions are seen in many parks and gardens. However, the original was made in expensive oak or teak and evidence of its location is found in private estates, not public parks.

Mawson identified that conveniences for both sexes were an essential provision and should be provided in a retired position with little display. The appropriate location of ladies' facilities was, where possible, at parkkeepers' lodges where they could be 'under proper control and duly attended' or in a refreshment pavilion.¹²³ An example of a retired provision is the toilet facility in Wandsworth Park dating from 1901. Unfortunately, contemporary maps are unclear, but it was set in a semi-circular area back from a path, protected by trees.

Just as the views of the commissioner or donor might influence eventual park design and provision, so did the implementation. At the small park in Cleethorpes, Mawson's plan (Figure 34) included the elements that he believed were needed but, despite being very happy with his design, he felt that it depended on 'careful balance and disposition of the parts' that were spoiled by the execution'.¹²⁴ Neither the location of seats nor the conveniences were indicated on the plan, possibly due to the scale, but, if they were of such importance to the overall design, some indication might have been expected.

¹²³ Mawson, *Civic Art* p. 206.

¹²⁴ Jordan, 'Public Parks', pp. 95-6.

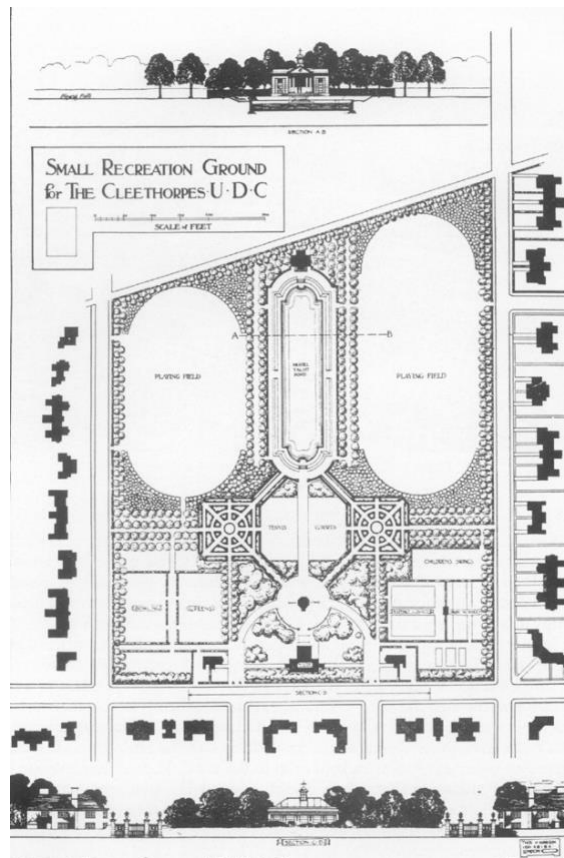


Figure 34. Cleethorpes, Sidney Park
 Thomas Mawson, *Civic Art* (London: B T Batsford, 1911) p. 340.

Members of the local population were sometimes involved in public park provision, not as consultees but as construction labourers. For example, weavers and others in times of depression, particularly in 1858, 1878 and 1886 were employed in improving and laying out Glasgow parks as a means of providing a livelihood and preventing them from starving.¹²⁵

Although underlying the provision of public parks was the widely accepted belief that they would provide improved physical well-being, many commissioners felt that it was necessary to provide a wide variety of features, including horticultural displays, music and facilities for sports and games to attract users.¹²⁶ Benefactors' views sometimes held sway over potential users' wishes. For example, in the People's Park in Halifax, despite its name, games provision was expressly prohibited by Francis Crossley the benefactor.

¹²⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, 11 October 1893, p. 4 cols 8-9.

¹²⁶ Jordan, 'Public Parks', p. 86.

Sporting facilities became increasingly important and in 1880 Stamford Park in Altrincham became a leader in this type of provision.¹²⁷ The plan (Figure 35) was designed by John Shaw Snr. around the central cricket pitch and included provision for football, tennis, croquet, and quoits with separate playgrounds for boys and girls, and a swimming pool (notably only for men and boys).¹²⁸ A *Gardeners' Chronicle* article of 1881 noted that the land was contoured to provide views, planting created shade and shelter and there were sites for fountains, statuary, seats and summer houses.¹²⁹ The move to make much greater provision for sport in parks did not necessarily correlate with a reduction in aesthetic considerations and the need for a varied range of park furniture continued with the amount of seating increasing.

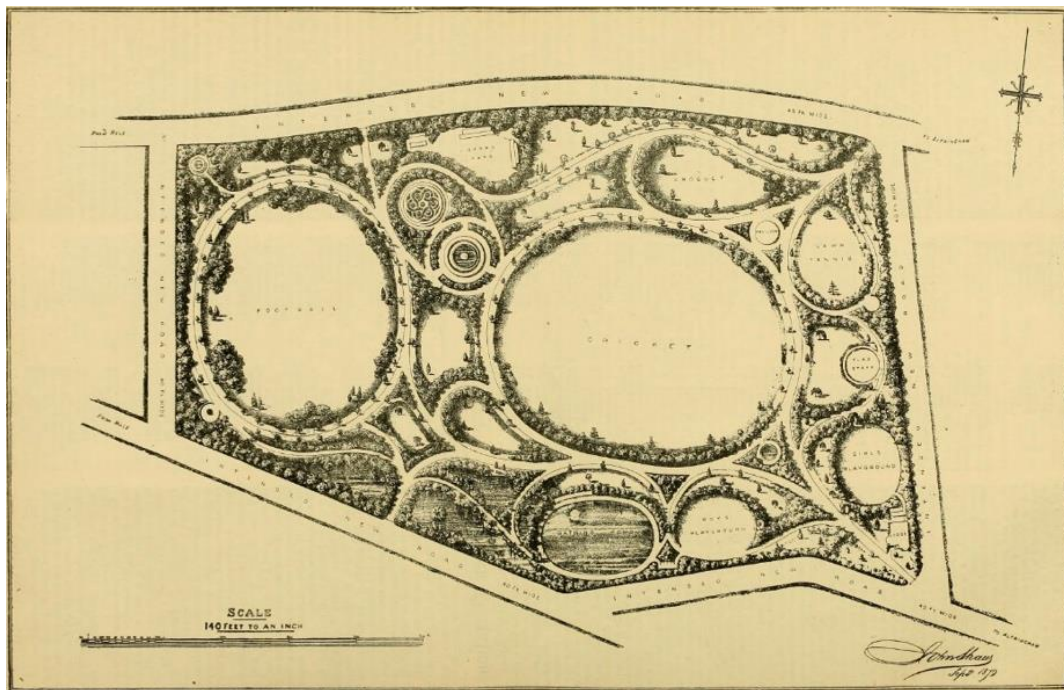


Figure 35. Plan of Stamford Park, Altrincham. *Gardeners' Chronicle* 15, (1881) pp. 1-832 (p. 45).

Different organisations exerted influence on provision based on their beliefs and principles. By 1910 The Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (MPGA) took the view

¹²⁷ 'Stamford Park', *Gardeners' Chronicle* 15, (1881) pp. 44-45 (p. 44).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

that open space should never be subordinated to appearance.¹³⁰ Although the vision of what park users needed was changing, it was still paternalistic in approach. The idea of Friends' Groups as a voice for the park user was a thing of the future. Little evidence was found that park furniture was planned in the early stage of commissioning. Where the intent was to provide mainly for promenading it may have been that seating was such a basic need it would have been automatically included at the implementation stage. The documentation from Bedford suggests, however, that a budget decision by commissioners would have been needed. Further detailed examination of other councils' minutes might uncover more information that would clarify this area.

Commissioners, as the budget holders, were the ultimate decisionmakers on what was provided in parks. This at times led to the amendment or disregard of designer's plans. Carré suggests that it was in the equipment and decoration, rather than the structure, that Victorian designers left their mark. He identifies pavilions, kiosks, bridges and gates in their varied styles from Gothic to Moorish or Italianate and the glass and cast-iron conservatories as providing evidence of the 'flavour' of the parks.¹³¹ The present research highlighted that, as well as gates, seats, drinking fountains and conveniences also provided evidence of the prevailing aesthetic. The foundry catalogues of the time demonstrated the full range of the eclectic Victorian taste in park furniture. Figure 36 provides an example of a more artistic design of a seat in situ and chapter four provides examples of the wide range of design influences.

It is noticeable in Figure 36 that the seat slats are in wood. This was used in many designs because it was not as cold as metal for sitting on. A further advantage was the fact that the seat could be flat packed making transport easier. Surviving examples of decorative iron seats are valued as antiques but are rarely in situ and lack provenance documentation to indicate whether they come from public parks or private estates.

¹³⁰ Jordan, 'Public Parks', p. 86.

¹³¹ Carré, 'The Public Park', p. 83.



Figure 36. Seat in Battersea Park (origin unknown) with ornamental side brackets and set in a recess protected by railings. Photo: The Author.

Where a garden or park was designed essentially for promenading, walks were provided with seats for meeting or repose. In parks with a wider range of recreational activities such as 'genteel' games of bowls or concerts, seats were essential, in the latter case often in large numbers. As sports facilities increased seats for spectators were required. Seating was universal and the most important item of park furniture. Evidence of a purchase decision was found in Bedford. Investigation of other council's minutes might help identify further examples of purchasing decisions.

Gates, railings or fences were also ubiquitous because the access to public parks was always controlled. Catalogues, photographs and postcards illustrated a wide range of designs and relative aesthetic importance. Ornate water fountains often featured in the description and illustrations of parks. The occurrence of the more basic designs, although probably much more numerous, often go unrecorded. Where park development was adjacent to valuable residential property it is possible that the developers or owners may

have been involved in decision making. Benefactors from the elite of society no doubt would have influenced specifications of their donations.

What was provided for the people in relation to park furniture was most heavily influenced by the commissioners' view of the intended purpose of the park. There is, however, evidence that some important designers had views on the provision and style of park seating.

Chapter 4 Park furniture production for public parks

This chapter uses the four case study areas to explore the relationship between park furniture production and public park development. A brief description of the manufacturing process is provided initially as context.

Most park furniture was cast iron although wrought iron was also used. The production methods resulted in different characteristics. Iron ore was heated then poured into moulds of a standard size called 'pigs'. These were traded to those who could work it into a more practical shape by casting or further refining it by heating and hammering to create wrought iron. For cast iron the molten material was moulded in sand moulds produced from wooden models, hence the same designs could be repeated. Cast iron is brittle and can break if subject to considerable lateral forces but is admirably suited to decorative iron work. Wrought iron has much greater tensile strength and was important in the nineteenth century as a structural material.¹³² It was also used for park furniture and at times combined with cast iron. Galvanized metal products had a zinc coating that protected them from rusting and was used, for example, in wire for fencing.

Co-location of abundant raw materials, waterpower and transport led to the early establishment of iron works in Coalbrookdale in Shropshire.¹³³ Abraham Darby founded the company in 1709 and introduced a new process using coke that was much cheaper than charcoal. This established Shropshire from the 1800s as the most significant iron working area in the country.¹³⁴ In the 1830s the company entered the decorative castings market and this enabled an expansion of the business and led to major success in the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition when the company displayed gates, designed by Charles Crookes, manager of the works, that were re-erected in Kensington Gardens in 1852 (Figures 37 & 38).¹³⁵

¹³² Diestelkamp, 'The Use of Iron', pp. 60-61.

¹³³ Thomas Southcliffe Ashton, *Iron and Steel Industry*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1951), p. 26.

¹³⁴ David Hopkins, 'Art & Industry Coalbrookdale & Co. and the Great Exhibition', *History Today*, 52:1 (2002) pp. 19-25. (p. 21).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

An example of their acclaimed 'boy with a swan' fountain is set in the grounds of the Coalbrookdale museum (Figure 39), where it has a circle of railings and benches. This arrangement reflects that used in many parks around fountains, for rest and enjoyment. Supplying park furniture often involved a 'package' of items if the company involved, like Coalbrookdale, had a wide range of suitable products. 1859 accounts for Devonport Park in Plymouth record that gates, railings, vases and other unspecified items were supplied by the Coalbrookdale Company at a of cost £172 2s 0d.¹³⁶



Figure 37. Coalbrookdale gate exhibit at the Crystal Palace Exhibition, 1851. David Hopkins, 'Art & Industry Coalbrookdale & Co. and the Great Exhibition', *History Today* 52:1 (2002) p. 20.

¹³⁶ <https://www.parksandgardens.org/places/devonport-park> [accessed 14/5/22].



Figure 38. Coalbrookdale cast iron gates at Kensington Gardens. Jennie Hills, 2003, Science and Society Picture Library.



Figure 39. Fountain, 'Boy with a Swan' in the grounds of the Museum of Iron, Coalbrookdale. Photo: The Author

The influential John Ruskin condemned cast-iron ornament as ‘a deceitful, false, vulgar, cold, clumsy and paltry pretence to art: a cheap substitute that, if allowed to proliferate in Britain, would obliterate our national feeling for beauty’.¹³⁷ Presumably not a view shared by Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), who provided designs for Coalbrookdale in the 1870s.¹³⁸ He was one of the Victorian period’s most important and influential stylists and a pivotal figure in the Aesthetic Movement which believed that art should be beautiful for its own sake.¹³⁹ He was a botanist by training, but his designs used formalised and stylised rather than naturalistic forms, such as in the Water Plant seat design, which by 1846 became one of Coalbrookdale’s best selling items (Figure 40).¹⁴⁰

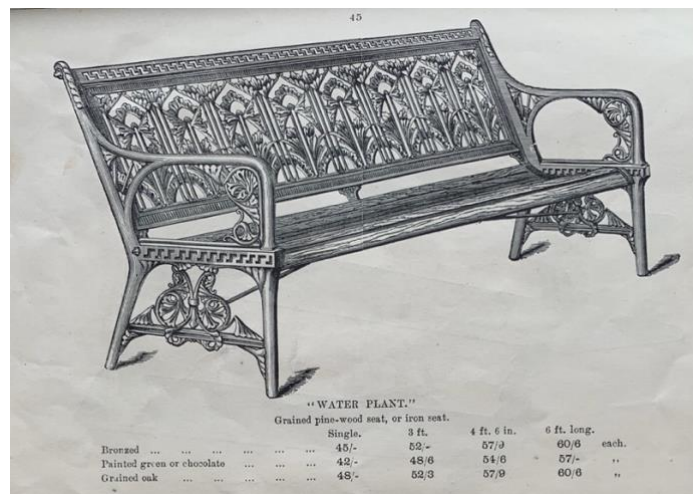


Figure 40. ‘Water Plant’ Seat. Coalbrookdale catalogue 1875, Section III containing garden and park embellishments, p.257. Ref: AGA/M/5/2/2/4 [Shrewsbury Archive].

Ruskin was railing particularly against the easy replication of seats such as in Figure 41. However, it was this type of design that allowed public parks to provide the amount of seating required for the number of users. The galvanized wrought iron helped reduce maintenance costs.

¹³⁷ Paul Dobraszczyk, *Iron, Ornament and Architecture in Victorian Britain*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 1.

¹³⁸ <https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/makingamark/teaching-resources/objects/christopher-dresser> [accessed 23/6/22].

¹³⁹ <https://www.britannica.com/art/Aestheticism> [accessed 21/7/22].

¹⁴⁰ Ian Lawley, ‘Art and Ornament in Iron: Design and the Coalbrookdale Company’, in *Design and Industry; The Effects of Industrialisation and Technical Change on Design, History of Design* ed. by, Hamilton and Newport (London: Design Council, 1980) pp. 18-21 (p. 20).

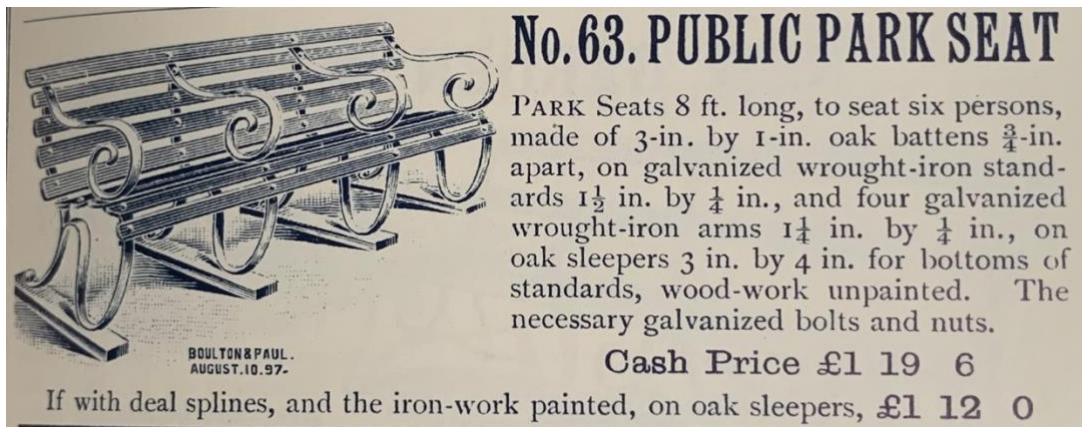


Figure 41. Park seat. 1895 Catalogue, Boulton & Paul, Norwich, (Ottawa: Algrove Publishing Limited, 1998), p. 228.



Figure 42. Peacock Design. John P. White Catalogue No. 2, 1902, Z319/1/3 [BA] p. 4.

Presumably Ruskin would have been supportive of the Arts and Crafts style wooden seats made by the Pyghtle works in Bedford (Figure 42) which resemble his own designs. As they were relatively expensive it would seem likely that they were used as feature pieces.

Designs in the period included wrought iron Gothic style, neo-Rococo in the 1850s and 1860s and a naturalistic style echoing the eighteenth-century wood designs.¹⁴¹ The photos in Figure 43 give an impression of some of the influences on Coalbrookdale designs. These would have offered a significant aesthetic contribution to their locations.

¹⁴¹ White, 'Perished perches', p. 87.




	<p>First design registered 1842</p> <p>Convolvulus</p>
	<p>First bench to be registered 1844</p> <p>Serpent and grapes</p>
	<p>Registered 1849</p> <p>Elizabethan</p>
	<p>Registered 1853</p> <p>Peacock</p> <p>Indian inspiration</p>
	<p>Registered 1859</p> <p>Oak and Ivy</p>
	<p>Registered 1870</p> <p>Medieval</p> <p>Designed by Christopher Dresser</p>

Figure 43. Coalbrookdale Benches. Images and information supplied by the Archivist, Museum of Iron, Coalbrookdale.



Figure 44. The gates at the entrance to The Quarry, Shrewsbury. Photo: The Author.

Having an important local park such as the Quarry, Shrewsbury, offered a commercial opportunity for the company and they supplied the iron gates (Figure 44) in 1881.¹⁴² In the eighteenth century the park had some ornamental planting in the ‘wet’ stone quarry, called the Dingle. In the nineteenth century it was cleaned out and benches provided with the Coalbrookdale fountain being installed in 1889.¹⁴³ No documentation has been found to indicate that any of the benches came from Coalbrookdale and, unfortunately, the originals do not remain in situ.

Advertising was integral to the prevailing consumer culture in the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁴ The publication of illustrated catalogues had developed alongside industrialisation of production as the most practical way of advertising products to an expanding market.¹⁴⁵ Coalbrookdale produced numerous examples from 1880 onwards illustrating their wide range of products.

¹⁴² <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001134?section=official-list-entry> [accessed 25/5/22].

¹⁴³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001134?section=official-list-entry> [accessed 25/5/22].

¹⁴⁴ Smith, Tori, ‘Almost Pathetic... but Also Very Glorious’: The Consumer Spectacle of the Diamond Jubilee’, *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 29:58 (1996) pp. 333-356 (p. 342).

¹⁴⁵ Dobraszcyk, *Iron, Ornament and Architecture* p. 32.

Like Coalbrookdale, Glasgow had easy access to raw materials and good transport links. From 1828 a huge expansion took place, and iron became the principal industry in Glasgow and its environs.¹⁴⁶ Walter Macfarlane established his business in 1850 and in 1862 his third and final huge foundry was built on a green field site at Possilpark in the north west of the city. From humble beginnings it quickly moved into production of sanitary and ornamental castings and by 1875 it had grown to become one of the world's biggest manufacturers of architectural and ornamental ironwork, using in-house designers who worked solely for the company.¹⁴⁷



Figure 45. Advertisement of Walter Macfarlane December 1907.
https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Walter_Macfarlane_and_Co [accessed 11/5/22].

¹⁴⁶ James Bell and James Paton, *Glasgow its Municipal Organization and Administration* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1896), p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Dobraszcyk, *Iron, Ornament and Architecture* p. 82.

Macfarlane's used advertisements (Figure 45) and catalogues which functioned as sales brochures. Section III 'Garden & Park Embellishments' of their 1875 catalogue was more than 100 pages, 41 of which were garden chairs and park benches.¹⁴⁸ The company was in a position to provide the whole range of park furniture as an article entitled 'Commercial Glasgow' noted: 'Some idea of the magnitude of the endless variety of castings undertaken by the firm may be gained from the fact that their catalogue extends to some two thousand quarto imperial pages and contains six thousand illustrations.'¹⁴⁹

The development of Macfarlane's business was contemporaneous with the huge increase in public parks and agitation by organisations such as the Metropolitan Free Drinking Association set up in 1859. There was, however, criticism that the designs of drinking fountains at the time were not worthy of the lofty ideals of the Association.¹⁵⁰ Possibly as a result of clever planning Macfarlane's unveiled their first ornamental drinking fountain in 1860 which received great praise. They followed this with the introduction of a number of new ornamental cast-iron drinking fountains (Figures 46 & 47) that also generated a very positive response.¹⁵¹

Macfarlane's Fountains Catalogue Pages 411-412			
No.	Each £ s d	No.	Each £ s d
4	2 11 6	9	1 6 9
5	1 14 6	15	2 3 6
6	4 11 0	16	3 15 6
7	7 14 3	17	5 1 3
8	26 3 9	18	27 1 0

Table 6. The 1882 prices for the fountains illustrated in Figure 45, Section III of Vol. II of the Sixth edition, 1882 Macfarlane's Castings Catalogue, p. 75, UGD 270/1 University of Glasgow Archive [UGA].

¹⁴⁸ John Davis, *Antique Garden Ornament*, (Woodbridge: Antique Collector's Club, 1991), p. 254.

¹⁴⁹ *Glasgow and its environs*, (London: Stratten and Stratten Publishers, 1891), p. 98., UGD 270/2/7 [UGA].

¹⁵⁰ Dobraszcyk, *Iron, Ornament and Architecture* p. 107.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Table 6 sets out the prices that were being charged in 1882. Section III of the catalogue states 'Designs can be submitted, and special estimates furnished for any large number of chairs for public parks or grounds, and coats of arms, &c., may be introduced as required'.¹⁵²



Figure 46. Drinking fountains from the Walter Macfarlane Illustrated Catalogue, Sixth edition, 1882, Vol. II p. 411. UGD270/1/1 University of Glasgow Archive [UGA].

¹⁵² Section III of Vol. II of the Sixth edition, 1882 Macfarlane's Castings Catalogue, p. 75, UGD 270/1 [UGA].

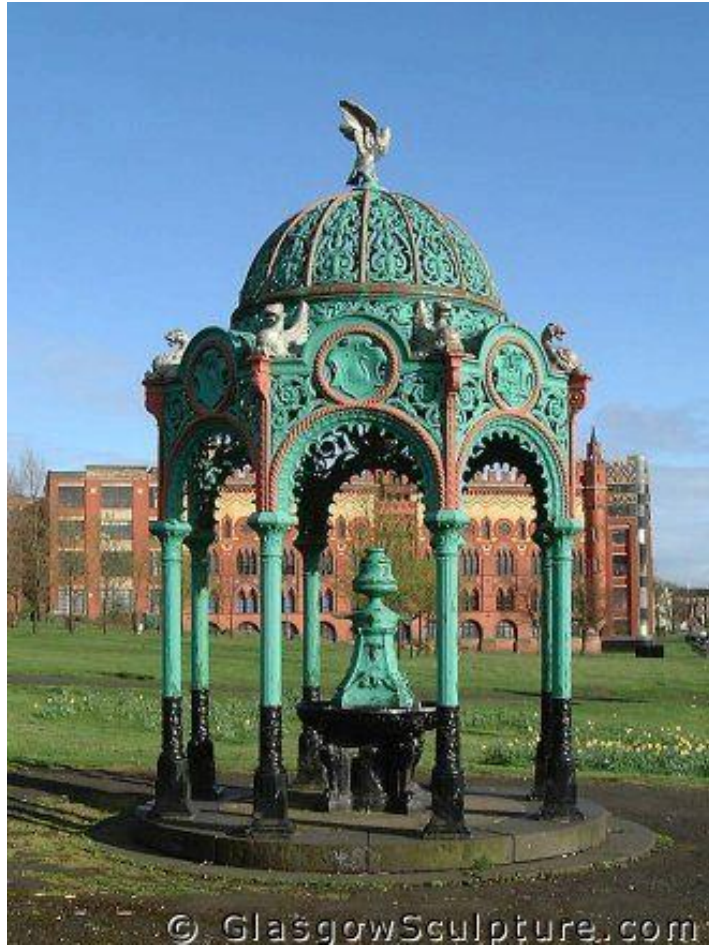


Figure 47. Cast iron drinking fountain No. 21 erected in Glasgow Green 18
http://www.glasgowsculpture.com/pg_images.php?sub=martin_fountain [accessed 3/7/22].

In 1893-4 a drinking fountain in memory of Baillie James Henderson Martin (Figure 46) was erected in Glasgow Green. The design was No. 21 from Macfarlane's Saracen foundry catalogue and was probably designed by the architect James Boucher. It incorporates shields specifically designed for the location with the Glasgow emblems of a swan and stork and a memorial inscription. In the 1882 catalogue it was priced at £70 6s 0d., although no doubt the particular requirements involved additional cost.

As their initial business was rainwater and sanitary castings, urinals became part of their early range. They were notable for the emphasis on ornamentation based in Islamic geometric patterns. Being fiercely protectionist, they also used patents given the strong local competition from James Allen Snr & Sons, McDowall Steven & Co. and Smith & Co.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ Dobraszcyk, *Iron, Ornament and Architecture*, pp. 94-96.

George Smith & Co., also known as the Sun Foundry, was started in 1857 and was one of Macfarlane's main rivals. Founded by George Smith, who had been an employee of the Saracen Foundry, by 1863 it had expanded with agents in London and Dublin, and later with offices in Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. They described themselves as 'Architectural, Sanitary and General Iron Founders' in their catalogue (Figure 48) and, like Macfarlane's, this included drinking fountains. Park seats were also an important part of their inventory and in 1888 they won the tender to provide the garden seats for the Kelvingrove International Exhibition.¹⁵⁴ Their association with public parks is evidenced through the number of bandstands and fountains that remain in situ or for which there are records. As these locations are throughout the country, parks across Britain are likely to have provided an important market for their utilitarian furniture, not only for their architectural products.

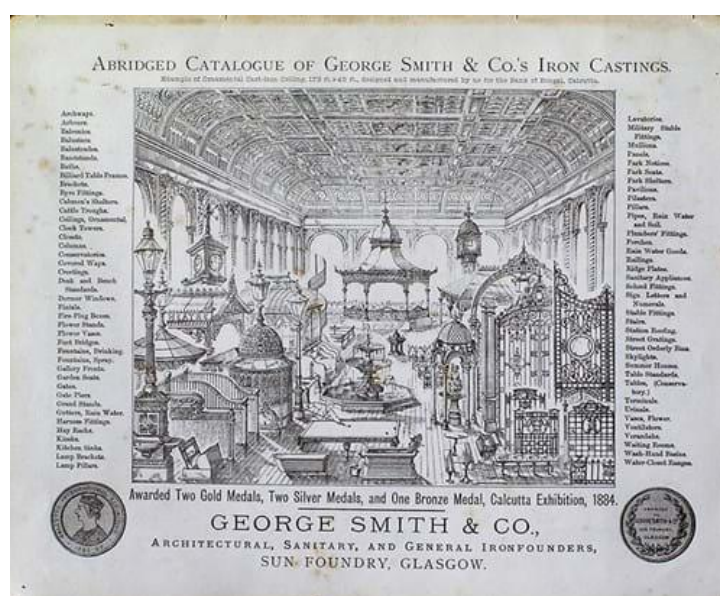


Figure 48. Front of George Smith catalogue c.1890.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/news/oh-what-a-feeling-when-we-re-glancing-at-a-cast-iron-ceiling/> [accessed 4/7/22].

In 1880 Jackson, Brown and Hudson, who had trained in the Glasgow foundries, set up the Lion Foundry in Kirkintilloch.¹⁵⁵ At their peak, the foundries in the area employed one

¹⁵⁴ Gary Nisbet, http://www.glasgowsculpture.com/pg_biography.php?sub=smith_g-co [accessed 2/5/22].

¹⁵⁵ James Leitch, Transcript of a lecture delivered to the Kirkintilloch & District Society of Antiquaries on 11 January 1980, p. 2. East Dunbartonshire Archive [EDA].

sixth of the population. The Lion foundry gained a reputation for high standards of workmanship and a capacity to be flexible in the face of changing demand.¹⁵⁶ In their first illustrated catalogue in 1881 they have the same huge range of utilitarian items as seen in the Saracen and Sun foundry examples, including seating, lighting, railings, gates, urinals and drinking fountains as well as a wide range of architectural products, such as bandstands. Figure 49 is a photograph from their catalogue of the fountain in the local Peel Park. Their manufactures were sold worldwide.



Figure 49. Drinking fountain design 41 in Peel Park, Kirkintilloch, Illustrated catalogue of the Lion foundry GD10/7/1/1/1 [EDA].

William Cassells came from the Macfarlane foundry to be the main designer. When he saw the drawings of James Leitch Snr., who was working in the paint shop, he took him into the drawing office. Despite leaving school at 12 Leitch attended night school and then Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College and the Glasgow School of Art. At the age of 22 he became chief draughtsman and remained for 44 years. Some *art*

¹⁵⁶ Online text for catalogue GD10, [EDA] [accessed 12/4/22].

nouveau style gates and railings, reminiscent of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's designs, remain in the pattern store and are probably a Leitch design (Figure 50).¹⁵⁷

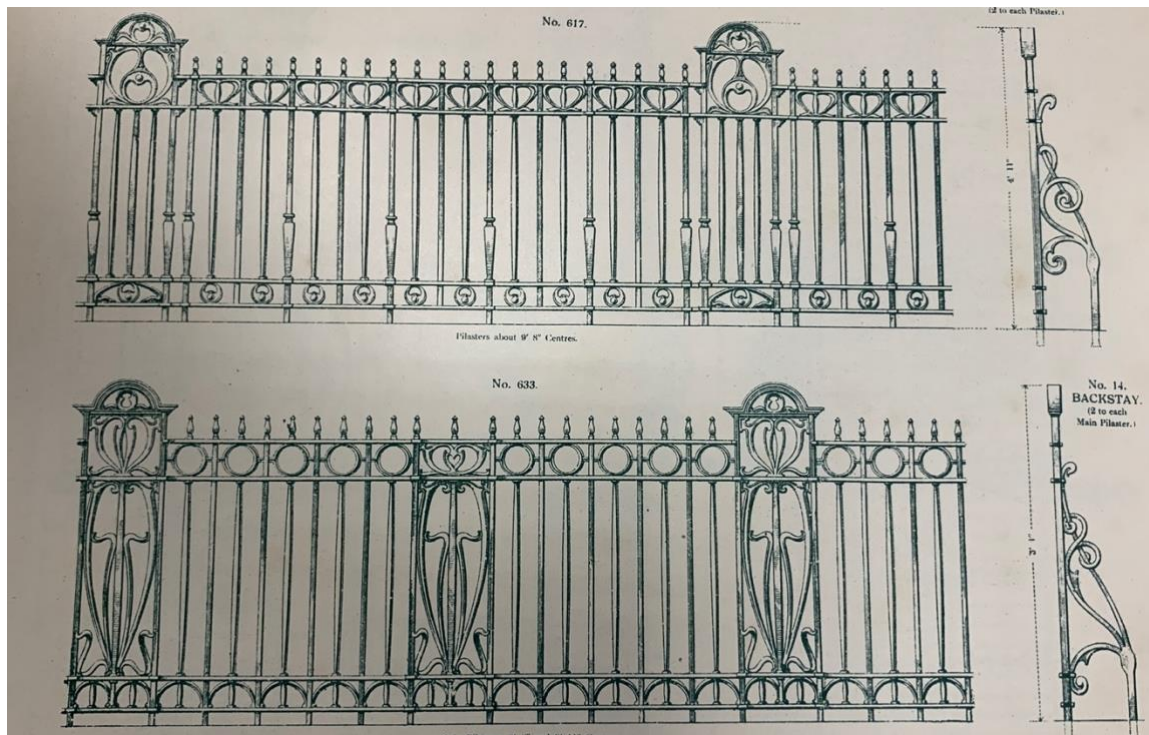


Figure 50. Railings with *art nouveau* design. Lion Foundry Catalogue Vol. 1 Fifth edition, p.123. GD10/7/1/1/5 [EDA].

The Carron Company in Falkirk was founded in 1759. Access to raw materials, transport connections, a cheap labour force due to the poverty in the area, and the use of Darby's smelting method established the production of cast iron. Their great development resulted from the acquisition of a contract with the Board of Ordnance to produce armaments for the army and navy. They developed a new gun, called the carronade. By 1814 they had become the largest ironworks in Europe and had an enormous range of products, including domestic ironwork and seating. (Figure 51). This particular example is shown on an esplanade. The major era of public park creation coincided with the increasing popularity of visits to seaside venues, often linked with the development of public gardens and parks as visitor attractions.

¹⁵⁷ Leitch, Lecture Transcript, p. 6.



Figure 51. Carron Company Illustration of seat design no.14, together with railings, drinking fountain and lamp standards. *Carron Company's Garden Furnishings*, Facsimile Source Book (Thirsk: Potter Books, no publication date), p. 404

All these producers had a huge inventory, of which park furniture was an important element. Carron may have been one of the earliest foundries to recognise that selling directly to customers rather than a middleman gave them a competitive advantage.¹⁵⁸ Coalbrookdale, depending on the product, sold direct to clients, such as councils, but also to builders, blacksmiths and ironmongers. This makes tracking the provenance of park furniture to specific public parks difficult. In the case of drinking fountains, urinals or gates, which generally had patent stamps, there are examples still in situ providing direct evidence. Many railings were removed during WW II and sadly few examples of seating survive except in rare cases of photographs, such as in Wolverhampton (Figure 54). Nevertheless, contemporary documentation, including photos, sketches and postcards provide evidence that cast iron seating was a ubiquitous provision in public parks, sometimes in very large numbers.

¹⁵⁸ Dobraszcyk, *Iron, Ornament and Architecture*, p. 33.

Chapter 5 Park Furniture and the users

This chapter investigates park furniture as a 'provision for the people' beginning with iron seating and its uses. The range of other utilitarian furniture provided is then examined.

In 1773 William Mason, when involved in the design of the formal garden at Nuneham, wrote 'You ask me for one of the most difficult things in the world when you ask me for the design of a garden seat'. A hundred years later the Coalbrookdale Company were producing a wide range of seats for municipal parks, villa gardens and large estates which were intended to be 'handsome and useful'.¹⁵⁹ In every type of public park, even those established early in the nineteenth century, seating was a necessary component, providing for repose and reflection. This reflects a continuation of the eighteenth-century circuit walks which were always associated with seating for rest and to take in views.¹⁶⁰ J. C. Loudon in his design for Derby Arboretum gave detailed instructions on how 350 seats should be placed. They were to face a view or feature, be oriented to east or west as the majority would be used in the summer, those on the grass were to be protected by shrubs to provide security or be double seats with a common back and should have footrests for comfort.¹⁶¹

The double-sided seat (Figure 52) was one type of seating produced by the Carron Iron Company in Falkirk and shown in one of its pattern books as suitable for the bowling green.

The passion for ferns, pteridomania, in Victorian times led to the fern being used as a decorative motif in all aspects of life. Coalbrookdale responding to this, which no doubt aided marketing, produced a bench with this design (Figure 53). An example in situ can be seen in (Figure 54) and shows a footboard as recommended by Loudon.

¹⁵⁹ John Powell and Pippa Shirley, 'Seating English Style', *V & A Research Report*, (1995) pp. 104-117 (p. 104).

¹⁶⁰ White, 'Perished Perches' p. 79.

¹⁶¹ Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 80.



Figure 52. Garden Set No.6 *The Carron Company. Carron Company's Garden Furnishings, Design Source Book* (Thirsk: Potterton books, n.d.) p.407.

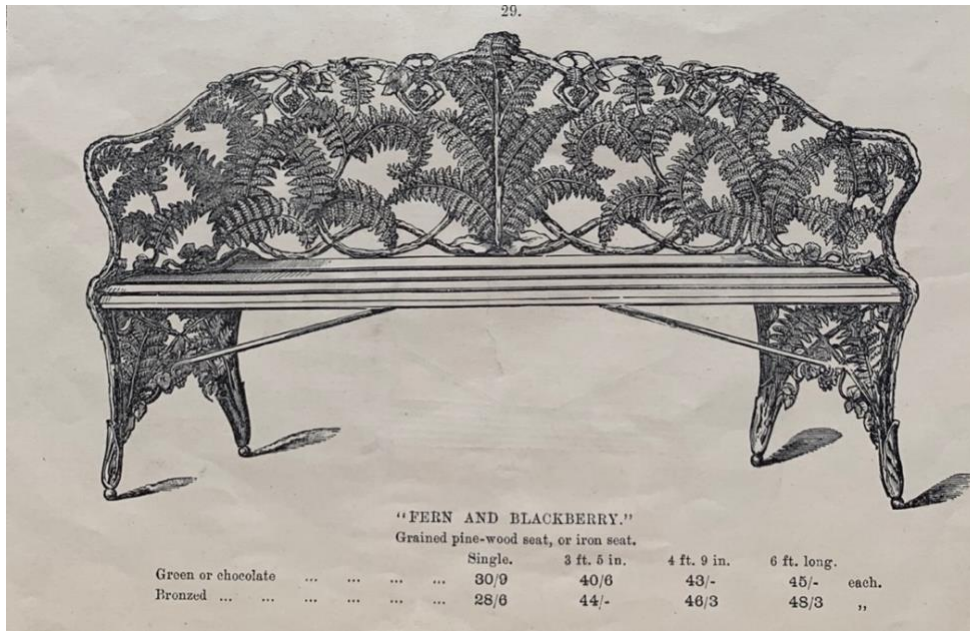


Figure 53. Coalbrookdale Bench. *Coalbrookdale 1875 Catalogue, Section III* p.254, Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron

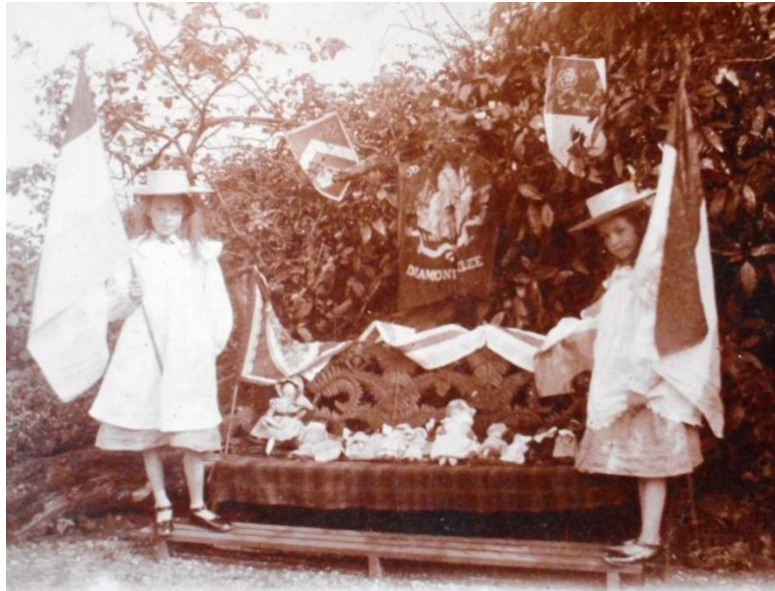


Figure 54. An example of the Coalbrookdale fern and blackberry bench in situ, for Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebration 1897. Warwickshire County Record Office, CR4651/529/1.

One of the intentions in creating public parks was to provide an opportunity for social mixing. Seating provided the possibility of meeting and conversation as illustrated in Figure 55. It featured regularly as a subject in postcards (Figures 56 & 57).



Figure 55. Kelvingrove Park, 1868. mitchelllibrary.org/virtualmitchell, Photograph C3971.

Of the 108 postcards consulted showing parks of the era more than a third showed seating as part of the view, reflecting its ubiquity and the fact that it was accepted as part of the memorable view in a park.



Figure 56. The Walk, Queen's Park, Glasgow, c.1910, Philco postcard series .
 mitchelllibrary.org/virtualmitchell/, Photograph C655.



Figure 57. Handsworth Park, Birmingham. Historic England Archive: pc06066

One of the issues that led to complaints and debate was that of vagrants, 'loafers' or 'verminous' parkgoers.¹⁶² Figure 58 shows the sad picture of men and women addicted to methylated spirits who would have been considered part of this category.

¹⁶² Nan Hesse Dreher, 'Public Parks in Urban Britain 1870-1920 Creating a New Public Culture' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1993), pp. 1-408 (p. 98).



Figure 58. 'Derelicts', in Phoenix Park, Glasgow 1911. mitchelllibrary.org/virtualmitchell/ C 62.

In 1904 a mother complained to her local council in London about school children seeing in parks 'day after day the loathsome, indecent and degrading dregs of humanity, stretched in all attitudes and in every degree of filth'.¹⁶³ She wanted tramps either segregated or removed.¹⁶⁴ One of the strategies adopted was to install seats with a central divide that helped prevent people lying across them in order to sleep (Figure 57). In 1892 the London County Council even adopted a byelaw that specifically prohibited 'gypsies, hawkers, beggars, rogues and vagabonds' from municipal parks', although by no means all the public supported the idea of excluding the poorest in society.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 99.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 101-2.



Figure 59. Spring Park Bench, sketch by Charles Dana Gibson, 1904.
<https://www.periodpaper.com/products/1906-print-charles-dana-gibson-girl-lovers-spring-park-bench-victorian-romance-033783-cdg1-124> [accessed 5/7/22]

Other users of park benches also drew comment (Figure 59). An article about ‘Sweethearting’ in Kelvingrove Park, Glasgow appeared in the *Dundee Courier* in 1895 written by someone who signs herself just ‘Tess’.¹⁶⁶ She wrote, the ‘smoothly gravelled walk along the Kelvin is a popular promenade’ and ‘the seats are all plentifully besprinkled’. She went on to say, ‘here I have seen lovers sit for the best part of an hour and a half....Sometimes no fewer than three couples will occupy one seat , and then not a little diplomacy has to be brought into play.’ The correspondent merely observed, she did not condemn. This an example of unintended use and one which, according to the prevailing middle class values, would have been seen as unacceptable. It was ‘symbolic inversion’ which Barbara Babcock defined as a behaviour that utilizes facilities in a way that contradicts commonly held cultural codes.¹⁶⁷

A letter from ‘A Lady Visitor’ to a public park in Fife in the *Fife Free Press*, also commented on seats in a public park.¹⁶⁸ She noted that on Saturday afternoons in the summer months when cricket was being played there was no music in the bandstand.

¹⁶⁶ *Dundee Courier*, 18 July 1895, p. 5. col. 4.

¹⁶⁷ Lambert, ‘Rituals of Transgression’, p. 206.

¹⁶⁸ *Fife Free Press*, 6 June 1896, p. 2. col. 5.

She proposed that, as large numbers attended the matches, amongst whom were ladies, that the chairs around the bandstand should be removed to the cricket ground.¹⁶⁹ The chairs would probably have been of folding type shown in Figure 60.



Figure 60. Folding chair. Boulton & Paul catalogue 1895. Garden Museum, p. 229 Ref. 2004-246.

Hence seating, as has been identified in previous chapters, was an element of park furniture in all public parks and in all areas of the park, but it could be a source of contention and its design influenced by use and the perception of users.

Because of the emphasis on parks as a healthy environment and the strong belief that public parks kept people away from the public house, the provision of drinking water fountains in public parks was almost universal. These fountains offered an opportunity for artistic expression and were important products of the iron industry (Figure 61).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.



Figure 61. The drinking fountain in Hackworth Park, Shildon. Paul Rabbitts, *Parkitecture*, (Stroud: Amberley Press, 2017) p. 68.

Figure 61 shows Macfarlane's Saracen foundry design no. 21 presented to Hackworth Park, Shildon, Durham, by members of the Old Shildon Workmen's Club in 1914. The specially designed shields represent the local mining profession and the engineer after whom the park was named.¹⁷⁰ A clear indication of the importance of such furniture to locals, not only as a practical feature but as a way of expressing civic pride.

In Kirkintilloch, one of the case study areas, The Hudson Drinking Fountain (Figure 62) in Peel Park, was manufactured by the Lion Foundry in the town and was presented to the Burgh of Kirkintilloch by former Bailie Hudson in 1905. Still valued by the locals, it is being renovated for the second time to ensure its preservation.

¹⁷⁰ <https://memorialdrinkingfountains.wordpress.com/tag/old-shildon-workingmens-club/> [accessed 20/6/22].



Figure 62. Hudson Drinking fountain, Kirkintilloch. Creative Commons Licence NS657.

Not all drinking fountains were large and ornate features, many that were placed in parks and on the streets were simple, functional designs (Figure 63).



Figure 63. Still in use a Victorian drinking fountain in Queen's Park Glasgow. *The Herald*, 25 March 2018, <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news16114607> [accessed 3/7/22].

The provision of conveniences by the Victorian era had become routine, although it was not universal. Initially a majority served only men, the result of society's view that 'modest' women would not wish to be seen entering a public convenience. The Public Parks Committee in Manchester discussed the need for public conveniences in 1846 and provoked the Honorary Secretary to declare,

'It is not desirable at any time to have too much accommodation of this kind, nor are the public parks the proper place for such matters. Besides I do not think that too much encouragement should be given to such occupation, and I conceive there is indelicacy in the very idea.'¹⁷¹

Fortunately, he was overruled, and the provision was made.

This certainly would have limited women's use of parks; it is sometimes referred to as the 'urinary leash' as it was potentially a way of controlling women's movements and ambitions outside the home.¹⁷² After campaigning towards the end of the nineteenth century more universal provision was made for women.¹⁷³ Figure 64, described as a water closet rather than urinal, was presumably a suitable provision for women although, given the sensibilities, conveniences for ladies were often located in waiting rooms and refreshment pavilions. A few examples of urinals, such as that in Mina Park Bristol (Figure 65), still survive in situ.

¹⁷¹ Manchester Public Parks Committee Proceedings, 18 September 1846 in Conway, *People's Parks*, p. 121.

¹⁷² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-41999792> [accessed 12/6/22]; <https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/History-of-Womens-Public-Toilets-in-Britain/> [accessed 12/6/22].

¹⁷³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/archive/collections/photographs/spending-a-penny/> [accessed 15/6/22].

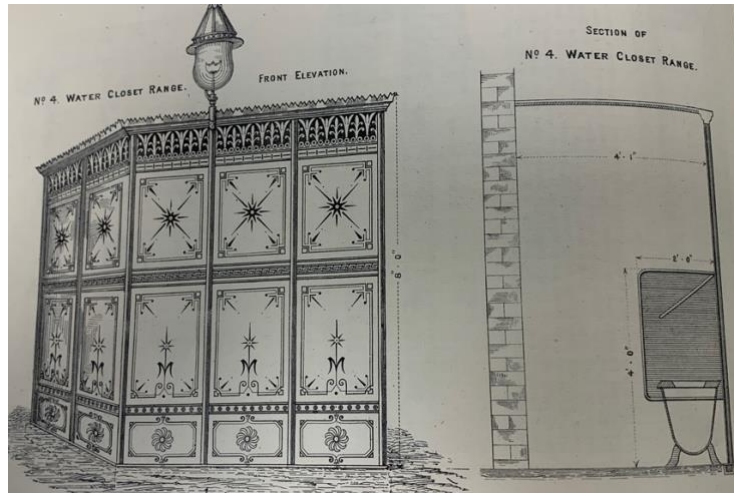


Figure 64. Water closet in Illustrated Catalogue, Lion Foundry, 1881 p. 167. GD10/7/1/1/1, Glasgow Archives [GA].

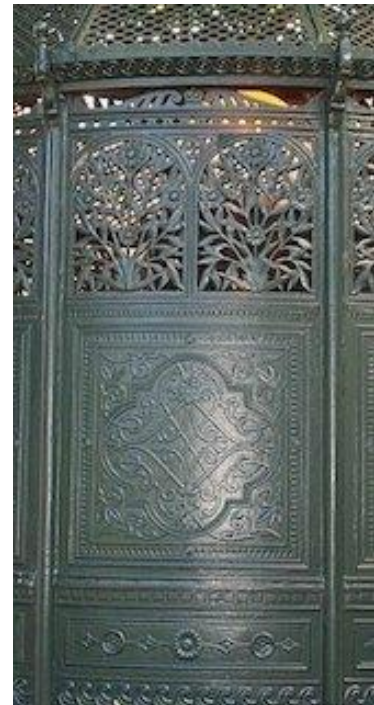


Figure 65. Urinal in Mina Road Park, Bristol manufactured by George Smith & Co. at the Sun Foundry in Glasgow. With detail of the floral design from the panel.
http://www.hevac-heritage.org/items_of_interest/public_health/street_urinals/street_urinals.htm
 [accessed 14/7/22].

Lighting in the form of lamp standards or brackets were items of park furniture that had a utilitarian role, providing safety, as well as being aesthetic features (Figures 66 & 67).



Figure 66. Victorian lamp standard in Peel Park, Kirkintilloch. Photo: The Author.



Figure 67. Lamp bracket, Kelvingrove Park. Photo: the Author

Other park furniture was also linked to safety, or, in some cases, control might be an apt description. These were the railings, found throughout the parks and flanking gates (Figure 68). O'Reilly points out that these boundaries indicated a new kind of space associated with expectations of certain behavioural standards, reinforced by regulations displayed prominently near the entrance.¹⁷⁴ The entrances were often ornate, making a statement about the importance attached to the park and demonstrating civic pride (Figure 69). They were also important advertisements for the skills and craftsmanship of the iron foundries.

¹⁷⁴ O'Reilly, *Greening the City*, p. 31.



Figure 68. The gates to Elder Park, Glasgow. <https://getintogovan.com/content/uploads/MultiHero-Elder-Park-Gates-After-1.jpg> [accessed 20/6/22].



Figure 69. Queen's Park, Glasgow. Entrance gates on Victoria Road. <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/2537768> [accessed 12/5/22].

Gates were sometimes funded by public subscription or were gifts from local organisations, such as the relatively modest northern entrance gates to Victoria Park, Glasgow (Figure 70). Made by Walter Macfarlane & Co. they were gifted by 'The Ladies of Partick Burgh' to commemorate the Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887.¹⁷⁵



Figure 70. Jubilee Gates to Victoria Park, Glasgow.
http://www.glasgowsculpture.com/pg_images.php?sub=victoria [accessed 14/4/22].

With the huge numbers frequenting parks it might be expected there would be a need to collect rubbish. It is not a surprise that such a mundane article would not be recorded in parks. However, the catalogue of Boulton & Paul (Figure 71) does include 'sanitary baskets' of galvanized mesh to fix to a wall so it is possible that a form of this product was found in parks.

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=31483&p=0> [accessed 12/5/22].

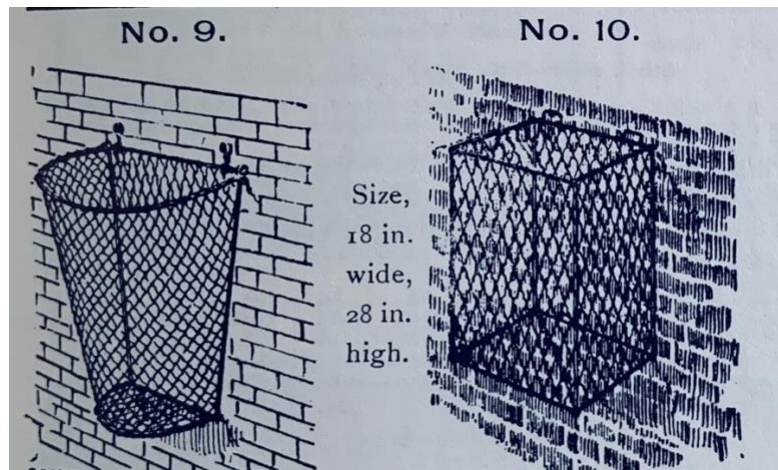


Figure 71. 'Sanitary' baskets. 1895 Catalogue, Boulton & Paul, Norwich, (Ottawa: Algrove Publishing Limited, 1998), p. 198A.

The role of the park user on park furniture provision seems largely to have been that of passive recipient. Successful agitation, however, for sports facilities involved an increase in furniture provision. Users, such as sweethearts and vagrants had the power to subvert intended use and in the latter case influence design. Particularly in relation to women some aspects of park furniture, such as the provision of conveniences, reinforced the social stereotypes of the era that restricted women's freedom. Notwithstanding this, women were, as subscribers, sometimes instrumental in funding the provision of memorial or celebratory park furniture.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The item of furniture universal to all public parks and gardens was seating – iron seating. This simple item, located in a public park, provided a visual expression of civic life in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Numerous illustrations of provision show how it was used to rest, meet and converse. Seating contributed to the prevailing philosophy of social improvement. Those of the ‘lower order’ could sit and observe culturally accepted norms of dress and behaviour. The seating provided around horticultural displays or aesthetically sophisticated fountains offered the observer an encounter with ‘art’, the opportunity for learning. The design was at times adapted to ensure that the undesirable user, the marginalised of society, could be prevented from sleeping on it, where they were not totally excluded from the park. It also became the locus of ‘unintended’ use such as ‘Sweethearting’, a differentiation of the original purpose becoming subtly diverted to a different use, seen by many as inappropriate. Seating demonstrated the tension between the park as a space where greater freedom was permitted but, simultaneously, where the prevailing cultural norms exerted control. It provided a reflection of the class consciousness of society and, at the same time, a material expression of industrial skill.

The overall range of iron park furniture provided was similar throughout the period, although in public gardens it tended to be more restricted. Over time large quantities of utilitarian seats were required for some forms of recreation, such as band concerts and increasingly for spectating at sporting events. The huge range of iron park furniture supplied by the major manufacturers was produced not only their local public parks but a wide national market stimulated by the celebration of Queen Victoria’s jubilees. Park users could experience, through the impressive array of iron furniture and its decorative motifs, a demonstration of British industrial prowess and its important global role. The furniture became a significant visual representation of civic and national pride.

The influence of commissioners on the provision of park furniture appears to have been largely indirect. It was the type of park they commissioned and their vision for its use

that ultimately influenced the park furniture provision. Evidence from Bedford suggests that local authority commissioners would have required committee approval of expenditure. It is at this stage that park furniture would have been itemised although detailed specification may have occurred only at the implementation stage. Further research of other councils' records could test this supposition.

Some important designers, such as Loudon, Mawson, Major and Sexby incorporated references to park furniture, seating in particular, in their plans. Strong views on what style of seating was appropriate for parks were expressed particularly by Mawson.

Underpinning the original purpose of public parks was the provision of a healthy environment and this made the provision of drinking fountains an important item of park furniture. Some were simple designs but, along with entrance gates, they provided an opportunity for aesthetically impressive designs demonstrating civic pride or philanthropy. The very slow introduction of conveniences for women was an indicator of the social conventions of the time and the limitations on women's enjoyment of recreation in parks.

Evidence of users' views came from articles in the press often agitating for particular recreational activities or expressing concern over restrictive controls, such as 'keeping off the grass'. The views were generally about park use and hence only indirectly about park furniture provision. The voices tended to be those of the middle class, even if their aim was to secure wider provision for all. A subversive influence, an expression of user control, was demonstrated by what Lambert termed 'transgressive behaviour' such as 'Sweethearting' or holding banned political meetings. Yet in Glasgow Green, where such meetings were permitted, it was seen as a 'harmless outlet for sentiments that might otherwise become an explosive force'. This highlights the contested and potentially divisive context of the park and park furniture.¹⁷⁶ Despite the fact that the furniture was 'provided for the people' the direct influence of its users was limited. The intent of the use was demonstrated through adaptations of design, for example, incorporation of arms

¹⁷⁶ Elspeth King, *The People's Palace*, (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1993), p. 86.

in benches to deter sleeping, the provision of manoeuvrable folding chairs for spectators or fencing to delineate areas for sport. A direct impact was made through donation, often by subscription, of memorial or celebratory items such as gates and drinking fountains. However, it is unlikely that this would have involved working class users.

The relationship between public parks and iron park furniture production involved what might be termed the 'push and pull' of the market. Public parks required a range of park furniture in order to meet the needs of their users and, given their numbers, created a substantial market for these iron products. At the same time, iron foundries exploited this opportunity to increase their production and profitability by advertising and commercialising their range of these items.

The design, manufacture and commissioning of iron park furniture symbolised the industrial and imperialist might of Britain at the time. Examination of whether the furniture represented provision for the people revealed the significant role of utilitarian iron furniture as an indicator of prevailing social and political philosophies, gender stereotyping and class structure. Commissioners ultimately had the greatest influence on provision, and the people they had in mind were those who conformed to middle-class cultural values. The range of furniture was available for all users who gained access to the park, although it was the ubiquitous seating that could provide the opportunity to subvert expected behavioural norms.

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EDA = East Dunbartonshire Archives

FL = Falkirk Library

GA = Glasgow Archives, Mitchell Library

GM = Garden Museum

IGM = Museum of Iron Archives

SA = Shropshire Archives

UGA = University of Glasgow Archives

WMA = Whitchurch Museum Archives

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