

His predictions proved true and Harcourt House was demolished later that year. But before it fell to the demolition contractor's pickaxe, we can be thankful that a photographer strayed through its deserted precincts, already marked for the wreckers and stripped of anything of value, making a last, poignant record of the mysterious and secret elysium of the *Mole Duke*.

THE SURVEY of LONDON
PUBLIC PARKS and GARDENS

By David Lambert

Between February 1995 and March 1996, consultants worked for the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust on a survey of public parks, gardens, squares, cemeteries and churchyards in Greater London, funded with the help of a generous grant from English Heritage London Division. The survey looked at over fifteen hundred sites, and has produced both a group of about seventy potential candidates for the *Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*, and a draft inventory of some 1,280 sites of local historic importance. It has also thrown up some interesting questions about the nature of historic gardens, and the approach to county-wide surveys.

The survey includes a huge range of sites, and pushes out what Chuck Yeager would have called the *envelope* of definition. In addition to what is instantly recognisable as a park or garden, we found ourselves considering, and usually including, the designed landscape around a Victorian waterworks, converted burial grounds, the grounds of LCC public housing projects, hospital and asylum grounds, a children's miniature road layout complete with clipped and dwarf planting, commons, gardens of remembrance, an Edwardian school botanic garden, public walks, garden suburb landscaping, and a 1920s industrial research centre. We applied English Heritage's thirty-year rule, which disbars probably the most extensive major landscaping of recent times, that associated with large commercial and business developments.

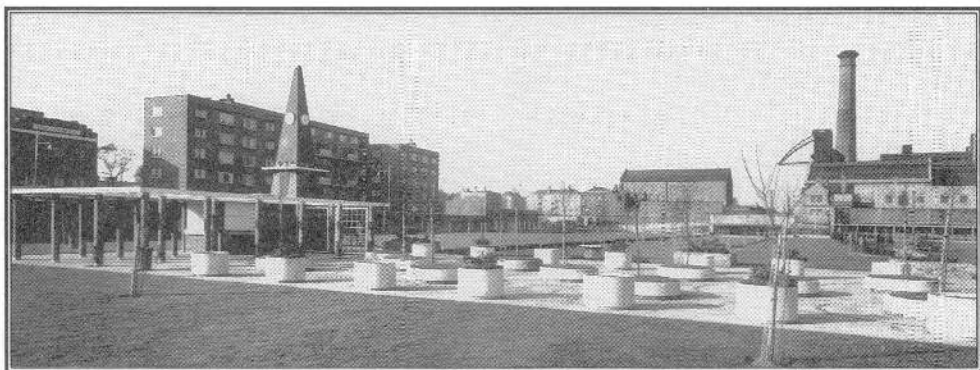
Churchyards, which the brief specifically included, are largely a new type, although Painswick churchyard in Gloucestershire is a registered site. Criteria include the quality of

tree-planting, path-layouts, monuments, architectural elements such as railings, walls and lychgates, the importance of the church and the role of the site in its urban setting. In the City however, where tree-planting was problematic, and the yards were often paved, the criteria need to be subtler: many such sites, converted to gardens by the Metropolitan Public Garden Association (MPGA) in the late nineteenth century, are of significant historic interest without fulfilling such requirements.

The whole question of architectural setting is particularly important in London, and by implication in other major cities. It seems worthwhile to ask what role a space has in street patterns and as the foil to surrounding buildings in such a context. Of course, many such sites are perhaps better designated as part of Conservation Areas than as historic gardens on an inventory, but the planned layout of suburbs such as Ruislip with its magnificent spine of landscaped roundabouts (what price a Register of Roundabouts?) or the dense arrangement of garden spaces in Rayners Lane, let alone the inter-related squares of Westminster, arguably deserve recognition as historic landscapes under some heading or another.

We have had to reconsider too the most basic criterion, that of design. Blackheath for example has no design element in itself, unless you count the siting of the Victorian picturesque All Saints Church on line with the Blackheath avenue in Greenwich Park, but it could be argued that the heath was left open by design and for historical reasons, and its openness was critical in the development around it, which all capitalised on the environment it created. How do you assess commons, such as Clapham, Ealing or Plumstead, for the inventory? There is often a significant element of design in the perimeter planting and path layout and architectural elements such as bandstands, but they are neither parks nor gardens in any conventional sense.

In looking at many late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century public parks, we have come to question the basic matrix of condition and age: at present, the later the site the more important a criterion becomes its condition. But the condition of public parks has so widely suffered in the last fifteen years, that neglect seems insufficient reason in itself to



12. Haggerston Park, Hackney, 1956. The park was laid out on the site of the former Gas, Light & Coke Co., destroyed in the Second World War (LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)

13. Shandy Street Recreation Ground, Stepney, 1957; formerly Beaumont Burial Ground, also known as East London Cemetery (LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)

14. Petersham Meadows looking from Richmond Hill, 1975 (LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)

discount a site which otherwise has notable and unaltered design quality, however recent its construction. And of course, the pre-park history of such sites, for example as common land or as a private estate, also makes strict dating problematic.

We have widened the value of association to extend beyond known designers or owners to include association with, say, a public campaign to save open space, or use of the land as a public meeting place, or with an architectural or social development. The social history of urban parks and gardens is particularly worthy of consideration in determining importance. In conclusion, it may well be that assessment of 'historic parks and gardens' in cities requires a different approach from those in rural areas.

On the dry subject of methodology, there is only space for one simple observation. We found that a map-based inventory was not feasible. An initial survey of maps and documents, while the obvious and essential starting point, had to be complemented at that primary stage with site visits. Maps fail to pick up small sites; they also fail to inform you of the existence of mature trees or earthworks, which can be critical in assessing the historic interest of a site. We found ourselves visiting virtually all of the sites included on the inventory, instead of just those that might be put forward for the *Register*.

Finally, it seemed a good idea to bring the story up to the present, so the survey included comments on present management (or lack of it) and the planning context - such as the threat of development or recent losses to, say, road-building.

The survey has revealed some bizarre management: not only the almost invariably corrosive effect of CCR, but such vagaries as the clearance of bandstands, the beheading of (dangerous) railings, the systematic sale of lodges, the filling-in of lakes, as well as the depressing spate of under-managed *wildlife areas*. The contrast between past beauties (and care) and present dereliction is revealed in the simplest picture postcard view. But there are some gleams of hope: Croydon has carried out a heritage audit of its parks and produced a book detailing their histories; several Friends organisations are helping to put together restoration plans, and a number of boroughs (credit here to Brent) are bucking the trend

and clearly see investment in parks as a priority. And of course, Lord Rothschild is actively encouraging the boroughs to apply for Heritage Lottery funding for work on public parks and gardens. English Heritage London Division has also produced a pack for all London boroughs advising them on repair schemes and Lottery bids.

The London Survey has demonstrated just what an integral part of the metropolitan fabric parks and gardens in the widest sense comprise. However, it should be remembered that identification (*another list*, as one sceptical heritage officer commented) is only the first, albeit essential, step in conserving this vital part of the urban environment. It is up to gardens trusts and other amenity groups not only to survey and record, but then to use that data to protect and enhance the special nature of these places.

Copies of the *Inventory* are on deposit at Duck Island Cottage and English Heritage. The survey was carried out for the LHFGT by Hazel Conway, Zara Conway, Ruth Gilding, David Lambert and Todd Longstaffe-Gowan. Research on the *Inventory* is still underway, and is being carried out by volunteers.

NOTES on the HAWKWOOD ESTATE and PETTS WOOD

By Daphne Thissen

Hawkwood Estate and Petts Wood are National Trust properties situated between Chislehurst and Orpington in Kent. The Hawkwood Estate comprises an area of 250 acres; Petts Wood, over 88 acres in extent, adjoins the eastern side of Hawkwood Estate.

What is now known as the Hawkwood Estate was originally a rural area called *Goodlands* which possessed woods, a stream and fields; it was the property of several families. Between 1543 and 1784 the estate was owned and managed by farmers and the land was handed down through the generations by inheritance. However, in 1784 the farmhouse and grounds were purchased by one Robert Jenner - who was succeeded in 1821 by Sir Herbert Jenner-Fust. Over the following