

Repeat commissions from members of the Gimpel family, after Brookes's completion of a Chelsea town garden (1964) (*fig. 52*) and, after he had designed and planted her garden at Pelham Cottage, SW7 (1965), from Annabel Birley (later Annabel Goldsmith),³² were crucial at this time and facilitated the development of a client base. Early in 1964, however, Brookes began a design for the West London offices of Penguin Books, which brought him wider professional recognition (*fig. 54*).³³ On published plan, the Penguin Books canteen courtyard (*fig. 53*) is comprised of geometrical shapes of water, planting, paving, grass and white chippings, the blocks divided by concrete paving slabs. The use of an underlying abstract theme, considered to be reminiscent of a Piet Mondrian painting, attracted public attention and was seen as a symbol of modernity – it matched the clean, simple lines of swinging sixties style.

Commercial and private client work during the late 1960s confirmed Brookes's stylistic versatility and his willingness and ability to design a functional space according to his client's needs. His designs included a series of gardens for south-east London show houses by Wren Properties (1965) (*fig. 55*), a communal garden in Bryanston Square, W1 (1966) (*fig. 56*), the extensive gardens around two Leonard Manasseh houses on the London fringes at Petersham, Surrey (1966), Heal's and Harrods in-store displays (1968) and demonstration gardens at Syon Park Garden Centre, Isleworth (1968). Towards the end of the decade Brookes's commissions were increasingly outside central London and, occasionally, abroad. When *Room Outside* was launched in 1969 he had designed more than one hundred London gardens. By the beginning of the 1970s, stimulated by television gardening programmes, DIY books, show gardens, easy access to garden centres (new in the 1960s), increased leisure time and disposable income, and affordable package holidays, an increasing number of people had acquired a taste for Mediterranean-style open-air living. John Brookes's timely publication provided amateur gardeners, as well as professional

designers, with the inspiration and practical knowledge to create their own 'room outside'.

John Brookes has been a significant influence on the design of gardens and landscapes for over half a century and has campaigned tirelessly to promote the recognition of garden design as a profession. Still at work today, Brookes has produced more than 1200 designs for town and country gardens in Britain and abroad. He was honoured with the 2004 *Award of Distinction* for his 'unique and exceptional contribution to the profession of landscape design' by the American Association of Professional Landscape Designers and an MBE 'Garden Designer. For services to horticulture in the UK and overseas' in the June 2004 Queen's Birthday Honours. John Brookes lives at Denmans, near Fontwell, West Sussex, where he manages a 4-acre garden open to the public.

The author wishes to thank John Brookes for providing access to his drawings and photographs and allowing for their reproduction, and for the time he has spent in discussion and recorded interviews.

**'ONE OF THE ABLEST GARDENERS in the EAST
END OF LONDON': WILLIAM PRESTOE and
VICTORIA PARK 1857-1868**
By Julia Matheson

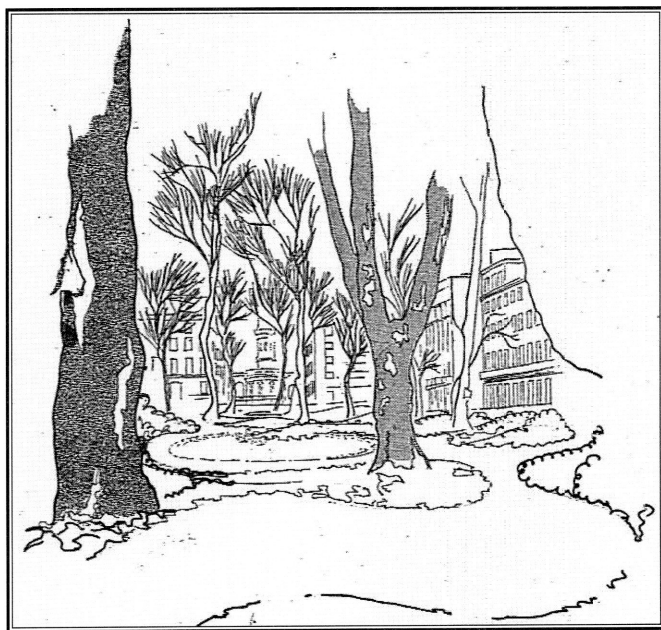
In November 1857, at the age of twenty-four, William Prestoe became Head Gardener of Victoria Park in the East End of London. He was responsible for 290 acres: grass, still grazed by sheep, but also the site of several cricket pitches, a splendid collection of trees and shrubs, an ornamental lake with three islands and – perhaps the main attraction – a fantastic series of flower beds and borders, bedded out in the High Victorian style and fully the equal of anything to be found in the West End.

Victoria Park was barely twelve years old when Mr Prestoe arrived. In 1840, 'the respectable portion of the inhabitants of Tower Hamlets' had presented a petition to the

32. Annabel Birley recommended Brookes to her brother, Lord Londonderry, for whom he later worked at Wynyard Park, Co. Durham.

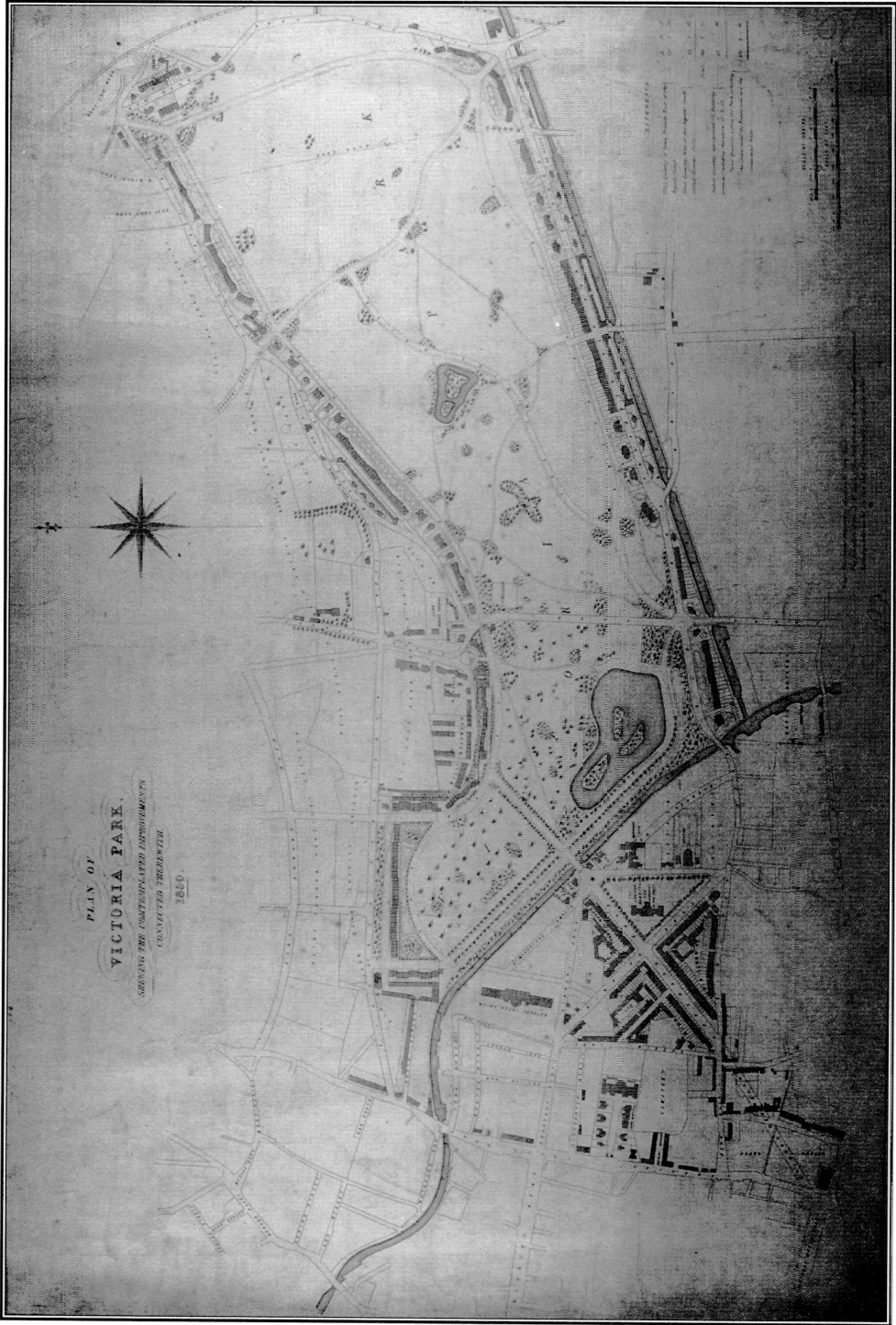
33. The garden was included in Jellicoe's selection of 42 modern gardens. See Jellicoe (1968), *op. cit.*, pp. 34-36.

1. Report of James Pennethorne 23 April 1841. Victoria Park Papers Vol. 1. London Metropolitan Archives.



55. A show garden for Wren Properties in Beckenham (1965)
(COURTESY JOHN BROOKES)

56. Sketch showing the proposed view to St Mary's Church, north of Eryanston Square, w1 (1966).
Pen and ink drawing by John Brookes
(COURTESY JOHN BROOKES)



57. Plan of Victoria Park shewing the contemplated improvements connected therewith. 1850.
(COURTESY LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)

young Queen Victoria, begging for the formation of 'a Royal Park, in which the comfort and healthful recreation of all classes of the inhabitants shall be adequately provided for'.² The Government had recently been alarmed by a report from the *Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages* which pointed out that the 'epidemics, whether influenza, typhus or cholera, small pox, scarlatina or measles which arise in the east end of the town do not stay there, they travel to the West end and prove fatal in wide Streets and Squares'³ and agreed remarkably quickly to the proposal. It found the money to fund the purchase of land in 1842 by selling off York House, one of the grandest private houses in London, which had reverted to the Crown Estates in part settlement of the debts of the Duke of York. James Pennethorne, who had worked with John Nash on Regent's Park and who was now the Architect to the Department of Woods and Forests, put forward two suggested sites – a northern and a southern. He preferred the southern, which was basically Bow Common with some of the land around it, but the northern site was cheaper to acquire so, inevitably, the Government decided on the northern one. The site was bordered on the north by Hackney, on the west by Bethnal Green, on the east by Wick Lane and on the south by Old Ford. It was divided by a public road – Grove Road – which could not be closed off. Negotiations with the various landlords and market gardeners who owned or occupied the land were protracted, but work was under way by 1844, before the compensation payments had been finalised. Although there was never an official opening, the public were using the park by 1845.

Originally, the plan was to develop the land just outside the park itself with elegant villas, as in Regent's Park, attracting wealthy City men to the East End. A carriage drive was to encircle the park itself, inside the boundary, as an added attraction for these residents, who could promenade as was done in Hyde Park. Trees would be planted, to create a beautiful landscape, but there would also be plenty of open grassland where games could be

played. One of the market gardeners who had been bought out, John Greig, was appointed as a temporary Superintendent to be in charge of day to day work at a salary of £2 2s per week.

Just as in today's garden design, the first job was to get the hard landscaping done. The area of the park had to be fenced in. There was gravel on the site which could be used for the carriage drive and other paths. At first there was no provision for any 'water feature', but by 1846 Pennethorne, who was responsible for the overall design of the park, suggested using the old gravel pits as the site for an ornamental boating lake. At the beginning of the same year, it was decided that a 'person of acknowledged experience and judgement'⁴ should be appointed to supervise the planting of the trees. John Greig was dismissed and Samuel Curtis, a nurseryman and former proprietor of *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, was appointed at an annual salary of £250. Mr Curtis was warmly recommended by the Director of Kew, but unfortunately he and James Pennethorne found it very difficult to work together and Curtis left (under something of a cloud) in July 1848. His successor was John Gibson, a protégé of Joseph Paxton. Gibson had been with Paxton when the latter had designed the municipal park in Liverpool (though the work was supervised by another of Paxton's assistant gardeners from Chatsworth) and had no doubt absorbed Paxton's ideas on landscaping a public park. Kate Colquhoun, author of a biography of Paxton,⁵ suggests that Gibson altered and improved the layout of Victoria Park when he took it over. (fig. 57) However, it does not seem that the *Gardeners' Chronicle* reporter thought much of his efforts, for he wrote in 1850:

Let the reader conceive an undulating space of 290 acres, entered by a lodge which can be compared to nothing better than a modern ruin built in some Cockney garden, of half vitrified bricks, and then made habitable by a country bricklayer. Having entered, let him imagine a road bending through the place till it finds its exit at the opposite side, another unfinished road, overgrown with grass leading to the left, a few others curving in different directions; unmeaning masses of little miserable trees and shrubs, evidently the

2. Petition included within the above report.

3. First Report of the Register General of Births, Deaths and Marriages (1839), quoted in the above report.

4. Board of Works, Minute 7 November 1845. Victoria Park Papers Vol. 2. London Metropolitan Archives.

5. *A Thing In Disguise: The Visionary Life of Joseph Paxton* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003).

sweepings of some neglected nursery ground, and a great piece of water on the right, having in its middle an island looking more like an old naval cocked hat than anything we can call to mind, and he will have as good an idea of Victoria Park as we have the skill to convey. Beyond this there is nothing, except a frightful pagoda perched at one end of the frightful island, and the beginning of a foot bridge to connect that paradise with the mainland, which bridge consists of three or four rotten planks resting on struts, and impassable by anybody less surefooted than an Irish hodman. That is Victoria Park, that is what the country has paid 44,000*l.* for; that is what the inventive genius of the agents of the Woods and Forests has last offered to the public, as a sample of English landscape gardening. Ye shades of BROWN, of GILPIN, of REPTON, arise and denounce the perpetrators of this national offence!⁶

However, an American who visited the park a little later came away with a very different impression:

Yet, though the grounds are new and not all laid out, it is a beautiful park. Its entrance-gate is, though not costly, in good taste, and the first department is laid out very gracefully. There are miniature lakes in it, full of swans and other aquatic birds. A beautiful island is formed by one of them, and upon it there is an elegant and fairy-like structure in the Chinese style of architecture, which is, in the proper season, almost buried among a profusion of flowers and shrubs and plants. The open fields are kept beautifully green, the walks are well gravelled, and it is one of the healthiest spots within ten or fifteen miles of London, in any direction.⁷

It is surely Gibson who was responsible for the placing of the flower beds that would become such a feature of Victoria Park. He stayed in post for eight years, before leaving to become Superintendent of Battersea Park.

So far, all the men named as associated with the creation of the park have been Superintendents. William Prestoe was the Head Gardener. His name does not appear once in the nine large volumes of Victoria Park Papers (the records of the Metropolitan Board of Works) held at the London Metropolitan Archives. It is in the pages of the gardening magazines, particularly those of the *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, edited by Shirley Hibberd, that one can read about his work in Victoria Park and the many other ways in which he became part of the horticultural scene in the

East End of London.

He was born in 1834 in Andover, the son of William Prestoe, who was also a gardener. In April 1854 he joined the staff at Kew Gardens. At this time, the Curator of Kew was John Smith, an expert on ferns, and judging by Prestoe's later activities, he must have spent at least part of his time studying the ferns in the collections there. For example, in 1858 he wrote a series of articles on 'New and Rare Ferns' for the *Floricultural Cabinet*; in 1863, having been elected one of the Vice-Presidents of the Central Society of Horticulture, he offered a prize of 15*s.* for 'the best six plants of ferns, dissimilar, correctly named'⁸ to be exhibited in 1864; in the same year he delivered a 90-minute lecture on ferns to the Tower Hamlets Floricultural Society and showed them several beautiful examples.

In November 1857, William Prestoe left Kew and went to Victoria Park. He later told the East Tower Hamlets Floricultural Society that when he had been given the position, the then Chief Commissioner of Public Works, Sir Benjamin Hall, 'had expressed a wish that he would assist and encourage the floricultural societies of the district'.⁹ It is therefore clear that the appointment had been approved at the highest level, which makes it all the more irritating that there is no correspondence about it in the files. It would have been interesting to know what his conditions of employment were and what exactly his duties were. (It was only after his death that the *Gardener's Magazine* wrote that for most of his time he earned 25*s* a week and never more than 30*s.*) At this date there seems to have been no accommodation within the park allocated to the Head Gardener, so he moved into a house just north of the park limit, and there his first child was born in March 1859.

In 1862, the fifth summer which William Prestoe had spent in the Park, the *Gardener's Magazine* began its annual reviews of the summer bedding scheme and it is from these reviews that one can discover the main horticultural features for which he was responsible and for which Victoria Park became famous – the mound beds, the ribbon borders, the scrolls and the great geometric designs. All the

6. *Gardener's Chronicle*, 1 August 1850, p. 519.

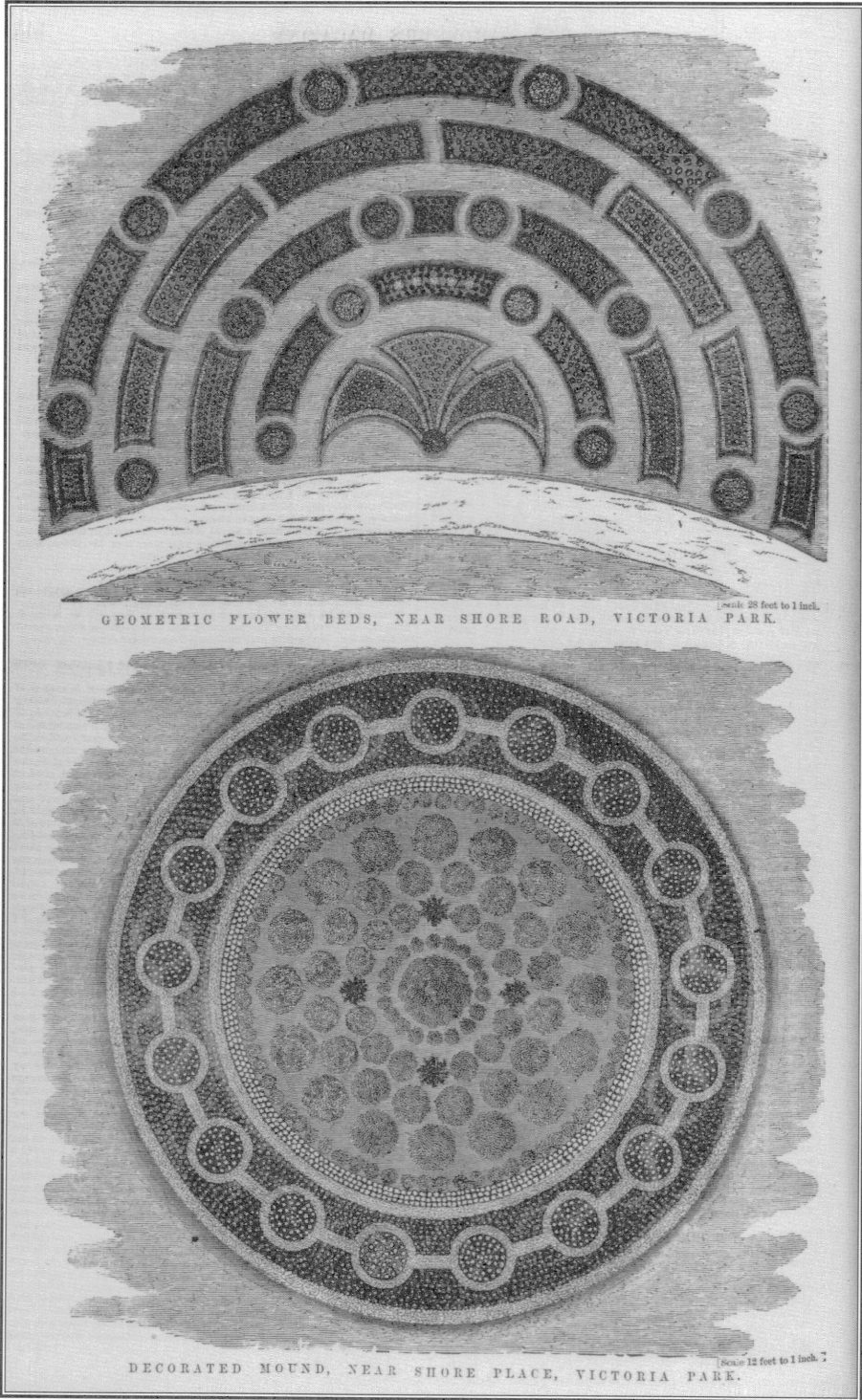
7. David Bartlett, *What I Saw In London* (Auburn Connecticut, 1852).

8. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 10 December 1863.

9. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 31 December 1864.



58. *Drinking Fountain in the Victoria Park, the gift to the public of Miss Burdett Coutts.*
A. H. Darbishire, Architect
(COURTESY LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)



59. TOP: *Geometric Flower Beds near Shore Road, Victoria Park;*
BOTTOM: *Decorated Mound, near Shore Place, Victoria Park.*
The Gardener's Magazine, 4 August 1866
(COURTESY BRITISH LIBRARY)

professionals who saw the displays were astonished at what Mr Prestoe achieved with minimal resources. George Glenny, the notoriously fiery horticultural journalist, was reported as saying:

There was no particular reason why we should praise the management of the West-end parks and gardens, because there was a prodigal expenditure of money and labour, and it would be strange if there was not something of a result. But at Victoria Park the gardener did wonders almost without means, and taught a lesson of economy and management to every practical man who visited his greenhouses and pits, which were so small and few that it was scarcely credible he should make so splendid a display of flowers during the summer.¹⁰

Shirley Hibberd goes into more detail:

The nursery establishment consists of one span-roofed house about forty feet by twelve, and a frame ground of about a thousand square feet, the frames made of rough timber by the gardeners themselves, and lights sufficient to cover only about half of them.... Of course in such a place as this propagating goes on all the year round. The little house is now filled with cuttings of Brilliant, Christine, Flower of the Day, &c. [all these are geraniums], mostly three or four cuttings in fifty-four sized pots, in which they are to be wintered, and be shifted into separate pots in spring. In the pits are reserves of asters, perillas, &c. In the rear of one of the shrubberies, and quite out of sight of the public, is a small piece of nursery ground. Here we saw a fine stock of Bull's Sparkler Calceolaria, turned out expressly to furnish cuttings for beds next year.¹¹

William Prestoe had to provide plants for a far greater number of beds and borders than exist in Victoria Park today. These were concentrated at the western end of the park, though there was certainly planting around the magnificent fountain presented by Angela Burdett Coutts in 1862. (fig. 58 - and note the gardener in the foreground!) The walk leading to the fountain had a border of hardy herbaceous and bulbous plants, including hollyhocks, asters, *Monarda* bergamot, penstemons, double *Saponaria*, yellow lupin and statice. Shirley Hibberd particularly commended the penstemons - 'you may travel all over England and not see better examples than Mr Prestoe produces within three miles of St. Paul's Cathedral'.¹² Other areas had cannas,

India-rubber plants, tobacco plants and even Indian corn. There was also a rockery, with saxifrages, statices and sedums. But it was really the bedding schemes that drew the crowds in their thousands.

The simplest were a series of oblong beds with a single kind of plant in each: different varieties of geraniums - which today would be called pelargoniums - gazanias, calceolarias, verbenas etc. Next, along most of the major walks, in front of the shrubberies, were the ribbon borders: long lines of plants that gave the effect of striped ribbon. These could be comparatively simple: for instance in 1862 there was one about a yard wide, with a central line of *Tropaeolum elegans* (scarlet flowers), with a line of blue lobelia on each side, and an edging of a dwarf variegated geranium. Another, 'a real good poor man's style of ribbon',¹³ had a central line of geranium 'Tom Thumb' (scarlet flower) and outer lines of grey-leaved *Stachys lanata*. A third, described as 'extra good' combined geranium 'Flower of the Day' (green leaves edged broadly with white, salmon-scarlet flower) with *Verbena* 'Purple King'. In 1863, however, there was a much more dramatic ribbon, nine feet wide, with a front line of *Tropaeolum lobbianum* (orange-red flowers), then a line of grey cineraria, then geranium 'Commander in Chief' (pale green leaves, white stems, light scarlet flowers), next a line of *Perilla nankinensis* (dark bronzy-purple foliage), then geranium 'Trentham Rose' (actually red-flowered, not pink) and finally, at the back, a line of *Dahlia* 'Captain Ingram' (so far, I have not discovered the colour of this variety). These were the sort of designs that could be adapted for a small garden and Mr Prestoe is praised for having attached to each bed 'a large legibly written tally, so that people who take a fancy to a particular thing may copy the name into their notebooks ... and go off to any of the east-end nurserymen, and order it at once, and rival Victoria Park'.¹⁴ Another source of inspiration was the huge raised bed divided into two inner concentric circles with six compartments at equal distances all round it. The centre was geranium 'Attraction' (another variegated variety), the compartments were

10. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 7 November 1863.

11. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 1862.

12. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 12 August 1865.

13. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 1862.

14. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 1863.

perilla alternating with *Gazania splendens* (bright orange flowers on dark green foliage), with groundwork of a glittering, grey-white variegated alyssum.

This is very luxurious, and it is true people's planting, for there is nothing expensive or difficult to do about it. Given the pit room, a few plants to begin with, moderate skill in propagating, and a pinch of good *Perilla* seed to sow in a cold frame in April, and folks who have no duke's fortunes to fall back upon may do the same thing in their small gardens, and keep pace with fashion without violating taste.¹⁵

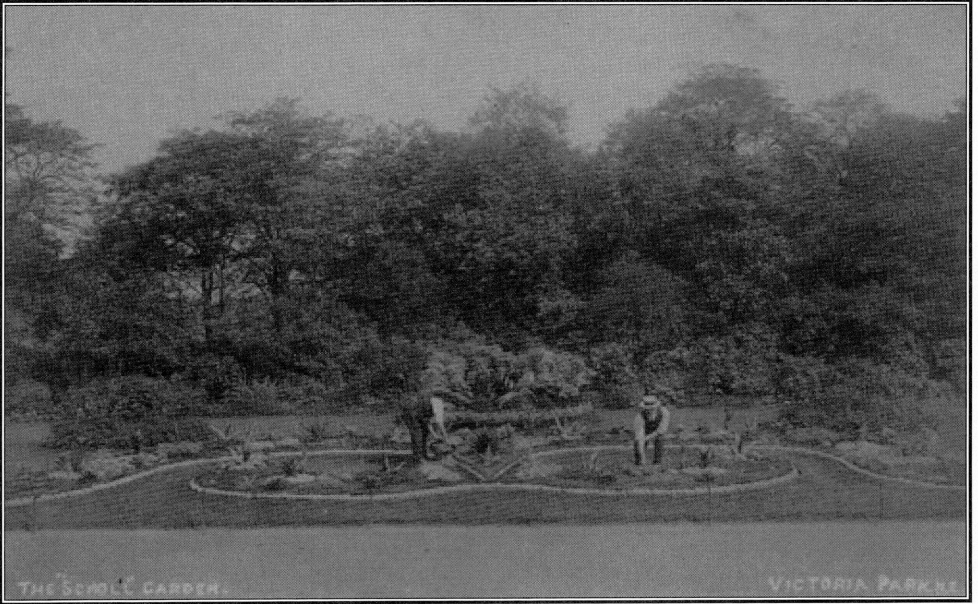
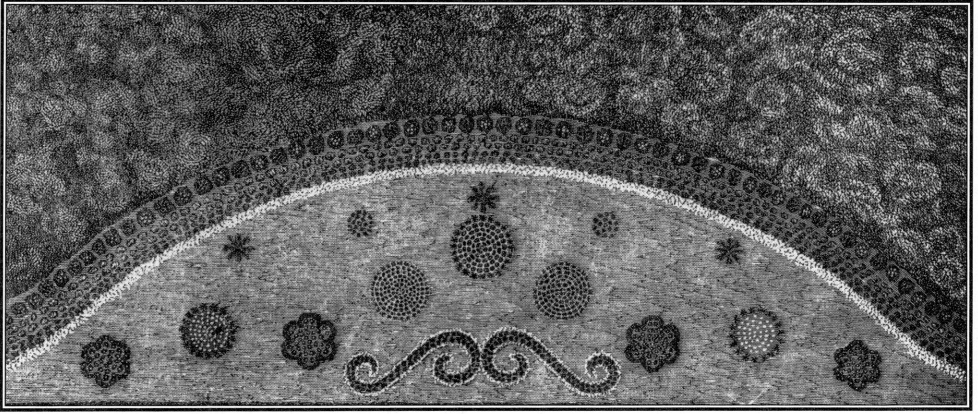
You would, however, probably have needed a duke's fortune – or at least a duke-sized garden – to recreate the grandest of the geometric schemes. The diagrams (figs. 59 & 60) show three of these: a circular bed, the largest of the scroll beds, and – the star of the show – the semicircle with a bird-like shape in the centre. The outlines of the beds remain constant from year to year, but the planting is different each time, and I give a representative sample. The circular bed is one of a pair, 72 feet in diameter and rising to a height of 4 feet. At the centre is a grouping of trees and shrubs, and around these are rings, planted in the same way as the ribbon beds, with, in 1865, yellow dahlias at the back, then variegated geraniums. The little circles are filled with a red geranium, with the links and borders in silvery grey *cerastium* (Snow-in-Summer). All the gaps are filled with blue lobelia, and the final edging is *cerastium* again. In 1866, the scrolls in the scroll bed were formed with a double row of geranium 'Little David' (red) with one row of *Lobelia paxtoniana* (blue-grey) on each side. The centre circular bed behind was filled by geranium 'Tom Thumb' (red) bordered by two rows of perilla (purple foliage). On each side of this are matching beds of deep yellow *calceolaria* edged with more 'Tom Thumb'. Next come matched beds of geranium 'Flower of the Day' (variegated, salmon-scarlet blooms) with blue lobelia, then two beds of foliage plants – claret leaved amaranthus and deep red mountain spinach, bordered by low-growing white *Gnaphalium lanatum*. The outermost beds are of *Lobelia paxtoniana* alone. (fig. 61)

However, it is the semicircular bed that was the real eye-catcher. It had forty beds in all. If one looks at the numbered version of the

diagram, (fig. 62) bed no 1 is 25 feet long by 9 feet broad, and each circle is 9 feet in diameter. The diameter of the semicircle is about 180 feet and the furthest bed from the roadway (no 7) is about 120 feet away from the viewer. As Shirley Hibberd considered that the display in 1867 was better coloured than he had ever seen it before,¹⁶ it is this one that I shall describe in detail. Unfortunately there is no central listing of varieties and their colours – these can only be picked up by chance references here and there and by consulting contemporary books on gardening which occasionally describe the plants named. I have therefore had to leave gaps here and there and would be most grateful if any reader can tell me what the colours are. The wings of the central bird shape are geranium 'Baron Ricasoli' (colour as yet unknown) with dots of geranium 'Cloth-of-Gold' (a yellow-leaved variety), the tail is 'Cloth-of-Gold', as is the body dot, and the whole motif is edged with *cerastium*. Bed 17 is a scarlet verbena, bed 18 a white petunia, bed 19 a soft rose petunia, bed 20 blocks of a white-leaved, white flowered geranium filled in with claret-leaved amaranthus. In the next ring, bed 12 is *Verbena* 'Purple King' edged with *cerastium*, bed 13 is *Tropaeolum compactum* (small leaves, small orange-red flowers), bed 14 is *Calceolaria* 'Prince of Orange' (bright orange brown fading to light orange) edged with geranium Brilliant (variegated, deep scarlet flowers), bed 15 geranium 'Lord Palmerston' (colour as yet unknown) edged with silvery leaved *dactylis*, bed 16 is geranium 'Cybister' (colour as yet unknown, but likely to be red or purplish.) In the next ring, bed 8 is *Lobelia paxtoniana* (blue-grey), bed 9 has oblong blocks of geranium 'Christine' (rose) filled in with orange *calceolaria*, bed 10 oblong blocks of geranium 'Stella' (possibly a purplish colour) edged with variegated coltsfoot, bed 11 orange *calceolaria* edged with claret-leaved amaranthus. The outermost line begins with bed 1 which has variegated alyssum and geranium 'Flower-of-the-Day' (white-edged variegated, with scarlet flowers) edged with amaranthus, bed 2 geranium 'Brilliant', bed 3 oblongs of pale yellow *calceolaria* with bands all round of *Calceolaria* 'Gem' (orange brown edged in yellow) edged with *dactylis*, bed 4

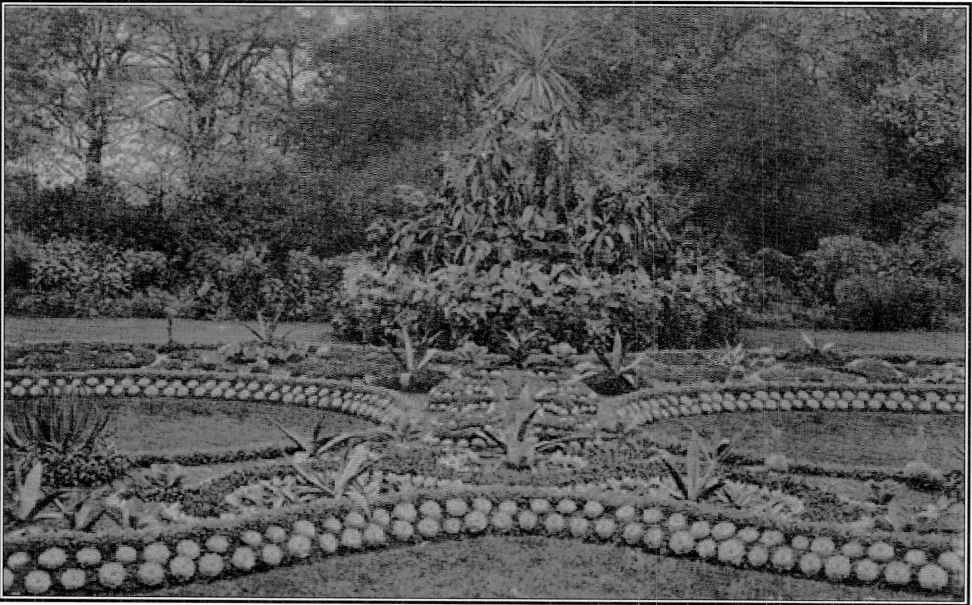
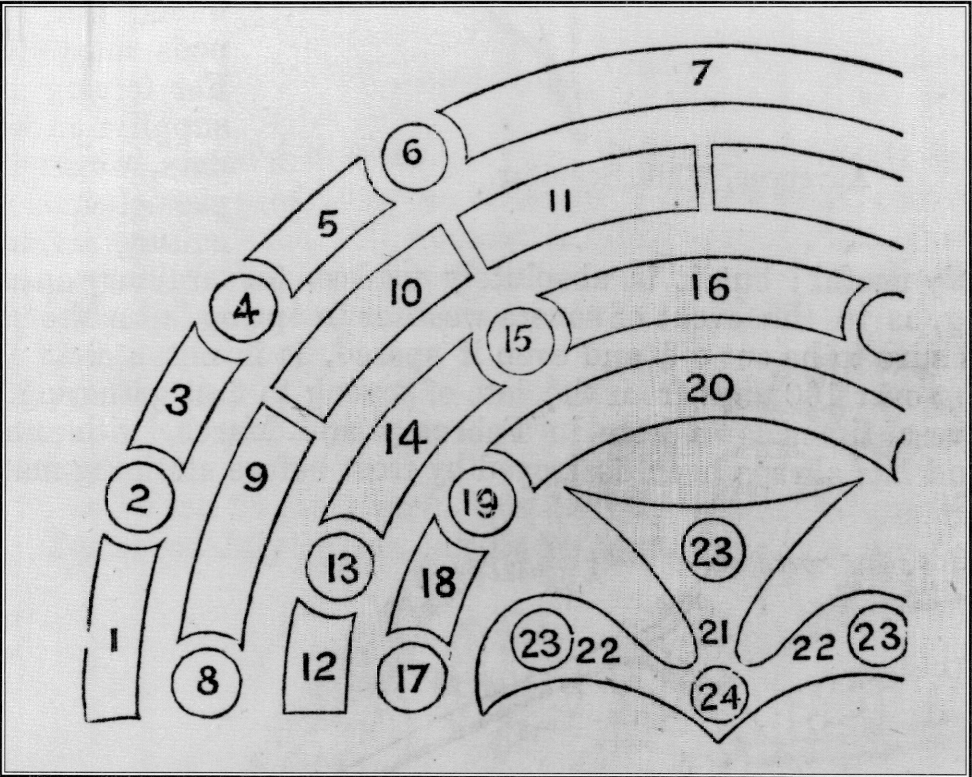
15. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 1863.

16. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 1867.



60. *Scroll and Flower Beds near Hanover Gate, Victoria Park*, from *The Gardeners Magazine* 11 August 1866
(COURTESY BRITISH LIBRARY)

61. *The Scroll Garden, Victoria Park*, postcard c.1905
(COURTESY PHIL MERNICK)



62. Diagram of Geometric Flower Beds, Victoria Park, *The Gardeners' Magazine*, 4 August 1866
(COURTESY BRITISH LIBRARY)

63. *Scroll Flower Beds, Victoria Park*, postcard c.1905
(COURTESY PHIL MERNICK)

geranium 'Trentham Rose' (red), bed 5, oblongs of geranium 'Punch' (brilliant scarlet), edged with perilla, bed 6, variegated ribbon grass, edged with cineraria (both grey), bed 7 'the key of the arch', geranium 'Trentham Rose'. No wonder so many writers on Victoria Park refer to the 'blaze of colour'. This magnificent bed was near the present day Night Walk, and it is still the site of the most impressive bedding scheme in Victoria Park today.

It may seem that Mr Prestoe relied heavily on geraniums and calceolarias for his schemes. These were comparatively easy to propagate and were also long-lasting and could, on the whole, stand up to most weather conditions – all important considerations in park gardening without the huge resources of private gardens. Nevertheless, if you read the magazine reviews in full, it is amazing what a large variety of plant material he used.

Mr Prestoe had 32 assistants – unlike today, when the Park has to manage with 12 – but even so it is difficult to imagine how he found the time to be involved in all the other activities that are reported about him. Year after year he helped out at local flower shows, lending foliage plants to form a background to the exhibits and sometimes acting as judge. In 1863 he was given a testimonial to which over two hundred local people subscribed and with donations from Angela Burdett Coutts and the Chief Commissioner of Works. He chose a microscope and the complete *Arboretum Britannicum* by J C Loudon and in addition he was given a purse containing forty sovereigns. These were presented at a dinner in the Crown Tavern, to which his father had also been invited. Many of the speech makers stressed how far he had gone beyond mere duty in his efforts to encourage floriculture in the East End and to beautify Victoria Park. In his acceptance speech, William Prestoe said that 'he was well rewarded for his work in seeing thousands of persons, largely consisting of those in humble life, enjoying the fresh air, the prospects, and the flowers all the summer long'.¹⁷ 1865 was a particularly busy year. He showed a collection of potatoes at the third flower show of the Victoria Park Society of Amateurs (which he had helped to organise),

and a collection of apples at the East Tower Hamlets Floricultural Show. (It is not stated whether he grew these actually in the Park, or whether he had some land elsewhere.) In the same year he wrote a guide to Victoria Park. He also made an ornamental garden and promenade in Stepney churchyard.

Life must have seemed good. By 1868, he was a respected member of the local community and known to many in the wider horticultural world. He was well settled in a good position in which he could expect to stay – after all, Mr Bullen had been at Kensington Gardens for nineteen years and Samuel Broome at the Middle Temple for more than thirty. He was the father of six children with another on the way. And then in November, while he was preparing for the chrysanthemum show, he caught a cold which turned into a fever. In a matter of days, aged only 35, he died at his home in Victoria Park and was buried in St Barnabas Church, Homerton. His wife was left in a desperate situation with a young family to maintain. Many of the same men who had organised the testimonial came forward to organise a subscription to help her. There were advertisements about it in the local newspapers and in the gardening magazines. William's younger brother Henry, who had followed him to Kew and then gone out to be the Superintendent of the Trinidad Botanic Gardens, wrote to the Director of Kew to see if he could use his influence with the Board of Works to allow Mrs Prestoe to stay in the gardener's lodge until the birth of her child.¹⁸ It seems that Joseph Hooker's intervention was not needed as permission had already been granted. The child was born in March 1869. By then a new Head Gardener had been appointed. The work of maintaining the park had to go on.

In 2007 it will be exactly one hundred and fifty years since William Prestoe arrived in Victoria Park. When I visited the park earlier this year and met the present Head Gardener, we both thought it would be wonderful if one of his planting schemes could be recreated – even if on a reduced scale – as a modest tribute to a remarkable Victorian gardener.

17. *Gardener's Weekly Magazine*, 7 November 1863.

18. Letter dated 9 December 1868. DC vol. 213 ff 421. Kew Gardens Archives.