

of the brutalist 1960s tower blocks and 1980s shopping malls, the latter in the title of the overarching project, which suggests a dystopian post-Olympic future. The drawings offer a double critique of redevelopment, depicting doomed 'regeneration' schemes, now crumbling and graffitied, and warning what is to come when these are, in their turn, demolished.

Paradoxically, the interest of these detailed biro drawings derives in part from their willful banality. They compel us to contemplate anonymous, unloved vistas which, in reality, the eye normally slides over. This is not fashionable inner-city decay, which has always had its own picturesque charm, but the despoiled, wrecked remnants of past redevelopments, financially and aesthetically valueless. Most striking in this respect is the artist's painstaking depiction of large areas of waste land, grassed and weeded over, criss-crossed by dirt paths. This dedication to the bleak, unlovely and above all empty spaces between pylons and tower blocks inverts topographical conventions of the optimum view point or the sleight of hand, which shifts buildings to make a better, ideal, view.

Rather than tidying up London vistas, as other such projects are apt to do, in Oldfield Ford's work graffiti is not only recorded, but added to the drawings where it doesn't already exist. Is the slogan 'FUCK THE OLYMPICS', apparently sprayed on a concrete bridge (not, alas, in one of the V&A's drawings) a found object or a created one? How far has the artist intervened? Protest extends to the drawings' subtitles, which, in a graffiti-like idiom, casually incite violence ('Loot Asda Burn Barratts') or, like snatches of overheard conversations, make vaguely threatening predictions ('But the time may come sooner than people think').

In some drawings the political dimension comes into sharp focus. The 'Elegy for Lammas Land' series (*fig. 32*) alludes to an area in Waltham Forest, recently claimed by the London Development Agency, which many local residents believed to be common land held in trust by the council on behalf of the people. (Lammas-land was traditionally subject to common rights of pasturage between Lammas-day, 1st August, and the spring.) In the face of strong local opposition,

the LDA eventually won the right to claim this land for the relocation of allotments from Hackney, which had been bulldozed in 2007 to provide a route between Olympic stadia. This particular drawing shows a more than usually featureless scrubby, overgrown open space; it is to conventional park views what Kitchen Sink was to the elegant interior scene. The drawing eulogises the area's unregulatedness, its lack of civic amenities (those paths are unpaved; they record a pattern of use by local people) – the very qualities that presumably made it vulnerable to annexation by the authorities.

Oldfield Ford's drawings are comparable to the 'Recording Britain' project of World War Two, for which artists were commissioned to record buildings and landscapes, often marginal and modest sites of local significance, which in the 1940s were under threat from enemy bombs (the 1600 resulting drawings and watercolours are now in the V&A). *London 2013: Drifting Through the Ruins* offers a range of political and poetic responses to the environmental impact and social consequences of the Olympic Games, all of which challenge the premise of the apparently axiomatic benefits of regeneration. Both series set out to record architecture and landscapes at risk of destruction.

'MARGATE SANDS': THE SEASIDE IN LONDON AT BISHOPS PARK, FULHAM

By Sally Miller

Bishops Park lies along the river bank in Fulham between Putney Bridge and Craven Cottage, the ground of Fulham Football Club. It was a late nineteenth-century creation on land that was part of the estate of Fulham Palace, which it borders. It was laid out and opened in stages between 1893 and 1903, with further additions in 1924 and 1926: its most famous feature, 'Margate Sands', opened in 1903 (*fig. 33*).

The Public Health Act of 1875 enabled local authorities for the first time to acquire and maintain land for recreation and to raise loans for the purpose (earlier public parks had been funded by private benefactors or public

subscription).¹ The late Victorian park became a symbol of civic confidence and pride, a visible demonstration of the commitment of local authorities to improve the quality of life of all residents. In Fulham a building boom in the last decades of the century swallowed up the common fields and the population grew from around 4,000 in the village of 1801 to over 137,000 in 1901.² Charles Booth in his survey of the London poor placed a quarter of the population of the borough in poverty.³ With poverty came serious health problems. Many houses lacked adequate sanitation and ventilation and were overcrowded. Sickness and disease were always present: cholera, typhus and TB. In 1902/3 the primary causes of death in Fulham Infirmary were TB, senility, epidemic diarrhoea and pneumonia, in that order.⁴ Typically, in these newly built and crowded western suburbs the well-off lived in close proximity to the desperately poor and the provision of a park that all could use was seen as an urgent need to help mitigate the results of overcrowding and social changes.

On 2 July 1883 a public meeting of the inhabitants of Fulham and Hammersmith passed a Resolution that 'a serious effort should be made to secure in permanency sufficient open space for a public park & recreation ground'. The subsequent Memorial, which was addressed to the Fulham Board of Works,⁵ described a Fulham that 'but a short time since' was almost entirely market gardens and open meadow land but which in the space of just a few years had been 'rapidly covered ...with small dwellings with very small backyards in many cases inhabited by two

families...'.⁶ It stressed the value of a Park in promoting the health and welfare 'particularly of the poorer & younger classes' and called for 100 acres to be identified and purchased for the purpose. It went on to assure the Board that the cost would be more than offset by reducing the burden of public health expenditure and by the increasing value of the surrounding building land, arguments which had been advanced in the cause of public parks throughout the century.

The ambition for 100 acres was never realised but with amazing alacrity, on 14 July Bishop Jackson, Bishop of London, resident of Fulham Palace,⁷ wrote to the Clerk of the Board:

Sir,

In view of the rapidly increasing population of Fulham I am prepared, subject to the consent of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners...

to offer as an open space the meadow lying between the Palace Moat & the River

The appellation 'Meadow' conjures up entirely the wrong image. By the 1880s it was a rubbish dump,

a malodorous line of foreshore, the receptacle of dead dogs and cats and other disagreeable flotsam and jetsam brought up by the tide. Backing it was a forlorn stretch of marshland, unkempt and unsavoury...a sort of no-man's land, a nuisance to the palace and an eyesore to the public.⁸

Frequent flooding at high tides became a serious health hazard as the river water was thick with sewage.⁹ The 'meadow' was crossed

1. Hazel Conway, *Public Parks* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications Ltd, 1996), p.27.

2. A L Wyman, *Medicine in the Parish of Fulham from the Fourteenth Century* (Fulham and Hammersmith Historical Society: 1988), p.43.

3. Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London, 1st Series - Poverty - Streets & Population Classified* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1902). Classes A & B were the very poor, Classes C & D were on the poverty line 'more or less self sufficient as long as their luck held out'.

4. A L Wyman, *Medicine in the Parish of Fulham, op. cit.*, p.143.

5. The Fulham & District Board of Works (the two parishes of Fulham and Hammersmith) was established under the Metropolitan Local Management Act, 1855. In 1886 the Board was dissolved and its functions assumed by separate Vestries for each parish. The London Government Act in 1899 replaced the Vestries with the Metropolitan Boroughs.

6. Except where otherwise footnoted, all the documentary evidence on the history of Bishops Park comes from the Minutes of the Vestry of Fulham, the Metropolitan Borough of Fulham, Hammersmith Borough Council and the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, and their various Committees, held at Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre.

7. Fulham Place had been historically the residence of the Bishop of London but since 1868 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (now the Church Commissioners) had been responsible for the administration of the manorial lands and properties of the Bishops of London, except for the Palace and its immediate grounds.

8. *The London Argus*, 25 July 1903. The article recalled the original state of the land on the opening of the 1903 extension.

9. *A History of Public Health in Fulham & Hammersmith* (Design for Living Exhibition, Fulham Broadway, London SW6, exh. cat., 11 September - 31 October 1971. As older, many-arched Thames bridges were replaced, water flow was less impeded, leading to increased flooding upstream. This piece of land was also known as the Tide Meadow.

THE SEASIDE IN LONDON : PADDLING IN BISHOP'S PARK, FULHAM.



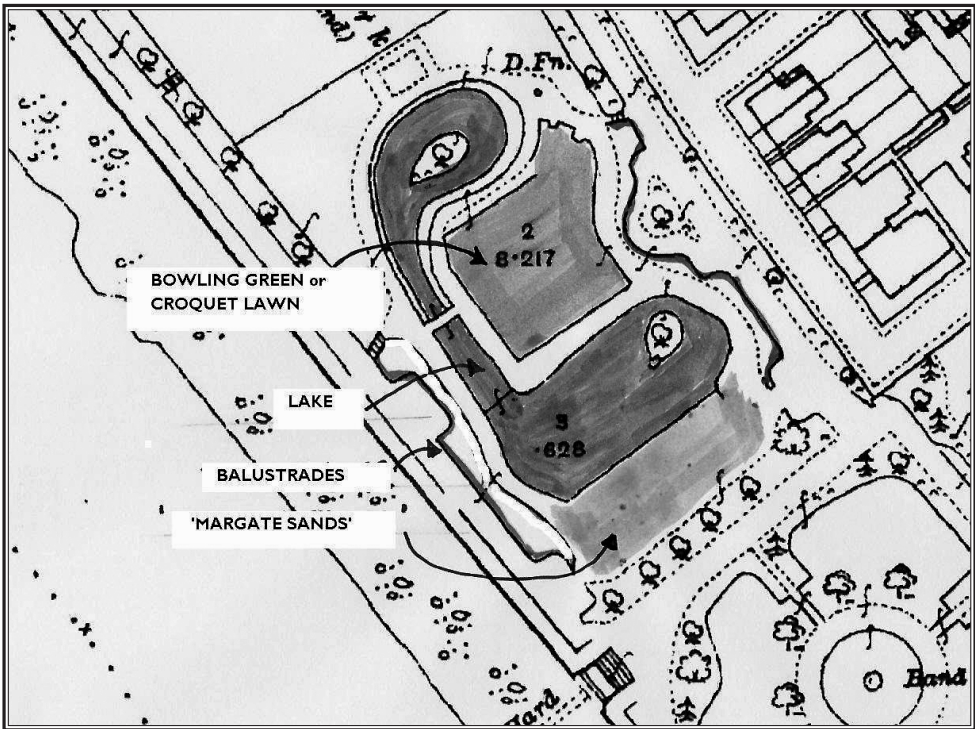
SEASIDE JOYS IN THE HEART OF LONDON : WATER AND SAND FOR THE CHILDREN.

Those little Londoners who see the sea only upon the occasion of a rare treat have an excellent substitute for the "beach" in Bishop's Park, Fulham, where both water and sand are provided for them. With particular reference to our photographs, it may be said that the boy with the boots slung round his neck is official "boot-minder" for a number of his comrades.

33. The Seaside in London: paddling in Bishop's Park, Fulham, *The Sketch*, 11 August, 1909
(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)



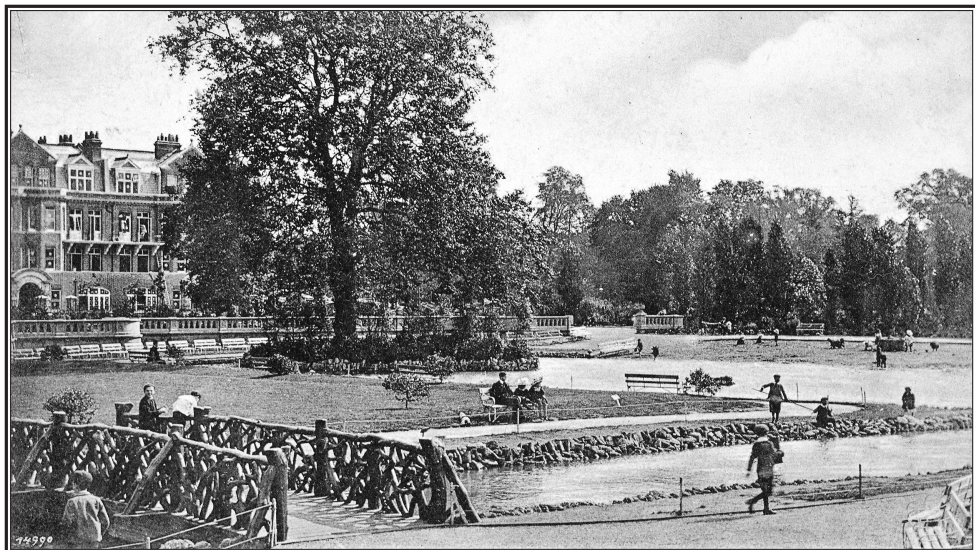
BISHOP'S PARK, FULHAM.



34. Bishops Park, c.1895: plane tree saplings separate the river promenade from the carriage way behind
(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)

35. The original layout of the lake and beach, based on OS 25", 1896. Annotation: author
(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)

‘MARGATE SANDS’: THE SEASIDE IN LONDON



36. Lake, 'Margate Sands' to the right, picnic lawn and rustic bridge, c. 1903.
There is a surviving elm tree on the island: most of the old elms died when soil levels were changed during the park's creation.
(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)

37. The new terracotta balustrades frame the lake, c.1905. Planting was intended to hide the concrete walls carrying them
(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)

by a public footpath: 'an elevated and dangerous way'.¹⁰ The Commissioners were doubtless glad to be rid of it. West Meadow lying at right angles to the river was added and the park opened in 1893 after the land had been drained and consolidated by infilling behind the new embanked river wall. In 1894 the Vestry of Fulham purchased from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners Pryors Bank house and grounds below Putney Bridge, and that extension was opened in 1900 after the house had been demolished and replaced with the Pavilion, which still stands.

The addition of new areas to the park allowed it to be laid out for separate activities: at Pryors Bank the Pavilion provided rest, refreshment and a reading room surrounded by formal bedding that showcased the skills of the park's gardeners. Bishops Meadow, with its river wall promenade and carriageway shaded by young plane trees, was for promenading and enjoyment of the river views (*fig. 34*). At the junction of Bishops and West Meadows the essential bandstand offered entertainment, and the rest of West Meadow was used by local schools and clubs for football. But the park was a small and constricted space, about 12 acres at this time, and the Vestry were concerned to obtain extra land for sports: the physical condition of the urban population and ways to improve it was seen as an important function of the public park, a view reinforced towards the end of the century by the disturbing medical reports on army recruits for the Boer War.¹¹

In 1899 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners made a further gift of eight acres on the river between Bishops Meadow and Craven Cottage, known as Fielders Meadow.¹² The largest part of Fielders Meadow was duly turfed for a cricket pitch, but the section adjoining Bishops Meadow was given an entirely different treatment and the play beach that became known as 'Margate Sands' opened in 1903. Practically, being on the river meant it was easy to ship in sand: two full barges were needed in 1904 and it had to be

renewed regularly. The name 'Margate Sands' came about because in the early days that was one source for the sand, although other sources were used later.¹³ The Thames estuary resorts (Southend, Margate, Clacton) would also be familiar to working-class Londoners, being reachable for a day trip in summer.¹⁴ The setting for the 'Sands' is the most architecturally interesting part of the park, making clever use of the limited space and the different levels behind the river wall. Although the layout was altered in the second half of the twentieth century, the bones of the design survived and have been restored in the HLF funded work completed towards the end of 2011.

In the original design, the rectangle of land between the bandstand square and the cricket field was laid out with an ornamental lake in two lobes, enclosing on three sides a grassed green and spanned at the narrowest point by a rustic wooden bridge (*fig. 35*).¹⁵ Each of the lobes had a small island. The larger, eastern lobe had a single jet fountain and the sand 'beach' along one side, which during its construction was referred to as the 'Children's Artificial Beach'. It was the park's most innovative feature, unique in London (*fig. 36*). This was where 'the infants of Fulham may disport themselves, dig the sand & not get drowned – unless they take great & particular pains to do so'.¹⁶ Towards the end of the nineteenth century the use of water for active recreation in public parks marked a change in attitudes about acceptable behaviour. At Victoria Park in Hackney (London's first public park, opened in 1845) swimming – men only – was only allowed in the eastern lake before 8.00 a.m. as it was felt to disturb the tranquillity of the park.¹⁷ But lack of local bath houses meant that many had no option but to use open water. By 1898 the swimming facilities at Victoria Park had been improved with a concrete bottom, diving boards and

13. In 1954 when the sand needed replacing the choices were Surrey pit sand, West Coast sea sand or Leighton Buzzard washed sand.

14. 'The 'Sands' were sometimes referred to as 'Brighton Beach', an inappropriate tag as the latter is mostly a pebble beach.

15. By 1914 the wooden bridge had been replaced with an arched rusticated stone one.

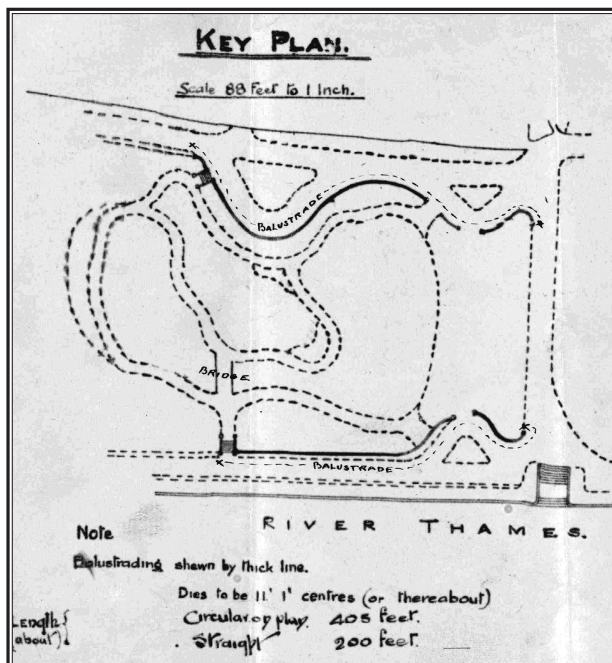
16. Hon. E C F Collier (ed), *A Victorian Diarist. Extracts from the journals of Mary, Lady Monkswell, 1805-1909* (John Murray: London, 1946). Entry for 8 July 1903, after she had attended the official opening.

17. Hazel Conway, *People's Parks: the design and development of Victorian parks in Britain* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1991), p.198.

10. Charles James Fêret, *Fulham Old and New* (Leadenhall Press: London, 1900), vol. III, p.210. In 1894 the footpath was closed as a right of way, enabling the Vestry to install fences and gates and shut the park at night.

11. Hazel Conway, *Public Parks* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications Ltd, 1996), p.33.

12. A Mr Fielder had leased it for hay and grazing.



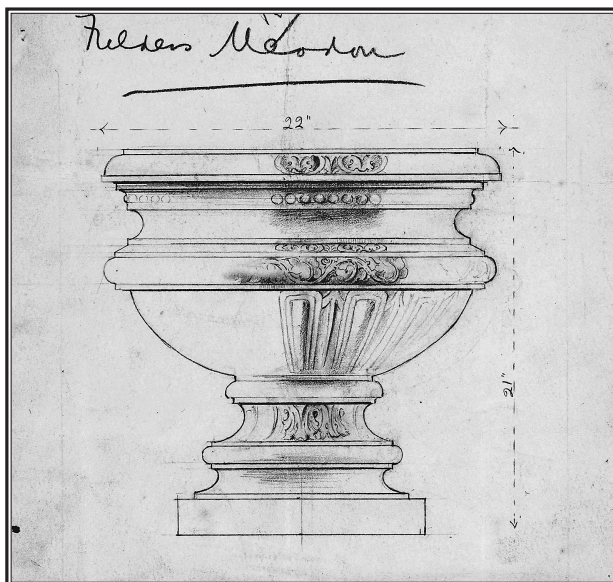
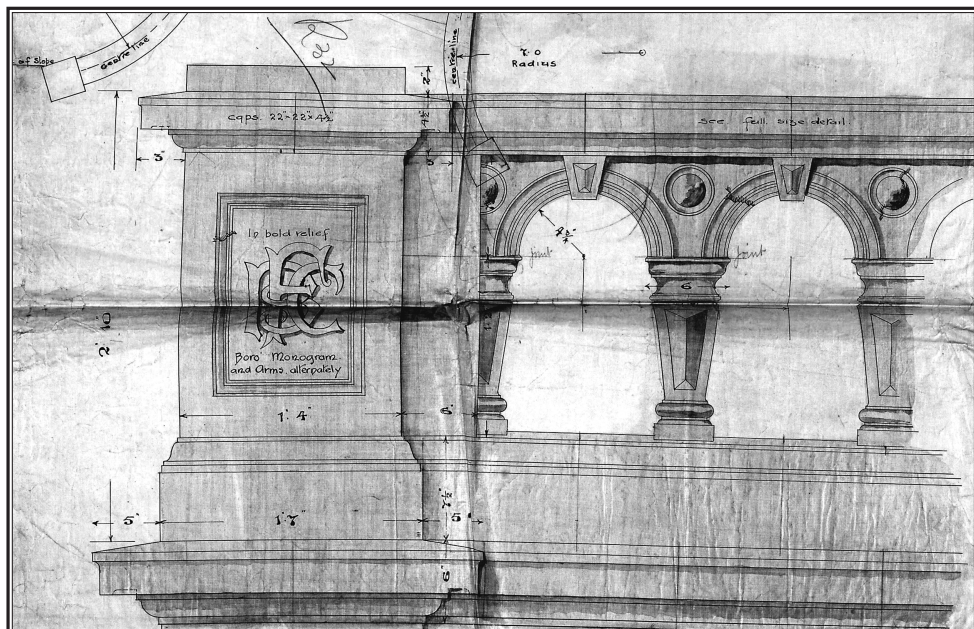
38. Early sketch for design of lake area, c. 1900

(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)

39. The rockery-grotto feature, situated between the two lobes of the lake, c. 1905, with a drinking fountain at its entrance.

This view looks towards the river.

(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)



40. Detail from the design drawings for the terracotta balustrades, showing the borough's monogram.
(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F9t2.3BIS)

41. Design drawing for the terracotta vases
(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F9I2.3BIS)

shelters: demand is evidenced by the recording, one summer morning, of 2,500 swimmers.¹⁸ This adaptation of ornamental lakes for swimming was a precursor of the boom in purpose-built lidos in the early decades of the twentieth century.

The end of the nineteenth century also saw increased provision of facilities for children, both educational and recreational. Aviaries, 'pets' corners' featuring small mammals (guinea pigs were very popular), goat cart rides, sandpits and paddling pools became common features in parks.¹⁹ The small scale of Bishops Park, and the large numbers of children living in close proximity to it, made it ideal for this purpose, and creating an artificial seaside was an imaginative initiative. Opportunities for inner London children to play in water were limited even as late as the 1930s. In July 1934 a 'Children's Beach' was officially inaugurated just above Tower Bridge. This was a stretch of sand and mud exposed at low tide on which children had always played, and sometimes died when trapped by the incoming tide. Naming it officially meant that access to the foreshore was legalised and it was made 'safe' for children by the installation of a ladder up to Tower Walk and an official patrolling boatman.²⁰ The health risks to the children from bathing in polluted river water do not seem to have been a concern.

In Bishops Park the lake and beach were enclosed on the north and south by yellow terracotta balustrades with steps up to the promenade walk along the river (*fig. 37*).²¹ It is clear from the archived case files that the design for this area originated with, and was worked up by, the Borough Surveyor Charles Botterill and the Borough Engineer, Francis Wood.²² There are several sketches of different layouts before a curvilinear design was chosen, the curves of the balustrades reflecting those of the lake (*fig. 38*). The clever design enabled this small area, just 400 feet long and 100 feet wide, to be zoned for separate activities:

exercise for small children on the beach and in the paddling area of the lake; a croquet lawn or bowling green 'for those unable to indulge in more violent exercise'; circulatory paths for promenading, and the western lobe of the lake intended for family recreations such as picnicking and 'botanising'.²³ A 'grotto' or more accurately a rockery feature was built on the edge of the green and planted up with specimen plants for 'schoolchildren and those interested in botany' (*fig. 39*).²⁴ This modest feature was named 'The Rockies!' on a contemporary postcard, presumably as an ironic joke, but similar features in other parks were given exotic and exaggerated names: 'The Khyber Pass' in East Park, Hull, which opened in 1887, was a narrow path between walls of artificial stone.²⁵ Near the entrance to the 'grotto' is a drinking fountain, supplied by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain Association who congratulated the Works Committee on the successful laying out of the new ground, adding 'it is somewhat refreshing to find a Council who look so well after the interests of the Poor & others in the Streets who require a drink of water'.²⁶

This part of the park was intended to give those who rarely left their neighbourhoods an experience of different environments, an important aspect of Victorian park design. The drawings for the terracotta balustrades show the influence of the Victorian Italianate style, lending an aristocratic air that was enhanced by incorporating plaques of the Borough's monogram and coat of arms, and 24 terracotta flower vases placed along the coping (*figs. 40 & 41*). The souvenir brochure of the Grand Opening remarked that this architecture was 'new to public parks although very much seen in old English gardens'. Planting of 'creeping ivy and yellow jessamine [jasmine]' was intended to enhance the effect as well as disguising the concrete walls that carried the balustrades. This Italianate style had been popular since the 1850s for the gardens of the wealthy, where the balustrades usually enclosed elaborate parterres and bedding

18. *Ibid.*, p.198.

19. *Ibid.*, p.197.

20. 'The Children's Beach at the Tower – Shortly to be Dedicated', *Illustrated London News*, 21 July, 1934, issue 4970, p.87.

21. The terracotta was supplied by Mr Wooliscroft & Son at £727 and installed on the top of concrete retaining walls built by the park's labour force.

22. All the designs for this part of the park are in the Surveyor's Dept. Case Files, 1894-c. 1905, PAF/2/376, London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, Local History Centre. Later case files were mostly destroyed.

23. Official Programme for the opening in 1903.

24. *The London Argus*, 25 July 1903.

25. Hilary A Taylor, 'Urban Public Parks, 1840-1900: Design and Meaning', *Garden History*, 23:2 (1995) p.206.

26. Letter recorded in the Vestry Minutes, 7 July 1903.

schemes or provided a frame for pools and fountains.²⁷ At Bishops Park they enclosed a very small lake, a green and a children's play beach: creating an aristocratic milieu for 'everyman' activities.

An ornamental lake was not complete without ornamental fowl to add an educational and aesthetic dimension. In the spring of 1903 the Town Clerk was in communication with Mr Abnett of East Molesey, His Majesty's Swan Keeper, about preparations for the two swans that the king had donated to the park. Mr Abnett advised that all the swans needed was a place like a small island to get out of the water to clean themselves and he would bring them when the lake was ready. The small 'picturesque islands' in the lake were prepared for the swans and they appear in early postcards (*fig. 42*). At the same time the Town Clerk wrote to Lord Rothschild for some 'Moor Hens'; to the London County Council and Kew Gardens for any spare 'Wild Ducks, Moor Hens or other birds' and also goldfish; and to a Miss Sophy Collier who had a couple of years previously offered a pair of Peafowl. Both the LCC and Kew replied that they had no spare birds, so the Surveyor got quotes for buying pairs of coot, Gargeney teal, White Cale duck, Brent geese and others amounting to £4-5s-0d. The purchase was authorised, but he was not to acquire any widgeon or cormorants. In the summer Kew advised that a pair of Canadian Geese was now available. An additional access slope was built on Swan Island for the smaller fowl. The peafowl it seems did not materialise: Miss Collier said that through bad weather and ill health she lost nearly all her birds but in April 1904 she offered a couple of pairs of 'Ceruvian [Peruvian] Guinea Pigs'. The Council regretted that it did not have accommodation for guinea pigs. The strangest gift came in 1905 from Mrs Ellis of 4, Merton Cottages, Point Pleasant, Wandsworth who offered a Black Swan. The Surveyor reported that the swan was in very poor condition, '....it had been kept in a kitchen & will be some little time before it is thoroughly fit'. How a black

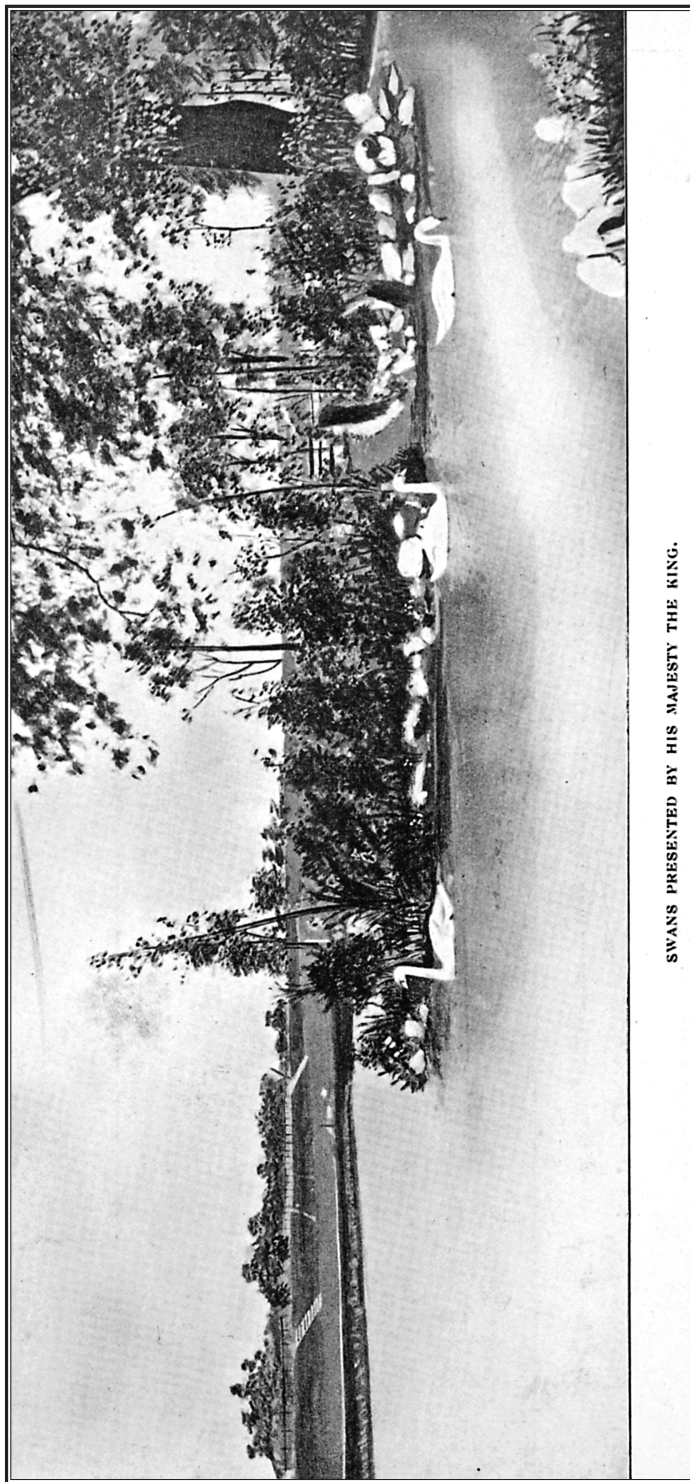
swan, native of Australia, came to be in a kitchen in Wandsworth was not explained: possibly it was brought home by Mrs Ellis's sailor son or husband. By the summer of 1905, predictably, the numbers of fowl had increased and were damaging the turf round the lake: the Surveyor was authorised to dispose of about ten drakes and to purchase another teal with the proceeds.

Unfortunately, from the start, the huge popularity of 'Margate Sands' created problems of overcrowding, safety and hygiene. Immediately after it opened a Mr Minter wrote to complain that the 'Ornamental Pond' would become an 'insanitary (*sic*) nuisance'. The Works Committee viewed the damage being caused to the ornamentation and the newly laid turf by the 'unmanageable crowds of children and youths' congregating around the lake. Contemporary photographs of the extension with just a few people present, and planting still immature, give an impression of space and tranquillity; others show just how crowded the lake and beach were on summer days (*fig. 43*). In around 1910 one writer recalls a Sunday picnic in the park held by a local Methodist Church. The children wanted 'tea on the Sands' but the sand was found to be flea-ridden, so they picnicked around a bench on the grass.²⁸

In the first year changes were made: 'wading' was not allowed on Sundays and in August the 'Sands' were to be cleared at 7.30 p.m. A spiked-topped iron railing was fixed across the lake, standing 2ft 6ins above the water, to prevent children wading across onto the island (and harassing the wildfowl), rather spoiling the 'seaside' effect. The Vestry also gave urgent consideration to providing more public conveniences for both sexes at the refreshment chalet by the bandstand. Despite the overcrowding and sanitary problems and occasional reports of accidents to children using it, 'Margate Sands' lasted in its original form for over thirty years. In 1936 a boy suffered a severely cut big toe from glass lying in the pool and his father successfully sued the Council for damages, citing negligence in the

28. C H Ralph, *London Particulars* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1980), p.99.

27. Two iconic Victorian Italianate gardens were Trentham Park and Shrubland Park, both designed by Sir Charles Barry. The earliest example of such features in a 'public' garden was the RHS garden at Kensington in the early 1860s.



SWANS PRESENTED BY HIS MAJESTY THE KING.

42. The 'picturesque' island in the lake, with ramp for the donated swans to get out of the water.

The islands were planted with barked willows and pampas grass.

(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)

supervision and management of the beach and pool.²⁹ For the Council this raised alarm about the extent of their duties and liabilities to users of the park and they appealed the verdict. The Court of Appeal found that

...it was a matter of interest to the council that children should have the opportunity of getting away from the streets, especially the children of ratepayers, and should have the more healthy occupation of paddling in a pool, which had been constructed in such a way as to indicate that it was there for the purpose of children paddling in it.

As there was a notice board warning against taking sharp materials into the pool, the Appeal Court concluded that the Council had already accepted that children could be in danger when paddling and rejected the Appeal.

The result was that the innovative design of lake and beach was dismantled. The bridge area was in-filled to separate a paddling pool from the remainder of the lake and the concrete bed was raised to limit water depth to twelve inches.³⁰ The fountain in the pool was removed and a concrete path and curbs were laid to separate the water from the sand, creating a standard paddling pool and sandpit. Until then the pool had been supplied with river water that could only be changed at certain states of the tide. Now it would be supplied with mains water and flushed frequently during the "paddling season".³¹

Nevertheless 'Margate Sands' remained a popular attraction well into the post-war years. By the 1960s it was run-down but still often overcrowded in summer. More space was

needed for children's recreation and in 1961 the old grass bowling green became 'Toddlers' Green', a play area for the under-fives. What was clear by the time an Improvement Plan was written in 1970³² was that Bishops Park was too small for the many recreational demands made on it. The assumptions were that local demand for recreation facilities would increase as a result of population growth combined with traffic congestion: residents in the central boroughs would be far less mobile than those in the suburbs and this difference was expected to increase. Added to this was the expectation of a vast increase in leisure time (as a result of automation of work practices) and therefore there was a need to make the maximum use of all available open space to provide modern leisure facilities. To achieve this, drastic redesign would be necessary. The terracotta terraces, 'derelict water garden', paddling pool and sand pit were in shade most of the day and represented a waste of useful space. A redesigned 'central suntrap' for 2-5 year olds' activities was proposed in which only the paddling pool and sandpit would remain. If this plan had been acted upon the lake area would not have survived in essentially its original design.³³

In 1981 another package of improvements was planned. This included construction of a 1 o'clock Club building on Toddlers' Green, a new paddling pool alongside a smaller sand pit and the existing paddling pool converted into a boating lake with a landing stage and boats (there were, for a time, ten hand-cranked boats on the lake). The sand pit was to be enclosed to allow use throughout the year, make it safer and prevent fouling by dogs: a glasshouse type cover with double doors on all sides, enclosing seats for adults, was planned but not built. Work on the boating and paddling pools and Toddlers' Green was completed in summer 1983.

By 2008, having escaped radical redevelopment, the lake area retained much of the original layout, although in poor condition. The terracotta balustrading was largely intact, though parts were missing or damaged and some rather unsympathetic restoration had been done in 2005.

29. The infant was awarded £50 with costs and the father £19-10-6d. for hospital and medical expenses. The Judge said that the pool was provided as one of the attractions of the park: sand was brought in and put by the side of it to give the appearance and attractions of the seaside. The pool was nowhere deeper than two feet and was suitable for paddling – and he noted that most children paddle barefoot. It was obvious that unless carefully supervised, it could be a danger. The child was in the water washing off sand before going home when he stood on the piece of glass. The court found that although instructions about raking the sand had been carried out, the type of rake used only went over the top of the sand, not deeper where glass could be buried. Another child had been injured in the same place a few days previously but the park keeper had not reported it.

30. The lake originally had a puddled clay lining. That was replaced with concrete in 1920, one of several schemes to provide work for the unemployed, employing 12 men for 8 weeks.

31. In 1902 the Thames Conservancy had agreed to placing an outlet into the river but suggested that river water should not be used for the 'Ornamental Pond' on account of its unclean condition. It recommended the water be supplied by the Chelsea Water Works Company at a cost of £50 pa. It seems this advice was ignored.

32. *Bishops Park: A Report prepared by the Borough Architect & Planning Officer, 1970*, Baths, Parks & Cemeteries Committee, cat.F912.3BIS, Hammersmith & Fulham Archives and Local History Centre.

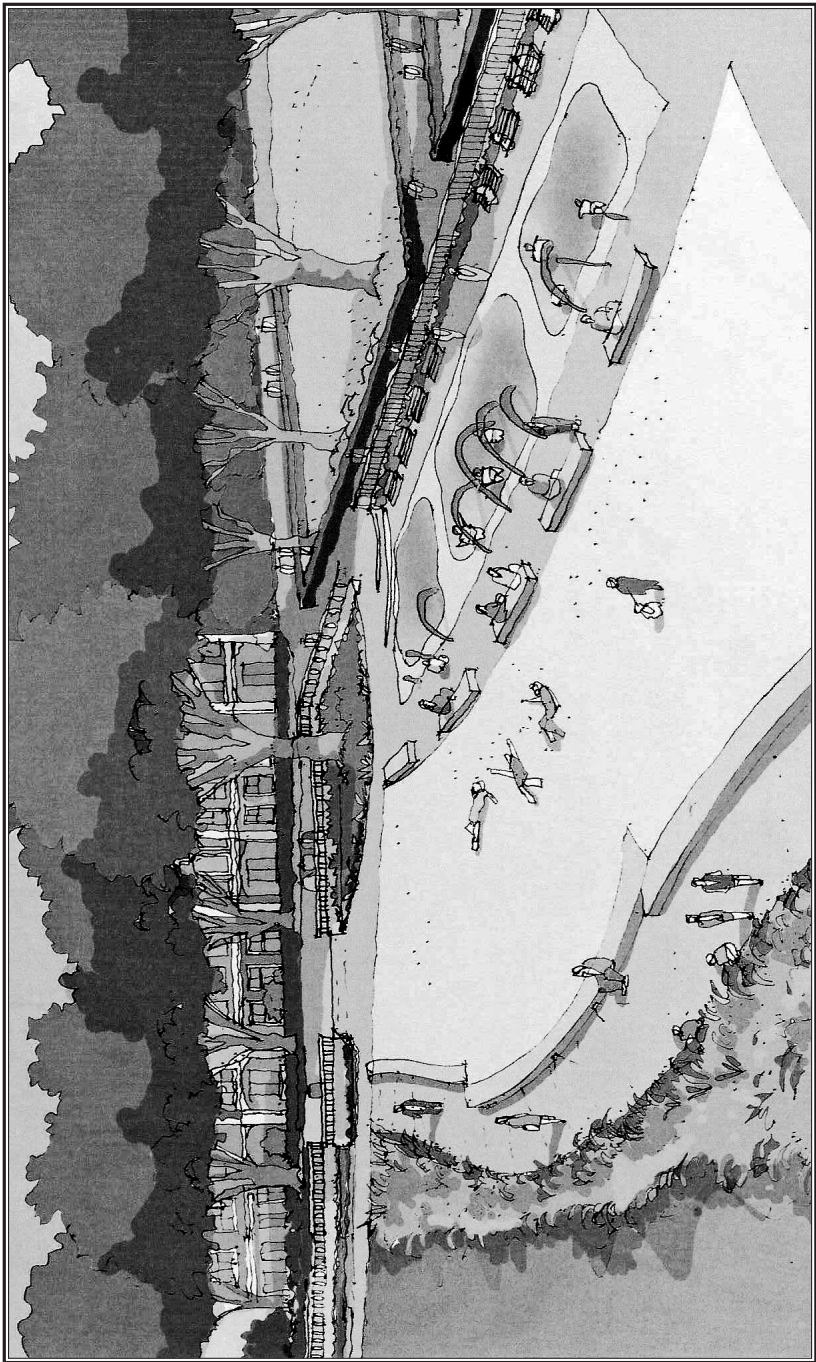
33. The Bishop's Park Conservation Area was designated in 1971.

‘MARGATE SANDS’: THE SEASIDE IN LONDON



43. A crowded summer day, c. 1903, 'Margate Sands' on the right.
(COURTESY LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM, ARCHIVES AND LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE, CAT. F912.3BIS)

44. Drained and derelict boating pond, paddling pool and sandpit, 2008.
(PHOTOGRAPH SALLY MILLER)



45. 'Fulham Beach', part of the HLF funded restoration of Bishops Park, artist's impression, courtesy Chris Blandford Associates, 2009.

The terracotta vases that sat along the coping had long since disappeared. The 'boating pond' had been drained and derelict since the 1990s. This, together with unsympathetic gates and railings installed for safety and security reasons, gave the area a neglected and unfriendly air (*fig. 44*). When the lake was divided in 1936/7 the other portion had been intended eventually as a small nature reserve, but it became over-shaded, with leaf litter causing maintenance and pollution problems.

The restoration has returned the lake to its original U-shaped design by removing the in-filled section. A new 'rustic' bridge (although of cast iron not wood) has been placed where the original was and the green has been reinstated as a picnic area. Restoration work on the terracotta balustrades has been done, using some terracotta recently rediscovered in storage.³⁴ Despite the 'picturesque' islands and the wildfowl, the original lake, when still being used by children, could not have provided a good environment for wildlife (apart from the fleas). The margins of the restored lake have been planted to support wildlife and water pumps will help oxygenation. 'Margate Sands' has been reinterpreted on the original site, separated from the lake by a footpath and a curved seating wall retaining a raised sand 'beach'. Behind the beach three small splash pools of differing depths with interactive water jets have recreated some of the fun of 'Margate Sands', allowing children to run in and out of the water. When the water is turned off the surfaces can be drained and used as an informal play area (*fig. 45*).

Pressure on local authority spending from the 1970s meant that Bishops Park, in common with many other urban public parks, suffered a gradual deterioration of its fabric. However, unlike some other parks it did not experience sustained levels of vandalism, perhaps partly because even in a state of poor repair it remained popular and well-used by local residents. It has always been too small for the recreational demands placed on it: the early photographs show how crowded it could be in summer. By the 1970s the original design was under pressure: the paddling pool and sand were overcrowded, the tennis courts (one-third of the total park area) and the

bowling greens on West Meadow almost always fully booked. The Council considered the park did not meet contemporary demands, particularly the active leisure needs of adults. Under plans drawn up then the lake and its setting represented a waste of useful space: it would have disappeared, leaving just a paddling pool and sandpit for toddlers. Lack of funding meant that the park escaped such radical change and much of the original design survived. More recently, the local community has mobilised to protect the park from inappropriate development, notably a planning application by Fulham Football Club to build a multipurpose artificial sports pitch on Fielders Meadow, which would have radically changed the park environment.

The urban public park has always reflected the aspirations of its time. This miniature landscape of terraces, lake and beach was an imaginative response to the recreation needs of a very local working-class populace, which at the beginning of the twentieth century was experiencing poor health, overcrowded living conditions, and had limited leisure time and little money to spend on it. It was a child-sized adventure playground, offering fun and challenges. One resident recalled that the tiny island in the paddling pool was quite forbidding: 'We used to say as kids there were bloodsuckers there...the boys would try to show off and say "I've been there and come back"'.³⁵

Even in the early 1950s, for one resident a day on the beach 'at the Bishops' with her brothers and sisters, jam sandwiches, a bottle of tea and perhaps a Lyons ice-cream to crown the afternoon, was her summer holiday.³⁶ The injection of lottery funding has enabled Bishops Park to be reshaped for contemporary use within the framework of a design that is over a century old. The restoration confirms that the original layout was a clever and significant contribution to public park design. More important, it promises to revive a sense of energy and enjoyment for those using the park, honouring the spirit and intentions of the public servants who created it.

35. Sally Miller, *The History of Bishops Park* (London: Scala Publishers Ltd, 2011), p.92. It is quite likely that the islands bred mosquitoes in summer!

36. Jessie Morton, *A Day at the Bishops*, recorded reminiscence, June 1993. London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, Local History Centre.

34. This has been removed from South Park in Fulham.