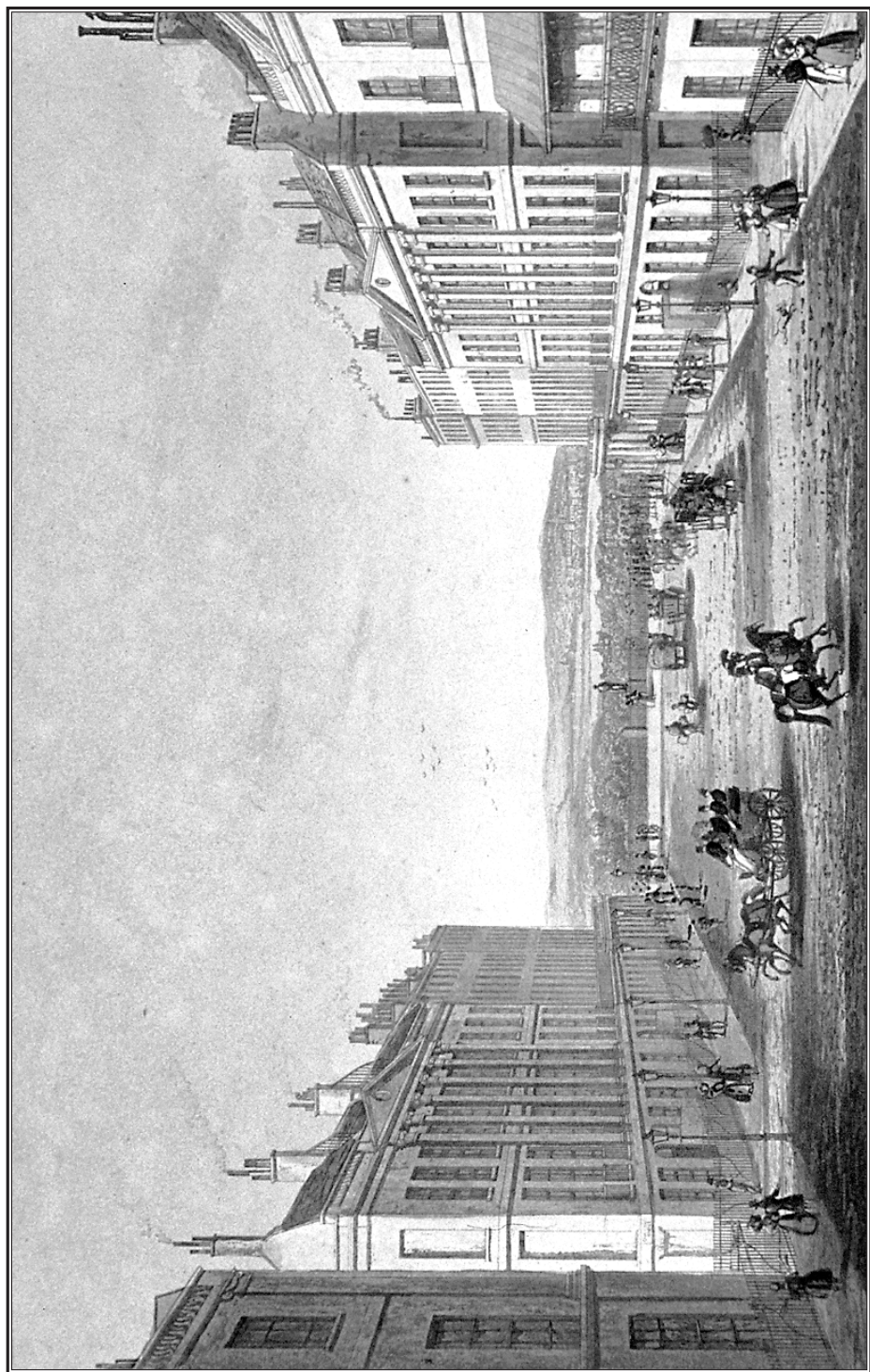




38. Richard Morris, *Portland Place*, 1831
(COURTESY LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVE)

and 11 Downing Street in an L shape. Large square planters line the raised terrace which overlooks the garden. The iris-filled pond is home to fish, newts and frogs – as well as a visiting duck from nearby St James's Park which nests there every year. A straight path edged with box cuts the garden in two and is lined with standard roses – all David Austin. Among them are 'Anne Boleyn', 'Blythe Spirit', 'The Pilgrim', 'Windflower' and 'England's Rose'. These are flanked by posts covered with climbing roses including 'New Dawn', 'Iceberg', 'Lady Hillingdon' and 'Malvern Hills'. In the past 20 years shrubbery has been introduced and recently single beds have been broken up into smaller oval ones. The plants include rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, red hot pokers, climbing hydrangeas and tree peonies.

* * * * *

Acknowledgements

This research was carried out by members of the London Parks & Gardens Trust Volunteer Research Group. We are pleased to acknowledge the enthusiasm and support for this project by Sophie Seifalion, Research Co-ordinator; Robin Saklatvala, Open Garden Squares Weekend Co-ordinator; and Sharan Chaggar from the Number 10 Downing Street Press Office

PARK SQUARE AND PARK CRESCENT GARDENS: A 'SORT OF GRAND VESTIBULE' TO REGENT'S PARK By Claire Martin

Park Square and Park Crescent were designed and laid out by John Nash as part of the redevelopment of Marylebone Park and the surrounding estate in the early nineteenth century. The pair of squares, known as Portland Place Circus until the early 1820s, was built on Dupper and Saltpetre Fields, which were at the time

divided by the Islington Road – also known as the New Road and more recently Marylebone Road. These large garden squares and their encompassing houses were the subject of numerous redesigns, and were crucial to the layout and the success of Regent's Park as they formed what was later described as a 'sort of grand vestibule' to the new royal park – the point at which one entered the extensive landscape to begin a circular tour of its highly picturesque interior. The 'squares' were, moreover, conceived as a magnificent terminus to the Prince Regent's new mile-long street, and to the broad expanse of Portland Place in particular,¹ whence one gained a remarkable vista over the gardens to the gently rising terrain of the park and the lofty heights of Primrose Hill, Hampstead and Highgate in the distance (*fig. 38*).

According to John Nash's report of 1812, Portland Place – then 'the most magnificent street in London' – was proposed to be one of two 'principal entrances' into Marylebone Park.² There were to be no other access points to the park from the south; and in order to:

disguise the appearance, and to prevent the impression of having crossed the New Road, it is proposed that the field immediately adjoining the end of Portland-place, together with the like quantity of the field beyond the New Road shall be converted into a LARGE CIRCUS, the intervention of the Plantation in the Area within the railing of which Circus, and the continuation of the street all round, will effectually connect Portland-place with Marylebone Park, without producing the least sensation of having crossed the New Road. This Circus will enclose an area equal to that of Lincoln's-inn-fields, and be in unison with the magnificent scale of Portland Place.³ (*fig. 39*)

Nash also remarked that:

a SQUARE is also proposed to be built on the south side of the Park, immediately beyond the New Road, of the size of Russell-Square (the largest in

1. Portland Place was regarded at the time as 'the most magnificent street in London'. 'Approved Report of Mr John Nash relative to Improvements in Mary-le-Bone Park, and to the Grand New Street from thence to Charing Cross' [1812], published in *The Monthly Magazine*, 1 August 1813, vol.36, p.26.

2. The other entrance was to be in Baker Street.

3. 'Approved Report of Mr John Nash', *op.cit.*, p.27.

London) with a street at each end, of the same breadth as Portland-place, leading to it. The houses on the north side of this square and street will enjoy the scenery of the Park, as will also the two great streets which surround the middle of the Park.⁴

The buildings in Park Crescent were the first to emerge with the building lease being taken up in 1812 by Charles Mayor, a business associate of Nash. Large quantities of Portland stone were ordered to face the buildings, suggesting that Nash originally intended the terraces to be stone and that stucco was ultimately employed when funds ran short.⁵ The new project ran straight into disaster when Mayor went bankrupt to the tune of £22,000. He had partially completed six houses on the south-east side of the Crescent but they were un-roofed shells, open to the elements. In 1814, a fire had broken out in one of the partially completed houses and Mayor had been paid £700 in insurance but this did little to aid either the building process or his ailing finances. In 1818 the eccentric millionaire John Farquhar agreed to guarantee the money for the development of the circus and the leases were taken up by three builders, William Richardson, Samuel Baxter and Henry Peto, with Peto taking over the houses begun by Mayor.⁶

The Crescent was successfully completed and let without further drama but the northern half of the intended circus was abandoned in favour of a square, Park Square, with ranges of houses to east and west. James Elmes declared in *Metropolitan Improvements* (1827) that this change was a 'manifest improvement of the entire design, and is productive of great benefit to the houses in the crescent and in Portland Place'.⁷

From 1823 Nash embarked on the building of Park Square. It is unknown when its central garden was laid out and enclosed. It certainly predates the houses that framed it on its east and west sides, and can be seen in its rectangular form on a plan of 1820 (fig. 40).

4. 'Approved Report of Mr John Nash', *op.cit.*

5. Ann Saunders, *Regent's Park: A Study of the Development of the Area from 1086 to the Present Day* (Newton Abbot, 1969), p.95.

6. *Ibid.*, pp.97-98. After a night of storms on 4-5 March 1818, the fire-damaged house collapsed completely.

7. Thomas H. Shepherd & James Elmes, *Metropolitan Improvements: Or, London in the Nineteenth Century: Displayed in a Series of Engravings of the New Buildings, Improvements, &c., by the Most Eminent Artists, from Original Drawings, Taken from the Objects Themselves Expressly for this Work* (Jones & Co., 1827), p.88.

Thomas Smith described the square in *A Topographical and Historical Account of the Parish of St Mary-le-bone* (1833) as consisting of 'two rows of houses elongated upon the extremities of the crescent, and separated from the New Road, from the Park, and from each other, by a spacious quadrangular area, laid out with planted pleasure grounds, and enclosed by handsome iron railings'.⁸

Park Square West was built by W. M. Nurse between 1823 and 1825 and Park Square East by Jacob Smith in 1823.⁹ Although largely residential, three central plots on the east side were given over to the Diorama. This entertainment possessed two painted scenes, which were partially transparent and which, with the aid of moving lights, sound effects and projections could suggest realistic effects of storms, sunlight etc. The two scenes revolved on a mechanism designed by James Morgan, which was so finely balanced that the whole auditorium could be turned by one man. The façade was by Nash but the interior was designed by Augustus Pugin.¹⁰

Elmes found much to praise in the new square garden, and in particular its picturesque devices, including 'meandering walks', 'ambrosial shrubs', 'velvet turf', 'gay flowers' and 'serpentine walks'.¹¹ It was, he remarked, important for an 'enclosed garden in the neighbourhood of buildings or other works of art' to possess 'neatness, symmetry and trimness, approaching to elegance... characters that should be sought after by the landscape or artist gardener. How refreshingly cool and soft the velvet turf of this smoothly shaven lawn is to the feet, after coming from the arid hardness of the gravelled road; and how delightful to the senses are the fragrantcy of those gay flowers, the symmetry of those beauteous dwarf shrubs, and the artfulness of those serpentine walks'.¹²

The central areas of the crescent and the square were laid out as private pleasure grounds in the manner of a conventional

8. Thomas Smith, *A Topographical and Historical Account of the Parish of St Mary-le-bone* (1833), p.249.

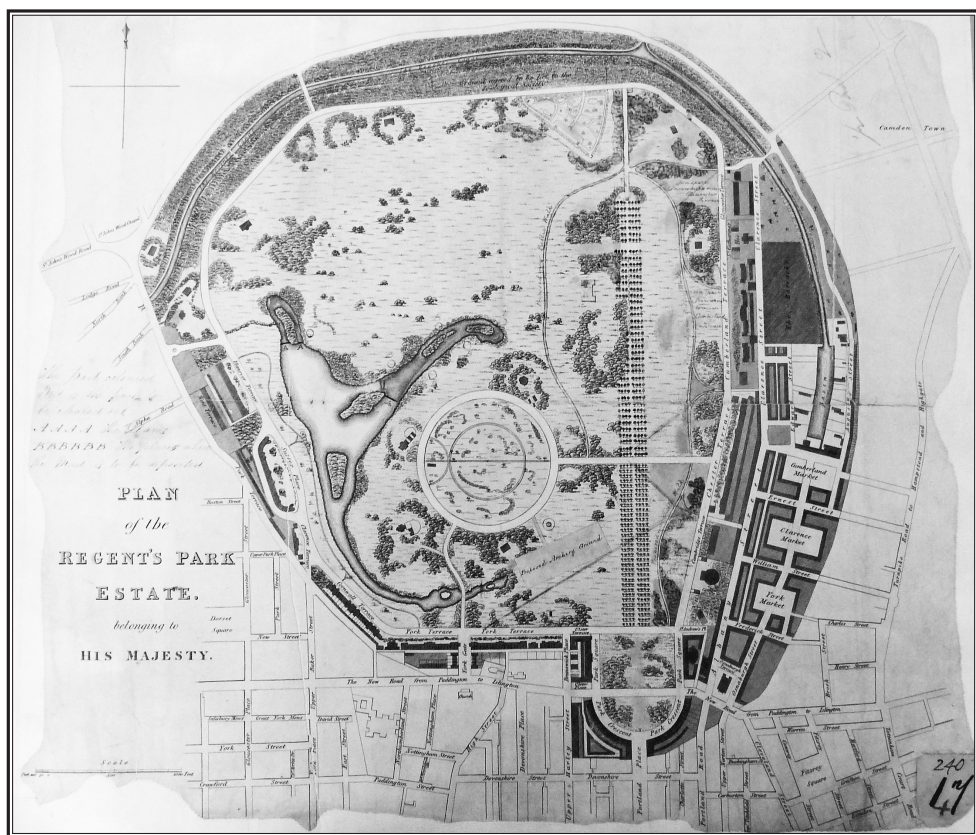
9. John Summerson, *The Life and Works of John Nash, Architect* (London, 1980), p.121.

10. Saunders, *op.cit.*, p.130. Terence Davis, *John Nash: The Prince Regent's Architect* (London, 1966), p.67.

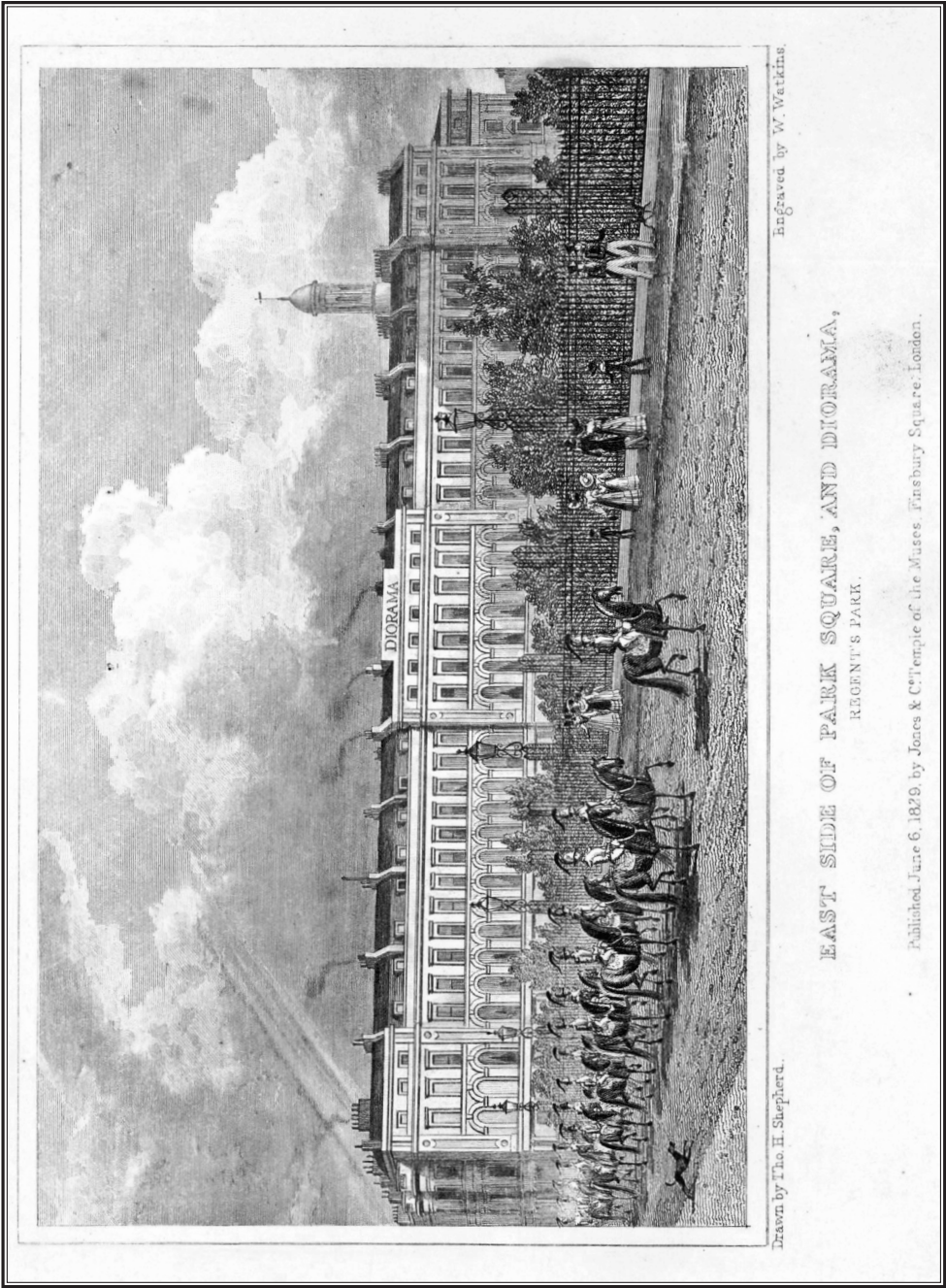
11. Shepherd & Elmes, *op.cit.*, *Metropolitan Improvements*, pp.88-9.

12. The layout was similar to Repton's for the statue of the Duke of Bedford in Russell Square (preliminary design dates from 1804), and Sir Richard Westmacott's statue to Charles James Fox in Bloomsbury Square (1816).

This architectural drawing illustrates a circular structure, possibly a well or cistern, with a cross-section and a plan view. The cross-section is shown in the upper half, with labels 'A' and 'B' at the top and 'C' and 'D' at the bottom. The plan view is shown in the lower half, with labels 'E' and 'F' at the top and 'G' and 'H' at the bottom. The central area is labeled 'Cistern'.



40. *Plan of the Regent's Park Estate belonging to His Majesty, showing parts of ornamental lake to be cleared out, 1820* (TNA, WORK 32 584)
(COURTESY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES)



41. Thomas H. Shepherd, *East Side of Park Square, and Diorama, Regent's Park*, 1829
(COURTESY TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM)

London square, where trees and shrubs were massed around the edges to provide privacy, and the large central areas were dotted with trees and shrubberies¹³ (*fig. 41*). Although the gardens are portrayed in a variety of early plans these representations appear to be generalised. Charles Mayhew's 'Plans of all the Ground, Houses and other Buildings within the Jurisdiction of the Commissioners for Paving the Regent's Park, Regent's Street, Whitehall, &c...from an actual survey made in the years 1834 and 1835' probably supplies the first reliable plans of the gardens. The plans show with great accuracy the layout of the railings, the planting and the positioning of the various gates, garden eye-catchers, outbuildings and lodges in both squares. Surviving building accounts record that both gardens were surrounded by cast iron railings, designed by Nash and cast by John Peachey.¹⁴ The squares' ironwork was 'of the finest and best soft cast Iron, cleaned off and fitted together in the most perfect manner and painted 4 times in oil of a copper bronze colour'.¹⁵

There were also gates and railings at the Marylebone Road ends of Park Crescent and at Park Square East and Park Square West to control the flow of traffic (*figs. 42 & 43*). These required gate keepers and therefore four Greek style Doric lodges – described at the time as 'Pavilions' – were erected in the north-east and north-west corners of Park Crescent Gardens and in the south-east and south-west corners of Park Square Gardens (*fig. 44*). The buildings were built in brick and covered with 'Parkers cement coloured and jointed as Bath Stone'.¹⁶ Those in Park Crescent were built as residential accommodation for the gate keepers, whilst those in Park Square served solely as lodges. The lodge in the north-east corner of Park Crescent appears to have had its own garden carved out of the square's boundary plantations. The plan also indicates the presence of a small rectangular building south of the lodge, which appears to be the first of a handful of garden outbuildings – including glasshouses – that were to be erected

in this corner of the garden, and which are clearly shown on subsequent surveys. The lodges in Park Square also appear to have had small gardens attached to them. Park Crescent Garden was accessed by a single cast-iron gate located at the southernmost end of the garden opening directly into the top of Portland Place, whilst Park Square had two gates – one set at the centre of both the east and west sides of the gardens (where they remain to this day).

Both squares possessed broad perimeter gravelled footpaths, which were screened from the surrounding streets by dense vegetation planted against the railings; in both squares the northernmost footpaths were straight and terminated in eye-catchers (two in the case of the walk in Park Square and one at the eastern end of the terrace walk in Park Crescent). The interiors of both squares were furthermore threaded with serpentine walks that snaked their way through plantations (presumably large flower and shrub beds).

Whilst the presence of gates in the New Road ensured that traffic in Park Square and Crescent was controlled, there were no such impediments to the movement of vehicles in the New Road itself. The residents therefore petitioned in July 1821 for a tunnel or 'subterraneous Communication be made between the two Gardens so as to obviate the necessity of crossing the New Road, a matter of considerable danger at most times to Children, & of Inconvenience to Ladies who are desirous of going from the Garden to the other'.¹⁷ The 'arched Tunnel' is indicated on maps and surveys of the gardens from the 1820s onwards, and later became known as the Nursemaid's Tunnel on account of the women who used it to walk their charges around the gardens (*fig. 45*).

In 1823 the residents proposed a further improvement to the gardens: to erect a statue of Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent (1767–1820) by 'public subscription as a tribute to his public and his private virtues' at the southern end of Park Crescent.¹⁸ The Duke's friend Sir

13. The developer Decimus Burton proposed a layout of the gardens in c.1819 that was rejected by John Nash.

14. Saunders, *op.cit.*, p.110. Davis, *op.cit.*, p.67. A record of the detailed improvements is supplied in 'Particulars for Iron Railing, Paving, Roads, Pavilions and forming the surface of the areas' [u.d.]: this specification also provides accounts of treatment of the squares' kerbs, lamps, lamp irons and footpaths (TNA, CRES 35 3520).

15. TNA, CRES 35 3520.

16. TNA, CRES 35 3520.

17. TNA, CRES 35 3520. E.B. Wilbraham, 'Proposing the formation of a Tunnel under the New Road to communicate with the two Gardens in the Portland-place Circus', 28 June 1821.

18. TNA, CRES 35 3520; Samuel Leigh, *Leigh's new picture of London; or, A view of the ... British metropolis* (London, 1825), p.289. The desire to erect an eye-catching monument may have been galvanised by the visionary painter Thomas Martin's proposal of 1820 to erect a 'national monument' to commemorate the Battle of Waterloo in the Crescent garden. His proposal was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1820 (exhibit no. 925).

John Soane was consulted on the setting in November 1823, recommending that the 'Statue shall look to the South and be placed in a recess or semi-circle [...] the diameter of which will not be less than 40 and not more than 50 feet'. The existing railing in front of the statue was proposed to be taken down to follow the projected semi-circular alignment, and the area around the granite plinth of the statue was to be open to the street.¹⁹ This proposal does not appear to have been realised, although a gate was inserted in the perimeter railings on the south side of the statue, which opened directly into the top of Portland Place. The statue is clearly shown in Richard Morris's view of Portland Place of 1831 [see *fig. 38*]; and Elmes reports in the same year that the 'bronze statue of heroic size of the late Duke of Kent, by [Sebastian] Gahagan' set amidst the plantations in Park Crescent complemented the 'splendid creations of picturesque art of the Regent's Park, on the north'.²⁰

There are numerous descriptions of the Square and Crescent in the first half of the nineteenth century, but few are as descriptive as that published in the *Court Magazine and la Belle Assemblée* (1836), which described Regent's Park as:

entered from the London side, by two rich iron gateways, joined together by a screen of similar iron-work, and flanked by two lines of spacious mansions, forming the east and west sides of PARK SQUARE; the north and south sides of the space being open to the park itself on the one hand, and to the splendid range of buildings called PARK CRESCENT, on the other. The mansions of which this square consists, unlike most others in the park, come flush to the pavement, and are reached, each, by a short flight of steps; and, moreover, they do not look directly upon the park itself, but upon the

handsome gardens of the which the space of ground lying between them consists; so that, until you have passed them, you do not feel yourself to be fairly in the park, to which they, and the pleasure-grounds and gardens belonging to them, seem to form a sort of grand vestibule.²¹

After only a few decades of tranquillity, change came to Park Square and Park Crescent with the Metropolitan Railway - London's first underground line.²² Contractors were appointed to start building in 1859, with the section between King's Cross and Paddington, which included Park Square and Park Crescent, being awarded to the firm of Smith and Knight.²³ Most of this section involved the construction of a covered cutting in the roadway that should have destroyed the pedestrian tunnel linking the two gardens but, remarkably, this was protected by the North Metropolitan Railway Act of 1854.²⁴ The north-east lodge of Park Crescent did not, however, fare so well: it was demolished, but later rebuilt.

Next to go were the Square and Crescent's iron gates at the junctions with Marylebone Road. In consequence of several carriages colliding with these gates in 1881, four pairs were removed from their hinges and taken away from Park Square and Park Crescent East. And although the Board of Works objected to the removal of the last pair of gates on the western side of Park Crescent, these too were banished in 1894 in the wake of the 'London Streets (Removal of Gates &c) Act' of 1893.²⁵ The removal of the gates had a great impact on the character of Park Square and Regent's Park in particular as it opened up the Outer Circle to unrestricted use by all forms of traffic.

The Ordnance Survey of 1870 supplies a good overview of the garden enclosures at Park Crescent and Park Square, and suggests that the layouts had not changed significantly since the early nineteenth century (*fig. 46*). It does, however, record the presence of new garden

19. TNA, CRES 35/3520. Letter from Joseph Hume, 14 November 1823. We are grateful to Sue Palmer at Sir John Soane's Museum for her insights into Soane's involvement.

20. Shepherd & Elmes, *op.cit.*, *Metropolitan Improvements*, p.16. Lord Ravensworth in a speech in the House of Lords in 1856 noted the 'disproportion of the statue and its setting. Portland Place was the widest street in London, and by way of terminating the vista, there was placed, in the distance, what appeared to be a small black man hiding himself among the trees'. He suggested that, as a compliment to Queen Victoria, her father's statue should be placed in the small court forming the entrance to Buckingham Palace on the Piccadilly side. Philip Ward-Jackson, *Public Sculpture of Historic Westminster*, vol. 1 (2011), p.181.

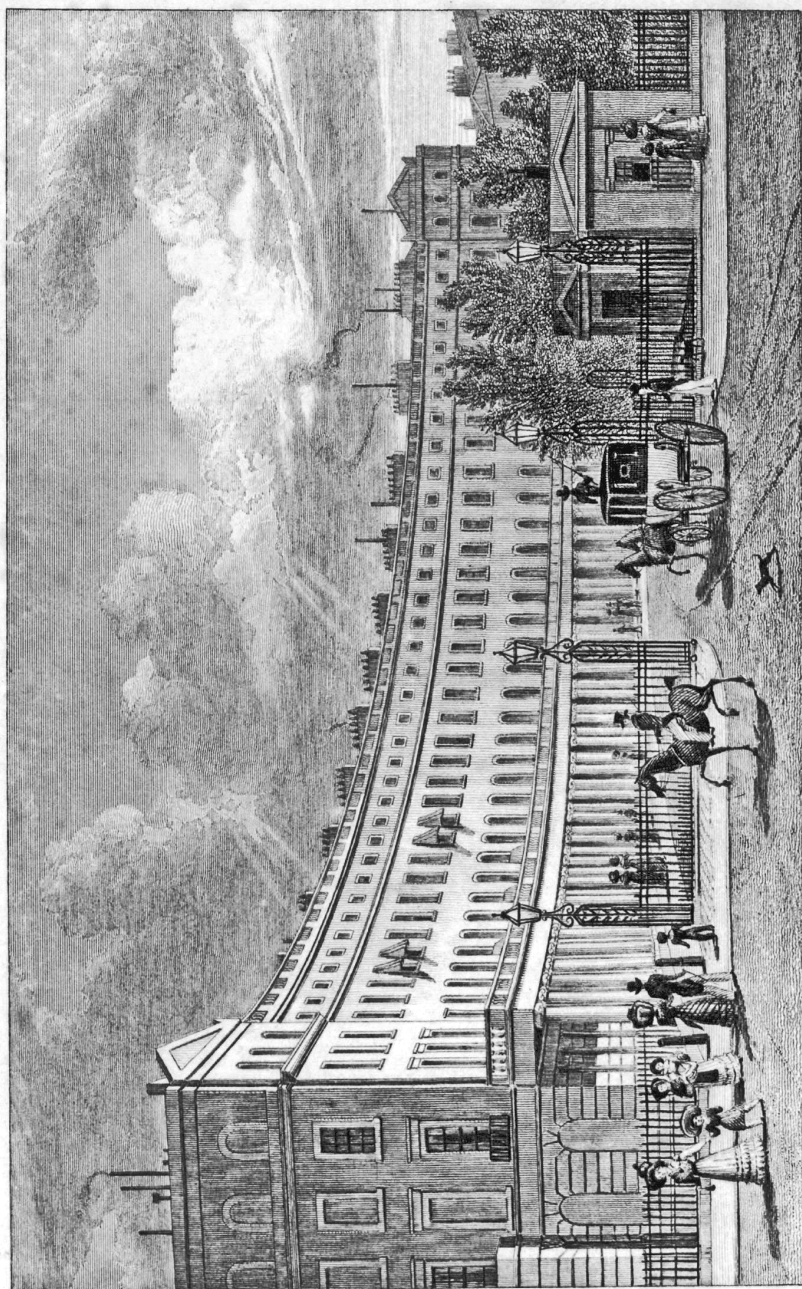
21. 'London Letters to a Country Cousin: The Regent's Park and its Appendages', *The Court Magazine and la Belle Assemblée*, vol. 7 (London, 1836), pp.116-17.

22. Opened 9 January 1863.

23. T C Barker and Michael Robbins, *History of London Transport: The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Harper Collins, 1976), 1, p.113.

24. North Metropolitan Railway Act, 1854, Cap. 221, clause 172.

25. TNA, WORK 16/20; CRES 35/3515. From 1851, the gates, gatekeepers and the lodges at Park Crescent were run and maintained by the Board of Works.

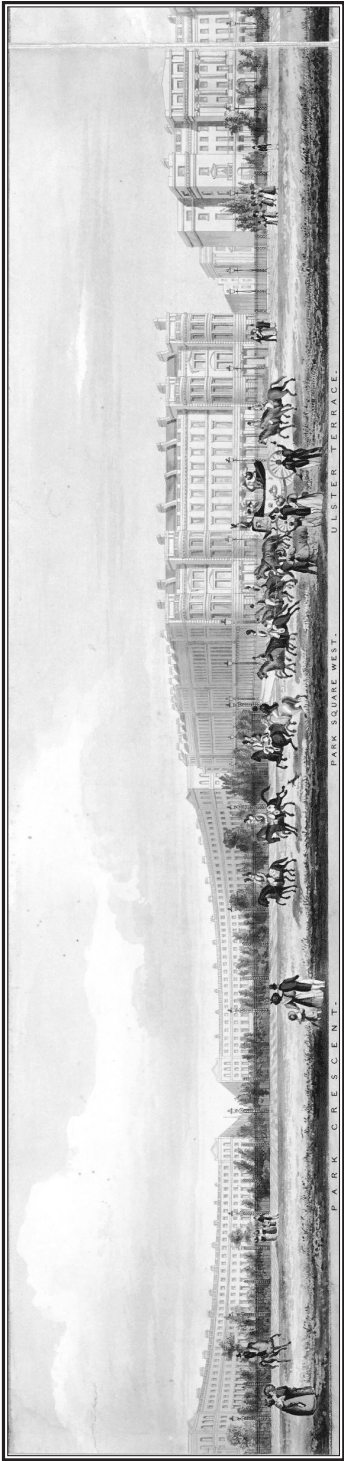


Engraved by J. Redaway.

EAST SIDE OF PARK CRESCENT.

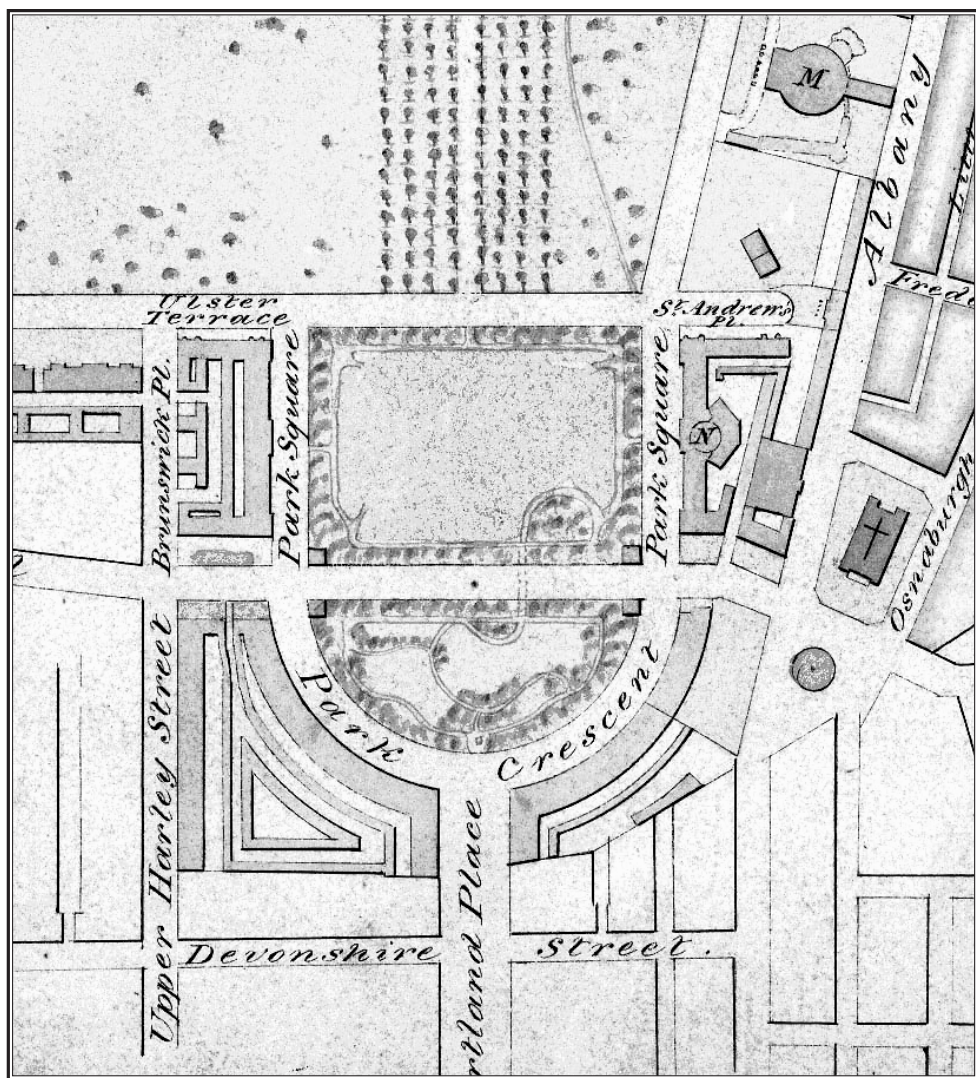
Drawn by Tho. H. Shepherd.

42. Thomas H. Shepherd, *East Side of Park Crescent*, 1827-30
(COURTESY LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVE)

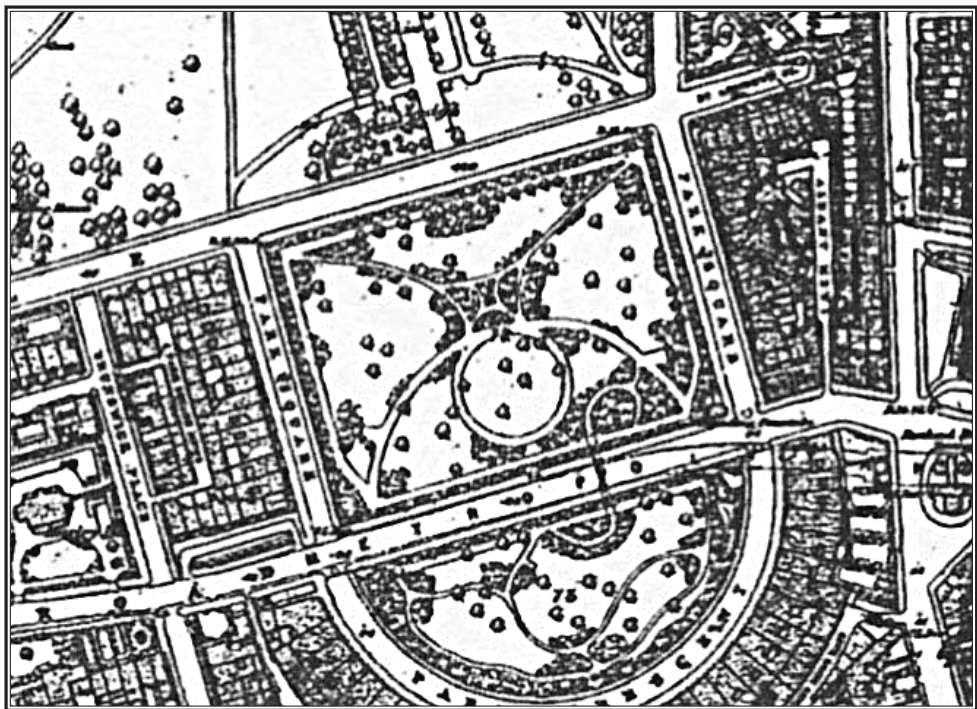


43. Richard Morris, *Panorama of Regent's Park, Looking south from Regent's Park to Park Square and Park Crescent*, c.1831/2 (COURTESY CEPC ARCHIVES)

PARK SQUARE AND PARK CRESCENT GARDENS



44. Detail of Charles Mayhew, 'Plans of all the Ground, Houses and other Buildings within the Jurisdiction of the Commissioners for Paving the Regent's Park, Regent's Street, Whitehall, &c...from an actual survey made in the years 1834 and 1835', showing Park Crescent and Park Square
(COURTESY CEPC ARCHIVES)



45. Entrance to the Nursemaid's Tunnel from Park Square, looking south, 2014
(PHOTOGRAPH TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN)

46. Ordnance Survey, 1870 (detail)

elements such as the so-called 'shed' in the south-east corner of Park Square Garden. This is presumably the cast-iron and timber clad building that survives in the gardens to this day. Also visible are the origins of what has become known as the gardeners' hut in the south-west corner of the same garden, as well as the glasshouses in the north-east corner of Park Crescent (now gone). The map also documents for the first time the random distribution of specimen trees on the open lawns of the gardens.

The early years of the twentieth century saw only minor changes in Park Square and Park Crescent. In 1907, a National Memorial to Shakespeare was proposed to be raised in Park Crescent Garden. Consent was obtained from the King for the removal of Gahagan's statue of the Duke of Kent, which had stood in a recess in the railings on the south side of the Crescent since 1823, and the Paving Commissioners 'generously' gave permission for the erection of the memorial.²⁶ The scheme, which was envisaged to be completed by the tercentenary of the poet's death in 1916, never came to fruition.²⁷

Greater disruption, if not major changes, came with the building of the Bakerloo Line and the construction of Regent's Park Underground station, which necessitated the building of a ventilation shaft in the Crescent garden.²⁸ Then in 1935 routine maintenance precipitated the removal of a row of twenty-seven elm trees on the north side of Park Square, which were found to be old, dangerous and decayed. In the same year, at the instigation of the Crown Estate Paving Commission (CEPC), the St. Marylebone Borough Council replaced the dilapidated drinking fountain that stood in a recess in the railings of Park Square on the Marylebone Road side with a new one supplied by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association.²⁹

The Ordnance Survey of 1940 shows the gardens before the advent of World War II, and for the first time labels some of its numerous outbuildings. Park Crescent is

depicted as possessing a 'shelter' about 10m south of the present Regent's Park Underground entrance, as well as a pair of glasshouses adjacent to the north-east lodge.³⁰ The survey also documents the presence of a building at the centre of Park Square.

This brings our story to the eve of World War II and a time of upheaval and destruction for all the terraces surrounding Regent's Park. Whilst the gardens at Park Square and Park Crescent were not fitted with the conventional range of air raid protection measures, the Nursemaid's Tunnel was put into service as an air raid shelter. It was felt at the time that the tunnel should survive anything other than a direct hit with only minor shoring necessary and partial covering of the entrance ways, presumably with sandbags.³¹

Whilst the tunnel survived intact, the terraces in Park Crescent and Park Square were less fortunate. Part of the western half of Park Crescent was destroyed by bombs and all the houses suffered from damage and neglect. The demands of war also saw the removal of the iron railings around Park Square Garden.³² This caused considerable controversy after the war when replacements had to be considered at a time when no funds were available to supply replica cast-iron designs. On the north side of Park Square the Crown Estate Commission installed close-paled park fencing, which obscured all view through. This was unpopular with the residents who favoured a more open style of wooden fencing.³³

Various post-war plans were considered for the future of the terraces, ranging from complete demolition and replacement with multi-storey flats, to restoration or rebuilding the façades in Portland stone. Ultimately, however, the fate of the squares was determined by the Gorell Committee, which was set up by the government in 1947. It recommended that the 'area enclosed by Park Square and Park Crescent should at once be substantially cleared of the mass of overgrown

26. 'The Shakespeare Memorial: why the Portland Place Site is Best', opinions of Prof. Gollancz and Mr Sidney Lee, *The Observer*, 8 March 1908, p.9.

27. TNA, CRES 35/3520.

28. TNA, CRES 35/4740. The line was opened in 1906.

29. TNA, CRES 35/3520.

30. The Ordnance Survey plan of 1912 shows a large clearing where the buildings were erected.

31. TNA, CRES 35/3520.

32. The railings in Park Square are presumed to have remained intact. Curiously, however, the railings along the northern side of the garden are different from those that trace the semi-circular outline of the garden. It may be that the former were replaced at some point after the war or the widening of the Marylebone Road.

33. TNA, CRES 35/3520.

shrubs and trees which, even in winter, completely obscure the vista of Park Crescent leading down to Portland Place, which was one of the most attractive features of Nash's conception. This would also, in the other direction to the north, clear the view on the line of the Broad Walk towards Parliament Hill'.³⁴

Representatives of the RIBA shared this view.³⁵ Gorell also reaffirmed the fact that the areas enclosed by Park Square and Park Crescent were to be considered as part of 'Regent's Park', and that they like the park should 'permanently remain an open space'.³⁶

The CEPC, however, as managers of the garden enclosures, took issue with some of the Committee's recommendations so it decided, on the advice of the Royal Horticultural Society, to obtain the expert opinion of the landscape architect Mr. Edward White.³⁷ White prepared a short report in late April 1947, in which he remarked that if it was the aim of the Committee to clear much of the vegetation from the squares it was presumably their intention to 'disclose a wide panorama of the Crescent buildings uninterrupted by planting', and that this 'operation must result in the practical elimination of the Gardens and the substitution of two open spaces divided by the Marylebone Road'. White argued that this approach was not consistent with Nash's original conception.³⁸ White furthermore contended that 'an important consequence of the clearance of the foliage screen would be the exposure of two hundred yards of traffic that streams along the Marylebone Road between the two gardens. An unending line of

buses and other vehicles would obstruct the view of the Crescent from the North'. It would, moreover, 'spoil the view of the Park and Broad Walk from Portland Place'. He continued to remark that:

the essential attraction of the Gardens lies in the arrangement of the planting which, among other mature specimens, includes some of the finest Plane Trees in London. The shrubberies have been neglected during the war, but with proper attention can be restored to condition. The groups of planting are arranged appropriately for Landscape effect in relation to the winding paths characteristic of their period. If these groups were removed, the paths would have no meaning and would have to be grassed over. The aesthetic advantages of the alteration are matters about which opinions may differ. If, however, Nash's original intentions are considered all important it may be recalled that in his reports on the Regent's Park development, he stressed the desirability of extending the planting of the Park into the Crescent, in order to avoid a hard division between the two.

White concluded his report remarking that his views were based on his own experience in 'planning City amenities in which the appropriate use of Trees and Shrubs in central positions is always gratefully appreciated. From a practical point of view it is certain that denuding the site of trees and shrubs would deprive pedestrians of comfortable shelter from cold winds and the protection from hot sun now afforded by the planting'.³⁹

It took many years for final plans to be agreed and for work to move forward in respect of the buildings surrounding the gardens, but finally in 1957 it was determined to preserve or where necessary to rebuild Park Square and Park Crescent, retaining the original façades but remodelling the accommodation behind to flats, small houses or offices more suited to modern living. Park Crescent was the first to be renewed but was so badly damaged it was completely demolished

34. TNA, CRES 35/3520. Ronald Gorell Barnes, *Report of the Committee on the Regent's Park Terraces* (HMSO, April 1947). Interestingly, in February 1832 John Nash proposed to 'remove a few Shrubs...from the Center of the Garden in Park Square so as to bring the Statue of the Duke of Kent at the End of Portland Place into view'. This would, he argued, create a 'straight vista' from Portland Place in the south to the Zoological Garden in the north, 'being a length of more than a mile, three quarters of which being within the Park and the Avenues consisting of seven walks will afford parades for the Public...' (TNA, CRES 2 742).

35. 'Park Square had been allowed to become overgrown with trees and shrubs, totally obscuring the vista down Park Crescent and Portland Place'. Gorell Report, *op.cit.*, p.18. The London Society proposed that a new 'Music Centre' for London should be erected 'on the Centre of Park Square'. Gorell Report, *op.cit.*, p.19.

36. Gorell Report, *op.cit.*, p.23.

37. White was the past President of the Landscape Institute (1930-1932). TNA, CRES 35/3515.

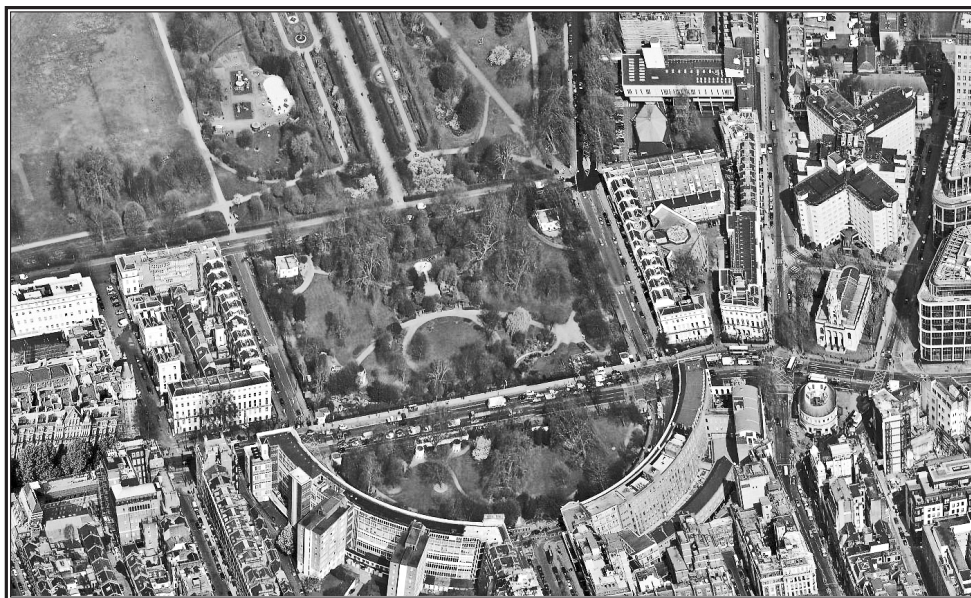
38. To prove his point he referred to the Revised Report of 6 May 1826 in which Nash's plan indicated 'a quantity of massed planting' in the gardens. *Edward White comments on the Report of the Committee on the Regent's Park Terraces*, 23 April 1947, p.2 (TNA, CRES 35/3520).

39. *Edward White comments on the Report of the Committee on the Regent's Park Terraces*, *op.cit.*, p.3.

PARK SQUARE AND PARK CRESCENT GARDENS



PARK CRESCENT, REGENT'S PARK: WHERE THE REPORT RECOMMENDS PRESERVING THE FAÇADE AND MAKING GOOD ANY GAPS CAUSED BY BOMBING,



47. East side of Park Crescent after WWII
(REPRODUCED FROM *Illustrated London News*, 26 APRIL 1947)

48. Aerial view of Park Square and Park Crescent, c.2012



49. Park Crescent Garden 2013. The large tree in the right middle ground is one of the Wellington planes
(PHOTOGRAPH TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN)

50. Works yard in Park Square Garden, 2013
(PHOTOGRAPH TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN)

section by section and rebuilt, following Nash's original design for the façade⁴⁰ (fig. 47). Much of the rubble from the demolished terraces was dumped into the gardens of Park Square and Park Crescent.

In the early 1960s a scheme for widening the Marylebone Road – first put forward before the war – was resurrected, and led to great changes in the layouts of both Park Square and Park Crescent gardens. The road encroached significantly on the northern edge of Park Crescent and the southern side of Park Square: in both gardens the broad boundary plantations, which ran parallel to the Marylebone Road, and which protected the gardens from it, were taken into the carriageway and the public footpath. Several plans from the period show the area taken out of the gardens to enable the road widening, as well as marking the location of the tunnel under the road. When the scheme was being planned in 1938, the Council proposed as part of its responsibilities the 'alteration of the subway between Park Crescent Garden and Park Square Garden'. When the scheme was revived no further mention was made of this.⁴¹ Although the roadworks do not appear to have necessitated changes to the entrances to the tunnel (then referred to as the 'subway'), the encroachment on Park Crescent Garden may have resulted in some minor changes to the westernmost end of the ramp leading to the tunnel entrance.⁴²

The road widening scheme also brought about the demolition of the garden lodges, which were rebuilt to more or less the same designs. A memorandum from c.1972 clearly sets out the status of the lodges at the time. The two residential lodges in the north-east and north-west corners of Park Square Garden, in 1965 referred to as 'two new bungalows', but now known as 12 Park Square East and 13 Park Square West respectively, were built on new sites as replacements for the old lodges that stood, before the road widening works, in the north-east and north-

west corners of Park Crescent Garden. The building of these two structures in 1963 necessitated the removal and repositioning of two early nineteenth-century summerhouses. The lodge in the south-west corner of Park Square Garden (which was rebuilt after the road widening) was occupied by the offices of the CEPC. The three other lodges in the south-east corner of Park Square Garden, and the north-east and north-west corners of Park Crescent were also non-residential. The lodges in the south-east corner of Park Square and in the north-east corner of Park Crescent were adapted as lavatories, and the lodge in the north-west corner of Park Crescent Garden was used by the CEPC as a store.⁴³ All of the new lodges in the Marylebone Road were rebuilt to their original design, before they had been extended by later additions.

At the time of road widening, a new ventilation shaft building for the repositioned existing shaft in Park Crescent Garden was proposed to incorporate a summer house and chair store. It was later determined that an additional shaft was needed for Regent's Park Bakerloo Line station so two new pavilions were built and finished in painted stucco in keeping with the buildings of Park Crescent.⁴⁴ The existing shrubbery in this part of the garden was largely replanted and the footpaths altered with a view to preserving the informal appearance of the gardens and avoiding the buildings becoming too obtrusive. The chair store was omitted in the final buildings but seating was included in recesses around the sides.⁴⁵

The most recent phase of construction in these gardens came in the 1970s when it was proposed that Park Crescent Garden would be used for driving the running tunnels for building the Jubilee Line. There were working shafts, plant and equipment, and a substantial proportion of the gardens to the south of Marylebone Road was occupied for as long as five years, after which the gardens had to be fully reinstated.⁴⁶ At the same time an octagonal ventilation shaft, masquerading as a

40. Saunders, *op.cit.*, pp.165–73.

41. TNA, CRES 35/3142. In negotiating the conveyance of land the Commissioners of the Crown Estate reserved to themselves: 'all those parts of the tunnel or subway now existing ... situate in those parts of the property known as Park Square Gardens and Park Crescent Gardens'. TNA, CRES 59/228.

42. A plan of the early 1960s suggests that cheeks of the ramps to the tunnel entrances in both gardens were lined with bricks – as they are in Park Crescent today, and along the western flank of the ramp in Park Square as well.

43. 'Marylebone Road Widening, C.E.P.C. Lodges in Park Square and Park Crescent' [u.d.]. CEPC Archives. TNA, CRES 57/316. The CEPC initially had little interest in the replica lodges or 'box lodges' as they became known but ultimately agreed to take on their maintenance when it was suggested those at Park Crescent could be converted to public conveniences for those using the gardens.

44. TNA, CRES 35/4740.

45. TNA, CRES 35/4740.

46. TNA, FD 11/51.

summer house, was installed on the other side of the road in Park Square Garden.⁴⁷

The present planting of both Park Crescent and Park Square gardens has evolved organically over the past century, and from the post-war period in particular (figs. 48 & 49). The perimeter planting against the railings is in many places uneven, and the interiors of the gardens are possibly more visible from the surrounding streets than they were originally conceived to be. The character and distribution of the planting material and the plant beds has also in many places changed, possibly on account of the emerging canopy. Park Crescent has several beech and London plane trees, and a catalpa and other trees of note include a maidenhair tree and a tulip tree. Both gardens have pendulous limes. The large London plane trees in Park Square and Crescent are reputed to have been planted in 1817 to commemorate the Duke of Wellington's victory at the Battle of Waterloo two years earlier. It is, however, more likely that they were planted sometime after 1826 when the Portuguese diplomat Manuel Rodrigues Gameiro Pessoa, Baron and Viscount of Itabaiana – an admirer of the Duke of Wellington – took up residence in the square.

If the maturity of the tree cover in the square gardens has the desirable effect of enhancing the sylvan qualities of both enclosures, it has also had a detrimental effect on the appreciation of Nash's original conception, as the trees now occlude the once open and celebrated view from Portland Place to the parkland of Regent's Park and Primrose Hill. This has possibly galvanised two recent initiatives that are contrary to the spirit of Nash's composition. From the late 1980s the open character of Portland Place has been significantly diminished by the planting of a line of London plane trees down the centre of the street;⁴⁸ and from 2000 onwards the

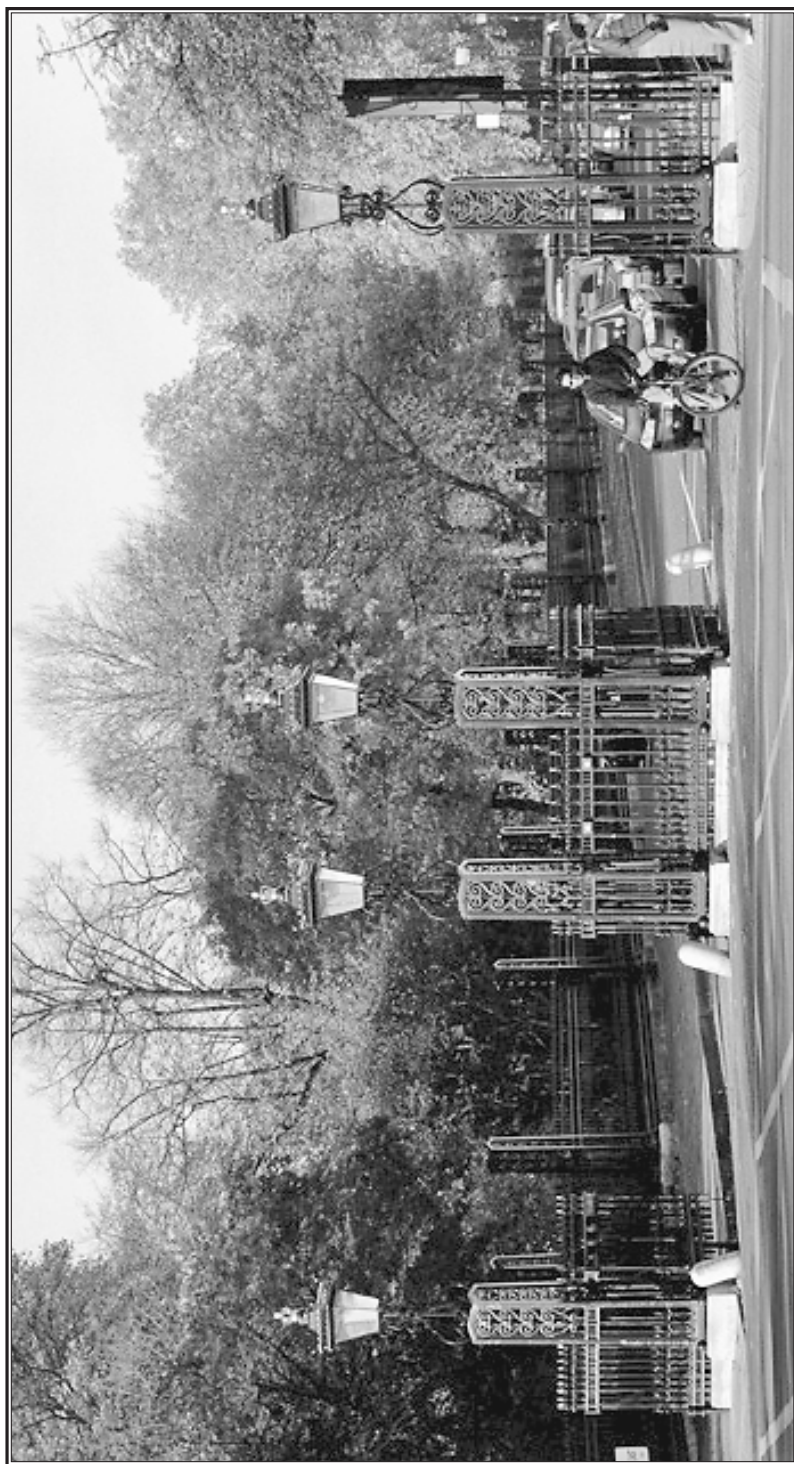
architect Terry Farrell has been promoting the creation of a 'grand pedestrian boulevard snaking through Central London from Regent's Park to the Mall', which proposes to bisect the gardens of Park Crescent and Park Square, and to further clutter up the open view from Portland Place to the park. Inspired by the *Ramblas* in Barcelona, Farrell's scheme, which has been dubbed the 'Nash Ramblas', proposes to drive a broad public footpath through the centres of the gardens to form a direct visual and physical link between Portland Place and the Broad Walk in Regent's Park.⁴⁹ Although Farrell purports that his plan complements Nash's original vision, many features of the scheme have no precedents in the original early nineteenth-century plan. Farrell, for instance, proposes to plant an alley of trees along the length of Portland Place. This street, which was conceived to be the broadest and grandest residential street in London at 38m wide, was intended to remain open and treeless. Furthermore, the aim to forge a public right-of-way through a pair of private gardens is not only undesirable but unnecessary: there are already very good and architecturally rich pedestrian links between Portland Place and Regent's Park. It was Nash's aim effectually to connect 'Portland-place with Mary-le-bone Park', without producing the least sensation of having crossed the New Road; such measures would exchange the view of a picturesque landscape at the end of Portland Place for a framed view to the traffic of the Marylebone Road.

Both Park Square and Park Crescent have suffered from the CEPC's need to base its day-to-day operations within these gardens, being the only available working spaces available to it on the estate. This has inevitably had some adverse impact on the gardens since space formerly given over to landscaping has been requisitioned for other uses at various times for glass houses, storage areas and new lodges. Attempts to negotiate other more satisfactory working spaces with the Ministry of Works or its successor, The Royal Parks, have not yet proved successful, somewhat to the detriment of these two important ornamental enclosures.

47. N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 3, North West* (London, 1991), p.618.

48. Quite astonishingly, the authors of *Trees in the Public Realm*, a Draft Supplementary Planning Document report produced for Westminster City Council in 2009 (Appendix, p.B-30), remark that 'although never intended to become boulevards, Portland Place, Gloucester Place, Devonshire Place, Great Cumberland Place are able to satisfactorily accommodate planting and now have an important greening function in this dense urban area'; and that 'there is no in-principle objection to planting in broader streets such as Portland Place and Baker Street and as part of a comprehensive scheme'. The authors appear to have little interest in the historical development of some of London's most important residential streets.

49. See <http://www.terryfarrell.co.uk/projects/nash-ramblas/>



51. New cast-iron gates at Park Square, 2013. The gates were erected in 2002 and were based on the original designs of the early nineteenth century
(PHOTOGRAPH TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN)

The development of the works yard in the south-west corner of Park Square Garden has been unfortunate, as has been the creation of a composting area in the south-east corner. The works yard and bin store – part of which is paved in concrete and asphalt, and concealed in part by a Leylandii hedge and close-boarded fencing – is particularly unsightly (*fig. 50*). Two timber pergolas were erected after World War II at the centre of the garden and the foundations of two former glasshouses, also at the centre of the Square, remain in situ where attractive garden space might otherwise predominate. The CEPC's offices in the north-east corner of the Square are divided from the central gardens by a low metal fence, as is the Inspector of Pavements' residential lodge in the north-west corner.

A long section of the north-eastern side of the retaining wall of the ramped walk to the Nursemaid's Tunnel has been removed and terraced beds with mixed shrub and herbaceous planting have been introduced in its place. The brick retaining walls that line the long ramp leading to the tunnel in Park Crescent survive but are in a decayed state and require extensive remedial works. The tunnel itself also requires regular monitoring of its structural integrity, pounded as it is by the Marylebone Road traffic above and the railway beneath. Its brickwork vaults and stucco façades need sympathetic conservation and redecoration in order to enhance the impact of this unusual garden feature.

The layout of the paths in Park Crescent remains more or less intact from the early nineteenth century. Notable changes include the loss of the long east-west path that formerly ran across the north end of the garden parallel and adjacent to the Marylebone Road, and a serpentine path that formerly snaked through the eastern side of the garden. Park Square has also lost its east-west footpath that ran parallel and adjacent to the Marylebone Road, and its counterpart on the northern boundary of the square has been truncated at both ends by the building of the 'bungalows' in 1963. It is not entirely clear whether the footpaths in Park Square follow their original alignment as the Mayhew plan of 1834/5 does not delineate in full the garden plan. The 1870 OS plan is the first reliable record, and this does, however, show that the

general layout is not dissimilar from the present one. Interestingly, the large semi-circular path echoes the alignment of the original 'Circus' of 1812, and the path layout proposed on Burton's 'Design for Planting the area of the two CRESCENTS' of c.1819. The surfaces of the footpaths in both gardens are presently mostly laid to gravel, and are edged in a variety of materials including timber, cobbles, rope edging tiles (some of which are presumably Victorian) and dwarf stone walls.

Among the most notable improvements to the gardens in recent years have been the reinstatement of missing railings and gates (*fig. 51*). Between 2000 and 2003 the Crown Estate and the CEPC collaborated to commission Caroe & Partners Architects to design and implement the replacement ironwork. Templates taken from original cast-iron railings in Park Crescent formed the basis for the new railings; these were cast at Ballantyne's Foundry in Scotland, and later erected on Portland stone plinths. On the north side of the square, lanterns were replaced, with designs developed from nineteenth-century engravings. In Park Square East and West the Marylebone Road park gates were reconstructed, with lanterns surmounted by gilded crowns.

Now that the railings have been restored and reinstated it only remains for the central enclosure of the square to be improved. The CEPC has to this end commissioned proposals for the refurbishment of the gardens. What is certain is that these proposals will be informed by the site's rich history and the needs and wishes of the residents, and that the improvements are sure to restore Park Square and Park Crescent to their rightful place as a striking terminus to Regent's Street and a 'grand vestibule' to Regent's Park.

* * * * *

Acknowledgements

With thanks to David Lambert and
Todd Longstaffe-Gowan
for assistance with this research