

The Lion

Presented by Councillor Clarke (inventor of Clarke's Blood Mixture and four times Mayor of Lincoln) the Lion was drawn on stone rollers up the High Street to its position in the park. A target for jokers from the outset, it's been daubed with paint (1910), striped red and green (1925), given black whiskers, spectacles, a scarlet face ...



Eventually the Park Committee, unwilling to fork out the £80 needed to clean the beast, decided to destroy it. However an anonymous businessman, warmly recalling his childhood "joy and awe" on visiting the Lion, came up with the money. The Lion was saved.



The Glass Pavilion

The 300m long Terrace, lined with Limes, was hailed as the longest in Europe, a promenade where people paraded in their Sunday best.



The Pavilion on the upper bank, a conservatory as well as a venue for grand occasions, was hit by bombs in the war and never rebuilt.

Promenade Concerts

Concerts became regular events until 1895. They ended because of poor attendance.



The Bandstand continued to be well used, and in 1903 was equipped with electric lighting.

The Maze

Once hedged with sweet brier, in the 50s the maze became a rose garden. A maze once more, it now has hornbeam hedges bordered with holly.



Fountains

The terrace pools were drained and planted with shrubs. Now the fountains are gushing again, the ponds brimming with water.



A Heritage Lottery Fund grant was instrumental in helping finance the park's restoration in 2003.

History

Arboretum

Monks Road • Lincoln



The Bandstand

Installed in 1884 at a cost of £120, the bandstand was sponsored by the Lincoln Lodges of Oddfellows, whose names are carved round the base. Ten thousand people flocked to the opening ceremony and stayed on to watch a firework display in the afternoon.

When the Arboretum was being restored in 2003, and the bandstand stripped down, English Heritage asked for the paintwork to be analysed, to find out its original colours.

What came to light was the glorious frivolity of purple, red, gold, white and pink that we see today.



A People's Park

During the 19th century, Lincoln's population rose fourfold. Overcrowding and smoke from the growing number of factory chimneys was damaging health. Workers needed fresh air.

When the idea of a People's Park was first mooted, Joseph Ruston feared workers would lounge about getting drunk for days on end.

Despite such doubts the venture went ahead. The site chosen was a "useless common" once owned by Benedictine Monks and given to the Freemen of Lincoln after the Reformation.

£500 from the sale of the Sheep Market sparked off the fund-raising. Edward Milner, one of the finest landscape gardeners of the day, was engaged to design the park.



Elaborate flower beds appeared, a floral clock, fountains, statues, ornamental urns, gilded bridges, a grand glass pavilion... But it was chiefly landslip problems that caused him to overrun his budget.

Milner persuaded the Committee to sell a strip of land above the terrace as building plots. The first two imposing houses pleased him greatly; he liked the dramatic effect. Not so the local press, who pronounced them "ugly ... an eyesore for as long as they stand."

1872 - The Opening

Railway excursions brought train-loads of visitors. 45,000 tickets were put on sale.

At 1.00pm the Robin Hood Band headed a procession of horse-drawn drays from South Common up the High Street past flag-waving crowds. Along Silver Street and into Monks Road they streamed, tableaux of tradesmen demonstrating their trades, and last of all Robey & Co's Steam Omnibus & Road Engine.

On arrival, the official party made their way up the steps to the Glass Pavilion, the ceremony set to music by the Bandmaster of the First Lincoln Rifle Volunteers. Sports and games were followed by Lilliputian Ladies, Performing Dogs, Ethiopian Minstrels, and a Balloon Ascent – all rounded off with a heavy downpour!

Keepers & Gardeners

The first Lodge Keeper was sworn in as a constable to keep the peace. People who played in the park as children remember a fearsome character patrolling the grounds. Games of cricket on the grass were forbidden. So were scooters. Only the foolhardy dared cross the chains guarding the bandstand.



It was the Head Gardener's job to look after the peacocks. He also turned the hands on the floral clock to show closing time for that evening. At dusk a bell rang to warn visitors that the gates were about to be locked – a ritual deemed pointless after 1939 when all the railings and gates were appropriated in aid of the War Effort.

The Stone Fountain

In 1905 a typhoid epidemic struck Lincoln, and 118 people died. Poor water was blamed, so a fresh supply was piped in from Elkesley.



A fountain was built using rock from the boreholes as columns. When in October 1911 the Mayor opened the valve, the piped water shot into the air with such force it drenched the dignitaries standing close by – even people watching from Monks Road got a soaking!

Again it rained. After a Service of Thanksgiving in the Cathedral, the procession marched down the steps, umbrellas glistening under thousands of fairy lights.



Such celebrations were justified. The bringing of pure water was to benefit a city's entire population.

Trees & Coronations



The Oak planted in 1902 to mark the crowning of Edward VII, who visited Lincoln the same year, still stands. A second planted for George V in 1911 perished. In 1953 the Coronation Gardens were created to honour the young Elizabeth II.