Welcome to

DORCHESTER BOROUGH GARDENS

View north west of the shrubberies towards Cornwall Road, from the south entrance on West Walks circa 1895 (Dorset County Museum Collection)

Grand opening of the new bandstand, 1898
(Dorset County Museum Collection)

Celebration of the Relief of Mafeking with the gardens lit by candle lanterns
Summer 1900
(Dorset County Museum Collection)

THE GARDEN RESTORATION

The Borough Gardens were designed by William Goldring in 1895. The south end of the site had been the Cornwall Road Nursery while the north end had been used for the cattle market and fairgrounds.

The gardens were intended as a gift to the people of Dorchester 'for the health and recreation of the inhabitants'. They are a good example of the type of park which became popular following the industrial revolution of the 19th Century and were usually commissioned by wealthy philanthropists or by the town mayor. It was the Mayor Alderman GJG Gregory who established Dorchester gardens and his achievement was celebrated with the commissioning in 1898 of the fountain in the Dell by Charles Hansford in memory of 'Alderman Gregory'.

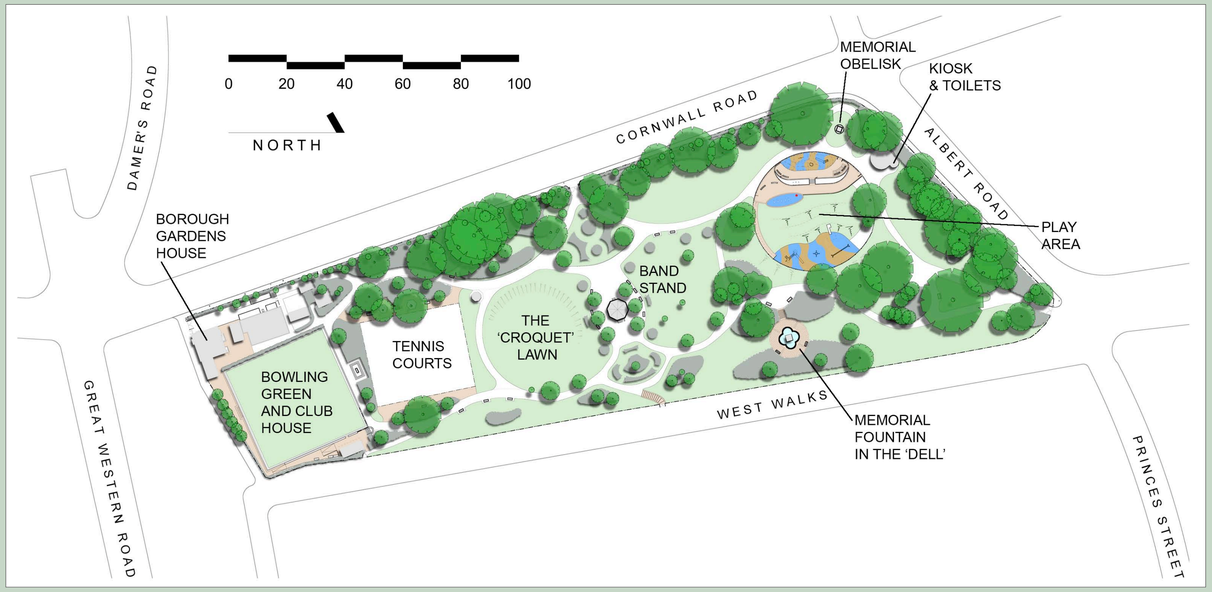
In 1905 Charles Hansford also donated the clock tower. In 1898 the new bandstand was built to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee with the help of Col. W. E. Brymer. Areas for recreation such as the tennis courts, a bowling green, paddling pool and children's playground were added throughout the next 50 years or so.

After some years of under-investment and vandalism Dorchester Town Council began the process of restoring the gardens in 1997. The initial step was securing the park with a Grade II listing on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens. This was followed by a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant of £950,500. The restored gardens were finally opened by the Mayor Robin Potter and Oscar winning local resident Mr Julian Fellowes on May Day 2007.

As well as restoring the gardens to their original character the playground was completely redesigned to provide modern and imaginative areas which are more sympathetic to the historic surroundings.

West Walks circa 1922
(Dorset County Museum Collection)

Postcard from 1905 showing a view of the fountain in the 'Dell' (Dorset County Museum Collection)



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