Welcome to

DORCHESTER BOROUGH GARDENS

View of the bandstand with bedding out circa 1922
(Dorset County Museum Collection)

View of the bandstand with bedding out circa 1922
(Dorset County Museum Collection)

View North of the shrubberies along Cornwall Road circa 1898
(Dorset County Museum Collection)

PLANTING IN THE GARDENS

William Goldring originally laid out the gardens in 1895. He began his professional life working at Kew Gardens where he soon became head of his own department. By the age of 25 he had become assistant editor of the 'Garden' magazine at the Royal Horticultural Society. He began to take private commissions for garden designs and soon he gave up journalism to work full time as a garden designer. By the end of his career it is said he had been involved with nearly 700 gardens. He worked for nobility, for governments and for councils throughout the world. He was noted for having designed the Exhibition grounds at Earl's Court and won the Gold Medal for the design of the gardens for the British Pavilion at the St Louis World's Fair in 1904.

The planting in the gardens was designed to form different themed spaces and to frame views through the gardens of the different features such as the fountain, the clock tower and the avenue of trees along West Walks.

The trees are the bones of his design. Many of the trees along the boundaries were planted before the gardens were laid out such as the Beech trees along Albert Road or West Walks, which were planted with Lime, Sycamore and Elm. With the exception of the Elms many of these still survive. Goldring added more Sycamore and Beech, and new varieties of trees, recently introduced from Asia and America, such as the Blue Cedar, Conifers and Copper Beech. The trees are now mature and some of them have become overgrown or infirm. As part of the restoration project trees have been felled or pruned to bring back those views between the different areas of the gardens.

The planting beds in the gardens are well recorded in articles of the time and in historic photos from the turn of the century.

'the trees and shrubs of which there are over 300 varieties, were supplied by Messrs. Veitch of the Royal Exotic Nurseries, Chelsea.'
Excerpt from the Dorchester Gazette August 6th, 1896.

A review in the Gardeners' Chronicle at the time described borders of shrub roses, rhododendrons, conifers and ornamental shrubs. The article also mentions beds *'filled with masses of gay colours'*.

Over the years many splendid herbaceous plants were lost and only a small number of varieties of shrub remained, most of which were long since over grown.

During the restoration these overgrown shrubberies were cut back down to size, different varieties were reintroduced and herbaceous plantings were brought back. The different varieties of plant were selected with the help of the magazine articles and with other sources from the period such as the catalogue of 'Messrs. Veitch' and popular gardening books from the period.

The gardens are back in good health. The greater variety of plants now here provide an important contribution to the biodiversity of the town, with a greater variety of flowers, seeds and berries and a greater variety of habitats.

View North West of the shrubberies torwards Cornwall Road, from the south entrance on West Walks in 1898
(Dorset County Museum Collection)

William Goldring 1854-1919
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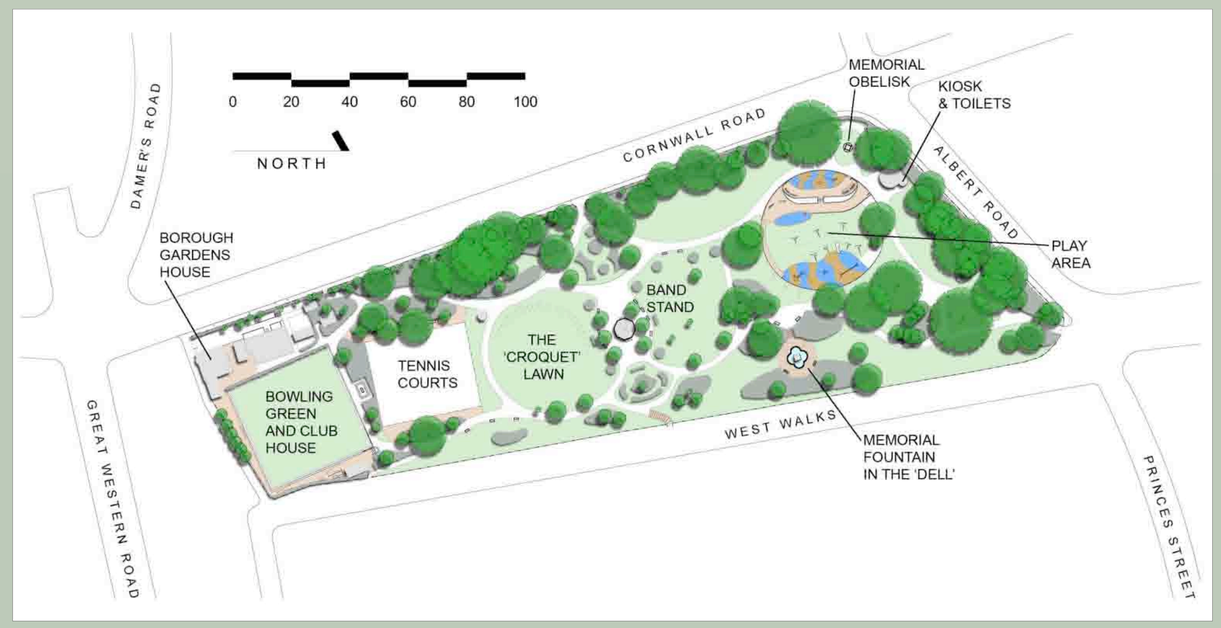

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