

WORTHINGTON PARK - A CENTURY OF HISTORY

A fascinating and emotive history lies behind the existence of our lovely Park.

In early 1897, a committee appointed by the Urban District Council, met to consider 'the question of providing Open Spaces or other forms of commemorating the Queen's long reign'. It was, of course, a follow-on from the movement for the creation of such recreational, public parks.

The philosophy behind the idea was to provide for the then present and for the future residents of Sale, facilities for the recreational welfare of the young, with open spaces for popular games and for the elder inhabitants, bowling greens, quiet resting places, garden seats etc., whilst 'the park-like character of the ground has also been considered'.

Sadly, ratepayers would not consent to the purchase of the available land, but within a very short time, an anonymous donor provided sufficient funds for the purchase to proceed.

The 16½ acre site was designed and laid out by a famous local engineer and surveyor, Mr.A.G.McBeath; his equally famous architect son, Mr. Robert McBeath designed the buildings - the lodge, summer houses, band stand and ornamental lake.

The benefactor was revealed on the 30th June 1900, when 'Sale Park' was declared open by Mrs Mary Worthington, of Sale Old Hall. It was a celebration of note, with Mrs Worthington opening the gates with a golden key, her planting of a Red Oak tree, with the children attending being given a commemorative medal and a Brass Band providing music.

Throughout its Century the Park has witnessed many events, changes and additions, yet retaining its original character.

In 1903 a Mrs Scrimshaw gifted the stone lion to the Park, for many generations to sit on his back. Sadly, due to repeated vandalism, 'Leo' had to be moved to the childrens' library in Sale - still sat upon!

In 1905, a memorial to J.P.Joule was unveiled by Sir William Bailey, after funds raised included donations from scientists as far away as Germany and the USA. From the 1920's Rose Queen events took place.

1935 saw the public celebration in the Park for the Royal Silver Jubilee of George V and Queen Mary, followed in 1936 by the celebration for the 1935 Charter of Incorporation of the Borough of Sale - when two oaks were planted in memory of the Charter Mayor, the late John Clarke.

During World War II, morale-boosting events took place - from Civil Defence displays, illustrating pertinent emergency measures, to school sporting events, open games for adults and regular concerts by the Home Guard Band.

The War-victory celebrations in 1945 were spectacular - a 12ft. bonfire, fireworks display and music played through gramophone records - over 2000 people attended.

By 1948 regular Sunday concerts were taking place; 1949 saw the opening of a new bowling pavilion for the Sale Veterans Association and

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1950 saw the Golden Jubilee of the Park, when another Red Oak was planted by Viscount Leverhulme, Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire, with the re-naming of the Park to honour Mrs Worthington. The erection of new gates at the Park's entrances marked the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

The 1960's, '70's and '80's brought changes - the loss of the tennis courts and putting greens, mass planting of trees and ground cover in some areas, new play features for children of various ages and in the '90's to mark the latest development in childrens' play, a dual purpose stunt bike/skating facility was installed.

The Millenium year saw a celebration to mark the Park's Centenary, designed to closely echo that very first momentous day of its existence, with a Mayoral re-dedication of the Park to the memory of Mrs. Worthington, tree-planting and commemorative plaques on main gates.

Even though some changes have occurred in the Parkland, there is still the sense of space, beauty, tranquility and pleasure to be found, at any time, in any season.

Much of the revitalising of this Green Flag Park has been through the efforts of the Friends of Worthington Park group, formed in 2003, working alongside Parks and Countryside staff and strongly supported by Ward Councillors.

Working with local schools, local businesses and other groups, brings about true community spirit; fund raising for projects now includes that towards a refurbishing of the bandstand - its use then will enhance that spirit even more.

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Information collected from directories, electorate rolls, newspaper reports, records and documents deposited at Trafford Local Studies Centre, Sale, and personal involvement.