

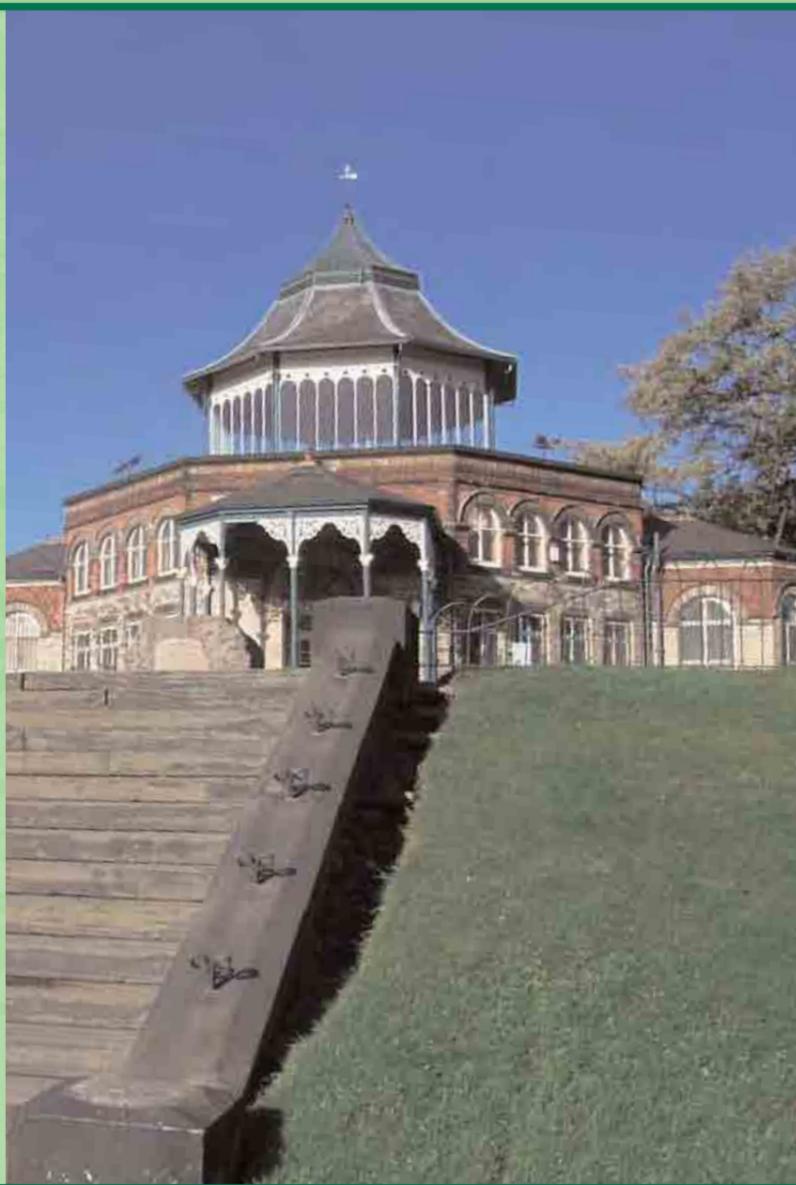
December 2006



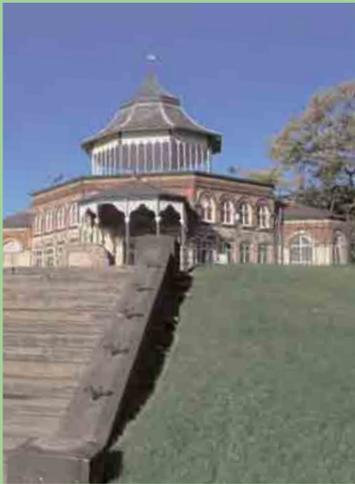
MESNES

CONSERVATION

AREA APPRAISAL



Environmental Services Department



THE MESNES
CONSERVATION
AREA APPRAISAL

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Introduction and background

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas were introduced through the Civic Amenities Act in 1967. They are defined as "areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". It is the quality and interest of areas, rather than individual buildings, which is the prime consideration in identifying conservation areas.

The special interest of an area may derive from the grouping or arrangement of buildings of similar or varied ages or architectural character and their relationship to spaces, for example streets, squares, parks, trees and greenery. The use of particular types of materials or locally distinctive styles of building and details such as paving, walls, railings, forming part of the public realm may also contribute to an area's special interest. Generally it will be the age and character of the area as a whole and the relationship between buildings and spaces which in combination may justify conservation area status.

There are over 9000 conservation areas in England. The borough of Wigan has 22 such areas varying in size from 1.59 hectares (ha) Railway Road Leigh; to 33.45 ha Wigan Lane CA, Wigan. Wigan's Conservation Areas occupy a total area of 231.25 ha. Wigan's first conservation areas Haigh Village and Standish were designated in April 1976 and the latest, Bridgewater canal Leigh designated 25 May 1994.

The Mesnes Conservation Area, the subject of this appraisal, was designated 25 August 1980 and extended 21 November 1984. It occupies an area of some 18.48 hectares (46.66 acres), the bulk of which is occupied by Mesnes Park.

The legal framework relating to conservation areas is currently provided by the 1990, Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. Government Policy for the implementation of conservation in England is set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, Planning and the Historic Environment *. Also relevant is PPG16 Archaeology and Planning *. *(Until these are rewritten as new Planning Policy Statements).

Within Conservation areas Local Planning Authorities have stronger powers to control new development and the alteration or demolition of unlisted buildings than elsewhere. Trees within conservation areas are also given greater protection. Wider publicity must be given to planning applications, which are likely to have an impact upon the character or appearance of conservation areas. Certain types of alterations to dwelling houses which would normally be exempt from the need for planning permission such as external cladding, require consent within conservation areas.

It is not the purpose of conservation area designation to prevent all new development, rather to ensure that changes necessary to meet evolving social and economic conditions are managed in such a way as to ensure the survival of the local distinctiveness and sense of place which warranted designation in the first place. Similarly, works involving the public realm should aim to preserve or enhance the area's special qualities, not detract from them.

The local Planning Authority has the means to achieve these objectives through the Development Control process by the application of the relevant policies of its Unitary Development Plan. Conservation Area Appraisals can usefully inform the development control process by identifying the features of the area which it is desirable to preserve and enhance and opportunities for positive change.





The relevant policies for Wigan are contained in the Wigan Unitary Development Plan, Proposed Modifications to the Replacement Plan, January 2006, as summarised in Appendix 1.

Councils can also seek to preserve or improve the character and appearance of their conservation areas by the careful design and implementation of works that are within its corporate control, for example the positioning and design of street furniture, specifications for paving and traffic management schemes, or by its briefing and commissioning role in regeneration projects.

Local planning authorities have a duty not only to select suitable parts of their district for designation as conservation areas, but also to keep them under review and if appropriate to designate further such areas. Designation also requires local planning authorities:

-  To formulate and publish from time to time proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and submit them to a public meeting in the area to which they relate.
-  In exercising their planning powers, to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

The overall policy and legal framework applicable within conservation areas is given effect locally by the relevant policies contained within the Development Plans prepared by Local Planning Authorities.

Often such policies are supported by additional supplementary planning guidance.

Conservation Area Appraisals

In 1997, English Heritage published guidance relating to the preparation of conservation area appraisals. With the increasing number of designated conservation areas over the years, it was considered that there would be value in the preparation of up to date assessments of the character of conservation areas. The broad purpose of such assessments or appraisals would be:

-  to identify and describe the character and appearance of the conservation area and the significance of its special architectural or historic features;
-  to provide an understanding of current issues and challenges particularly those relating to the vulnerability of the special qualities of the conservation area; and
-  to provide a basis for the formulation of proposals for enhancement and the sustainable management of the area and for consultation relating thereto.

The guidelines were revised and updated in June 2005 to reflect recent changes in planning legislation including the new Development plans processes and consultation procedures. In February 2006 English Heritage published their guidance in booklet form, 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals'.

This appraisal is generally framed within the English Heritage guidance. It should be noted that whilst this appraisal aims to provide an overview of the historic development of the conservation area and its present day character and appearance, the analysis inevitably involves a degree of subjectivity. In the interests of succinctness, it cannot be totally comprehensive. Because a particular building or feature or aspect of the area's historic development is not mentioned, it does not imply that it is unimportant. Additional



matters may arise as a result of consultation and publicity which may need to be taken into account in subsequent reviews of the appraisal or the management strategy.

Appraisals should not therefore be just an academic exercise. By identifying key issues and priorities, the appraisal can be used as a practical management tool to ensure the continued preservation and enhancement of the area's special qualities.

Given the time which has elapsed since their designation, a number of Wigan's conservation areas are in need of up to date appraisals. Inevitably such work must be prioritised. Further momentum has been given to the need for Conservation Area Appraisals in that they are now one of the Council's Best Value indicators for performance of the planning service.

The need for an appraisal of the Mesnes CA is all the more pressing as the Park itself is now to be the subject of a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for a major revitalisation programme. HLF rules require that the bid is formulated within the context of relevant and up to date assessment of the area's special architectural and historic character and appearance and moreover takes into account the aspirations of stakeholders and the local community for the particular conservation area.

Mesnes Conservation Area

Location, boundaries and land form

The Conservation Area is centred upon Mesnes Park a public park located to the north of the town centre, within the Central Ward of the borough of Wigan, (formerly Swinley Ward).

The Designated Area is approximately pentagonal in shape and lies on a south-easterly to north-westerly alignment, some 700m long on its principal axis and about 430m at its maximum width.

Its southern edge extends 150 m along New Market Street which forms the northern boundary of the town centre and the principal shopping area as defined on the Wigan Unitary Development Plan. Premises 4-6, 8-10 New Market Street and the adjoining Rushton Building, occupied by the Council's Civic Offices, are included.

In a clockwise direction, the Conservation Area's perimeter continues along Parson's Walk taking in the Drumcroon Arts Centre, the Thomas Linacre Outpatients Centre, (former High School), and west side frontage properties numbered 1-49 Parson's Walk. It continues as Park Road including frontages numbered 1-14 and includes two short culs-de-sac, Park Crescent and Park Crescent West and the premises of the Wigan Subscription Bowling Club.

The western perimeters of the Conservation area and Mesnes Park coincide, following the embankment of the main 'west coast' railway line. The boundary returns along the northern edge of the park, (excluding the park depot), taking in part of the Pagefield Annex of Wigan and Leigh College,



(formerly Rylands Gidlow Mill). The perimeter continues along the north eastern side of the park, including the frontage properties Nos 1-29 Bridgeman Terrace inclusive, Bridgeman House, Nos 38-46 Bridgeman Terrace and Nos 5-7 Kenyon Road. The boundary continues along Mesnes Street including Claremont, to its junction with New Market Street.

The conservation area includes Mesnes Park Terrace, which links Bridgeman Terrace with Parson's Walk separating the public park from an area of mainly open land known as the Mesnes Field. Premises numbered 1-5 Mesnes Park Terrace are included. The conservation area includes some 93 properties of a domestic scale and character of which slightly over half remain in residential use. (Ref Plan 1)

The land level drops from 39m. Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), at its south western corner, to a low point of 34.7m. AOD mid -way along Parson's Walk, then rises gradually to 37.36m. AOD at the railway bridge. Along its eastern perimeter, the levels rise gradually northwards, from approx. 39m. AOD at the south eastern corner, to 39.9m. AOD mid way along Bridgeman Terrace, rising more sharply to over 46m. AOD on the northern edge of the park.

An outline of the geology and land form of the Wigan area with particular reference to the historic importance of coal mining is given in Appendix 2.

Character Areas - an aid to appraisal

English Heritage suggest that larger conservation areas can often be conveniently analysed in terms of sub-areas, for example, which contain buildings of a distinctive period or style or which can be defined by natural or man made features such as watercourses, main roads or areas of open space. This approach can conveniently be applied to the Mesnes Conservation Area appraisal as the area

naturally divides into several distinct sub areas. The appraisal will however consider the contribution of the various character areas to the conservation area as a whole.

The various character areas within the Mesnes Conservation area can be described as follows:

-  Mesnes Park itself
-  The Mesnes Field area
-  The south western perimeter of Parson's Walk/ Park Road and the former high school
-  The north eastern perimeter comprising Bridgeman Terrace and the Pagefield College Building

These are illustrated on Diagram 1.



Character Area 1 Mesnes Park

The Park - a brief introduction

Mesnes Park, the focus of the Mesnes Conservation Area, is an area of urban parkland of some 12 hectares (29.65 acres), laid out in Victorian times. It extends about 0.5 km in a northwesterly direction from Mesnes Park Terrace. Its main entrance is located at its south-eastern corner at the junction of Bridgeman Terrace and Mesnes Park Terrace, within 200m of the town centre shopping area. The Mesnes Field is an area of mainly open land situated between the park and the town centre.

From its inception up to modern times, Mesnes Park has provided the principal area of open space for the inner town. It is juxtaposed with nearby residential areas of medium density including many semi-detached and terraced houses with small private garden space. Neighbouring the park is the substantial campus of the Wigan and Leigh College, comprising the main buildings off Parson's Walk and the Pagefield Annex located adjacent the northern area of the park. The two sites together have some 6,600 enrolled students including full time, part time and evening learners.

Historical context

The development of Mesnes Park is inextricably linked with the history and development of the town and particularly its period of rapid growth and expansion during the industrial revolution. The history of Wigan as a settlement can however be traced back to at least Roman times, being identified with the name of Coccium. (A review of the principal archaeological findings within the Conservation Area is contained in Appendix 3).

"Wigan is not a parvenu of the
Industrial Revolution. The Parish

Church is first mentioned in 1199, the town received a charter in 1246 and the grant of a market in 1258 and there are minimal features of the 13th Century in the Parish Church. Leland mentions sea-coules at Wigan in 1538, and by 1784 a cloth hall was opened, i.e. the town manufactured textiles".*

*N Pevsner, Buildings of England,
South Lancashire

The early town grew up on rising ground above the River Douglas, a tributary of the Ribble and situated on the alignment of the Roman Road between Preston and Warrington. The name Wigan is probably Saxon in origin.

In 1538 Leland described Wigan as paved, "as big as Warrington" - also a town with 13th Century Market charters - "but better built". He recorded that Mr Bradshaw at Haigh, just outside Wigan "hath found much cannel like sea-coules in the ground, very profitable to him".

(Cannel is a form of coal formed under special conditions when plants decay under water. It is high in impurities and contains large amounts of fish scales, oil and gas. It will burn in a candle flame producing a smoky candle light effect - hence the name. Large seams of cannel were mined in Wigan. Cannel was especially suited to gas production. Source: Wigan History Shop).

By the mid 18th Century the town was known for its brass, copper, bedding, rugs and cannel coal products. Its main industry was coal mining aided by the development of canal connections initially by a link to the River Douglas, 1742 using coastal shipping from the Ribble to Liverpool. A direct



canal link to Liverpool was opened in 1772 later becoming part of the Leeds and Liverpool canal, opened throughout in 1816. The introduction of steam engines and innovations in textile machinery led to the growth of the textile industry away from mainly domestic woollen production into the large cotton mills. In 1829 there were 32 steam engines at work in Wigan's mills.

(Source - History Shop).

The town's principal industries, coal and cotton, flourished during the 19th Century aided by the coming of the railway, initially in 1832, via a link to the Liverpool and Manchester. By 1838 the line to Preston was complete.

The Preston Chronicle of the day described the great embankment north of Wigan station as "almost a fortification round the sides of the town". (Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain Volume 10 G O Holt).

The development of ironworks followed the coalfield expansion. A number of independent coal owners were replaced by the Wigan Coal and Iron Company formed in 1865.

The town's population of 10,989 in 1801 had risen to 31,941 by 1851 and to 48,194 in 1881. (Source - Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540, Phillips and Smith).

The mid to late 19th Century was a prosperous time for Wigan, a factor reflected in the rebuilding and development of fine social, commercial and civic buildings in and around the town centre during this period, for example, the new market hall, opened in 1877. (This was in turn replaced in 1987 by the present market hall as part of the Galleries shopping centre).

"The change which has taken place in the borough within but a recent

period might almost be described as a transformation.

Gradually though perceptibly it has cast off its more antique habiliments, dilapidated structures of obsolete styles of architecture have disappeared giving place to buildings massive and imposing and adapted to the requirements of this advanced age".

The Wigan Examiner, 9th August 1878, from its extensive coverage of the formal opening of the park.

Wigan town centre's pattern of development since medieval times had been characterised by development in depth of narrow plots of land fronting its historic main streets, Standishgate, Millgate, Hallgate and Wallgate. These plots known as burgage plots, held by the town's burgesses, gradually became intensively infilled particularly during the town's expansion as an industrial and commercial centre during the 19th Century. The pressure of commercial growth left little opportunity for the provision of open space or greenery. The Mesnes held by the Rector, had remained open land used as pasture and for informal recreation by local people but during the 19th Century there was increasing pressure to exploit it for commercial purposes.

The word 'Mesnes' is an historical term being a shortened version of 'demesnes', which is land retained by the Lord of the Manor for his own use and not let to tenants. In Wigan the Rector held the title of Lord of the Manor and the demesne formed part of the Wigan Rectory Glebe estate. The Manorial seat and Rectory was Wigan Hall situated, as it remains today, some 150m to the south west of the present park.



The so called Mesnes was a large tract of land extending northwards and eastwards from the grounds of Wigan Hall and including the present day Mesnes Field and the park itself. The Mesnes land was contained between two lanes or paths, on the alignments of present day Parson's Walk and Bridgeman Terrace.

Pressures to develop the Mesnes

In 1837 there was an attempt to enclose the land by Act of Parliament so that it could be developed but the Members for Wigan opposed the move arguing that the land was used by local people and crossed by footpaths. The bill was amended to allow a portion to be retained as open land for recreational use.

The 1848 OS shows the Mesnes land as an open area crossed diagonally by footpaths but that two collieries and their tramroads were present as well as marl pits and sand quarries. Mesnes Colliery No 1 was located just north of the Rectory (Hall) grounds. No 2 described as a cannel pit, was situated more or less near the present park main gate; Mesnes Colliery. No 3 was located in the northern area of the present park.

By the mid 19th Century, commerce in the form of collieries and sand pits, had clearly established a foothold in the Mesnes although the land was evidently still being used for recreational purposes in December 1863 when work was progressing with the Rector's agreement on the construction of a new walk on the north west side of the Mesnes, "for the convenience and recreation of persons visiting the Mesnes".

(Wigan Observer and Advertiser
18 December 1863).

Pressure to develop the land nonetheless continued and in 1871 a private Bill called the Wigan Rectory

Glebe Act was introduced with the intention of revoking earlier legislation in order to allow further building and mining on the Mesnes. The Wigan Examiner refers to the protracted debate surrounding the possible acquisition of part of the Mesnes for a public park.

"This important work has not been thus consummated without having to undergo many precarious vicissitudes". ... "However after much practical eloquence had been devoted in the ventilation of the subject without any appreciable result, it found a sturdy champion in the person of the present High Sheriff of Lancashire, Nathaniel Eckersley Esq".

Rescue by the Mayor!

During the consideration of the 1871 bill in Parliament it was proposed that the town should purchase 16 acres of the Mesnes land for the purpose of a public park at a cost of £2,000. Mr Eckersley as Mayor of Wigan and who was a local mill owner undertook to pay the cost of the land. The Council proceeded to secure possession and in due course secured the remainder of the land which constitutes the present park from a Mr Hodge.

Provision was made concurrently for a grammar school to be built on part of the Mesnes adjacent to the site of the park.

In 1877 Wigan Corporation held a competition for the design of the park. Twenty one designs were submitted and put on display in the Council Chamber. The designs evidently adopted similar approaches but varied in detail with costs ranging from £1,300 to £18,000. The Wigan Examiner



records that the winning design was that submitted by Mr J McLean of Castle Donnington who was awarded a prize of £50 and the contract to oversee the construction of the park, his estimated cost for the work being £2,250, and this included:

"the necessary accommodation for croquet, archery, cricket, lawn tennis, bowling and recreation; also a fountain, a pavilion and a pretty sheet of ornamental water broken up with two islets which might be utilised as an abode for water fowls."

Wigan Examiner 9/8/1878.

The Wigan Examiner of August 9th 1878 carried a lengthy and informative article on the Park and its formal opening. The article graphically described the urban context of the park in the Wigan of the latter 19th Century.

"Wigan is a grim emporium of labour and industry; it is devoid of natural beauties and the atmosphere is polluted by the serpentine and cloud like columns of smoke which are vomited from the huge chimneys by which we are surrounded. Hence it is all the more necessary that the town should be provided with a public place of resort."

WE 9 August 1878.

Prior to the park landscape works the condition of the Mesnes was described as a largely uncultivated waste of barren appearance, "although the surface of the land has never been carefully cultivated much arduous toil has been undergone below ground. In every direction it has been literally riddled". (Ref above).

The extent of mine workings in the locality indeed gave cause for concern that the massive Gidlow Mill erected 1864 on the edge of the Mesnes would cause the ground to collapse.

The article gave a full description of the park layout and the proposed buildings, which were not complete at the time of its formal opening. The design was considered to make good use of the site and its levels. Much was made of the potential health benefits of the site's elevation and openness to breezes from the Irish Sea, which it was considered would provide an antidote to the polluted atmosphere. It would appear that the main works were focussed upon the southern part of the park and that the area north of the pavilion was a later stage, which included an intention to provide another lake and open areas for recreation. It was noted that this 'lower' end of the park was as yet in a rough and unfinished state.

The total cost of the park including the erection of the pavilion and all its fixtures and other elements was later estimated to be £12,000.

The Park was formally opened on Monday 6th August 1878 by Nathaniel Eckersley, who was then High Sheriff of Lancashire. Although construction work was as yet incomplete the date was chosen to honour Nathaniel Eckersley as benefactor during his tenure as High Sheriff and to permit a celebratory public holiday during the summer.

The development of the park was therefore a laudable civic response to the social and environmental conditions of the day in providing the inner town with much needed open space for the recreation and well being of the local population many of whom were exposed to dirt and pollution in their everyday working lives.



The Park today

When first opened, the green wedge of Mesnes Park, penetrating almost into the town centre must have provided a welcome contrast with the densely built inner town. Today, though the smoky industries are gone, the park continues to provide a valuable recreational and amenity space, its mature trees and greenery being readily visible from the heart of the town centre. Mesnes Park remains true to its image of a typical Victorian town park with its formal compositions of paths flanked by lawns and flower beds offering vistas to planned focal points together with areas of informal character, including a duck pond and perambulatory paths flanked by trees and shrubbery. The park also contains a range of recreational facilities, including bowling greens, tennis courts, children's play areas and sports pitches. The recreational areas represent progressive stages in the park's development, catering for evolving leisure requirements.

Pevsner thought the park was 'on the small side', yet it contained a serpentine lake. He mentions the pavilion and stone terracing and the Powell statue.

The historic interest of the park has been recognised by its inclusion in 1996 in the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, described thus:

"Mesnes Park opened 1878 and designed by John McClean, Grade II on the English Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Notable features include its topography and duck pond; the survival of the historic layout and planting structure and early buildings including the lodge, pavilion and bandstand which are listed buildings. The park with its

many mature trees forms a major element in the Mesnes Conservation Area." (Appendix 4).

There are seven individually Listed Buildings within the park:

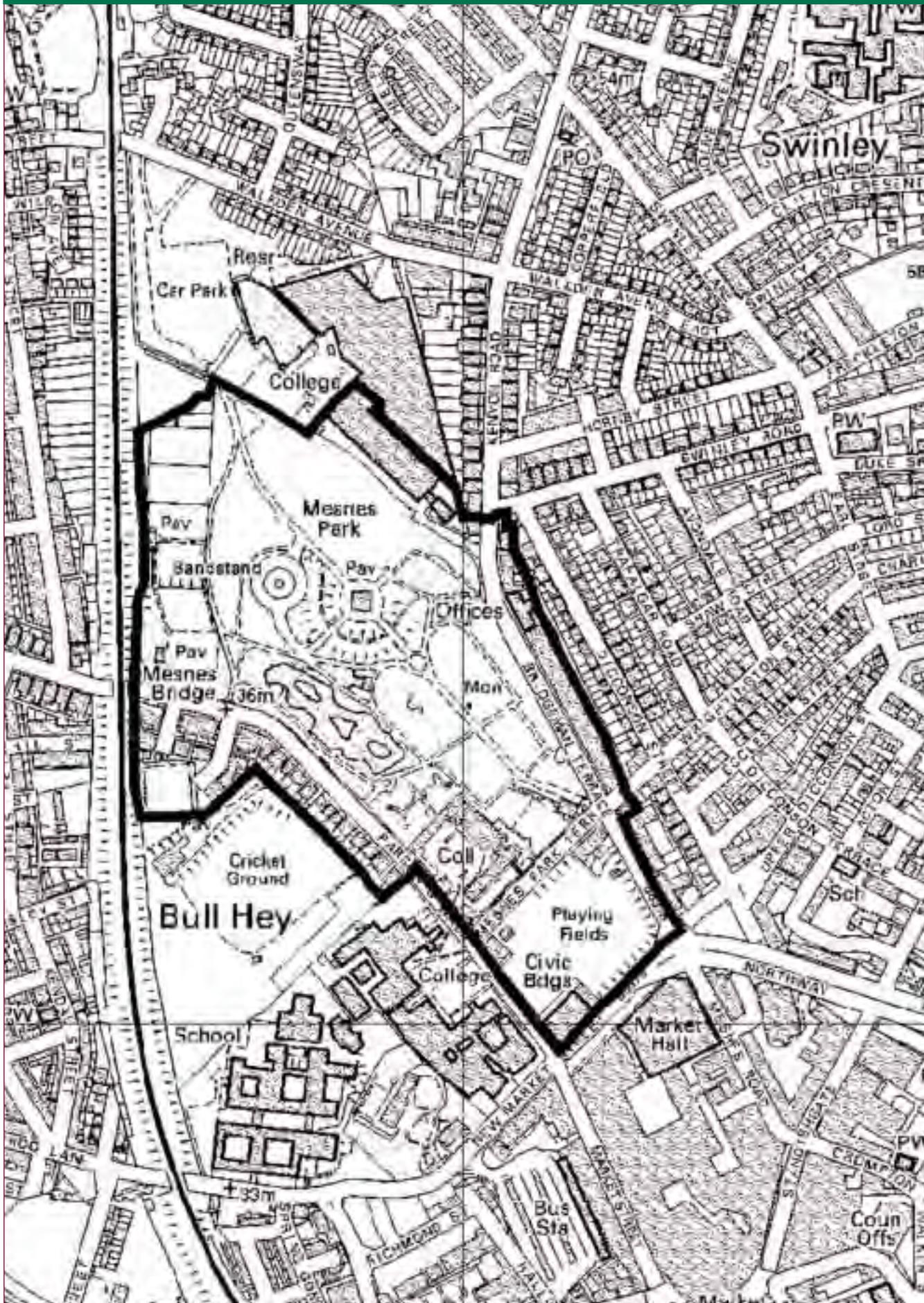
-  The Bandstand; c1880.
-  The Powell Monument; a monumental statue in bronze on granite plinth dated 1910.
-  The Pavilion; c1880.
-  Double flight of steps to west of pavilion.
-  Double flight of steps to south of pavilion, both c1880.
-  Entrance gateway to Mesnes Park from Mesnes Park Terrace, 1878.
-  Entrance Lodge, 1878 vernacular revival style, enlarged and altered; 2 storey portion added set back (c1928).

Recent reports by specialist consultants have evaluated the condition of the Park's buildings and structures in some detail and have considered the overall landscape and amenity character of the park and its strengths and weaknesses. It is not the purpose of this appraisal to reiterate these findings in detail, as they will in due course be incorporated in the HLF bid. However, reference is made in this appraisal where appropriate, to some of the principal findings of previous specialist research.

Unsurprisingly, over a period of some 127 years, the park has undergone a number of changes though these are mostly confined to elements of detail and decoration rather than its underlying structure.

The Mesnes Conservation Area

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Extract of 1848 Ordnance Survey

Reproduced (not to scale) with the kind permission of the Wigan Heritage Service





As with the Conservation Area as a whole, the park itself can be broken down for analytical purposes into a number of distinctive character zones. In reality these zones blend seamlessly into one another, but the broad subdivisions provide a convenient basis for description and analysis of the park as it is today and the ways in which it has changed over time.

It is considered that the main character zones comprise the following:

-  The main entrance gates and the formal gardens and paths.
-  The central platform area with steps, pavilion and bandstand.
-  The ornamental lake area.
-  The northern zone including the recreation grounds and the depot.

Ref Diagram 1

ZONE ONE

The main entrance and formal gardens

The principal entrance to the Park is via an impressive ornamental gateway served by a driveway entrance and located, as noted, at its south-east corner at the junction of Mesnes Park Terrace and Bridgeman Terrace. The wide sweeping kerbed carriage crossing has no surface differentiation to denote a pedestrian crossing and in effect is a continuation of the junction carriageway.

The ornamental cast iron park driveway gates are supported by Pennine sandstone ashlar piers and flanked by narrower pedestrian gates with lower outer piers. The gates and piers are Grade II listed.



The gates are said to be the product of the renowned McFarlane Foundry of Glasgow and contain medallions showing the town's coat of arms. They have had a chequered history, having been removed for the wartime scrap drive during 1941-5. In 1950, they were rescued from the scrap yard restored and re-hung by Bridge and Sons (Wigan) Limited in 1950 only to be damaged in a road accident in 1957.

The fragments were collected and once again repaired and reinstalled by Bridge and Company.



One gate pier has since lost its ball finial. The town shield is a distinctive feature but the drab green paint does not perhaps show the elaborate ironwork to its best advantage. A short length of old railings survives adjacent the gate piers, but the park's boundaries are now mainly low privet hedges.



The wide sweeping entrance driveway, and absence of differentiated pedestrian crossing provision does not offer a pedestrian friendly welcome to the park. The tarmac surface at the entrance is worn and reveals sections of the old stone thresholds.

Flanking the gateway is the 1878 Swiss Chalet style lodge. The entrance lodge was designed by W H Fletcher of Welbeck Street, London; extended in 1928 by the addition of a two storey wing. The extension sits somewhat awkwardly with the original. This is an early 20th Century view before the extension was built.



The lodge is described in the List Entry as one and a half and two storey, with irregular plan. The lower left portion next to the gateway has a projecting gabled porch with recessed doorway above, which is a plasterwork panel inscribed with date 1878. The base is snecked sandstone with half timbering above. Elaborate tall Jacobean style chimneys in brick and stone, rise from a sweeping slated roof.

The 1928 extension called Mesnes House is in similar materials but of two storeys gabled and set back from the lodge.



To its rear is a group of trees and open grassed area abutting onto the rear of the former Grammar school and once used as tennis courts. Though the lodge is Grade II listed it has been disused since the mid 1980s and is identified as a building at risk. It is boarded up with roofs part felted and battened. The dilapidated appearance of these key buildings located at the main entrance conveys an initial impression of neglect, which is at odds with the generally neat and well kept appearance of the park as a whole. Attempts have been made in the past to find a suitable new use for the lodge but without success. The complicated internal layout and varied floor levels are said to be an obstacle. The building is also subject to a covenant which restricts its use to a use for municipal purposes, otherwise its ownership will revert to the Rector.



The renovation and re use of these buildings for a suitable purpose must nevertheless be an absolute priority in any scheme to revitalise the park. It is clearly desirable that the lodge and its extension are used for a purpose which relates directly to the use and enjoyment of the park itself, reinstating the original relationship between lodge and park, though not necessarily as a residence.

From the entrance gates, the carriage drive slopes slightly downwards, flanked by trees and shrubs which initially screen the view towards the pavilion. About 60metres from the entrance, the carriage drive alignment veers slightly northwards and the park opens out onto the formal gardens with a vista towards the elevated pavilion, some 220m beyond.



The formal gardens, described in early accounts as being in the 'Italianate style', consist of a mainly flat area comprising spacious lawns flanking the 7m wide carriage drive which forms the central axis aligned upon the pavilion. The lawns contain a pattern of small floral beds, beyond which are curvilinear evergreen hedges trimmed to about a maximum 1.5m in height. The outer edges of the park are bordered by mature trees and shrubbery.

The lawns contain a number of individual trees some evidently being fairly recent plantings. Secondary paths lead off the main drive at right angles, then turn parallel with the main axis before looping back to the centre below the pavilion steps, providing alternative routes for strolling.

The view northwards to the pavilion along the carriage drive is perhaps the most significant planned vista within the park, with the corresponding prospect from the pavilion southwards over the lawns and flower beds towards the town centre.

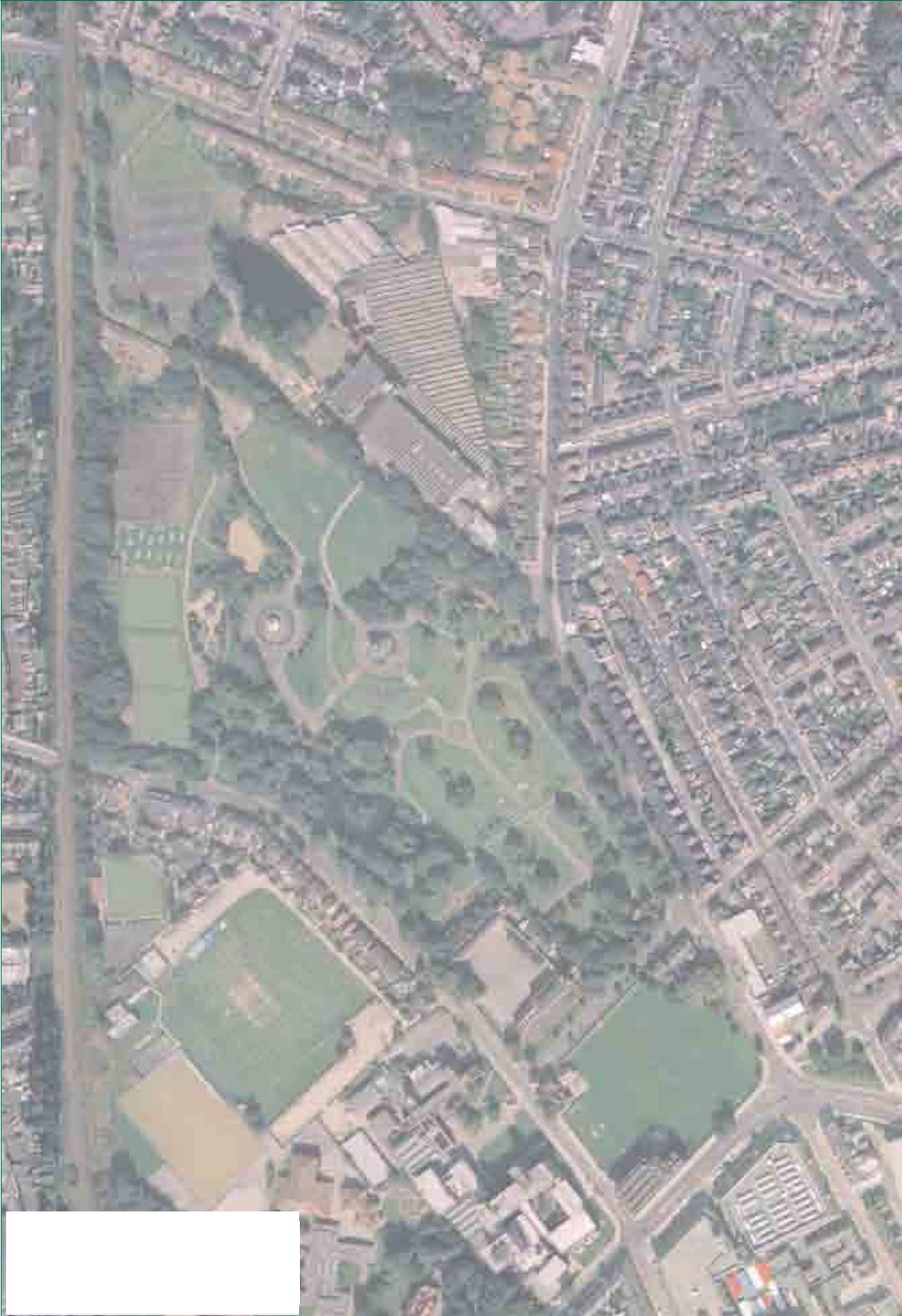
(Ref diagram 2)



Early plans and photographs indicate that the vista towards the pavilion would have been obtained directly from the entrance gates across open lawns. This vista is now partly obscured by trees and shrubbery though even in this 1920's view, the dense growth of trees and shrubs around the perimeter is apparent.

It clearly shows the elaborate floral and rhododendron planting scheme Today's floral beds are smaller and simpler. (The last carpet bedding was 1976).

The photo shows the main central axis with temperance fountain, 1880, lower; the pavilion and site of large fountain centre; to centre right the bandstand; duck pond and woodland to right. The still undeveloped plot in Bridgeman Terrace, left, is evident. Paths lead to the other park entrances from Bridgeman Terrace, Parson's Walk, Park Road and from the north via Walkden Avenue.





The paths would have been originally gravel or shale. Approval for re-surfacing in tarmacadam, was granted in 1917 but the work was not carried out until on or after 1921. In the above 1920's view the paved areas appear to be still in their original state.

The main drive and some of the other paths, are neatly edged in stone setts but in places, surfaces are crazed. Other sections are patchy e.g where repairs have been made; some localised ponding is evident after heavy rain.



Mid way along the formal axis is the Powell Monument, a bronze life sized statue of one of the town's long serving MPs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Sir Francis Sharp Powell.



The figure is set upon a granite plinth and raised platform, with corner posts which once held chains. The monument proclaims the year of its

unveiling, 1910, which was according to the local press account carried out with due Edwardian pomp and circumstance. The whole is listed Grade II, designed by E G Gillick.

Oddly, given the overall symmetry of the layout of this area of the park, it was not thought necessary to provide an equivalent feature opposite to balance the formal composition and though of unquestionable artistic and historic merit, the monument appears rather isolated.

There is not even a bench to encourage visitors to sit and contemplate the scene, sadly perhaps to discourage vandalism.

No doubt when there are bedding plants in bloom this area of the park is most attractive, but it appears somewhat empty when the beds are bare, a situation exacerbated by the wide expanse of tarmac surfaced driveway.

Tree and Shrubs within the park

During the summer months, at least, the dense perimeter tree and shrub planting effectively encloses the central zone of the park to such an extent, that only traffic noise serves as a reminder that the park is situated within an urban area.

The present day aerial photograph provides a good impression of the extent of tree cover within the park showing the main tree groups to be concentrated round the perimeter, with planting in depth around the ornamental lake and to north-east of the pavilion.

A tree survey of the park in 2002 revealed some 1,060 trees of which 180 have been identified as being in poor condition warranting removal, with a further 147 noted as in need of arboricultural work for various reasons. Some 710 trees, 66% of



the total, are mature or reaching maturity. It is believed that the park was originally planted with a mix of deciduous trees and conifers but that the conifers were killed by air pollution so that none of the originals have survived.

Over the last two decades, trees in the park have received only a limited amount of management which has concentrated mainly on safety issues. As a result, a dense enveloping canopy has developed, to the detriment of the tree and shrub under-storey. Holly bushes, probably originally intended to be shrubs, have developed into a subdominant tree layer. The crowding of trees and shrubs is probably due to the originally dense planting to give an initial green effect together with later colonisation by seeding species of trees.

The present density of greenery and the condition of some trees and shrubbery has given rise to the need for an arboricultural management programme. This would involve selective thinning which could beneficially open up views and improve perceptions of security.

A comprehensive account of the tree and shrub planting in the park and proposed arboricultural management measures has been provided by the Woodlands Officer for the Leisure and Culture Trust and is set out in Appendix 5.

ZONE TWO

The central area containing the pavilion, steps and bandstand

The pavilion is placed axially upon a two stage mounded platform, which is semi-circular on its western side, rising some 6.5m above the lower ground level but blending into the natural ground level on its northern and eastern sides. The platform is approached on its southern and western sides by two stage flights of stone steps.

At the foot of the south steps a large ornamental cast iron fountain once occupied the point where the loop paths converged onto the main axis. The fountain was supplied by the Coalbrookdale Company.



The fountain stalk was 14 feet high, placed in a basin of 25 ft diameter.

The fountain was removed c1914. The site is now a flower bed bordered by grass.

The higher ground on the northern and eastern sides of the Pavilion is accessible by sloping paths. On the eastern side of the pavilion there is extensive tree and shrub planting including a zone of conifers and a secondary path leading to the Bridgeman Terrace entrance.

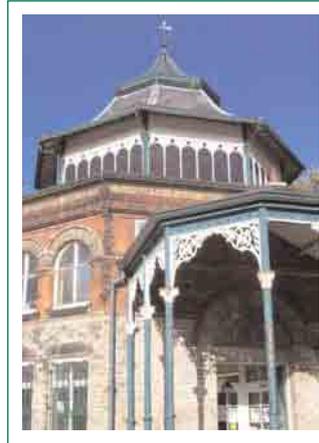


Undoubtedly the Park's most important built feature, the pavilion was clearly intended to be the elegant focal point of the axial plan, taking advantage of the original contours of the land. Of course other views towards this landmark structure can be obtained from various positions within the park and these incidental views and vistas add to the element of surprise and interest within the park. The approach to the pavilion via the two flights of 16 stone steps is particularly impressive.

The steps are listed Grade II, c1880 "sandstone ashlar, wide steps in two flights, interrupted by intermediate terraces. Low side walls have moulded copings; they form a group with the pavilion and are listed for their group value". The 22 ft (6.7m) wide steps were erected by Messrs Dalton and Co London. terracotta ornamental urns were originally placed at the landing pedestals, possibly replaced later by cast iron versions supplied by the Coalbrookdale Ironworks, Ironbridge, but none now remain.

The steps now are now heavily worn and in places laminated. Joints have opened up. Handrails seem to have been absent from the beginning, perhaps more an issue of concern today than in 1878!

The pavilion is octagonal in plan, approx. 14m across, 2 storeys with tall central glazed lantern. Polygonal single storey wings project on northern, eastern



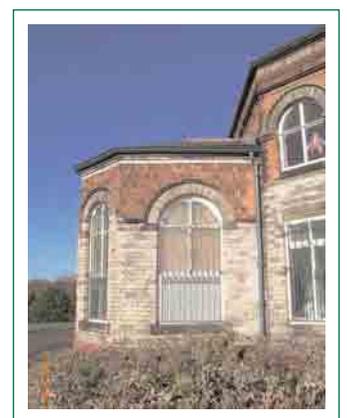
and western axes. Its south eastern elevation features a lofty 5 sided open porch supported on twisted cast iron columns with foliated open work brackets forming decorative spandrels. The porch and terrace offer a fine elevated prospect

over the formal gardens towards the town centre. Access to the porch is by 3 stone steps from the pathway.

At the opening of the pavilion in 1880, toasts were raised to John McClean, the designer of the park and to the architect, W H Fletcher. This suggests that the concept for the pavilion was John McClean's but that the architect for the lodge probably also undertook the detailed design of the pavilion.

Externally the lower elevations are in buff brick, unusual in the area, surmounted by red brick at first floor level.

Round headed windows feature in the wings and at first floor level with yellow brick voussoirs and drip moulds, sandstone cills and springers. The grills are a recent addition, in keeping. Terracotta tiles with floral motif clad



the spandrels. Rising above the first floor flat roof is the lofty fully glazed lantern also octagonal in plan supported on 8 cast iron columns.

From a distance the pagoda style roof seems to float above the lantern.



Six tall round headed windows occupy each side above which are small ports glazed, alternately in red and blue glass, and above these are row of star shaped ventilation openings. The structure is basically an external brick perimeter wall roofed towards the central lantern, which is supported by 8 cast iron columns rising in stacks of 3. The roof is a two stage in-swept pagoda style clad in slate.

Internally, the ground floor is an open space containing the 8 columns clad in timber. The first floor is decked over but was originally an open gallery permitting light to enter the interior space from the lantern and facilitating ventilation.

Externally the pavilion is sited within a circular kerbed dais, paved up to the building on its northern side where service access is provided. The paved surround is functional rather than pleasing. The south facing semi- circle has a narrow grass borders containing low shrubbery either side of the porch.

The pavilion is in use as a cafeteria with a particular speciality in ice creams and appears to be a very popular venue.

As well as providing a focal point and landmark within the park, the pavilion's lantern and distinctive roof profile can also be seen from Market Place in the town centre at least when trees are bare, reinforcing the visual linkage between the park and the town centre.

In 2004 a comprehensive analysis of the condition of the building was carried out by Heritage Engineering of Glasgow. Their report identified the ironwork as almost certainly the product of the McFarlane Foundry. The report concluded that whilst the building was in basically sound condition and some useful remedial work had been carried out over the years it was not up to conservation standard and in time elements of the structure

would deteriorate. Externally, there was some damage to brickwork, erosion of stonework and missing terracotta tiles. The yellow bricks in particular appear to show effects of past atmospheric pollution and a general cleaning to conservation standards, might be worthwhile.

The rather drab painting scheme and pollution stained brickwork do not present the pavilion's attractive architecture at its best.

The 2004 report recommended a programme of specialist renovation work to achieve the long-term conservation of this unusual and important structure. The report is held by the Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust.

This early 20th Century view shows the memorial statue in Carrera marble erected by public subscription to the memory of the Regular, Volunteer and Imperial Yeomanry forces of Wigan and



District, who fell in the South African War 1899-1902. The memorial was unveiled in 1903. After 65 years the statue was removed because of its deteriorating condition, the railings having been removed probably during WW2.

The photo also shows that the first floor of the pavilion had a decorative railing balustrade and that the roof of the porch appeared to be in corrugated iron. Note also the fascia below the pagoda roof.

Of the statue, only its Aberdeen granite plinth remains, forlorn, an example of one of the park's lost treasures.



In 1920, two German field guns captured by Lancashire troops were placed next to the statue and a WWI tank positioned on top of the hill facing the pavilion. These were all removed in 1935, ... "as they served no useful purpose".

The pavilion is unquestionably the most significant building in the park by reason of its unique architectural character, its use of materials exemplifying 19th Century skills and technology, particularly the use of cast iron and its design purpose as a focal point within the park.

Renovation of the pavilion to conservation standards will secure its long term survival which is of fundamental importance to the preservation and enhancement of the conservation area as whole.

The Bandstand



The bandstand is located at a lower level 70m to the north-west of the pavilion. Listed Grade II it is an open sided structure, octagonal in plan, with tall inswept roof. Set on a slightly raised plinth, the bandstand is enclosed by a low hedge following the octagonal plan, surrounded by a circular paved area of about 55m overall diameter.

The list entry describes it thus: c1880, altered, sandstone plinth. Cast iron columns at the angles with fluted bases, twisted shafts and crocket capitals:

these are now linked by wooden tie beams; large pierced decorative brackets springing from the capitals both laterally and forwards carry the oversailing eaves of a strongly swept roof, which has a simple corona round a dome with renewed finial. Forms group with the pavilion.

The bandstand design was in fact approved in 1890 and it was erected in 1892. In 1922, folding glazed screens were fitted and admission fees charged for bandstand seating. The following year, the grass surround was replaced with concrete covered with asphalt and a retaining wall built. These improvements allowed for dancing, but only two hours per evening during summer!

In 1926, new shutters were added, the floor concreted and the paved surround extended. In 1983, submissions by the Wigan Civic Trust to the Civic Trust Pride of Place competition resulted in an award of £500 for repairs to ironwork and restoration of the roof to its original profile. Refurbishment work was carried out in 1985 by the Leisure Department.

In 2004 the condition of the bandstand was also evaluated by Heritage Engineering of Glasgow. The consultants believe that it was a product of George Smith and Son's Sun Foundry, Glasgow, who produced numbers of such structures involving the liberal use of cast iron.

They consider the band stand design used at Mesnes Park to be one of the finest models produced by the Sun Foundry.

Their report identified a number of defects and made recommendations for heritage based conservation works. These include the restoration of lost features, including a decorative cast iron balustrade. They conclude that the bandstand is a rare and fine example of its kind but importantly it forms a key



element in the park amenity group of structures. It can be restored to a high standard and its life extended by its previous span. The structure restored will enhance the aesthetic appeal of the park and encourage its use as a venue for musical events.

The bandstand has over the years clearly been an important focus for public entertainment within the park. For many years on Wednesdays and Sundays in summer, concerts were given by military and other bands*.

*from pamphlet c1950 provided by GMAU.

Protection of such an open sided structure from vandalism as with other vulnerable elements of the Park environment, will however be an issue that must be addressed in a conservation management strategy. As with the pavilion, the renovation of the bandstand to conservation standards will be necessary to ensure the long term survival of this important feature of the park and the conservation area.

ZONE THREE

The lake area



This pleasing ornamental water feature consists of an irregularly shaped lake about 150m in length, which extends along the western edge of the Park, abutting onto Parson's Walk and Park Road. At its northern end there is a substantial rockery - originally with a waterfall, designed and installed at a cost of £500, by Messrs Pulham and Sons ... "to convey an air of artificial rudeness which will resemble a natural structure".

Source: Wigan Examiner August 9th 1878

Pulham were amongst the foremost exponents of Victorian rock garden design pioneering the use of realistic and long lasting Portland cement based artificial stone though in their later works they used natural rocks. The material used at Mesnes has all the appearance of natural stone but may indeed contain some artificial material. The waterfall is long defunct but the 'rock' formations, channels and basins remain. The Wigan Archaeological Society is currently involved in investigations of the water supply and pumping arrangements which once fed the waterfall.

Early illustrations show a set of cast iron railings to the duck feeding area, thought to be of a McFarlane Foundry pattern. The present railings are a later replacement. Three islets are provided planted originally with shrubs and rhododendrons.



Restoration work on the lake to repair leakage, improve water supply and restore banks was undertaken between 1998 and 2000, assisted by the 'Friends of Mesnes Park'. The pond is home to a seemingly thriving waterfowl population. Pathways around the pond provide pleasant walks amid mature trees and shrubbery. The western side is open to Parson's Walk and Park Road, permitting a degree of inter-visibility between park and highway.

The contrast between the informal woodland walks around the pond and the formally laid out and more open central zone is one of the park's attractive features.



Between the lake area and the former Grammar school is a roughly rectangular area, enclosed by high hedges laid out as a rose garden with a sun dial at its centre. Its site was originally part of the general parkland but by 1929 it had become tennis courts.

The Rose Garden was opened in 1949 and dedicated to the memory of Alderman James Pagett, Chairman of the Markets and Parks Committee for 37 years. Some restoration work has recently been carried out but the sun dial gnomon is missing. A 1950s style gate with modern brick piers provides pedestrian access to and from Parson's Walk just to the north of the rose garden. At the Park Road entrance, pair of more ornate gates, probably of wrought iron remain. As with the Park's other gates, their drab

green paintwork with rust showing through does not present them to their best advantage. An open sided 'Tudor style' shelter originally with toilets at the rear dating from 1936 is located on the loop path about 30m east of the duck pond providing an outlook over the formal gardens. It is built in brick with half timbered twin gables with fascia boards and plain tiled roof. The shelter has been prone to vandalism and had become dilapidated, the toilets now having been demolished. Some refurbishment of the shelter has been carried out recently, involving re-tiling the roof and installing new iron grill gates but damaged roof tiles were still evident at March 2006. Although not one of the park's original structures, the shelter has been an established feature of the park for 70 years and is certainly worthy of retention as long as it can be protected from malicious damage.





ZONE FOUR

The northern park and recreation grounds

The main spine footpath curves northwards from the pavilion, bisecting the northern area of the park and leading to its north entrance. The subtle curvature of the path provides progressive views southwards towards the pavilion. On its south side are the recreation grounds and children's play area. To its north is an open field used as sports pitches extending up to the college. A drinking fountain was installed on this path in 1880 provided by the Abstinence Society, removed during 1920s. A link path now leads up to the college entrance, via a short flight of steps.

A belt of woodland planting extends north-eastwards from the pavilion and along the boundary with the former mill. The Bridgeman Terrace gate is a wrought iron type but evidently modern, set in c1950's brick piers flanked by short lengths of modern railings, again in need of attention by the painters!

The 'recreation grounds' consist of a group of 3 bowling greens with pavilion, a putting green and a pair of tennis courts arranged in a row alongside the railway embankment. Their development has taken place in several stages. The 1894 OS shows the northern area of the park as open land bisected by the meandering Barley Brook, which disappeared in a culvert beneath the railway embankment about 120m north of Park Road. Nearby was the site of the Gidlow Lane Colliery No 3 shown on the 1848 OS. A footpath looped around the northern area providing an outer circuit. It is thought that this open area was intended to cater for archery, cricket, lawn tennis and bowling. The development of a second lake in the area was mentioned in the description of the park at its formal opening. In 1903 the first bowling green was created on a site adjoining the railway and Park Road.



By 1908, 3 'recreation grounds' had been added. In 1921 a second bowling green was opened and tennis courts provided. In 1922 the remainder of the Barley Brook was culverted and the ground levelled with assistance from the Government Unemployment Grants Committee. In 1923 plans for more tennis courts and a further bowling green were proposed, which involved relocating some swings. The 1929 OS shows the arrangement much as it is today with three bowling greens, a putting green and two tennis courts, occupying the full western edge of the park with the park depot and glasshouses at the northern corner. The northernmost of the greens is now a pitch and put course. A hard surfaced area bounded by hoop railings has been laid out between the northern-most tennis court and the depot, allocated for skate boarding, in-line skating and BMX biking. Between 1960 - 62, the open area in front of the Rylands Mill was levelled to accommodate the summer shows, displacing the children's playground. Works carried out in recent times, have included the provision of a fragrance garden, 1982, improvements to the relocated children's play area and the construction of a play shack in the 1980's.

The presence of the railway becomes more apparent in the northern area though its embankment is well wooded. Trains now probably create less disturbance than in the past, however.

In the eloquent language of the day, the Wigan



examiner describing the future experience of park visitors, suggested ...

"the weary may recline beneath the foliage of overhanging trees and listen to the musical murmurings of the gentle zephyr and yet find it impossible to forget the grim realities by which they are surrounded, for although the vision may be restricted, their musings will be disturbed by the sharp shrill whistle of the engine as it hurries past, the rattle of the trains on the lines and the harsh - hum of the machinery in motion in the adjacent mill".

The author was pleased to comment that:

"the Park Committee had obtained permission from the railway company to plant shrubs etc. along that portion of the embankment which bounds the park"; also to note that Turner's colliery which occupied the site and contrasted "rather curiously with the sylvan aspect of the park", would be removed when its lease expired in two years time. Wigan Examiner August 9th 1878 extract from article on the park opening ceremony. (Wigan History Shop).

In its heyday some 200,000 bedding plants were raised annually in the depot greenhouses*.

*Undated pamphlet from GMAU, probably c1950.

Although clearly necessary for the upkeep of the park, the depot has become shabby and run down. Despite it being excluded from the Conservation Area, it is unfortunately located in a prominent elevated position in front of which is an untidy bank of rough ground.

Some tidying up and screening, perhaps including the demolition and replacement of the unsightly depot buildings would be beneficial.

The park's north entrance, created in 1910 at a cost of £10!, is little more than an alleyway with a raised bank on the north side and the depot on the other. A short length of original railing oddly survives in this location. From the entrance, a footpath continues, in a north-westerly direction, initially along the park depot wall then turns northwards to follow the foot of the railway embankment leading to Walkden Avenue, a suburban road about 250m away. New buildings for the Pagefield College annex, (under construction December 2005) occupy an elevated site to the north and east of the footpath. A triangular area of patched tarmac formerly a play area, flanks the main park path near to the northern entrance, contributing to the somewhat unkempt appearance of the park's northern extremity.

The narrow path with its blind corner and poor quality northern entrance represent an unsatisfactory and somewhat intimidating approach to the park.

Summary - The Park character area

 As the focus of the Conservation Area the park is its dominant feature, and its raison d'être. The park's mature landscaping lends a spacious and sylvan setting to its immediate surroundings. Mesnes Park is itself a heritage asset included on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. It also provides the setting for a number of built features of acknowledged heritage value each complementing the other to form a complete composition.

 The park has adapted to meet contemporary recreational needs by providing facilities for a diverse range of activities and events. It still



provides floral bedding displays in spring and summer; it has modern facilities for children's play, it caters for crown green bowling, tennis, basketball, crazy golf and informal recreation. Additionally, the Rangers offer a programme of 'hands-on' events in the park throughout the year whilst the main event of the year is probably the 'Wigan One World Festival', (WOW!) a major event in the park aimed to celebrate the town's cultural diversity.

✎ Mesnes Park thus remains a valued urban park capable of accommodating contemporary leisure requirements, readily accessible on foot from nearby residential districts and within a 10 minute walk of the main town centre facilities.

✎ Historically it is important because of it was the town's first urban park commissioned during the high Victorian era of Wigan's industrial growth and expansion. It was the outcome of both civic endeavours and private philanthropy to preserve the historic former manorial demesnes land for the benefit of the community. Without the intervention of the town's benefactors, further encroachment by industry and commercial development would have been inevitable.

✎ In its planning, Mesnes Park is an example of the fashionable park design philosophy of the era. As described in this review, (and with reference to diagram1), its design skilfully accommodates a variety of landscapes in a relatively small space giving the impression of a much larger area. Especially noteworthy are the planned vistas and prospects towards and from the main entrance and the pavilion and the contrasting informality of the lakeside woodland area.

✎ The laying out of the park also represents an early colliery land reclamation project. It made

imaginative use of the natural ground contours and existing features, for example the marl pits which were adapted to the ornamental lake.

✎ It is a tribute to those involved in the management and stewardship of Mesnes Park over the years that so much of its original Victorian character has survived intact including its important heritage structures.



The view from the terrace c1907, showing the fountain and urns

Negative Factors/ Opportunities

Inevitably, the park has undergone many changes over the years not all of which have been beneficial. Natural wear and tear and exposure to weather and air pollution, the introduction of new facilities, changes in horticultural and landscape management practice and natural maturity of the landscape itself have all influenced its character and appearance.

Whilst horticultural stewardship of the park is evidently of a good standard, the budgets available for maintenance and upkeep in the recent past have not been sufficient to fund a comprehensive arboricultural management programme or restoration of the heritage structures to conservation standards. Nor has the reinstatement of lost or damaged ornamental features been possible.



In consequence, Mesnes Park today has lost some of the richness of detail embodied in the original concept and its surviving built features are in need of major overhaul. Many of the pathway surfaces including the broad 'carriage drive' are now badly deteriorated and in need of major renewal. As noted much of the remaining ironwork is shabby and in need of overhaul and repainting.

Perhaps the most significant changes have been the loss of the perimeter railings, the Coalbrookdale fountain and urns, the Boer War statue, the Pulham waterfall and the dilapidation of the lodge.

In more recent times those involved in managing and maintaining the park have had to contend with the effects of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

The pedestrian provision at the main entrance gates is unsatisfactory for the reasons mentioned.

However as already noted, the original layout remains virtually unaltered, the important built structures survive and the park remains a valued asset in the community.

The HLF bid scheme provides a valuable opportunity to restore the park to at least some degree of its former glory and to restore the heritage assets to conservation standards and ensure their long term survival. It also offers the opportunity to adapt the park to modern needs for accessibility and to improve its safety and security in a manner which is compatible with its heritage status.

A fine prospect towards the town centre from the upper level of the park. The former grammar school tower, the Methodist Mission cupola (1907-8), and Parish Church tower as prominent landmarks. Site of Coalbrookdale fountain right foreground.

An assessment of the issues to be addressed in a management strategy for the park is set out under the Conservation Area Management section below.





Character area 2: The Mesnes Field



The Mesnes Field is an almost rectangular area of approximately 1.83 hectares, bounded by Mesnes Street, New Market Street, Parson's Walk and Mesnes Park Terrace. Mesnes Park Terrace and New Market Street are parallel and 120m apart. It was part of the original manorial demesnes land. The Mesnes Field was used as a playing field by the former High School but since the closure of the school it has been very much under used. Ownership of the Field remains with the Borough Council.

The field lies at a slightly lower level than the surrounding roads and is bounded by low hedges permitting views across it. Pedestrian access is by iron gates which open onto two short flights of steps at mid points on New Market Street and Mesnes Park Terrace but there are no connecting pathways. In November 2005, part of the area was laid out as a temporary car park. The picture shows the Mesnes Field viewed from south west. From the eastern side the view is dominated by the Wigan and Leigh College block rising 5 storeys from its slightly elevated site.

The Mesnes Field accommodates buildings at its south-western, north-western and north-eastern corners. The south western corner is dominated by the Council's Civic offices building.



Originally built as a food and grain warehouse this structure is three storeys in hard red brick, frontage 45m to new Market Street of 11 bays divided by brick pilasters and 25m in 4 bays to Parson's Walk. Ground floor elliptical arched windows have drip moulds and fluted keystones; pairs of rectangular windows with continuous stone heads and cills at first floor; pairs of round headed windows at second floor; fluted terracotta keystones continue as corbel brackets to dentilled cornice; parapet wall proclaims AD 1900 O & C Rushton Limited AD1905. The stock brick north elevation of the civic office is by contrast austere and unornamented.

Abutting on to its eastern flank are a pair of three storey shops of similar period. They feature large projecting 1st and 2nd floor bays, above a traditional shop fascia, attic gables with round arched windows stone cornices and ball finials.

The north west corner of the field is occupied by a large detached villa. Its name 'Drumcroon' inscribed in its stone plinth, it is an Arts and Crafts style building of the turn of the 20th Century. The earliest available record of this property is the 1909/10 street directory, which records it as the residence of John McAllister Boyd, surgeon and physician. The previous (1903) directory records the same person resident at 61 Mesnes Street and does not refer to any property in the position of Drumcroon. The 1925/26 directory finally mentions Drumcroon, still



occupied by J McAllister Boyd, BA MB, Bch, BAO, physician and surgeon. The building was clearly intended to be a dwelling for a gentleman of substance, its name and that of its original occupier evidently sharing a Scottish connection.



Known today as Drumcroom Gallery, an Arts education centre operated by the Borough Education Department, it is two storey in hard red brick with hipped and gabled plain tiled roof; prominent barge boards and brackets, stone cills and lintels, terracotta detail including a balustrade above the west bay window; a projecting 5 sided turret effectively turns the corner into the shorter Mesnes Park Terrace elevation.

A small hipped roof brick pavilion (boarded up) which also accommodates a sub station is sited next to Drumcroom on the Mesnes Park Terrace frontage.

Located on the north-east corner of the field is a terrace of 5 houses. No 1 Mesnes Park Terrace is a large two storey house in red brick with slated roof, splayed bays with hipped roofs; a pleasing round arched doorway. Nos 2 and 3 are plainer, in business use; Nos 4 and 5 are taller 3 storeys with 2 storey splayed bays and decorative tiling and capitals, prominent keystone and drip moulds to the doorways. No 4 is the Driving Test Centre; No 5 appears to remain residential. Nos, 4 and 5 appear on the 1894 OS.

No 5 marks the end of the terrace leaving an open gap of over 100m to Drumcroom.

The layout of the 5 properties and the street name suggest that perhaps it was intended to continue building along the frontage. Reference was made to subsidence problems in 1910 when a steamroller was engulfed in Mesnes Park Terrace. Perhaps this discouraged further development!

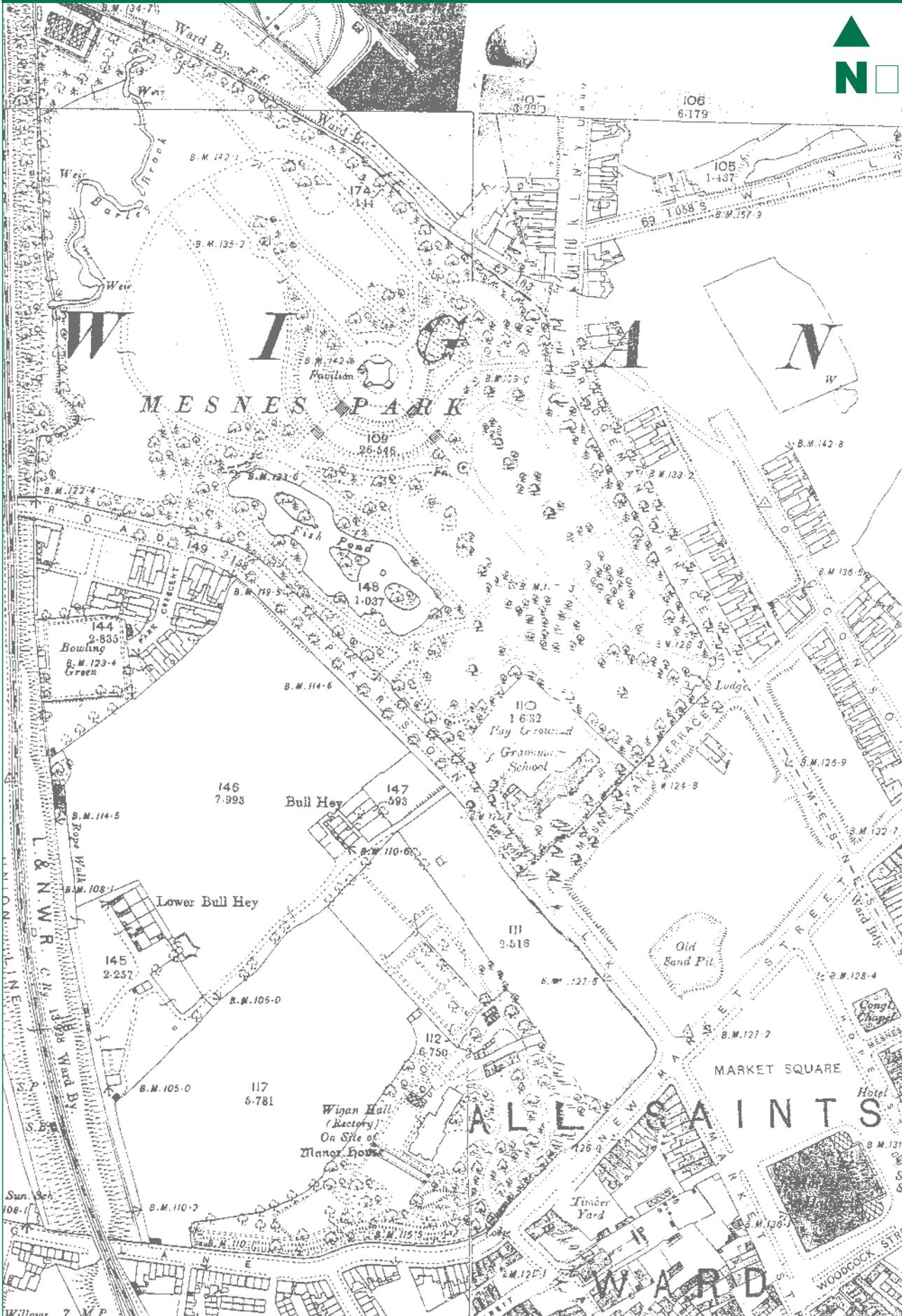
Public realm aspects: Mesnes Field Character Area

The Galleries shopping precinct opened 1989, occupies the entire length of New Market Street opposite the Mesnes Field. This modern development displays an interpretation of 'Victorian vernacular' design in red and blue brick, well modelled and detailed. Though its north elevation is not designed as shopping frontage, it accommodates accesses to a Morrisons superstore, the indoor Market Hall, Market Square and the Galleries. A service road used as a taxi rank and for disabled parking extends along the north frontage of the shopping centre. Pedestrian guard rails on the service road and the north side of New Market Street ensure that pedestrians are directed to crossing facilities located at the junctions of New Market Street with Parson's Walk and Mesnes Street, about 130m apart. The Mesnes Field is bounded at least on three sides by busy roads.

New Market Street is itself a busy cross town centre route. Mesnes Street and its continuation Bridgeman Terrace are classified B5376 which, continuing as Kenyon Road, leads to the A49 Preston road. Parson's Walk and its continuation Park Road, B5375, lead to Shevington and Appley Bridge. Both these classified roads are developments of paths or lanes, which are shown on the 1848 OS. Bridgeman Terrace is believed to follow the alignment of the Wigan Preston Roman Road, see Appendix 3.

Extract of 1894 Ordnance Survey

Reproduced (not to scale) with the kind permission of the Wigan Heritage Service





From New Market Street a fine terrace of listed early to mid 19th Century Georgian style town houses at Dicconson Street are visible beyond a landscaped area. On the opposite corner, Mesnes House is a modern office building of distinctive and not displeasing design.

Summary of the Mesnes Field Character area

As noted, the Mesnes Field is historically important in that it was once part of the Manorial demesne, being divided off from the remainder of the Mesnes which ultimately became the park, as a consequence of the 1871 Wigan Rectory Glebe Act. Today it provides an area of green space penetrating up to the town centre. It permits open views towards the park and to the former grammar school.

The buildings located at the three corners of the playing field make positive contributions to the conservation area by reason of their scale, age, quality of detail and their generally consistent use of the typical local materials of the late 19th Century/early 20th Century notably red brick and sandstone.

The Rushton Building is especially prominent and by its scale and bulk helps to balance the modern and somewhat bland college buildings located opposite.

Drumcroon is, despite some replacement windows, a distinctive villa like building, well suited for its prominent corner position, its varied roof profile especially noticeable from Market Street.

Negative factors/ opportunities

The Mesnes Field itself is currently under used as a recreational space. The partial use for car parking is temporary, pending completion of the new Grand Arcade shopping development (taking place 2006) on the east side of Standishgate.

The Mesnes Field at present might be described as a wasting asset in that it is not a regularly used playing field nor is it an active urban open space. It contains little of landscape value nor does it function effectively as a physical link between the town centre and the park. Its very openness moreover exposes the generally nondescript backs of the corner buildings which were clearly not intended to be viewed as principal elevations.

Mesnes Park Terrace is a one-way street serving the driving test centre, the service area of the Thomas Linacre centre and the temporary Mesnes Field car park. The junctions at east and west ends have wide bellmouths because of the carriage drive access to the park gates and a redundant vehicle access to the Thomas Linacre Centre. The road tends to isolate the park from the town centre because of its inadequate pedestrian crossing provision.

If the Mesnes Field is no longer required as a playing field, it has the potential for remodelling as an urban open space which could be laid out so as to strengthen pedestrian links between the park and the town centre, possibly in conjunction with some form of traffic calming on Mesnes Park Terrace.



Character area 3: Parson's Walk and Park Road



The former grammar school, is located at the junction of Mesnes Park Terrace and Parson's Walk, abutting onto the south west corner of the Park. Pevsner described it as - "Grammar School, Parson's Walk Large neo Georgian, 1937 by A E Munby". It is a replacement of an earlier gothic style edifice dating from c1878. The present building is Grade II Listed; an extensive description is given in the list entry which describes it as "Thirties modernist style". Latterly a High School it is now converted to use as the Thomas Linacre Out Patients Department of the Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust.

It is a substantial two storey building, U shaped in plan, central main block of 60m with flanking wings 70m long enclosing a car park with gated main entrance facing onto Parson's Walk. The clock tower located on se corner is a local landmark. Hipped roofs are in a type of pan tile. Round headed windows at first floor level are used in the central parts of the wings with red tile voussoirs. The south wing containing the former assembly hall over a crypt, features very tall rectangular windows with horizontal glazing bars and margin panes as have the others.

Old stone shields with JB probably rescued from the 19th Century building are positioned over main entrances, commemorating Dr John Bridgeman, Rector and Lord of the Manor of Wigan 1615-1642 and whose family supplied or presented Rectors during the 18th and 19th Centuries.

Although a large building, its bulk when seen from the park is softened by nearby trees and shrubbery. The former school represents a period of building rare in the locality. Its 'modern movement' style, is in marked contrast to the predominantly Victorian architecture of the conservation area. It is also important for its historical association with the town and with the park.

The Parson's Walk edge to the park is bounded by a continuous low hedge. Trees and greenery dominate the scene especially viewed northwards as the road curves round to the north west.



A group of 36 houses on the west side of Parson's Walk form a more or less continuous frontage of some 310m between the Technical College campus and the railway bridge.

They vary in age and style and are a mixture of detached, semi detached and terraces. The development of this long frontage did not proceed chronologically outwards from the town centre. The 1894 OS shows Park Crescent complete, Nos



17 and No 14 Park Road and 1 and 3 Park Crescent West; the whole frontage to Parson's Walk as yet undeveloped. Nor do the first 12 houses on Parson's Walk appear on the 1907 OS. The 1903 Wigan street directory refers to the Grammar School as being located on Park Road, though Parson's Walk is named on the 1894 OS. The 1909/10 Street directory refers to Parson's Walk, but only mentions 6 occupied properties, Nos 31, 33, 43, 45, 47 and 49.

The land to the rear known as Bull Hey, is occupied by Wigan Cricket Club, which appears on the 1908 OS. On the 1848 edition, this area is shown as enclosed gardens and orchards possibly associated with the Hall and Rectory adjoining it to the south. To the north were the Mesnes No 1 colliery and a sandstone quarry.

Progressing northwards along Parson's Walk Nos 1 and 3 are a pair of Arts and Crafts style houses with gables and bays; No 5 a c1930's hipped roof bungalow followed by a group of c1930's bay fronted semis. 21 and 23 are modern dormer bungalows gable to road. Next is a detached house probably c1920's.



Nos 31 and 33 are Edwardian era bay fronted semis. Both are rendered or painted; No 31 has an enlarged 1st floor window. No.33 is in use as a day nursery. Nos 35 and 37 are red brick bay fronted gabled semis dated 1922. No 39 is a detached house

probably pre 1914, with elaborate door pediment in terracotta.

43-45 are late 19th early 20th Century semis; ground floor bays with Dutch style gables and retain raised and fielded panelled doors.



No 47-49 of similar period, have ground floor bays with balustrades over and rendered or painted stone mullions and reveals. This marks the transition from Parson's Walk to Park Road.

1, 1a- 4 Park Road form a pleasing late 19th Century terraced group with gable features and continuous slated porches over ground floor bays.

Terraced groups of similar character but varied in detail extend up to the railway bridge and flank two side streets, Park Crescent and Park Crescent West. The bridge itself features cast iron panels with mouldings.

Park Crescent and Park Crescent West are short roads containing 8 and 5 dwellings respectively mainly 2 storey semi detached of c1880's. Some are in rustic brick rather than the predominant hard reds and feature gabled bays with windows of tall proportions.

The alignment and name of these short roads suggests that perhaps they were intended to link,



however both are culs-de-sac, leading to the grounds of the Wigan Subscription Bowling Club whose sign board states its establishment in 1852. It is certainly shown on the 1894 OS. A substantial pavilion of traditional design and construction, long in proportion and with extensive veranda windows, faces the green with the railway embankment at its rear. The grounds are enclosed by high fences.

Park Crescent and Park Crescent West extend the streetscape of the main frontage forming secondary spaces with a strong relationship with the park landscape.



Nos 5-10 Park Road.

Interestingly, Nos 8, 9 and 10 with similar Flemish style gables, were occupied in 1910 by members of the Ashton family who were fish, game and poultry dealers.

The properties in this character area remain almost wholly in residential use; as noted No 33 Parson's Walk is a day nursery. Most of the properties appear to be well maintained externally though there are a few which would benefit from some care and attention. However the relentless march of replacement windows is evident.

Where the window openings and proportions remain unaltered, these modern replacement

windows tend to remain subservient to the inherently robust character of the Victorian and Edwardian era houses.

Parson's Walk/Park Road: Public Realm Aspects

Traffic and its associated signage and utilitarian street furniture are inevitable features of these classified roads. However, the bustle of activity around the junction of Parson's Walk and New Market Street soon gives way to a quieter suburban character with progression northwards. Double yellow lines extend along the whole west side and around the bend on the park side but with some kerbside permit holder parking south of the bend.

The tarmacadam footway adjacent the park is of generous width giving a spacious character to the road.

Main road Lighting columns are tall, tapered steel but painted black. The culs-de-sac have a mixture of old concrete and new steel columns of varied design. A replacement column is ominously sited on the outside of the bend. Residents refer to a history of accidents here and a bus stop being relocated away from the bend. There is certainly a feeling of vulnerability due to the severity of the bend and very restricted visibility from Park Crescent southwards.

The west side has a concrete slab footway, uneven in places with narrow grass verges within which are a number of roadside trees. The grass verge is damaged in places by vehicle overrunning.

The whole residential frontage is to a common building line of 2-3 m. Most properties retain their low front garden walls and original stone gate piers. The shallow front gardens leave no space for intrusive frontage car parking.



Despite their close spacing, most of the properties have access to off street parking, some via shared drives, though a few do not. The lane to the rear is within the grounds of the cricket club and does not provide secondary access for residents.

The introduction of a residents' parking permit system has eliminated the problem of intrusive kerbside parking by town centre users. There is however some anecdotal evidence of conflict between residents parking and traffic movements to and from the bowling green in Park Crescent and Park Crescent West.

Summary of Parson's Walk and Park Road Character Area

The Thomas Linacre building (former Grammar School) is a building of acknowledged architectural interest. It is a notable feature on the approach to the park from the town centre and thus makes a positive contribution to the conservation area. It usefully counter balances the modern technical college complex opposite - rightly excluded from the Conservation Area.

The conservation merit of the other properties within this character area is to a degree, a reflection of its stages of development. The earlier phases of the Victorian era contribute the greater interest by reason of their typically vertical emphasis with tall proportioned windows and richness of visual incident, for example, projecting bays, ornamental porches, balconies, and applied decoration such as terracotta work and ceramic tiling.

The earliest stages of its development were broadly contemporary with the laying out of the park thus providing an appropriate 19th Century setting for the park landscape and in turn deriving benefit from its outlook over the park.

Many of the dwellings represent examples of craftsmanship, detailing and use of materials which would be difficult to reproduce today.

The houses of later periods are of variable quality but overall the street retains a cohesive appearance due to its unity of scale, a common building line and generally consistent use of materials notably red brick and slate.

The Parson's Walk - Park Road section of the conservation area is of particular value in that its continuous built form provides a well-defined urban edge to the park.

Park Crescent and Park Crescent West together with the corresponding frontages to Park Road are secondary spaces of pleasing domestic scale and robust Victorian character, which like the main frontages have a positive visual connection with the park itself.

Negative factors/ opportunities

As noted, a number of houses have received modern replacement windows, usually with a different pattern of glazing bars from the original. Such alterations if widespread can erode the historic character of an area.

Alterations to the external appearance of dwelling houses are often classed as permitted development but in conservation areas there are restrictions on such matters as various types of cladding; the insertion of dormer windows into roof slopes; the erection of satellite dishes on walls roofs or chimneys fronting a highway.

However, alterations to windows will generally remain permitted development unless additional powers are sought by the Planning Authority;



(Article 4.2 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order).

To date no such powers have been obtained by Wigan BC in respect of the Mesnes Conservation Area. As such, it is not perhaps surprising that a number of householders have installed replacement glazing units in modern materials and designs. It is a matter for consultation and discussion as to whether such changes should be discouraged by seeking additional planning powers, given the extent of changes already made and the probable additional cost to householders of installing like for like replacements in traditional materials.

A further issue of concern is the conversion of original family homes to flats or for multi-occupation. Generally such intensification will require planning permission and its impact upon the character of the conservation area e.g additional parking demand, will be a material consideration.

Character Area 4: Bridgeman Terrace



The eastern side of the conservation area is formed mainly by Bridgeman Terrace but it includes an isolated property located at the corner of Mesnes Street and Wrightington Street.

Occupied by the Claremont Dental Practice, it is a pleasing 3 storey building dated 1894, in red brick with buff sandstone mullions strings and dressings.

It features an end bay with projecting barge boards and framing and a pleasing elliptical arched doorway in sandstone.

The north eastern perimeter of the Conservation Area continues with Bridgeman Terrace. The road, named after the 17th Century Rector, Dr John Bridgeman, actually includes three separate groups of buildings totalling 39 premises.

The largest group is a terrace of 28 mainly late 19th Century former town houses of 3 storeys, (Nos 1-29 inclusive; Nos 1-2 is evidently one property), extending 175m northwards from the junction with Mesnes Park Terrace; the majority of these properties are now in use as offices including professional services and consulting rooms. Two appear to remain in residential use and appear to be multi-occupied. Two are currently unoccupied.

 Bridgeman House is a modern 3 storey office building occupied by the Inland Revenue, located between Nos 29-38.

 Nos 38-44, 45 and 46 Bridgeman Terrace and Nos 7 and 8 Kenyon Road are late 19th Century/early 20th Century two storey town houses. Nos 43 and 44 appear to be unoccupied.

Reference to OS maps and the variations in design indicate that Bridgeman Terrace was developed in stages. Nos 1-11 were evidently the first to be erected and form a distinctive group. No 1/2 displays a stone plaque with the legend "Park View 1879". This group displays the characteristics of the earlier Georgian style of town house, with simple detailing and pleasing proportions. They feature 2 storey



height panelled splayed bays (except Nos 7 and 8 which have square bays), surmounted by over-sailing cornices with dentils. The continuous eaves line has brick corbel and coggling detail. The warm red brickwork is a form of English Garden wall bond. Most retain original raised and fielded 6 panelled doors and large paned sash windows though some modern replacements are evident. Upper floor windows have flat cambered lintels in stone.



Nos 12-15 and 25-29 are shown on the 1894 map, a date stone on No 29 proclaiming its date as 1881, but Nos 16-24 were later, built between 1894 and 1908.

The building of the Terrace evidently began concurrently with the development of Mesnes Park. These were homes for the emerging middle class built to exploit the pleasant outlook and amenity value of the new park. Worrall's Directory for 1885, lists 17 occupied houses in Bridgeman Terrace.

The 1885 Directory records that the occupants were mainly people of the professional and business classes, for example, the occupier of No 26 in 1885 was a Henry Farr, carriage builder operating from premises in Commercial Yard, Market Place. His landaus and broughams were awarded prize medals by the Manchester and Liverpool Agricultural Society in 1870, 1871, for excellence in design and workmanship. Mr Thos Charlson of No 30 was a corn merchant; No 6 was occupied by Thos

Baldwin a tarpaulin manufacturer with premises in Commercial Yard Ince. No 8 was occupied by Jas. McGregor, a bank manager. No 3 was the home of Edward Coupe, Iron founder, possibly part of the R & J E Coupe, Iron founders of Worsley Mesnes. Clearly the Terrace was a prestige location for the late Victorian middle classes.

The emerging fashion for more individually designed houses by the new middle classes is reflected in the later phases of more flamboyant style for example exhibiting a more elaborate treatment of doorways, fenestration, bays and gabled fronts than nos. 1-11.

No 12 -15 inclusive is a group of such bay fronted gabled town houses.

The bays are splayed, two storeys, with brick piers. The upper bay is shallower than the ground floor with projecting lead clad roof to the lower bay. Ground floor windows have



cambered stone lintels, the doorway round headed brick arch with stone springing and keystones. 1st and 2nd floor windows are round headed. Steeply pitched gables extend above the bays flush with the main wall plane.

Decorative balconies with cast iron railings extend above the doorways. No 11 and 12 appear to remain in residential use.

Nos 16 - 24 show further variations. Nos 16 and 24 have large projecting gables with tile patterned relief decoration; Nos 17-23 have smaller attic gables. Bays feature large sash windows with cambered brick lintels. Doors are grouped in pairs.



Nos 19 and 20 have a combined porch supported by console brackets.

Nos 25, 26, 28 and 29 have similar features to Nos 16-24 but steeper gables; No 27 is however of different style with large square stone mullioned bay and massive doorway with terracotta relief detail above door and ground floor window, but altered attic gable. No 29 is the northern end of the main terraced group.

View southwards showing variety of projecting bays, gables windows and doors set within reveals and other detail offering richer visual incident than most modern buildings. The buildings are set to a building line of not more than 3m providing a close relationship to the street, the scene enhanced by the presence of roadside trees. Shallow front areas are hard paved. There is evidence that nos. 11-29 were provided with low walls and railings. No.12 is the only one to retain its low stoned capped walls and



stone gate posts- inscribed 'Mona House'. The railings are no more. The shallow building line at least ensures that frontage parking does not detract from the street scene.

Detail of gable, No.16



Bridgeman House represents the only modern incursion in the 290m length of the street. It has the hallmark of the 1960's, pre-dating the conservation area designation. Though its white rendered façade and large panelled fenestration are out of keeping with the terrace, it does at least respect the eaves line and overall scale of its neighbours.



Adjoining is No 38, the Bridge Club, a doubled fronted villa in hard red brick and terracotta. Its 2 storey height aligns with the three storeys of its modern neighbour due in part to the road gradient.



(1894-1907). Unusually, it has a flat roof with balustrade. Its terracotta portico is impressive.



Nos 39 and 40 are a pair of large red brick town houses with mullioned square bays surmounted by balconies and Dutch style attic gables. Now offices. Shown on the 1894 OS.

No 41 is a large double fronted 2 storey house with stone and brick segmental lintels and 6 panelled door dating from between 1894 and 1908. The remainder of the group up to No 7 Kenyon Road, consists of 4 bay fronted 2 storey houses in red/brown brick with hipped roofs to full height, arranged as double and single fronted pairs, all built before 1894. No 7 is used as consulting rooms.

All this group retain low front walls, some with stone gate posts.



Across the road Nos 45 and 46, are a pair of houses of similar age and character, now offices, sited prominently at the Pagefield College entrance. The former Rylands Mill dating from 1864, dominates the background but the green annex is incongruous.

The Pagefield Building, formerly the Rylands Gidlow Mill



This massive three storey former cotton mill has a 120m frontage to the Park. It is aligned on a north-westerly axis, its southern end being about 75m north west from Bridgeman Terrace. The building has been adapted for its current use as an annex of the Wigan and Leigh College. Between the main building and Bridgeman Terrace is a yard area on which a system built annex has been placed.

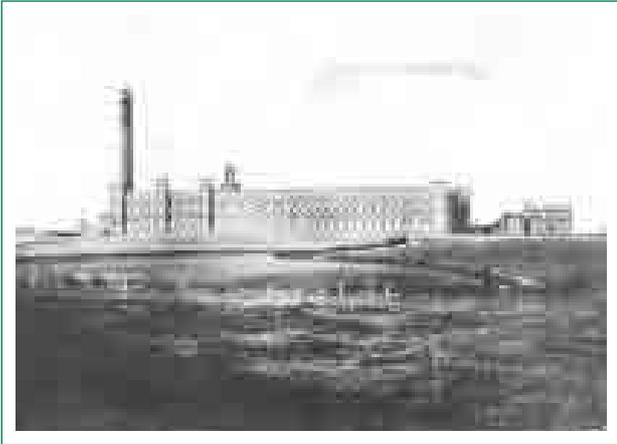
Remarkably, despite its prominent hill top site and huge bulk, the former mill is effectively screened by the summer foliage of mature trees and under-planting along the edge of the park.

The mill is Listed Grade II; 1996. It is described as: Integrated cotton mill comprising spinning mill with integral boiler and engine, associated chimney and attached weaving sheds; now part of a college, 1865, by George Woodhouse for Rylands & Sons; altered and internally remodelled. (See also SMR entries, Appendix 3).

In 1865 the Earl of Derby praised the mill "as



a pleasure to the eye to rest on, so well has architectural effect been studied in its construction".



The architect, George Woodhouse of Bolton was a leading mill architect of his time. He made deliberate use of white and blue Staffordshire brick in order to relieve the monotony of red brick.

An early view of the mill before the park was fully landscaped.

The mill remains a permanent memorial to John Rylands and embodies a triumph for aesthetic over utilitarian considerations. It was however one of the most expensive mills ever built; costs were raised by the use throughout of fireproof modes of construction. (Extract from Sites and Monuments record, GMAU).



The mill was designed for throstle spinning (a spinning machine formerly used to twist and wind fibres of cotton or wool continuously). The use of polychromatic brickwork for mill construction at this time was unusual.

'Forms a very striking feature on an elevated site immediately north of Mesnes Park' (list entry). The list entry leaves no doubt about the significance of this massive structure. The mill is an undoubted heritage asset to the park. Its chimney is a prominent landmark.

The Mesnes Conservation area was extended in November 1984 to include the original three storey section of the mill.

At that time the mill was being sold off by its original owners and was unlisted with the attendant risks of total or partial demolition or alteration to accommodate new uses.

In the designation report, the mill was described as forming "a fine enclosing element to the Mesnes Park. The roofline is enriched by turrets and an ornate water tower finished with an attractive lantern. The tower forms a dominant feature in Wigan's skyline from several different viewpoints. The mill forms a good example of the English functional tradition in early industrial architecture in which Georgian skills in proportion, window pattern and detailing were carried into the nineteenth century so helping massive industrial buildings to relate to the human scale unlike much modern architecture. The mill's special architectural character and its relationship with the existing conservation area therefore justify its inclusion in the Mesnes Conservation Area".



The Public Realm



Bridgeman Terrace appears to attract fast moving traffic. Footways are of generous width and provide for roadside tree planting on both sides. On the park side there are double yellow lines, but metered kerbside parking is available on the opposite side.

A form of traditional street lighting has been installed but the columns are rather spindly in proportion, their height probably dictated by highway requirements.

There is a substantial pedestrian movement to and from the college which gives the area more bustle than its character as a quiet professional business quarter would suggest.

Despite the considerable pedestrian flow, no controlled pedestrian crossing facilities are provided at the park entrance.

The junction is potentially hazardous due to its position at a cross roads junction and the amount of traffic turning into Mesnes Park Terrace where the town's driving test centre is located. The lack of pedestrian crossing facilities must be a deterrent for visits to the park from the town centre direction, especially for example by the elderly, the mobility impaired and people with young children.

The park's perimeter trees and neatly clipped boundary hedges, undoubtedly make positive contributions to the street scene along Bridgeman Terrace.

Whilst the dense evergreen perimeter shrubbery effectively screens views of traffic from within the park, it conversely deprives pedestrians passing along Bridgeman Terrace of views into the park which is perhaps unfortunate, moreover creating a degree of seclusion which may at times feel uncomfortable.

Summary of the Bridgeman Terrace character area

As well as being a fine terrace in its own right, the main frontage of Bridgeman Terrace contributes a strongly defined edge to the conservation area, visually containing the park, by reason of its continuous three storey built form.

The main terrace itself is a tour de force which has much variety in detail and visual incident within an overall continuity of scale and height, unified by a consistent palette of traditional local materials, predominantly red brick, terracotta and stone. Many original fixtures survive, for example, panelled doors, porches and various forms of decorative work. In general the properties seem to be well maintained most now being in commercial use. Signage is generally restrained.

The building of the Terrace is contemporary with the development of the park, providing an appropriate late Victorian era back-cloth to the gardens.

Bridgeman Terrace moreover provides a tangible link with an aspect of the town's social history in that many of the early occupants were proprietors



of local businesses and part of the late Victorian middle class.

The former mill is an acknowledged building of national importance by virtue of its Grade II listing. The present use by the College is planned to cease during 2006. Its status as a listed building and location within the conservation area should ensure that new uses are accommodated in such a manner as to respect the architectural qualities of the building and its setting.

Negative factors/ opportunities

The survival of so much of the Victorian character of the terrace into the 21st Century is undoubtedly in no small measure due its conservation area status combined with the careful custodianship of property owners. However, as with Parson's Walk, there have been a number of inappropriate alterations mainly to windows, such as the removal of glazing bars. About one fifth of the properties are so affected.

The loss of nearly all of the front boundary walls and railings and the robust stone gate piers is also regrettable as these defined the private/public realms and provided a visual 'plinth' to the terrace. The paving of the former gardens is nondescript.

Most of the terrace is now in use for commercial purposes a number of which would be expected to attract visits by the public or by clients. Ground floors are 2-3 steps above pavement level, so that providing front access for wheelchair users could be problematic.

Reference has already been made to the need for better pedestrian crossing facilities at Mesnes Park Terrace by the Park gates.

The reuse of the Gidlow Mill will present both a challenge in attracting an appropriate use or mix

of uses and an opportunity for improving the overall presentation of the site to the park and its approach from Bridgeman Terrace, including the removal of the modern green annex.

The modern office building Bridgeman House though of inoffensive design is manifestly out of keeping with the rhythm and materials of the older properties that provide its context. As such it makes no contribution to the character of the conservation area. Should the opportunity ever arise to replace this building, it would have the potential for a more sympathetic design of building which would enhance the conservation area.

Diagram I Character Areas

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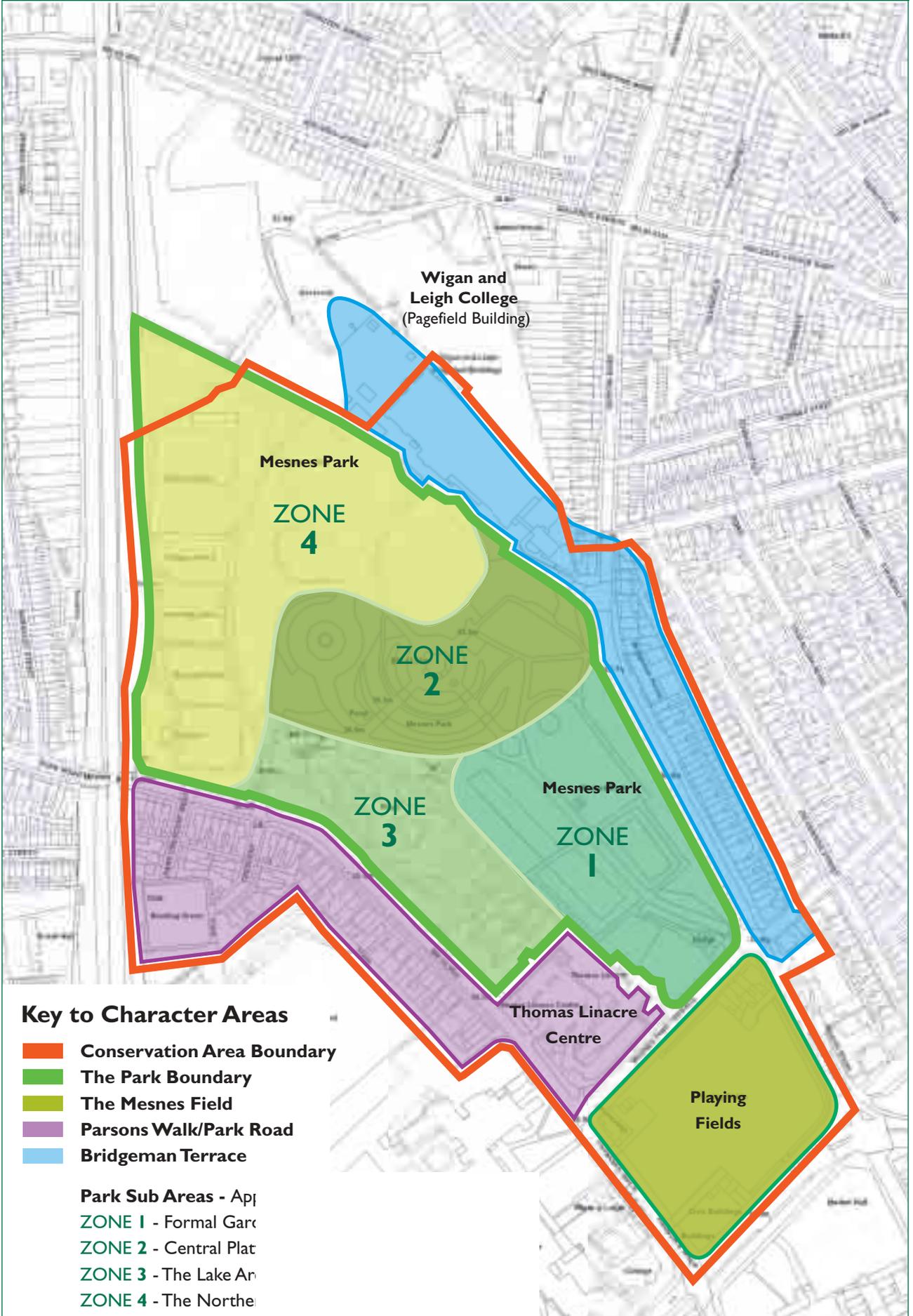


Diagram 2 Character Analysis

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