

# London Metropolitan Archives

Information Leaflet Number 56

## Records of gardening and Parks and Open Spaces in London Metropolitan Archives



## **Introduction**

London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) holds a variety of records relating to gardening and horticulture in the Greater London area. Foremost amongst these are the records of the Worshipful Company of Gardeners, one of the City Livery Companies. There is a reference to an organisation of gardeners as early as 1345. By the time of the granting of the Company's first charter in 1605, it was fully in control of its trade. By the mid 19th century the Company was in abeyance, but it revived in the 1890s. It received its grant of arms in 1905. In recent years, the Company has been notable for running a number of campaigns and competitions in the City of London. It also continues the tradition of providing bouquets and flowers for members of the Royal family and for Royal occasions. The archives held at LMA date from 1605, but early membership records are patchy, and court minutes do not begin until the second half of the 18th century. The archive is not large, but it is notable for a series of scrapbooks recording the history of the company since 1345, begun by the company in 1934 and continuing to the present day. The company's collection of printed books is deposited at Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH.

## **Private Gardens**

Among the early records of horticulture are seventeenth-century probate inventories of gardeners in Westminster and Middlesex in the records of the church courts. There is a delightful group of ten letters from his gardener to the Earl of Uxbridge in 1766 about the earl's garden in Uxbridge ('For nothing I think, my Lord, in the vegetable World, is more changing, worse to propagate than things of a variegated colour') and later the minutes and accounts of the trustees for maintaining the garden in Queen Square, Holborn 1858-1949, and the Ampthill Square Garden Committee 1856-1921 who laid out and looked after those gardens for local inhabitants.

Private gardens such as these relied on nurserymen and seedsmen and LMA is fortunate to hold records 1775-1826 of Harrison's Nursery Garden, Brompton, which include stock books and valuations listing bulbs, seedlings, vegetables and flowers, and name both clients and growers.

## **Public Gardens**

The Metropolitan Public Gardens Association was formed in 1882 with the object of providing public open spaces in the metropolitan area. It raised money by public subscription to buy and lay out parks and gardens and attempted to persuade local authorities to make similar provision. It encouraged the conversion of disused churchyards and burial grounds into public gardens and parks. LMA holds the archives of the association as well as the maps relating to a report prepared by Mrs

Basil Holmes in 1895 for the London County Council. She surveyed churchyards and cemeteries in London, including the City, with the aim of beautifying them. Faculties in the archives of the Diocese of London and the Archdeaconry of Surrey and the Dioceses of Rochester, Southwark and Guildford, record the conversion in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries of churchyards and cemeteries to public gardens and open spaces, information supplemented by parish records such as those of St George the Martyr, Southwark. An incomplete set of the printed reports of the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association 1894 -1962, the London Gardener 1963 - 1979, and 97 volumes of newspaper cuttings relating to the association's activities in London and the south east 1883 -1969 are in the care of Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ

Access to the archives is also at Guildhall Library - email [guildhall.library@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:guildhall.library@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

## **Institutional gardens**

Institutional gardens are represented also by the records of the garden advisory service set up by King Edward's Hospital Fund for London in 1952 to improve hospital gardens for the benefit of patients and staff while making them economical to maintain. Miss Nightingale herself had approved of the health-giving properties of flowers: 'I shall never forget the rapture of fever patients over a bunch of bright-coloured flowers' (from her Notes on Nursing in the records of the Nightingale Training School in the LMA).

Bomb damage maps from the LCC Architect's Department indicate how much damage hospital and other gardens sustained during the last war. A petition from the Charterhouse gardener in the eighteenth century refers to another sort of damage, that of smoke from breweries.

## **Amateur Gardens**

Amateur gardeners are represented by the records of the Enfield and District Carnation Society 1946-1977, the Ealing Horticultural Society 1894-1915 and by parish records relating to the management of allotments in Ealing 1835-1870. Allotments seem to have been the main horticultural concern of the Middlesex County Council although it also maintained nurseries to plant highway verges.

## **Council records**

On a larger scale, the office has the records of the London County Council and its predecessors. In 1869 the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW), then the central local authority for London outside the City, set up a Parks and Open Spaces

Committee, probably as a result of the extra work generated by the Metropolitan Commons Act of 1866. In 1887 under the London Parks and Works Act the MBW took over from the Office of Works responsibility for Battersea, Kennington and Victoria Parks, and under the MBW (Various Powers) Act of the same year responsibility for Wandsworth Common. In 1871 the Board purchased the manorial rights over Hampstead Heath from the Maryon-Wilson family to prevent inclosure of the heath and secure a 'lung for Londoners'.

The London County Council, created in 1889, continued such work through its own Parks Committee and Parks Department and during its life acquired other responsibilities, widening its interest in gardening and horticulture. Town planning meant an involvement with tree preservation, the maintenance of London squares and with the Green Belt. The Festival of Britain brought the Festival Gardens in Battersea to the LCC in 1953. Gardening was regarded as suitable training for boys in LCC truant schools.

Like all local authorities, the City of London Corporation maintains a number of open spaces within its boundaries, funded from local taxes. It also provides many services outside the City from its own funds (City's Cash) at no cost to the tax or ratepayer. One of these is the ownership and maintenance of open spaces within twenty-five miles of the City of London. The City of London Corporation was empowered to acquire open spaces outside the City by the City of London (Open Spaces) Act 1878. This Act was used to acquire most of Epping Forest, most of Burnham Beeches from Sir Henry Peeks in 1880 and a string of commons across Kent and Surrey (Farthing Down, Coulsdon Common, Kenley Common, Riddlesdown, Spring Park, West Wickham Common and Ashted Common), from 1883 onwards. Highgate Wood and Queen's Park, Kilburn were bought under the Highgate and Kilburn Open Spaces Act 1886. West Ham Park was bought from the Gurney family in 1874. The Corporation accepted responsibility for Hampstead Heath in 1989, following the demise of the Greater London Council in 1986.

Many of the open spaces outside the City were acquired by the City of London Corporation using funds derived from a duty on grain brought into the Port of London, known as metage. Highgate Wood and Queen's Park, Kilburn were purchased using part of William Ward's bequest. These open spaces are now funded from City's Cash. The City has also bought and acquired additions to many of these open spaces at different times. The City of London also owns or administers over 100 open spaces within the City itself

London Metropolitan Archives holds records relating to all these functions and a brief list of them and of deposited records is given later.

## **Prints, maps and photographs**

In addition the Print Collection includes prints showing London gardens, both public and private, from the seventeenth century many of which can be viewed online on Collage at. <http://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/>

Maps can provide evidence of the distribution and, in the case of 5 feet Ordnance Survey maps which are held by LMA for inner London and 25 inch Ordnance Survey for parts of Middlesex, the lay-out of gardens and open spaces. Enclosure maps and awards and tithe maps and apportionments for Middlesex for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries provide evidence of parks, gardens and nurseries and their owners and occupiers.

The Photograph Collection can illustrate the Londoner's love of growing things (also illustrated in the photographs among the archives of St Thomas' Hospital), and the more formal creations of the local authority gardener as well as prize winning gardens of LCC tenants in the 1930s.

## **Finding aids**

Enquirers should consult our catalogues in the Information Area for records of gardening and horticulture. Many of our catalogues can be viewed and searched on our website at [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma)

## **Records**

Selective list of records of gardening and horticulture in the Greater London area held by London Metropolitan Archives.

### **Private gardens deposited records**

- ACC/446/EM/50: Letters from his gardener to the Earl of Uxbridge 1766: among the records of the Marquis of Anglesey.
- P82/GEO2/111-115: Minutes and accounts of Trustees for maintaining the garden in Queen Square, Holborn, 1858-1949: among the records of the parish of St George the Martyr, Queen Square.
- LMA/4059: Minutes 1856-1895, byelaws 1878-1903, accounts 1857-1921 and other records of the Amptill Square Garden Committee.
- ACC/212/3, 10: List of plants and valuation of trees in a Stoke Newington garden 1726-1733.
- Lists of plants and trees are also to be found in the Stowe Collection (ACC/262) and among records of the Bedford Estates in Covent Garden and Surrey (E/BER).

- Uncatalogued papers relating to the Earl of Jersey's Osterley Park estate eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries include accounts and bills for garden plants, trees, landscaping, gardeners, hothouses, and a menagerie (ACC/3752). An interim list can be made available by appointment. At least 48 hours notice is required to view these records.
- E/MW/H Records relating to Hampstead Heath 17-20c: among the records of the Maryon-Wilson estate.

## **Gardeners and Nurserymen**

- CLC/L/GA: The Worshipful Company of Gardeners, 1605-2005  
  
MS03389-402, MS09564-A, MS17305-6, MS21128-9, MS28953-6, MS36860-1, MS36996-8
- B/HRS/1: Hewitt, later Harrison's Nursery Garden, Brompton, 1775-1826.
- MA/G/CBF/309: Bill for fruit trees, etc, supplied to the Middlesex House of Correction, 1799: among the records of Middlesex Sessions.
- H1/ST/E67/38/3, 26, H1/ST/E67/46/19 Leases of St Thomas' Hospital land in Hackney to H1/ST/E67/46/19 Conrad Loddiges and to William and George Loddiges, nurserymen, 1786-1821. H1/ST/E67/46/19H1/ST/E67/46/19

## **Amateurs**

- ACC/2078: Enfield and District Carnation Society 1946-1977.
- ACC/1339: Ealing Horticultural Society 1894-1915.
- DRO/37/H1-H7: Records relating to the management of allotments on Ealing Common 1835-1870: among the records of Ealing parish church.
- ACC/3571: Ruislip Cottagers' Allotments Charity 1901-1988.

## **Institutional gardens**

- ACC/1876/G5: Includes papers relating to the cost of cultivating the garden 1724 and no date: among the records of Sutton's Hospital, Charterhouse.

Assembly order books, and diet books as the kitchen garden was maintained to provide produce for the Master and pensioners, may also contain information.

- A/KE/726-7: Files relating to the garden advisory service of King Edward's Hospital Fund for London 1951-1963, and files relating to individual hospitals advised, including plans of layouts and advice on planting 1952-1963: among the records of the Fund.
- H01/ST/PH, H01/ST/NCPH: Photographs among the archives of St Thomas' Hospital and the Nightingale Collection showing the hospital gardens and wards etc 19-20c.

- DL, DW/OP, DS/F: Tithe maps and apportionments for Middlesex.
- DR/F and DG/F: Faculty papers among the records of the Diocese of London, Archdeaconry of Surrey and the Dioceses of Southwark, Rochester and Guildford, relating to the laying-out of burial grounds c.1870- to date.

## **Retailers**

- CLA/009, CLA/013: City of London markets including Spitalfields Market
- ACC/2058: Borough Market, Southwark.
- E/BER/CG: Records relating to Covent Garden Market 17-20c among the records of the Bedford Estate.

## **Associations**

- CLC/011/MS11097-11103: Metropolitan Public Gardens Association
- CLC/011/MS21670-1, 22284-97

## **General**

- DL: Probate inventories of gardeners, seedsmen, etc, 17-19c: among records of the Archdeaconry Court of Middlesex. Archdeaconry Court of London, Commissary Court of London and Peculiar Court of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral. For further details see Information Leaflet No.6 Wills.
- ACC/1953, ACC/2558: Records of water companies, the predecessors of Thames Water Authority, relate to the provision of water, the construction and maintenance of rivers and reservoirs and, more recently, their landscaping.

## **Inherited records**

### **City of London Corporation**

The Corporation's open spaces are overseen by Committees made up of elected members of the Corporation and, due to the terms under which the Corporation took over some of the open spaces, representatives of other interests. These Committees are responsible to the Court of Common Council. Historically most of these open spaces fell under the supervision of the Corporation's Coal, Corn and Finance Committee, although Epping Forest was overseen by the Epping Forest Committee.

From 1966 all the open spaces formerly supervised by these Committees came under the control of the Epping Forest and Open Spaces Committee, now the Epping Forest and Commons Committee. When Epping Forest business is under discussion the members of the Corporation are joined by four verderers, who are elected by the commoners of the Forest. West Ham Park, however, is run by the Committee of Managers of West Ham Park. This is made up of representatives of the Corporation

and appointees of the Gurney Family, the Parish of West Ham and the London Borough of Newham. Hampstead Heath is administered by the Hampstead Heath Management Committee, which includes appointees from the London Boroughs of Barnet and Camden and conservation groups.

The open spaces within the City of London itself are paid for by City ratepayers, so they are under the charge of the Trees, Gardens and City Open Spaces Sub-Committee of the Planning and Transportation Committee. This Sub-Committee also oversees Bunhill Fields, which was previously administered by the City Lands Committee and later the Streets Committee.

Plans, histories, and guides relating to individual parks and open spaces can be identified by searching our computerised catalogues which are available on our website at [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma)

## **Metropolitan Board of Works**

The archives of the Metropolitan Board of Works (MBW) include papers and plans about the creation, laying out and maintenance of Battersea Park 1845-1888, Kennington Park 1841-1878 and Victoria Park 1841-1891 (MBW/OW/BP, MBW/OW/KP, MBW/OW/VP) and minutes, reports and financial records of the Wandsworth Common Conservators 1871-1887 (OS/W). Records of the MBW's involvement with parks and open spaces are found in the minutes and presented papers of the MBW Parks, Commons and Open Spaces Committee 1896-1889 (MBW/0977-1035), minutes, etc, of the sub-committees of the Works and General Purposes Committee relating to parks 1875-1887 (MBW/0680-0684), two volumes of coloured lithographs c.1875 (MBW/2495-2496) and deposited plans relating to parks 1857-1889 (MBW/2446-2456).

## **London County Council**

The archives of the London County Council (LCC) include the minutes, presented papers and agendas of the LCC Parks Committee and sub-committees 1889-1965 (LCC/MIN/8700-9054), plans of parks presented to the Parks Committee 1892-1961, with a series of lithographs (LCC/PP/PK/1-57), records of the LCC Parks Department 1889-1964 being mainly returns, reports and publications (LCC/PK) and records relating to parks in the records of the Clerk's Department 1889-1965, concerning squares, the Green Belt, open air exhibitions, and individual open spaces (LCC/CL/PK). There are also lithographs before 1910 and other published papers, early 20th century about parks including, for example, the chrysanthemum house Finsbury Park (LCC/MISC/P/195- ) and volumes of descriptive pamphlets for official opening and other ceremonies 1893-1952, including, for example, the 1895 opening of Island Gardens, Poplar, a 1903 visit to Horniman Pleasance and the 1912 opening of Geffrye's Garden, Kingsland Road (LCC/CL/CER/3).

The records of the LCC Architect's Department include general town planning subject and policy files including tree preservation 1932-1939 and garden squares and enclosures 1923-1945 (LCC/AR/TP/1) and town planning subject and policy files about the Green Belt 1929-1937 (LCC/AR/TP/3).

The Central Unemployed Body for London 1904-1930 used men for labour in London parks and ran Hollesley Bay Labour Colony and its mixed farm (later taken over by the LCC) (CUB).

Festival Gardens Ltd set up Battersea Park and Funfair for the Festival of Britain 1949. It transferred its assets to the LCC 1953 (FGL).

## **Greater London Council and London Residuary Body**

Records of committees and departments which succeeded those of the LCC to 1986 (GLC, LRB)

## **Middlesex County Council**

Records of Middlesex Agricultural Committee and its smallholdings and allotments sub-committee, the Middlesex War Agricultural Committees, and the Middlesex County Council Estates and Housing Department (MCC).

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