

= Beacon Park =

Beacon Park is a public park in the centre of the city of Lichfield , Staffordshire , in the United Kingdom . The park was created in 1859 when the Museum Gardens were laid out adjacent to the newly built Free Museum and Library . The park has since been extended in stages and now forms 69 acres (28 ha) of open parkland in the city centre . The park is located in the northwest of the city centre and to the west of the Cathedral Close across the road from the Garden of Remembrance .

The majority of the park was originally waterlogged marshland and a lake covered the area of what is now the Museum Gardens . The land was drained in the early 19th century and the Museum Gardens were raised with silt dredged from Minster Pool . The large northern area of the park once formed the land and gardens of Beacon House . This land was incorporated into the park when the owner of Beacon House , Colonel Swinfen Broun , donated the land after his death .

The park has many sporting and recreational facilities for use by the public , including an 18 hole golf course , football pitches , tennis courts and bowling greens . The park also hosts a wide range of events throughout the year including the Lichfield Bower and The Lichfield Festival . The park is home to many monuments , most notably a large bronze statue of Captain Smith of the RMS Titanic .

= = History = =

= = = Early history = = =

Beacon Park stands on land which was originally low lying , poorly drained pasture alongside the Leamonsley Brook . The Museum Gardens and Recreation Grounds were the site of Bishops Fish Pool (sometimes known as Upper Pool) . The pool was created when a causeway was built on Beacon Street in the 14th century separating it from Minster Pool . The waterlogged marshland surrounding Bishops Fish Pool became known as ' The Moggs ' from the 15th century and later ' Swan Moggs ' .

Swans were kept by the Bishops of Lichfield on Bishops Fish Pool from the early 14th century . Special pens and nesting areas were constructed . Ownership of the birds passed to the Lichfield Corporation from 1548 . In 1704 the lease owner of ' Swan Moggs ' was required to allow the swans make their nests there . In this area today we get the street names Swan Road and Swan Mews reflecting the history of the land use .

The land of the wider Beacon Park was used for agriculture from at least the 13th century to the 19th century . This past use is visible today in street names with Townfields south of the park and north of the park there are records of a Shaw field in 1336 which is now Shaw Lane .

= = = 19th century = = =

As the city water supply from Aldershaw was diminishing in the early 19th century , money was spent diverting surface waters from ' Swan Moggs ' into a common conduit . The two streams across it were diverted into underground culverts ; the land was raised with silt and mud dredged from Minster Pool . The area was subsequently developed into the formal gardens of Beacon Park by the Lichfield Corporation , but paid for by the Conduit Lands Trust . The Museum Gardens were opened in 1859 to complement the new Italianate Free Library and Museum . The Recreation Grounds , opened in 1891 , is the small area between the Museum Gardens and the wider Beacon Park . The central fountain was unveiled as the central focus of the Museum Gardens in 1871 . A bandstand was also installed close to the junction of the Museum Gardens and Recreation Grounds , and was positioned to provide a focus for the avenue through the Museum Gardens .

The development of the wider Beacon Park is closely linked to the development of Beacon House , which was built for George Hand in 1800 . The gardens and parkland were developed in stages over the nineteenth century as ownership of the estate changed . In 1826 the owner , Richard Hinckley

added two wings to the house , extended the grounds and carried out extensive improvements to the landscape . Two fish ponds were dug along the valley , fed by the Leomonsley Brook , and a long ornamental approach constructed across the fields towards Walsall Road . Samuel Lipscomb Seckham acquired Beacon House and its 32 acres (13 ha) estate in 1880 . He extended the parkland to cover 100 acres (40 ha) and added a terraced walk along the front ; linking the house to the ponds .

= = = 20th century = = =

Statues of Edward VII and Edward Smith were erected in the Museum Gardens in 1908 and 1914 respectively . During the First World War , Beacon House was sold to the War department . A Crimean War cannon and a First World War German gun were placed in the Museum Gardens after the war , only to be removed for scrap metal during the next war . After the First World War the park was the scene of much celebration with the Recreation Grounds used for athletics and the Museum Gardens for dancing . The Garden of Remembrance was laid out across Beacon Street opposite the park in 1920 . The timber framed public convenience at the northeast entrance was built in 1930 , partly with old materials from the portion of the Friary which was taken down in 1925 on the making of the new road .

Beacon House was used by the Royal Army Service Corps during the Second World War before being demolished by the City Council in 1964 . The land on which Beacon House once stood is now a housing estate with street names Swinfen Broun Road and Seckham Road named after previous residents of the house . Colonel Swinfen Broun gifted 12 acres (4 @. @ 9 ha) of the land to the park in 1943 . After the land attached to Beacon House was incorporated into Beacon Park between 1943 and 1964 the park area as we know it today was complete .

Over the rest of the 20th century many recreation facilities were incorporated into the park . Parkland was levelled for football pitches in 1947 . A second bowling green in the Recreation Grounds was laid out by the City Council in 1962 to join the green in the Museum Gardens laid in 1922 . In 1972 the two fish ponds were reshaped and deepened to leave one pool (Beacon Pool) we see today . The golf course was laid out and opened in 1973 .

= = = 21st century = = =

In 2009 , the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund announced Beacon Park , Minster Pool and Walk and the Garden of Remembrance had been awarded a grant £ 3 @. @ 9 million under the ' Parks for People ' programme . The transformation started in 2010 and was completed in 2012 with works including a new café , refreshment kiosk , bowls and education pavilion , toilets , and new and improved play areas for children of all ages . Conservation work was carried out on the listed structures , including the statues , railings and fountain . In the Museum Gardens , the bowling green was relocated to the Recreation Grounds and in its previous location beds of flowers were planted to recreate the Victorian geometric landscaping to the gardens .

= = Monuments and sculpture = =

Plaque of Martyrs ? The plaque came into being as the seal for the city of Lichfield . The disputed story of 999 Christian martyrs who were killed by the Romans under pagan Emperor Diocletian in Lichfield in 288 CE is depicted in the stonework of the monument . It was located on the front of the Guildhall until , in 1744 during the Victorian restoration of the Guildhall the plaque was taken down a placed in storage . It emerged again in 1864 , when it was moved to a rockery on the eastern side of the Museum Gardens . It lay in the rockery falling into a state of disrepair until 2010 when it was restored and relocated onto a plinth in the Recreation Grounds . The seal can also be seen on the railway bridge at St John 's Street .

Chancellor Law 's Fountain ? Unveiled in May 1871 , the fountain was sculpted by Turner and Allen of London . The lions are made from Ashlar stone and the central figure is sculpted iron . The

fountain was a gift from James Thomas Law who was the chancellor of the diocese and gave much to the city , including the statue of Samuel Johnson in the market square . The fountain is located at the centre of the Museum Gardens . In 2011 the fountain was restored with funding from Lichfield Conduit Lands Trust .

King Edward VII ? Unveiled in September 1908 the statue was sculpted by local stonemason George Lowther of Robert Bridgeman & Sons of Lichfield . The pedestal is made of Hoptonwood stone and the figure from Portland stone . Edward is portrayed in full coronation robes with a sceptre in his right hand . The arms of the City of Lichfield are on the front of the pedestal . The statue was erected during Edward 's reign as a gesture of the city 's loyalty to the King . The statue is located on the eastern end of the Museum Gardens . The statue was rededicated on 24 April 2013 by The Princess Royal .

Captain Edward Smith ? Unveiled in July 1914 at the western end of the Museum Gardens , the statue was sculpted by Kathleen Scott , wife of Antarctic explorer Robert Scott . The pedestal is made from Cornish granite and the figure is bronze . This is a memorial to the captain of the RMS Titanic , which sank on 15 April 1912 . Captain Smith was from Hanley and Lichfield was chosen as the location for the monument because Smith was a Staffordshire man and Lichfield was the centre of the diocese . The statue originally cost £ 740 raised through local and national contributions . In 2010 , as part of the ' Parks for People ' programme , the statue was restored and the green patina removed from its surface at a cost of £ 16 @, @ 000 . In 2011 an unsuccessful campaign was started to get the statue moved back to Captain Smith 's home town of Hanley .

Colonel Swinfen Broun ? Unveiled in September 1972 , the memorial is a 1.9m high sandstone brick with two bronze plaques located on each side . In 1948 Lichfield mourned the loss of one of its most generous benefactors , Colonel Swinfen Broun . He had paid a large part of the cost of Victoria Hospital , given the Guildhall its clock and donated 12 acres (4 @. @ 9 ha) of recreational land to Beacon Park in 1943 . In his will he also left half of his estate at Swinfen Hall to Lichfield Cathedral and the other half to the Lichfield Corporation . A memorial was set up on the west bank of Beacon Pool after his death in recognition to his contribution to the city .

Erasmus Darwin ? Unveiled on 12 December 2012 , a 2 @. @ 3 metres (7 @. @ 5 ft) high bronze statue of Erasmus Darwin sculpted by Peter Walker . The statue was estimated to cost £ 61 @, @ 500 with 30 % of the funds to come from Section 106 funding . The statue is located near to the Bird Street entrance to the Museum Gardens .

= = Recreational uses = =

The park has many sporting facilities including flat and crown bowling greens in the recreation grounds . The Lichfield Museum Bowling Club has been playing on the greens since 1922 and is one of the oldest bowling clubs in the country . There are four asphalt surfaced tennis courts built in 1932 , six football pitches (seasonal) , a basketball court , a cricket pitch (seasonal) and an eighteen hole public golf course .

In addition to sports , other recreational facilities are available . These include a crazy golf course , a young children 's playground and an older children 's playground . During the summer season activities such as canoeing on Beacon Pool , donkey rides , giant board games and a bouncy castle are available in the park .

Two new catering facilities in the park opened in May 2012 . The Lakeside Bistro near Beacon Pool and Chandlers Café at the Bird Street entrance to the park were built as part of the works following the £ 3 @. @ 9 million grant and Chandlers Group spent £ 200 @, @ 000 fitting out the new facilities .

= = Entertainment uses = =

The park is used as a venue for many entertainment events throughout the year . The Lichfield bower and the Lichfield Festival hold events in the park annually , during the summer . ' Cars in the Park ' takes place annually at the end of June . First held in 1997 , ' Cars in the Park ' showcases

more than 1 @, @ 000 vintage and modern cars and 62 car clubs took part in the 2011 event . Lichfield Proms in the Park , an open air classical music event , takes place annually on the first Saturday of September . A big top Circus also comes to the park annually in Spring .

= = Gallery = =