

## FOUNTAIN AT CORONATION GARDENS, SOUTHFIELDS, WANDSWORTH



ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPH

### **Some of the writings and findings on the history of Coronation Gardens from the research by the historian Sebastian Bulmer:**

'Briefly, when Lancaster bought the land he turned to the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association (MPGA) for help (he was a member). Lord Meath (Chairman) readily agreed to offer the Association's resources, with costs being met by Lancaster. Fanny Wilkinson, the Association's garden designer, drew up plans and oversaw the laying out of Coronation Gardens.

The opening ceremony took place on 4 July 1903 with speeches from Lord Meath and Lancaster.

The drinking fountain arrived late, as noted by Lancaster in his speech:

"Councillor Lancaster said he had been rather exercised about the drinking fountain. Fountains were so often like funeral urns, but in the present instance something artistic was being prepared, and he was hopeful that, from what he knew of the British workman - (Laughter.) - when the summer had well gone and the frost and snow was on the ground, that they would see the drinking fountain in proper working order. (Loud laughter.)" (Wandsworth Borough News, 10 July 1903).

He was optimistic and it wasn't installed until the following year, mentioned by Lancaster in a letter to the Secretary of the MPGA, dated 29 April 1904:

"Dear Mr. Holmes, I am happy to say the drinking fountain at Coronation Gardens is at last fixed and will shortly be in working order. I hope you may be able to run down one day and see it. I am sure you will think we have improved on the "funeral urn" style of architecture."

.. No mention made of who designed it. The only specific mention I have found is from the Wandsworth Borough News for 6 May 1904:

"MR. LANCASTER'S GIFT. When Coronation Gardens, Southfields, the gift of MR. W. J. LANCASTER, were publicly opened last July, it was announced that the donor's sisters would defray the expense of a drinking fountain for the ground. This has just been set up. It is artistic and unique in design, consisting of four rough hewn blocks of Peterhead granite, 8ft. in height, and about 4ft. square, standing on a concrete bed. The water issues from a vase held in the right hand of a bronze figure joined to the granite, and falls into a large bronze bowl, to which a metal drinking cup is attached. The fountain is also decorated with Lancaster roses, in bronze, and is the work of MR. BUCHANAN, the bronze adornment having been provided by MR. FRANK ROWE."

Buchanan and Rowe are not names I am familiar with and I sought the help of the National Art Library who also came up empty.

This is a puzzle. Lancaster clearly gave the drinking fountain a lot of thought. .. The Coronation Gardens fountain was not commissioned through the MPGA, nor was it commissioned through the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain & Cattle Trough Association..

One possibility is he kept it local and commissioned a graduate of the PSAD.'