

Parks, Coast and Countryside

Vale Park

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The area now known as Vale Park was once common land, and was included in lands recovered under an Inclusion Act in 1809. In 1811 the 25 acres plot was sold to Merchant shipowners and factors, Thomas Twemlow and Samuel McDowal. In 1812 the estate was later split in two, including the house called Liscard Vale. Sadly, Twemlow died intestate in the 1820's and in 1826 the estate was sold to John Davies, a solicitor.

John Davies added more buildings, a gothic house in 1833, a gothic cottage known as the Rookery, the Royal Liscard Hotel and built a sea wall around an area of the foreshore(1830's) . John had the right of ferry, providing passage for Captains to store Powder at the Magazine (not the Pub!) And to transport businessmen to and from Liverpool. John struggled with money and eventually succumbed to his debts and had to sell his Liscard Estate to Charles Holland for £9995. Charles Holland then sold what was now called the Woodlands (Liscard Vale) to the tenant of The Gothic House (is now called Vale House), Henry Ellythorpe Robson and moved into Vale House. He lived here with his (ten) children for many years. The rapid expansion of his family, meant Vale House needed to be modified to allow them all to fit, several extensions were added, with extra kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms and of course a much needed billiard room. A large glass house was added to the end of the property to house plants and children on warm sunny days.

One of the most asked about features is Dr Poggi's Shelter which stands on the site of the New Brighton College. The college was formally known as the Royal Liscard Hotel which serviced Ferry travellers who alighted here to reach the Magazine . The sea wall built by John Davies twenty years previously meant a small beach had formed next to the hotel. The New Brighton College housed Dr Poggi, his wife and eight children, their governess, a nurse, several servants, 2 schoolmasters and 24 students.



Sadly the college burned down on 27th October 1864, but miraculously all occupants were evacuated in time. The evacuation was coordinated by Mr Charles Holland, Mr Holland opened his home to the Poggi family and staff and the rest were housed in Liscard Manor House. It is thought that Ricciotti Garibaldi son of the famous General Giuseppe Garibaldi was in residence at the college at the time of the fire and may have been a target of local catholic dissidents.

Vale Park was purchased for £7,750 in 1898 and both estates were rejoined. The Park officially opened in 1899, by George Coombs the Chairman of the Council's Parks Committee. The park is of a traditional design for the late Victorian era, with serpentine paths wined through wooded plantations, formal flower beds and sculpted rolling hills. The addition of the bandstand in 1926 and the retention of Vale House and his associated lodge and Coach House created the solid and idyllic park we can see today.

Although Liscard Vale was always reported as having a serene atmosphere and Samuel Smith MP (1860's) was recorded saying "We made our house in Liscard Vale, New Brighton, in a sweet situation embosomed by trees and with grounds reaching down to the shore of the Mersey; There we spent some ten happy years."

During WWII the park like many others was pulled into service and held a barrage balloon to help protect Wallasey, Birkenhead and Liverpool from Hitler's Bombers. The barrage balloon was tethered where the children's play area is today.

Unfortunately, many of Vale Parks key features were lost in the 1970's and 80's in the global decline of parks. The loss of the clock, the glasshouses and heated tropical plant conservatory, the pool and the large rockery all lessened the visual impact of this stunning little park.

