

Upper Norwood Recreation Ground

history

Upper Norwood Recreation Ground was acquired by the Council in 1890 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for about £6,500 and laid out by the Borough Road Surveyor for about £2,500 (this included the construction of two new roads Eversley and Chevening).

The new Recreation Ground was opened by the Mayor who had come directly from opening the new Wandle Park. The Mayoral Party was met by large crowd of cheering locals and following the opening they were entertained by various bands and choirs, childrens games were organised and they were provided with tea. The day was finished off with a display of fireworks by C.T. Brock & Co.

A local newspaper report described the new ground as three minutes walk from the Bourgeoisie, snobocracy and upper middle class of Upper Norwood villadom. The ground was only a short walk from the high and low level Crystal Palace Stations and visitors were expected to come to the ground from there. Many people were expected to visit from Lambeth which had a very large population and little open space provision.

The newspaper report suggests that when the ground was opened the landscape was rather sparse as it had only just been laid out and that one of the best things about it was the views from the site which included the towers of Crystal Palace. The reporter continued. The ground affords an admirable opportunity to any wealthy resident who desires to confer what would an undoubted boon upon the inhabitants of the charming district in which he has made his home by the presentation of a shelter similar to those exceedingly useful and desirable structures which the never-failing generosity of Councillor Fred Edridge has provided for Wandle Park and the South Norwood Ground.

A shelter was provided for the recreation ground and also a drinking fountain and bandstand. Tennis courts and changing rooms were built and the ground was well used by footballers and cricketers. The north western end of the ground was used for allotment gardens but these have now gone and the ground has been developed for more sport.

The recreation ground contains one of the head-waters of the River Effra which now runs underground north west. Several springs rise to the west of Church Road (Westow Park is often wet due to spring water) and flows under Chevening Road to join with another course that flows under Orleans Road, Hancock Road and Hermitage Road to its lowest point and through the grounds of the Convent of the Faithful Virgin. The river was still visible at the beginning of this century, although it has now been culverted. According to legend Queen Elizabeth I came up the river in her barge to where Hermitage Road now stands.