

Edgar Wood and Middleton Townscape Heritage Initiative

## Jubilee Park Fountain, Middleton - Advice on Restoration



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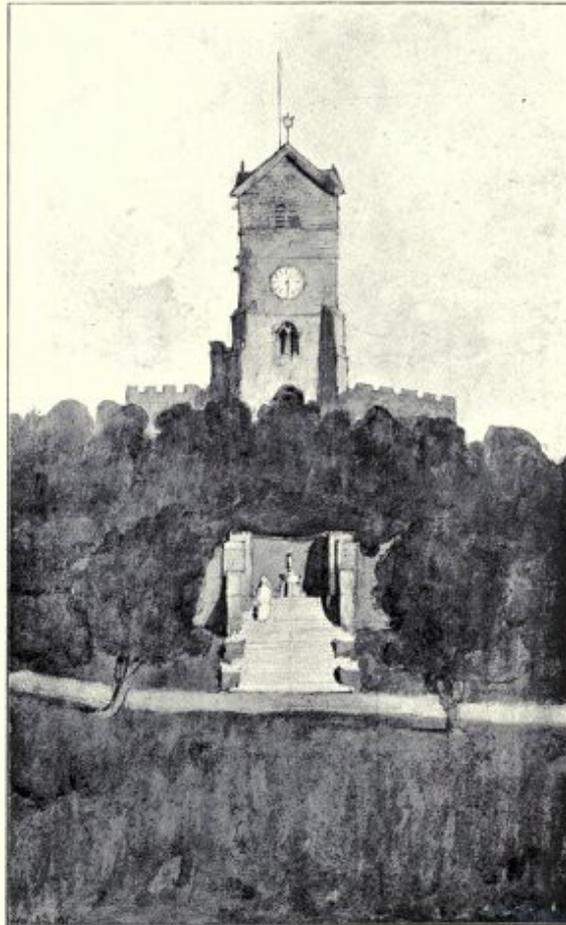
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# ACADEMY ARCHITECTURE

1906<sup>1</sup>



1461. *Fountain at the Park, Middleton,*  
EDGAR WOOD, Architect.

B

*Illustration 1: Frontispiece to Academy Architecture, 1906*

# INTRODUCTION

1. The Edgar Wood & Middleton Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is a Heritage Lottery Fund partnership scheme concerned with the restoration of buildings created by the Arts and Crafts architect, Edgar Wood. It is managed by Rochdale Council. Greater Manchester Building Preservation Trust is a lead partner contributing two days per week professional quality conservation support. Its role includes:
  - delivering a conservation project for Long Street Methodist School;
  - providing office space for the THI in the School;
  - providing specialist restoration advice and historical material on Edgar Wood Buildings; and,
  - contributing to complementary initiatives of the THI.
2. This document concerns the restoration the Jubilee Park Fountain, Middleton, a unique Edgar Wood structure, designed in 1905 and built in 1906. It is written by David Morris MCD MRTPI IHBC, historic buildings advisor to the Trust and researcher/writer on Wood. David thanks fellow researchers for their input, especially Harold Cunliffe who provided the historic photographs and the Middleton Library and Edgar Wood Society, based in Middleton.

## ***Purpose of the Restoration Advice***

2. Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) grants schemes combine conservation work with architectural restoration, so that a typical scheme normally contains both. In most THIs, grants involve the repair and restoration of good quality mainstream buildings designed by unknown traditional builders or architects. Their restoration requires a good general knowledge of architectural conservation.
3. The Edgar Wood & Middleton THI is unusual in that it involves the repair and restoration of buildings designed by one of Europe's elite late Victorian/Edwardian architects, a designer credited with pioneering Art Nouveau, Arts & Crafts and Art Deco. Working at the cutting edge, Wood often reversed the norms of the day and without a detailed understanding of his idiosyncratic design approach, the special qualities of his buildings can be diminished by mainstream restoration solutions.
4. Edgar Wood's buildings are often of a very high order of design and work at different levels. Time is needed to understand and appreciate their significance and quality. Detailed knowledge of Wood's architecture is needed to draw up restoration schemes that are truly enhancing of their significance.
5. The THI is a once in a lifetime opportunity to restore some of Middleton's Edgar Wood buildings and, for this reason, the THI Board asked the Trust in December 2012, to provide detailed advice on each Wood building that comes forward for restoration. This advice does not normally concern itself with aspects of repair, which are best undertaken by the consultant surveyor or architect. Rather, it complements the repair advice with a greater understanding of the significance of the building and how the THI grant should best restore the structure.

## ***Edgar Wood and Middleton***

6. Edgar Wood lived in Middleton from his birth through to almost his retirement. Most of his commissions came from there, often through friends and family, and he repaid it with many fine buildings. He tried to shape its civic and architectural character through his design, promoting the arts and crafts and encouraging conservation of its heritage. His father and brother were prominent local politicians, through which he had significant influence despite his avant garde design.
7. In the early 1900s, Wood was the architect for Middleton Parish Church, St. Leonard's, which nobly overlooked the town and its recent Jubilee Park. Jubilee Park Fountain was Wood's way of uniting the church and park with a striking and original piece of civic design.



*Illustration 2: Jubilee Park Fountain on completion (Photo: Harold Cunliffe)*

# JUBILEE PARK FOUNTAIN

## *Identifying The Monument*

8. The Jubilee Park Fountain was a children's drinking fountain and sculpture set within a roofless loggia-like walled enclosure and elevated on the steep slope of Jubilee Park, leading up to Middleton Parish Church sitting at the top. A substantial formal staircase below the fountain, frames the western aspect of the medieval church and tower. The design is exceptionally ingenious and stylistically advanced. It contains the following inscription in an Arts and Crafts script...

*Who works not for his fellows,*

*Starves his soul,*

*His thoughts grow poor and dwindle,*

*And his heart grudges each beat, as misers do a dole.*

9. This was part of a rhyme by the Swedenborgian writer, Henry Sutton. He was active at the New Church, Peter Street Manchester during the 1890s but died unexpectedly in 1901. The final two lines were missed off... *He dies anon, and shall with them have part, Who find in death an everlasting goal.*
10. Today, the fountain and sculpture are missing but the remaining structure was listed Grade II in 1987 as *Staircase and Exedra in Jubilee Park* (Appendix 2). The term 'exedra' is not quite accurate but was the nearest term the list inspector could use to describe the uniquely curved rear wall.
11. 'Staircase and Exedra' is therefore a very recent name derived from the statutory listing . It is not an good reflection of the monument. The proper name is 'Jubilee Park Fountain' or 'The Fountain in Jubilee Park'. At the time of construction, the Middleton Guardian called it '*The Statue and Fountain Donated By T.B. Wood* ', referring to Edgar Wood's elderly father who proposed the fountain and paid for it (Appendix 3).
12. The proper name relates to the function of the design – a drinking fountain. Public drinking fountains were a part of everyday life right up to the 1970s and are currently making a modest comeback. The size of this fountain showed it was designed for children, something emphasised in the set piece photograph taken after it was constructed (Illustration 2). Edgar Wood's design was often socially enlightened with respect to child welfare while architectural historian, John Archer, stated it was principally concerned with shelter and security. Here, the two come together with the enclosure around the fountain designed as a sheltered meeting place for children.

## *Edwardian Drinking Fountains*

13. The late Victorian and Edwardian periods saw very many drinking fountains erected in parks and other public places. They were one of the great public health strides and, like the Park Fountain, they were often associated with local donors. However, virtually all were either small free-standing structures or part of a larger building or monument, such as a public clock or town hall. Edgar Wood's design is unique in the way he designed a large civic structure around the fountain itself.
14. They came in many historical styles, such as classical or Gothic (Illustrations 3 & 4). Many are listed today, such as those illustrated. After 1900, one occasionally finds an Art Nouveau or very plain example (Illustrations 5 & 6), as the Victorian fashion for historicism waned somewhat. Edgar Wood emulated neither a traditional style nor the flamboyant Art Nouveau. Rather, he created an elegantly simple and style-less design, using smooth pared-down forms which he had slowly developed over his career (Illustration 7). In retrospect, we might call his styling Moderne or Art Deco, terms which had yet to be invented.



*Illustration 3: Maden Memorial Fountain, Stubbylee Park, Bacup (Photo: Andy Marshall)*



*Illustration 4: Drinking Fountain, Haslam Park, Preston (Photo: Mr. G. M. Smith ARPS)*



*Illustration 5: Fountain in Patte D'Oie, Hyde Park, Westminster  
(Photo: R. C. Hopkins)*



*Illustration 6: Drinking fountain, North Street,  
Ashburton, Devon (Photo: Mr Dennis A. C. Raffell)*



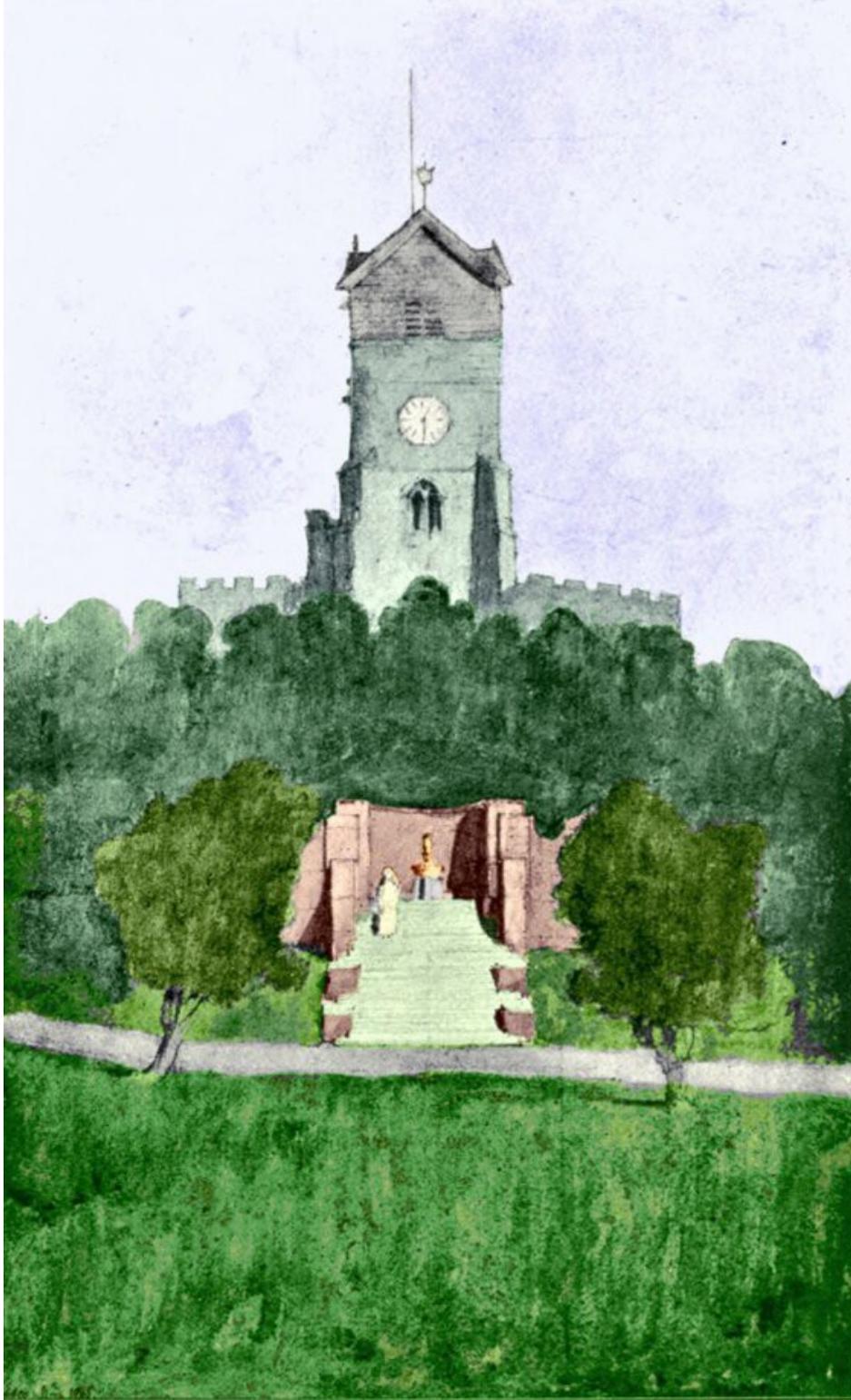
*Illustration 7: Extract of Jubilee Park Fountain on completion (Photo: Harold Cunliffe)*

### **Advanced Styling**

15. In fact, Park Fountain is arguably the first example of Moderne or Art Deco architecture in the country. Its stripped formality, cubic forms, lack of ornamentation, use of stone with natural striation and the cross-referencing of plan and elevation (U-shaped cut-outs in the walls reference the plan of the enclosure) is unique for 1905/6 and looks forward to the 1920s and 30s.
16. The combination of a so-called 'exedra' (properly only in linear walls) with a ceremonial staircase and a drinking fountain is creative and wilful. It goes beyond style and shows that Wood was also interested in the evolution of architectural form. The design can therefore be compared with Wood's earlier Lindley Clock Tower (1900, listed Grade II\*) and later house called Upmeads (1908, listed Grade II\*). All three create new forms for existing building types. It is only the unfortunate loss of the drinking fountain and historical vandalism to the staircase which prevents a similar grading for this design. In 1905/6 the fountain and staircase were stylistically at the forefront of European architecture.

### **Historical Significance**

17. Wood's design for the Jubilee Park Fountain was thus extremely interesting to his contemporaries. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1906 (Illustration 8), something not lost on the *Middleton Guardian*, which reported the matter in May, as the structure was being erected (Appendix 3).
18. Furthermore, the design was used as the frontispiece for the prestigious *Academy Architecture* – the journal which illustrated the most important designs exhibited that year (Illustration 1). Being the cover illustration simply meant that the Jubilee Park Fountain was considered *the* most interesting design exhibited. It provided Park Fountain with immediate national and international prominence.



*Illustration 8: Academy Architecture watercolour, hypothetically recoloured*

## **Building Materials**

19. Documentary evidence on the building materials and their sources has not yet been found. One reason is that the fountain was never formally opened due to its sponsor, T. B. Wood, suffering a heart attack in 1906 when on holiday in Llandudno. Consequently, there was no Middleton Guardian report of the opening which is usually where the architect describes the design and the materials used. Research continues and information may yet emerge from documentary sources.
20. On 10th Feb 1906 the Middleton Guardian reported that the fountain was not yet complete, due to a suitable stone not being found (Appendix 3). The stone eventually used was red sandstone, but with heavy white striations which run naturally through the whole composition. They are not random but carefully contrived to ornament the masonry structure (Illustration 2) and the whitest stone is reserved for the centrally placed inscription on the 'exedra' behind the fountain.
21. The stone is most likely from Runcorn in Cheshire, which was the recorded source of similar stone for the nearby Long Street Methodist Church. Normally such striated stone was rejected as imperfect and perhaps Wood's problem was finding a quarry ready to open such a seam that nobody else would use.
22. The contrasting green stone for the steps and flagged floor is a finely-grained green sandstone, possibly from Rossendale. The Middleton Guardian report, in the middle of winter, implies that work had begun in 1905 and had to stop with Wood unable to find the stone he wanted.
23. While speculative, Illustration 8, suggests that the reddish stone was meant to stand out against the largely green backdrop (red and green are complementary colours), thus bringing the staircase visually forward in the scene, compared with the larger but more muted parish church.

## **Comparative Study - Trojan Staircase, Port Lympne, Kent**

24. The listed 'Staircase and Exedra' is one of only two listed staircases in England. The other is the much larger Trojan Staircase (listed Grade II), designed by Philip Tilden in the 1920s. It is carefully integrated into a parkland landscape at Port Lympne, an exotic Edwardian mansion designed by Herbert Baker (listed Grade II\*) – a place associated with the inter-war national elites but now a wedding location and zoo.
25. The focus of the Trojan Staircase is a square pond at the bottom but otherwise, it is not dissimilar to Park Fountain, though somewhat by accident. The design is classical and originally had two small temples at the top which were soon demolished. However, their lower walls now create a sheltered enclosure while, at the bottom a pair of small trees frame the staircase, as in Wood's design. Also as at Middleton, the Trojan Staircase provides elevated views across the landscape (but much grander at Lympne).
26. In comparison to Lympne, Jubilee Fountain is style-less. Nevertheless, it has a similar symmetry and disciplined form. Though earlier, it is arguably, more advanced and more sophisticated. Wood's design for the top of the staircase, for example, is especially interesting and nuanced. Likewise, Wood compensates for the smaller scale (and budget) at Middleton by the ingenious inclusion of the church and its tower into his design. Port Lympne relies on sheer scale and the impressive clipped terraces for effect.
27. The Trojan Staircase has been successfully restored (save for the temples) and is now very popular with visitors and for wedding photographs. The restorers wisely addressed the planting associated with the staircase as well as its structure. They completely replaced the surviving damaged shrubs, including the pair of trees at the bottom of the steps. This made an enormous impact (Illustrations 9 & 10).
28. A similar approach is needed at Middleton to encourage a 'step-change' in public perception and use. Just repairing the structure will not lead to the successful restoration of the monument.



*Illustration 9: Trojan Staircase - before restoration (Photo: Mr George D. Russell)*



*Illustration 10: Trojan Staircase - after restoration (Photo: Port Lympne Mansion and Gardens)*

# ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE

## *The Purpose of the Design*

29. Like the Trojan Staircase at Port Lympne, Jubilee Park Fountain is an architectural structure with a fundamental landscape purpose. It unified the ancient parish church, on the hill, with the modern public park on the former fields below. The design combined the functional requirements of a public drinking fountain with a profound civic statement.
30. Wood designed the fountain 'function first', working outwards from the water spout to the elevated view. He nevertheless integrated it firmly into the landscape. He constructed a picturesque winding footpath at the bottom of the slope to access the staircase. There were lawns either side and belts of rhododendron shrubs further up the slopes. Wood seems to have thinned out the park's earlier planting to open up the view to the Fountain and church, including a line of 6 trees (Illustration 33). The aspect was open and attractive. Views to the elevated church had a touch of nobility. It commanded the scene, both axially across the park to Long Street and from various acute angles.

## *Twentieth Century Alterations*

### **Decline in the Quality of the Landscape and Fountain**

31. Today, the above initial scene is only dimly perceived. Unfortunate changes started early and got steadily worse over the decades (Illustrations 11 to 14 and Appendices 1 and 4). Slowly, casual tree planting and self-seeding completely clogged the scene. Trees planted literally against Park Fountain staircase caused a slight deformation, while new shrub beds hid it from view. Subsequent thinning out simply meant the remaining woodland tree species quickly filled the voids and the modest improvement lasted a very short time.
32. Not all changes were harmful. Originally the main park lawn had a sunken valley which was later filled and the flower beds added. Wood's lower path to Park Fountain was banked up along the edge and may have been slipping into it. Cracks and distortions on the path are still visible today.
33. In 2007, both the Fountain and the view of the church remained blocked and ugly. A Phase 1 Restoration Plan was jointly drawn up by Middleton Heritage Group and the Council to address the worst problems. It was implemented over the winter of 2007/8 (Illustration 15). Removing the modern shrub planting on the lawned areas was not addressed and many badly sited trees remained.

### **Staircases and Paths**

34. The main staircase leads from the bottom path to the fountain enclosure. It then divides into two smaller ones, turning and rising either side of the enclosure to reach the top path. These three flights were altered in 1978 when their nosings were removed and slots cut into the risers to imply the removed nosing. The reason is not known but it was probably either a misguided safety concern or an attempt to 'modernise' Wood's design. The Fountain was also sandblasted (Illustrations 17 & 18).
35. Two steps were added at the bottom of the main staircase, most likely in response to Wood's bottom path slipping downwards into the sunken valley. The lowest step is not full length and is visually weak. A low rock wall above the top path was demolished and the stones scattered.

### **Fountain**

36. In the 1970s, the fountain and sculpture was constantly vandalised and repaired at the Council depot. In response, a local councillor offered a place of safekeeping and they were removed. Thus, it is conceivable that they still exist and the Edgar Wood Society is making enquiries.



*Illustration 11: Park Fountain c. 1930. Saplings casually planted along path. (Photo: Middleton Library)*



*Illustration 12: Park Fountain c. 1940 Casual and self seeded trees intrude. (Photo: Middleton Guardian)*



*Illustration 13: Park Fountain c. 1960. Trees completely block the scene. (Photo: Middleton Library)*



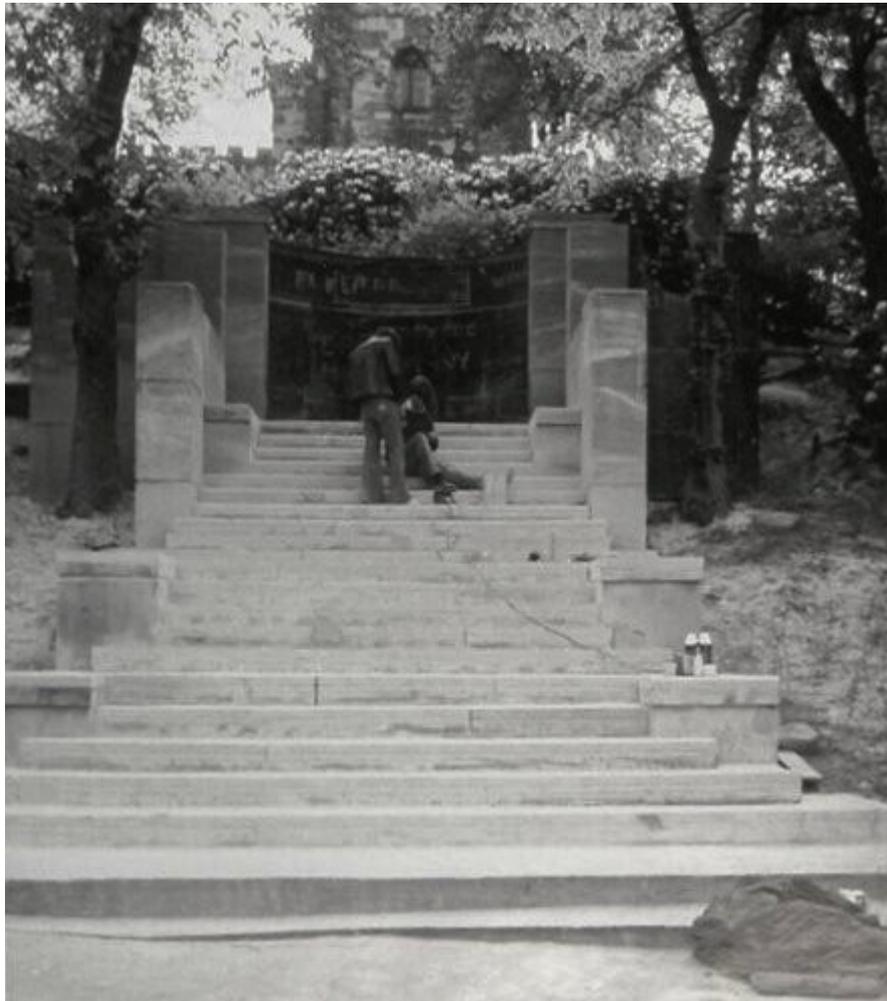
*Illustration 14: Park Fountain 2007. Trees ever larger despite thinning; random species, such as conifers.*



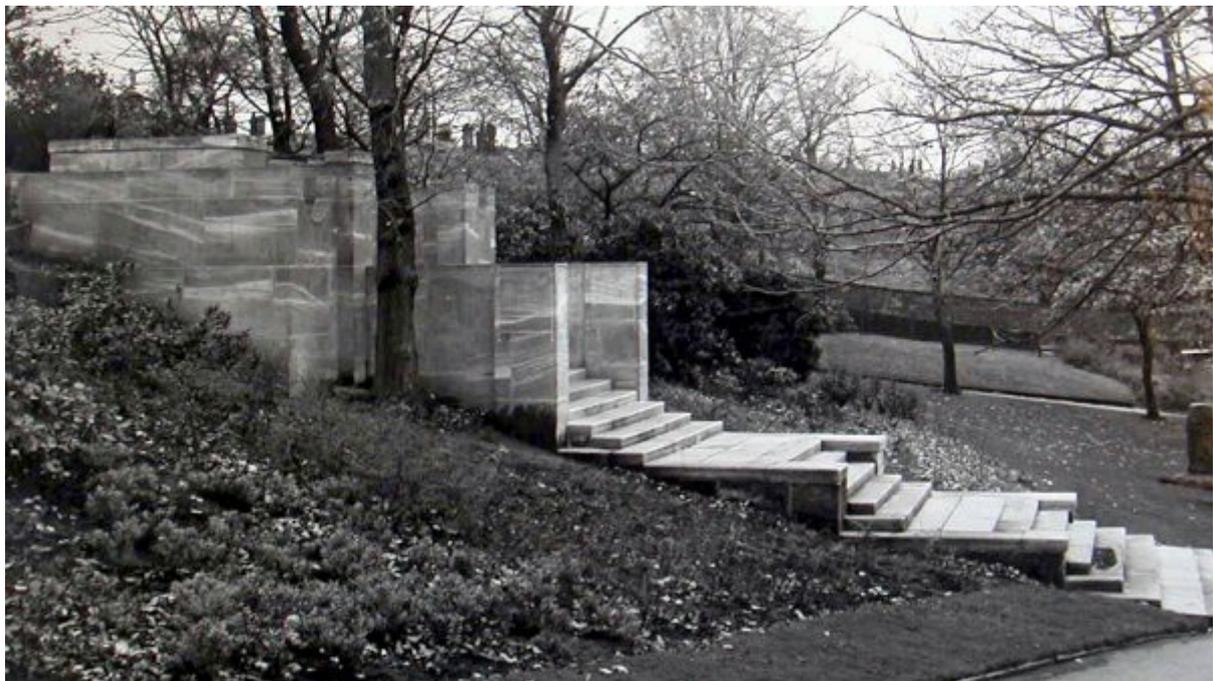
*Illustration 15: Park Fountain 2008. Restoration Phase 1, after campaign by Middleton Heritage Group.*



*Illustration 16: Park Fountain 2015? Restoration Phase 2, THI restores the Edgar Wood scheme.*



*Illustration 17: Sandblasting and removing nosings 1978. Trees about. (Photo: Middleton Library)*



*Illustration 18: Lawns either side were planted with shrubs (Photo: Middleton Library)*

# DEFINING THE ELEMENTS OF THE DESIGN

## ***A Golden Restoration Opportunity***

37. The THI scheme presents a golden opportunity to complete the restoration of Wood's design, both the landscape architecture and the monument architecture. Just one would be a golden opportunity wasted. It not achieve the required 'step-up' in quality. The aim must be to restore both the civic purpose of uniting the church with the park as well as Park Fountain itself (Illustration 16).
38. The elements of Jubilee Park Fountain can be grouped into four for the purposes of restoration.

## **1. Fountain and Sculpture**

39. The drinking fountain was a small child-sized structure comprising the following (Illustrations 19 to 21)...
- a) a wide circular base slightly raised off the ground,
  - b) a 'moderne' styled plinth, scalloped to create three projections,
  - c) topped by a wide flat bowl with three matching squat legs, through which the water must have drained,
  - d) with a small 'post-box' shaped pedestal rising from the centre of the bowl, ornamented with *TBW 1906* and Art Nouveau plant forms, from which water shoots downwards from the mouths of three fish-shaped drinking fountains, two at the front and one at the rear, their fish bodies wrapped around the top of the pedestal.
  - e) This supported a small statue of a boy, not quite a cherub, the focal point of the composition.
  - f) Water for drinking ran constantly in the manner of a true fountain - there were no taps.

## **2. Fountain Enclosure**

40. Around the child-sized fountain, Wood provided the following....
- a) a rectangular walled enclosure, like a roofless loggia,
  - b) the east end containing a curved seat, part of the 'exedra',
  - c) which faces west to catch the afternoon sunshine, and
  - d) where there is a distinct echo so the sound of the fountain resounded around the enclosed space.

## **3. Fountain Staircases**

41. The space is sheltered and intimate yet highly accessible...
- a) on two sides, by short staircases to the upper path, designed not to break the enclosure and
  - b) via the main staircase, downwards to the lower path
  - c) with a grand view to the west from its elevated position.

## **4. Fountain Landscape**

42. Park Fountain sits in a specially created open hillside landscape...
- a) upon which stands Middleton's ancient parish church of Saint Leonard, where
  - b) the main staircase leads the eye to the tiny fountain, an 'accent' of the design, and then upwards to

the church tower;

- c) a vertical Art Nouveau motif, topped by the 'chevron' of the belfry barge board
- d) where the line of the fountain and church tower divides the hillside into two when seen from Long Street, across the park.

### ***Extent of the Restoration Scheme***

43. Thus the full extent of the design includes the...

- fountain, sculpture, plinth and curved seat,
- walls enclosing and sheltering the fountain,
- staircase comprising three flights of steps,
- pre-existing top path, demolished limestone rock wall and shrub planting leading to the skyline and church tower,
- main staircase, bottom landing and lower path,
- lawned foreground with pair of trees framing the staircase,
- rhododendron shrub planting and lawned areas either side of the staircase and on the slope, and
- the axial view from Long Street.

## **APPROACH TO RESTORATION**

44. In this design, Edgar Wood bridges the small intimate world of the child with the larger landscape of Jubilee Park and the parish church. It is important that the restoration scheme embraces this breadth – focussing on both the intimate fountain and the wider landscape. The scheme should therefore achieve the two following aims.

### **Restore the Function which Shaped the Design**

- a) The structure was an accessible children's drinking fountain in the park,
- b) around which there was a roofless loggia-like intimate space,
- c) shaped to magnify the sound of the continuously running fountain,
- d) including a curved seat to encourage children to meet, talk and
- e) admire an impressive view from a raised sunny position,
- f) which also meant that the children were highly visible to their parents lower down in the park.

### **Restore the Landscape Created by the Design**

- g) The staircase, enclosure and fountain sat within a landscaped slope of Rhododendron shrubs,
- h) including, at the top of the monument, a picturesque footpath, and
- i) at the bottom, a landing, footpath, lawns and a pair of small trees,
- j) above which rose Middleton's ancient parish church of Saint Leonard,
- k) where the staircase led the eye upwards to the accent of the tiny fountain in its enclosure
- l) and further upward to the church tower with a timber belfry capped with a gable-like pediment.



*Illustration 19: Mid-Twentieth Century Photograph 1 (Photo: Harold Cunliffe)*



*Illustration 20: Mid-Twentieth Century Photograph 2 (Photo: Harold Cunliffe)*



*Illustration 21: Mid-Twentieth Century Photograph 3 (Photo: Harold Cunliffe)*

# RESTORING THE FUNCTION WHICH SHAPED THE DESIGN

## *The Drinking Fountain*

### Working Fountain

44. The reintroduction of drinking fountains in parks and public places is a theme of current interest in the UK and Europe. The industry is served by trade organisations, best practice and regulation. An internet search quickly brings forward appropriate suppliers, contractors, standards etc. The restoration of the Jubilee Park fountain should be seen in this context and the benefits to children of public drinking fountains, for example as an alternative to expensive sugary drinks.
45. Modern day equipment is smaller and more efficient than that of a century ago and an assumption here is that modern equipment and standards would fit within the original design. The restoration of the fountain needs to go hand-in-hand with the technical installation and maintenance of a modern day drinking fountain.

### Sculpture

46. Like the wider design, the boy sculpture was without affectation. He was more real-life toddler than little cherub. He stood, feet together, looking down at his fellow children, his slightly exaggerated hands reaching out as if to welcome them into the secure enclosure. The honest unsentimental depiction of the child suggests a universal representation of childhood.

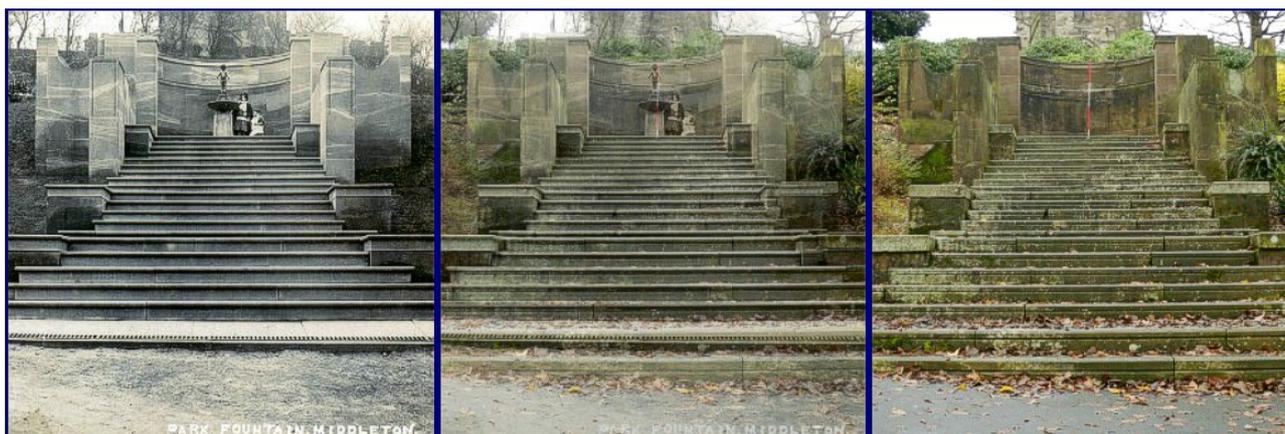
### Acquiring the Dimensions

47. The following technique was used to successfully restore the original gateposts and fencing to 36 Mellalieu Street which were of unknown dimensions. It was inspired by Edgar Wood's own practice of the 'measured sketch' – sketching old buildings and features and then measuring them. It meant he could accurately recreate such features in his designs.
48. It involves superimposing modern day photographs over original images showing the fountain and measuring off the principal dimensions. In this way, in the absence of discovering any parts of the fountain to copy, it will be possible to recreate the fountain. Harold Cunliffe has kindly donated three old photographs for us to work off.
49. The trick is to find the exact point in space from which each old photo was taken, both horizontally and vertically. This can be done by carefully working backwards from the photograph using a modern camera viewfinder. The precise taking position can be determined 'in camera' by comparing the live image with the original printed out and by adjusting the position until the perspective is identical.
50. Once the camera position is established, a measuring pole is placed centrally where the fountain and sculpture once was and a photograph is taken. The original and modern photographs are then superimposed. The various elements are measured off while widths are measured by cutting and pasting the measuring pole horizontally.
51. With such measurements, a mason and sculptor would be able to replicate the design accurately, working off the photos for the details. However, some of this work may not be needed if initial reports that the fountain and sculpture survives in a Middleton private garden are correct. This lead is currently being followed up.
52. (Illustrations 22 & 23) show a rehearsal of the technique using a less accurate ranging pole. At the

first attempt, the original viewing point was very nearly achieved, despite poor weather conditions, meaning an exact match should be possible. The Edgar Wood Society is happy to undertake this work if desired by the THI manager or consultant surveyor.



*Illustration 22: Dimension Technique Rehearsal 1*



*Illustration 23: Dimension Technique Rehearsal 2*

## Deciding the Materials

### ***Bowl, Small 'Post-box' Shaped Pedestal, Fish Water Spouts and Sculpture***

53. The historic monochrome photographs (Illustrations 7 & 19 to 21) suggest that the bowl, sculpture, pedestal and water spouts were made of bronze, with a brown waxed surface patina. There are two possible alternatives to this, cast iron, painted dark, and for the statue only, lead painted or oiled.
54. The possibility of bronze is supported by the sheen on the sculpture and what appears to be the characteristic (green) stains from copper sulphate run-off on the plinth below. On the other hand, if cast iron had been used, the stains on the plinth could have come from brown rust from lack of maintenance. Illustrations 18 & 21 may have been photographed after the bowl and statue had been restored – they look in remarkably good condition.
55. Cast iron was not prominent in arts and crafts sculpture, being used for more prosaic items like fireplaces. Bronze, on the other hand, was the material of choice. Thomas Stirling Lee implemented

stone and bronze sculptures for Wood at Long Street Church and Lindley Clock Tower and it is possible that the boy statue was made by Lee. It has a slight affinity to his *The Music of the Wind* of 1907 at Leeds Art Gallery.

56. However, the memory of someone who saw the fountain prior to its removal has the bowl made of cast iron but the sculpture made of lead. This is possible as lead could have been oiled or painted, thus creating the lustre in the photos.
57. Lead was not common in Edwardian statuary but the Arts and Crafts movement began producing lead garden statuary in the early 1900s. Especially prominent was the Bromsgrove Guild, Worcestershire which produced lead garden cherub-like figures not unlike the one on the fountain. The Guild was set up in 1898 with the dynamic sculptor, Walter Gilbert, at its head and began working in lead around 1903. It is therefore just possible that a lead sculpture could have come from this source.
58. Replacing lead or bronze, like-for-like, will almost certainly result in its theft, or damage through attempted theft – thus undoing the restoration. More pragmatic replacement materials would be cast iron (for any feature) and possibly bronze resin for the sculpture (if replacing true bronze). This could be decided once the original materials have been ascertained .

### **Base and Plinth**

59. Illustrations 13, 20 & 21 show the plinth and its base as white or very light. However, Illustrations 12 & 13 suggest perhaps the plinth was painted or whitened in some way, as the nearby flood monument (a dull sandstone with lead lettering) is likewise bright white. Such painting of the plinth would be consistent with the need to cover copper sulphate or rust stains.
60. The stone of the plinth and base was most likely a Portland limestone. Wood introduced this material into his repertoire at precisely this time. White was almost symbolic for Wood. It is prominent on all his buildings and, after 1905, is often expressed as Portland limestone. It partly acted as a substitute for his earlier white painted render and timber – two vernacular materials no longer appropriate for his new 'moderne' style. In this manner, Wood replaced the white lime-washed fencing around his home, Redcroft, with substantial limestone blocks.
61. Illustration 19 shows an eroded surface where the face has worn back so the edging groove seen on Illustration 7 has gone, something possible with limestone exposed for several decades. This might have encouraged the postulated over-painting.
62. Another possible material is a pale granite but the author knows of no exterior granite used by Wood, so this is ruled out.

### **The Fountain may still Exist**

63. There is a reasonable possibility that the fountain and sculpture still survive. If so, hopefully they will be available for close inspection, measurement and possibly for making a cast of the statue. The uncertainties about the materials raised here would be resolved absolutely.
64. However, if it confirmed that they have been destroyed, the Edgar Wood Society should be able to firm up the details about materials via its older members and through the Middleton Guardian.

### **The Loggia-like Enclosure**

65. The floor surface survives except for one large missing flag and a few smaller replacements and several cracked flags. Following stone analysis, the replacement of missing or damaged stones would restore the floor surface.
66. The walls are intact but require conservation measures to remove organic growth and graffiti (discussed later).

67. Hidden lighting, to illuminate the fountain at night for show and security, needs specialist consideration. Options for discrete installation, perhaps in/on the partly hidden walls on the secondary staircases or up-lighters in the floor need investigating and integrating into the scheme. Security cameras might also be included. Lighting or cameras on posts should be avoided.

## **Sound of the Fountain**

68. There is a distinct echo in the centre of the enclosure, due to the curved 'exedra'. Consequently, it is believed that the sound of the fountain may have been magnified. This is worth testing at some stage prior to the restoration of the fountain.

## **The Curved Seat**

69. The original vertical and horizontal facing stonework to the seat appears to have been completely lost - the remaining broken horizontal stonework looks like a replacement because its edge moulding does not match the double moulding in the historic photograph, Illustration 19. The present stone is the same fine grained green stone used on the steps. It suggests the postulated replacement stone may have been a like-for-like replacement.
70. The vertical facing stonework to the seat appears missing altogether. What appears to have survived is the backing stone and some red coloured mortar. The mortar appears to be cement, again suggesting these are not the original materials. The vertical stone is currently unknown but is likely to be the same red sandstone as the walls of the enclosure.
71. The surfaces of the seat should be reinstated as close as possible to the early photographs and close inspection of the remains. Clean new surfaces and a quality seat will encourage children to use the Fountain.

## **The Three Staircases**

72. The consultant surveyor, Lynda Jubb, drew up several ingenious ways of reinstating the lost nosings. This was considered by the THI officers but was not proceeded with because it would effectively mean the partial dismantling and reassembling of the staircases and many new stone facings, all of which had a cost implication. Rather, it was decided to simply accept what had happened and to provide an explanation on an interpretation board.
73. Two additional steps added to the bottom of the staircase are best repaired as the original arrangement is not known and probably is no longer possible due to the changes in the pathway.

## **Restoration Aspects of Repair**

74. The repair of the monument is not part of this advice, unless it impacts on the restoration. This is the case with regard to cleaning work.
75. The structure has been sandblasted, so the surfaces are now gritty and have attracted moss, lichen and mould from the nearby trees. Most were largely cut down in early 2008 but dark green moss and pale green lichen are now prominent on the structure. In key places, such as the exedra and its inscription, there is also a black carbon layer and historic graffiti only partially removed. There are also areas of recent small scale graffiti.
76. Taken together, these surface blemishes obscure the artistic intent, especially the colour of the two stone types and the variegations in the red sandstone. In the light of this and the need to transform the attractiveness of the structure, it would be best if the cleaning regime removed all accumulated marks on the stone surfaces, not forgetting the top, thereby taking them back to an 'as new' situation.
77. The monument, with its reinstated fountain and curved seat, could then age and patinate more attractively as a single entity in a much drier and sunnier aspect without the trees.

# RESTORING THE LANDSCAPE CREATED BY THE DESIGN

## ***View of the elevated Fountain***

78. The view from the enclosure and staircase looks across the park lawn and flower beds towards Long Street, framed on the left by Jubilee Library and on the right by a line of benches, bandstand and higher land with trees. This shaft of space, clearly part of the design intention, has improved in the last decade with the removal of some of the casual tree planting .
79. Some remaining trees 'in the wrong place' should be removed. They include three rapidly growing conifers, inappropriately planted against an old group of blossoming cherries on the opposite side of the park lawn and the Christmas tree, which is planted on axis. There are three poor quality trees close to the fountain, a sycamore, horse chestnut and cherry (Illustration 24).

## ***Restoring the Link with the Church and Hillside***

80. Bringing the church and hillside back into the park and recreating the original Fountain landscape scheme is simply a case of removing the remaining casually planted and self-seeded trees, ensuring the bank of rhododendrons is free of trees. Removing the trees will significantly improve the moisture levels around the Fountain and allow it to dry out and providing a sustainable environment.
81. It would be advisable to work outwards from the Fountain towards the edges where there will come a point where some casually planted trees may no longer impact sufficiently upon the various views to warrant their removal. Some small trees species may not be a problem but the woodland types grow much too large for this relatively intimate hillside scene. The restoration project especially needs to remove some large woodland trees near the Fountain and to the south. Those closest to the fountain are shown in Illustration 25, those further away in Illustration 26, while the desired result is indicated in Illustration 16, a dramatically improved aspect.
82. The top pathway has considerable potential and should be restored to its original quality by new low level planting to the open area behind the Fountain, solving the drainage issues, repairing the pathway surface, edges and slopes adjacent the Fountain, and, recreating the low limestone wall around the edge of the rhododendron planting, if this is possible (Illustration 26).

## ***Visibility from the Park***

83. The visibility from inside the park is now greatly reduced by planting adjacent the monument below the original Rhododendrons. These areas were originally lawned so that the sides of the staircase were visible when approaching at an angle along the lower path. The staircase is now invisible from the path, until one suddenly encounters it. The shrubs and trees also obscure the church and its tower.
84. The removal of this shrub planting, like the offending trees, is essential for the restoration of Park Fountain (Illustrations 25 & 27). It will make the Fountain much more visible and the restored lawned areas will encourage people to sit on the grassy slopes when it is sunny. People will be encouraged to engage with the structure and enjoy its presence.
85. The original Rhododendrons remain in-situ and meet the staircase at the level of the enclosure. Here water erosion has thinned out the Rhododendron shrubs and some soil consolidation, minor terracing repair and shrub replacement are needed.

## ***Visibility from Long Street***

86. The above mentioned conifers and the ever bigger Christmas tree now completely block the axial views to the Fountain and Church from Long Street (Illustrations 28 & 29). A new Christmas tree should be planted on a new site. A better location in the park would be near the New Lane corner.





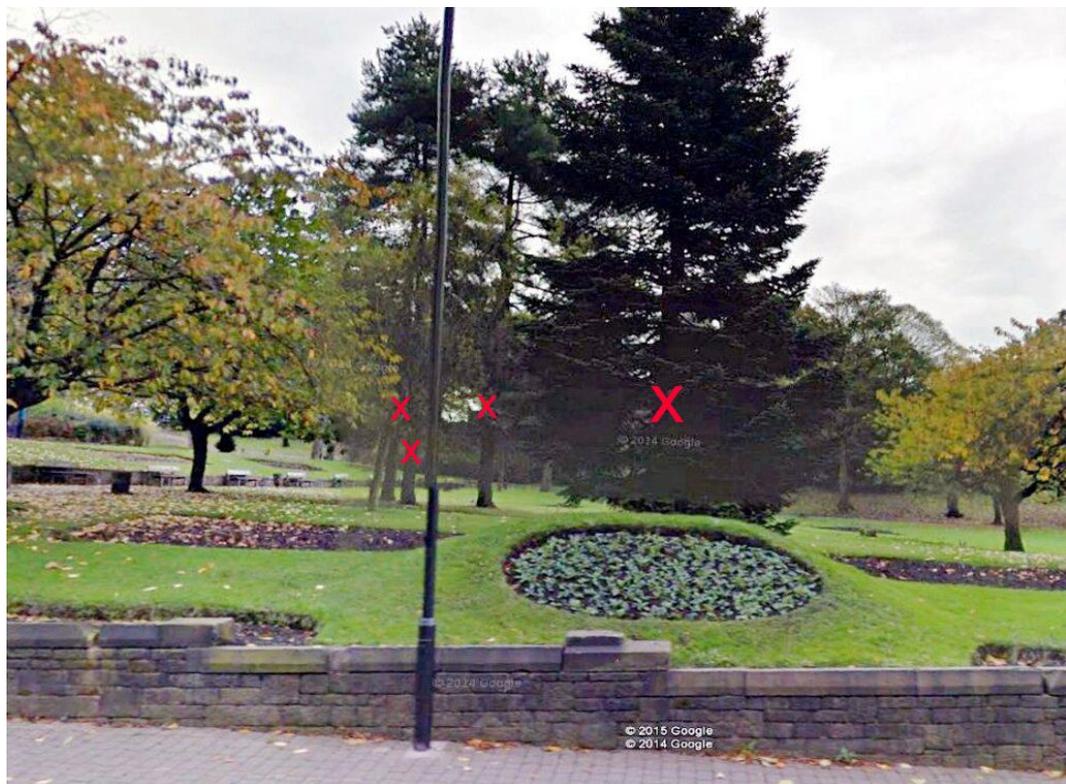
*Illustration 26: Top path, tree and shrub removal, low limestone wall and low level planting*



*Illustration 27: Bottom path, the staircase is hidden by tree and shrub planting when approached.*



*Illustration 28: Long Street Axis 2007, the church tower is just visible*



*Illustration 29: Long Street Axis 2013, views blocked and made ugly by conifers. (Google Earth)*

## SUGGESTED DRAFT TIMESCALE 2015

87. The following outline timescale might be an achievable, if a decision on THI funding were quickly made. It is assumed that Council maintenance teams will undertake much of the landscape work.

### 1. Winter/Spring

- Remove harmful trees following six week conservation area notification to planning authority
- Monument begins to dry out
- Seek new site for Christmas tree (New Lane corner?) and request Committee approval
- Seek listed building consent to restore the fountain and sculpture, details to be conditioned
- Work up the Park Fountain repair schedule and appropriate cleaning methods
- Enquire about the whereabouts of the original fountain and sculpture
- Design water and electricity supply and a lighting scheme
- Solve technicalities for a new drinking fountain

### 2. Spring

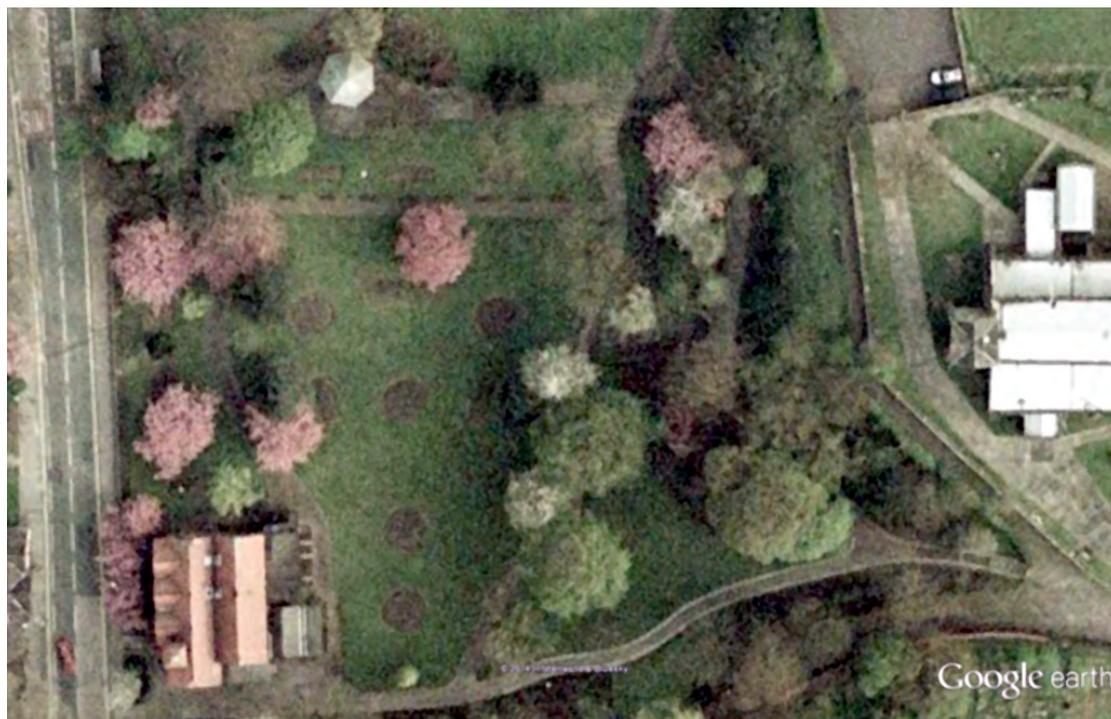
- Remove shrubs and replace with turf, except for adjacent the Fountain
- Begin mowing and maintenance of new areas
- Remove all tree stumps, carry out new planting and restoration of planted areas
- Undertake repairs to the top path and prevent water from the path running down the slope
- Plant new Christmas tree in new location
- Appoint conservation specialists for fountain and sculpture restoration, via interview or reputation
- Acquire remaining information needed and dimensions of fountain and sculpture
- Install water and electrical services
- Design and build new fountain and sculpture off-site following specialists preferred procurement method
- Meet listed building consent conditions about design of new fountain and sculpture

### 3. Summer

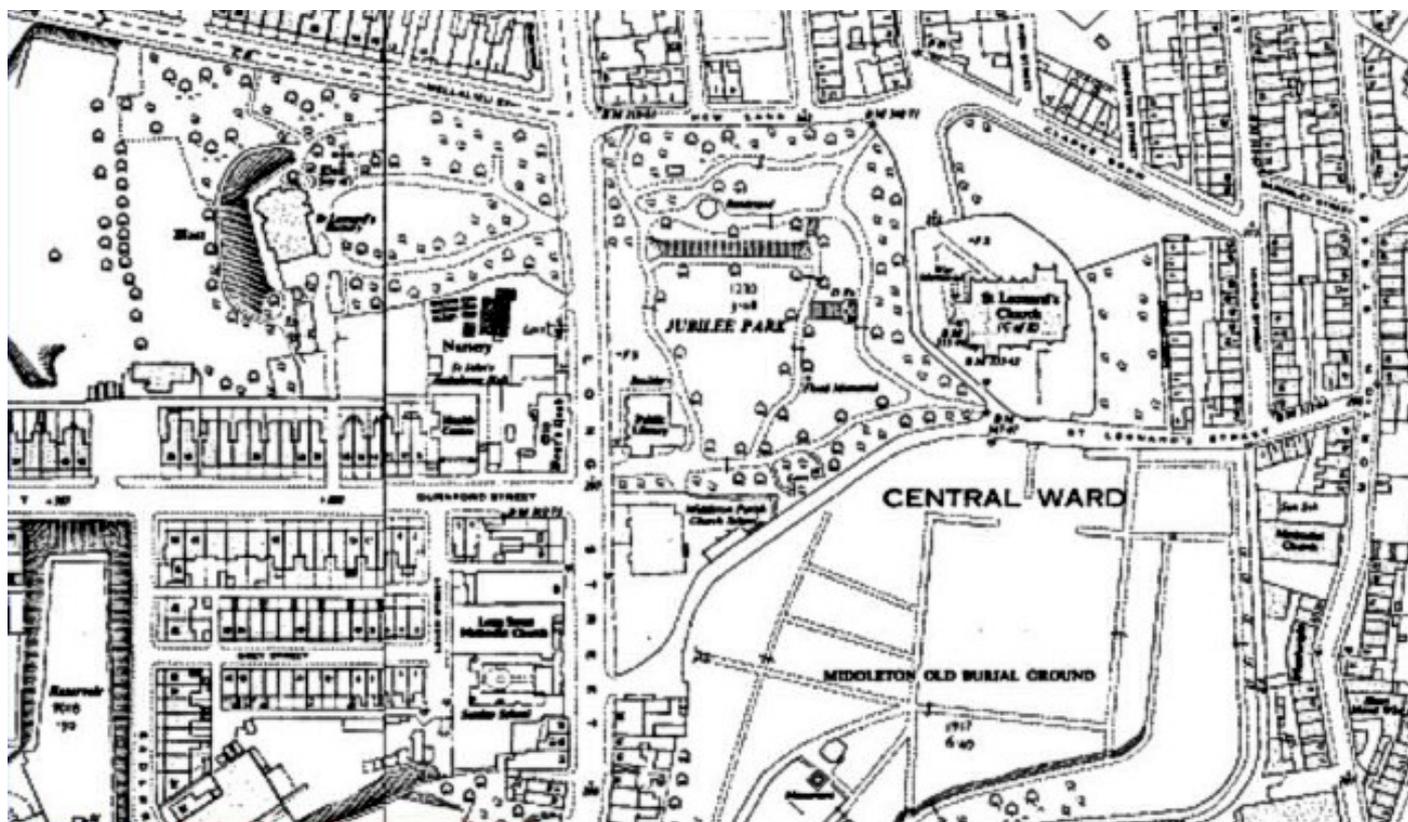
- Tender building restoration work, except for specialist fountain and sculpture restorers
- Appoint contractor, erect hoarding and begin on site
- Complete restoration and install new fountain and sculpture
- Complete all remaining works, including turfing perimeter of Fountain and installing security and lighting
- Remove hoardings, opening ceremony.

88. The Autumn would give space for any overrun.

## APPENDIX 1 – Map Regression



*Illustration 30: 2005 Pink cherry trees frame the view of the Fountain from Long Street. (Google Earth)*



*Illustration 31: 1955 The sunken area has gone and Wood's lower path is tree-lined. (Ordnance Survey)*

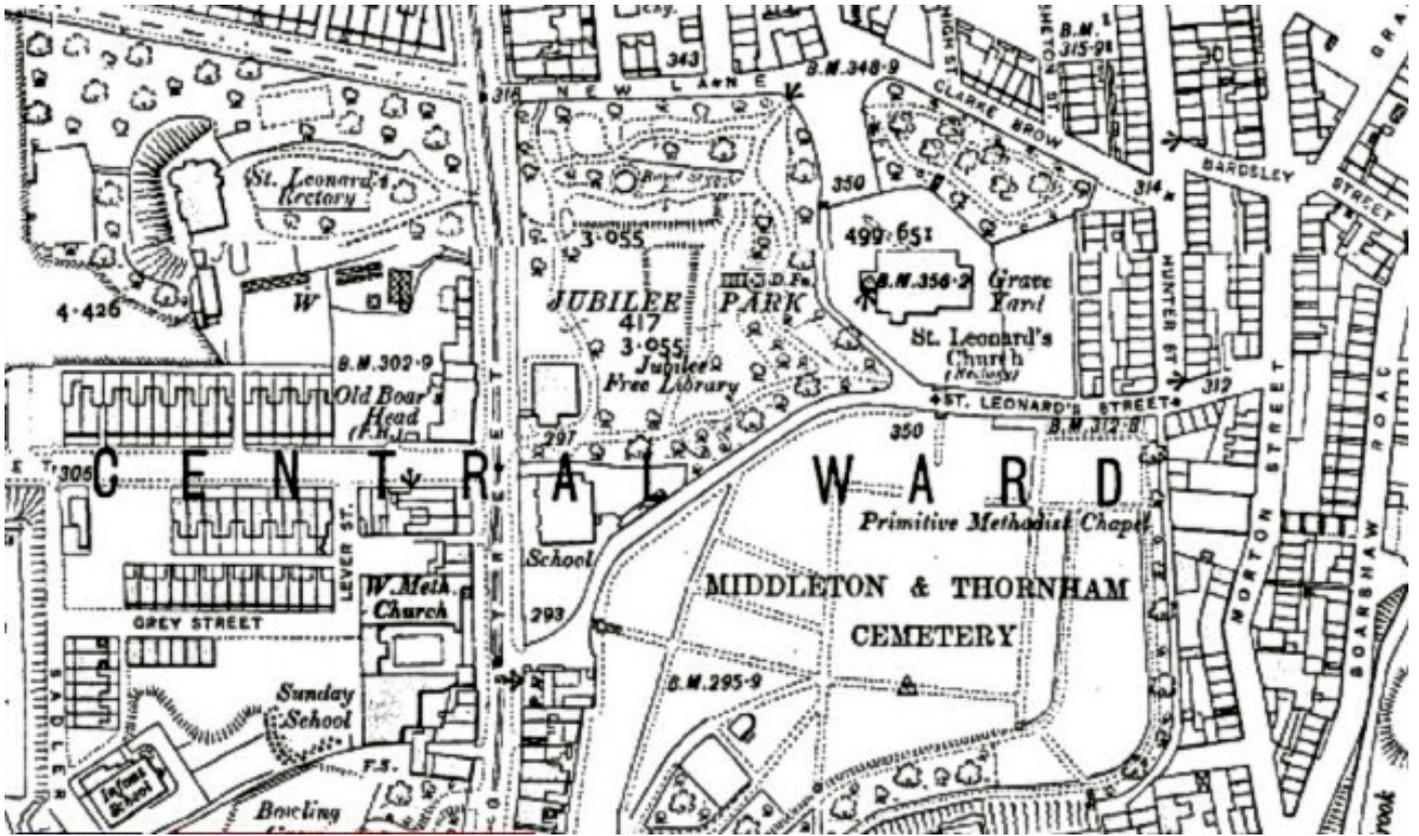


Illustration 32: 1909 The Fountain is installed with a footpath and rhododendron beds. (Ordnance Survey)

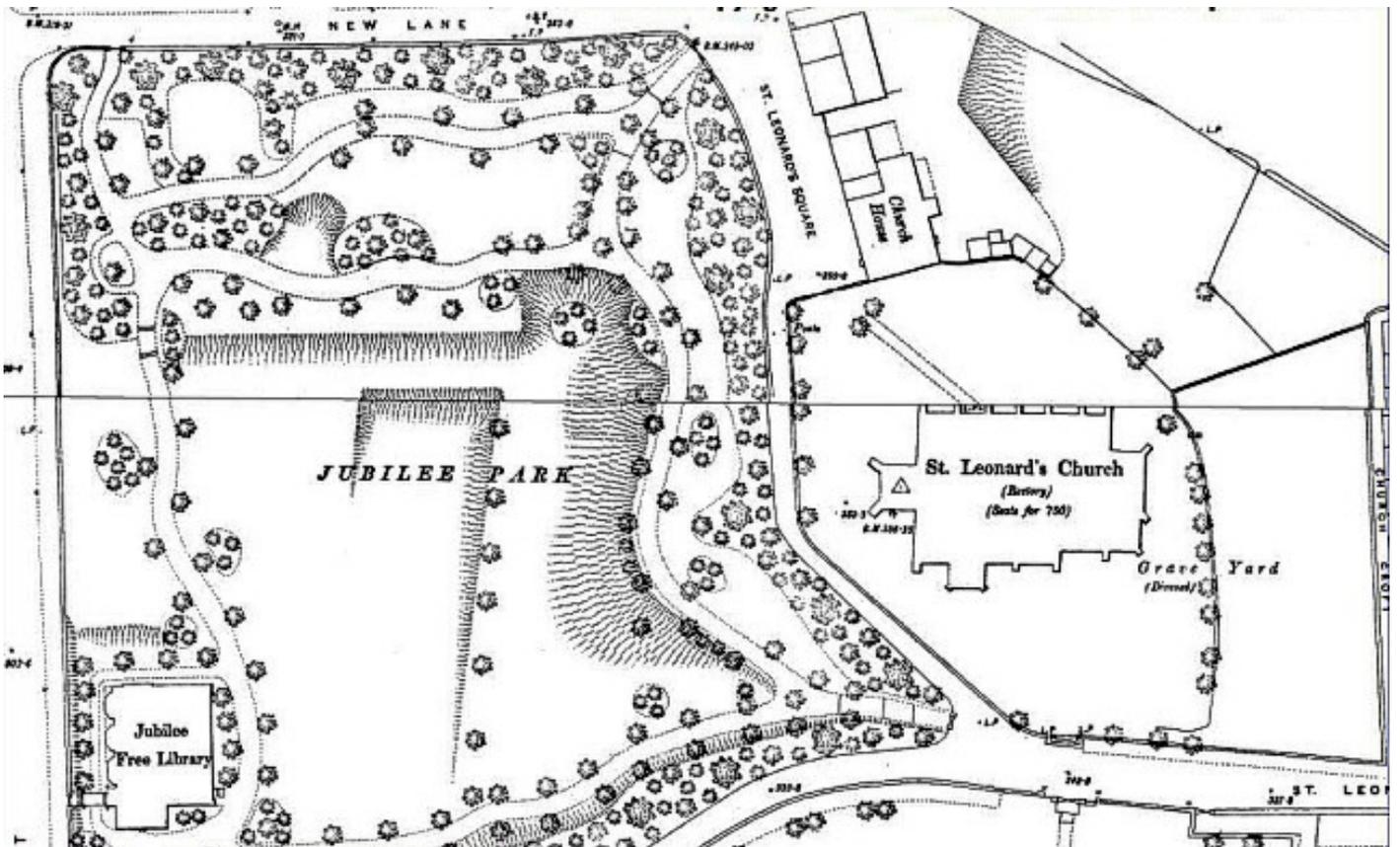


Illustration 33: 1891 Pre-Fountain, Wood removed the trees next to the sunken area. (Ordnance Survey)

## APPENDIX 2 – English Heritage Listing Description

### Building Details

Address: Details:

Building Name: STAIRCASE AND EXEDRA IN JUBILEE PARK LBS number: 213449

Address: LONG STREET Grade: II

Parish: MIDDLETON Date listed: 23-MAR-1987

District: ROCHDALE Date of last amendment : 23-MAR-1987

County: GREATER MANCHESTER NGR: SD 871 063

Postcode: M24 6TJ

### Listing Text

MIDDLETON LONG STREET

SD 80 NE

(east side)

2/9

Staircase and

- Exedra in

Jubilee Park

G.V.

II

Monumental staircase and exedra. 1906. By Edgar Wood. Sandstone. 21 steps lead up to a semi-circular enclosure, at one time with a central fountain, which has seats and an inscription: "Who works not for his fellows his thoughts grow poor and dwindle and his heart grudges each beat as misers a dole". The surrounding walls have U-shaped cut-outs. The quality of materials, planning, design and craftsmanship are all of the highest standard. The steps lead up to the church and are on the axis of the tower, adding dramatic effect to the view from Long Street to the church on top of the hill.

Listing NGR: SD8714906308

## APPENDIX 3 – Contemporary Newspaper References

Newspapers Search - Jubilee Park - post 1897

- Main Title: [Jubilee Park \[newspaper article\]](#)  
Source: 12 Jun 1897, p. 4, column 7 Middleton Guardian  
Summary: Abstract: Comment On The Picturesque Appearance Of Jubilee Park  
Language: English  
Subject: [Parks -- Jubilee](#)  
BRN: 179270
- Main Title: [Fountain Not Complete \[newspaper article\]](#)  
Source: 10 Feb 1906 Middleton Guardian  
Summary: Abstract: Fountain Presented By T.B. Wood Not Yet Completed  
Language: English  
Subject: [Wood, Thomas Broadbent, Alderman](#)  
BRN: 212609
- Main Title: [Fountain \[newspaper article\]](#)  
Source: 05 May 1906, p. 5, column 2 Middleton Guardian  
Summary: Abstract: Water Sketch Of Fountain Being Erected In Middleton Park By Edgar Wood In Royal Academy Exhibition  
Language: English  
Subject: [Wood, Edgar Art Exhibitions](#)  
BRN: 191206
- Main Title: [Jubilee Park \[newspaper article\]](#)  
Source: 22 Sep 1906, p. 5, column 1 Middleton Guardian  
Summary: Abstract: Fountain In Jubilee Park Now Completed And Working  
Language: English  
Subject: [Fountains](#)  
BRN: 136248
- Main Title: [Fountain Completed \[newspaper article\]](#)  
Source: 22 Sep 1906 Middleton Guardian  
Summary: Abstract: Fountain In Jubilee Park Completed. Note On T.B. Wood's Health  
Language: English  
Subject: [Wood, Thomas Broadbent, Alderman](#)  
BRN: 212630
- Main Title: [Statue And Fountain Donation \[newspaper article\]](#)  
Source: 22 Sep 1906 Middleton Guardian  
Summary: Abstract: The Statue And Fountain Donated By T.B. Wood Is Now Complete. It Bears The Initials 'T.B.W. 1906'  
Language: English  
Subject: [Wood, Thomas Broadbent, Alderman](#)  
BRN: 212591
- Main Title: [Borough Fountain In Jubilee Park \[newspaper article\]](#)  
Source: 13 Oct 1906, p. 4, column 7 Middleton Guardian  
Summary: Abstract: Meeting Of Committee On 8 October Concerning The Formal

- Dedication Of The Borough Fountain In Jubilee Park  
 Language: English  
 Subject: [Middleton Borough Council -- Library And Parks Committee](#)  
 BRN: 223644
- Main Title: [Concerts Given In Jubilee Park \[newspaper article\]](#)  
 Source: 27 Oct 1906, p. 8, column 4 Middleton Guardian  
 Summary: Abstract: Full Council Meeting On 24 October Receiving Committee Report On The Concerts Given In Jubilee Park During Last Season  
 Language: English  
 Subject: [Middleton Borough Council -- Library And Parks Committee](#)  
 BRN: 223637
- Main Title: [Park Railings \[newspaper article\]](#)  
 Source: 03 Dec 1927, p. 7, column 4 Middleton Guardian  
 Summary: Abstract: Letter Written Complaining About The Ugly Railings Which Have Been Erected In The Park Near The Library  
 Language: English  
 Subject: [Parks -- Jubilee](#)  
 BRN: 17917
- Main Title: [Monument \[newspaper article\]](#)  
 Source: 16 Jul 1932, p. 9, column 6 Middleton Guardian  
 Summary: Abstract: On Fifth Anniversary Of Middleton Flood, Monument Was Placed In Jubilee Park  
 Language: English  
 Subject: [Floods](#)  
 BRN: 134784

Newspaper reports not catalogued for mid-twentieth century.

- Main Title: [Jubilee Park Friends Group \[newspaper article\]](#)  
 Source: 25 Aug 2005, p. 19, column 1 Middleton Guardian  
 Summary: Abstract: Meeting New Friends Group To Discuss Plans And Funding Col Phot Bandstand. Regualr Drinking Problem Despite Alcohol Free Zone  
 Language: English  
 Subject: [Parks -- Jubilee](#)  
 BRN: 168263

## APPENDIX 4 – Outline Evolution of Jubilee Park Fountain



*Photograph of Jubilee Park Fountain shortly after the planting of trees along the lower path. G. Wellens*

1. The outline history can be followed on the map regression in Appendix 1. In 1905/6 Edgar Wood installed the fountain and staircase and planted linear beds of rhododendrons either side (at the top of the slope). A picturesque lower path was constructed along the edge of the sunken area to access the bottom of the staircase (Illustrations 32 and 33). The above photo shows a stony gravel path, very like the ones Wood used at Long Street Church and School nearby and his larger houses.
2. To the possible chagrin of the gardeners, Wood removed lines of trees that ran along the top path and the edge of a sunken area in the centre of the park, in order to open up the views of the church, framed by the fountain. Originally, there were also narrow paths along the lower edge of the rhododendron beds, possibly for maintenance access. The beds did not quite reach the staircase. Though trimmed low in the photo, Wood's watercolour shows the rhododendrons larger and more naturalistic.
3. Sometime between 1909 and 1955 (Illustrations 32 and 33), most likely the 1930s, the sunken area was filled. Trees were planted either side of the path (see photo above), effectively reinstating those that Wood had removed. Also at this time, the terraced area to the north of the lawn, near the bandstand, was created. The planting beds, which match the shape of the sunken area, were also probably created as part of the scheme. The above photo appears like a set-piece picture taken shortly after the changes were completed.
4. Post 1950, the path trees, self seeded trees and casual planting had grown to block the view that Wood had opened up. The whole scene became very dense. The church was visually 'lost'. The fountain, now hidden away, was regularly vandalised, so that it was eventually removed. The lawns either side of the staircase were planted up with shrubs. Some removal of trees occurred, especially in 2008, but the scene had lost its significance and remained a visual mess in 2015.