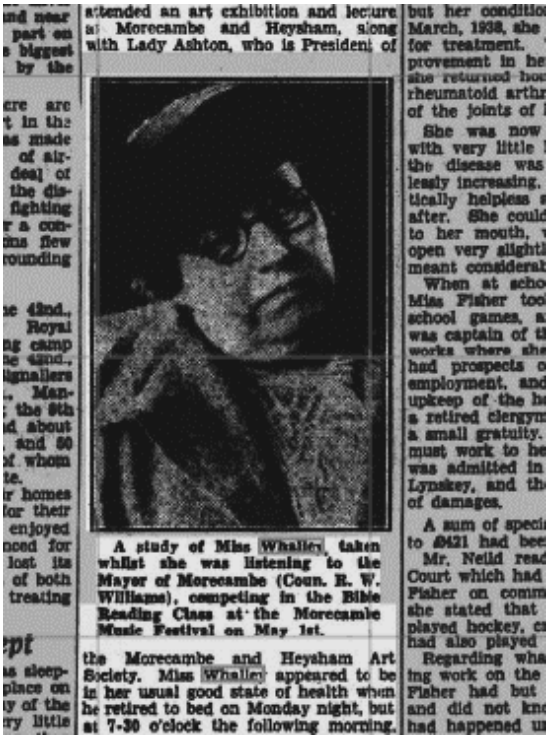
Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

MISS WHALLEY'S FIELD, LANCASTER

Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 119

Miss Whalley – Frances Geraldine Whalley – was the eldest daughter of Frances Maude Whalley (née Daniel) who married Colonel Joseph Lawson Whalley of Richmond House, Skerton, Lancaster in 1881. She was born in Halton in 1882. Her father died in 1908 and her mother, Frances Maud Whalley, married Lord Ashton (James Williamson Jnr) in 1909, becoming his third wife, Lady Ashton. Miss Whalley kept her mother's first married surname, Whalley. She died suddenly in 1939 aged 57, possibly due to a heart attack: her mother died in 1944. Miss Whalley was therefore Lord Ashton's stepdaughter: he died in 1930.



attended an art exhibition and lecture at Morecambe and Heysham, along with Lady Ashton, who is President of

A study of Miss Whalley, taken whilst she was listening to the Mayor of Morecambe (Coun. R. W. Williams), competing in the Bible Reading Class at the Morecambe Music Festival on May 1st.

the Morecambe and Heysham Art Society. Miss Whalley appeared to be in her usual good state of health when he retired to bed on Monday night, but at 7-30 o'clock the following morning,

but her condition March, 1938, she for treatment. provement in he she returned hom rheumatoid arthr of the joints of

She was now with very little the disease was lessly increasing. tically helpless after. She could to her mouth, open very slightl meant considerab

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Regarding wha ing work on the Fisher had but and did not kn had happened u

A rare photograph of Miss Whalley
(Source: *Lancaster Guardian*, 9 June 1939 p11)



Her gravestone in Lancaster Cemetery

She is buried in Lancaster Cemetery next to family members. Miss Whalley was a wealthy woman. When she died her estate was valued at over £116,000 – around £6.4 million in today's money.

She was a benefactor to many charities in the fields of agriculture, animal welfare, medicine, religion and politics. She supported St Luke's Church in Skerton. Through her executors she gifted £5000 to Westfield War Memorial Village to build three cottages in memory of her father and her brother Captain Julian Lawson Whalley who had died in the First World War battle at Cambrai in 1917. They were built after the Second World War. She bequeathed her extensive and impressive collection of china and porcelain to Lancaster City Museum. She gave £1750 to Royal Lancaster Infirmary; her mother and father-in-law were even more generous benefactors. The Whalleys and their Richmond House are commemorated in the names of Richmond Avenue and Whalley Road in north Skerton.

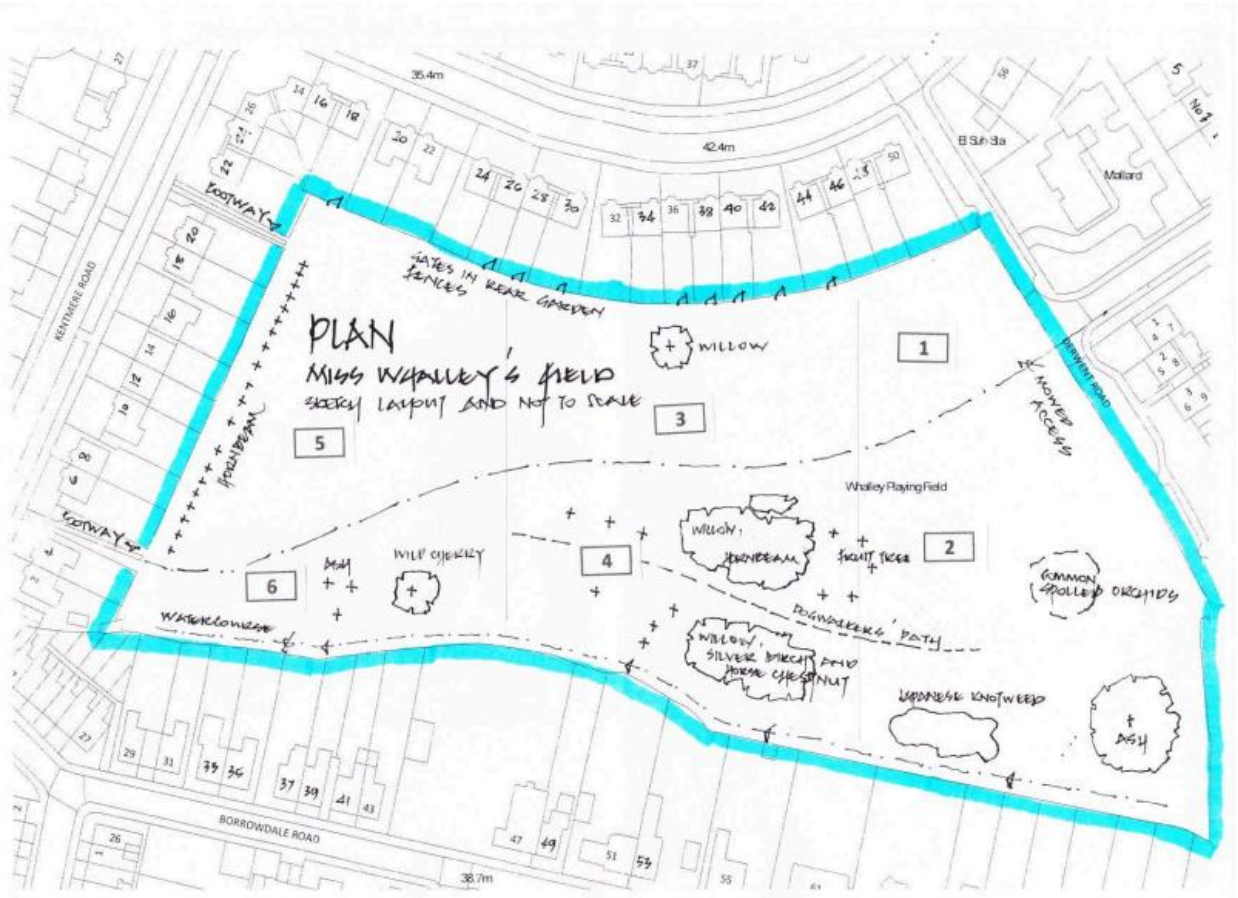
Today the most recognisable reminder of Miss Whalley is "Miss Whalley's Field" in east Lancaster, off Derwent Road. In her will, dated 1938, Miss Whalley gave a sum of up to £12,000 to establish a "recreation ground for the use and enjoyment and benefit exclusively or mainly of children residing in the Borough of Lancaster". After the Second World War had ended, a Trust Deed was agreed in 1951 by her will's executors who had obtained 5.825 acres from the Ministry of Education. The Trust Deed transferred the land to the care of Lancaster Corporation to create and maintain the site as the "Whalley Playground". The Corporation received £5000 for the site's maintenance and £400 for playground equipment. The map below shows the site as it was in 1910 – just farm fields.



The area of Miss Whalley's Field as surveyed in 1910 by the Ordnance Survey.
It occupies parts of fields 423, 419 and 418, overlain by the word "LANCASTER".
(Source: National Library of Scotland)

Her plan was for the playground to resemble Kensington Gardens. Aerial photographs of the area in the mid-1960s show what looks like just a field with few facilities.

The Friends of Miss Whalley's Field was established in 2015 to work with Lancaster City Council to improve the site. The Friends brought volunteers, ideas and enthusiasm to the task. They have organised many different events on the site, erected an informative stone and plaque, created new paths across the site and have encouraged the draining of wet areas. They have planted shrubs, bulbs and an area of trees – the Jean Argles Wood. She was a great niece of Miss Whalley. Below is a plan of intended developments. The site is now a recognised war memorial – in memory of Miss Whalley's brother and father who were soldiers – and the site is also protected from new building by the 1951 Trust Deed. Other ways of securing this land as open space are being explored.



The plan of improvements to Miss Whalley's Field (Source: the website of the Friends of Miss Whalley's Field – (https://misswhalleysfield.org.uk)




CENTENARY FIELDS
Miss Whalley's Field
Lancaster


Miss Whalley's Field



Lancaster Castle and Lancaster Priory background to Miss Whalley's Field – photo Ian Greene

Acknowledgements
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Other Guides of interest in this series
Guide No. 43 *Philanthropists in Lancaster*
Guide No. 63 *Lancaster Cemetery: Notable Gravestones and Memorials*
Guide No. 3 *Lancaster Cemetery*

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