

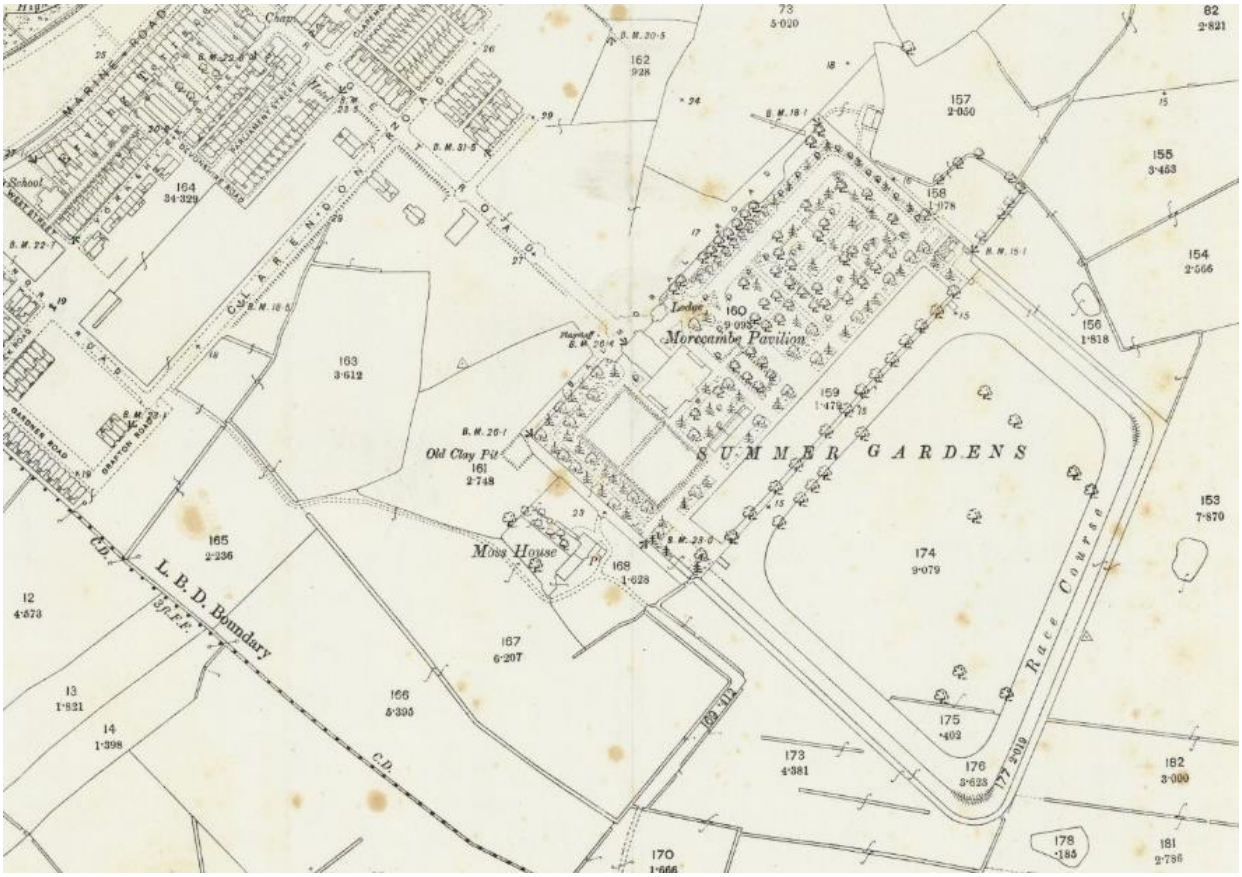
Lancaster Civic Vision

Celebrating our Heritage – Enhancing our Environment – Shaping our Future

The SUMMER GARDENS and REGENT PARK in MORECAMBE

Lancaster Civic Vision Guide 122

The Winter Gardens in Morecambe is well known: the Summer Gardens much less so. As the map below shows it was created on 30 acres of farmland next to Moss Hall Farm and part of the Moss Hall Estate at the west end of Morecambe. It opened in 1877 yet even by the 1890 Ordnance Survey map (below) it was still isolated from expanding Morecambe. Regent Road, starting at the Promenade stopped at the Summer Gardens.

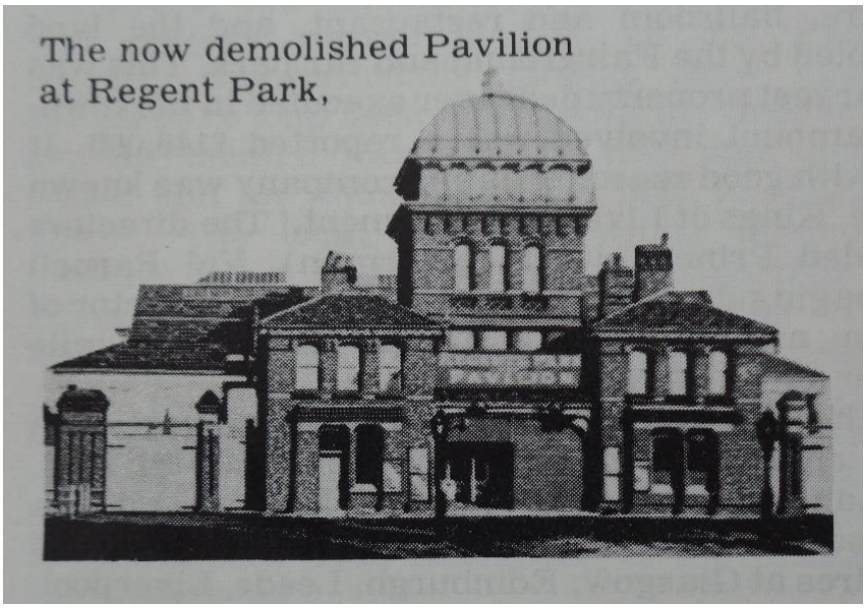


This map shows a substantial development on a large site with several buildings and many facilities. The task was how to make a profit on so large an investment on the edge of town. The owners' solution was to provide many different activities to attract as wide a clientele as possible, visitors in summer and local people year-round.

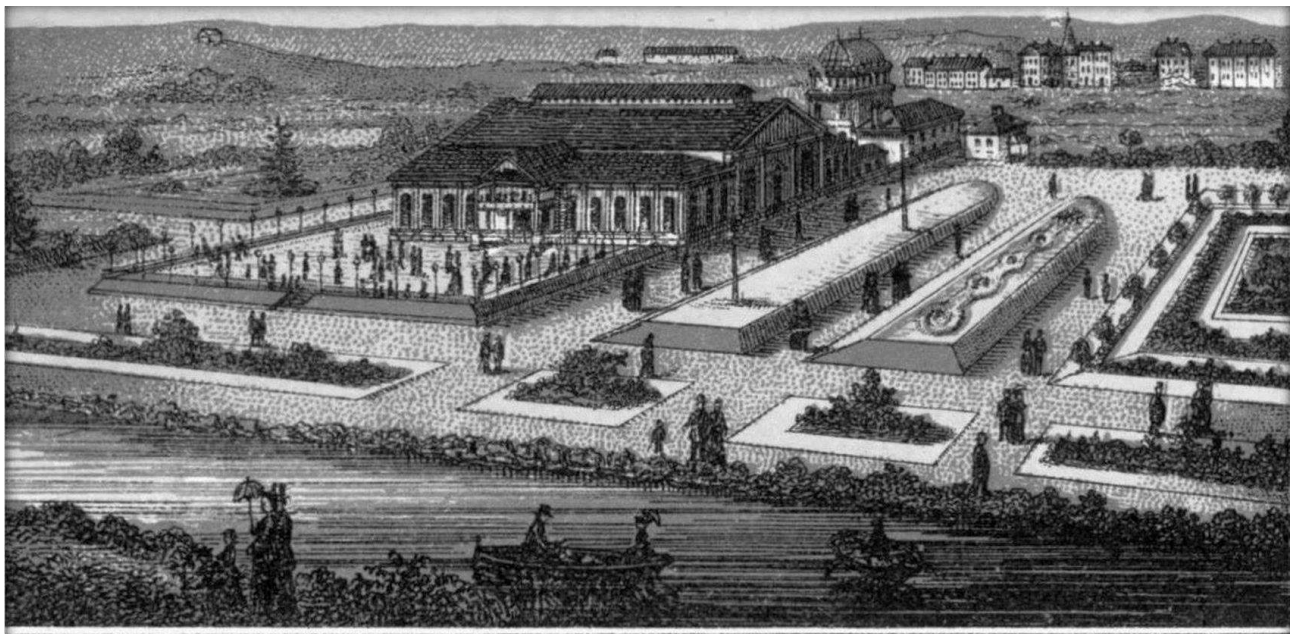
There was a race course for hosting the Poulton Stakes and other races. People could skate on the frozen dyke around the race course. Nearer the Pavilion were tennis courts, a bowling green, outdoor dancing and concerts. Boats could be hired on the long, narrow boating lake. There were pathways around lawns and colourful flowerbeds.

The Pavilion was an impressive building in size and design – called 'Italianate' – as the sketches below show. Designed by Thomas Worthington of Blackpool, it was built in red brick with sandstone detailing.

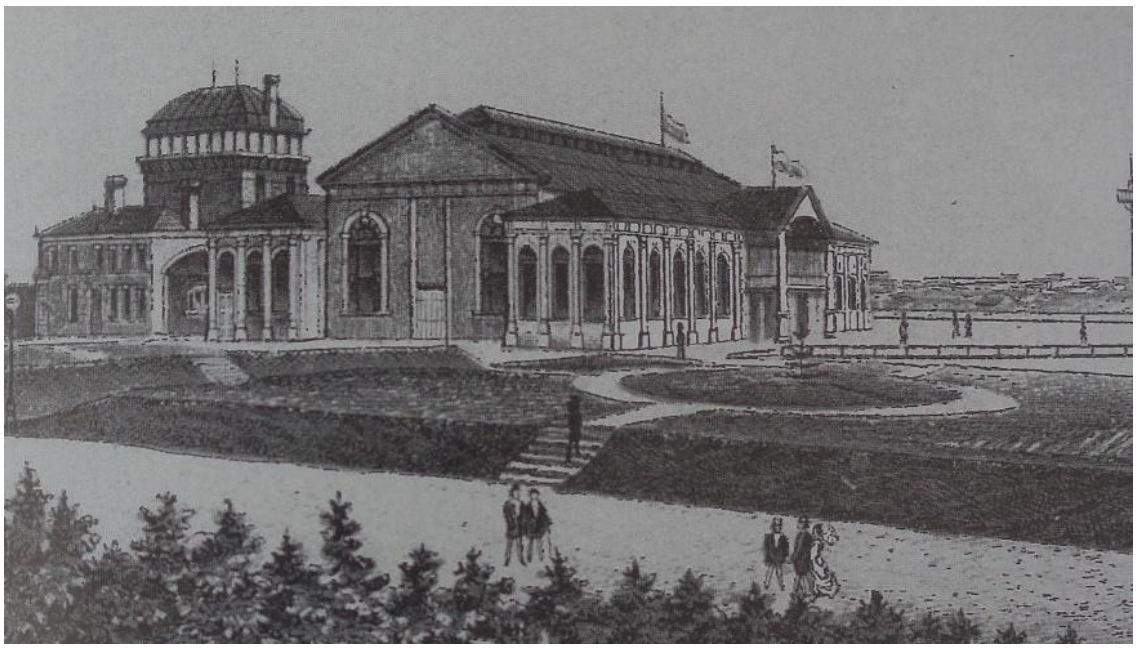
There was a central tower, a glazed belvedere and rooms for concerts, a ballroom for dancing, sports events such as wrestling and for music-hall acts. There was an aquarium. The refreshment rooms could generate more income.

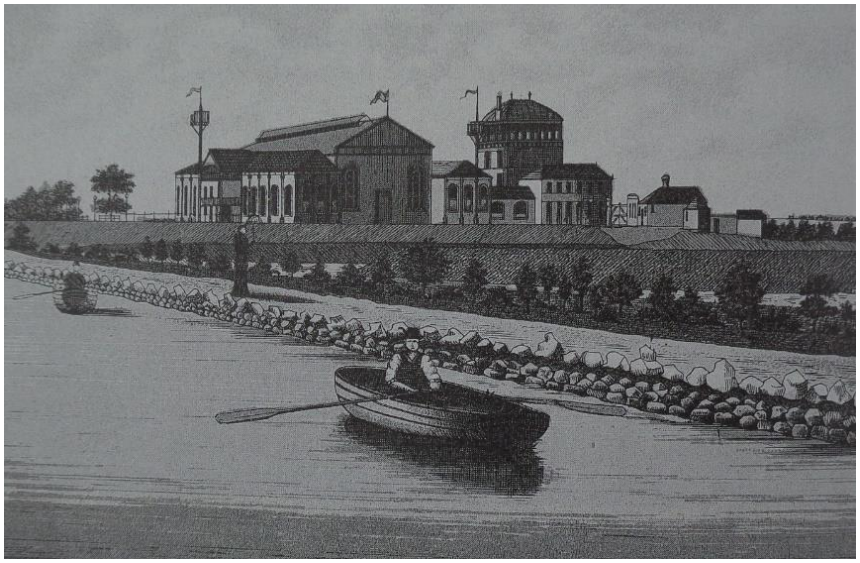


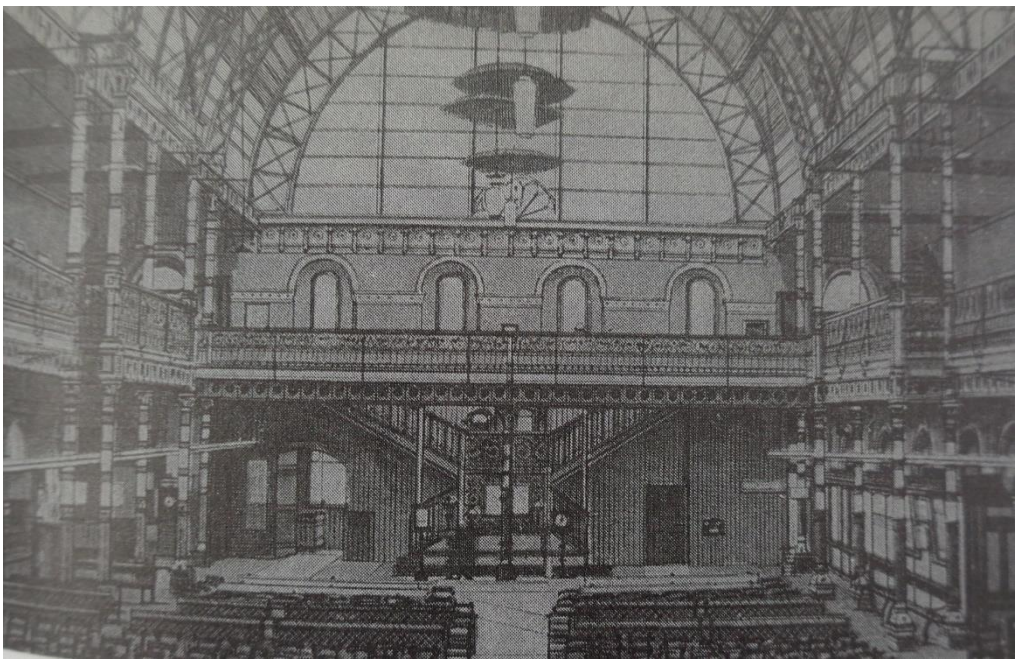




SUMMER GARDENS.







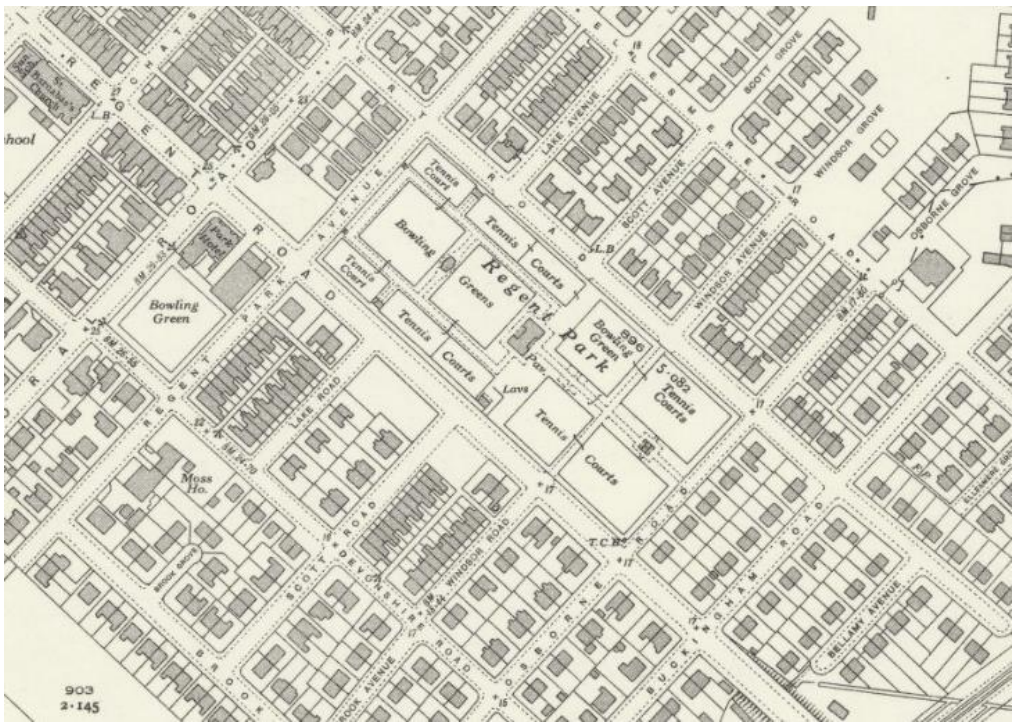
The chequered commercial history of the Summer Gardens is one of repeated changes of ownership and several bankruptcies. The growth of rival attractions nearer central Morecambe was an insurmountable problem that even spectacular events, like Blondin tightrope walking and a balloon flight, could not overcome in the long run.

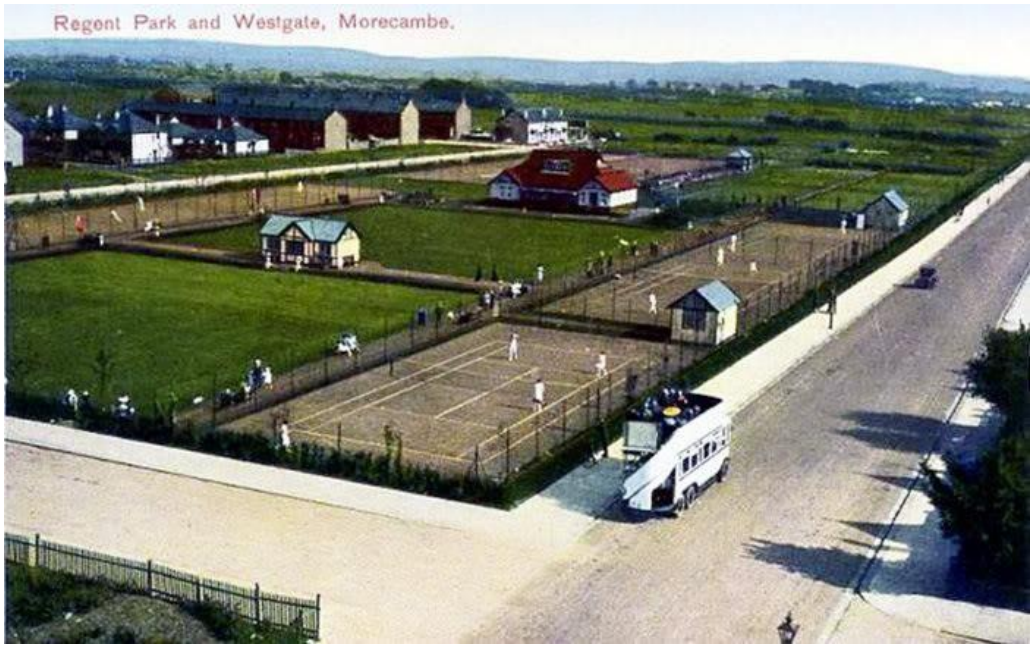
There was the competition from the two piers opened in 1869 and 1896 (the West End Pier being just down the road). The Winter Gardens opened in 1878, only one year after the Summer Gardens, and offered similar attractions in a more central location.

The Alhambra (1901) was very nearby and on the Promenade. Over the years the Summer Gardens had various changes of name and rebrandings – Pleasure Graden, Palace Garden and Bellevue Garden – but its decline after 1900 was considerable and it closed in 1905.

The Pavilion was demolished, Regent Road was extended southwards on its current alignment, and land was sold off on all sides for housing. For 20 years the site was derelict. What was left was the much smaller site occupied since 1926 by Regent Park, as the 1938 OS map and photograph (below) show.

The site was bought in 1924 by Morecambe Corporation – less than a quarter the size of the Summer Gardens – and opened with tennis courts, bowling greens and a small central pavilion. It was now, and still is, a publicly funded facility focused on meeting the needs of the local population.





Over time, the needs of the local people have changed, and local authority funding has become tighter. Today, a very active Friends Group helps maintain the Park. Many facilities have recently been upgraded to meet today's preferences. The bowling green is still there. Two play areas for children have been set up, for younger and older children. There is walking football and basketball. There is a sensory garden replacing a rose bed, a wild flower meadow in one area, a small community orchard and colourful planting. The Park has been awarded Green Flag status. The central building is now a cafe and social club.









Other guides of interest

Guide No. 58 The Winter Gardens, Morecambe
Guide No. 81 Morecambe's Piers.
Guide No. 109 The Alhambra in Morecambe

Text – Gordon Clark.
Line Drawings – original source unknown.
Maps – National Library of Scotland.
Photographs – Gordon Clark.

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