

The Third Lake and Other 'Fish Ponds' at Roundhay Park.

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It is sometimes said, that a third lake was to have been created in the Park in the days of the Nicholsons who founded it. Had this been done, it is popular belief that it would have been in the sports arena where the cricket ground is. One can easily imagine a lake in the bowl-shaped depression at the bottom of the slopes from the Mansion and 'Hill 60'. This would be a good place for a pond or lake since there was a stream next to it (as there is now) which could provide fresh water to support fish and other aquatic life in need of oxygen.



'Hill 60', the Arena and Cricket Ground.

There is oral evidence for this. Charles Mills was employed as the last footman by the Nicholson's in their time at Roundhay. When the Estate was sold, he left with some members of the Nicholson family to live in Torquay but later returned to work as a Park Ranger. Before him, his father had been the Nicholson's butler at the Mansion.

In 1941 Charles was interviewed by the Yorkshire Post, when he was 86. He said that, had 'the old gentleman' (Thomas Nicholson,

who died in 1821) lived long enough, he would have made a third lake 'where the sports ground is and where Tattoos were staged'. Since Thomas Nicholson's fortune was based on the shipping industry, Charles continued, 'He used to say that he had made his money out of water and that he was going to have water round him.'

It is interesting to note that in the early years of the Nicholson's at Roundhay, the Park had a couple of lakes or ponds that are not here any more (see the picture on the opposite page; they are also shown on Joshua Thorp's map of Leeds dated 1819-1821). Their location was between the Upper Lake and the Waterloo Lake and they were quite small, being less than half the size of the Upper Lake in total.

The uppermost of these was a narrow stretch of water that widened into a pool (see the photo on page 18). According to Jonathan Taylor's survey of Roundhay, it was 1 rood and 31 perches (0.44 acres), a little larger than the pond in Canal Gardens.

It discharged into a rather more substantial lake or pond before the Waterloo Lake. Taylor's survey tells us it was 1 acre 2 roods and 35 perches (1.72 acres), i.e. about the size of a football pitch. It is interesting, that someone has added the words - '(now Land) Pasture' against this item in the survey and we can see that by the time of the 1847 Ordnance Survey map, the lower of these two 'fish ponds' (as Taylor called them) had disappeared.

Most likely, these existed before the Waterloo Lake was created. There is evidence for this in a newspaper account of 1811, which I came across recently, in which Thomas Nicholson was fishing a 'fish pond' below the castle. The existence of the castle at this time is a revelation, as up to now it was believed to have been built in about 1820, but the Waterloo Lake, as the name suggests, was created a few years later than 1811. Thomas Nicholson did not even own the land for the Waterloo Lake in 1811.



From Jonathan Taylor's 1825 map of Roundhay showing the 'fish ponds' between the Upper Lake and Waterloo Lake. Courtesy of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

References and Acknowledgements

Charles Mills, '*Nearly a Third Lake*', Yorkshire Evening Post, 27 February, 1941.

Jonathan Taylor, Map DD177/1 from *Survey of Roundhay*, MD279A2/14, Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1825.

'*Col. Campbell and Mr. Nicholson*', articles and letters in the Leeds Mercury during September and October, 1811.

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Part of the stone edge of what was once a pool (see text).



Here, further downstream in what is now the lower wooded area between the Upper and Waterloo Lakes, there was a 'fish pond' in 1825 (and probably earlier) about the size of a football pitch (see text).