

TINKER'S OR VAUXHALL GARDENS

To two generations of Manchester people Tinker's Gardens, or Vauxhall Gardens as they were latterly called, were a popular holiday resort; and to perhaps another generation they were a tradition, or little more than that. Today there remains no trace of them, but occasionally as we come across one who in childhood's days was taken there, we may hear some account of their glories. To the present generation the institution is not even a name. It is therefore necessary to say something concerning this one-time popular resort. The ground once covered by the gardens is on the left hand side of Rochdale Road, some little distance away from that road, and lying between it and Collyhurst Road. The approach to them was near to the end of Osborne Street.

The proprietor for about forty years was Robert Tinker, who in Scholes's Directory for 1797 as "Robert Tinker, Grape and Compass Coffee House and Tea Gardens, Collyhurst. In later years he became a victualler and in 1814 he changed the name of his establishment to Vauxhall Gardens. For a fuller account of the glories of the gardens I must refer the reader to Alexander Wilson's *Johnny Green's Description of Tinker's Gardens* with which this chapter will be closed. On holidays and Sundays great crowds of people resorted to the gardens, where they could promenade or dance (except on Sundays) to the music of a brass band, and where they could partake of tea and other refreshments at small tables standing under overhanging trees or in alcoves covered with creepers. The situation of the gardens seems to have been very favourable to plant growth, and an announcement made in 1814 reads very curiously to-day. It ran thus:— "To the admirers of cucumbers. At these gardens may be seen a cucumber which measures seven feet eight inches long. One from the same plant was sent for the Prince Regent's inspection. It is allowed by all gardeners, and others who have seen it, to be the greatest curiosity of the kind Nature ever produced in this kingdom".

From time to time balloon ascents were made from the gardens, the last of these being made by Lieutenant Gale in 1847. Robert Turner died on February 1st, 1836, but the gardens were continued until about 1852 when their glories having departed they were closed. The subsoil consisted of a valuable bed of sand of a peculiar quality, used by iron moulders, and in the course of a few years the site was literally carted away. After the removal of the sand houses were built, and to-day the spot whereon Tinker's Gardens stood is indistinguishable in the maze of streets and rows of houses that now cover the district.

Mr. Procter in his volume *Manchester in Holiday Dress*, refers to an advertiement issued by Mr. Tinker in 1812, in which he announces special attractions to celebrate Wellington's great victory. The grounds were to be illuminated by means of three thousand variegated lamps which were to transform the gardens to an Elysian retreat. Popular vocalists were to supplement the efforts of the band, and the charge for admission was to be 1s. 6d. The entertainment, it was said, would render the evening "at once intellectual, rural, and delightful".

The following is Alexander Wilson's song, "Johnny Green's Description of Tinker's Gardens".

Heigh! Hall o' Nabs, an' Sam, an' Sue,
Why, Jonathan, art tew there too?
W're aw aloike, there's nought to do,
So bring us a quart before us.
Aw're at Tinker's gardens yesternoon,
An' whot aw seed, aw'll tell yo soon,
In a bran new song, boh it's to th' owd tune
Yo'st ha't if yo'll join meh chorus

Aw geet some brass, fro' uncle Nat,
Eawr David lent mea his best hat,
Then off fur th' teawn aw seet full swat,

Mich faster nor Pickfort's waggin.
Aw paid meh brass, an' in aw goes,
An' eh ! what shady beawers i' rows,
Wheer lots o' ladies an' their beaus
Wurn set to get their baggin.

There's bonfeoirs fix't at th' top o' pows,
To leet yor poipes, an warm yor nose;
Then a thing to tell which way th' wind blows,
An' the' fish pond too did pleas mea;
Boh th' reawnd-heawse is the rummest shop,
It's fix't on here an' there a prop,
Just loike a great umbrella top;
If it's not, Jimmy Johnson squeeze mea.

Aw seed a cage as big, aw'll swear,
As a wild beast show i' Sawfort fair,
There's rabbits, brids, and somethings there,
Aw couldn'a gawm, by th' mass, mon;
Aw thowt o' pullink one chap's wigs,
For tellink me they're guinea pigs,
Says aw, 'Meh lad, aw' up to yor rigs,
They're noan worth hawve o'th' brass, mon."

Aw met wi' a wench aw'd often seen,
When aw wi' meh wark to th' teawn had bin,
Hoo're drest as foine as ony queen,
So aw just stept up behind hur;
Says aw, 'Yung miss, dun yo work for Kays?
Aw've wove their crankys scores o' days
Hoo wouldn'a speak, boh walk'd hur ways,
An' hoo're nowt but a bobbin woinder.

Boh th' band o' music caps owd Nick,
Aw ne'er seed th' loikes sin aw wur wick;
Thern drest like soldiers, thrunk and thick,
As merry as hey-makers.
Up in a tree, foive yard fro' the' Greawnd,
On a greyt big table, rail'd aw reawnd,
While lads an' wenches jigg'd to the' seawnd,
'Oh, merrily danced the Quakers.'

Then next aw seed a swing, by gad!
Where th' ladies flock'd loike hey-go-mad;
They wanted a roide far wor than th' lads,
They really did, for sure.
Ther'n one wur drest so noice i' blue
An' loike an' angel up hoo flew,
Hoo'd noice red cheeks, an' garters, too,
So aw thowt aw'd buck up to hur.

Aw made hur link wi' mich ado,
An' mounted up a greyt heigh brow
Wheer folk run up, an deawn it too,
Just loike March hares, for sure.
So when eawr Kate coom we begun,
An' started off, twur glorious fun!
Mich faster than Cock Robin run,

When he won at Karsy Moor.

What wark we made, aw'm sheawmt to tell,
We tried, boh could no' stop eawrsel
Till into a beawer yed first aw fell,
 Where aw th' foine folk wur set, mon
Some porter run aw deawn my shirt;
A biscuit stuck to th' ladies skirt,
An whot wi' th' hurt, an' grease, an' dirt,
 By gum, aw feel it yet, mon.

Of aw the things that pleast us, John,
Wur Tinker's house wi' pot dolls on;
There's Blucher an' Lord Wellington.
 An' Blue Beard look'd so glum, surs!
There's cupids under trees and shrubs,
An' men wi' harps, an' some wi' clubs,
An' naked childer up o' tubs,
 Don'd eawt i' lots o' plumbs, surs.

Reet hungry, aw seet mea deawn at last,
An' swallow'd cakes an' ale so fast,
Aw wonder meh waistcoat did no' brast,
 Aw'r full os meh hoide could crom, surs
When aw wur seen at could be seen,
They play'd, 'God save eawr noble Queen',
Aw strid to th' tune reawnd th' bowling green,
 An' asay aw coom straight whoam, surs.

It bangs booath play heawse, fair an' wakes,
For gam o' all maks, ale an' cakes,
Aw'll bet a quart, an' theaw'st howd th' stakes,
 It bangs th' king's creawnation.
Aw'd ha' yo't goo next Monday noon,
For if't rains poikels, late or soon,
Aw'll goo again, if aw goo bowt shoon,
 For it's th' grandest place i' th' nation."

And such was the opinion of many of the folk who lived in Manchester and the district seventy years ago.

Swindells, T. Manchester Streets and Manchester Men Fifth Series. 1908 J E Cornish Ltd, Manchester p.149/153



above - 1844-49 maps Surveyed 1848