

The Garden of Peace – Hammersmith Park

The exhibition site built in Shepherd's Bush, London, in 1908 by Imre Kiralfy was called "The White City" probably because of its resemblance to that of the 1893 World Fair held in Chicago. Originally built to host the 1908 Franco-British exhibition, it also incorporated the stadium for the 1908 Olympic Games.

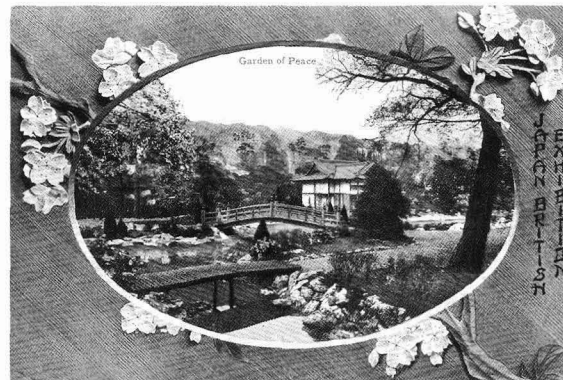
Two years later, the site hosted The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910: undoubtedly one of the major, if not the major, events during the long history of Anglo-Japanese relations. Over the period May to October 1910 well over 8 million passed through the gates.

More than ten acres of the site was devoted to two Japanese-style gardens: *The Garden of Peace*, and *The Garden of the Floating Islands*. Although there were already many other Japanese-style gardens throughout the UK [Raggett, 2006] most of these were privately owned; the gardens at the exhibition, being probably the first Japanese-style gardens most UK residents had ever seen, no doubt contributed greatly to the continuing interest in and construction of such gardens.



But what happened to these gardens when the exhibition closed? The Chokushi-Mon gate was dismantled and rebuilt in 1911 at Kew Gardens, where it still stands [See Shakkei 13 (4) p3], and the Garden of the Floating Islands was replaced by the Grand Canyon Railway for the Anglo-American Exposition of 1914 [See plans in Fletcher and Brooks, 1978]. However, there is evidence that the Garden of Peace was still in existence in 1916 [Raggett, 2002]. The site continued to be used for exhibitions, including the British Industries Fairs (1921 – 1937), for many years until it eventually made way for a large housing estate and the BBC building complex. However, no further mention of the gardens can be found until 1955 when the local council, clearing a small patch of woodland behind the BBC site to create a park (Hammersmith Park), uncovered what is believed to be part of Heiwa-en – the Garden of Peace (see copy of postcard).

This garden was rejuvenated in 1955, with a new bridge being constructed inspired by a Lake District packhorse bridge [Raggett, 2002], and, with Heritage Funding, refurbished in 2001. However, it has not been maintained and a new initiative has recently been launched by



the local council and a number of prominent Japanese residents, to bring this element of the 1910 garden complex back to its former state in time for a series of events planned to celebrate and commemorate the centenary of that important Exhibition.

The first phase, clearing much of the overgrown vegetation so that a group of landscape architects and gardeners from Kyoto could then assess the needs and develop a restoration plan, took place on 28th/29th August and was attended by many enthusiasts (including some JGS members) – see photographs.

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References

- Fletcher, F.A. and Brooks A.D. (1978) British Exhibitions and their Postcards. Part 1 1900 – 1914
- Raggett, J (2002) The Japanese-style Garden in the British Isles, 1850-1950, introduction, application and significance, Unpublished PhD thesis.
- Raggett, J. (2006) Early Japanese-style Gardens in Britain – an Overview. Shakkei 13 (2) 6-9.