



St. John's Garden

St Johns Ornamental and Memorial Garden was opened by the City Council in 1904 and is the only area of public greenspace within the heart of Liverpool. As such it plays an important role as a 'green lung' in the city center as well as a considerable heritage asset.

History of the Garden

Naturally a plateau of open heath, the development of the area began in the form of windmills, lime kilns and markets to serve the growing communities. The names of several of the adjacent streets such as Lime Street and Old Haymarket derived from these early uses.

The mid 18th Century brought to Liverpool its first phase of rapid urban expansion. In 1767 the area of the garden was enclosed as a general burial ground with a small mortuary chapel. It was in 1775 that the first stones were laid for St John's Church, which was designed, in the gothic style by the architect Thomas Litoller. Construction of the Church was completed in 1784.

During the Napoleonic Wars, many French sailors were captured by the Royal Navy, and even more by privateers. They were brought back to Liverpool and incarcerated in Liverpool Gaol near St Nicholas's Church, on the site that is now the Tower Building. At one time more than 4,000 French P.O.W's were held there, and many occupied their time making a variety of goods and novelties to sell.

After the Peace of Amiens in 1802, 1,100 were liberated from the Gaol and returned to their homeland. Many prisoners died in the ghastly conditions of the prison and were buried here when it was St Johns Churchyard.



At the base of the semi-circular retaining wall a plaque in French and English was erected by the French Government, it reads:

"To her sons who died in captivity in Liverpool in 1772/1803 and whose bodies lie here in the old cemetery of St John the Baptist. France ever grateful."

St John's Garden, takes its name from the Church and churchyard which once occupied the site. The cemetery within the churchyard containing approximately 27,000 bodies was closed in 1854.

In the same year work began on St George's Hall, designed in Neo-classical style by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, winner of the architectural competition for the building. St John's Church had been located hard against the West elevation of St George's Hall and was a factor in the more simple design of this side of the Hall

At the end of the 19th century, in order to improve the prospect of St. George's Hall and the adjacent civic buildings, the area once occupied by the church and churchyard was laid out as a terraced garden. The garden now contains a dazzling array of sculptures by some of the best Victorian and Edwardian sculptors.

The garden is claimed to have been designed initially by the sculptor, George Frampton, as a setting for existing and proposed pieces of public sculpture reflecting the City's new found economic, political and cultural status.

