

Park and present

by Bethan Dorsett

THE VICTORIAN preoccupation with urban beauty spots resulted from the growing industrialisation of towns and cities.

One of many green spots to spring up across the country was Victoria Park, which must have seemed an oasis to families living next to the newly created Manchester Ship Canal and Trafford Park industrial estate.

The site has been a popular fixture since opening in 1902 after the then Stretford Urban Council shut the area's recreation ground and bought 13½ acres from the estate of Sir Humphrey DeTrafford for a village park.

Among its best features were the magnificent gates at the corner of Victoria Road and School Road, created to honour the monarch.

It quickly grew and in its 1930s heyday boasted four tennis courts, five bowling greens and a bandstand.

During this time the council suggested some of the land could be used for a new library, but this was not to be.

Pauline Law, who has been researching the park's history, said: "The residents protested about it and the library was instead built down the road on Pinnington Lane. But it was bombed during the war.

"If only it had been built in the park."



BYGONE DAYS: Victoria Park, Stretford, taken in the 1930s (S)

The community united once again in 2001 over concerns the park was being neglected.

So the Friends of Victoria Park group was formed and became so successful it won the venue its first Green Flag.

The Friends are now busy researching the park's history, scouring through old council records, collecting photographs and maps and asking residents to share

their memories. The result of this work will be on show at an exhibition at the park's community building this Sunday from 1pm to 3pm.

Mrs Law added: "We would love people to come along for a cup of tea or coffee and share their memories and photographs of the park.

"We hope to build a library of memories to pass on."