

Imagine Calderstones Since 1828: A Self-Guided Walk

Walk length: 1 hour

Start your walk in front of the Mansion House main entrance. This large Victorian residence was built in **1828** for the lead shot manufacturer Joseph Need Walker. At the time Allerton was a popular place for Liverpool's merchant elite to build their houses. It was close to their work in the city, yet rural enough to mimic the appearance of the landed gentry's estates. Following Joseph's death, the house was owned by Charles MacIver, who co-founded the Cunard Line shipping company. Finally, in **1902** the estate was purchased by the Liverpool Corporation.

Follow the path clockwise around the house. This side of the house was previously the park café, whilst the rest of the building contained offices for the Parks and Gardens Department. Today the building is leased by The Reader, as the world's first Shared Reading community.

On the left of the path, you will reach a collection of Victorian outbuildings: the coach house and stables. Today these buildings are the Ice Cream Parlour and Storybarn. You can go through the archway and into the courtyard to take a look.

Go back to the path, and continue north. This is the original driveway of the house. Stop when you reach the Bowling Greens on your left. In the **19th** Century, most of the park was the gardens and estate of the Mansion House. A map from **1876** shows that the Bowling Greens used to be fields, perhaps for the family's horses. Some things haven't changed though, as the map also shows a row of trees lining the drive.

Turn around now, and walk back towards the Ice Cream Parlour. Take the first left. When you reach a T junction, briefly turn right to see a small headstone, marking the place where Joseph Need Walker's family buried their pet ponies. Return to the T junction, and take the left hand fork this time, following the path



North East side of the Mansion House with the Allerton Oak in the foreground, c.1865.

through the trees, until you reach a tree enclosed by a fence- The Allerton Oak.

Local legend has it that the Allerton Oak is around **1000** years old. During the Second World War people in Liverpool sent oak leaves from the tree to soldiers on the front line as a symbol of hope.

Continue down the path, and at the T junction, turn right. Many of the trees in this part of the park are native to North America, and were collected for Charles MacIver (the second owner of the Mansion House) on the transatlantic shipping expeditions he organized as owner of the Cunard Line. When you reach a fork, go left.

When you reach a crossroads briefly take the left turn towards Menlove Avenue. This corner of the park was once home to the Liverpool International Tennis Tournament before its relocation to Aigburth Cricket Club.

Return to the crossroads and turn left, continuing on the previous path. Take the next right, and then a left- You are now in the Bog Garden, a haven for wetland loving wildlife. See if you can spot any whilst circling the bog, crossing the bridge and staying on the path by the water's edge.

When you reach the lake at a multi-path junction, turn left to go clockwise round the lake. The lake was added to the park in the **1930s**, during the Great Depression, as part of a government funded, public works unemployment relief scheme. At the time not everyone thought the lake was an improvement, as one letter in our archive expresses concerns that it would ruin the view and be a hazard to children. Today though, it's hard to imagine the



The Lake c.1935.

park without the lake. In the past it has been used for boating, and you can still see the boathouse on the opposite shore.

Your path will join a wide avenue to the south of the lake. This is Jubilee Drive, and was also added to the park as part of the unemployment relief scheme. Follow it in a North Westerly direction towards the Linda McCartney playground, a donation from Paul McCartney in memory of his wife.

Continue on Jubilee drive and take the first left, then immediately take the right turn by the gate. From **1964-1984** Calderstones Park was home to the Liverpool Botanic Garden, and one of the taxonomic gardens, where plants were ordered by their species so they could be studied, was located here. Today, this space is the Text Garden, an art installation completed in **2001**. The topiary letters spell the names of four plants that would once have been found in the taxonomic garden: Lords-and-Ladies, Love-in-a-Mist, Forget-me-Not and Lily-of-the-Valley.

Return to the gate and walk through, into the rhododendron walk. Take the first right down the gravel path, that skirts the back of the Text Garden and then through a sandstone wall. At the T junction turn left. You will pass the miniature railway used by the Mersey Live Steam Group, then, when you reach a tarmac drive, look to your left to see a lodge house. This part of the park was once the grounds of Harthill House, another mansion house that once stood next-door to Calderstones, and this was one of the entrances to the estate.

Next, make your way to the Four Seasons Gate, via the dirt track next to the allotments, or, if this is very muddy, either take the pavement on Harthill Road or make your own route following

park paths. The Four Seasons Gate stands at the end of Jubilee Drive. The statues that surround it once adorned the Browns Building on Water Street, a building owned by the wealthy banker Sir William Brown. When the building was demolished in **1926** the statues were relocated here. Each of the women represent a different season.

Go back down Jubilee Drive, this time pausing when you reach a hexagonal glasshouse, Harthill Vestibule. This is all that remains of a series of **16** interconnected glasshouses that once stood in this part of the park as part of the Liverpool Botanic Gardens. One of the many plant collections inside was a nationally important collection of orchids.

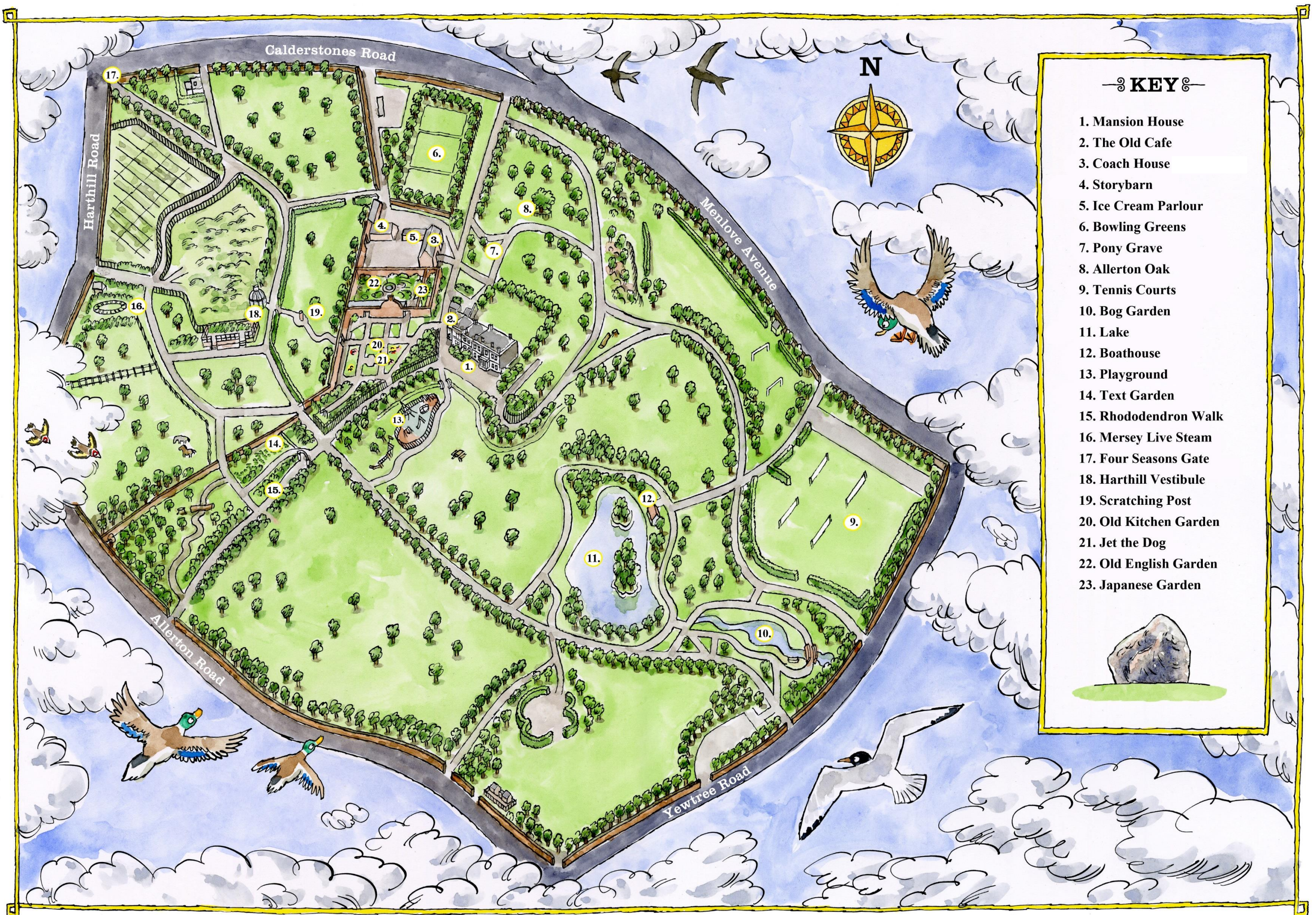
Next, take the path opposite the glasshouse, which leaves Jubilee drive through a gap in the hedge. In the middle of the path is a cattle rubbing stone, or scratching post, which dates from when this area was livestock fields for the Victorian Mansion House.

Continue down the path, and through the gate into the walled garden. In the **19th** Century this was the kitchen garden, and gardeners would have grown regimented rows of fruit and vegetables here. There were even glasshouses for tropical fruit such as melons and pineapples, which were fashionable to serve at dinner parties.

In the centre of the garden is a memorial to Jet the Dog. Jet was born near Calderstones Park in **1942** and was trained at the War Dogs School in Gloucester. He was the first official civil defence rescue dog, and was renowned for refusing to leave collapsed buildings until everyone was pulled out. In **1945** he was awarded the Dickin Medal for saving over **50** people trapped in bombed buildings.

Going North you will enter another walled garden, which today is planted in the style of an old English garden. Wind your way through the paths to the Japanese garden. This was created as part of an apprenticeship scheme in the **1970s**.

Make your way back to the Mansion House to complete your walk.



KEY

1. Mansion House
2. The Old Cafe
3. Coach House
4. Storybarn
5. Ice Cream Parlour
6. Bowling Greens
7. Pony Grave
8. Allerton Oak
9. Tennis Courts
10. Bog Garden
11. Lake
12. Boathouse
13. Playground
14. Text Garden
15. Rhododendron Walk
16. Mersey Live Steam
17. Four Seasons Gate
18. Harthill Vestibule
19. Scratching Post
20. Old Kitchen Garden
21. Jet the Dog
22. Old English Garden
23. Japanese Garden