

The twenty years during which Saltaire was developing, between 1851 and the early 1870s, was a period of considerable debate about the use of colour, in paintings, interiors and, of course, in gardens and designed landscapes.

During the 1850s and 1860s, there was an emphasis on rich or brilliant colour, often primary colours. Quite quickly, however, this taste came to be questioned, partly due to a suspicion that 'primitive' races preferred bold colours. In 1863, Andrew Murray, the Assistant Secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society, asked rhetorically: 'Does not the gaudy glitter of these beds (at the Sydenham Crystal Palace Park) address itself to the lower elements of our taste? It is the savage who is caught by the gayest colours, and a liking for them... is a remnant of primitive barbarism which is shared by us all, but possessed in smaller and smaller proportions as we ascend the scale of civilisation.'

Subtler colours began to be more popular. Writing in 1877 on *The Royal Parks and Gardens of London*, for example, Nathan Cole discussed the preferred use of colours, and recommended that secondary and tertiary tones should be used, rather than the primaries. He also emphasised the importance of the wider context of any colour, as no individual element will be seen in isolation. Thus, he recommended a number of combinations with which it would be possible to achieve 'some of the most refined and beautiful arrangements':

- Deep blue and golden brown
- Peach and dark blue
- Light purple and light orange-yellow
- Olive and russet
- Deep claret and sea-green.

This discussion had a profound influence on art and gardening. Thus, in any designed environment at this period, colour was not applied in an *ad hoc* fashion. It seems that Roberts Park would have been no exception.

Hand finished photographs, such as the one shown to the left, dated c.1900, suggest that the colours used in the displays of flowers and shrubs were, indeed, fairly soft, predominantly secondary and tertiary hues. Likewise, the West Shelter is described as being painted in dark ochre, and the metalwork of the seat on the terrace appears to be a dark grey-blue. Even accepting that the hand-coloured photographs may be misleading, the furniture and structures in Roberts Park are likely to have moved away from the brighter colours characteristic of earlier years, towards a more subtle range.



One piece of very specific evidence is in Half Moon Pavilion. The walls (right) are lined with soft, buff-ochre bricks above the dado, and tiled below. The tiles are plain and glazed in a quite beautiful range of tones, soft blue-grey, dove grey and green-grey. The feature is finished with a frieze of decorative tiles: twining raspberries, green leaves and a rich red trellis on a soft, blue ground. In this building, if nowhere else, we know for certain that the colours reflected the passion for rich and subtle tones that characterised the closing decades of the 19th century.



You have told us during consultation this year that you think colour should be a major aspect of the restored Park. With this and the above argument in mind, we have developed a colour palette for Roberts Park which draws predominantly on the secondary or tertiary tones shown below. Harmonious combinations of these colours will be applied to all the elements that are restored or reinstated, including railings, gates, bins, building timbers, and a new bandstand. The same palette will be employed for interpreting the Park, on leaflets, signs etc. Combinations include:

- Gates: green, with ochre highlights;
- Seats along the promenade: blue, with green-grey and pink highlights;
- Signs and bollards: deep red, with ochre highlights;

- Principal timber elements of the West and East Shelters: ochre, with blue, gold and dark pink highlights;
- Principal timber elements of the North Shelter: dark red, with green, gold and green-grey highlights.

