

2002-2012 (2011)

The Strand Gardens



The Strand Gardens were originally just that – gardens in which wealthy locals and holiday-makers could stroll and engage in social chit-chat whilst the iron railings kept the riff-raff at bay. The railings can be seen above although, as the picture clearly dates from after the erection of the war memorial in 1921, they were by then purely decorative.

When “The Strand Enclosure” was given to the town by the Rolle estate in 1870, it was on condition that the layout, once established, should not be altered, and that the space should not be used for any exhibitions, shows or public meetings. Since then, the layout has been altered several times, and exhibitions, shows and public meetings have become the lifeblood of the area! The first Exmouth Festival was held here and has since become a major annual celebration of music, drama, the arts and seriously good food.



Jason Sedgemore

The most recent adjustment of the layout, in 2011, achieved two major improvements. Most importantly, it closed the roads in front of the shops, and turned a huge traffic island into the pedestrianised haven it now is. It also provided an opportunity to resolve long-term flooding issues. As a result, the site can now accommodate the vastly increased footfall of a modern town centre, whilst retaining as much as possible of the garden element. At the same time, it provides space for events and commemorations, such as the annual Remembrance Sunday service.

If you walk to the far corner of The Strand, alongside the TSB you will find a magnolia tree. This is a variety called *Magnolia Grandiflora Exmothiensis*, named after the town, and the first example of the magnolia to be introduced to this country (by Sir John Colleton, who laid out The Parade as a gravelled walk for the earliest holidaymakers).