

The Stray at Bogs Field

FOLLOWING last week's Bygone Harrogate about the incorporation of Collins' Field into Valley Gardens, *Advertiser* reader HG Blakeny-Flynn, DSO, OBE, RN retired, has asked if a photo exists that shows Collins' field before it was added to the rest of Valley Gardens.

I am pleased to comply with the Commander's request by reproducing a postcard view of about 1900 that shows every feature of last week's article, save for the stone wall between Valley Gardens proper, and Collins' Field. This week's photograph shows a view of the Royal Bath Hospital taken from the upper floor of one of the houses in Valley Drive. Today, this view will not be possible, due to the height and thickness of the trees on the Valley Drive boundary, but even if it were, the gardens would appear far more formal.

Collins' Field may be seen at



centre right, although the stone boundary wall that separated it from Valley Gardens is hidden by a hedge. On my original postcard, it is possible to make out a few plain wooden benches, which can only have been added after the land was bought by the Corporation in 1901. At the centre of the card may be seen the still existing footpath that led to the old Magnesia Well Pump Room on Bogs Field, which was surrounded by Stray, when this

photograph was taken in about 1903.

What are not visible are the many Bogs Field Wells, most of which are hidden by the trees at the foot of the photograph. The dome of the 1895 New Magnesia Well still has the look of new copper, and to the right may be seen part of the circular decorative bandstand, which was also built in 1895, and which stood on the same site as the present bandstand of 1933.

To the photograph's left may

be seen the path that still leads to Harlow Moor, although most of the Bogs Field was laid out in the 1920s with the familiar circular flower beds that are today so beautifully maintained by Harrogate Council. The planned temple at the heart of the Bogs Field circle was never built, due to the belt-tightening of the Great Depression.

The question may be asked: "Why, if Bogs Field was part of the Stray, was it allowed to be turned into a public garden".

The simple answer is that it just happened, and nobody objected, although the late JH Ogden pointed out that within the restrictions of the 1893 Stray Act, it was an encroachment, and that to charge for entry to the new tennis courts (an illegal encroachment) was clearly contrary to the spirit of the original Stray Act, which had said that all of the 200 acre must be forever open and unenclosed.

The same tacit acceptance also occurred on Montpellier Hill. The delightful gardens that line the route of Montpellier Parade from Bettys to the Montpellier Pub, have been taken from the Stray, but I doubt that anyone today would want to restore the unadorned grass.

This is not to say that the people of Harrogate will accept anything, as the Council discovered in the 1930's when they tried to turn the West Park Stray into a park, or the 1950's when the Town Clerk tried to get a conference centre on South Stray. As for playgrounds, the new one on the Valley Drive entrance is very welcome, and an excellent and much valued amenity, and moreover, an amenity at an appropriate location.