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Somebody call elf 'n' safety, standards are on the

[Add to cart](#)By [RYAN KISIEL FOR THE DAILY MAIL](#)**PUBLISHED:** 05:58 EDT, 17 April 2012 | **UPDATED:** 04:08 EDT, 18 April 2012[View c](#)

With their rickety ladders leading to a steep descent with little or nothing to hold on to, these 1922 slides would have today's health and safety zealots scrambling for their clipboards.

But the children, in their school ties, caps and shorts, seem perfectly happy to ride down the polished wooden planks.

The scene was captured shortly after Britain's first slide was constructed – and is a world away from the far more modern metal slide with side rails found in the same playground today.



The original: The slide built in 1922 at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire. Three long plans with nothing to apart from at the top of the tallest, which is 13ft high



© Geoff Robinson

Old fashioned fun: The primitive piece of play equipment was constructed in 1922 in Wicksteed Park in Kettering, Northamptonshire - the first public park in the UK



© Geoff Robinson

Stick to your side: Initially Wicksteed made separate slides for the boys and girls, which were labeled to avoid confusion. Children had to sit astride the wooden planks and hold onto the edges to stop themselves falling off.

There were three slides, the steepest one for boys and the other two for girls (though in the picture here, boys using all three).

For the tallest slide, boys climbed a 13ft ladder before sitting on the wooden plank angled at 45 degrees.

TRENDING



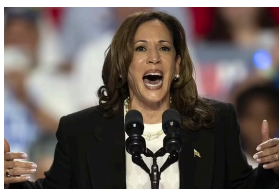
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At the same park today the modern metal structure has a 9ft ladder with rails, safety barriers at the top, and is curved off at the bottom to slow your descent.

There is also a rubberised surface to cushion anyone who falls.

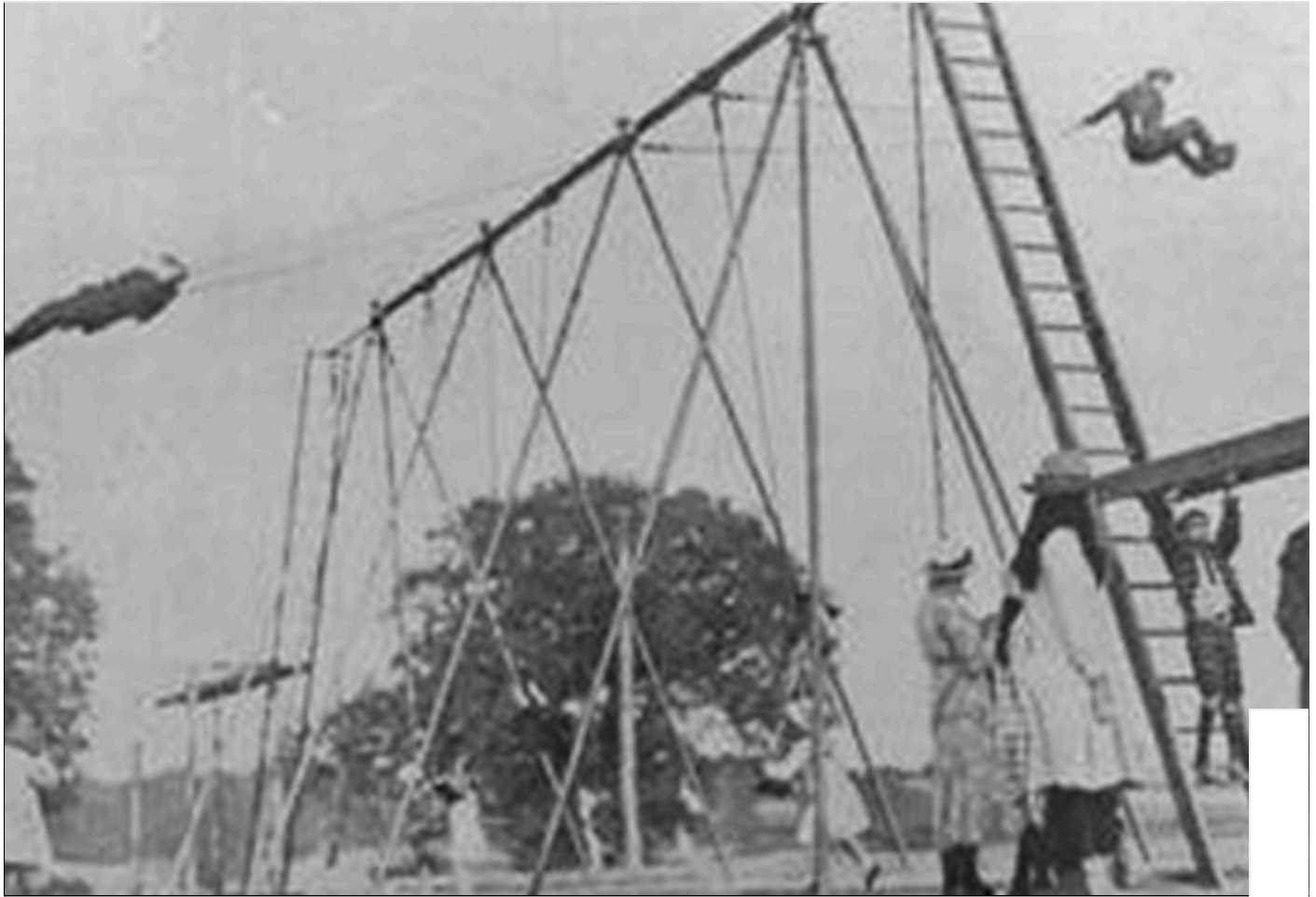


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Warm-hearted: Wicksteed, who was born in 1847 in Leeds, opened Wicksteed Park after the First World War because he wanted to give something back to the town he loved



1935: By this time Wicksteed's slide was made to a new design out of steel and wood, with a curve at the end to slow down



Fun play: Mr Wicksteed wanted to push boundaries for children's outdoor play - he was renowned for his swings as well slides

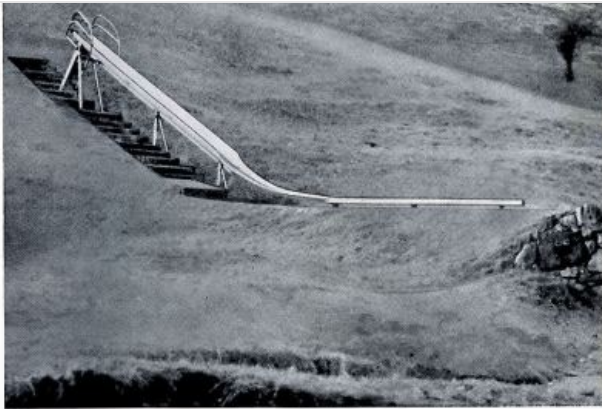
The 1922 slide was designed by Charles Wicksteed, who went on to manufacture the slide for playgrounds all over the world after building these in Wicksteed Park, the public space he created in Kettering, Northamptonshire.

The photo was found by child play historian Linden Groves, who was researching playgrounds for the slide's 90th anniversary today.

'The health and safety brigade would have a fit if a slide like this was put in a playground,' she said. 'But in those days people took responsibility for themselves. If you fell off a slide and tore your trousers you would get a clip round the ear from your dad, not a six-figure payout.'

A Wicksteed company catalogue from 1924 says: 'The supposed wear and tear of the children's clothes does not take place.'

'It was at first thought that children would hesitate about climbing so high a ladder; this has proved to be quite a mistake, they go up without fear or trembling, and we have never had an accident of any sort, although tens of thousands of sliders use them.'



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FREE OF CHARGE



The First Slide

Established 1876
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Inventor: Charles Wicksteed, initially made slides for his park, then went on to manufacture and sell them around the world



ALL-METAL CONSTRUCTION

These all-metal slides are curved at the bottom, ending in a horizontal section of sufficient length to reduce the speed at the end of the slide to such an extent as to effectively prevent any danger in alighting.

With this design, we are able to give the slide itself a slope and a speed that would otherwise be dangerous. The increase of slope and speed is of great advantage in damp weather, when an ordinary slope is not sufficiently slippery.

This most popular appliance will accommodate children at the rate of twenty a minute.

Extra deep Timber Guards supplied on request at extra cost.

Precision made for easy erection.

We can offer slides designed to fix into existing natural banks — conforming to individual contour of slope. (See page 10)

★ STRENGTH, SAFETY, SECURITY.

Manufactured in three sizes—

18 ft. 6 ins.—Weight : 10 cwts. 3 qrs. 21 lbs.
Safety Ground Space : 30 ft. x 6 ft.

30 ft.—Weight : 17 cwts. 2 qrs. 7 lbs.
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40 ft.—Weight : 22 cwts. 0 qr. 6 lbs.
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SPECIFICATIONS—

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All metal construction. The steps are made of 4" x 2" angles with specially designed renewable malleable iron steps and steel dougl rail. The chute is supported by 3" x 3" tee iron, and is made of cast iron B.S. 1452 with hard cold rolled brass liner surface fixed to thereby obviating any need for the use of screws. Thus any expansion or contraction that should take place adjusts itself and does not buckling of the brass.

The supports are of 2½" dia. steel tubing.

All-Metal Slides



Popular: 'The slide is the most popular appliance we make. It will accommodate children at the rate of 20 a minute, which is a great feature. Parents enjoy seeing the sport, even when they don't join in it,' said Mr Wicksteed

By 1929, Wicksteed's slide had become his most popular piece of play equipment.

He developed the design so that it was made from steel and wood with a flat length at the end so that children could slow down.

It can be seen in use in the 1935 photo above, and Wicksteed wrote: 'It will accommodate children at the rate of a minute, which is a great feature. Parents enjoy seeing the sport, even when they don't join in it.'



© Geoff Robinson



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Still enjoyable: Children enjoy the slides in Wicksteed park on the exact same spot as children 90 years ago on the original wooden slides

WHO WAS CHARLES WICKSTEED AND WHAT ELSE DID HE INVENT?

Charles Wicksteed was born in 1847 in Leeds, the son of a clergyman and lived in Leeds.

When his father's health deteriorated they moved to Wales where Charles spent his school days.

At 16 he began a 5 year apprenticeship with Kitson & Hewitson following his passion for engineering and then at 21, with investment from his family and friends he set up a steam plough contracting business.

The Earl of Leicester described him as 'the hardest working man he had ever met'.

He was single-minded, working 16 hours a day in pursuit of success and did not drink or enjoy sport.

In 1914 when the war began, Charles purchased the land that is now Wicksteed Park, his factory started to make shells for the army and his beloved wife Mary passed away - they had two sons and one daughter.

After the war Charles was financially secure and decided that it was time to give something back to the town he loved.

the plan was soon modified when the government introduced Council Housing.

Charles pressed on with the development of his park and reinvented himself yet again becoming a manufacturer of play equipment initially for the park.

Another legacy – this equipment especially swings can still be seen all over the world and is made to this day. Most people in this country have sat on a Wicksteed at some time in their lives.

Charles was not only a manufacturer but an inventor with many patents. He designed:

- Seating to suit the human form.
- Prefabricated buildings.
- The fantastic bread buttering machine (a working version is still owned by the Park) managing up to 400 slices an hour and was later purchased by 'The White Star Line'.
- In 1907 he took a major gamble and at the age of 60, he invested heavily in 'the Wicksteed Speed Change Gear' a form of automatic transmission (a forerunner to the gearboxes now used in Grand Prix Cars). It was described at that time in the Daily Mail as 'the very thing for lady drivers.'
- A 'hydraulic hacksaw', which was exhibited at Olympia. It could cut steel in 5 mins instead of 1 hour, it was instant success and the works was modified for its mass production.
- In 1926 Charles introduced one of the first water based rides in the world with the installation of the water chute. The 'Waterchute' at Wicksteed Park is one of only 3 still remaining in operation.

He died in 1931 from influenza and pneumonia and at his funeral days afterwards the streets of Kettering were lined with people.

Source: wicksteedpark.co.uk



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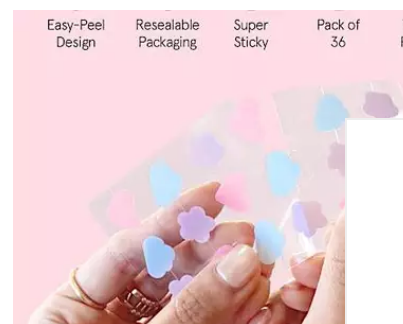
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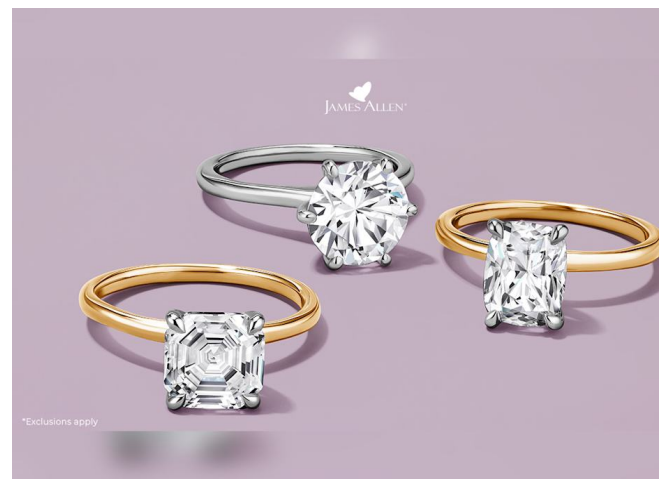
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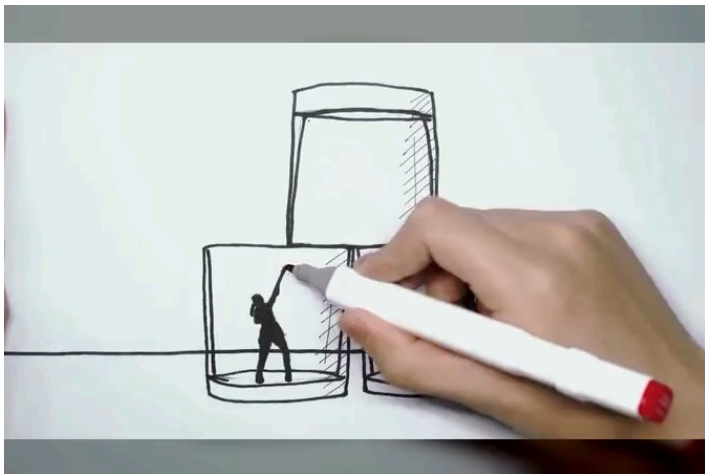
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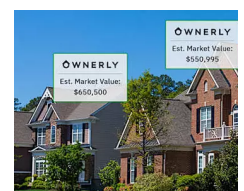
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- Athena , Sussex, 1 decade ago

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- Jason newark , Kettering ,England, 1 decade ago

"Kettering today and tomorrow" which has lots of pictures and interesting facts and comments about this lovely Northamptonshire town.I hope you po
and take a look at the sites ,better still why not pay Wicksteed Park a visit you wont be disappointedjason newark sites administrator ..

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Pop, England, 1 decade ago

Aye them were the days.Why even the penknife had a spike for taking stones out of horses hoofs.it's still as good as new.

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