Tokushima Park 徳島公園

A symbol of the feudal past, Tokushima Castle was demolished in the wake of the Meiji Restoration and the land it occupied, in the heart of the city, was designated for public use. The main tower was torn down in 1869 and most remaining buildings were removed by 1874. Tokushima Park was founded on this former castle ground at the turn of the twentieth century to mark Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Washi-no-mon, literally the “Eagle Gate”, was the only original feudal structure in this redeveloped area.

On the night of 3rd July 1945 an air raid devastated the city of Tokushima. The 314th Wing dropped over one thousand tonnes of incendiary bombs on the city and very few buildings survived. Although the park has recovered, a number of the civic buildings that stood there were relocated. It was not until 1989 that the Eagle Gate was replaced and, now, a monument displaying one of Iihara’s scenes of the park stands proudly alongside it. The park is now home to the Tokushima Castle Museum and its picturesque garden.
Senshukaku Hotel 千秋閣

The Senshukaku Hotel, completed in December 1907, was built to accommodate Prince Yoshihito, who would go on to become Emperor Taisho. With the dark green forest of Shiroyama in the background, the Senshukaku was an awe-inspiring sight. For years it was used regularly as a public auditorium and it became much loved by the people of Tokushima. Regrettably, this majestic building was burnt down during the war.
The Koukei Library  光慶図書館

The Koukei Library was built in 1917 at the southern foot of Shiroyama, koukei means “light and celebration”. It officially served as Tokushima Prefecture’s central library and it notably contained the Awa Province
book collection and the work of Wenceslau de Moraes, amongst others.

The library was burnt down by the US air raid in July 1945.

After the war, a new cultural center was built, largely funded by public donations. Opened in 1949 as the ‘Constitutional Memorial Building’ in commemoration of Japan’s post-war constitution, it too burned down the following year in an accidental fire.

In 1953, a three-storey Prefectural Library was constructed from reinforced concrete. It went on to serve the public for over thirty years, closing in 1990 when a new library was built in Bunka no Mori, in Hachiman-cho.

Now, as locals walk around the vacant land at the foot of Shiroyama, the decades of memories of the library come flooding back, like so many books stacked row by row on the library shelves – the colour of the new leaves glistening through the windows of the reading rooms, the smiling faces of people who attended courses there. Standing there, it is almost hard to part from the now-empty site, lost in nostalgia for all that once stood there.
The statue of Masakatsu and the Koukei Library 正勝像と光慶図書館

The bronze statue that stood in front of the Koukei Library was erected in 1913 but later melted down to help the war effort. The Koukei Library was a prefectural library opened in 1917, which was burned down in the
1945 air raid. In 1949 the “Constitution Memorial Building” was built in its place, but it too burnt to the ground due to an accidental fire a year later. It was eventually replaced by the Tokushima Prefectural Library, but now even that has been relocated to Bunka no Mori.

All that remains in that space of lost memories now are the petals of cherry blossoms scattered to the wind.
The cherry blossoms in Tokushima Park  徳島公園の桜

In 1871, after the feudal clan system was abolished and the prefectural system began, all that remained of Tokushima Castle was the Eagle Gate
in an otherwise overgrown area. In 1905, construction began on a park to commemorate victory in the Russo-Japanese War, and three years later it was all but finished. By 1928, around the time that the northern path around Shiroyama was finished, a number of cherry trees had cropped up, filling the park with their blossoms come springtime.

Eras come and go – from Meiji to Taisho, from Taisho to Showa, from Showa to Heisei – but the cherry blossoms go on blooming and falling just the same, silently watching on as the human world goes through its vicissitudes. When we go to view the cherry blossoms, are we looking at the flowers... or are they the ones watching us?
In front of Tokushima Park 鹿児島公園前

In 1905 work began to create a park from the former site of Tokushima Castle to commemorate victory in the Russo-Japanese War. In the six years it took to complete, the Senshukaku Hotel and the commercial museum were built as well. The plaza in front of the Eagle Gate was sometimes used by vendors looking for somewhere to set up shop, as well as by the occasional performer looking to put on an exotic show of some sort – Chinese magic, maybe, or animal displays.
Sukiya Bridge 数寄屋橋

This bridge dates back to the days of Tokushima Castle, but it was expanded in 1877. It is made from Japanese cypress wood and it boasts ornate railings. There was once a small levee built around the moat, but it
was removed in the Showa era and trees were planted in its place. Various meetings were held at Kiraku, a restaurant to the west of the bridge.
The Eagle Gate was a remnant of the Hansei period that stood at the entrance of Tokushima Castle Park until it was destroyed during the air raid in 1945. The cries of street vendors' sales pitches could often be heard in the public square in front of the gate, but that didn't draw much of a crowd by itself, so sometimes they held performances of various sorts – Chinese magic, maybe, or a performing bear – free of charge. In summer,
some groups danced Awa Odori there, and spectators would gather around to watch.
The Eagle Gate

Many people passed through the Eagle Gate – not only people coming to spend time at the park, but also people who use the park as a shortcut from Tokushima-honcho to the Tokushima station area. Though they're very rarely seen today, flamboyantly-dressed street musicians called chindonya were once employed for advertising throughout Japan. For a long time, chindonya consisted of about four or five people handing out flyers, with maybe a bell, a drum and a shamisen for musical
accompaniment. Then, in the early Showa period, along came Sho-chan and his chindonya, with Sho-chan himself leading on horseback a procession of dozens of marching flag bearers, bookended with a mixture of Japanese and Western-style musical instruments at both the front and back of the parade, Sho-chan making sure that everyone keeps in line.
The view from the ruined moon viewing tower  月見櫓跡から

Standing here in the summer grass, beyond the rows of old houses, you could see the high roof of the Western-style city hall, as well as the courthouse with its chrysanthemum seal glowing under the large roof. This small, sleepy city seems for all the world to have been left behind by the march of time, and yet, although the water in the moat may appear to have stopped, the shadows of white clouds on the water can be seen changing shape surprisingly rapidly.
The product display building stood in the south-east of Tokushima Park, near where the culture centre is now. Completed in 1907, it was built not only to display various products from Tokushima and elsewhere, but also to commemorate Japan’s 1905 victory in the Russo-Japanese War. With an area of approximately one hundred and seventy square metres, there were two floors – local product displays such as Awa-shijira fabrics and woodblock on the first floor, war memorabilia on the second.

The display building quietly watched as the clouds passed by Tokushima
over the years – through the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Manchurian Incident in 1931, the Shanghai Incident the following year in 1932, and the Second Sino-Japanese War starting in 1937, until finally, the Asia-Pacific War came in 1941, blurring the front lines and the home front, and ultimately leading to the building’s destruction during the 1945 air raid.
There was a bridge over the Terashima River called Kenzaki, literally – the point of a sword, and it led to Tokushima Castle Park from the Tokushima Station area. Many people crossed over this bridge to view cherry blossoms in spring and to celebrate Bon Odori in summer. The
water of the river was perfectly clear, reflecting the green pine trees and stone wall of the castle. The bridge railings were very high, too high for children to see over. Children used to jump from the railings and splash around in the water which made them extremely happy and proud of themselves – they greeted passersby with looks of triumph! Regrettably, the Teramachi River was filled to provide free land for train lines through the city and the clear water can no longer be seen.
Children’s Land

Children’s Land stood at the eastern foot of Shiroyama. In 1922 fifty Japanese macaques were donated to the park and it was expanded over time. There was a large waterfowl enclosure in the Senshukaku garden and then, for a few years in the 1930s, many deer and small birds were kept and a new playground was installed, making for an absolute dreamland for children.
Cheerful cries of children floated off into the sky alongside balloons carelessly let go of in their excitement as they watched ducks in their coloured plumage, or perhaps as they admired the way families of monkeys would remove the shells from peanuts the children had bought at the little shop. One can almost still hear the children even now as one walks around the foot of Shiroyama, thinking back to those long days from childhood.