

Christchurch Park – Timeline

This timeline is gleaned from a number of different sources, some of which vary with details of dates and events. A number of these variances are marked with a question mark in the text. I am quite confident there are other mistakes and omissions, for which I am delighted to be corrected (see details on the Contact us page). If you wish to use this timeline, please credit the Friends of Christchurch Park. Richard Wilson

1086 – In the Domesday Book, “Alnulfus the priest has a church, Holy Trinity, to which belongs twenty-six acres in alms”. The church was to the west of Thingstede Way (Bolton Lane) and the parish boundaries were probably similar to St. Margaret’s

c.1177 – Augustinian Priory of Holy Trinity (also known as Christ Church) founded by Norman Gastrode and first Priory buildings established

1194 – Priory rebuilt, after having being badly damaged by fire, by John of Oxford, Bishop of Norwich and formerly Dean of Salisbury and Chaplain to Henry II

1297 – 8 January, Edward I visits Christ Church on the day of his daughter Elizabeth’s marriage to the Count of Holland (they were aged 14 and 12 respectively)

1393 – Royal pardon granted to canon John Bendel for causing the death of Godfrey Neketon, cook

1536 – Priory suppressed by Henry VIII and on 10 March 1537 the estates granted for 21 years by deed to Sir Humfrey Wingfield and Sir Thomas Rushe

1536 – 10 March, a survey by the Crown of the trees states there were “300 okes and elms of lxxx & c yeres growth” [300 oaks and elms of 80 to 100 years growth]

1544 – 21 March, Henry VIII grants “the site and house of the late Priory of S. Trinity” to Sir Thomas Pope, who was later to become a Privy Counsellor under Queen Mary and the founder of Trinity College, Oxford

1545 – 19 February Pope receives license to sell to Paul Withypoll

1545 (or 1546?) – 20 February, Paul Withypoll, Master of the Merchant Taylors Company and the City of London’s representative in Parliament, buys the estate (including St. Margaret’s Church) with other manors and land for £2,000, but dies on 3 June 1547

1548-50 – Mansion is built by Edmund Withypoll (born c.1514 or 1515), son of Paul, whose tutor was Wolsey’s chaplain, Thomas Lupset, on the site of the demolished Priory. Now named Christchurch Withypoll or Withypoll House. Edmund marries Elizabeth Hynde c.1535 and fathers 11 sons and 8 daughters

1555 – 19 March, Edmund commanded by the Lords of the Privy Council to pay restitution to the curate of St Margaret's for demolishing a boundary wall and appropriating church land

1561 – 6-11 August, Queen Elizabeth I visits Christchurch and she returns (possibly also in 1565 and 1577?) in 1579

1560's – There were public disturbances after Edmund Withypoll tried to prevent access to the annual fair

1566 – 10 July, Withypoll fined "for taking in with hedge and gate the way for horse and foot from Brook's Hall to Dairy Lane, viz. Pedder's Lane, and payned to lay the same open"

c.1567 – Wilderness Pond created. The springs had previously fed four separate ponds below a terrace of formal gardens and orchard to the west of the Mansion

1568 – The present St Margaret's churchyard walls were built after 1568

1582 – 16 May, Edmund Withypoll dies and the estate passes to his grandson Paul aged 17, eldest son of Paul Withypoll deceased (1579)

1585 – 3 April, Paul dies a month before attaining his majority and the estate passes to his brother Edmund, aged 12 years and 11 days

1619 – 11 November, Sir Edmund dies and the estate passes to his eldest son William

1645 – 11 August, Sir William dies and the estate passes to his daughter and sole heir Elizabeth, wife of Leicester Devereux. The Devereux family own Christchurch until 1735

1646 – A second house is referred to in a deed of this date. Possibly this is Little Christchurch shown in a George Frost painting and named as a property belonging to the Fonnereau family. It stood where Neale Street is today and was demolished after 1848

1649 – Devereaux inherits the title of 6th Viscount Hereford. He begins a series of improvements to the Park and Mansion

1660 – May, Viscount Hereford travels to Holland with five other peers to bring Charles II back to England and restore him to the throne

1668 – 5 October, Charles II stays overnight with Viscount Hereford at the Mansion and may have played bowls in the Park (1662?)

1674 – Christchurch Mansion badly damaged by fire and subsequently rebuilt

1675 – Ogilby's map of Ipswich shows four ponds at the bottom of Dairy Lane

1677 – November, Lord Hereford dies and the estate passes to Leicester, 7th Viscount Hereford, aged 3

1683 – 12 January, Leicester is buried at Sudbourne (aged 9) and is succeeded by his brother Edward (now 8th Viscount Hereford), aged 8

1700 – 9 August, Edward dies aged 25 without issue. Christchurch passes to his only sister, Anne and then to her husband (and cousin) Leicester Martin

1732 – Death of Leicester Martin. The estate passes to the husband of Elizabeth (his only daughter and heir), Price Devereux

1735 – 14 March, Claude Fonnereau buys the estate for £11,500. The grounds are described in deeds as "yards gardens and twenty one acres of meadow, eighty acres of pasture, ground paled in for a park and thirteen acres of wood." This adds up to more than 114 acres of land. Today the Park covers about 82 acres, or 33 hectares

Sometime in the 17th Century (?) – Last remains of the Priory's church, Trinity Chapel, blown up with gunpowder (John Kirby in "Suffolk Traveller" 1735 says "the strong foundation of this steeple was within these few years undermined and blown up with gunpowder". Kirby also produced an estate map of Christchurch on which the Wilderness Pond is called Dovehouse Pond

1772 – Thomas Fonnereau tries to restrict access to the Park by issuing keys to people who sign an agreement outlining conditions of entry

1804 – The estate passes to the Rev. William Fonnereau

Sometime 1811-1820 – Prince Regent (later George IV) visits (possibly Sept 10, 1811, 1812 or 28 Oct 1813?)

1817 – The estate passes to William's second son, the Rev. Charles William Fonnereau. Property comes to be known as Fonnereau Park

1838 – 28 June, children at "voluntary schools" treated to a dinner in the Park to celebrate Queen Victoria's coronation (the "charity children" met in the new market)

1844 – 13 August "and subsequent Tuesdays", the band of the 4th Light Dragoons permitted to play in the Park, "and the public to have free access thereto after four o'clock"

1847 – Fonnereau Road formed

1848 – 20 January, Councillor A. Ransome convenes a public meeting "to determine the propriety of selecting... an eligible spot for the formation of a park or place of helpful outdoor recreation for all classes"

1851 – 4 July, Prince Albert visits Christchurch on his way from Ipswich School to Sparrowe's House (the Ancient House)

1851 – Ipswich Corporation leases 13 acres of parkland to develop the Upper Arboretum (1853?)

1858 – 7 May, two tall elms at the entrance to the Lower Arboretum struck by lightning

1861 – 5 July, Suffolk Agricultural Association holds “a most successful show” in the Park

1862 – 9 November, Mr John Brett presents the drinking fountain in the Upper Arboretum to the town. The total cost was £64

1863 – 4 July, “The Horticultural Society’s show was held in the Lower Arboretum, and the Society announced a display of fireworks in the evening, but the Arboretum Committee fell into a scare, and forbade such, and by formal notice stated they should hold the Society responsible for any damage that might arise if the display took place! Such was made in the Mulberry Tree paddock!” (Grimsey, *The Mayors of the Borough of Ipswich*)

1864 – 23 April, Shakespeare tercentenary celebrated by planting of a silver cedar tree in the Arboretum

1866 – 23 May, His Highness the Maharajah of Lahore visits the Upper Arboretum

1869 – Suffolk Show takes place in the Park

c. 1870 – Large numbers of oak, elm, ash and horse chestnuts are taken down and sold. The hillside on the eastern edge of the Wildlife Reserve is excavated to provide landfill for an area of low ground east of the Wilderness Pond. It is planted with Austrian and Scots Pine

1874 – 10 September, jubilee meeting of the Ipswich Horticultural Society held in the Lower Arboretum

1874 and 1875 – Park Road and Westerfield Road widened and an iron fence placed around the Park

1876 – 8 September, nearly 2,000 children attending Board Schools “provided with amusements and refreshment” in the Park

1892 – Christchurch Mansion sold by William Neale Fonnereau to Felix Thornley Cobbold

1892 – 21 April, 5,110 vote against and 3,784 vote for the purchase of the Park (?)

1893 – Fonnereau’s Executors offer Christchurch Park to Ipswich Town Council for £50,000. Voted against (?)

1893 – 7 January, Ice Carnival held

1893 – 23 January, Cabman’s Shelter opens on the Cornhill

1894 – 21 June, sale of portions of the Christchurch Park estate

1895 – 23 February, Felix Cobbold presents the Mansion to the people of Ipswich

1895 – 11 April (or 12?), Ipswich Corporation buys the Park from William Neale Fonnereau for £28,300 and the Park opens to the public on 24 April

1895 – 3 May, Cabman's Shelter moves to the Park from the Cornhill

1895 – 5 June, boy accidentally killed in the Park

1895 – 22 July, Upper Arboretum closed for military display

1896 – Bolton Lane Lodge knocked down and rebuilt by John Corder, and the pillars from Soane Street Lodge moved here. Iron gates replaced wooden doors

1896 – Burton Fountain donated by Bunnell H. Burton (possibly May 1895?)

1896 – 18 April, Mansion opens as a museum

1898 – Ice cream kiosk donated

1902 – 25 June, A.C. Churchman gives tea to 11,000 children and on 9 August holds a gala with bands and fireworks

1903 – 16 December, the Dean of Canterbury unveils the Martyrs' Memorial at the bottom of the Ancient Avenue

1904 – 28 May, unveiling of the Victoria Memorial in front of the Mansion (later removed)

1907 – 9 September, the Mayor and the Corporation of Ipswich summoned for keeping noisy animals in the Park

1909 – 30 March, man drowns in the Wilderness Pond

1910 – 29 June, open air whist drive held in the Upper Arboretum

1913 – 14 July, meeting of the Caravan Club

1919 – 20 April, first Sunday opening of the Mansion

1922 – Lower Arboretum bought for £1,568 14s 3d and the first tennis courts and croquet lawn established

1924 – 3 May, Cenotaph unveiled. The Suffolk Soldiers Memorial for the South Africa Conflict (or the Boer War) was moved on rollers by about 50 men from the Cornhill where it had stood since 1906

1924 – Tudor merchant's house moved from Major's Corner to the north of the Mansion

1927 – 21 September, Upper Arboretum leased by the Council, eventually bought for £8,500 in February 1928

1930 – 26 June, HRH the Prince of Wales (Edward) watches 1,000 performers at the Wolsey Pageant

1931 – 4 May, new layout to the front of the Mansion opened by the Mayor

1932 – Wolsey Gallery Garden is laid out for the first time

1980 – Brett Fountain restored by the Ipswich Society

1986 – Peace Garden opened between the Wilderness Pond and the Cenotaph

1987 – 16 October, 235 trees lost in the “Great Storm”

1995 – Cabman’s Shelter badly damaged by a fire set by vandals

1998 – The Cherry Avenue was planted in Upper Arboretum by Ipswich Horticultural Society to launch the Christchurch Tree Trail

2001 – £150,000 refurbishment of Children’s Play Area

2003 – Heritage Lottery Fund approves application for restoration of the Park

2004 – Servicemen who died in World War Two added to the War Memorial

2006 – Cabman’s Shelter restored and moved to the Westerfield Road entrance

2008 – 6 May, opening of the Reg Driver Visitor Centre and completion of the £4.2 million Heritage Lottery Project

2008 – The Park receives its first Green Flag Award from the Civic Trust

2011 – 8 April, the Ipswich Society’s Blue Plaque for Felix Thornley Cobbold and The Cobbold Family History Trust interpretation panels are unveiled at the Reg Driver Centre

2011 – A £142,500 Lawn Tennis Association and Sport England grant enables the tennis courts to be re-laid and renewed

2011 – Children’s Orchard established in the old leaf yard