

# Christchurch – a Public Park for More Than a Century

20<sup>th</sup>  
↓  
21<sup>st</sup>  
Century

## Key Dates in the Park During This Time

1903

Martyrs' Memorial unveiled

1922

Lower Arboretum bought for £1,568 14s 3d

1924

Cenotaph unveiled and Boer War Memorial moved on rollers from the Cornhill

1928

Upper Arboretum bought for £8,500

1987

235 trees lost in October's 'Great Storm'

2006

Cabman's Shelter restored and moved to the Westerfield Road entrance

2008

Opening of the Reg Driver Visitor Centre and completion of the Heritage

## Bought for the People

In 1894 William Neale Fonnereau offered the estate to the Corporation (now Ipswich Borough Council) for £42,000. His offer was turned down and a property syndicate bought the land and sold parcels of it for housing. Up to this point the houses on Bolton Lane, Westerfield Road and Park Road did not exist. In 1895 Felix Thornley Cobbold presented Christchurch Mansion to the town as a gift on the condition that the Corporation purchased the remainder of the Park. The Corporation bought what is now the Park for £28,300 on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1895.

## A Public Park

The Park was opened to the public on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1895 with a Mr Damant as Park Attendant. He was given a budget of £500 for upkeep.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> May the Cabman's Shelter was transferred to the Park from the Cornhill. It had sat on the Cornhill for only three years before it moved to its new home just inside the Bolton Lane entrance.

There are various records of landscaping works mostly to the arboreta; however, one record shows the purchase of trees to hide the views of the houses in Bolton Lane (to the east of the Mansion).

In 1896 a drinking fountain was donated by B. H. Burton – it was installed just to the north east of what is now the children's play area. Of course in 1896 the play area did not exist – the site was about to be occupied by a bandstand. Just beyond the bandstand, at the top of 'Snow Hill', was another shelter, which was topped with a clock.

As the Park became popular and the lower footpaths had more use so the grass needed more protection. Various areas were fenced off making sure users would not stray from the paths.

While keeping control of park users was important, so was providing for them and in 1898 the ice cream kiosk was donated.



## Memorials

In 1903 the Dean of Canterbury unveiled the Martyrs' Memorial. The memorial commemorates nine people who were burned at the stake between 1538 and 1558 for their Protestant beliefs.

In 1924 the Cenotaph was unveiled. This was a memorial displaying the names of Ipswich men who had died during the Great War (World War One). Recently, was renovated and updated to include the names of those who lost their lives during World War Two. The second unveiling took place on the same date (16<sup>th</sup> May) in 2004.

A memorial to those soldiers who died in the Boer War was moved to the Park from the town, in 1931, where it had been since 1906.

In 1922 the Lower Arboretum was purchased for just under £1,600 and the Park took its present shape when the Upper Arboretum came into the Borough's ownership in 1928.

During 1986 the area to the south of the Wilderness Pond was landscaped and set out as a Peace Garden. The garden looks out over the memorial area and offers a quiet setting in which to remember.

## Trials and Restoration

Christchurch had been hit by strong winds many times in the past but in October 1987 the Park was closed after 'the Great Storm' felled 235 trees. An area of the Park was so badly damaged that it was fenced off for some time. This area remains fenced and has become the Bird Reserve.

In 1995 the Cabman's Shelter that had sat inside the Bolton Lane entrance for 100 years was largely destroyed by fire. It was covered by a tarpaulin and protected from further damage.

During the late 1990s Ipswich Borough Council put together a plan to restore the many historic features of the Park. In 2006 the Heritage Lottery Fund project got under way with the restoration of the drinking fountains (Brett and Burton) and the Arts & Crafts and Cabman's shelters. Then, in January 2007, the main body of the restoration project began.

On 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008 the restoration work was completed and this Visitor Centre officially opened.

## Key Dates in Britain and Around The World

1908

Boy Scouts Movement is founded

1918

Votes are granted to women (over the age of 30)

1926

John Logie Baird gives public demonstration of television

1953

The structure of DNA is discovered at Cambridge

1980

Mount St Helens erupts in the United States killing 57 people

1989

Berlin Wall comes down

2007

Work begins on Christchurch Park's restoration

