

The western section of the present Pittville Park was not part of Joseph Pitt's original Pittville Estate. In the early 19th century the land was divided among several owners under the 1806 Enclosure Act. The largest portion was awarded to Francis Welles. He built Marle Hill House (Mansion) on the hill above the millpond on Wyman's Brook.

Until 1935 the insignificant stream marked the border between Cheltenham and Prestbury. The area to the south and west was marshy common land, while the high ground to the north, known as Marle Hill, is lime-based clay.

Cheltenham Corporation bought, or was presented with, land on this west side of Evesham Road over a number of years which became known as the Marle Hill Annexe. It was formally opened as a public pleasure ground on 25 April 1894.

Robert Capper, a wealthy lawyer, magistrate and JP, was the next owner of the house and the millpond became known as Capper's Fish Pond. In 1892 the then owner, Charles Crawford Noble, sold 12 acres of the land to Cheltenham Corporation for about £1,800. A two-acre section of land known as 'The Holts', owned by James Batten Winterbotham, was also sold to the council for £500 on the same day. Part of 'The Holts' is now occupied by Dunalley Primary School in West Drive.

The Council bought Marle Hill House itself and the rest of the estate in 1931 for £6,500. The house was demolished in the 1960s and the houses of Albemarle Gate were built in 1965-67.

1 The Agg-Gardner Recreation Ground

South of the lake, it is named after Sir James Tynte Agg-Gardner, a former Lord of the Manor of Cheltenham and the heir to John Gardner, a business partner of Joseph Pitt. Sir James inherited Gardner's Brewery, was Mayor of Cheltenham and served as Conservative MP for Cheltenham for 39 years in four separate terms.

2 The Agg-Gardner Plaque

James Tynte Agg-Gardner donated money to buy the Recreation Ground for Cheltenham Corporation in 1888. A plaque commemorating this gift can be found on the lodge on the south edge of the Recreation Ground.

Cheltenham Town Football Club was founded in 1887 and played at the Agg-Gardner Recreation Ground, which was formally opened on 20 June 1888 and described at the time as "prettily wooded with beech, elms and willow, with fine views of Marle Hill House and gardens".

A children's paddling pool in the recreation area was constructed in 1937 but was damaged by enemy action during World War II. It was rebuilt in 1947 but has since been grassed over.



The Lodge



Registered charity number 1146790

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Pittville Park – The West Side – Marle Hill Annexe



Marle Hill Mansion



1896 sketch of the old corn mill at Marle Hill

3 Corn Mill
Evidence of a corn mill, demolished circa 1940, is still visible near the top of the waterfall at the western end of the lake. It is shown on maps which predate Marle Hill House. A sketch made in 1896 is reproduced here.

4 The Folly Brickworks
The Folly Brickworks quarried clay where the present golf course is now. The clay pits then became the Folly Lane town rubbish tip until declared full in 1969, after which it was grassed over to extend the golf course. Methane gas and carbon dioxide needed to be vented from the site for decades and contours appeared in the landscape as the tip subsided. A wildflower area was established there in 2014 which has attracted a greater variety of birds.

In 1965 Cheltenham Borough Council acquired the site of the now Leisure Centre which was opened in May 1971 by H.M. Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. Having been severely damaged in the July 2007 floods it was modernised and reopened in August 2008.



A 'rustic bridge' as removed in 1974



The Community Bridge opened in 2012

5 The Community Bridge
The Community Bridge, funded by Cheltenham Borough Council and Severn Trent, joins the north and south banks of the Lower Lake and was opened by Cheltenham Mayor, Cllr. Barbara Driver in 2012. The bridge is decorated with metal sculptures based on drawings made by local schoolchildren and interpreted by metal artist Christopher Lisney. There has been a bridge at the site since 1810 as part of a lane to Marle Hill House. In 1893 the lake was extended to the east and a new bridge was constructed in bamboo. The "rustic bridge" was repaired and replaced several times and removed in 1974 when considered unsafe. In 1983 a bridge was built by the Junior Leaders Regiment Royal Engineers as a training exercise, but this was destroyed by fire and removed in 2004.

6 The Boathouse
In 1894 a boathouse, designed by the Borough Surveyor, Joseph Hall, was built for £90 on the north bank of the lake extension. Ten boats were purchased from Mr Halford's Boat Building Yard in Gloucester. In 1934 the shallow children's boating area was added, with a low fence to divide it from the rest of the lake.



The boathouse circa 1895

It is interesting to see how little the boathouse has changed since it was built. This photograph was taken by Lady Henrietta Gilmour circa 1895.

7 The Pedestrian Tunnel
Often known as the underpass, this was constructed under Evesham Road near where Wyman's Brook is culverted. The £340 tender to do so was accepted from John Strachen of Cardiff in 1892. In 1905 an exit turnstile at the west end was added. Until 1954 two pence was charged to enter the east side of Pittville Gardens on the other side of the road. Following an increase in traffic weight and volume on the road above, the underpass had to be strengthened, which meant narrowing the passageway. White tiles at the entrance outline the original dimensions of the underpass. Many a child 'whoops' on their way through the echoing 125 year old underpass.

Design and artwork by www.lifechart.co.uk



This information board is funded by Cheltenham Borough Council