

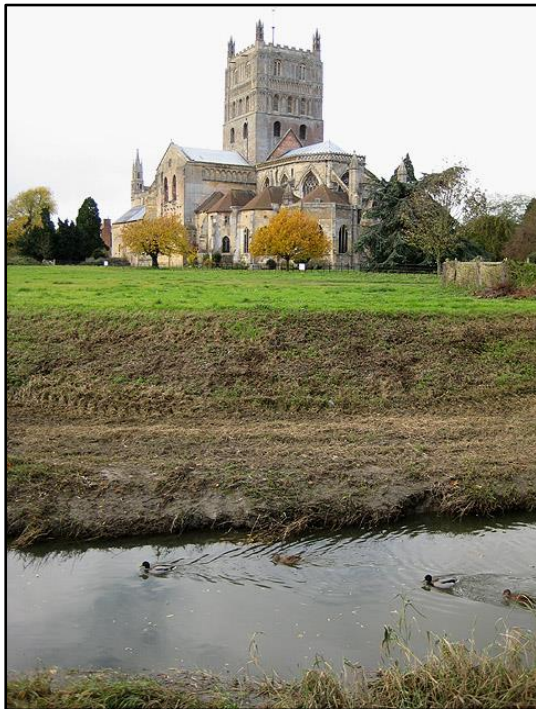
Pittville's watercourse and lakes

THE WATERCOURSE – WYMANS BROOK

Wymans Brook flows through Pittville from east to west. It has two sources:

- First, from the Cleve Hill escarpment at The Hewletts (to the east), the brook runs on the south side of Cheltenham Cemetery in Bouncer's Lane and is culverted in parts of Oakley and Whaddon.
- Second, on the south side of the New Barn Lane ridge (to the north-east), it runs through the Starvehall Farm housing development and then into the Cleevemount area.

Wymans Brook can then be seen in Cleevemount Close and Little Cleevemount. It flows in a culvert under Albert Road near the junction with Pittville Lawn. From here it enters the park and is integrated with the residuum (see below) and the two lakes.



After leaving the park the brook passes through the Wymans Brook housing area, then south of Swindon Village Green and under Manor Road. In the Elmstone Hardwick area it merges with Hyde Brook and together they form the River Swilgate. The Swilgate flows north to Tewkesbury, then turns east, passing south of Tewkesbury Abbey. It flows under the A38 to continue beside Lower Lode Lane (the site of the Battle of Tewkesbury in 1471). Here it empties into the Mill Avon, near the Avon's second, smaller confluence with the River Severn. (The Avon splits and has two confluences with the Severn).

Since the 2007 floods, measures have been taken to reduce the chance of similar flooding. Water levels are monitored in Cheltenham at:

- Prestbury Road, where the normal depth of water is between 0.00m and 0.05m.
- Windyridge Road, where the normal depth of water is between 0.22m and 0.39m.
- Manor Road (Swindon Village) where the normal depth of water is between 0.07m and 0.32m for 90 per cent of the time. A recent high was 1.15m on August 25th 2012 at 5.30pm.

Water holding reservoirs have recently been built within the new Starvehall housing area as part of a flood control system.

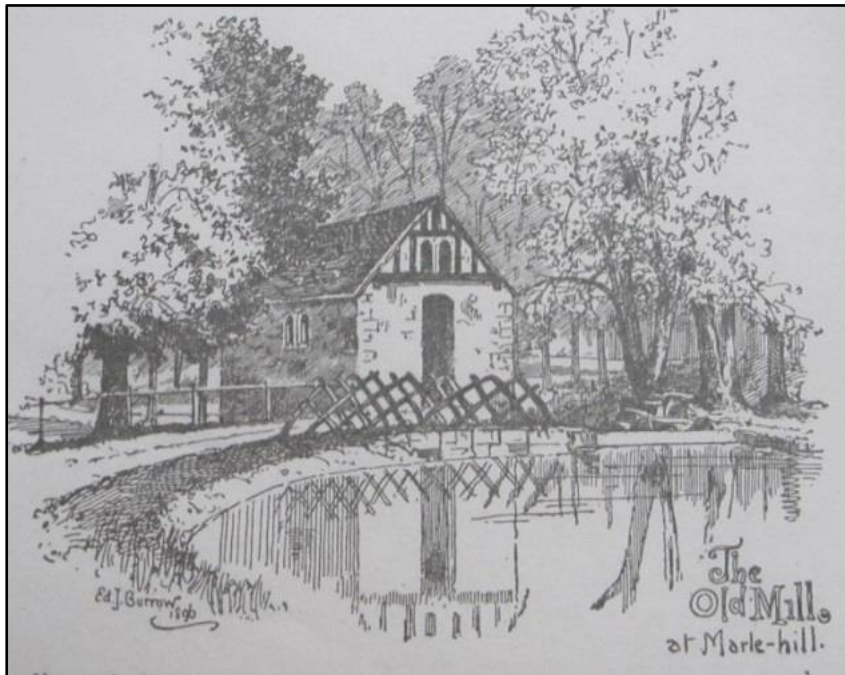
THE LAKES – PITTVILLE PARK

The small natural watercourse described above enabled ponds and lakes to be included in various plans for Pittville over the years. The first, a pond on the west side of the current day Pittville Park; and then, on the east, the large lake which was originally part of the early 19th century Pittville Estate. The larger lake to the west was formed later in the 19th century.

The west side

Millpond

The first pond was a millpond for a water mill, shown on an 1806 map. The foundations for the mill are still visible today, at the far end of the west side boating lake, beside the waterfall. At the time the land in the area was marshy with the brook running through. This picture sketched 90 years later shows the now demolished mill.



In the early 19th century the land in this area was divided among several owners and under the 1806 Enclosure Act, the largest portion was awarded to Francis Welles. He built Marle Hill House (now demolished) on the hill above the millpond.

Fishing pond

The second owner of Marle Hill House was Robert Capper who had the mill pond enlarged and the marsh tamed to become a fishing lake. This was known as Capper's Pond for many years and fishing is still allowed there today (but not in the closed season 15th March to the 16th June when the fish are breeding).

Boating or lower lake

At the end of the 19th century the borough council began to acquire the land which now makes up this western area of the park. They enlarged the pond and widened the brook. A recreational boating lake was established with a boathouse (1894), a rustic bridge installed, many new trees planted and a pleasant "river walk" created. Today it looks very similar to that time except for a metal 'community bridge (2012) which replaced a later rustic bridge (irreparably damaged by fire). An extended shallow area with a concrete base was added to the lake at its east end in 1939 for children's boating, but this is no longer in use.

The east side

This side of Pittville Park was part of an ambitious plan to create a new residential area north of Cheltenham. Joseph Pitt, who had been involved in the building expansion of Cheltenham anticipating a continuing popularity of the mineral waters, bought the land following the Enclosure Act in 1806. By 1825 he had planned a complete layout of classically styled villas, terraces, squares, and a Pump Room, with gardens and a lake. The Pump Room and gardens were completed by 1830.

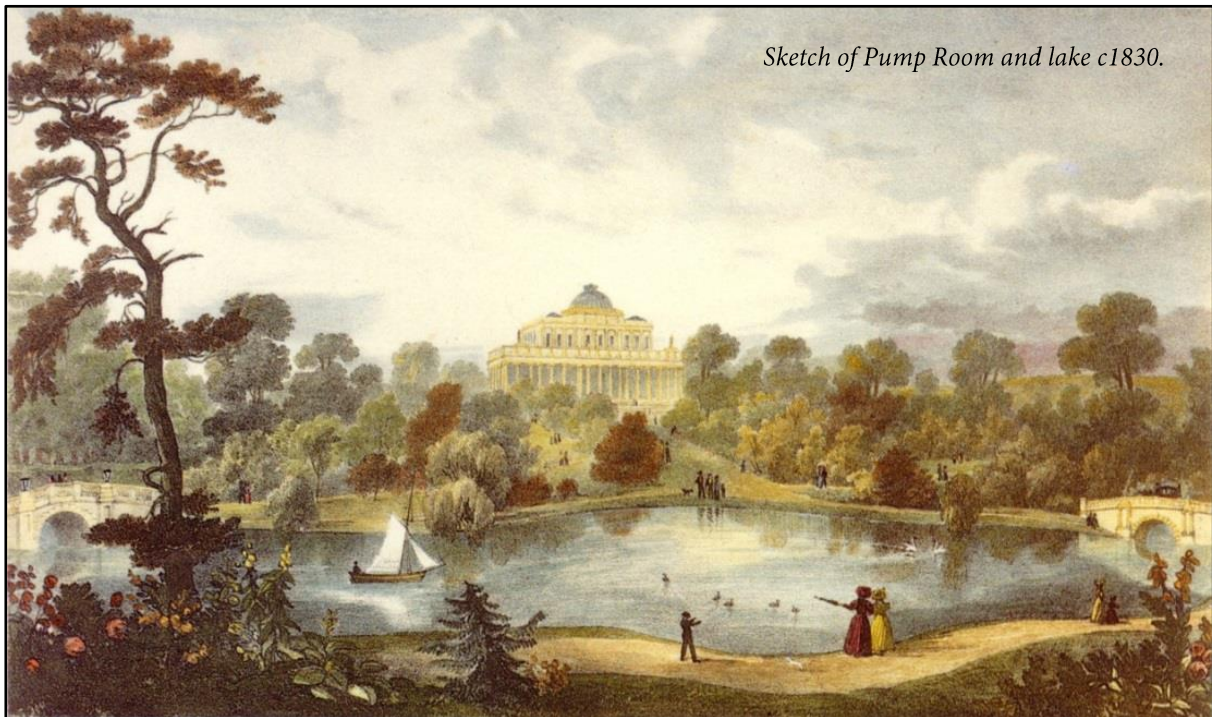
Residuum

Wymans Brook flowed east to west through the land at the bottom of the slope on which the Pump Room was to be built. As it entered the site, a small pond with a low barrier (a residuum) was built to collect any debris coming downstream. This can be seen on the Albert Road side of the eastern stone bridge. It does not look particularly attractive as it is doing the job of allowing only the clearer water to pass into the lake. The solid matter (the residuum) stays within the residuum pond.

East lake

The clearer water flows under the eastern stone bridge of the gardens into a large lake which was dug and landscaped in 1825-1829. The lake was edged with paths, trees were planted and water birds introduced. A wide central path, where the lawn is today, led to the Pump Room.

Wymans Brook leaves the east or upper lake under the western stone bridge and is culverted under the Evesham Road. It flows down an open gully into the boating lake or lower lake on the west side. It then exits Pittville as described earlier.



Can you answer or research the following questions associated with the watercourse and lakes in Pittville?

1. How is the level of the water in the lakes controlled?
2. Why do the lakes have to be dredged periodically?
3. Why do Cheltenham Borough Council have to put fountains in the lake to aerate the water?
4. How many different water birds can you see on the lake?
5. What sort of fish would you expect to find in the lake and give examples?
6. Can you identify any marginal plants around the lakes, which ones like to root in the damp banks and which in the deeper water?
7. How do you row a boat, how is it steered? What safety precautions should you take?

Find an Ordnance Survey map. Can you follow the route of the watercourse from its source to where it flows into the River Severn near Tewkesbury?