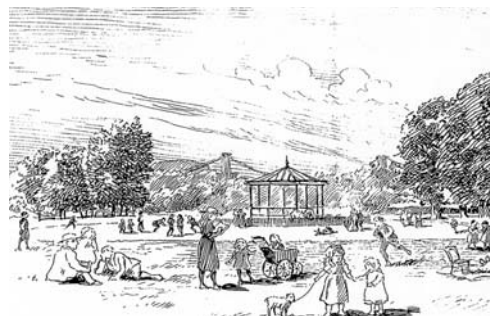


Factsheet - Greville Smyth Park

By 1850, Bristol was declared the third most unhealthy city of mid-19th century England. Many people had left the countryside and moved into the city to find jobs in industry. There were no dustmen to take away the rubbish, drinking water was polluted and there were not enough drains to take away the sewage. So much land had been built on that there was little room for recreation.



1 Greville Smyth was the first substantial Park created by the City in the 1880s. Before this the land was considered rather posh and was known as the Clift House Estate, part of the Ashton Court Estate. John Henry Greville Upton inherited it in 1852 and took the name Greville Smyth from another branch of the family. He was made a baronet in 1859.

2 Over the next 20-30 years, the area declined in appearance and one idea was to build tanks there to treat sewage. In 1881 a tenant of Greville Smyth's, Stephen Harding, suggested offering the land to the City of Bristol "for the purpose of forming a Public Park or Pleasure Ground". The council accepted.



3 In 1883, the council's Open Spaces Committee looked at 13 different plans for laying out "The People's Park at Bedminster" and eventually work began. First of all 50 seats were ordered and in 1884 work was done to protect the site from flooding.

4 The next job was to install features. The whole length of land against the public road leading to Ashton was to be "fenced with a fence wall and iron railings with entrance gates, that an entrance lodge and tool house be built, that paths be laid out and trees and shrubs planted at a cost not exceeding £3,000."

5 In 1887 a drinking fountain and a bandstand were installed and concerts were performed by local brass bands. Boys from Ashton Gate Board School were allowed to exercise in the Park and in 1905 an open air swimming pool was opened. A clubhouse for the bowling green was erected in 1909.

6 People called the new Park the "Bedminster Park" or "Ashton Park" but it was re-named Greville Smyth at the request of Lady Smyth who gave four more acres of land in 1902.

7 Much of the Park and its character has been lost to development. In about 1904, the Smyths took a corner off to build Frayne Road and Clift Road. Then came Ashton Avenue and Clift House Road. The original Clift House had been used as a hospital for diphtheria sufferers but was replaced by the bonded tobacco warehouses in 1919. Most of the iron railings were removed to be melted down to make weapons in the Second World War. A further acre was lost to Cumberland Basin road improvements in 1964.

8 Today the park is used by all age groups for various recreational activities including a very active bowling club, football, children's play area and general leisure activities of walking, picnics and exercising dogs. Although the park is surrounded by main roads it is very well used.

