



Winter Newsletter February 2026



In this issue

7 Brass on the Grass 2026

10 Constable in Christchurch Park

12 Christchurch Park Bird Report

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 02 Welcome
- 05 Projects and Plans
- 07 Brass on the Grass 2026
- 08 Past Guides to the park  
Christchurch Park viewed  
through History
- 10 Constable in  
Christchurch Park
- 12 Bird Report October  
2025 to January 2026
- 16 My first visit to  
Christchurch Park
- 18 Dog Disruption at the  
Junior Park Run
- 19 Annual General Meeting  
24th March
- 19 Membership Matters
- 20 Membership Form

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Our thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue.

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# Welcome

by Richard Hudson, Chairman



Welcome all to our first newsletter of 2026. I always feel a sense of renewal at this time, both in terms of any new year resolutions or initiatives started and the first encouraging signs of spring just round the corner. And in terms of our cherished park, the first snowdrops appearing or the pickup in the levels of birdsong in the morning. I hope you feel this too.

The Friends of Christchurch Park have been busy contributing to this renewal with the provision of funding for the new plantings outside the main Soane Street gates as well as just inside the Fonnereau Road gate. They look somewhat immature currently but will hopefully bed in quickly and already have made a significant improvement to the look of those entrances.

We are also looking forward to the upcoming installation of two octagonal, heritage picnic tables plus benches. These will be located in the flat area

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just past the pétanque/boules court before the path drops down the hill to the Reg Driver Visitor Centre. FoCP have funded one of these, to be supplied by Genesis Mencap, and Ipswich Borough Council's Park's team are kindly matching this and providing the other. This should, we hope, create a popular picnic area for use by all that is distinct yet still conveniently close to other facilities such as the ice cream kiosk and boules court.

Finding the right balance between new facilities or plantings and the maintenance

and protection of those that are already existing is sometimes tricky. Ideally both can happen hand in hand. However, with many different viewpoints held by different individuals and bodies that is not a given ! The recent planning application to IBC for the 'Adventure Golf Course' to be located on the old Croquet Lawn is a case in point. The FoCP Committee received a wide range of views from members with regard to the application. Individual responses sent directly to IBC and available for public view, also reflect a



similar spread of views, varying from very supportive to wholly against. After considerable discussion amongst the Committee, we submitted a response to IBC on behalf of FoCP withdrawing our initial objection to the application, provided a number of significant mitigation actions to address points of concern were adhered to by the applicant.

One learning point that the above planning application matter has highlighted is the ageing state of some of FoCPs systems and processes. For example our lack of being readily able to consult with members on urgent matters, or indeed process new memberships on



line. We are a modest sized organisation that does not require complex systems but we are looking to overhaul some key areas in this coming year.

Lastly, I want to mention our forthcoming AGM. This will be held in the Reg Driver Visitor Centre from 6.30pm on Tuesday March 24th 2026, with AGM formalities to start at 7.00pm. We expect to finish at 8.30pm. This year we have invited local Ipswich cider maker, Cydefx, based in Westerfield Road, to provide a short talk on their cider making, all with local apples, as well as providing some different options to sample ! I do hope many of you will be able to attend to both enjoy some local cider but also provide your views and opinions to guide the Committee going forward. As



ever we would also be very welcoming of anyone who would like to join the committee or indeed provide any other assistance to FoCP.

FoCP would not exist without the enthusiasm and time of its many volunteers nor achieve as much without the much appreciated work of the whole of the IBC parks team. Thank you all.

**Richard Hudson**

Chairman, Friends of Christchurch Park





As reported in our previous newsletter, various projects have been in the planning and I am pleased to report that, working with the IBC Parks team, the Friends have been able to support improvements and innovations as below.

**Soane Street entrance re-plant.** The flower and shrub beds at the entrance to the Park and the Mansion from Soane Street were well past their best and a re-plant of these two areas was highly desirable. We agreed to pay the costs of refreshing and this was completed late in 2025.

**David Routh Memorial Garden.** A suitable area for a garden dedicated to the memory of this well loved supporter of the FoCP was identified by the upper entrance to the park in Fonnereau Road. The Park team have created a slated garden with railway

sleeper sub divisions planted with shrubs suited to the weather variations, with costs again borne by the Friends.

**Picnic Tables.** We have thought for some time that there was a need for somewhere for visitors to the Park to sit and enjoy a picnic; the Friends have agreed to pay for an octagonal table with three benches in durable hardwood including space for positioning a wheelchair, for which Genesis Mencap have been commissioned to make. We are delighted that the IBC Parks Team have volunteered to match the Friends' initiative and provide





a second table. A suitable site has been chosen near to the ice cream kiosk a little above the Reg Driver Visitor Centre. The picnic tables will be positioned some time in February or early March.

**N.B.** The cost of these three projects being funded by the Friends amounts to **£3800**, a substantial inroad into our funds. Contributions from Members towards these costs would therefore be appreciated; Committee members have already made some contributions.

**Bird Walks.** Philip Murphy has agreed to again lead four Bird Walks this year. Philip is a veteran in his knowledge of birds and is a regular contributor to articles within these pages relating to bird activity in the Park. His leading of these popular walks is absorbing and informative. For dates of the Walks see the page in this newsletter.

**Brass On The Grass 2026.** The seven band events in 2025 were much appreciated and well attended. Our Committee Member Roger Herbert has once again been busy planning concert events for this year and we are pleased to announce that a total of eight bands have been engaged to play in the Upper Arboretum on Sunday afternoons between 19th July and 6th

September. Details are given on the next page and will appear in notice boards around the Park.

Although not funded by the FoCP the IBC Parks Team have other projects being rolled out which include as follows:

**Sri Chinmoy Peace Statue.** Mentioned in our previous newsletter this statue of the renowned peace campaigner is due to be installed in the Upper Arboretum adjacent to rhododendrums on the 26th April. This site has been chosen as more suitable to one previously planned near to the Cenotaph.

Annual planting of flowerbeds by the Bolton Lane entrance is planned, due for completion for this year in the next 2 months.

**Park Road entrance improvements.** Some strengthening of the boundary wall with buttresses is taking place to ensure the wall is made safe. In the autumn the adjacent bed will be rejuvenated and planted with a new and varied bedding scheme.

**Reg Driver Visitor Centre.** Installation is planned of three pairs of planters outside the Centre; the aim is to have these in place for late spring or early summer.



# BRASS ON THE GRASS 2026

By John Woodcock, Vice Chairman



The 2025 season of Brass on The Grass events was greatly enjoyed with over 1300 attending across the six Sunday afternoons. Committee Member Roger Herbert arranged a varied line-up of bands who played a delightful cross section of music for all tastes.

We are delighted to announce that Roger has been able for this season to arrange for a total of eight bands to play. The sponsorship of these bands by companies and individuals is enormously appreciated and without whose support these events would not be possible.

The bands play in the Upper Arboretum from 2.30 – 4.30 pm with a break midway; all are free to attend. The details are as follows:-

<b>19th July</b>	<b>Martlesham Brass</b>
<b>26th July</b>	<b>Castleton Brass</b>
<b>2nd August</b>	<b>Tendingr Brass</b>
<b>9th August</b>	<b>Ipswich Over 50s Band</b>
<b>16th August</b>	<b>Suffolk Phoenix Brass</b>
<b>23rd August</b>	<b>City Of Colchester Band</b>
<b>30th August</b>	<b>Ipswich Hospital Band.</b>
<b>6th September</b>	<b>Woodbridge Excelsior Band</b>

# PAST GUIDES TO THE PARK

## Christchurch Park Viewed Through History



Christchurch Park has long been described as one of the jewels in Ipswich's crown, being so close to town centre and offering a place of peace and tranquillity.

Visitors and residents alike have offered their views on the park from the time when it was a private residence to the public amenity it is today. The following is a summary of some of the many comments made regarding the park land. Obviously, there are also many mentions of the historic mansion too. As you can read there is a fair amount of agreement on the asset the park provides, plus a glimpse at how it was laid out and used by the population.

### **Daniel Defoe Tour through the Eastern Counties of England 1722**

"The Lord Viscount Hereford has a very fine seat and park in this town; the house indeed is

old built, but very commodious; it is called Christ Church, having been, as it is said, a priory or religious house in former times. The green and park is a great addition to the pleasantness of this town, the inhabitants being allowed to divert themselves there with walking, bowling, etc"

### **John Glydes Guide to Ipswich 1869**

The Arboretum is divided by a narrow bridle way into two sections, the Upper and Lower. The Upper is open to the public from daylight till dusk, and the principal part of Sunday. "The grounds are very prettily laid out- hill and dale, shrubs and flowers, good gravelled paths, lawns, and beds of roses or other flowers everywhere meet the eye". "A fine view of Christchurch Park, with its noble beech and chestnut trees, is obtained on these pleasure grounds". "Near the west entrance a handsome drinking fountain, was



in 1862, erected at the expense of Mr John Brett." At the lower end of the Upper Arboretum exit onto the bridle way to the entrance to the Lower Arboretum which is in the hands of lessees and only open to subscribers or on payment of sixpence. In the summer the Ipswich Flower Show is held here. "The crowd on such occasions is great, the scene is bustling, the faces varied, the elegance, refinement, and luxury meet you on every hand."

[sixpence is approximately £2.60 today]

### **Town Guide 1922**

The mansion dating from 1546, was presented to the town along with all the ground in front, in 1894 by Felix T Cobbold. This action saving the building from demolition and this part of the park from falling into the hands of the modern builder, "a service for which the inhabitants of the town will ever be grateful".

"The Park, beautifully undulating, well wooded with fine oaks, chestnuts, elm, lime and beech trees, and containing picturesque ponds on which many wildfowl are kept, consists of 64 acres 138 rods, purchased by the Council in 1895 at a cost of £28,050. It is open free to the public throughout the year."

[Plans had been drawn up to replace the Mansion with a crescent of grand houses.]

### **1938 town guide**

In a section entitled "The Pleasure Grounds of Ipswich", Christchurch Park figures heavily. Describing the "richly-timbered parkland" and "sequestered beauty-spots, with their clean fresh foliage and fragrant odours of the country." "A perfect pleasance for adults" and "a veritable paradise for children."

Upper and Lower Arboretum "breathe an atmosphere of purity, peace and scented beauty". Where the art of landscape gardening is seen at its best, with "gracefully winding pleasure walks, which expose new vistas at every bend". The Lower Arboretum contains hard and grass tennis courts and a croquet lawn. The Mayors' Walk is featured

and described as "each successive Mayor of the borough plants a sapling in what will one day be a fine avenue of trees".

### **Ward Lock's illustrate guide to Ipswich and district circa 1950**

Describes a walk in the park "we walk up the main roadway through the Park, passing the round pond on the left. Beyond the old bowling green we turn left across the grass, descend past the shelter, and return through the woods by the "wilderness pond", pass the Cenotaph and leave the grounds by the Fonnereau Road gate. Adjoining is a gate leading into the Lower Arboretum, a charming little example of modern landscape gardening. Here are tennis courts and a croquet lawn. Turning left in a few yards we reach, by a gate on the opposite side, the Upper Arboretum – an ideally peaceful spot.

park open 7:30- dusk, Sundays 9:00 – dusk

### **Ipswich Official Handbook circa 1962**

"No other town in England can boast of such a fine 70-acre park so close to its centre, with its wide expanse of grass, its broad tree-lined walks, its artfully placed clumps of trees and shrubs and its "wilderness ponds alive with wild-fowl." The guide goes on to describe the Upper and Lower Arboreta. "The grounds are beautifully laid out with rock gardens, sloping lawns, trees and ornamental shrubs." It also mentions the croquet lawns and tennis courts available for use.

From the extracts above it is worth noting the cost of accessing the Lower Arboretum, opening hours of the park over the years, both of which have changed for the better.

Some of the comments suggest the author may not be too familiar with the park, with mention of "wilderness ponds" plural, but it is clear the park has long been appreciated as a place for people to relax and enjoy the "countryside" so close to the centre of the town.

**By Paul Horne, Committee Member**

# Constable in Christchurch Park

By Rowell Bell



The Park in 1852

When JoAnne & I and our three boys lived in Park Road for eight years starting Christmas 1986 there was this scenic view from the upper South Facing windows across to what looked like a length of string with ants heading in opposite directions. Traffic on the Orwell Bridge and the distant hills the other side of Ipswich, with a beautiful stretch of grass, and trees below, a few of which were lost in October 1987.

The Traveller's view of Ipswich by Richie in the last decades of the Eighteenth century read as follows:

"There are few lovelier rivers in England than the Orwell on which Ipswich stands and on the banks of which Gainsborough learned to love nature and draw her in all her charms" ... "The town itself stands in a

valley, but had gradually crept up the hills on each side, so that almost everywhere you have a pleasing prospect and breathe a bracing air."

**This year we are celebrating John Constable's 250th anniversary** at the Wolsey Gallery, Christchurch Mansion, centrepiece being 'The Hay Wain'. Visitors viewing the Exhibitions, are likely to enjoy the surrounding Park. Earlier this month, whilst at a fund-raising event to restore Constable's Cello, I asked Emma Roodhouse, Art Collections and Learning Curator, whether young John Constable visited Christchurch Park in the 1790s, and perhaps even made a sketch or two when a guest of the Cobbold's at The Manor House, St. Margaret's Green? Emma said it was possible. However, I have drawn a blank.

**Cobbold Connection:** Elizabeth Cobbold (nee Knipe), remarried widower 'Big' John Cobbold 7 August 1791, after her first husband of barely three months, William Clarke, died shortly after they arrived in Ipswich, from Liverpool. There were 14 children from Big John's first marriage to Elizabeth, (nee Wilkinson) who had died the year before, to which the first of seven by Elizabeth were added a year later. So, an Instant large household with children, servants, and guests, including young John Constable. *An aside if I may: Early one evening in 1794 John Constable, Daniel Gardner and Elizabeth Cobbold were sketching side-by-side at 'the Cliff' when a woman approached with a letter recommending Margaret Catchpole as a possible employee, and for 18 months Margaret became one their most trusted servants at The Manor until she met her*



*sweetheart Will Laud, stole a horse in August 1797 and ended up in Sydney in 1801 transported for life.*

7 January 1799 at The Manor House, Priscilla Wakefield wrote: "Spent the evening at Mrs Cobbold's, met there a pleasing modest young man, who had a natural genius for painting". 18 August 1799: the young man records "Staying with the Cobbolds in Ipswich; 'sees Gainsborough in every hedge and Hollow tree'.

The Fonnereau family, who purchased the Christchurch Estate in 1735, allowed the townfolk to stroll in the Park and play bowls there. Incidentally, the original bowls green was situated where the children's play area is now. The ice house would have been still in use. Bearing that in mind and the proximity just round the corner of the Soane Street gate, young John Constable would have enjoyed a stroll in the parkland so close to hand. It was not all parkland; immediately to the left of the pathway leading to the West of the Mansion, stretching just beyond the Cenotaph was "A great garden," The paths would not have been paved either. Young Constable loved the view from the Cobbold's manor house side windows of the undulating countryside by the Woodbridge Road, reminding him of Gainsborough's, (1727-1788), early landscapes.

I enjoyed reading 'Constable's Painting Watercolours and Drawings, Tate Gallery 1976', best described as an illustrated diary in the third person, from the early years 1793 when "Already devotedly fond of painting", to his last day on this mortal coil at his home in Charlotte (now Hallam) Street London 31 March 1837.

John Constable 'busily finishing his picture

'Arundel Mill and Castle', for the R. A. Exhibition, followed by a stroll in the evening on a charitable errand connected with the Artists Benevolent Fund, then a hearty supper, a warm bed and reading himself to sleep. He died after calling out that night, with his eldest son at his side.'

The Ipswich George Frost (1744/5-1821) and John Constable knew, is very different today, However, if Thomas Gainsborough or John Constable were to see Christchurch Park in 2026, it would still conform to the 'A Plan' of Christchurch Estate compiled by John Kirby in 1735, minus land sold off for the houses built on the south side of Park Road. We all need to preserve the natural phenomena of our precious parks.

**Footnote:** I first saw The Hay-Wain, (copy), on a wall in MacDonalds in downtown Oakland, California in April 1971 when I was working out there; then a real version that I think is coming to Ipswich, at the Tate Britain when working nearby years later; now looking forward to a third up-close and personal viewing.

*Photos supplied by courtesy of Stuart Grimwade*



# Bird Report

OCTOBER 2025 TO JANUARY 2026

By Philip Murphy



## October

The last vestiges of summer involved a singing Chiffchaff on 1st and two Swallows on 6th. Conversely, the first incoming Redwings and Fieldfares were noted on 7th and 21st respectively but there was no large arrival of either species during the course of the month. Skylarks were formerly a regular autumn bird over the park but, as with so many other species, have become more irregular in recent years; as such, the sight of four over the Upper Arboretum on 8th was very welcome. A noisy group of 30 Jackdaws flew north high over the park on 17th.

The highlight on Wilderness Pond was 34 Mandarin Ducks at the first light on 25th, but an hour later only about ten were present – are some of these ducks using the park as a roosting site before going elsewhere to feed during the daylight hours? It was noted that many of the Mandarin Ducks were in pairs – there was much chasing, calling, posturing and head-bowing amongst the males. Mallard totals peaked at 40 on 19th and these ducks were noted copulating regularly during the month.

Four cormorants were present up to 22nd but only one at the month's end. Up to 17 Canada Geese were recorded but on several dates none were present. Six Little Grebes were noted on various dates involving two pairs on the large open area and one pair at the northern end.

Typically for October, Jays were much in evidence. A Grey Wagtail was seen from the wooden footbridge on 5th. Birds of prey involved up to three Common Buzzards and regular sightings of a Sparrowhawk.

## November

A Ring-necked Parakeet in trees in the vicinity of the War Memorial on 2nd was the first to be recorded in the park since October 2024 – it was chased away by Carrion Crows.

Thrushes were much in evidence this month. Loose gatherings of Blackbirds in the Lower Arboretum involved as least 15 on 2nd and 13 on 30th – these were probably recent arrivals from the continent. The highest total of Redwing involved 50 heading west on 7th, and 15 Fieldfares were noted, also flying westwards, on 18th.



Chiffchaff



Jay



Fieldfare

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Ring necked parakeet

Late in the month, singing thrushes in the Lower Arboretum involved a Song Thrush on 30th and a Mistle Thrush on 25th and 27th; what was probably the same Mistle Thrush was noted on several occasions from 16th feeding on the bunches of Mistletoe in the trees adjacent to the Mansion.

Birdlife on the ponds was somewhat sparse. As in 2024, no Cormorants were seen on the ponds after the annual fireworks display on 1st. Maximum totals of other waterbirds, mainly on Wilderness Pond, involved 19 Mandarin Ducks, 30 Mallards, 15 Canada Geese, 15 Moorhens and five Little Grebes. Black-headed Gulls were ever-present on the ponds peaking at about 110 on 9th.

Fine, clear days on 4th and 7th witnessed westerly movements of Wood Pigeons high over the park, totalling about 125 on 4th and 100 on 7th. Sightings of birds of prey involved a Sparrowhawk and two Common Buzzards.

## December

Before this month, all sightings of Little Grebe in the park had been on Wilderness Pond; as such, the presence of a Little Grebe on Round Pond from 10th until at least 25th was noteworthy. At least four Little Grebes remained on Wilderness Pond throughout the month.

One of the two white domesticated ducks that had been released illegally on Wilderness Pond in October 2022 had not been seen since November 30th this year – the second bird of this pair was not seen after December 5th.

There were sightings of Ring-necked Parakeet on at least three dates during the month including two on 21st.

On 5th only five Mandarin Ducks could be located on Wilderness Pond but totals in the second half of the month were consistently above 20 with a maximum of 26 on 31st.



Little Grebe



Mistle thrush



Redwing

Observations showed that these small ducks arrived on Wilderness Pond just as it started to get light – where they had been during the night is unfortunately, not known.

Three Mute Swans flew southwards over the park on 31st. Black-headed Gulls are a constant feature of the ponds during the daylight hours in the winter months; totals of this small gull peaked at about 120 on 25th.

By the month's end, Mistle Thrush, Song Thrush and Blackbird had all been heard singing in the Park.

### January

Colder weather during the period 4th to 11th resulted in some particularly interesting bird sightings. Round Pond froze over completely but, typically the northern 25% of Wilderness Pond remained unfrozen. Given these conditions, and as in recent years, there was an influx of Mandarin Ducks onto this unfrozen section of Wilderness Pond; it is thought these small ducks were forced to leave frozen-over ponds elsewhere. There were 23 Mandarin Ducks on 1st, but on 4th there had been an increase to 36 and the total peaked at 40 on 11th. By the month's end, with milder conditions prevailing, the total of Mandarin Ducks had declined to no more than 25.

Up to four Little Grebes remained on Wilderness Pond during the colder weather and one Little Grebe was on Round Pond on 18th. This latter bird attracted much attention from Black-headed Gulls which

were probably hoping that the grebe would bring food to the surface.

An adult Common Gull was on the ice on Wilderness Pond with Black-headed Gulls on 4th. Surprisingly, an adult Lesser Black-headed Gull was present on the ponds on 21st and 26th; we do not normally see this large species of gull back on the ponds until February – this bird was either an early returnee or an overwintering individual.

On 11th, other sightings linked to the colder weather included five Lapwings flying northwards high over the park, a Woodcock in flight over Snow Hill and 30 Redwings feeding on the berries on a Hollytree close to the Mansion.

Birds were quick to respond when milder conditions prevailed in the second half of the month. A Mistle Thrush and two Song Thrushes were regularly heard singing, and the first Great Spotted Woodpecker was heard drumming on 26th. A male Sparrowhawk in display flight high over the park was, surprisingly, joined by a second male on 24th. An overwintering Blackcap was heard in subdued song from within shrubbery at the Bolton Lane entrance on 28th. The site's first Grey Wagtail of the year was at Wilderness Pond on 23rd.

A fortunate observer saw two Ravens over the park on 18th, two Common Buzzards on 24th were given a hostile reception by Carrion Crows and a Peregrine was over the Mansion area on 16th.





# What's On in Christchurch Park

[www.friendsofchristchurchpark.co.uk](http://www.friendsofchristchurchpark.co.uk)

## Bird Walks 2026

**Sat 28th March at 8.30am**

Meet at Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park

**Sat May 16th at 4.30am (Dawn Chorus)**

Meet at the top end of the Bridleway

**Sat July 18th at 8.30am**

Meet at Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park

**Sat 26th September at 8.30am**

Meet at Reg Driver Centre in Christchurch Park

All events are free to join but booking is essential at Reg Driver Centre  
Telephone 01473 433516



This poster was produced with support from The Friends of Christchurch Park



# My first visit to Christchurch Park



By Reg Snook

It was in 1946. I was eight years old. I was a member of the Priory Heath Natural History Society. Well, not really, it was just that a group of 'heathens' were very interested in wildlife and, because we lived on a new council estate on the eastern edge of Ipswich, we spent all of our spare time in the adjacent countryside.

There was no one to stop us trampling over the fields, heaths and through the wooded areas as there were few gamekeepers two of which were the Baker brothers of Nacton. Naturally, we tried desperately to steer clear of them when we went bird nesting. Some of us had an egg collection. Some of us kept wild birds. All of us boys kept chickens, rabbits, and pigeons as in those days, just after World War II, meat was expensive and difficult to come by. That's why we kept them. Of course, we still went rabbiting as rabbits were so common. We used to dig them out of their burrows. We also trapped them with wire nooses, clubbed them in the cornfield at harvest time and we used dogs, the mongrel version, to chase and catch them. In those days, rabbit was a staple food. Nowadays, all that might seem unbelievably cruel but our families needed food. Being let loose in the countryside was not a problem. It was an adventure for a very young boy and an exciting daily event gathering knowledge on every aspect of the delights of the countryside and its natural history.

This article, however, is a story about our neighbour who decided to make a pond in his front garden but did not know where to catch fish to put in said pond. There were several large ponds within easy walking distance of our area but securing (stealing) fish of a suitable size for Ivan's pond was not going to be easy. Of

course, we could illegally try to hook or net fish from the decoy pond on Bixley Heath. (The pond was actually on Purdis Heath but we always used the Bixley Heath entrance through a gap in the barbed wire fence). However, the fish we managed to catch at this very large pond were much too large for our friend's front garden pond (roach and bream mainly though sometimes we caught a pike which went for our hooked roach).

After careful consideration it was decided that we boys should try to catch a few fish from either Holywells Park or, would you believe, Christchurch Park. Holywells Park was considered too risky. The ponds were too easily observed from the park keepers' headquarters and, in any case, there were too many visitors in that park. Dare we attempt to steal a few fish from the park in the centre of Ipswich? Well, young boys from the Priory Heath estate were fearless – and stupid! So our plan was hatched. We had no transport to take the fish from Christchurch Park back to Lindbergh Road where we lived but the trolley bus depot was situated behind our houses and numbers Two and Four routes finished there.

Ivan's pond had been dug out and lined with clay and then filled with water. Vegetation was sunk into the clay including some plants taken from Purdis Heath and the pond on Nacton Road (in a garden). Todd's dad had a metal bucket-type thing that had a screw lid and, together with a couple of fishing rods, all was set to catch suitable fish. Our rods were simple canes to which was attached a piece of nylon line, a match stick float and a bent pin for a hook. We mixed flour and water to make a thick paste, as bait which would not slip off the bent pin. For us boys it was only a tuppenny return ticket to the centre of Ipswich. However, before we actually attempted our great adventure to deprive



Christchurch Park of some of its fish, we had to do a 'recce'. Eight of us young and mainly small boys plus Spudger's twin sister, who always dressed as a boy, travelled one Saturday morning to the Electric House bus station (as it was then known). We eagerly hurried through the park's main gate across, the grassy area adjacent to the trees near the Bethesda Chapel where the rookery was very noisy. Yes, rooks used to nest in Christchurch Park. We excitedly made our way to the Wilderness pond. The pond always attracted visitors. Some people loved feeding the ducks with a slice or two of bread as in those days a loaf of bread was a precious commodity. However, we could see that some of the bread that the ducks had not eaten was being nibbled by fish and those fish were much smaller than the fish of Purdis decoy ponds.

We all agreed that this was where our fish for Ivan's pond would come from but what about the people who visited this popular and very central Park especially those feeding the ducks? We could not be seen to fish in full view of the numerous parkgoers as it is difficult to disguise the fact that one is using a rod to catch fish and, in any case, we had to get the fish back to Priory Heath alive and in good order! The answer, of course, was to attempt to rid the park of some fish before the park gates opened in the morning or when the park gates had closed in the evening. We all agreed that early morning before the gates opened was the best time. So our plan was finalised. We would catch an early morning number Two or Four trolley bus into town.

We took it in turns to carry the metal container. The bus conductor was inquisitive

but allowed us to place it under the stairs of the bus. The park was not open to the public when we arrived but we were so used to scaling walls into private property that all of us entered the park with no problem. We decided to fish along the path near to the wooded area – again no problem. We put water into our fish carrier (metal tank) and immediately began fishing. It was easy. The park's roach really went for our bait even though it was just squashed up flour and water, the lid was placed on our metal pot and, without being seen, we nipped over the wall into Fonnereau Road. The tram driver at the Electric House seemed surprised to see a bunch of very young boys and a girl, although no one could tell that she was a girl, waiting at the bus stop with a large metal pot as was the conductor but he clipped our Tuppenny return tickets and we were on our way back to Priory Heath. We were so so excited to deliver our dozen or so roach to Ivan but we were in for a shock. The pond was empty. The clay lining of his pond had a leak and we could not leave our precious roach in the metal bucket. But then Todd found the answer. His dad's water butt of course. So our precious fish were tipped into Todd's butt. They seemed happy and there they remained until Ivan patched up his clay lining. The roach settled down quickly in Ivan's pond and many people passing commented on the pond and its lovely gleaming fish, so silver and gold with lovely red fins and tail. What pleased us youngsters most was when we saw our local policeman and sworn enemy, PC Jack Roper, standing by Ivan's fence and admiring the fish. Little did he know that we had 'borrowed' those lovely fish from Christchurch Park.



The Priory 'heathens'.

# DOG DISRUPTION AT THE JUNIOR PARKRUN

We have on occasions highlighted in these newsletters incidents involving dogs not kept under proper control by their owners resulting in stress or alarm to the recipients of such bad behaviour.

Fortunately, such incidents are infrequent and the majority of dog owners supervise them responsibly. But unfortunately there was an occasion in late December when an uncontrolled dog disrupted runners on the Junior Parkrun and in the interests of avoiding complacency it seemed sensible to include a report here emailed to me by one of the organisers of the Junior Parkrun.

"Today we had an issue at junior parkrun. A spaniel got very excited about our runners running from the crossroads towards the Park Road entrance. It was continually circling around and upsetting a lot of the younger runners, whilst interfering with the more robust. It was not aggressive and was probably playing but a fair proportion of the children were disturbed and some



upset. The owner was not able bring the dog to heel and when finally located (several minutes) and challenged, claimed the dog was having an off day, he was unable to control the dog and he understood our complaint. There was no real apology or appreciation of the issue his dog was causing.

No one was injured but it was very disturbing for all."

Let us be mindful of the potential distress an uncontrolled dog can cause.

**John Woodcock, Vice Chairman**



# Annual General Meeting 24th March

The AGM of the Friends of Christchurch Park will be held in the Reg Driver Centre at 6.30 pm for 7. Drinks and refreshments will be available from 6.30 pm. Do join us to hear about the past and future work of the Friends.

We are delighted to announce that we have been able to engage as our speaker for this event Andy Frost of Cydesfx Cyder who, apart from explaining about his successful local cyder making business, will also be including a tasting of his ciders! An all round unmissable event.



## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

We are pleased to report that the numbers of Individual and Household Members, and Lifetime Members, stands at 332 currently; there are 21 Corporate Members, 10 honorary home memberships and 9 honorary corporate memberships.

**Subscriptions** Annual subscriptions from Members are **now due**, £10 for each Member or household, £25 for corporates. Thank you to those who pay by Standing Order.

If you would like to join as a Member please use the Membership Form overleaf. If you would like to become a Life Member this involves a single payment of £125.

