

## Hatherley Park

In July 1935 Cheltenham Corporation purchased eleven acres of the Hatherley Court Estate in preparation for the provision of a 'fine recreation ground of especial value to dwellers in the Tivoli district.' The eleven acres was the minimum acreage that the agents were prepared to sell, and the Borough Council decided that they would allocate some of the land for housing, fronting what was to become Hatherley Court Road. The actual purchase price of the land was £2,750 to which was added an estimated £1,460 for road works, ground preparation and ornamental gates.

The site devoted to recreation was developed from a furrowed field and comprised nine of the eleven acres purchased. A pool was made from what had been a mere pond in the field, and the water that flowed down the falls, was automatically pumped back. The rock garden was constructed of Cumberland stone which had been stored for some years in the Corporation stores at Sandford. An avenue of trees bordered the main entrance path. Equipment for the children included swings, roundabouts, and a shelter with a pavilion in the central part. The whole project had taken eighteen months to complete.

The Hatherley Court Recreation Ground – its official name – was formally opened on Saturday April 29<sup>th</sup> 1939 by the Mayor of Cheltenham, Mr John Howell. The ceremony was performed in front of a large audience of invited guests, at the entrance to the pavilion.

In a short speech, the chairman of the Parks and Recreation Grounds Committee, Mr WJ Green, expressed his belief that "not many towns the size of Cheltenham can boast so many beautiful parks."

The Mayor of Cheltenham, hoped that this new park would not be the last of Cheltenham's 200 acres of parks and gardens. It was a daring experiment in that it included a recreation ground and playing field for children as well as a park beautifully laid out for adults. "It was," he added, "up to parents to teach their children how to make the best advantage of it."

He also warned that elderly people who might like to use the park for relaxation and rest, would be annoyed by the noise of the children. However, the committee hoped that "after experience they might enjoy hearing the children's voices."

Tea was served in a marquee after a tour of the new grounds had been made.

(Provided by Brian Torode from information condensed from Gloucestershire Echo reports for 27.07.1935 and May 1<sup>st</sup> 1939.)