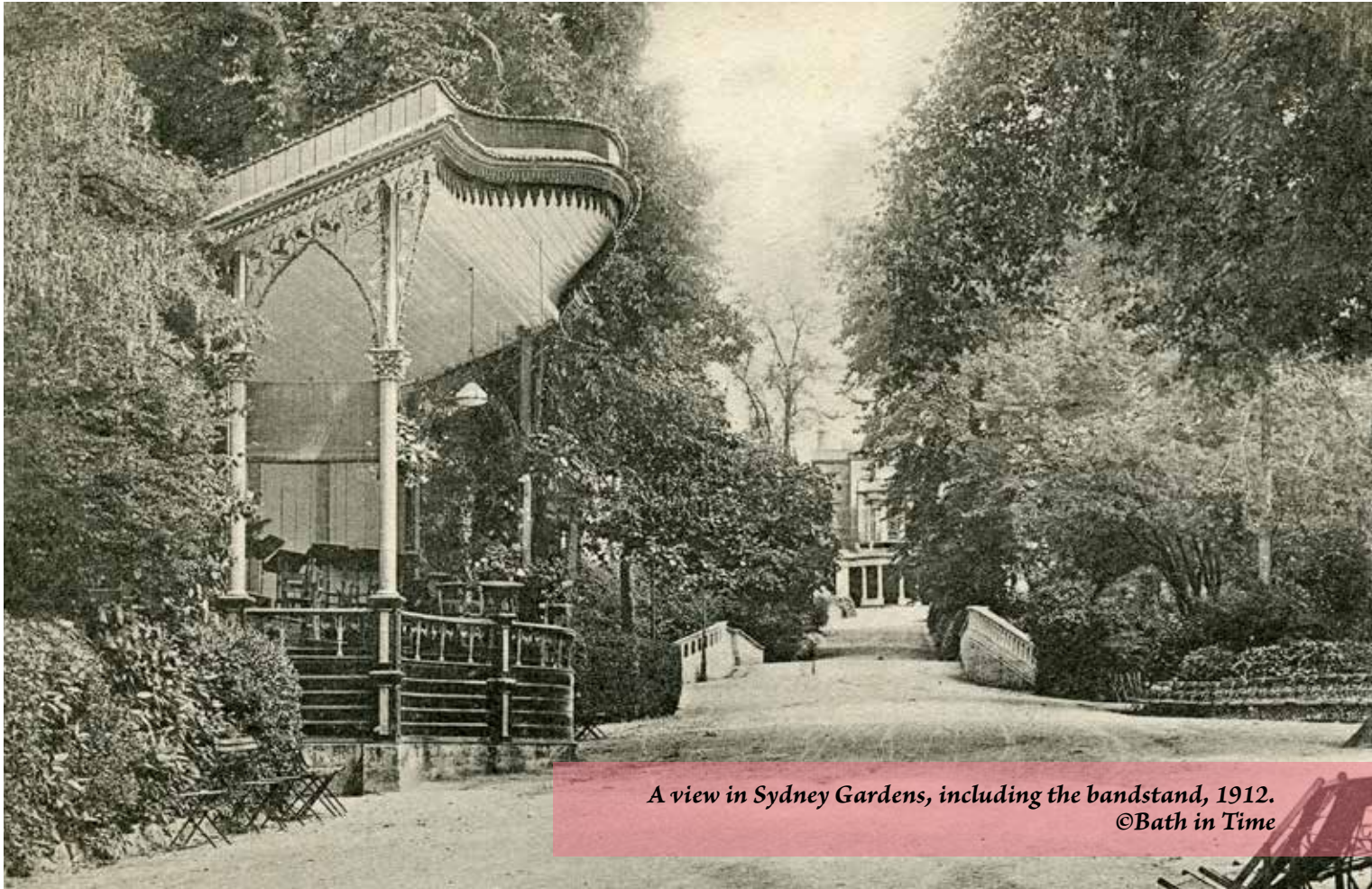
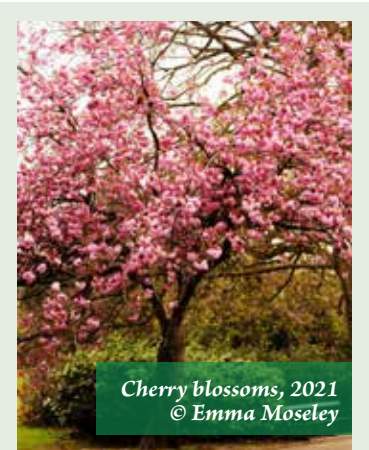


# THE GARDEN CHRONICLE

SYDNEY  
GARDENS  
BATH  
SUMMER 2021



A view in Sydney Gardens, including the bandstand, 1912.  
©Bath in Time



## TREES OF SIGNIFICANCE

Sydney Gardens offers a green haven in the busy city of Bath, inside the park there are many carefully selected trees. They were chosen for a variety of reasons, including, historical significance, height and heritage. Each tree in Sydney Gardens is labelled, so if you wish, you can go and find them for yourselves.

### Black Pine

The first tree is the Black Pine, this can be found by the main entrance into Sydney Gardens. The fast-growing pine can live to 500 years old and can grow to 55 metres. Due to its thick and rough grey bark, it can tolerate air pollution, making it ideal for an urban park. The Black Pine's pointed needles have slightly serrated edges, meaning it's not the most popular with wildlife. However, birds love to eat the seeds which are encased in cones and due to the height of the pine, it offers a great shelter for animals, and visitors to the park. In mythology, the Black Pine was thought to ward off bad spirits and protect buildings and cattle from misfortune, disease and even lightning. Barns and stables were swept with pine-twig brushes and sprigs were hung above doorways.

### Tree of Heaven

The *Ailanthus altissima*, commonly known as the Tree of Heaven, is a native tree from China. The given name for the tree in China is 'chouchun', which means 'foul-smelling tree', which it is. The tree is widely used in Chinese culture as a medicine for mental health and baldness. Similar to the Black Pine, they are also fast-growing, they can grow up to two metres a year. However, they also have a shorter lifespan of 50-70 years. Despite having a heavenly name, the Tree of Heaven can suppress the growth of its competition by sending out chemicals which stops other trees from growing. In Sydney Gardens, the Tree of Heaven can be found next to the Loggia.

## SYDNEY GARDENS' HIDDEN HERITAGE

**The Sydney Gardens, once known as the Bath Vauxhall Gardens, located in Bathwick, Bath, is at the heart of The Pulteney Estate. One of the last remaining examples of a Georgian Pleasure Garden in Britain, now open to the public as greenspace to be used by all. It has its own unique history and many hidden treasures can be found within.**

In the past, these gardens were guarded by solid seven foot walls and had a small horse track circling it. Only those that had a membership could witness the beauty that was held within. Now, thankfully, that has changed and it is free to enter and we can all glance upon the secrets within. These gardens hide rich history and heritage amongst its luscious greenery and its roots and, like most areas in the south west, it can be traced back to the slave trade.

If you walk to Sydney Gardens from Bath city centre, you will come across the Pulteney Bridge and Great Pulteney Street. Each building was built using the Bath stone, renowned for its golden colour. This beautiful architecture hides the fact that the wealth used to build these buildings was gained via the Transatlantic Slave Trade. They were commissioned by Sir William Pulteney, a plantation owner and the first Earl of Bath.

At the end of Great Pulteney street lies the Holburne Museum and Sydney Gardens. The Museum was funded by Pulteney. It was originally designed to be a two storey hotel by Thomas Baldwin in 1974, but after he was declared bankrupt the plans were redesigned by Charles Harcourt Masters as a three storey building.

The museum has been used as the backdrop in multiple television programs and films, including *The Duchess* with Keira Knightley, *Vanity Fair* with Reese Witherspoon and an adaption of the Jane Austen novel *Persuasion*. Speaking of Jane Austen, Sydney Gardens used to be one of her favourite places to walk when she lived in Sydney Place. Austin's novel, *Northanger Abbey*, was set across from the Holburne Museum.

Sydney Gardens has had many special trees planted over the decades. One such tree was chosen to become a memorial to those who died during the first world war. There were at least 1800 servicemen who came from Bath and fell on the battlefields of northern France and Belgium. This tree was a Belgian Oak which had been planted long before the war, according to the Bath Chronicle, it had been planted on 16th September 1793. However, this tree was then removed and a new tree planted in its place to honour the dead in 1919, known as the Peace Oak.

Not far into the gardens you will find the Indian Bean Tree and the remains of a Roman temple. The temple itself is in fact a very good fake and is done in a very convincing style. The stone was collected from the hills around Bath, which the central Roman Baths had been built, and the small temple was completed in the same style. Next to it stands the Indian Bean tree which is thought to have been brought over to England by Mark Catseby, a plant collector at the time. Mark Catseby was visiting his sister in the British colony in Virginia in 1712, he went to stay with slave-owners in the West Indies and then finally returned to England. He is credited for starting the craze for North American foliage due to a collecting expedition in 1722, when he sent drawings and seeds back, including samples of the Indian Bean tree.

Perhaps the oldest tree in the gardens lies closest

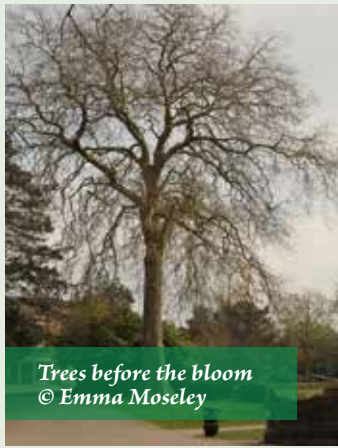
to the canal. This London Plane tree has been standing longer than the canal has been running through. The tree would have been approximately twenty years old when the canal was dug through in 1777. The tree soars over the others in the park, stamping its claim to the area with its sheer height. If the tree could speak, it could tell us the history of the area before the canal, before the railway and before the gardens were laid out around it. Precisely why it was planted here remains a mystery or even how it came to be, but with its age and towering height it has enjoyed its time and continues to do so in the gardens.

Perhaps a question we should end with is how the gardens came to be called Sydney Gardens. With the loss of the colonies in America, Home Secretary Sydney came up with the idea of sending the convicts to Australia at the famous Botany Bay, which was named after Captain James Cook landed in 1770 with the botanist Joseph Banks on board. Due to the diverse plant life found, the site gained the name Botany Bay. Banks set up a 'World Centre' for the British Empire named Kew Gardens.

The first set of ships set to set sail were not just carrying convicts but Joseph Banks had the ships rigged to import and export plant life. When these ships arrived at Botany Bay, a mere seventeen years after Captain Cook and the HMS Endeavour, in 1787, they found there was a distinct lack of water in the Bay, which is rather troublesome for growing plant life. They found a more suitable location close by and it was renamed Sydney Cove which in turn founded the city of Sydney. Tommie Townsend, associate of William Pulteney, Home Secretary and Viscount Sydney in turn brings this small tale of the heritage of Sydney Gardens in Bath to a close.

Written by David Murphy

Continued on Page 2



Trees before the bloom  
© Emma Moseley

### European Beech

The European Beech is a large tree, capable of reaching heights up to 50 metres. It lives for 150-200 years, (the oldest recorded reached 300 years). Due to the Beech's long lifespan and size, it's possible this tree was part of Sydney Garden's original planting. It could have been a part of the beech hedge surrounding a previous feature of the park, the 'Ride'. Today, it can be found by the tennis courts. The Beech tree is also monoecious, meaning it contains both female and male flowers on the same tree. You can tell the flowers apart as the female flowers grow in pairs, and the male flowers are wind pollinating catkins.

### London Plane

Located in close proximity to the European Beech, the London Plane. It has a multi-coloured bark which has a camouflage pattern and thick and leathery leaves. This tree is a hybrid of the American and Oriental Planes and is thought to have been planted in Sydney Gardens in 1777. The London Plane is a namesake for the capital city as it is London's most common tree. It's a fairly new tree, discovered in the seventeenth century, it wasn't widely planted until the 18th century. While very little wildlife is associated with the London Plane, grey squirrels feed on the tree's seeds and birds are often found nesting in the branches.

### Weeping Ash

Native throughout mainland Europe, the Weeping Ash can be identified by its umbrella-like shape. The Ash can be found at the south entrance into Sydney Gardens. It has stunning long and narrow green leaves, however, the Weeping Ash is at its most beautiful in spring, with its purple flowers. Sadly, Weeping Ash are very susceptible to Ash dieback, a disease which is responsible for killing around 80% of ash trees in the UK, it is likely that this ash tree will too succumb one day.

### Giant Sequoia

The Giant Sequoia tree is in the south of Sydney Gardens, standing in a significant trio of 'exotics', next to the railway with the Blue Atlas Cedar and Cedar of Lebanon. The Sequoia is native to the Pacific North-West of America. They grow to an average height of 50-85 metres, however, the tallest recorded height of a Sequoia, was 94.8 meters. Another interesting fact about this tree is that the oldest ever recorded Sequoia was 3,200-3,266 years old. The Giant Sequoia in Sydney Gardens is thought to be over 160 years old, planted soon after this species was brought into the UK in 1853.

Written by Ella Winbolt

## AN OAK PLANTED FOR PEACE

**Planted in July 1919, the Peace Oak signifies the end of the First World War. Recently reaching its 100th year anniversary, the Peace Oak is important as ever to Sydney Gardens, as is the history surrounding it.**

The Peace Oak, also known as the Golden Oak, is a tree native to Europe. The cultivar of the Peace Oak originated in a nursery in the Flanders town of Ghent, Belgium in 1843. This tree was possibly chosen as the Peace Oak due to its connections with Belgium, hallowed ground following the First World War.

The tree was planted in Sydney Gardens during the Peace Day Celebrations to mark the end of World War One. It was planted by Councillor Wills, who was mayor at the time partly due to his success as Chairman of the Food Control Committee during the First World War.

In 1914, Sydney Gardens was the location for a cheerful ceremony, the formal opening of the Temple of Minerva. No one attending the ceremony knew that just seven weeks later, Britain would be at war with Germany. Later that year, soldier Piles wrote home to his wife, he described

the shelling he was experiencing, as 'like being in Sydney Gardens watching the fireworks'.

In the final two years of the First World War, Sydney Gardens greatly contributed to Bath's war effort. The garden held Red Cross fairs which would last for three days, with competitions and exhibitions, over 20,000 people attended. For one of the fairs, a total of £3000 was raised, which is the equivalent of £165,000 today. An ambulance was given to the Red Cross to bring wounded soldiers to Bath for treatment.

When the end of the war was announced, Mayor Wills held a Peace Day Celebration in Sydney Gardens which was attended by 5,000 guests. Despite it raining all day, there was live music, and 250 pigeons released to celebrate the returned soldiers. The newspapers reported that people were in such high spirits, the guests carried on dancing through the rain and on the wet grass.

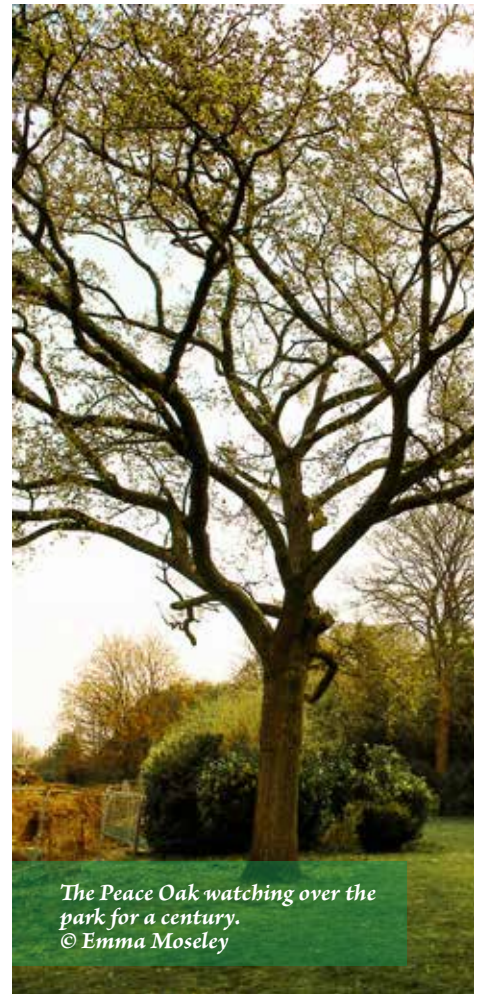
This celebration is when the Peace Oak was planted. The Bath Chronicle and Gazette described the planting: '**the gathering gave three very hearty cheers for the Mayor, who then ... proceeded to the Queen of the West Lawn, where he planted a promising young oak to commemorate the celebration of Peace.**'

Today the Peace Oak stands proudly in Sydney Gardens, symbolising a happy time of celebration and peace. In 2019, to mark the 100th anniversary, The Sydney Gardens Project held the Peace Oak Commemoration event. During the event a new stone plaque was made and donated by Bath Freemasons. In attendance was Jane Tollyfield, the granddaughter of Mayor and Councillor Wills.

With the Sydney Gardens restoration project underway, there will be many changes to the park. The original and important parts of the garden will remain as they give the garden its amazing history. People today who use the park for walking, trainspotting and walking their dogs can go and see the Peace Oak and be reminded of times when the people of Bath came together.

If you wish to visit the Peace Oak, enter via the main entrance or from the Holburne Museum, the tree is located in close proximity to the Temple of Minerva and on the left-hand side of the gardens and can be identified by the plaque.

Written by Ella Winbolt



The Peace Oak watching over the park for a century.  
© Emma Moseley

## THE IMPACT OF GREEN SPACE ON MENTAL HEALTH

**In the last year we have all needed an extra boost of serotonin every now and then, and with the shops closed, there was very little we could actually do.**

The one thing we could do to keep ourselves and others safe, was to not leave the house unless it was essential and to only take one walk a day locally. For some people it was an easy feat, with green spaces galore, but for others living in Cities, much like Bath, it proved to be more difficult.

The green spaces around Bath have accommodated for this and, according to some studies, green

spaces help with Mental Health. Two thirds of UK Adults that have mental health issues said that their mental health issues have gotten worse during the pandemic (according to the UK Mental Health charity Mind).

There are many reasons for the rise in mental health issues; one of the key contributors is loneliness. Those between 18-24 are most at risk for worsening mental health due to loneliness in lockdowns.

With all this uncertainty that the pandemic has brought, people needed a space to escape. For many people, green spaces have been an amazing escape from their four walls, 24 hours a day, when working from home.

### Does Green Space Really Improve Mental Health?

A study from 2019 found spending at least 2 hours a week outside in a green and open space linked to better mental health. People associate the outside and nature as an escape, and a place to simply reflect on life.

Green spaces can help relieve stress and sadness as well as Depression and anxiety. '**Weekly use of the natural environment for physical activity reduces the risk of poor mental health by a further 6%**'. Six percent doesn't seem like a lot, however, it can make a huge difference to those who suffer from mental illness.

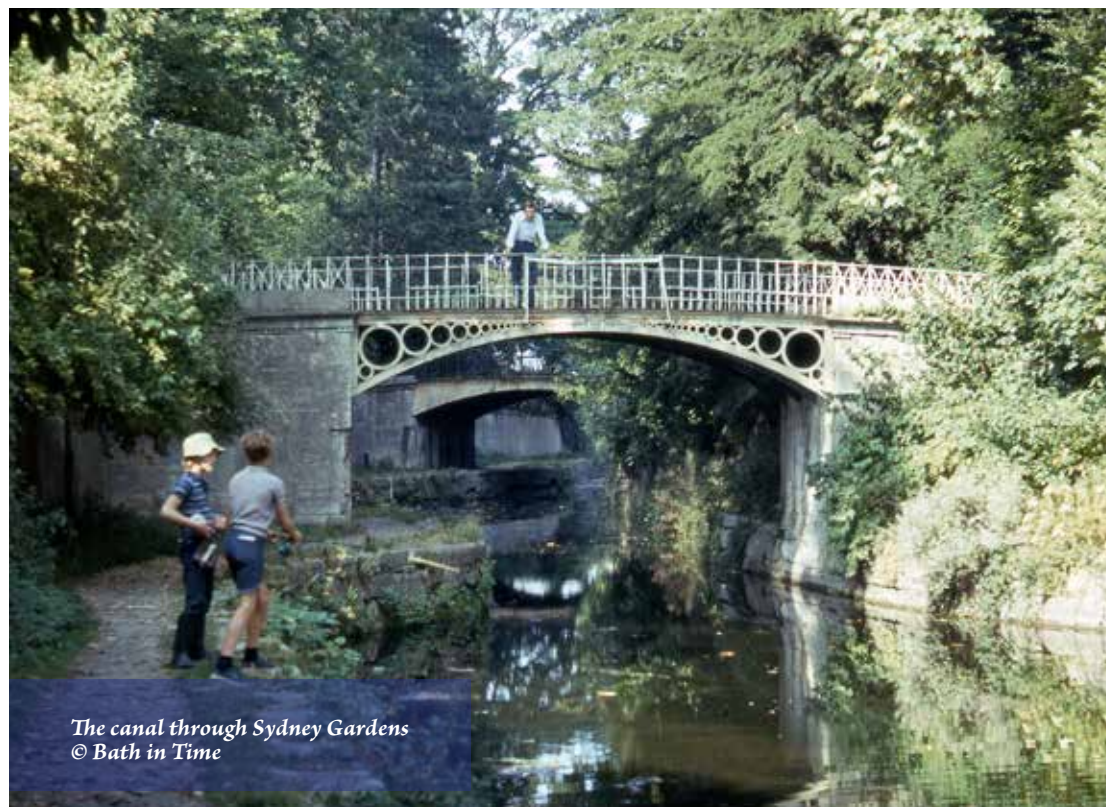
'**Greenspaces are often used in a targeted way to deliver structured therapeutic interventions to individuals living with mental ill-health**'. However, not everyone has access to green space. Public Health England has been reviewing the lack of green spaces for those who don't have access, for example, those who live in flats and people living in areas where green space has been taken over by housing development. The committee on climate change found the proportion of urban greenspace declined by 8 percent between 2001 and 2018 going from 63% to 55%.

'**Spending time in the natural environment ... improves our mental health and feelings of wellbeing. It can reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression...**'. Green space is valuable for so many reasons, not only mental health. In Adults 'several systematic reviews' have found an association between nature in the urban environment and positive emotions. It has a positive impact on adults, and can help development of the children and learning new skills.

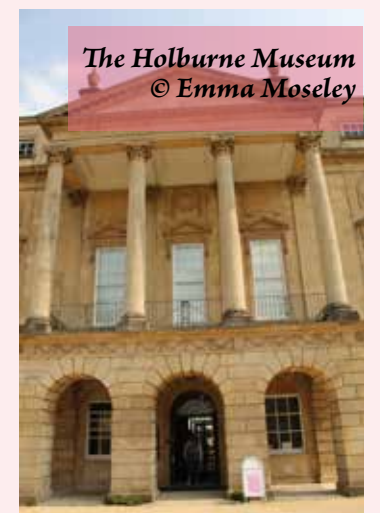
In the coronavirus pandemic we have learned that green spaces are valuable to have access to, especially as a benefit to our mental health and more needs to be done to help preserve our green spaces for future use. According to Public Health England '**Natural England has estimated that £2.1 billion per year could be saved in health costs if everyone in England had good access to greenspace, due to increased physical activity in those spaces.**'

From personal experience greenspace was a saviour for me during the pandemic, especially during lockdowns, as the isolation had a huge negative impact on my mental health. Using green spaces like Sydney Gardens, gave a sense of normality in the otherwise lonely time at University.

Written by Morgan Stapley



The canal through Sydney Gardens  
© Bath in Time



FILMING IN BATH

Bath is a great place for filming locations, a beautiful city full of Georgian architecture that has a tendency to attract the attention of various directors and filmmakers.

There have been many Hollywood blockbusters filmed in Bath that have had great success, such as the multi-award-winning musical Les Misérables. This film shows various scenes across Bath including the Pultney Bridge and Weir which was used to portray a nineteenth century Paris location. This bridge was used in a pivotal scene where the lead played by Russell Crowe took his own life in a dramatic scene.

The most recent addition to filming in Bath is the Netflix series, Bridgerton, which became available to view in 2020 on Christmas day. This Netflix series is based on a series of books written by Julia Quinn, bestsellers and part of the romance genre. The Holburne Museum was used to film the show for several days due to the stunning architecture of the Grade I listed building. This was used as Lady Danbury's home and the exterior of the Holburne can be seen in all but one of the episodes. A lot of the scenes were filmed at The Guildhall, Assembly Rooms and the Royal Crescent.

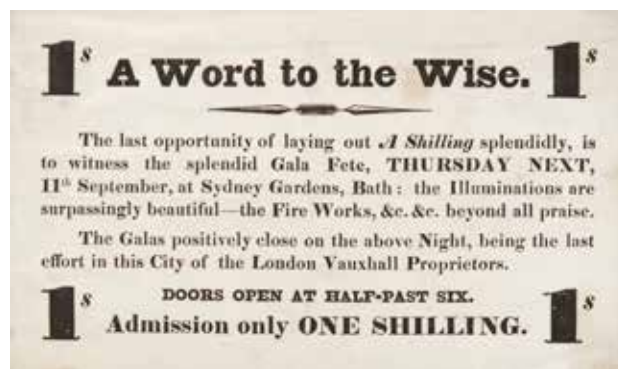
As Bridgerton was released on Netflix, it was able to achieve an international audience which has helped to raise the profile of Bath. Due to this, a vast amount of people will be inspired to visit Bath and look for Bridgerton based experiences. Inevitably, the filming of Bridgerton has led to the creation of various walking tours around Bath that explore the filming locations as many fans want to have a behind the scenes experience.

Bath has since been featured in many newspapers, magazines and travel programmes around the world since the premiere of Bridgerton on Christmas day. The tourism that will come off the back of Bridgerton will benefit Bath and the local economy which has been largely affected by the pandemic, like many other cities. According to Bath council, due to the success of Bridgerton, at least £1.5 million will be put into the local economy.

2021 continues the tradition of filming historic dramas in Bath, with a new thriller based on HG Wells' famous novel 'The Invisible Man'. In April of this year, actors took to wearing period costumes once again. There were several closed streets with Victorian style carts to be seen. This new movie has been given the name 'Fear the Invisible Man' and is directed by Paul Dudbridge.

Written by Emma Moseley

Written by Emma Moseley



A variety of adverts for the Gala Fete at Sydney Gardens and the Floral Fete held by the Bath Horticultural and Floral Society within the Gardens. © Bath in time

GEORGIAN GARDEN FESTIVITIES

It was common practice for pleasure gardens to hold various events throughout the year for their guests. Sydney Gardens was no exception and held numerous events in its lifetime, from dancing to gardening.

Since the opening of Sydney Gardens Vauxhall in 1795, many people would flock to Bath to gather and celebrate within this new pleasure garden. The Gardens held numerous festivities throughout the years which garnered much attention from people all over the world. The main demographic of visitors had come from London, bringing various new trends that would soon be replicated in Bath.

Pleasure gardens and tea rooms were seen in abundance throughout Europe during the eighteenth century due to their popularity. It was during this time that the pleasure gardens were run as commercial venues with the tenancy leased out to people. This made it important for the tenants to provide a variety of entertainment to bring in the crowds and make some profit.

The gardens would have an entrance fee, with some having a seasonal ticket as an option. People would attend pleasure gardens for public breakfasts where they could dine with polite conversation, a very popular social activity for many. The pleasure gardens tended to offer a variety of activities that could be enjoyed during the daytime.

Most gardens would include a variety of attractions for guests to entertain themselves, such as a labyrinth or grotto.

To pull in the big crowds, Sydney Gardens would hold a variety of nighttime entertainment throughout the year, from large Galas to floral shows. These events would have an extra fee that needed to be paid for entry per guest, but were priced low enough to ensure inclusivity.

Gala

The Gala was a sight to behold and made a magical evening for many, with an orchestra performing through the evening for the guests to dance the night away. The guests could wine and dine on an abundance of food and alcohol. As the sunset, thousands of lamps would be lit illuminating the night sky to beguile the guests. The lamps were fixed to every pillar and hung amongst the tree branches. The night would finally end with a spectacular display of fireworks.

The Gala events would be advertised in the local newspapers to generate interest, initially priced at one shilling per person. They would pull in crowds of around 4000 people. Initially, they held three Galas each summer to commemorate the birthdays of George III on 4th June and the Prince of Wales on 12th August. And the final one was held in July to coincide with the Bath Races, this meant this Gala did not have a set date. If the weather was bad, they would usually hold the event again a few days later.

Floral Shows

At the floral shows, held by the Bath Horticultural and Floral Society, guests would be astounded by the exotic plant life and enthralled by the numerous beautiful floral arrangements. Sydney Gardens was awash with colour, the perfect setting for a festival of plant life. The abundance of greenery and exotic trees helped to set the scene for a floral fete. There were many competitions held throughout the day, including ones that focused on specific types of plants, such as hyacinths. These festivals were extremely popular, and would have vast amounts of people attending, either to compete or simply to watch the competitions and have an enjoyable time.

The entrance was easy to navigate through, with only one entrance and a walled garden, making it easier to ensure all guests had paid and to keep track of numbers. Guests would bring their own home-grown plant life, from flowers to fruits and vegetables. The festival held many different competitions that all guests could partake in. Many working men would flood to the gardens to bring their apples and potatoes and compete in the cottagers class. While the landowners and wealthier citizens would bring along a variety of exotic plants and fruits, grown on their lands and in their greenhouses which had been tended to by their own gardeners. By 6.00pm the doors

would close, and the guests would make their way back home.

Bath Horticultural and Floral Society

With the opening of a new public park in Bath in 1830, Royal Victoria Park, there was a waning interest in Sydney Gardens, as this new park was free for all to enter. This meant that Sydney Gardens had to find other ways to get more visitors to continue paying for the upkeep of the lands. New festivities began to emerge as a result of this, with summer floral shows arranged by the Bath Horticultural and Floral Society being a primary attraction.

The society began in 1834 and was founded by wealthy citizens and landowners. The society's main aim was to get more people to produce flowers and get involved with horticulture during their leisure time. The society held five annual festivals throughout the year initially. After a few years the society split into two due to various disagreements, with one section forming a new society and purchasing its own garden within Royal Victoria Park (where the Botanic Gardens now stand). After having two seasons of separate shows, the two societies merged together once again and became the Bath Royal United Horticultural Society. They held six annual shows, alternating between Sydney Gardens and Royal Victoria Park until 1853.

Bath Abbey  
© Cajee Zhang on Unsplash



## BATH'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

Colonial slavery has played a significant role in shaping Britain into the place it is today. Bath, like many cities, developed its rich cultural heritage due to money gained from the slave trade.

Wealthy slave owners would visit Bath and spread their wealth through building works and leisure. Much of Bath's architectural beauty is connected with these slave owners and their ill-gotten gains. Looking at various places of in Bath, we can gain an understanding of how Bath was able to profit from the slave trade and develop its' own cultural heritage.

### The Bath Abbey

This Abbey is at the heart of Bath, encompassed by the many shops within Bath's high street. This building took several centuries to become what it is today. Having stood witness to much of Bath's history and becoming a keystone for many people of faith. The Abbey has a dark, well-known secret; it has the largest memorial dedicated to slave owners than anywhere else in Britain.

There is a plaque within the Abbey's walls dedicated to James Holder Alleyne (found in the North transept). Alleyne was born in 1790 to a very powerful family who owned a sugar plantation in Barbados. He married in 1815 and moved to Clifton in Bristol. By the age of 22, he was the owner of 118 slaves and also owned 204 acres of land. In 1833, Alleyne owned 739 slaves in Barbados and his brother owned 865. With the abolishment of slavery in 1833, many slave owners were given the opportunity to file for compensation from the British government for the loss of their slaves. Alleyne was one of many who made the claim, and received £16,617, and his brother was able to get £18,128 in compensation.

The Abbey also has a glass window dedicated to James Heywood Markland, to honour his life. Markland was the Treasurer of a Church of England missionary organisation and a parliamentary agent in the West Indies. He moved to Bath in 1841 and lived at 1 Lansdown Crescent and remained there until he died in 1864. He was able to claim compensation on behalf of the London Society of West India Planters and Merchants. This society owned 410 slaves in Barbados on the Codrington estate. The British government paid £8,558 in compensation. Markland was important on the Literary Committee of the London Society during the 1820s, as he was a literary agent for several different pro-slavery author. This organisation was known for being pro-slavery and created various publications to increase publicity for slavery.

Continued on page 5

# SYDNEY GARDENS VAUXHALL: HISTORY

Sydney Gardens and rear of Sydney House (now Holburne Museum of Art), Bath 1805  
© Bath in Time



**As one of Bath's most beloved parks, many people in the city do not know that Sydney Gardens is one of the last remaining eighteenth century pleasure gardens in the UK.**

Pleasure Gardens were very fashionable across Europe in the eighteenth century. They were green outdoor spaces that were open to the public. They held entertainment and recreational events within, one of the most famous Pleasure Gardens was Vauxhall Gardens in London. Unlike normal parks, there was an admission fee, this was to help with the upkeep, but it was reasonable enough to keep it inclusive.

In Sydney Gardens, during its time as a Pleasure Garden, it held firework displays, dancing and concerts in the evening. During the day, people would walk along the gardens and have tea and pastries in one of the outdoor shelters, known as Supper Boxes. Aside from the attractions it offered, Sydney Gardens was also a place to socialise and maybe even meet a potential partner. It was great entertainment for people and attracted many visitors from London.

### Sydney Gardens

Sydney Gardens was originally designed by architect Thomas Baldwin, however, before the project could be finished, he became bankrupt and work on the gardens was taken over by fellow architect Harcourt Masters. Work began on the site of Sydney Gardens during the eighteenth century in 1793, when Pleasure Gardens were considered fashionable places to visit. The first tree in the gardens was planted later that year, but in 1795, Sydney

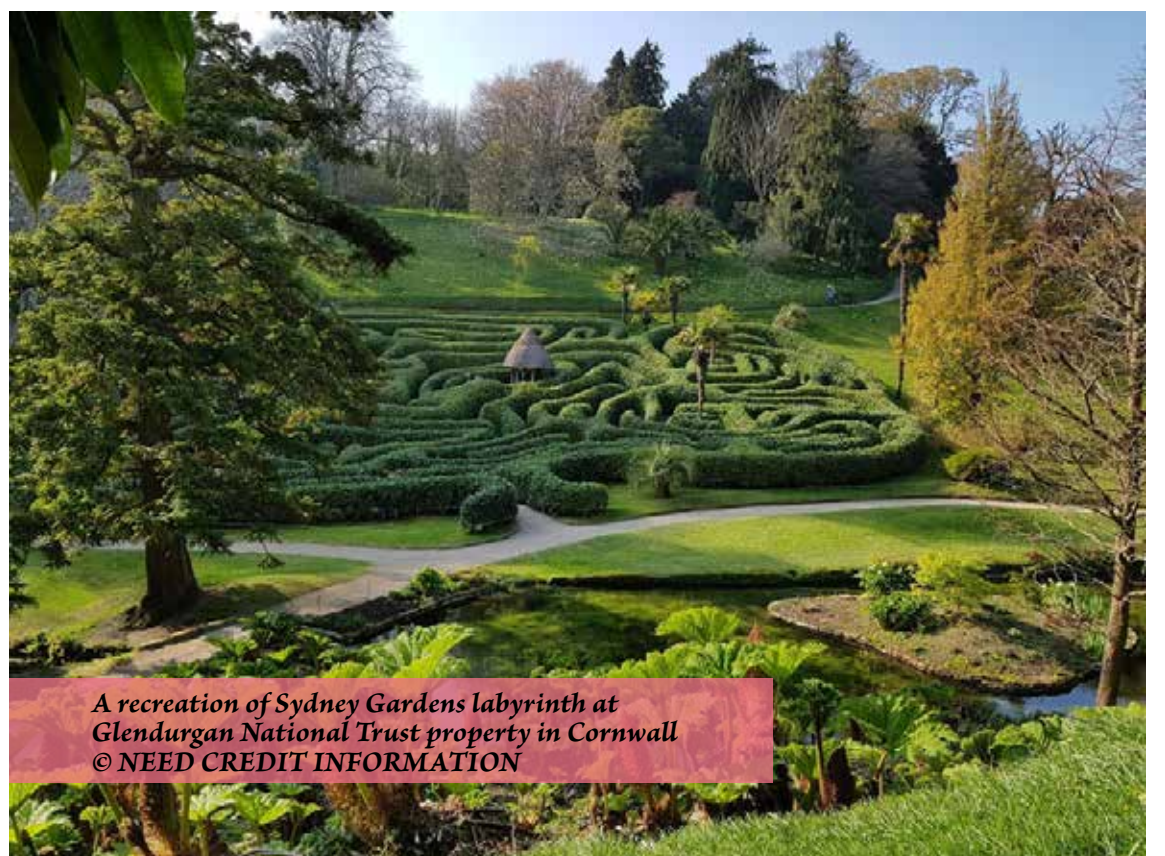
Gardens was open to the public for walking and was big enough to hold 4,000 people on gala nights. Vauxhall came to be a general term for Pleasure Gardens, so Sydney Gardens was originally named Sydney Gardens Vauxhall. In fact, Sydney Gardens Vauxhall became so popular, it led to the closure of two older Pleasure Gardens in Bath, Spring Gardens and Grosvenor Gardens.

But why Sydney? The gardens were named after politician Thomas Townshend, 1st Viscount Sydney, who was also the namesake for Sydney, Australia. He was heavily involved in British Colonial activities and trade, such as the establishment of the British colony in Australia and overseeing the East India Company from 1784-1790. He died in 1800 and there is still to this date, no evidence

found that he ever attended the gardens himself.

### Jane Austen

Famous novelist, Jane Austen, was a frequent visitor at Sydney Gardens during the Georgian era. She lived at number four, Sydney Place between 1801 and 1804. Austen visited the gardens regularly as she found solace



A recreation of Sydney Gardens labyrinth at Glendurgan National Trust property in Cornwall  
© NEED CREDIT INFORMATION

# OF THE GEORGIAN PLEASURE GARDENS



*A place to come and relax with nature*  
© Emma Moseley



View from the Pavilion at Sydney Gardens c.1920s  
© Bath in Time

## Lansdown

Henry Goodridge designed the Lansdown Tower in 1827, using the much favoured architectural style of the nineteenth century: neoclassical. This tower is just outside of Bath next to Lansdown Road. Goodridge designed the Tower for William Beckford, who used the tower as both a library and a luxurious retreat. Beckford went on to buy several homes in Lansdown Crescent and the land between the tower and Lansdown Crescent were landscaped to create Beckford's Ride.

The Tower has since changed names and is now known as Beckford's Tower. It is now open as a museum displaying various furnishings that were initially made for the tower and paintings, prints and objects to show Beckford's life. This building has become a Grade I listed building and the adjoining cemetery is Grade II on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England.

William Beckford's wealth was made primarily through the Slave Trade as he had inherited several sugar plantations in Jamaica at the age of ten. He had also received an estate in Wiltshire and £1 million in cash from his father. This gave him the opportunity to live a lavish lifestyle where he could indulge in his passions. Not only was he a plantation owner, he was an art collector, travel writer and English novelist. His lifestyle and building ventures used up most of his fortune, leaving around £80,000 by his death in 1844.

Lansdown was a popular area for wealthy men in Bath. Another slave owner, known as Nathaniel Wells, came to live in the area in the mid eighteenth hundreds, and remained there until his death in 1852. Nathaniel was initially born into slavery on his father's plantation in Saint Kitts. His mother was a Black, enslaved house servant and his father was William Wells, owner of three sugar plantations. In 1783, Nathaniel was freed from his enslavement and baptised, then sent to England to attend Oxford University. Nathaniel received £120,000 and the majority of his fathers' estate upon his father's death. With the abolition of slavery in 1833, Nathaniel received £1400 in compensation for the loss of 86 slaves.

Overtime, Nathaniel had come to play a major part of the Monmouthshire high society and was appointed as the Justice of Peace in 1806. He became the first Black person to become a sheriff in Britain in 1818 when he was appointed Sheriff of Monmouthshire.

There are other places within Bath that was funded by the slave trade, with some places beginning to acknowledge their history and engage the public with it. The hope is in time for all to be known so that we can all learn from the past.

in the quiet green corners of the gardens. After attending one of the galas held in the gardens, she wrote, 'last night we were in Sydney Gardens again, as there was a repetition of the gala which went off so ill on the 4th. We did not go till nine, and then were in very good time for the fireworks, which were really beautiful, and surpassing my expectation; the illuminations, too, were very,

pretty.' Austen also mentions Sydney Gardens in her novels: Persuasion and Northanger Abbey.

As Sydney Gardens was growing in popularity, one of the main attractions was the public breakfast as it allowed for many to mix and socialise over the often-forgotten meal. Austen once wrote to her sister, jokingly saying, '... there is a public breakfast in Sydney Gardens every morning, so that we

shall not be wholly starved.' However, she attended the public breakfast herself soon after.

## Georgian Entertainment

As well as a bowling green, a movable orchestra and elaborate firework displays, there were many other attractions in Sydney Gardens which enticed a lot of visitors.

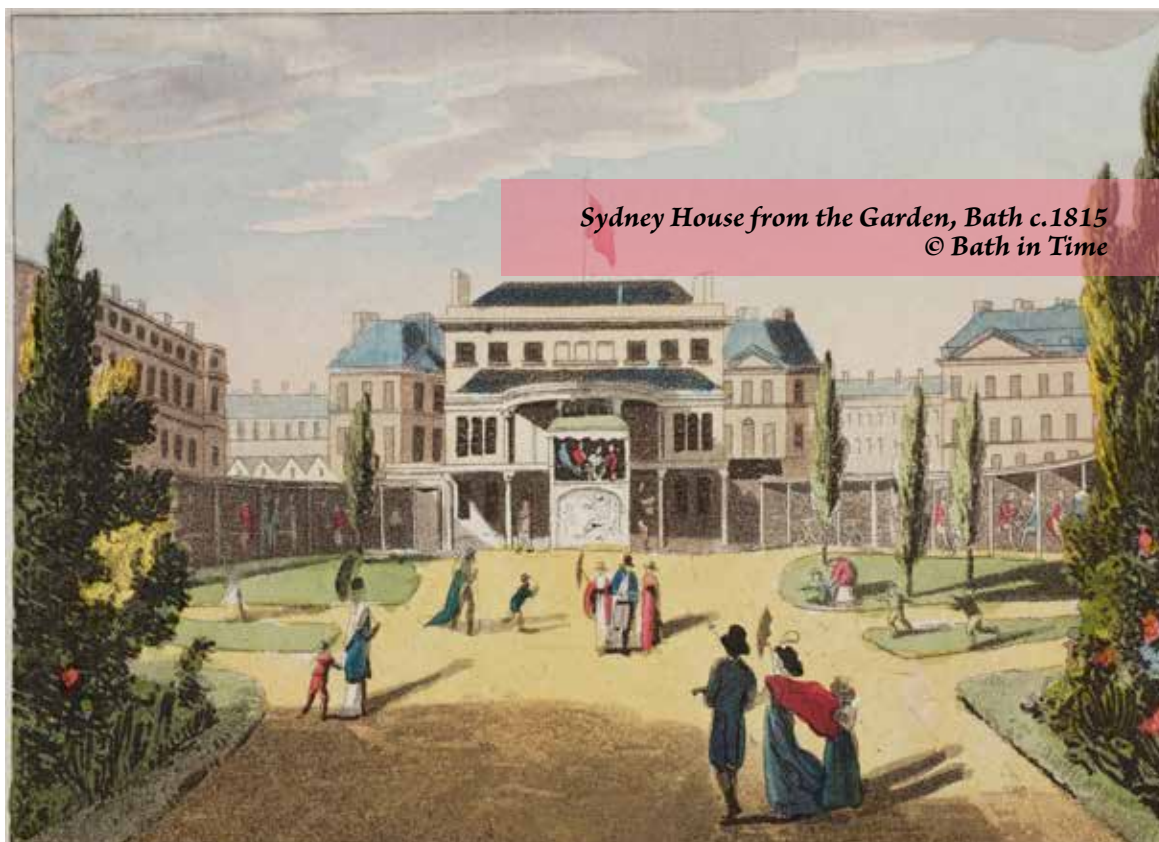
One of the main features in Sydney Gardens was the labyrinth, which was a particular source of fun for visitors. Austen described the maze as, 'nearly twice as large as that in the gardens of Hampton Court'. It was made up of carefully placed winding hedges, with paths that would lead you to a grotto which the Georgians thoroughly enjoyed, and were popular in many gardens at the time. In the centre of the maze was Merlin's Swing, an adult-sized swing created by the Belgian inventor John Joseph Merlin. It was a contraption for improving health through gravity, most likely in a boat-shape style and could hold four people at a time. However, in 1853 the labyrinth and grotto were destroyed when the land they were located on in Sydney Gardens was sold to build two houses on.

One of the most dramatic features of the gardens, which can be seen on the 1800 plan, was The Ride. This was a 15 meter wide racetrack for horse riding, which ran along the entire perimeter of the gardens. The Ride was suitable for all weather and was another key attraction in the Pleasure Garden for visitors.

Sydney Gardens was also known to hold some spectacular one-off events. For example, in September 1802, André-Jacques Garnerin took off from the gardens in his hot air balloon. During this time, manned balloon flight was in its very early days, so this would have been a spectacle to onlookers.

Despite the long history, Sydney Gardens continues to impress people today and is open and free for the public to walk their dogs, have a picnic and to enjoy a quiet moment in the garden, away from bustling city life.

Written by Ella Winbolt



Sydney House from the Garden, Bath c.1815  
© Bath in Time

Written by Emma Moseley

## RETURNING LIFE TO THE GARDENS

**A three-year long restoration project for this historic Georgian Pleasure Garden, where local communities can reconnect with nature and their shared heritage.**

In 2017, Bath & North East Somerset Council's Park Team partnered up with The Friends of Sydney Gardens, the Holburne Museum and local residents' groups to create the Sydney Gardens Project. The main aim of the project is to bring life back into the historic Gardens and to get more of the local community involved and people excited about visiting. The partnership have a vision to **'Revitalise Sydney Gardens as a beautiful Pleasure Garden with peaceful and tranquil spaces, that achieves a renaissance as a unique, fun and restorative environment, for all ages; its remarkable built and natural heritage, people and events, told and experienced in witty and eclectic ways.'**

Initially beginning with a small development grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project

began with a plan and a series of public consultations to restore listed buildings, renovate the park with a new extended play area and to open areas of the park currently closed to the public. Another aim is to encourage people to learn more about the history and heritage of the Gardens. This project consists of more than just restoration and building, as it aims to get more people involved with parks and gardens by bringing various activities for people to enjoy and to spend more time in nature and the park (gardening, arts events and workshops, walks and talks, exercise and well-being, archaeology, research and documentation.

With a further grant of £2.7 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in February 2019, the partnership began their three year project (ending in March 2022). Unfortunately due to Covid, the project was delayed during 2020, but is still scheduled to complete on time. During these three years, various restorations will be made to historic buildings throughout the Gardens, alongside investment in garden



Restoring the gardens  
© Sydney Gardens Project

and landscape works to increase biodiversity and areas open to the public. There is to be a new play area for people of all ages to come to the park and

enjoy. The play area will feature panna football, table tennis, natural play, swings and slides!

Written by Emma Moseley

## CLIMATE EMERGENCY & COMMUNITY ENERGY

**March 2019, B&NES Council declared a 'Climate Emergency' as part of a global movement to galvanise support for, and to instigate the drastic actions needed to combat the impacts of climate change.**

The B&NES Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan identifies three priority areas: improving energy efficiency; a reduction in transport emissions; and a 'rapid and large-scale increase in local renewable energy generation'. Community Energy projects are a key contributor to achieving this last aim. The overarching goal is to be carbon-neutral by 2030.

Whilst it is important to remember that reducing our own contribution to climate change can have a positive impact around the world, there are also substantial benefits at a local level. These actions have the potential to benefit local people, but the development of local 'green' energy arguably has more far-reaching implications.

### Why is energy not produced locally?

Historically in the UK, the energy market has always been centralised. We have had a limited choice as to where and how our energy is generated, and to whom we pay for the privileges of access and consumption. In 2010, the introduction of 'Feed-in Tariffs' began to challenge this status quo and small-scale energy producers received subsidies in return for feeding electricity into the national grid. This led to the rapid growth in the number of community energy projects, but this growth has slowed in recent years following changes in legislation and the subsequent reduction in Feed-in Tariffs.

With the number of successful community energy initiatives growing around the world, (notable examples can be found in Germany, Denmark, Belgium, South Korea, Chile and Brazil), it is hopeful that

the changes in legislation necessary to encourage community energy projects will take place.

In the UK, campaign groups, such as Power for People, are pushing for legislative reforms which would allow smaller local energy producers greater access to the energy market. While organisations, such as Community Energy England, promote the benefits of the sector and provide support to aspiring initiatives.

Meanwhile, some local authorities (B&NES included) are providing technical advice and work to promote grant funding access to community renewable energy projects. Support from the above sectors is crucial given the unstable levels of support from the central government and the inflexible nature of the energy supply structure.

### What do we gain from 'Community Energy'?

Community Energy projects are not structurally uniform in their operation and are established for a variety of reasons. Their structure and motivations are largely influenced by the location and culture of their home communities. Community Energy projects fall under the umbrella term of 'social enterprise' which is defined by a prioritisation of environmental or social impacts over financial motivations.

They demonstrate a range of approaches, with some operating on a traditional commercial basis, whilst still exhibiting a strong social and environmental ethos. On the other end of the spectrum are Community Energy projects which do not aim to compete in commercial markets but instead focus on maximising their social and environmental impacts locally.

Community Energy generation requires the embrace of innovation, entrepreneurship and local autonomy often found in the social enterprise sector. Belgium, Germany and Denmark all have a strong tradition of social enterprise which is less present in the UK.

Community Energy projects can benefit their local areas in a variety

of ways which are dictated by the structure and objectives of the project. Projects are jointly owned by local investors and an external partner. Local investors will see a return on their investment, but it is common for profits to be invested into other local causes.

For example, South London's Brixton Energy generates a 3% return for investors, whilst 20% of the project's profits are invested in initiatives focused on energy-saving in the local area. As an example closer to home, Keynsham Community Energy offers returns to their investors along with cheaper energy and reduced carbon emissions.

B&NES council's renewable energy action plan emphasises the importance that Community Energy projects will have in achieving their goal of net zero emissions by 2030. To support the development of future projects, the council plans to encourage local organisations to take advantage of existing funding schemes. The council is committed to continuing its support for the three existing projects in the area: Bath and West Community Energy, Keynsham

Community Energy and Chelwood Community Energy.

The jury is still out on the long-term implications of the widespread declaration of climate emergencies, but the potential benefits of Community Energy projects are hard to ignore. As national policy seems increasingly likely to shift in order to facilitate a less centralised approach to energy generation it would be an opportune moment to promote Community Energy as a viable alternative for the future. Local, green energy generation provides an opportunity for local people to benefit, be that in the form of investor returns, cleaner air, reduced carbon emissions, boosted biodiversity, cheaper energy or employment.

Community Energy projects have the potential to contribute on a much larger scale. B&NES council's goal of becoming carbon-neutral by 2030 represents the global impact local energy production could have in reducing climate change.

Written by Jacob Sudell

Greener energy to combat climate change.  
© Karsten Würth on Unsplash



# TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

## Its all about the trees!

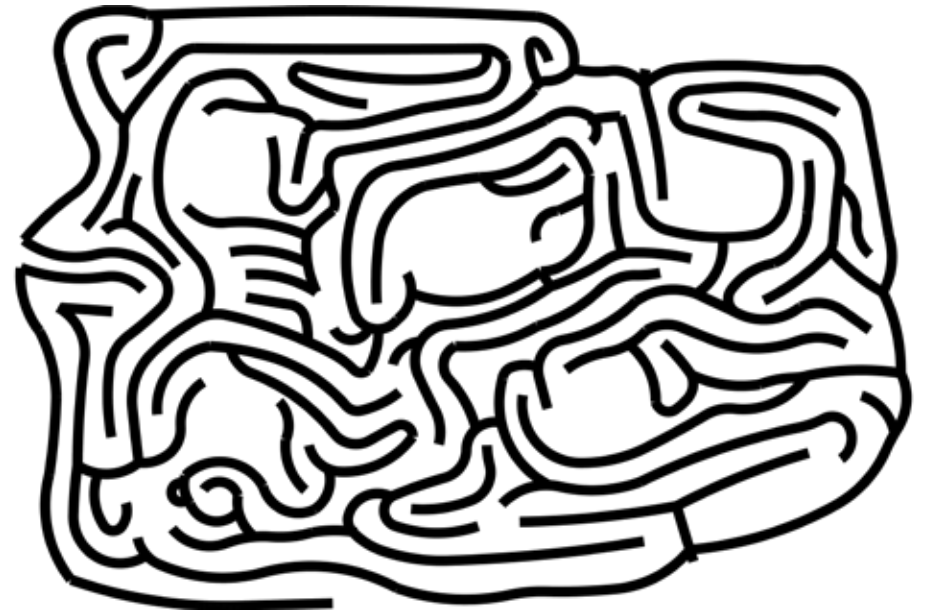
**ACROSS**

- Can grow beyond 90m in height
- One of the tallest trees found in the east USA
- Umbrella-shaped tree
- National emblem of Lebanon
- It has silvery-blue needles
- Can live for 3500 years
- Believed to ward off bad spirits

**DOWN**

- Fan shaped leaves
- Tallest tree in the Gardens
- Large heart-shaped leaves
- Originally from Asia, introduced to Scotland in 1838
- A foul smelling tree
- You can climb on it!
- Planted in 1919

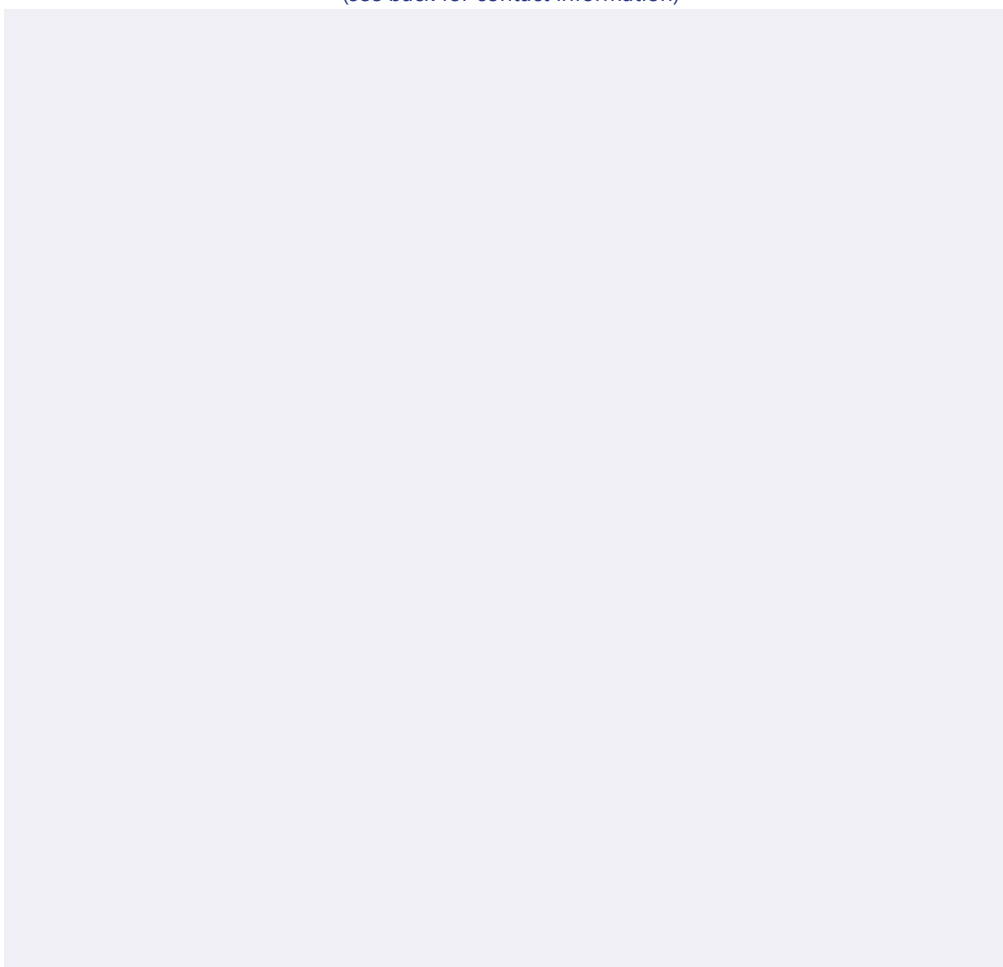
## Can you find your way out of the labyrinth?



## Can you find all the words?

- |            |             |          |
|------------|-------------|----------|
| Austin     | Festival    | Swings   |
| Bridgerton | Oak         | Temple   |
| Canal      | Park        | Trains   |
| Dickens    | Picnic      | Tulip    |
| Family     | Restoration | Wildlife |

**Draw a picture of your favourite plant/tree and share on our social media feeds!**  
(see back for contact information)



P	T	X	O	B	S	S	U	A	I	B	P	A	R	K
R	E	E	G	T	N	G	U	X	R	C	A	N	A	L
R	A	K	M	I	O	S	N	I	O	A	W	Y	N	W
X	M	A	A	P	T	B	D	I	B	A	Q	C	O	I
S	S	R	A	I	L	G	C	N	W	R	Q	F	I	L
Y	T	H	N	U	E	E	I	B	H	S	T	E	T	D
W	F	M	L	R	H	Z	N	V	A	H	E	S	A	L
A	D	X	T	S	G	U	C	Q	H	F	X	T	R	I
T	L	O	N	P	S	K	I	F	E	Y	P	I	O	F
U	N	X	U	Z	G	L	P	P	L	G	L	V	T	E
L	S	N	E	K	C	I	D	I	K	A	O	A	S	Q
I	X	G	J	P	R	O	M	X	W	J	Z	L	E	T
P	M	V	P	J	P	A	P	Y	F	G	I	X	R	K
G	N	R	Z	N	F	L	Q	H	E	U	C	N	F	J
D	W	P	U	D	F	F	N	W	N	T	R	E	L	J



## FRIENDS OF SYDNEY GARDENS

The Friends of Sydney Gardens (FoSG) group was formed in November 2013, with an aim to support the Historical Georgian Garden. Additionally, to liaise with the public and encourage volunteers to get involved with their local park.

Our volunteers collect litter, during the week and every weekend and we hold gardening sessions every 2nd Sunday of each month (more frequently when required). Our membership presently stands at 129 people. We also participated in the Steering Group during the 2018 HLF bid, which we supported.

We offer Historical Guided walks on the 2nd Sunday of each month that are open to the public to attend (when Covid allows). We also produce a Newsletter twice a year with a print run of 2500 copies which are hand delivered to local houses.

We have created a Tree Trail for selected trees in Sydney Gardens. There are hard copies of the trail available in the park. QR codes have also been set up and placed on the tree labels that link to our website for further information.

We have a comprehensive website where you can access our tree trail, links to the Heritage Lottery project updates and much more. We also have various social media accounts where we post the latest updates to our followers: Facebook, twitter and Instagram accounts.

**Interested in learning more about the FoSG?**

Then visit our website on:  
[www.friendsofsydneygardens.org](http://www.friendsofsydneygardens.org)

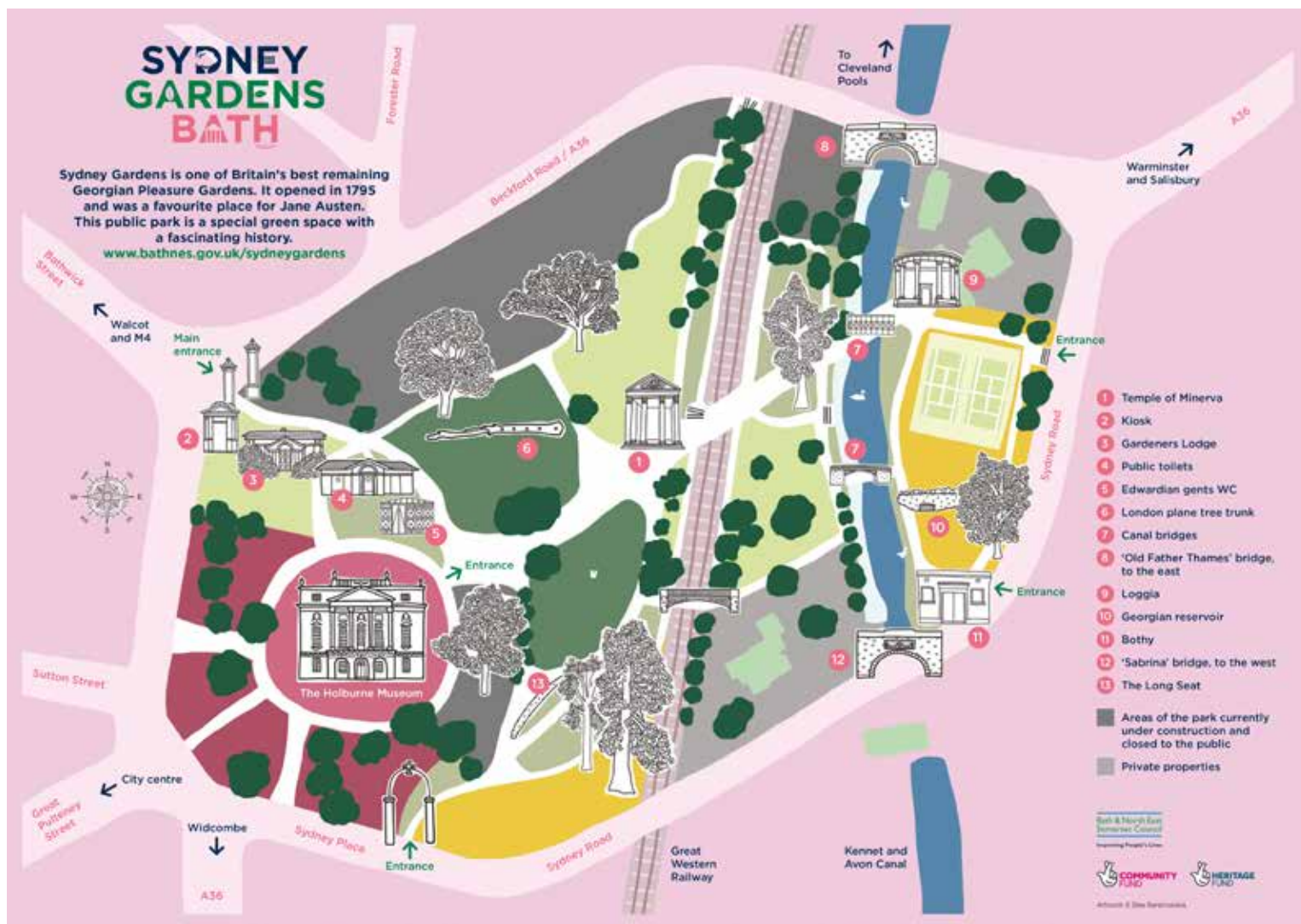
**Get in touch with FOSG:**

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 🐦 @fosydneygardens  
 📷 @fosydneygardens



Any views expressed in the articles in this newspaper are the views of the author and are not necessarily representative of the Sydney Gardens Project. Although every effort has been made to ensure that all articles are factually correct at the time of writing, we trust that our authors have thoroughly researched their articles.

This newspaper was created by Emma Moseley as part of a project initiated while studying a BA in Publishing & History at Bath Spa University, and as a volunteer on the Sydney Gardens Project.



## VOLUNTEERING AT SYDNEY GARDENS

**Interested in doing something both positive and enjoyable for your community? Then join our volunteers and be part of the Sydney Gardens' volunteer community.**

Sydney Gardens is a place where you can help make a difference for the local community, whilst meeting a wide range of people with various backgrounds. Whether you are retired, a student, work part time or even full-time there are a variety of opportunities for you to get involved and be a part of a caring community.

There are various roles available to get involved and many training opportunities to develop your skills. Many of our volunteers like to take part in gardening, where they are working on making the Gardens feel more inviting to visitors. They are planting flowers to make it more ornamental and feel like a proper garden, more than just planting flowers. There are volunteers who focus on the general upkeep of gardening, ensuring that the garden is kept neat and tidy with all weeds removed. There is also a team of volunteers who regularly go around the Gardens to pick up any litter to

maintain the beauty of the site and keep the park clean and tidy.

Other volunteer opportunities include leading historical walks through the park. There has been a team of volunteers who have helped to both design and create various trails throughout the park (such as a tree trail, Jane Austen trail and a heritage trail). Some volunteers will guide visitors around these trails, where visitors can discover the hidden treasures of the Gardens.

There are also opportunities to develop your marketing skills and build our presence on social media to reach a wider audience and get

more of the community involved and visiting the park.

Volunteering with Sydney Gardens will help better your own understanding of the history on your doorstep, feeding you local knowledge of Bath and giving you that better understanding of what came before. You can meet like minded people and develop new friendships with people of all ages and backgrounds. Volunteering can be very satisfying on a personal level, giving you a great sense of achievement.

Written by Emma Moseley



Our volunteers and their work.  
© Sydney Gardens Project



**Keep in touch and let us know what you think!**

To find out more about the Sydney Gardens Project visit:  
[www.bathnes.gov.uk/sydneygardens](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sydneygardens)

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Medium: <https://medium.com/sydney-gardens-bath>

