

## Placemaking Areas

### BATH RECREATION GROUND

The area of this study, which includes The Bath Rugby Football Ground, Sports and Leisure Centre, The Pavilion, and ex St.John's Catholic School, is represented by the rectangle formed by Pulteney Mews (north), Pulteney Road (east), North Parade Road (south), and the River Avon (west).

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

#### **Pre-Georgian**

Before the development of Bathwick in the late 18th century, the study area consisted mainly of a large meadow or pasture ground by the Avon called West Mead, together with a smaller meadow on its south side divided into strips adjoining Dolemead in Widcombe parish, and a triangle of higher ground on its north-east corner called Mill Craite. The boundary between West Mead and its northern neighbour, another large meadow called the Ham, was marked by a stream from the Sham Castle springs which fell into the tailrace of Bathwick Mill below the city weir, its southern boundary marked by another from Bathwick Hill falling into the Avon just above the present North Parade Bridge. At an early stage in the development of Bathwick, the former stream was diverted to Bath's water supply system, the latter converted to a drain. All these grounds were bounded on the east by a lane leading from the village of Bathwick to Widcombe - the only road to the city, via St.Lawrence's Bridge.

Lying below the flood plain, these pasture grounds were typical of many along the river Avon which in earlier times had the advantage of providing early grass in the spring after seasonal flooding, thereby saving the slaughter of livestock during the winter. However, at other times of the year those adjoining the towns occasionally provided convenient flat open areas for public assemblies and events, such as Shrovetide sports or military musters.

#### **Spring Gardens**

With the rise of Bath as a fashionable resort, its surrounding meadows also provided pleasant walks for the visitors, and in the 1730s one of Bath's first pleasure grounds was established within a rectangular enclosure in the north-west corner of West Mead, adjoining Bathwick Mill. Known as Spring Gardens (in imitation of London), it offered a pleasant retreat among shrubberies and flowerbeds, the boundary stream serving as an ornamental water feature with fishponds and cascade. Refreshments were also provided, together with such entertainments as bowling, music, dancing, and firework displays. Before the building of Pulteney Bridge, the Gardens could only be reached by the ancient ferry from Boatstall Quay to Bathwick Mill or, via Widcombe, along a riverside path later known as Spring Gardens Road. They nevertheless remained very popular until competition from new pleasure grounds began to appear elsewhere towards the end of the century, and in about 1798 were finally closed, most of the ground being taken up for the completion of Johnstone Street.

#### **Development by the Pulteneys**

Although the potential for the development in Bathwick had already been recognised by the 1740s - not only by the owner of the estate, William Pulteney, Earl of Bath, but particularly by John Wood - nothing could be done until it was connected to the city by a bridge. Besides the profit from fashionable housing, this would also raise the value of the agricultural land, as pointed out by the Earl's successor, William Johnstone Pulteney, to the estate Trustees in 1769;

'... as to the Fields which may not be built upon, the Rent will be much increased by means of the Bridge because at present it is necessary to go near two Miles round to the present Bridge in order to carry Horses or Cattle from Bath to this Manor, and all Carts with Dung from Bath or with the produce of the Estate to Bath must make the same Circuit and must also pay at a Turnpike, but after the Bridge is built, these Fields which are chiefly in Grass, will be found very convenient for pasturing Horses and Cows belonging to the Inhabitants, and the carriage of Dung and the produce of the Estate will be attended with less than half the expense'.

Following the completion of the bridge in 1774, building development was eventually able to start, based on a design by Thomas Baldwin which replaced an earlier scheme by the Adam Brothers. On the north

side of Pulteney Street, on the Ham, there was to be a great square ('Frances Square'), and to the south on West Mead a parallel street called Great George Street or Great Annandale Street connected to a grand Crescent facing across the river to the Parades. Although no details of this Crescent have survived, it resembles a similar plan for the Kingston Estate opposite, which also proposed a riverside crescent at about the same time, designed by Repton (see Placemaking study for Manvers Street). However, these plans were curtailed by the outbreak of war in 1793, and from thereon, like the Kingston Estate, all further development only continued in piecemeal fashion.

Nevertheless, the plans for the development of Frances Square and West Mead were not abandoned, the meadow grounds being put to temporary use in the meantime. As anticipated, a large proportion quickly became covered with cultivated grounds, referred to as 'Kitchen Gardens', consisting of rented smallholdings and market gardens. The remaining open ground was most likely let for horse grazing, which by this time was at a premium owing to the thousands of horses then occupying the city during the booming stage-coach era. Associated with this was a complex of livery stables, coachhouses and cottages built on the edge of Mill Craite ground, between William Street and Edward Street (site of Pulteney Mews, opened in about 1830), together with another group behind Darlington Street (later Darlington Mews).

Also, certain public events still continued to take place in the open areas, such as a travelling menagerie show in 1812 for example, and cricket was already a popular enough pastime to be specifically banned as a disturbance, along with quoits, from the Bathwick Meadows in 1792. Although a Bath cricket club was already in existence by 1817, it would seem that matches were then played on any flat unused ground, including the Downs surrounding Bath. There is no evidence that these meadows were particularly favoured, and in any event, it was not until a later stage that sport was sufficiently well established financially to rent a permanent venue.

It was also during this time that the lane to Widcombe was replaced by an avenue initially called Sackville Street but eventually named Pulteney Road. This route had already been taken over by the Bath Turnpike Trust in 1759, in anticipation of the development of Bathwick, but remained something of a cul-de-sac until through-routes into the estate were opened in the 1830s, and was merely known as 'the New Road to Widcombe'.

### **Development by Henry Vane, Earl of Darlington (later Duke of Cleveland)**

Not long after the Earl of Darlington inherited the Estate in 1808, Bath was already changing from a fashionable resort to a place of respectable residence and retirement, and from this time into the 1820s attention turned to the development of the high ground of Bathwick Hill, where detached Italianate villas with secluded gardens began to be built rather than set-piece terraces. It was also during this period that much attention was given to the building of Cleveland Bridge, completed in 1827, opening a through-route to the London Road.

It was not until 1830 that interest eventually returned to the meadow grounds, when the tenants of the 'Kitchen Gardens' were given notice to quit, and plans for the grand squares and crescents were finally abandoned in favour of villas and parkland areas. On the north side of Pulteney Street, Bathwick Villas were completed during the 1840s around the remaining open area of grazing land called 'Bathwick Park' or (by 1860) 'Henrietta Park', but it was not until the 1850s that the development was continued on the south side with the line of villas along Pulteney Road, completed in the mid 1860s with the building of Lorne Villas and La Sainte Union Convent (now the Probation Offices). The rest of West Mead was returned to open grazing, including Mill Craite belonging to the livery stables, which by this time contained a group of garden buildings situated near the road. Also retained was an area of gardens, part of the strip meadow further south, in which a house known as Willow Cottage had already been built next to the road, with access at the rear to the river along a trackway among the field gardens which followed the line of the old boundary stream.

In the meantime, vehicular access between Bathwick meadows and the city had become much improved; following the opening of Orange Grove and Terrace Walk to traffic in 1834, North Parade Bridge, together with North Parade Road, was built in the following year under the ownership of the North Parade

Bridge Company Ltd. Also completed in 1834 was the New Warminster Road, put through to the Sydney Gardens by the Black Dog Turnpike Trust. However, the construction of the Great Western Railway through the Estate, proposed in 1838, was strongly opposed by the Earl, and after his death in 1842 his successors took little interest in further development.

However it is from here onward that sport as a pastime became more prominent. The Bath Archery Club was founded in 1857, followed by the Bath Football Club in 1865 (originally on the North Parade Cricket Ground), Somerset County Cricket Club (1875), Bath Cycling Club (1880), Bath Lawn Tennis Club (1880), and Bath Flying Club (birds) in 1882. Not all were necessarily associated with 'Bathwick Meadows' (as these grounds were then known), and there was much movement between venues, but it is noticeable that by the 1880s most of the open grazing had already been partitioned into designated cricket pitches, the remainder being available for the usual public events such as 'Sanger's Circus' which exhibited at Pulteney Road in 1882.

### **Captain F.W.Forester**

Following the death of the last Duke of Cleveland in 1891, the estate passed in trust to Captain F.W.Forester, who was himself closely involved in the business of horse-racing, and therefore very familiar with the commercial prospects of the sport industry. To this end, the tenancy of the whole of the Bathwick Meadows was taken up in 1894 by a group of gentlemen later known as the Bath and County Recreation Ground Company Limited, who took over the running of the grounds exclusively for sports. Although no formal lease was agreed until 1908 (see extract in Appendix below), various notable alterations were put into effect by the turn of the century.

All the internal partition fencing was removed, including those of Mill Craite ground, most of which (except for the garden buildings) was thrown into the open recreation area, together with the gardens and track to the river at the rear of Willow House, in order to bring the premises of these buildings into line with the Pulteney Road Villas. Grazing was probably unnecessary by this time, with the introduction of motorised lawn mowing. The Recreation Ground was then divided into designated areas for the different sports, the strip adjoining the river being immediately taken up by the Bath Football Club for a rugby pitch. Their previous venue, Henrietta Park, was then donated to the city by Captain Forester as a public amenity on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897.

Also included was a former timber and stone yard or wharf which had been extended out into the meadow in about 1820 from the south side of the remaining Spring Gardens premises beside the Mill. In 1882 the yard was taken over by Joseph Day, engineer, ironfounder, and inventor of the two-stroke engine, for his mechanical engineering business, 'The Victoria Iron and Brass Works', and it was here in Spring Gardens that Day developed his engine, taking out his first patent in 1891. Unfortunately he became involved in legal proceeding which left him bankrupt in 1893, and was forced to auction the works in May 1894, allowing the yard to be incorporated into the Recreation Ground (now the site of the Bath Football Club-House). It is noticeable that this was the only industrial use of these meadows throughout their history, unlike most others in the Bath area, and in strong contrast to the 'filthy and odious' Dolemeads housing development of the 1820s, built next to the K&A Canal just over the boundary in Widcombe.

Other measures included the formation of the enclosing embankments along Spring Gardens Road and Pulteney Mews, with a fixed entrance from William Street, where a pair of ornamental turnstile boxes and a cricket pavilion (now listed) were installed about 1895. Also laid down, adjoining North Parade Road, was an open-air roller-skating rink in the triangle between the road and the former trackway from Willow House.

### **The Pavilion**

In 1910 the 'County Skating Rink' was replaced by a purpose-built indoor rink, erected on the same site, formally opened by the Mayor of Bath in September. With the advent of the Great War, however, this building and the Bath Assembly Rooms were taken over for the assembly of airplane parts manufactured at Twerton. After the War, following an unsuccessful attempt to sell the Bathwick estate as a whole, in 1921 it was decided to sell in lots, allowing the Recreation Ground to be purchased by the leaseholders in 1922 (see extract below). Since the skating rink building was then still in the occupation of 'Aircraft

Limited', it was not until 1930, after the vacation of the firm, that it was converted to use as a concert hall named the 'Pavilion'. In the meantime the Corporation had purchased North Parade bridge under the 1925 Bath Corporation Act, after which it was closed to traffic for reconstruction, and it was not until after this was completed, about 1935, that the present vehicular entrance to the Pavilion was opened up from North Parade Road.

### **Post WWII**

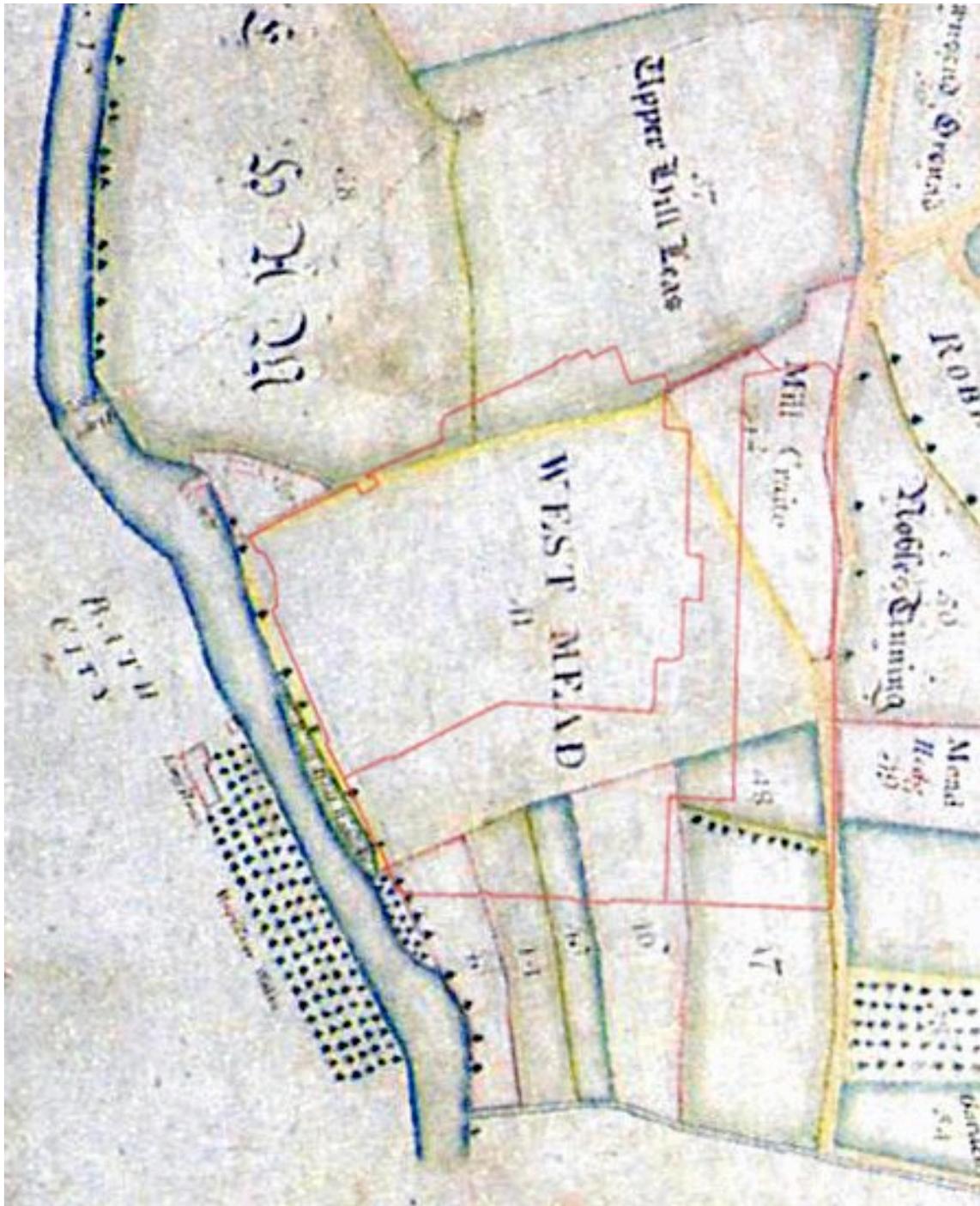
Apart from the development of the Recreation Ground since its acquisition by the city in 1956, changes elsewhere in the survey area have mainly occurred in Pulteney Mews and Pulteney Road, the first being the replacement of the livery stables in Pulteney Mews (together with two cottages which still belonged to the Recreation Ground premises) by Gerrard's Buildings in 1972.

In Pulteney Road, few of the villas now remain as private residences, those towards the northern end serving as Hotels or Holiday Apartments, the plot containing the Mill Craite garden buildings (removed in the early 20th century) as a site for the Bath Bowling Club greens. At the southern end, Willow Cottage was demolished and its ground converted to a garden attached to the former St.John's RC Primary School who had occupied Lorne Villas (Nos.33& 34 Pulteney Road) on the south side. This garden has been shared with the Convent School which moved to Nos.3&4 Stoneleigh Villas (28&29 Pulteney Road, once also known as 'Merlin') on the north, following its vacation of the original building for the new Magistrates Court and Probation Offices in 1980. Part of the lower end of the garden, together with a strip of ground taken from the original Convent premises, provided St.John's school with the additional space at the rear of Lorne Villas for the building of its modern extension block.

## MAP REGRESSION

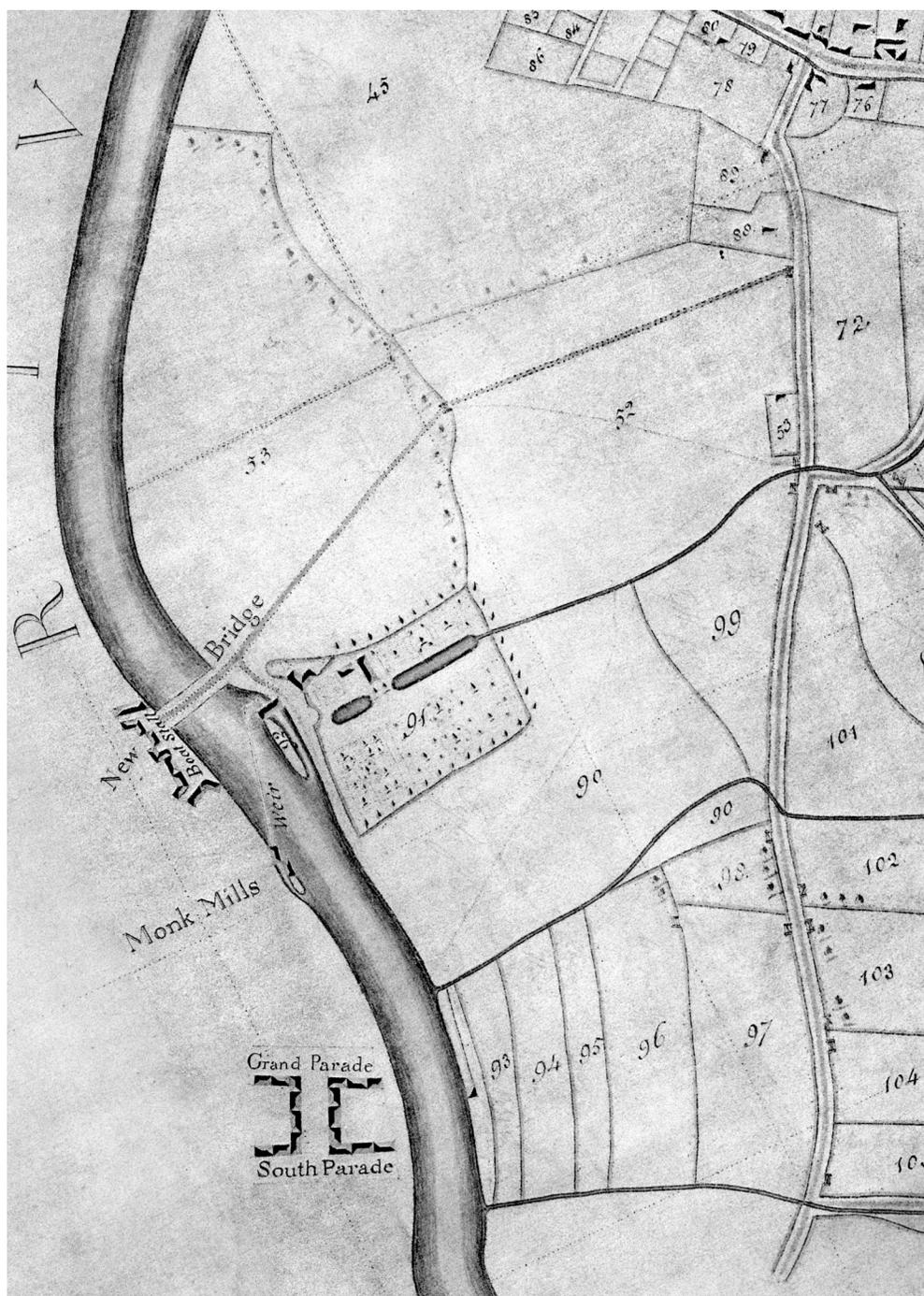
[The study area is superimposed by the red lines.]

1. From 'A Survey of The Manor of Bathwick In the County of Somerset belonging to the Hon. William Pulteney Esqr', 1727.



This survey was taken the year William Pulteney acquired the Manor of Bathwick from the Earl of Essex. The ancient ferry from the city is shown top left, later the site of Pulteney Bridge, with Bathwick Mill just below. On the opposite side of the river are the new Assembly Rooms and riverside walks before the building of the Parades.

2. From 'A Map of the Manor of Bathwick in the County of Somerset belonging to William Pulteney Esquire'. Undated, c.1770.



This survey was taken just before the building of Pulteney Bridge to show the springs and water courses in the manor, one of which flows through Spring Gardens (plot 91) in the NW corner of West Mead (plot 90). On the NE corner is Mill Crait (plot 99), and on the south is another stream bounding the strip fields (plots 93-98) facing the Parades opposite. To the south of these is Smallcombe Brook, the boundary of Widcombe and Lyncombe. On the east side is the lane from Bathwick village (top right) to Widcombe.

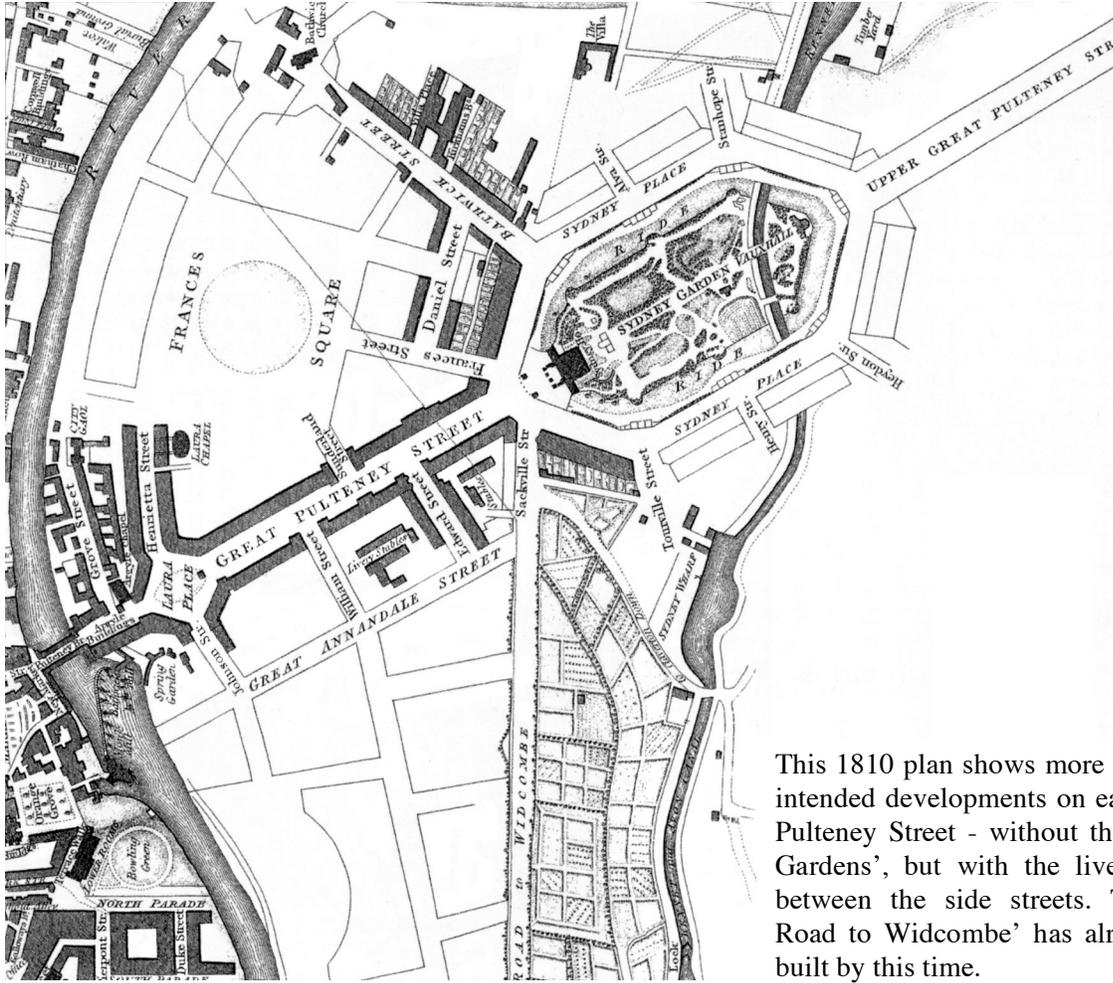
Pulteney Street was later built through plot 53 (the Ham) and 52 (Upper Hill Lease).

### 3. From Harcourt Masters' *Plan of the City of Bath, 1795*.



By this time Pulteney Bridge and Great Pulteney Street have already reached completion. Spring Gardens is still shown, but was soon to close, and it is already apparent that the rest of the area on the south side, together with Mill Craite (top right), is already filling up with 'Kitchen Garden' plots. Overlying the map are the outlines of the intended developments of Great George Street and the Crescent facing across the river to the Parades, with Sackville Street leading to Widcombe on the east side.

**4. From *A New and Correct Plan of the City of Bath* (H.Godwin, c.1810).**



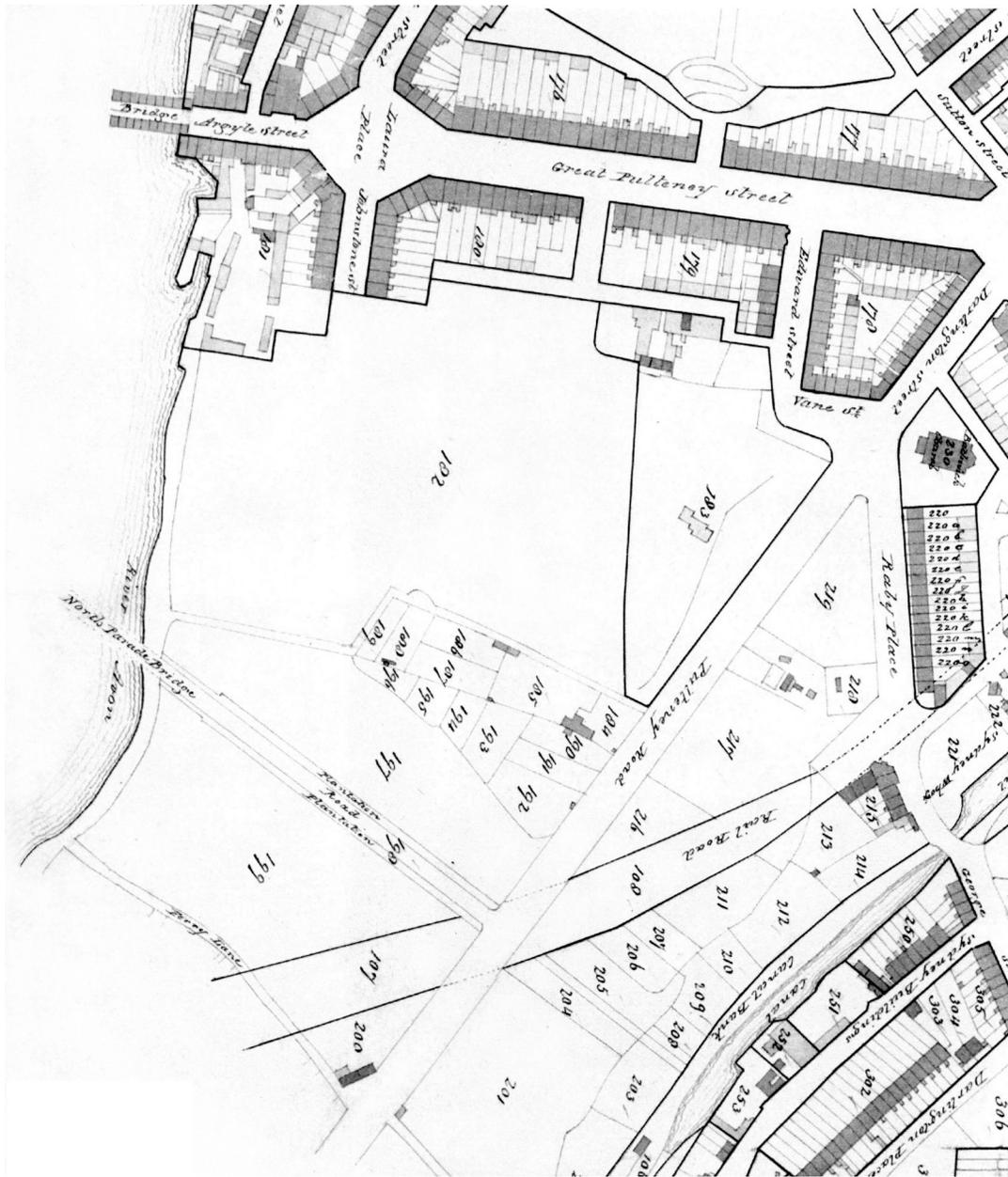
This 1810 plan shows more clearly the intended developments on each side of Pulteney Street - without the 'Kitchen Gardens', but with the livery stables between the side streets. The 'New Road to Widcombe' has already been built by this time.



**5. From *A New and Correct Plan of the City of Bath* (J.Barratt, 1818).**

This map published eight years later still shows the intended developments, but also the extensive coverage of the Kitchen Gardens.

6. From the Tithe Map of Bathwick, 1840.



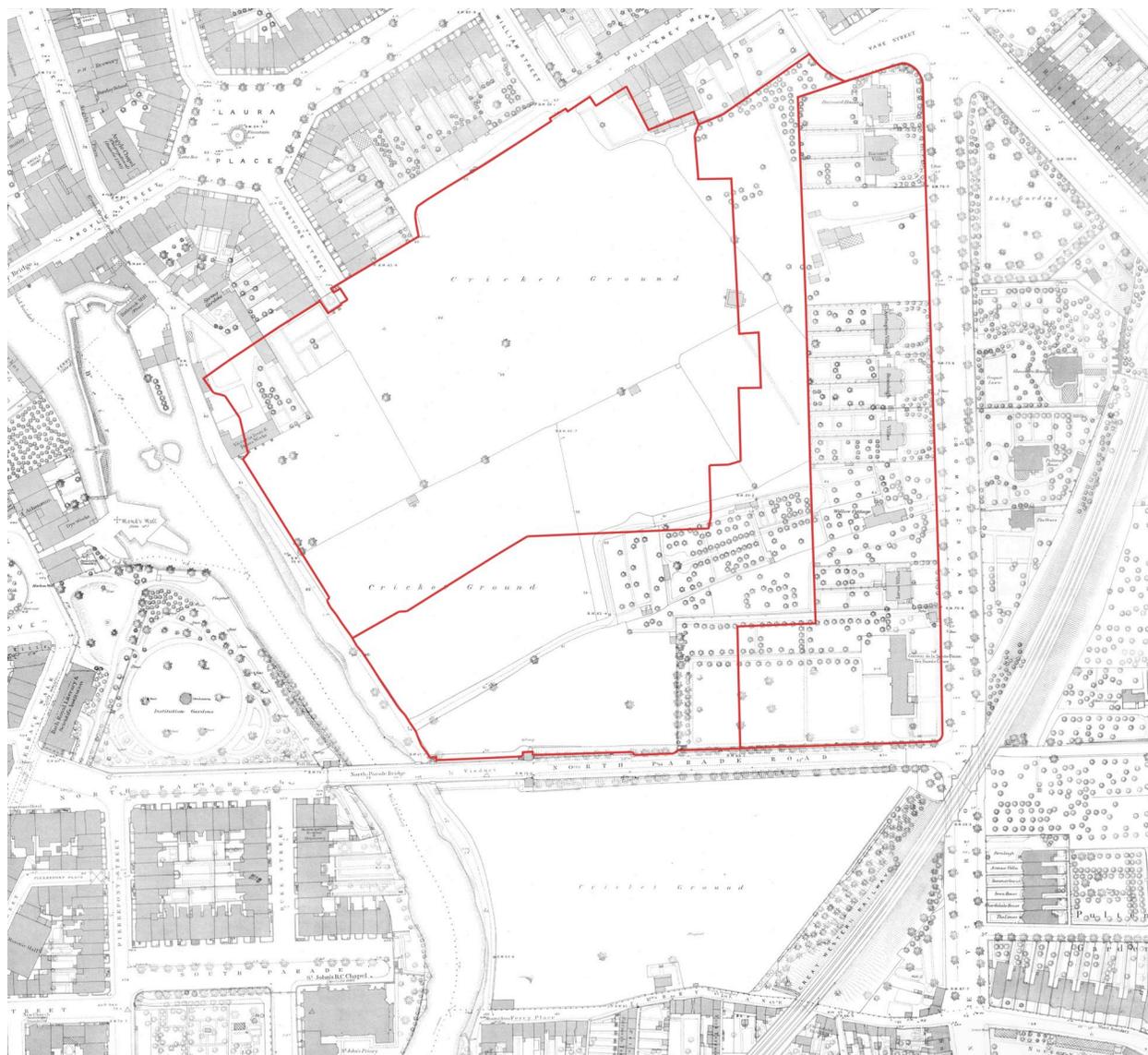
The tithe map shows all the Kitchen Gardens cleared from the meadow (plot 182), except for the triangle of Mill Craite and garden buildings (plot 183), including the livery stables in Pulteney Mews (recently opened up). Also remaining behind Willow Cottage (plot 184) are the gardens and trackway to the river (plots 185-196). In the NW corner of the meadow is the timber wharf attached to the Mill and Spring Gardens premises (plot 181). North Parade Bridge and Road have been built, as also the Great Western Railway, but the villa development along Pulteney Road has not yet begun.

**7. From Cotterell & Spackman's MS plan (sheets 41 and 42), 1852-1853.**



This large-scale map of the water supply system in Bath produced for the Corporation shows the outlines of the villas in Pulteney Road marked out ready for building.

**8. From the OS 1:500 map of Bath (sheets XIV.5.10/15 and 6.6/11), surveyed 1885.**



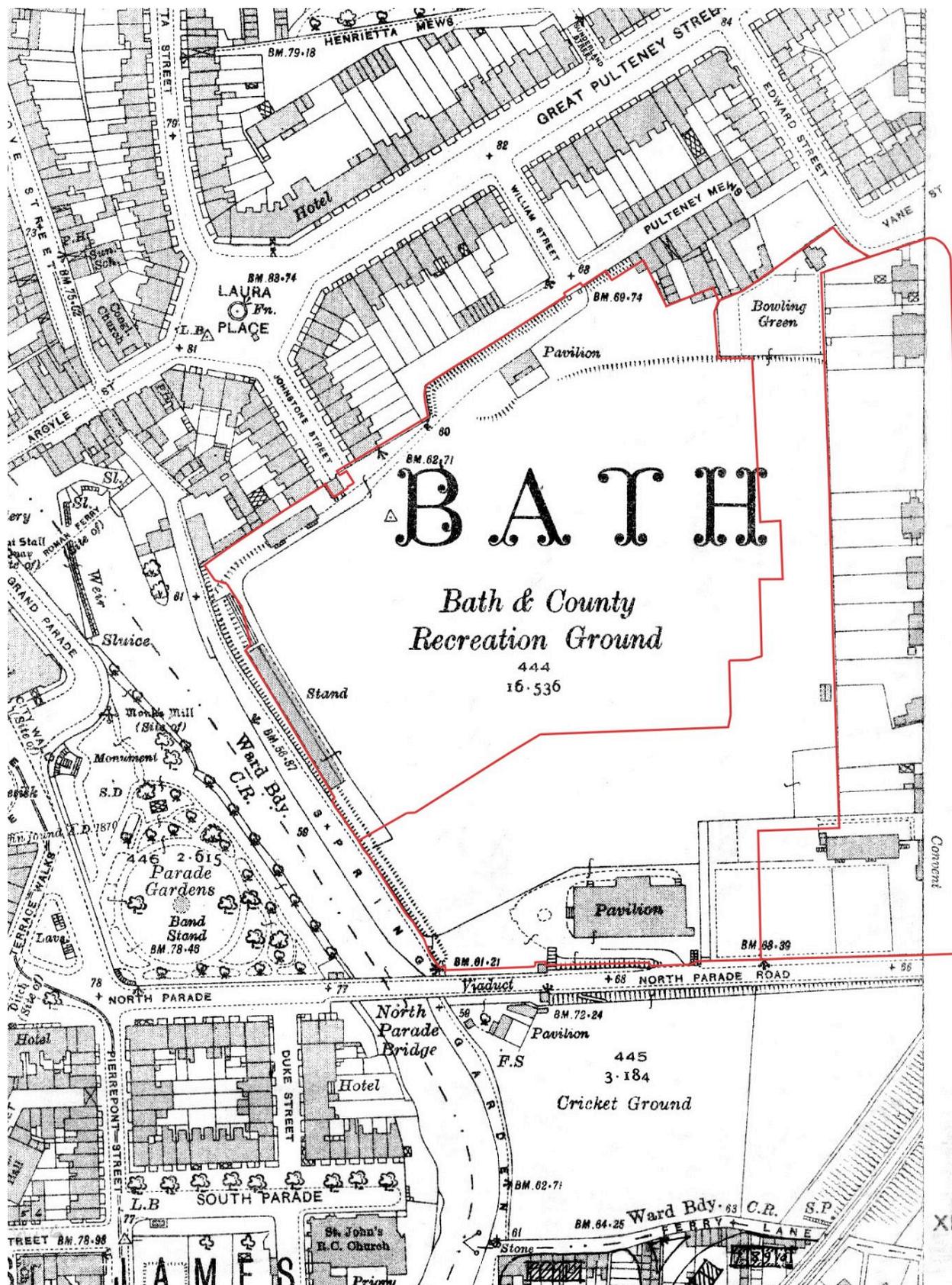
By this time, the villa development in Pultney Road is complete, but does not yet incorporate the garden buildings of Mill Craite or Willow Cottage (here 'Wellow Cottage') with its gardens and trackway. The timber yard by the mill was occupied at this stage by Joseph Day's 'Victoria Iron and Brass Works'. The open areas are already being extensively used as cricket pitches, with what appear to be various pavilions.

9. From the OS 1:2,500 map of Bath (surveyed 1902), sheet XIV.5.



This edition (published in 1904) shows the survey area soon after the alterations by the Bath and County Recreation Ground Company. Most of the internal boundaries have been removed, and the western boundary of the Pulteney Road villas has been rationalised to include Willow Cottage and the remnant buildings of Mill Craite. Joseph Day's engineering yard has been taken in, and the enclosure banks thrown up around the perimeter along Spring Gardens Road and Pulteney Mews. On the north side, the entrance from William Street has been opened up, with turnstile and cricket pavilion, and on the south an open-air roller-skating rink laid out.

10. From the OS 1:2,500 map of Bath (1936 edition), sheet XIV.5.



By this time the Pavilion concert hall has been provided with vehicular access from North Parade Road.

11. From Abercrombie's 'A Plan for Bath', 1945.



Only the NW corner of the Recreation Ground is included in Abercrombie's Plan, but shows an open Lido fronting the river.



## Sale 6 April 1922

Francis William Forester (the 'Vendor') 1st part

Brinsley FitzGerald and Arthur FirzGerald (the 'Trustees') 2nd part

The Bath and County Recreation Ground Company Limited of Milsom Street (the 'Purchasers') 3rd part

Recites:

1. Settlement of 1920 by Francis and Henry Forester, one part, and Trustees, other part. Bathwick Estate settled to the uses of the Vendor as tenant for life, the Trustees appointed for the purposes of the Settled Land Acts 1882 to 1890.
2. Powers of appointment of the Settlement to Francis and Henry not exercised for these hereditaments.
3. Francis as tenant has agreed to sell the hereditaments to the Purchasers for £6,050

This Indenture made for the sd.sum paid to the Trustees declares the following agreement:

1. Vendor conveys to the Purchasers ALL THAT piece of ground in Bath, 16.2.11 acres known as The Bath and County Recreation Ground with the building thereon formerly used as a Skating Rink and now in the occupation of Aircraft Limited and the Pavilion near Pulteney Mews in the occupation of the Purchasers as Lessees 1908. And also the two buildings formerly two Cottages adjoining the South side of Pulteney Mews now occupied by the Purchasers and The Bath and County Croquet Club respectively.

Excepting the Vendors title to use of running water and soil from other buildings and land of the Vendor adjoining the hereditaments that might be under the premises.

TO HOLD in fee simple free from the limitations of the Settlement subject to the 1908 lease.

2. The Purchasers covenant with the Vendor, (so that this covenant shall be binding in such portions of the premises conveyed as are respectively affected thereby into whosoever hands the same may come, but so that the Purchasers shall not be personally liable in damages for any breach thereof after they shall have parted with the sd.hereditaments) that no workshops, warehouses, factories or other buildings for the purpose of any trade or business which may be or grow to be a nuisance, annoyance or disturbance or otherwise prejudicially affect the adjoining premises or the neighbourhood, shall at any time hereafter be erected upon the sd.hereditaments and premises except the part thereof now in the occupation of Aircraft Limited and that nothing shall hereafter be erected placed built or done upon the sd.hereditaments and premises including such part thereof as last aforesaid which may be or grow to be a nuisance annoyance or disturbance or otherwise prejudicially affect the adjoining premises or the neighbourhood PROVIDED always that no factory chimney shall be erected on the portion of the sd.hereditaments now in the occupation of Aircraft Limited

3. PROVIDED always that so far as regards the reversion or remainder expectant on the life estate of the Vendor in the premises hereby conveyed and the title thereto and further assurances thereof after his death the statutory covenant by him implied in these presents shall not extend to the acts or defaults of any person other than and besides himself and persons deriving title under him.

4. The Vendor hereby acknowledges the right of the Purchasers to the production of the documents mentioned in the Schedule.

This is intended to be a Plan of the land (coloured Pink and Green) conveyed by an Indenture dated the 6<sup>th</sup> day of April 1922 and made between Francis William Forster of the first part Brinsley John Hamilton Fitz Gerald and Arthur Henry Brinsley Fitz Gerald of the second part and The Bath and County Recreation Ground Company Limited of the third part

*F. W. Forster*

