



COPING WITH LOCKDOWN 2020 / 2021

We have not been at all idle during this very difficult, and frankly rather stultifying, period, when we have been unable to welcome the happy chatter of young children to the BCHS Barton facilities.

With the willing help of our loyal band of volunteers, and family members, we have accomplished a great deal of refurbishment, and organised a comprehensive tidy up of the whole area. Without the children weekly on site, we could take our time, and do a really thorough job. We started by cutting right back the brambles, which had begun to seriously encroach into the coach parking area. This was followed by properly trimming the boundary hedges, and laying a further forty yards to complete the full required length.

The willow maze, which is always so popular with our smaller visitors, was the next task. Each year it needs to be rewoven in part, and the undergrowth cleared. Some small saplings were planted in the nature glade, where last year a number of old and unsafe trees were felled. Then all of the flower and shrub beds were thoroughly weeded, and replanted where necessary, before they were given a weed preventing covering of wood chips from the glade. As a result of all this hard work, we are looking unusually neat and tidy, and awaiting the next influx of boisterous youngsters.



The above was mostly achieved during the partial easing of the summer lockdown, whilst strictly adhering to social distancing rules, more easy to achieve in the great outdoors!

On rainy days we turned our attention to ways, in which we could reduce our running costs. We cancelled, for the meanwhile, our on-going contracts for waste and for recycling collection. We turned off all the heating, except when frosty conditions prevailed. We also turned off the sewage treatment plant and reviewed how we might run Barton with these reduced costs- a very advantageous exercise, which will bring benefits in the future. There is no doubt that there are useful ways to utilise the enforced idle time brought about by Covid 19, and, of course, there was the usual run of essential repairs and maintenance, which bedevil every large complex. – think Forth Bridge!!

Early in January this year the Building Committee did it's annual round of checks, and arranged for the Fire and Safety surveys to be done, and for all the outdoor and indoor play equipment to be tested, cleaned and cleared for action. Happily, this year, the outdoor swimming pool, and its attendant facilities is in tip top order after last year's successful retiling, and all of our roofs appear to be secure and watertight.

We hope that you can now see that we have no intention of letting the grass grow under our feet. If it does, the mower will be readily to hand !!

Important Message from Our Chairman

2020 was such a difficult year for all at BCHS on so many levels. We have all become more and more frustrated by all the necessarily introduced Covid 19 restrictions and, despite the Trustees' ingenious initiatives and best endeavours, Barton Camp has had to remain closed for most of last year, and so far all of 2021. This has brought a severe impact upon our income stream, and upon our financial position generally.

We do, however, have an action plan in place to reopen just as soon as the easing of the restrictions will allow us to maximise the usage of the wonderful Barton facilities. We can be surprisingly flexible to make things work for different groups of children, within the expected and continuing limitations. This is made possible because we can now divide Barton into two separate indoor centres, and also utilise the extensive outdoor spaces. We are versatile enough to be able to arrange day visits by individual schools and other groups in one area, whilst offering extended stays of up to a week for parties of disadvantaged children and their carers over in the camp dormitories.

By having to shut down much of the site for most of the year we have managed to keep the running costs as low as possible, and, with the help and support of our local band of volunteers and family members (all hands to the pump!) the outdoor areas have been kept neat and tidy in anticipation of eventual reopening. But, as everyone will know and have experienced, certain overheads do not just go away in lockdown, and must be taken on the chin.

Understandably, this year we have had to draw heavily upon our carefully nurtured financial reserves, in order to maintain the necessary level of services to keep Barton safe and secure.

Contd. Overleaf



Important Message From Our Chairman Contd.

Now we will need to fundraise with even more vigour, in order to replenish our somewhat depleted reserves.

Like all charities, we are finding that our traditional donors and supporters are also feeling the pinch, and I would like to thank all those, who have continued to help us through this horrible pandemic.

In 2021 we will be launching a new "Friends of Barton Camp" donors campaign, where our supporters, and many other members of the public, can simply make a small but regular contribution to this very worthwhile Society. Details will become available later in the year.

Again this year we have welcomed generous donations of colourful, hand stitched quilts from a number of local, amateur quilting groups. These quilts become treasured souvenirs of a child's stay at Barton, and are given to many of our less fortunate and smaller visitors.

We have noticed that, with many more lockdown hours on their hands, the quilters production has been greatly increased, and thus many of these quilts have been shared out among those children disappointed by the cancellation of their planned stay at Barton Camp.

With the mass vaccination programme currently being so successfully rolled out, there is some cause for optimism that we shall, at least partially, be able to open safely, and soon again in 2021. Our facilities are now better than ever, and offer young urban children an unrivalled opportunity to enjoy this beautiful countryside environment nestled in the Mendip Hills of Somerset.

We cannot wait to welcome back children from Bristol and further afield to the exciting place we call Barton Camp.

Bob Hollis, Chairman of BCHS, April 2021

Our Thanks To The Bristol Area M.G. Owners Club



Once again this group of great petrol-head enthusiasts have visited Barton for a week-end motor rally and "al fresco" barbecues. For a number of years now, through the invitation of Bert Hurditch, the on site manager at Barton, a member of this distinguished club, and a Trustee of BCHS, these M.G. owners have used the camp as a base for their countryside tour, and an annual get together. This visit generally results in a generous whip around. This year they raised in excess of £250, with Margaret Williams making and selling delicious pancakes with various exotic fillings.

During lockdown other members of the Bristol Area M.G. Owners Club have also not been idle with their charitable thoughts. Tim Price-Jones has constructed a number of bird boxes, using recyclable materials, for the involvement of the children, who will put them up in the woods, when they eventually return. He is also helping us with a bat survey, which we have arranged in readiness for the planned new security gate house and office location, for which we have just received planning permission. Tim is building for us a number of bat boxes to see if there is a small population in residence already.

Unfortunately, this year's gathering was brought to an abrupt ending, in true British fashion. The heavens opened on Sunday afternoon, and all those brightly shining M.G.s quickly high tailed it for home! We very much hope that we will be able to welcome them back again later in the year.



Our Thanks To Pauline Leverett

The photograph shows Pauline Leverette, the Secretary of the Bristol Area M.G. Owners Club, sitting at her sewing machine. During lockdown she has been industriously sewing a target of one hundred designer face masks for her favourite charity – the Bristol Childrens Help Society. Her original target was to raise £200, but so far she has raised over £2000 with her project, including sending twenty of her bright masks to Australia !

What a wonderful effort for a very good cause. WELL DONE PAULINE !



THE STORY FROM THE BEGINNING – Chapter One

Dick Hyde, Board Member & Trustee

The Education Acts of the 1870s, passed by the Liberal Government led by W.E. Gladstone, introduced compulsory school attendance up to the age of twelve. The dire poverty of swathes of urban children, many of whom went without serviceable shoes or boots meant that they often lacked proper clothing as well. Frequently these impoverished children were also on the very verge of starvation. Over time these terrible circumstances became uncomfortably apparent to the better off classes in Clifton, Hotwells and other affluent suburbs of Bristol.

In 1884 the Reverend Urijah Thomas, Minister at the Redland Park Reformed Church in Bristol, formed a Penny Dinner Society for those children, who were fortunate enough to be able to find a penny: but soon afterwards further funds were being raised to give free meals to those, who their teachers decided were, in fact penniless.

In 1888 73,880 halfpenny dinners and 57,954 free breakfasts were served, at a cost of £139-16-0, a very substantial sum in those days. It is recorded that the Lord Mayor of Bristol, Patron of this Society, on one occasion donated a whole ox! Other gifts included 56lbs of cocoa from J.S. Fry, 84lbs of jam from Bristol Preserving Co., 67lbs of bacon from W. Tilty & Co., and 1cwt of biscuits from Spillers. It is not recorded what shape they were! The name of the Penny Dinner Society was later changed to The Bristol Childrens Help Society.

By 1907, when the responsibility for the provision of school meals had been passed to the local Education Authority, it is estimated that over two million meals had been served to Bristol children, thanks to the charitable efforts of these generous Bristolians.

Before their journey to Barton, the children used to assemble at St. Peter's Parish Hall, Hotwells, where they were showered, deloused and given a set of the Society's clothes and boots, while their own were taken away for fumigation and a good wash. They then marched to Temple Meads Station to board a specially attached carriage, which was

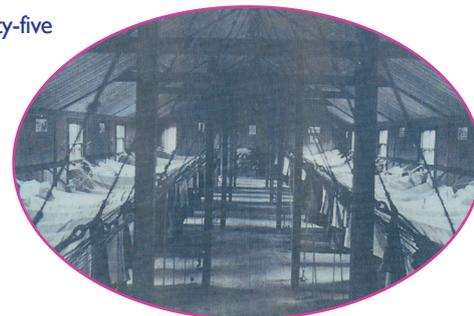
uncoupled at Winscombe on the Cheddar Valley line. From the station they walked the two and a half miles to Barton Camp.

At Barton the building of corrugated iron, managed to survive the onslaught of innumerable children right up until it was condemned in 1977, under fire and safety regulations, and was of two stories, with a large dining room, kitchen and store at one end of the ground floor; and the helpers' dining room and sleeping accommodation at the other. An outside staircase led to the upper floor with a dormitory for sixty-five children, who slept in slung hammocks, and a room for the Supervisor, who ran the camp.

From 1930 onwards, the journey from Hotwells was made by charabanc. One can easily imagine the excitement of the children, in those very early days, many of whom will have seldom left their immediate neighbourhood, and least of all, the city itself.

In 1914 war was declared, and sadly Barton had to close for the duration.

To be continued in our next Newsletter.



STOP PRESS NEWS ITEM

For a number of years now Bristol Childrens Help Society has welcomed small parties of local physically handicapped, or autistic, children to Barton Camp, whenever it has been possible for them to make a day visit to the countryside.

During the summer of 2020 we received a visit from the Trustees of the Heswall Disabled Children Holiday Fund, who have, for some years, been hosting a week long summer break each August for up to thirty 9 – 15 year olds, with serious personal or physical problems, in the North West of England.

Heswall are looking to expand into the Bristol and South West area, and have recognised that a certain lack of similar care and attention for this group of children also exists in our region. They now they have plans to organising a similar break here in August this year. They have formed a partnership with Bristol University, who have pledged to provide a team of youthful university volunteers to help with this project. August suits BCHS very well, being school holidays, when our usual visitors are all at home with their families.

Heswall visited the Barton complex during lockdown, and were impressed with the facilities as being ideal for their purposes of helping young people with differing forms of physical difficulties. In addition they are able to bring with them specific equipment to enable these children to use the swimming pool, and our other outdoor facilities. It is envisaged that this association will also enable BCHS volunteers to join with Heswall, and to learn new skills. We very much hope that this welcome initiative will herald the beginning of a long and fruitful partnership.



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

A Portrait of Nigel and Emma Greenhalgh

Nigel has been associated with the Bristol Childrens Help Society for over three years now. A long-time friend of our Chairman, Bob Hollis, Nigel's main focus now includes trying to improve the Barton properties, together with the security and operational costs of the whole of the Barton Camp site. This has become especially important during the frustrating lockdown periods of 2020 and 2021. The pandemic, and subsequent dislocation of our normal trading patterns, has inevitably raised many new challenges to generating income, and to maintaining the existing buildings.

Nigel qualified from Liverpool University as a Civil Engineer, and then worked abroad for a number of years, to enjoy travelling, and to gain groundwork experience, mainly on the continent of Africa. After a couple of years back in the office in London, however, he decided that the normal civil engineering route was not for him, and so he moved to Cornwall to work with a local construction and development company, before setting up his own business developing residential units in and around Truro. Unluckily, the financial recession of the early 1990s put an end to that, and he moved back to London to work on the Docklands Light Railway as a project manager, and to work with several other clients on a wide variety of projects, both national and international; these included the rollout of supermarket stores, and a delivery of data and switch centres for mobile operators, both in the UK and in the EU.

In 2003 Nigel set up his own company, together with his wife Sarah, to focus on project development and delivery, and also project management in a variety of areas, including residential and commercial properties, communications and railways, and also in the fields of art and education. Local projects included working with the Bristol Old Vic Theatre, the Watershed leisure complex and the Bristol Beacon. There was also work in Ireland, and a continuing engagement with Network Rail, Highways England and Transport for London.

Nigel and Sarah have four children, and, recently, one of them, Emma, has come to help BCHS on a voluntary basis. Born in Cornwall, and schooled at Redmaids in Bristol, Emma also had



Nigel and Emma completing the Bristol Half Marathon

an enjoyable four month stint in Kenya as a junior teacher, but took advantage of every opportunity including white water rafting and bungy jumping ! After following an early ambition to be a beauty therapist, and owning her own company, she is now employed in the burgeoning I.T. industry, which is an area, in which we are using her expertise. In the last eighteen months Emma has helped to build our new, and contemporary website, and has provided a much more lively social media presence for BCHS.

As we go to press, Nigel has just heard that the plans he recently submitted to the local council for a new office and gatehouse, which will provide us with a more secure entrance to the Barton site, have received the required planning permission. This is an exciting new project, and sensible for long term security at Barton. Now all that is needed, before we go ahead with the plans, as always, is the money to build it ! With Covid 19 still in the air, however, that may take a little longer than we had originally envisaged – unless, perchance, we can find a charitable Trust, willing to help us, as a one-off special project. We shall certainly be looking diligently for this White Knight to appear on the horizon for us !!

Nigel Greenhalgh is a Trustee and Board Member of BCHS.

I'd Like To Help Barton Camp

Please tick and return your completed form to: **BCHS, Barton Camp, Winscombe, N. Somerset, BS25 1DY.**

- I have made a payment direct to the BCHS bank account.
(Bristol Childrens Help Society sort code- 56-00-05, Account no. 2105 3820).
Please put your name as the payment reference.

My details:

Mr/Mrs/Miss (please delete as appropriate)

First Name Surname

Organisation Name (if appropriate)

Address

Tel Number Email

Please Gift Aid my donation to claim 25p from the taxman for every £1 donated
(I am a basic rate UK tax payer)

Signature Date

Please notify BCHS if you:

- Wish to cancel this declaration
 Change your name or home address
 No longer pay sufficient tax on your income
and/or capital gains

If you pay Income Tax at a higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief, you must include all Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return, or ask HMRC to adjust your tax code.

We will not share your information with third parties but would like to hold your details to keep you updated with our work. If you would prefer us not to, then please tick this box

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