

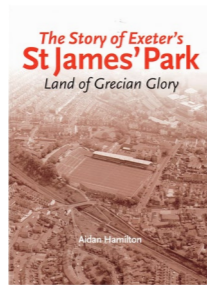
## The story of St James' Park

In order to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the first association-football match played at St James' Park in 1894, the ECFC Supporters' Trust has produced a book in conjunction with local publisher Halsgrove.

Author Aidan Hamilton traces the land's ownership and uses starting with its scandalous aristocratic origins in the seventeenth century, through two world wars and up to the present day. Once a humble field used for fattening pigs, this site has seen extraordinary things from murder and menageries to circuses and celebrities. The ground has also hosted cricket, rugby, athletics, cycling, boxing, baseball and American football.

To this day, Exeter City and its stadium remain constant threads throughout the remarkable social and economic changes

both in football and wider society that are charted in this book. Running to 160 A4 pages, this high-quality hardback book is available from the ECFC club shop for just £19.99.



## On the beat

Exeter St James Forum would like to thank our outgoing local Police Officer, Ben Turner. He regularly attended our Have Your Say Meeting and was always ready to answer our email queries. He played a very major part in changes made to local policing during Freshers, working closely with the University and Local residents with the aim of co-ordinating a fair set of measures that improved safety for all. Good luck for your future Ben.

## TWRA Lockdown News

Thornton West Residents' Association had a good lockdown, if there is such a thing and all generations played their part:

- The two young children who raced each other down opposite pavements in Thornton Hill, with the road providing the required social distance.
- The teenage boy who delivered papers to the elderly.
- The young mothers who shopped for others or organised home deliveries for the vulnerable.
- The residents who looked out for their

neighbours and helped with the food bank.

- The elderly who followed the guidelines and stayed indoors.

The street party in West Avenue to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day was a highlight. Everyone enjoyed themselves, particularly the adults. Here's Bob Price in RAF uniform - a tribute to his father, a Battle of Britain pilot. Roll on VJ Day, 15th August!



Bob Price

## Beating the bounds

Long before maps and smart phones the ancient custom of beating the parish bounds was carried out during Rogationtide to pass on knowledge of where the boundaries were to future generations. Traditionally a procession would be led by the local priest and other dignitaries accompanied by children of the parish wielding sticks of birch or willow with which to beat the boundary stone markers as they went. Exeter has long been without parishes but here in St James we have our own boundaries - the area served by the Forum is coterminous with the old Exeter City Council ward of the same name:

If you were to beat the bounds of St James today - no cheating, just stick to the paved pathways around the perimeter - how far do you think you will have walked?



(Answer: 4.5km / 2.8miles - a leisurely walk of just under an hour!)

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# ABOUT St James

A joint publication by Exeter St James Forum & Exeter St James Community Trust Distributed to all households in St James

Issue 11 July 2020



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DELIVERING THE NEWS AND STORIES AROUND AND ABOUT OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD



Find out more at [www.exeterstjamesforum.com](http://www.exeterstjamesforum.com).

## COVID-19 in St James

The coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated just how important communities have been in helping those most affected by Covid-19 and ours is no exception. The St James Forum, its Residents' Associations and individuals have stepped up to meet urgent need wherever it has been identified and sprung into action to keep neighbours connected and cared for. As a consequence we were able to apply successfully for a grant from Exeter City Council's Covid-19 Action Fund which has enabled us to go ahead with this edition of "About St James".

Normally we are dependent on local businesses advertising in the newsletter to fund its cost but, of course, these are not normal times and businesses have suffered too. They have faced particular challenges during lockdown and so, thanks to the Council's grant and to show appreciation for businesses which have been regular supporters, we have been able to offer adverts free of charge on this occasion.

Here are a sample of comments received from our business supporters:

"Quite a few months and still difficult times. In spite of this we are feeling cautiously optimistic about the future and can't wait to get back to Hems House. Following a three month fallow period the big challenge for us now is to move from home working back to the studio and to make sure we find a way that takes care of our staff and the practice. Things are still uncertain for us but we're doing all we can to come out of this stronger and with some new lessons learned".

Neil Emery, Clifton Emery Design Ltd

"It has been a challenging couple of months making sure all our staff felt safe working, sourcing reusable face masks, installing Perspex "sneeze screens", implementing strict cleaning rituals and providing lots of hand gel. Keeping the shop fully stocked has been an issue - we have spent a lot of time trawling Cash & Carrys for toilet rolls, flour and pasta to name a few! We have been fortunate to be really busy and remained open every day thanks to all our lovely customers for

supporting local and being so understanding. The biggest thank you goes to our amazing staff who have always kept smiling in such unusual circumstances".

Nicola Saunders, Saunders Stores Ltd

On 20 March we traded our last night as a restaurant with customers: a sad night, very scared and worried for our future as a business. We attempted to provide take-out meals to locals and had a fantastic response but it was not financially viable for us to continue with this service. Now we are really excited to be opening again and cannot wait to see all our lovely customers back. We have been part of the community for 27 years and would like that to continue so please keep it local and support all our lovely local businesses.

Samantha Pounds, Harry's Restaurant

So everyone, please support our local businesses so that they not only survive but thrive!



## Latest news from Queen's Crescent Garden

If you've walked along York Road recently you'll have noticed some handsome railing panels are being installed on top of the restored brick wall. Further panels will grace further sections of wall, once rebuilt, and also the new entrance towards the corner with Queens Crescent. It has been very disappointing that two builders have now had to pull out, one through ill health last year and the second, who had been due to commence work in April, as a result of effects of lockdown on his team. However as we go to press, the QCG Project Team is very hopeful that the work will finally get

underway in just a few weeks. Good things are worth waiting for!

While lockdown impacted on all but essential maintenance of the Garden the borders kept growing in clear breach of regulations! Keen to get back control we are looking for volunteers, initially those with trimmers. Do please get in touch at [info@exeterstjamesforum.org](mailto:info@exeterstjamesforum.org) if you can assist so a working party can be planned with appropriate safety measures in place.



QCG Railings



## St James Who's Who!

The very first issue of About St James drew attention to Harry Hems, our internationally famous wood and stone carver. Harry's Restaurant is the current occupant of the workshop Harry built in Longbrook Street and the cluster of fascinating buildings behind also carry his name. Attention has been drawn previously to the invaluable ongoing support provided to the Forum and Trust by businesses based there; the likes of Sands Chartered Civil and Structural Engineers and Clifton Emery Design.

But did you know that also secluded in Hem's Court is the studio of Exeter's Hugo Bugg? Without doubt on today's St James' Who's Who list! Amongst a

number of prestigious awards, Hugo was the youngest ever Gold Medal winner at the Chelsea Flower Show for his 2014 large show garden. This year Hugo and Charlotte (Harris Bugg Studio) designed Chelsea's M&G Main Avenue show garden, sadly not built due to lockdown. However, all being well, their design for an Urban Pocket Park will grace Chelsea 2021.

The Forum was delighted that Hugo was not too proud to accept an invitation to become an associate member after his success in 2014 and this year he has given the Trust the benefit of his creative talent – take a look at his planting suggestions for the Community's Planter on the Forum website [www.exeterstjamesforum.org](http://www.exeterstjamesforum.org) and vote for your favourite!

## Is any place too small or unloved to be transformed?

Last year the Trust was approached by Cllr Kevin Mitchell and asked to take over responsibility for a sadly neglected planter from the City Council. Always ready to take on projects to improve St James, the Trust agreed and was awarded a ward councillors' grant to cover initial costs. As an interim measure a host of golden daffodils was planted while a permanent planting for year round interest was chosen by the community.

Referring to their Chelsea Flower Show 2021, Hugo wrote: 'We believe that there is no corner too small, too unloved, or too battered that cannot be transformed into somewhere peaceful, tranquil, powerful and restorative.'

Hugo may not have had quite such a small and unloved space in mind

as the battered container beside the mini-roundabout at the junction of Longbrook Street and Blackall Road, but nevertheless he kindly agreed to suggest four inspirational planting combinations from which we are inviting readers of About St James to decide which should be taken forward!

The plant lists for each of Hugo's options may be found on the website [www.exeterstjamesforum.org](http://www.exeterstjamesforum.org) so check there for more information including how to vote.



## Lockdown in Devonshire Place

On March 24th everything went a bit weird. Time suddenly slowed down, or sped up, or both at the same time; days seemed to merge; familiar patterns of daily life disappeared or acquired new significance; and we gained a new lockdown vocabulary of zooming and social distancing.

So, Covid-19 has presented us with unprecedented challenges, but it has also given us the opportunity to rethink many aspects of our lives and, for many, the most important has been the value of community. Lockdown did isolate us, but it also brought us together in lots of ways and to commemorate this very strange time in the life of our street, here's a short list of some of the things that have forged a stronger sense of 'us' in Devonshire Place:-

- Saunders corner shop- lovely friendly staff, local news- a real community hub.

- The DPRA Support WhatsApp group- an info service, a virtual chat room and a space to share a new art form: the 30 second video joke.
- The Thursday Clap with Petula Clark on Ken's sound system.
- Mo and Rudi who took their number work out of the classroom and onto the pavement...and all the other pavement art from 'team Zoe'.
- Thanks to everyone who turned out for group gardening, the Orchard once again providing an invaluable community space.
- The VE Day Singalong led by Claire on keyboards and broadcast on Ken's sound system.
- ...and finally, the whole street coming together in solidarity against those students who returned in their hordes and ignored social distancing guidelines.

Let's hope we can keep hold of many of these gains when this is all over!



Longbrook Street Junction Planter

## Wonderful Walks



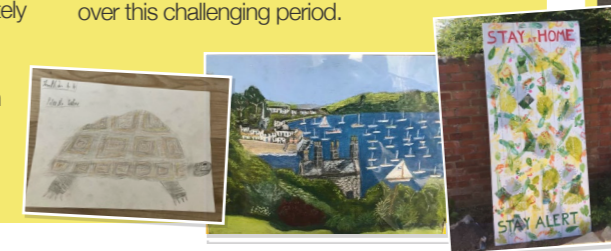
Here's an experience during the Covid-19 lockdown that many will relate to: I've always enjoyed going somewhere for a walk, normally on a train to the seaside but lockdown stopped all of that. So I had to look closer to home for exercise. I've had great fun looking at the map and planning routes through streets I've never seen but are only ten minutes from home. I've found alleys and paths and people with whom to have a chat – socially distanced of course. I've been surprised by the variety of architecture. There are spectacular views through the houses to Woodbury Common, Haldon Hills and the Exe Estuary. There are open fields and woodland filled with bird song. It's all within easy walking distance and I've known it was there but I'm pleased I've been forced to go out and find it. No doubt many of you have had the same experience and have discovered now that St James is a great place to live.



## Bury Meadow Lockdown Art Exhibitions

Residents of Bury Meadow have done their bit to brighten up the neighbourhood and raise spirits by participating in bi-weekly socially distanced art exhibitions. The 'Sunday Lockdown' events have showcased impressive work by local artists - from wonderfully constructed Lego models exhibited by younger residents to exquisitely pruned trees, watercolours, abstract expressionism, collages, embroidery, photography and floristry. Work has been displayed on hedges, in windows, and on benches in front gardens. The diverse

exhibits, chattering residents, beautiful weather and inspiring gardens (lovingly tended by lockdown gardeners) have all contributed to an atmosphere of positivity and community spirit and have brought residents out in force. The theme of the final show will be 'Thanking the helpers' and the aim is for as many households as possible to contribute to an exhibition which will celebrate the efforts of all those who have helped and offered to help those in need over this challenging period.



## Train Trouble

The train service to Exmouth was cut in half when emergency measures started on the railway. Unfortunately many of the trains no longer running were due to stop at St James' Park station. On Monday to Saturday there were no late morning or early afternoon trains towards Exeter & Paignton and no trains in any direction most of Sunday! Even with so few travellers, the Avocet Line Rail Users Group felt that this was not useful for key workers making essential journeys. Great Western, who operate the service, agreed to stop trains at St James' on Mondays to Fridays but were unable to improve the weekend timetable. Thankfully the full timetable for the line started again on 6th July. You can find out more about the Rail User Group at [www.avocetline.org.uk](http://www.avocetline.org.uk). Government advice is still to consider other forms of transport before public transport and you must wear a face covering if you do decide to travel.



## What Lockdown showed us

What a strange few months – what with shielding, the pavement sidestep shuffle, the once a week shop and all sorts of other restrictions that were unimaginable last year. However, there is a bright side and that has been the level of existing and new Community spirit. St James Ward residents' associations did not wait once the need became apparent, getting stuck in to assist those who needed help, and new groups were set up to cover other parts of the St James area. Oxford Road

RA took on a larger area; Bury Meadow RA co-ordinated activity throughout the area. Prospect Park; Devonshire Place, Powderham Crescent and Thornton West all played their part and Old Tiverton Road/Lucombe Court residents responded to a leaflet asking for volunteers – including locked down students volunteering to people happy to make phone calls to those feeling the strain of being alone, shopping, driving, gardening – the response far outweighed the numbers needing help.

It is good to know that there are so many people who will find the time to help others. Thank you and well done St James.

## Lockdown Volunteers

During the Covid-19 lockdown Exeter City Council sought out a single contact in each Ward to manage requests for help and volunteers in that Ward. As the Duryard and St James Ward lacked a suitable entity, the Bury Meadow Residents' Association (BRMA) filled this role, supported by Exeter St James Forum, local councillors, Community Builder Maisaa Sweid, other local Residents' Associations and many generous neighbours.

We used Google Maps to plot the locations of volunteers, resident associations and neighbourhood groups. Volunteers were

allocated according to geographical location and sometimes particular skills. We had a very productive, collaborative relationship with the other residents' associations and local-neighbourhood hubs in St. James, forwarding relevant referrals their way. This ensured as many volunteers as possible had the opportunity to help, and that isolators were assisted by local people, allowing a supportive relationship to continue post-lockdown.

Following the referral, both the volunteer and recipient were contacted to review their experience and whether the system needed adjusting in any way. We also worked with local volunteers to coordinate the delivery of

around 1,500 leaflets for Exeter Community Wellbeing.

The response of the community to volunteering was heartwarming. There were about 90 volunteers on the BRMA list, though few were used due to little demand. All contacted were quick and enthusiastic to respond, showing compassion for those requiring assistance. While some have returned to work, the majority have remained for any future demand. Since lockdown there is a greater sense of community support and informal assistance is continuing. This was definitely a positive outcome from Covid-19, one which has strengthened our local community.