

The Opportunity to Refurbish Paul Schill's Rock Garden as Part of the MCRC Development

As part of the forthcoming major development at Christie Hospital there exists an exciting opportunity to reinstate a small portion of a former historic rock garden that remains on the site for the benefit of patients and their families, staff, visitors and the local community.

This site was once occupied by Withington Hall, a grand stately home. Its final tenant, a successful industrialist, social reformer (see page 3 of this link www.zen10521.zen.co.uk/pdf/heritage/manchester.pdf) and fanatical gardener, named Paul Schill, constructed a giant 750 tonne Rock Garden during the 1920's. This occupied a large area, typical of that to complement a stately home and included a distinctive design and a number of rare plants, brought to the city from his travels as a shipping merchant.

This asset featured in many articles of the Rock Gardening Society Bulletin (see attached, which includes pictures). Paul Schill's brother at the same time was also constructing a rock garden in the Lake District, which also featured prominently in gardening circles.

Given the urban context of Withington, a features which epitomises nature and includes large mounds and ponds (almost mini lakes) was highly distinctive.

Paul Schill's brother's garden in the Lake District has been carefully reinstated by Stuart McGlasson, the father of Civic Society Member Kieron McGlasson. In the 1990's this was done when Stuart's wife and Kieron's mother was being treated regularly at Christies for an aggressive form of Cancer. Following her death and the amazing coincidence of the rock garden links between their home and the hospital, both father and son sought to see what still remained.

Around the turn of the millennium, much correspondence was had with the higher members of the hospital and Paul Schill's rock garden was rediscovered, albeit under a now overgrown forest and woodland cover. Admittedly, 750 tonnes of rock was not going to move too quickly on its own. A project was instigated and funding committed by the Lottery's New Opportunities Fund to reinstate the rock garden. However, the pressure of car parking for the hospital meant, against the will of many, much of the asset was turned into a temporary car park.

Kieron and Stuart, having tried their hardest didn't want to be a 'swampy' standing in the way of the Hospital's vital need and so acknowledged their dream was over.

However, upon joining the Civic Society and raising the matter again, Kieron thought he would investigate the extent of the damage done to the 750 tonne former rock garden. Upon investigating, just off Cotton Lane a significant degree (yet small by comparison to its former glory) of rock garden still remains as pictured below.

Given the longer term nature of the new development rather than a temporary car park, its cost and of course environmental impact, Kieron would like to propose through the civic society, that Paul Schill's remaining rock garden be reinstated and incorporated into

the landscaping for the MCRC development, rather than following a purely simple landscaping solution.

The benefits of experiencing nature rather than staring at a brick wall are well documented in terms of a patients well being. Such a quality garden feature could also prove just the tonic for stressed families and busy staff to enjoy their lunch – an oasis in the city and a place to escape it all. Finally, the local community would also inherit an asset they could use (perhaps similar to Fletcher Moss Gardens).

But most importantly, a key piece of unique garden history in the Withington area will be preserved – not just as a recollection but as a valuable function in today's society.

If anybody would like to know more please see the attached information and / or contact Kieron on 07791 058 438.



