## King’s Park – a century ago

My ‘park’ is larger than the public park and golf course area. Its modern segments were all present but were very different in character from today.

Agricultural land – on carse divided into fields which still exist

Golf course – a nine-hole course existed. But no golf club (so minimal management) and still pastured by cattle until c. 1950 when the golf club bought out the pasture rights.

Public Park had existed from 1890s but only a small part fenced to keep out cattle, so cowpats and pasture very different from mown grass; no tennis courts yet.

The Knot was still pastured – and there were recurrent complaints about the wetness of this field. I think pasture stopped post WWII.

Butt Park was pasture and had been for centuries.

South Braes below castle – had been pastured till Butt Park wall was constructed between 1820 and 1860 (probably 1850s); photos c. 1900 show sparse, young trees.

The Haining (haugh and brae) had been an orchard (1490s to 1720s) and pastured (18th century and perhaps thereafter); it is said that in the 20th century, stone from demolished building in Top of the Town was dumped here. Secondary woodland overlies some terraced areas at Butt Well etc.

The park walls along the south-west side, where they are very high, probably 17th century, though re-pointed at some time. Elsewhere they have been rebuilt in the mid 19th century.

Pox Wood (King’s Park farm on cliffs) is probably the least changed part though may still have been managed in some way. The Broad Wood (along the south side) existed but is now very different from Pox. Is this due to pasturing livestock and limited regeneration?

Until the Haber Process for industrial fixation of atmospheric nitrogen was fully-industrialised (1913) synthetic fertilisers were limited and expensive with eg guano and farm manure as main alternatives. Pre-herbicides, arable was rotational (to control weeds and restore nutrients). Even permanent pasture such as Butt Park will now be fertilised with drastic changes in flora.

Mechanical grass cutting ‘lawn mowers’ etc were in use in 19th century but not so close or so frequent as today; the alternative was scythes which cut less closely and so destroy less bug life.

In my view, the biggest single change is removal of pasturing livestock with direct impacts on grass (mowing) and development of secondary woodland and scrub on the castle braes and the Gowane Hills. That impacts on views and access as well as bio-diversity. On the golf course area even the ‘rough’ is managed, there has been extensive draining and tree planting (much within last 30 years and intended to control loose balls). Areas such as the Knot are now regularly mown and fertilised. On the carse farmland, the change is from an essentially ‘organic’ system to a fully-industrialised one.