



July 2017

*The aim of Friends of Pittville is to promote greater community involvement in the enjoyment, protection, future restoration and renewal of Pittville Park and Estate*

Welcome to the July newsletter for members of Friends of Pittville. It has been another exciting and busy few months – royal recognition for the work of all our volunteers, and on page 2, the interesting investigation to look for traces of the steps that once led up to the Pump Room. We have a new Treasurer – and please note the date of the AGM!

## More recognition for Friends of Pittville



Friends of Pittville have been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award given to UK volunteer groups, and recognises outstanding work carried out by volunteers in their communities. It was created in 2002 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of The Queen's coronation and is regarded as the MBE for volunteer groups.

This is a great honour for us and is recognition for the work done by our group over the last 11 years. It acknowledges the contribution of every volunteer (Green Space, Pittville History Works, newsletter deliverers, committee members, helpers at events and others) towards our gaining this award, but also the support of our members over the years. Well done everyone!

We were pleased to be nominated by Cheltenham Borough Council, with which we have worked closely for many years now.

You can find more details about the QAVS at <https://www.gov.uk/queens-award-for-voluntary-service/overview>

The award will be presented by the Lord-Lieutenant, Dame Janet Trotter on 29 July - see the enclosed flyer for details. (If you have not received the flyer with your newsletter, please see the Enquiries contact information on page 4.)

*Judie Hodsdon  
Chairman*

## Our volunteers – we could not survive without them!

Friends of Pittville hosted a gathering for all its volunteers on 1 June 2017 to mark Volunteers' Week. This is an annual celebration of the fantastic contribution millions of volunteers make across the UK which takes place in the first week of June every year.



*Friends of Pittville volunteers met at The Boathouse during Volunteers Week in June.*

About 35 volunteers gathered in The Boathouse in Pittville Park for cakes and coffee. The volunteers included the most visible of our number, those who spend two hours twice a month in the green spaces in Pittville, weeding, planting, pruning, sweeping and much more.

Another large group is the volunteers who deliver the printed newsletter four times a year, twice to the 300 or so member households, but also twice to over 2000 residences.

There is also a small group of historians who have researched every house in the original Pittville Estate, with the information available from anywhere in the world via its Pittville History website [friendsofpittville.org.uk/about-pittville/history-of-pittville/](http://friendsofpittville.org.uk/about-pittville/history-of-pittville/)

Then there are the helpers at events, such as at the Albemarle Gate car park, our plant sale, public lectures, Heritage Open Days and the daily maintenance of the duck feed dispenser in Pittville Park.

The trustees of Friends of Pittville are so grateful for the willing and enthusiastic participation of the many people from all over Cheltenham who love Pittville.

Our Membership Secretary, Gloria Jones, and her husband Peter (a newsletter deliverer and events helper) attended an evening event in the Municipal Offices, organised by the Cheltenham Partnership, Cheltenham VCS Forum and Cheltenham Borough Council to say thank you to all Cheltenham volunteers. As well as more tea and cake, they participated in a short workshop on the value of volunteering. The aim of the event was to help organisations improve the 'volunteering experience'. The organisers will share the comments and suggestions from the evening with organisations through the VCS Forum and Volunteer Managers Network.

*Fiona Clarke  
Secretary*

## **Pittville Pump Room steps dig**



*In search of the steps: the archaeological team and Friends of Pittville members were joined by the Mayor, Councillor Chris Ryder.*

To help Cheltenham Borough Council draw up proposals for improving the surroundings of the Pump Room, we wanted to establish what, if anything, remained of the short flight of steps that once terminated the broad walk which until the 1890s ran up towards the Pump Room from the Upper Lake. The steps are visible on maps and postcards up to about 1900.

The two plinths which bookended the steps are still there, but now appear rather insignificant because the ground level has been built up over the years.

On 20 April several FOP members took a break from normal Thursday park duties: under the supervision of Gloucestershire Archaeology experts, and with CBC in attendance, three test pits were opened, one each next to the east and west plinths, and one half way between.

Because of the dry weather, the soil under the turf proved hard going, and it was over two hours before any intelligible features came to light (not counting bottle caps, old lighters, confetti, etc.).

The Forest of Dean stone steps themselves had gone but we did find the remains of some stepped foundations in Victorian brick. Digging further, we established the full depth of the plinths, which themselves sit on undisturbed brick foundations.

Then we had a Time Team moment – an interesting find just when it was nearly time to pack up: a series of small regular holes at four levels in the side of the plinths, which almost certainly would have corresponded to lugs on the end sections of the (missing) steps. The spacing indicated four steps fitting neatly into the side of the plinth.



*You can just make out the holes that would have corresponded to lugs on the end sections of the steps.*

The middle pit revealed two lengths of brick-and-rubble footings. Judging from the materials used, these were most likely connected with the first site of the bandstand before it was moved to its current location.

By 1.00 pm the excavations had been recorded, back-filled and re-turfed.

The unexpected highlight of the morning was the arrival of the Mayor with the top tier of her birthday cake (previously featured in the Echo), which she generously shared with us and which rather eclipsed our meagre haul of small finds: half a rusty horseshoe and small change to the value of 7p!

*Judie Hodsdon  
Chairman*

## Heritage Open Days 2017



The theme of September's Heritage Open Days is Cheltenham's hidden places and their stories, and Friends of Pittville are laying on a bumper package of local events.

On **Friday** morning (8 September) Des Marshall will be leading a walk through Pittville's two squares to explore their history and the stories of some of their residents.

On **Saturday** afternoon (9 September) we will be welcoming visitors to the Pump Room and answering questions about its history.

On **Sunday** morning (10 September) three special hidden places will be open. The owners of 48 Clarence Square will be opening the kitchen and housekeeper's room in their 1830s Grade 2 listed house, which still has its original stone flagged floor, bread oven, pantry with stone worktop and cooking range. Costantinou's in Winchcombe Street will be opening their early Victorian vaulted wine cellars and you will also be able to visit the underground chamber beneath Pittville Gates.



*Come along and explore the hidden space under Pittville Gates!*

On **Sunday** afternoon you can join Dr Steven Blake for a walk around Wellington Square and Clarence Square to find out more about their architecture and construction as well as the people who lived there in the past. The work done by the Pittville History Works group over the last few years means that we now have a rich fund of information about Pittville's 19<sup>th</sup> century residents.

Booking is essential for the two walks and for the Clarence Square house visit. For further details, watch out for this year's Cheltenham brochure, which is being published on 20 July, or look at the website, [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk), where listings will appear from mid-July onwards.

*Hilary Simpson*

## New trustee – and Treasurer

We are delighted to announce our new Treasurer: Paul Benfield. Having come to Cheltenham in 2001 for work, Paul moved to Pittville in 2007 and has spent 10 years enjoying the Park with his dog, being close to town and also to the Cotswolds. Paul looks forward to his future involvement with Friends of Pittville.

## Friends of Pittville Plant Sale



The second Friends of Pittville plant sale was held on 6 May, in front of the scout hut in Pittville Park. Thankfully this year we had fine weather, which probably helped us raise 50 per cent more than last year.

We had plants from three commercial nurseries (Ireley, Dundry and Hoo House) who gave us a percentage of the money from the plants sold. We were also kindly supported by the Cheltenham Horticultural Society who brought a good selection of plants which sold well. There was also an amazing effort from the FOP volunteers who grew their own plants and raised over £220. The raffle had a good range of prizes and was well supported; many thanks to all those who donated prizes.



*Not part of the sale, but the horse chestnuts were at their best for the day!*

Thanks too to all who helped on the day, and to members who turned out and bought plants - I hope they are all thriving! The sale raised £684 which will go towards the projects that FOP are planning for the park.

*Chris Archibald*

## Friends of Pittville Garden Party

Following the success of last year's event, Friends of Pittville will be holding another Garden Party for members on Sunday 30 July. See the flyer enclosed with this newsletter for details. (Again, if you have not received this, see the Enquiries contact details at the foot of this page.)

## Drop Ins dates

Our monthly 'Drop Ins' provide an opportunity for members and others to meet on an informal basis to find out what's happening in Friends of Pittville and to give ideas and feedback to our trustees – one of whom, at least, is there each time.

Dates for the next three months are 27 July, 30 August and 27 September – the last Wednesday! Venue: The Sudeley Arms, 25 Prestbury Road, GL52 2PN, between 11.00 and 12.30.

## Another appeal for email addresses!

Although the Secretary and I have email addresses for many of our members, there are still some that we do not have. It does help to cut our costs and save time if we can communicate with you in this way.

I know that some people are wary about letting too many organisations have their email address, but I can assure you all of our complete discretion. Your details would never be passed on to a third party under any circumstances.

If you have recently received an email from Friends of Pittville, we already have your email address so please do not send it again. However, if you receive notification of events, etc., by letter, this would indicate that we do not have your email address. If this is the case, and you do have email, please contact me at the following address: [membership@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendsofpittville.org.uk)

*Gloria Jones  
Membership Secretary*

## Help look after Pittville – useful contacts

Several people have contacted us recently about so-called joy riders on motorised bikes in the park. These should be reported to the police immediately on 101. The police may not always be able to attend, or even sound that interested, but these incidents should be logged. If you report it after the event, please use the online service

<https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/contact-us/report-a-crime-or-incident/>

You can also play your part in looking after Pittville by reporting broken lights, graffiti, damaged furniture and equipment, to the borough council through their website

<https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/reportit>

There is a special place to report abandoned shopping trolleys! <http://www.trolleywise.co.uk/>

And, finally, for broken street lights, potholes, roads, pavements, go to

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-rights-of-way/roads/report-it/>

## Friends of Pittville AGM

Advance notice for your diaries: the Friends of Pittville AGM will take place on Monday 16 October, at 18.00 in the hall of Dunalley School. Our guest speaker will be John Simpson, of the History Works group, who will talk about the lives of some of Pittville's early residents - both in the elegant drawing rooms and below stairs down in the sculleries.



*One of a series of groups of three railings seen along Albert Road – were they left as examples in the event that one day the full sets would be restored?*

**Newsletter editor:** Sandy Marshall

Photos courtesy of Fiona Clarke, Terry Langhorn, Sandy Marshall and Hilary Simpson.

Enquiries: 01242 227 720 or [secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk)

Registered charity number: 1146790

