Welcome to the July newsletter from Friends of Pittville. This issue is delivered just to members. It has been a busy few months for Pittville, with recognition for the achievements of the Gates Project team and our local contribution to the Queen’s 90th birthday celebrations. The History Group reports on its activities — and our first plant sale was a success in spite of the weather!

**Pittville Gates Civic Award**

The project to refurbish Pittville Gates has earned a 2016 Civic Award for the Restoration of an Existing Structure. The project team received the award at a ceremony at the Town Hall on 20 April. As well as Friends of Pittville (Chris Archibald, Fiona Clarke, Judie Hodsdon and Judy Langhorn), the award recognised the partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council (the owners of the Gates), represented by Garrie Dowling; the architect/project manager RRA, represented by Mark Powles; and the contractors AMPM247, represented by Tim Jeynes and Dan Heaton.

The big decision we now need to make is where to affix the plaque near the Gates!

**The dragons of Central Cross Cafe**

*A local resident, Cressida Howard, writes:*

Here is a mystery I'm hoping to solve with your help: what happened to the dragons on Central Cross Cafe roof?

About 22 years ago, my mother, Connie Baker, was commissioned to make some dragons for the roof. Within days of their installation they were vandalised.

Who commissioned them, and what happened to their broken remains? Sadly, my mother died 20 years ago, so I can no longer ask her.

Does anyone out there have any information about the dragons? If so, please email me, Cress Howard, at cresshoward@gmail.com. I hope to follow up in the autumn with a mystery solved!
Our Pittville History Works Group found themselves in the national news on 28 May when they featured in a Sunday Times article about researching the history of your house.

The work of the History Group featured in The Sunday Times on 29 May.

The article included an interview with Kim Furrokh who lives in Evesham Road, together with a photo of his house. The other project featured in the article was the Regency Town House in Brunswick, Hove. Brunswick has many parallels with Pittville – both were designed as self-contained communities in the first half of the nineteenth century, Pittville as an adjunct to Cheltenham and Brunswick as an adjunct to Brighton.

To explore these links further, the History Works Group has planned a day trip by coach to visit the project in Hove on Thursday 11 August. If you would be interested in joining us, please email info@pittvillehistory.org.uk.

John Simpson

We are delighted that the East India Café in Cheltenham wish to make us their community charity. We are in the process of working out a scheme with them whereby FOP will benefit every time a FOP member dines there. More details in due course.

News from the Park

When Friends of Pittville and Cheltenham Borough Council representatives sat down to develop what they called a 'single proposition sheet' for Pittville Park, little did they realise just how appealing our beloved park is to so many groups of people.

Rather than view the public as an ‘amorphous crowd’, the team set out to profile visitors and to group them so they could match the attractions of the park with the requirements of the people most likely to use the facility at the heart of the Pittville Estate.

Adam Lillywhite, CBC councillor, led the exercise with help from parks ranger Janice Peacey and FOP trustees Chris Archibald and Mike Evans. Their work resulted in an information-packed study, boiled down to fit a single A4 page, designed to help the owners of the park – the council – to promote it in the right way.

‘We quickly became aware that Pittville Park was a destination not just for those living in Pittville but for a Cheltenham-wide audience and for visitors to the town from other parts of the Cotswolds, the country and overseas,’ explained Chris Archibald. ‘And the age range was at the limits – babes in arms right through to great-grandparents. It’s a wonderful privilege to help provide such a wonderful facility on a daily basis in such a unique town as Cheltenham for such a diverse range of visitors.’

Behind the success of the park lies a lot of hard work by the council and dedicated volunteers, for sure. And with more leisure time available to many of the users they are seeking out both traditional and new facilities in which to spend their time.

A greater demand for exercise has resulted in many individuals and groups using the park to improve fitness and health; the recently opened new play area has provided a safe place for children to play; walking, sitting, chatting, drinking coffee and tea have all contributed to the wellbeing of visitors; and utilisation of our famous Pittville green spaces has done much for relaxation for locals and visitors of all ages, abilities and ethnicities.

In a nutshell, because that’s what our Single Proposition work set out to create, Pittville Park is truly unique.
You can see some of the attractions listed on the new welcome boards at most of the entrances to the park.

One of the new signboards in Pittville Park

We see it as a place to:


Mike Evans

News from the Park 2: Green Flag update

The Green Flag/Green Heritage Site Accreditation judge visited the park on 7 June and was met by Councillor Chris Coleman (cabinet member for the Environment), members of the Green Space Development team, CBC Property officer, CBC trees officer, representatives of the Cheltenham Trust, Ubico, ‘In the Park’, and Judy Langhorn and Chris Archibald from Friends of Pittville, who explained the various aspects of the park and their role in maintaining and improving the park.

He was then taken on a tour of the park - thankfully the weather was fine and he saw the park at its best. Thanks to everyone who has helped us get this far. We await the results in the next couple of weeks - fingers crossed!

Chris Archibald

News from the Park 3: The new play area

The brand new play area at Pittville Park opened to the public on 27 May, following a preview event for children who had been involved in the early design work. It is already proving very popular.

It is a much bigger area than before, with two zip wires, a castle tower with climbing equipment, tunnel slides, a sand and water area, as well as a climbing net, tunnels, swings, musical play equipment, trampolines and toddler play equipment. An early priority was to ensure that the play area was suitable for all ages and abilities to enjoy.

There is also a brand new refreshment kiosk, with seating.

Councillor Chris Coleman, the Cabinet member responsible for bringing the scheme to fruition, thanked Friends of Pittville for their support and fundraising efforts.

There are still a couple of areas where grass is still establishing, and this will be cordoned off, along with the aviaries which are expected to be completed by early July. Once they have been completed there will be an official opening event later in the month.

Friends of Pittville were invited to name the pirate ship (or rather wreck!). It has been named, in a nod to Joseph Pitt, ‘The Jolly Joe’.

Heritage Open Days

Our History Group is organising three events during this year’s Heritage Open Days, which have a ‘spa’ theme to mark the 300th anniversary of the discovery of mineral waters in Cheltenham.

Friday 9 September: Judy Langhorn will be leading a walk entitled The Pittville Pump Room and Estate – what a story! starting from Central Cross Café at 9.30 am and ending with a tour of the Pump Room.

Saturday 10 September: the Pump Room will be open from 2.00 – 4.00 pm. Friends of Pittville and other members of the Pittville History Works Group will be on hand to answer your questions.

Sunday 11 September: Graham Gage will be leading a walk entitled Pittville: a spa too far? starting from Pittville Gates at 10.00 am and ending with a tour of the Pump Room.

For the Friday and Sunday walks, numbers are limited to 15 and tickets must be obtained in advance, from Monday 18 July, at the Tourist Information Centre.

Hilary Simpson

Friends of Pittville Garden Party

We are planning a garden party (tea and cakes) for FOP members on the afternoon of Sunday 14 August. More details in due course.

Friends of Pittville AGM

A date for your diary:

Friends of Pittville AGM will take place on Tuesday 18 October 2016, at 6 pm, at Dunalley Primary School. Our guest speaker will be Adrian Barlow, who will speak on Victorian Pittville.
Tercentenary Dinner
Later in the year, on Saturday 3 November, there will be a ‘grand dinner’ to mark the discovery of the spa waters. You might like to form your own table.

Cheltenham Tercentenary Civic Dinner
3 November 2016
at Pittville Pump Room

Tickets are £60 per person and include reception drinks, three-course meal, coffee and petits fours, and a drink for the toast.

Join us in the celebration: buy individual tickets; book a table for eight or ten guests; offer additional support by sponsoring a particular item such as the invitation cards, menus, reception drinks, toasts, guest speaker, entertainment or venue hire.

Please apply to Martin Renshaw, Flat 3, Queensholme, Pittville Circus Road, Cheltenham GL52 2QE
email: martinrenshaw@hotmail.com
Cheques should be made payable to Cheltenham Civic Society Tercentenary Dinner.

Organised by Cheltenham Civic Society and Friends of the Wilson.

Friends of Pittville Plant Sale
The first Friends of Pittville Plant Sale was held by the Scout Hut in Central Cross Drive on 21 May. It was judged to have been a great success, and the organisers would like to thank all those who contributed plants or books, or who came along to buy plants. Despite the intermittent rain plenty of people turned out or called in as they passed by.

Nearly £390 was raised for FOP funds and another £122 for the Play Area. FOP is grateful to the Cheltenham Horticultural Society and Dundry and Hoo House nurseries for providing plants, but it is gratifying that the largest single amount, over £200, was raised from the sale of plants brought along by FOP members. The raffle alone made £80. Thanks to all the donors of prizes.

Preparation for all weathers: many hands (and heads!) make light work at the FOP Plant Sale

HM the Queen’s 90th birthday celebrations
On 21 April Cheltenham joined many towns and villages across the country to celebrate the birthday of our longest reigning – and now longest lived – monarch.

Following a short ceremony the Mayor of Cheltenham lit a beacon on the balcony of the Pump Room.

More national celebrations were held over the weekend of 11 and 12 June. Highlights of the event in Pittville Park included a barbecue, a fancy dress competition and three excellent bands. The weather was not in celebratory mood, but rain held off sufficiently for those who came to enjoy the event.

Winners of the fancy dress competition receive their prizes.

Testing the water!
We are pleased to report that visitors can once again taste the spa water at Pittville Pump Room. Cheltenham Borough Council arranged the necessary repairs and we understand that the delay has been due to the ‘high water table and confined space restrictions on carrying out the works required’.

Fiona Clarke

Enquiries: secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk or 01242 227 720; Newsletter editor: Sandy Marshall; printed by Top Flight 01242 528 906
Registered charity number 1146790