



April 2018

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 Friends of Pittville newsletter for April 2018, delivered to every address in Pittville. Many thanks once again to the volunteer distributors.

Read about our plant sale next month, the work being done on learning in the park and the development of volunteer roles at the Pump Room. In a new feature focusing on people who have become members of Friends of Pittville, member Andy Hopkins talks to FOP treasurer Paul Benfield about what being a member of FOP means to him.

Volunteering at the Pump Room



Register your interest if you would like to be considered for volunteering at the Pump Room.

Friends of Pittville is working with the Cheltenham Trust, which manages Pittville Pump Room, to extend its successful volunteer programme at The Wilson to improve the experience of visitors to the Pump Room. This is what Kristen Pye, Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Trust, has to say.

‘2017-18 has been a landmark year for volunteering at the Cheltenham Trust. We are now working with volunteers in over 30 different volunteer roles at our various locations and we reckon the time is ripe for that activity to spread to Pittville.

‘Working together with the Friends of Pittville, and using the model of volunteering developed at The Wilson, we will be working in the months ahead to take our efforts to the Pump Room, where we are thrilled to be developing new roles for Volunteer Stewards and Guides to open up and interpret this important building for Cheltenham residents and visitors.

‘Do you have an interest in the history of Pittville and enjoy working with the public? We want to hear from you! To register your interest in volunteering with us at the Pump Room, email volunteering@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk and play your part in making a vibrant and vital volunteer programme for the Pump Room a reality.’

Plant Sale

**To raise funds to help
Friends of Pittville improve
the Park**

Saturday 5 May 2018

10am to 1pm

Central Cross Drive, Pittville

GL52 2DX

(in front of the scout hut)

**Plants supplied by
Cheltenham Horticultural
Society
Hoo House Nursery
Dundry Nurseries
Friends of Pittville members**

**We will also be holding a
raffle.**

**A chance to buy some fabulous
plants at a reasonable cost and
perhaps win a great prize.**

Registered charity number 1146790

Trees in Pittville

The recent felling of several mature trees in Pittville prompted a few enquiries to the Council and elicited a factually accurate, if rather turgid, response. One of Cheltenham's, and Pittville's, foremost charms are the glimpses of white Regency villas and terraces through the trees which line broad avenues. This apparently normal but carefully planned treescape is as important to conserve as the buildings on the conservation lists. So what are the Council's priorities and purposes?

It appears that the trees in Cheltenham are the responsibility of Cheltenham Borough Council for trees in parks and gardens, and of Gloucestershire Highways for street trees. Trees within parks and gardens are easier to manage: they can be allowed to develop to their full natural form and size. Street trees need more management: their potential encroachment onto the highway may require 'formative' pruning. The Council and Gloucestershire Highways operate independently in terms of tree maintenance and tree planting.

These different approaches can be seen in the recent felling of trees in Albert Road, compared to the pruning and supporting of the cedar in Pittville Park.

Both Gloucestershire Highways and Cheltenham Borough Council work in line with good arboricultural practice, removing diseased and overgrown trees, and planting 'future-proof' trees. The list of 2017-18 plantings for the Borough council is impressive - they have an eye on the future, though many of the replacements are small to medium-sized trees, for example crab apples, hornbeams, service trees. These will probably not develop into the statuesque specimens which currently line our streets and fill the parks.

Trees are usually felled for health and safety reasons or through fear of subsidence in adjacent properties - powerful arguments for removal, but if this policy is followed through to its conclusion there will only be wispy saplings growing along the streets. In many ways we have fallen out of love with mature trees, regarding them as dangerous left-overs. In practice the mature trees in Pittville carry much of the park's wildlife interest: they are the trees people look at and admire and where children play, and are an integral part of Pittville's history.

Perhaps it is because the distinction between street and park trees is less clear in a garden suburb like Pittville that the felling of local trees is so keenly felt by its residents.

Des Marshall



The mature trees in Pittville carry much of the park's wildlife interest.

Pittville History Works

19th century schools in Pittville Circus Road

When the History Works Group came to transcribe details of the houses in Pittville Circus Road for our online database, we noticed that several of the large houses in Pittville Circus Road were used during the 19th century as preparatory schools. (One house was even used as a convent, but that's another story!) Mark Penfold took up the challenge of researching these educational establishments, and you can read the results of his detective work on the website (www.pittvillehistory.org.uk).

One story particularly caught his attention. Mary Jane Briggs was the celebrated principal of Vallombrosa School in Pittville Circus Road (now Homespring House). Her pupils knew her as the lady who had been shipwrecked off the coast of New Zealand and held captive by the Maoris, and who led war games on Battledown Hill. She was also an early suffragist, arguing in 1867 that the word 'man' should be replaced by 'person' in the new Reform Bill. An account of her remarkable life is also on the website.

Hilary Simpson



Homespring House, once Vallombrosa School, Pittville Circus Road.

Who are the Friends?

Paul Benfield is Treasurer of Friends of Pittville. In the first of a new feature, he talks about what FOP means to him.



What made you become involved with Friends of Pittville?

The Pittville Gates project made me realise that Friends of Pittville existed. Walking into town I was always aware of the gates and I thought – oh, who are these people doing all the fund-raising? When the new play area opened near the lake, I noticed they were involved again. Then a neighbour said the group needed help with the money side of things. I'm an accountant, so I said I'd try it and it's worked out fine.

What do you get out of being involved?

Well, I use the park every day for dog walking. It's a great place to relax. I particularly love walking the south section and catching glimpses of the Pump Room through the shrubs around the lake. I love the change of seasons – I never get bored with it.

By being involved I feel I can have a say in the future of the park. All the park's users need to be catered for – young people, dog walkers, people doing fitness and families at the play area. I feel I'm giving a little back but I'm also ensuring my voice is heard. I'd advise anyone using the park regularly to become a member of Friends of Pittville for those reasons.

What would the park be like without the Friends?

I work in the public sector and I know the pressure on councils to concentrate their budgets on people in need. Budgets for green spaces are constantly at risk. Groups like Friends of Pittville can pick up some of the slack – from the immensely important practical work of maintaining and improving the park, to fund-raising for special projects that benefit the surrounding community.

Paul was talking to Andy Hopkins.

Pittville Park: The Learning Project

A small team of volunteers is working to produce information on the park and the Pittville estate that will be put into a learning section on the FOP website. To start with this will include details of the flora and fauna, local history and geography. It is hoped this will be used by schools and families visiting the park.

Chris Archibald

Drop-Ins at the Sudeley - time called

In the January newsletter we mentioned that the Drop-Ins at The Sudeley Arms were likely to be discontinued, and this is now the case. Many thanks to all who came along over the last four years.

Quiz Night

A total of 61 FOP members, family and friends took part in Friends of Pittville's by now annual quiz at The Feathered Fish in February. We also welcomed some residents from the National Star College's Pittville housing scheme at Bradbury Gardens.

Thanks to Friends of Pittville member Amanda Slayton-Joslin for once again organising a successful evening, and to quizmaster Paul. £347.50 was raised for Friends of Pittville funds.

Philippa Howell

Race week car parking

Once again Friends of Pittville successfully manned a car park in Albemarle Road during race week. The wet weather restricted the use of some

of the grassed area, but we still made £2250 for FOP funds. It was an early start, putting out the signs and bollards – race goers start arriving at 7.30 in the morning.

We had visitors who needed to dress discreetly behind their cars for the Ladies Day Parade, groups having champagne lunches in spite of the temperature and a cheerful group who were happy to be photographed, but asked for it not to appear anywhere for a few days until they had come clean to their husbands about where they had been!

Many thanks to the team of helpers who take the money, guide the cars for parking, and provide security - some cars are left overnight until the owners have recovered sufficiently to drive them again.

Henry Williams



Different approaches to dressing for Ladies Day!

Bioblitz in Pittville Park

Keen on local wildlife? Join us on **Saturday 9 June** for the Cheltenham BioBlitz. We'll be taking over Pittville Park and attempting to record as many species as possible. We will start early at 5 am with the dawn chorus, then throughout the day counting flowers, trees, butterflies, bees, mammals and more, and finishing off at 11 pm with some late-evening bat detection.

These records will help us gain a better understanding of the wildlife of the park and how we can support its management. We are also hoping to engage local families and the community with diversity of the wildlife on site.

Bioscience students from the University of Gloucestershire are organising the event together with naturalists from across the region. We're looking for volunteers to help out on the day for as much time as they can spare – you don't have to come at 5, nor do you have to stay until 11 pm!

We'll have experts leading groups and working with members of the public to answer queries, so no prior or knowledge or experience is necessary.

If you're keen on volunteering, or just want to find out more then drop us an email at gloucestershirebioblitz@gmail.com, or get in touch via our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/CheltBioBlitz/>

Simon Loughran



Come along to the Bioblitz and see what you can find in the park!

Newsletter editor: Sandy Marshall

Photos courtesy of Paul Benfield, Sandy Marshall, Hilary Simpson and Henry Williams.

Enquiries: 01242 227 720 or secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk

Registered charity number: 1146790



