



FRIENDS *of* PITTVILLE

June 2019

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 Summer edition of the Newsletter. This is the time of year when the park comes alive, not only with blossom and fruits and newborn animals, but also with outdoor events and activities that attract large crowds on sunny weekends.

This issue contains reports on some recent events, including the Friends' annual plant sale and the Cheltenham Pride picnic, and announcements for others that are taking place right now. Don't miss the AllBars Flying Trapeze Club, Prestbury Open Gardens and Cheltenham Open Studios! Fiona Clarke writes about plans for Heritage Open Days in September, and also reports on matters to do with the Pump Room Action Group. Meanwhile, Pittville History Works has been celebrating its fifth birthday. But first of all, Chris Archibald brings us up to date with recent activities of the Green Space Volunteers.

Green Space Volunteers

The GSVs are still working hard in the park with an average of twenty volunteers at each session. Our biggest project at present is the restoration of the east end of the rockery on the upper lake in the east side of the park. The vegetation has been cleared, some trees taken out and many of the rocks exposed. This will be completed and the missing rocks lifted out of the lake before the autumn when replanting will take place.

Another job that has started recently is the clearing of the bed near the corner of Wellington Road and Evesham Road. This is the first view of the park that people get when they leave the town by car. It is not very attractive at present but we hope this will be greatly improved when we plant it with new trees and shrubs in the autumn.

There are too many jobs for the number of volunteers so if you would like to join us you would be very welcome on the first and third Thursdays each month from 9.00 to 11.00am. Contact us on volunteer@friendsofpittville.org.uk

Chris Archibald

Have you considered flying in the park this weekend?

I was expecting something more modest – smaller, child-sized, perhaps. But the structure before me is big enough for a full-size circus big top. This is the **AllBars Flying Trapeze Club**, and it's in



Pittville Park until September! I had a chat with Ian, the person behind it all.

'We are a not-for-profit club and we encourage people to have a go at what we call *flying*. People are amazed how much they can achieve in a single session,' says Ian. 'If you do well, you can even try for a *catch*, where you let go of one bar and catch another in mid-air!'

Ian's interest in the trapeze began in his forties when he did a course in the Forest of Dean with his then teenage daughter. He never looked back, and has been an enthusiast ever since. 'There are very few trapeze clubs in the world. As well as providing sessions for beginners, we also attract more expert enthusiasts who need the facilities of a trapeze to practise their flying.'

'Children have to be over eight years old but there's no upper age limit. The only stipulations are that you have to be able to hang from a bar for 20-30 seconds and fit into our safety harnesses. But we check on all of this beforehand.'

So, why not give it a go? Sessions are available every Saturday and Sunday until the end of September. You can book on the website at www.allbars.net.

Andy Hopkins

Another successful Friends of Pittville plant sale

The annual Friends of Pittville plant sale took place on Saturday May 4, and raised £616.88 to go towards improvements to the park. We would like to extend thanks to all who supplied plants – Cheltenham Horticultural Society, Dundry Nurseries, Hoo House Nursery, Ireley Hardy Plant Nursery, Malcolm Allison Plants and Friends of Pittville members. Despite the cold weather it was a dry and sunny day and lots of visitors came to buy and hear more about our plans for the park. We are grateful for all the help from volunteers, to people who donated raffle prizes, to the Scouts for the use of their hut and tables, and to everyone who came along to support the event and buy plants.



Cheltenham Open Studios at a venue near you

June 2019 will be the 11th time that artists from Cheltenham Open Studios (COS) have opened their doors to the public in this celebration of the visual art being made in the area. Now a biennial event, it has become an important part of the regional cultural landscape for artists and art-lovers alike. At the last event, in 2017, more than 14,000 people visited the studios, workrooms and exhibition spaces of over 200 artists working in Cheltenham and its surrounds. This year's event, which runs from **June 8-16**, looks as if it will be even richer and more diverse than ever.

This year's art trail links together 79 different exhibition venues, where you can meet the artists,

view their work, learn about their practice and even have a go yourself. In the foreword to the event guide, artist PJ Crook writes:



'The biennial Open Studios event has become a cultural highlight for many people living in and around Cheltenham. This fabulous festival of local creativity

encompasses new members as well as more established artists, all prepared to share their work. A buzz of colour, texture, shape, form, light and digital – you can find it all. What I love about the over two hundred artists who take part is how supportive they are of each other and how happy to engage in conversations about their work. So, here's your chance to learn more and perhaps even become the owner of an original piece of art.'

Download your free guide to Open Studios at www.cheltenhamopenstudios.co.uk. Or a printed version is available free from any of the venues or local outlets like Havanas, Maximum Circus Tattoo and the Holst Birthplace Museum. *Andy Hopkins*

Friends of Pittville monthly drop-in sessions

We have held three drop-in sessions at our new venue, the basement at Havanas, and at the new day/time, the last Thursday of the month between 10.00am and midday. These sessions have been very successful. Each time we have had up to fifteen people attending and there has been a really nice 'buzz' to the place. It provides an excellent opportunity to mingle, to get to know new Friends, and to meet familiar faces, in a cosy venue.

Havanas is known locally for its excellent coffee and service by friendly staff. Perhaps most important of all is the varied and tempting selection of cakes (and savouries for those without a sweet tooth). Because this cafe is such a popular spot, we can only keep our reserved space in the basement if plenty of us turn up, so we hope that this regular session will continue to be well-supported. We look forward to seeing you there. For those not familiar with Havanas, it is near the bottom end of Prestbury Road, on the right-hand side if you are heading into town.

Susan Walker and Liz Auster

Heritage Open Days alert: September 13-22 2019

We are planning a talk on the historic landscape features of the eastern side of Pittville Park that are visible from a point just north of the upper lake. The talk will be held on Tuesday September 17 and again on Wednesday September 18. Pre-booking,



from August 1, at the Tourist Information Centre (TIC), is required and tickets must be collected in person at least 24 hours before the first talk on September 17. Full details will be in the Cheltenham brochure, which will be available at the TIC, Glide outlets (e.g. public libraries) and some local shops and cafes from the last week in July.

Details of the many Cheltenham buildings and events will be on the national website (see below) from early July, we hope! The national theme this year is *People Power. Then. Now. Always.* The



ability of local communities, groups and individuals to evoke change. Our talk may not illustrate people power but our own group has taken the initiative on more than one occasion to improve the landscape environment in Pittville for the benefit of everyone who visits the park. www.heritageopendays.org.uk

Fiona Clarke

Pump Room Action Group

We have attended three meetings relating to Pittville Pump Room since the March newsletter.

Highlights are:

Our YouTube video, setting out our vision for the Pump Room (find it at the following address: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpXvwRTIbHo) was well received by Sara Staniforth, Chair of the Enquiry into Pittville Pump Room, and may lead to us being involved in future plans. We learned some interesting facts about the hire of the building. In 2017/18 there were 24 The Cheltenham Trust events (music, comedy etc.), 78 private hire (weddings, parties etc.) and 118 'external' hire (corporate, charities, schools etc.).

Laurie Bell started as the new Chief Executive from May 1 2019. She was previously Director of Communities and Communication at Wiltshire Council. The appointment is for one year in the first instance while negotiations continue with Cheltenham Borough Council on the renewal of The Trust's contract. We would like to see someone given overall responsibility for the Pump Room, located on site if possible.

We were surprised that a notice has appeared on the fountain, that you drink the water 'at your own risk'. We feel this is too risk-averse and will discourage people from tasting the water (even if it is still like tap water!). We are drafting some text for a proper notice to sit above the pump which will include some information about its history.

In our discussion with CBC we learned that there are quarterly meetings to monitor outcome-based performance indicators which are included in the specification. The outcomes are very broad; there is only a brief reference to the town's heritage being 'protected, enhanced and enjoyed'. The only specific requirement relating to the Pump Room is the preservation of the opening hours (10.00 to 4.00 Wednesday to Sunday unless there is an event taking place). There is some renegotiation of the specification going on at the moment.

We are still pressing for consistency in the building being open to visitors while events are set up and taken down; putting out welcome boards even if no volunteer guide is present, and a dedicated Pump Room website which is more than a venue hire opportunity, with live information about opening hours. Things are improving though.

More volunteers are welcome. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at the Pump Room, learn more at volunteering@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk

Fiona Clarke

Cheltenham Pride Picnic in the Park 'a huge success'

Large crowds showed up for the Cheltenham Pride picnic in front of the Pump Room on Saturday May 12, on the first really sunny day of the year. This was the first Pride event to be held in Cheltenham for a decade, but the organisers have already confirmed that it will be repeated in 2020.



Prestbury Open Gardens

Saturday and Sunday

June 22/23 2019 2 – 5pm

Fourteen delightful gardens dotted around the historic village of Prestbury. Entry £5 per adult to cover both days (accompanied children free). Tickets available at any open garden or at St Mary's Church.

Profits to St Mary's Church.

Plant sales in aid of The Butterfly Garden.

One new trustee appointed but more needed!

We are delighted to announce that Janina Kay was appointed as a trustee in March. Janina lives in Clarence Square and already organises litter picks and related activities in the square. However, we still currently have a vacancy and several trustees will be standing down in October, so, please, think about joining the committee to keep FoP going. Among those leaving is Fiona Clarke, a founding trustee of Friends of Pittville and Secretary for ten years.

Being a trustee is interesting, not onerous (mostly) and so worthwhile. To find out more please contact the Chairman, Judie Hodsdon, or the Secretary, Fiona Clarke, at, respectively, the following:
chairman@friendsofpittville.org.uk
secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk

Annual General Meeting date set

The AGM will be on the evening of Tuesday October 24 2019, from 6.00 for 6.30. It will be held in Dunalley School again. The guest speaker will be James Hodsdon, who will speak about Pittville's original swimming pool. More details will be in the next newsletter.

PHW's fifth birthday



Members of the Pittville History Works group celebrated their fifth birthday at the end of March with a lunch at Prithvi, 38 Evesham Road. Like PHW, Prithvi started out as a small venture which has expanded over the years, moving recently from Bath Road to the prestigious setting of No 38. We all enjoyed a tasty lunch on a glorious sunny spring day. Many thanks to Hilary Simpson for organising the event, and to John Simpson for his leadership of this small but enthusiastic group of researchers into Pittville's past. Why not browse our website to see the remarkable resource that has been developed and is freely available to everyone:
www.pittvillehistory.org.uk Sandy Marshall

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