

# Pittville Park and Estate - The East Side



Joseph Pitt, a lithograph by George Rowe, based on a portrait by Richard Dighton, circa 1835

Pittville was named after Joseph Pitt (1759-1842), who developed the estate in the 1820s. The Wiltshire-born solicitor, and MP for Cricklade, invested in banking and land from 1789.

With the development of Cheltenham as a spa town, Pitt established the fashionable suburb of Pittville to the north, with a Pump Room to rival Montpellier Spa and restrictions on manufacturing, trade and business.



**PITTVILLE SPA, CHELTENHAM.**  
**FOR SALE AT THE PUMP ROOM, THE CONCENTRATED CHELTENHAM WATERS,**  
 PREPARED ONLY FROM THE VALUABLE SPRINGS OF THE PITTVILLE SPA.

The value of this water consists in its being so highly concentrated as to be capable of transport, without inconvenience, at the same time that its medicinal qualities remain totally unaltered. This desideratum has not been attained without considerable expense, as it is the result of numerous Chemical Experiments, instituted for the purpose of ascertaining how far the Waters of Pittville could be concentrated without undergoing any change; the result of which is a clear and bright water, having six times the strength of the water as obtained from the Spring; so that a tumbler of Pittville Waters can, at any time, be prepared, by adding a wine glassful of the concentrated water to a common sized tumbler of either warm or cold water, as may be most agreeable.

Open for the Inspection of Visitors daily  
**THE COSMORAMIC EXHIBITION.**  
 THE VIEWS ARE:—  
 The Ruins of St. Bertin's Monastery, St. Omer; Bielestein, on the River Moselle; The City of Antwerp, with Cathedral, Arsenal, &c.; Rome—St. Peter's Fort and Bridge of St. Angelo, &c.; The City and Cathedral of Amiens, Market Place; Mount St. Bernard, the Monastery, Pass, &c.

Admission, 1s. each; Juveniles, 6d. each.  
 Being an extra charge to the admission to the Spa.

Advertisement in George Rowe's Illustrated Cheltenham Guide, 1850



The saline Pittville spa water is similar to that of Montpellier, but was said to be superior as it also contains sulphate of magnesia and bicarbonate of soda. Cheltenham spa water was recommended for obesity, gout, rheumatism, constipation and liver disorder, amongst other complaints.



Statue of Greek physician, Hippocrates (circa 460-370BC), 1965 replica

The Pump Room, opened in 1830, was designed by architect John Forbes, and is inspired by the Temple of Ilissus in Athens, with Ionic columns on three sides and a small, beautifully-proportioned dome.

The three statues on the roof represent Hygeia, Greek goddess of health, flanked by Hippocrates, the Greek physician and 'father' of medicine, who is grasping a snake, and Aesculapius, god of medicine.

The original statues were removed in 1937-39 as they were in poor condition, replaced in 1965 by copies made by Boulton & Sons of Cheltenham.



Registered charity number 1146790

Pitt's original plan was for 500-600 houses on 100 acres, 177 of which were built between 1824 and 1842. Development slowed with only 216 completed by 1860, and by 1885 only another 29 had been built, with a further three by 1930.

From the earliest years the owners and occupiers of the Pittville estate had free access to the walks and rides, the pleasure grounds and gardens, which were surrounded by railings. Servants were only permitted to walk here if accompanying their employers and children. Visitors and non-residents could subscribe to take the waters or to use the rides, drives and walks. For example, in 1830 a family subscription to take the waters for the six-month season cost £2 2s (£2.10).

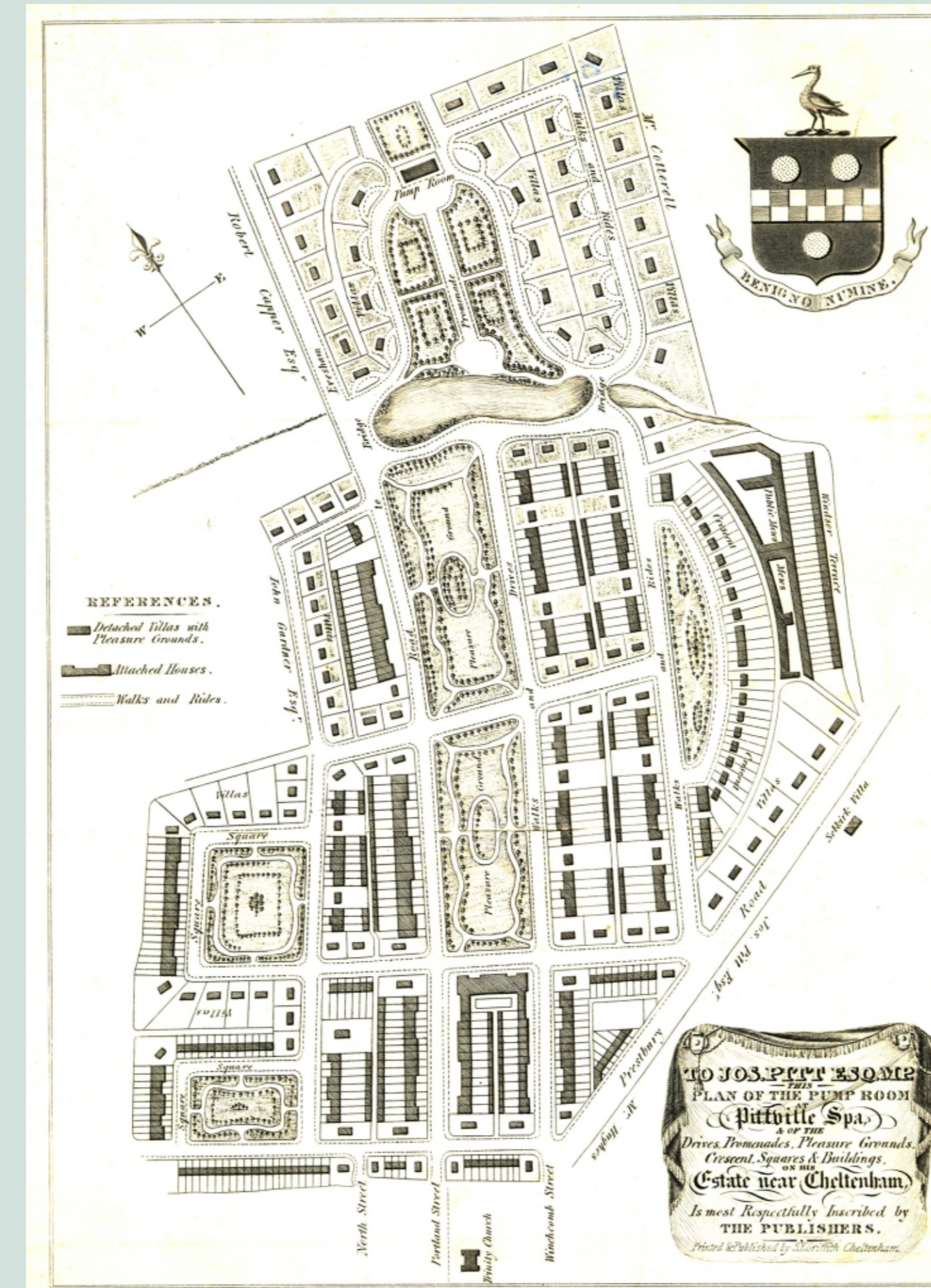
The extensive parkland was laid out by local nurseryman, Richard Ware, in 1827. The original plan shows a 'Promenade' between the Pump Room and the lake, bordered by formal flowerbeds and overlooked by villas. This gravelled path, also known as the 'Long Walk', was grassed over after the Council's purchase of the estate in 1890.



Summer house on East Lake and Pump Room, postcard circa 1900

Early postcards show a small wooden summerhouse on the north side of the lake.

Friends of Pittville is very grateful to:- Sue Rowbotham and Jill Waller for their help and advice on the text; Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum for permission to reproduce George Rowe's lithograph of Joseph Pitt; Cheltenham's Local and Family History Library for access to its collection; Terry Langhorn and Tom Clarke for use of their postcards and illustrations; and Cheltenham historians Steven Blake, Sue Rowbotham and Jill Waller for their several books on which we have based our research.



Plan of the Pittville Estate 1826, published in S.Y.Griffith's New Historical Description of Cheltenham, 1826



Wyman's Brook was dammed to form the Upper Lake, as it was known from the 1890s. The lake and two stone bridges follow the original plan of 1826. George Rowe's 1845 Illustrated Cheltenham Guide noted that its banks were 'overhung with weeping willows' with 'a gravel path winding along its margin'.



Pittville Lake and East Bridge, postcard circa 1910



Bandstand in front of Pump Room, postcard circa 1900

By 1888 the Pump Room was not financially viable, and in 1890-91 Cheltenham Borough Council purchased the building and the 44 acres of surrounding gardens for £5,400 from the County of Gloucester Bank. In 1891 Pittville Gardens were formally opened to the public. A circular bandstand had been built directly in front of the Pump Room by December 1900, but was moved to its present site the following year, allowing a clearer view of the spa building. The Cheltenham branch of the Royal Air Force Association (RAFA) funded a £6,000 restoration of the bandstand in 1994-95, and contributed to further restoration in 2010 following fire damage.

The already-decaying Pump Room was commandeered for use as a US Army storage depôt during the Second World War, from 1942. The area of grass in front of the Pump Room was covered by Nissen huts and barbed wire. By the time the military left, the Pump Room dome was only held up by the plaster, and the timbers had been eaten away by dry rot. Under threat of demolition for many years, Pittville Pump Room was fortunately saved for the town. After extensive restoration, it was re-opened by the seventh Duke of Wellington in 1960.



Nissen huts in front of Pump Room, photograph mid-1940s



A refreshment and entrance lodge (now the café on Central Cross Drive) was opened in 1903. Here visitors paid their admission charge for entry to Pittville Park until 1954.



More information about an area of present day Pittville Park, not originally part of the Pittville Estate, can be found on the west side, through the underpass under Evesham Road.



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