



The Visitor Experience at Pittville Pump Room

A report by Friends of Pittville's Pump Room Action Group

November 2018



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The Visitor Experience at Pittville Pump Room

Executive Summary

- Pittville Pump Room is arguably Cheltenham's most iconic landmark, but visitors to this Grade 1 listed building are currently poorly served.
- During August and September 2018, members of Friends of Pittville's Pump Room Action Group carried out a monitoring exercise to gather information about the visitor experience at Pittville Pump Room. Over 30 random "mystery shopping" visits were carried out.
- A significant proportion of visitors make a wasted journey because of the difficulty of finding out in advance whether or not the Pump Room will be open on a specific day.
- On arrival there is a lack of signage, little in the way of information or interpretation, and an indifferent welcome from staff.
- There has been an attempt to improve matters during 2018 with the recruitment by The Cheltenham Trust of a group of volunteer guides, a project which is still in its early stages.
- The visitor experience at Pittville Pump Room does not currently reflect the values set out in The Cheltenham Trust's own Customer Charter. Friends of Pittville urge The Cheltenham Trust to implement the Customer Charter at Pittville Pump Room as a matter of urgency.

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November 2018

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Pittville Pump Room is a widely recognised Cheltenham icon and one of only five Grade I listed buildings in the town. ¹ It was the last and most ambitious spa building to be built in Cheltenham and is now the only place where it is still possible to drink the spa waters.



The screenshot shows the top of a Sunday Times article. The header includes 'THE SUNDAY TIMES', navigation links for 'Today's sections', 'Past six days', and 'My articles', and user options for 'Times+', 'My account', and a search bar. The article is in the 'Travel' section. The title is 'Cheltenham: Great British Breaks' with a sub-headline 'The literary festival opens this week. Here's what to fit in between the books'. The author is Susan d'Arcy, dated September 30, 2018. There are buttons for 'Racing' and 'Music'. The main image is a photograph of the Pittville Pump Room, a large classical building with a dome, surrounded by trees and a pond with swans. The caption below the image reads 'The Pittville Pump Room GETTY'.

An image of the Pump Room used in an article in the Sunday Times, 30 September 2018

- 1.2. The Pump Room is owned by Cheltenham Borough Council but has been managed for the last few years by The Cheltenham Trust, predominantly as a venue for private hire. The current phase of its existence has its origins in the 1990s with the closure of the costume museum on the upper floor and expansion of the private hire function as a result of the Marriage Act 1994, which allowed marriages to be carried out in “approved premises”. A short history of the Pump Room’s somewhat chequered history is attached as Annexes 3 and 4.
- 1.3. Despite being marketed primarily as a private hire venue, the Pump Room remains an important destination for visitors to Cheltenham. It is open to the public (free of charge) from Wednesday to Sunday from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm, unless closed for an event such as a wedding or concert.

¹ The others are All Saints Church, Cheltenham Minster, the Montpellier Rotunda (now a branch of The Ivy restaurant chain, having previously been a bank) and Thirlestaine House (part of Cheltenham College).

- 1.4. During August and September 2018, Friends of Pittville’s Pump Room Action Group carried out a monitoring exercise to gather information about the visitor experience at Pittville Pump Room. Over 30 random “mystery shopping” visits were carried out by Friends of Pittville members, mostly at times when the Pump Room was expected to be open, but also on a few occasions when it was scheduled to be closed. The full results of this monitoring exercise can be found in Annexe 1.
- 1.5. Our overall conclusion is that visitors to the Pump Room are currently poorly served. A significant proportion make a wasted journey because of the difficulty of finding out in advance whether or not the Pump Room will be open on a specific day. On arrival there is a lack of signage, little in the way of information or interpretation, and an indifferent welcome. The staff who work at the Pump Room are employed to manage the building as a venue for hire, and do not generally engage with visitors whose purpose is to visit the building. There has been an attempt to improve matters during 2018 with the recruitment by The Cheltenham Trust of a group of volunteer guides, a project which is still in its early stages.
- 1.6. The Cheltenham Trust has published a Customer Charter (Annexe 2), but it is clear from our monitoring visits that the visitor experience at Pittville Pump Room does not currently reflect the principles enshrined in this document.

2. Contacting the Pump Room

- 2.1. The visitor experience often begins with consulting a website, but Pittville Pump Room is marketed primarily as a private hire venue and limited information is available for visitors who simply want to see the building. The home page of the current website says:

“Breathtaking, unique and radiating regency refinement, Pittville Pump Room is Cheltenham’s most spectacular private hire venue. When not in use, come and sample the fountain’s historically medicinal Spa Waters.”

- 2.2. Under the “Visit Us” tab on the website, the following information is provided:

This prestigious venue is open to the public for general viewing at the following times:

- Wednesday to Sunday inclusive
- 10am to 4pm
- Opening times are subject to bookings for private events
- Opening times may vary for Bank Holidays

The Pittville Pump Room is also available to hire exclusively for events and makes the perfect location for weddings, celebrations and corporate events, with a guaranteed wow factor. We welcome all enquiries, please contact us on:

For all venue hire enquiries

Tel: 01242 387 409

Email: venuesales@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk

For ticket sales for public performances at the Pittville Pump Room

Tel: 0844 576 2210

Email: boxoffice@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk

For all other enquiries

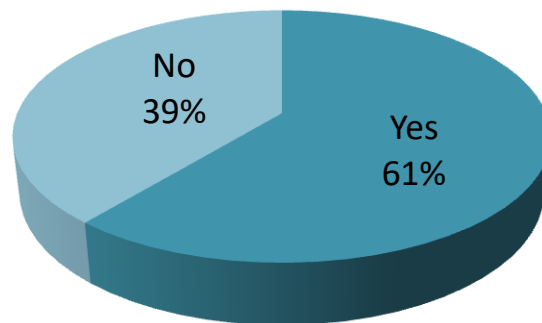
Tel: 01242 387 409

Email: info@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk

- 2.3. The telephone number given for “all other enquiries” (01242 387409) is the same as the venue hire number. It often rings unanswered or goes to voicemail, where it is not identified as a number belonging to the Cheltenham Trust. As a result it is often impossible for visitors to check whether the Pump Room is open on a specific day.
- 2.4. The “Visit Cheltenham” website also gives the opening hours and makes it clear that the Pump Room may be closed for private hire events, but likewise it offers no way of finding out whether this is the case on a particular day. People wishing to visit the Pump Room are therefore left with no option but to simply turn up and risk possible disappointment on arrival.
- 2.5. In our survey, based on more than 30 random visits, the Pump Room was open to visitors on 61% of visits and closed on the remaining 39%.

“Unfortunately the inside was closed due to a private function so it was a bit of a wasted walk.” *Tripadvisor, September 2018*

Was the Pump Room open when you visited?



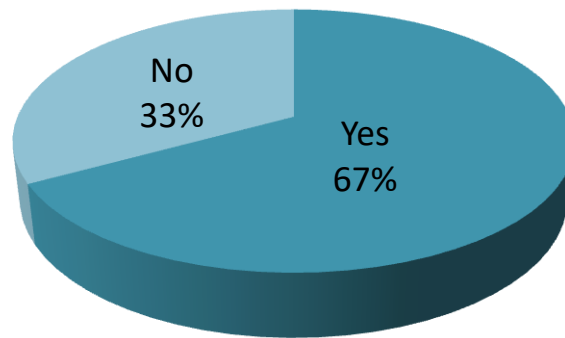
“I went especially today to find it closed. Sundays are supposed to be open unless event on. No sign of any event today. No times of opening anywhere. No apology. All the curtains closed ... I would never recommend this as a place to visit because you could just be wasting your time.” *Tripadvisor, September 2018*

3. Arriving at the Pump Room

- 3.1. It’s hard to miss the Pump Room, but for casual visitors there is no sign indicating what the building is, apart from some discreet lettering over the east entrance.
- 3.2. There are three entrances with double doors – one on the west side, one on the east side, and one opening onto the colonnade in front of the lawn – plus the entrance to the foyer which is also on the east side. However there is nothing to indicate that this is the main entrance, and our monitors encountered a number of visitors wandering around the building looking for a way in.
- 3.3. There is no sign that says “Open” when the Pump Room is open to visitors, and no opening times are displayed on any of the entrances.

“The main east doors were shut. I saw two people walk up to the entrance, realise that the doors were shut and walk away. The doors then opened automatically and one of them went back to ask if the building was open.”
Monitoring Report, 9 August 2018

If the Pump Room was closed, was there are a notice explaining why?



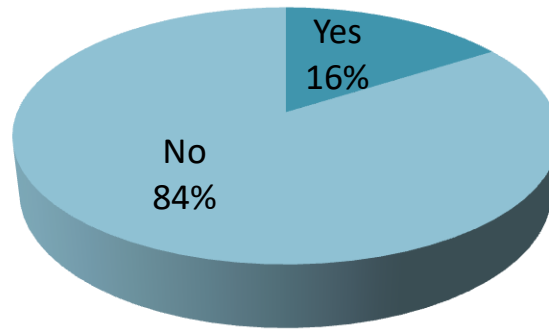
3.4. In our survey, the mystery shoppers were asked whether an explanatory notice was visible when the building was closed (see above). A “home-made” sign is usually displayed when the building is in use for a private hire event (see below). However this gives no information for visitors who have made a wasted journey about when the building is normally open, or when it will next be open.



4. The Welcome for Visitors to the Pump Room

4.1. Visitors to the building are not seen as customers at the Pump Room (private hirers are the only group seen as customers). Our monitors were greeted by a member of staff on only 16% of visits made when the Pump Room was open.

Were you greeted by a member of staff on arrival?



“Four people came in while I was there, then two young mothers with prams, and then another group. The member of staff made no effort to engage with any of the visitors or offer any information.” *Monitoring Report, 1 September 2018*

4.2. On entering the building – assuming the visitor gets that far – there is no indication of where to go and no information of any kind provided, unless the visitor is fortunate enough to encounter one of the volunteer guides who have recently been introduced.

“While I was there two visitors arrived, but as no-one was available they did not have the confidence to look around.” *Monitoring Report, 21 September 2018*

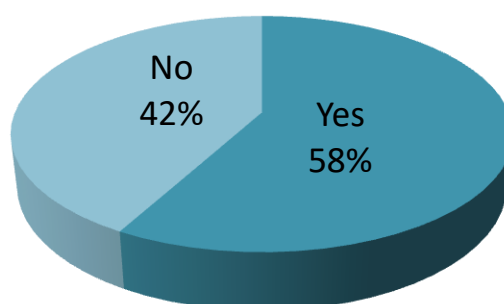
4.3. Ironically, a “Glide” stand is well-stocked with leaflets about other local attractions, but there is nothing about the Pump Room itself.

“We had guests with us and I have to say the place felt empty and unwelcoming. There is nothing outside or in the entrance lobby to make you feel encouraged to venture further.”
Monitoring Report, 22 September 2018

Friends of Pittville have provided the Pump Room with free copies of Steven Blake’s booklet *Pittville Pump Room: an Historical Guide to Cheltenham’s Spa*. This authoritative guide was originally published in 1980 and republished in 2000; the remaining copies were donated to Friends of Pittville by Cheltenham Borough Council in 2014.

4.4. Despite repeated efforts, it has proved very difficult to persuade staff at the Pump Room to make these booklets available in the foyer as a guide for visitors. It has also proved difficult to ensure that the donation box provided by Friends of Pittville is on view.

Were copies of the free guide book visible when you visited?



5. Taking the Waters

5.1. Pittville Pump Room is now the only place in Cheltenham where the spa waters can be taken, and this is one of the reasons why visitors seek out the building. Interest in “taking the waters” has increased since the screening of the programme “Regency Cheltenham” in the Channel 4 series “Britain’s Most Historic Towns” in May 2018.

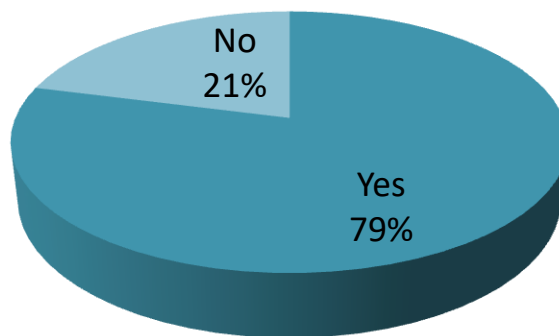


5.2. There are no signs directing visitors to the pump, which is easily missed if there is no-one to point it out. Water is dispensed through a brass tap and small plastic glasses are supposed to be supplied for visitors, but these were not always available during our visits.

“Although the water was available and there were visitors, there were no glasses. These were eventually found in the storage area above the tap.” *Monitoring Report, 30 August 2018*

5.3. The water is sometimes unavailable for drinking, with no indication given of why this is the case.

Was the spa water available for drinking?



“The pump water was turned off, but there was a large plastic tumbler with water in it under the tap. This had presumably been left over from an event and not cleared away, but was potentially very confusing for visitors, who might have assumed that it contained spa water. There was nothing to explain why the spa water was unavailable.”

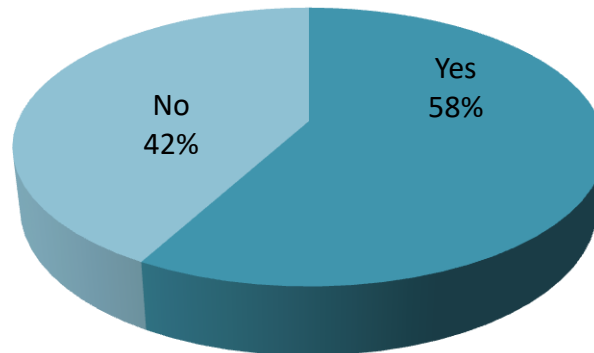
Monitoring Report, 8 August 2018

6. The Volunteer Guides

- 6.1. Several cohorts of volunteer guides have been recruited and trained by The Cheltenham Trust during 2018 and there is no doubt that their presence enhances the experience of those visitors who are fortunate enough to encounter them.
- 6.2. However there is not always a guide on duty and it is difficult for visitors to find out when a guide will be available.

“On leaving I realised too late that the chap who tried to catch us just as we left was in fact a guide.” *Tripadvisor, September 2018*

Was a volunteer guide on duty when you visited?



“I asked if there were sometimes volunteer guides on duty and she {member of staff} said, “Yes, a chap was here yesterday afternoon.” I asked how to find out when the guides were available and she didn’t know.”
Monitoring Report, 29 August 2018

6.3. There is also some evidence of difficult relationships between the guides and the Pump Room staff, who have differing priorities.

“When I arrived at 10.00 am the doors were still locked and two volunteer guides were waiting outside. The member of staff on duty was not friendly towards the volunteers.” *Monitoring Report, 15 August 2018*

7. Conclusion

7.1. The Cheltenham Trust has published a Customer Charter which sets out a number of principles for engaging with customers. It is clear that the majority of these are not currently being met at Pittville Pump Room. They include:

Our venues and services ...

- X Will clearly display the activities and events available at all Cheltenham Trust venues, our opening times and timetables to inform customers.*
- X Will be welcoming and inviting to all*
- X Will have clearly signposted areas*

Our people ...

- X Will be friendly and happy to help and greet all customers on each visit.*
- X Will offer encouragement and support.*
- X Will answer all telephone calls in a friendly and professional manner ...*
- X Will aim to resolve your enquiry on the first point of contact or pass you onto a colleague who will be able to help.*
- X Will ensure equipment and facilities are available as advertised and if withdrawn will report and action repairs as quickly as possible.*
- X Will create exciting and diverse programmes and content that enrich lives and encourage participation.*

7.2. Friends of Pittville therefore urge The Cheltenham Trust to take immediate action to ensure that the principles enshrined in its Customer Charter are implemented at Pittville Pump Room.

Results of the Monitoring Exercise

The following pages show the results of 31 visits made to the Pump Room by Friends of Pittville members in August and September 2018.

Each visitor was asked to record the date and time of their visit and answer the following questions:

1. Was the Pump Room open to the public?
2. If no, was there a sign or notice telling you why?
3. If yes
 - a. Were you greeted by a member of staff?
 - b. Was a volunteer guide on duty?
 - c. Were copies of the Pittville Pump Room booklet available?
 - d. Was the Friends of Pittville donation box available?
 - e. Was the spa water available for drinking?
 - f. If yes, were the small plastic glasses available?
 - g. If no, was there a notice explaining why?
4. Any comments on visitor numbers or other observations

Visit no	1	2	3	4	5
Day	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	08-Aug-18	09-Aug-18	10-Aug-18	11-Aug-18	12-Aug-18
Time of arrival	11:40	12:20	15:50	14:30	15:00
Was the Pump Room open?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	No	No. Staff in the ticket booth with the blind down.	No. Staff showing a wedding couple around.	n/a	No. Staff moving furniture around.
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	No	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
Was the FOP donation box available?	No	No	No	n/a	No, just TCT box
Was the water available for drinking?	No	Awaiting test	Awaiting test	n/a	Awaiting test
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	No	No	No	n/a	No
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	No	See comments	No notice saying "Water being tested - don't drink"	n/a	No notice saying "Water being tested - don't drink"
Visitor numbers	Volunteer had shown round a coach party of c 20 people plus a further 10 visitors. Monitor counted another 6 arriving during visit.			n/a	Quiet day

Visit no	6	7	8	9	10
Day	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	14-Aug-18	15-Aug-18	16-Aug-18	18-Aug-18	19-Aug-18
Time of arrival	12:10	10:00	10:20	15:15	14:00
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	No, closed day	Yes but door still locked at 10:00 and 2 volunteers waiting outside	Yes	No, closed for a wedding	No, closed for Cheltenham Horticultural Society Summer Show
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	No	n/a	n/a	Board outside with scruffy notice	CHS had their own notices on A-boards
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	n/a	No. Staff member very unwelcoming to volunteers	No. Staff member not welcoming. Doors were not opened until at least 10.10	n/a	n/a
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	n/a	Yes	Yes)	n/a	n/a
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	n/a	Not initially	Yes	n/a	n/a
Was the FOP donation box available?	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a	n/a
Was the water available for drinking?	n/a	Awaiting test	Yes	n/a	Yes
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	n/a	No	Yes	n/a	No
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	n/a	No. See comments	n/a	n/a	No notice saying "Water being tested - don't drink"
Observations on visitor numbers					

Visit no	11	12	13	14	15
Day	Monday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	20-Aug-18	23-Aug-18	24-Aug-18	25-Aug-18	26-Aug-18
Time of arrival	15:00	12:00	10:30	11:00	13:15
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	No (closed day)	Yes	No	Yes	No
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	Nothing to say closed or open	n/a	The usual sign saying "Private Function - Sorry Closed to Visitors"	n/a	The usual sign saying "Private Function - Sorry Closed to Visitors"
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	n/a	No	n/a	I was asked if I was "just visiting"	n/a
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	n/a	Yes	n/a	No	n/a
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	n/a	Yes	n/a	No	n/a
Was the FOP donation box available?	n/a	No	n/a	No	n/a
Was the water available for drinking?	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Observations on visitor numbers	Monitor saw at least ten people looking into either the open west door or the main east door.		n/a	n/a	A couple who had obviously turned up to look round the building were turned away at the door.

Visit no	16	17	18	19	20
Day	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Thursday
Date	29-Aug-18	30-Aug-18	31-Aug-18	01-Sep-18	06-Sep-18
Time of arrival	14:30	10:15 and 12:45	14:30	15:00	10:30 and 15:30
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	Yes	Yes but late	No, closed for a wedding	Yes (although doors were closed)	Yes (Heritage Open Days)
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	n/a	n/a	The usual A-board	n/a	n/a
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	No - the only member of staff was polishing the floor.	No (at 12.45 a member of staff was setting up for an event)	n/a	A member of staff was sitting in the ticket office	Yes
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	Yes	Yes	n/a	No	Yes
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	Yes	Yes	n/a	No (see comments)	Yes
Was the FOP donation box available?	No. It was a struggle to find it. See comments.	Problems with the two donation boxes - see comments	n/a	No (see comments)	Yes
Was the water available for drinking?	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	Yes	No	n/a	Yes, but not many left	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Observations on visitor numbers				At least six people arrived during the monitor's visit	About 60 people up till 3.30 pm.

Visit no	21	22	23	24	25
Day	Saturday	Sunday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Date	08-Sep-18	09-Sep-18	12-Sep-18	13-Sep-18	14-Sep-18
Time of arrival	15:20	15:00	10:15	11:10	15:45
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	No	No, but should have been as no event was on. See comments	Yes	Yes	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	The usual board and two wedding notices on the door	No	n/a	n/a	n/a
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	n/a	n/a	Acknowledged but not welcomed	No	Yes, in the ticket office. However at 3.45 I was told that the Pump Room was "just about to close".
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	n/a	n/a	No	Yes - showing round two visitors. The main doors had been thrown open.	No
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	n/a	n/a	No	No	Yes
Was the FOP donation box available?	n/a	n/a	No	No	No
Was the water available for drinking?	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Observations on visitor numbers			Four visitors arrived during the visit - see comments		Two sets of visitors were there, but did not have any information with them.

Visit no	26	27	28	29	30
Day	Friday	Saturday	Saturday	Sunday	Wednesday
Date	21-Sep-18	22-Sep-18	22-Sep-18	23-Sep-18	26-Sep-18
Time of arrival	12:35	11:00	14:30	15:30	11:00
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	Yes (with a paper sign on the door saying "Open")	No. Being prepared for a wedding. Some guests had arrived early and were waiting outside in the rain.	Yes, but automatic doors were not working and stayed closed when approached.	Yes, but automatic doors were not working and all the curtains were closed.	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	n/a	No	n/a		n/a
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	Yes	n/a	Two members of staff working in the main hall.	No. Three members of staff setting up for an event.	No. Three members of staff talking in the foyer.
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	No	n/a	No	No	No
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	Yes	n/a	No	No	Yes, by ticket office
Was the FOP donation box available?	No	n/a	No	No	No
Was the water available for drinking?	Yes	n/a	Yes	Didn't check	Yes
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	Yes	n/a	Only a few	Didn't check	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	Didn't check	n/a
Observations on visitor numbers	Two visitors arrived but no member of staff was available so they did not have the confidence to look around. The hall was full of chairs for an event.		See comments	See comments	

Visit no	31				
Day	Thursday				
Date	27-Sep-18				
Time of arrival	11:15				
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	No - setting up for a wedding				
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	Yes				
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	n/a				
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	n/a				
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	n/a				
Was the FOP donation box available?	n/a				
Was the water available for drinking?	n/a				
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	n/a				
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	n/a				
Observations on visitor numbers	Two couples were trying to look in the windows.				

Monitoring the visitor experience at Pittville Pump Room,

August – September 2018

Additional notes and comments on visits

Tuesday 7 August

This visit was deliberately carried out on a “closed” day. The monitor commented “I went to each door and the curtains were pulled across. You couldn’t see inside the building. The lobby was completely empty and the ticket office blind was drawn down. A casual visitor would have assumed that the building was permanently closed.”

Wednesday 8 August

It appeared that a handwritten notice had been on the door earlier in the day saying “Closed because of staff sickness”.

The Pittville Pump Room booklets and the Friends of Pittville donation box were in the ticket office. The pump water was turned off, but there was a large plastic tumbler with water in it under the tap. This had presumably been left over from an event and not cleared away, but was potentially very confusing for visitors, who might have assumed that it contained spa water.

There was nothing to explain why the spa water was unavailable.

Thursday 9 August

The main east doors were shut. The monitor saw two people walk up to the entrance, realise that the doors were shut and walk away. The doors then opened automatically and one of them went back to ask if the building was open.

The tap was on and water was available, but the volunteer on duty had been told that the water had not yet been tested. Volunteers had apparently been advised to tell visitors not to drink the water, but obviously they are not by the tap all the time. There was no notice advising members of the public not to drink the water.

Friday 10 August

The water had still not been tested. According to the volunteer on duty, there was no notice advising members of the public not to drink the water, and at least one member of the public had drunk it.

Saturday 11 August

The Pump Room was closed for a private event. This is the notice that was placed at the entrance.



Sunday 12 August

The east doors were open, but it was not obvious that visitors were welcome. Staff were moving furniture, and a volunteer was by the tap explaining to two visitors why it was inadvisable to drink the water. This was the fourth day after the water had been turned back on and there was still no notice advising visitors that they should not drink it.

The volunteer said that he had noticed people peering in at the west door and felt that there should be a sign directing visitors to the main (east) entrance.

Wednesday 15 August

When the monitor arrived at 10.00 am the doors were still locked and two volunteer guides were waiting outside. The member of staff on duty was not friendly towards the volunteers.

The water had still not been tested (six days after it had been turned back on) and there was still no notice advising visitors that they should not drink it.

Thursday 16 August

When the monitor arrived at 10.20 am the volunteer on duty had only just managed to get into the building, and had been about to give up and go home. Again, the member of staff on duty was not friendly towards the volunteers.

It was still unclear whether the water was safe to drink (a week after it had been turned back on) and there was still no notice advising visitors that they should not drink it.

Saturday 18 August

The Pump Room was closed for a wedding. The same board was outside with a scruffy notice on it. The monitor commented “I overheard a young father walking past the door and saying to his kids ‘You can’t go in there’, as if it was never open. And maybe he’s never seen it open!”



Sunday 19 August

The Pump Room was closed to the public for the Cheltenham Horticultural Society Summer Show. CHS had put their own notices on A-boards at the main door and at the south-west corner, so it was clear to members of the public what was taking place. The organiser said that some tourists had come to look round and rather than turn them away she had allowed them to look round the main hall without paying the entry charge to the show.

The doors to the upstairs were locked even though CHS had booked the whole building.

The tap was dispensing water but there were no glasses and no notice advising whether or not the water was safe to drink.

Monday 20 August

This was a closed day. The monitor reports “The west door was open and someone was inside cleaning the floor. I saw at least ten people looking into either the open west door or the closed main door. I spoke to two grandparents from Cheltenham with their grandchildren who had hoped to go in. They thought it odd that although someone was there, they couldn’t go in.

Saturday 25 August

The Pump Room was open. The monitor reports as follows: “Two members of staff were on duty, one cleaning the floor and one in the ticket booth who asked if I was “just visiting”. The tap was working and there was a supply of plastic glasses. There was no volunteer on duty and no guide books or donation box on display, although there were other booklets (Cheltenham Trust, Heritage Open Days etc) on the window sill. I asked the person in the booth whether there was a guide book about the building. Her first reaction was “No” but after thinking about it she dug out a copy and said “You can have one of these”. I asked if there were sometimes volunteer guides on duty and she said, “Yes, a chap was here yesterday afternoon.” I asked how to find out when the guides were available and she didn’t know.

Thursday 30 August

When the monitor arrived at 10.10 am the building was still closed. A volunteer induction session was scheduled for 10.00 am and the volunteers and their co-ordinator (plus a delivery driver) were all banging on the door. There was no apology from the member of staff who finally appeared at 10.15 am.

Although the water was available and there were visitors, there were no glasses. These were eventually found in the storage area above the tap.

Saturday 1 September

The monitor reports that the Pump Room was open at the time of their visit (3.00 pm) but there was nothing to indicate this as the doors were closed.

A member of staff was sitting in the ticket office. The Pump Room guide books were not on display but could be seen sitting on a messy shelf. The monitor reports: “Four people came in while I was there, then two young mothers with prams, and then another group. The member of staff made no effort to engage with any of the visitors or offer any information.”

The supply of glasses for the water was running low and the monitor asked the staff member if there were any more. She said that there were boxes of them “out the back” and went to get some.

Thursday 6 September

The Pump Room was open for Heritage Open Days. There was bunting on the south and east sides of the building but only the east entrance was open, and there were no signs to indicate this.

Sunday 9 September

The monitor arrived at 3.00 pm and found the Pump Room closed, although there was no event taking place and it should have been open. The monitor commented: “All the curtains were closed. It looked derelict.”

Wednesday 12 September

The monitor arrived at 10.15 am. The Pump Room was open although the staff said they were preparing for a wedding later in the day. There was no guide on duty. While the monitor was there, four visitors arrived wanting to look round. They came from Hertfordshire and were staying in Tewkesbury. They had made a special trip to see the Pump Room.

The monitor gave the visitors an impromptu tour. The Pump Room guidebooks were not on display in the reception area, although a selection of other booklets and leaflets were on the windowsill. The monitor asked a member of staff for two copies of the guidebook and he retrieved these from the ticket office. The monitor commented: “If I had not been there I suspect these visitors would have left disappointed, as there was no-one to greet them and no information about the building to be found – although ironically the “Glide” display cases provide information about countless other local attractions.”

Friday 21 September

The monitor commented: “While I was there two visitors arrived, but as no-one was available they did not have the confidence to look around.”

Saturday 22 September

The monitor commented: “We had guests with us and I have to say the place felt empty and unwelcoming. There is nothing outside or in the entrance lobby to make you feel encouraged to venture further.”

Sunday 23 September

All the curtains were closed and the automatic doors were out of order at the time of the monitor’s visit on a Sunday afternoon. A couple tried to get inside but were not pushing hard enough, so the monitor encouraged them to try again. The monitor told the visitors that they could look around and they said “Oh, can we? We’ve come from the railway station to look round the area.” The monitor handed them over to a member of staff, who accepted the role with some reluctance.

The Cheltenham Trust – Our Customer Charter

<p>Our Venues and Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will clearly display the activities and events available at all Cheltenham Trust Venues, our opening times and timetables to inform customers. • Will be welcoming and inviting to all • Will have clearly signposted areas • We constantly strive to improve and update our facilities to achieve our aims • We will clearly indicate our pricing 	<p>Our People:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be friendly and happy to help and greet all customers on each visit • Will offer encouragement and support • Will be easily identifiable by name badge • Will answer all telephone calls in a friendly and professional manner giving: a greeting, the name of whom is talking and asking “how may I help you?” • Will aim to resolve your enquiry on the first point of contact or pass you onto a colleague who will be able to help. • Will ensure the safety and welfare of customers at all times • Will make venue cleanliness a priority • Will ensure equipment and facilities are available as advertised and if withdrawn will report and action repairs as quickly as possible. • Will create exciting and diverse programmes and content that enrich lives and encourage participation
<p>Communication:</p> <p>Please fill out a Comment Card or email us: Facilities, Operations & Customer Services Email: customerservices@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Learning events, courses & schools Email: learning@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Programme: Email: programme@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Volunteering Email: volunteering@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Gym and Wellbeing Email: fitness@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Email: re-active@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Sports bookings Email: blockbookings@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Events Email: venuesales@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Email: weddings@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk Membership Email: membership@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk</p>	<p>Evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will publish a summary of feedback each quarter and report against it identifying any actions taken • We will use the Culture Counts tool to monitor the qualitative experience of our customers • We will evaluate our response maintenance activity and report on the repair timeframes and actions. • We will benchmark to national frameworks and report our performance against those benchmarks • We will use mystery shopping to provide independent monitoring of our customer service • A customer service notice board will be located at each venue and upon the Trust websites that summarises our performance in these areas.

Head Office Communications:

You can write to us: Executive Office, The Cheltenham Trust, The Wilson, Clarence Street, Cheltenham, GL50 3JT

Email: communications@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk

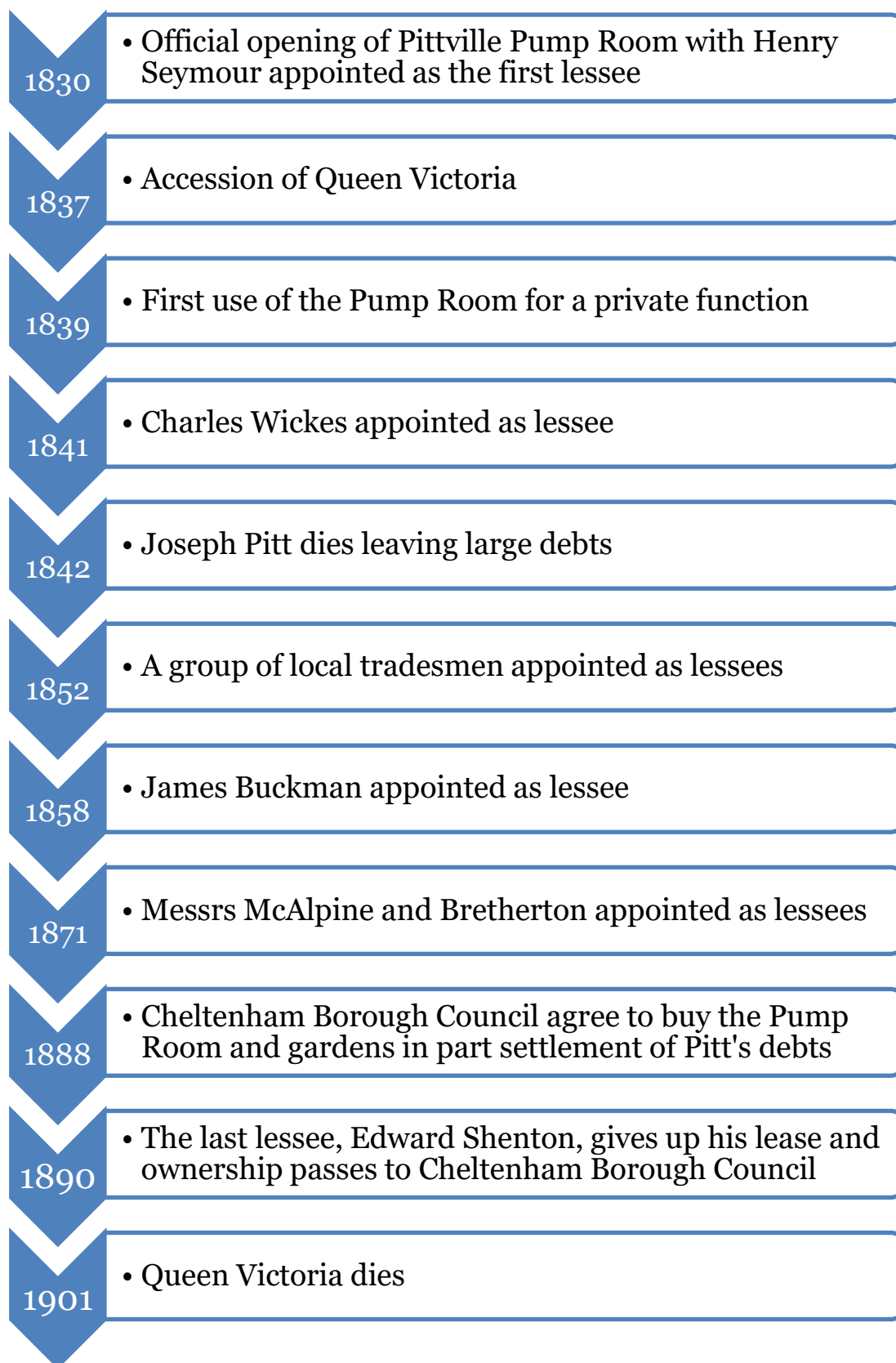
For Media, Press and Marketing Enquiries:

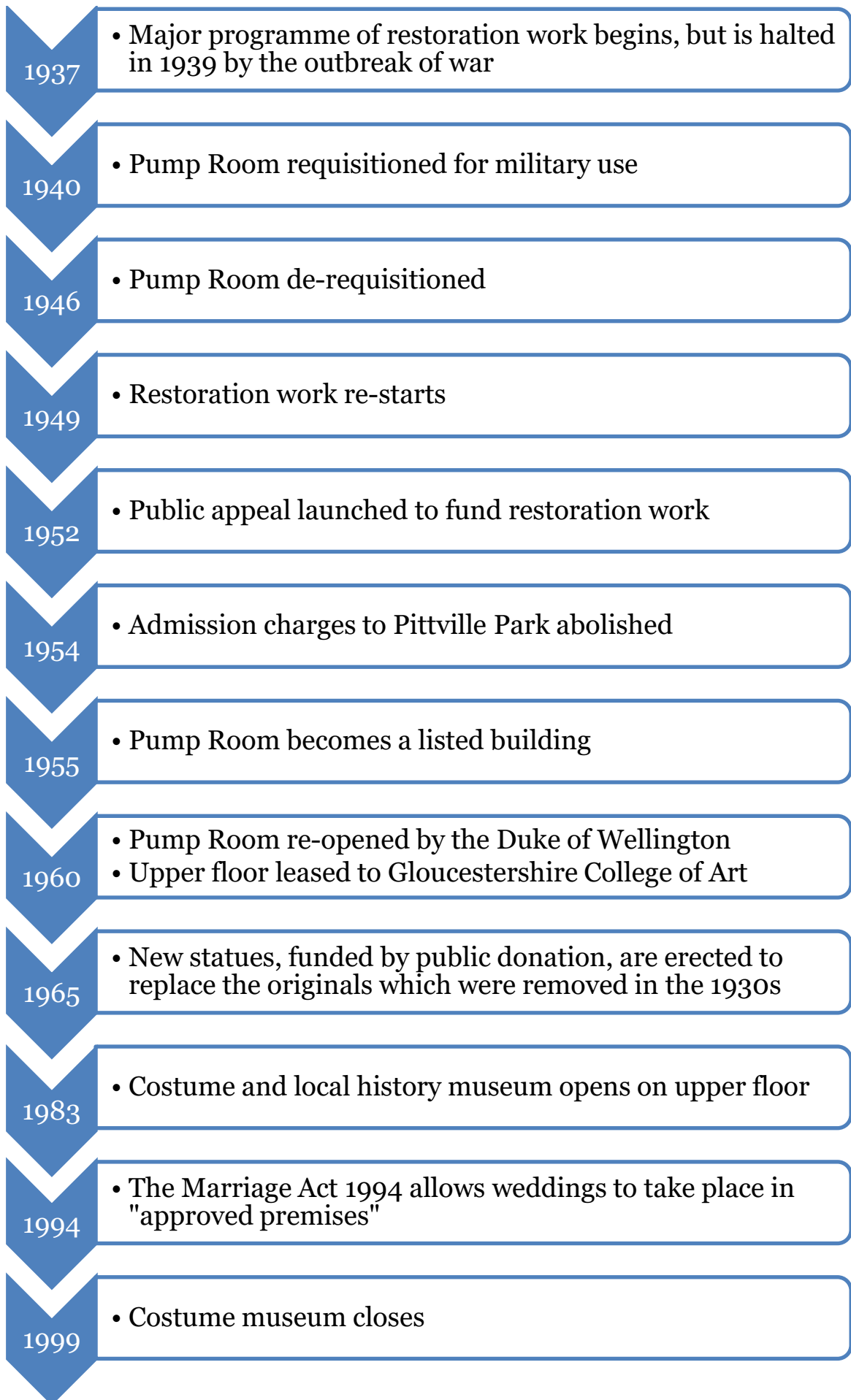
Email: communications@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk

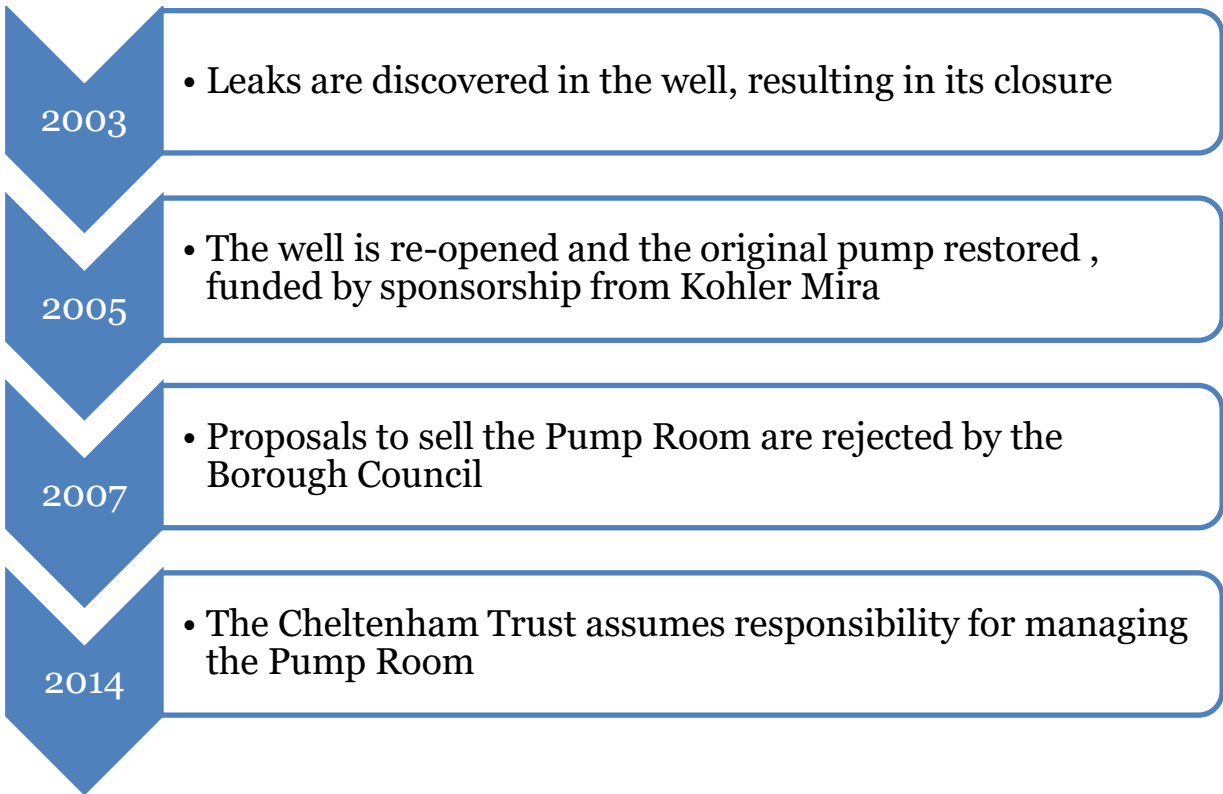
For Fundraising enquiries:

Email: development@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk

A Pump Room Timeline







The Pump Room's Recent History

The early history of the Pump Room is set out in Steven Blake's *Pittville Pump Room – an Historical Guide to Cheltenham's Spa* (revised edition, 2000). Dr Blake's account makes it clear that the exact function of the Pump Room has long been a matter for debate, and making it profitable has always been problematic.

It is worth exploring its more recent history to understand what has led to the current situation.² When the Borough Council bought the Pump Room in 1890 it acquired a building with structural problems which was in constant need of repair. A programme of major restoration work was started in 1937 but interrupted by the war. During the war the Pump Room was requisitioned for military use and occupied by the United States army, which resulted in further damage to the structure.

Despite its poor state of repair, the Borough Council's Pittville Pump Room Committee concluded in 1949 that the Pump Room should be preserved for the town. However the committee's minutes for 3 February 1950 show that there was disagreement about what role the building should play. Some saw the future of the Pump Room as a formal setting for functions and conferences, while others proposed a more community-oriented use, including facilities for sports such as badminton. There was also a third group who favoured demolition.

A feasibility study was commissioned in 1950 from the Gloucestershire Architectural Association to look into possible future uses of the Pump Room and the costs involved. The report, entitled *Potentialities for the Pump Room*, reviewed the options for various types of events and concluded that because of the building's architectural properties, the most appropriate use was for conferences, meetings and social gatherings. It warned, however, of the problems faced by Pittville in competing with venues that were closer to the town centre, and stated that improved access from the town centre and the promotion of Pittville as a visitor attraction were the two most important factors for increasing visitor numbers. It accused the Borough Council of failing to promote Pittville in the past and encouraged it to take a more active role in marketing it in the future.

² See Ashley Rossiter, "Renovation of Pittville Pump Room and its Reopening", Gloucestershire History no 17 (2003), pages 16-20

The Pump Room Committee proposed to the Borough Council that the recommendations of the Gloucestershire Architectural Association report should be accepted. The proposal involved a total restoration with substantial expenditure to instal central heating, toilet and catering facilities and to replace the statues which had been removed from the front of the building in the 1930s. However there was still a strong local body of opinion which argued that the town would be better off financially if the Pump Room was demolished.

The Borough Council itself was deeply divided on the issue. The costs of restoration and the potential losses the building might make in the future were the main focus of opposition. A councillor commented in the *Cheltenham Chronicle* in January 1951 that “most of the municipal enterprises providing social amenities already run at a loss. The Pump Room will merely increase this deficit.” The mayor, however, described the Pump Room as “a priceless heritage which must not be neglected.”

A compromise was reached in the form of a decision to raise money for the work via public subscription. There were a number of substantial private donations and grants were also received from the Pilgrim Trust and the Ministry of Works but in the end this only accounted for just over a third of the total cost, the remainder being funded by the Borough Council itself.

“After a spell of military occupation, it stood sadly decayed and disregarded. There were some who thought it a ‘white elephant’ and advocated its demolition.” *Country Life, July 1960*

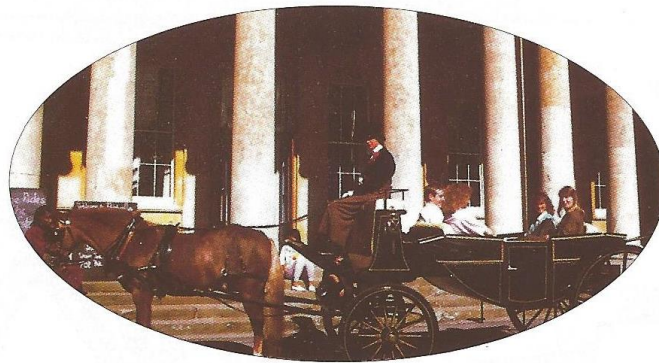
The introduction of “listing” for buildings of special architectural or historic interest eventually removed the threat of demolition and the Pump Room became a listed building in 1955.

The restored Pump Room was officially re-opened in July 1960. However, its role still remained unclear. Gloucestershire County Council was keen to lease the building, but Cheltenham Borough Council was reluctant to hand over control. In the end another compromise was reached whereby the Borough Council leased the top floor to the County Council, who used it as studios for Gloucestershire College of Art.

A flyer from the early 1990s

Pittville on Sunday

A very English way to spend a Sunday



For your Refreshment

Between 10am and 5pm, choose from an extensive menu of:

- ♥ Breakfasts and Brunches
- ♥ Freshly-made sandwiches
- ♥ Toasted sandwiches made to order
- ♥ Delicious hot meals (including vegetarian)
- ♥ Afternoon Cream Teas
- ♥ Cakes and pastries
- ♥ Choice of beers and wines

Teas, coffee, ice cream and soft drinks available all day.

For your Entertainment

- 10am ~ 5pm** Craft Displays & Demonstrations
- 11am ~ 2pm** Live Music in the Pump Room, ranging from light Classical to Jazz
- 11am ~ 4.20pm** Museum open - small entrance charge
- 12noon ~ 4pm** Carriage Rides
- 2.30pm ~ 4.30pm** Playbus (3rd July - 4th September)
- 2.30pm ~ 4.30pm** Bands in The Park - Open air concerts by top bands from across the region

Many facilities for people with disabilities



From 1983 the upper floor housed a museum of costume and local history. During this period the Pump Room attempted to strike a balance between being a heritage building which was open to the public and a venue for events. Its use as a concert hall, for example, increased with the growth of the Cheltenham Music Festival. On Sundays, however, refreshments were served, live music was played and carriage rides were available (see previous page).

Over the last twenty years the Pump Room has moved increasingly towards being a venue for private hire and events. The passing of the Marriage Act in 1994 meant that the Pump Room could become an approved location for weddings, and this is now a major source of its income. The costume museum closed in 1999 and the upper rooms reverted to being available for general hire. Following local government elections in 2007 the incoming Council discussed the possibility of selling the Pump Room for possible use as a hotel or restaurant, but after widespread protests this proposal was later dropped.

LIVE BBC NEWS CHANNEL


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Pump Room remains in public use

The famous Pittville Pump Room in Cheltenham will be retained for public use, it has been announced.

The borough council will lease the listed building out to a private firm, which will retain it for use as a cultural and music venue.



The Pump Room is a grade I-listed Regency building

It will also continue to be used for weddings, meetings conferences and exhibitions, and banqueting.

Councillor Diggory Seacome said: "The Pump Rooms are not to be sold off or used as a hotel, casino or restaurant."

He added: "Local amateur societies will still be able to use the jewel in Cheltenham's crown at concessionary rates as they have enjoyed in the past."

Cheltenham's Lib Dem MP Martin Horwood said: "The Pump Room has provided a focus for public entertainment and leisure for the best part of 200 years.

"I welcome the council's assurance that it won't now be turned into a private venue like a hotel but will remain for community use."

The Pump Room is a grade I-listed Regency building.

The Cheltenham Trust took over the management of the Pump Room in 2014 under an agreement with the Borough Council which also included the Town Hall, The Wilson, Leisure@ and the Prince of Wales Stadium. The Trust is proposing to establish a Pump Room Development Group with an independent chair to develop its vision for the building's future.