



www.friendsofpittville.org

January 2016

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

A warm welcome to 2016

Welcome, also, to many new members. Happy New Year and very best wishes for 2016; I hope you will enjoy this issue for members of Friends of Pittville. You'll find brief reports on our activities, details about forthcoming events, progress reports on current projects and much more!

Thanks for membership renewal – it really matters to us

Thank you to everyone who renewed their membership for 2016. Some of you will receive this issue even though you haven't got around to renewing yet, as we allow a six-month grace period! If you are in doubt about your membership status please contact Gloria Jones, at membership@friendsofpittville.org or telephone Hon. Secretary Fiona Clarke on 01242 227 720.

Friends of Pittville trustees elected

Those of you who have been following the progress of our new constitution (adopted on 2 September 2015) will know that, from that date, the three office bearers (Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) are chosen by the trustees who have, in turn, been elected by the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

In addition to Judie Hodsdon (see next column), the following were re-elected and then chosen as office bearers: Fiona Clarke (Hon. Secretary) and Wendy Acres (Hon. Treasurer).

Christopher Archibald, David Richards and Hilary Simpson were re-elected, and Gloria Jones, who had been a volunteer observer, was elected and continues as Membership Secretary. Newly elected trustees are Mike Evans, Sandy Marshall and Robert Rimell.

The current non-voting representatives of other organisations are Desmond Fitzgerald (Pittville Park Watch), Cllr Adam Lillywhite, and Cllr Dave Prince.

Introducing our new chairman



We are pleased to announce that Judie Hodsdon was chosen to be chairman by the trustees who were elected at our AGM on 19 October.

Judie is well-known to many of you already through her chairmanship of the Pittville Gates Restoration Project Sub-committee and Joint Project Board (with the borough council and project manager RRA Architects).

Thank you to our outgoing chairman

Judy Langhorn featured as 'Volunteer of the moment' in our September 2015 newsletter and we thank her again for all she did to steer FOP through more than five crucial years. Judy continues as a Green Space volunteer and active member of the Pittville History Works team.

Fields in Trust award

Sadly, Pittville Park did not attract enough votes in the 'UK's best park' award, but even to be one of the 122 nominated parks is an achievement of which we can be proud. Thank you to all who voted. Details of winners at http://www.fieldsintrust.org/News_Detail.aspx?newsid=80e422a1-a5b8-472f-b2d4-497a14d8adef

Some recent successes

The Quiz Night at the Feathered Fish on 16 November was enjoyed by fifty-one members, with four teams vying for second place. Here is the winning team's leader, Hilary Simpson, with Paul, the quizmaster. We made £202 through the entry fee and raffle. Many thanks to FOP member, Amanda Slayton-Joslin, for another memorable evening.

Pittville autumn tree walk revealed many surprises, old and new, by Judy Langhorn

"On 7 October 2015, Chris Chavasse, Cheltenham's Senior Tree Officer conducted another tour for members of Friends of Pittville. Here are some of the trees you may see if you follow the same route in spring.

Our attention was gained immediately as we began to walk under the huge London plane tree in the north section of Pittville Crescent Gardens. This tree is probably one from the original estate plantings 175 years ago, now with a span of about 35 metres. It looks healthy and beautiful whilst acting as an efficient pollution filter. Sheltering beside it are two heart-shaped-leaved Indian bean trees, a species likely to snap and not for exposed places. Close by is a weeping silver lime which turns its leaves to the sun and, as so often with limes, produces abundant nectar. Further to the north is a soft-leaved blue atlas cedar of upright habit and

comparatively young; it should live for another 150 years. To the east is a dense fast-growing holm oak. This 50-year-old tree alone would fill an average garden. In the northern tip is a liquid amber maple with leaves which give a sweet exotic fragrance when bruised.

Already surprised by the variety we had been shown, we crossed to the southern section where the largest tree, not in great condition, is another holm oak. Half of this giant has split and died, but new shoots from the base and thick strengthening buttresses which have developed on the trunk enable it to continue living. Here we were shown an Artist's Fungus, a bracket fungus so hard it can be used as a drawing medium for scratched pictures. We thought the oak old, but just to the south stands a deciduous conifer, a *Metasequoia*, not itself ancient, but a species originating from the time of the dinosaurs. It is an unusually beautiful tree, with a reddish trunk and feathery compound leaves which turn yellow in the autumn. Finally, a pretty 1988 'In Memoriam' tulip tree, a weeping ash and a tall weeping blue atlas cedar provide further contrast of shape, leaf and colour.

Pittville Circus next, to another mini-arboretum. To the east of the centre path is a recent planting of a ring of five upright oaks which should grow to 25 metres high. Close by, near the road, is a mature hornbeam. Nearer the centre a young black mulberry (labelled *Morus nigra*), a dark purple Norway maple, double flowering cherries and a Judas tree, the pink flowers of which cover the tree before the leaves emerge in May. Near the All Saints Road exit is an old male yew (no berries), an Indian horse chestnut and the slightly larger red horse chestnut.



Two examples of their more common European relative, the common horse chestnut, can also be found suffering from the 'leaf miner pest' which causes the leaves to brown early, but they carried a plentiful conker crop. On the western side of the path, as a red sunset ended the daylight, a pale green weeping willow and a richly coloured copper beech ended the tour."

Current projects

'Not so much a play area, more a way of life for a whole generation'

From the pen of our chairman, Judie Hodsdon: The new play area soon to be built on the east side of Pittville Park will be ready for opening in early summer. With the thrill of climbing towers, zip rides and water features in the offing, children aged from three to 14 are set to benefit from both sensory and active play for the next 25 years thanks to up-to-the-minute design and robust construction. Built at a cost of over £450,000, the park's new play area is set to feature as a top Cheltenham attraction bringing families and generations together at the heart of the Pittville Estate... visit our News page for the video www.friendsofpittville.org.

FOP has started to raise some of the money, alongside the borough council, to ensure all equipment can

be installed at once, rather than having to phase it, which will save money and time. We need your help with this endeavour, so please contribute at www.justgiving.com/fo-pittville or send a donation to Fiona Clarke, Hon Secretary, 3 Burston House, Pittville Circus, Cheltenham GL52 2PU.

Remember, there is a play area in the west side of the park near the Leisure Centre to use while the east side development is taking place. Together, the two play areas and newly reconstructed aviaries and small animal centre will bring exciting, healthy exercise and development to children of all ages and abilities."

'She's our litter picker ambassadeur extraordinaire'

It's nearly three years since Sally Goymer first picked up her Friends of Pittville 'black bin bag' and litter-picking stick, donned her fluorescent yellow tabard and headed across the Evesham Road to take on what was once considered the 'Wild West' frontier of Pittville Park. Twice a month on Thursday mornings you'll find Sally tackling some of the most persistent littering in the park. It takes time and dedication to spot and collect the rubbish discarded there by locals and visitors alike.

"Male youths seem to me to be the worst offenders," said Sally when we caught up with her on the last FOP Volunteers Thursday before Christmas. "They discard anything from empty cans to food wrappers, bicycles and firework launchers. If I'm in luck I can find mobile phones – one once rang from inside my collecting bag and the owner recognised the ring tone. On one occasion I found an engraved hip flask in the lake and a watch in the grass."



Sally, featured here as one of the many volunteers delivering services to the park-going community, came across the volunteering opportunity when she bumped into FOP Hon. Secretary at a Cheltenham Horticultural Society flower and craft show in the Pump Room.

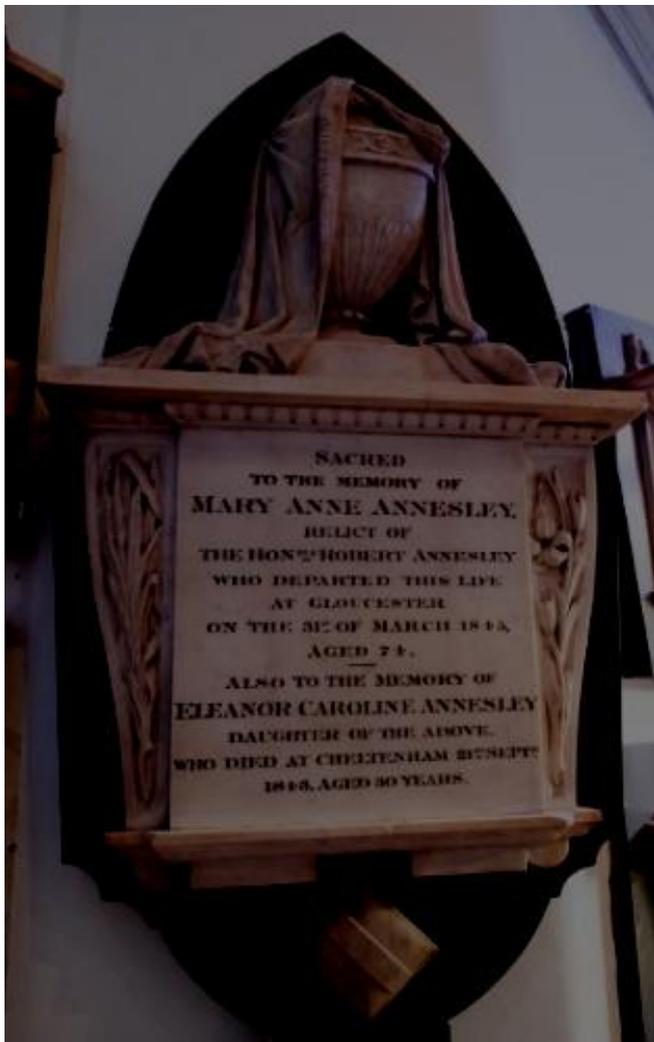
"When it comes to litter picking, I'm a bit of a loner," Sally told us. "I get a great sense of achievement when I'm finished and see a spotless park, as nature intended. I hope everyone notices the difference that the FOP volunteers make."

Pittville History Works: 5,000 people and counting ...

John Simpson shares the latest developments:“Pittville History Works is a small history research group within Friends of Pittville. We started with a single objective: to assemble information about the people who lived in Pittville in the 19th century, using national censuses and Cheltenham street directories. We then began to publish that information on our website and to write and commission short articles about Pittville people and life in Pittville in the past. So far we have added the names and details of about 5,000 people who lived in Pittville from 1830-1903 to the database; we are currently working on Clarence and Wellington Squares.

We've added the Pittville sections of the Cheltenham Old Town Survey (1855-7) to the website, www.pittvillehistory.org.uk, with links to the map from database searches. So you can see on a map, for example, where all the clergy were living in Pittville in 1871.

We are also expanding in other areas. Steve Blake is researching Pittville houses built after 1860, which were not included in his original booklet on Pittville; Sue Dodson is investigating Wellington door-knockers; James Hodsdon has written a brief life of the Pittville architect John Forbes (later a convicted fraudster); and Hilary Simpson is opening up what could become a large project: where were Pittville residents buried?



Judy Langhorn organised a visit to Trinity Church recently where we examined the beautiful marble memorials which line the walls and the remarkable stone coffins in the crypt. We are grateful to the vicar and his colleagues for facilitating this intriguing tour. If this sounds like fun to you – the history, the database, the research – and you'd like to know more, then get in touch at info@pittvillehistory.org.uk.

A successful 2015

From Community Ranger, Janice Peacey

“Over the past twelve months the FOP working parties have achieved some great results, in particular the painting of the West Approach Drive gates. We hope in early 2016 to complete the East Approach Drive entrance too. I am looking forward to the Evesham Road bank on the west side this winter/spring with the 10,000 snowdrops and 300 primroses providing a splash of colour.

By the end of January 2016 Pittville's first Green Flag and Green Heritage Award application will have been submitted, and judging will take place between March and June 2016. The park is looking great at the moment. If you wish to share any of your photographs of the park with others we have Cheltenham Parks Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/cheltenhamparks/>

2016 promises to be a great year with the new play area and hopefully a couple of awards to add icing to the cake."

Website update

We plan to launch our new website at the end of February 2016. Those of you on e-mail will receive a message to this effect which will include the URL. There are two important changes for us as a group. The new URL will end in .uk which means that the site will be kept for posterity by the British Library. And it will now be possible for us to add content directly, so our news and events pages will be easier to keep up to date.

We invited three web designers to submit a proposal to design and build the new site. The web team (Judie Hodsdon, Hilary Simpson and Fiona Clarke) selected Daniel Espley. Dan has been running the current website for three years.

Cheltenham Tree Group planting



A silver birch, earmarked for Pittville Park. This is one of thirty trees planted recently near the Leisure Centre and play area which are already making an impact. Thank you to the borough council and Cheltenham Tree Group for these welcome additions to the park.

Will you be there?

Friends of Pittville 'Drop-Ins' at the Sudeley Arms, Prestbury Road ... a social occasion

Numbers hover around eight people per Drop-In with a core group of about twelve who meet between 11.00 and 12.30 on the last Wednesday of each month (27 January, 24 February, 30 March and 27 April 2016). Come along to find out more about what we are up to, meet other members, and give us your ideas

and comments.

“Who built Pittville?” Thursday 18 February 2016 at Main Hall, Pittville School, Albert Road at 19.30 ... a great speaker

This talk, organised with the Holst Birthplace Museum, by renowned Pittville historian Teven Blake, will look at the people who actually built the houses. Ticket prices and other details are in the enclosed flier. If it has fallen out, contact Hon Secretary Fiona Clarke on 01242 227 720, from whom tickets are also available.

Cheltenham Horticultural Society Spring Show, Sunday 3 April 2016, at Pittville Pump Room, 12.00-16.00 ... wonderful plants on show

We hope to have a stand where you can find out more about our current projects and activities, including volunteering opportunities. Entry is £2 per adult and free for children.

Friends of Pittville Plant Sale, Saturday 21 May 2016

Put this date in your diary now; more details in the April newsletter.

Neighbourhood Coordination Group

The next meeting of the Pittville NCG is on Wednesday 24 February 2016 at 19.00 at Pittville School. Martin Surl, the county's Police and Crime Commissioner will be present. <https://www.gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk/>

If you'd like to be on the mailing list to receive further information about the NCG in Pittville, e-mail the coordinator Dennis Parsons at dennisp99@hotmail.com

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Images by Fiona Clarke, James Hodsdon, Terry Langhorn, and Amanda Slayton-Joslin.