



PITTVILLE PUMP ROOM ACTION GROUP

The Visitor Experience at Pittville Pump Room

Second annual report by the Pump Room Action Group

October 2019



Image: Wikimedia Commons

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The Visitor Experience at Pittville Pump Room – second annual report

Executive Summary

- During August and September 2018, the Pump Room Action Group carried out its first monitoring exercise to gather information about the visitor experience at Pittville Pump Room. A full report was published in November 2018.
- The exercise was repeated over a similar period in 2019, and this report presents the results of this second exercise.
- There have been some improvements in the visitor experience since last year. However a number of significant problems remain, and the visitor experience continues to fall short of the values set out in The Cheltenham Trust's own Customer Charter.
- The presence of a volunteer guide results in a more positive experience for visitors, but the proportion of visits in our sample when a guide was available has dropped to 37%, compared to 58% in 2018.
- We would draw the attention of The Cheltenham Trust in particular to the ongoing difficulty in finding out about opening hours; to the general air of neglect and poor housekeeping; to the lack of a warm welcome for visitors; to the absence of any information about the building and its heritage; and to the fact that volunteer guides do not appear to be available in sufficient numbers.
- Accordingly, the Pump Room Action Group once more asks The Cheltenham Trust to ensure that its Customer Charter is fully implemented at Pittville Pump Room as a matter of urgency.

Chris Archibald

Fiona Clarke

David Collins

Hilary Simpson

October 2019

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.



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 five 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 the expansion of the private hire function, primarily as a result of the Marriage Act 1994, which allowed marriages to be carried out in “approved premises”. A short summary of the Pump Room’s 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.
- 1.4. During August and September 2018, the Pump Room Action Group carried out the first monitoring exercise to gather information about the visitor experience at

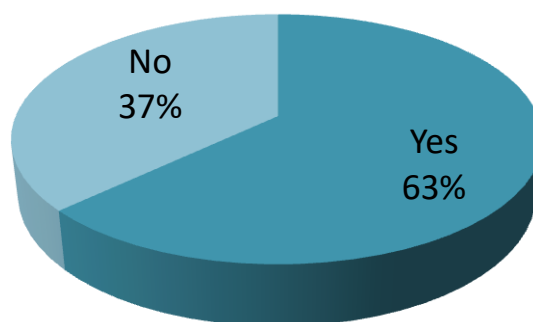
¹ The others are (a) All Saints Church, (b) Cheltenham Minster, (c) the Montpellier Rotunda (now a branch of The Ivy restaurant chain, having previously been a bank) and (d) Thirlestaine House (now part of Cheltenham College).

Pittville Pump Room. Over 30 random “mystery shopping” visits were carried out and the results were published in November 2018.

- 1.5. This exercise was repeated in July - September 2019, with 30 visits carried out. Although there have been some small improvements, our overall conclusion is that visitors to the Pump Room continue to be poorly served.
- 1.6. It is still very difficult to find out 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.
- 1.7. 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 explore this historic building. The recruitment by The Cheltenham Trust of volunteer guides has improved the experience of those visitors who are lucky enough to visit when a guide is on duty. However this was the case in only 37% of the survey visits, a marked decrease on 2018 when the figure was 58%.
- 1.8. 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 still falls far short of meeting the principles enshrined in this document.

2. Contacting the Pump Room

Was the Pump Room open when you visited?



- 2.1. Last year’s survey found the Pump Room open to the public on 61% of the possible opening days (i.e. not including Mondays and Tuesdays, when it is always closed). In this year’s survey, the proportion of days when the building was open to the public was broadly similar, at 63%. Based on these figures there is therefore a one in three

chance that a casual visitor will find the building closed, even if they are aware of the recurring closures on Mondays and Tuesdays.

- 2.2. However it continues to be extremely difficult for visitors to find out whether or not the building is open on a specific day. During 2019 the Cheltenham Trust launched a new website for the Pump Room (www.pittvillepumproom.org.uk). This website includes a page showing the days on which the building is open to visitors, generally listed for a week or two ahead.
- 2.3. However at the time of the 2019 survey, this new website consistently failed to appear on Google searches. ²
- 2.4. It is one thing to have no information; arguably it is even worse to have incorrect information. A Google search for “*Pittville Pump Room opening times*” gives a completely misleading result which states (incorrectly) that the Pump Room is open daily from 10.00 am to 5.30 pm with the exception of Sunday (see next page).
- 2.5. Moreover, the phone number that appears on this Google search (01242 521621) is a “dead” number which tells the caller “the number you have dialled has not been recognised”.

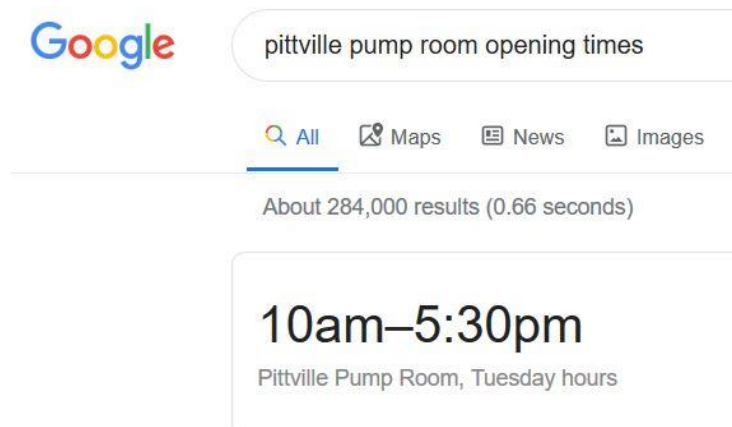
“I found the telephone numbers on the website out of date and went through to the council offices but there was still no response from the site itself.” (TripAdvisor, local visitor, September 2019)

² The top ten “hits” on Google for “Pittville Pump Room” as at September 2019 were as follows:

1. www.cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk/visit-us/pittville-pump-room/
2. www.cheltenhamtownhall.org.uk/
3. www.visitcheltenham.com/things-to-do/pittville-pump-room-p133013
4. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pittville_Pump_Room
5. www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g186284-d218214-Reviews-Pittville_Pump_Room-Cheltenham_Cotswolds_England.html
6. www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/visit-and-booking-information/our-venues/pittville-pump-room-oval-room-2/
7. www.explore Gloucestershire.co.uk/page1016.asp
8. www.friendsofpittville.org.uk/about-pittville/pittville-pump-room/
9. www.hitched.co.uk/wedding-venues/pittville-pump-room_918.htm
10. www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-news/anger-famous-cheltenham-attractions-doors-1225028

Results of a Google search for “Pittville Pump Room opening hours”

(search conducted on 15 October 2019 at 12 noon)



The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the text 'pittville pump room opening times'. Below the search bar are links for 'All', 'Maps', 'News', and 'Images'. The search results indicate 'About 284,000 results (0.66 seconds)'. A prominent result shows the opening hours '10am–5:30pm' for the 'Pittville Pump Room, Tuesday hours'.

Pittville Pump Room

[Website](#) [Directions](#) [Save](#)

4.4 ★★★★★ 199 Google reviews

Wedding venue in Cheltenham, England

The Pittville Pump Room was the last and largest of the spa buildings to be built in Cheltenham. The benefits of Cheltenham's mineral waters had been recognised since 1716, but not until after the arrival of Henry Skillicorne in 1738 did serious exploitation of their potential as an attraction begin. [Wikipedia](#)

Address: E Approach Dr, Cheltenham GL52 3JE

Opened: 1830

Hours:

Tuesday	10am–5:30pm
Wednesday	10am–5:30pm
Thursday	10am–5:30pm
Friday	10am–5:30pm
Saturday	9:30am–5pm
Sunday	Closed
Monday	10am–5:30pm

[Suggest an edit](#)

Phone: 01242 521621

3. Arriving at the Pump Room

- 3.1. There is still no signage to indicate what the building is, apart from the lettering over the east entrance which is not easily visible.
- 3.2. There are entrances to the building on three sides – west, south and east. However there is nothing to indicate that the main visitor entrance is on the east side, and our monitors this year again encountered a number of visitors who were unsure about the way in.
- 3.3. The Cheltenham Trust has now produced “Open” and “Closed” signs on A-boards, but these are only placed at the east entrance and are not visible to visitors approaching from the west, or via the park from the south.



4. The Welcome for Visitors to the Pump Room

- 4.1. Sadly, it is still the case that visitors to the Pump Room are not treated as customers. The lack of a warm welcome (or indeed any sort of welcome) was noted by many of our monitors, who were greeted by a member of staff or a volunteer on less than half of all visits.

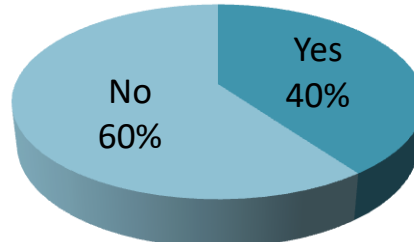
“The whole place has a desultory air about it.”
(Monitoring report, 21 August 2019)

“I felt not wanted.” (Monitoring report, 1 September 2019)

“Visit lasted about 90 seconds – I felt like an intruder.” (Monitoring report, 30 August 2019)

“The member of staff sat in the ticket office and did not welcome anyone.” (Monitoring report, 28 August 2019)

Were you greeted by a member of staff or a volunteer on arrival?



“I arrived at 10.30. There were no lights on and no ‘Open’ sign. Someone’s breakfast was on the counter.” (Monitoring report, 30 August 2019)

“The man at the desk just nodded to me. He was eating his lunch. On my way out he didn’t even look up.” (Monitoring report, 1 September 2019)

4.2. On entering the building there is no indication for the visitor of where to go and no information is provided, unless the visit coincides with the presence of one of the volunteer guides.

“There was nobody there to talk to and nothing to see, apart from people cleaning the main room.”
(TripAdvisor, visitor from France, August 2019)

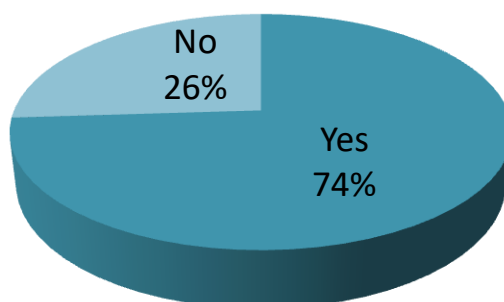
4.3. Ironically, there is a stand which is well-stocked with leaflets about other local attractions, but there is nothing about the Pump Room itself.

“There was absolutely nothing about the Pump Room in any form, anywhere.” (Monitoring report, 6 September 2019)

4.4. To plug the information gap, Friends of Pittville have supplied free copies of Steven Blake’s booklet *Pittville Pump Room: an Historical Guide to Cheltenham’s Spa*.³ This year there was an improvement in the number of visits when this booklet was available (74% compared to 58% in 2018). However this publication is a detailed history of the building and is not a substitute for a proper visitor leaflet to guide visitors around the Pump Room and explain its key points.

³ 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.

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. However there are no signs inside the building directing visitors to the pump, which is easily missed if there is no-one to point it out.

“If I didn’t know where to look I would not have found the spa. There were no signs to locate it and there were tables and chairs and ‘stuff’ in the way.” (Monitoring report, 30 August 2019)

“The spa was encircled by tables. No visible signs to guide anyone to the whereabouts of the spa.” (Monitoring report, 6 September 2019)

“Fountain blocked on all sides by furniture. Nothing to say it was available to sample the water.” (Monitoring report, 7 September 2019)

5.2. This year there were an increased number of comments about the general state of untidiness around the pump. Monitors noted that access to the pump was blocked off by furniture, and on several occasions dirty glasses were mixed up with clean glasses.

6. The Volunteer Guides

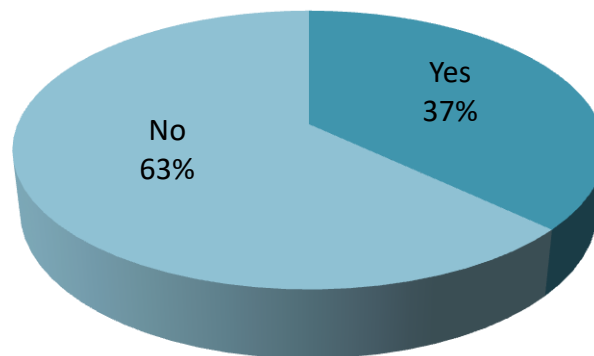
6.1. Several cohorts of volunteer guides have been recruited and trained by The Cheltenham Trust during 2018/19 and there is no doubt that their presence enhances the experience of those visitors who are fortunate enough to encounter them.

“The guide was very knowledgeable about the building. She talked about the spa water and I tasted some.”
(Monitoring report, 5 September 2019)

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.

6.3. This year there was a significant decline of 21% in the number of “mystery shopping” visits when a volunteer guide was on duty – 37% in 2019 compared to 58% in 2018.

Was a volunteer guide on duty when you visited?



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. The Pump Room Action Group therefore urges The Cheltenham Trust once again to take immediate action to ensure that the principles enshrined in its Customer Charter are implemented at Pittville Pump Room.

“The building is oriented towards events and does not recognise the casual tourist/visitor.” (Monitoring report, 6 September 2019)

Results of the 2019 Monitoring Exercise

The following pages show the results of 30 visits made to the Pump Room by Friends of Pittville “mystery shoppers” between 31 July and 7 September 2019.

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

1. Is the Pump Room supposed to be open to the public today?
2. Was the Pump Room open to the public?
3. If no, was there a sign or notice telling you why?
4. 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?
5. Any other comments/observations

Visit no	1	2	3	4	5
Day	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	31 July 2019	01 August 2019	02 August 2019	03 August 2019	04 August 2019
Time of arrival	11:25	12:15	14:00	11:00	15:10
Was the Pump Room supposed to be open?	No. Website said "Closed for renovation"	No. Website said "Closed for renovation"	No. Website said "Closed for renovation"	No. Website said "Closed for an event"	Yes
Was the Pump Room open?	No	No	Yes Member of staff said the room was being prepared for events tomorrow so she thought she "might as well open".	No	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	Standard "Closed" sign	Standard "Closed" sign	n/a	Standard "Closed" sign	n/a
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	n/a	n/a	After a while	n/a	Yes
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	n/a	n/a	No	n/a	Yes (Catherine)
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	n/a	n/a	No	n/a	Yes
Was the FOP donation box available?	n/a	n/a	No	n/a	Yes
Was the water available for drinking?	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Visitor numbers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Estimated 70-85 (jazz concert in progress outside)

Visit no	6	7	8	9	10
Day	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	07 August 2019	08 August 2019	09 August 2019	10 August 2019	11 August 2019
Time of arrival	10:30	10:45	11:45	14:25	12:40
Was the Pump Room supposed to be open?	Yes	No. Website said "Closed for an event"	Yes	No. Website said "Closed for an event"	Yes
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	No	No	Yes	No - but a member of staff who was clearing away after a wedding let me in.	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	No. Knocked on door and was told that a member of staff hadn't turned up for work.	No but there was a Registration Office notice advising that a ceremony was taking place.	n/a	Standard "Closed" sign	n/a
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	See above	n/a	Yes	n/a	Cursory acknowledgement
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	No
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
Was the FOP donation box available?	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
Was the water available for drinking?	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes but hard to find
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Observations on visitor numbers	n/a	n/a	n/a	Met two lots of people who were disappointed that the building wasn't open.	10 other visitors while I was there

Visit no	11	12	13	14	15
Day	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	14 August 2019	15 August 2019	16 August 2019	17 August 2019	18 August 2019
Time of arrival	12:15	11:35	14:00	15:15	00 January 1900
Was the Pump Room supposed to be open?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No. Website said "Closed for an event"
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	CHS Summer Show
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	By volunteer	No. Staff were setting up, but they spoke to other visitors.	Yes	A member of staff was talking to other visitors.	n/a
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	Yes	No	No	No. The member of staff who was talking to visitors made several factual errors while I was there. He was also "selling" the Pump Room and other TCT buildings as "venues".	n/a
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	No	Yes	Yes	On the ledge	n/a
Was the FOP donation box available?	No. Volunteer was taking donations for TCT.	Yes	Yes	On the ledge	n/a
Was the water available for drinking?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes but new and used glasses were mixed up.	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	n/a	There were 10 visitors during the ten minutes I was in the building.	n/a	Seven more visitors arrived as I left.	n/a

Visit no	16	17	18	19	20
Day	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Date	21 August 2019	22 August 2019	23 August 2019	24 August 2019	25 August 2019
Time of arrival	10:30	11:30	12:00	15:15	
Was the Pump Room supposed to be open?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No. Website said "Closed for an event"
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Standard "Closed" sign
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	Greeted by volunteer	Yes	No	No	n/a
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	Yes	No	Yes	No	n/a
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	Yes	Yes	Yes	On ledge	n/a
Was the FOP donation box available?	Yes	Yes	Yes	On ledge	n/a
Was the water available for drinking?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Dirty and clean glasses all mixed up	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	n/a	n/a	n/a	4 other visitors there during my visit	n/a

Visit no	21	22	23	24	25
Day	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Friday	Saturday
Date	28 August 2019	29 August 2019	30 August 2019	30 August 2019	31 August 2019
Time of arrival	12:25	11:50	10:30	15:00	15:00
Was the Pump Room supposed to be open?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No. Website said "Closed for an event"
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	Yes	No	Yes	No	No A large wedding was taking place.
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	n/a	Standard "Closed" sign	n/a	No	Standard "Closed" sign
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	No. A member of staff was in the ticket office but did not welcome anyone.	n/a	No member of staff visible. Someone's breakfast had been left on the counter.	n/a	n/a
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	No. I showed some visitors how to get upstairs.	n/a	No	n/a	n/a
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	Yes	n/a	No	n/a	n/a
Was the FOP donation box available?	No	n/a	No	n/a	n/a
Was the water available for drinking?	Yes	n/a		n/a	n/a
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	Dirty and clean mixed up	n/a	Yes but not sure if they were clean or dirty	n/a	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	5 visitors plus children during my visit.	Several people looking through windows on south and east sides. No sign of any activity or event in the building.	n/a	n/a	n/a

Visit no	26	27	28	29	30
Day	Sunday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Date	1 September 2019	4 September 2019	5 September 2019	6 September 2019	7 September 2019
Time of arrival	12:30	10:45	14:10	11:15	11:50
Was the Pump Room supposed to be open?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Was the Pump Room open to the public?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice saying why?	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
If yes, were you greeted by a member of staff?	No. The staff member at the ticket office nodded to me. He was eating his lunch. On my way out he did not even look up.	By volunteer	No, the member of staff was showing other visitors around	No, the two members of staff appeared to be setting up for an event	Not with any enthusiasm
Was there a volunteer guide on duty?	No	Yes	Yes (Rosemary)	No	No
Were copies of the PPR booklet available?	No	Yes	Yes	No	Just one
Was the FOP donation box available?	No	Yes	No, the member of staff was showing other visitors around	No	No
Was the water available for drinking?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes but encircled by event tables	Yes but blocked on all sides by furniture
If yes, were small plastic glasses available?	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
If no, was there a sign or notice explaining why?	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Observations on visitor numbers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Monitoring the visitor experience at Pittville Pump Room,

July – September 2019

Additional notes and comments on visits

Wednesday 31 July, 11.25 am

The monitor reported: “Chandeliers lit, so potential visitors may have walked up thinking it was open. No explanation for closure.”

Friday 2 August, 2.00 pm

The website said that the Pump Room was closed, but when the monitor arrived, there was a large sign saying “Open”. A member of staff explained that the building was being prepared for two events on the following day, “so she thought she might as well open”.

Sunday 4 August, 3.10 pm

A “Bands in the Park” event was in progress, resulting in a large number of visitors - especially during the interval - but no special steps had been taken to acknowledge this. The monitor reported that the Pump Room looked “very neglected and untidy”, with “poor housekeeping”.

Wednesday 7 August, 10.30 am

The Pump Room should have been open, but there was no sign of activity when the monitor arrived at 10.30 am. The monitor knocked on the door and was told that a member of staff had failed to turn up for work.

Thursday 8 August, 10.45 am

The website said that the Pump Room would be closed for an event. When the monitor arrived there was an official notice from the Registration Service stating that a wedding would be taking place. The monitor commented: “It would take little effort to have a sign to tell visitors when it will next be open.”

Friday 9 August, 11.45 am

There was a volunteer guide on duty and the monitor (who had not visited the Pump Room before) had a tour and tasted the water. She remarked however on the lack of information about the building.

Saturday 10 August, 2.45 pm

The website said that the Pump Room would be closed, and there was a board indicating this outside the building. The monitor met two sets of visitors who were disappointed that the Pump Room wasn't open. Neither of them had checked the website.

Saturday 17 August, 3.15 pm

When the monitor arrived, a member of staff was talking to a visitor by the pump and the monitor noted that several factual errors were made. The area around the pump was messy, with new and used glasses mixed together, and the monitor also remarked that the reception area "looked awful".

Wednesday 21 August, 10.30 am

The monitor commented that "the whole place has a desultory air about it" and noted a number of housekeeping problems with "too much equipment, tables, chairs cluttering the place up." In particular, the area around the lift was very untidy, which the monitor felt was disrespectful to those with limited mobility who might need to use it to reach the upper floor.

Saturday 24 August, 3.15 pm

The monitor noted that clean and dirty glasses were mixed up together by the pump.

Wednesday 28 August, 12.25 pm

The monitor spoke to a family from Stroud who had been to the park before, but had never visited the Pump Room. Although a member of staff was on duty, it was left to the monitor to show the family where to taste the water (glasses at the pump were "in a jumble" as usual) and how to get upstairs.

Thursday 29 August, 11.50 am

The website stated that the Pump Room would be closed. There was a "Closed" board by the east door but nothing on the west side. The monitor saw several people looking through the windows on the south and east sides of the building.

Friday 30 August, 10.30 am

When the monitor arrived, someone's breakfast had been left on the counter of the ticket office. The monitor asked a member of staff "Are you open?" The member of staff looked at his watch and said "We are now, help yourself to look around."

The monitor reported "If I didn't know where to look I would not have found the spa. There were no signs to locate it, and there were tables and chairs and 'stuff' in the way." There were glasses near the pump amongst the clutter, but the monitor was unsure

whether or not they were supplied for taking the spa water and whether they were clean or dirty.

The monitor commented: “There was nothing to see or do. All the upstairs was locked, clutter downstairs. There was a man with a machine sweeping the hall floor, the office doors were left open and unattended. My visit lasted about 90 seconds and I felt like an intruder.”

The monitor returned later that day at 3.00 pm and found that the building was shut with no sign outside. Someone had clearly decided to close and leave early.

Sunday 1 September, 12.30 pm

The member of staff on duty was eating lunch when the monitor arrived, and just nodded. The monitor commented “On my way out he did not even look up. I felt not wanted.”

Wednesday 4 September, 10.45 am

The monitor noted that the area on the ground floor by the lift was very untidy and being used for storage.

Thursday 5 September, 2.10 pm

The monitor reported: “The guide was very knowledgeable about the building. She talked about the spa water and I sampled some.”

Friday 6 September, 11.15 am

The monitor commented: “There was absolutely nothing about the Pump Room in any form, anywhere. The spa and plastic cups were available, but the spa was encircled by tables and there were no visible signs to guide anyone to its whereabouts.” The monitor also felt that “the building is oriented towards events and does not recognise the casual tourist/visitor. The lack of historical information is appalling.” Finally, the “Open” sign was only put in place towards the end of the monitor’s visit.

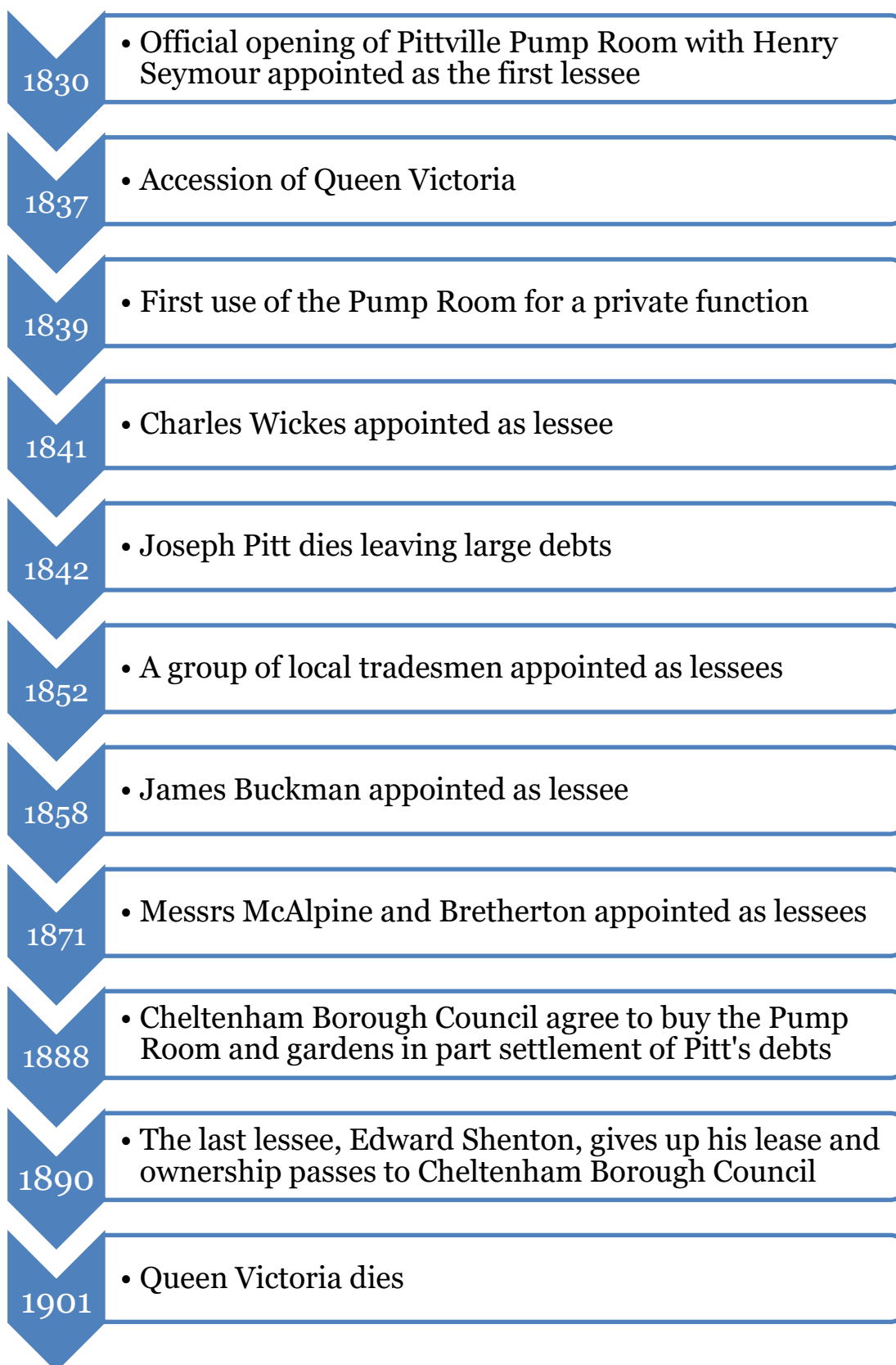
Saturday 7 September, 11.50 am

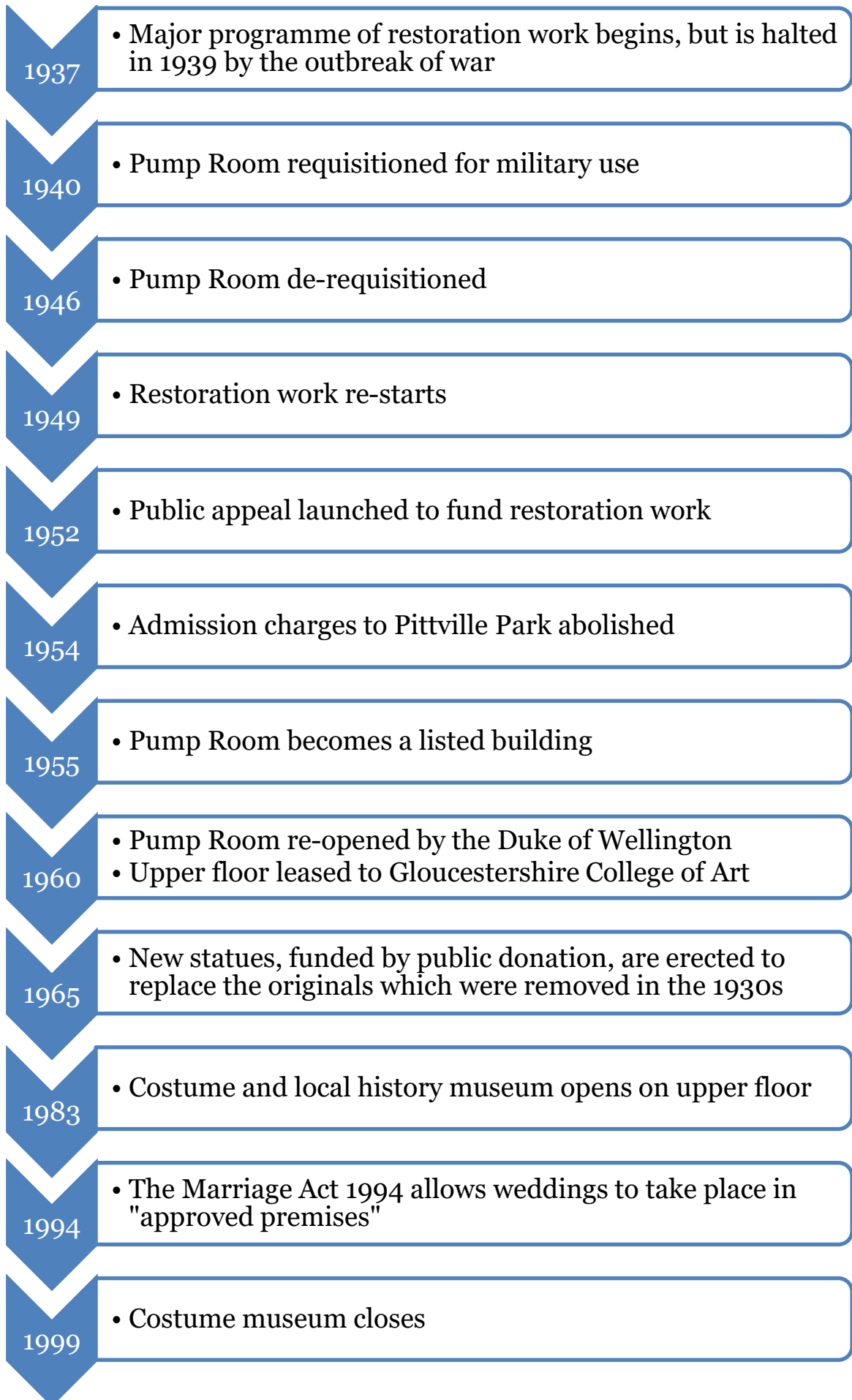
The monitor reported that the pump was blocked on all sides by furniture and there was nothing to indicate that the water was available to sample.

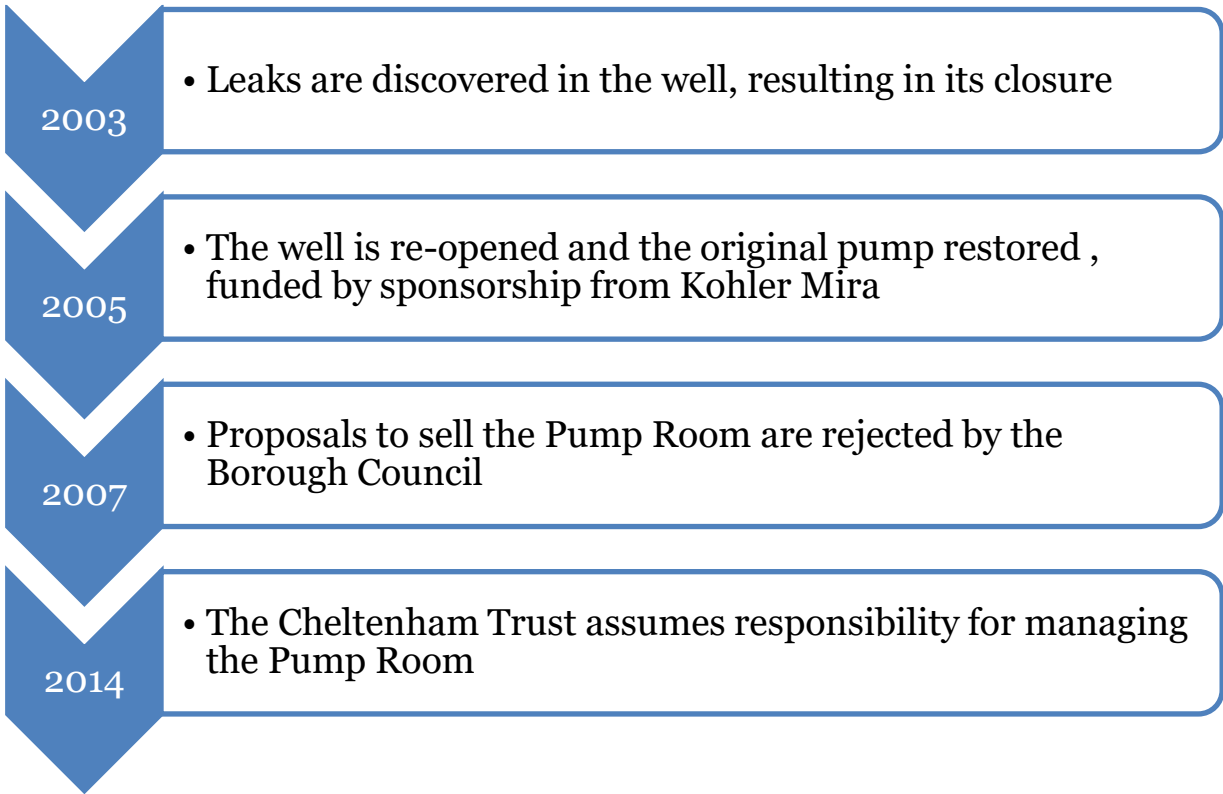
The Cheltenham Trust – Our Customer Charter

<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.

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.⁴ 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.

⁴ 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*

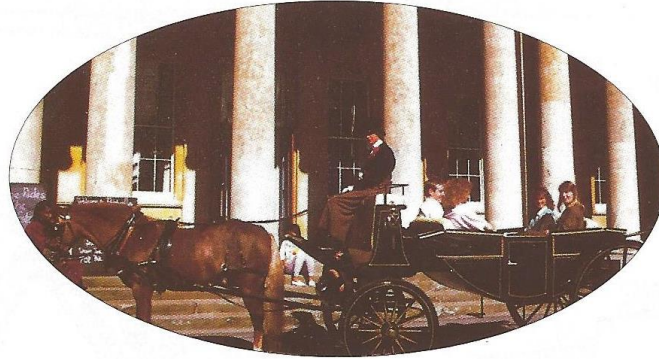
The introduction of “listing” for buildings of special architectural or historic interest eventually removed the threat of demolition and the Pump Room became a listed building in 1955.

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 enabled the Pump Room to 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**


Last Updated: Wednesday, 6 June 2007, 13:28 GMT 14:28 UK

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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.