



FRIENDS *of* PITTVILLE

December 2020

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.

Goodbye 2020

What a year it's been! Perhaps it's a relief that it's coming to an end and maybe, just maybe, we can now look forward to life gradually improving. So, let's welcome the new year and hope it brings a return to a time when we can all get a bit closer!

This issue contains a summary of the annual report from our Chair, Judie Hodsdon. She also provides an update on the development of Bed 38 next to the Evesham Road. Chris Archibald talks about the Green Space Volunteers and their changing tasks through the seasons. The fate of the cedar tree by Albermarle Gate has raised passions this year, and Chris reports the latest information.

The Pump Room has been an unexpected centre of activity this year, with a café running throughout both lockdown periods, sometimes with chairs and tables and sometimes not. It has been a great resource during these times. But how accessible will the Pump Room be when times return to normal? Fiona Clarke writes about the activities of Pittville Pump Room Revival.

The swans are a particular attraction for many. Regular visitors will have followed the various dramas that beset them and hoped that this year's cygnets would survive all the natural (and less natural) dangers they routinely face, and survive into adulthood. Sally Thomas tells their tale.



Many thanks to Krishan Patel for this autumn view of the lake.

You may know that the Friends of Pittville website includes a lot of downloadable learning resources that can be used by visitors to the park. We thought

we would draw attention to them by having a quiz in this issue. Maybe you know all the answers already. If you don't, the Learning Resources and the Explore Pittville sections will provide the answers! Or look for the answers on our Facebook page.

Sometimes we forget how fortunate we are to have free access to such a beautiful park. A new resident in Pittville tells us how he and his family feel to be living here.

Andy Hopkins

The FoP non-AGM 2020

FoP trustees decided not to hold an AGM this year, either real or online, and instead circulated the annual report and accounts to all our members individually, asking for comments and questions. Only two comments were received, both favourable, so we have concluded our members are content. The paperwork will be posted on the website as a record for the year 2019/20. At our follow-up meeting on 17 November, trustees also concluded that members support the election of Sally Thomas as a trustee from October 2020, and three trustees – Paul Benfield, Philippa Howell and Henry Williams were re-appointed for a second three-year term. Appointments were agreed for the three officer posts (unchanged from last year) and for the new deputy chairman post, and the names of other postholders were confirmed. All these names have been circulated to members and can also be found on the FoP website.

I would like to thank my fellow trustees, all our volunteers and our members for their continuing support during this difficult year. The downsides of not holding an AGM were that we missed being able to hold a social occasion for members and also the opportunity to hear John Simpson talking about his new book on the subject of the management of poverty in early 19th century Cheltenham. I hope there will be another occasion for the talk but, in the meantime, if you would like to know more, or to buy a copy of the book, contact John at johnsimpson@aol.com *Judie Hodsdon*

Bed 38 replanting

Bed 38 is the one on the corner of Wellington Road and Evesham Road which has been adopted by the Friends. Unfortunately, progress to prepare the neglected bed for replanting has been slow and interrupted by lockdowns (which have just given the weeds a chance to rampage!). We hope however that the planting of three new cherry trees



is just about to happen, to be followed soon with a collection of shrubs to provide interest throughout the year. The large yew tree, which has suffered some dieback, will be carefully pruned to remove the dead wood. The ivy growing thickly round its roots has been removed to help it recover. With any luck there will soon be a beautiful corner bed to welcome visitors to Pittville Park.

Judie Hodsdon

Pittville Pump Room – Cheltenham’s premier heritage destination?

It is a whole year since I wrote here about our campaign to bring new life to Pittville Pump Room. In that time, everything, and little, has changed. We are thrilled with the outdoor café and summer activities (and claim some credit, a café being high on our ‘wish list’). We continued our discussions with the Pump Room management team at The Cheltenham Trust, although meetings are on hold until the new year. We, ourselves, funded by many donations including from Friends of Pittville, produced a give-away ‘brief history’ leaflet which, sadly, cannot be given away just yet. However, if you scan the image in the next column with your smart phone, you should be able to read it there.

As for the future, we plan to increase our engagement with the borough council, the chamber of commerce and others, especially with the local elections coming up in May 2021. Our focus will be developing the story of Cheltenham as a spa town and Pittville’s role. More must be made of the architectural and historical features of the



Pump Room, including the historic pump. The mineral water must be promoted and the building available for community use.

We are encouraged by the visible support of the public through Instagram and Facebook, including the *Days Gone By in Cheltenham* group. Check out our website for reasons why Pittville Pump Room should be Cheltenham’s premier ‘heritage destination’. pumproomrevival.com

Fiona Clarke, for Pittville Pump Room Revival

What makes good paving?

Here’s the most recent incarnation of what the company concerned clearly considered an acceptable paving repair at a heritage site – in front of Pittville Gates.

This is the second time this repair work has been done, yet the setts are the wrong colour and they are rough cut rather than smooth so are the wrong shape. A couple of setts have also been added next



to the yellow access cover, breaking the whole pattern. Look how well the originals were done. Run your eye along the straight line of the silver setts, then compare the laid-by-eye darker setts. The colour of the pointing is different too. In any basic construction course, work like that would be rejected. Why is it so routinely accepted every time paving has to be broken up to access services in our town? Gloucestershire Highways agree that it is unacceptable and are on the case.

Andy Hopkins

From the Sticks to the Pitts



It's been a year now since we made the move from our farm into Pittville and we haven't regretted a second of it.

If I'm honest, the move was mainly because of our kids, although I have had family members here for the last three generations. We

loved the country life, but teenagers want fast internet and Deliveroo and we eventually caved. I'm so glad we did.

We hadn't lived in an urban environment since leaving Notting Hill Gate in 2003. The original idea was to move to the Cotswolds for six months while we did our place in London up. Seventeen years later and we're still here, so I guess we rather like it.

Pittville really is something special though. Having just written my new book about travelling around England, I can attest with confidence that there is genuinely nowhere more beautiful in the entire country. Our two Labradors, Fitzgerald and Truman, were used to free roaming and so insist that we take them out a lot. This has allowed us to explore the area and marvel at just how lucky we are to have so much around us. Pittville Park for our daily meanderings, a coffee at the Pump Room, lockdown cricket in our square.

What has really stood out, especially in these weird times, is the community spirit. We have had such wonderful moments of kindness and made new friends in a period when you'd imagine that everybody would be looking inward as opposed to welcoming strangers. So here's hoping for a better, happier 2021 and for us as a family getting to know more of the people and the area that we have so fallen in love with.

Dom Joly

The GSVs locked down again

Since our last newsletter in September the great support from our volunteers has continued. We have been catching up with many of the maintenance jobs we normally do and making progress on two projects for this year, the rockery and Bed 38. Unfortunately, our working party planned for November 5 was cancelled by the latest government restrictions, but we hope to get back to work in December. Sixty plants await planting on the rockery next to the upper lake and the weeds have not stopped growing.

We carry out several maintenance jobs at particular times of the year. One of the biggest is

pruning shrubs and for most of them the best time to prune is just after flowering. Another job is spreading bark on the informal paths on the west side. We normally do this in the autumn to prepare them for winter. With fewer working parties, some have not been done and we will work on those as soon as we can. Litter picking is needed all year round, particularly as the park is still very busy. I look forward so much to getting back to work and meeting all the volunteers in the park again.

Cedar of Lebanon update

The good news is that the Cedar of Lebanon adjacent to Albemarle Gate and the west side of Pittville Park is still standing – at the moment.

The campaign to save the tree is being led by The Next 200 Years group and supported by FoP. The group are employing a barrister, who specialises in cases involving the protection of trees, to write a legal opinion based on the evidence available. Thanks to Jane Farrar's photos below, we can see what we will lose if the tree is removed.



It is interesting to read in the 2020 Cheltenham Plan (para 7.5), 'the council is mindful of the need to protect views into and out of areas of acknowledged importance such as ... sites included on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens ...' The campaign goes on!

Chris Archibald

FoP membership

A gentle reminder that the annual membership renewal date was **1st October**. The renewal form can be found on the FoP web site Home page – click on 'become a member' at the bottom of the page, then the 'membership' or 'membership renewal' within the link.

If you haven't already done so, we do hope you decide to sign up for another year.

The December quiz

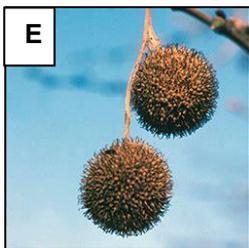
To start with, an easyish set of questions that we should all be able to answer. The information for the answers is in the Explore Pittville and Learning Resources sections of the FoP website. Or go to the FoP Facebook page for the complete set of answers.

The Pump Room

- 1 When did the Pump Room open?
- 2 Who manages the Pump Room now?
- 3 Which statue holds a snake?
- 4 When did the Council buy the Pump Room?

The park

- 5 Which stream runs through the park?
- 6 What was quarried below the present golf course?
- 7 Which club, founded in 1887, used to play on the west side?
- 8 When was the Boathouse built?
- 9 Who designed Pittville Gates?
- 10 Name the trees below trees in the park from their fruit, flower or leaf. All are found in the park.



The Pittville Park swans

Pittville Park is home to a magnificent pair of breeding swans, known locally as George and Zelda. Lockdown year has brought more visitors than ever to the Park, and the swans are a major attraction. This year the pair had seven cygnets, born at the end of April. Sadly, after a couple of weeks, two were discovered dead on a floating island by the Pump Room, trapped in the netting that forms the top of the island. Thankfully, five have survived, and were named by interested

parties as Maisie, Sassy, Cyril, Tonto and Ranger. Cygnets do leave to join other flocks: Maisie is now resident in Worcester, and Tonto and Sassy in Evesham. Cyril and Ranger currently remain with their parents, but they too will leave by the spring, to join another flock. By the age of three, young swans are ready to breed themselves.



So, 2020 has been a successful year for cygnets, and this is, in no small way, due to local people who look out for them, and the incredible work of the Vale Wildlife Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre. There are constant dangers to swans and cygnets. Vets often have to remove potentially fatal fishing line and hooks that have been swallowed. Foxes prey on cygnets and dogs can be a problem too. When young swans are learning to fly, they sometimes crash-land in nearby gardens and have to be rescued and returned to the lake. People can cause harm too, by feeding them inappropriately. They should be fed on the water where they can swallow, with no dogs nearby. To find out more, visit Facebook at *Pittville Swans & Friends*. For general information visit *swanlife.com*. To support the work of the Vale hospital, go to *valewildlife.org.uk*

Sally Thomas

Editor

Andy Hopkins

Photos

Jane Farrar, Andy Hopkins,
Jill Archibald, Dom Joly,
Krishan Patel, Judie Hodsdon

Contact FoP at

Telephone: 01242 245143

Email secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk
newsletter@friendsofpittville.org.uk
membership@friendsofpittville.org.uk
volunteer@friendsofpittville.org.uk

Website www.friendsofpittville.org.uk

Facebook Friends of Pittville

Registered charity number 1146790



