



FRIENDS *of* PITTVILLE

June 2021

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.

From the Chair

As I write this, the date for the lifting of most Covid restrictions is on the horizon but there is also the possibility that the spread of the new variant will disrupt the roadmap and we will be no further forward. However, the good news is that the Green Space working parties, with record turnouts, have been taking place since late April; significant improvements – the west rockery and Bed 38 planting – have been achieved, and numerous other regular maintenance jobs have got underway again. We have also been able to meet up again on the last Thursday of the month at the Pump Room café for coffee and a natter, though the weather was not the best for the first gathering in April. Meanwhile, Pittville History Works has kept going with its research almost unaffected. Looking ahead, we are planning a plant sale, probably for the first weekend in October (winter bedding and perennials), and a Quiz Night (all being well) for October too. There will be more details in due course. Let's hope for a good summer, Covid- and weather-wise, with our wonderful park supporting the wellbeing of so many people.

Spring visitors to Wyman's Brook



For the last three years at least, beautiful white birds have been haunting Wyman's Brook in the spring months. They are great white egrets, members of the heron family, usually slightly smaller than grey herons. Once a rarity, they have become increasingly common across the UK, and in fact from this year will no longer be classed as rare birds. There was a single visitor in 2019, three last year and one, and occasionally two, this year. It is lovely to see them in flight but difficult to capture in a photo as they don't stay long in one place!

Judie Hodsdon

Wear and tear in the park

A great many more people have used the park in the last year as a result of Covid restrictions and the weather has not always been kind – particularly this May. Several grassed areas have suffered badly; a particular example is the Pump Room lawn. Other areas have suffered from maintenance and delivery vehicles running off the paths. CBC's Green Space team have told FoP that they are logging the problems and looking at a range of solutions to help the grass recover, including aerating the ground, laying geogrids and reseeding. It is likely much of this work will be carried out in the autumn when the weather is likely to be more suitable.

Cheltenham has recently seen a great increase in the amount of graffiti around the town and Pittville Park has not escaped. A particularly bad area is the underpass below Evesham Road between the two sides of the park. The Green Space Volunteers painted it a few years ago and plan to repaint it again in the summer. If you see anyone daubing graffiti, please report it to the police or the council.

Wildflower areas

Last autumn CBC ploughed a number of 3.5 metre wide strips in the west side of the park, on the edges of the golf course, to extend the wildflower meadow. They sowed a native meadow seed mix that contained a mix of mainly perennial seeds



Yellow rattle

with some annuals together with yellow rattle. The yellow rattle is a pretty wild flower that attaches to grass roots and suppresses their growth, thus enabling the wild flowers to flourish. Please be patient as this seed mix and the fact that the council are not using weed killers on the grass means that it will take longer to establish than the more annual mix that has been planted in the past.

Chris Archibald

The rockery is planted!

There has been a rockery on the north side of the upper lake in Pittville Park since 1890. It was constructed to resemble the Alps, with vertical rocks and very few plants. In 1930, Mr Leuchars, the parks and gardens superintendent, remodelled the rockery with stone from the quarry on Leckhampton Hill in the style we see today. It was reported in the Gloucestershire Echo in 1933 that he planted it out with a considerable number of alpinines and other rockery plants to add floral interest in the park.



Adam Reynolds, the current parks manager, with the help of Green Space Volunteers from FoP, has been working for the last three years to restore the west end of the rockery to its former glory. In mid-May a large planting operation took place with plants purchased by CBC from a local supplier, Hoo House Nurseries, and some provided by volunteers from Friends of Pittville, under the supervision of landscape architect Linda Thomas.

The planting will develop over the years and it is hoped it will bring back interest and pleasure to the very many visitors to the park. *Chris Archibald*

Change of name

Has your house got a name? If not, what sort of name would you give it – The Grange, Haversham's, Fredella? House names are evocative; some remind people of where they grew up, others describe a characteristic architectural feature, and some are just quirky. Pittville History Works has been investigating the 400 house names in Pittville from the 1830s until the 1950s. This is the story of The House With Most Names.

St Anne's is a large house towards the western end of Pittville Circus Road. It is the focus of a celebrated ghost story, but that's for another day. Back in 1865 it was named Garden Reach because the owners had previously lived in the Garden Reach suburb of Calcutta. When they moved out the house was difficult to sell (probably because of



the chilling ghost story associated with it), so in 1879 it was rebranded under a neutral name, Pittville Hall. After a few years, the house changed hands again and was renamed Donore by the new occupant after his family's ancestral home in Donore in Ireland. After 1894 the house was empty again for several years, reappearing again as the neutral Pittville Hall (and fleetingly as Pittville Court) in the later 1890s. In 1897 it was renamed Inholmes when the new owner moved his Inholmes School there from Burgess Hill in Sussex. Then in 1912 it became St Anne's Nursery College; the college housed nursery nurses looking after 'deserving infants'. When that finally closed in 1935, the house retained the name and was known, as it is now, as St Anne's.

To read more about the origin of Pittville's house names, search for 'Pittville house names' on Google, or visit our website at <https://pittvillehistory.org.uk/>. *John Simpson*

Pollution incident



Some of you noticed on 15 March this year that there was a grey sheen on the newly dredged residuum which did not look very pleasant (see photo). This was due to a discharge from the surface water drain that enters Wyman's Brook a little way upstream of the

Albert Road bridge. It appears that a washing machine or similar has been incorrectly connected into the sewer. This has been reported to the Environment Agency, who have said they will look into the problem but with stretched resources are not hopeful of locating the source of the problem.

Chris Archibald

Dogs in the park

You may have noticed small signs appearing near the lawn in front of the Pump Room, instructing dog-owners to keep their dogs on leads. I spoke to Sam Robinson, the Neighbourhood Officer for Public Protection and Environmental Health, to clarify the areas of the park to which they apply.



He referred to CBC's Public Spaces Protection (Cheltenham) Order 2020, which deals with alcohol consumption and dog walking. More signs will be posted by the summer to make it clear where leads must be used. These areas are specified in the PSPO:

Dogs are not allowed in the children's play areas, skateboard park, tennis courts, lakes and water courses.

Dogs must be on leads between the Pump Room and the lake.

Dogs must be put on leads when directed by an 'authorised' person, to prevent nuisance to people, birds or other animals, on the golf course and Pittville Lawn.

Owners can be fined for not complying with the order, which also includes the requirement to pick up dog faeces immediately and a ban on walking more than four dogs.

Jocelyn Potter

The bandstand – a sad sight



The bandstand has been fenced off, for safety reasons, since last summer. It's a sad sight, especially if, like me, you regard bandstands in parks as traditional places for free public music. It seems there is some action now as CBC have invited tenders for the repair work, which it hopes will be carried out in the early summer months.

The bandstand is owned and managed by Cheltenham Borough Council and in principle, community groups can hire the bandstand from them, to put on an event. A potential problem, though, is that access to the electrical supply adjacent to the bandstand is controlled by the Cheltenham Trust, so in practice, no event is possible without the Trust's cooperation. This is problematic as community events are likely to clash with their own. Does this mean that the facility of the bandstand has effectively been lost to the public? We shall see this summer how many bands perform there, and whether it will be used for other community purposes.

You may know that there used to be another bandstand in the park, on the shore of the lake on the west side. Wouldn't it be good to have one there again, or at least to have a community performance area elsewhere in the park well away from the Pump Room?

Andy Hopkins



The long-gone bandstand on the west lake with Marl House in the background.

Heritage Open Days in September

Heritage Open Days this year will be taking place 10-19 September on the theme of *Edible England*. Friends of Pittville will be offering two walks through the park, led by Robert Hyatt-Williams, who will talk about the history of the park, its wildlife and trees. Pittville History Works and Pittville Pump Room Revival are also planning to hold events. The complete HOD brochure will be available in late July and the programme will also be on the Civic Society website here: <https://cheltcivicsoc.org/events/heritage-open-days/>

Have you renewed your membership?

A reminder to all those who have not renewed their membership to Friends of Pittville: we are a very small charity and unfortunately our membership numbers have been adversely affected by not having hard copy newsletters delivered along with a membership renewal form. Please renew!!! Contact me if you have any difficulty finding the renewal form download page on the FoP website.

Janina Kay, Membership Secretary

Policing Pittville

Gloucestershire Constabulary, working with CBC, are anxious that visitors to the park should act responsibly and continue to observe government guidelines on social distancing; fortunately, though, there have been few reports of anti-social behaviour, which have been a much greater problem in Montpellier Gardens.

To discuss improvements to security in the park more generally, three FoP trustees met Simon Bailey, the police Neighbourhood Watch Officer for Cheltenham. One discussion point was how existing by-laws might be used to enable the police to enforce issues such as overnight camping more effectively. The Public Spaces Protection Orders at present only deal with issues relating to dogs and the misuse of alcohol. (This information is currently not prominently displayed and could be included on the park notice boards.)

To address other, personal security concerns, the police architectural liaison officer considers how natural surveillance works within the park, ensuring access and visibility issues (like low-hanging tree branches and overgrown hedges) are addressed. In addition, the possibility of

coordinating Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the area into a Park Watch WhatsApp is being considered in conjunction with the CBC Green Spaces team.

Unlike most other crimes, motor vehicle and cycle theft has increased in Cheltenham over the last year, and a free police cycle marking event was held recently in Up Hatherley. There have also been complaints about Zwings e-scooters being used at speed and on pavements, some by children who are clearly not old enough to have a driving licence. Infringements should be reported to the police on 101; rental scooters have GPS tracking (privately owned scooters can only be used on private land), and a photograph in support of a complaint would be helpful.

Janina Kay

New cygnets



The lake is alive now with the young of wildfowl and other birds. Seven cygnets arrived in early May; there are grebe and moorhen chicks, lots of goslings and ducklings. With so many young dogs in the park these days, and perhaps so many new owners, it's worth underlining the importance of keeping dogs away from the lake and wildfowl in general.

Andy Hopkins

Editor

Andy Hopkins

Photos

Henry Williams
Tom Clarke
John Simpson
Adrian Allen

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



