



FRIENDS *of* PITTVILLE

June 2022

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.

Introduction

In this issue, Hugh Curran of the Successful Streets Group of Cheltenham Civic Society laments the appalling state of many of Cheltenham's streets and suggests ways to get involved in encouraging our local councils to take positive action. And we thank Mike Beamish for – again – restoring the paving in front of Pittville Gates.

Henry Williams and Philippa Howell report back on some successful and fun fundraising efforts over the last few months while Chris Archibald brings us up to date with the activities of the Green Space Volunteers.

Lucy and Kevin Barker describe their feelings about living in the area since moving here a year ago in *A Year in Pittville*.

I'd like to thank Janina Kay for all her help in putting together this issue. *Andy Hopkins*

Gold Cup Car Parking Fundraising

Every year, Friends of Pittville run the car park at Albemarle Gate during Gold Cup week. This is our main fundraising event and this year we raised over £6000 to contribute to projects in the park.

A lot of planning goes into setting up this event, starting in January when we have to obtain permission to use the car park. We then have to show how we intend to meet health and safety requirements. We



ask members to volunteer to cover time slots on each of the four days – from 6am until 7.30 in the evening, because even when all the cars are in, we monitor all day for security.

A week before the event, notices have to go up warning of the closure of the car park during race week. We have to get all our A boards and signs

repainted. Then on the race days, there are various jobs – taking the money, issuing tickets, showing people where to park etc. This year we had twenty-three helpers who did a total of 120 voluntary hours between them.

There's quite a lot of pleasant chat with the racegoers and sometimes a few dramas. People often come running back to their cars because they've forgotten their Festival tickets. Lots of people have dressed up for the day and come in really stunning outfits, especially on Ladies Day.

Some people want to have a picnic next to their car before they go to the course, and often arrive with tables, chairs, food and champagne. After the races, when they return having won or lost and had their fill of food and drink, we have some banter – often about how much money they have lost and how much FoP have made! It's normally a great atmosphere. Every evening all the signs are removed and the area is tidied up and closed.



Racegoers appreciate what we do and like the fact that we are a voluntary group raising funds for the park. We were offered £30 this year for a broly when the rain started. Maybe next year we should set up an umbrella stand!

We are very grateful to all our helpers, many of whom love the job because the atmosphere is so good. If you would like to get involved next year, please go onto our website and use the contact form for volunteers.

Henry Williams

Cheltenham Civic Society

Successful Streets Group (SSG) is a subset of Cheltenham Civic Society and is focused exclusively on street-level issues. And there are plenty of issues. The state of our roads, pavements, squares, verges and public spaces, the graffiti and grot, the bins, litter, tarmac infills, inappropriate street art and street furniture, clutter, lack of maintenance, general mess and ugly boarded-up empty shops let Cheltenham down badly.



We are tired of hearing the same old excuses – ‘no money’, ‘no resources’, ‘it’s the other Council’s fault’. In late 2019, SSG created a report on the state of the town centre entitled *Improving Cheltenham’s High Street*. Since then, not one of the items highlighted has been addressed. Frustratingly, many of the problems could be resolved at very little cost, which is why we published our Ten Point Manifesto ahead of the recent May elections. It can be viewed on our website at www.cheltcivicsoc.org. We asked all the Borough and County Councillors and candidates to sign up to the manifesto, which simply requested that we get basic things done properly. This campaign has created real momentum and is ongoing.

We believe the core reasons for the sorry state of the town centre are:

- 1 The lack of a Town Centre Vision – a masterplan. We need to stop the willy-nilly piecemeal approach with quick fixes that lack any coherence. The Civic Society may well create such a document because neither Council seems remotely close to doing so.
- 2 The lack of clear, enforceable policies and guidelines on quality and standards for each and every public realm item, from tarmac infills to shop fronts to the quality of street furniture.
- 3 The poor relationship between the Borough and County Councils.

4 Waste on silly projects, waste through poor maintenance and waste by simply not doing a quality job in the first place.

5 Lack of enforcement. If only the town’s zeal for issuing parking tickets were applied to all the other regulations that are not enforced.

So how can you help?

Why not start by visiting www.cheltcivicsoc.org. There you can read some items such as: ‘Improving Cheltenham’s High Street report 2020’ (in Links/Downloads); the Ten Point Manifesto (on the News page); and of course, the back issues of *Our Town* and our interim newsletter *Making a Difference*, (in the Newsletters section).



Tell us about any mess of any kind that you come across – simply email ssg@cheltcivicsoc.org. There is no need to write much, especially if you attach a photo or two. We maintain a constant dialogue both with Council officials and with the Councillors. Channelling the issues in this way is undoubtedly more effective than individual representations.

Consider joining the Civic Society to bolster our numbers and to add weight to our various campaigns, not just on the public realm, but on planning, conservation and similar issues. We are also looking for volunteers to help with practical efforts. There is a full events calendar throughout the year. Email: membership@cheltcivicsoc.org

*Hugh Curran, Chair, Successful Streets Group
Cheltenham Civic Society*

Pittville Gates – Pavement Restoration

Several members contacted us late last year to highlight the state of the pavement at the gates after Severn Trent had repaired a water valve beneath the paving slabs. The reinstatement work was of extremely poor quality, and is an example of what has been happening all over Cheltenham (see Hugh Curran's article above), where paving has been taken up for underground works then



replaced – usually very badly – with black tarmac. The Severn Trent reinstatement manager was helpful and agreed to refund the costs of us putting it right. We were lucky enough to be able to contact Mike Beamish, who carried out the original work, to reinstate

the paving properly – again! We also sourced matching stone setts and the work was carried out in early April.

Since then, some of the gate pillars have been sprayed with some really quite disgusting graffiti.

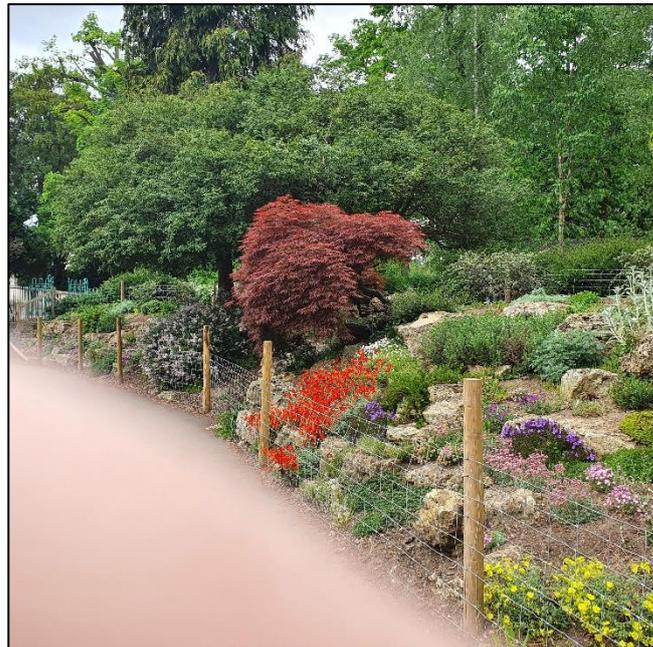
Although it has been washed off, we now need to discuss with CBC what further specialist treatment the stone may require.

Sally Thomas

Green Space Volunteers

The west end of the rockery by the upper lake has now been fully planted and is providing a great show of colour. The east end of the rockery has been cleared this year, the volunteers doing a lot of the work at each working party.

A contractor has recently been employed by CBC to do the heavier work in grinding out the old tree stumps. The contractor will lift the rocks out of the lake and place them back into the rockery. Eventually, the two sections will be restored, recreating the original 1930s design.



Volunteers have also been looking after and improving Bed 38 (near the junction of Evesham Road and Wellington Road).

Webbs Garden Centre recently made a donation to Friends of Pittville of their surplus plants for use in the park and this was much appreciated. The volunteers have been able to use them on the west end of the rockery and in Bed 38 where they will reinforce the planting. We have purchased more plants this spring and are continuing to increase the range of plants and interest in Bed 38.

Other news is that we have been awarded a grant by Gloucestershire County Council to design and erect two interpretation boards describing habitats in the west side of the park. One will describe the water – the birds that depend on it, the fish and insects that live in it, and how it is looked after. The second will concentrate on the wild flower area – the birds that find food, the insects that live in it, the wild flowers themselves, and how the area is managed. If anyone would like to help with these boards, please email me for more information at the address below.

The volunteers provided great support again this year with an average of twenty-five people at each working party. It is a very big and well-used park and if you want to get out in the fresh air and help, you will be most welcome – just get in touch with us at volunteer@friendsofpittville.org.uk.

Chris Archibald

Plant Sale

On Saturday 7 May Friends of Pittville's annual Plant Sale raised £618.50 to go towards improvements to the park. This was one of our most successful plant sales.



Our thanks go to all who supplied plants. Our partner nurseries – Hoo House Nursery, Ireley Hardy Plant Nursery and Malcolm Allison Plants – again supplied a lovely range. Cheltenham Horticultural Society and Friends of Pittville members also contributed a wide variety of plants.

Fortunately it was a dry and sunny day and lots of visitors came to buy and talk about plants and to buy raffle tickets. We are grateful for all the help from our volunteers, to people who donated wonderful raffle prizes and to the Scouts for the use of their hut and tables. *Philippa Howell*

A Year in Pittville

We collected the keys to our lovely Pittville town house on 25 March 2021. We had finally arrived in Clarence Square, which we had stumbled on by chance and fallen in love with three years earlier.

Pittville had not been our first choice as we had foolishly not realised just how central this part of Cheltenham is. We can walk to The Brewery Quarter, the Everyman and John Lewis all in less than fifteen minutes, which for us is very exciting! There is also a host of independent shops and cafes to visit. We can walk everywhere from Pittville and it feels wonderful not to need to drive every day.

We were initially quite worried about having neighbours – very close neighbours! We were worried about parking; we were worried about noise. We need not have worried. Our neighbours are charming and there is a very real sense of community, which we have not really experienced before. That community has indeed been very effective in improving Pittville Park and Clarence Square. Parking is not perfect but we can usually find a space not far from our front door and our tiny courtyard garden is quieter than our previous one-acre plot and a lot less work!

We feel privileged to wake up every morning and walk to Pittville Park, Wellington Square or Pittville Lawn and admire this gorgeous part of our lovely English town. We can't quite believe we actually live here and that at some point we won't have to get in our car and drive home. The architecture of Pittville is an inspiration and we thank Joseph Pitt for his ambition, imagination and jolly good taste, if not for his financial acumen!

Lucy and Kevin Barker

Membership Secretary Notes

I'm delighted to report that after a dip in 2020/21, membership numbers have increased, and for the first time have topped 400. Many thanks to everyone who has renewed, and a very warm welcome to all our new members.

I've sent out some reminders to the very few members who had not paid their annual subscription, due annually on 1st October. The trustees have decided that from October 2022, membership will lapse in respect of subscriptions not received 6 months from the renewal date, i.e. by 31 March the following year.

You will all be aware that since March 2020, six out of the eight issues of the newsletter have been sent out as an email via the Mail Chimp platform. With effect from September 2022, the newsletter will only be distributed as hard copy each September. Please contact me if you do not have access to the internet, and would like to nominate someone to receive the newsletter on your behalf.

Janina Kay

Editor

Andy Hopkins

Photos

Sally Thomas
Andy Hopkins
Cheltenham Civic Society
Henry Williams
Philippa Howell

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



