



# FRIENDS *of* PITTVILLE

September 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.

## Autumn Events

### FoP Annual General Meeting

It's that time of year when we are looking at the planning of the 2022 AGM. Roger Widdecombe and the team at **St Paul's Church** have been kind enough to offer us the opportunity to hold it there. It is well-equipped for such an event, and has plenty of onsite parking.

Our speaker this year is Jonathon Porritt, the well-known environmentalist and writer, who has been a resident of Cheltenham for many years. His talk is on the hot topic of climate change and is titled

*From Local to Global: The Climate Emergency Changes Everything.*

The AGM will be held in the early evening of **Tuesday 25 October**. We are also hoping to arrange a drop-in beforehand for new members to meet the trustees, and find out a bit more about us. Full details will be sent out nearer the time.



### Fundraising talk



Journalist and author Oggy Boytchev is a fairly new resident of Pittville, and a member of FoP. He has generously offered to give a fundraising talk on his career as a journalist and independent producer with more than twenty years' experience with the BBC. He was producer for the BBC World Affairs Editor John Simpson, has worked

in more than forty countries in the world's main war zones, and has covered the majority of international conflicts since the late 1980s.

The talk will be held in partnership with Holst Victorian House, at Pittville School in November. Further details to follow.

*Sally Thomas*

## The missing steps in front of the Pump Room

Many of you will know that Friends of Pittville are involved in 'The Masterplan Project' in conjunction with Cheltenham Borough Council. Part of this project involves the reinstatement of the steps in front of the Pump Room in the position shown in the photograph below, taken pre-1900.

The good news is that The Masterplan Steps Project can go ahead! We have received the offer of a grant from the Enovert Community Trust (which uses landfill tax money) for £40,000 which, with other grants, including from the Cheltenham Borough Council Jubilee Fund, plus some accumulated FoP fundraising money, will cover the cost of reinstating the set of steps.

The steps, at the top of the grassed area between the two remaining plinths, were first installed at the same time the Pump Room was built in the 1820s. They helped set off the view between the Pump Room and the lake. However, they disappeared in around 1900 when the bandstand was temporarily placed on top of them.

The project will reinstate the four Forest of Dean sandstone steps, renovate the plinths and landscape the surroundings. FoP are in partnership with CBC on this project and it is the Council that will undertake the tendering process and appoint the contractor. It is hoped the new steps will be in place next spring. *Judie Hodsdon*



## Pittville Estate and the Gold Cup Meeting

In 2021, access by fans to the Festival race meeting was severely restricted because of Covid. In March 2022, record crowds of 280,627 racegoers attended over the four-day period. By the end of the event, almost four hundred complaints of antisocial behaviour (ASB) in Pittville Park, Evesham Road, New Barn Lane and tributary roads had been made to the Jockey Club. This massive increase in ASB has a serious impact on both residents and the Estate itself.

In April this year, Chris Nelson, the Police Complaints Commissioner, issued a press release which referred to this issue and particularly to complaints of men relieving themselves in public whilst on their way to and from the event. He said that this had been a regular problem, and was not a simple issue to solve. Alcohol is a major contributory factor, but the police are also concerned at the level of drug taking and dealing.

The Jockey Club have acknowledged that pedestrian access to the course and traffic congestion on surrounding roads are their biggest concern. The massive increase in complaints relates not only to ASB but also to the lack of portable toilets, too few rubbish bins, lack of stewards in evidence and limited police presence. They see these elements of the event as a shared responsibility between the racecourse and other authorities and agencies, and that finding a strategy to reduce the levels of concern is of the utmost urgency. The Jockey Club are conducting worldwide research as to how other venues with similar challenges deal with the situation, and intend to build their findings into a plan for 2023. Remedying the existing problems before the next Festival is one of their key goals.

A reported £100,000,000 revenue accrues to local businesses and to the racecourse over the four days of the Festival. It is not unreasonable to expect a more significant acknowledgement and that consideration be given to the fact that local residents and their environs bear the brunt of the footfall of many thousands which occurs for the most part on roads leading due north from the town centre.

Alex Chalk and both our local councillors, Stephan Fifield and Julian Tooke, attended a meeting at the racecourse last month which was chaired by Chris Nelson. The local situation in Pittville was one of the items on the agenda, but there won't be any firm proposals put forward until later in the year.

This is intended as a brief synopsis of events to date, as it is important that all Pittville residents



are aware of how matters progress, and we will endeavour to keep everyone updated.

Friends of Pittville is not a campaigning group. The aims as set down in our constitution are those of the preservation, improvement and conservation of the Pittville Estate. But the management of the vast numbers of people who move through Pittville on the way to and from the racecourse during the Festival is a legitimate concern for all of us who are affected by it.

*Janina Kay*

## Membership

The renewal date for membership, 1 October, seems to have come around very quickly this year. Many of our members pay by standing order, which much reduces the admin involved for both the Treasurer and the Membership Secretary. If you haven't set up a SO, it would be very helpful if you could do so. Bank transfers are also welcome! If you are renewing by this means, please use your membership numbers as a reference if possible.

Joint membership stands at £10.00 per annum, Single membership is £7.50 – this remains unchanged since 2016.

We have listened to what members have said over the last year, and hope that, fairly soon, we'll be able to offer renewals and new membership electronically via the Friends of Pittville website. Please bear with us – the new system should be in place within the next few weeks.

Many thanks to everyone who has continued to support Friends of Pittville over the last year. Please get in touch with me, Janina Kay, with any queries: [membership@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendsofpittville.org.uk)



## Heritage Open Days

Friends of Pittville are managing three events to support Heritage Open Days. For the first, on Friday 9 and 16 September, meet in front of Pittville Pump Room at 10am. Robert Hyatt-Williams will lead a walk through Pittville Park, focusing on its history and trees. 'The walk starts at the Pump Room, where I shall give a short history of the project and the events surrounding it. However, the walk is mainly about the trees so we shall stop at some of the more interesting ones. Some are not indigenous and I will talk about their origins. At East Lake bridge, we pause to talk about Wymans Brook, which flows through the park and adds so much to it aesthetically.'



The second event involves visiting an underground chamber in front of Pittville Gates, from the late 1890s, which served as the transformer sub-station for the electrification of houses in the area. It also served the lamps on the Gates and possibly as a booster station for the electrified tram system. Climb down a (steep!) ladder to see inside the chamber!

When you have done that, walk up Prestbury Road to drop in at the paint shop next to Pittville Kitchens and Living Spaces, where members of the Pittville History Works group will be available with laptops to show you how to access some of the wealth of material on their website. Learn how to find out about the history of the Pittville Estate: house histories, residents and their occupations, schools, the origins of house names, and more. Both these events will take place on Saturday 10 September, between 11.00 and 13.00. There is no need to book.

*Sandy Marshall*

## Steve Mason – our new Community Parks Officer

Since joining the Green Space Team at the end of June, I have been struck by the passion everyone has for the parks and green spaces around Cheltenham. This is true of those more office based, to the Rangers – Wayne and Lucy – and to the volunteers who give their time freely. It is fair to say that without the Friends groups, and the vital work they carry out, the parks would not be the amazing places they are. I have attended



at least one working party with most of the Friends groups already, and hope to get to know you all over the coming months. I come from a surveying and project management background, but have always had a passion for the outdoors. For the last ten years I have been a member of the grounds maintenance team at my local archery club near Shurdington (a hint to what I do in my spare time), carrying out many of the same duties as the volunteers in Pittville. We have implemented new natural planting schemes to improve habitats and biodiversity, and I will look to use the skills from both these areas to make a positive impact on the parks across Cheltenham. This will, of course, include ensuring we achieve Green Flag and Heritage status every year, as well as implementing projects to enhance the wonderful facilities we already have.

Unfortunately, I won't be able to attend every working party, but if you see me around and about in the parks please stop and say hi. *Steve Mason*

## Welcome to Caroline Macklin, our new media manager

Caroline is a financial advisor who runs her own business within Pittville, and has lived and worked here for nearly twenty years. She is very familiar with using social media, and follows Gloucestershire people and places.



She always enjoys reading local news, and engages online with local people such as politicians, councillors, crime commissioners and those who have an effect on our lives as residents of the Pittville area. Her hobbies are hiking, golfing and music – she enjoys attending festivals.

Our aim is for Friends of Pittville to be informative about matters of potential interest in the local area, so if you would like a FoP-associated post on any of our social media pages, please contact Caroline on [social@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:social@friendsofpittville.org.uk)

## Green Space Volunteers

The Green Space Volunteers continue to work hard in the park. We have had an average of twenty-five volunteers at each working party. We are pleased to have had help recently from Carol and Ross from St Vincent's and St George's as well as several young and fit volunteers from the local firm Spirax-Sarco.

Although we have great support, it is a very large park with a lot to do, and we always welcome anyone who would like to join us – send an email to [volunteer@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@friendsofpittville.org.uk)

## Planting notes

### Samaritan roses



The rose bed in the southeast corner of the Pump Room lawn was planted by the Samaritans to celebrate forty

years in Cheltenham and there is a plaque giving details. The bed is planted with a rose called the Samaritan Rose which was developed by Harkness Roses; a Hybrid Tea Rose blending peach, apricot and pink shades of petals with an orange centre and with a strong fragrance. The roses are looking particularly good this year and there are more at the gates with a plaque to celebrate the Samaritans having a presence in Cheltenham for fifty years.

### Jubilee wildflowers

Cheltenham Borough Council planted wildflower seeds in the south-east corner of the Pump Room



lawn earlier this year - a mix of flowers similar to those planted for the Queen's Jubilee in the Tower of London moat. They have done very well and provided a great show of colour this summer as part of Jubilee celebrations.

## The loss of the cygnets

It was very sad that George and Maisy, the two swans on the lower lake, lost their cygnets not long after they were born. It will be the first time in many years that we will not have the pleasure of walking round the park and seeing them develop before they fly off to their new lives.

It is not known how the cygnets were taken but there are several suspects. If anyone has any specific information on how this happened, please let us know.

*Chris Archibald*

## Vacancies for Secretary and a website guru

Like many small charities, Friends of Pittville's success is dependent on volunteers. We are a dynamic organisation trying to make an impact on our community. Would you consider joining us in one of these key roles? We would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact us at: [secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk)

### SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

We are looking for a new Secretary to join the FoP team. The Secretary's role involves the administration of the Board and its activities, working closely with the Chair, Treasurer and Membership Secretary to ensure opportunities are not missed and harmony is maintained. We are all volunteers and have other interests and responsibilities. We are looking for a self-starter with good admin skills who enjoys working with people. The job should take 8-10 hours a month but at peak times could be a little more. The Secretary will be a member of the board of trustees.

### WEBSITE GURU

We are looking for a passionate website guru to guide, plan, and help write and edit FoP website content. The role involves the publishing of new content in a creative way, liaising with FoP members about new content, and overseeing layout (images, graphics, videos etc). Our guru should be a skilled writer and researcher with an eye for detail and an understanding of the special requirements of web writing. The job should take 8-10 hours a month but at peak times could be more. The goal is to produce creative web content to appeal to our wide audience. *Sally Thomas*

### Editor

Andy Hopkins

### Photos

Sally Thomas

Andy Hopkins

Chris Archibald

Fiona Clarke

Steve Mason

Caroline Macklin

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