



FRIENDS *of* PITTVILLE



December 2023

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.

Our new chair

David Kay is a relatively new resident of Cheltenham, having moved in April 2023 from the Isle of Man, where he and his wife Caroline have lived for the past 28 years.

However, they are no strangers to the area, as regular visitors to Cheltenham over the last 12 years, so when it was time to return to the UK for family reasons, Cheltenham was the number one choice as a place for their new home, the wonderful Pittville area being their favoured location. Both David and Caroline are Chartered Architects by profession, and have run their own practice together in the IoM for 20 years, and this has also been moved to Cheltenham with them. Previously David had experience of voluntary roles in a residents' association for the area where they lived



in Douglas, IoM, which also looked after five and a half acres of gardens in an urban setting, so when the need arose for a new chair for Friends of Pittville, David put himself forward to be of service to the community that he has recently

joined, and looks forward to the future in the area which has very quickly become home.

David Kay

New trustees

Some of you attended our AGM on 23 October, at St Paul's Church. There was a good turnout and those who attended were able to hear Chris Nelson, Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire, and two officers from the neighbourhood policing team, Sergeant Meredith

Gosden and Constable Simon Silsby, answer questions relating to their activities, particularly in relation to the park. The minutes of the AGM are available in full on our website.



A number of changes in officers and trustees took place at the meeting. Sandy Marshall stepped down as a trustee and as our much-valued Secretary. The meeting also showed its appreciation for Sally Thomas's term as Chair, although she will remain on the committee.

Three new trustees were appointed at the AGM: John Holloway, Sacha K and David Kay.

As outgoing Chair, Sally then announced the names of FoP officers going forward, two of whom are new to their positions:

Chair: David Kay

Treasurer: Sarah de Buriatte

Secretary: Sacha K

Membership Secretary: Janina Kay

John Holloway will be available as vice chair when needed. He and the remaining trustees – Chris Archibald, Henry Williams, Philippa Howell and Andy Hopkins – have individual responsibilities for updating technology; organising the Green Space Volunteers; planning and manning specific fundraising events, and the management and production of the newsletter.

Joc Potter

The newly renovated steps in front of the Pump Room

The renovated steps in front of Pittville Pump Room were officially opened on 20 November by the Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, Edward Gillespie. Judie Hodsdon, an ex-trustee and ex-Chair of Friends of Pittville, who has been involved in managing the project from the start, gave an opening address, which is summarised here.

The foundation stone of Pittville Pump Room was laid about 198 years ago. The original plan for its surroundings included, across the forecourt, a flight of steps between two plinths at the head of a wide and very grand promenade

leading down to the lake below. This flight of steps appeared on prints and early photographs. About 70 years later, the new owners of the park, the borough council, decided that what Pittville needed was a bandstand and it would be best sited directly in front of the Pump Room. So the steps were removed and foundations laid for the bandstand. Only two years later, it was realised it had not been such a good idea, so early in 1900 the bandstand was moved to its current position.



Two ex-Chairs, Judie Hodsdon and Sally Thomas, with incoming Chair David Kay and Lord-Lieutenant Edward Gillespie



Cutting the ribbon for the formal opening

The flight of steps was not restored and the remaining foundations were grassed over. But fortunately, the two plinths survived as a sad reminder of what had been there before.

Friends of Pittville was set up to help maintain the park but also to refurbish and restore the original historic structures. Hence, in partnership with the

borough council, we undertook the restoration of Pittville Gates and more recently the reinstatement of the magnificent rockeries on the edge of the lake. The one heritage structure that had actually disappeared was the steps, except for the two plinths marking where they had been. An excavation in 2017 established that the foundations provided good evidence for the number and size of the original steps and it was decided to include their restoration in the master plan for improvements in this part of the park.

Plans were drawn up by landscape architect Toby Goodman, planning and listed building consent were obtained and fundraising began. All this took much longer than anticipated as the pandemic intervened. But we were cheered by obtaining a very generous grant from the Enovert Community Trust; with money from FoP funds, mostly raised from running the race week car parking, and from CBC, we were able to proceed. Another piece of good fortune was that despite inflation in building costs, the contract with Snape Contracting Services was still affordable. So now we can all see why these steps are an essential element in the Pump Room surroundings. Let's hope they last longer than 70 years this time, as a feature to be enjoyed by generations of park users to come.

Judie Hodsdon

A few additional notes about the renovated steps

Some people have asked why the steps are a different stone from the Pump Room. The material used for constructing the steps is Forest Pennant sandstone from the Forest of Dean to match that used for the existing plinths and the steps of the main Pump Room. It was also used in the rebuilding of Pittville Gates.

The total cost of the steps project was around £59,000. The very generous Enovert grant was for £40,000, Friends of Pittville contributed around £16,000 through fundraising, and Cheltenham Borough Council provided a grant of £3,000 from the Jubilee Fund.



Angela Haymonds, Trust Manager at Enovert Community Trust, also attended the opening

The Cheltenham Samaritans: sixty years of listening

I was quite taken aback at the scale of the activities of Cheltenham Samaritans when I met the branch director, Andy Goddard – a volunteer like everyone there – as the centre marks its 60th year of being part of the Cheltenham community. Close to 150 volunteers are involved locally, in many different capacities, and over 20,000 people were supported from the Cheltenham centre last year! While these are impressive statistics, the truth is that the need for the Samaritans' services is always greater than it can provide. And that's why they are using the occasion of their 60th anniversary to call for more volunteers.

From their centre in Back Albert Place, just off Pittville Circus, the Cheltenham and District branch supports people by telephone, online chat and email, as well as providing a drop-in service from 10am to 8pm daily. They provide an active listening service and confidential emotional support. 'Last year there wasn't a single second that Samaritans weren't on the phone to someone in need.'



Samaritans listening volunteers come from all backgrounds. The national website puts it this way: *You won't need to have previous experience or qualifications, but you will need to be non-judgemental and accepting of others. It doesn't necessarily matter if you've gone through difficult times yourself, what matters is that you want to help people – all kinds of people, from all walks of life.*

For someone interested in becoming a volunteer, what kind of commitment would there be?

'Our listening volunteers are well trained and willingly offer their time to support those facing a tough time. We hope that volunteers will be able to cover one three-hour shift per week, usually in the day but occasionally at night. First of all there's an

interview, followed by the initial training. This takes place over seven weeks, with a weekly three-hour session. After that, new volunteers are assigned a mentor and there is always someone available to help with dealing with difficult issues that might arise. There are always at least two people on shift at once, and at least three in the evenings.

'There is no doubt that becoming a Samaritan volunteer is a commitment, but it is one which is extremely rewarding. Volunteers will save lives. As one volunteer put it, "It is a humbling experience to be able to support people with their most personal concerns."

So if you're interested in finding out more about volunteering, the next information sessions are on Saturday 2 December at 10.30am, Saturday 20 January at 10.30am, and Wednesday 28 February at 7pm.

You can find out more about volunteering at www.samaritans.org/cheltenham or email them at cheltenham.branchrecruitment@samaritans.org.

Andy Hopkins

Our new volunteer ranger

Hi all,

My name is Georgie, and I am the new apprentice ranger with Cheltenham green space team. I will be working closely with Lucy and Wayne, so you will probably see



me around at some point if you haven't already.

A little bit about me (and some ready-made conversation starters!): I love dogs, reading and spending time outdoors. I'm currently at the start of a two-year college course, at the end of which I will (hopefully) qualify as a countryside ranger. I come from Stroud so I'm still learning my way around Cheltenham, but I can already see that the standard of your parks and green spaces is exceptional.

I'm really excited to start working with everyone, and hope to learn a lot from the wealth of knowledge that you all have.

Looking forward to meeting you all.

Georgie Bearder, Apprentice Ranger, Green Space Development, Cheltenham Borough Council

A night perspective



It was a pleasure to meet Mark Reid and his dog Toffee, two characters who are favourites with the guests at No. 38 The Park, a boutique hotel at the junction of Evesham and Wellington Roads. Mark has been the night manager there for the last eight years, with Toffee alongside him on almost every shift.

‘I’m from Bangor, County Down and had a dog grooming business there. Toffee was one of two abandoned Shih Tzu puppies that I rescued from the River Shannon. Toffee thrived – he’s thirteen now – and came with me to Cheltenham when, having sold my business, I moved to Pittville Lawn. I take him to work and he’s a well-loved mascot of the team. When I took the night manager role, No. 38 was part of the Lucky Onion Group. In early 2022, it was taken over by Youngs Brewery, who have sustained the business despite the challenges post-pandemic.

‘We have a diverse clientele of paying guests and non-residents. We welcome wedding guests (and are licensed to hold ceremonies), attendees at special functions, holidaymakers (we’re dog-friendly, obviously) and, of course, racegoers. We also host small conferences in our meeting room, and our dining room and courtyard see groups celebrating birthdays, wakes, christenings and baby-showers.

‘While guests sleep, Toffee and I monitor the nocturnal activities in and around the hotel through CCTV cameras. Pittville residents may be surprised by how much goes on at night. We see a lot of wildlife: foxes, owls, and badgers frequent the Long Garden opposite and neighbouring squares, spending hours foraging. We also see numerous police patrols each night. Residents should know they can sleep soundly under their watchful eye.’

Just then, as if to prove that observation, an officer appeared at the reception with Toffee, asking, ‘Doesn’t this dog belong in the hotel?’

No. 38 would love even more Pittville residents to enjoy the facilities. Why not make your dinner or breakfast reservation soon?

www.no38thepark.com

John Holloway

Annual FoP quiz

The annual quiz for members and their guests will once again be held at the Feathered Fish in Winchcombe St, on Monday 19 Feb 2024 at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. If you would like to attend you can either make up your own team of up to six or we will match you with other members. Details of how to book will be advised later. Donations of raffle prizes are always welcome. Please email Philippa Howell, at philippahowell@yahoo.co.uk

Allotments

The Windsor Street Allotment Gardens are now able to take names for the waiting list. There are twelve small plots next to the Windsor Street Care Home. Annual charges are just £10, with an initial registration of £20. If you are interested in one of the allotments, please email the Secretary, Philippa Howell, at philippahowell@yahoo.co.uk.

Philippa Howell



Editor

Andy Hopkins

Photos

David Kay
Georgie Bearder
John Holloway
Chris Archibald
Andy Hopkins
Andy Goddard
Henry Williams

Contact FoP at

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

Website www.friendsofpittville.org.uk
Social Media social@friendsofpittville.org.uk
Facebook Friends of Pittville

Registered charity number 1146790



