



# FRIENDS *of* PITTVILLE

March 2024

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.

## Message from the chair

Hello everyone, it is now March, and Christmas and New Year festivities are a distant memory and I am sure we are all starting to look forward to the spring. For those of us who regularly use Pittville Park, those harbingers of spring, crocuses and daffodils, made the most of an unseasonably warm February to brighten our days with a lovely early show of colour. Friends of Pittville (FoP) Green Space Volunteers have been working tirelessly, even through the depths of the winter period, with the essential tidying of leaves, weeding, pruning of vegetation, planting of new shrubs and all the other routine but essential works to keep the park looking lovely, and ready to burst into bloom in the coming months.

The importance of the work of the Green Space Volunteers cannot be underestimated, and their work has many benefits, not only to the physical environment and those who use the park, but also to the mental and physical health and wellbeing of the volunteers themselves. As an organisation, FoP has many achievements, the refurbishment of the main gates on Pittville Lawn being one, for which the organisation gained the Queens Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award given to UK volunteer groups and the equivalent of the MBE for the voluntary sector. The end of 2023 saw the latest major project completed, the reinstatement of the previously lost steps in front of the Pump Room. Both projects, like the many other similar smaller projects FoP has carried out, came about and were achieved through the dedication of our volunteers, who gave their time, effort and skills freely for the benefit of the wider community.

In order to continue its works in the future, the organisation needs two key elements. The first is to maintain an active membership prepared to give their time and use their skills for the benefit of the community. The second is the raising of sufficient funds to enable the works carried out to be paid for. FoP has sought and gained grant funding towards some of the major projects but funds many smaller projects from the monies it raises each year. If you are reading this newsletter but are not a member of Friends of Pittville and would like to become involved, please visit our website where you will find a link to join us. [www.friendsofpittville.org.uk](http://www.friendsofpittville.org.uk)

The organisation raises funds in a variety of ways: through membership subscriptions, through member and public social events throughout the year (such as the quiz night), through direct donations and through being named as a beneficiary charity by players of the Cheltenham Lottery. Could I encourage any existing members, potential members or even any members of the general public who would like to support our work but cannot currently commit the time, to consider naming the organisation as their beneficiary charity if they play the Cheltenham Lottery. [www.cheltenhamlottery.co.uk](http://www.cheltenhamlottery.co.uk)

Alternatively, one-off donations are always welcome, and the charity can also claim gift aid if the appropriate details of the donor are provided. And finally, for those who have a special connection to Pittville Park and wish to see its preservation for the benefit of future generations, the organisation would be forever grateful for being included in any potential legacy.

Thank you in anticipation of any support that you may be able to provide, in whatever form that may take, and I hope that you can all take the time to enjoy the wonderful facility that is Pittville Park this year.

*David Kay*

## News from the park

### Sensory Garden

FoP have obtained a grant of £1000 from the Cheltenham Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Fund 2023, and are contributing a further £1500 from their own funds, to complete phase 1 of a project to turn the six brick planters between the main children's play area and the aviaries into a sensory garden. The work of clearing out and then



replanting the brick planters will be carried out by FoP Green Space Volunteers. The aim of the project is to make the planters informative and fun for children visiting the play area. There are six beds of varying size, which are enough for the five senses of sight, smell, touch, sound and taste. There is a wide range of plants and objects available to illustrate the various senses.

A small group of volunteers, together with the Cheltenham BC Community Parks Officer, are consulting with local groups such as the Beavers, Dunalley School, Aim Up and Insight on what they would like to see in the sensory garden and how they might use it. Their contributions will inform the design. The group are seeking to enlist the help of a local artist to help add labels, sculpture, painting – things that will be attractive to visiting families. It may be that, depending on the ideas the artist comes up with, these will be the subject of a phase 2 that will need extra funding.

## Native Tree Habitat Board

Many of you will have seen the Wildflower and Lake Habitat boards in the west side of Pittville Park, which inform visitors about some of the biodiversity there. The same team of volunteers are working on a third board with the theme of ‘native trees’ that describes the benefits that this habitat provides. Native trees are those that were established after the last ice age but before the English Channel was formed, approximately 10,000 years ago. These trees tend to be more beneficial to animals, insects and fungi than other tree species and therefore ten native trees have been selected for a tree walk; these are illustrated on the board. There will also be photographs of some of the animals, insects and fungi that live in this habitat and can be seen in the park – although this will depend on the time of year and day.

There will be notes on the importance of these trees as they grow and live in the park and about the habitat benefits they provide as they decay. In a public park tree management is also important to ensure they are healthy and safe. There will be a QR code provided on the board, as there is on the other two habitat boards, so that a copy can be downloaded onto a smartphone or tablet. The board is paid for by a grant from the Gloucestershire County Council Build Back Better fund awarded to FoP and should be in place by the end of August.

## Green Space Volunteers’ Tool Shed

FoP has applied to the Gold Cup 100 Community Fund for a grant towards purchasing and erecting a tool shed at the back of the aviaries. The tools needed by the Green Space Volunteers for their working parties, every first and third Thursday morning of the month, are brought to the park by the CBC community ranger. A secure shed in the park for the volunteers would provide more flexibility and take the pressure off the community ranger. Fingers crossed!

*Chris Archibald*

## A new pub for Pittville?



The building that houses the current Sudeley Arms was built in the early 19th century, but it wasn't until 1851 that the part of the premises then known as the Ale, Porter and Cider Stores was re-named The Sudeley Arms by land-

lord George Holland. And under that name it has been a feature of the area for over 170 years. Until now. But that is about to change ...

I've lived in the area on and off for the last thirteen years, and it's been very sad to watch what must have once been a popular pub in its heyday go downhill. The turnover of landlords in that time has been fairly rapid, but none seem to have consistently attracted many new customers. Pubs have always needed to be attractive all year round to the communities they serve, and The Sudeley Arms hasn't really done that for many years.

So I find it pleasing that a small, successful pub company has taken it over and intends to offer something completely different, starting with the name, which is to be The Airs and Graces. The Dodo Pub Co. began in Oxford with two pubs, then opened five others, one of which is in Cheltenham: the Bottle of Sauce in Ambrose Street, opposite St Gregory's. Other Dodo pubs are in Witney, Reading and Bristol. When you look at the Bottle of Sauce website, you see that a lot goes on there – good food, music, sports TV, but also painting workshops and a book group! You get the impression that thought and care has been put into making their pubs successful and responsive to the local community.

Leo Johnson and Chris Manners are the co-founders of the Dodo Pub Co. Since 2014, they have built a reputation for turning around failing pubs, so the Sudeley Arms seems an ideal choice! The Dodo Pub Co.'s quirky, yet welcoming style will be recognisable but The Airs & Graces will differ slightly from The Bottle of Sauce in its food offering. The menu will focus on Neapolitan style pizzas with a wide variety of bar snacks.

The Airs and Graces will open its doors in late March with a party for VIPs, press and the local neighbourhood. Sign up on their website for the latest news. [www.dodopubs.com/locations/the-air-and-graces-2](http://www.dodopubs.com/locations/the-air-and-graces-2)

*Andy Hopkins*

## Prestbury Road lights

At the lower end of Prestbury Road, on the stretch between Pittville Circus and Windsor Street, were four unusual and historic lamp posts, the surviving remnants of the Cheltenham District Light Railway which operated an electric tramway service in Cheltenham between 1901 and 1930. They were removed for renovation by Gloucestershire County Council last year and we're pleased to hear that their reinstallation is about to begin.

Temporary street lamps will be removed and new foundations for the renovated lamps should be in place by mid-March, with the installation completed by the end of the month. We look forward to their reinstatement.

*Andy Hopkins*

## Cheltenham Horticultural Society Spring Show

at Pittville School, Albert Road  
Sunday 7 April 12.30-4pm

Adults £2.50 Children under 16 free

Stalls selling locally produced plants, cakes, books and cards. Refreshments available.

Friends of Pittville will have a table so do come along and support us.

## FoP quiz night proceeds

Almost 70 quizzers enjoyed our quiz night at the Feathered Fish in mid-February. With entry charges and lots of raffle prizes donated by members and local businesses, we raised a total of £604, all of which will go towards park improvements. Thank you to Andy at the Feathered Fish, Paul the quizmaster and everyone who attended. (And to Philippa who organised it all! Ed.)

*Philippa Howell*



## Windsor Street allotments

The Windsor Street Allotment Gardens are still taking names for the waiting list. There are twelve small plots next to the Windsor Street Care Centre. Annual charges are just £10, with an initial registration of £20. Each plot is about 30 square metres. If you are interested in one of the allotments, please email the Secretary, Philippa Howell, at [philippahowell@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:philippahowell@yahoo.co.uk).



## Wartime memories

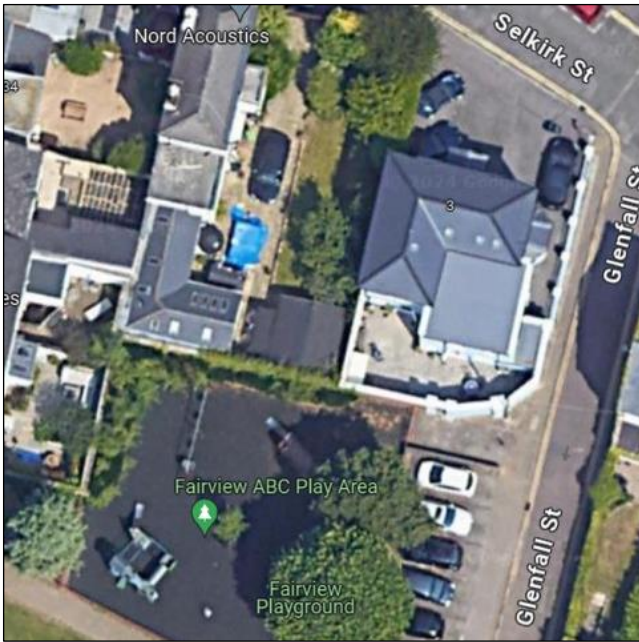
### How Pittville History Works helped

Pittville History Works group recently received a query from Mrs Pauline Paucker. At 95 years young, she is in the process of writing a memoir of the wartime evacuation to Cheltenham of her school, King Edward VII High School for Girls in Birmingham. She approached us to see if we could find any information on 'the charming Court family, the handsome Regency house and nearby Park' where she was billeted.



Unable to resist a challenge, we used the 1939 census and located Mrs Paucker, then aged eight, living at (the still very handsome) number 3 Selkirk Street with Mr Wilfred Court, his wife Lina and their family.

Mrs Paucker recalls that Mr Court was the manager of the Flowers Brewery and that as number 3 came with the job, the brewery horses were kept in the yard behind the house, the site of which is now the Fairview ABC playground. She also recalls a 'full and happy house' as the Courts, with their two daughters, Doris and Eileen, and Mrs Court's mother, Ellen, had



rescued a Czech Jewish refugee named Liesl who had become one of the family, and had taken in four girls from the evacuated school.

We found that Mr and Mrs Court were originally from Stratford-upon-Avon, moving to Cheltenham in 1935 on his promotion to brewery manager. Mr Court was also a Special Constable and Mrs Court a Sunday School teacher. In the early 1950s they retired to Moarend Grove, Leckhampton, where they celebrated their golden wedding in 1968, along with eight of their ten grandchildren.

Mrs Paucker was delighted with the information we sent her, which included newspaper clippings, and we are looking forward to receiving a copy of her memoir when completed.

It is fascinating the random facts that researching a simple question can uncover. We found that Mr Court's family had been the owners of William Shakespeare's house, now known as Shakespeare's Birthplace, for many years until it was acquired for the nation in 1847.

*Debbie Christopher*

## Friends of Pittville Plant Sale

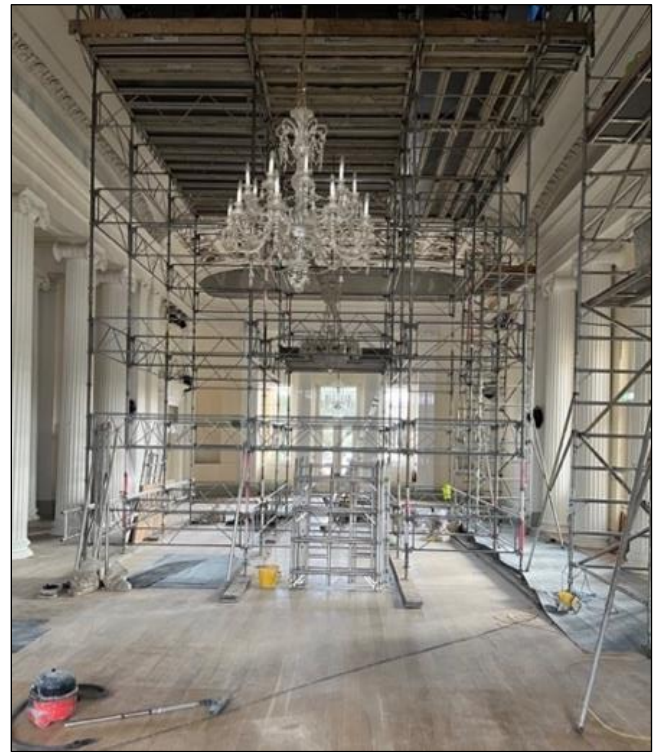
**Saturday 4 May  
10am – 12 noon**

Outside the Scout Hut in  
Central Cross Drive

We will be supported by local nurseries and will have plants grown and donated by Friends of Pittville members. Don't miss it!

## And more scaffolding ...

When will the Pump Room reopen? According to Cheltenham Trust CEO Laurie Bell, 'The ceiling plasterworks commenced on the week of the 15 January, following the temporary reinforcement of



the basement ceiling to ensure that the Pump Room floor could support the weight of the scaffolding required to carry out the repair works. Specialist plasterers are carrying out the repairs which are programmed to take between four and seven weeks, with the re-opening of the Pump Room scheduled to take place in the week commencing 11 March, ahead of the Cheltenham Festival Race Week.'

### Editor

Andy Hopkins

### Photos

Andy Hopkins  
Philippa Howell  
Debbie Christopher  
Chris Archibald  
Sally Thomas



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

*The MBE for volunteer groups*

### Contact FoP at

Email [secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:secretary@friendsofpittville.org.uk)  
[newsletter@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@friendsofpittville.org.uk)  
[membership@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:membership@friendsofpittville.org.uk)  
[volunteer@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@friendsofpittville.org.uk)  
Website [www.friendsofpittville.org.uk](http://www.friendsofpittville.org.uk)  
Social Media [social@friendsofpittville.org.uk](mailto:social@friendsofpittville.org.uk)  
Facebook Friends of Pittville

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