

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.



A note from our Chair

After one of the hottest summers on record it has been great to see so many people making the most of the park and outdoor spaces. Most recently, we saw hundreds of people flock to Pittville Park to witness the solar eclipse, pictured.

Friends of Pittville have been busy too and, in other parts of this newsletter, you will read of how we brought harmony to your summer, retained the coveted Green Space and Heritage Awards for Pittville Park, hosted our annual summer garden party - and other delights. But before we move on to those, a couple of important updates from me:

Celebrating 20 years at our AGM

Save the date: 19 October, 6.30- 8.30pm.

2026 is the 20th anniversary of Friends of Pittville being established. We will be celebrating this milestone birthday at the AGM in October. All members are invited to join us for a celebratory evening that will feature a talk from Jessica Brewster, CEO of Cheltenham Trust. For full details and information on how to reserve your free place, look out for our email, coming soon.

Supporter survey on potential projects

We trustees have been compiling a five-year project plan and a strategy for working toward implementing it. You should have received an email linking to an online survey, giving you a chance to share your thoughts and help shape the projects we take forward. The survey closing date is 25 September 2026.

If you cannot find the link please scan the QR code provided or email us at the address below with the subject line SURVEY to get a new link.



Survey QR code

Email : chairman@friendsofpittville.org.uk

Is your Friends of Pittville membership due for renewal?

We recently added an option to our website that allows memberships to renew automatically each year. However, many of our existing members may not have this automatic renewal set up. We therefore ask that you check your membership renewal date so you can continue supporting Friends of Pittville and the work we do.

Scan the QR code below to renew your membership, or to find out when your membership is up for renewal email the address provided.



Membership QR code

Email: membership@friendsofpittville.org.uk

Thank you for your ongoing support. We hope you will stay in membership for the foreseeable future.

John Holloway



Summer Brass feels like gold

If you're of a certain age, brass band music may feature quite prominently in your memories. Perhaps you recall the Salvation Army playing Christmas carols in the snow, summer concerts at seaside towns with the audience in deck chairs, marching bands at local processions and fetes. If you're from certain parts of the country, their association with mining communities and trades unions is strong. And perhaps, like me, a lot of those memories surfaced as you struggled to hold back a few tears during the film *Brassed Off*.

There's something special about brass bands in Britain. They are perhaps one of the last strongholds of real community music-making. Across the country, serious musicians and enthusiasts gather to continue historic bands and to support their passion through their own endeavours. It's quite amazing to think that they are more or less self-funded and that many use whatever income they earn to pay for instruments for younger learners in training bands. And in an era when traditional activities and sports seem to be increasingly monetised and free access to culture is made more complex, brass bands play on, and all you have to do to show your support for them is to go and listen.

This summer, Friends of Pittville were delighted, in conjunction with CBC and with the help of The Cheltenham Trust, to bring back the sound of quality brass band music to Pittville Park. And even though our bandstand is too small for most bands, the setting at the top of the new steps in front of the Pump Room turned out to be perfect.

So we'd like to thank the Metz Big Band, the Wotton Silver Band, the Gloucester Excelsior Band and the Gloucestershire Police Band for providing such wonderful music for us during July and August and we hope we'll see them again. And although some people have found the constant sunshine a bit wearing this year, the predictably dry weather helped make those music-filled Sundays a joy.

Andy Hopkins



Pimm's, Poetry and Prose

A huge thank you to everyone who bought tickets for our summer fundraiser, and to Julian and Oggy for their generosity in allowing us to hold the event in their beautiful garden.

'An Afternoon of Pimm's, Poetry and Prose' was a thoroughly enjoyable gathering with guests entertained by former international journalist and author Oggy Boytchev, who spoke about his fascinating career and how it inspired him to write thriller novels. We are also grateful to Stephen Selby, local poet and musician, who delighted guests with a poetry and storytelling performance.

Together with music and refreshments, the event provided a wonderful opportunity for members and friends to come together and raised over £700 in support of the Friends of Pittville.

Louise Allerton



UK & Ireland Tree Climbing Competition

Something exciting is coming our way! On 5 and 6 September, the Arboricultural Association is hosting the UK & Ireland Tree Climbing Competition in Pittville Park. No booking is required for spectators – just show up and support the competitors. There is also an opportunity for children aged 6 and over to have a go at tree climbing near the main event. While this is free, spaces are limited and booking is required to secure your child a slot. Book your free tickets and find times and details on the Arboricultural Association website trees.org.uk

Barbara Leigh



Green Space Volunteers

Our merry band of volunteers is going from strength to strength. We regularly have numbers in the mid-twenties at our volunteering sessions, working their socks off to help keep our amazing park looking lovely!

Green Flag and Heritage Flag status

We are delighted to report that, following the inspection in May, Pittville Park has retained its Green Flag and Heritage Flag status. We are looking forward to reading the report, which we expect to receive in autumn. The inspection added an extra incentive to review the accreditation criteria and do some nagging to make sure everything was brought up to scratch, so time well spent! Well done to the volunteers and, of course, the Parks Department and UBICO.

Albert Road Gates

On 2 July, the plants arrived for the new beds by the Albert Road gate, so we had a fun session planting them all and applying mulch to cover the membrane. It's not been an ideal time for planting, and much time and effort has been spent bailing water from the lake to keep the plants alive, but our hard work has paid off and they are looking healthy.



Additionally, a new board with information about the Residuum (the pond next to Albert Road that filters the water from Wymans Brook into the lake) has been created and will be installed soon. The trolley in this area has also been reported to the council and will be removed in due course.

Other activity

In June, we organised a tree walk of Wellington Square with the delightful Chris Chevasse, the Senior Tree Officer. As always, it was a very informative and humorous session and a good opportunity to come together with an interested and appreciative group of local people.



Everything grows so quickly, even in this very dry weather. The sensory beds are doing well and looking very colourful, and we are very grateful to Mark who looks after the aviaries and playground for keeping them watered. We have also spent some time clearing the growth from the bottom of the trees at the lower lake, which has opened up the view to the lake – a big improvement!



If you would like to join our volunteers, we meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month, 9.15-11.15am, by the aviaries, and afterwards we head to Central Cross café for a coffee and a chat. Just come along or, for further information, email us on volunteer@friendsofpittville.org.uk

Barbara Leigh



Thursday Coffee Mornings

Pump Room Café, Pittville Park

Thursday 24 September, 10.00 - 12.00

Join us from 10am until noon on the last Thursday of every month. Members neighbours and friends welcome.



Meet Mark: The man behind Pittville Park's aviaries

For generations of Cheltenham families, the aviaries have been a much-loved feature of Pittville Park. But caring for them is no small task. We spoke to Mark Thorndale to find out about his role at Ubico and looking after the animals and aviaries.

Q: How long have you worked in Pittville and what does your typical day involve?

Mark: I've been looking after the park and aviaries for about two and a half years. Most people know me as "Mark from Pittville Park"!

I start early. My first job is picking up litter and cleaning and maintaining the play area, particularly the water feature and sand pit, to ensure they are clean and safe for the children. I then weed and water the Sensory Garden and flower beds.

Then there's the aviaries. I check every cage for any damage, ensure it is all secure, and clean everything down; jet wash the bars and provide fresh food and water. There's always something to do!

Pittville is my main area, but I also help clean and maintain some of the pavilions and car parks around Cheltenham too.

Q: Tell us about the animals living in the aviaries.

Mark: We've got quite a mixture. There are parakeets, cockatiels, finches, chickens, golden pheasants, rabbits and a dove. The parakeets are from New Zealand, and the cockatiels are from Australia. We've also got some young finches at the moment that are only a couple of weeks old. My favourites are the parakeets. I looked after two of them when they were babies, so they're particularly tame and will sometimes land on me when I'm in their cage.

We recently had three very friendly grey chickens donated. They're so tame that they'll come straight up to you and can even be picked up. Some of the chickens lay eggs and we can get around 10 to 12 every few days.

We also have a family of three rabbits that came from the animal shelter. They're very close-knit. We tried introducing other rabbits, but they weren't having any of it!

Q: What is the most challenging part of looking after so many different animals?

Mark: Making sure they are happy and healthy and getting along with each other. If an animal is injured, I will take them to the vet and if we get a call from a concerned member of the public, I will come down at any time of the day to make sure they are OK. Even on Christmas Day, I'm at the aviaries feeding them.

The biggest job is the cleaning though. It has to be done every day. You have to get inside the cages, clean the bars, change the bedding and keep everything hygienic.

Q: How do you cope with extreme weather?

Mark: In the colder months, the animals have heated indoor areas where they can go, but I need to make sure their water doesn't freeze. In hot weather, I ensure there is plenty of water and shade. Most of the birds are from warmer countries, so they're quite used to heat, but the rabbits aren't, so they spend a lot of time in their shaded areas.

Q: You've done a huge amount of work improving the aviaries. What have you changed?

Mark: My aim is to keep improving them for the animals and the people who visit. Since I first took over, I've painted the outside and inside of the aviaries, replaced wood and damaged sections, added new branches, bamboo and trees, and put bark down and turf to make the cages more natural. A new roof was installed last year, replacing the old plastic sheets, which was a big improvement.

There's been a lot of work behind the scenes too. We've had new electricity and lighting installed, and there are heaters for the animals in winter. There is also regular pest control and fire safety.

Q: What would you like to see for the aviaries in the future?

Mark: The animals really enjoy fresh fruit and vegetables and I'd love to grow vegetable plants and fruit trees around the aviaries which can be used to feed them.

I'd also like to install clearer information boards around the aviaries, that tell visitors about each animal - what they eat, where they're from and other interesting facts that will make it more fun and educational for children.

Follow Mark's Facebook page [Pittville Park Animals](#) on Facebook for regular updates on the aviaries and their inhabitants.



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Photos: Barbara Leigh, Andy Hopkins, Jocelyn Potter, Louise Allerton, Arboricultural Association