

## Annual Report, October 2020

### 1. Our history and aims

1. The Pump Room Revival group was formed in 2018 as a sub-committee of Friends of Pittville. We became a separate unincorporated association on 13 November 2019 and this is our first annual report as an independent organisation.
2. Our aim is to breathe new life into Pittville Pump Room, improve the experience for residents and visitors, and ensure that the unique heritage of this Grade I listed building is preserved and celebrated. We are the only local group specifically established to support the Pump Room.



*“Considered to be the finest building in Cheltenham”  
(Historic England)*

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3. The Pump Room is one of only five Grade I listed buildings in Cheltenham and has been in public ownership since it was purchased by the Borough Council 130 years ago. Given its importance, we believe the Pump Room should be a lively public space that welcomes both the local community and visitors to the town. It should not be simply a venue which stands deserted unless it has a booking.
4. Since taking over responsibility for the management of the building, The Cheltenham Trust has seen it primarily as a venue for weddings and other forms of private hire. It has been under-utilised both as a community resource and as a heritage destination for residents and visitors.
5. In our view this represents not only a failure of imagination and ambition on the part of the building's owners and managers, but also a huge missed opportunity for Cheltenham, which urgently needs a landmark destination building as a focus for its visitor economy. Images of the Pump Room are widely used as an iconic symbol of the town, but the focus on private hire, the poor quality of the visitor experience and the lack of anything for people to do or see at the building has meant that it cannot be marketed in its current state as a visitor destination.
6. Ironically, the COVID-19 pandemic has made a significant contribution to the Pump Room's revival. In May 2020 we submitted a proposal to the Cheltenham Trust for "Tea at Pittville Pump Room". In July The Cheltenham Trust opened an outdoor "Heritage Café", with seating provided in the porticoes and on the forecourt, along with a musical events programme. This initiative has been extremely popular, and we have supported and promoted it. We believe that commercial and heritage interests can be successfully combined (as they are in other spa towns) and await with interest the Trust's plans to build on this achievement.

## 2. Our Membership

1. During our first year we have deliberately restricted our membership to a group of just over 40 influential local people who support our aims, and we have not charged a membership fee or subscription.
2. As a small committee we do not currently have the resources or infrastructure to service a large membership, but we will review this policy if wider community involvement is felt to be essential to achieve our aims.
3. Our Facebook page, which currently has over 150 followers, is our main point of contact with the wider public.

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*The committee at the Heritage Café  
(left to right: Fiona Clarke, Rita White,  
Chris Archibald, Hilary Simpson, David  
Collins)*

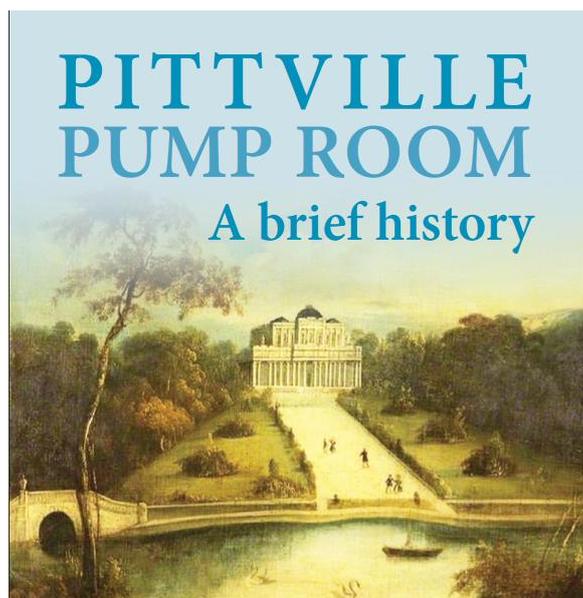
### 3. Our Activities

1. Since 2018 – firstly as a sub-committee of Friends of Pittville and subsequently as an independent organisation – we have held over a dozen meetings with the Chief Executive and other senior representatives of the Cheltenham Trust to explore ways in which the building’s heritage can be properly recognised and the visitor experience improved.
2. We have also met with elected members and officers of Cheltenham Borough Council and with representatives of Cheltenham Civic Society and Marketing Cheltenham. In addition we have developed a fruitful relationship with the Pump Room at Bath, whose manager has kindly shared information about their successful business model.
3. In 2018 and 2019 we undertook extensive “mystery shopping” surveys of the visitor experience, which can be found on our website.



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4. For many decades there has been no investment in communicating or promoting the Pump Room's rich heritage to visitors or residents. In 2018 we facilitated the setting up of a team of Cheltenham Trust volunteer guides for the Pump Room, and also arranged for copies of Dr Steven Blake's 2000 booklet *Pittville Pump Room: an historical guide to Cheltenham's spa* to be made available again for visitors.
5. In 2020, as these copies began to run out, our supporters generously funded the design and printing of 2,000 copies of a new visitor leaflet entitled *Pittville Pump Room: a brief history*. This is also available online.



David Collins  
Chair, Pittville Pump Room Revival  
October 2020

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