



Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2011

Appendix 2 Summary of Chairman's report and report on Pittville Gates Restoration Project

4. Chairman's report

The Hon. Chairman welcomed everyone. She said that this year was very busy and she thanked the committee for pulling together so well. Friends of Pittville was also given considerable professional help by many Cheltenham Borough Council officers and elected members, and also by Gloucestershire County Council.

She acknowledged the following members: James Hodsdon, who produced the only known booklet about the Pittville Gates; Anne Roberts, who served on the committee from its inception but who had to resign due to other commitments; and Andy Hopkins who will be leaving Cheltenham (he designed the Pittville Gates Restoration Project logo); Frances Gabriel who was co-opted in January and took on the role of Hon. Treasurer.

On 7 April, the Pittville Gates Restoration Appeal was launched at the hotel, Cheltenham Townhouse, on Pittville Lawn. A donation in kind from the owners, Jayne and Adam Lillywhite, (for rental of the rooms), was much appreciated, as was support from the then Mayor, Cllr Anne Regan, Martin Horwood, Cheltenham Member of Parliament and many special guests.

FOP does not have its own premises or equipment for holding or participating in events such as gathering local opinion, publicising itself, or for fundraising activities. FOP successfully applied to CBC's Community Pride 2011 for funding to create a 'Roadshow' which can be used indoors or outdoors.

FOP has just applied to CBC's 'Promoting Cheltenham Fund' for the design, making and siting of three heritage boards for Pittville Park, and a self-guided historical walk leaflet.

New membership fees will be introduced from this evening. There has not been an increase in the five years since FOP was set up. Although the bank balance is healthy, this is entirely due to the generosity of many members who pay far more than the basic £2.00. In planning for 2010-2011 FOP thought it had sponsorship in place which would make a significant contribution to the newsletter cost.

One option was to reduce the newsletter distribution and/or the quality of newsletter, but these are vital to publicity, keeping the public informed, and recruiting and retaining members. Members, however, do not get a lot for their subscription, and thought will be given to what more can be offered.

It was agreed at the last Executive Committee meeting on 29 September:

Single Membership to Friends of Pittville to be raised to £5 a year, with £7.50 per couple

The usual print of 2,200 newsletters would be distributed as previously to the same households currently served (members and general public) but only twice a year, in September and in April.

Plus there would be a members' only newsletter, which will be distributed to member's households in June and December.

A review will be made at the end of the year to judge the result of the new fees and system.

There were two questions at this point. Nick Edwards asked what the total membership was. JL said there were 235 paid up members, 353 memberships had been issued. Ten members had sadly died; ten had left the area and others had not renewed.

Mrs Anderson asked how difficult it would be to send an electronic newsletter to members on e-mail and not deliver a printed newsletter to them. FC said it was not worth taking those people out of the physical distribution because as a proportion of the total distribution it was tiny. The newsletter is available on the website.

The Hon. Secretary then reported on volunteers, of whom there are about 25. In the last year the group has contributed 276 hours, bringing total so far since November 2009 (when the group started) to 447 hours.

The biggest achievement was clearing the growth along the south side of the Upper Lake so that visitors can see across the water from Pittville Lawn to the Pump Room, and vice versa. It is hoped to refurbish the flowerbeds near the aviaries. This has been agreed with CBC to complement a plaque to be placed there in memory of Gloucestershire Policewoman PC Lynn Aston who died earlier this year. She thanked all the volunteers and also CBC's Community Ranger Geoffrey Jenkins.

Ron Pattinson, who set up the FOP website in 2006, stepped down earlier this year and FOP purchased the domain name for the website www.friendsofpittville.org. The new web manager is Mr Dan Espley who has a lot of experience with other websites. She thanked Terry Langhorn for temporarily holding the fort.

FOP was invited to participate in Heritage Open Days by Cheltenham Civic Society. Held on 8-11 September, Executive Committee members were at Pittville Gates for six hours over two of these four days, and spoke to 65 people. The Hon. Chairman and Secretary had researched less well known facts about Pittville and two guided walks were held, with ten people on Saturday and 16 people on Sunday.

6. Pittville Gates Restoration Project Sub-committee's Chairman's report

JH outlined progress since the AGM last year when Dr Steven Blake gave a fascinating and thought-provoking presentation. This led to JH and her husband, James, researching local archives and newspaper records and talking to those involved with previous repairs. James had written an illustrated booklet referred to earlier by the Hon. Chairman.

She then described the present condition of the Gates - the crumbling pillars, the missing ironwork, two different colours of green paint, an unattractive surrounding environment.

Consultations with the public and discussions with the county and borough councils and other organisations all indicate support for FOP's campaign to have the Gates restored. There had been a couple of letters in the Glos. Echo in relation to the cost of the project, based on items in the newspaper.

An issue has been ownership of the Gates and the borough council has accepted ownership, with the county council owning the Highways land on which they sit.

The borough council has provided much help on plans and costings for the project, including the landscaping. This includes replacing the pillars; renovating the existing ironwork and eventually replacing the missing opening gates and their posts. The electricity supply restored; four lamps of the original design will be placed on the four outer pillars and the central lamp below the municipal coat of arms will be replaced.

The existing hard surfaces will be replaced and the overall design will be fairly simple. The existing grass triangle will be replanted and hedging will be planted in front of the block wall to the west of the site and the wooden fence to the northeast. A granite horse trough will be placed in front of the Gates and filled with bedding plants. Bulbs will be planted in the grass verges of Pittville Lawn. The missing railings along Prestbury Road will be replaced. Street furniture will include matching road signs for Prestbury Road and Pittville Lawn, a litterbin and a seat, and two 'heritage' boards.

In order to make the funding of the project more manageable, it is proposed to split it into phases. The first phase will cover the new pillars, the renovation of the existing ironwork, the new surfaces and hedging, and the new street furniture, thus considerably enhancing the site. Later phases will cover the replacement of the missing ironwork on the Gates and the replacement railings along Prestbury Road.

JH outlined the small scale public fundraising events since the April launch, which had raised £3500. Applications were made to two funding bodies in September, and it is hoped to have some financial help from GCC and CBC. There is a long list of other charitable trusts to apply to, companies to seek sponsorship from and continued public fundraising. Finally, the Gates project had been voted the top scorer of Waitrose's Community Matters in August, obtaining £390.

JH noted that the last significant improvement to the Gates had been for the then Prince of Wales's visit to Cheltenham in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. It is hoped to link the beginning of the project to the current Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June 2012.