

# PITTVILLE PUMP ROOM



**A HISTORY**

**ELEGANT GRADE I LISTED BUILDING**

**STANDING IN REGAL SPLENDOUR AT ONE END OF PITTVILLE PARK ABOUT TWO MILES FROM THE TOWN CENTRE.**

## A MONUMENT

**THE WATERS**

The Pump Room is a monument to more than 100 years of fame which Cheltenham enjoyed as a Spa town. The waters were first discovered in around 1715 on a site now occupied by Cheltenham Ladies College. In 1788 George III and Queen Charlotte came to take the waters, and it was their visit that set the seal on Cheltenham's future. From that day on it grew and prospered and new wells were dug near Bayshill House where the King stayed.

## PITT THE MAN

**A DESIGN BANKER**

Some years after the visit a banker named



Joseph Pitt commissioned John Forbes, the architect, to design a pump room that was to act as the centrepiece to his vision of a town to rival Cheltenham - a town he would call Pittville. The foundation stone was laid on 4 May 1825 and the work completed in 1830. A feature of the design is the columns facing the lawns which are based on those of a Greek temple. Above the colonnade are three statues by Lucius Gahagen, erected in 1827, of the goddess Hygieia, Aesculapius and Hippocrates.



Pittville Pump Room c. 1835

## A GRAND OPENING

**AND COSTLY**

The total cost of the project was over £40,000 - not small by today's standards, but incredibly high at that time. The decoration is based on the Ionic order and the great hall reflects the genius of John Forbes with the spa opening on the north side and the gallery and dome surmounting the hall.

The original official opening of the 6 July 1830 was postponed until 20 July because of the death of George IV. A grand public breakfast and ball marked the occasion.

## BANKRUPTCY

**& DRY ROT**

Unfortunately like many bankers of his time, Pitt later ran into financial difficulties, the building went out of favour and it was eventually sold to the Borough of Cheltenham for a mere £5,400 in 1890 - a fraction of the original cost. During the Second World War the Pump Room housed British and American army personnel, when dry rot was allowed to creep through the structure unchecked, and only after the war was the full extent of the damage revealed. Plaster, brickwork, timber: nearly everything had been affected. The dome was only held in position by a shell of plaster; the timber had been eaten away by the fungus.

## THE DUKE

**OF WELLINGTON**

Public subscriptions came to the rescue, which were accompanied by Public Works grants and Historic Building Council contributions. A total of £43,250 was raised and by 1960 the building was partially restored to its former glory and re-opened in 1960 by the Duke of Wellington. The old card room had been replaced by a new foyer, cloakrooms and second staircase, and heating and new lighting were installed.

## A NEW BEGINNING

**A NEW CENTURY**

In 2003, it was discovered that the old Victorian wells at the Pump Room were leaking and allowing ground water to dilute the natural mineral water to such an extent that it no longer qualified as "spa water", and the well was shut down. Thanks to sponsorship from local company Kohler Mira, the well was repaired and the original marble and scagliola pump restored, and on 21 September 2005 the spa waters flowed once more, allowing visitors to taste the unique spa water which is the only alkaline spa water in the country. In 2008, Pittville Pump Room's old maple-strip floor was replaced with a stunning English oak floor. Herefordshire-based Winstone

Flooring worked alongside English Heritage to source the most appropriate flooring for the hall. Work on the floor also offered the opportunity to replace the building's boilers and heating pipework, and to refurbish the heating panels in the building's walls, a job which was last done in 1951.

Left, Pump Room interior, 1834

## STUNNING VENUE

**PUBLIC & PRIVATE**

Pittville Pump Room is in use most days of the year for private and public functions and is one of Cheltenham's most popular wedding venues. It is also a favoured venue among orchestras, choirs and chamber groups for its stunning acoustics, which sees it take centre stage in the annual Cheltenham Music Festival.

**The Pump Room is open to the public Wednesdays - Sundays 10AM - 4PM events permitting.**

### MORE INFO:

If you would like to find out more about the Pittville Pump Room, you can either send us an email to:

pittvillepumproom@cheltenham.gov.uk

Or go online to:

**CHELTEHAMTOWNHALL.ORG.UK**

*The effects of Cheltenham Waters' or 'Tis necessary to quicken your motions after the second glass' by S.W. Fores*



**PITTVILLE PUMP ROOM, PITTVILLE**

**PARK, CHELTENHAM**

**GL52 9JE.**



**CHELTENHAM**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Level access means that all downstairs facilities are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. A lift can transport you to upper levels. There is ample free parking.