

PITTVILLE SPA SUBSCRIPTION BOOK 1830-1852

COPYRIGHT

Digitised Images © 2014 and Compilation © 2014, Gloucestershire Archives and Cheltenham Local History Society.

Text © 2014, Cheltenham Local History Society.

These images or portions thereof may be reproduced under the Copyright Design & Patents Act 1988 for personal research or study. However, any reproduction of any portion of the digitised images, or of any text in any medium by whatever means of reproduction, **requires written permission of both parties – Cheltenham Local History Society and Gloucestershire Archives. By continuing to view these images you are agreeing to these terms and conditions.**

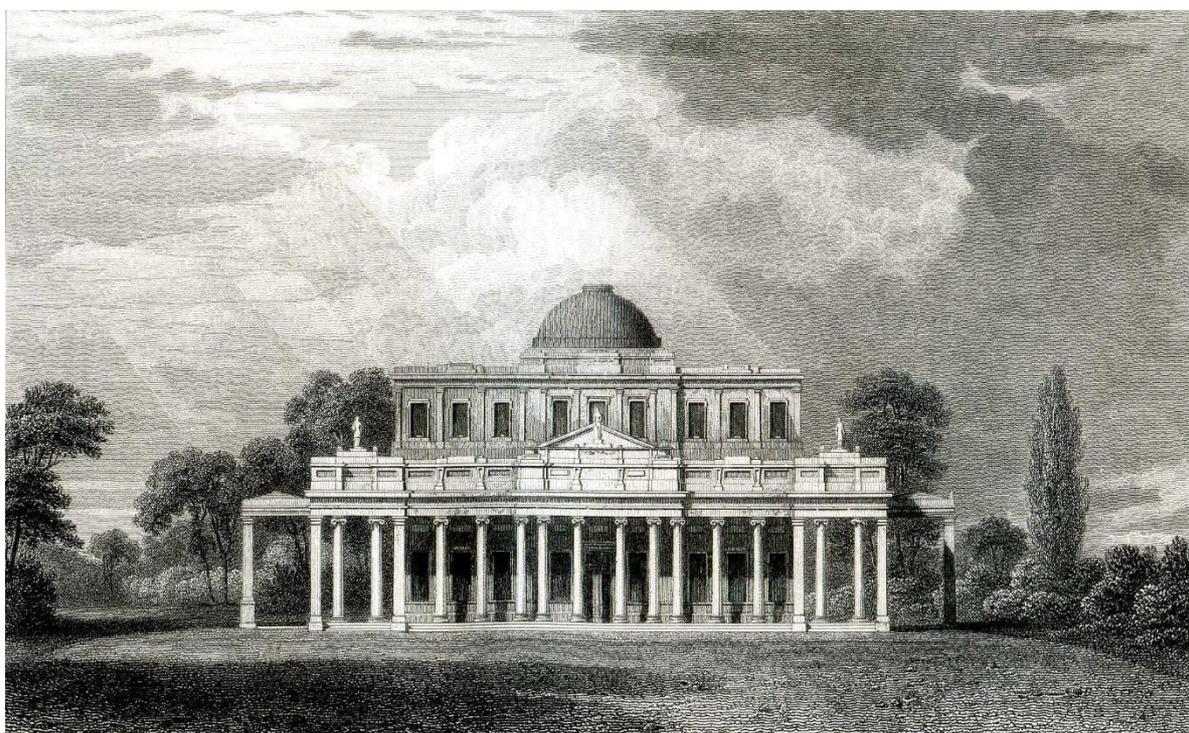
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Cheltenham Local History Society would like to thank those who enabled the production of this project:

Transcribed by Kath Boothman and Jill Waller, with contributions and cooperation from the following:

Steven Blake, Andrew Crabtree, Gloucestershire Archives, Geoff North, Sally Self, Kryss Waller, and members of Cheltenham Local History Society.

October 2014



Pittville Pump Room, drawn by its architect John Forbes. The central pediment was never executed
(from *Griffith's New Historical Description of Cheltenham*, 1826)

INTRODUCTION:

The Pittville Spa Subscription Book is a large ledger in which early 19th-century visitors recorded their subscriptions to use the facilities at Pittville Pump Room, Cheltenham – the medicinal waters and the rides, drives and walks in the surrounding pleasure grounds. The book came into the possession of Cheltenham Borough Council when it purchased the Pittville Pump Room and Estate in 1890. For many years the book was kept in Cheltenham Public Library, apart from a period on display in the Gallery of Fashion which was open at the Pump Room from 1983 to 1999. Fortunately, in view of its fragile condition, the book was transferred from the Library to Gloucestershire Archives, and this project to digitise and transcribe it has again made it available for the public to enjoy.

Although the foundation stone was laid 4 May 1825, Pittville Pump Room was not completed until June 1830, with the official grand opening on 20 July 1830. The first volume of subscribers, reproduced and transcribed here, contains 475 pages recording over 8,000 entries running from the opening day to 20 July 1852. The *Cheltenham Journal* noted 'the promptitude with which the names of the most influential personages among the distinguished society of Cheltenham were entered in the subscription book'.

Subsequently visitors came from all over the country, including members of royalty and the aristocracy. It was also popular with military and East India Company officers, attracted to the town because of its society, mild climate and spa waters (believed to be beneficial to digestive systems disordered by service in India).

The Pump Room was managed by a lessee, who paid an annual rental to Joseph Pitt, developer of Pittville, deriving his income from the sale of the waters, admission fees to the gardens, and the profits of any events that he organised. There was a succession of lessees, including a group of 'respectable tradespeople', until Cheltenham Corporation purchased the property in 1890. Admission charges to the gardens were finally abolished in 1954.

Although visitors are recorded throughout the year, most subscribed during the 'season', which ran from May to September. The period of subscription ranged from a fortnight to the whole season. The saline waters were available in the mornings, with a band playing and refreshments on hand, and the pleasure grounds were open throughout the day, again with a band in attendance. Images highlighting the terms and conditions of the subscriptions are included in this publication, showing the prices and range of facilities. Non-subscribers were admitted to the grounds for one shilling.

Relatively few of the visitors stayed in hotels, opting instead for lodgings or the seasonal rental of houses. Private residences were rented on a long-term basis, furnished and with servants provided if required. As the houses and streets have been renamed and renumbered several times over the past 150 years, where possible the modern locations of the addresses given by subscribers have been supplied. Of around 200 individual houses named in the book, only a few remain unidentified. Despite much development and rebuilding of Cheltenham since the heyday of Pittville Spa, many of these properties are still extant, and the local or family historian will at least be able to get a flavour of the areas mentioned in the book.

SOURCES:

- An Historical Gazetteer of Cheltenham*, James Hodsdon, BGAS 1999
- Pittville 1824-1860: a scene of gorgeous magnificence*, Steven Blake, CAGM 1988
- Pittville Pump Room*, Steven Blake, CBC 1980, 2nd edition 2000
- Directories of Cheltenham – authors' own & Cheltenham Local Studies Library;
- 19th-century Cheltenham maps, including 1820 Post Office Map & 1855-57 Old Town Survey