

Cheltenham Notes

Cheltenham

Market town. Its medicinal waters were discovered in the 1700s. By 1850 it was the largest town in Gloucestershire, with a population of more than 35,000. Attracted members of the English and Continental Royal families, including Princess (later Queen) Victoria, the Duke of Wellington, and the novelists Jane Austen and Lord Byron.

Original Spa where Cheltenham Ladies College stands. Others developed later at Montpellier and Pittville.

The earliest of these schools was the Cheltenham Proprietary College for Boys, opened in 1841; the Ladies' College opened 13 years later.

St James Square railway station – closed 1966. A dead end station.

The line was originally part of the Great Western Railway's Cheltenham–Stratford-upon-Avon–Birmingham line, known as the Honeybourne Line, built in 1900–1906. The line was run down over the years and finally closed after a derailment damaged a stretch of track in 1976, with the double track being lifted from 1979.

Untruth: The Honeybourne Line was named that because during the pollinating season farmers used it to transport bee hives between farms. It caused chaos with others on the train.

Neptune Fountain

Stone sculpture showing Neptune in his shell-chariot drawn by four sea-horses and accompanied by two shell-blowing mermen.

This is a sculpture of Neptune, the ancient Roman God of sea and water, holding a trident surrounded by sea-horses and tritons. It was designed in 1892 by Joseph Hall, the town's Borough Engineer and its design was influenced by the Trevi Fountain in Rome. It was executed in Portland stone in 1893 by R.L. Boulton & Son's, who were stone masons and wood carvers of national importance but whose business in the later part of the 19th century was based in Cheltenham. Originally Neptune's fountain formed a feature in front of the Imperial Spa, a fine classical building, which was demolished in 1937 to be replaced by a cinema, and that in turn was demolished to be replaced by the current office building. In the past the fountain recycled water from the river Chelt which flows below the fountain through a large culvert and it is hoped that in the future this will happen again. The trident went missing for a time in Dec 2014.

Richard Lockwood Boulton also sculpted the Boer War memorial here in Cheltenham and Translators memorial in St Asaph - this tercentenary memorial of the translation of the bible into welsh by Bishop Morgan was erected by national subscription a.d. 1588 – 1888

Untruth: The Neptune Fountain was the inspiration for the Trevi fountain in Rome.

Edward Wilson Statue

Born Cheltenham 1872. Ornithologist, natural historian, physician and artist. Studied at Cambridge & London. Strong Christian faith. 1898 diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis, contracted during his mission work. Discovery mission - He together with Scott and Shackleton reached the furthest South anyone had been before turning back. Terra Nova expedition: In the winter of 1911, Wilson led a journey with Bowers and Cherry-Garrard, to the emperor penguin breeding grounds at Cape Crozier to collect eggs for scientific study. A very well liked member of the expedition. Someone many would confide in.

Statue designed by Captain Scott's widow, Kathleen. Unveiled by Sir Clements Markham, former president of the RGS in 1914.

Edward Adrian Wilson B.A. M.B. CANTAB. F.Z.S. Born in Cheltenham 1872. Chief of the Scientific Staff. Artist and Zoologist of the British Antarctic Expedition 1910-1913. He reached the South Pole January 17 1912. And died with Capt. Scott on the Great Ice Barrier March 1912. 'He died as he lived. A brave true man. The best of comrades and staunchest of friends.' (Letter from Capt. Scott)

Imperial Gardens

The grand Cheltenham Town Hall, built at the start of the 20th century, is located at one end of the park. In the centre of the ground he planted an exotic botanic garden, around which the houses of Imperial Square were built in the 1820s. They were originally planted out for the exclusive use of the subscribers to the Sherborne Spa. Each year, approximately 25,000 bedding plants are used to produce the magnificent floral displays enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year.

Untruth: Gardens named after Mint Imperials

Gustav Holst 1874-1934

Gustav Holst. composer of The Planets. was born in an ordinary Cheltenham town house into a musical family. His grandfather was originally from Latvia, and after living in London came to Cheltenham as a music teacher. Gustav's father Adolph was the organist at All Saints Church, where the young Gustav sang and also played the organ. Educated at Cheltenham Grammar School, Gustav remained in the town until he left for London to study at the Royal College of Music in 1893.

Holst introduced new ideas to his music, such as Hindu culture, folksong and, most famously, astrology in his masterpiece The Planets. The melody from Jupiter was used for the hymn I Vow to Thee My Country and, together with his setting of In the Bleak Midwinter, remains his most famous piece of music. Cheltenham honoured its famous son in 1927 with a festival of his music at the Town Hall. He described this as 'the most overwhelming event of my life'.

He mastered in different styles of music including choral, orchestral and chamber music. However his main area of expertise was the classical music. The Planets. He wrote the masterpiece in the years of World War I. The war years proved to be very fertile for the English composer.

Holst's health played a decisive part in his musical future; he had never been strong, and in addition to his asthma and poor eyesight he suffered from neuritis, which made playing the piano difficult. He said that the affected arm was "like a jelly overcharged with electricity".

English-born composer of German and Swedish ancestry. His surname was originally "von Holst." Learned to play the piano, organ, violin, and trombone. He began lessons on trombone "as a cure for asthma"! Studied composition at the Royal College of Music in London. Taught at the St. Paul's Girls' School for the last 30 years of his life.

In 1895, shortly after celebrating his twenty-first birthday, Holst met Ralph Vaughan Williams, who became a lifelong friend and had more influence on Holst's music than anybody else.

Statue of Holst at his birthplace, Cheltenham. He is shown with the baton in his left hand, his frequent practice because of the neuritis in his right arm. He married and had one daughter.

A complete list of movements in Holst's The Planets follows (no earth or Pluto)

Mars, the Bringer of War.

Venus, the Bringer of Peace.

Mercury, the Winged Messenger.

Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity.

Saturn, the Bringer of Old Age.

Uranus, the Magician.

Neptune, the Mystic.

Untruth: Holst found writing music easy but always had trouble coming up with the names of pieces. In the case of the Planets he had the music written but didn't know what to call it. One day we was out for a walk in town, stopped by the Neptune fountain and had his lunch. He was just finishing when he pulled his Mars bar out of his pocket and it all came together nicely.

2008 statue of Holst. Sculptor: Anthony Stones, (1934–2016). born in Glossop, Derbyshire. lived in New Zealand between 1952 and 1983 He also sculpted Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie) (1720–1788) on Cathedral Green in Derby and Emperor Nerva (30 AD–98 AD) in Gloucester.

Montpellier Gardens

Another gardens built around a pump room, now gone. Initially the public could only enter by paying an admission charge.

William IV statue. (1830-1837)

Used to be in Imperial Gardens.

Served in the navy and got arrested with his shipmates after a drunken brawl in Gibraltar; he was hastily released from custody after his identity became known.

William served in New York during the American War of Independence, While William was in America, George Washington approved a plot to kidnap him. The plot did not come to fruition. He later served under Nelson and the two became great friends. and dined together almost nightly. At Nelson's wedding, William insisted on giving the bride away. When Britain declared war on France in 1793, he was eager to serve his country and expected to be given a command but was not, perhaps at first because he had broken his arm by falling down some stairs drunk. Instead of serving at sea, William spent time in the House of Lords, where he spoke in opposition to the abolition of slavery, which still existed in the British colonies. From 1791, William lived with an Irish actress, Dorothea Bland, better known by her stage name Mrs Jordan, the title "Mrs" being assumed at the start of her stage career to explain an inconvenient pregnancy and "Jordan" because she had "crossed the water" from Ireland to Britain. The couple had ten illegitimate children—five sons and five daughters—nine of whom were named after William's siblings; each was given the surname "FitzClarence". He later married Adelaide.

He became king aged 64, the oldest person to do so until the present King Charles. Succeeded by Queen Victoria.

Bandstand

The Friends of Montpellier Bandstand and Gardens were established in 1994 following the restoration, initiated by the Civic Society, of the then 138 year old bandstand - one of the oldest, if not the oldest in the country! Oldest still in use according to plaque.

First ever parachute jump

On 3 October 1838 John Hampton became the first Englishman to make a successful parachute drop, when he descended from his gas-filled balloon which had risen from Montpellier Gardens, opposite the Montpellier Spa Pump Room (now The Ivy). The parachute was umbrella-shaped, 15 feet in diameter, made of canvas, whalebone and bamboo, and weighed about 200lb. Hampton jumped from his hot air balloon at a height of 6000 feet in a descent lasting 12 minutes 40 seconds.

Climbing Frame

Untruth: An early modern art piece by Antony Gormley – angel of the north in Gateshead and Crosby beach

Edward VII statue (Peacemaker)

Sicilian marble statue of King Edward VII in Norfolk suit helping a poor girl. Standing on an oval granite base with lion's head taps to drinking bowls on three faces.

King from 1901 to 1910. Victoria's eldest son. Nicknamed Bertie.

He fostered good relations between Britain and other European countries, especially France, for which he was popularly called "Peacemaker", but his relationship with his nephew, German Emperor Wilhelm II, was poor.

Bertie chose to be called King Edward rather than Albert, because he said he didn't want to "undervalue the name of Albert" and "diminish the status of his father with whom, among royalty, the name Albert should stand alone."

Statue gifted by the Boulton company (as in the Neptune Fountain) and crafted by Ambrose Neale (c.1868–1930) chief artist of Messrs. R. L. Boulton & Sons –. Given to Cheltenham after the death of the king in around 1914.

Caryatids

Turn around and you will see one of Cheltenham's most famous landmarks - the sculptures of armless ladies known as caryatids. These were inspired by the portico of the Erechtheion Temple on the Acropolis in Athens. The Nottingham sculptor John Rossi was commissioned to make two statues in white-painted terracotta, which were used as a pattern for 30 copies carved in stone by local sculptors James Brown and his son William. The 32 caryatids now line the shops of the Montpellier Walk

Untruth: The people of Cheltenham questioned the appropriateness of the sculptures but the Mayor told them they were 'armless enough.'

John Nevil Maskelyne (1839 – 1917)

A magician and inventor of the mundane (pay toilet) and magical (levitation). He started his career here before being drawn to cities such as Liverpool and London. In 1894, Maskelyne wrote the book Sharps and Flats: A Complete Revelation of the Secrets of Cheating at Games of Chance and Skill. It became an instant hit, and to this day is considered a classic gambling book. It was the first detailed revelation of the secrets of cardsharps. With his son, John Nevil Maskelyne Jr., Maskelyne invented a typewriter

whose types were inked by a pad and which typed proportionally (some characters receiving greater widths than others).

Untruth: At the time of his death Maskelyne was working on combining his skills as the inventor of the pay toilet and levitation with a new invention enabling users to hover above the seat.

The Hare and the Minotaur by Sophie Ryder

The sculpture was initially part of a temporary exhibition of the work of Gloucestershire based artist Sophie Ryder; it featured at the Cheltenham Museum and Art Gallery and it was created in 1995. The overwhelming public response to the exhibition fuelled the campaign to retain one of Sophie Ryder's sculptures and the Hare and Minotaur was acquired by public subscription in 1998.

The statue itself features a female hare and a male Minotaur seated on an oversized bench. It stands taller than any person and is made of reclaimed scrap metal; up close you can spot cogs and cooker hobs, screws and all sorts, creating a really textured, tactile metal finish. At the end of 2017, the statue was removed for a month and taken for restoration at Sophie's Foundry, where it was returned to its former glory

Used to be in Canary Wharf

born in London, England, in 1963.

Sophie famously developed the Lady Hare as a counterpart to Ancient Greek mythology's Minotaur.

Greek mythology. Minotaur head and tail of a bull and the body of a man

Cheltenham Library

Statue of Shakespeare

A statue of William Shakespeare above the pediment on the front of Cheltenham Library.

Pittville

Pittville is the largest and most ambitious of the new building estates which sprang up in Cheltenham in the early nineteenth century. It was created by Joseph Pitt MP (1759-1842), who invested the profits from his legal practice into property development. Although the project was never finished, Pittville remains one of the finest examples of a Regency building estate.

Pitt envisaged Pittville as a completely separate spa town to rival Cheltenham. He acquired much of the land at the beginning of the nineteenth century and started to build on it in the early 1820s, when demand for land and houses in Cheltenham was at its peak.

Asclepius Asclepius was often depicted with a serpent entwined round his club. He was the son of the Greek god Apollo and the princess Coronis, and was educated by the centaur Chiron, a strange yet wise creature, half-human, half-horse, famous for his skills in medicine.

Hygeia The female figure represented by the central statue is Hygeia, shown with a serpent and bowl of water. Hygeia was the daughter of Asclepius and his wife Epitome, the goddess of soothing pain.

Hippocrates On the right is the bearded figure of Hippocrates, again with serpent and staff. Hippocrates appears rather diminutive but his stance, hair and beard are a typical representation, along with a staff and snake.

We have the final word on these three statues from a founder member of Friends of Pittville, Judy Langhorn. Many people think that the left hand statue (viewed from the front) is holding a baseball bat, put there by the American troops who were stationed in the Pump Room during WW2. This is not true. Full story here [The Pump Room statues](#). A postscript: the Borough Council recently replaced the 1960s 'bat' with *another, also made of wood, which certainly does look like a large baseball bat!*