Friends of Imperial Square
Heritage and Conservation

Garden Railings Reinstatement Appeal

Cheltenham’s ‘Signature Square’
A brief history…

King George III, Queen Charlotte and three of their daughters arrived in Cheltenham on 12th July 1788 to take the Spa waters of William Mason and Henry Skillicorne’s spring at Bayshill Meadow (later renamed Royal Well). The King stayed at Lord Fauconberg’s town house with his entourage for 5 weeks, forever establishing the town as a fashionable destination for walking, riding, theatre plays, and social excursions.

**Imperial Square** was established, along with the Promenade, in 1817-18 as part of the botanical pleasure grounds of the Sherborne Spa. Due to a fall in the water table the original Spa building was relocated further down the Promenade, and the Queen’s Hotel was built in its place by Robert William and Charles Jearrad in 1837-8. During the 1830’s, most of the fine Regency houses surrounding **Imperial Square** were constructed.

By the time the new Town Hall was completed in 1903, **Imperial Square and Gardens** had become the hub and focus of the town’s social scene, and often referred to as ‘the jewel in Cheltenham’s crown’. From late nineteenth century postcards to early twenty-first century live television broadcasts, **Imperial Square and Gardens** have provided that characteristic and quintessentially English Spa town setting, attracting townspeople and visitors from all over the world.

Today, **Imperial Square and Gardens** are famous for their fine Regency architecture and magnificent floral displays, still providing the ‘pleasure grounds’ established some 250 years ago for residents and visitors alike. Whether meeting family or friends, attending the well-supported festivals or simply enjoying the view and ambiance, welcome to Cheltenham’s ‘signature square’.
Cheltenham’s ‘Signature Square’

Garden Railings Reinstatement Appeal

In June 1940, the railings surrounding Imperial Gardens were scrapped and recycled as armaments for the war effort (see the photo on the front cover) as were both cannons from the Sebastopol Memorial (in front of the Queen’s Hotel) – only one of the original two gun pedestals now remain.

Friends of Imperial Square and Gardens (FISG) was formed in 2007 by Cheltonians to protect the floral grandeur and amenity of Imperial Gardens, and from this group, Friends of Imperial Square Heritage and Conservation (FISHAC) was established in 2011 as a Registered Charity to raise funds to reinstate and repair the heritage and conservation assets in Imperial Square and Gardens.

The Trustees of FISHAC work in partnership with all stakeholders in this ‘people’s project’ to protect and further enhance the appearance, use and amenity of Imperial Square and Gardens. The Trustees are not paid in any way, and work on a pro bono basis for this community initiative.

The current appeal is raising funds to reinstate the railings lost to the war effort and the Trustees have made donations to cover the Charity’s initial costs and overheads. The Trustees are extremely grateful to the Charity’s supporters, who also donate their time, facilities, products and professional expertise to the Appeal, ensuring that the Charity’s direct costs are extremely low.

As part of a 2011 redesign consultation, Cheltenham Borough Council have issued a revised layout proposal for Imperial Gardens and allocated funds for landscape improvements, and to upgrade infrastructure to accommodate the special event usage. As part of this overall plan, FISHAC’s first project is to reinstate the lost Imperial Square railings.
The Trustees are extremely grateful to the following for the advice and help received in setting up the Charity:

Mercure Cheltenham Queen’s Hotel

Cheltenham in Bloom
Cheltenham Borough Council
Cheltenham Local History Society

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Friends of Imperial Square Heritage and Conservation

Trustees: Bob Keevil (Chairman) David Stennett (Vice Chairman), Peter Walsh (Company Secretary & Treasurer), Paulette Faulkner (ret’d 2016), Charles Horn, John Kynnersley
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