

# Newsletter

OPEN CHELTENHAM DOOR

Summer 2026



*Our colourful outdoor space.*

## Welcome



**With summer days ahead, many of us are looking forward to beautiful weather and a chance to be outside. Cheltenham Open Door regularly sees a peak in numbers at this time of year as people experiencing homelessness feel more able to move about without getting cold and wet. That means summer is our busiest time, with more mouths to feed and more resource needed than at any other time of year. Your support is more important than ever.**

With an increasing number of visitors, it's a great time to ask our guests about the challenges they face, what they really need and what they miss out on. We are currently undertaking our most comprehensive guest survey to date. We've thought hard about how we take a trauma-informed approach to ensure participants are comfortable sharing information about their challenges. By giving some of the most marginalised people in our community a voice, we can campaign for what's needed, locally and nationally, and continue

to evolve our services. We hope to share some of our research findings with you in future newsletters. Watch this space!

In this newsletter, you can read more about how we're supporting our guests and find out our latest news. Behind Cheltenham Open Door is a team of dedicated staff and volunteers as well as incredible support from the community. It's a joint effort!

**Rosie**, Operations Manager

## Going greener

This newsletter and donations form plus its packaging are printed on recycled paper. Subscribing to our digital newsletter is better for the planet and saves our charity money. If you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email, drop us a line:

[comms@cheltenhamopendoor.org.uk](mailto:comms@cheltenhamopendoor.org.uk)





Flip Thornnett-Roston came to the UK in the 1930s to escape Nazi Germany.

## The remarkable life of Flip Thornnett-Roston

**Cheltenham Open Door exists today thanks to the inspiring Flip Thornnett-Roston. To find out more about Flip, we spoke to Sara Reader, long-time friend of Open Door, who first met Flip in 1995.**

Sara remembers her as a formidable woman. "She was extremely socially aware and got involved in projects that supported people and the community," said Sara, who went on to manage Cheltenham Open Door and still volunteers in the Guest Hub. "Even in her later years she used to pop down to us, her yellow car loaded with donations. Flip might have been tiny



Sara Reader was a volunteer when she first met Flip more than 30 years ago.

in stature, but she was always in the midst of a campaign she cared about; she certainly wasn't a wallflower!"

It's believed that Flip was born in Germany in 1922 and arrived in London in the early 1930s with her sister and Jewish mother. Her father never managed to reach the UK.

Having worked in London as a nurse, Flip arrived in Cheltenham with her partner Ernest Thornnett. Ernest was thought to have worked for GCHQ and been involved in code breaking at Bletchley Park. He made his name as a crossword setter and crime writer. Together the couple shared a son.

### Compassionate action

Struck by the number of homeless people congregating around Royal Well Crescent, Flip, with the help of friends, started bringing them sandwiches and flasks of hot drinks. As the gravity of the situation become apparent, she was determined to take more concrete action.

From 1992, Flip ran a Sunday breakfast service as well as a Christmas shelter out of Grosvenor Hall in Grosvenor Street; this was the official start of Cheltenham Open Door. After Flip and Ernest split up, she met and married Ben Rosten, taking his last name while keeping Ernest's.

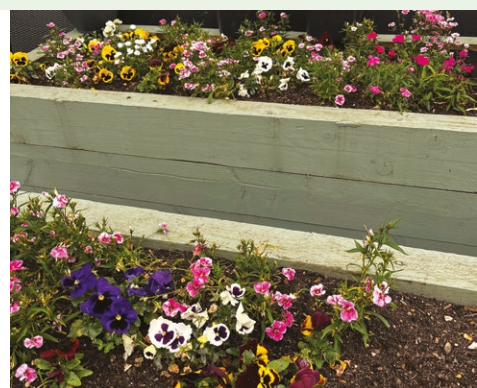
Flip's life was filled with positive actions to help others. She died in 2016 however her spirit lives on as we aim to replicate her attitude of unwavering kindness, acceptance and non-judgement.



We aim to emulate Flip's approach of kindness and acceptance every day at our Guest Hub.

## Flower power

Who needs Chelsea Flower Show when you've got Cheltenham Open Door? Here's a snapshot taken in our lovely open space. The garden is lovingly tended by our guests and supplies the kitchen with aromatic herbs and leafy greens. Our outdoor space is understandably popular at this time of the year.



## Culture club

Thanks to the new Cheltenham Festivals Community Voices Network, our guests are blazing a trail in the local cultural scene. The initiative works with those in the local community who face barriers to attending cultural experiences for a variety of reasons. The aim is to strengthen community connections and establish wider access to local events. We're just one of several groups that the Community Voices Network is listening to and learning from.

Guest Hub volunteer Sara Reader participates in the Network. As a liaison, she represents our guests and their lived experiences while encouraging guests to explore cultural experiences that interest them. Thanks to the collaboration – and the generosity of Cheltenham Festivals – more guests have started attending Cheltenham Festivals events and experiencing the benefits of cultural connection. The collaboration started positively with our guests receiving 60 tickets for the Science Festival in early June. Pip Claridge, Learning and Participation Manager at Cheltenham Festivals, has been engaging with us



StillMoving Media

Community Voice Network members Scott Bailey-Locke of Gloucestershire Young Carers and Open Door's Sara Reader under the Big Top at May's Jazz Festival with Pip Claridge and Sarah Cooksley of Cheltenham Festivals. L to R: Scott, Pip, Sara, Sarah.

to widen participation. She said: "It is exciting to see the difference that the Community Voices Network has already made since it was established earlier this year. We are looking forward to welcoming Open Door guests to a wide range of events at all our festivals."



Our group of volunteers and guests had a brilliant time.

## A grand day out

Earlier this spring, Cheltenham Open Door received an invitation from Highgrove Gardens for a group to experience a guided tour of the world-famous gardens at the private residence of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

Over the past 40 years these gardens, close to Tetbury, have been developed as a series of interlinked spaces that reflect the King's artistic spirit. Testament to his longstanding advocacy for nature, the gardens prioritise sustainability and support for wildlife.

We were so pleased to have a chance to recognise our volunteers for the dedication and commitment they show. We could not carry out our work without their support and passion. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to say thank you to some of our volunteers who joined some of our guests for the tour. Despite a few showers on the day, the group had a fantastic time.

Everyone agreed it was a "fabulous day out" and really appreciated their own "brilliant tour guide".

Highgrove's Thyme Walk.

Titch Tetley Photography



## At the Guest Hub...

You never know who you're going to meet when you come to the Guest Hub. Many people share their professional expertise and their passions in order to support our guests. We work with health professionals and hairdressers, pet experts and podiatrists, crafters and counsellors and many other skilled people.

Everyone shows up with a smile and dedicates time to improving our guests' day. We extend a big thank you to everyone who supports our guests.



Toni and Karen from Samaritans are on hand to listen.



Esther and Danielle from Cheltenham Animal Shelter offer pet care.



Nurses Caroline and Carol drop by to do health checks.

## Thank you to our supporters

We are grateful to everyone who supports Cheltenham Open Door, whether through making donations in-kind (such as food, clothing, toiletries or equipment) or by donating to the charity's funds. We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of all individuals and organisations whose contributions make our work possible. Here we recognise organisations who have made significant gifts to us over the last two years.

Charles Hayward Foundation  
Cheltenham Round Table  
Everyman Theatre  
Garfield Weston Foundation  
GCHQ Retired Associate Members  
Gloucestershire Community Foundation  
GML Global Trading Ltd  
Highfields Trust CIO  
John Lewis  
Julia Rausing Trust  
Lilleybrook Golf Club  
Ludlow Trust (WAB Trust)  
Mayors Charity, Cheltenham  
Metlife Foundation  
Mrs F B Laurence Charitable Trust  
Nancy Kenyon Charitable Trust  
National Grid Community Matters Fund  
Red Savannah

Runciman Charitable Trust  
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St Paul's Masonic Lodge  
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Suffolk Traders  
TFT Consultants  
The Albert Hunt Trust  
The Fine & Country Foundation  
The Midcounties Cooperative  
The National Lottery  
Winchcombe Cycling  
Winchcombe Rotary Club  
Yorkshire Building Society Charitable Foundation  
Zurich Community Trust

## Leave a legacy

Your will is a way to care for the people and causes closest to your heart. Once loved ones are provided for, you might consider leaving a gift to Cheltenham Open Door. Even a small percentage – just 1% – can make a lasting difference to the vulnerable people we support.

A legacy helps us continue offering food, warmth, and care to those who need it most. Whether you're continuing a lifetime of support or giving for the first time, every legacy is valued. If you'd like to explore this in confidence, we'd be happy to talk with you.



**Cheltenham Open Door**

Registered Charity Number: 1063434

Registered address: 39 Grosvenor Street, Cheltenham GL52 2SQ

