

Better Bristol

The Bristol Civic Society Magazine – Issue 18 Spring/Summer 2021

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- Big changes in the city centre
- Protecting from floods
- We're going to the zoo
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- Bristol books reviewed
- Making history



an independent force for a **better Bristol**





Front Cover: The Gloucester Road may be quiet at the moment but it is predicted high streets will see a major resurgence. Photo: M. Manson.

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BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY

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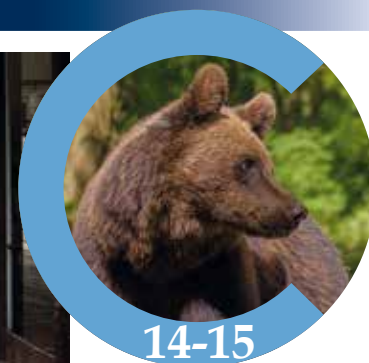
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All articles in *Better Bristol* are the opinion of the author and don't necessarily reflect the views of Bristol Civic Society.

Chairman's report



Construction at the Carriage Works is proceeding rapidly.



Carbon-neutral e-scooters – great fun and highly recommended.

I am very fortunate being Chair of the Bristol Civic Society – able to work with such a positive and

hard working team of volunteers delivering our wide range of activities. And this has been especially valued during the past year. It's customary to thank everyone each year at the AGM but I'm breaking with custom and thanking you all now!

Membership has been increasing, and I think the events programme has contributed significantly to the attraction of the Society during the dark days of a winter lockdown.

A varied programme has included well attended talks on Egypt on Avon, Designing for the Arts, Mapping the Medieval Town, and The Power of Place. We also enjoyed project-focussed events on the University's plans for Temple Quarter and the Zoo's plans for its West car park. How important has Zoom become!

Last autumn I commented on the continuing high level of development activity in Bristol. My recent walks have taken me to construction sites at Brooks Dye Works



in St Werburgh's (well worth a visit and a future Design Award nomination?), Westmoreland House & The Carriage Works in Stokes Croft – long awaited and proceeding rapidly, Redland Court (which I can almost see without leaving home) and, most intriguingly, the redevelopment of the former W H Smith site in Clifton Down

Road. How will this development look when finally completed? It has certainly attracted strong views on all sides. We continue to monitor plans for Waterfront Place (with little enthusiasm for the disappointing efforts seen to date), for the west end of Castle Park (much more promising) and await sight of amended plans for Redcliff Quarter and for the redevelopment of The Galleries. No wonder our Major Sites Group is very busy and is attracting new members.

At New Year we were sorry to see the demise of our Planning Applications Group – which made representations on a wide range of schemes across

Bristol. However, we will continue to monitor and comment on illuminated advertisements. We are delighted to announce the formation of two new groups – the Transport & Place-Making Group (see page 13) and the Bristol Heritage Group. There is a separate report on the Bristol Heritage Group – see page 26.

As we go to press there has been an interesting announcement that the Prince's Foundation is going to be involved in determining a sustainable long-term future for Ashton Court Mansion. We look forward to hearing more details of this exciting new initiative and continuing our involvement in the Mansion.

As an entertaining new activity during lockdown I have been enjoying taking part in the trial of carbon-neutral e-scooters – great fun and highly recommended. A very convenient way of zipping around the City.

Simon Birch

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Not already a member? Why not join TODAY!

See page 27 for more details...

Post-Covid Bristol

Eugene Byrne wonders what the future holds for local shopping.

At the time of writing, England is set to start emerging from lockdown, and by June 21 almost all restrictions will have been lifted.

Assuming that the plan is not knocked off course by, for instance, some new variant of the virus, the world we're going to emerge into will be very different.

Trying to predict the future is a mug's game, though we can say with reasonable confidence that there will be no "return to normal" for a long time, if ever.

While we can be very cautiously optimistic that lockdown and vaccinations mean it's going to be a good summer, the virus is not going to be eliminated for a long time, if ever. As new variants of the virus emerge, annual vaccinations and occasional lockdowns may become the new normal.

The conventional wisdom is that lockdown has accelerated some trends which were already there. For instance, fear of the virus on the part of retailers and customers has seen a fall in the use of cash in favour of card and contactless payments. Similarly, the ever-increasing popularity of online shopping has been turbocharged by lockdown. The new normal, whatever it is, is likely to be very visible in retailing.

Amazon in 2019 had over 30% of the entire e-commerce market in the UK. For one glimpse of the future, go for a spin along the M49 out of Bristol; a little before you join with the M4 you'll see, over to your left, the stupendously large Amazon distribution warehouse. The sheer size of the place, where over 1,000 employees work alongside robots to ensure that your orders are delivered, is proof of the trouble that many bricks-and-mortar shops were already facing before the pandemic.

Recent months have seen several developments locally, many of which have gone unnoticed by the majority of us as we've been under house arrest.

The big headline closure in Broadmead was that of the Debenhams' department store, a local fixture since Jones & Co



Eager shoppers queue up outside Broadmead for the post-Christmas sales at Debenhams, December 27 1985; something we're never going to see again. (Pic: Bristol Post).

opened on the site in May 1957. This of course was only part of the folding of Debenhams across the country.

Less obvious are other, smaller closures, along with the announcement that The Galleries shopping centre in Broadmead is to be transformed over the next few years. When the Galleries opened in 1991 it was the last word in American-style mall shopping (Cribbs Causeway came later), albeit on what now seems a very small scale. But it was struggling to attract customers for some years before the pandemic,



Clifton Arcade, 1997. Local shopping streets and independent shops selling things you can't easily find online or anywhere else are predicted to do well (Pic: Bristol Post).

and was sold for about £32m in 2019, less than the £50.1m it attracted when previously sold in 2011.

It's now to be changed to a "mixed use" development, which will probably include a mixture of retail and residential, reflecting the growing numbers of people now living in the middle of town.

Conventional wisdom has it that the old-fashioned office has had its day. Many people found they preferred working from home, and employers are tempted by the huge savings they can make on expensive office space. There are likely to be fewer people working in Bristol offices, and this has dire implications for Broadmead.

However, Nick Turk, Director of the retail team at property investment firm Colliers, told *Better Bristol* that we should not write off the future of Broadmead and Cabot Circus because huge numbers of people live in the neighbourhood nowadays.

"It's not binary – more people working from home therefore less people in town centres – a lot of these office workers will be replaced by students and people living in rented flats in the centre of town which by and large have been converted from redundant offices.

"Lidl took over the old H&M site – fashion has been one of the sectors which has suffered because of internet shopping – and Lidl aren't silly; they see the number of students coming in, and the number of people living in the city centre."

We should also, perhaps, be careful about writing off offices. While the trend for turning old office buildings into flats may continue, we may also see some former buildings being partly or wholly turned into "hot offices" where you can rent a desk or conference room by the hour, in keeping with modern mobile ways of working – again, this was a trend in place before the pandemic.

Just as Debenhams succumbed to market forces and changing times, another department store chain, John Lewis, is also in trouble, posting a loss of £517m before tax earlier this year and announcing that some of its shops will close, with talk also of plans to integrate some of the John Lewis operation with its Waitrose supermarkets.

At the time of writing we don't know if the branch at Cribbs Causeway will be affected, but industry experts are bullish about the future of the big out-of-town shopping malls.

Certainly, the complex of shops, restaurants and leisure facilities at Cribbs seems to have a reasonable future given the growing population around it, and its good road/motorway connections. There's even an ice rink opening there soon.

In continuing uncertainty over viruses and infections, many shoppers will feel

safer driving there, parking for free and nipping in and out again with their purchases rather than risking driving or taking the bus into town.

There have been plenty of retail winners during the pandemic. All that money you didn't spend at the pub, or at restaurants? A lot of it went to the supermarket instead, didn't it?

Health and "wellness" did well, too. The stresses of lockdown, and the personal dangers posed by Covid-19, prompted many to take regular exercise and watch their diet. Sales of gym equipment and wearable health-tracking devices soared. As did garden furniture.

There are likely to be fewer people working in Bristol offices, and this has dire implications for Broadmead.

But the real winner in the long run might actually turn out to be something we can all support – your local High Street. Between restrictions on our movements and a desire to support local business, most of us spent more money at the shops closest to us. This doesn't just apply to Bristol's different communities, but elsewhere, too.

Nick Turk: "There's a really positive message in places like Wells, Glastonbury, Clevedon, Portishead,

Wotton-under-Edge and so on, which are suburbs of Bristol in the broadest sense of the word. People live there and commute into Bristol to work, but shops in those towns will certainly now have more lunchtime trade because there will be more people who live and work in those places who previously just lived there."

As we make our more routine purchases online and once-familiar High Street fascias go out of business or migrate to the internet, there will be opportunities for small, independent shops, and Bristol is well provided for with these; think of Clifton, and the lower stretch of the Gloucester Road, for instance.

"The winners will be independents because if say you're clothes shopping, they've got something that TK Maxx and Next won't have," says Nick Turk.

"People still love shopping. They love going out shopping, but they want something more than just buying stuff, they want an experience ... companies and shops that provide experience will be the winners."

Business consultants Deloitte said in a recent report: "Lockdown and the growing number of people working from home has led to a return to local shopping, which we believe will continue beyond the pandemic. However, we think the market will polarise between real destination stores that will continue to attract consumers and "hyper-local shopping", which bodes well for the future of the high street."

The Mall, Cribbs Causeway, deserted in lockdown, but likely to make a comeback.



Major Developments in Bristol

John Payne and Simon Birch of Bristol Civic Society's Major Sites Group give an overview



The Arc would rise high in the air to give unparalleled views of the City.

The Arc Millennium Square Anchor Road Bristol

The Arc is an unusual project, a visitor attraction comparable to a fairground ride which would rise high in the air to give unparalleled views of the City. The Society continues to support the concept of the Arc. As an addition to the City's tourist attractions it could make a valuable contribution to the City's economy including the hospitality sector. However, some of

our members have significant concerns about this particular proposal and for the reasons set out below consider the proposed location in Millennium Square to be inappropriate.

We have considerable sympathy with the views of Historic England, the City Design Group and others about the importance of taking care not to adversely affect the City's historic townscape. Whilst we have members who consider the proposal has the

potential to be an exciting addition to Bristol's skyline, other members are concerned about the impact on views - of the Cathedral in particular.

We are particularly concerned to note that it is being suggested that when not operating the Arc would be rested in the vertical. If this is correct, the Arc would be highly visible for long periods of time with a commensurately more significant impact. This is not something we could support.

2-18 Stokes Croft and 2 Moon Street

A revised application has been submitted for this site comprising the demolition of existing buildings, erection of student accommodation, ancillary student services, flexible commercial floorspace and associated works including cycle parking, landscaping, and refuse storage.

Overall, the Society welcomes the redevelopment of this underused and unattractive site. We support the proposal but still have reservations about some of the design elements. The Society welcomes the increase in employment space and the changes to the ground floor frontage to Stokes Croft. Our preference for conventional residential accommodation rather than

student accommodation remains. We have made a number of comments intended to help secure positive changes to the proposal, not to seek refusal.

We welcome the more traditional shopfronts proposed for the Stokes Croft elevation which will be more in keeping with the character of the Conservation Area. Although the mansard roof has been set back further, we still have reservations about the design of the dormer windows which seem far too prominent and do not relate well to windows on the lower storeys.

If the Council accept the proposed student accommodation, the Society suggests that construction allows for conversion to conventional residential use at a later date if demand for student housing falls.

The increased width of the footpath opposite the Full Moon pub is welcome and we have suggested that this be extended into Moon Street. We have also urged that the opportunity should be taken to liaise with other developers active in the immediate area to secure wider public realm improvements.



2-18 Stokes Croft and 2 Moon Street. Overall, the Society welcomes the redevelopment of this underused and unattractive site.

One Temple Way, Redcliffe, Bristol. Refurbishment of existing office and retail accommodation and erection of a two-storey office extension

The Civic Society welcomes the proposed refurbishment and repurposing of this building. One Temple Way represents an important part of Bristol's recent commercial history and we are supportive of the plans to retain the character of the existing building and to create sustainable and modern accommodation.

We support the changes to the ground floor which will make the building much more welcoming to the visitor and passer-by. The additional floors retain the layered and indented form of the existing building and the use of lighter material in their construction will reduce their visual impact in longer views. We understand and support the advantages of inserting a central lightwell.

Gas Lane/Freestone Road, St Philip's

The Watkins Jones proposal for the development of the triangular site between Gas Lane and Freestone Road, is for 387 student bedspaces, including communal facilities, bin and bike stores. No parking spaces are included. Recreational space is provided on a sixth floor terrace and an inner courtyard. Two flexible commercial units are proposed accessed from Freestone Road.

The Society cannot support this scheme. We regard it as premature until there is a clearer strategic view of the overall development of the St Philip's Marsh area which would cast light on the desired mix of development, supporting services and open space.

We find the layout and proposed height of the development unsupportable. The perimeter form would result in a very shaded and unattractive courtyard space. It would also present cliff faces to Freestone Road, Gas Lane and the north/

Plot 3 Dalby Avenue and Whitehouse Lane Bristol. Proposed redevelopment of the site to provide student accommodation, with associated public realm and landscaping

This is a disappointing proposal which the Society initially supported. However the Society could not support the height, massing, elevational treatment and choice of materials in the current development proposals. When we were consulted at the pre-application stage the scheme looked significantly different and we

One Temple Way. The Civic Society welcomes the proposed refurbishment and repurposing of this building.



There will also be positive improvements to the public realm. We would add that we consider that major improvements to the existing underpass

are critical to the ultimate success of any public realm improvements. These should be implemented in tandem with works to One Temple Way.

south route adjacent to the east end of the development. To the north, the Society considers that this would adversely affect the proposed development on the north side of Freestone Road particularly the lower floors. In Gas Lane the combined effect of the high façade and the historic wall on the opposite side would result in an unpleasant ambience for pedestrians and cyclists using the road. This is particularly important as we understand



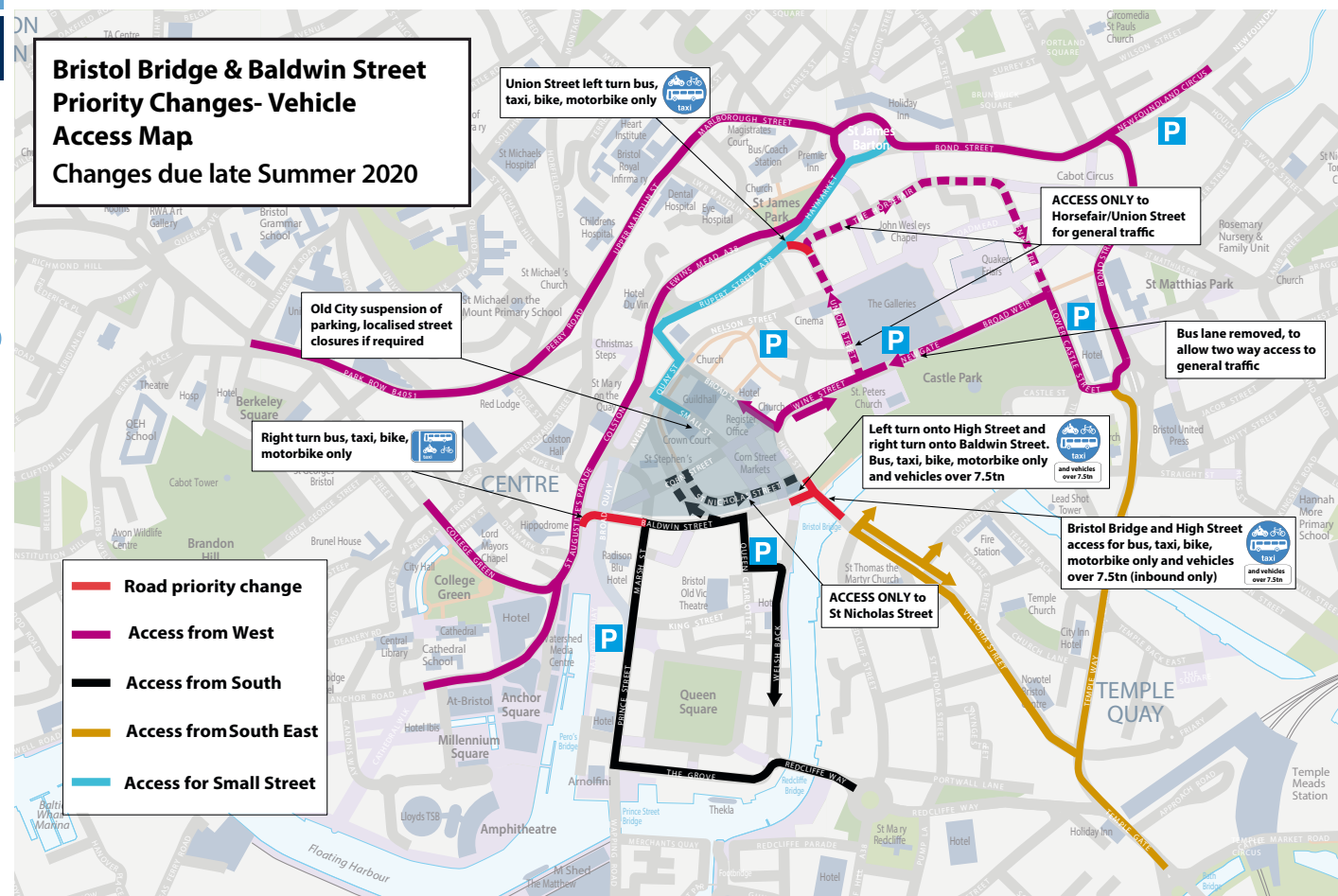
Gas Lane. The Society cannot support this scheme. We regard it as premature until there is a clearer strategic view of the overall development of St Philip's Marsh.

that Gas Lane is intended solely for cyclists and pedestrians. While there might be an opportunity for some higher elements in a development on this site, we strongly suggest a generally lower approach which is sufficiently divided into blocks to allow light into and through the site.

The Society has not commented at length on landscape and public realm issues as we consider the harmful impacts of the proposal to be too severe to be sufficiently mitigated by such improvements. Nevertheless, the planting of a row of trees on the adjacent Gas Lane pavement is a very minor contribution in the context of the proposal. However, there is a great need for public realm improvements in this area to encourage pedestrian and cycle movements. We are also aware of the attractive fan-patterned cobbles on Freestone Road. These should be protected in any proposal. The narrow pedestrian tunnel leading north from Freestone Road to Dings Park is also in much need of improvement.

would like to see bold attractive elevations on both proposed buildings, especially the conspicuous elevations facing both sides of Clarke St and on to Dalby Avenue. At pre-application stage we urged the architects to seek inspiration from the examples of attractive elevations shown to us in the presentation consultation slides. Our views have been largely ignored. We believe the area deserves better than this unambitious and uninteresting design.

Big changes for drivers



Alan Morris explains the complex changes and paints the broader picture behind the headlines.

Bristol Bridge and Baldwin Street have been closed to general traffic.



Changes for drivers

There have been a number of closures to general traffic:

- Bristol Bridge and Baldwin Street
- Union Street – closure of the route to Rupert Street
- Old City (after 10.30 am each day) and King Street
- Cumberland Road – closure inbound (from October 2021)

The effect of these changes is to bar through-journeys from one side of the inner loop road to the other, whilst allowing access to everywhere within the loop. (See *Bristol Bridge and Baldwin Street vehicle and access map.*)

A lane has been removed for general traffic:

- from Park Row to Marlborough Street
- on Lewins Mead

The street space has been given over to a bike lane or a bus lane, helping to free up buses and fill in gaps in the network of protected bike routes.

(See *Bristol cycle route map.*)

A Clean Air Zone (CAZ) will be introduced from October 2021 as follows:

- covering the area within the inner loop road
- affecting pre-2016 diesel and pre-2005 petrol vehicles (about 25 to 30% of vehicles)
- charging older cars £9 per day
- exemptions (initially for 1 year only) for disabled drivers, in-zone residents, low-income city centre workers, hospital visitors
- enforced by cameras
- in place until roadside NOx levels get below legal limits - projected by end 2023.

(See *Clean Air Zone map on page 10*).

The impact on drivers

There are a number of impacts:

- cross-city journeys will become less direct, diverting around the inner loop road
- there will be more traffic and slower journeys on the inner loop road. But the impact of removing a lane may be less than one might think: the

in Bristol's city centre

flow capacity is determined by the pinch-points at other points on the inner loop road.

- some journeys will be displaced to avoid the CAZ charge, creating more traffic on roads outside the city centre. This has been modelled in planning the CAZ, and will be monitored.
- charges will be incurred by those that choose to drive in the CAZ, or have no alternative. And by some who have unwittingly been caught driving on Baldwin Street or Bristol Bridge, not noticing the signs
- some people are concerned that the restrictions will damage footfall for businesses and tourism. But note that the Cabot Circus car park is outside the CAZ.

Bristol has more traffic passing through the city centre than other cities because the M32 brings traffic into the centre and there are fewer outer-lying alternatives than in other cities. The CAZ zone includes Temple Way and the Cumberland Basin flyover, so through-journeys will be affected.

The impact may change over time: it takes months for drivers to adapt their journeys, and some journeys may 'disappear', as drivers choose different ways to travel. And overlaid are traffic changes during Covid lockdown, and longer-term post-Covid trends in travel and workplace patterns. Traffic levels returned to 85% of 2019 levels in October 2020, but the daily pattern changed – less commuting and more daytime trips.

The broader picture

So those are the facts: what is the broader picture? Why are the changes being made? How do the changes fit into the Council's wider transport policy? What are the longer-term goals? How will the politics play out?

Bristol city centre suffers from too many vehicles on its roads, and the expansion in Bristol's population, and more city centre residents, will increase the travel demand. Curbing private motor traffic in city centres as a policy is common across the UK and Europe. This is not just about how we move around: it is about making streets pleasant places to experience and enhance our well-being. It is recognised that there is insufficient street space to accommodate the huge growth in vehicles over the years, and that public transport and active travel use the space more efficiently and need space to ease their passage. To the extent



that drivers switch to other modes, there are fewer cars on the road. Traffic congestion is not only frustrating for drivers but unpleasant for other road users. Air pollution is now recognised as a top public health threat, and traffic contributes to roadside pollution: electric cars will take away NOx emissions but not particulate pollution.

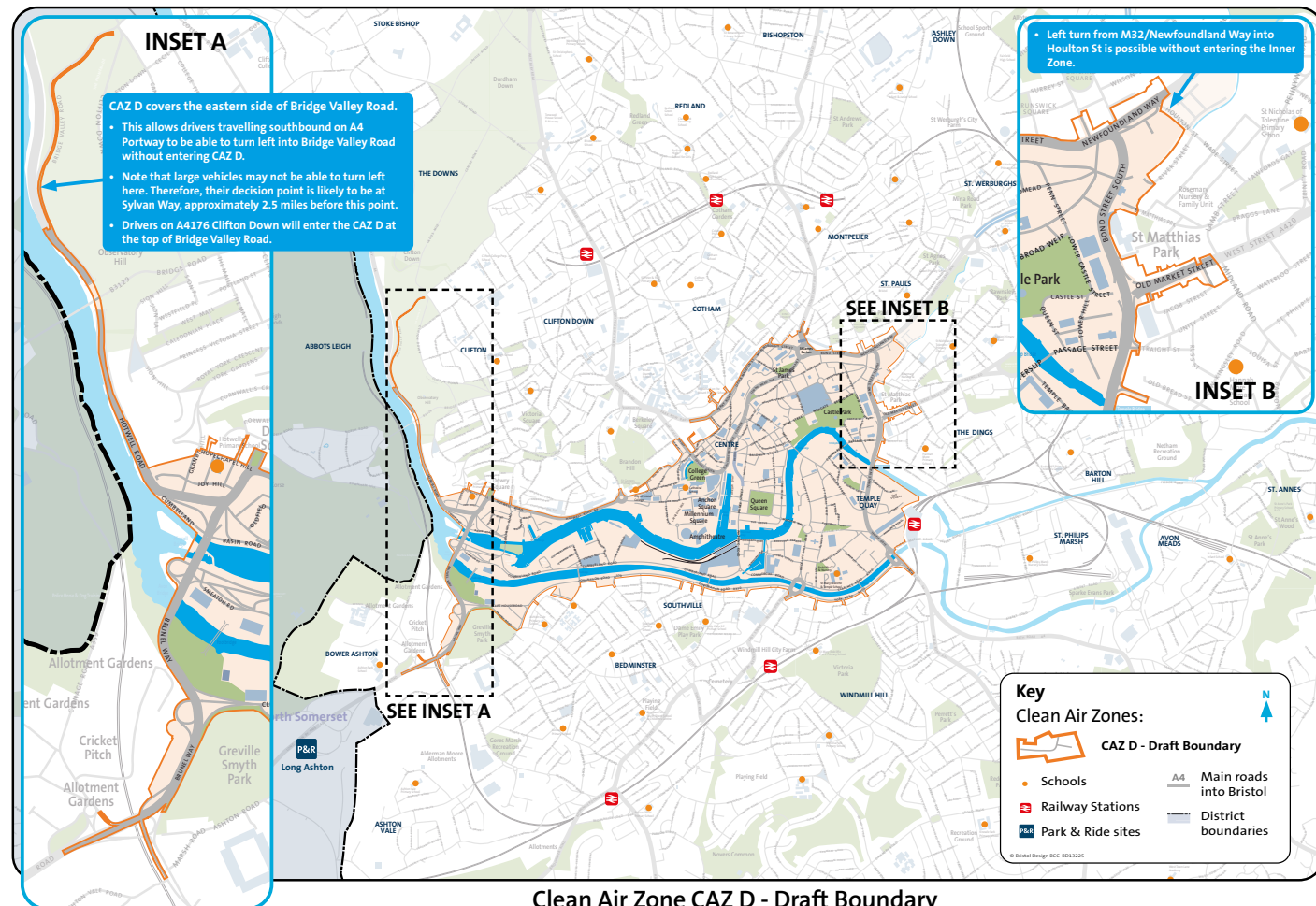
Bristol had no choice in implementing a CAZ, even if it has taken the Council five years to deliver it. Along with other cities, it was belatedly complying with EU rules which pressure group Client Earth took legal action to force the government to address. For a long time Bristol's Labour administration prevaricated out of concern for the effect on lower income drivers. Then Covid came along, and the government ordered councils to take measures rapidly to enable social distancing and facilitate active travel. In response, the Council chose to bring forward plans for city centre street space changes, in the hope that this would achieve air quality compliance without a CAZ. But the government's decision deadline of February 2021 gave them insufficient time to demonstrate the effectiveness of the measures.

To be fair, street space changes can be a more effective way of reducing air pollution: Baldwin Street is a good example. And the Mayor was right in encouraging people to use public transport and active travel as a more constructive way of reducing air pollution. Even though a CAZ is useful as a very public way of effecting travel behaviour change, it is arguably an expensive sticking-plaster solution, which has absorbed Council resources too much and for too long.

The Council recognises that the CAZ will cause some displacement of traffic through inner suburbs. In defence, it argues that the acceleration of changes to cleaner cars due to the CAZ will benefit inner suburbs, that the modelled displacement of air pollution is less significant than one might think, and that they will introduce Liveable Neighbourhoods to mitigate the impact. Liveable Neighbourhood schemes include point closures to prevent traffic passing through a neighbourhood whilst retaining access to anywhere in the neighbourhood: it is the same 'traffic cell' approach that has been applied in the city centre. Liveable Neighbourhoods

(Continued on page 10)

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Clean Air Zone CAZ D - Draft Boundary

(From page 9)

also introduce other measures to encourage walking and cycling and improve the public realm, and are now firmly a part of the Council's plans.

The street space changes in the city centre, including the closure of Bristol Bridge, were foreshadowed in the 2019 Bristol Transport Strategy and the 2020 City Centre Framework policy documents. The latter document specified city centre route networks for public transport including continuous bus lanes; pedestrian routes and priority routes for public realm investment; All



There have been traffic changes during Covid lockdown.

Ages and Abilities (AAA) cycle routes.

Also in the Council's transport plans are strategic corridor schemes that will make street space changes to free up buses on arterial roads, and make cycling and walking safer and more attractive. These are the so-called 'Bus Deal' schemes, under which First Bus has committed to increasing bus frequency in return for quicker and more reliable passage for their buses. These schemes are even more important since Covid-19 damaged public transport. The first scheme is route 2, from Cribbs Causeway to Stockwood. Route 2 buses are helped by the closure to general traffic of Bristol Bridge. Over time, the corridor schemes will be complemented by further Park and Ride schemes – progress is frustratingly slow. All these schemes are an essential counterpart to the city centre changes, enabling access to the city centre by sustainable travel modes.

These transport plans have the wider aims of reducing carbon emissions and air pollution. Transport causes over a third of greenhouse gases in the UK, and it has been estimated that motor traffic volumes have to reduce by 40% to meet the 2030 zero emissions target, even allowing for the move to electric cars. Street space measures are a quick and cheap way to help meet that goal. The Council has yet to explain to the general public this bigger picture of its

transport plans but it intends to rectify this later in 2021.

In an ideal world, all the complementary elements of the transport plans would be introduced at the same time, but in the real world the progress and timing of these schemes is constrained by the funding available. The city centre street space schemes were brought forward when the government made funding available for active travel schemes in 2020. Nowadays most of the funding for Bristol's transport plans comes via the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), the sub-regional authority that includes South Gloucestershire and Bath and North-East Somerset. Currently, WECA's adopted joint transport plan is quite strongly roads-based, but it is under review. The plans for both Bristol and WECA will depend on the outcome of the May elections, with different political landscapes in Bristol and the sub-region. However, the transport plans I have described seem to carry broad party political support.

Surveys show that the majority are in favour of these changes, but it is certain that some changes will meet strong resistance: some people do not like their freedom to drive restricted and they voice their complaint loudly. Recent news reports from elsewhere of protests against Low-Traffic Neighbourhood schemes are evidence of that.

In focus

Better Bristol is pleased to feature the works of Daniel Makepeace and Tamos Kovacs, photography students at City of Bristol College.

Dan Makepeace photographed central Bristol - the areas around the docks and Corn Street. His images are beautiful and formal. Tamas Kovacs photographed Purdown - a suburban wild place that has become an outdoor art gallery. His images show the contrast between a gritty foreground and the city beyond.



The Foundation Degree in Professional Photography at City of Bristol College is a 2-year course. Students can progress to a full BA with a third year at the University of Plymouth. The

course covers academic and research disciplines. It is a vocational course aiming to give students what they need for a career as an independent photographer.

Top,
Watershed walkway.
Photo by Daniel Makepeace.

Left,
St Stephen's church.
Photo by Dan Makepeace.

Right,
Tamas Kovacs Purdown
swastika graffiti. Photo by
Tamas Kovacs.

Below,
Purdown bunkers. Photo by
Tamas Kovacs Purdown.



The heavy anti-aircraft battery at Purdown was built in 1939 at the beginning of the Second World. It was subsequently converted into a permanent reinforced concrete and brick-built battery with octagonal gun emplacements, integral ammunition bays, blast walls and shelters in June 1940.

It was manned by the Royal Artillery Regiment. It is now a scheduled monument retaining many of its original features.

Protecting the city centre from floods

Alan Morris considers the Bristol Avon Flood Strategy consultation

Bristol's city centre is vulnerable to the risk of both tidal surges up the river Avon and downstream river overflow from rainwater, possibly at the same time. The risk of flooding is projected to increase over coming decades. It can damage buildings and cost lives. What action should Bristol take to defend itself against this risk? The Council has been grappling with this question, and recently consulted on its proposed strategy.

The first question is whether flood risk could be managed solely through downstream measures (a flood barrier) and upstream measures (natural interventions). A River Avon barrier, possibly creating a new traffic crossing, appeals to some, but it would be an



Cast-iron flood marker for the 1882 flood, Mina Road, St Werburghs.

ambitious and possibly risky engineering project, with a high cost. The Council's technical advice (taking into account cost considerations) is that down- and up-stream measures are not sufficient on their own, and that raised defences are needed along city centre waterways. Plainly, this has implications for some of Bristol's treasured places and views.

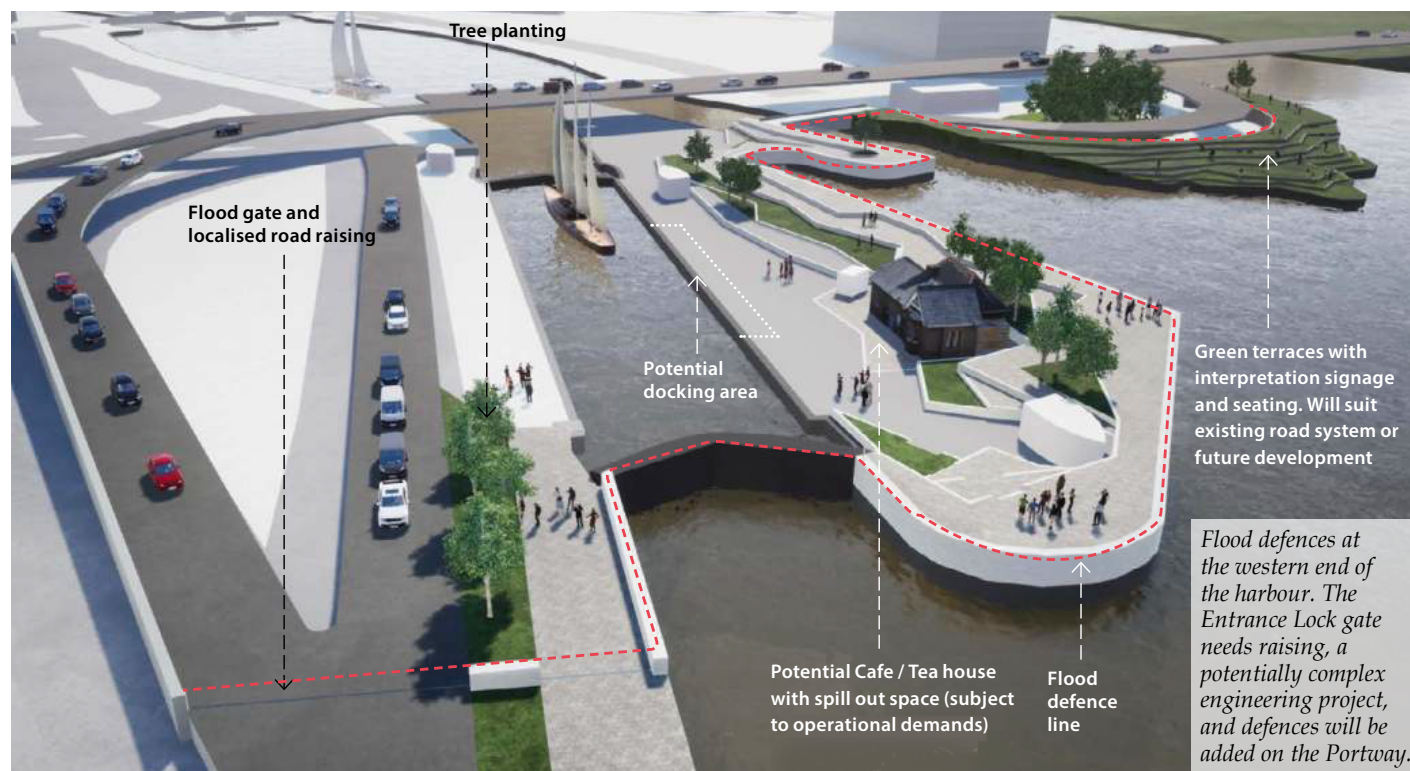
Take for instance the view of the Avon gorge from the western end of the Harbour – the locks, and the 'Knuckle' promontory near the Create Centre. The visualisation shows how the defences might be designed. The flood defence is shown in dashed red. The modelling studies for the next 50 years result in a wall which is approximately 2 metres above existing ground level; beyond

that, as flood risk worsens, extra height could be achieved by retrofitting glass panelling to the top of the wall. This design concept would retain access to views by giving access over the wall on to the end of the Knuckle, and by adding raised terraces between the locks so that people can look over the defence wall.

Note too in the visualisation that the Entrance Lock gate needs raising, a potentially complex engineering project, and defences will be added on the Portway. The flood defence work may be integrated into plans for changes in the layout of the road and land use in the Western Harbour area, on which there was early consultation in 2019.

These design ideas are at an early 'aspirational' stage. The changes will not happen quickly. Funding needs to be secured, and the plan is to adapt the flood defences gradually over time. Opportunities will be taken to incorporate greening, public realm improvements, walking, cycling and recreational infrastructure into the defences. Designs will be developed in consultation with local communities and other interested stakeholders.

Whilst the strategy is developed over time, new waterside developments will continue to come through the pipeline,



The risk of flooding is projected to increase over coming decades.

providing an opportunity to add new defences. Take the Silverthorne Lane area for example, bounded by the Feeder Canal and the Floating Harbour. Last summer the Council approved a large hybrid development, but the application has to go through a further stage: it has been 'called in' by the Secretary of State because the Environment Agency (a statutory consultee) objected.

This development raised the following issues:

- The developer was not able to rely on the provision of strategic flood protection because there is no current commitment to provide this.
- The assessed degree of flood risk changed during the evolution of the development
- The development includes residential use, a school and student accommodation – all vulnerable categories of use

The proposed flood management solution includes an egress route along a canalside walkway along the whole frontage, external spaces and voids below buildings to provide flood water storage, and residential uses that are positioned above the flood levels.

Flood risk assessment includes a strong focus on safe access and egress during

a flood, including whether there is likely to be much advance warning of a flood, and whether in practice people would use the egress routes provided. The Council's Flood Risk officer felt able to approve the egress plan, but the Environment Agency (which has a wider remit) considered that "there will be a danger of loss of life for the general public and the emergency services in a flood event". They also thought the development should be raised more to avoid the risk of deep flooding.

Another emerging development is the Harbour caravan site by Baltic Wharf. Here the proposal is to raise up the whole development. But even so access/egress is not risk-free, because flooding could overwhelm the underfall duct between the Harbour and The New Cut, and flood water could submerge Cumberland Road.



Gloucester Road flooding in the 1930s. These days flooding is more likely to be caused by a tidal surge.

New Transport and Place-making Group

Bristol Civic Society has started a Transport and Place-making Group to cover this increasingly important issue.

The group's scope is the future development of transport and public space policy and schemes in Bristol. It will cover not only movement aspects, but also place-making aspects - the quality of the public realm, and spatial frameworks for a neighbourhood area undergoing major development.

The first meeting was in January, and the group is currently meeting once a month. We have a mix of people in the group: some with relevant knowledge and experience and others coming with no more than a strong interest and a keenness to know more.

New members are very welcome. Do contact me to find out more.

Alan Morris
alan@morrisfastmail.fm

INVITATION - PROVISIONAL!

Bristol Civic Society 2021 Annual General Meeting

At the time of going to press, it is not at all clear whether the Covid situation will allow us to hold a normal public AGM, nor whether there will be much public enthusiasm for attending one even if it is allowed. If need be, we will hold an online AGM as in 2020, but we are making provisional arrangements to hold a "real-life" one (with social distancing, if the rules at the time require).

We plan to hold it on

Tuesday 22 June, from 7pm,

at **"The Mount Without"**

(formerly the Church of St Michael on the Mount Without), St Michael's Hill, Bristol BS2 8DT.

You will thus have the opportunity to see the progress made in transforming this splendid but dilapidated and fire-damaged building into a performance and events space.

Refreshments from 7pm; the meeting starts at 7.30pm.

The Agenda will include:

Chairman's Report, Finance Report, election of officers and other Management Team members, and review of the Society's activities.

Nominations for officers and Management Team members must be sent to the secretary no later than 15 June, at secretary@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

We will let members know as soon as we can whether this meeting will take place, or will be replaced by an online AGM (which would hopefully be on the same date). We will communicate this by email, but will also send letters to those who don't have email addresses or don't habitually read emails.

For many years Bristol Zoological Gardens has been facing some fundamental challenges. Included in these challenges is a 12 acre site far too small for the needs of the animals, and falling visitor numbers.

The impact of Covid 19 drastically reduced visitor numbers (attendance is normally about 700,000 p.a. across two sites) and forced the speed of change. Zoos have large overhead costs, both fixed and variable, and the perfect storm of difficulties led management to bring forward a strategic plan for its future direction and financial stability.

Consequently, a new world-class zoo with spacious, modern facilities is to be created. The new site will allow for significant growth in conservation and education work and a ground-breaking, innovative visitor experience.

In order to secure one of the city's most respected and popular attractions and free up opportunities for the future, the Clifton site will be sold and the zoo moved to land it owns at the Hollywood Tower Estate near Cribbs Causeway.

But first a brief history of the development of what could be considered a 'zoo'. The oldest 'zoo' in the world with a continuous existence, is the Tiergarten Schonbrunn in Vienna. This 'menagerie' was opened to the public in 1752. Other European zoos quickly followed: Madrid in 1775 and in Paris in 1795. The 'modern zoo', focused on providing scientific study and exhibits for public entertainment and inspiration, emerged in the nineteenth century in Great Britain. The Zoological Society of London established London Zoo in Regent's Park in 1828. Its setting and layout in the middle of a large city enabled it to appeal to a large urban population, and was widely copied as the model for a public city zoo in Victorian times.

Hence Bristol Zoological Gardens, founded in 1836 by the Bristol, Clifton and West of England Zoological Society, which claims to be the fifth oldest modern zoo in the world. It also has the distinction of being the world's oldest provincial zoo. Incidentally, the abbreviation "zoo" first appeared in print in the UK around 1847 when it was used for Clifton. From its early days the zoo housed a considerable number of species of animal, bird and insect, large and small, from around the world (much I guess garnered from the British Empire).

Today, Bristol's Victorian walled zoo and gardens contain many of the original buildings, some of which



One of the four bears at Bear Wood at Wild Place Project © Andre Pattendon.

We're going to the zoo

You can come too, says *Nic Billane*, but no longer to Clifton.



Above left, Keeper John Partridge with Wendy the elephant at Bristol Zoo Gardens. Middle, The historic Monkey Temple at Bristol Zoo Gardens now home to an exhibit on plants.



are listed and a few are quite quirky in design, which may account for their enduring architectural interest and the wish to protect them. While some of the older buildings are no longer fit for their original inhabitants, much of the grounds and gardens are still recognisable. The zoo estate has continued to evolve and develop within space limitations. Recent examples of investment include the Seal and Penguin Coasts (1999), Monkey Jungle (2006), and Gorilla Island (2013) home to a family of western lowland gorillas.

But the constraints of the site have made it difficult to meet the needs of the animals. The foundation of a second

zoo called 'Wild Place Project' on 22 July 2013 at the Hollywood Tower Estate provided the key for future zoo development. Wild Place already houses many of the larger species, with space to roam in specific habitats such as the new Bear Wood and Discover Madagascar.

The plan is to move some of the Clifton species into their new habitats by 2024 when a new exhibit exploring animal species of the forests of Equatorial Guinea and a publicly-accessible Conservation Breeding Centre will be created. The species list for each is yet to be finalised but will include some species from Clifton as well as species from other zoos.



Endangered species will be bred in a purpose built conservation breeding centre at the new Bristol Zoo.

Memories of Bristol Zoo visits stay firmly in the minds of generations of children who became parents themselves and continued the tradition of family visits. The thrills started as one passed through the famous white portal gate entrance opposite the Downs, to hear the roar of lions and tigers. Then to move on to see the antics of chimps, lofty giraffes, the reptile house, languid penguins, acrobatic fish-eating sea lions and outrageously pink flamingos. Older readers will recall the BBC's 1960s Animal Magic programme with Johnny Morris wearing his zoo keeper's hat, interpreting the deepest thoughts



of animals and hissing reptiles into his spoken English. I've a personal memory from the 1980s of my young twin sons studying closely the immensely powerful but temperamental 32 stone silverback gorilla through the safety of a thick plate glass window. I also recall my concern for the sad looking grey seal, or Misha the (long-gone) polar bear who lived at the zoo 40 years ago after being rescued from a circus. I recall him pacing repeatedly around the pool enclosure - reflecting exactly the extent of a cage in which he had lived during his time at the circus. Things do change, often for the better.

Today, Bristol Zoological Society is a conservation and education charity. Its mission is focused on saving wildlife, while engaging and inspiring people to do likewise. Its vision is for wildlife to be a part of everyone's lives and for people to want to, and be enabled to, protect wildlife now and for the future. The zoo also breeds endangered species, helps preserve habitats and promotes a wider understanding of the natural world.

Over the next couple of years the move from the Zoological Gardens site to the spacious 136 acres occupied by the Wild Place project (located close to the

M5 and a handy shopping mall), will be completed, thus addressing one of the major pressures. The prime 12 acre Clifton site will be sold, probably for residential development. But much of the iconic architecture within the boundaries will be retained. An example being the main public entrance building on the A4176 which will become an urban conservation hub. Change will happen, the zoo will survive and prosper, the animals will be happier - but will still growl or hiss or maybe maintain a dignified silence (their choice).

The move offers great hope for the future, enabling continued research, proactive conservation efforts and the ongoing opportunity to observe the animals, free to roam in a suitable space. It will surely excite the young and indeed those of all ages who have an interest in the environment and wildlife. The enduring popularity of the TV output of wildlife films on our screens will continue to delight, but for future generations actually visiting a zoo can be even better.

Bristol Zoological Society has a useful website which fully describes its activities, including its research and conservation work. www.bristolzoo.org.uk

Clifton remembers...

What did you do during lockdowns? Well, for me, I needed something to fill the void - the tours that I led each week on the Clifton Suspension Bridge and inside the Leigh Wood abutment vaults were summarily cancelled. I worked on filming projects for the bridge's website and on Zoom presentations. At first, using Zoom was exciting: my laptop screen would populate itself with faces, like the Muppet Show intro with Kermit and his chums stacked along the balconies, or like postage stamp-sized doors opening on an advent calendar.

But rather than fill a void, I was staring into one: it was difficult to get connection with participants. Video conferencing is no match for actual face-to-face meetings. Humour is difficult to get across, especially subtleties such as irony. We derive personal warmth from non-verbal communication - facial expressions, which are hard to distinguish on a streamed image, and emphasis and tone, which are tricky to pick up with poor audio signals.

What I needed was a Big Project, which got me out of the house as well as involving me in lots of bookish and googly research. The solution: devise walks around a beautiful suburb which is adorned with commemorative plaques. I could spend warm August afternoons strolling or cycling around Clifton. Now, August is known as the silly season when not much happens, but that's not true. It was in the month of August that World War I started, Hitler ordered the invasion of Poland and Saddam Hussein marched into Kuwait. And here was I planning a sortie into CHIS-held territory. Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society has put up green plaques each year since 1989, embracing and celebrating an eclectic spectrum of celebrities. And there are some older ones: large, handsome, rectangular bronze plaques erected by the Clifton Improvement



Dorothy Brown. Bristol's Boudicca.

Committee in the nineteenth century. There are also unattributed plaques perhaps put up by the university since they often appear on halls of residence.

I could google deep down into each plaque subject's history. I would end up with informative walks which could attract Society members and I would be able to directly relate to them, serving up tasty ingredients: meaty historical information, crispy humour, nutty dramatic irony and a *soupçon* of political incorrectness. That recipe had certainly worked for me on the bridge tours. . .

There are more than sixty plaques in Clifton and the slopes of Hotwells, providing a rich variety. But I saw an opportunity to celebrate another aspect of Clifton: its enterprising merchants. Leading businessmen in the second half of the nineteenth century

bought mansions in Pembroke Road - seven of them lived within a few hundred yards of All Saints' church. They were all members of the council's Docks Committee, and were involved in the long conflict of vested interests on the future of our city's port: maintain the city docks or develop new ones at Avonmouth and Portishead. And they held proud civic positions - Aldermen, Masters of the Society of Merchant Venturers, Sheriffs, JPs, and Presidents of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce.

The prosperous merchants of Pembroke Road were engaged in a wide range of trades: methylated spirit makers and drysalterers; the importation of hide and tallow from Montevideo; coachbuilding (by appointment to royalty), paint and varnish manufacture and a grocer, with a chain of stores which "revolutionised the high-class business in provisions, wines, spirits, &c., together with household requisites in general". One



Above, E H Young. Her novels are set in Clifton.

Right, Sir George Oatley. His Perpendicular Gothic looms over Park Street.



Gordon Young takes a tour of Clifton's commemorative plaques.



Sayce and Percival. An Egyptologist and an educational pioneer.

of them had an impressive international reach, importing timber from Russia, Mexico and Canada.

It would be a worthy project, a fitting counterpoint in a year in which our city's history has been demonised internationally. I was determined to prove that we locals, while we might sound like Long John Silver when we talk, are not piratical, cutlass-wielding rogues. Our ancient city can boast many centuries of distinguished and enterprising endeavour. In the 1240s, Bristol men shifted a river to create St Augustine's Reach. And forty years before Cabot's voyage of discovery, Robert Sturmy's astonishingly ambitious commercial venture marks him as one of our city's greatest sons - a brave merchant venturer, who you probably have never heard of. He certainly deserves a statue and there's an empty plinth in Colston, oops, sorry! - Beacon Avenue . . .

Commemorative plaques can only bear the briefest of biographies. It was fascinating to unearth facts which didn't make an appearance. Here are some examples:

- An artist who painted herself into the background, gazing out at the observer with a wry smile just as the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael paints himself as Apelles in his acclaimed "School of Athens" fresco in the Vatican (Rolinda Sharples, Canynge Road)
- A poet who imagined corpses under his bed in childhood dreams and nearly drowned when sleep-walking into an attic rainwater tank (John Addington Symonds, Clifton Hill House)
- A formidable paediatrician, who, when on a ward round, caused even the innocent to wonder what they might have done wrong (Beryl Corner, Rodney Place)



Left, Richmond House's three plaques. A talented trio - an epidemiologist, a physical anthropologist and an author.

- A scientist who had a compost heap in the garden which provided methane gas for cooking (Dr C R Burch, Percival Road)
- Not just one, but two *ménage à trois* relationships (Sir Henry Newbolt, College Road and E H Young, Saville Place)
- A talented epidemiologist (we could do with him right now) (William Budd, Lansdown Place, and Clifton Road)
- A child, rejected by his mother, who inherited a coal-mining fortune of £80,000 annually (John Lambton, 1st Earl of Durham, Rodney Place)
- Inspirational women, ahead of their time: an architect, and a suffragist who convened one of the earliest gatherings in England to discuss votes for women (Evelyn Dew Blacker, Victoria Square; Florence Davenport Hill, West Mall)
- Television's first chef, who enjoyed a final meal of oysters, partridge and champagne (Keith Floyd, Princess Victoria Street)
- A poet/physician obsessed with death: he poisoned himself in 1849 and left a suicide note calling himself, "food for what I am good for - worms" (Thomas Beddoes, Rodney Place)
- A modernist architect who got it wrong when designing a home for penguins (Berthold Lubetkin, Princess Victoria Street)
- A fossil collector who filled a Hotwells house with thousands of specimens; it took eight days to auction them off when he died (James Johnson, Dowry Parade)
- A French princess who wrote home from our city: "*Ne pensez pas qu'il y ait des divertissements publics ici. Tout le monde reste à la maison et on ne voit jamais un homme à la mode dans la rue.*" ("Do not think there are any public amusements here. Everyone stays at home and one never sees a fashionable man in the street.") (Princess Eugenie de Montijo, Royal York Crescent)

Hmmm, young Eugenie's comments apply today, *peut être* . . .

But when this particular Horseman of the Apocalypse afflicting us eventually rides off and we are rid of the plague, then, providing his fellow jockeys - Sword, Famine and War - don't visit us, the Clifton Plaques Walks can resume.

See you there.



Ferry cross the Avon

Ferries have been an important driver in the revitalization of the Bristol's harbour, says Nic Billane.

Today Bristol has a reputation for being an attractive city. One of its major draws is its nineteenth century man-made floating harbour, covering more than 80 acres which roughly follows the old water course of the rivers that drain into the basin. The harbour developed significantly during the thirteenth century but hasn't always looked as nice or fragrant as it does today.

The harbour's character, fortunes and use has changed dramatically over the centuries, evolving from a muddy

inland tidal port to, in its prime, a buzzing harbour full of ships from around the world. In recent decades (since the 1970s) a regenerated space for leisure, housing and tourist attractions has breathed life into the waterfront



area as traditional activities of trade, along with their associated jobs, moved to Avonmouth or Portbury.

Choosing iconic views to represent Bristol today I would include the Clifton Suspension Bridge, the SS Great

Britain and the harbour vistas which often have yellow and blue ferries plying their trade with colourful hot air balloons floating high above it all.

Way back in early times the rivers and the tidal flows would have presented major challenges for our ancestors. Perhaps in those primitive days traversing watercourses might have been a matter of waiting for the tide to go out so that the river could be forded. Or even to seize a passing log and hang on to it, to avoid the alternative of a long trek along rough tracks with baggage on one's back. During the late Bronze Age when our ancestors dwelt in wattle villages, a dug-out log canoe would have been useful, perhaps even skin covered coracle type boats were the ancient precursors of ferries. As things moved on a simple bridge would have been constructed. Bristol's name, after all, is derived from the Saxon 'Brigstowe' or 'place of the bridge' to help travellers on their way.

As Bristol's importance as a trading centre grew the need to facilitate the local movement of people developed. Ferries offered a quick, easy and convenient way to cross the harbour. Old city maps show numerous ferry routes traversing the water. There were ferries operating from Redcliffe to Welsh Back, from Guinea Street to River Station, from the New Gaol to Southville, from the Cumberland Basin across the Avon to Somerset (the Rownham ferry) being just a few examples. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the development of roads, new bridges and railways, Bristol's old ferry routes declined along with passenger numbers.

Skipping a few decades, Bristol was re-imagined and reinvented in the 1960s and 1970s when it became clear that rather than filling the docks with rubble and covering with urban expressways, using the harbour as an attractive component for urban renewal would be worth exploring.

Today we better understand the benefits of non-automotive usage, of environmentally green transport, of sustainable values, clean air quality and so on. In 1977, a group of movers and shakers calling themselves the City Docks *Venturers* resolved to kick-start the revival of the docks. This non-profit making conservation group appointed



Ian Bungard to run a ferry service. Soon a fleet of distinctive and classic craft, all of them painted in the iconic yellow and blue paintwork, became a familiar sight plying the docks.

Many Bristolians have fond memories of the *Margaret*, the original boat in the fleet (built 1952 in Appledore, served in North Devon, then used as the Pill ferry pre-M5 bridge). In 1980 the *Independent* joined (built in 1927, originally used on the River Severn and Wye), followed in 1992 by the *Emily* (built Bideford in the 1920s). Each of these classic wooden boats weighs around 16 tonnes with a capacity for 30-50 passengers. The most modern craft in the yellow and blue fleet are *Matilda* (built in Bristol harbour by the ferry company in 1997), and the steel-hulled *Brigantia* (built 2006) which is fitted with a curious lifting wheel-house to facilitate passage under low bridges. The experience of travelling on these characterful boats is complemented by the friendly and knowledgeable crew who are willing to provide a well-informed tourist information service to visitors and locals alike.

The commercial history of Bristol Ferry Company has had its dramas. In 2002 the business was sold; ten years later the company went into liquidation. Supporters of the company then bought back the fleet at a receiver's auction. Thus, in 2013 the Bristol Ferry Company was transformed into its current ownership by 850 shareholders and now trades under the banner of Bristol Community Ferry Boats Limited.

The water bus service usually runs throughout the year with a reduced timetable during the cold winter months when boats are routinely taken out of the water for maintenance. The ferries have contributed enormously to making the dock a tourist attraction, moving customers to restaurants, galleries, museums, and historic ships which dot the quayside. Hires

are popular for their entertaining commentaries about Bristol landmarks, maritime history and wildlife and are much used as education study trips. The ferries help increasing numbers of people get to their work places in the city centre.

In a normal Bristol summer it is not unusual to see up to 15 tourist boats operating in the harbour and around the docks. It is difficult to judge just

Ferries bring people together, they help commerce, they provide jobs, they keep skills alive, and the crews provide knowledge of the city's history, its wildlife and its culture.

how many tourists use the service while visiting Bristol but an estimate of over 250,000 may not be too far off the mark. The boats and their associated infrastructure contribute to the city economy by providing employment to boat crews (usually 2-4 per craft) and hospitality staff who serve on private hires. Full-time staff and volunteers are also engaged in the administration involved in managing the operations. Additionally, boatyards, such as the Underfall Yard, maintain the craft.

The blue and yellow boats have had



competition since 1999 from another fleet of distinctive shark-mouth painted craft that also ply the harbour and offer a similar range of services. The Number Seven Boat Company has a number of converted ex-lifeboats, the *Mercury*

and sister crafts, *Numbers 3, 5, and 7*. The most recent addition to the fleet is the *Freedom* which is a covered boat with a retractable roof. The company also operate the *Mary Brunel* which offers a cross-harbour shuttle to the SS Great Britain. Another familiar boat trip company, the *Bristol Packet*, established in the mid 1970s, operates a fleet of four boats, the *Tower Belle*, canal boats *Redshank*, and *Flower of Bristol*, and a splendidly exotic craft the *Bagheera* from their site on Gas Ferry Road, offering harbour tours and river cruises.

The damaging effect of the Covid19 pandemic in 2020/21 halted the programme of floating delights, depriving visitors of a popular and convenient way to explore Bristol by ferry boat. The opportunity to traverse and commute the length and breadth of the harbour, float up the civil engineering marvel of the New Cut, or travel the Avon to Beese's tea gardens and the pubs at Hanham Lock were put on hold.

Many major cities have made a feature of iconic ferries in their watery locations. Amsterdam water taxis, New York Manhattan cruises, Sydney-Manly ferry, and Venetian gondolas spring to mind. The successful revival of the Bristol's ferry tradition has supported the revitalization of the harbour side ambience, the growth as a tourist area, the re-population by new businesses and new residential housing. Ferries bring people together, they help commerce, they provide jobs, they keep skills alive, and the crews provide knowledge of the city's history, its wildlife and its culture.

Let's hope they prosper in the post Covid 19 world, when life can return to normal. The boats have been maintained, insured throughout the lockdown and are ready to go.

Illustrations also by Nic Billane.

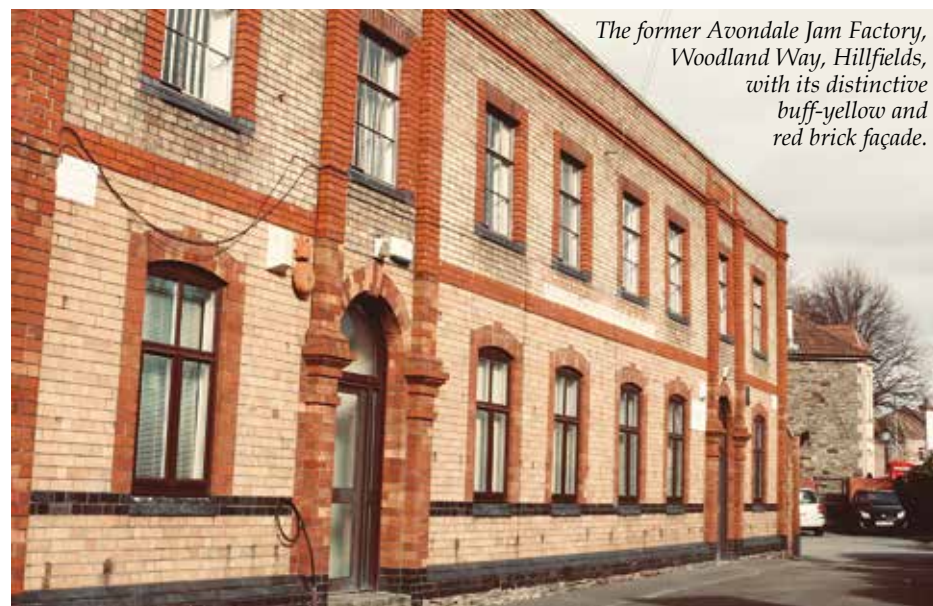
Bristol's industrial heritage

Mike Manson reveals new additions to Bristol's Local List

Every year Bristol City Council publishes additions to what is called the Local List – buildings and structures that don't have National Heritage listed status but are nevertheless deemed to be important locally.

The most recent list of 24 additional buildings focuses on Bristol's industrial heritage. These include the atmospheric Georgian Gaslight works on Avon Street dating back to 1821; Kingsland House, Gas Lane, St Philip's, a workers institute building designed by premier Bristol architect George Oatley; the striking Ashton Gate Brewery where Ribena was first manufactured; rare remains of Easton colliery, off St Gabriel's Road, one of the few buildings standing that are a reminder of this once important industry, and the former Avondale Jam Factory, Woodland Way, Hillfields, with its distinctive buff-yellow and red brick façade.

The oldest building added to the list is a former Newcomen engine house tucked away in Hollywood Road, Brislington. Dating from the 1730s, and now a private residence, it once housed an engine to pump water from a coal mine.



The former Avondale Jam Factory, Woodland Way, Hillfields, with its distinctive buff-yellow and red brick façade.



Below, Ashton Gate Brewery, where Ribena was first manufactured.

It's remarkable that Heritage England hasn't already accredited this one.

Bristol's maritime history is represented by the inclusion of the dock walls of the Royal Edward Dock at Avonmouth alongside the imposing Avonmouth Lighthouses, which are so striking they are to be put forward to the National List.

The most modern structure is an imposing, space-age building, built in 1961 by Alec French Architects. This impressive single arch structure in Rose Green, built to house a print and box making company, was used most recently as an indoor go-karting track.

So why a Local List? Although not protected by law these 'heritage assets' must be taken into account in

determining a planning application. They are viewed as important in terms of the contribution they make to local distinctiveness and their potential significance to local communities.

Councillor Nicola Beech, Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning and Design, said: 'Industrial buildings are often overlooked as they don't fit people's perceptions of beauty or culture... Recognising the special nature of these places helps highlight their value in the history of Bristol and makes sure they can be conserved and adapted appropriately for new uses. Reusing historic buildings is the ultimate form of recycling.'

How are nominations assessed?

The Architecture Centre has set up an independent panel to assess the nominations every few months.

The panel uses a set of criteria based around these themes:

- architectural interest
- historic importance
- artistic interest
- archaeological interest
- community value

Other factors such as completeness, rarity and the degree to which they may be thought to be typical of Bristol, such as the use of local building materials, are also be considered.

You can nominate a building by emailing conservation@bristol.gov.uk

All nominated sites must be in the Bristol City Council area.

Each year Bristol Civic Society presents an award for an outstanding piece of work by a graduating student from the Faculty of Environment and Technology at the University of the West of England.



Bristol Civic Society Student Award

Sophia Kwong outlines her vision for an improved Bristol Marina and a Climate Emergency Institute.



Above left, Visualisation of external space.

Above right, Covered slipway converted to boat workshop.

Below left, Multi purpose atrium.

ground level. The Bristol Marina will become the heart of Spike Island.

For our individual final year projects, as a response to the Climate Emergency declared by Parliament in 2019, we were required to design a Climate Change Institute. Using this as the starting point for my brief, the building was designed with its location to front the Bristol Marina. 'The Craftyard' encompasses an approach for promoting and inspiring boating activities in an environmentally conscious way, by engaging visitors through arts and craft making, and integrating the building more carefully within its existing context.

Much unintentional harm to the marine ecology is caused by refuelling, engine emissions and oil leaks from poorly maintained boats. Just 5% of oil and fuel pollution comes from catastrophic spills. As a response to this issue, the project envisages shared spaces for cleaning, repairing and overall maintenance of motorboats and other craft, while also offering public workshops that provide spaces for upcycling scrap materials produced on-site. This scheme endeavours to mitigate the environmental impacts on Bristol's waters while simultaneously engaging and educating the users on ways they can be more mindful of the growing problem. The building also comprises an exhibition/gallery space to showcase the works created inside; aiming to unite private and public services and encourage a more efficient use of the location.

For the final year studio project on our Architecture and Planning degree, we worked as groups to design a masterplan proposal for the Spike Island area of Bristol.

The masterplan incorporated homes of mixed price and tenure, office and business premises, leisure facilities, and a location for our Climate Change Institute, a building that we were to design for our individual final year project.

Spike Island is a historically rich harbourside area that holds a strong maritime character. Today, some boat and tool workshops remain and are still operational. Spike Island is also notable

for its creative culture, with several institutions dedicated to the arts, along with Banksy's renowned piece, 'The Girl with the Pierced Eardrum', attracting visitors all year long. In spite of there being many physical attractions to the area, it lacks a sense of quality public realm, specifically around Bristol Marina. There are too many parking spaces, together with numerous railings that fence off sections of the site.

Our masterplan proposes a new waterfront space that seeks to invite the public to the harbourside edge by introducing pedestrian zones in front of the Bristol Marina. The masterplan also aims to further connect Spike Island to the rest of the city. This is achieved through a new business quarter, which introduces mix-use buildings with shops, cafes, bars and restaurants on

Book review

Recent books featuring Bristol.

From Wulfstan to Colston – severing the sinews of slavery in Bristol

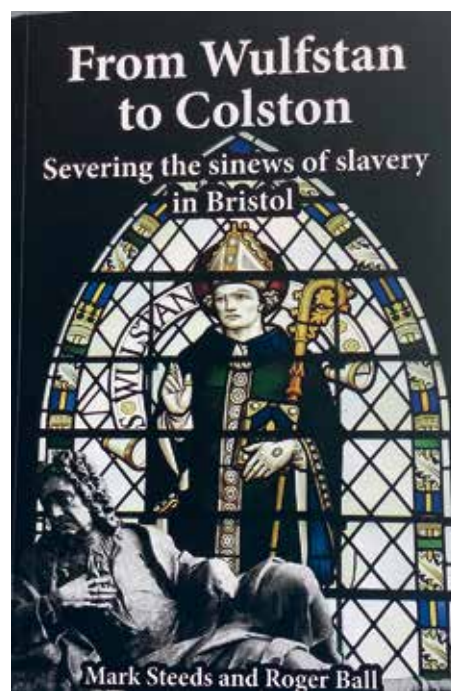
Mark Steeds and Roger Ball, Bristol Radical History Group, 2020, 420 pages, £14.00.

The toppling of the statue of Bristolian slave trader in June 2020 made world news. Following this event Mayor Marvin Rees said : ‘The events over the last few days have really highlighted that as a city we all have very different understandings of our past.’ It is timely to see this important and thought-provoking new book on Bristol’s involvement in people trafficking through the ages.

From Wulfstan to Colston – severing the sinews of slavery in Bristol traces Bristol’s involvement with slavery back to Anglo Saxon times. In those days the trade involved the trafficking of men and women to Dublin – a practice that was stopped by Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester, who was later canonised as a saint.

Steeds and Ball track Bristol’s

involvement in the development of the overseas colonies. The first recorded shipment of enslaved Africans to the plantations of Virginia was in 1619. Over the following years increasing numbers of kidnapped Africans



It is timely to see this important and thought-provoking new book.

were forced into labour on the North American and Caribbean estates.

The Bristol-born Edward Colston first appears in 1672, when he is shipping cloth and wine to and from Spain. But Colston was soon involved with The Royal African Company. It is estimated that between 1672 and 1713 170,000 enslaved Africans were transported across the Atlantic. Of these, 36,000 died during the crossing. Working from London, Edward Colston and his family were deeply involved with this outrage against humanity.

In 1698 the African trade was opened-up to merchants across the country. Bristol’s Society of Merchant Venturers quickly got in on the act. By 1725 Bristol was the main slave trading port in Britain with over 20, 30 or even 40 vessels leaving for the African Coast each year.

By the end of the eighteenth century, revolts of the enslaved on plantations and a vociferous abolition movement were hastening the end of this brutal trade. The British slave trade was abolished by Act of Parliament in 1807. After a number of slave rebellions around the Caribbean, slavery was officially abolished across the British Empire in 1833.

In an interesting and topical addendum Steeds and Ball, recount the rise and fall of the cult of Colston.

Written chronologically, this is another fascinating, meticulously researched publication from the ever thought-provoking Bristol Radical History Group. *Mike Manson*

Manson’s Bristol Miscellany

Michael Manson, Bristol Books/Tangent Books, 2021, hardback, 160 pages, £18.00.

Bristolians are well provided-for when it comes to local history books, ranging from the serious and academic to brazenly inaccurate trivia.

Manson’s Bristol Miscellany is an interesting new twist; though meticulously researched and referenced, it’s neither heavy nor frivolous.

Nor is it chronology from primeval swamp to present, but a thematically-organized salad of facts and stories, which, says the author, is “whatever grabs my interest” as part of a decades-long quest for “the soul of the city”.

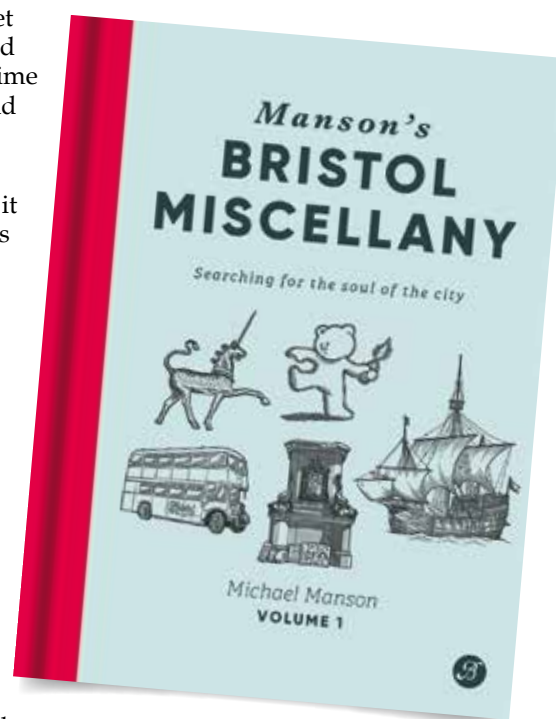
Much is missing or only mentioned in passing (Brunel, pubs, trams, Concorde, Caraboo, etc.), but that’s the point (there’s always volume two

to look forward to). What we do get is parks and streams, industries and infirmaries, trades and markets, crime and (lots of) punishment, slums and sanitation and more.

For the local history trainspotter, the tests of any new book are a), is it accurate? and b), does it tell me lots of things I didn’t already know? It passes both with ease.

Never heard of the Henry Slead stream? Didn’t know the clever stroke the builders of the General Hospital pulled to generate extra income from warehousing? Where was Dead Horse Lane? Why did American soldiers deliberately throw themselves off Charles Heal’s fairground rides?

Manson’s Bristol Miscellany will set you right on these and more. It won’t tell you all of Bristol’s history in the right order, but you’ll feel smarter for reading it, and you’ll want more. It might even set you off on some quests of your own. *Eugene Byrne*



Though meticulously researched and referenced, it's neither heavy nor frivolous.

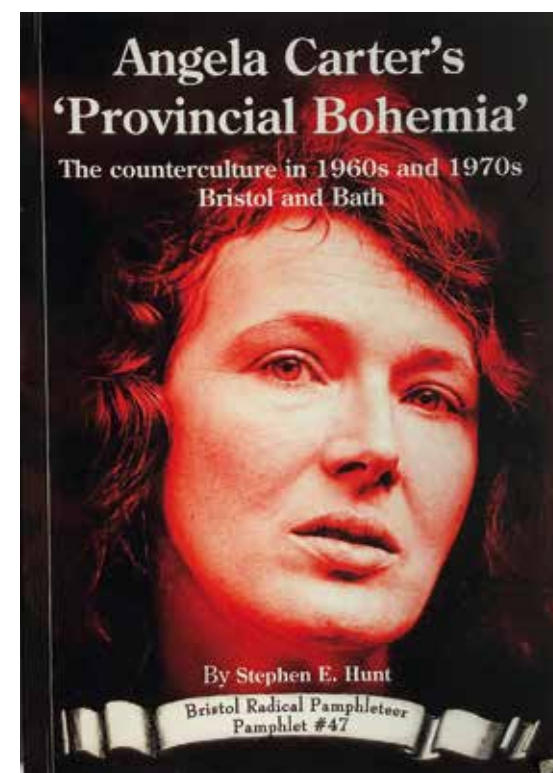
Angela Carter’s ‘Provincial Bohemia’

Stephen E. Hunt, Bristol Radical History Pamphleteer #47, 2020, 162 pages, £9.00.

Angela Carter (1940-92) moved to Bristol in 1961 and lived at 38 Royal York Crescent. Her unique gothic vision of a rundown Bristol in the 1960s is otherworldly and mildly disturbing. Carter is widely regarded as one of the most influential writers of the twentieth century.

While in Bristol Carter was astonishingly productive. Her novels, *Shadow of Dance*, *Several Perceptions* and *Love*, often dubbed the Bristol Trilogy, offer a unique view of ‘swinging sixties’ provincial counterculture. Indeed, more specifically, Clifton counterculture. It was in the 60s that Clifton first acquired the soubriquet ‘village’ – an ironic reference to New York’s Greenwich Village. Clifton was a lot less posh then than it is now.

Some of the more mature *Better Bristol* readers may remember those days. It was a time when the Bristol Civic Society was campaigning against the threat of a new monstrous hotel and car park dominating the Avon Gorge, or saving Kingsdown from the wrecking ball.



As much an analysis of Bristol’s 1960s counterculture as a study of Angela Carter.

Hunt has gathered together a who’s who of bohemian Clifton with anecdotes that vividly recreate the beatnik scene which largely revolved around politics, poetry, art, music and mind altering substances.

Hunt describes Carter’s social milieu: middle-class bohemians surviving on modest incomes, living in little appreciated run-down Georgian Buildings. There were positive

consequences to ungentrification. Rents were minimal, and attractive to the more creative fringe elements.

Although not outwardly political, Carter, described herself as an anarcho-Marxist. In 1968, encouraged by the demonstrations in Paris, there was a wave of student sit-ins across the country. University of Bristol students invaded the Senate House and set up an ‘assembly’. Apart from ‘student solidarity’ it is unclear what their demands were.

Hunt identifies many of Carter’s thinly disguised venues: The Berkeley Café; The Lansdown pub; The Plume of Feathers on Hotwells Road; The Greyhound (now The Bristol Fringe (Why?)); The Arnolfini when it was based in the Triangle, Clifton.

Bristol’s 1960s counterculture was creative, chaotic and fun. Hunt highlights the rise of the Women’s Liberation Movement, campaigns for LGBTQ+ rights, the fight for affordable housing, and environmental activism. All issues still relevant today.

By the time Carter left Bristol in 1969 she was an established author. A green plaque at her address on Royal York Crescent erected by the Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society commemorates her time in the city.

A readable and wide reaching book; as much an analysis of Bristol’s counterculture as a study of Angela Carter. *Mike Manson*

Hotwells: Spa to Pantomime,

Sue Stops, Bristol Books, 2020, 80 pages, £10.00.

According to Sue Stops the people of Hotwells and Clifton Wood are a resilient bunch.

The land that we know as Hotwells was originally a slither of terrain between the settlement of Clifton up the hill and the final bend in the Avon before you hit the docks. It was only in the eighteenth century with the establishment of the Hotwell Spa that it became a community in its own right. Yet the spa was never a rival to Bath. The Hotwell House was demolished in 1822.

The people of Hotwell have faced a number of challenges over the centuries. The first was the digging of the Cumberland Basin. A massive project involving a thousand labourers reshaping the landscape. The second

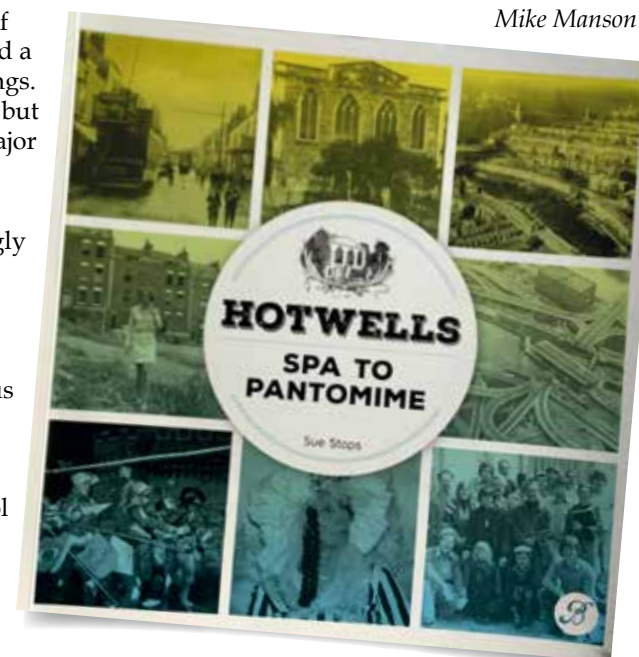
challenge was in the 1960s when the car ruled the roost. The building of the Cumberland Basin flyover involved the demolition of several rows of houses and a number of historic buildings. Dowry Square was saved but Hotwells, divided by a major road, was never the same.

Sue Stops writes engagingly about the neighbourhood she lived in for over 40 years. From the 1970s, Hope Chapel, with its concerts, plays and famous pantomimes became the glue of the community. Without naming names, who knew so many Bristol Civic Society members had a thespian streak in them!

The character of Hotwells is yet again under threat with the confusing Western Harbour scheme.

If this book is anything to go by, the people of Hotwells will make their voice heard.

Mike Manson



The people of Hotwells and Clifton Wood are a resilient bunch.



In 40 years Redcliffe have published over 200 books on Bristol.

Making history

Mike Manson provides a brief survey of Bristol's historians.

Over the past 250 years, historians and lay people alike have done much ground work to uncover Bristol's past.

The first comprehensive account, *History and Antiquities of the City of Bristol*, was written by William Barrett (1733-89) in 1789.

Barrett, who trained as a surgeon, gathered together early charters and manuscripts. But equally as interesting is his detailed account of Bristol in the 1780s – including descriptions of the docks, industries, markets and fairs. His 700 page tome was accompanied by 30 copperplate illustrations and a specially commissioned large fold-out map. Unfortunately, Barrett is primarily remembered for being duped by the boy poet Thomas Chatterton (1752-70) who provided bogus information.

It was a good, if flawed start. Forty years later, school teacher and clergyman Samuel Seyer (1757-1831), aware of Barrett's failings, was more rigorous in his approach. Seyer transcribed the raw material of charters, calendars and minute books for his two volume *Memoirs, Historical and Topographical, of Bristol and its Neighbourhood*, (1821-

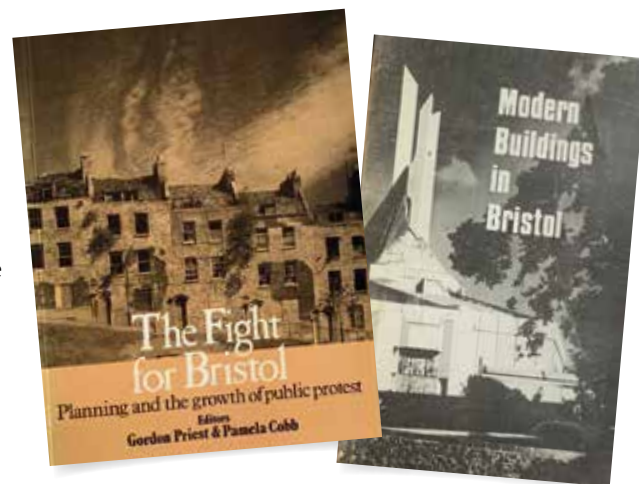
23). Clearly written, reliable, and typographically accessible, Seyer laid out the corpus of Bristol's history from which much further interpretation has flowed. Seyer is one of my first 'go to' historians. His text is accompanied by fine engravings by Edward Blore (1787-1879) with whom he had a difficult relationship. 'Engravers are men of strange manners,' Seyer commented. One wonders, however, what Blore made of Seyer, who was notoriously free with his use of the cane.

At the same time, John Evans (1774-1828), a printer, published *A Chronological Outline of the History of Bristol* (1824). This shorter volume covers much the same ground as Seyer, but in less detail. Financially the book was a failure. Evans sustained a great loss from the publication of the book. The Corporation voted him £20 on delivery of four copies. Evans died in London in 1828 when a theatre which he was attending collapsed on the audience.

Another renowned chronicler was John Latimer (1824-1904), a journalist

who worked for the *Bristol Mercury*. His four volume *Annals of Bristol* is an impressive compendium of seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century events. Latimer scanned the newspapers and summarised the major stories. His *Annals* are well researched, but also nicely partial! A classic.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Bristol printers and publishers J. W. Arrowsmith hit gold. Although their main business was printing timetables, they also published the occasional novel. Their most celebrated



In the 1970s, the Bristol Civic Society dipped its toes into the inky world of publishing.

books were the timeless *Three Men in a Boat* and *The Diary of a Nobody*. But alongside these comedy classics Arrowsmith's produced a range of helpful Bristol guides and directories. Their *Dictionary of Bristol* (1906) provides a comprehensive portrait of the city in the 1900s, while *Bristol and its Famous Associations* (1907) by Stanley Hutton detailed a range of biographical cameos. Arrowsmith's continued to provide updated city guides throughout the twentieth century.

In the 1970s, John Sansom's Redcliffe Press published its first book, *Children's Bristol* (1976). Read as much by adults as children, its runaway success paved the way for Redcliffe's extensive coverage of Bristol's history and built environment. In 40 years Redcliffe have published over 200 books on the city – many superbly illustrated.

When it comes to the built environment, Bristol is well-served with commentaries. For early architecture *The Town House in Medieval and Early Modern Bristol* (2014) by Roger Leech is an astounding compendium of Bristol's earlier buildings. 35 years in the making, it not only covers surviving buildings but also uses documentary evidence of houses that are now demolished. Heavily illustrated with photos, maps and plans it's a stunning achievement.

The Georgian architecture of Bristol has been extensively covered. C.F.W. Denning, a distinguished architect himself, produced the sumptuously illustrated *Eighteenth Century Architecture of Bristol* (1923), while Walter Ison expanded on this in his *Georgian Buildings of Bristol* (1952). Timothy Mowl's *To Build a Second City* (1991) is witty and opinionated. Andrew Foyle updated Nikolaus Pevsner's ground-breaking, but rather arid, *Buildings of England – North Somerset and Bristol* (1958) with a splendidly illustrated pocket volume (2004).

George Oatley, surely one of Bristol's most visible architects, with the Wills Memorial Tower and other commercial and domestic buildings to his name, is admirably represented in Dr Sarah Whittingham's meticulous monograph *Sir George Oatley* (2011).

In the 1970s, the Bristol Civic Society even dipped its toes into the inky world of publishing. The 70s were a crucial turning point for Bristol's built environment. The Bristol Civic Society was at the forefront of injecting some sense into the waves of ill-conceived developments that were threatening to destroy much of what made Bristol so special.

Gordon Priest and Pamela Cobb wrote the influential *The Fight for Bristol* (1980). The Bristol Civic Society wasn't against change *per se*. In fact, two volumes, *Changing Bristol* (1979) by Tony Aldous and *Modern Buildings in Bristol*, praised a range of modernist buildings many of which haven't necessarily stood the test of time. I have to admit that the description of the then Avon House North as 'stretching sinuously' and having 'massive dignity' did make me momentarily re-evaluate the building. Though I wasn't so easily swayed by the entry on the Cribbs Causeway Service Station: 'Stylish and intelligently thought out...'

But, for me, *Bristol – an architectural history* (1979) by Gomme, Jenner and Little is encyclopaedic and reliable. An updated version by Gomme and Jenner was published by Oblong in 2011. Anything written about architecture by Mike Jenner is eminently readable.

For a visual record of Bristol in the late nineteenth and twentieth century Reece Winstone's distinctive self-published volumes are an unrivalled photographic record of the changing city.

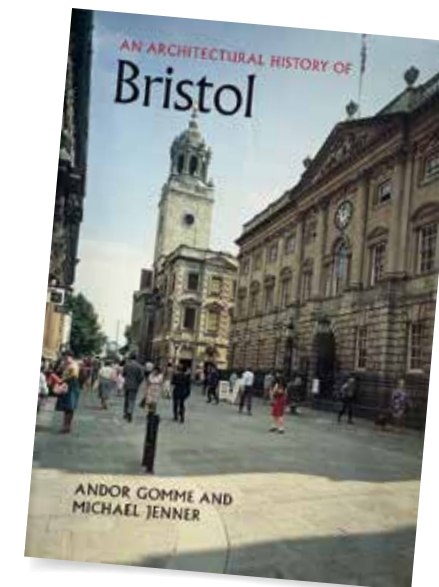
Times change and viewpoints shift. Just as history is written by the victors, so also is it a product of its time. The mythologizing of Edward Colston is a case in point.



Where were the women. This is what Jane Duffus asked, and answered.

By the 1980s Bristol's history was being re-evaluated and the largely Victorian narrative reassessed. The glories of previous ages turned out to be not so glorious. Historians began to highlight Bristol's unpalatable role in the trans-Atlantic triangular trade and how colonial links brought great wealth to the city.

There was also an increasing interest in working class history. In the 1980s, the publishing collective Bristol BroadSides gave voice to the previously unheard. Many of Bristol BroadSides's booklets came out of history workshops run, in conjunction with the WEA, on council housing estates. The ground-breaking *Bristol's Other History* (1983) contained chapters on labour struggles, woman's emancipation, people's housing



Bristol – An Architectural History, is encyclopaedic and reliable.

and tales of everyday domestic and working life. This was followed by *Placards and Pin Money* (1986) which included Madge Dresser's influential *Black and White On The Buses* detailing the 1963 Bristol bus boycott.

Publications from the Bristol Radical History Group, formed in 2006, continue this tradition. Although the group's roots are exhilaratingly radical, veering on the anarchic, their publications are scrupulously researched and well-worth reading.

In 1997, the establishment of Regional History Centre at the University of the West of England confirmed local history had come of age. The centre has published a number of lavishly illustrated books in partnership with Redcliffe Press and also produces the *Regional Historian* (now an annual yearbook) in addition to free monthly lectures at M Shed (when conditions allow).

But where are the women? This is what Jane Duffus asked, and answered, in her magnificent two volumes of *The Women Who Built Bristol* (2018-19).

There are, of course, many more resources for the Bristol historian. Special mention must go to *Know Your Place* a truly fascinating, ever growing, on-line database of maps and heritage information. Established in 2011, rarely a day goes by when I don't consult this addictive digital mapping resource.

These are just some of the resources that have led the way or have personally resonated. And I haven't even mentioned the uniquely well-stocked Bristol Central Reference Library - where you should find these publications - and the unrivalled Bristol City Archive for original research.

Mike Manson is the author of the *Manson's Bristol Miscellany* (Bristol Books).

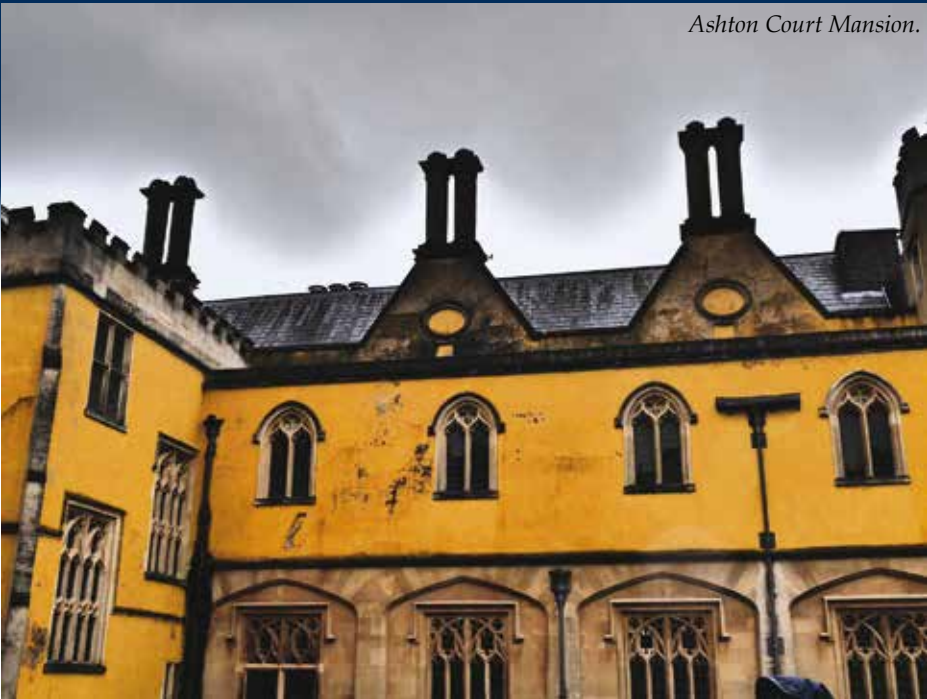
A new heritage initiative

Simon Birch announces an exciting new Bristol Civic Society campaign group

From time to time it's good practice for a charity to revisit its objectives and to check that it's actually doing what it was set up to do. That's exactly what Bristol Civic Society did last year. I anticipate that all readers of Better Bristol may not be conversant with our charitable objectives so here they are:

- The Society shall promote and encourage the following objects, by charitable means but not otherwise.*
- a. To stimulate public interest in, and care for, the beauty, history, character and future of the City of Bristol and its surroundings.
 - b. To encourage high standards of architecture and town planning; the preservation of the best of the remaining features of the historic past of Bristol and its surroundings as well as the best of the existing features of public amenity and interest; the incorporation and blending of such features in present and future developments; the improvement of existing and the creation of new features of public amenity and interest.
 - c. To pursue these ends by means of meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, other forms of instruction and schemes of a charitable nature. (That's enough objectives. Ed)
- We realised that one component of these objectives was not receiving sufficient attention – the heritage of the City – the preservation of the best of the remaining features of the historic past. The Society has resolved to establish a new heritage group, and 18 members immediately expressed interest. The group adopted very clear and succinct objectives:
- Acting as advocate and champion of Bristol's heritage.*
- Promoting the value of heritage to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the City and to its sustainable development.*

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY



Ashton Court Mansion.

The group quickly identified three priorities:

- i) Ashton Court Mansion and Estate. This is a long running challenge and the Society organised public meetings in November 2017 and again in Summer 2019. We also welcomed publication of the Purcell Report. The City Council has decided to keep the Mansion "inhouse" and we plan to work with the Council in the coming months to help secure its long term future. We are excited to learn that The Prince's Foundation will be involved with a community consultation on the future of the mansion in the Spring. We look forward to receiving more details as they emerge.
- ii) The famous Llandoger Trow closed early in 2019. The building is owned by Bristol City Council and leased to Whitbread. It suffered substantial bomb damage in WW2, was renovated in the 1960s and now needs much care and attention. The group is investigating a community-based campaign.
- iii) The future of Western Harbour is

much discussed but details about its future are currently uncertain. We are very aware of the importance of heritage assets, which include the Brunel lock and bridge, the Floating Harbour, tobacco bonds, and housing in Hotwells. A watching brief just now. Future activity will depend on the interests of group members and will also relate to development activity in the City. The group recently put together a response to the City Council's consultation on the proposed Silverthorne Lane Conservation Area. If you are interested in joining the Bristol Heritage Group or just wish to receive information about its work please get in touch.

Simon.birch7@gmail.com



The famous Llandoger Trow closed early in 2019.

Bristol Civic Society membership

Your Civic Society needs YOU!

Bristol Civic Society is more than 100 years old. It is a non-party-political body which campaigns for what is best for our city. Joining the Society is inexpensive and it is open to all. The bigger and more diverse our membership, the stronger we can be. As a Society member you're also on the invitation list to a range of events and benefits, from serious campaigning through to expert talks and social evenings and outings.

Bristol Civic Society is:

- * Saving the best of Bristol's past
- * A powerful voice in Bristol's future
- * Campaigning on issues that affect us all - and the generations to come
- * A great way to make new friends (and maybe re-connect with old ones!)

Find out more about the Society and its work at bristolcivicsociety.org.uk



Joining is easy

There are three ways to apply. You can do it via the website: bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/get-involved/join-the-society where you can join using PayPal, or download an application form. Or fill out, cut out or photocopy, and return the form below.

Have you considered leaving something to the Bristol Civic Society in your will?

Membership application to join Bristol Civic Society

Membership (Annual)	Rate	✓
Individual	£20	
Joint living at the same address	£30	
Student	£10	

Please return to: Membership Secretary, Bristol Civic Society, 52 Oakwood Rd, Bristol, BS9 4NT. Cheques, if not made by standing order, made payable to Bristol Civic Society. **Enquiries:** Tel: 0117 9621592. **Email:** membership@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

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www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Events

Spring and Summer 2021

While the evidence of a steady and progressive exit from the Covid pandemic will hopefully gather pace throughout the spring and summer months, Bristol Civic Society's events programme will expand as government guidelines permit. At the time of writing, the aim is for all restrictions to be lifted by 21 June at the earliest if conditions are met.

We are already planning the resumption of outdoor walks, site visits and occasional seminars, and would ask members to periodically check our website <http://www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk> for news on upcoming events.

Over the past lockdown months Bristol Civic Society Events Team uncovered much "light relief" archive film of quirky or unusual local interest subjects. Many gems remain to be uncovered and we will continue to make themed collections of short films available to Bristol Civic Society membership over the next few months.

Meanwhile, Zoom meetings have proven very popular. We aim to offer Zoom meetings on a monthly basis covering topics of architecture, historic or human interest. Zoom presentations are often organised at relatively short notice and promoted in advance by email invitation direct to members. Presentations are often recorded and are posted on the website for those who are unable to view events in real time.

Upcoming Zoom events

MAR Wednesday 24 March at 7.30pm.

A presentation by Robin Gray of Alex French

Architects, a well-established award-winning Bristol-based Architectural Practice, who have completed a wide range of projects covering education, housing, offices, cultural community, mixed-use regeneration, master planning and design.

APR Wednesday 7 April at 7.30pm.

A talk by Andy Blayney of Bristol Harbour's historic Underfall Yard.

Since the creation of the Floating Harbour in 1809, the Underfall Yard has been



Ed 'the shirt' Hall will lead a walk focusing on the New Cut and its bridges.

critical to its operation and maintenance, and to this day remains a vibrant corner of the area's industrial heritage.

Other Zoom events in planning include, more presentations from local architects, lectures from academics covering local history, and insights on interesting projects which have an impact on city life and environment.

Walks

As soon as it is practical we will launch three different regular Clifton and Hotwells Plaque walks, guided by Gordon Young (see pages 16-17). Other walks, including Ed Hall's guided tour of the New Cut and bridges, and the postponed Shirehampton study walk with David Martyn, will be

advised via email, or posted on the website. Details of other new walks and visits to sites of local interest will be posted on the website in due course.

Other dates for your diary

JUNE Tuesday 22 June at 7.00pm.
Bristol Civic Society Annual General Meeting, either live or online – see page 13 for details.

JULY July. **Summer social evening**. Date, time and location to be announced.

SEPT September. **Bristol Civic Society Design Awards** – details to be advised.