

Better Bristol

The Bristol Civic Society Magazine – Issue 22 Spring/Summer 2023



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- Going underground • Sustainable Westbury-on-Trym
- Let's Dance - creative re-use of Jacob's Wells Baths • Bristol in 1973 - fifty years ago!



an independent force for a **better Bristol**





Front Cover:
What sort of city do we want to live in?
Photo: Michael Manson.

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From the Chair

Just how important is Bristol Civic Society in the life of the city?



With continuing budget and service cuts in the City Council – affecting planning, design and transport, all services of great interest to Bristol Civic Society – coupled with the loss of senior officers through retirement and career change – the loss of professional expertise and the historic knowledge of how the City works are seeping away with potentially serious results.

A new Chief Planner and Head of the Planning Service is being sought. The advertisement calls for an experienced person. Someone who will 'know just how divisive planning can be. So, it's equally important that you bring the gravitas to lead critical conversations

across the Council, with developers and politicians and – most importantly – the communities in our care. To earn their trust, understand their views and find solutions that work for all'. We look forward to meeting up with this exemplary person!

A need to be able to work with the City Council, and other partners, in order to ensure that Bristol retains its attractive appearance.

With increased national emphasis on design and the introduction of Design Codes to guide future development there is a great need for suitably experienced professionals in the City Council. Yet current proposals will severely reduce this part of the planning service. We find this difficult to understand.

In just over a year's time (May 2024) the City will move from having an elected

mayor to a committee system. What will be the implications for planning, transport and all the other Council services? Will decisions continue to be made in a timely fashion? Or will Bristol revert to the situation where things happen despite the Council and not because of it?

We will all have different views on these issues but it's apparent that changes in the City Council have a significant impact at a time when there are tremendous pressures for development. Bristol is a prosperous city and housing is in great demand, whether for residents, incomers or students. Yet development land is a premium within tightly drawn boundaries and an encircling Green Belt.

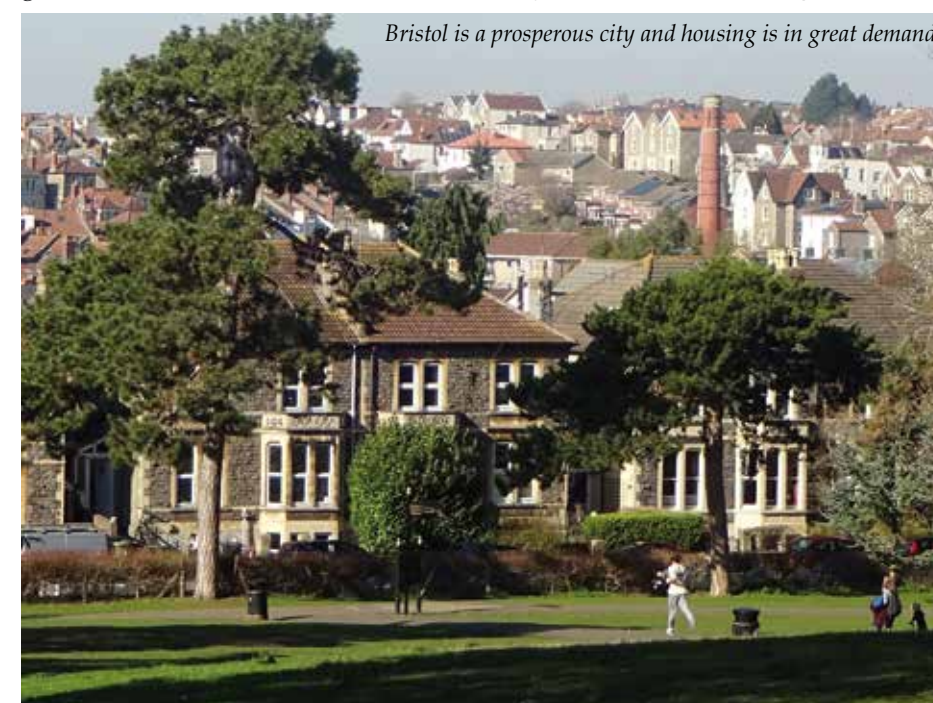
What does this mean for Bristol Civic Society? An opportunity for a strong voice on development proposals. A need to be able to challenge poor quality schemes, to champion suitable projects and generally to ensure that there is a high level of debate and conversation about the direction the City is taking. A need to be able to work with the City Council, and other partners, in order to ensure that Bristol retains its attractive appearance.

The Society has over 600 members and numbers have been steadily increasing. Yet we need more active members to share the tasks of running the organisation – see our separate article (pages 24-25) on succession planning.

This is clearly an important period as the City Council faces funding challenges and the City faces intense development pressures. Please think about actively contributing to the work of Bristol Civic Society and to ensuring that we all have a strong voice in what is going on.

Simon Birch

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Bristol is a prosperous city and housing is in great demand.



Not already a member? Why not join TODAY!

See page 27 for more details...

Major developments

John Payne and Simon Birch review a selection of important proposals.

Since we reported in the autumn edition of *Better Bristol*, applications have come forward for the sites we covered at Plot 3, Temple Quarter and the former Peugeot dealership site at the junction of Clarence Road and Temple Gate.

We broadly welcomed the proposals for Plot 3, Temple Quarter (22/05998/F) as a positive contribution to the townscape of the area but expressed some reservations about the impact of some of the buildings on views approaching the site from Castle Park and the Floating Harbour.

In contrast we have consistently objected to both the pre-application and application proposals for the former Peugeot site (22/06035/F), Clarence Road, Temple Gate. These are of particularly poor quality for such a prominent site. The proposed buildings are far too high and inappropriate in this location; the density development is excessive and will negatively impact on the quality of life for future residents; and many flats are far too close to the poor air quality and noise caused by the adjacent major roads. We will continue to oppose this proposal.



We have consistently objected to both the pre-application and application proposals for the former Peugeot site, Clarence Road, Temple Gate.

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We broadly welcomed the proposals for Plot 3, Temple Quarter as a positive contribution to the townscape.

Proposed residential tower block on top of Castle Park Energy Centre.

The Bristol Civic Society objected very strongly to this development proposal and issued a press release. The Society is adamant that tall buildings are not essential to meeting the housing crisis in Bristol. They are only one of several ways of increasing building densities. We objected to the principle of this development.

The proposal is the latest, and by far the worst, in what seems a tidal wave of tall buildings that are unsympathetic to local character. Building heights leapfrog what was considered exceptional only a matter of months ago.

The Society was very concerned by the seemingly random nature of this

proposal. The Society requested clarity on the development plan context that supports a very high tower in this location. We have not been able to substantiate this proposal in planning policy.

At 33 storeys the Society considered that the proposal is a fundamental assault on the appearance of the city and on its visual traditions. Additionally, we emphasised the inappropriateness of this waterfront location for a tall building. The Floating Harbour is a defining feature of Bristol, and other new developments have reflected the scale and massing of the former warehouses and industrial complexes. And the proposed development will have a very significant, and highly negative, impact on Castle Park.

Former Vauxhall and Kawasaki sites, Avon Street (21/02141/P)

Bristol Civic Society welcomed the regeneration of this site. We retained concerns that the building adjacent to Avon Street was too high and would contribute to the continuation of the canyon effect in Avon Street south of the railway line. In addition, this building together with the building the other side of the Retort House appear to overbear the Retort House.

The Society welcomed the additional pedestrian and cycle access from Silverthorne Lane. However, we had concerns about the junction of the east/west route with Silverthorne Lane at the

in Bristol

eastern end of the site. This crossroads has a blind corner and is dangerous to cross when entering the crossroad from the end of Gas Lane. We suggested including a 'raised roadway' at this crossroad to give a speed bump to slow cars as they come up Silverthorne Lane and onto Kingsland Road. This is a key cycle route into the city from the east, and will no doubt have greater use as a result of the development.

1 Passage Street, BS2 (21/06933/F)

The application is for the demolition of the existing building for office led redevelopment of c16,000 sq m up to 12 storeys in height.

Bristol Civic Society objected to the earlier proposals. Our concerns remain. In particular, we have objected to the principle of this proposal which would require the demolition of a relatively modern building. We believe that consideration should be given to upgrading and extending the accommodation whilst retaining the bulk of the existing building. We have asked the Council to consider whether this would be a more sustainable solution in line with its climate change mitigation objectives.

In addition, we objected to the following aspects of the proposal:

It is an over development of a relatively constrained site. We consider a more modest proposal should be brought forward if the Council is minded to permit the redevelopment of this site.

We agreed with and supported the views of Historic England regarding the adverse impact of the proposal on the Grade II* Pip and Jay Church and Generator Building. Historic England stated that a reduction in height would significantly reduce the impact and harm of the proposed development on these buildings. Its impact on views of the Shot Tower is mitigated to some extent by stepping back of upper floors. Nonetheless, the visual impact of the Shot Tower would be diminished.

The Society is disappointed that public access to the edge of the Floating Harbour is not included. If the development is permitted, public access to the waterside should be provided.

York Road, Mead Street (Bart's Spices) (21/06878/F)

Bristol Civic Society objected strongly to this application, which was approved in August. The Society considered that proposals for the loss of so many commercial premises should only be considered within the context of a masterplan for the area.

The Society also raised concerns about the proposed development relating to its height and the resultant quality of life for residents together with its impact on views, particularly those towards the Totterdown escarpment.

There was specific concern that blocks of this height and mass would be harmful to views toward Richmond Street, with its colourful terraced houses, atop the Totterdown escarpment. This is one of Bristol's important, landmark views. Equally important are views toward the Grade I listed buildings at Temple Meads Station and the spire of St Mary Redcliffe.

Redevelopment of the Mickleburgh store in Stokes Croft to provide new premises for Mickleburgh and 192 student bedrooms.

The proposal had much to commend it. In addition to enabling Mickleburgh's to operate much more efficiently and



Redevelopment of Mickleburgh store in Stokes Croft. The proposal had much to commend it.

1 Passage Street.

remain in Stokes Croft, the proposal would enhance the appearance of Stokes Croft particularly looking north. It would provide a strong feature at the junction with King Square Avenue where its design successfully turns the corner. The verticality of the upper floors provides a conspicuous contrast with the retail frontage and sits well with the character of Victorian and Georgian buildings in the vicinity. It is, perhaps, a little plain though and the Society wonders if more design interest could be achieved. Some use of local stone might add interest to its appearance and improve its relationship with older buildings in the vicinity.

The Society has some concerns relating to the height and mass of the proposal bearing in mind that the site is within a conservation area and close to residential properties particularly across King Square Avenue. There are also listed and locally listed buildings lower than the proposal in King Square, Jamaica Street and Stokes Croft adjacent to the proposed development. The Society has, therefore, requested more information to demonstrate the impact of the plans on its neighbours and views in the area.

What sort of city do we want?

There are so many planning pressures. Can the Council's Local Plan resolve them, ask *Alan Morris and Simon Birch*.

There is a housing crisis. Young people can't afford to buy their own home. The population is growing. The country isn't building enough new homes. The planning system cannot solve the crisis, but it should at least define the rules that guide where new development can go, and how it should be designed and built. Bristol is reviewing its Local Plan, and plans to approve it this summer, subject to public examination.

The government sets local authorities targets for new housing. In its current review of national planning policy, it is holding firm on protecting the Green Belt around cities. Following pressure from Conservative backbenchers, it is relaxing the rules for housing targets in the shire counties. At the same time it plans to reinforce the need for cities to fill the gap, via a 35% uplift in the target – Bristol is rightly ignoring this in its Local Plan, as it is unevidenced and unachievable. Planning is best done sub-regionally, but the councils

that border Bristol can't agree how the housing numbers should be shared, so the Combined Authority has given up its role. Bristol is on its own.

This situation creates a number of tensions between policy aims. The Local Plan must try to guide how the tensions should be managed. Month by month the Society comments on proposed developments at major sites: we see ever higher density of developments and the proliferation of tall buildings, encouraged by the Council's desire to build as many homes as possible. We are concerned that planning policy is not doing its job as well it might. And the draft Local Plan is not yet addressing our concerns. So what are those concerns?

Design, and tall buildings

Design: There is insufficient emphasis on good design. The national planning policy's commitment to good design is being strengthened via a requirement for 'local design codes', and the policy emphasises community involvement in producing the codes. But the Local Plan has not picked up on this enough. The Foreword to the Local Plan, which is where the political tone is set, says nothing on design. The objectives seek to make all design considerations subservient to achieving the highest possible number of dwellings. The lack of guidance on appropriate built form leads to developments that are too large in the context of local character and identity, or do not work well.

Tall buildings: The Local Plan policies do not sufficiently guide where tall buildings are appropriate



and how high they should go. What is needed is a townscape assessment that both assesses the quality and heritage of current environments across the city, building on Conservation Area character appraisals, and protects them from harm from a proliferation of excessively tall buildings. Tall buildings are unnecessary for increasing density – mid-rise developments can do this with equal efficiency, at lower cost, and produce higher satisfaction for most potential occupiers.

But that's not all ...

Employment land: The pressure for residential development is driving out other land uses – industry, distribution, service and other non-retail. We see this in several places across Bristol, for instance Bedminster, Fishponds, St Philips Marsh. There are proposals to accommodate employment uses at above-ground level to use land more efficiently, but does not work for many types of employment and is only a small part of the answer. The Local Plan's policy on managing this tension will not emerge until the summer.

Green space: There is rightly increasing pressure to protect natural habitats. The Local Plan review responds to local campaigns by removing areas allocated for housing at Western Slopes and Brislington Meadows. Protected green space is not available for new housing, thus increasing the pressure on other areas to accommodate housing. Access to green space varies across the city: the city centre and inner suburbs do not meet the minimum quantity standard for green space, but the Local Plan does not address this.



We cannot ignore transport needs.



The Local Plan policies do not sufficiently guide where tall buildings are appropriate and how high they should go.

Student accommodation: The projected housing need is intended to include provision for students – some 6,400 bed spaces city-wide by 2028. As the universities grow, the Society has seen numerous developments in recent years for student housing, and this still continues. The substantial student requirement competes with the demand for other residential housing. The Local Plan does not constrain numbers of students in Bristol. At this time of a housing crisis, with Bristol struggling to achieve housing targets, is what is right for the universities also right for Bristol?

Transport: whilst the role of the Local Plan is land use, it cannot ignore transport needs. The growth in population and increased housing

density in the city centre and other growth areas have major implications for transport. At such a time, better public transport and enablers for active travel are needed, but bus companies are struggling with increased costs, and services are being cut. Public subsidy to support bus services is being maintained to some extent, but not enough.

And if that wasn't enough, we have a climate emergency ...

Whilst the Local Plan adds new policies to control the embodied and operational carbon of new developments, the Plan does not include evidence of the Plan's projected carbon implications, or justification against alternative options. The embodied carbon from all the new housing will make a significant contribution to carbon emissions. Currently the Plan contains an implied acceptance of tall buildings without any reference to emissions. Meeting zero carbon targets will be impossible if the city continues to prioritise high rise buildings, which tend to be highly carbon-consumptive.

All this demonstrates the challenge of resolving tensions between various important policy aims. The Society has commented critically on the Local



We have a climate emergency.

Plan, but we recognise how difficult the challenge is, and our comments are intended to be constructive.

It's not just about the Local Plan, important as it is: we are concerned that there is not enough public debate on these issues. Bristol Civic Society has always been particularly concerned about the character of our city, and there isn't enough debate about the rapid move to tall buildings, and the political direction to make all design considerations subservient to achieving the highest possible number of dwellings. At the time of writing, Bristol Civic Society is working up its plans for organising an event or events so that there can be more debate to answer the question: what sort of city do we want?



There is not enough green space in the city centre and inner suburbs.

Going underground



A tram in Bristol's twin city in France, where they are probably laughing at us.

And so farewell then Bristol Underground. It would have cost billions (not sure how many!) but would have done us a power of good, claims *Eugene Byrne*, who has been talking to himself again.

The proposed Bristol Underground system is dead in the water, I hear.

Looks like it. In February it turned out that a report compiled by consultants for the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) said it would cost telephone numbers.

So when WECA head, the "Metro Mayor", if you will, Dan Norris was asked on local TV if the Bristol Underground was going to happen his reply was a curt and unequivocal "no".

Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees, who has championed the scheme all along, was pretty cross about this, condemning WECA's "lack of ambition". At the time of writing Rees was planning to recommend that WECA spend another £15 million on developing the idea. He did not appear to have much support within his own party or any other.

A Bristol Underground was a silly idea in the first place, wasn't it?

That depends on who you ask, and indeed on what would have finally been delivered.

No-one would dispute the basic premise – that we need to improve public transport in the city. At the moment, the bus service is terrible. They don't have enough drivers and the real-time display signs and phone apps are even less trustworthy than the old paper timetables used to be.

Something needs to be done. Driving my gas-guzzling 4x4 around town is no fun.

Part of the vision would be to create



something more energy efficient and which would reduce carbon emissions. Something so wonderful to travel on that you'd no longer feel the need to use a car, or even own one.

But my God-given right as a free-born Englishman to swan around in a big black motor! My wife's inalienable right to park her own Chelsea tractor on the zig-zags outside the school ... !

I read somewhere that cognitive behaviour therapy might help with pitiful cases of status-anxiety like yours. Or you could try religion.

Anyway, the key bit of the plan would be that better bus and train services and facilities would be joined by four rapid transit routes – streetcars, trams, trains, tram-trains, whatever – going from the city centre out in four directions, to wit: north to Cribbs Causeway, south to Hartcliffe and onwards to the airport, south-east to Keynsham and another out to Kingswood.

And this is the so-say Bristol Underground?

Some of it would have to be subterranean, but some of it, as with

the London Underground, would be above ground.

Shame. I'd like to have seen it. Anything that gets other drivers off the road means more room for me.

Indeed. The costs would be large, but then so would the benefits.

The system would serve an area with a population of 1.1 million (and rising). Better public transport would benefit the environment, would attract investment and new business and have a positive impact on productivity. All of this stuff is hard to measure, but it would make the Greater Bristol area more attractive to live and work in and would boost the economy.

If the Mayor found a Magic Money Tree growing in the back garden of City Hall, it would still be massively complicated to build.

Yes. Rees first mooted the plan in 2017, those halcyon days before Covid, War in Ukraine, and before the growing realisation that Brexit was a bloody stupid idea. (*I don't think we're allowed to say that, yet. Ed.*) But even then it seemed bold and visionary.

Since then, three reports have been commissioned at great expense to look at the scheme and how it could be done. Two have been published looking at where the routes should be, what vehicles might be used, how the tunnelling would be done and so forth. The engineers have looked into the geology, the bits where you're boring through hard rock and the bits where it's clay and so on.

Among the hazards the works would have to look out for are any damage to historic buildings up above, but the thing that will many folks will find striking is the danger of coal mines.

Coal mines? Didn't that Mrs Thatcher close them all down?

Coal mining in Bristol ended somewhat before Thatcher was PM, but it was a major local industry for centuries. And back in the olden days people didn't always keep accurate records (or any records at all) of where, exactly, they had sunk shafts. That solid Bristolian ground you're standing on? Like a Swiss cheese, it is.

Then there's all the sewers and water pipes and cables and medieval cellars and secret tunnels dug by the Knights Templar and the Illuminati ...

As has been pointed out by wiser saloon bar bores than you or I, we used to have a local official called the City Engineer in the olden times before local government got hollowed out and taken over by people with humanities degrees. A City Engineer would have saved us a few quid on consultants.

OK, but all of these issues can be overcome with money, right?

Right, but the problem is we don't know how much. The first report from late 2017 costed the scheme at something like £1.1bn for each of the four lines. Obviously it was likely to get more expensive what with inflation and unforeseen snags arising, but you were looking at something under £5bn

That's the price of a weekend in Brighton these days. Sounds affordable to me.

Perhaps, but then the most recent report, which at the time of writing we've not seen, puts the price tag

Bristol's first grand post-war public transport scheme.



Bristol public transport network vision



The proposed mass transit system (Bristol City Council)

at EIGHTEEN BILLION. And then you have to factor in inflation and unforeseen snags and the fact that the country has run out of money.

So no, whether the money comes from taxpayers, the private sector or a combination of the two, it's not going to happen anytime soon.

So we end up looking like a bunch of knuckle-dragging yokels again. Lots of other places have trams.

Edinburgh, Birmingham and Manchester have them. Newcastle got its Metro decades ago. Other places like Liverpool have underground rail stations. Bristol's twin city Bordeaux has a lovely tram system (though Bordeaux is very flat. It also has very wide streets to make it harder for the French to riot.)

Bristol could have had something. Back in the 1980s there was a serious plan for a private sector-led Avon Metro,

inspired by the Newcastle one and by London's Docklands Light Railway. That failed because of politics and economic downturn. Then there was the "Supertram" scheme scuppered by feuding between Bristol and neighbouring authorities, particularly South Gloucestershire.

Has the Bristol Underground been done for by politics, too?

We've yet to get a proper grasp of that, but it's no secret that other parties on Bristol City Council have poured cold water on the plan. As has Dan Norris, who is of the same party (Labour) as Rees.

Rees, whatever his faults and whatever you think of him, came up with a bold and imaginative solution to the congestion problem that everyone in Bristol has been complaining about since the Middle Ages. His ambition, some suggest, was thwarted by a local lack of ambition. A column in the Bristol Post said: "Perhaps there's an inferiority complex about Bristol that the city never actually thinks it can achieve something."

Yeah, but it was mostly money, wasn't it?

Yep.

Back to the drawing board then?

And to traffic congestion, angry cyclists on pavements, and standing in the rain waiting for buses that never come.

Right. I'm off. Can I give you a lift in my nice big 4x4?

Yeah, go on then.

Safeguarding our heritage

Can Barton Hill's diminishing heritage assets be saved? *Garry Atterton and Alexander Smith* write about the challenge of preserving the local heritage.

During 2021 and 2022 the Barton Hill History Group and other local action groups showed increased interest and developed a more active role to safeguard the rapidly diminishing heritage assets on Barton Hill. Four key outcomes of their work have been the creation of a Heritage Asset List, an At Risk Register, the involvement of groups, such as the Save the Rhubarb Campaign and the creation of Barton Hill Heritage Trails.

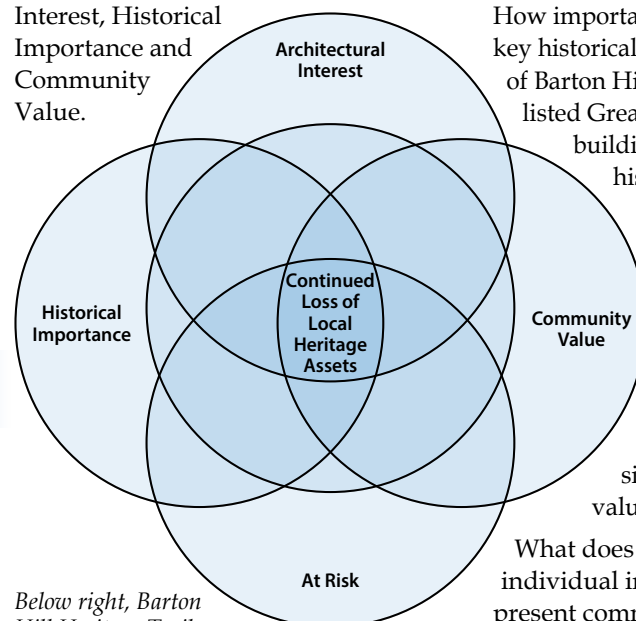
Key outcome one: The creation of a Heritage Asset (HA) list.

An HA is defined as a building or structure that reflected the heritage of Barton Hill that should be kept and enjoyed by present and future generations. We wanted to record anything of heritage value, whether it was a listed building or a stink pipe!

Field observations, general discussion with volunteers and social media contributions led to the identification of 31 Heritage Assets. The list covers the buildings, structures and plaques that

represent the historical, architectural and community value of the heritage of Barton Hill. The list highlighted what heritage assets were left, their state of repair and how they could be further protected.

The diagram below shows the relationship between the three heritage components: Architectural Interest, Historical Importance and Community Value.



Below right, Barton Hill Heritage Trail. Reaches new people that would otherwise not engage with the history and heritage of Barton Hill.



Barton Hill Mixed School.



Architectural Interest often takes a greater role in heritage asset assessment than Community Value. We believe that Community Value should be equal to the other two components, as the HA's that remain matter to people personally, socially, and culturally.

Seven types of HA were identified with respective codes:

1. Nationally listed. (NL)
2. Local listed. (LL)
3. Plaques and memorials. (P)
4. Buildings not listed. (B)
5. Structures not buildings. (NB)
6. Streets (S)
7. Street furniture. (SF)

An audit of the 31 HAs was completed with a brief description of what they are, where they are and how they link to the three main components.

Key questions asked were:

How important was the HA in reflecting key historical events in the development of Barton Hill? For example, the locally listed Great Western Cotton Works buildings are so significant historically as they mark the origins of urban Barton Hill.

How does the architecture reflect Barton Hill? For example, Barton House was the largest block of flats built outside of London in 1958, adding significant architectural value to Bristol.

What does the HA mean to an individual in terms of past and or present community value?

A score system from 1-5 was used to rank the HA in terms of the three heritage components.

- 1 = Limited value or importance
- 2 = Some value or importance
- 3 = High value or importance.
- 4 = Locally listed.
- 5 = Nationally listed.

The nationally listed St. Luke's Church had the highest score of 15/15, because of architectural interest, historical and community value over 180 years. The three locally listed buildings; The Rhubarb Tavern, Barton Hill Mixed School and The Great Western Cotton Works all scored highly with 14/15.

The next highest scores were also key Barton Hill heritage buildings. The Settlement buildings, St. Luke's Church



Rhubarb Tavern, Barton Hill.

Vicarage, Old School House, Avonvale School and Barton House.

Key outcome two: An At Risk register

A second set of criteria was used for deciding how At Risk each HA was in terms of potential change of function and condition.

The following scoring was used.

- 1= Worst condition and likely to be demolished.
- 2= Poor condition and or likely to have major change in function.
- 3= Sound condition, but lacking any management and or function may change in the future.
- 4= Good general condition and well managed.
- 5= Very good condition and very well managed.

As a result, three HAs; Barton Hill Mixed School, St Luke's Church Mission Hall/Tenant Association building and the Rhubarb Tavern have been placed on our At Risk register.

The owners of the Barton Hill Mixed School are doing the minimum to try to keep the building safe from environmental damage and vandalism. Many windows have been smashed and it has become a blight on the neighbourhood. The building was on the market for £1.2 million, with no buyer as yet, the building will continue to decline.

An article published in the *Better Bristol* magazine (Issue 21) by Alexander Smith and Ian Beckey details the historical importance of the building.

The second HA At Risk is the Tenants

Association/Mission Hall in Avonvale Road. After years of neglect by the owners, Bristol City Council, the building is in a poor state and likely to be demolished in 2023 and be replaced with flats and a potential community space. This is an example of economic value outweighing historical importance and community value.

Key outcome three: The activity of a heritage action group.

The Rhubarb Tavern which closed in 2020, is the third HA At Risk. A lack of maintenance by the owners has led to damage to the exterior and interior of the building. An article published in the *Better Bristol* magazine (Issue 20) by Mark Steeds details the history of the Rhubarb Tavern. 2022 was a very productive year for the Save Rhubarb Campaign group, with the aim of seeing the pub reopen.

Highlights included:

- Access gained to the Rhubarb to record the internal condition of the historic features.
- The Asset of Community Value (ACV) listing of the pub, was granted, revoked and then finally reinstated.
- The planning application for total change of use was withdrawn and another application seeking partial change of use into flats for the upper half of the building and the garden re submitted (and is still pending a decision).
- Vast media publicity of the campaign including Bristol Post/

Bristol Live and Bristol Civic Society's *Better Bristol* magazine

- Support from the Bristol Green Party and their councillors, who requested the latest planning application be called-in to a Development Control Committee.

- Meetings with individuals interested in taking on the running of the Rhubarb, as well as numerous local residents who are intrigued about its future.

- Setting up a Community Interest Group, which once officially established will allow the campaign to fundraise and put forward our own offer for the Rhubarb.

Key outcome four: Barton Hill heritage trails.

The aim of the trails is to make people more aware and connected to the heritage of the area. Comments from volunteer Jen Grove reflect their success.

'Working with the Barton Hill History Group on the heritage trails has helped me feel more connected to my local community and the area's heritage. Having the resources to produce professional standard materials has enabled us to reach new people and places that would otherwise not engage with the history and heritage of Barton Hill.'

Future plans

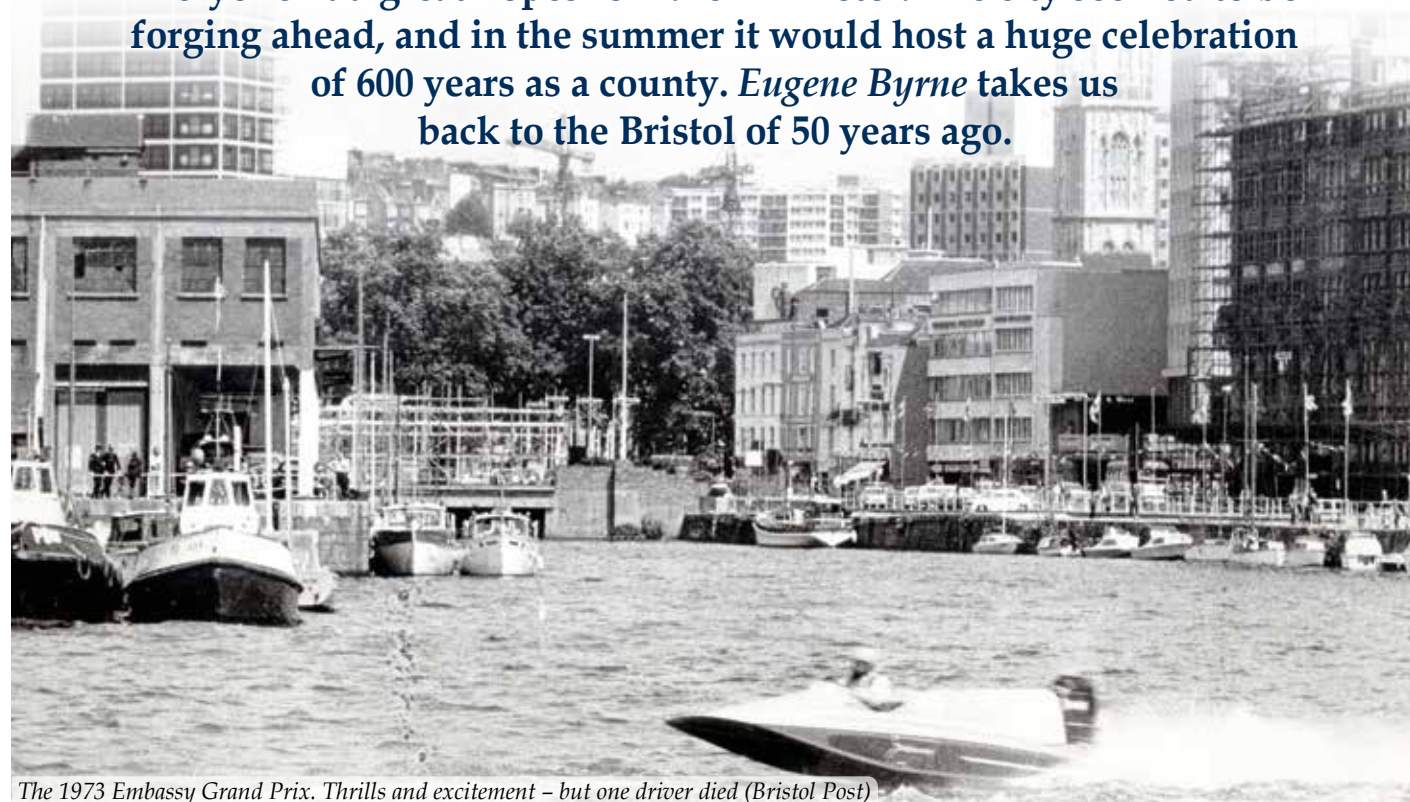
Future plans of the Barton Hill History Group are: first, to look into the possibility that the three locally listed assets are upgraded with Heritage England's national listing. Second, the three HAs At Risk to be prioritised by the history group and other action groups to promote saving these buildings. Third, to pursue all five of the key heritage assets buildings being added to Bristol City Council's local listing. Finally, the group are really pleased to announce that in May 2022 Bristol Civic Society's Blue Plaque to AV Alexander was added to the HA list.



St Luke's Church Mission Hall Tennant's Association building has been put on the local At Risk register.

Fifty years ago!

Everyone had great hopes for 1973 in Bristol. The city seemed to be forging ahead, and in the summer it would host a huge celebration of 600 years as a county. Eugene Byrne takes us back to the Bristol of 50 years ago.



The 1973 Embassy Grand Prix. Thrills and excitement – but one driver died (Bristol Post)

The year 1973 dawned bright in Bristol. Everything was going to be great, they said.

W.D. & H.O. Wills' new £15 million factory at Hartcliffe would be opened and about 1,000 of the 6,000 tobacco workers in the city would have moved there by the end of 1973.

Yes, that's right; in 1973 tobacco employed around six thousand souls in Bristol, but then almost half the UK population smoked and the whole country stank of stale tobacco.

The North Somerset section of the M5 from Avonmouth to Dunball near Bridgwater was due to be opened (at last!) and work was due to begin on the massive new West Dock at the Bristol City Council-owned port of Avonmouth – what would be the Royal Portbury Dock.

More noticeable on a daily basis for many Bristolians was the planned pedestrianisation of much of the Broadmead Shopping Centre. There was even talk of some of Broadmead being roofed over.

Roman Catholics throughout the region would be getting a new Cathedral – it would be consecrated on June 29 – a

triumphant modern building in Clifton. Meanwhile, it was still possible to believe that the most globally recognisable Bristol product, Concorde, would be purchased in numbers by some of the world's biggest airlines.

The summer was going to be a good one. You might even be taking a family holiday in your brand-new Austin Allegro, which was launched in April (though you'd have to wait until the autumn before you could take the M5 all the way to Dunball).



Clifton's new Roman Catholic Cathedral, consecrated in June 1973 (Bristol Post)

Bristol had plenty to offer, even for those who weren't able to get away.

In June there was the Water Festival, now in its third year and entertaining visitors with its array of boats and nautical entertainment. Alas, it was marked by tragedy when an explosion on one of the private boats killed a

young couple. The circumstances weren't suspicious, but it left a cloud over the proceedings. The Water Festival would, though, in due course, turn into the Harbour Regatta and the modern Harbour Festival.

The following weekend the city docks hosted the Embassy Grand Prix powerboat races. With lavish sponsorship from WD & HO Wills, it was expected to turn into an annual event, which it did for a while. This was despite the Bristol course being one of the most dangerous in the world. That year it claimed German driver Rudi Hersel. He left a wife and two young children.

The crowning event of the city's summer was to be Bristol 600, a celebration of Bristol's six centuries as a county following the granting of the charter by King Edward III in 1373.

It was huge, centred on a big exhibition and arena on the Downs, with jousting and ox-roasts and displays by local (and national) firms and voluntary organisations and more.

An episode of *Jeux Sans Frontières*, the Europe-wide heat of *It's a Knockout*, was to be broadcast from the arena, complete with medieval-themed games. The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh would also be dropping in.

It was more than just a round-figured anniversary party. It was also driven by a feeling across political boundaries that the 1972 Local Government Act would be the end of centuries of proud history.

Under the Act, the new county of Avon would come into being on April 1 1974, but it wasn't just that Bristol's status was being downgraded; many feared that's Bristol's identity would somehow be smothered by this new local authority.

The run-up to Bristol 600 was accompanied by plenty of excitement. Naturally (this being 1973) such an event had to be fronted by a beauty contest to find – a “swimsuited dolly”, as the blurb for the contest, broadcast on HTV in June, had it.

The 12 finalists included a schoolgirl of 16 (would that be allowed nowadays?), but the winner was 20-year-old Sally Lovell of St George, who won £600 and who would be present at many of the events through the summer.

The judges were Lord Mayor Ald. Wally Jenkins, HTV West Programme Controller Patrick Dromgoole and Deputy Editor of the Evening Post Ernest Averis.

Obviously the event needed some celebrity glamour, so also on the panel were actors from two of the period's most iconic TV sitcoms, one of which can still be seen from time to time nowadays, and one that is far harder to find as it's, um, problematic.

We had Doris Hare, who played Reg Varney/Stam Butler's Mum in the inexplicably popular *On the Buses*, but also Nina Baden-Semper, one of the stars of *Love Thy Neighbour*.

The big three-week show on the Downs was dogged by terrible weather. A tremendous gale blew up, making a mess of the site early on. Heavy rain later churned up the mud even more and the royal visit was cancelled.

Exhibitors mutinied, threatening to walk away, so then it was back on the Queen's itinerary once more; she spent 20 minutes being driven around the site on the back of a Land Rover.

The show ended and the city fathers were congratulating themselves that, well, in spite of the weather it hadn't been a complete disaster, had it? The international heat of *It's a Knockout* had been watched by 400 million people across Europe, so that was a pretty good advertisement for Bristol, wasn't it?

But not long afterwards the creditors started queueing up. A lot of them.



Bristol's great hope for the future. Concorde model 02 on display at Bristol 600.

The company which had organised the show, Commerce Displays Ltd., had debts of almost £75,000. The Fraud Squad was called in, and Eric Castle, Deputy MD of Commerce Displays, did a runner at the same time that £17,000 of the show's gate money disappeared.

He was thought to have holed up in Rhodesia, nowadays Zimbabwe, but back then a pariah state where the post-colonial white minority was clinging on to power and whence extradition was impossible.

By the time Castle's misdeeds were emerging, however, the rest of 1973 had gone sour, both for Bristol and everywhere else.

In the autumn there was a short war in the Middle East and the OPEC oil-producing cartel squeezed the West's oil supplies.

The UK inflation rate was already running at 10%, but the massive hike in the price of oil, combined with union demands for pay increases to keep pace with the cost of living, would see it get much higher in the years to come.

Among those taking industrial action by the end of the year were rail workers and coal miners, and the government of Edward Heath introduced a three-day week to conserve electricity and with it, coal stocks.

Concorde failed to live up to its commercial promise and the bullish predictions for Bristol's forthcoming good times failed to materialise. In the economic woes of the 1970s many old Bristol firms went under and few large building projects materialised.

Still, when comedy duo Mike and Bernie Winters (remember them?) opened the new Fine Fare superstore at the Broadwalk in Knowle in December 1973, you could get a bottle of Harvey's Bristol Cream for £1.34, a Fray Bentos Steak & Kidney Pie for 22p, six Kleenex toilet rolls for 10p, or, if you really wanted to push the boat out, a tin of Ye Olde Oak cooked ham for 69p. And on top of that you could get 20 Benson & Hedges filter-tips for just 27p ...

... Because in 1973 cigarettes were groceries, too.



The international heat of *It's a Knockout* was watched by 400 million people across Europe.

Alex Dunn reckons we're living through a golden age of volunteering, with people coming together to give their time and knowledge to improve their communities. And, he says, the organisation in which he plays a leading role, Sustainable Westbury-on-Trym, is a good example.

This is a golden age of volunteering. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, around the country are giving their time for good causes to help others and to improve their communities.

Sustainable Westbury-on-Trym (SusWoT), which originated with the Transition Movement in the noughties, is a good example, and one in which volunteers can have fun, too.

In 2010 the first SusWoT newsletter was published for the Westbury-on-Trym Ecofiesta, an event to promote sustainability and show what the centre of Westbury would be like with no traffic. SusWoT founder Andy O'Brien was the driving force behind this.

Early campaigns included Twenty's Plenty for Bristol, aiming to slow traffic to 20mph, now implemented.

SusWoT went on to create an Energy Group, which conducted home energy checks for 1500 homes, which the Home Energy Trust used to provide a report for each house showing how they could reduce energy consumption and emissions.

The local watercourses and woodlands were examined to see how biodiversity could be promoted. Tomato plants were grown and sold along with local apple juice at the monthly farmers market, and the SusWoT Community Garden between Reedley Road and Stoke Lane started thanks to Mary Rivers and many other gardeners.

Some of these activities continue, some have stopped, and new ones have started.

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Cleaning up the Trym.



Eco fiesta 3.



Having a small break - Photo Philippa Crabbe.



A trout from the Trym.

Sustainable Westbury-on-Trym



Eat what you grow dinner.



Since 2019 work has been going on to clear the river of rubbish and clean up the banks and the surrounding green spaces.

Why has SusWoT survived, where so many Transition Groups have not?

Probably because SusWoT does what people want to do, ignores the things that they don't, and because it's enjoyable.

Cleaning up

Litter-picking is a good example. SusWoT started doing this early on, initially as a monthly group activity to clean up places with serious litter problems. SusWoT went on to work with Sustainable Southmead to litter-pick Southmead.

Now there are plenty of volunteer litter-pickers - and there are no bad sites left. There are about 30 "rounds" with more than 60 people working to keep Westbury tidy, plus litter-picking going on in Brentry, Henbury, Southmead, Stoke Bishop and Sea Mills.

SusWoT provides all the kit that pickers need, and has an excellent relationship with Bristol Waste and Bristol Parks who collect and dispose of the rubbish.

To improve the efficiency of litter picking operations, (and river cleaning) SusWoT is developing a phone app enabling members to photograph a litter problem and link it to Google Maps so that it can be dealt with. This

is being done in partnership with IT students at Bristol University.

Energy

SusWoT's ambition to improve the community's energy efficiency has been a far greater challenge. After the early surveys, events organised with local renewable energy specialists Ecocetera attracted few takers and so apart from promoting Cold Homes Energy Efficiency Survey Experts (CHEESE - see cheeseproject.co.uk) SusWoT have not done much until recently.

However, in 2021 the national Heat Pump Ready Program was set up by the Government, aiming to start building capacity to instal 600,000 per year by 2028.

Part of this programme is to identify locations where a number of Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) could be installed at the same time, and attached to the same substation.

This would test grid capacity and the ability to install lots of ASHP systems simultaneously. This would need equipment, a skilled workforce and suitable housing.

Bristol successfully applied to become a trial location, and Westbury-on-Trym was chosen as it met the criteria

and had a community group in place - SusWoT - to help find householders prepared to have ASHPs installed.

Other partners include The Centre for Sustainable Energy, Bristol Energy Network, National Grid and Bristol City Council and installers, and Westbury is now one of six UK locations where the 200 homes that will have the ASHPs installed are being sought.

This scheme will greatly benefit Bristol because the city will become a centre of heat pump expertise. This will be the first multimillion pound SusWoT project.

Food

Growing food has always been a popular SusWoT activity.

It started with 800 little sungold tomato plants that were grown from seed and sold for 30p each. Sungold remain the most successful. Lots of other vegetable plants are also grown now - chilies, peppers, various beans and brassicas - and sold at local events such as the May Fair or the Get Growing Trail, and online.

Doing this helps people grow their own very cheaply; SusWoT sells more than 1,000 plants each year and has a fun day of potting on tomatoes in April. It's SusWoT's main source of income.

At the Westbury Village Show in September SusWoT sponsors three trophies related to food and growing things. It also maintains two gardens in the village; the Library Garden where a small vegetable plot is tended to show what can easily be grown and the Stoke Lane Community Garden, a tranquil space to sit and rest, maintained mainly by Jim and Lesley Scarborough. Before it was revitalised it had been the dumping ground for the local garage.

People having fun doing things together is what SusWoT is all about. Before Covid, it had an annual community harvest lunch in September where locally grown produce was turned into great food by Matt Hobbs and a battery of assistants. Live music was provided, and a good time was had by all.

Trout in the Trym? Why not?

SusWoT is a founding organisation of Trout in the Trym which started five years ago, amid much scepticism!

A Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership grant was used to pay for a survey by the Wild Trout Trust that said that trout could live in the Trym but there would be problems.

Since 2019 work has been going on to clear the river of rubbish and clean up

the banks and the surrounding green spaces. A core group of ten people who love to put on waders get into the river to get out the rubbish.

Finds have included a horse's head, a kitchen sink and 13 motorbikes (most very old but the occasional fresh one). Most rubbish is builders' rubble and flytipping from the last 30 years.

So far more than 120 tonnes of rubbish has been removed and the river system will have been cleaned at least once by the end of the year. SusWoT works with eight other groups that abut the river and with Bristol Avon Rivers Trust and the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership.

This summer SusWoT hopes to complete the eradication of Himalayan Balsam from the area. This will be the third year of work, and hopefully the last.

Trout are now found in the Trym, but they are unable to swim up Hazel Brook through the Blaise Estate because of the weirs. The ponds at Blaise are completely silted up and the silt trap itself is full.

But regular water quality sampling tells us that things are improving. More life is appearing in the river, including eels, bull heads and various coarse fish.

This spring a new project was started with a grant from Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership to investigate water voles and otters in the Trym. If they are not actually found it is hoped that conditions can be improved so that they will come back. Beavers? Not just yet.

SusWoT meets on the last Thursday of every month at the village hall and then decamps to the local pub. A monthly regular visit to a local restaurant has started with the aim of supporting local businesses.

SusWoT has a stall at all the Westbury events to promote its activities. It takes part in the Bristol Get Growing Trail and the fortnight of the Great British Spring Clean.

For more information about SusWoT email: suswot2050@gmail.com

www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Blue Plaques

Lori Streich celebrates the lives of two pioneering women.

Late winter was brightened by the unveiling of two more blue plaques, both of which celebrate exceptional, but hitherto unknown, women in the city.

Emma Martin

The first, in a highly visible location in Bridewell Street, celebrates Emma Martin, a feminist and socialist, and a Freethinker (we'd now use the term Humanist), a public speaker and campaigner, and towards the end of her short life, a pioneering midwife who championed women's rights over their own bodies.

Born Emma Bullock in 1812, and baptised at St James' on 23rd February that year, she was devoutly religious as a young woman. She married and lived with her husband in a property at Bridewell Lane/Bridewell Bridge – now, the YMCA building on which Emma's plaque is affixed. The marriage was not a happy one: her husband was described as 'one whose company was a humiliation to endure', but, as a woman, Emma was unable to obtain a divorce. She later took the bold step of leaving her marriage, and, even more boldly for the time, took her daughters with her.



In 1839, Emma Martin attended a lecture which introduced her to the ideas of 'Owenism', advocating a society run along co-operative lines, and greater equality between the sexes. She abandoned her religion; convinced of the validity of socialism and feminism she became a prolific, and fiery lecturer on these issues. To the extent that she faced prosecution for the then imprisonable crime of blasphemy.

Finally retraining as a midwife, Emma Martin practised privately from 1847 until her death at the age of just 39 in 1851: no hospital would employ an atheist. She continued to advocate for women's right to be trained in obstetrics and gynaecology, and to have access to factual information about their own bodies and health.

Emma Martin's plaque was unveiled on 23rd February 2023 by Professor Alice

Roberts, Bristol Lord Mayor Cllr Paula O'Rourke, and Emma's descendants Emma Moody and her two daughters. The plaque was sponsored by Bristol Humanists.

Hilda Cashmore

Our second winter plaque was unveiled in falling snow on 8th March at Barton Hill (now Wellspring) Settlement. It celebrates the equally impressive and influential Hilda Cashmore.

Cashmore was a Quaker, a feminist, an educator and a social worker. She founded the Guild for Social Service and this enabled her to win support for the establishment of a "University Settlement" in Barton Hill in 1911. Hilda was its first Warden, a position she held until 1926.

But her work extended beyond Barton Hill. She became the first woman president of the British Association of Residential Settlements, promoting a vision of society which placed people and communities at the heart. She established social work education by creating a qualification, the 'Bristol Testamur' an accredited course which raised the professional status of this work. She promoted her work and her ideas through what we'd now call networking and partnership working: with local government, health and other public authorities, trade unions and trade boards – all of which brought support for the Bristol Settlement, and publicity for the Settlement idea.

Cashmore continued to respond to local needs, organising support for families during the flu pandemic, providing food for workers' families during strikes, and toys for local children. During the First World War, she joined the Quaker War Victims Relief expedition, driving ambulances in France in 1914 and Poland in 1920.

Always alert to social need, after the War she became involved in committees to build 'Homes for Heroes' – good quality council housing. Hilda's final achievement was to set up a Settlement and educational Ashram in India. Her memory lives on in Barton Hill, with Cashmore House and the Cashmore Nursery carrying her name.

Hilda Cashmore's plaque was

sponsored by the Bristol Radical History Group (BRHG) and is proudly situated next to that of A V Alexander, at the entrance to Barton Hill, now Wellspring, Settlement. It was unveiled by Helen Meller, Cashmore's biographer, Trish Mensah (BRHG) and Beth Wilson, CEO of Wellspring Settlement. After the unveiling, Ann Joslin, a Trustee of the



Right, Hilda Cashmore's plaque was unveiled by, left to right, Beth Wilson (CEO of Wellspring Settlement), Helen Meller, (Hilda Cashmore's autobiographer) and Trish Mens.

Settlement, spoke about the relevance of Hilda Cashmore's vision to the work of the Settlement today.

These are the Civic Society's thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth Blue Plaques. They attest to our aims of celebrating diversity, and of bringing to attention the lives of people who have made a positive contribution to the well-being of Bristolians, or to the wider world.

For more information about Emma Martin: <https://heritage.humanists.uk/emma-martin/> about Hilda Cashmore: <https://www.brhg.org.uk/site/pamphleteer/hilda-cashmore/>



From Pen to Print

Gordon Young previews his talk on fifteenth century letterpress.

Looking back, I suppose it was a poor career move. In 1963, I signed up for a five-year craft apprenticeship as a hot-metal compositor. It was at a jobbing printing house close to the foot of Christmas Steps; the building has long-since gone and its position is now marked by a statue of an emaciated monk on a horse.

I was taught to pick up individual pieces of type, from a compartmentalised wooden case and arrange them in a composing stick. Each line had to be fine-tuned by adjusting word spacing. By 1968, computers were making their analogue presence felt in the industry – phototypesetting had arrived. So, there was I, fully trained in a medieval craft and no doubt a disappointment to Harold Wilson with his talk of our future being 'forged in the white heat of technology'. Nothing for it but to head off to Australia as a ten-pound Pom for



Book of Hours, Paris, 1450, on vellum. two years' colonial experience, work on a national newspaper and hitch-hike across the Nullarbour desert.

But I remained connected with the printing trade for my entire career, ending up as sales manager with book printers, dealing with university presses and learned societies.

The earliest books printed by letterpress are generally in university libraries and private collections. They are prohibitively expensive but there was another option within my reach: individual pages – leaves from fifteenth-century books. They are affordable (or were), and I have built up a collection which traces the evolution of the formative years of book printing. Printed on paper made from rags, not wood pulp, they are beautiful late-medieval examples of the craft. Some show heavy blackletter



Apocrypha, Nicolas Jenson, Venice, 1477.

type, from Strassburg; others delicate seriffed roman faces printed in Venice in the 1470s.

Would you like to see them? The society's events team has scheduled an event for Friday 28 April, 7:30pm at Hampton Road Quaker library in Redland. It's an impressive room and entirely appropriate for a 'fireside chat' event with limited numbers attending. Now, this won't be a Powerpoint presentation with slides of the leaves – I'll bring the actual leaves themselves. I can't manage a leaf by Johann Gutenberg (there are some currently for sale on the internet at prices above £100,000), but I do have leaves printed by his associates, in effect his apprentices. Most are from Germany and Venice, but I do have one printed by a local lad in 1482... William Caxton. See you there.



Emma Martin's plaque was unveiled by Professor Alice Roberts, Bristol Lord Mayor Cllr Paula O'Rourke, and Emma's descendants Emma Moody and her two daughters.

Stephen Macfarlane

1928-2022



In 1967, Stephen designed new insurance offices on Redcliffe Hill, which when sold proved flexible and are now the Mercure Hotel.

Stephen Macfarlane, well known architect and member of Bristol Civic Society, has died aged 94 after a successful career spent mostly in Bristol.

Stephen trained at the famous Architectural Association school of

High Kingsdown. A much admired and award winning design.



architecture in London. He met his future wife Jean at a north Wales forestry village where he was working in place of military service and since she was working in Bristol, he decided to join her here, buying a small cottage in the quarry just off Blackboy Hill. They were married in 1955 at a Quaker ceremony.

Stephen and Norman Whicheloe, also from London, founded a joint practice,



High Kingsdown. 1974. A lively townscape, human in scale and character.

Whicheloe and Macfarlane, with its first offices in a Berkeley Square basement in which I worked as their second-ever assistant. While building the practice, Stephen and Norman taught part-time at the Royal West of England Academy School of Architecture in Great George Street and rapidly became part of an active group of Bristol architects commenting, not always favourably, upon the post-war changes in Bristol buildings, which became The Architect's Forum producing positive

ideas for the future of Bristol illustrated in its own magazine.

The practice grew and Stephen was involved in many projects, with which assistants were always acknowledged. In 1962 a terrace of houses was designed in Portland Street, Clifton. After architectural protest, in 1967 a site owned by Bristol City Council at High Kingsdown was made the subject of an architectural competition. Whicheloe and Macfarlane won the competition with a much admired and award winning design. Also in 1967, he designed new insurance offices on Redcliffe Hill, which when sold proved flexible and are now the Mercure Hotel.

Ashton Court estate was acquired by Bristol City Council with its 800 acre park in 1959, but the mansion remained unused and was decaying. By 1970 Bristol Society of Architects, with Bristol Civic Society support, proposed holding a ball in the building to publicise its plight. When insurance was withheld due to its poor condition, Bristolians responded with horror and in response Bristol City Council held an architectural competition for its restoration which Whicheloe and Macfarlane won.

With Stephen in charge, the building was saved and with minimal extra work has survived

for the past half century, but has never been fully restored or found a viable use. Bristol Civic Society has maintained a series of groups working with Bristol City Council ever since, on which both Stephen and I continued to sit and which have been unable so far to make any sensible progress. I know Stephen would have wished the building completed and given a viable new life.



Stephen was closely involved with the return and restoration of the SS Great Britain.

Stephen retired from practice in 1990 and has spent much of his long retirement working voluntarily, for example: with fellow architects to help students upon the closure of the University Department of Architecture and with the establishment of The Architecture Centre on Narrow Quay, now Design West. He was closely involved with the return and restoration of the SS Great Britain in the city docks and the development of the Bristol Aerospace Museum recently opened at Filton and, of course, on the long hoped for completion of his work on save Ashton Court Mansion, which when it is completed, might make a most suitable memorial to his unstinting devotion.

He was a member of Bristol Civic Society for many years, working voluntarily through the Society with several other architects as well as interested lay persons to try and improve Bristol's built environment.

Stephen was a sensitive friend and gentle but enthusiastic man of principle, prepared to stand up for his beliefs and ever supported by his wife Jean, who survives him with their three daughters.

Peter Floyd

Invitation

Members and friends are warmly invited to the



2023 Annual General Meeting

**Tuesday
20
June,
from 7pm**

The Agenda will include:

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

We hope also to arrange a tour of the Albion Dock, the latest SS Great Britain project, with a talk by Matthew Tanner, Chief Executive of the SSGB Trust.

Further details will be posted on the website (bristolcivicsociety.org.uk) and emailed to members, nearer the date.

Nominations for election as officers and Management Team members must be sent to the secretary (secretary@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk) by 13 June 2023.

.....
**In the
Viridor Theatre,
Brunel Institute,
adjacent to the
SS Great Britain**
(refreshments from 7pm;
the meeting
starts at 7.30pm)



Ken Stradling – Director of the Bristol Guild

Ken Stradling, who died in July 2022 aged 100, is remembered by many in Bristol as the charismatic director of the Bristol Guild of Applied Art on Park Street. He became a familiar figure in the shop and around Park Street and Clifton, his trademark black shirt, overcoat and the essential fedora.

Through the shop and his wide involvement in the arts and business community he played a unique part in the history of British post-war design in Bristol and the South West. His personal vision and business acumen transformed a pre-war crafts and gift shop into the Bristol Guild – a small department store selling well-designed products for the home, whether mass-produced or hand-made. He championed a Scandinavian aesthetic from the 1950s onwards and was a great supporter of local designers, makers and craftspeople. His network of contacts became a network of friends locally and nationally.

Ken was born in Clifton, grew up in Totterdown and attended Bristol Grammar School. At school he was influenced by the teaching of the headmaster, JE Barton who was actively involved in the national design scene and a prominent member of the Design and Industries Association that did so much to champion Modernism in the 1920s and 30s. In the 1930s Barton lectured on the arts for the BBC, his mission to develop the public understanding and appreciation of contemporary art and design. During the Second World War Ken worked for the Forestry Commission and then joined the Royal Corps of Signals based at Catterick. Demobbed, in 1948

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he decided to develop his interest in design as a career. He approached Bristol furniture retailer Crofton Gane, but offered a job in PE Gane's more traditional South Wales shop he turned it down in favour of the role of assistant manager at the Bristol Guild.

In 1958, Ken married Betty Haggart, a painter who taught art at Clifton High School. Betty's art school background and friends brought new ideas and influences, not least a lasting interest in studio ceramics. As soon as they could they began to travel, visiting Scandinavia and Czechoslovakia. Betty shared his passion for the arts and her untimely death in 1964 was a great blow.

Ken's personal taste helped shape that of Bristol shoppers, making the Guild a key destination to see new, exciting work from Britain, Scandinavia and Europe. *'I've only ever bought things I like – never invested in anything I didn't.'* The range of areas that the Guild covered expanded steadily, taking in furniture, textiles, jewellery, kitchenware and toys. A core respect for modernist design was balanced by an enjoyment of the quirky and absurd, particularly evident in the toy department. Ken's deep concern for his home city and its region also meant that there was always a strong local element. In 1961 the addition of a craft gallery within the shop broadened the scope further and allowed him to showcase art and design by up-and-coming and established individual makers.



Bristol Guild in 1983. (Stradling Collection).



Bristol Forum set out to debate the future of the Bristol region as an area to live in the early 1960s. Ken Stradling was one of the editors (Stradling Collection).

Buying for the Guild brought Ken into contact with all manner of designers, manufacturers, artists and makers and helped to build up many close friendships. These networks were also an important element in expanding his involvement with design beyond the Guild. He was Deputy Chairman of the Dartington Cider Press Centre from 1989-98 and was interested in supporting and encouraging artists and designers from the West Country and young people starting out from the region's colleges and universities. Fittingly, from 1988-2013 he was Chairman of the Gane Trust, established by Bristol furniture manufacturer Crofton Gane to support all kinds of people in the fields of craft, design, the arts and social care in the South West. Gane was another important influence on Ken. He had been a major figure in Bristol's cultural scene before the war and like Ken his contacts were very wide within the contemporary design world. His efforts to promote modernist design to the people of the West Country resulted in his working with Bauhaus designer Marcel Breuer as well as other major figures including Wells Coates, the nationally recognised architect of the Lawn Road Flats in Hampstead.

As Ken became more established, he began to engage with local design



Above left, The show house at Pitch and Pay, Sneyd Park in 1963. Interior by Sparta Furniture Associates including steel-framed furniture by Peter Cuddon alongside Scandinavian and British Conte. Above right, Furniture by Marcel Breuer and others in the Stradling Collection. 48, Park Row, Bristol BS1 5LH (Stradling Collection).

issues. He co-founded *Design Exhibition Bristol* in 1958, showcasing products featured by the Design Centre in London, and was active in the local branch of the *Design and Industries Association*. He was quite prepared to challenge the status quo; he joined the *Bristol Architects Forum* in 1959, and helped edit the three issues of their magazine *Bristol Forum* published in 1960-61. The group aimed to stimulate discussion of the local authority's plans for the reconstruction and redevelopment of the city centre areas and was critical of the local architectural establishment. This brought him into contact with young, up-and-coming architects and designers, including Colin Beales (Group Architects DRG) and the furniture designer Peter Cuddon, with whom he set up *Sparta Furniture Associates*. Sparta provided the interior for the show house at Pitch and Pay in Sneyd Park in 1963 amongst other projects. He was also closely involved in Bristol Dock Ventures and with the SS Great Britain trust, supported the foundation and development of St George's as a music venue and was a key member of the Park Street Traders' Association which has worked hard to maintain the street as a key Bristol shopping destination.

Ken did not set out to be a collector; he acquired objects for his own home in much the same way he bought for the shop. By the time he decided to retire in the early 2000s as he put it, he *'found he had a collection.'* Unsure what to do with it, he sought advice from friends including Christopher Lloyd, fellow Guild director June Lancaster, the critic David Whiting and the collector Anthony Shaw and in 2006, established The Ken Stradling Collection Trust. His intention was to make it accessible to educate and inform the public and to inspire a new

generation. He echoed JE Barton when he wrote *'the general standard of public taste will never improve until design becomes an integral part of everyone's general education.'* The Collection opened to the public as The Stradling Collection at 48 Park Row in 2014.

The unique property of the collection is its breadth. A shopkeeper's collection, it spans almost every aspect of the home that the Guild showrooms did, from the kitchen bowls to the armchairs, artworks and children's toys. There is no process of selection that separates studio glass or pottery from industrial equivalents. The result is a collection that reflects the familiar rather than the grand or precious, at the same time selected with a very particular eye.

Aside from contemporary objects, Ken was interested in the pre-war design world in Bristol and in particular the figure of Crofton Gane. He acquired a number of pieces of furniture designed in 1935 by Marcel Breuer for Gane's house in Westbury Park. Gane had asked Breuer to remodel and furnish his home, partly as a show house. Some

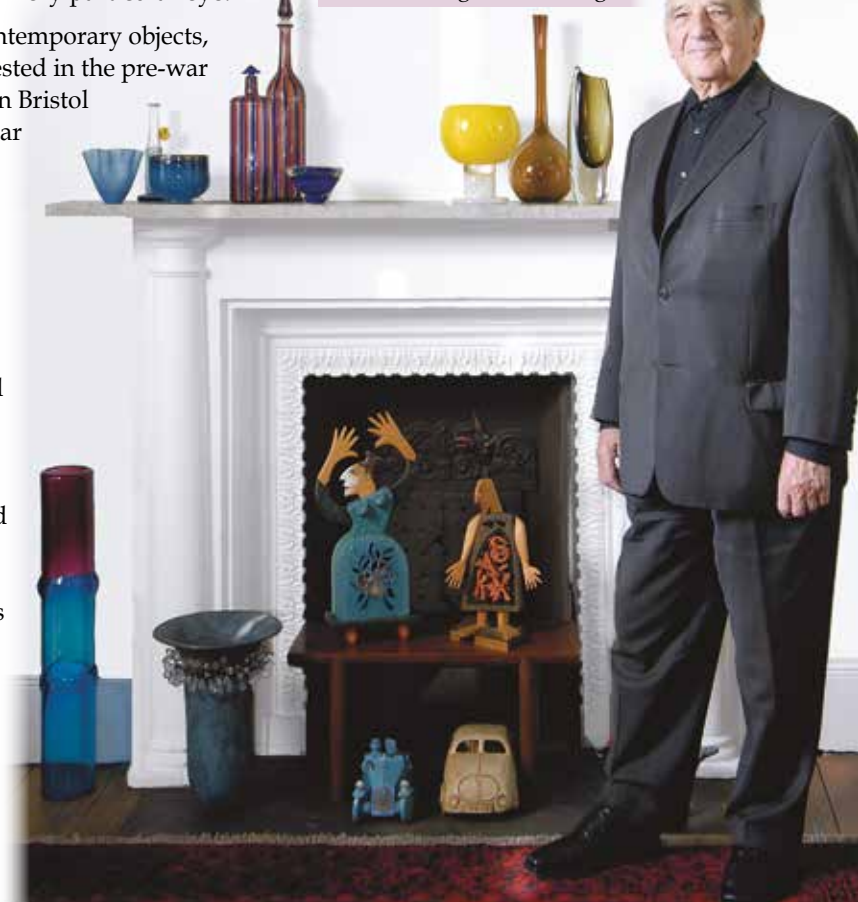
Right, Ken Stradling at home in Clifton, 2008 (Stradling Collection).

furniture was bespoke, other pieces were for production. The house was widely reviewed in the design press and other pieces from the house are in the V&A. This can be seen as a tribute to Crofton Gane but also a celebration of Ken's home city as a place with a significant twentieth century design pedigree.

Ken was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Bristol, was a Member of the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers and was presented with the Lord Mayor's Medal. He was made an MBE in 2020.

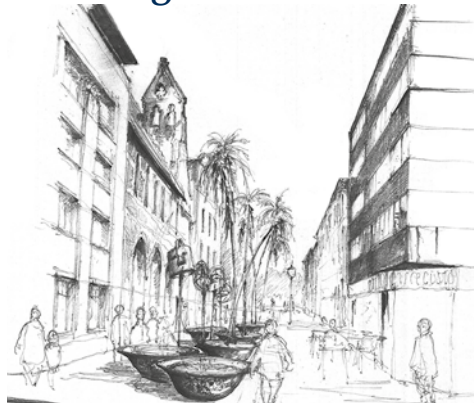
Oliver Kent

Dr Oliver Kent is a trustee of the Stradling Collection.
web: stradlingcollection.org



Museum dedicated to the history of enslavement & abolition

Mark Steeds reports on plans for the imaginative re-use of a long neglected building.



How it could look. Abolition Garden by Sam Kendon

The old Seamen's Mission on the corner of Prince Street and Royal Oak Avenue has been neglected and allowed to deteriorate for decades. It's now considered an eyesore. The 'Abolition Shed Collective' community group wish to give imaginative re-use to this significant building, just off Queen Square, the epicentre of Bristol's involvement in the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans.

We believe this could become a major tourist destination, adding to Bristol's 'string of pearls' attractions on the waterside. The building would offer space to:

1. Explore the divisive topic of Bristol's role in the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans by creating an inclusive museum to go with a yet to be determined major Memorial to the Victims of Enslavement. Primarily to remember the African Diaspora, but also Indigenous

Peoples and Indentured Servants. Bring communities closer together through greater understanding and recognition of events from the past including the work of the abolitionists.

2. Work with Bristol's existing Museum service, to complement it, and provide a focus for related museums and artefacts currently spread throughout the city such as the Red Lodge, Georgian House and the fallen Colston statue. This could include the Hogarth triptych and appropriate remnants of the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum.

3. Engage with the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England to develop a significant research and teaching museum, with courses in art, anthropology, conservation, and museum studies - as offered in the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia in Canada.

4. Work closely with universities and institutions with related histories in other countries such as those in the West Indies, West Africa, North & South America, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain; as well as in the UK including Bath, London, Liverpool, Lancaster and Glasgow.

When consecrated in 1880, the Seamen's Church hosted thousands of sailors on leave each week and gave them religious sustenance. After the Second World War it became a Youth & Evangelical Centre before being allowed to fall derelict by the early 1980s.

During the Second World War the church sustained severe damage. Subsequently, the Prince Street elevation was redesigned austere, in emergency war-time materials. This is the last surviving example of this type of construction in Bristol. We believe the existing rebuilt portion would make



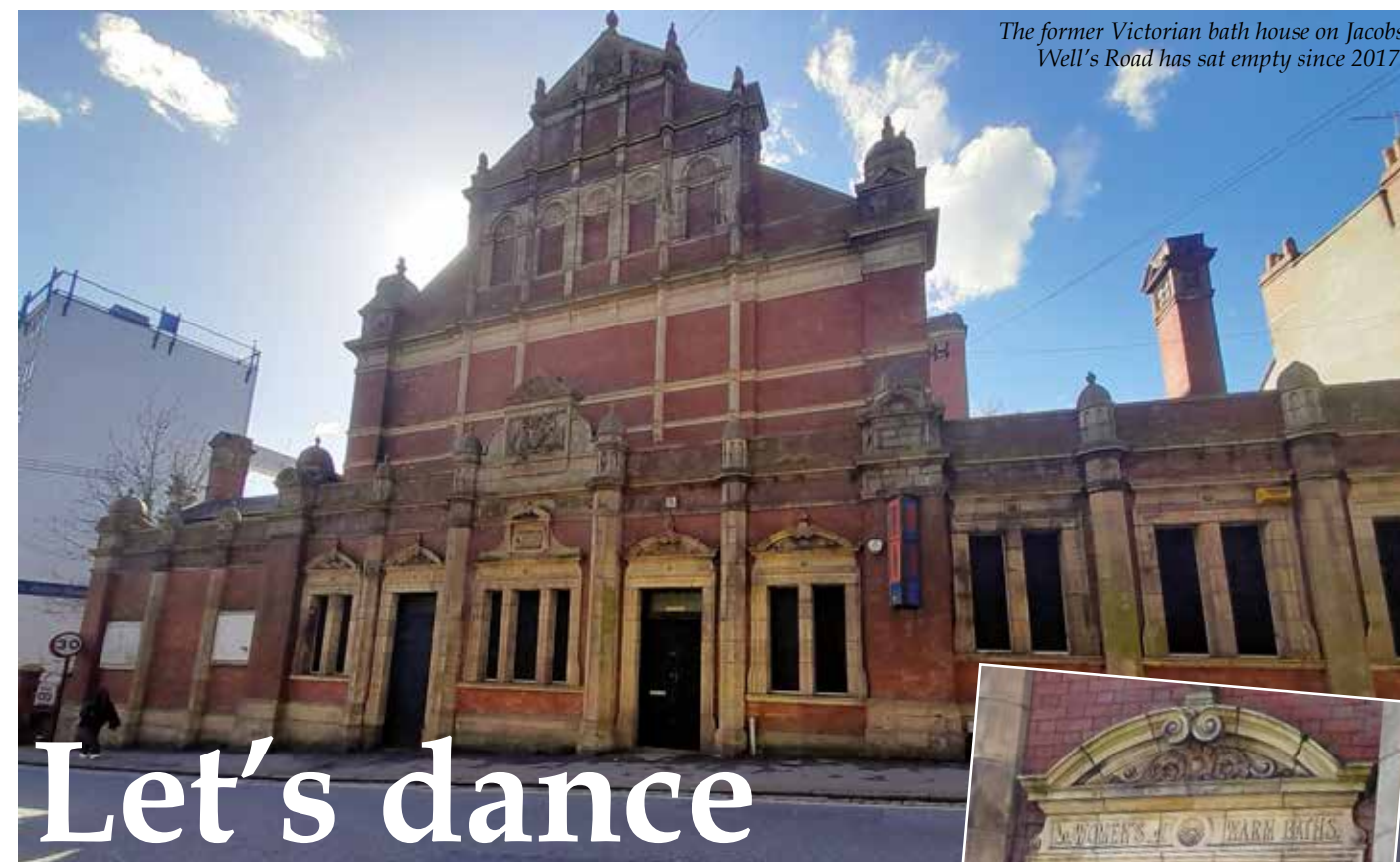
Above, The old Seamen's Mission on the corner of Prince Street and Royal Oak Avenue has been neglected and allowed to deteriorate for decades.

Below, When consecrated in 1880 the Seamen's Church hosted thousands of sailors on leave each week.



perfect research and lecture rooms to revive its Institute status, while the remnants of the Church would make ideal exhibition space and be a centre for African art and culture.

The Collective would like the revived building to be called the Bristol Enslavement & Abolition Museum & Institute - BEAMi - and have applied for Asset of Community Value status. In addition, Marshall & Kendon Architects have submitted a full planning application to transform it for the city. Watch this space.



The former Victorian bath house on Jacobs Well's Road has sat empty since 2017.

Let's dance

Creative re-use of Jacob's Wells Baths isn't just about the social or architectural case, says Emma Harvey.

Serving the city as its only dedicated dance space for over 30 years, the former Victorian bath house on Jacobs Well's Road has sat empty since 2017. It is now under threat as our cash-strapped local authority seek to dispose of complicated buildings like this to plug their £32m revenue budget shortfall for 2023/24.

This is a scenario playing out across the United Kingdom as local authorities - who are often the reluctant owners of these cherished but complex assets - struggle to plug sustained budget cuts. Faced with other immediate problems in our daily lives, we stroll past a building converted into boujie flats and reminisce about what once was, and walk by a boarded up building and fantasise about what might have been.

Across the country, pockets of resistance are emerging to stem this tide. Here in Bristol the local

community have launched a petition to *Save Jacob's Wells Baths*. Trinity is working with them to develop a plan to repair the building and bring it back into use as a community and dance hub.

In the face of great adversity it feels almost counter-intuitive to resist a quick fix; sell it and the problem goes away. But, this sticking plaster politics gradually over time erodes the very fabric of civic life, slowly stripping communities of secular spaces to congregate, create and connect, increasing our feelings of isolation, division and polarisation as the UK population increases in density and diversity.

The essence of good city planning is learning how to pick up the messages and think beyond political cycles. These buildings speak to us and the solutions are right there if we are willing to listen. We are here today because of quick fixes. But far from being the problems, if we learn to interpret this heritage story, each poorly located partition, inaccessible room or damaged roof-space screams out about what needs to happen now.

Bristol is a trailblazer. It is in that spirit of One City, our rich activist heritage and doing things differently that we now have a once in a lifetime opportunity to be brave in the face of great adversities and think creatively about the future of this space. Creative re-use of Jacob's Wells Baths isn't just about the social or architectural case. As Historic England

outlines, aside from the social and architectural case for this project, there is an environmental case in relation to reduction of carbon. With a building of this size and importance, the city has the ability to mitigate against climate change through adaptive re-use providing warm spaces for community groups and a dedicated home for dance, as well as providing a much needed youth-hub for young people in the locality.

We must think long-term about what will be lost to the city should this building fall into the hands of developers seeking to capitalise on the value of the land.

As an already trusted guardian of a publicly owned asset, Trinity, along a number of other professionals, is offering to help Bristol City Council to save Jacob's Wells Baths as an asset of community value and to develop a model for community asset management that can serve as a model for other towns and cities.

The story is not unique, but our solution can be. If you'd like to find out more about our plans visit www.trinitybristol.org.uk/savejwb

Emma Harvey is Chief Executive Officer for Trinity.



Above, Bristol Civic Society is much more influential when working in partnership. Photo Jeff Lucas.

Right, I had a personal interest in supporting efforts to renovate The Mount Without

Rather depressingly the report was short on practical solutions to this problem. For example, some thought Societies with committees and minutes lack dynamism and energy. Possibly – but some form of governance will always be essential.

Others talked of doing things in other ways and of doing different things altogether. Interesting ideas and ones to investigate further? Societies need to be project based to attract members. I think there is lot of truth in this.

For example, it was recently reported that the team at Bristol's Great Avon Wood, near Pensford village in the Chew Valley, were "astonished" to receive 200 applications within 10 days. The task was to plant trees, not manage the organisation. There is certainly quite a lot of evidence that many volunteers want to take part in and see physical results rather than sit in meetings (see pages 16-17).

Town planning is very technical, and increasingly so, was a common response from Societies. It's challenging to keep up with legislation and government guidance. Many don't want to do the same in retirement that they did in work. Town planners especially!!

Whilst the pandemic may have disrupted the normal flow of activity for volunteers, there is some evidence that the decline in enthusiasm for civic involvement seems to have begun a few years before then. But the evidence is largely anecdotal.

Some of you will know that I'm also involved in the Mountain Bothies Association (MBA) (see mountainbothies.org.uk for more information). Interestingly the MBA has comparable challenges. Despite having over 3,500 members there is increasingly reluctance to stand as trustees (or run for chairman). Yet a recent call for volunteers to contribute to a bothy work party in Argyll received over 90 replies within days.

Impact of online meetings, events and social media

I'm not sure. Our online events during the past two or three years have been a great success, attracting good audiences and generating new members for the Society. Although there is no alternative to meeting face to face for getting to know people and for discussing issues, opportunities and common interest. Yet, neither has produced members prepared to stand as trustees or become involved in the management of the Society.

Conclusions and emerging strands

Something needs to change – there isn't an inexhaustible supply of volunteers wanting to be trustees, on management teams and being chair. There is certainly some unease at the traditional model of committees and minutes.

But how should this change happen? Not surprisingly I don't have the answer. If I did, I wouldn't be writing this article. But you might have ideas – possibly from your own work and

volunteer experience. Please contribute and let's see if we can create a model which is more attractive to new volunteers and also more sustainable.

Projects are popular. But are hard to identify for a City wide charity.

Can leadership roles be shared? Certainly, our current joint chairing of Major Sites Group operates well. Although obviously clarity is needed on who does what. And those involved need to get on with one another!

How to contact potential volunteers? Articles in *Better Bristol*, mailchimp contact, website advertisements? Interestingly, a recent survey found that one in ten people said they would be very likely to volunteer with a group, or club if they were invited personally. A problem with this approach is that we don't know all our members sufficiently to make personal approaches – we wish we did! Certainly, over the years in the MBA our approach has been very much one of phoning potential trustees – but the supply of likely candidates has dwindled here too!

What next?

We urgently need your involvement and ideas if Bristol Civic Society is to have a robust and sustainable future as an important force in Bristol. In my *Chairs Piece* I identified the important role for the Society. It is up to you to ensure that we continue to perform this role. I look forward to hearing from you.

chair@bristolcivicsociety.org

www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

The challenges of running Bristol Civic Society

How to ensure that there is seamless succession in the key roles. A personal view by current chair, Simon Birch.

Introduction

Succession planning – easy to say but extremely difficult to do in practice in a volunteer run charity. It may even sound quite boring but is actually key to the future of the Society. I've recently announced that I'm stepping down in June 2024 – after 10 years. Apart from replacing me we also need additional volunteers to join our Management Team.

There is much advice available on the personal qualities essential in a Chair – all quite exhausting! For example, the ability to lead the organisation to enable it to fulfil its purpose, acting as a spokesperson and figurehead, possessing tact (not sure I score well here!), diplomacy and powers of persuasion, relevant knowledge and, more prosaically, has the relevant skills to run a meeting well.

My message is don't be put off by this list. But it is critical to recognise that Bristol Civic Society is run by volunteers and that they will only continue to volunteer if they enjoy doing it and their contribution is appreciated. Most important.

Role of Chair

What do I do as Chair? At one level there is a role leading Management Team, agreeing agendas, chairing meetings, and following up actions. And of course, the opportunity to contribute to *Better Bristol* and to chair many of our online and face to face events.

But there is so much intangible activity, networking and linking up with other organisations and individuals in the City. Aiming to work positively together to achieve positive outcomes.

The Civic Society is much more influential when working in partnership.

I also email all the new Members to the Society and welcome them. And I ask why did you join the Civic Society? The replies are often

because of friends, or from reading *Better Bristol*, or attendance at events. We are a growing organisation.

Optional activities (not all Chairs will do these)

I worked as a town planner and still enjoy contributing to our Major Sites Group, which I currently co-chair with John Payne. There is great satisfaction in holding meetings with developers, going on site visits, and in preparing draft responses. But not for everyone I admit!

And of course, I had a personal interest in supporting efforts to renovate The Mount Without and I still have an enduring hope that Ashton Court Mansion will find a new life sometime soon.

What do others do? (Bristol Civic Society is not alone)

In 2021 Civic Voice published *The future of the Civic Movement – where will it go from here?* This report was the output from sessions with over 30 societies across the country. The resounding messages which I took from the exercise were:

It's a widespread challenge to recruit new trustees and to get people to take on active roles. It's simply not sustainable to rely on so few individuals to organise everything.

There is a lack of resilience coming across in almost all talks, with many societies reporting a lack of younger members/active volunteers and an ageing membership.

Bristol Civic Society Design Awards



An enduring hope that Ashton Court Mansion will find a new life sometime soon.



Review

Bad Blood in Georgian Bristol

Steve Poole and Nicholas Rogers
Redcliffe/Regional History Centre UWE, 2022
168 pages, £20.00.

In 1741, Sir John Dineley was abducted and dragged through the streets of Bristol in broad daylight, rowed down the Avon and forced onto a warship captained by his brother, Samuel Goodere. There, Dineley was murdered by two seamen, Charles White and Matthew Mahoney.

Dineley's death was the culmination of a bitter feud with

his brother over the inheritance of the family estate.

Goodere and his accomplices were

Bad Blood in Georgian Bristol is full of vivid and interesting detail about mid eighteenth century Bristol. Poole and Rogers explore some of the more macabre aspects of Georgian life.

subsequently arrested and tried for murder. They were condemned to death by hanging on St Michael's Hill. Mahoney's body was subsequently placed at the mouth of the Avon inside an iron gibbet cage suspended from a tall pole. It was a grim reminder to those arriving in Bristol of the consequences of murder.

The Bristol fratricide caused a sensation in Georgian Britain. Numerous graphic pamphlet accounts of the trial and execution quickly followed, embellishing the gruesome details for an eager public, and digging back into the history of the feud.

Bad Blood in Georgian Bristol explores the Dineley-Goodere family feud and seeks to answer a number of pertinent

questions – namely why did

this family dispute culminate in such a brazen murder. Goodere claimed his brother was mentally unstable and he was imprisoning Dineley for his own protection. But how come two sailors on Goodere's ship ended up strangling the unfortunate captive? And why did Goodere make such little attempt to conceal these violent deeds?

Bad Blood in Georgian Bristol is full of vivid and interesting detail about mid eighteenth century Bristol. Poole and Rogers explore some of the more macabre aspects of Georgian life. A chapter is dedicated to gibbets! It was a dark time – the transatlantic slave trade was at its height. Meanwhile, Bristol's sailors, on their return from lengthy voyages, lived in fear of being press-ganged and taken who knows where.

The authors certainly know their stuff. Steve Poole is Professor of History and Heritage at the University of the West of England, Bristol and has been Director of the University's Regional History Centre since 2004.

Nicholas Rogers is a professor of history at York University, Toronto. He is the author or co-author of several books, including, most recently, *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night* and *The Press Gang: Naval Impressment and Its Opponents in Georgian Britain*.

Rogers and Poole collaborated on the seminal *Bristol from Below – Law, Authority and Protest in a Georgian City* (The Boydell Press, 2017).

Meticulously researched and accessible, *Bad Blood in Georgian Bristol* shines a light on a little known corner of Bristol's history.

MM

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

Title..... Forename Surname
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Events

Spring and Summer 2023

What odd times we live in: a war in Ukraine; sky high inflation; energy costs soaring and no tomatoes (this week) to be had in the shops. Has the world gone crazy? Answer is 'not quite' as the events team continue to work on a varied programme of walks, Zooms, visits and talks to ease you through the turbulent times of Spring and Summer and hopefully to amuse you and inform you about life in our fantastic city.

Much of the programme in the summer months is yet to be confirmed, so please check the Bristol Civic Society's website (www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk/events) for updates on those events shown below

and other new upcoming events. We usually notify members via email about upcoming events, particularly where booking is required. Some events may have a small charge and numbers can be limited. We try to record Zoom events and place them on the website for the benefit of those members who miss the live event, or who wish to refer to them for information purposes.



APRIL Wednesday 12 April, 7.30 pm.

Zoom talk by Julian Okoye of Wessex Water, which looks after Bristol's sewage infrastructure.

Wednesday 19 April, 2.00 pm.

Walk led by Dave Blackburn around the traces of Bristol's Harbour Railway.

Wednesday 19 April, 7.30 pm.

Zoom talk by Liz Alcock on the work of Bristol Water, including water supply and other issues.

Wednesday 28 April, 7.30pm at Redland Quaker Hall.

Gordon Young will steer us through the development of medieval printing techniques, from 'Pen to Print'.



MAY **Ed Hall offers his City Walls walk.** Date and time to be confirmed.



JUNE Tuesday 20 June, 7.30 pm.
Bristol Civic Society AGM.

The Viridor Theatre, Brunel Institute, adjacent to the SS Great Britain. Matthew Tanner will also talk about, and guide us, around the Albion Dock project.

Coming up

- Walks: including a series of walks guided by Gordon Young focused on commemorative plaques and inscribed statue pediments in the city centre.

Walk One takes place on Thursday 9 March at 10.30 pm repeated on Sunday 12 March.

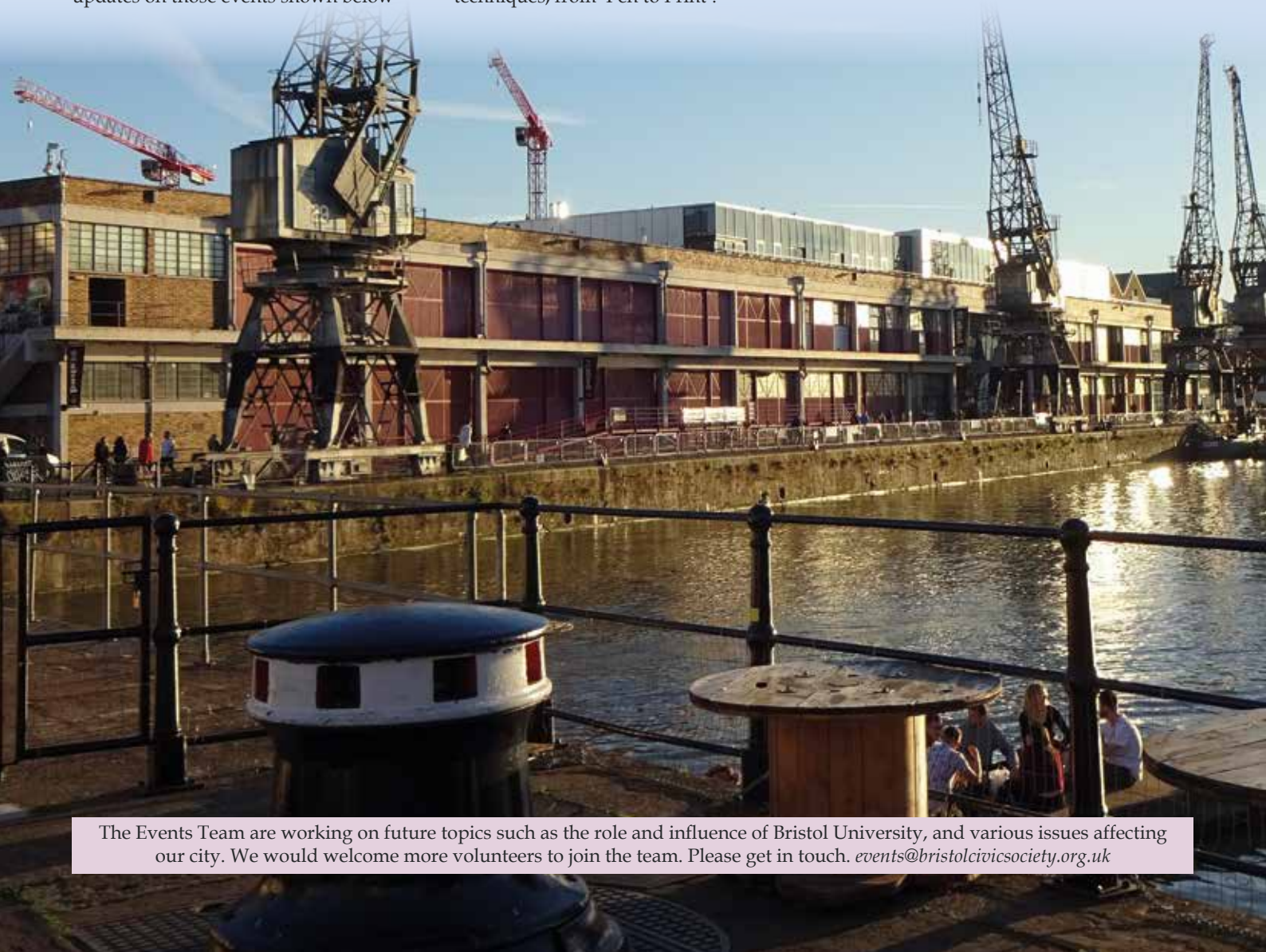
Walk Two will be on 22 March and 16 April.

Walk Three on 3 May and 7 May. Details of walks to be published via email.

- Zoom presentations: usually one a month, sometimes more.

- Visits to local places of interest,

- Talk on the role of Bristol Civic Society's Major Sites Group, its activities improving the city's built environment.



The Events Team are working on future topics such as the role and influence of Bristol University, and various issues affecting our city. We would welcome more volunteers to join the team. Please get in touch. events@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk