

Better Bristol

The Bristol Civic Society Magazine – Issue 25 Autumn/Winter 2024

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an independent force for a **better Bristol**





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Elderberry Way

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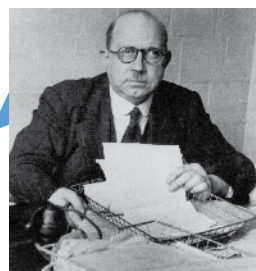
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From the Chair

Message from *Sandra Fryer*, Chair of Bristol Civic Society



I am delighted to be the new Chair of the Bristol Civic Society. I have spent the last two months getting to understand how Bristol Civic Society works, whether we have our priorities right, who our partners are, and where we can make a difference.

As a planner, regenerator and long-term resident, I am passionate about Bristol. The city is changing and I feel it needs a renewed shared vision, perhaps a 'Re-Set' that reflects the new ambitious city council leadership, the new local MPs and tackles the issues and opportunities that a new government may bring for Bristol.

Bristol with an estimated population of 483,000 people was the second fastest growing of all the Core Cities in England and Wales over the last 10 years (2012 to 2022) after Manchester. Bristol has an increasingly diverse population, there are now more than 287 different ethnic groups in the city, more than 185 countries of birth represented, at least 45 religions and more than 90 languages spoken by people living in Bristol.

Bristol is a changing city, with some highly affluent and successful parts and yet a weak city centre, and some hugely deprived neighbourhoods. Bristol is

proud of its two universities and their significant contribution to the Bristol economy and yet the rapid growth of student housing is almost certainly contributing to the housing crisis and poor place-making, as well as forcing employment out of central and inner-city Bristol.

I am a passionate urbanist, always keen to see high quality development and growth that chimes with the historical context and character of a place. Cities can successfully grow ensuring safe, liveable neighbourhoods, which does not mean tall buildings but it does require confident, visionary leadership.

**I am a passionate urbanist,
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character of a place.**

There are many places to learn from in terms of good quality urbanism and contemporary living. In the UK, some parts of London are beautiful, the tram led solutions in Nottingham have connected regeneration areas to the city centre, award winning housing in Norwich and urban extensions around York and Cambridge. In Europe, Amsterdam, Almere, Freiburg, Copenhagen, Malmö, and Stockholm all have quality regeneration creating high

quality sustainable neighbourhoods.

It is time to work out how Bristol achieves the new homes and infrastructure required ensuring great places across the whole city. I am especially keen that the Civic Society engages more widely across the city including with young people and those from all parts of the city. I would like to work out how the Civic Society can help Bristol deliver positive plans for new urban areas across the city.

I met with the Civic Society Management Team recently to consider our Manifesto, and our priorities over the next few years. We agreed that we want to keep doing the things the Civic Society does well and members value including the Major Sites Group, the Transport and Place Making Group, *Better Bristol* and the fantastic events programme.

We hope to raise the profile of the Civic Society across the city and encourage new members from underrepresented groups or areas of the city. To do this we plan to hold events and activities beyond central and inner Bristol, to increase membership, update our communications strategy and engage in a debate on the future of our great city.

If you have ideas to share and want to join in please contact me.

Sandra Fryer

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Not already a member? Why not join TODAY!

See page 27 for more details...

Design Awards 2024

Andy Reynolds, Chris Leeks, Kerry Chester, and Tony Berongoy.



One Portwall Square. An exceptional example of innovative office development.

One Portwall Square

Developed by Nord and designed by architects AHMM, this six-storey Grade A office building, located diagonally opposite St Mary Redcliffe Church, was constructed speculatively on a restricted site. A harmonising palette of materials was chosen for the façade, modelling itself on the neighbouring orange-red brick and pre-cast concrete buildings. Unusually, the Civic Society gave unreserved support to the original planning application, drawing attention to a design that would reflect and



complement the articulation of the dominant neighbouring building, 100 Temple Street. The Society was impressed by the intended creation of a pocket park in front of the building which would animate the surrounding area and retain the two mature trees on the site.

The scheme has now been completed and occupied and the Awards Panel was impressed by this exceptional example of innovative office development, which shows what can be achieved on a relatively compact city centre site.

Elderberry Walk

Developed by Brighter Places and designed again by AHMM, Elderberry Walk is a pioneering brownfield development in Southmead, providing 161 new homes organised around a central green lane adorned with trees and multifunctional green landscaping. Its diverse communal gardens also enhance ecological links and wildlife connections to the adjoining parkland.

This mixed-tenure scheme, embracing open market, rent to buy, affordable rent, shared ownership, key worker rental, and ethical market rent properties, showcases the possibility of designing for vibrant, inclusive communities.

Left, Elderberry Walk. High-quality, affordable homes through innovative funding strategies.



Notable for its exemplary design, Elderberry Walk creates secure and inviting community spaces, promoting social interaction and a sense of belonging among residents and their families.

Elderberry Walk's meticulous attention to detail and unwavering commitment to enhancing residents' quality of life set a high standard for the housing sector nationwide. A first for the UK, this groundbreaking project brings together a housing association, a community investment company and private sector capital and marks a significant milestone by providing much-needed, high-quality, affordable homes through innovative funding strategies.

Easton Jamia Mosque

Easton Jamia Mosque has been developed from a Victorian National School into one of the biggest and most celebrated mosques in Bristol. It was purchased by some of the local elders in the early 80s and has since grown into a visible and distinctive presence on St Marks Road - one of the "Greatest Streets in the Country" according to the Academy of Urbanism.

The building mixes original features - such as the pennant stone walls - with Islamic features and motifs. Transparent domes sit on the roof which are illuminated in the evenings to dramatic effect. Arches, tiles and geometric patterns enliven the facades and the streetscape as well as linking the building to its Arabic heritage.

In 2023 a new entrance and facilities were opened which significantly improve the experience for women and children. They make clever use of a very restricted site, wrapping around the original building and mirroring its design language.

The awards panel were impressed with the way the building built on, respected



Left, Easton Jamia Mosque. Clever use of a very restricted site.



Above, Bristol Beacon makes a major physical and cultural contribution to the life of the city. Photo Tim Crocker.

Left, interior view of Bristol Beacon.

and developed the existing structures. They also admired the way in which the community had been involved in the design and building process, with many of the mosque's members directly contributing to the building work. This - together with the use of innovative local suppliers - meant that the whole project could be realised at remarkably low cost.

Bristol Beacon

The transformation of the Bristol Beacon has been a long-running, challenging, and, yes, expensive project. However, the outcome justifies the investment and the wait, as the venue now makes a major physical and cultural

contribution to the life of the city.

The design team demonstrated an unwavering commitment to creating two venues that deliver an unparalleled audio/visual experience for the

audience. We experienced one of these new halls for the Awards presentation and were suitably impressed. Their focus on acoustics and sightlines ensures that every performance can be enjoyed to the fullest, establishing the Bristol Beacon as a premier destination for music lovers. This has been integrated into the project with great energy and dedication, resulting in an impressive and high-quality piece of architectural design.

The Awards Panel was particularly impressed by the meticulous attention to detail evident throughout the building. Every element, from the main concert halls to the smallest architectural features, reflects a deep consideration for both form and function. For those who take the time to explore the venue, there are countless design details to appreciate, each contributing to the overall aesthetic and experiential quality of the space.

This project stands as a testament to the power of thoughtful design and its ability to transform a historic venue into a modern, dynamic space that serves the community and enhances the cultural fabric of Bristol.

Major developments in Bristol

Peter Ellis looks at a selection of important proposals.

Mickleburgh's site, Stokes Croft, BS1 3PL

The redevelopment proposals include a music hub (incorporating multi-functional floorspace for retailing, teaching, practice, performances and events) and purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). As described by the applicants, the proposed redevelopment would be a place where 'music meets community – a destination for music lovers to learn, perform, and connect.'

Whilst we had concerns about the initial proposals, particularly their scale, we fully supported the revisions. The willingness to listen, and respond, to feedback from the community was refreshing. We were particularly impressed by the attention given to integrating successfully with the surrounding townscape, animating street frontages and providing a range of facilities to support Bristol's music scene. We also applauded the commitment shown by Mickleburgh to maintaining the retail presence in Stokes Croft.

In our view, the proposed provision of PBSA integrated with uses that provide year-round activities is the way to address the seemingly ever-increasing demand for student accommodation. The granularity, and approach to placemaking, seen in these proposals is to be much preferred to the enormous, monolithic PBSA enclaves



Above left, We applauded the commitment shown by Mickleburgh to maintaining the retail presence in Stokes Croft. Above right, 54-56 Redcliffe St. We considered this would result in poor living conditions for future occupants.

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Left, Malago Road. The revisions exacerbated rather than addressed our earlier concerns.

we see proposed (and consented) all too frequently.

Former Pring & St Hill site (Plot 1) Malago Road, BS3 4JQ

We objected strongly to the latest iteration of the proposals for this site. Our two principal objections related to the design, particularly the adverse impact on local character from the proposals' height and massing, and to the amount of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). We expressed our frustration that the revisions' direction of travel exacerbated rather than addressed our earlier concerns.

The proposed increase in height was at the western end of Malago Road where the predominant height of near-by buildings is two to three storeys. Not only would the proposals be out of character but the extra height would increase the proposals' overbearing and overshadowing of the buildings opposite. The quantum of PBSA had also grown. We flagged again our concern that students are a transient community, whose contributions to local

businesses would not be consistent and related mainly to term times (for 30 or so weeks a year). We underlined that we hoped the application would be refused but, if permitted, the proposals should, at the very least, allow for conversion to family accommodation or larger units were the demand for PBSA to falter.

Despite substantial local objections, the application was approved in June.

Bathroom Solutions, corner of Redcliffe Street and Three Queens Lane, BS1 6LS

This is another proposed redevelopment for PBSA. We objected to the proposals. Although the lower part of the proposed building fitted in well with the character of the area to the south, the upper storeys did not work for several reasons. With the enormous development being built just to the north, this part of Three Queens Lane would become a canyon. This would put the street in shade for much of the year. We were also worried about the impact on nearby homes including the listed Atrium building.

Many of the student rooms proposed



would be single aspect and north facing. Bearing in mind the height of the building opposite, we considered this would result in poor living conditions for future occupants. We also underlined we would expect the development to be adaptable to conventional residential use in the event of reduced demand for PBSA.

The White Hall, Glencoyne Square, BS10 6EU

The proposals are for an apartment building providing 23 flats, all to be let at social rents. They, and associated remodelling of the existing playground, have emerged following extensive local work and engagement over time about the future planning of the wider area and this site. In our response we made some comments on the detail, but didn't look to 'parachute in' our views about the principle of redevelopment given the local engagement. We did say that if the proposed disposition and proportions of land uses were considered acceptable, we supported the provision of 100% affordable flats with all homes provided at social rent. These are the sort of homes desperately needed in the city.



Glencoyne Square. These are the sort of homes desperately needed in the city.

Queen Charlotte Street and Old City Conservation Area, BS1 4HE

This is a complex site, which includes 3 Queen Square (listed Grade II*), 2 Little King Street (listed Grade II) and Armourers House, a 1980s-built office block on Queen Charlotte Street, all within the Queen Square and Old City Conservation Area. The proposals involve changing the use of 2 Little King Street from a warehouse (currently vacant) to offices and integrating with Armourers House and 3 Queen Square (both in office use already). As well as works to the listed buildings, there would be an upwards extension of Armourers House.

The comments made by the City Design Group's Conservation Section reflected our review so we aligned ourselves with those rather than

repeating the detail. In short, we thought there was a degree of harm to the listed buildings and conservation area which needed better justification and a number of design modifications should be considered. We welcomed the reuse of the Armourers House as the preferred option, as its demolition and redevelopment would give rise to unnecessary carbon emissions.



Queen Square. A number of design modifications should be considered.

Redevelopment of the Premier Inn and Debenhams, The Bearpit, BS1

Better Bristol's spring edition explained we had objected to these proposals, and why. Disappointingly, in the run up to the May local elections both planning applications were given the green light by the council. Some of the advice given to councillors on the Premier Inn redevelopment didn't look right so lawyers were asked to have a look.

In a highly unusual step for the Bristol Civic Society, lawyers were instructed to write to the council, in a pre-action protocol (PAP) letter, setting out the critical matters missed in the information given to councillors and the mistakes made in the advice given to them. This meant the resolution to approve the planning application, through no fault of the councillors, was legally unsound. The Bristol Civic Society felt that as the proposals were highly controversial with a widespread impact, it was important they were considered properly, not least when a number of councillors had said their decision was finely balanced. The PAP letter therefore invited the council to withdraw the resolution. This would have given councillors the opportunity to reconsider the application with all



Debenhams tower. Notwithstanding concerns, the council issued planning permission.

the information they needed and in the correct way.

Notwithstanding these concerns, the council issued the planning permission on 14 May. Both the council, and the applicants, in their replies to the PAP letter defended the basis on which the decision had been taken. Having reviewed these replies, counsel advising the Civic Society, still considered the courts would likely grant permission to apply for judicial review; and that if the matter proceeded to trial, the planning permission would likely be quashed. After weighing up the potential benefits and risks, including financial risk to the Civic Society, the Society's Management Team decided against pursuing the judicial review.

Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

Many of the proposals we see are for, or include, PBSA. We are very aware that these proposals can be controversial in local communities, as can the loss of housing to student HMOs. The demand for PBSA is likely to feature in the examination of Bristol's draft local plan this autumn.

The city council's most recent local housing need assessment provides interesting context:

"There was a total of 16,500 bed spaces provided as PBSA in 2023..... In total, 8,150 PBSA places are planned, a 49% increase in PBSA student accommodation...."

"If all the planned provision were to be built then the total supply of PBSA would increase to 24,650 bedspaces compared to a prospective 65,900 full time students by 2030... 71,300 by 2040."

"The number of students requiring accommodation in the Private Rented Sector would fall slightly despite the increase in student numbers to 2030; as the 42,500 existing students who are not in PBSA will reduce to around 41,300. By 2040 (assuming no further increase to the PBSA nor student numbers in UWE over the 2030-40 period), the number will have increased to 46,650, but it should again be noted that not all of these students will require accommodation in Bristol."

If you have any thoughts on how we should be responding to proposals for PBSA, do let me know at peter.ellis@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

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City Planning and the Housing Crisis

The May elections brought a fundamental change to the operation Bristol City Council. This is an opportune moment, writes *Willie Harbinson*, to consider future development and tackling the housing crisis in the city.

Bristol Civic Society campaign for the good planning and design that successfully integrates new development with what makes Bristol special. New development must be delivered in a way that civilises our streets at human scale and provides desperately needed homes.

Learning from the Past

The drive to build more homes quickly could lead to a repetition of the legacy of the 1960s which produced poorly constructed homes that have created serious health and social problems for their residents and have resulted in environmental damage to parts of the city. New homes were built quickly but without proper considerations of the consequences. Today we are more aware of the pitfalls of not building carefully and sustainably or in a way that fosters genuine community cohesion.

Many UK cities are filling their skylines with high rises as a solution to the housing crisis; but is this the answer for Bristol? Academic work shows that high rise flats are less sociable, and people



People are attracted to the city because it is historic.

are isolated in them. They are not suitable for children who can't go out to play unsupervised. Many are ugly, and never truly safe; just consider the fatalities caused by the fires at Grenfell and in Bristol at Twinnell House, and the disruption to people's lives caused by the discovery of structural problems at Barton House. It is wrong to go down this thoughtless development route just because it's expedient.

Tall Buildings in Bristol

Bristol has suffered from a peppering of uncharacteristic tall buildings, largely in the 60s and 70s, but now much taller buildings are popping up in unsuitable places. These tall buildings are changing the character of Bristol for the worse. They disrupt the unique character that Bristol derives from a successful integration of built form and topography. We change this character at our peril. It contributes to the wellbeing of those who have made their home here. It underpins tourism and is a magnet for the many cutting-edge businesses that are the lifeblood of Bristol.

People are attracted to the city because it is historic, different, and is largely low or medium rise. Other historic and beautiful cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen have chosen to avoid high-rise and go for mid-rise to preserve their attractive lifestyles. They know that beauty is an important characteristic for a city; it makes people happier; it attracts people to come and work in

the city and attracts tourists and the economic benefits that they bring.

Towers are not the answer to solving Bristol's core problem of housing those who need affordable housing. High rise does not mean higher density. Bristol's sad post-war high-rise estates are relatively low density. Clifton ward has Bristol's highest density and is mid-rise.

To Build Out or Up

Building out means concreting over fields on the fringe of the city, and creating new, low-rise, mostly car dependent communities, far from the heart of the city. The alternative, building up, is to expand the capacity in our centre, building hundreds of new homes on relatively small patches of land.

It is argued that building up will produce more housing and the housing will occupy less space. However, this isn't true as high-rise buildings need adequate open space around them for their residents' recreation and to create acceptable environmental conditions.

There are opportunities throughout Bristol for more holistic solutions that accommodate the housing needed, while promoting happiness and well-being. This third choice is mid-rise housing in mixed-use streets – regarded as most people's preferred urban form.

Mid Rise

European cities face just the same housing pressures as British cities do and mostly choose to house more people by building mid-rise, which houses people densely, and creates buildings which are flexible and adaptable in that they can be all forms of residential, commercial, retail or communal or a combination of these different uses with the ability to be converted from one use to another relatively easily.

The various locations around the centre of the city identified in the draft Local Plan as growth areas can all become mid-rise developments. The largest of

these areas, St Philip's Marsh, could be a new, mid-rise city, near the station, well-served by roads, built on a pattern similar to that of Clifton and therefore at an eminently sustainable density.

Planning Policy

National planning policy tells us that creating high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

In Bristol there is no strategic plan apart from an encouragement from the previous administration to 'go for height' on the presumption that Bristol's skyline needs to grow to communicate 'ambition and energy' with little regard for the city's history and townscape. There was no public consultation to precede this initiative which isn't necessarily shared by all Bristolians. Such an arbitrary policy can only result in a major loss of Bristol's innate character.

Local policies need to include a recognition that the right-to-buy and the unrestricted market in the private rental sector have been direct contributors to the housing crisis. There is little policy control on the explosion of student accommodation which is changing the dynamic and environmental diversity in the centre of the city and aggravating the pressure on mainstream housing.

Implementation

Fundamental is the principle of making good use of existing land resources, particularly land that has been previously developed. This means that 'brownfield' and other under-utilised urban sites should be prioritised for housing development, but only to the extent that the sites are suitable and brought forward as part of informed placemaking, and those sites that are high in biodiversity value, or heavily polluted, or are in locations suffering from poor air quality, or a combination of these are excluded.



Elderberry Walk. It is at the early stages in a scheme's gestation that community consultation can have the greatest value.

The character, quality of place-making and health of communities in our city is vitally important. Development proposals must not ignore lack of capacity in social, physical, and environmental infrastructure, and the needs of communities including creation of employment opportunities, provision of family housing and access to open space and nature. In new housing strict planning control needs to be maintained of space standards, room orientation, avoidance of single aspect north facing flats, provision of natural ventilation and daylight, prevention of summer overheating plus many other important aspects of healthy living.

Community Consultation

Community consultation is becoming a tick-box exercise, undertaken by developers at a stage when their scheme proposals are well developed, so denying any meaningful community influence in the basic evolution of the proposals. This is often exacerbated by pre-application negotiations that take place between the developers and planning officers without any reference

to community groups. It is at the early stages in a scheme's gestation that community consultation can have the greatest value.

A housing crisis should never be used as a reason to wreck the soul of our city.

We are in a housing crisis, but unless the council takes a joined-up approach to solving it, we are going to end up with yet more decades of unsuitable and unhealthy developments. A housing crisis should never be used as a reason to wreck the soul of our city, but we must look for solutions that do not compromise the great places that make Bristol what it is.

Councillors are elected primarily to look after the interests of the citizens of Bristol, indeed most claim that this is the reason why they have entered the political arena. Evidence during the previous administration would suggest that the council, both councillors and officers, have a bias towards the developer rather than to people they represent. More weight needs to be given in the planning process to the views of the community groups that operate throughout the city. The dilution of community involvement in the planning process is a cause of great concern which the new council needs to rectify.

Above all we desperately need a skyline or high buildings policy that defines protected views and defends historic areas of the city from inappropriate development.

Meanwhile we should have a moratorium on building high and follow the example of Paris where new buildings taller than thirty-seven metres are banned. Let's do better in Bristol and draw a line in the sky at seven-stories.

Willie Harbinson, architect and urban designer has lived and worked in Bristol since 1968. He is a passionate advocate for top quality buildings and civic spaces.

Far left, Paintworks. Midrise housing in mixed use streets.

Left, Are high rises the solution to the housing crisis?

Bristol suffered from a peppering of tall buildings in the 60s and 70s.

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Park Life

In September 2023, 50 local people convened to help initiate the practical processes that we need to secure the benefits of open spaces in Bristol and Bath for future generations. Ted Fowler explains.

The event was set up by Bristol Fellows of the Royal Society of Arts, the Schumacher Institute and the team of *Your Park Bristol and Bath*. We were hosted by Burgess Salmon.

Whatever their leadership, activist or professional roles, that evening people had the opportunity to leave any representational responsibilities behind, work and learn with each other and enquire collaboratively. They contributed to thinking through some truly pernicious issues in a creative, productive, safe-to-be-bold moment. This article reflects those contributions and discussions that followed.

As I write we are enjoying proper summer sun. Listening to the sounds of scuffling balls and ambitious-for-attention babies emanating from Owen Square Park, just behind our house in Easton, perked me up as it always does. It reminds me of my childhood, just as much as a sponge cakes soaked in tea did for Proust 100 years ago. So I took a walk around the block, via our narrow little street and the Bristol and Bath Railway Path and estimated 150 people enjoying this pocket of green: lying around in the grass and shade; reading and snacking and snoozing; chasing balls and each other in the games area; picnicking as families under tree canopies; talking to each other as parents and children in the playground.

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Left, St Andrews Park. The big drive for the parks came from the rapid growth of the city in the nineteenth century.

Our approach was informed by inputs offering personal, historical and future perspectives, as well as the huge range of skills and practical experience in the room. We were all there to start securing a 'generational legacy': supporting a growing and diverse population, understanding the benefits we gain from open spaces and the values they bring: social spaces; fresh air; healthy, active lives and communities; play and sport development, growing food, biodiversity and wildlife corridors; climate change mitigation, energy generation, and not least our wonderful landscapes in challenging urban settings.

Virtually all activities under these general headings are not statutory responsibilities for any public body. They do not have to happen by law and are therefore difficult to prioritise when other desperately needed statutory provisions are struggling for resources.

Bristol covers an area of 11,000 hectares (27,000 acres), the Bristol City Council (BCC) estate covers 4,747 hectares of that (12,000 acres), the parks estate covers 2,850 hectares (over 7,000 acres) of the BCC estate. This equates to 60% of the BCC estate or 25% of Bristol.

We know that Bristol is a high growth city, and that we have a serious social and affordable homes crisis. The city is curtailed by a vigorously defended green belt, and competitive relationships at local authority level. However, investors and developers are attracted by Bristol's green and blue (rivers etc) infrastructure as part of their offer, with the right mechanisms they could contribute to that bigger picture as well as more local open spaces.

The Parks and Green Spaces service at BCC has been working to a declining

budget since 2010. In 2010 the parks service received c. £7.5m support through the general fund. In the 2023/24 financial year the service received £1.6m from the general fund, supported, I believe by some cross subsidies. To mitigate budget pressures the service has introduced a series of income streams which go directly to support the parks and green spaces service. Meanwhile the design, development and outreach functions associated with BCCs stewardship of parks and green spaces have minimalised, often funded by external project finance.

The principle of investing in one-off (capital) or short-term projects only when the maintenance and stewardship costs (revenue) are considered realistically, seems to have gone. These days much of the recent "kit" for our green and blue infrastructure has come from one-off sources. Bristol's housing growth provides a source of infrastructure levy cash that benefits some areas. Also there are waves and ripples of Heritage Lottery Funds and foundational support.

All these sources are subject to competition from other good causes, sometimes more immediately urgent (like care, for example), sometimes with complementary impacts. Parks and other open spaces are now not so much viewed as infrastructure that adds value to our public and personal lives but increasingly they are a focus for costs, competing with service providers' core priorities.

Public policy is a wind-vane rather than a windmill

Maintenance, grassland, tree and landscape management remain functions carried out by teams within the City Council. Voluntary bodies (such as Avon Wildlife Trust and the Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership and parks friends groups), also have a huge impact.



Hidden park off Redcliffe Hill, formerly a Quaker burial ground.

However, the financing system has been massively debilitated, leading to the systemic delegation of pressure to those least able to cope on a sustained basis. Roles of professional parks teams and friends groups are transformed from being community partners and capacity builders to firefighting to ensure our amazing assets are just about kept going. Similarly, it is difficult to build the learning from short term project funded activities into our mainstream practices at public sector or volunteer level.

Much of the time, it feels that public policy is a wind-vane rather than a windmill - it cannot sustain, and sometimes isn't necessarily relevant to, these deeper problems.

For this reason, and others, researching this wider/aggregate green and blue infrastructure estate both in Bristol and neighbouring areas was a strong recommendation from our discussions. There are a number of stakeholder groups and priorities which impact on the management and future of our open spaces: developers, sport, local history, wildlife, civic amenity, schools, parent, older people, cyclists, drainage and flood prevention, trees, play, and planners to mention a few. Stakeholder

interest and influencers rarely meet across their zones of interest, and if they do it is usually responsive to crises rather than proactively. They operate in parallel and in ignorance of each other, or see each other only as competitors for space and finance. Developing a network or platform where common values and interests can be developed in practical ways is an achievable goal.

Can we govern what we do not invest in?

Nationally and locally, there is a range of more-or-less independent bodies involved in park stewardship. Most of these are still dependent on Local Government service agreements, commercial income raised from the open spaces themselves (such as parking, cafes and plant sales, energy generation), and charitable funding. They can also be less transparent than *de facto* public bodies. Often this approach involves competing with other good causes, and often each other, for funds from local and national sources. Sometimes sweating the assets can lead to conflicts with the organisation's primary purpose (rock concert or playing on the

Continued on page 12 ►



Left, Parks and other open spaces are now not so much viewed as infrastructure that adds value to our public and personal lives.

Right, Eastville Park. Far right, Eastville Park. Photo Ted Fowler.



www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Writing on walls... blue plaques here and in the capital



Dundry Slopes. Photo Len Wyatt.

◀ From page 11

grass?) However, these spin outs do demonstrate different approaches and business plans for independence.

To inspire us to be open to alternative resourcing models, we looked in more detail at the approach taken in Milton Keynes which outlined the way in which the Development Corporation endowed a Trust to look after parks and open spaces – through ring-fenced commercial income from assets outside their estate – therefore minimising conflict of use. This enabled parks budgets to be separate from UK Government public spending regulations and independent of local authority challenges (although still able to work closely with local government and other partners). The Milton Keynes Park Trust is doing rather well financially and appears to be delivering a range of progressive benefits to the city's communities:

<https://www.theparkstrust.com/our-work/our-story/>

However, Milton Keynes in the 1990s was a far simpler context than Bristol in the 2020s. Finger in the air estimates show that to meet our present budget requirements we might need an endowment of £200m. That might be difficult to visualise. However:

1. We don't have to get there straight away: an endowment can grow and at the same time contribute increasingly towards supporting our open spaces – an ambitious but tapered approach might make sense.

2. Just as we have to acknowledge as citizens that our amazing legacy didn't just happen, we can learn how to contribute to its future: e.g. through gifts, lottery, local taxation and developers' contributions.

3. The same forces (e.g. population growth) that are stressing the city may be brought into bear to help resource the changes we need.

4. We have a somewhat different institutional structure, with bodies such as Quartet and Bristol and Bath Regional Capital, Resonance etc., who could be sources of expertise in doing things differently locally.

5. There are now more examples locally, nationally and internationally of maintaining public benefit and accountability, yet operating outside Treasury rules, including having

councillors as trustees, including robust ways of stopping asset capture.

The final contribution to our event was made by Mrs Peaches Golding OBE CStJ His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Bristol:

"I am encouraged by the breadth of individuals, institutions and constituencies that value our open spaces for what they give us in social, economic, environmental and other terms. Likewise, I am keen for local people to own and invest in their locality for this generation and those to come. Finally, I do believe the King, a strong environmental steward, is always keen to be made aware of novel solutions to everyday opportunities. I think we have an opportunity to do something and that we must be brave enough to start somewhere rather than wait for perfection."

Want to know more about parks?

Four easy ways to understand how parks and some other open spaces were developed:

Know your Place bristol.gov.uk/knowyourplace

Lambert, D., *Historic Public Parks – Bristol 2000*, Avon Gardens Trust.

Manson's Bristol Miscellany Volume 1, Bristol Books, 2021. (Thanks Ted, Ed.)

Conway and Rabbits, *Peoples Parks – The Design and Development of Public Parks in Britain*, John Hudson, 2023 (reprint).

Ted Fowler has played a leading role in developing Bristol and Bath Regional Capital; City Academy Bristol; Voscur and various community initiatives over the past 44 years.



St George's Park.

Not much to report, says *Gordon Young*. No new plaque unveilings since the last *Better Bristol*. There are several in the pipeline though, for installation in the autumn. But Historic England plans to erect a plaque in Bristol soon – it'll be like the large ceramic English Heritage ones in the capital.

Some background to the London scheme: the idea of placing commemorative plaques on the houses of the great and the good was first mooted in 1863 by William Ewart. A Liberal MP, he wrote that "the places which had been the residences of the ornaments of their history [that] could not but be precious to all thinking Englishmen". Thankfully, the wording on English Heritage plaques has less convoluted syntax – and often really concise text:

John Howard prison reformer

Tony Hancock comedian

Kenneth Williams comic actor

Mary Shelley author of *Frankenstein*

Amy Johnson aviator

Ian Fleming creator of James Bond

Luke Howard namer of clouds

These plaques refer to famous folk so no explanation is needed; Bristol Civic Society plaques generally honour less well-known individuals and they deserve to be celebrated with a little more narrative. But hats off to English Heritage with their pithy, vigorously expressive prose for little-known Luke Howard's plaque: its 'namer of clouds' works well, conjuring up

visions of gentle wisps of cirrus; towering, anvil-shaped cumulonimbus, and menacing nimbostratus.

In order to guard against sudden gusts of celebrity, anyone granted a plaque will have been dead 20 years. That way, so the reasoning goes, there is no danger of elevating someone to plaque status only to find a

decade later that no one can remember who they were. Our rule is five years, which we regard as just enough time to allow possible skeletons to emerge from cupboards. Scarborough Civic Society installed a plaque to Jimmy Savile just a year after his death. When sexual abuse allegations surfaced, the plaque was defaced and hurriedly removed.

English Heritage is eager to reflect current values in their blue plaques. They refer to 'racist and imperialist sentiments' of Rudyard Kipling and

'racism, xenophobia and lack of literary merit' in Enid Blyton's writing (such imperfections didn't register with me as a nine-year-old, when I was totally absorbed in the *Famous Five* adventures. And I was drawn to Richmal Crompton's gang-leader William, but was appalled at lisping, ringletted Violet Elizabeth Bott. She put me off girls until I reached puberty). The plaques commemorating these (considered by some as flawed) fictional characters remain, but English Heritage updated their online Blyton entry in July 2020 with a reference to her work being criticised for racism. This is as it should be – retain and explain.

In Bristol the Panel has not encountered similar issues although we have had to occasionally reassure anxious property owners that the historical subject being celebrated had no connections with the slave trade.

Edward Colston and his ilk cast a long shadow...



Above, Our own English Heritage-style plaque in Princess Victoria St, Clifton.



Probably our finest example of befitting wording: brief, forceful and deeply moving.

www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

Hartcliffe Betrayed

Paul Smith asks what is history? When does it end? Where does it end?

Growing up in Hartcliffe in the 1970s Bristol's history was very much concentrated in the central areas of the city and appeared to end with the Blitz. I very much felt that my area, sitting on the southern reaches and only recently built, was not part of the story.

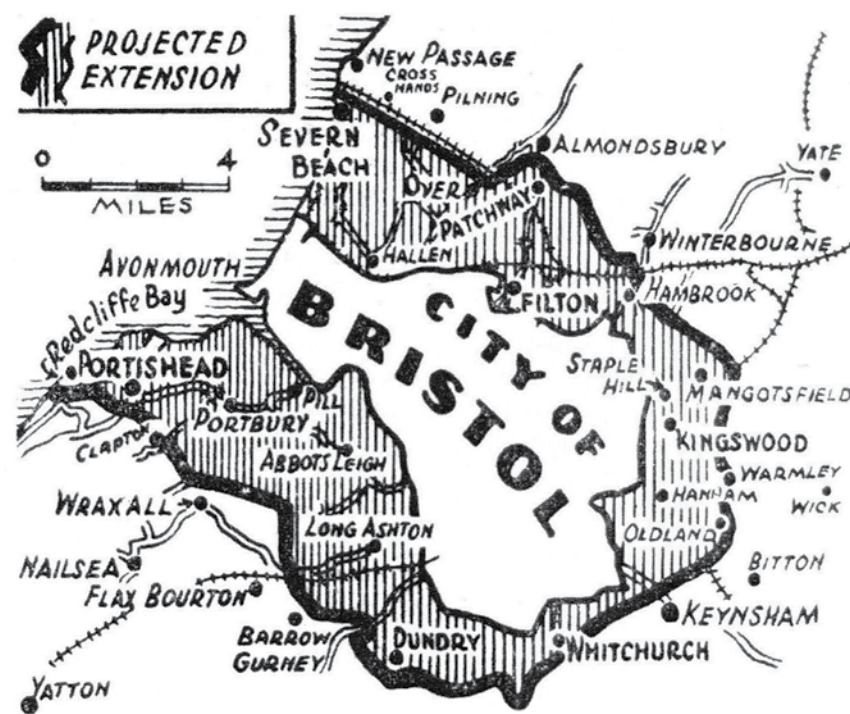
However, Hartcliffe is crucial to the post war reconstruction of a city which was subject to catastrophic bombing, and which needed to both renew and to grow. I was excited when *Design Control in Bristol 1940-1990* (Redcliffe, 1990) by John Punter was published. Would this tell the planning story of the many neighbourhoods which sprang up in the 1950s? Despite its almost four hundred pages, the planning and building of new housing estates around the city was worthy of only a single sentence. A book, which I know from friends, was a set text in our local universities failed to escape the confines of central Bristol.

Around 30 years ago I uncovered an enormous bundle of plans rolled up and tied with string in the city archives. As I started to unroll them, I discovered detailed drainage plans for the estate beautifully hand drawn. Within an hour or so I found the golden nugget which I hoped existed. The original plan for the estate with its optimistic provision of youth centres, sports facilities, cinema, swimming pool, library, schools, and pubs. A catalogue of many buildings which never escaped the confines of the plan to become physical features of the landscape. A dated map took me to the report to the Planning and Reconstruction Committee setting out in detail the description of a model community, some would call a garden city, maybe even a new town to be built on the northern slopes of Dundry Hill. I read in the *English City: The*



Above, Opening of a flat in Hareclive Road 1952.

Below, The story of Hartcliffe is a tale of failed negotiations to create a much larger city.



Story of Bristol, promoted as a book produced by Fry's in 1945 but which was clearly drafted by a collection of council officers, a description of the neighbourhood model "...each with its own amenities, including a shopping centre, clinic, schools and churches, cinema and recreation grounds. Factories should be built in or near the 'Neighbourhood Unit'."

So, what changed? Where did the swimming pool, cinema and other

facilities disappear between planning and building the estate? Why did no-one I knew have any inkling that such treasures were lost?

This question formed the backbone of what was to become *Hartcliffe Betrayed* (Bristol Radical History Group, 2024 – see page 26). Unasked questions were quickly uncovered.

Bristol's boundary had always been represented as growing, like adding layers to the onion. Nowhere had I

previously read that the city had surrendered some of its territory to Somerset to facilitate the building of more homes. I was not aware that Bristol had originally sought to extend itself far beyond its existing limits to incorporate much of what is now North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. How different our city would have been. I did not know that in accepting areas in Hartcliffe, Bishopsworth, Withywood and

Stockwood it had to ditch ambitions to spread further north and east into Gloucestershire. I was only vaguely aware that when its plans for expansion died the city built council housing in surrounding areas such as Filton, Keynsham, and Cadbury Heath in return for a ten year right to house Bristol people in them. The story of Hartcliffe is also the tale of failed negotiations to create a much larger city.

I discovered that until 1960 the council had a policy that community centres and youth clubs had to be built by the local community, and that the building of the community centre was delayed by lack of local volunteers and, sadly, vandalism. National government also had rules, for example, councils were not permitted to use scarce resources to build public libraries until late into the 1950s.

The victory of budgets over planning was won before the first bricks were laid. Roads were downgraded, bridges were replaced with culverts (or just filling in streams) to save money. The size and standard of housing was diminished, one councillor even suggesting replacing a downstairs internal wall with curtains. Brick and block was replaced with concrete and steel, a disastrous innovation which required many homes to be rebuilt in the following decades.

Everything was costed based on pounds per dwelling and the facilities ebbed away. They were never really cut, just silently dropped, forgotten, and erased.

I discovered that the original name for the neighbourhood was New Dundry, until the residents of 'old' Dundry objected, unwilling to have their village associated with authority housing.



Housing Manager Herbert Harris, the man who named Hartcliffe.

The same was to happen to the homes built around Bishopsworth which were named Withywood to distinguish them from the Domesday listed village.

I found that the building of the schools too would become a battleground. The main secondary was to be separate Boys and Girls schools, but a local campaign resulted in a mixed comprehensive school with two very distinct buildings, one including cookery kitchen classrooms, the other with woodwork and metalwork labs.

The first mention of building a hospital in the area in the mid-1950s did initiate a campaign which lasted for over 50 years resulting in a much more modest development than initially proposed on the old Bristol Airport site, since renamed Hengrove Park.

The research demonstrated the enormous value of the Bristol Archives and its ever helpful and patient staff heading off into the caves to find

Bishopport Fives under construction 1964.



binders containing old council minutes or trolleys full of maps tied up neatly in string.

One of the big differences between the 1990s when I started this work and the 2020s is the searchable online newspaper archive. It made it much easier to find stories than sitting in the central library scrolling hopefully through the microfiche. My investigations shone a light on local journalism at the time. Back in the 1950s an editor could send a

journalist into an estate like Hartcliffe with little more of an instruction than 'Go to Hartcliffe, talk to local people and fill a page or two in the newspaper'. Those reports provided a richness and colour of information which brought local views to life. There were also the regular round ups of 'estate news' or 'church news' which included nuggets of detail about the social calendars of our communities.

The story of Hartcliffe is part of the story of the city, but also the country. There are hundreds of Hartcliffes across the land and I hope my book – see review page 26 – might encourage more people to ensure that their history is also documented.

Paul Smith was brought up in Hartcliffe. In 1988, at the age of 24, he was elected City Councillor for Whitchurch Park Ward. Paul has over 30 years' experience in housing. He is currently Group Chief Executive at Elim Housing Group.

'It was fifty years ago today...'

Intrigued by Bristol's music venues, **Robin Askew** looks back at some great gigs.

I've always been intrigued by music venues. I can't walk past the Corn Exchange without imagining the likes of Pink Floyd, Cream, The Who and The Byrds playing there.

The former Colston Hall is also steeped in history, from shows by the Beatles and Rolling Stones in the early sixties, through a brace of amazing package tours featuring Jimi Hendrix, to the likes of Led Zeppelin, Genesis, Queen and Deep Purple in the seventies. Perhaps most importantly, Bristol's Home of Rock, the Granary Club on Welsh Back, saw early performances by the likes of Yes and King Crimson and later, low-key ones by Robert Plant and Motorhead.

In writing about great local rock shows by bands of national and international significance, I decided to cover the 15 year period from 1963 to 1978 - the year when I first started going to gigs. I tracked down gig-goers and promoters for yarns and spent many hours in the Reference Library, exploring how these shows were covered by the local press.

So what can readers expect? Well here are some abbreviated selections from 50 years ago. There certainly was much fun to be had in 1974.

Status Quo

Colston Hall, May 6 & 7 1974

Status Quo opened their Quo tour to

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY

Rolling Stones Backstage at Colston Hall 1964 - Bristol Post.



promote the *Quo* album with this two-night stand at the Colston Hall. The double-denim hordes were out in force for what was the Frantic Four's heaviest album.

Quo delivered a relentless 12-bar barrage powered by their legendary 'Wall of Death' backline. Oddly, the set list included only two songs from the record they'd released three days earlier (album openers *Backwater* and *Just Take Me*).

Quo fan Ian Gregory reports that it was a riotous experience. 'If I'm not mistaken, Quo weren't allowed to perform at the Colston Hall for many years after those gigs as there was damage caused to the seating.'

Writing in the *Bristol Evening Post* ('*An orgy of rock from Quo*'), James Belsey seems to have enjoyed himself: 'Sheer exuberant pandemonium reigned supreme for more than an hour as they whipped through tough raunchy rock number after number and even if it was heavy on the eardrums, it was fun.'

Steely Dan

Hippodrome, 19 May 1974

No, really. The legendary Steely Dan did play Bristol on their *Pretzel Logic* tour. It was a close run thing, mind. The UK leg was abandoned after just four shows when Donald Fagen fell ill. As you might expect of the exacting Fagen and Walter Becker, the expanded eight-piece touring band comprised some superlative session musicians, including future Doobie Brothers Jeff 'Skunk' Baxter and old smoothy-chops Michael McDonald - plus Jeff Porcaro, who went on to found Toto with fellow Dan refugee David Paich.

Bristol Post reviewer Tim Davey

described the show as 'sensational'. 'Together the eight of them produced a flawless set, including numbers like *Boston Rag*, *Do It Again* and *Showbiz Kids*,' he wrote. 'Becker, on bass, kept out of the limelight, but Fagen was the maestro of the whole gig. Not forgetting two extraordinarily good guitarists - Denny Dias and Jeff Baxter.'

Deep Purple/Elf

Colston Hall, 20 May 1974

The *Burn* album was another commercial and artistic triumph for Deep Purple, but it was all change in the ranks for what's become known as Mark III of the band. Out went Ian Gillan and Roger Glover; in came the phenomenal Glenn Hughes and the unknown David Coverdale.

Western Daily Press reviewer David Naylor wrote that 'the loudest rock group in the world produced the ultimate in visual and musical magnificence in the Colston Hall.' The packed crowd 'was driven to near hysteria ... and they earned the loudest and longest encore I have ever heard.'

Steeleye Span

Colston Hall, 24 May 1974

'See: Pitched Battles, Maidens Deflowered, Medieval Exorcism, Miracles ... all plus Steeleye Span's bag of musical tricks featuring elves, maidens, sooth-sayers, magicians, witches, kings, queens, knaves and jokers.'

Really, how could anybody resist? 1974 was folk-rockers Steeleye Span's breakthrough year with the *Now We Are Six* album. The band celebrated their newfound commercial success with a two-night extravaganza at the Royal

Albert Hall attended by their unlikely fan, Prime Minister Ted Heath. They then took the dressing-up box on the road for a tour that arrived at the Colston three days later for this sold-out show.

As the press blurb promised, for the centrepiece of the performance Steeleye donned masks and costumes to perform a full ten-minute mummies play. Written by multi-instrumentalist Tim Hart, this has St. George taking on an 'infidel'.

Writing in the *Bristol Evening Post*, David Harrison was overjoyed at what he described as the finest performance Steeleye had even given in Bristol. 'Simple, beautiful and incomparable updated folk music of the highest standard,' he rhapsodised.

Cockney Rebel

Boobs, 24 & 25 June 1974

Steve Harley and chums pitched up at Boobs (the live rock night at Tiffany's nightclub on the Downs) on a tour to promote their second album *The Psychomodo*, just after *Judy Teen* had become a top five single. Despite the band's rocketing popularity, the tour was not a happy experience, as a gulf had opened up between Harley and his fellow Rebels. Less than a month later, everybody departed apart from drummer Stuart Elliott. Harley promptly got his revenge by writing a new song. Pitched at his erstwhile bandmates, the arrogant, vituperative and hugely catchy *Make Me Smile (Come Up and See Me)* was the first single released as Steve Harley and Cockney Rebel, becoming a massive worldwide hit in 1975.

Kilburn and the High Roads

Granary, 4 July 1974

Pub rockers Kilburn and the High Roads were formed by Ian Dury in

1970. Their debut album, *Handsome*, was still a year away when they played this gig at Bristol's home of rock, for which they were paid a princely £75. Standing stage front was Peter Blake. Yep, the future Sir Peter Blake, best known for designing the Beatles' *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album cover. Blake had been Dury's art college tutor and had lived just outside Bath since 1969. He was reportedly mesmerised by his former pupil's performance. 'Ian would wind people up,' he later recalled. 'At one point he tried to get the other Kilburns to throw the man who ran the Granary club off the balcony.'

Queen

Colston Hall, 12 November 1974

A year on from their support slot with Mott the Hoople, the ascendant Queen returned to the Colston on the opening leg of their first world tour. *The Sheer Heart Attack* album had just hit the shops and the *Killer Queen* single was released to accompany the tour. With more loot in the kitty, Queen were also able to splash out on lighting, pyro and costumes.

Veteran Bristol rock DJ Andy Fox was at the time a schoolboy. To this day, he can pinpoint the exact moment at which he was hooked. 'We were down the front in the stalls. During *Now I'm Here*, Freddie was on the right-hand side of the stage. He then appeared to jump to the left-hand side before reappearing in the middle. Obviously, I now know that it's a simple illusionist's trick. But to a 15-year-old kid, it was like 'Wow!' I just loved the theatricality of the whole show. Freddie absolutely captivated me.'

Golden Earring/Lynyrd Skynyrd

Colston Hall, 29 November 1974

You might be forgiven for thinking that the headliners would be completely

outclassed by their support act at this show. And you'd be right.

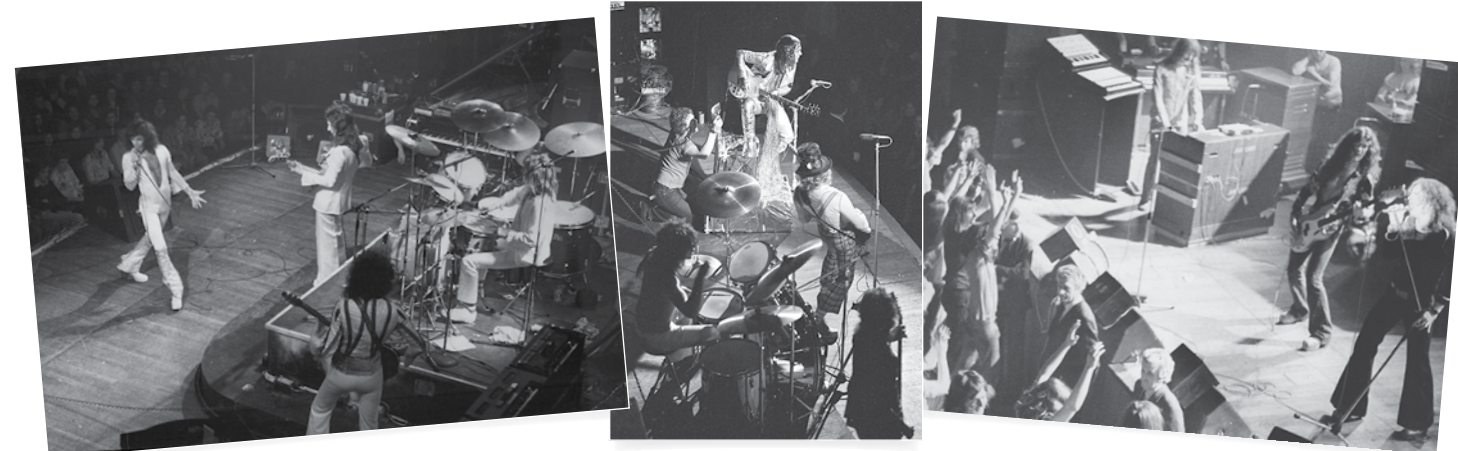
1974 was a year of traumatic culture shock for great southern rockers Lynyrd Skynyrd. Before that November, they'd never left the US. Hell, they'd spent very little time outside the Florida bar circuit. They referred to this as the Torture Tour.

The Colston Hall show came as intra-band tensions were rising but just before their big bust-ups. No set list survives, but it's likely that the show ended with both *Sweet Home Alabama* and the original three-guitar onslaught of *Freebird*. Steve Street had gone specifically to see Skynyrd. 'They obviously didn't disappoint and were clearly going to be a tough act to follow,' he recalls.

The *Bristol Post* sent along reviewer David Lister. If that name seems familiar, it's probably because Lister went on to become one of the founders of the *Independent* newspaper, where he served as Arts Editor. He found Golden Earring's music 'instantly forgettable' and went on to note that they could learn much from Skynyrd, 'a group in the Allman Brothers mould who delighted the audience with their unpretentious rock'n'roll. We could be hearing more of them. But somehow I doubt many will remember Golden Earring one year from now.'

'The West's Greatest Rock Shows: Lost, Forgotten and Previously Untold Tales from the Gigs You'll Wish You'd Seen' by Robin Askew is published by Bristol Books, price £25.

In the next edition of Better Bristol we will be assessing the current state of Bristol's Nightlife.



Left, Queen - Colston Hall Nov 1975. Bristol Post. Middle, Slade - Colston Hall Dec 1972. Bristol Post. Right, Deep Purple Colston Hall May 1974 - Bristol Post.



Left, The former Evening Post and Western Daily Press offices on Silver Street, Broadmead, 1965 (Bristol Post). Right, The new building (Bristol Post).

Iconic Edifices

Fifty years ago, Bristol United Press moved into a new building which a few people liked, but which ever since has been condemned by many as one of the ugliest things in Bristol. Eugene Byrne, who quite likes it, revisits the history of the iconic structure.

Some people loved it, most people hated it. Number 1, Temple Way, colloquially known as “The Evening Post Building” regularly used to feature in lists of Bristol’s ugliest/most unpopular structures. Probably not so much nowadays because – generally speaking - the older a building gets, the more affection gets invested in it. Plus, there are so many other unsightly things to choose from these days.

Declaration of interest: I rather like it. Not because I used to work there, but because it’s bold and original. It looks like some 1930s futurist idea of a fortress, which is exactly right for its setting next to two busy roads with traffic thundering past. Besides, something that looks as solid and reliable (but with a big transparent bit at the front!) is just the thing for a place where two daily newspapers were produced.

The *Bristol Evening Post* and the *Western Daily Press* moved in to their new bespoke building in the autumn of 1974. The *Post* had been founded in 1932 as a local competitor to the Northcliffe-owned *Bristol Evening World*, which occupied a very grand Art Deco building on the Centre (nowadays called 33 Colston).

The much less well-resourced *Post* took over a number of buildings on Silver Street; the printing press was in a former tripe factory (yeah, yeah, very funny. Apparently Bristol Tripe was a thing back when normal people, as opposed to food snobs, ate the stuff.) The *Western Daily* started in the 1850s and for many decades occupied a very grand building on Baldwin Street, but by the early 1960s was in financial trouble, so it, too, moved to Silver Street when it was bought out by the *Post*.

The resulting firm, Bristol United Press (BUP), was in its pomp from the 1960s to the 1980s. The *Western Daily* was successfully re-invented as a regional morning newspaper, rather than just a Bristol one, while the *Post* finally acquired its *Daily Mail*-owned rival, the *Bristol Evening World* soon afterwards.

In an age with fewer TV channels and none of today’s electronic distractions, both papers were awash with money, most of it generated not by sales, but by advertising, from big double-page spreads for this week’s bargains at the Co-op to smaller ads for everything from jobs, houses and cars to secondhand prams. The *Post* did particularly well because it had a local monopoly; with daily sales of 120,000 copies and more, it went into almost literally every home in Bristol, and a fair few beyond the city boundaries.

The Silver Street premises, though, were old-fashioned and, far worse, overcrowded. A site for a new building, which would house the presses and

offices for journalists, photographers, sales staff and everyone else was acquired on Temple Way. It wasn’t like they couldn’t afford it.

The new building would be designed by John Collins, the Bristol architect who was also responsible for One Redcliff Street (“the DRG Building”) and the HTV Studios on Bath Road.

Before it was cleared to make way for the new development it had been the derelict site of Beavis’s lemonade factory. In Victorian times it had been the site of a malthouse (and for some years, a brewery, too); it also featured densely-packed housing in courts. Many people living there doubtless worked at the nearby soap factory.

When the site was being cleared, large numbers of clay pipes, dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries, were dug up. Some were displayed in the site office, along with a notice saying that anyone who wanted one as a souvenir should not steal them as it was easy enough to dig up one for yourself.

The staff and equipment of the *Post*, the *Western Daily* and other, smaller, titles (such as the *Bristol Observer*) were moved in over the weekend of September 21-22. The move went smoothly; within 18 hours of the last paper coming off the presses at Silver Street, the first ones were being printed on new presses at Temple Way. The only hitch was when one of the managers complained that his sandwiches had been eaten by a guard dog.

The building incorporated a number of radical features, including a heating and air conditioning system which did not need boilers, but recycled warmth from the machinery and lighting (and, said some, from all the cigarettes the hacks got through - this was the 1970s, remember ...)

Around 800 BUP staff moved into the building, along with about 400 people in subsidiary companies. Aside from the offices, it incorporated a pillarless



Today - alongside student flats called The Print Hall.

press hall, where four lines of presses were each capable of printing 60,000 copies an hour. These were loaded onto vans that accessed the basement of the main building via separate ‘in’ and ‘out’ ramps.

The thing everyone remembers about the press hall is the external display showing the time and temperature. From the inside, those who were not privileged enough told tall tales about the

sybaritic delights enjoyed by the senior management on the top floor, which even had a rooftop garden. One former *Post* editor claimed he used to practise his golf swing from the astroturf up there, hitting balls towards Old Market. He should not necessarily be believed.

More recent decades have seen a confusing number of mergers, takeovers and buy-outs in Britain’s newspaper business. For connoisseurs

of irony, the takeover of BUP by (the present) Lord Rothermere’s Northcliffe Newspaper Group in 1998 must have seemed like things had gone full circle.

Northcliffe sold the titles again in 2012 and since 2015 the *Post* and *Western Daily* have been part of the Reach plc newspaper and magazine conglomerate. The firm owns a number of regional newspapers, such as the *Manchester Evening News* and some national titles, too, including the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Express*.

The papers are printed elsewhere, and the print hall was demolished some years ago to make way for a block of student flats called, er, The Print Hall. The newspapers vacated the building not long after Covid-19 struck, with staff now working from home or going into an office in Lewins Mead.

The building was sold, and has been projected to become a “research hub”. At the time of writing, *Better Bristol* has been unable to contact anyone who could tell us about the current status of these plans, or what the eventual fate of this iconic building will be.

Another “iconic” local edifice celebrates a round-figured birthday this autumn



Left, The Spectrum Building, mid-1980s. The pedestrian footbridge was removed in 2005 and was split into two sections to be used somewhere up north for the National Cycle Network (Bristol Post). Right, Spectrum Building today in reflective mood.



Nowadays, the Spectrum Building is rather lost in its surroundings, but when it was unveiled in the autumn of 1984 it was greeted with (mostly) enthusiasm as a bold, shining symbol of Bristol’s transition from a place of factories and industry to a location for offices. The city had been an attractive place for financial services firms to re-locate since the late 1960s, but the blue-tinted glass structure spoke of a new chapter.

Not everyone liked it of course. When it was completed, architect and architectural historian Mike Jenner said that when he drove past it, “my eyes light up, nearly always. It gives me pleasure.”

The problem, he said, was that on says when skies are grey (i.e. most) he liked it a lot less.

The development took the place of a dense warren of streets, and the old Bunch of Grapes pub, and with it the Stonehouse, the latter generally known as a folk music club, though in its day you could see all manner of musical acts there.

There were teething problems, too, in stopping those great big windows from fogging up, and a real fear that if moisture got between the panes there’d be no end of expense in cleaning the stains. Boffins from Bristol University

were called in and sorted it.

The building was/is used as offices by a range of different firms, but nothing interesting seems to have happened there since 1985, when the RAC’s legal services division – based there at the time - won substantial damages for a member whose car fell victim to a rubber band. The band was being wound round a bull’s testicles to effect temporary castration, causing said animal to leap over a hedge onto said RAC member’s car, reshaping the roof.

If you fancy having an office there (handy for Cabot Circus) see www.spectrumbristol.co.uk

Bristol to Berlin and back again

Clive Burlton relates the tragic life of Frederick John Berry (1 December 1894 to 4 April 1941).

This is one of those stories that you know has to be told in print one day.

I was a researcher for the *Moved by Conflict* exhibition at M Shed in 2014; a project that was part of Bristol's city-wide commemoration of the centenary of the start of the First World War. I worked alongside curators and archivists. I was in my element, delving into the collections across Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives, finding memoirs, documents, photographs and objects that could help tell Bristol's story.

We held open days where Bristol folk could bring along memoirs and items from loved ones long gone, who had experiences of the period. Several of their artefacts were displayed in the exhibition. We also put appeals out on radio, television and in the excellent Bristol Times supplement of the Bristol Post.

It was the latter appeal that I'm going to talk about.

Just as the exhibition was being signed-off and my role as a researcher was coming to an end, I was leaving B Bond, the home of Bristol Archives, when my mobile phone rang.

It was a Christopher Berry on the line. He had seen the Bristol Times appeal some six months earlier, but only now was making contact. Would I be interested in the story of his father, Frederick Berry? Too late for *Moved by Conflict* and too



Bristol RNVR men at Groningen 'English camp'

late for the myriad of books and other projects that were underway.

Nonetheless, my interest was piqued and I arranged to meet Chris at his home. Wide-eyed, I studied his family scrapbook, scanned images and recorded our conversation.

Quite a tale to tell...

Frederick Berry was born in Manchester in December 1894, but moved to Bristol with his parents when he was around 10 years old. They lived at 3 Denmark Place, Bishopston and Fred attended St Barnabas Boys School in Montpelier. When 12, Fred joined the Bristol Sea Scouts and when he left school he

got a job in the accounts department at Mardon, Son & Hall Limited in Redcliffe Mead Lane.

On 20 August 1914, and two weeks after the outbreak of the war, Fred received a letter from the Bristol Division of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR), telling him to report for mobilisation at 9am the following day. There were around 400 men in the Bristol RNVR at the time. Fred did as he was told and Mardon's had no problem with releasing him from his employment. Not surprisingly really when Ernest Mardon was the Honorary Commander of the Bristol RNVR based at Jamaica Street.

Fred Berry and the rest of the Bristol

RNVR Division left for Walmer on the Kent coast where they were assembled, prior to crossing the channel to help in the defence of Antwerp. This would have been on or around 5 October 1914 when two brigades joined up with the Royal Marine Brigade that had arrived in Dunkirk a few weeks earlier.

Antwerp fell quickly, such was the speed of the German advance in northern Belgium. In attempting their retreat, of the naval force sent to defend Antwerp, approximately 1500 escaped to neutral Holland and were interned in a camp at Groningen for the rest of the war.

Anxious for news, Fred's mother appealed for information about her missing son. She received a reply from a British officer in the Groningen camp. He said that although Fred was in his company during the retreat, his whereabouts were unknown and he was definitely not in the camp. He was hopeful that he may have escaped, or joined another unit.

Fred in fact was among a group of 800 men who had been captured and spent their war years as POWs in Germany. Fred was apprehended near Moerbeke Railway Station in Belgium and was sent to Doberitz POW camp near Berlin.

Shortly after receiving the disappointing news that her son wasn't in Groningen, Mrs Berry received the first card from Fred at Doberitz. He said he was safe, but had had a rough time of it. He was cold as they were living under canvas at the time, so he asked for warm clothes.

He also went on to say, "I also want you to send me one box of 50 Woodbines once a month and you can write as often as you like, but do not write anything about this war."

According to Chris Berry, Fred was put to work preparing graves and working with groups of POWs digging the land

and cultivating crops, especially potatoes.

Fred escaped and was re-captured three times while a POW. His final escape saw him get as far as the coast where he was aiming to board a boat to Sweden. However, he was caught and returned to the same POW camp where he was placed in solitary confinement. He thought he was going to be shot.

Instead and as odd as it sounds, the German military put Fred to work in a bakery in Berlin.

Fred was befriended by Ernst, the youngest of the three brothers who worked in the family business. Fred learnt to speak German fluently, and on at least one occasion, the two eldest brothers, took Fred into the centre of Berlin where they spent the night on the town at Potsdamer Platz.

Imagine that, a Bishopston lad incognito, living it up on a night out in Berlin during the war!

At the War's end Fred returned to his Bishopston home via Leith in Scotland and his formal discharge at Aldershot. His time as a POW had taken its toll. Chris said that it took several years for his mood swings and depression to subside. He also got into trouble. In August 1923, Fred was fined 58s for a motoring offence committed near the Langford Inn in Somerset.

Fred picked up his career as best he could and continued his work in the Accounts Dept at Mardon, Son & Hall. He also maintained his friendship with the bakery family in Berlin and visited Ernst there in 1928.

On 5 July 1930, Fred married Violet Philpott from Totterdown and by 1939, Fred, Violet and their two children were living in Woodbridge Road, Knowle. Although his occupation was noted as Assistant Cashier, Printing, in the 1939 Register, he was also shown to



Fred 2nd left wearing his Bristol RNVR cap alongside POWs from other naval units.

be in the Corps of Military Police, Field Security Section.

Chris Berry explained that owing to Fred's command of German, he was seconded to the Intelligence Corps in World War Two and worked at Avonmouth, interviewing the crew of merchant ships coming into the docks.

On 4 April 1941, Fred Berry was driving a military truck along the Portway and towards Avonmouth, when a German plane released some bombs, one of which destroyed Fred's vehicle, killing him instantly.

Fred Berry (Lance Corporal) had a full military funeral with a gun carriage escort and a three-volley salute. Fred is buried at Canford Cemetery.

Fred's name is listed among the Roll of Honour pages in 'Mardon's During the War Years 1939 - 1945', published in 1946. There is also an entry in a listing of those in the Intelligence Services who have died, showing that Fred Berry was in unit 133 FSS Avonmouth.



POW working party with Fred sat down far left.



Above, Good wishes from former school.



Left, Fred, middle smoking pipe with fellow POWs with musical instruments. Right, shows the family and staff of the bakery.

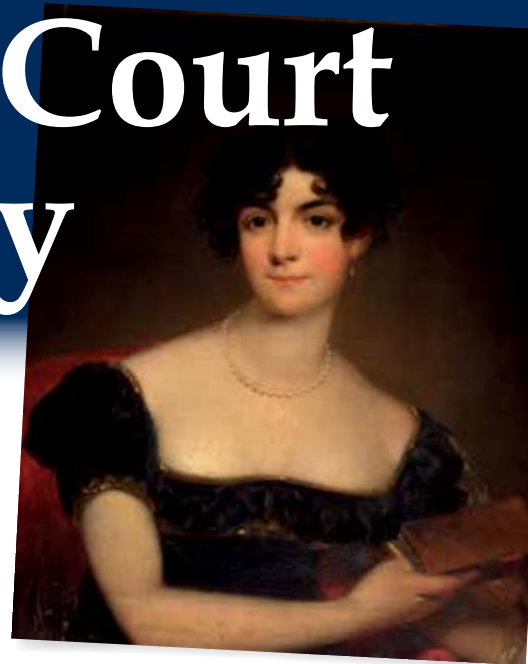


An Ashton Court mystery



John Hugh Smyth-Pigott.
Copyright Somerset Museum Service.

**Kate Barlow
unravels the
stranger than
fiction life of
John Hugh Smyth
Pigott (1793-1853)**



Ann Pigott.
Copyright Somerset Museum Service.

October 1792: Sir John Hugh Smyth and his nephew Hugh, face each other down the Long Gallery of Ashton Court. Portraits of previous generations look on as the apoplectic baronet and his headstrong heir stand toe to toe trading accusations. Servants melt away and family members are nowhere to be seen.

At last, their voices quieten. Scion Hugh's unborn child, and its mother – Elizabeth Howell, a young woman in his mother's household – will not be banished to likely poverty. But in return Sir John wants to ensure the family tree is not 'polluted' and demands his heir marry the daughter of the Bishop of Bristol, several years older than his nephew.

The young heir to this baronetcy should have got legal advice before agreeing to his uncle's outrageous bargain that, with his child on the way, he must marry, not the mother but a woman of his own class. Any competent Regency attorney would surely have advised the young man that the law, as it stood back then, clearly stated that for the child to become legitimate and inherit the baronetcy, its' parents must be married by the time the child is born.

The baby, christened John Hugh, perhaps in honour of his great uncle, is born in early 1793 to no acclaim and much consternation, with the exception

of his parents, whose protestations that they married secretly in Ireland under false names, one being Percival Prosser, cut no ice legally or with the family.

Inevitably, the boy grows up lonely, taught by tutors and shunned by the rest of the Smyth clan, who are appalled by this illegitimate child's mere presence. Close relatives refuse to have anything to do with a situation they regard as beyond the pale. But, as children will, and this energetic, cheerful boy in particular, young John Hugh finds playmates among

Close relatives refuse to have anything to do with a situation they regard as beyond the pale.

the many servants' children. He picks up the country cadence of the area, adopts rural habits and dress, lives comfortably astride upper and lower classes but alienating his own to the extent that a family friend, the former Sophie Weston - now the stately Mrs. Pennington - dismissed the young man as possessing 'habits and manners. . . altogether rural'.

Oddly, life for the young boy improves dramatically after his father's marriage to the bishop's daughter. When his father inherits the baronetcy and becomes Sir Hugh Smyth, he and his wife decamp to a property in Wiltshire for months at a time, on the excuse the hunting is superior. No children will result from this marriage. When his first wife dies, Sir Hugh marries his lover who, unlike John Hugh, ends up with a

title becoming Lady Elizabeth Smyth.

In the meantime, John Hugh is left to his own devices and as de facto master of Ashton Court, begins to spread his wings. He gets to know every corner of the court, coming to appreciate the art displayed on its walls. He delves into the unusual tomes filling the library shelves, particularly those on 'forbidden subjects'. He gets caught up in the excitement over geologist William 'Strata' Smith's famous map titled, 'A Delineation of the Strata of England and Wales, With Part of Scotland', and this son of a blacksmith's observations of rock layers (strata) in the county's coalfields. Young Smyth also catches the bug of fossil collecting, in the process acquiring a circle of good friends and finding himself lonely no longer.

But history is about to repeat itself. The nearby Brockley Court estate is also in dire need of an heir. That family's two bachelor Pigott brothers are growing old, their formidable sister, the wild and unhappily married Mrs William Provis of Bath's Royal Crescent, has died. Not a child among them - until the sister's will is read. She has left her entire fortune to a young woman nobody has ever heard of. More troubling still, it appears this now-heiress had been plucked from the famous St Pancras Foundling Hospital in London by Mrs Provis and installed in a boarding school for young ladies. No matter! For their own obvious reasons, the Pigott brothers declare the young woman to be their niece, despite there being no such recognition in the will. But she needs a husband and they

an heir. Who better than the 'boy next door'! And what a coup combining the two estates would be!

Does this Ann Fydell (last name arbitrarily bestowed by the foundling hospital) have a word or two to say about her new-found family's plan? We do not know, but controversy rages over her origins. Even changing her last name to that of her benefactress and being awarded her mother's dowry cannot quell the gossip. But perhaps, 'the foundling and the natural son of a baronet' find they share the bond of their unusual beginnings and in December 1815 marry and down the years produce a total of 10 children, including five sons. Enough heirs for half the county!

On the deaths of her two uncles, Ann inherits the Brockley estate on one condition, the couple adopt the double-barrelled handle, Smyth Pigott. This marks the third time down the generations that these two ancient Somerset families have intermarried but the first that they have combined the two surnames.

With his wife's estate to call his own and despite his lack of the baronetcy that could have been his, (a childless uncle inherited) John Hugh Smyth Pigott turns his huge energy to the extensive Pigott land holdings. He restores Brockley Church, hangs a Poussin over the altar, adds sculptures

to the extensive Brockley gardens and builds a tunnel under a road to allow deer to come onto the lawns. He renovates the dilapidated Brockley Hall across the park to accommodate the couple's horde of offspring, library of 6,000 books and collection of Old Masters, which include a Raphael, a Leonardo, a Titian and a Brueghel. He even installs on the roof an octagonal observatory, equipped with a Dollond telescope, one of the first in the area.

In recognition of his significant achievements in the fields of archaeology, antiquities and history, Smyth Pigott is made a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Largely due to his influence, Weston-super-Mare becomes a fashionable destination. He later serves as High Sheriff of Somerset.

During the couple's lifetime, Brockley Hall is the social centre of north Somerset with a constant stream of parties and weddings, christenings and funerals. Local gossip had it that the couple could ride 12 miles in any direction without leaving their own property and Smyth Pigott was generally acknowledged to be the last squire so generous and involved with the local community. What a loss to the Smyth dynasty!

John Hugh and Ann die within a year of each other in the mid-1850s. Only after both had been laid to rest do two



Lady Elizabeth Smyth. Copyright Somerset Museum Service.



Ashton Court Mansion.

Family Tree. It's complicated!

Sir John Hugh Smyth (1734-1802)
3rd baronet

Hugh Smyth (1772-1824)

Nephew to John Hugh Smyth, Ashton heir. In 1802 on the death of his uncle became 4th baronet.

In 1797 married Margaret Wilson, daughter of Bishop of Bristol - no issue.

In 1820 on death of Margaret Wilson married Elizabeth Howell, the mother of John Hugh (see below) and a young woman in his mother's household. She became Lady Elizabeth Smyth.

John Hugh Smyth (1793-1853) - illegitimate son of Sir Hugh Smyth and Elizabeth Howell (no dates available).

In 1815 married Ann Fydell/Provis (1786-1854).

In 1824 father died but John Hugh Smyth could not inherit as illegitimate. That same year the young couple added Pigott to their last name Smyth as a condition of inheriting the entire Pigott estates.

servants step forward and swear before an attorney that 'the foundling' was indeed her benefactress's daughter, fathered by a wastrel American attorney living close by - but that's another story.

Kate Barlow is a great-great-granddaughter of John Hugh Smyth Pigott. A former journalist and author she grew up in Somerset and now lives in Canada.



Sir Hugh Smyth.
Copyright Somerset Museum Service.



Victorian horse-drawn tram on Whiteladies Road.

Trams
One hundred and fifty years ago, Bristolians were wondering when they would get the trams that the Corporation had laid the rails for. The answer came at the end of the year, and with it modern new public transport. *Eugene Byrne* looks at the rise and fall of Bristol's tram system.

When the Bristol Tramways Company was formed at the very end of 1874, horse-drawn trams were not a new idea. For centuries it had been known that moving wheeled vehicles along rails sped things up and required less energy. Rails had been used for a long time to move coal, quarried rock and other heavy loads for short distances. Such "rail-ways" or "dramways" were an important footnote in the history of Britain's industrial revolution, and were the direct predecessors of railways.

Horse-drawn "omnibuses" – from the Latin meaning "for all" – running on the roads with other traffic, had been around

BRISTOL CIVIC SOCIETY

for a while. They were commonplace in British cities by the 1840s, but it was known that if they ran on rails, the horses could pull twice the weight.

When the notion of horse-drawn trams arrived in Britain in the 1860s, the government set out the legal framework for their development, and in 1871 Bristol's Corporation obtained Parliamentary permission to start laying out routes.

The rails were embedded in some streets (at a cost of £12,000) and then nothing happened. It was a few years before a private operator was found and a deal was done with the Bristol Tramways Company, led by local law firm Stanley & Wasbrough, whose young clerk George White handled much of the work.

When the last line out of the Centre left in July 1939, a comparatively small crowd gathered and made a half-hearted stab at singing 'Auld Lang Syne'.

The first line was operating by 1875, running from Perry Road to Blackboy Hill. Other routes followed, thanks to George White.

George White was Secretary of the company by 1875 and would later be its managing director and chairman. He would go on to be a successful stockbroker, he would have interests in several other firms and would also found the British & Colonial Aeroplane Company in 1910, thus starting Bristol's aerospace industry.

White's father had been a painter and decorator, his mother a domestic servant before marrying, and he would go on to become a baronet. His rise was

remarkable, particularly by Victorian standards, when status and social class mattered a great deal. Even in a mercantile city like Bristol, the snobbery of the *nouveau riche* inhabitants of Clifton was a standing joke.

Like the one about Cliftonians' horror at the prospect of trams coming to their suburb. In 1878 the *Bristol Mercury* published a letter saying:

Is it not something terrible and most wicked that the disgusting tramway is to bring the nasty, low inhabitants of Bristol up to our sacred region?

We have nothing common or unclean amongst us at present. Poor people do not walk about our Clifton streets. We have no common people at all here ... We have even no vulgar dogs running about pell-mell. All is orderly and decent, for we lead our dogs by silken cords, and they are very, very proper.

And now here are those money-making plebeians of Bristol talking about running tramcars through our beautiful and lovely Clifton!

The following week, the paper stated the letter was clearly meant as satire. Satire was not something Victorian Bristol was familiar with.

The Tramways Company prospered. Trams, along with suburban railways, made the massive outward growth of Bristol possible in the later Victorian period.

It wasn't just that the lower middle classes could now live in Horfield or Fishponds and travel to their clerical jobs in the middle of town. It was for the working classes too. The area we now call "The Centre" was originally the "Tramways Centre" and here thousands of ordinary folk arrived and departed for work each morning. One part of it was known as "Skivvies' Island" as it was from here that women



Electric trams at Old Market, about 1910.



Tram, with driver and conductor, on Blackboy Hill, early 1920s (Bristol Post).

in domestic service jobs gathered to catch the trams (many of them to Clifton!) to work in the homes of the middle classes each morning.

By the 1890s, the company had 100 cars and around 800 horses, with 500 men and boys on its staff. It employed more horses than humans.

But horses got tired, they needed feeding, grooming and watering and the ministrations of vets (or the knacker's yard). They produced prodigious quantities of manure, which the company was (in theory at least) supposed to clear up. Hence the old Bristolian joke:

"It's good for putting on your rhubarb."

"Really? We have custard on ours."

Sir George White accordingly introduced Bristol's first electric trams in 1895, giving us (for a short while) the most technologically advanced public transport system in the country.



comfortable seats – and roofs! – were the coming thing. They didn't need rails, and their routes could be varied at will.

On Saturday May 7 1938 the last

The only known surviving tramcar is a horse-drawn one now in the Aerospace Bristol museum. Salvaged some years ago, half of it was left as it was, and the other half magnificently restored by volunteers of the Bristol Aero Collection.



The "Tramways Centre" in the late 1930s, with buses in the background (Bristol Post).

By the time Bristol was undergoing its second great suburban expansion, with the massive programmes of building private and council housing between the wars, the trams had had their day.

The Bristol Tramways & Carriage (after Sir George bought the local taxis, too) Company was bought out by the Council in 1937, and the decision was taken to phase the trams out.

Their loss was not regretted much. The Tramways Company had become a local by-word for atrocious industrial relations, with frequent strikes. The cars were old, with hard and uncomfortable seats. The top decks were open; delightful on a sunny Sunday, but miserable on a wet Monday morning when there was no room downstairs. The tram lines themselves were dangerous, sometimes trapping cyclists' wheels in the path of oncoming trams, or simply causing bikes to skid.

Buses, with their pneumatic tyres and comfortable seats – and roofs! – were the coming thing. They didn't need rails, and their routes could be varied at will.

On Saturday May 7 1938 the last

trams were to run on the routes from the Centre to Westbury-on-Trym and Hotwells and Eastville to Durdham Down. They set off late that evening, crammed with revellers – many who had doubtless had a few drinks – eager to have their own little part in history.

All were vandalised by souvenir-hunters. All the loose fittings vanished, and then seats and handles. On at least one of them the driver's cap was taken as well, though this was to pass around to make a collection for him.

It was announced that all of the trams would be broken up at the Kingswood depot. Few tramcars survived in one piece because of this deliberate policy of breaking them up. There were fears that if they could be bought entire then they might be turned into unsightly out-houses and dwellings or even – perish the thought! – caravans.

This was just the first stage in the phasing out of the rest of the tramlines. More followed, only this time with police officers usually travelling with them to prevent vandalism. When the last line out of the Centre left in July 1939, a comparatively small crowd gathered and made a half-hearted stab at singing 'Auld Lang Syne'.

The strategy was put on ice when the Second World War broke out, but what the Council had postponed, Hitler's airforce completed anyway when a bomb struck the main power line in 1941. Deprived of power, the very last tram in Bristol free-wheeled downhill into its depot. The old trams were gone for ever.

And Bristol has been talking about once more having trams, metrobuses, light rail systems, guided rail buses and even an underground system since the 1970s.

www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

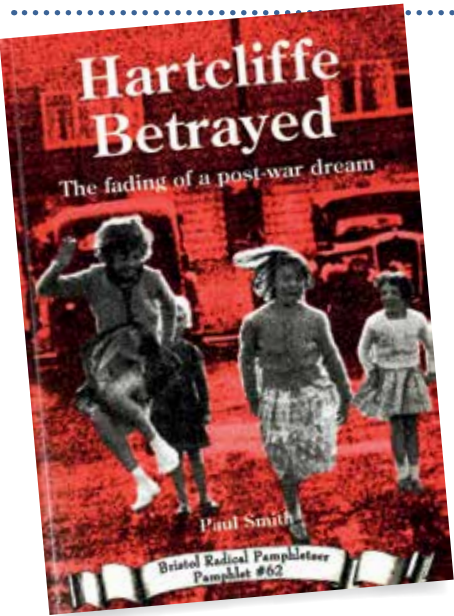
Book Reviews

Mike Manson reads some Bristol books.

The First-Time Forager

Andy Hamilton
National Trust
£12.99
Not strictly a local book, but the author is a Bristol resident who can frequently be seen scurrying around urban hedgerows gathering food for his family. This book is for everyday people who live in urban areas who

want to get a little closer to nature. Who knew that Japanese Knotweed tastes like Rhubarb? (Warning: Don't compost any left-overs – burn them.)
The reassuring text is accompanied by clear photographs and interesting recipes.
Very much a beginner's guide; if you love the idea of foraging but are worried about the reality, this is the book for you.



Hartcliffe Betrayed

Paul Smith
Bristol Radical History Group
£11.00
Another great volume from the Bristol Radical History Group. Paul Smith follows the post war housing dream as exciting plans for an ambitious new neighbourhood on the Dundry Slopes – later to be called Hartcliffe – slowly evaporate.
In the mid-1950s there was a government shift in emphasis from houses to flats leading to eleven high-

rise blocks being built in Hartcliffe and Withywood. Providing community services took a back seat.
Hartcliffe also suffered from its remoteness – Bristol's largest cul-de-sac. And then there was the mud!
Meticulously researched and referenced, this book offers a salutary lesson to planners as to how the best laid plans can be hi-jacked by local government bureaucracy, financial cut-backs and lack of vision. Will we ever learn from these malign impacts?! See *Better Bristol* pages 8-9 and 14-15.

The West's Greatest Rock Shows 1963- 1978

Robin Askew
Bristol Books
£25.00
Robin Askew has spent nearly 40 years writing about film and music in Bristol. For more than three decades, he was Film Editor of local listings magazine *Venue* and currently has the same role at *Bristol24/7*.

The West Country might not have a place in rock history to match that of London or Liverpool, but some incredible shows took place here, with key performances by many of the greats.
Along the way, you'll be plunged into the sights, sounds and - oh, yes- smells of the sixties and seventies regional club scene. There's the Corn Exchange, where rock history was made on multiple occasions in the 1960s; the Granary Club,

Bristol's vibrant, pleasingly lawless counterpart to London's Marquee; and the extraordinary, none-more-seventies than Boobs (Tiffany's), where you could have seen artists as diverse as Quo, Faust and Bob Marley and the Wailers performing alongside plastic palm trees - and still have change from a quid. It all amounts to a very different prism through which to view rock history.
Askew provides an insightful introduction to Bristol's 60s and 70s music scene. He wasn't there himself, but has trawled through local newspapers with hilarious results. He concludes that, with some notable exceptions, many of the music hacks were more interested in posturing than writing about music. Certainly, Evening Post reporter James Belsey's edgy account of Bob Marley and the Wailers playing at the Colston Hall, as it was then called, in 1976 is very much at odds with my own diary entry for that era defining concert.



A great trip down memory lane for those who were there, and an insight for those who weren't.
See pages 16-17 for gigs from 50 years ago.

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, 17 Bathurst Parade, Bristol, BS1 6UB.
Cheques, if not made by standing order, made payable to Bristol Civic Society.
Enquiries: Tel: 0117 927 6991.
Email: membership@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk

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Events

Autumn / Winter 2024

Our events programme supports Bristol Civic Society's overall aims by celebrating our city's heritage and history, offering insights into diverse aspects of its life including the economic and industrial, and looking at the challenges it faces in the future.

At the time of going to press, we have the following firm dates - but new events are regularly being added, so check our website www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk and your in-box.



SEPT Wednesday 4 September, 10.30am.

Visit to the "Pervasive Media Studio", at the Watershed.

Thursday 12 September, 10.30am.

Visit to the **Glenside Hospital Museum**, UWE campus.

Tuesday 24 September, 7.30pm on Zoom. The Work of the **Avon Gardens Trust**, by Kay Ross.



OCT Tuesday 1 October, 10.30am.

Visit to the **Park Row Synagogue**, a recently renovated 1871 Grade II listed building.

Wednesday 2 October, 7.30pm on Zoom. **Bristol's Brutalist Architecture**, by David Griffiths.

Thursday 10 October, 7.30pm in the Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral.

The Stride family's legacy of house-building in Bristol, by Richard Stride.

Tuesday 22 October, 7.30pm in the Apostle Room, Clifton Cathedral. **Bristol Harbour since 1809**, by Robert Pritchard.

Wednesday 30 October, 7.30pm on Zoom. Steve Melia on a transport - topic to be decided.

Coming up

We are keen to find a new date for Eugene Byrne's guided walk on the Bristol Blitz, which had to be postponed. Other events planned or proposed include a look at community-led housing, the results of the Clean Air Zone, a visit to the Brabazon arena and housing development, a look at the Ken Stradling Collection (of craft and design) and a talk on "Bristol Byzantine". During the winter, we hope to resume emailing out miscellaneous clips of video footage old or new that will entertain and amuse. And we will have our usual Winter Social in the latter part of January.

Booking is via emails, sent about a month before to all those who've opted to receive them- you can sign up on our website. Events are not restricted to members but where numbers are limited, we email members first. Zooms are free; there is normally a small charge for others.

Three important messages:

- If you book and then find you can't make it, do please let us know;
- If you have ideas for future events, we'd love to hear from you;
- And the Events team still needs help in various areas - do consider joining us!

Contact us on: events@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk



Above, Glenside Hospital Museum.