

# BETTER BRISTOL

The Bristol Civic Society magazine

Issue 01 Autumn 2012 [bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](http://bristolcivicsociety.org.uk)

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An independent force  
for a better Bristol

FREE

# Bristol Civic Society Public Event

## KEEPING BRISTOL'S HIGH STREETS ALIVE

**MON 19th NOV 7.00PM COLSTON HALL No 2**  
**Free and open to all: doors open 6.30pm**

In her report published last December, retail expert Mary Portas set out her vision for Britain's high streets and warned that "after many years of erosion, neglect and mismanagement they will disappear forever unless urgent action is taken."

This major public event, free and open to all, is intended to inform Bristolians about what is being done in this city in response to these findings, to stimulate ideas and act as a catalyst for further action.



**CATHY PARKER**, Professor of Retail and Marketing Enterprise, Manchester Metropolitan University, will give the keynote address, introduce the issues and give examples from other cities of how the problems might be addressed.

**COUNCILLOR ANTHONY NEGUS**, Bristol City Council Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Regeneration will respond with the actions the City Council is taking.

**TONY MILES**, Chair of the Clifton Village Traders Association will speak about the proposal for a Clifton Business Improvement District.

**BEN BARKER**, Secretary of Greater Bedminster Community Partnership will speak about Bedminster's successful bid for funding to become a "Portas Pilot" area.

**GEORGE GRACE**, consultant from "Towncentred" will talk about regenerating Gloucester Road and the Town Teams Initiative.

All speakers will then form a panel on the stage for an hour of questions/debate from the floor.

The event will close around 9.00 – 9.30pm.

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## JOIN US

**Bristol Civic Society - an independent force for a better Bristol - is a registered charity.**

**A large part of our income, which comes from membership subscriptions, is spent on producing this magazine.**

**If you are not already a BCS member and would like to support us and have Better Bristol magazine delivered to your address, please consider joining us.**

**Individual membership for the first year is £10 if you set up a standing order and £20 annually thereafter.**

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# A Warm Welcome

## *Hello and welcome to the first issue of Better Bristol, the new Bristol Civic Society magazine.*

April 2012 saw the last BCS Newsletter being edited by Haydn Mason whom I would like to thank again for his time and commitment over the last four years. Also, thanks to Alan Cole for his design work.



*in edgeways from the Chair*

### *Just a word*

The Newsletter Management Group started looking for a new editor, but without success. How should we proceed? Was this to be the end of the Newsletter? Did we need a paper publication? After all, we do have our website, e-bulletins and emailing to communicate with members. However, not everyone uses the Internet and we cannot reach out to potential new members at events and festivals by electronic means.

We listened to opinions outside the society, discussed and learned that there is a view that there is indeed a place for a magazine that 'talks' about pertinent issues in Bristol, something with a wider content than the newsletter. An Editorial Board was formed; format, content and budget were considered, and this first issue of Better Bristol is the result of the process that we have been through.

As well as the usual BCS items, there is a new section of features from invited writers, whose opinions are not necessarily those of the

Illustration: 'The Invisible Woman' from an original by Sue Macartney Snape [www.smsoriginals.co.uk](http://www.smsoriginals.co.uk) with thanks to Sue Macartney Snape

society. I agreed to edit this issue; in future I will be Commissioning Editor, Beth Hargest will be Assistant Editor.

Better Bristol will appear twice a year in the Autumn and Spring. There will be a paper news sheet produced in the Summer and Winter to keep you up-to-date with the latest BCS news and events. You can also keep in touch through the BCS website, e-bulletins, Facebook and Twitter ( see p 26 for details)

Sadly, Gordon Tucker, a past society Chairman and Secretary, died suddenly in March, just as the last newsletter was going to press. It was a pleasure and an honour to have known Gordon; I learnt much from his calm and measured approach. He will be greatly missed by the society. Please see tributes on page 22.

Notwithstanding work and personal commitments, several society members found time to attend the six-week-long Transport and Works Act Public Inquiry into the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads Bus Rapid Transit scheme (BRT2). Many thanks to James Smith and John Frenkel who spoke on behalf of the society and Stephen Wickham, an independent objector, who kept us informed of daily events.

I found the inquiry process fascinating and revealing. It was also most helpful for BCS to work alongside other objectors who came under the umbrella of STOPBRT2. ([stopbrt2.org.uk](http://stopbrt2.org.uk))The inspector's report is expected in early 2013.

In spite of the economic recession there is some movement on the planning front, particularly around the Harbourside.

Applications, at various stages in the planning process, include Redcliffe Wharf, Bristol General Hospital, Wapping Wharf, Harris Warehouse, McArthur's Warehouse, Huller House and the Cheese Warehouse. The majority of these are for apartment accommodation. Should we be thinking more about what the residents of these buildings are going to do in their leisure time, should there be more entertainment, sports facilities and activities in the

buildings on the Harbourside? Should there be provision for a primary school to help create a balanced community? Also, a stone's throw away in the City Centre, around Corn Street/ Nelson Street/ Colston Avenue, there are several applications for conversions of offices to student accommodation. We are losing the Ice Rink on Trenchard Street, a large part of this complex is proposed student accommodation. This new community will also need more amenities in their neighbourhood. If you have comments to make on these applications, why not join one of our planning groups?

On November 15th we vote for the first elected Mayor of Bristol and for the local Police and Crime Commissioner. Read about the candidates and voting system on page 13.

The election is closely followed on Monday, 19th November by our own 'Big Event' in Colston Hall 2. 'Keeping Bristol's High Streets Alive' will be an interesting evening with the chance for everyone to express their ideas. I look forward to seeing you there.

A big thank you to contributors and everyone who has helped produce the first issue of Better Bristol.

*Heather Leeson*

## NEW MEMBERS - INVITATION

It is most encouraging to see the society's membership growing.

Welcome to:

Carol Williams, Alexandra Pickford, J A Phillips, Christopher Parker, L Niven, M Lee, Moira Kray, Samantha Jewell, George Rynholdt, Chris Carley, Babs Evans, Maureen Wright, Chris Chalkley, Ronald Sims, Anita Sims, Diana Hayns, John Waldron, Ben Appleby, Roger Ayton and Mr and Mrs Ray Smith

We are meeting in the Llandoger Trow on Monday, 26th November from 7.30pm for a chat and a drink.

Members and non-members are welcome to join us.

Hope to see you there.

# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BIZARRE

## Dockisation

Victorian Bristol was gripped by an increasingly urgent debate which went to the heart of the city's economy. How to adapt the harbour to the modern age?

To get in and out of the Floating Harbour, ships had to travel along the long and winding River Avon, and then only at high tide. As ship design improved, and vessels started getting bigger, the danger also grew that they would run aground, especially on the river bends.

This actually happened on several occasions. It disrupted the port's normal commerce, and it generated terrible publicity, losing the city more and more business.

Brunel's ss *Great Britain*, for instance, may have been built in Bristol, but getting her out into the Bristol Channel had been so hazardous and stressful that she never returned to Bristol under her own power.

The obvious solution was to build a new port on the Bristol Channel coast, which of course is exactly what happened in the end.

But for a long time, the city fathers considered another option - to turn the whole Avon from the City Centre to the Bristol Channel into one enormous floating harbour. They would build a dam at Avonmouth, bung up the river so it was permanently filled with water, and ships could come in and out through a system of locks. The scheme was known as "dockisation".

The engineering challenges and potential costs were immense. The idea was finally abandoned after several decades of engineers' reports and civic dithering.

But now the idea is back on the table - in theory, anyway.

Late last year, local business organisation Business West published its Bristol2050 vision, a set of ideas for how the city might look in 40 years' time. It's not intended as a blueprint for the future, but Business West hopes it will start public debate about how the city should be run in the future.

Its suggestions include improved footpaths and cycle networks and improved public transport, a massive remodelling of the Cumberland Basin area and an Avon Barrage close to the M5 bridge at Avonmouth. This barrage would generate electricity, and it would also turn the Avon into a "linear water park".

This is Victorian dockisation all over again, only this time to create a huge facility for boating, fishing and other leisure activities.

# See [www.bristol2050.co.uk](http://www.bristol2050.co.uk)

EB

## Unbuilt Bristol

Scattered across the pages of Bristol's history is a wide range of plans and structures which never made it off the drawing board. Eugene Byrne, who is writing a book about them, takes a look at some of the grand ideas the city has had the fortune (and misfortune) to witness.

Bristol Civic Society has often taken the lead role in campaigning against all manner of plans which could have blighted several parts of the city.

One of the most celebrated periods in the society's history came in the 1960s and 70s, when it led the local revolt against big road schemes and big concrete buildings.

At this time, the city's planners proposed covering parts of the Floating Harbour with roads. There was an equally contentious scheme to build a massive hotel on the side of the Avon Gorge, along with a number of only slightly less controversial ideas, such as tower blocks in Clifton Wood, or the General Post Office (as was) and its plan to build a massive tower block smack in the middle of town.

The footnotes of Bristol's history for the last 250 years or so are littered with schemes and structures which never got built.

One should not, however, believe that bad architecture was just another by-product of the 1970s, along with flared jeans. There were some equally horrible plans before that.

Consider, for instance, some of the visions for rebuilding Bristol after the Blitz; the Western Chapter of Architects came up with some drawings which would have filled the City Centre with dreary blocks straight out of the worst nightmares of Stalin's Russia.

Go back further and you find some of our Victorian forebears wanted Queen Square to make way for the city's main railway station. To progress-minded Victorians it made perfect sense to put the station close to the centre of town and right next to the Floating Harbour. To them, Queen Square was old and shabby and held a lot of unpleasant memories of the 1831 riots. The plan was defeated by local politics (long story); nobody even mentioned conservation back then.

### *Vision for rebuilding Bristol after the Blitz*



# VISIONS OF BRISTOL

While we can only feel relieved that many plans never left the drawing board, there are a few cases of ideas so visionary that we should lament the fact they never happened.

If history had worked out differently maybe Brunel's 'original' Clifton Suspension Bridge would have been built. The bridge completed after his death is Brunel's in all its structural essentials, but his original proposal had been for something elaborately ornamented in an 'Egyptian' style, complete with sphinxes.

Or you can go back further. In the late 18th century, William Bridges proposed a structure spanning the Avon which would also have contained housing, shops, and even a museum and library. It's rather fanciful to imagine this astonishing thing ever being built; quite apart from the stupendous cost, the engineering challenge in supporting such a heavy structure would have been considerable. If it had been realised, though, it would now be Grade I listed, and a tourist destination all of its own.

Recent years have seen a large number of schemes which got dropped, some at least of which would probably have proved great assets. Take the Harbourside centre for the performing arts, for instance, an astonishing thing designed by Behnisch Architekten of Stuttgart and likened by one wag to an exploding greenhouse.

The 1990s and the early noughties were, in retrospect, a golden age of failed, or at least postponed, schemes, good, bad and indifferent. Everything from the Bristol Arena through to the St Mary le Port development, or the Bristol City FC stadium. If you want to drive yourself mad, try to unravel all the different plans down the years for Bristol Rovers stadiums both at the Memorial Ground and elsewhere. If you want to drive yourself completely mad, devote yourself to all the various tram, light rail and bus schemes which never left the terminus. Avon Metro anyone?

Ten years ago, there were probably days when the local press featured more artists' impressions than photos of real, actual things. Now, with our ongoing economic woes, we're in a new phase. There are few really visionary proposals for anything that's likely to happen anytime soon, though this doesn't stop lots of people having all manner of great ideas for the future. And some terrible ones, too.

Eugene Byrne

## *Proposal for Harbourside Centre for the Performing Arts,*



## The Bristol Pyramid

In the run-up to the Millennium, Frank Drake, artist-in-residence at the CREATE Centre, came up with an idea which most Bristolians remember to this day. He wanted to build a huge pyramid on top of the building, using 320,000 wine bottles and leave it there for a year.

The 400-tonne structure was to be the largest ever artwork made from recycled materials, comprising 1,024 triangular tiles, each of 300 bottles. It would be lit inside with solar-generated electricity to provide a glowing green landmark at night.

The project would also have a website where you could post a virtual "message in a bottle" while the real bottles would also contain letters from local schoolchildren.

Planning permission was secured, the Bristol Pyramid Foundation was granted charitable status and Drake and his team set about raising the money. Bath-based musician Peter Gabriel proved an enthusiastic backer, and sponsored the first 'tile'.

By the autumn of 2001 the original scheme had collapsed. Bristol City Council, which owned the building, announced that the Pyramid Foundation's business plan failed "to address serious concerns relating to the financial and structural viability of the project." It was not convinced the project could raise the estimated £2.5m cost.

The Bristol Pyramid Foundation disagreed strongly with the verdict. In a press statement it said: "It is the firm belief of Frank Drake and the trustees of the Bristol Pyramid Foundation that the business plan submitted to Bristol City Council gave more than enough detail for a project at its current stage of development. Especially as the council was not being asked to contribute to the construction costs and ... no construction work would be undertaken until all necessary monies for construction and eventual dis-assembly had been found."

The Pyramid Foundation, however, is alive and well. 'The Cell' which is 1/64th of one side of the Pyramid, was on display at the University of the West of England's Bower Ashton site until recently. It's going, says Frank, to the Bearpit, St James Barton "as soon as we can muster the muscle".

Eugene Byrne

Is currently researching and writing a book on Bristol's failed or postponed building developments for Redcliffe Press. It is due to be published next spring or summer.

# CHOKING CITY MUST TAKE DEEP BREATH AND REJECT 'CAR IS KING' AGENDA



From the moment we are born, few issues have as great an impact on our health as the quality of the air that we breathe. And for Bristol's new elected mayor, to be chosen in November, few issues will be as important to his/her brief. Reducing pollution in the air means tackling one of the city's most controversial political debates - that of Bristol's creaking transport network.

There is no time to lose, either. Dozens of streets across Bristol exceed European air pollution levels, with nitrogen dioxide levels more than twice the EU limit in some roads. The European Commission (EC) has already threatened to prosecute the UK Government over air pollution in 12 cities, including Bristol.

During the summer, a group of cycling and environmental organisations called on candidates for elected mayor to explain how they will improve air quality in the city.

Living Heart for Bristol said it was "ironic" that while Bristol was praised for its monitoring of air pollution, during its failed bid to become European Green Capital, the UK government was facing prosecution for poor air quality.

The issue was raised almost immediately the mayoral campaign began, way back in July, when independent candidate George Ferguson mooted the idea of reducing the speed limit on the M32 to 30mph.

Experts in the city say that while this has partial benefits, to really address the issue, then a cultural, long-term shift needs to be maintained - only by reducing the number of cars on our streets will we truly improve the air we breathe.

Steve Crawshaw is the city's air quality programme coordinator, responsible for the monitoring and reporting of air quality from ten monitoring stations across Bristol, and explains: "We have been one of the leading cities for monitoring air quality for many years. The problems have changed over the last 30 to 40 years - from the black smoke produced by open fires, then to lead in petrol in the 1980s. Over the last few years, traffic levels have remained relatively stable. Roads are at capacity and our colleagues in transport have been doing their best to reduce traffic, hence the investment in buses and cycling. We are broadly in line with other European countries in terms of the problems faced. But the bottom line is the need to reduce the traffic levels and improve technology to reduce emissions from each vehicle."

Mr Crawshaw says that while a speed reduction on the M32 would make a small positive difference, he questions whether the new mayor would even have the power to make that happen. "Engines running at medium speed produce less nitrogen dioxide than those running at normal motorway speeds, or at slow speeds," he says.

"But the effect is very localised, and does the mayor even have the powers? The M32 is a Highways Agency road, so you need to agree any speed reduction with them. But when we have spoken to them before they have said there is no legal remit to change levels on environmental considerations, only safety. It's a great idea but I question if it is achievable."

Improving air quality has to be one of the results of an overall, long-term, region-wide strategy of improving the transport network. A cultural change needs to take place, so that streets become safer and people feel more confident to cycle and walk.

The change is glacial, though. Angela Raffle, who works for the director of public health in the city, says that even since the 1890s, the cyclist has been the target of anger. Some 120 years later, the debate has hardly shifted.

But with the evidence that being exposed to poor quality air contributes to respiratory disease, heart disease and strokes being "incontrovertible", it is a debate that those fighting for healthier air have to win.

"You have to start at fundamentals - the aim of our transport system is the movement of people and goods, for work, play, and access to service for residents, workers and visitors," she says. "Ultimately, we want the region to be a great place to get about. But if you look at



Traffic on TempleWay Bristol

the history of transport in Britain, where the Europeans in the 1950s and 1960s saw the flaws in the maths of the 'car is king' argument, in the UK we ended up with Beeching ripping up the branch rail lines and the deregulation of our buses in the 1980s."

Ms Raffle adds that there are already good projects making a real difference in the city. The residents parking scheme in Kingsdown has been a success and residents have done their bit over the years to stop some of the more hare-brained schemes to come out of the planning department.

But there are still areas, such as the city centre gyratories, which make the environment too hostile to persuade inexperienced cyclists to get out of their cars. And, she says, businesses need to "wise up" to the fact that opposing workplace parking levies simply ensures that rush-hour traffic remains at its

present, chronic levels, as workers have no incentive to use alternative options.

Ultimately, the language that is used over the next few years needs to be carefully chosen to bring the debate around to focus on the benefits of getting people out of their cars - and away from the "firecracker" arguments still used.

"We have 45,000 car trips made a day under 5km that are work related. If we can shift just 10% of those trips to buses, bicycles or walking you can really help to transform things. Creating a better road environment encourages more people out of cars and this improves things further in turn," she says.

"We were really successful in helping the public campaign against smoking indoors in public spaces, by focussing on the health issues and the rights of workers. But with transport, we still have these 'firecracker' arguments such as 'they

[cyclists] all ride on the pavements, they don't pay road tax' and so on.

"These are the same arguments as the 1890s. Our discourse about the bicycle hasn't evolved since then and it needs to, if we want a civilised society."

Christopher Brown  
Editor of the online newspaper Bristol 24-7  
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Email: editor@bristol247.com

exhaust fumes



Bristol Traffic



Air Quality monitoring station,  
Old Market Bristol



# WE NEED COURAGE TO BUILD A BETTER BRISTOL

**Better Bristol? The need for hard, informed debate, followed by real action... A Rant**  
Chris Chalkley

## Part 1. How Did This Happen?

I studied Economics and Philosophy at Bristol University in the late 1970s. There I learned about the Dismal Science, how its simplistic theoretical framework made it the roughest of fits for the complexities of reality. I learned how the market could not take into account anything that was not measurable by money, such as clean air or ecosystems. I also learned that growth per se was not necessarily a good thing and that certain types of economic activity could have a net negative effect. For example, increased tobacco sales and subsequent increased expenditure on hospitals might look great on the balance sheet, but would likely have a net negative benefit to society.

Studying corporate structure, it was quite clear that the inexorable growth of transnational businesses would mean that these companies would become more powerful than government and that the directors of these multinational organisations would effectively wield great and largely unaccountable power due to the institutional set up and consequent lack of accountability between directors and their shareholders. As a result, the sovereignty of notionally democratic nations would be outrageously compromised. It

could all be worked out in a classroom on a piece of paper, and nobody batted an eyelid.

Over the ensuing years, we have seen the effects of growing corporate power on our city. When I came to Bristol, Eastville boasted a football stadium, a dog track, the Bristol Bulldogs Speedway team, and a thriving local food and produce market on Fridays and Sundays. Gloucester Road and Stokes Croft had many furniture shops, new and second hand, and open markets thrived. When IKEA and Tesco opened on the former stadium site, these shops began to disappear, and the open markets across the City went into rapid decline. Sunday trading delivered the coup de grace. I ran an independent wholesale business in Montpelier that supplied the small independent businesses and when they closed, we closed.

Nowadays the trading centre of our City is Cabot Circus at the bottom of the M32, a £500m corporate extravaganza, where even the streets are privately owned. Elsewhere the Memorial Ground and Ashton Gate are currently up for sale to supermarket chains, the heart of our docks is occupied by Lloyds, £20m was spent on a staircase at the Colston Hall, and throughout the city we have a glut of apartments built by over-enthusiastic developers in pursuit of profit.

To me it seems that Bristol has sleepwalked into this state of affairs. Did we mean to surrender our right to self-determination

in exchange for a few shiny baubles and a lot of one-stop shopping? Was the lure of cheap disposable furniture, food and clothing really all it took for us to give away our cultural heritage and an economy in which we were able to fully participate?

## Part 2: Stokes Croft - Platform for Debate

### Neglect and Defiance

In recent years, Stokes Croft has made a lot of noise and consequently been a thorn in the side of corporate business and local government - both used to getting on with what they do unhindered.

Since World War II, a litany of poor planning decisions meant that the area remained a shabby oasis, largely untouched by rampant development. Low property values, cheap rents and dereliction attracted a queer mix of artists and long-term property speculators. Graffiti artists took advantage of the dereliction and hostels and drug agencies found it a place they could be without too much opposition.

With so many empty properties owned by absentee landlords waiting for the next boom, a strong squatting tradition was also established.

Add to that a long tradition of musical and theatrical entertainment and religious groups occupying the area, then slap a major arterial road through the middle, and you have a microcosm of society with



Before



After: Turbo Island: Jamaica street transformed by paint and a few statues



1



2



3

Photos: Chris Chalkley

its issues writ large. It's the kind of community that moves things along in its own sweet way. It is also a community prepared to defy government if needs be.

**Paint and Regeneration**

By simply painting in the holes in Stokes Croft's gap-toothed smile, the local community, of which graffiti writers are a part, had started to turn the area around, inculcating a growing sense of pride and confidence. The grey squares of government were steadily banished, and a wave of colour, opinion and, of course, rant washed through the streets, and with it flowed the idea that a do-it-yourself approach to regeneration was possible: reinvent and care rather than demolish and build. This approach has not stopped, while the latter option continues to nudge its way in, but at least the first is now on the agenda as an alternative.

The struggle with the Council's Clean and Green anti-graffiti team however continues, though the debate over the criminality or otherwise of graffiti has become more nuanced.

**Property Ownership: Absentee Landlords v. Squatters**

In Stokes Croft more damage has been done to buildings by absentee landlords acting legally than by the easily blamed squatting community. The Carriageworks, a masterpiece of Bristol Byzantine architecture by Stokes Croft's Patron Saint, E.W. Godwin, which has stood empty for 25 years and fallen into chronic dereliction, is the most startling example. It is a speculative token in the property development game played between the building's owners, the Comer Brothers and Bristol City Council. (If there was ever a case for government to help the local community to buy a property and effect a gentle and appropriate refurbishment, then this is it.) By contrast the Free Shop and Emporium further down Stokes Croft, buildings

which had been empty for more than 20 years when they were squatted in 2007, are used, sometimes noisily and anti-socially, but generally with positive intent, by skint locals, and have hosted landmark art exhibitions and offered a service to the most marginal of our community, at no public expense.

The philosopher John Locke (1632 - 1704) posited that ownership of property was related to the amount of work put into it by the occupier. If one were to accept this position, then the squatters would now have more right to that property than the long neglectful landlord. In any case, it is clear that current property law does not serve the best interests of the local community, and the nature of ownership is a subject ripe for debate.

**Addiction: Moving the Problem Elsewhere**

Stokes Croft has an intimate relationship with drugs, both legal and illegal. For the longest time, government and police have been trying to move the problem on, shying away from getting to the core of the issue. Unenforceable no drinking zones have been created, the worst of the cheap alcohol brands are banned in local shops, methadone continues to be doled out as a matter of course, and people continue to drink, take drugs and die.

It is entirely appropriate that the debate about drugs should take place here and we should be taking the lead on radical reform policies rather than simply moving the problem elsewhere as the area becomes more attractive. All the conditions are right, we just need to summon up the political courage.

**Corporate Power, Government and Planning Law**

From the outset, a large section of our community stated its opposition to

1. 'Tsunami of Roses' - a testament to the idea of gentle, positive, incremental change in Stokes Croft.
2. Mural Stokes Croft
3. A panel on the Carriageworks, making a case for the buildings potential use

2009. Meetings were called, polls were taken and almost 3,000 written objections were delivered to the council. But the council felt unable to fully back the community as it was afraid of losing in court against the legal and financial might of the supermarket.

When things finally erupted in April 2011, I would argue that the so-called riot was about lack of voice. Polls had shown that as many as 93% of locals opposed the new Tesco, so why was it there? And why did our police force seem to be on their side? In 1831, the riots in Bristol were about lack of voice, too. Only 5% of the population had the right to vote. Half the city burned and hundreds of people were slaughtered by the 3rd Dragoons led by Lt. Col. Brereton.

Tesco is still open on Cheltenham Road, but the huge Boycott Tesco mural remains as a reminder of opposition.

**What to Do?**

To build a better Bristol, we need to have the courage to face the very real challenges of climate change, globalisation and growing corporate power. To consider what the need for sustainability, and economic and food security will entail. To discuss, debate and to have the courage to act.

Chris Chalkley, Chair PRSC  
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 www.prsc.org.uk

# Ebenezer Chapel

## The story of an incomplete list - Ebenezer Chapel

This is a little story about Ebenezer Chapel - a historical gem in the heart of St Philips which I fell in love with soon after I came to Bristol, and which needs your help to survive.

The charming chapel in Midland Road was used as an architectural salvage business when I first came across it, and has a rich history, which is now under threat. An application for listing status was refused by English Heritage in 2011 because it is not of "national importance". If it cannot be protected, this embodiment of the area's Methodist history could be demolished for yet another block of flats.

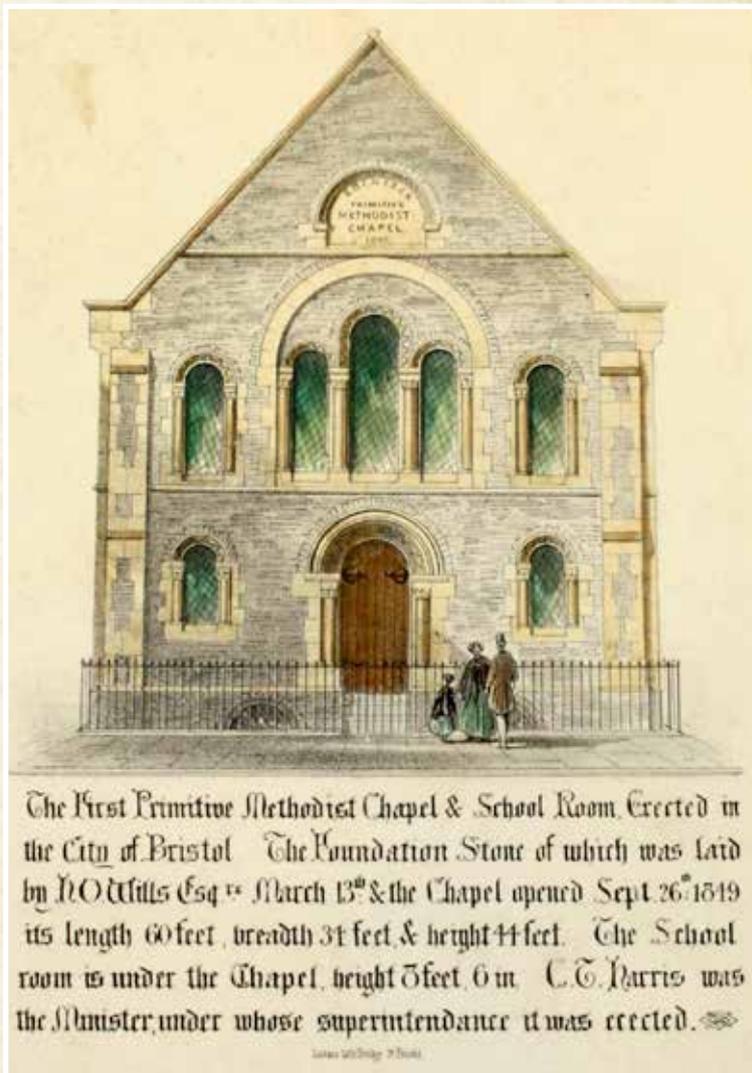
It is now absolutely necessary to gather new evidence to renew the request and keep the Chapel as an open window to observe the people, the ideas and the great transformations that created our current values and lifestyle - that of Methodism and religious tolerance, philanthropy and how Sunday schools triggered compulsory education, slum clearance and the history of our railways.

In February 2011 the Neighbourhood Planning Network asked Old Market Community Association to be involved in a still ongoing pre-planning application: the little chapel could be demolished to build flats. This prompted me to spend of a couple of months researching the history of the building.

Starting from a few lines in the photographic book "The Dings and St Philips" (Stephenson and Willmott) I visited the library of The New Room in Broadmead and the Records Office supported by my friend Jayne Pucknell, former archivist, who discovered important documents. Finally the reports in the 19th-century newspaper, the Bristol Mercury, shaped this research into a journey into the life and culture of a vibrant district in the last years of the Industrial Revolution.

Around the 1830s, with the construction of the Floating Harbour and the development of the railways in Bristol, the area to the south of Old Market, previously occupied by orchards and fields leading to the forest of Kingswood, filled up very quickly with railway stations and their huge secondary infrastructure, with factories and houses for a large population of workers. A large number of churches and chapels, a stone's throw from each other, were built for the most diverse religious movements: Anglican, Wesleyan, Zoar, Christian Brethren. none of them are left apart from one.

Just round the corner from Midland Road, in Broad Plain, John Wesley had preached in the open air for the first time in England in 1739, so the Methodist community was already deeply rooted in Old Market when in



*Ebenezer Chapel today*

1833 two missionaries of a new movement named the "Primitive Methodism" preached in the open air. They established a group which in 1849 managed to open its first chapel in Bristol just in front of St Philips Station.

H.O. Wills III (Wills Memorial) laid the foundation stone for Ebenezer Chapel and its congregation. Forever in debt, it was continuously supported by famous philanthropists concerned about the miserable conditions of the people working in local industries.

Ebenezer Chapel was built in an original Norman design even if the Methodist privileged architectural forms were Gothic or Classic. The architect is unknown but Dr Christopher Wakeling of the Chapel Society saw a connection with the similar design of the more imposing Baptist Chapel in City Road.

The basement underneath the chapel was used as a Sunday school and the Bristol Mercury continuously reported about its rich social events: meetings of the Teetotal Society, bazaars and lectures as that delivered by the famous colliery owner and MP Handel Cosham on the life of the late MP Samuel Morley.

In the 1930s with the construction of the Central Hall in Old Market and the Union of the Methodist groups, while local slums were cleared and people moved to the suburbs, Ebenezer Chapel became redundant. With minor damage in bombing during the Second World War it became a Christadelphian Hall until the 1980s when it was converted into a business.

Notwithstanding the changes in use the building was never modified and retains an intact religious structure with the original galleries, pulpit, wooden floors and basements. It is a precious building which has been at the centre of deep social transformations and we are lucky that it has been preserved. So it would be tragic to see it disappear.

Mariateresa Bucciante

If anyone wants to have more information or is concerned about the future of the Chapel please contact me at [mtbucciante@yahoo.it](mailto:mtbucciante@yahoo.it) or call 07962 832654.

# BRISTOL'S TRANSPORT PROBLEMS - ARE THEY SOLVABLE?

## The problems with Bristol's traffic

That Bristol has a serious traffic problem is no surprise to anybody, but the fact that it has some of the worst congestion in the UK is a cause for concern. It has been estimated that average peak time speeds in Bristol are 16 mph (26 km/h), the lowest of the eight English "core cities", with 23% of journey times spent stationary. Consequences of slow moving and idling traffic are poor air quality and much wasting of time. The trend for new home completions in suburban and satellite towns around Bristol is likely to continue, bringing thousands of additional car movements on the city's roads during the rush hours.

## Causes

For many there is no option: journeys from outlying villages and suburbs are next to impossible by public transport. For others, this inconvenience is preferable to relying on erratic, unreliable bus services. Much of the traffic is generated outside the city, and arrives from the satellite and suburban towns in an arc north around the city from Weston to Keynsham.

## History and geography

Bristol is both victim and beneficiary of its physical location. The great natural harbour that brought its maritime trade also provides a barrier to easy movement across the city. Road traffic is funnelled into a few river crossing points. After the Cumberland Basin high-level bridge, the next crossings are concentrated in the very heart of the city, with few further crossings on the east side.

Railways, too, were never conceived to provide suburban passenger services. The acres of sidings at the Great Western Goods Depot and the Midland Cannons Marsh were developed to move goods to the docks and the new harbour at Avonmouth.

## THE RISE AND FALL OF BRISTOL'S TRAMS

Far from being backward, or suffering lack of investment, Bristol led the way in the development of electric trams, being one of the first major cities in Britain to have such a system. The first electric tramway was opened in Bristol by the flamboyant entrepreneur Sir George White in 1895. This line from Kingswood to Old Market grew into a network throughout the city. London followed about eight years later.

The death of the Bristol tram is attributed to a direct hit on the power station during the blitz of 1942. Of course it could have been repaired, but there was not the political will. The system needed massive investment, and the modern diesel powered bus was adaptable, could go anywhere, and above all, the new post-war consumer society was in love with the freedom brought by the motor car.

## The coming of public transport

Public transport arrived with the city's first horse-drawn tramway system in 1875, soon followed by a pioneering electrical system. With the demise of the tramways, control of the buses passed to a new Corporation-controlled Bristol Omnibus Company, who continued to run the buses without much flair, imagination or regard to the changing world until privatisation in the 1980s.

## More roads, more traffic

The love affair with the motor bus and motor car had taken hold even before the war. A map of the city in 1902 shows a dense maze of narrow streets, with few main thoroughfares. All this was changing in the 1930s. Borough engineers saw it as their mission to drive great highways through the ancient city, like railways through darkest Africa. The local paper of 1938 excitedly reported on the plans to demolish part of Old Market to make way for the "Eastern Road", (now Temple Way), and drive a swathe through Georgian Redcliffe and across Queen Square for the "Western Relief road".



*Old Market in the 1920s. White's electric tram and overhead cables. The Temple Way underpass now runs through the foreground, where the 'Empire' stands on the left.*

The motor racing mania with its inner and outer circuits continued and accelerated until its peak in the 1960s, when Temple Way was lowered into a vast chasm under Old Market. Monster roundabouts severed old communities such as Old Market and Stokes Croft from the rest of the city.

A brave new world had arrived where pedestrians would stroll on raised decks or sunken gardens away from the traffic. Reality turned out to be a bit different.

## Taming the car

We have now discovered that the car is an insatiable monster, the more space it is given the more it wants, the wider the streets, the more clogged up they get. Yet we can't kick the habit of using it. Policy is now to discourage the car from the city centre, in accordance with the 'Living Heart' philosophy. However, any attempts to bring in congestion charges would be political suicide, even if the council had the legal powers to impose them. What will bring the "modal shift"? Traffic patterns will never change until the bus or tram or cycling or whatever become more attractive, or Peak Oil makes the car prohibitively expensive. [Cont... →](#)

**Public transport in private hands - the Showcase bus?**

In the last decade nearly £80 million has been spent on ten "Showcase Bus routes" across the Greater Bristol area.

The scheme includes a range of measures that will improve the speed, reliability, comfort and image of conventional bus travel. A major feature is the creation of bus lanes throughout the region, with raised kerbs and height adjusting suspension on the buses, to ease access for all users.



*Smart new buses with shelters and electronic information displays...but is this good enough to get people out of their cars?*

©Roland Harmer

**THREE RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEMS ARE CURRENTLY PROPOSED FOR BRISTOL:**

**BRT2**

A bus rapid transit from Temple Meads to Ashton Gate via a loop through the city. This was described in the last issue of the newsletter and was the subject of a public inquiry in July. See the report in this journal.

**SBL - South Bristol Link**

A bus rapid transit running on a new relief road linking the A370 at Long Ashton to the A38 and the existing South Bristol ring road at Hengrove. The society doesn't like this because we see little public benefit, and it relies on joining the discredited BRT2 at Ashton Gate to reach Bristol. It will encourage development on Green Belt land.

**BRT3**

A bus rapid transit system from the north fringe in South Gloucestershire to Hengrove, via the city centre. It is a package of measures totalling £102m (50% funded by the Department for Transport and 50% from local contributions) designed to improve the transport links between residential areas and employment, leisure and retail centres in the area. Clear information, faster boarding and 'smartcard' ticketing linking with wider bus and rail services, creating a new way of travelling travel across the West of England area, is promised. In the city it will run from the M32, via St James through the Centre. Improvements around the Cenotaph will follow. The route will reach Bedminster via Princes St and a new river bridge.

A great deal of information - far too much to reproduce here - is available and can still be viewed online at the official website : <http://www.travelplus.org.uk/north-fringe-to-hengrove>  
We see merit in the case for the BRT3 route because it fulfils the need for a mass-transit tram service from Bristol northwards. But it is a high price for what is basically just a bus.

**The Bus Rapid Transit systems (BRTs)**

More recently, we have had plans for Rapid Transit bus systems. The rapid transit vehicle is a strange beast, neither fish nor fowl, which seems to have been invented by a committee in the last Government. They would not finance full tram lines because of the expense, but looked favourably on this hybrid. Not a real bus because it is partially guided, and not a tram because it runs on conventional street wheels and road tyres.

**Greening up**

Extravagant claims have been made for Bristol's position as a Cycling City. There have been some notable successes, particularly where cycle routes offer an attractive alternative, away from the main road, but in some places the paths are little more than white lines on pavements. Much more needs to be done before Cycling City can offer a truly practical system.

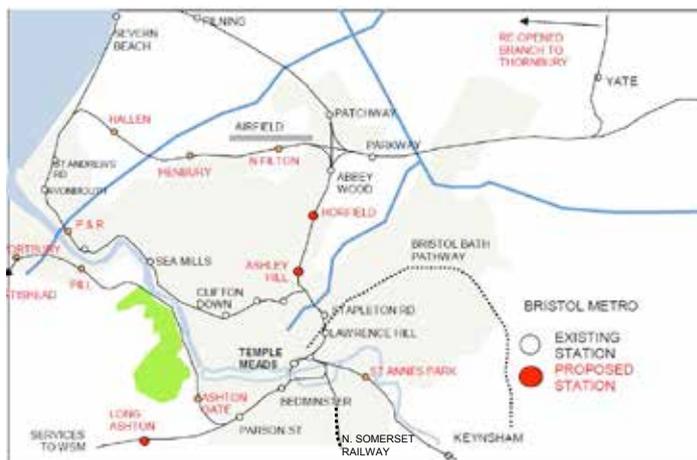
**Regenerating the suburban railway**

Showcases buses, BRTs – will they work? The jury may still be out on them. But there is a definite new enthusiasm for rail transport. Not just the lonely voices of a few green activists, but a chorus across the political scene. The West of England Partnership (WoEP), a body representing the four local authorities of Greater Bristol, is in favour of the Greater Bristol Metro, and enthusiastic about re-opening the Portishead line. WoEP has said: "Reopening the rail link to Portishead is a priority for the West of England. The project would increase the UK's passenger rail network by 10 miles and connect an additional 30,000 people to the network. The Portishead to Bristol corridor (A369) suffers severe congestion and journey time reliability problems."

The new franchise for the Great Western route, expected to start in 2013, has provided an opportunity for the development of plans for the Metro.

This has wide support and backing from business, local cross party politicians and community stakeholders.

New funds released to the city from central government appear to promise funds for re-opening the Portishead branch and the Henbury loop, with new or re-built stations at Ashton Gate, Horfield, Ashley Hill, Salford and Henbury. Rachel Villiers, Minister for Rail announced in July that funds for restoring the quadruple tracks between Bristol Temple Meads and Bristol Parkway to provide the capacity for the Greater Bristol Metro will be made available to Network Rail.



**Proposed Bristol Metro**

The Metro promises to bring much of Greater Bristol within reach of frequent local trains. There are large areas which will still not benefit in east and south Bristol. The trackbeds of the Midland and north Somerset railways still exist and are used as cycle/footways. Would it be heretical to suggest that a modern electric light rail system might share part of these routes?

**Integrated Transport Authority (ITA)**

Will the government stand by its pledges to support the local system? Will the local authorities have sufficient 'clout' to make it happen? There has been much co-ordination between the four local authorities through the WoEP, but local interests and prejudices still surface. The 2008 Transport Act allows for the creation of ITAs. Bristol councillors voted for the creation of a Strategic Transport Authority, but neighbouring Councils, perhaps fearful like turkeys voting for Christmas, are less keen. Such an authority has much power to determine transport in its area. The six ITAs that already exist – including Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear – have been far more successful in dealing with their transport problems – maybe it is time for Bristol to follow them.

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# BRT inquiry: What the inspector was told



## Ashton Vale to Temple Meads Bus Rapid Transit – Transport and Works Act Public Inquiry

Last February's Newsletter carried Bristol Civic Society's concerns about the AVTM BRT2. The Promoters proposed a concrete bus track from the Long Ashton Park and Ride (LAPR), across the Portishead railtrack on a new 300m fly-over, then along the former Bristol Docks Railway (BDR) track under the high level roads and across the Ashton Avenue swing bridge. The route would run along the BDR track beside the New Cut, through the Cumberland Road tunnel, through the Harbourside, around the back of the M Shed Museum and into Wapping Road. At Prince Street Bridge, the separated busway would join the roads to follow a one-way circuit via Temple Meads, the Centre and then back to Prince Street Bridge. Double-decker buses from Portishead, Clevedon and Weston-super-Mare could also use the separated busway for the last two miles of their journeys. The capital cost of the scheme would be £50m; Bristol City Council and North Somerset District Council would together contribute £15m. During the six-week-long Public Inquiry, between May and July 2012, James Smith gave the society's evidence and he and John Frenkel cross-examined the Promoters' witnesses. The Inquiry Inspector will deliver his report to the Secretaries of State for Transport and Communities this autumn. The society's final submission to the Inquiry is on our website.

### What the Society said

The society recognises Greater Bristol's need for investment in rapid transport and supports any improvement to Bristol's public transport system. However, the society's major objection is the substantial harm that it believes the AVTM and feeder buses would cause to the visitor experience around M Shed. The BDR track may be a preserved transport route but a highly successful visitor attraction has

grown up around it created by a huge investment of public and private money.

To support the visitor attractions, the city council proposes to develop a new square west of M Shed as an outdoor museum to show off the dockside exhibits and the working steam railway. Through this virtually pedestrianised visitor area, the Promoters plan to drive up to 42 diesel buses an hour, at peak times. The society said that the AVTM should instead run along Cumberland Road to avoid the Harbourside. This would save construction costs and avoid the risk of cost overruns by construction beside the New Cut tideway.

### Where will the council find its local contribution?

The council must find £42m to fund its share of the local contribution to three schemes: the AVTM, the Hengrove to Northern Fringes bus rapid transit schemes (BRT3) and the South Bristol Link Road. Even if the council invests the whole of the new Community Infrastructure Levy (from January 1st 2013), it still needs new sources of money to repay borrowing to fund the transport schemes. The council has appointed Grant Thornton to advise how to introduce a Supplementary Business Rate and / or Workplace Parking Scheme, both of which would be controversial.

The council has not yet established a settled plan and timetable to pay its share of the local investment within the Department for Transport's timescale.

### Will AVTM need an operating subsidy?

The Promoters said that the AVTM fare box would meet the operating cost of the busway, which is to be revenue neutral. Last year, 18 years after the LAPR opened, the council still paid a £100,000 subsidy to the 903 bus service. The council forecast that by 2016 the LAPR's use will rise to 1,250 cars a day. Current use

has been a steady average 880 cars a day for the last five years. The society challenged the assumption that economic growth would generate a 42% rise of use to meet the cost break-even point. The LAPR use will only increase when the city council completes a ring of residents' parking schemes in the inner suburbs. Generally, commuters will always choose free on-street parking, if it is available.

### What Transport for Greater Bristol (TfGB) said

TfGB commissioned Keith Buchan, the current chair of the Transport Planning Society to give evidence. Among many other matters, he said:

- AVTM scheme is not a new transport initiative, but a 905 bus service replacement.
- AVTM does not directly serve Temple Meads Station or the new Enterprise Zone.
- The one-way circular route does not resolve journey time problems. Some passengers would gain but others would lose, especially in the central area. The 903 bus provides a fast journey to the Anchor Road and Centre stops, which AVTM does not reproduce.
- The Promoters over-estimated the journey time benefits and reliability of AVTM. The evidence shows that the 903 bus maintains its timetable in congested conditions.
- There was no analysis of key issues such as the use by buses of one carriageway of Prince Street Bridge with the other reserved for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The Promoters' evidence shows that AVTM would not reduce the quantity of traffic.
- A workplace parking levy would produce new patterns of demand that the AVTM would not meet.

• AVTM did not offer good value for money; it offered some benefits to some users. The locally sourced funding risks are high.

• A better-value-for-money transport investment would be a bus priority scheme around the central area, which would greatly benefit all bus operators, and the completion of the bus priority measures on Hotwell Road/Anchor Road. These low cost interventions would deliver significant journey time savings for all passengers on the 903 bus.

### What other objectors said

There were many other objectors. Long Ashton Parish Council gave evidence about the need for additional works to mitigate the effect of AVTM on the green belt. Stephen and Anne Wickham spoke of the need to conserve the Ashton landscaped park and other items of street furniture such as the BDR railings. John Grimshaw and Sue Carter said that although the AVTM claimed to offer benefits to cyclists and pedestrians, the scheme was bus-led and in critical areas it did not adequately plan for other road users. Other cycling witnesses described the effect on cyclists and pedestrians of the Prince Street Bridge bottleneck. David Martin predicted that the AVTM operation would reduce the working steam railway to a static exhibition.

### The final day

The Inspector met witnesses to walk the AVTM route on the final rainy day of the inquiry. He had previously borrowed a bike to cycle along the route. Everyone agreed that whatever his final advice, the Inquiry Inspector was courteous, helpful and well prepared.

John Frenkel  
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Email: johnfrenkel@blueyonder.co.uk

# BRISTOL PREPARES FOR I

Bristol goes to the polls on 15th November to elect its first mayor, or in the worn-out parlance of the local press, "Bristol's Boris"; our very own equivalent of the Mayor of London.

Under the current system, Bristol is run by councillors, each serving a four-year term. They elect a council leader who heads a "cabinet" of executive members responsible for various council functions, such as education, transport, museums & libraries, refuse collection, and social services. Usually, this leader and cabinet are all drawn from the party with the majority of councillors.

Under the new system, the elected mayor becomes the city's chief executive, making all the major strategic and executive decisions regarding the city, and setting the budget. The mayor will also have a cabinet appointed from the ranks of councillors, who will continue to represent the interests of those living in their wards, and will serve on various committees, including planning committees.

The mayor should also have a lot of influence and "soft power", especially if they're elected with a convincing majority. They can make a lot of things happen simply by demanding them.

Whoever wins this first contest gets the chance to shape the role of mayor for the future. S/he also becomes the public face of Bristol both to the local electorate and to the wider world in a way that former leaders of the council could never be.

It's also a magnificent opportunity to set the agenda for the city for years to come. The issues in the mayor's in-tray include the obvious ones like transport, education and housing. But the hope is that the mayor will also have sufficient clout to move the city forward on matters like investment, sustainability and green technology, as well as other issues like extending the city boundaries. S/he will be expected to bring new business to the city and to demand a bigger piece of the

taxpayers' cake.

As one council insider told me: "I don't know who to vote for yet, but I do know that I'm not voting for a political party. I want the person who will be best able to bang the table for Bristol in Whitehall."

The mostly ceremonial post of Lord Mayor will continue. For the conceivable future councillors will annually choose one of their number to spend 12 months opening things, and being photographed with pieces of machinery, schoolchildren and visiting foreigners.

In the local media, and Bristol's blogosphere and web forums, this is the most exciting local election in decades. The contest, and the referendum before it, have got a lot of people talking about how to take the city forward. Some of the people behind the original 'yes' campaign in the referendum, for instance, are hoping to influence things by persuading voters to come up with a crowdsourced

## THE CANDIDATES

Please note that these are all the people who had declared an interest in running as we went to press. No-one is confirmed as a definite candidate until nominations close, and some may not stand, and others might come forward. This list is simply to give our readers some idea of the range of people standing.

Where possible, we have mentioned candidates' Twitter feeds, websites or blogs, but they may have other online information later.

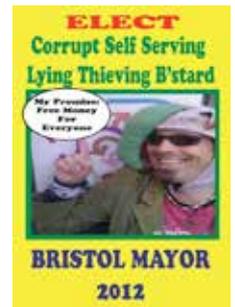
This list is in alphabetical order, and the Civic Society does not endorse any individual candidate.



**Craig Clarke (Independent)**  
Radical whose CV includes campaigning against NHS privatisation and who has stood for the English Democrats in the past.



**Tim Collins (Independent)**  
Former Labour councillor on Avon County Council, Collins later stood for the Conservatives. The main plank of his campaign is to save Filton Airfield from development. On Twitter as @TimCollins5



**Mr Corrupt Self Serving Lying Thieving B'stard (Independent)**  
Changed his name by deed poll (in case you hadn't guessed) and while he may look like a joke candidate, he does have a coherent radical programme.  
Web: [corruptbstard.wordpress.com](http://corruptbstard.wordpress.com)



**Spud Murphy (Independent)**  
Local businessman and former Conservative councillor for Avonmouth



**Daniella Radice (Green)**  
Longstanding local green activist whose CV includes working in the waste and rail industries and the Environment Agency.  
Web: [daniellaformayor.wordpress.com](http://daniellaformayor.wordpress.com)  
Twitter: @green\_mayor

# ELECTED MAYOR PLUNGE

manifesto for the city.

See [www.bristolmanifesto.org](http://www.bristolmanifesto.org)

At the time of writing, there are at least eleven candidates - see panel - but since we go to press before nominations close, others may have entered the race by the time you read this.

All the major parties have put up candidates, but there's also a wide choice of independents, from the radical fringes through to sober-suited businessmen who pride themselves on their common sense.

This is going to be nothing like parliamentary or council elections. Aside from the huge range of independents, the elections will use a different voting system to the usual first-past-the-post system. We're using the supplementary voting system. Under this, you pick two candidates, your first choice - the one you most want to win - and a second, the one you like best if your favourite doesn't get a majority. Any candidate winning more than 50% of first preference votes is the winner. If nobody wins more than 50%, then the two candidates with the highest number of votes

go forward to the second stage.

Then, all the second preference votes for these remaining two candidates are added to the votes they received in the first stage, and the one with the most votes after adding together the results from stages 1 and 2 is elected.

Confused? You will be. Council officials privately expect a sizeable proportion of ballot papers to be declared invalid because voters won't know how to fill them in properly. So remember; vote for your favourite candidate as first preference, and your second favourite (or the one you hate the least) as second preference.

See [www.electoral-reform.org.uk/supplementary-vote](http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/supplementary-vote) for a full explanation.

The voting system and the range of different candidates make it very hard to predict who is going to win. With national opinion polls the way they are, you might expect Labour to make a strong showing, but there's no way of calling it when people's second preferences are taken

## Police and Crime Commissioner

On the same day as Bristol is electing a mayor, the whole country gets to vote for its local Police And Crime Commissioners.

These are one of David Cameron's big ideas, elected officials who replace the former local police authorities. The plan is for commissioners to shape local policing strategy and the hope is that they will be more accountable to local people.

The move dismayed many folk who fear a populist race to the bottom by the hang 'em and flog 'em brigade, though there are no signs of that happening yet. Indeed, there are few signs of the campaign coming alive at all. The only publicity the contest garnered at all before the end of the summer was the story of how Avon & Somerset's Labour candidate Bob Ashford had to drop out because of a conviction over 30 years ago when he was aged just 13.

Ashford's place is now taken by well-known Bristol business figure John Savage. The Conservative candidate is former Somerset County Council leader Ken Maddock, while the Liberal Democrats have selected Horfield Councillor Pete Levy, a former soldier and police officer. As with the mayoral election, nominations close in mid-October, so other candidates might declare themselves by then.

Further information:

[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/police-crime-commissioners/](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/police-crime-commissioners/)

[www.policeelections.com](http://www.policeelections.com)

Eugene Byrne



**George Ferguson (Independent)**

Well-known local businessman and architect, former president of RIBA, owner of the Tobacco Factory, wearer of red trousers.  
Web: [bristol1st.com](http://bristol1st.com)  
Twitter: @Bristol\_1st



**Cllr Geoff Gollop (Conservative)**

Well-known Bristol councillor who recently served as Lord Mayor.  
On Twitter as @GeoffGollop



**Neil Maggs (Respect Party Anti Cuts)**

Trade unionist and school bursar, he took over the Respect candidacy from well-known local activist Paulette North who had to stand down for personal reasons.  
Web: [www.maggsformayor.com](http://www.maggsformayor.com)



**Marvin Rees (Labour)**

CV includes stints as journalist, TV presenter, director of the Bristol Partnership and more, plus two politics degrees and spells working in the US.  
Twitter: @Marvin4Bristol



**Cllr Jon Rogers (Liberal Democrat)**

The former GP took early retirement and is currently deputy leader of Bristol City Council.  
Web: [jonrogers.org.uk](http://jonrogers.org.uk)  
Twitter: @DrJon4Bristol



**Andy Thorne (Independent)**

Local businessman (MD of Thorne Security) who wants to make the council more efficient and streamline the planning system.

## Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network

NPN was set up in 2006 to build the capacity of the community to get involved with the planning system in Bristol through their resident-led planning groups.

Since the adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement (CI) in October 2008, the process for involving the community in discussions about proposed developments before the planning application is made

(pre-app CI), has been improved through a number of Bristol City Council (BCC) processes. The Planning Protocol, which sets out the importance of early community involvement, was agreed by BCC, GWE Business West and Bristol Property Agents. More specific BCC 'Guidelines' for pre app CI have been produced. Community members are now invited to briefings with planning committees, so they are able to raise issues of concern with the developers and the planning committee members. The local planning agents, architects and planning consultants now are regularly talking to local communities through their network planning groups and the results of those discussions have led to a number of good results for both communities and applicants.

In addition, a number of groups have been involved in the emerging Bristol Local Plan consultation process, helping with the Character Appraisals for their conservation areas, working on compiling planning evidence for their area through street surveys and agreed planning principles and in the 'front runner' Neighbourhood Development Plan process under the Localism Act.

The importance for each area of the city to have a local planning group is widely recognised, and there is now good coverage of Bristol by over 45 groups; some of which cover a whole ward or Neighbourhood Partnership Area, and some a few streets. Issues with boundaries, which continue to dog the Neighbourhood Partnership organisation, have long been dealt by Network groups by regular 'cross boundary' working between groups.

There is still a misunderstanding that the Network is a body with a few people who speak for the whole organisation. This is not the case; each group speaks for its own community and no 'administrator' or 'chairman' can speak for the network. The network is coordinated through e-bulletins and the website by a 'network administrator'; individual volunteers from Network planning groups share their experience and expertise with other groups when invited, and the pre-application process is monitored by a small group of volunteers who direct the developers to the appropriate network planning groups to carry out their pre-application community involvement.

Alison Bromilow  
Email: [networkadministrator@bristolnnpn.net](mailto:networkadministrator@bristolnnpn.net)



Bristol Civic Society has its origins in the Bristol Kyrle Society, established in 1905 by Miss Mary Clifford, with support from Professor G H Leonard. Mary Clifford was inspired by a meeting, held in York, of the National Union of Women which discussed various ways of beautifying towns and cities. (Read more of this story [bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](http://bristolcivicsociety.org.uk))

Today in Bristol, as well as the Civic Society, there are many hard working local planning and amenity groups which are supported

# Community acts for positive change

**Heather Leeson** recently spoke to **Nancy Carlton** about her involvement with a local planning group.



Nancy Carlton

### HL. Why did you want to set up a local planning group?

NC. Some of the residents in my area, Windmill Hill, felt that there were a number of issues that we wanted to tackle, such as inappropriate development, traffic management and safer routes to school. We were also keen to improve our green spaces and increase the green corridor from the Mendips to the New Cut, along the Malago. There's a good sense of community in Windmill Hill, and we felt that it could be strengthened by making improvements to our local environment.

### How did you go about setting up a planning group?

We already had a local 'green' group that looks after our green spaces, and we amended the constitution to include activity on issues that impact on our neighbourhood. Then we joined the Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network, and they gave us a lot of support and some training about how the planning system operates.

### How has the group operated since it was set up?

Through the NPN, in 2010, we took part in a project that involved working with 2 UWE Architecture and Planning students, who acted as our planning consultants as part of their coursework. They consulted our group and then drew up some suggestions about how we could improve the street scene and thus strengthen the identity of Windmill Hill as a distinct community. Their report was excellent and gave us some good ideas for making positive changes. However, once the momentum produced by that project ended, we hit a hiatus

because people didn't feel they could commit the time required to make a planning group work. People tend to coalesce around issues.

When our local green spaces were under threat from the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT3) proposed route, there was a lot of local interest. We won that argument and local interest died down again.

More recently, residents have become interested again in planning issues and were willing to set aside the time to lobby for some improvements to traffic management and the environment. We've recently started to reorganise and start working again.

### What barriers have you encountered in setting up your group?

Our first task was to agree what makes up our neighbourhood. We decided it included where we live, but also, crucially, where we shop. Our shops are located in another ward, Bedminster. Any developments to the local high street and the land surrounding it would have a huge impact on our community.

However, because the shops are outside our ward our ability to influence developments in that area are limited because our ward councillors don't deal with that area. There is already a well-developed planning group in Bedminster and Southville, the BS3 Planning Group, which looks at all BS3 planning applications, including Windmill Hill. Our solution to the problem of boundaries was to join up with that group. We felt it would give us a better means of making our views known, and it gets us around the

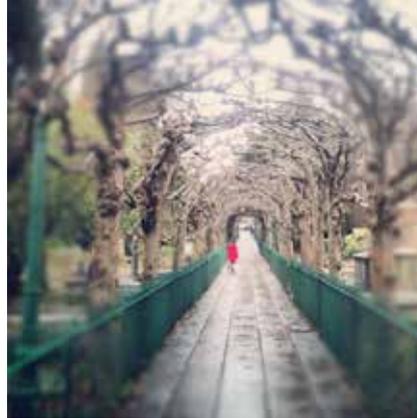




**CIVIC VOICE**  
talking civic sense



*Planetarium - Christian Key*



*St Andrew's Churchyard and Birdcage Clifton - Mike Murphy*

## Bristol Civic Day was picture perfect

Civic Day is a national celebration of civic pride, initiated in 2011 by Civic voice, the national charity for the civic movement in England.

Students, Heidi Tremlett, Carys Rea and Jason Butler volunteered to organise this year's celebration of our city.

The Bristol Civic Day project 2012 consisted of a photography competition with the theme, "I love Bristol because ..." and a Civic Day event on June 23rd at the Bearpit in Bristol city centre. We asked members of the public to take a photo of their favourite building or open space in Bristol, and to send this to us. We had a great response, with more than 130 entries in total, all of which can be viewed at [www.flickr.com/photos/bristolcivicday](http://www.flickr.com/photos/bristolcivicday)

The best of these photographs were awarded prizes, based on creativity, imagination and originality. Photography Made Simple [www.photographymadesimple.co.uk](http://www.photographymadesimple.co.uk) kindly donated prizes of a day's xphotography course at Ashton Court for each category winner, and one-to-one tuition for the overall competition winner as well as vouchers for eight highly commended. It was great

to see a range of skills and ages taking part. We had more photographs of Bristol's buildings than open spaces, which shows the pride that people have in our architecture. We also saw many shots of the Clifton Suspension Bridge, which, of course, is a great local landmark.

We engaged with the public further on Saturday 23rd June – Bristol Civic Day – by asking people to finish the sentence. "I love Bristol because...", and captured their responses on film. The aim of this was to collate a range of views on our city, and to produce a short film to highlight what people in Bristol feel is important to improve or protect for future generations. We also had a display of all of the photographs that were entered into the competition at the Bearpit on June 23rd. We set up a voting system, where members of the public could vote for their favourite photo to win the people's choice award - a family photo shoot - donated by Clifton Photographic Company. Despite the rain threatening all day, we had a great response from the public, with many people coming down to the Bearpit specifically to see us, having read our article in the local newspaper, The Post, or heard our interview on BBC Radio Bristol.

We rounded up the day with a prize presentation to the competition winners. The Lord Mayor of Bristol kindly attended this, presented the prizes, and took part in the voting and filming.

We really enjoyed viewing all of the photographs as they came in, and the support from the public was encouraging. We managed to collect a fantastic visual catalogue, depicting what people love about Bristol, and we hope that this highlights the diversity of the city's built and open environment.

### The winners

**Overall winner:** Matt Smart - Bristol In motion (cover photo)

**Buildings:** Christian Key - Planetarium

**Open spaces:** Mike Murphy - St Andrews Churchyard and Birdcage, Clifton

**Highly commended:** Dicky Goldthorpe, Lauren Welch, Christian Key, Sam Sneed, Jen Land, Mike Hancock, Sian Tudor Davies, Juliet Oakhill

Carys Rea



*Heidi Tremlett Lord Mayor of Bristol, Councillor Peter Main Heather Leeson (Chair BCS) Carys Rea Jason Butler*

# ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS 2012

This is our 22nd year and we have had fewer nominations than ever, a sure sign of our straightened times where building is concerned. Our nominations have come primarily from nominees of past years (Architects, Developers and past members) but sadly few, if any,

from members. Our panel, Quentin Alder, Wendy Pollard, Roland Harmer, Peter Weeks, Charles Fox and welcome new member Simon Birch have chosen five, which we believe deserve an award, from a list of 10 nominations.

Broadly, the criteria are for:

- Environmental improvement for a new building
- Improving an existing building or
- Alterations that improve landscaping.

## SITES TO BE AWARDED

Photos: Roland Hammer



**228 MINA ROAD, ST WERBURGHES.**  
New-build housing on the Ashley Vale estate, a unique private development.



**ST JAMES PRIORY, Whitson Street.**  
Bristol's oldest building, greatly upgraded and restored.  
Architects: Ferguson Mann.

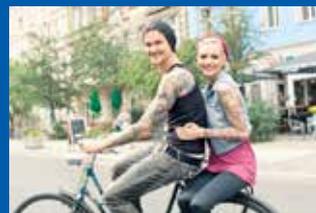


**ST JUDE'S COURT, Lawford's Gate, Easton.**  
A new development by PG Enterprises providing quality housing in a rather run-down area.  
Architects: O'Leary Goss.



**HORFIELD LODGE, Kellaway Avenue.** Enhancing the view across Horfield Common, this is a comfortable and well-appointed care home for elderly residents, some with dementia.  
Architects: KWL.

The Society is most grateful for the continuing support and interest shown by Bristol Water who sponsor the awards. The elegant, oval plaques, now seen displayed across the city, have been produced by Wards of Bristol for more than 10 years.



**CYCLING CITY.** A city-wide scheme run by the council which will provide many benefits for Bristol, especially by the removal of some traffic and the encouragement of an Olympic sport. A key site will be chosen to display the award plaque.

**The award ceremony** will be held at St James Priory, Whitson Street on 6th November in the upstairs café at 11.00am, all society members are welcome – please let Charles Fox know if you wish to attend, by 15th October.

Charles Fox - Awards Organiser  
Email: cfox 868@btinternet.com

# UWE student award winner 2012

We are delighted to introduce Laura Mitchell, the Civic Society's 2012 award winner from the Architecture and Planning Degree Course at the University of the West of England. The given site was a 1,200 space car park in central Salisbury with residential, retail and cultural neighbours.

## Maggie's Orchard

Her project, Maggie's Orchard, provided a cancer help and respite centre linked to apple orchards. Laura master-planned the whole site, addressing the water feature and referring back into Castle Street and an extant doctor's surgery.

Laura's project appeared more grounded than many and her documents and modelling together

with drawings showed the amount of thought and work she had put into the project; she had come up with something buildable and interesting.

## About Laura

Laura has secured a job with the Nash Partnership in Bath, a Design, Planning and Regeneration Multi Disciplinary Consultancy. Architecture is the main focus of Laura's long-term ambitions but she is very pleased she will have the opportunity to use her planning skills.

We wish Laura well in her career and look forward to following her progress.

Wendy Pollard



Laura and Wendy

# Maggie's Orchard



Images: Laura Mitchell

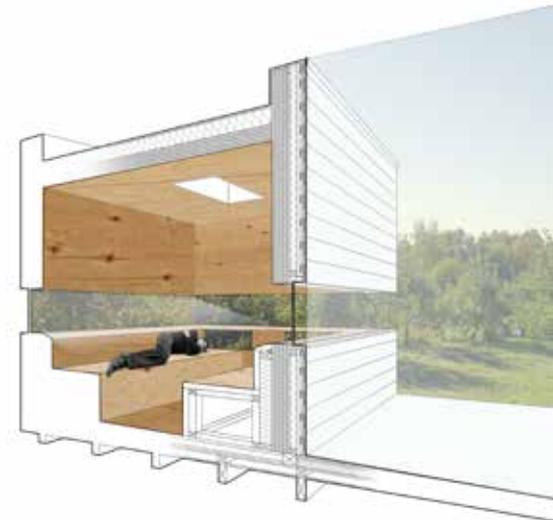
The project proposal is for a Maggie's cancer care centre in one of Salisbury's most crucial regeneration schemes, a nine hectare city centre site called the Maltings. The master plan derives from the desire to permeate green links throughout the city, reconnecting the city with its surrounding countryside by the means of a city wide orchard, emphasising Salisbury's unique designation as the city in the countryside.

Traditional orchards are thought to have declined by 60% since the 1950s, lost to intensification, neglect, or felling to make way for development. However, due to the scale of the site introducing an orchard allows the public to interact with a new kind of green space. Throughout history, fiction refers to the protective and healing nature

of apples. This aspect allows the orchard to provide a secure setting for a Maggie's centre.

Maggie's centres support, not only to those suffering from cancer, but friends and family too. The concept of a cancer care hospice like Maggie's is centred around domesticity.

A space to heal, away from institutions, focusing on atmosphere and elements of nature. The journey to the centre itself plays a key part in atmospheric healing. The main entrance from the hustle and bustle of Castle Street, allows visitors to ascend on a spiritual journey, glimpsing the orchard. The journey allows visitors to leave behind their worries as they enter the centre through a protective rammed earth wall.



Once in the centre, connections to the orchard are made through defined and undefined vistas, some broken strategically by the building's timber frame structure and louvres. Further interaction with the orchard is encouraged by a range of orchard activities taking place in the grounds. Activities such as grafting, juicing and woodcutting re-affirm a medical innovation to introduce Biophilia (human's inherent tendency to affiliate with nature) into spaces of healing. The overall concept of my project utilises an orchard setting for a Maggie's centre, a metaphoric relationship of what man is to an apple, an orchard is to a city.

Laura Mitchell

# Help develop Bristol's future

## Planning Applications Group – PAG

Every city street, each urban location comprises an amalgam of buildings, spaces, trees, road signs and so forth. Some places have a dominant or historic character which needs to be nurtured or maintained. Others have a vibrant mixture of styles attracting diverse activities. Whatever the character of an area, any development there should raise its overall appearance and quality of life, and proposals which would harm its overall appearance or the wellbeing of residents or other users should be resisted.

It's not only the large developments which have an impact on the city. Small changes in the wrong setting can have damaging results. For example, a single illuminated sign high up on a tall building can dominate the night-time skyline. A replacement of a single shop unit with another use with a dead frontage can diminish the retailing feel of a shopping street and reduce footfall. A poorly designed roof extension can destroy the quality of a residential street scene. The use of materials which look fine in drawings can weather into drab street frontages after a few years. Change from single family occupation of a house in a residential area into flats or multiple occupation can herald a change in the social composition of an area, particularly if it encourages further such changes.

In Bristol there are more than 4,000 applications for planning permission each year. Within the Civic Society, it is Planning Applications Group's (PAG) role to keep a watchful eye on those applications and respond, where appropriate, to represent the society's views. Whilst most applications have no great significance beyond their immediate location, there are always some which PAG feels could have a more significant impact and so we meet every three weeks to consider 12 or so applications submitted to the council in the preceding three weeks. Looking through the lists of planning applications every three weeks also helps us to pick up trends in development in the city.

### How does PAG operate?

Our main focus of interest is the central area of the city where there are fewer, if any, groups to represent local opinion. We do, however, consider proposals in other parts of the city which we feel could affect, for example, key views, an historic or other particularly interesting area, or a major route into the city centre. In these circumstances, we aim to link up with and, generally, support local opinion.

PAG considers a wide variety of applications. These might involve demolition and rebuilding, development on open land, changes of use for example from shops to offices or from offices to student accommodation, changes in the way in which houses are occupied, advertisements, particularly internally illuminated ones and proposals for street furniture such as communications equipment. NB. Our role is distinct from the society's Major Sites Group. The latter addresses proposals for large, often comprehensive



developments or redevelopments which can involve the society in months of pre-application comments and discussions with developers. PAG aims to get a rapid response to applications submitted, often after only a short period of pre-application consultation. When we assess planning applications, PAG considers the effects the proposals would have on their surroundings and, where appropriate, on the wider city scene. Our assessment considers issues raised by the application including, primarily, the setting, size, design, activities that will take place at the building or site and traffic and footfall that might be generated. Where appropriate we think about changes that the proposal might bring to the social and economic character of the location.

We also try to determine whether proposals help to deliver the council's planning policies. Our comments on an application are sent directly to the case officer dealing with it at the city council. When we feel it is necessary, we follow up our written representations with a statement and appearance at the appropriate council committee considering it.

### New participants welcome

We are keen to welcome new members to PAG. If you are interested, please contact me, John Payne (contact details below), and talk it over. You do not need to have a professional background in design or development. The important requirement is enthusiasm for Bristol and its built environment and the capacity to spare a few hours every three weeks to consider the selected applications. Participation in the group helps us all to hone our skills at commenting on planning proposals. PAG usually meets on a Monday evening, at one or other of the group members' houses. Whilst our discussions are serious, our approach is informal and we aim to finish sufficiently early to repair to a local hostelry for further discourse.

John Payne, Chair of the Planning Applications Group  
Tel: 0117 924 0634  
Email: johnpayne997@btinternet.com

# Tributes to Gordon Tucker

I first met Gordon in the Autumn of 1999 having just moved to Bristol from London. I'd been invited to go along to the Planning Applications Group (PAG) meeting but only knew one other person there. However, Gordon instantly made me feel welcome without fuss or formality. He involved me in the discussion and I've never looked back.

Much has been said about Gordon's work for the society in the many positions he held. I'd just like to share a few more personal recollections. He would gently push people into developing new skills. In PAG, he always listened courteously to everyone's views and would only nudge us back to the topic under discussions when we digressed wildly. Gordon had a subtle sense of humour and accepted with good grace and a wry smile the gentle teasing from PAG members particularly relating to his IT skills. Above all he just kept working for the society right to the end – a very decent and dignified man.

John Payne.  
Convener PAG

Gordon Tucker, an active member of the society for many years, died suddenly on March 22nd, 2012, aged 81.



Gordon has been a most effective convenor and chairman of PAG and it was always a pleasure to attend group meetings. He was a most warm and friendly person, and extremely patient. His technique was to let comments ramble on somewhat and wait to see if a clear point of view or a consensus was emerging, before getting a concise comment drafted and moving on. Some of us rather indulged ourselves by going off on some tangent which he would eventually close off in the most good-humoured manner. His sudden and unexpected loss is a matter of great sadness for us all.

Martin Lee

All of Gordon's family wishes to take this opportunity to sincerely thank society members for their overwhelming support by letter, email and telephone following his sudden death. It was of great consolation at the time and the number present at his funeral was very much appreciated. He is so greatly missed by all of us and knowing that his efforts and work for the society will be carried on is of great help. Thank you all so much.

The Planning Applications Group (PAG) often met at his house: the manicured lawn, the disciplined row of shoes in the hall, the bakelite telephone with the shrill ring; and that impressive collection of cards and artistic ornaments on his monumental mantelpiece. Pride of place was awarded to the John Makepiece clock; was I the only member of PAG that would glance at it towards the end of the list of applications under discussion? After all, we needed to allocate time for tea and biscuits and our adjournment to the Clyde Arms or The Port of Call for further discussion, embracing civic matters, but also straying into art exhibitions and stately homes and gardens that Gordon had visited or Saturday's Daily Telegraph motoring column by Honest John.

Gordon was an aesthete and a gentle man. At PAG meetings the sound of grinding axes can be deafening; he'd let us sound off and we knew when we were making valid points because he'd be scribbling notes. Either that or he would wait until we had fully burst forth and run out of argument. Then he'd quietly move on to the next item on the list.

If he was on holiday, walking with long-time colleagues from his dental-school days or visiting world cities, ranging from Las Vegas to Venice, he would ask me to convene the meeting. I found the task of distilling everyone's views into letter form really difficult. But since he entrusted me with his battered blue correspondence folder I could resort to underhand tactics – trawling through past letters to glean his phrases and appropriate objections and try to make them my own. Gordon's absence at PAG meetings is still palpable. I miss him, and I miss glancing at that mantelpiece clock, as it measured out our meetings.

Gordon Young

Gordon will be remembered and missed as a rare and true gentleman of the old school. He was always kind and patient enough to accommodate a diverse range of views from participants in PAG over a long period of time, and is missed by us all.

His appreciation of art and beautiful things in their diverse and varied manifestations often surprised us and was always a source of energy and inspiration we'll never forget.

One way in which Gordon's love of fine and beautiful things manifested itself was in his appreciation of highly-accomplished filmmakers and cinema. I recall he admired the work of Italian film director, Luchino Visconti, citing the film *Il Gattopardo* (translated as *The Leopard*) as one of the finest films he'd ever seen.

His diverse interests were a great strength and we could always rely on Gordon for balanced, intelligent and interesting perspectives on a wide range of issues. His benign, benevolent style and guiding hand in PAG will be a hard act to follow.

Helen Pillinger

Gordon was most generous with his time, not just to us but to architects in need of a pre-application before that became the norm. He was efficient at Brunel House, gutting selected plans and documents from the PAG list fully in under two hours. And beyond the society contribution he followed up major applications at the Development Control Committee as theatre, clearly rating the individual councillors' contributions on some kind of points system independent of their politics. He felt we had good years and bad years as the cast changed. While not born in Bristol his local knowledge out-dated and outranked many of us who were, and he was a steady hand in the society from years before the day I met him until the day he died. His huge life contribution to Bristol is largely unrecognised.

Stephen Wickham

I knew Gordon from the early 1970s when I first joined the society, and soon became the honorary secretary. When I retired, five years or so later, Gordon followed me as honorary secretary. He then went on to give many years of invaluable service to the society – vice-chairman, chairman, vice-chairman again as well as another (long) spell as honorary secretary. On top of this he ran the Planning Applications Group for many years.

In my opinion, he was never fully recognised – I thought he deserved an MBE. The best I could do was to arrange a Certificate of Honour for Voluntary Work from my local Rotary club. He deserved more. A great man and a dedicated worker for the society.

James Briggs

# News from the Major Sites Group

The Major Sites Group (MSG) engages with the Bristol City Council and developers in the pre-planning application consultation about the development of major sites.

## New student accommodation in the city centre

The February Newsletter examined the principle of the conversion of buildings in the city centre into student accommodation. The city council has refused a planning application to convert the former **Gaumont Cinema** in Baldwin Street because the proposal was over-intensive; the society cautiously supports a revised proposal. The society supports the conversion to student accommodation of some but not all of the huge, empty **Froomsgate House**, between Lewins Mead and Nelson Street. The society prefers mixed use.

The society reluctantly accepts the closure of the **Ice Rink** in Trenchard Street because the operator's lease has expired and no one else wants to lease this aging facility. The society actively supports the Christmas Steps Arts Quarter who put forward a plan to the city council to improve the dismal Trenchard Street, to be part-funded by the development, by Unite, of a block to house 450 students, to be built above the former entertainment centre. The society has commented on the mass, height and design of the proposed new building.

## Bristol General Hospital

The city council has refused the developer's application for planning permission. The council approves the scheme but refused planning permission because of the lack of affordable housing in the project. Everyone wants the scheme to proceed as soon as possible and the developer and the council continue their discussion around the level of the developer's contribution.

## Whiteladies Road TA Centre

The society supports local residents' groups who oppose the clearance of the site and redevelopment as a supermarket (Waitrose) with student accommodation blocks. The drill hall is worth preserving. The open space makes a major contribution to the character of this part of the conservation area. There is a strong local feeling that this site is inappropriate for the proposed type and scale of development, which is outside recognised retail areas.

## McArthur's Warehouse

The bank who owns this site, has appointed

Linden Homes to design a residential-led development with an element of employment space. The society works closely with the site's neighbours, the Underfall Trust, the ss Great Britain Trust, Aardman and the city council. The society remains uncertain about Linden's proposals, which have evolved further than those seen by the society.

## Wapping Wharf

The developer now has detailed planning permission and finance to build the first two blocks at the west boundary of the site. The development will include the layout of a new public walk to link Goal Ferry Bridge to the harbour and a new public space, 'Museum Square' to the west of M Shed.

## South Bristol Link road

Proposed new road from the A370, the Weston Road via the A38 to Hengrove, The society supports Transport for Greater Bristol, which does not support the SBL because:

- The rapid transport benefits are low and rely on the AVTM to reach the city centre – see Public Inquiry article page 12.
- The employment benefits are unclear.
- The new road would encourage more private motor traffic and it would split communities through which it passes.
- The environmental losses are disproportionate to the benefits.

## The Northern Fringes (Filton and beyond) to Hengrove Bus Rapid Transit

The NFHRT is the second scheme that the Government will support with a transport capital grant. The society welcomes the transport initiative to link north and south Bristol. The route would run from Filton, down the M32, along Bond Street, through the Centre and across the New Cut into Bedminster. The society's concerns relate to conservation and place making between the St James Barton roundabout and the new bridge over the New Cut. In the public consultation the society said that the next redesign of the centre must integrate the council's urban design team with the highways / transport design team to produce a better outcome than those recently built in Old Market and Whiteladies Road. The society supports the Bristol Urban Design Forum's proposal that there should be an architectural competition to design the new, New Cut Bridge.



*Ugly car park in Trenchard St*



*Desolate concrete canyon between ice rink and car park*



*Ice rink's fortress-like street frontage*



*Hostile public right of way to Park Row between ice rink and car park*

John Frenkel  
Tel: 0117 924 0853  
Email: johnfrenkel@blueyonder.co.uk

# Action transforms our city centre



UK Disability Council Mural in the Bearpit

## Public Spaces Group Progress report July 2012

The Public Spaces Group (PSG) has concentrated on four areas where it was felt some impact could be achieved: reduction of street clutter, improvements to Castle Park, the Old City and the "Bearpit" at St James Barton roundabout.

A pilot street clutter audit was carried out and a presentation made at one of the council's rights-of-way sub-groups as well as to the City Design Group. As a possible result of this, some redundant and confusing signage has already been removed from the city's streets and spaces. The most noticeable improvement has been to the "Triangle" area of Clifton, which was previously a tangled "forest" of signage and street clutter (see picture below).



Photo: Henry Shaftoe

Triangle street furniture before de-cluttering

Roger Mortimer from the group has been the main negotiator over Castle Park, coming up with some achievable designs for improving some of the more problematic or neglected parts of the park.

A number of members of the group have been involved in meetings and proposals related to making the Old City area more pedestrian-friendly and attractive; this fits well with the council's Central Area Action Plan to which the group submitted comments and recommendations.

The most substantial impact on public space by the group has been the involvement of several Civic Society members in improving the Bearpit at St James Barton. The Bearpit Improvement Group (BIG) consists of a team of volunteers (four of them Civic Society members) with various skills (including architecture, urban design, horticulture, planning, financial management, arts and play) who have formed a community interest company to transform the "Bearpit" (the sunken area at St James Barton roundabout) into a space that is welcoming, safe, diverse and inclusive. The BIG is working towards these aims in collaboration with Bristol City Council, which has designated the site a "Community Action Zone".

### The Bearpit Improvement Group has started improving the Bearpit site according to a number of themes:

**Greening.** Hundreds of bulbs have been planted by the group. The BIG has arranged for local organisations and companies (including the Soil Association, AXA, Immediate Media, Oxfam and the Avon Organics Group) to "adopt" hexagonal planters on the site. Flowers, fruit and vegetables are now being grown in these planters.

**Artwork.** An ever changing "outdoor gallery" of artworks is being curated. In addition, colourful "bear-prints" have been fused to the floorscape. The Arts Council has awarded the BIG a grant to continue with this work.

**Play.** A permanent outdoor table tennis table has been installed. The funds for this were raised entirely independently, from local firms and cake sales etc. A stage is proposed for the site to allow for occasional theatre and acoustic music events.

**Trading.** The BIG has arranged for selected independent traders to operate on the site. Currently there is a daily fruit stall, coffee cart and gourmet sausage grill. On Saturdays this expands into a market with additional food outlets and craft stalls.

**Seating.** With funding from the University of the West of England's "Better Together" programme, the BIG has purchased and installed a number of moveable chairs and tables for the use of customers and passers-by. Plans are afoot to erect canopies for protection against the elements, as well as more communal seating.

**Historical Interpretation.** The St James Barton area has a rich history which the BIG wishes to articulate by installing illustrated boards. These will be produced in conjunction with local historians and schools.

**Re-design.** The BIG is working with the council to implement some structural and traffic management changes that will enable pedestrians and cyclists to access and cross the Bearpit at road level. This will mean that people will not have to use the subways at night if they don't want to and will allow a safe view into the Bearpit before entering or crossing. Linked to this will be friendly lighting and additional facilities on the site.



Early visualisation of how the Bearpit could look after physical improvements

Henry Shaftoe  
Tel: 0117 929 2983  
Email: [henry.m.shaftoe@gmail.com](mailto:henry.m.shaftoe@gmail.com)

# Historical Group

The Historical Group has held one meeting since our final newsletter. In May, Ken Jones gave a talk on the history of the old city centre, illustrated from his personal selection of old maps and pictures, and including his own memories of Bristol going back to the Second World War.

The next meeting will be on 29th November at 7.30pm, at 92 Sefton Park Road, St Andrews, BS7 9AL.

It will be an illustrated talk by Mike Manson on the growth of the Victorian suburbs – with particular reference to St Andrews.

Ideas for future meetings and offers of help welcome.

Alan Morris  
Tel: 07766 442495  
Email: alan@morrises.fastmail.fm

Michael Manson

## THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF ST ANDREWS, BRISTOL

## NEWS

**CIVIC VOICE**  
making civic sense

New director: following the departure of the previous director, Tony Burton, to the

Design Council, Civic Voice (CV) has appointed Steve Graham for six months to develop a strategy for the next three years. Civic Voice needs more funding than it receives from subscriptions from member societies, and a focus will be on strengthening the financial base.

Strategic review: a number of individuals from across the country were invited to a workshop in Birmingham on August 4th to help frame the strategy. Alan Morris represented Bristol Civic Society at the workshop. One view expressed at the workshop, given CV's stretched resources, was that CV's trustees should take a more active role.

AGM: The annual Civic Voice AGM and Convention is in Coventry on 19th - 20th October. Hosted by the Coventry Society at the Herbert Gallery, there will be walking tours, visits and opportunities to meet civic colleagues from across the country. The event costs £25 and any Bristol Civic Society member is welcome to attend.

Alan Morris

### FREE DAY PASSES THROUGH CIVIC VOICE

All Bristol Civic Society members also belong to Civic Voice – the national charity for the civic movement in England. Just over a pound of your annual subscription goes to Civic Voice which has over 75,000 individual members coming from 290 civic societies. As a member you are eligible for free National Trust and English Heritage day passes. Download a pass at [www.civicvoice.org.uk/about/partners/](http://www.civicvoice.org.uk/about/partners/) or write to the Civic Voice with a SAE.

Civic Voice Unit 101, 82, Wood Street, The Tea Factory, Liverpool L1 4DQ. Tel : 0151 708 9920

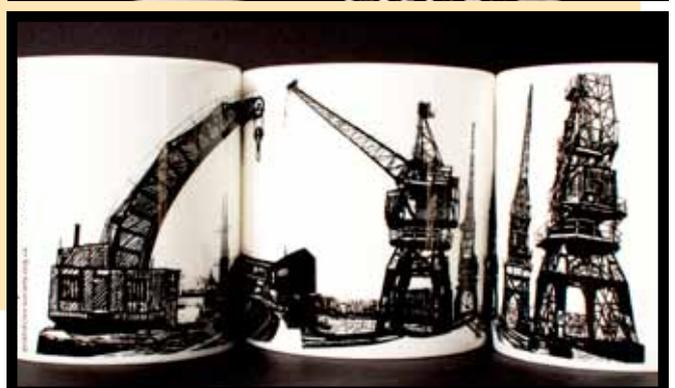
### BCS CUPPA WHILE STOCKS LAST

Bristol Civic Society has commissioned a limited edition of these fine English bone china mugs from Stokes Croft China, Bristol.

The design, by Heather Leeson, shows the 1878 Fairbairn steam crane and the 1951 Stothert and Pitt electric cranes on Princes Wharf, Bristol.

The mugs, which would make ideal presents, are for sale at £8 each; they can be bought at society events/talks or contact: [chair@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:chair@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk).

**All profits go to BCS.  
Hurry whilst stocks last!**



# Get online and let us keep you informed

## Who's who in the society

### 'The Art of e-Communication: Next Steps for Bristol Civic Society'

The Marketing Group, chaired by Alan Morris, supports the society with an array of e-communications tools including the website, e-bulletins, Twitter, Facebook and Flickr.

### Aim

The team's main aim for e-communications is to draw in new people to the society, whilst having a better dialogue with current members.

### Social media channels

Social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, are becoming increasingly important. Facebook is growing in popularity and we are using it for news and discussions: the format is simple and it's easy to make comments and provide pictures. To find our Facebook page click on the link provided on the Society homepage or type "Bristol Civic Society" into the Facebook search field.

Twitter is a relatively new service (it was started in 2006) where messages can have up to 140 characters. Writing short messages comes naturally to a generation brought up on SMS (the Short Messaging Service used for text messaging or "texting"). In consequence, the use of Twitter is rising and is becoming almost as popular as Facebook. Politicians, including our councillors, are getting on board and to "trend on Twitter" is the ultimate accolade unless, that is, you're a gaffe-prone politician.

Facebook and Twitter are available on smartphones and desktop/laptop computers making your accounts available everywhere at any time.

Our Twitter account, @BristolCivicSoc, is gaining momentum and we plan to make better use of this tool in the future. So far we have 255 followers.

### Website update

This year we introduced "blogs" so that we could explain what the society is doing and at the same time provide a discussion opportunity. Do take a look at the recent blog concerning the Ashton Vale to Temple Meads (AVTM) Rapid Transit Inquiry which ended in July.

The website, because it provides an events calendar, a blogging ability and document storage (for eBulletins, documents and society archives) will continue to play an important role; the website home page provides quick access to our Twitter stream and links to Facebook and Flickr.

## Get involved

Managing these various channels of communications is a huge challenge for the team and would benefit from additional resource. If anyone would like to offer content ideas or contribute editorially then do write to enquiries@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk.

We need new members and it's now possible to open a subscription online via PayPal. New members, by the way, get a 50% discount for the first year. The website will be reviewed over the next few months to make it easier to follow.

This year we plan to move the website to a more up-to-date platform. We would like to make it more accessible using mobile phones which have web browsers but rather small screens.

### Technological advances for BCS



Many of you may have noticed these curious square codes now showing up in newspapers, posters and signs. These "Quick Response" or QR codes as they are known can be

read by a QR application, which is available on most smart phones. The QR code pictured below will appear increasingly on Civic Society documentation; it encodes the website address of the Civic Society.

A QR application will decode a QR code and take one directly to a website without typing a single character.

As you can see we're continuously looking at ways of bettering BCS in order to make the organisation work smarter.

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You can sign up to the society's e-bulletin at  
www.bristolcivicsociety.org.uk  
Past copies of the e-bulletin and the  
magazine are also available to download.

**Bristol Civic Society, Registered Charity No: 244414.**

BETTER BRISTOL magazine  
mageditor@bristolcivicsociety.org.uk  
The opinions expressed in this magazine do not  
necessarily represent those of Bristol Civic Society



**TUESDAY 6th NOV**  
**GROUND CONTROL**  
– FEAR AND HAPPINESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY  
**Anna Minton**

**A Joint Event with Spike Island and Bristol and Bath RIBA**

In the last decade Britain's streets have been transformed by gleaming business districts, mega malls, and gated developments watched over by CCTV. But have these led to 'regeneration', or have they intensified social divisions and made us more fearful of each other? In this talk author and journalist Anna Minton discusses her acclaimed 2009 book with the above title, recently updated.

She passionately contests the way that the privatisation of previously public space is changing not only our cities, but the nature of citizenship and of trust.

**Anna Minton** is the recipient of five national journalist awards. She writes regularly for the Guardian and formerly for the Financial Times. She is the author of The Joseph Rowntree Foundation Viewpoint on fear and distrust and is a member of the writers' panel for The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment.

6pm Spike Island Arts Centre, 133 Cumberland Road Bristol, Avon BS1 6UX Café open until event begins.

Members of Civic Society and RIBA £2 (voluntary)  
Non-members £6.00  
Booking essential : admin@spikeisland.org.uk  
or phone 0117 929 2266

**MONDAY 19th NOV**  
**KEEPING BRISTOL'S HIGH STREETS ALIVE**

**BIG  
EVENT**

**A Presentation and Debate open and free to all at the Colston Hall, 7pm. See page 1 for details.**

**WEDNESDAY 12th DEC**  
**KINGS WESTON HOUSE AND ESTATE**  
**David Martyn**

Sir John Vanbrugh's magnificent house and estate was once nationally famed and has close connections with national figures and events as well as the development of industrial Bristol. It has been much neglected and the historic importance overlooked. This illustrated talk highlights the importance of this historic estate and shed a little light on recent discoveries by the Kings Weston Action Group.

**David Martyn** is a Bristol Based architect who helped set up the Kings Weston Action Group to focus attention on a much misunderstood part of the City. He now runs the group with other like-minded volunteers, regularly taking direct action to salvage the gardens and restore the fortunes of the historic estate.

7.30pm Upper Meeting Room, Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE  
Members £2 (voluntary) Non-members £5

**THURSDAY JANUARY 10th**  
**BRISTOL'S LOST RIVERS**  
**Melvin Wood**

This talk will describe the location and catchment of the underground and buried rivers in Bristol. It will provide some of the historical aspects of how Bristol has developed around the rivers in Bristol and how flood risk will be a challenge for the future.

**Melvin Wood** is a civil engineer who works in the Environment Agency and is in charge of providing and maintaining the flood defences across the catchment of the Bristol Avon.

7.30pm Upper Meeting Room, Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE  
Members £2 (voluntary) Non-members £5

**WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 13th**  
**THE BRISTOL CITY URBAN DESIGN GROUP – PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE**  
**Andy Gibbins**

The City Design Group has contributed to the development of Bristol for over 40 years in various incarnations. Its work has been recognised nationally and internationally. Its practitioners include architects, urban designers, landscape architects, archaeologists, conservation specialists, planners, and public art professionals. Projects include regeneration of College Green, Queen Square and in St.Pauls and the "Know Your Place" web site allowing community involvement in recording the city's historic environment.

**Andy Gibbins**, who has led the Group since 2008, will provide an insight into the work of the Group in place making and planning. Andy is an urban designer and town planner with over 25 years experience in both the public and private sectors. He has been involved in a range of urban design projects throughout the country.

7.30pm Upper Meeting Room, Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE  
Members £2 (voluntary) Non-members £5

**WEDNESDAY MARCH 13th**  
**PERMACULTURE IN BRISTOL**  
**Mike Feingold**

The word 'permaculture' comes from 'permanent agriculture' and 'permanent culture' - it entails living lightly on the planet, and making sure that we can sustain human activities in harmony with nature. It combines three key aspects: ethics, an attitudinal/philosophical approach and an understanding of how nature works. These principles then inform the design of sustainable, agriculturally productive, non-polluting and healthy settlements, either adapting what exists or starting from scratch.

**Mike Feingold** will explain Permaculture in detail and tell us of Permaculture activities and projects in Bristol and how you could get involved. Mike is a member of the Bristol Permaculture Group and has been working with and teaching Permaculture in various countries for over 20 years, mainly in India and Nepal.

7.30pm Upper Meeting Room, Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, BS6 6JE  
Members £2 (voluntary) Non-members £5