

Newsletter

Covid takes down the Pre-Raphaelites

In this edition

- how planned exhibitions fell victim to lockdown
- three acquisitions for Bristol Archives
- how museum staff have been collecting and recording climate change protests in Bristol
- a visit to the Underfall Yard
- powerful contemporary art from Barbara Walker
- tales from a Royal Visit

**December 2020
Issue 211**



▶ **The Garden Court**
by Edward Burne-Jones
© Bristol Culture

Just a few of the participants who took part in the AGM on Zoom. Our three patrons Max Hebditch, Sir George White and Francis Greenacre can be seen on the right hand side of the centre row.

Photo by Sue Thurlow

From the Chairman

I am beginning to get used to our lovely new-look Newsletter which again has lots of interesting articles kindly written by museums and archives staff who are experts in their fields. We have had a noticeably increased volume of feedback on the newsletter over the last two editions, all of it very positive. If you have a view – especially if you have any thoughts about what we could do better – do please email me or our lead editor Tim Wood. Our email addresses are on the back page.

One star piece in this edition is Jenny Gaschke's beautifully-illustrated article about the much-anticipated but sadly-cancelled Pre-Raphaelite exhibition that was so close to opening when the first lockdown came. Jenny shares some of the fascinating insights that the exhibition would have featured, and helps me see more deeply into the paintings.

I am delighted that we also have a trip report from Behind-the-Scenes at the Underfall Yard. It feels good that we have got our events restarted, and that we have plenty of members who want to take part

Our Annual General Meeting held by Zoom

This year's AGM, held for the first time on Zoom rather than in person, was a resounding success. Thank you to the more than 60 of you – including all three of our patrons – who were there. Ray Barnett hosted the meeting for us to ensure things run smoothly. I am sorry that some of you who are not online were effectively excluded, but we had almost twice the number of members present as in recent years, and lots of members contacted me and other committee members

afterwards with positive comments. Some even said that they had previously been rather doubtful about using Zoom but based on their positive experience at the AGM they were likely to sign up for some of the museum's online lectures.

The formal business was conducted smoothly. Richard Avery was confirmed as Membership Secretary to replace June Hibberd. All the other officers and ordinary members of the committee, with the exception of Roni Edwards who stood down, were re-elected. June Hibberd and Mary Bailey were elected to the remaining two vacancies

News from the Events Group

We are delighted that since our last newsletter we have been able to run some events that fully comply with social distancing requirements. There have been Behind the Scenes tours – in groups of 5 – at the Underfall Yard but, sadly, the gallery tours of the Being Human exhibition at the Museum & Art Gallery have had to be cancelled again. As for everything else in our lives it will be a long time before we get back to anything approaching 'normal' but it feels like a start. Thank you to Carol Ouvre for organising them.

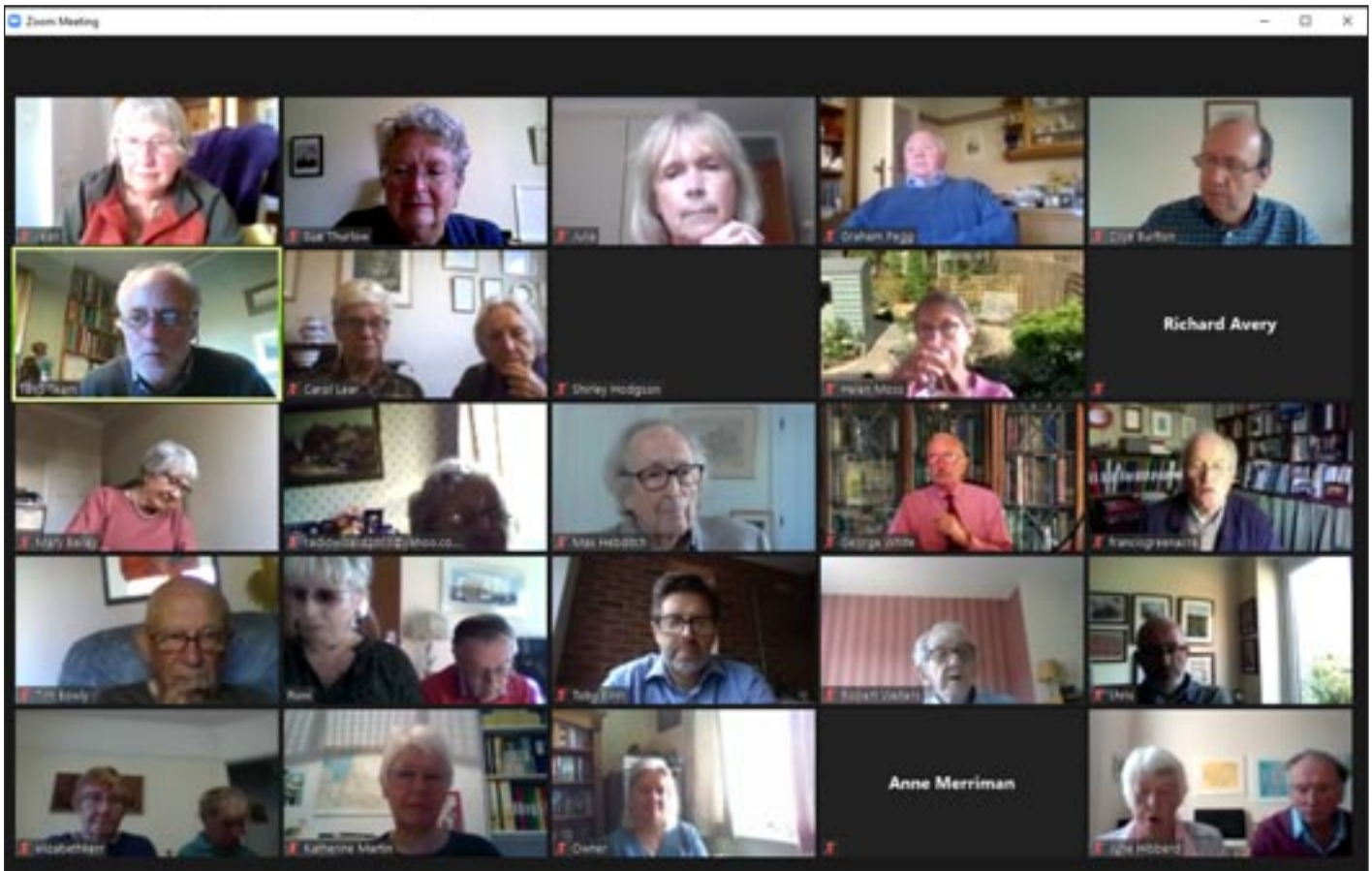
Enclosed with this newsletter you will find application forms for a gallery tour in early 2021 with Jenny Gaschke focusing on diversity in the art gallery collections; and a guided tour of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibition; fingers crossed that these will go ahead.

The museum's public Winter Lecture series – which we sponsor – restarted in October on Zoom, but the programme was finalised too late to be publicised in our September newsletter. As with all Zoom talks, it is necessary to register in advance so that you can be sent a link that will enable you to join the audience.

Second-hand book sales

We have decided that for practical reasons we need to call a halt to our regular and very popular second-hand book sales for the foreseeable future. Storage of the books in between sales and transport of so many heavy boxes to the sites of

Cover photo: A portrait by Dante Gabriel Rossetti of Louisa Ruth Herbert (1831 – 1921), a well-known Victorian-era English stage actress who frequently modelled for the artist.
© Bristol Culture



the sales has always been a challenge. For the last few years we have been able to store the books at M Shed, but the behind-the-scenes space the books occupy in the stores there is now needed by the museum to enable improved public access to the collections. If in the future we find a solution to the storage and transport issue we shall be able to resume the sales, assuming we have volunteers to run them, but we have handed over our remaining stock to Bookbarn International of Hallowtrow, near Bristol, who will market them either in-store or online and pass on to us our share of the proceeds. We still intend to resume cake sales when we can, and also sell jigsaws and preserves.

It does feel like the end of an era, and I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the success of the sales including those who have given books, provided storage and transport, helped with setting up and taking down the tables, unpacked and repacked the books – and of

course everyone who has bought books over the years. If you are suffering withdrawal symptoms and would like to browse through Bookbarn's extensive collection go to bookbarninternational.com.

Celebrating Generosity

Last quarter I asked for your help in providing me with some stories about the late Jane Biddulph who left us a very generous bequest of just over £17,000. Thank you to those of you who responded and provided information which all added to what I had already. Through research at the Probate Registry I am now in contact with Jane's executor who has offered to make contact with some of Jane's friends and family so we can include a fitting profile of Jane our spring Newsletter.

You will remember that we had also recently received £100,000 from the estate of Margaret Kerr – we profiled

Margaret in the June Newsletter. Her estate is still in the process of being wound up and we were delighted to receive a further £25,000 interim payment.

Sue Thurlow Chairman



▶ *The FBMGA book and cake sale at the 2019 Harbour festival*

© Sue Thurlow

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

Service-wide developments

The reopening of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, M Shed and Bristol Archives to the public in the summer went well. Numbers of visitors were limited at all three sites to allow social distancing to be applied, with prior booking required (although the museums were able to allow 'walk-ins' if there was space). In October, for example, at M Shed 98% of available time slots for visitors were filled and at BMAG 95%. In compliance with the second national lockdown in early November, these sites were again closed and as I write we wait to see whether reopening will be possible after 4 weeks or whether lockdown maybe extended.

We are of course acting on any instructions from Government and will continue to provide a public service as best we can, including online. Responses from the visitors to our sites have been very encouraging and positive with many expressing their thanks that we have presented a safe and secure environment in which to appreciate the museum displays and the archive research service.

Sadly Blaise, Red Lodge and Georgian House were not able to open to the public at all this year and so are currently planned to be open from the beginning of April 2021 after the usual winter closure. This closure enabled us to redirect staff resource to the two museum sites which were open,

where the new conditions dictated a need for more staff than before Covid. Achieving social distancing at the three historic houses is particularly challenging given their smaller size and layout, and their history as homes rather than as purpose-built museums or warehouses.

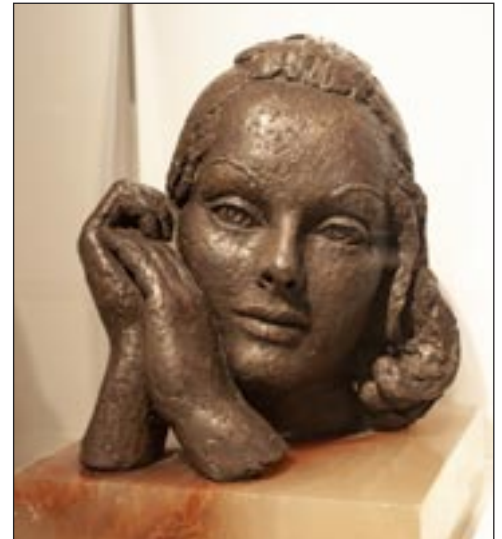
Thanks to the Arts Council England's Culture Recovery Fund we were awarded a £270,000 grant, announced in October. This money, which will assist the Harbour Railway, M Shed gallery digital interactives, Blaise displays and our retail and commercial offers across sites at this difficult time, has to be spent by the end of March as it is specifically aimed at ensuring public services normally provided are able to carry on in 2021. This is very welcome funding and part of a package of measures across the country.

The Culture team have continued to work closely with Bristol's newly created History Commission, which is now chaired by Professor Tim Cole of the University of Bristol. We will be working closely with Commissioners over coming months in creating a display of the Colston statue as a means to engage in a conversation with the city about the controversial aspects of Bristol's past.

▼ The Perfect Catch by Hannah Vijayan, Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2020

© Hannah Vijayan





▲ **Noni, bronze, 1938-39 by Frank Dobson**
© Bristol Culture

◀ **Bear Power from Do You Believe in Magic?**
© Chris Bahn

Leadership Team changes

Following the departure of Fiona Francombe from The Bottle Yard Studios, Laura Aviles has been appointed Senior Bristol Film Manager on a 12-month contract with responsibility for the Studios and the Film Office. In addition Becky Peters has been seconded from her post of Programming Manager to a Senior Manager post on the Culture & Creative Industries Senior Leadership Team alongside Jon Finch, Ray Barnett, Zak Mensah and Laura Aviles, on a 6-month contract.

Further interim changes to the Senior Leadership Team are likely – and may already have taken place by the time you read this – as Zak Mensah left us in early November to take up a job-share role as Director of Birmingham Museums Trust. In addition, the secondment of Philip Walker to Gloucester City Council has been extended to the end of March 2021. Zak will be much missed but is moving to a comparable museum service and will no doubt be working in partnership in some way with ourselves in future.

Blaise Castle House Museum, Georgian House Museum and Red Lodge Museum

The torrential rain at the end of August resulted in water ingress at Georgian House. Fortunately the damage was relatively minor but conservation work will be going ahead over the winter to prepare the site for reopening in April.

We are grateful to volunteer Karin Walton and contractor Jane Porter who have continued to work on the Red Lodge garden during the summer (and Georgian House garden in the case of Jane), including trying to keep Box-Tree Moth caterpillars from devastating the box hedging.

Anti-social behaviour continues to be an issue for the Blaise estate, which is why the museum windows have remained boarded up whilst we are closed to the public.

Exhibitions

All exhibitions will be re-opened only when permitted by Government and/or local restrictions. Please book building entry online in advance.

Being Human: An exhibition of modern sculpture
Bristol Museum & Art Gallery until 5 April 2021

Do you believe in magic?
Bristol Museum & Art Gallery until 28 February 2021

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2020
M Shed until 3 May 2021

Produced by the Natural History Museum, Wildlife Photographer of the Year is the most prestigious photography event of its kind, showcasing the world's most astonishing sights for more than 50 years. This year there were 49,000 entries from all over the world from which the winning images were selected for their creativity, originality and technical excellence.

Online museum events

For details and booking see
www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/whats-on

Late Lunch Talks

By Zoom, alternate Thursdays at 2pm

Winter Lectures

By Zoom, sponsored by the Friends. Details of the lectures are on the information sheet enclosed.

Ray Barnett Head of Collections & Archives

The Pre-Raphaelite Exhibition

On 16 May 2020 we meant to open *Pre-Raphaelites – Dreaming of a Mediaeval Past* at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. As with so many things Covid-19 put a stop to that and the exhibition, with its high profile loans from Tate, Manchester Art Gallery and other art galleries, had to be cancelled. It would have been quite a show.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed in London in 1848 by seven radical young artists: William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens and the sculptor Thomas Woolner. They banded together against what they felt was an artificial and mannered approach to painting taught at London's Royal Academy of Arts. Today (and in our exhibition) the term Pre-Raphaelite describes a much wider collective of Victorian poets, painters, illustrators and designers who worked across Britain right into the early 1900s.

The Pre-Raphaelites believed that art was essentially spiritual and should be guided by the study of Nature and 'what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art'. They sought a return to the abundant detail, intense colours and complex compositions of 15th century Italian art. Some, like Ford Madox Brown, painted scenes from contemporary life, but they are best known for their biblical, literary, and mediaeval subjects.

Our exhibition aimed to show the dream-like and imagined nature of the artists' mediaeval visions. And in the spirit of the Pre-Raphaelites' work, we wanted to invite you to take your time studying the pictures by way of the exhibition's design. We wanted you to sit down on comfortable benches, relax and immerse yourself using all your senses. We created themed books containing specially commissioned scents for you to browse. We commissioned readings of romantic poetry and recordings of music from the 19th century. A 'sensory space' at the end of the exhibition with

specifically-composed music and video art was meant to take you into the world of the final painting, Edward Burne-Jones' *The Garden Court*...

Well, at least I can tell you about the kind of pictures that would have been on display.

The Pre-Raphaelites' images of mediaeval history and legends served as metaphors of an alternative world and offered an escape from the challenges of contemporary life. British society was rapidly changing during the age of Empire and Industrialisation. Pictures of perfect kings, saints and fairy tales provided both a place to lose oneself, and - just as often - an ideal to aspire to. To give you some context: In 1856, the British painter Edward Henry Corbould (who was, in fact, not a Pre-Raphaelite) captured in one astonishing watercolour the potential as well as the dangers of inventing and painting such dreams, which cannot always be controlled. The picture is called *The Artist's Dream*.

An artist has fallen asleep in his studio dreaming of a fantastical world of strange creatures and people in mediaeval costume. A king and queen lead a procession of knights, musicians and jesters from a castle towards the viewer amidst a crowd of men and women. But in the foreground a few Victorian figures are subtly inserted into the scene, as well as the unsettling reference to a drowning artist, whose outstretched hands and paint palette appear on the surface of a pond.

The Pre-Raphaelites and their followers were drawn to what they saw as



▲ Edward Henry Corbould, *The Artist's Dream*, 1856, watercolour

© Bristol Culture

formative historical events such as the Hundred Years' War (1337 – 1453) and the Crusades of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. Despite the rise of history as a serious academic discipline, many of their history paintings relied on adapting and mythologising people and incidents – such as Richard I ('the Lionheart') or the Siege of Calais (1346 – 1347) – sometimes with minimal regard to facts.

Although the first two generations of Pre-Raphaelites saw themselves as an anti-establishment art movement, these paintings increasingly served a national narrative. They projected a heroic image of British leadership in the world, during a period of aggressive imperial expansion and competition between European and global powers. This is where Bristol's 1866 (reworked 1895) painting *The Return* by Edward Coley Burne-Jones from his *Saint George and the Dragon Series* comes in.

Christianity played a significant part in the creation of national myths, providing moral guidance for both the individual and the Nation. Saint George had been adopted as the English patron saint during the Middle Ages; and Victorian culture now further anglicised this originally Middle Eastern figure. It was popularly thought that King Richard I himself adopted both the patron saint and his flag at some point during his crusade. To be fair, Burne-Jones had a more nuanced view of St George's role in British identity than more conservative artists – his saint and the Princess Sabra look somewhat pensive as they pass celebrating crowds in a frieze-like composition.

Literature, both English and French, also played a big part in the Pre-Raphaelites' design of an ideal mediaeval world. The stories of Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table at Camelot provided Victorians with a political narrative of an established and just feudal society. The material was further enriched by numerous 19th century poets – including Alfred Lord Tennyson who published his first Arthurian poem *The Lady of Shalott* in 1832. The legends provided a template for a chaste and virtuous life, and were also widely taught in schools.

With this popular interest in mind, artists found in the Arthurian legends an abundance of material for storytelling, but also the aesthetic opportunity to indulge in colour, ornaments and compositional experiments. The same was true for mediaeval love stories such as the *Roman de la Rose* by Guillaume de Loris and Jean de Meune. It tells the story of a suitor's quest for a symbolic rose, representing the love of the woman he adores. *Roman de la Rose* had been influential in Britain since the time of Chaucer – to artists like Rossetti it provided imagery of complex and intense love. We had some wonderful loans secured



▲ Edward Coley Burne-Jones, *Saint George and the Dragon Series. No 7 - The Return*, 1866, oil on canvas
© Bristol Culture

▼ Maxwell Armfield, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, 1901, watercolour
© Bristol Culture



Frank Dicksee, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, circa 1901, oil on canvas
© Bristol Culture



from the Tate's collection for this section – you can view them on their website, as an example at [tate.org.uk/art/artworks](https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks), type in the search box *rossetti sir galahad*.

Pre-Raphaelite painters also found inspiration in new material from across Europe. Walter Scott's historical novels continued to be extremely popular during Queen Victoria's reign, while the Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck was inspired by mediaeval legends when writing his 1892 play *Pelléas and Mélisande*. In Bristol we have Maxwell Armfield's watercolour of the despairing lovers, who turn their backs to the viewer as they look out over a distinctly English-looking landscape.

Many of the artists associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement had complicated personal relationships with women, while their paintings reflected Victorian attitudes to women in general. Mediaeval subject matter served as a vehicle to interpret gender relationships and to define women's roles. It offered the polar opposites of saint or sinner, powerful and passionate or passive pawn. In the real world women were increasingly politically active, educated and seeking financial independence. In fact, the Pre-Raphaelites had female patrons, and female colleagues such as Evelyn de Morgan and Elizabeth Siddal, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's lover.

Many of the subjects featuring the imagined mediaeval woman came from Arthurian Legend as well as Keats' poetry and early 19th century collections of fairy tales. A good example is a painting you are all too familiar with – Frank Dicksee's *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, 1901.

Dicksee's painting capitalizes on the idea of the dangerous 'temptress': she bewitches a young knight in polished armour, who appears to surrender himself to her charms. The artist took his inspiration from Keats' poem of the same title from 1819.

The artist took care to make his picture plausible. The armour, for example, is modelled on a surviving mediaeval suit now in Detroit, USA. He did not depict the dark outcome of the story, but focused on the power of the 'femme fatale', which may reflect a rising anxiety over gender roles at the turn of the 20th century. In 1893 New Zealand had granted women the right to vote, while here in 1902, textile workers in Northern England petitioned Parliament with 37,000 signatures demanding votes for women.

Our exhibition would have taken its visitors through all the different ways the Pre-Raphaelites and their followers engaged with an imagined mediaeval world – love them or loathe their art, some of these images are still influential today. Others help us to unlock an era of radical change that is both unlike and very reminiscent of our own.

Jenny Gaschke Curator of Fine Art pre-1900



▲ **Too Many Blackamoors (#2), 2015,**
Heather Agyepong.
© Heather Agyepong

Bristol Photo Festival

A Sense of Place

Next spring the inaugural Bristol Photo Festival will draw the attention of the photography sector to our city and give residents the chance to see exciting lens-based work. Bristol has become a hub for contemporary photographic practice, with the Martin Parr Foundation and Royal Photographic Society both moving to Paintworks. Bristol Culture & Creative Industries is a core partner in developing the festival and supporting the delivery of a high profile and innovative programme. The overall theme, *A Sense of Place*, will thread through venues across the city accompanied by training, events and screenings. For details of the full programme as it develops, see: <http://www.bristolphotofestival.org/>

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery will be a key venue, hosting six exhibitions and interventions, while South African artist Lebohang Kganye will be creating new work for the context of the Georgian House Museum. Bristol Culture is proud to present projects that promote diversity and shed new light on the galleries and collections.

Exhibitions in Bristol Museum & Art Gallery:

Island Life: photographs from the Parr Foundation provide a biography of life in post-war Britain. The collection forms a compelling study of national behaviour: how we present ourselves, what we communicate when we are off-guard, and how that has changed over the past 70 years.

Ghanaian Photographer: James Barnor was Ghana's first international press photographer, working at the time of independence (1957). He came to Britain in 1959, photographing London. The exhibition showcases Barnor's black modernism, a fusion of pan-African futurism and 1970s style.

Interventions in Bristol Museum and Georgian House:

five photographers draw out themes and narratives in BMAG's art galleries and Georgian House

1 Heather Agyepong uses her own image in her photography, performing a catalogue of identities that have paraded through colonial discourse on African peoples. *Too Many Blackamoors* quotes a letter from Queen Elizabeth I and Agyepong performs *Cartes de Visites* (visiting cards) by Sarah Forbes Bonetta, the West African god-daughter of Queen Victoria. Her work will be shown among 18th century Grand Tour paintings offering a postcolonial perspective on the gallery.

- 2 Jessa Fairbrother explores images of femininity through the lens of psychoanalysis, the relationship between mother and daughter, motherhood and loss. She often uses her own body, along with personal photographs embellished with stitch or punctures. Her work will be shown among the museum's Pre-Raphaelite paintings and modern French art, presenting self-authored contemporary narratives alongside historic images of women by men.
- 3 Lebohang Kganye explores fictional history using archives to merge illusive characters with 'real' characters in a new universe. Using animation and sound to occupy the rooms of the Georgian House once inhabited by enslaved people, Kganye will draw on the oral tradition of naming as a response to the loss of individuals, language and oral histories.
- 4 Lua Ribeira has transposed dramatic stories of suffering to her photographs documenting homelessness in Bristol parks. Interested in the idea of being transported, Ribeira alludes to angels and demons in her photographs, which will be shown amongst the Renaissance angels and demons of Solario and Bellini in our galleries.
- 5 Sarah Waiswa is a Kenya-based documentary and portrait photographer with an interest in exploring African identity. Waiswa will respond to images from Bristol Archives' British Empire and Commonwealth collection with her own photographic artworks. The exhibition will juxtapose past and present imagery to reframe existing and challenging narratives.

Julia Carver Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art



▲ **Bolton, Lancashire ('Worktown') 1937 For Mass Observation by**
Humphrey Spender
© Martin Parr Collection

Three acquisitions

Made by Bristol Archives with help from the Friends

Sixteen playbills for the Old Theatre Royal, King Street, and New Theatre Royal, Park Row, 1870s

Thanks to support from the Friends, we recently purchased a set of playbills relating to two major Bristol theatres in the 1870s. We already hold a large number of playbills for the *Theatre Royal*, many recently digitised. By comparison we have very few for the *New Theatre Royal*. As these playbills pre-date most of those in our collections, they are a very timely and useful addition to our theatre-related holdings.

Many of the advertised plays are well known today, such as Shakespeare's *Richard III*, some less well known such as *Jeanie Deans* (based on a Walter Scott novel). There are also pantomimes of *Red Riding Hood* (1875) and *Beauty and the Beast* (1877).



▲ 1874 Playbill for the New Theatre Royal on Park Row
© Bristol Culture

Two general election posters, 1865

We are grateful to the Friends for funding the recent purchase of a pair of posters from opposing campaigns in Bristol during the general election of 1865.

The first ridicules Conservative candidate Thomas Fremantle, advertising a 'Wonderful curiosity!! For a short time only in Bristol ...to be seen alive the excited gorilla of Wine Street'.

Fremantle lost the election to Liberal candidates Berkeley and Peto. The poster continues 'this rare specimen is ...the most self-conceited and ignorant in the kingdom' ... 'his roar at the mention of his conquerors is terrific, and only to be equalled by the Durdham Down lion'.

The second poster promotes Fremantle in that same election. It asks, 'The radicals state that 'Lord Palmerston's Ministry has proved itself equal to all the wants ... of the country' - Is this so?' It finishes that 'the stump advocates of Berkeley and Peto hopped about as bare and ridiculous as the deluded jackdaw. Fremantle for ever! Give him a plumper!'

These posters supplement other election documents throughout our collections, including poll books and electoral registers. The museums' social history collections include an election flyer also referring to Fremantle as a gorilla. Together, these can enhance our understanding of elections of the period, as well as the advertising and promotion used by candidates.



▲ Bristol campaign poster from the 1865 General Election, ridiculing the Conservative candidate as 'the excited Gorilla of Wine Street'
© Bristol Culture

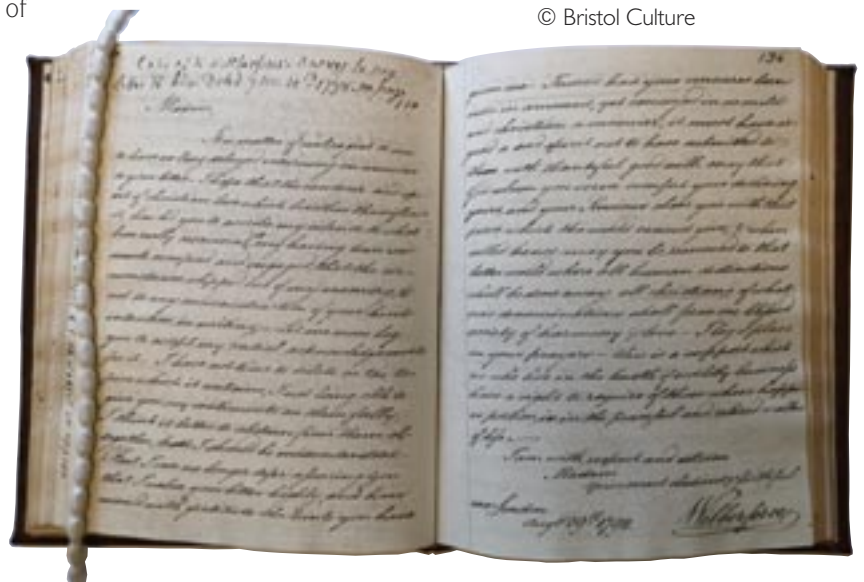
Journal of Mary Beck covering 1796-1798

Bristol Archives recently acquired a journal written by Mary Beck (1718-1799), returned to Bristol thanks to generous support from the Friends.

Mary was a widow from a notable philanthropic Quaker family. She married the merchant Joseph Beck in 1743. They had four children and lived in Frenchay. Her journal records many visits with family, friends, tenants and religious acquaintances showing how she was well supported and connected after the death of her husband in 1793. It also gives details of her declining health in her late 70s and includes copies of letters to and from William Wilberforce: not about the anti-slavery movement, however, but about some of Wilberforce's theological writings: 'I wish he [Mr Wilberforce] had spoke more fully on the pernicious consequences of plays & novels...'

The journal ties in with many other parts of our collections, including Quaker family collections, the records of the Society of Friends and the Bristol Dispensary (an organisation which she supported). The only other known document by Mary Beck is held at the University of Pennsylvania. We are very pleased to make this journal available for research in Bristol, as a welcome and enlightening addition to our holdings.

Graham Tratt Archivist, Bristol Archives



▼ The journal of Mary Beck, a well-connected Quaker widow, including copies of correspondence with William Wilberforce
© Bristol Culture

Collecting to represent the Climate Movement

Bristol has been the location of numerous climate protests since the winter of 2018. The history team has striven to ensure that these are represented in the museums' collections. Two groups in particular – Extinction Rebellion (XR) and Bristol Youth Strike for Climate (BYS4C) – have dominated news headlines.

XR – ‘an international movement that uses non-violent civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse’ – has a strong Bristol connection. The design of their iconic pink boat was conceived in Bristol and XR Bristol is the biggest XR group outside of London, with up to 500 people attending weekly meetings.

The summer of 2019 saw protests in Bristol against the fast-fashion industry (‘XR52’), the blocking of Bristol Bridge by another pink boat, and an anti-airport-expansion protest on the Downs. Some original XR-branded clothing and fashion accessories were collected. The maker, Dr Linda Thomas, claimed they were worn by a Bristol activist at the first XR ‘Rebellion Day’ in London on 17 November 2018. The recording and transcript of an interview with Dr Thomas are available on the museums' online catalogue.

The Bristol General Strike for Climate protest, part of the Global Climate Strike, took place on 20 September 2019 to draw attention to wildlife extinction and demand climate action. Inspired by the Extinction Voices exhibition at BMAG, the BBC's Natural History Unit led their own march (Film Strike for Climate) from the Victoria Rooms to College Green. One activist, Melanie Ruth, generously donated her tailor-made, up-cycled climate-emergency dress. Melanie wrote a piece about the strike, which was published as a blog post on the M Shed website. See bristolmuseums.org.uk/blog and click on February 2020.

BYS4C was formed in February 2019 as part of the wider Climate Strike Movement inspired by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg. The Bristol branch is one of the largest in the UK. On 20 September 2019, BYS4C took part in the ‘Global Mobilization’ against climate change. Their successful campaigning for local issues (Bristol airport expansion) and national demands (a Green New Deal), led to Bristol being chosen as the first UK strike location to be attended by Greta Thunberg. In February 2020, an estimated 30,000 people came to hear her speak.

During this event, in addition to photographs and leaflets, a couple of very wet, mud-besmirched banners were collected and are in the process of being conserved. A member of the public donated a full-length video of Greta's speech, which we will make available online.

An effort has been made to collect both oral and written testimonies. One young climate activist, Persephone Hubbard, who donated her protest banner while visiting M Shed, wrote: ‘I made my sign because I wanted to go to the School Strike for Climate protests ... if we don't act now, then we'll have to swim later because our land will be flooded. I was inspired by Greta Thunberg's clever thinking, confidence and perseverance ... I want the politicians to realise that the climate crisis is far more important than Brexit, and even though they think they are extremely clever and brainy, they're stupid if they continue to do nothing to stop climate change’.

Bristol Culture will continue to represent the local climate movement as a significant aspect of the city's history. Plans are underway to refresh the Protesting case in M Shed with a climate-protest theme, and a temporary exhibition, provisionally titled ‘Think Global Act Bristol’ is scheduled to launch at M Shed in 2022.

Lee Hutchinson Curator of History



▲ **Annabel O'Hene at the XR fashion action in Bristol on 1st June 2019, wearing a necklace made of discarded fishing net, which was later gifted to the museum**

© Tracey Byles-Walker

▼ **Young climate-strike protesters on College Green, 12 April 2019. Left to right: Polly Simmonds; Persephone Hubbard**

© Bristol Culture



The Underfall Yard

The continuous rain did not bother us at all, it was just so good to arrive for the first Friends' visit in six months and see Carol Ouvry standing, as usual, by the entrance checking us off on her list.

We began our tour outside the café. This is the area where the Victorians based the whole dock workforce. Then there were 400 to 500 workers from divers to steeplejacks, engineers, carpenters, ropemakers and blacksmiths. The dock engineers are still based here, but now there are only four of them.

We walked over to the red flashing light to stand on the dam built in 1809 to create the Floating Harbour. At last, after 800 years of being a tidal port, ships no longer had to run the risk of tipping over whilst moored at the dockside. Excess water in the harbour flowed into the New Cut over a weir known as the Overfall. However, this system allowed silt to accumulate in the harbour so channels were dug underneath the dam. Three sluice gates in the dam controlled the water level and one deep sluice allowed the silt to be carried away into the New Cut by the undertow created by the falling tide. This became known as the Underfall. Nowadays computers control the sluice gates; mud is sucked up from the harbour and pumped through a quayside pipe system; and 'cutter-suction' dredgers scour the harbour and pump the silt directly to the sluices.

Next we visited what was for me the highlight of the tour, the steam-powered workshop. Built in the 1880s, it is a long, narrow building with rotating shafts going down the length, powering the machines on either side. Almost all the parts for the dock machinery were made here. It is still used as a workshop with 'modern' machines from the 1950s. Many of the original Victorian machines are still there for demonstration purposes and we were lucky enough to see one of these working. The steam engine which drives them is operated electrically now, as the original boiler is too rusty. David, the engineer, set it going and the shafts started turning. Driving belts run from the shafts to the machines. Some of the original leather belts are still there and some replaced by modern synthetic ones. David put the shaping machine into gear by using a long handle to push the driving belt from a stationary pulley to a rotating one. It was fantastic to see. We also saw the hand-operated overhead crane, the steam hammer and the blacksmith's furnaces.

Then back past the boat building yards to the pump house. Here pumps created the hydraulic pressure transmitted by about 2 miles of pipework to operate the cranes, lock gates, bridges and other machinery. These were replaced by electric pumps in 1907 which continued to operate the lock gates until 2010. One pump was switched on and we saw the hydraulic accumulator rise to its full height. With no machinery to operate any more the water is returned to the reservoir as it descends. Our final stop of the tour was in the café.

Thanks to our wonderfully knowledgeable and enthusiastic guides Richard and David for giving us such a special tour. Above all, thanks to Carol for all her great work in setting this up. I thought I already knew all about the Underfall Yard, but not so. I learnt so much on this visit and can thoroughly recommend it.

Sue Pears

Find more at <http://www.underfallyard.co.uk/>



▲ The group with David, one of the volunteers who showed us round
© Clive Burton



The belt-driven workshop - incredible pieces of machinery and works of art all in one. We could almost smell the oil in the air, the clattering of the belts and the shrill sound of metal being cut.

© Clive Burton (above) and
Andrew Blayney (below)



Portable Antiquities Scheme

A major milestone reached

Bristol Culture plays an integral role in the delivery of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in partnership with the British Museum National Partnership programme and in July it was announced that 1.5 million records have now been added to the PAS database.

The main aim of PAS is to encourage archaeological objects found by members of the public to be reported and recorded, and it is delivered by a network of regionally-based Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs); the PAS Central Unit (based at the British Museum); National Finds Advisers; interns and volunteers. FLOs are hosted by a wide variety of organisations. Kurt Adams, the FLO for Gloucestershire and Avon, has been part of our Archaeology team for over 15 years.

Kurt's main role is to record the thousands of archaeological objects which are discovered every year, often by metal detector users but also by chance when people are out walking, gardening or at work. All the finds recorded by Kurt are made publicly available on the PAS online database and currently there are almost 19,000 records which refer to objects found within our area. It is important to note, however, that these records do not relate to a number of single items, since many may refer to hoards of objects found together. Nor does it mean that Kurt has only contributed this number of records to the database, since he often gets called upon to record objects found out of region. It is also worth saying here that only a fraction of the items that are brought in to the museum for identification warrant a record being made, but every item that does involves a degree of research and report writing, and the making of an accurate expert photographic record. The records of each of these objects help advance knowledge of the history and archaeology of our area as well as cumulatively across England and Wales. Occasionally finds, such as those designated as Treasure, hit the news or lead to full-blown excavation of a particular site but in reality it is the sheer volume and quality of data that has been gathered overall that is leading to ground-breaking research projects which improve our understanding.

Clearly, since we have been mostly working from home since March, Kurt has not been able to meet with finders or receive objects to record but that does not mean all recording has stopped. Some material has been able to be recorded from photographs and there is always a backlog of finds to work through. Fewer finds were also being made as people's activities – including metal-detecting – were restricted by lockdown.

Gail Boyle Senior Curator - Archaeology & World Cultures

If you want to browse the PAS database to find out what has been discovered near to you, explore www.finds.org.uk



▲ **Shallow Grave:** metal and glass objects associated with an Anglo-Saxon burial in the Cotswolds were reported to Kurt Adams by the metal detectorist who found them and this led to the excavation of the site in 2019.

© Bristol Arts Channel

▼ **Boar Mount:** one of the most exciting finds to be reported and recorded recently is this copper-alloy late Iron Age/Roman zoomorphic mount depicting the forward half of a boar (found in South Gloucestershire) which we are hoping to acquire for the collection.

© Bristol Culture



The Royal Visit to the Art Gallery, 1908

Bristol Art Gallery and Museum of Antiquities (as Bristol Museum & Art Gallery was originally known) opened in 1905 and was the first open-to-all and free-to-enter museum in the city. A number of celebrations were organised for the opening. At a private event on 2 January, the main funder of the building, Sir William Henry Wills (who became Lord Winterstoke in 1906) ceremonially handed over the key to the building. On 15 February, the distinguished artist Sir Hubert von Herkomer officially opened the Art Gallery and Museum (and donated one of his pictures to the permanent collection). On 20 February,

the doors were thrown open to the public. Three years later, on 9 July 1908, the building received royal endorsement when King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra lunched at the Art Gallery during a visit to Bristol to open the new Royal Edward Dock at Avonmouth.

A photograph taken on the roof of the Art Gallery (1), shows the staff who were present on the day of the Royal Visit. Seated left is Richard Quick, Superintendent of Art Gallery and Antiquities, Perhaps he is nervously fingering the notes for his speech. Seated beside him is his assistant, Mr A. Cook. Unfortunately, the names of the two women staff members are not recorded, but amongst the standing men are: the Chief Attendant, H. Osborne, and Attendants F. Sutton, F. Brice, H. Wells and S. Piggins. Three of the Attendants wear 'Bristol Art Gallery' caps, and two of the men are decorated.

After reaching the highly-decorated front of the Art Gallery and Museum, the royal party then entered a similarly bedecked Central Hall (2). The Royal Lunch was similarly lavish although the exact location of the lunching room shown in the photograph is yet to be identified (3). The original photograph for this postcard may have been taken by Arthur E. Smith, a photographer based in Coronation Street, Southville, as we know he was present on the day.

On the first day following the Royal Visit, the building was open to visitors with tickets to see the decorations, and on the second day it was open to all. There were 20,061 visits recorded on the second day. Numerous photographs were turned into hurriedly printed postcards to commemorate the occasion, many of which were published by the Bristol firm of Harvey Barton & Sons. Bristol Archives has a representative set of 1908 Royal Visit postcards illustrated on their catalogue search website.

In 2023, we will be celebrating 200 years since the first recognisable museum in Bristol, the Bristol Institution for the Advancement of Science,

Literature and the Arts, opened at 31 Park Street. The above photographs have been catalogued as part of a project to document that ongoing history and to create a database of useful images and other sources including digitised books and catalogues. The ultimate aim is to record the various museum buildings, their beginnings and (sometimes disastrous) ends; what they set out to achieve; and what actually happened inside them. Lockdown and home working has provided an opportune moment to make a start on what was originally conceived as a long-term project for volunteers,

Trevor Coombs Documentation Assistant



▲ **1 Staff photo on the day of the Royal Visit**
© Bristol Culture

▼ **2 The Winterstoke Hall, then called the Central Hall, decorated for the Royal Visit**
© Bristol Culture



▼ **3 The lunching room decorated for the Royal Visit**
© Bristol Culture



THE ROYAL VISIT TO BRISTOL.
Luncheon Room, Art Gallery, July 9th., 1908.

Untold stories

Drawings by Barbara Walker

In recent years the museum has been seeking opportunities to diversify the visual art collection and the Black Lives Matter movement has added urgency to this stream of work. I am delighted to announce that earlier this year, with the help of the Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery acquired two drawings by Barbara Walker, *I was there IV* and *I was there V*.

I first encountered Barbara Walker at the Diaspora Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2017. She had drawn larger-than-lifesized figures of black soldiers in black chalk on the walls of a palazzo stairwell. *I Was There IV* and *V* come from a series that she has been working on for seven years. Walker started with a quest into the role of black soldiers in the wars with Iraq and Afghanistan. As she dug deeper she discovered the earlier history of the involvement of African Caribbean soldiers in the First and Second World Wars. The Diaspora Pavilion drawings were an exploration of this history. Walker uses archive images to make monochrome drawings. For Walker the fragile, sometimes ephemeral nature of her mediums – chalk, embossing, tracing paper – are a vehicle for the point she wants to make about the erasure of black histories. So her chalk drawings are washed away from the gallery walls, or, images on tracing paper are laid over archival images.

I Was There IV and *V* are intimately-scaled ink drawings of soldiers on tracing paper laid over digitally printed photographic images of soldiers, black, Asian and white. The images in the drawings and the photographs come from public archives in the UK and internationally and, crucially, they are anonymous. The red W and E are reminders that soldiers came from the western and eastern parts of the former British Empire: to fight the war of the colonial masters. *I Was There V* overlays two soldiers in one drawing. Overlaying her drawings onto photographic images as a kind of palimpsest is a statement of presence of both her subject and the original soldiers over whose images the drawings are placed. The drawings were acquired as part of the Contemporary Art Society Museums Acquisition Scheme, with vital support from the Friends. I was hoping to display them to coincide with Remembrance Sunday but the museum was closed due to lockdown 2.

To see more of the Visual Arts team's work on diversity take a look at the article Jenny Gaschke and I wrote for Art UK titled: Postcolonial interpretations of the art collections at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (to find it go to artuk.org/discover/stories and filter on Collections in Focus)

Julia Carver Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art



▲ *I Was There IV*, by Barbara Walker
© Barbara Walker



▲ *I Was There V*, by Barbara Walker
© Barbara Walker

More bang for your buck

In March this year, Bristol Cars Ltd went into liquidation. The company had been founded in 1946 as an offshoot of the Bristol Aeroplane Company, hand-building small numbers of high-performance luxury cars made to aircraft standards. In 1960 it became an independent company but in latter years struggled with cashflow and closed in 2011. The company was bought by Frazer Nash and moved to Surrey, where a new design was developed but only one was ever made before the final collapse.

The company assets came up for auction in September and, with the joint help of the Friends and the Bristol Owners Heritage Trust, we were able to purchase two 'bucks'. A buck is a full-size hardwood model of the bodywork of a car, against which the hand-shaped panels are fitted to ensure they are correct. We have always wanted a buck rather than a car because it clearly shows the construction process.

We have acquired the front and rear bucks for the Bristol 404 and 405. These were produced between 1953 and 1958 and shared a radiator and bonnet design modelled on the air intakes of the Bristol *Brabazon* aircraft. The bucks are currently stored in the *Brabazon* hangar at Filton but will be moved to M Shed in the near future.

Firebars for *Mayflower*

The Friends have generously agreed to fund a new set of 28 firebars for the steam tug *Mayflower*.

Firebars make up the grates in the boiler on which the coal is burned to produce steam. They are made from cast iron and last a very long time, but eventually burn away or bend into shapes that make it very difficult to tend and clean the fires. *Mayflower* has only had two sets of bars in our ownership – an average life of over 15 years.

As ever, we are very grateful to the Friends for funding these important projects.

Andy King Senior Curator – Social, Industrial & Maritime History and Working Exhibits

A *Mayflower* volunteer, William Ritchie, with a stack of firebars and the boiler behind him

© Bristol Culture

▼ Panels of a Bristol 404 being fitted round the buck

© Bristol Culture



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