

Newsletter

The Colston statue toppled: what happens next?

In this edition

- the reopening of Bristol's museums, galleries and archives
- M Shed's 10th Anniversary celebrations
- podcasts of life in Bristol in the 20th century and the Blitz
- bringing the Lodekka bus to life
- a street art exhibition
- news of upcoming events, talks, exhibitions, and winter lectures

From the Chairman

It is good news that Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, M Shed, Bristol Archives and Blaise are now receiving visitors, with the Georgian House due to follow suit in the early autumn. Our Events Group are cautiously planning a few more events this quarter than last – although as you will see from our job ad we need to recruit some more volunteers for the Events Group before we can think of expanding our programme to pre-Covid levels.

AGM

We are planning to return to a face-to-face AGM at M Shed this year, after our – admittedly very successful – online AGM in 2020. As usual we have some short presentations to entertain and enlighten members once the official business has been despatched in our usual efficient manner, and after that a chance for everyone to have a chat, accompanied by tea and cake. I do hope to see you there.

In July the executive committee held our first in-person meeting in over a year and enjoyed a sociable – and safely distanced – drink afterwards. All agreed it was good to return to some semblance of normality and to have a livelier discussion than is possible when we must speak one at a time on Zoom, with no real eye contact.

We are, however, losing two executive committee members. Muriel Harrison, a stalwart from FoBAG heritage, with a real passion for supporting art, resigned in May. Shirley Hodgson, who carries a torch for Bristol Archives and family history, will not be standing for re-election at the AGM. Both have been very effective committee members, playing an active part in all the committee discussions, and we will miss their wise and helpful input.

Sad news

I am sorry that now I need to share sad news of the deaths of three people who will be known to many of you and have made very significant contributions to the work of the Friends (and previously to FoBAG and Bristol Magpies) over the years.

Andy King, who you will remember retired as Senior Curator in March and immediately accepted our invitation to become one of our Patrons, very sadly died in July. I had been one of his volunteers at the Industrial Museum, and then at M Shed, for over 30 years, and a close friend for almost as long. I shall for ever be grateful



▲ **Andy King 1956-2021**
© Sue Thurlow

Cover photo: Artist Jasmine Thompson creating a Black Lives Matter mural in the front hall of BMAG.

© Manoel Bolutife Akure.

Check out the survey: Colston Statue: What happens next?



◀ A recent addition to the M Shed displays: one of the seated figures from the 1300s originally on Lawford's Gate, at the eastern end of Old Market Street. They were removed when the gate was demolished in 1769 and later used on a triumphal arch built as a gateway to Arnos Castle, Brislington. The identity of the subjects is unknown
© Sue Thurlow

for his friendship, and the passion he inspired in me for the work of the museums service and for local industrial history. Ray writes more about Andy in the Museum Report, and of course we published a long article about his career in our last newsletter, so I will say no more.

In the last few months, we have also sadly lost Tony Merriman, a past treasurer of FoBAG and a popular participant in many of our activities. And more recently we learned of the death of John McOmie – who may well have been our oldest member at 101 – who had been chairman of the Magpies on three occasions! There are short pieces about both Tony and John on our back page.

I am sure you will all join me in sending our condolences and best wishes to their families and friends.

Thank you to our contributors

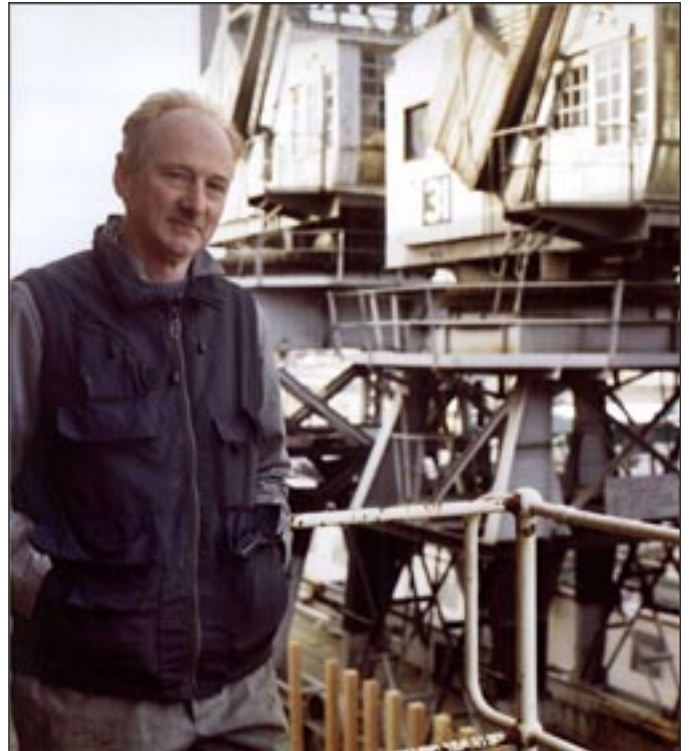
Once again, we have a newsletter edition packed full of interesting articles written by the professional staff at the museum. I hope you all enjoy them as much as I do and appreciate that the staff make time in their already busy lives to help each of us understand different aspects of the work of the museums and archives.

Sue Thurlow Chairman

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

It is my sad duty to report the death of Andy King. There have been many tributes in the local press and via social media to Andy who was a wonderful colleague throughout my entire career here in Bristol. Like many who work in museums, Andy was passionate about his work and responsible for many memorable achievements made possible through his enthusiasm, charm, deep knowledge, pragmatism, all-round abilities and communication skills. I will not list those achievements here as they have been covered elsewhere but suffice it to say his contribution to the work of Bristol Museums and his support for other museums and individuals in the profession, will be hugely missed and he leaves a considerable legacy. The true test of a person is perhaps when adversity strikes, and the way Andy coped with a difficult disease and its impact on his life and others was truly impressive. After the amputation of his right arm, I remember his empathy and reassurance for others who may have been embarrassed and unsure about what to say to him, with no hint of self-pity. A great loss.

The course of the Covid pandemic continues to twist and turn. In the last newsletter I was anticipating the reopening of Bristol Museum & Art Gallery and M Shed, which went ahead as planned. The new exhibitions at the two sites have been well received and attendance has been good. At M Shed, of course, we have had the opening of the temporary display of the Colston statue, a means to start a conversation primarily with Bristol communities (but also from all around the world) as to where to go next with the statue and indeed in addressing the big issues it embodies around the way society represents its history, both good and bad. If you have not taken part in the online survey, I would encourage you to have your voice heard as this will probably



▲ *Andy King, 1956 – 2021, pictured with his beloved cranes*
© Bristol Culture

▼ *The newly-painted M Shed cranes crossed in the traditional manner to mark the death of Andy King*
© Bristol Culture





▲ Artist **Jasmine Thompson** creating a new mural in the front hall of BMAG.

© Manoel Bolutife Akure

close in September. The results will then be considered by the We are Bristol History Commission, and a report will be submitted to the Council. We are pleased to be able to play a role in this important debate and that importance was reflected in the level of worldwide media interest when the display opened with Culture staff, Councillors and Commissioners from the History Commission all being called upon by TV and radio from all around the globe.

The Vanguard exhibition of street art on show on the top floor of M Shed covers a topic for which the city is also internationally famous and fortunately has been able to be presented even though it was originally scheduled for 2020.

The service has recruited several new members of the gallery staff, so if you are a regular to our museums, please do say hello to them and mention the Friends. We had hoped to reopen Blaise Museum in June but delayed that until late July so that new staff could be recruited and

trained up in their roles. Blaise remained closed throughout 2020 so it is gratifying seeing it reopen, as it will be for Red Lodge and Georgian House, which should be reopening (all being well) early in the autumn.

Greater diversity and representation in all that we do is very important to us, and one new development is the publication of a school textbook *Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery: Origins, impacts and legacy*. Written by head teachers from Bristol schools in collaboration with ourselves, this will start to fill that gap in the teaching of history to give a much more rounded picture of the country's past and Bristol's role in that. Whether you are at school or very far past those days it is an excellent and accessible introduction to this topic, which I recommend to you.

Despite pandemics, much continues to be achieved by the museum and archive teams (and throughout the whole of the Culture & Creative Industries teams as well). For example, the electric cranes at M Shed have now been repainted ensuring their continued longevity. Maintenance work continues on our historic boats and although public trips on the Harbour Railway will not be possible this season, we are starting to focus on the completion of the work in Cumberland Road, which should allow us to recommence steam locos running to the Cumberland Basin in 2022, linking up with Bristol Archives and the Create Centre (also part of our team). We have celebrated 10 years of M Shed this June with a series of events and the Festival of Archaeology in July has been able to go ahead with actual events in person rather than online. Let us all hope that we can continue to move back to a way of life more like that we enjoyed before Covid-19 reared its ugly head.

Ray Barnett Head of Collections & Archives

▼ **Blaise Museum ready to greet visitors**

© David Seaman



The Colston statue: What next?

The statue of Edward Colston was pulled down on 7 June 2020 during a Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol. The statue has been part of a temporary display at M Shed since June 2021. It is a partnership between the museum and the We Are Bristol History Commission.

The statue is on display alongside a small selection of placards from the protest, as well as background information about Colston, reactions to the toppling, a timeline of events, and suggestions of where else to visit locally to find out more about Bristol and the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans.

The aim of the display was to be a conversation starter about the statue's future - which it certainly has been. We wanted to present the facts, and for visitors to be able to make up their own minds about what happens next. Everybody is encouraged to complete a survey once they have seen the display.

This is an opportunity to have your say on how we move forward together. If you have not yet completed the survey, we would encourage you to do so soon. The consultation is due to end on 5 September. Your feedback will help the History Commission make a recommendation on the future of the Colston statue and the plinth site.

You can view an online version of the display, and the survey, on our website – just put *Colston Statue What Next* into your browser

Amber Druce Curator of History



▲ **'How would you bring Bristol together?'**
A mirror stimulating thought and discussion as part of the Colston Statue exhibit at M Shed. Please contribute to the online discussion about the Colston statue

© Sue Thurlow

▼ **Colston's statue on display at M Shed**

© Bristol Culture



M Shed's 10th birthday

After a decade of welcoming over 5 million visitors, including the Queen and politician Tony Benn, M Shed turned 10 years old on 17 June 2021! To mark this special occasion we celebrated with 10 days of online talks and activities and toasted happy memories of the amazing objects and experiences that tell the story of the city and its unique place in the world. The celebrations opened with an online talk about M Shed's highlights over the past 10 years. We took a virtual tour of popular objects and exhibitions and the myriad events created with our brilliant partners, communities and volunteers. M Shed shares the story of Bristol and its people from 5,000 years ago to the present day, so it was no mean feat to focus on favourite objects. However, the Lodekka bus had to be there along with Henry the horse. The tombstone of Gaius Sentius, Bristol's oldest named resident, was name-checked along with the sparkling brooch of Dame Clara Butt, the most popular singer of her day during the 1890s to 1920s. It was good to be reminded that the museum is constantly evolving and collecting with a view to the future as much as the past, and that M Shed has much more in its collections than can ever be displayed at any one time. We are looking forward to the volunteer-led behind-the-scenes tours starting up again later this year, giving visitors special access to the rich reserve collections that reflect the city's industrial, social and maritime history.

Selecting just 10 favourite exhibitions was a similar challenge but we plumped for a range that spotlights the wealth of topics covered: Moved by Conflict; Skeletons: Our



▲ At M Shed's official launch in 2011 HRH the Princess Royal met the late Princess Campbell MBE, one of Bristol's first Black ward sisters, and her son Dennis Perry

© Bristol Culture

▼ One of M Shed's most popular exhibitions, *Brisool 2015/16* was a giant 3D knitted city of Bristol

© Bristol Culture



Buried Bones; Bristol Music; Chocolate; Children's TV; Somalis in Bristol; Urban Sports; British Tattoo Art Revealed; that perennial favourite Wildlife Photographer of the Year; and, of course, the inimitable Briswool – the city of Bristol knitted in wool!

Our highlighted events and special memories reflected the multi-faceted nature of Bristol itself. We remembered the quirkiness of the crane dance; the edginess of Tattoo Live; the challenges of panel events such as The Truth about Migration; the vibrancy of the Somali family fun day; the diversity of festivals to mark LGBTQ+ History Month and Black History Month; the playfulness of a Bristol Music fashion show; and so much more.

The celebrations continued with a series of online talks on specific subjects echoing the eclectic nature of M Shed and its collections.

We also ran a popular humorous social media thread highlighting our Top 10 Trip Advisor reviews of M Shed over the decade, starting with a five-star review alongside the comment: 'Good way to spend an hour to prepare yourself for cake'. A four-star review observed: 'On the second floor was an exhibition of how cantankerous and discontented Bristolians can be'. Another commented: 'More like some weird socialist exhibition of bits they found lying around in the back of a cupboard.' There was a five-star recommendation which said simply: 'Banginggggggggg place'. The thread ended on a five-star note: 'Without a shadow of a doubt simply the best museum that I've ever visited'.

The 10th birthday celebration was an opportunity to thank our wonderful partners; the volunteers who have helped to shape M Shed over the years; and the visitors who discover Bristol's story and keep the museum alive. Inevitably lockdown restrictions necessitated a slightly muted celebration this time around, but we look forward to exploring the next ten years and what they hold.

Karen Garvey Engagement officer, Events

The People's Museum

Zion Community Art Space is based in Bedminster Down. In 2019 they hosted a People's Museum for local residents to showcase their weird and wonderful collections. The 2021 edition is coming to M Shed and we cannot wait to see what the people of BS13 bring out of their attics this time! It is a showcase of the everyday, the collections that would not traditionally get displayed in a museum but deserve to be seen and celebrated.

Collections at the last event included rubber ducks, teapots, James Bond books, and trolls. This year's submissions include beekeeping, tarot cards, computer games and Glastonbury Festival memorabilia.

Come along to M Shed on 13-14 November to see The People's Museum and to find out the stories behind them.

Amber Druce Curator of History

Annual General Meeting

**Saturday 25 September 2021 –
2.30 pm at M Shed**

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find a formal notice of the AGM, a nomination form for committee membership and a copy of our annual report. Following the business (which will be kept to a minimum) there will be short presentations from museum staff about some of their current projects including the Colston statue. We will conclude with tea and cake, and the opportunity at last to meet up with friends again.

Do please come along to the AGM as we like to get feedback from our members, and this is a good opportunity to give us your views.

Election of Executive Committee officers and members

The current officers of Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives are:

Sue Thurlow – Chairman; Katherine Martin – Secretary; Robert Walters – Treasurer; and Richard Avery – Membership Secretary. They are all willing to stand again.

The remaining elected members of the committee are:

Mary Bailey, Clive Burlton, Gary Gostelow, June Hibberd, Shirley Hodgson, Carol Lear and Toby Pinn. All except Shirley Hodgson are willing to stand for re-election.

We can fill up to ten places on the committee so there are two vacancies. If you are interested, please complete the nomination form enclosed and return it to the Secretary. Brief profiles of all known candidates are on the back of the AGM agenda.

Netsuke Animations

A series of animations responding to Bristol Museum & Art Gallery's incredible collection of Japanese netsuke will be released this autumn. Located in the *Netsuke: Miniature masterpieces from Japan* exhibition and created by Bristol animator Paddy Wright, the animations will be discoverable in the museum via smartphone. They will provide playful stories expanding upon a small selection of the netsuke on display, enabling families to actively investigate, learn and enjoy during their visit.

Karen MacDonald Exhibitions Officer

Sharing our sound heritage

The Unlocking Our Sound Heritage (UOSH) project team, based in Bristol Archives, has been working hard to help people use and learn about newly digitised audio collections during the pandemic.

The project is led by the British Library and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Our team is working to protect recordings from archives and museums across the southwest. Together with nine other hubs around the country the project will save and make available to the public almost half a million rare and unique recordings. These recordings – ranging from oral histories through drama performances to hospital radio – are all held on vintage formats that are threatened by physical degradation and whose playback machinery is getting harder to find and maintain. One of the key aims of the project is to help people hear and use these recordings. The UOSH team have found innovative ways to do this despite Covid restrictions.

The team was committed to running a citizen journalist project with volunteers from across Bristol. We planned to train and mentor the volunteers in person but due to the pandemic we took these sessions online. With support from Marcus Smith from BCfm Radio, the volunteers learned how to use archival audio to create podcasts. Funny, moving and thoughtful by turn, the podcasts series cover facets of early 20th working class Bristolian life and Bristol at war during the Blitz. They can be heard on Bristol Museum Soundcloud.

Also on Soundcloud you can listen to excerpts about the Bristol Blitz used by our schools' learning worker Lucy Fulton for a new programme for Year 6 children (aged 10-11 years). The children began by using historical evidence from the oral histories along with artefacts, maps and photos of the Blitz. They had a note-taking session to help their spoken language skills, which is a key part of their English curriculum. Listening to someone talk for three minutes without losing concentration is hard work! The final activity was a day-long drama workshop, run by actor and playwright Toby Hulse, in which the children produced their own short scenes to gain a sense of what life was like during the Blitz.

As well as running these activities, we are keen to support new research and exploration using the collections. Local journalist and broadcaster Sherrie Eugene Hart used oral histories from Bristol Archives and Bristol Libraries to create a short film about her responses to the experiences of Black Bristolians from the 1940s to the 1970s. Her film, 'Black Voices from Bristol's Past' is available on Bristol Museum Youtube.

And finally, we have been providing opportunities for people to volunteer from home, which has given us extra insights into audio collections. Many recordings offer rich evidence of southwest dialects and volunteer Amber Lindley, a student at UWE, has written about her work on a Devonshire dialect collection from the Federation of Devon Women's Institutes for our blog (Bristol Museum Blog – find Queen and Country).

By the time the Bristol UOSH team hang up their headphones in March, they will have preserved over 4,500 rare, unique and at-risk recordings from archives all over Southwest England, helping to preserve and share this incredible heritage for the future.

Allie Dillon City Archivist



▲ **Bomb damage on Newfoundland Road, Bristol**

© Bristol Archives: Facey Collection

▼ **Brenton WI 1965 Scrapbook Compilers**

© Devon Archives



Grayson's Art Club Exhibition

Channel 4 has invited us to be the sole venue for a new exhibition alongside the hit series Grayson's Art Club. We will be working with Swan Films and Channel 4 to produce a show of work from the second series. This will include pieces created by Grayson and Philippa Perry, and several by other contemporary artists and celebrities, as well as many by members of the public whose work Grayson selected to feature. The process of the exhibition development will also be documented to feature on Channel 4.

The exhibition will open on 4 December and run until May 2022. It is likely to take over all the temporary exhibition spaces and may spill out into some of the permanent galleries. We are hoping to work with local communities to run a Bristol 'art club' both on and off-site in various locations. And Grayson Perry himself is famously generous with his time, and is a fan of Bristol, so we hope he will put in at least one public appearance.

Karen MacDonald Exhibitions Officer

▼ *Grayson and Philippa Perry during lockdown*

© Richard Ansett



Bristol Photography Festival – your chance to take part

What makes your neighbourhood unique? As part of the Bristol Photography Festival, we are creating a digital space where everyone can explore the past and present of Bristol's unique neighbourhoods. We want you to share photos, stories and comments that tell us what it is like round your way. Where is the most beautiful spot in your neighbourhood? What makes you laugh? What makes its specific character? Some of your images and stories may even find their way into M Shed and help tell the real story of Bristol.

Get involved

To share your photo please email it to museum.community@bristol.gov.uk, telling us the neighbourhood you live in and up to 25 words explaining to us why you chose the picture. For more information about ways to share your photos and how to see what we have collected so far go to bristolmuseums.org.uk/blog/ and scroll down to 'Our Bristol'.

Here are a few more ideas for subjects if you would like to take part: the best road name in Bristol; something new you found during lockdown; a place that holds strong personal memories for you; free things that people leave out on their front walls in your area; the weirdest thing about your area; a scene that really sums up your area; the first (or last) thing you would show a visitor to your neighbourhood.

That is by no means a comprehensive list of subjects. We would like to see photos of anything in your neighbourhood or other parts of Bristol that you think is special.

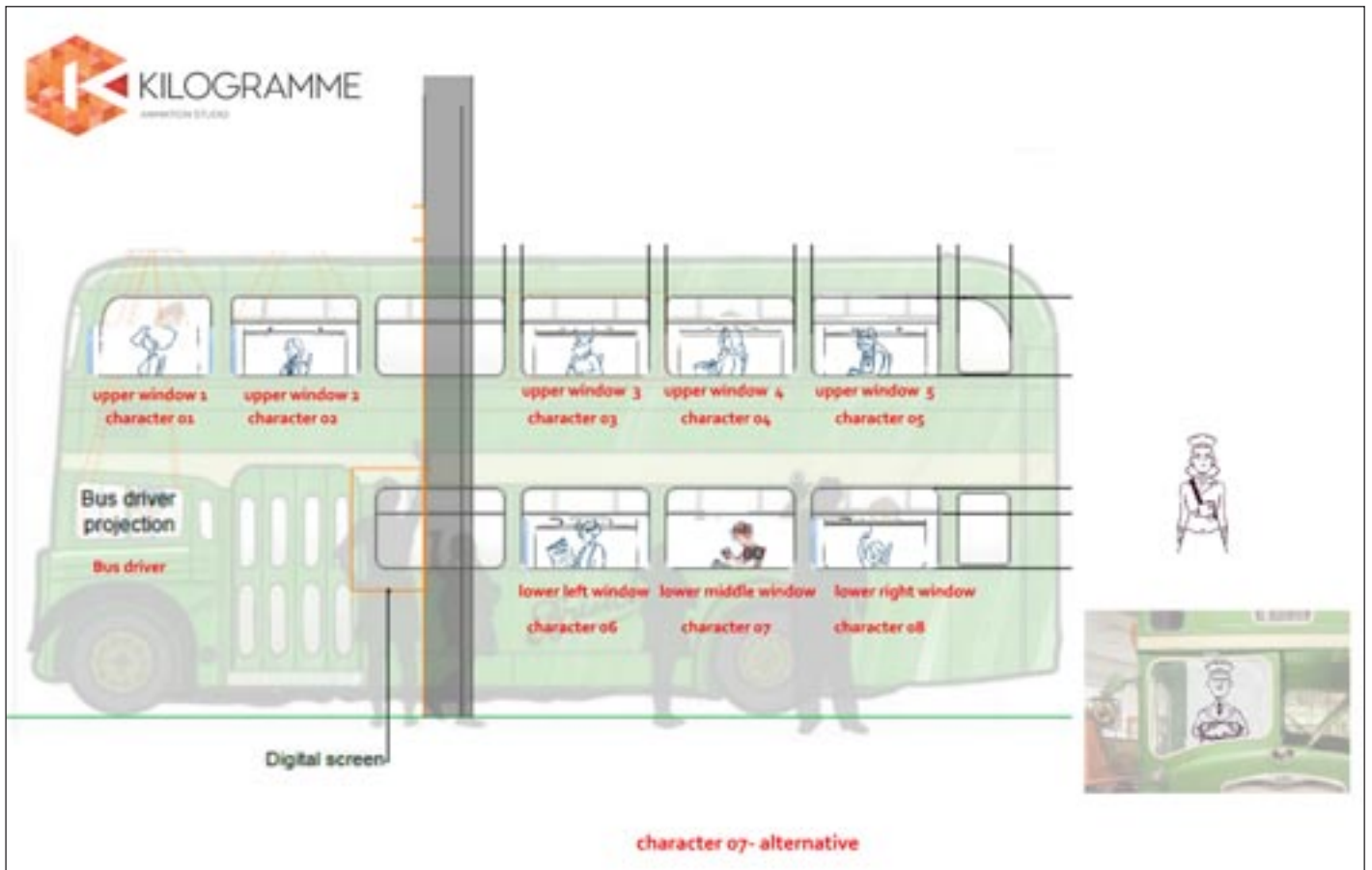
Finn White

Community Engagement Officer

▼ *Makes me smile every time I walk past!*

© Sue Thurlow





▲ *Work in progress: character mapping animated passengers on the bus*
© Kilogramme Animation Studio

Animating the Lodekka bus at M Shed

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic the tactile elements of M Shed, including the bus, touchscreens, buttons and toys, were assessed as unsafe for general use. This left an obvious gap in visitor experience, and there was a clear need both to recreate the playful intergenerational engagement that is so important to the family audience, and to rebuild a level of interpretation that is appropriate for younger ages. The bus was a natural choice for us to focus on, as it is a star object for many families at M Shed – the very limited interaction allowed with it as a result of Covid restrictions was disappointing for visitors. With funding secured via our Culture Recovery Fund bid, a project team was formed including members of the Collections, Operations, Design, Participation and Digital teams and we set about finding ways to create an added, but safe, engagement opportunity that would be fun, exciting and allow for playful interactions.

▼ *Bristol Lodekka double decker bus in M Shed*
© Quinton Lake



Our overarching aims were:

- To find creative solutions to reinstate and improve on the resources that families can engage with, and the ways in which they interpret the museum space and objects.
- To stimulate memories and discussions to create positive visitor experiences during restrictions and beyond.

The use of digital technologies was agreed to be the most pragmatic and flexible way of bringing the bus to life, and we decided to do this by projecting onto its windows imaginary passengers that react to visitor movement (eg a wave), and act out snippets of conversation scripted to encourage visitors to locate objects and stories within the gallery. Projections of passengers on the upper floor windows will also move and react to each other in a natural or humorous way. A new digital bus stop sign will double as a 'bus conductor' who will signal to the audience how to interact with the projections and provide access to 'lost stories' that would not normally be available. Visitors will also be encouraged to engage with the bus and its new 'passengers' by the bus driver who will reflect a range of ages and diverse communities, as well as being playful and engaging.

We carried out extensive research into different types of interactive technologies that could provide the desired visitor experience. Of course, these also needed to be flexible, easily managed, within budget and relatively easy to procure. We compiled a brief for the commissioning of the animations by a specialist graphic designer, and we are now working with a company called Kilogramme Animation Studio to create the content for our projections. A lot of creative imagination, interpretive and technical expertise has now brought us to the stage where we can start to test sample animations to see if what we have planned will deliver the desired outcomes. We are hoping that by the time you read this the animations will be close to going live.

As with any new type of interpretation some of what we have created is highly experimental. This has provided us with lots of opportunities to push ourselves to try something new and to learn from the process, and we will be evaluating how our visitors react to it once it is up and running. We hope, of course, that they will be able to get 'on board' with what we have created whilst they cannot literally be 'on board' the bus itself!

Gail Boyle Senior Curator (Archaeology & World Cultures)

Museum events coming up

Keep an eye on the museum's What's On pages for more information about these and many other events/talks/exhibitions and the forthcoming winter lecture series:

- **Wildlife Photographer of the Year 57** opens at M Shed on 27 November
- **Docks Heritage Weekend** is planned for September – details will be published nearer the time
- **Georgian House Museum** reopens in the autumn with a new film installation by South African artist Lebohang Kganye as the final instalment of the museums' Bristol Photo Festival programme. The house is currently awaiting some repair works to ceilings.

Working with families with children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

As part of Bristol's Brilliant Archaeology 2021, we are working with Bristol Autism Project at the West of England Centre for Inclusive Living and Ambition in Lawrence Weston to have some family fun days out. The families will be stepping back in time, replicating the hillfort and roundhouses that once stood on Blaise hill, making their own Roman coins and learning how to weave. There will be activity packs complete with a trail designed by a local artist, a junior archaeologist's toolkit and fiddle toys/sensory aids.

These sessions at Blaise are a continuation of the partnership work started during lockdown which sought to recognise what an incredibly challenging time the pandemic has been for families with SEN children. These sessions allow families to have fun, engage with things they are interested in and be themselves without judgement or stress.

Julia Thomson-Smith Engagement Officer (Families)

An opportunity to join the Events Group

The Events Group is looking for one or two willing volunteers to join our team so that we can continue to provide a busy and wide-ranging programme of events for members. The ideal candidates will have good organisation, interpersonal and IT skills, willing to input ideas for events and happy to work as part of a team. Mainly owing to ill-health, our existing team is now down to five members, which means we shall find it challenging to arrange the number of events which we have done in the past. If you would like to help shape our programme in the future, then please contact me to find out more about what is involved.

Mary Bailey

Email: events@friendsofbmga.org.uk

Phone: 0117 942 1944 or 07779 244308

Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery

Origins, impact and legacy

Following the Black Lives Matter protest and the removal of the Colston statue last summer, Bristol's involvement in transatlantic slavery has been under greater scrutiny than ever before.

As a result, a group of Bristol secondary history teachers wanted to improve teaching about Bristol and transatlantic slavery in their schools. They approached me about a possible collaboration between themselves and Bristol Museums. They had decided to re-write their existing curriculum schemes of work and lesson plans regarding the history of slavery, with a particular focus on Bristol's role.

After an initial 'virtual' meeting we decided that together we would write and publish a textbook titled *Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery: origins, impact and legacy* aimed at Year 8 students in secondary schools in the city and beyond. Our partnership combines the teachers' extensive knowledge of the requirements of the secondary history curriculum, with our rich and varied collections of objects, images and archive documents. Another bonus is that the two lead teachers on the project have already written many history textbooks!

A small core team of teachers from local schools spent six months (including their summer holidays) researching and writing the content. We have consulted as widely as possible, including local academics, museum experts, the African Voices Forum, Black History teachers and other stakeholders, to ensure that the text is both accurate and inclusive.

As the project lead, I first had to gain approval from the Senior Leadership team to identify the necessary funding. I then approached Bristol Books CIC to work with us to design and publish the book. I have also had the fun (but slightly frustrating) task of tracking down the images needed for the book - we have tried to use only objects, archive documents and artworks from our collections but I have had to source a few images from elsewhere (together with the necessary permissions).

The book has now been launched, ready for teaching in the coming academic year, and is available in the museums' book shops. Much has been said and written about Bristol and its role in transatlantic slavery in the months since the Colston statue was pulled from its plinth. Much more will be said and written in the coming months too, and this project is part of that conversation. All the team believe that this textbook will have a significant impact on teaching the city's history within schools both locally and, hopefully, further afield. We also hope that this model of local collaboration between teachers, museums and academia will be seen as a model of best practice.

Jane Hack Senior Engagement Officer
(Formal Learning) at Culture &
Creative Industries



▲ *The empty plinth*
© James Cameron



▶ *A mmaa dwa (woman's stool) brought to Britain from Accra (now the capital city of Ghana) by a Royal Navy officer involved in anti-slavery patrols off the West Coast of Africa in 1827.*
© Bristol Culture

Forging Our Future

Collecting to better represent disabled people in Bristol

Forging Our Future is a dynamic project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Working in partnership with Bristol Museums Service, it explores the disability rights movement in Bristol from the 1970s to the 2000s. A group of young disabled people has collected a set of oral histories from local activists. Project coordinator Lori Streich has been listening to their stories:

‘We have heard about how their actions achieved change – in law, in education, to transport provision, in the language we use, in access to buildings, to organisations delivering services, and more; and in the approach to all aspects of life through the development of the Social Model of Disability.’

These local stories, never before collected, will be presented in the We Make Bristol gallery at M Shed in 2022. They will be placed on a website to be launched later in the year, and in schools through a set of learning resources developed especially for this project.

Forging Our Future is taking the messages of the disability rights movement into the museum service. It is working with museum staff to identify areas for change, particularly at Bristol Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG). Lori is so far enthused with the progress: ‘A group of people with lived experience of disability have visited BMAG and highlighted challenges in getting round the building and making the most of the treasure-trove we all find within. Museum staff have responded constructively and creatively within the constraints of this complicated listed building!’

Lee Hutchinson Curator of History



▲ **Disabled people's protest, Arncliffe 1989**

© Ruth Pickersgill



▲ **The launch of Forging Our Future at M Shed, 30 November 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic that stalled the project for several months.**

© Bristol Culture



▲ **Bristol Disability Equality Forum manager Laura Welti speaking at the launch of Forging Our Future.**

© Bristol Culture

Call-out for objects

Bristol Museums' History team is actively aiming for equal representation in the collection. It is seeking to increase and enhance the small proportion of the collection that represents disabled people. In addition to oral histories, the team is keen to collect 2D or 3D objects. Items may include the large or the small, the old or the new, the significant and seemingly insignificant. These could be machines, documents, photos, posters, badges, items of clothing or whatever has significance to you. If you would be happy to donate or know of others who may be able to donate items that represent the daily lives of disabled people in Bristol, then please get in touch with Lee Hutchinson at M Shed, who will be able to advise further. Email: lee.hutchinson@bristol.gov.uk

To view what the museum service already has in its collection to represent disability, see <https://tinyurl.com/nhutrec>

To contact Project Coordinator Lori Streich, please email: ourhistory.bristoldef@outlook.com

Bristol Street Art

Vanguard presents 'Bristol Street Art: The Evolution of a Global Movement'.

Until the end of October, M Shed is hosting an exciting and innovative exhibition which explores the instrumental role of local Bristol creatives in the development of British street art from the 1980s to the present day. The exhibition has been created by Vanguard, a collective of artists, specialists and collectors involved in the global street art movement. Vanguard's creative consultants include John Nation and Inkie, both key players in Bristol's story.

From anarchist origins in the '80s and '90s through to the explosion of the scene in the early '00s, this exhibition brings together one of the largest collections of original works and memorabilia ever seen in the UK. It examines the creative response of the city's pioneering underground scene throughout the UK's recent turbulent social and political history and considers the drive for social change underpinning the work of many of today's street artists.

On display, visitors will find a host of new original pieces, as well as rare and unseen works, including bespoke edits from the filmmakers and photographers who documented the unfolding scene. Through this, Vanguard explores and highlights the pivotal role Bristol holds within the street art scene and the incredible talent of the city's street art creatives.

Beyond Bristol, Vanguard explores the evolving disciplines of British and Irish artists fusing traditional techniques with new technologies. The exhibition also reflects on how a new generation of global creatives are advocating for social and environmental awareness through art on the streets. In the world of street art, artists are mirroring our global frustrations and delivering an authentic call for urgent action.

Outside of the exhibition, Vanguard have developed an outreach programme in partnership with Vans and Toward 2030 to include art activations, workshops, panels and film screenings, hosted at a number of venues throughout the city.

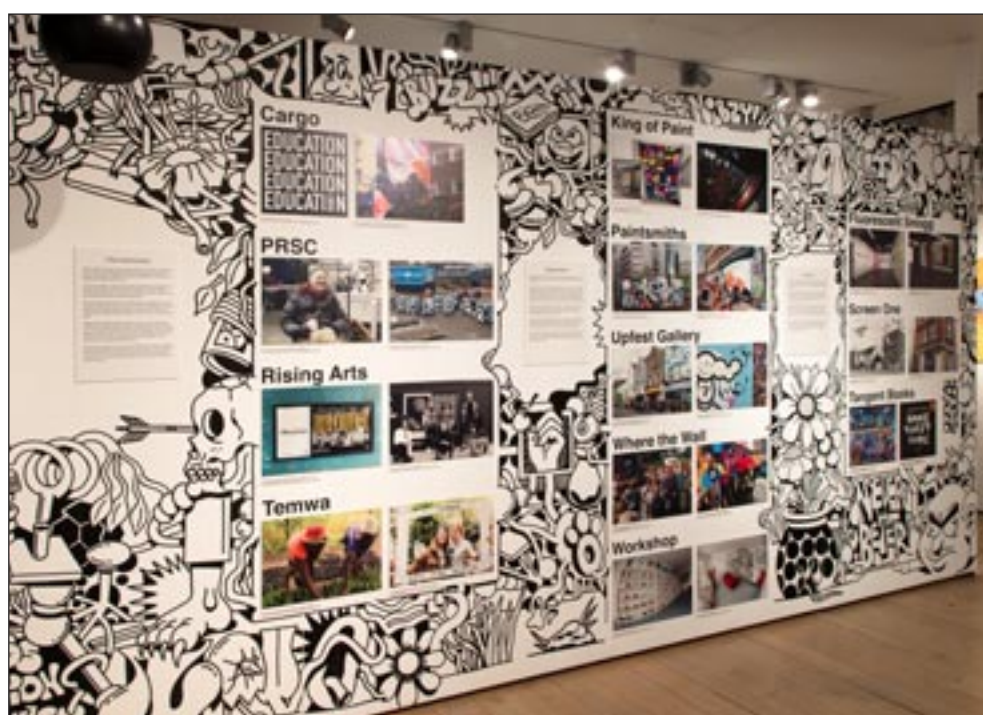
This highly visual exhibition and city-wide experience demonstrates the incredible influence Bristol's creatives continue to have on the British and global street art scene, challenging its stereotypical preconceptions and actively contributing to a new unfolding visual genre.

Steve Bradley Exhibitions Officer



Exhibits in the Bristol Street Art exhibition

© Jamie Woodley



New from Old

A World Cultures art commission

During the 1960s Derbyshire Museums schools loan service bought pieces of art and artefacts made in countries across the world from local dealers and auction houses and sent them into classrooms for children to engage with stories of other people and places. In 2018 the loan service was finally withdrawn from use. After a successful funding bid to the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Trust their project to redistribute almost 450 of the items began in early 2020.

Many items from the Pacific, Africa and the Americas were of significant quality. They fitted well with our World Cultures collections by either deepening existing historic material or working to extend other areas with more contemporary works. But Covid delayed its arrival and also meant that the original plan to work with local schools on a new educational programme had to be reconsidered.

Money was offered for some museums to create 'Travelling Stories' by commissioning artists connecting creatively with the donated material. I commissioned Australian Aboriginal artist Ryan Presley. After a Zoom call and only a few emails Ryan began work on his response to historic boomerangs in both our existing collection and donated material. As Ryan is an established artist with a significant reputation, we needed to supplement the money available and with the generous funding from the Friends we were able to purchase *Aero-dynamism (past the point of no return)*.

'Aero-dynamism (past the point of no return)' is a response to the multitude of Aboriginal objects and artefacts that are held in museum collections across the world, particularly in Britain. Often our tools are held and exhibited with no credit or didactic information. Over time this has been done by collectors in haste and ignorance; seeing Aboriginal people as one homogenous group. In reality, Aboriginal Australia is as culturally diverse as continental Europe. This work symbolically references the thrown returning boomerang that has become famous worldwide and a pop cultural icon. It is a tool, that since its inception, is proof of Aboriginal strength, intelligence, and ingenuity. It indicates a working understanding and application of the laws of physics and aerodynamics. Aero-dynamism (past the point of no return) is a play on the irony of a returning multi-use tool becoming a static object of display, where its origin is unknown.' – Ryan Presley

With the rest of the project money I commissioned artwork based on material from Africa from a local artist, Akhran Girmay, who had earlier in 2020 submitted a proposal for the museums' Black Lives Matter commission, is a young British freelance illustrator of Ethiopian heritage early in his artistic career. He connected with several Nigerian wooden paddles made by the Itsekiri people of Southern Nigeria.

'I submit this piece as a conversation starter or one of many first steps towards understanding the almost lost pasts of items such as these. It is time to trade colonial omission and appropriation for deeper and more compassionate cultural exchanges and dialogue. Through this project I have discovered a rich history expressed and encapsulated within these paddles by a vibrant culture that may have remained hidden from me still. I, along with many others, want to see equal representation of long overlooked and silenced histories. Especially ones which include the chronicles of African nations, being of African descent myself. It is programs such as Travelling Stories that reassures me of the underlying will of people wanting to understand one another and what makes our identities so interestingly different.' – Akhran Girmay

I look forward to being able to display these works on paper in the not-too-distant future but for now I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to enhance and build on new material that showcases artists from non-European traditions and perspectives.

Lisa Graves World Cultures and Archaeology Curator



▲ **Aero-dynamism (past the point of no return)**
©Ryan Presley



▼ **Itsekiri Paddles**
©Akhran Girmay

Dr John McOmie 1920-2021

John McOmie, believed to be our oldest member, sadly died shortly after his 101st birthday on 17 July. John was a valued long-standing member of the Bristol Magpies who followed on from Liz Mackenzie as chairman in the late 1980s. He served on the Executive Committee for many years and subsequently stepped into the role of chairman again at short notice on two more occasions: the first when Monica Jones died in post in 1998 and the second in 2002 when the incoming chairman, Brian Bartlett, had to step down through illness. We are indebted to John for his commitment to FBMGA, along with his late wife Heather.

Hazel Jarvis, his daughter, wrote 'His was a remarkable life, travelling from a tin bath in front of the fire and literally cobbled together shoes to Oxford, to Bristol, to Egypt, Australia and to Japan. He taught and travelled widely. He loved laughing, crosswords, peppermints and us. We were so fortunate.'



▲ **John McOmie at 90**
© Hazel Jarvis



▲ **John McOmie celebrating his 100th birthday in 2020**
© Hazel Jarvis

Anthony Malcolm Merriman

27 September 1934 to 1 June 2021

Anne Merriman remembers:

'Tony qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1960, when I met him. In 1966 he applied to return to the Department of Economics, University of Bristol, where he found himself with the people who had taught him.

On 16th August 1969 we had two weddings and drove in the 1955 Morris Convertible (still in use) to our house in The Causeway, Congresbury. Tony retired in 2000 and kept busy as a treasurer of various societies.

He had been in hospital twice this year. We did not know he was ill, and it was a terrible shock when he died on 1st June, unexpectedly and within 4 hours of having a cold drink and a Magnum with me at 4.30 p.m.

I have had so many cards, e-mails and phone calls and he will be greatly missed. He was much loved.'



▶ **Tony and Anne Merriman**
© Anne Merriman

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the FBMGA or Bristol Culture

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