



ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives
Registered charity no.276777

www.friendsofbmga.org.uk

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**Friends of BMGA, c/o The Chair, 37 The Mill House.
Ferry Street, Bristol BS1 6HH**

www.friendsofbmga.org.uk

Chair's Report

The Friends continue to be in a very strong position financially, thanks largely to the kindness of some late members who remembered us in their wills. This year we have received a substantial bequest from Brian Toms. These additional funds mean that we are even better placed to support the museum. For members to remember us when they write their wills is an affirmation of what we and the museum are doing, and of the real sense of friendship and belonging that they found in the many events we run.

In January, as agreed at our 2024 AGM, we increased subscription rates from £22 to £30 for single membership and from £32 to £40 for family membership. Going some way to offset the increased cost for members, discussions with the museum led to the issue of a discount voucher – at no cost to the Friends - which we sent out with the June newsletter. The discount has to be limited to comply with Gift Aid rules but if this year's trial is successful we hope to repeat it in future years.

Our most significant challenge remains that those of us currently taking responsibility for one or more the many roles needed for an effective organisation will sooner or later move on and there are currently not enough members expressing an interest in taking on those roles either now or in the future.

Despite this, we have run a varied and interesting programme raising an impressive total of very nearly £20,000. Without the Events Group, led by Mary Bailey, the Friends would be unrecognisable as the organisation we all know and love, so I cannot thank them enough. Please let Mary know if you would like to learn what might be involved if you joined the Group, or even just helped support one or two events a year.

The Treasurer's Report lists the ways in which some of our funds have been used this year to support the work of Bristol Museums Galleries & Archives: many of them have been highlighted in more detail in our newsletter and on our website or have been the subject of one of our Saturday talks.

Newsletter and communications

Our newsletter continues to be vital in keeping us connected with all our members, not just those who join us for events. In October 2024 it was Highly Commended in the national Newsletter Awards run by BAFM, the British Association of Friends of Museums. Editors Tim and Ann Wood do a wonderful job of putting together each fully-illustrated edition and making it so enjoyable to read; many thanks to them both for their skill and hard work, to our many contributors of articles and photographs, and to Mary Bailey and Richard Avery who are responsible for printing, enveloping and dispatch. We are investigating the practicalities of making the newsletter available electronically to those members who actively choose that approach. That would reduce our costs, particularly postage, and allow us to use more of our funds to support the museums service. The print version of the newsletter would continue to be produced and posted to all other members.

Working with the museums service

Our relationship with the whole of the museum team continues to be key to what we do as Friends, and we are grateful to staff across the service for their continued enthusiastic support. I know that in return they appreciate not just our financial and practical contribution but also our "moral support". When in January Bristol City Council proposed reducing the public opening of the Archives search room by one day to three days a week to reduce

costs we issued a media release highlighting the negative impact this would have on researchers and members of the public. The proposal was approved by Full Council despite concerns expressed by us and others, but we helped to raise the issues in the public consciousness.

Beth Cutter and Caroline Booth-Morris, who job-share the role of Development Manager, have remained our primary touch-point with the museum this year and one (or occasionally both) of them have come to all our committee meetings. They have been supportive in all sorts of ways and we are grateful for their ongoing support.

Our financial contribution continues to be valued by the Service, and we are able to help with minimal bureaucracy. For larger amounts, our seed funding can unlock national funds from, for example, the Art Fund, the V&A, and private trusts, often more than doubling the value of our contribution. The availability of our funds therefore makes a very real difference to the Service and to the individual members of staff we support.

This was certainly the case when, in mid-June, it was announced by Sotheby's that JMW Turner's first exhibited oil painting, long lost, had been re-discovered and was of Hotwells. At the museum's request the Friends promised up to £300k towards the cost of bidding to acquire it, which along with the £109k raised by the museum's "Bring Turner Home" crowdfunder campaign unlocked very significant commitments from national funders and meant the museum was able to put together a serious bid several times higher than the auctioneers' top estimate. Sadly the museum were still outbid, but the generous bequests we have received over the last few years enabled us to commit sufficient funds for our pledge to be pivotal in enabling the museum to put together a credible bid.

The Executive Committee

I would like to thank all the officers and committee members for their commitment and hard work behind the scenes. Special appreciation is due to our officers: Katherine Martin our Secretary; Robert Walters our Treasurer; and Richard Avery our Membership Secretary. Also to Steve Sparks, who has been shadowing Robert's role as treasurer so we now have effective back-up, and Clive Burlton who is taking the lead in investing our growing funds. The committee (with the exception of Robert) have met monthly in person throughout the year. Thanks, too, to all the volunteers who are not part of the committee or the Events Group but whose work is vital to our success.

Managing our Reserves

Prompted by our growing funds, the Executive Committee have reviewed the Reserves Policy and approved amendments to it. The changes included the appointment of an Investment Lead (Clive Burlton) from within the Committee to oversee the Trust's investments which may now include equities if appropriate.

In order to improve and simplify administration, and give a greater choice of products, fixed-term and fixed interest deposits will be made under the CAF (Charities Aid Foundation) Deposit Platform operated by Flagstone Group Ltd. Investments in any one institution will not exceed £85,000, which is the maximum amount that can be protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

The Future

We are in a stronger position financially than we have ever been. Thanks to our loyal membership and to all our officers, committee & Events Group members and other

volunteers, – and supportive staff from the museums service – I am confident we shall continue to thrive in the coming year.

Online booking has grown in popularity with members, and further development is in hand to make it even more effective, and in particular to make it less onerous for our already stretched volunteers to administer. To maintain and grow our activities we need to recruit new members to the Events Group and volunteers interested in shadowing and later taking on all the key roles essential to our success. If you think you might be able to help, while at the same time extending your social circle and having the satisfaction of supporting such a good cause, please let me know in person or by email.

Sue Thurlow
Chair

Treasurer's Report

This has been a successful year. Total subscriptions have increased in spite of an increase in the subscription rate and we are grateful to Richard Avery for his assiduous work in collecting them. Thanks, too, to Peter Newley for claiming the gift aid and to Geoffrey Clements for reviewing our accounts.

Mary Bailey's events team have provided a varied series of outings and lectures and increased our funds by £20,000.

We were asked by the Museum to provide £300,000 towards Bristol's bid for the early JMW Turner painting of Hotwells. We had this ready on 30 June for the auction on 2 July, which explains the large amount of liquid assets in our Balance Sheet. In the event the Museum was outbid.

We received a generous donation from our Patron Max Hebditch and a legacy from the late Brian Toms of £108,416, for which we are most grateful. Other sundry donations were also received.

The Executive Committee has adopted a revised Reserves policy. Details are in the Chair's Report.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MUSEUMS 2024/25 £

Contribution to Sounds of the South West project	2,355
Half funding of photographic print <i>Wistman's Wood, Dartmoor</i> by Nancy Holt	9,250
Port of Bristol Authority Rules for Crane Drivers	372
Orangutan death mask from Bristol Zoo	451
<i>Pyronaut</i> repairs	16,406
Seed funding for video art: <i>The Neon Hieroglyph</i> by Tai Shani	5,500
Kings Weston Roman villa (interpretation resources)	3,320
2,000 copies of children's book <i>Is That Doris?</i>	3,665
Winter lectures 2024/25	2,516
Transcription of Robert Long manuscript on wildlife of Jamaica	5,146
Two contemporary Native North American glass sculptures	18,832
Clayfield-Ireland family daguerreotypes	1,344
Ten drawings from Rachel Hemming Bray residency	<u>1,000</u>
Total	<u><u>70,158</u></u>

COMMITMENTS TO FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS £

Video art	5,954
Facsimiles of documents for display at M Shed	1,344
Contribution to Sounds of the South West project	7,646
<i>Pyronaut</i> repairs (balance remaining)	13,594
Kings Weston Roman villa (interpretation Resources - balance remaining)	4,480
Glass Gallery redisplay	25,000
Photographic prints by Hashem Shakeri	6,990
Wickwar Hoards	9,000
Contribution to purchase of <i>The Rising Squall, Hotwells</i> , by JMW Turner	300,000

SUMMARY ACCOUNTS FOR 2024/25

INCOME	<u>£000</u>	<u>£000</u>
Donations and legacies	110	
Activities for generating funds	20	
Bank interest	18	
Subscriptions	15	
Other	<u>2</u>	
	165	

EXPENDITURE	<u>£000</u>
Grants to museum	70
Administration	<u>10</u>
	80

SURPLUS for year	85
SURPLUS brought forward from 2024/5	<u>473</u>
SURPLUS carried forward	<u>558</u>

BALANCE SHEET	<u>£000</u>
Bank Term Deposits	216
Deposit account	239
Current account	100
Other	<u>3</u>
	<u>558</u>

Full accounts are available on the website.

Robert Walters
Treasurer

Membership Secretary’s Report

Membership numbers have fallen again this year and as at 30 June 2025 we had 312 single members (323 last year) and 250 (300) joint members. In part this was the effect of our increasing the cost of membership in January. Also, with our membership skewed towards the older age bracket, it is inevitable that some will not continue in membership for a variety of reasons. It is encouraging to note that we have seen 27 new memberships (35 members) in the year.

84% of the current membership have completed Gift Aid declarations, enabling us to boost our income, and our thanks are due to Peter Newley for processing our claims.

Richard Avery
Membership Secretary

Events Group Report

First, I must express our sadness at the death of Gary Gostelow in May this year. He was a pivotal member of the Events Group for so many years until his illness prevented him from taking part any further, and his contribution to the success of the Group was huge. He is much missed.

This has been a year of successes (mostly) and failures (a few). On the plus side there has been a good response for our Behind the Scenes visits, with Carol Ouvry and Sally Dore working hard to arrange extra visits to cope with demand. A couple of our talks have been a sell-out, as have a couple of our coach trips. However, we had to cancel two talks at the behest of the speakers concerned - but were able to re-schedule them - and also had to cancel a trip - to Nature in Art at Twigworth - because there was not enough interest. Some of our other trips have had low numbers, making them only just viable, and our spring lecture and lunch with Fran Coles had a very disappointing response, so we shall discontinue those. The challenge, as always, is to provide a programme which appeals to as wide a range of interests as possible. Carol Lear and Richard Avery have undertaken all the organisation of the coach trips, while Catherine Dixon has carried out the administration of the talks with her usual efficiency. Our thanks go to all the Group members for giving up their time to arrange the programme of events, a full list of which is given below.

We welcome suggestions and feedback on the programme and also any offers of help in organising events. Please do get in touch with me if you have comments or think you would like to be part of the organising team:
events@friendsofbmga.org.uk or 07779 244308.

List of events

1 Holiday

Visit to Glasgow

11 Trips

Stanway House, Gloucestershire

Chavenage House, Tetbury

American Museum in Bath

Museum of Royal Worcester Porcelain

Salisbury Museum

Cardiff Castle

The Wilson, Cheltenham

Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry

Court Barn Museum, Chipping Campden

Wightwick Manor, Wolverhampton

Lydiard Park, Swindon

15 Behind the Scenes Visits

Blaise House and Hamlet – two visits

Gallery tour of 'Truth In Nature'

Sparks Bristol, Broadmead

Tour of Bristol Beacon

University of Bristol Theatre Collection – two visits

The New Room, Broadmead

The Lord Mayor's Chapel – two visits

Underfall Yard – two visits

Trymwood Studios

Limbs and Things

The Observatory, Clifton

7 Talks

Dyrham's Shakespeare Folio

Purchases in Japan for the Eastern Art collection

The Cossins family of Redland Court

Maps of Bristol

Pioneers – the First Policewomen of Bristol

Bristol Tramways 150th anniversary

James Cowles Prichard of The Red Lodge

2 Lectures and Lunch

Summer lecture and lunch, Trinity College – Lucy Bailey

Spring lecture and lunch, M Shed – Fran Coles

4 Public events

Bristol Harbour Festival – jigsaws, cakes and preserves sale

Bristol Archaeology Festival

Docks Heritage weekend – cake sale

Concert to celebrate 100 years of Bristol Archives

Mary Bailey

Chair, Events Group

Volunteering Report

Once again our volunteers came out in force with jigsaws, cakes and preserves for our stall in L Shed at the Harbour Festival in July 2024. We no longer sell books as it has become too burdensome to organise their transport but the quantity of jigsaws and cakes almost made up for it. The final sales figure was £845 – an excellent result.

Bristol Archaeology Festival at Blaise took place in mid-July 2024, master-minded efficiently as always by Kate Iles. We had a stall displaying food eaten by the Romano-British people during the period when Kingsweston Roman Villa was built (late 3rd century AD). There was much interest from families in the rustic bread, pungent garlic cheese, cabbage salad and honey cake on display with other items consumed at that time. Thanks are due to Sue Pears, Sue Pettit and Richard Avery for their time helping on the stall and to Sue Thurlow, who took up her usual position on the welcome desk for the whole day. If anyone is interested in joining the cooks in the Archaeology Food Group do let Kate Iles know: kate.iles@bristol.gov.uk. It is interesting and

good fun exploring recipes from different ages and trying them out for this event.

A further baking opportunity occurred in October for Docks Heritage Weekend, when the dockside is transformed with re-enactments of cargoes being unloaded by the cranes on to trucks on the quay. Our volunteers got busy again and we had plenty of cakes to sell, making a surplus of just over £640. Our grateful thanks go to everyone who baked and helped on the stall.

Mary Bailey

Harbourside Working Exhibits Report

What a year it has been and our team of volunteers still continue to pull out all the stops.

But first I have to thank Rodney, a stalwart of the team, who has had to step down due to ill health. We miss his constant but unnoticed attention to keeping on top of all the mundane jobs: from checking vehicle and lamp batteries to the servicing of scissor-lifts, to ticket-producing. We have had to find many volunteers to cover his role. Our grateful thanks for his years of toil go to Rodney, and we know he is on the end of a phone for answers.

Moving on, *Henbury* is struggling with the coal issue that affects the whole steam heritage sector. Having suffered severely damaged firebars, *Henbury* needs them replaced in order to continue operating. The smoke issue is also a problem and we are about to try a new product that, hopefully, will see us survive in the future.

A better future is on the cards as we have started work at A Bond to reinstate the railway, which last ran to Butterfly

Junction in 2015. This, of course, was displaced for the Metro bus scheme and then the chocolate path subsided. We still have Vauxhall Bridge work in progress, and many hundreds of new sleepers have arrived for the reinstatement of the line for public operating.

Mayflower has had its bottom repaired and painted but we are not quite ready with the boiler; perhaps a Christmas steaming. Meanwhile *John King* and *Pyronaut* continue to operate our boat programme for the public.

The steam crane is on the back burner at present requiring the time to remove the boiler for major repairs.

Electric cranes: new shock-absorbing rubbers for the jibs are on the menu to replace the existing ones, which have reached the end of their shelf life. Good news is that crane 29, for the first time since 1975, has moved the jib under its own power. This just leaves the hoist motor to lift the hook up and down to bring the crane back to operation. However, there is still much to be done before it can join the other cranes as a fully-functioning exhibit.

For those who frequent our ticket office, we now have lights in readiness for the darker days of autumn.

Thanks again to the Friends for all the help you continue to give in support of the Working Exhibits.

Chris Ecclestone

Working Exhibits Manager

Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives Committees

2024-2025

Executive Committee

Officers:

Sue Thurlow – Chair

Katherine Martin – Secretary

Robert Walters – Treasurer

Richard Avery – Membership Secretary

Elected Members:

Lucy Bailey

Mary Bailey

Ray Barnett

Clive Burlton

Susan Hibberd

Carol Lear

Toby Pinn

Sir Stephen Sparks

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives' Representatives:

Beth Cutter/Caroline Booth Morris – Joint Development Managers

Events Group

Mary Bailey – Chair

Richard Avery

Catherine Dixon

Sally Dore

Carol Lear

Carol Ouvry