



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

JANUARY 2023

It seems hard to believe that twelve months have passed since I last penned my report for Winter 2022. Another Christmas come and gone and a whole new year virtually untouched. We have had some really cold days that have tested the resolve when it comes to managing the household thermostat but that said there is still something special about living in a country with clearly defined seasons. Little can compare with the pleasure of a brisk walk across the Downs on a bright frosty day. Heavy coats, sturdy boots, a woolly hat and home for a hot drink. The days are already extending and before we know it, we will have Spring knocking at the door and the first of our new bulbs breaking the surface at the Thomas Memorial.

This time last year I wrote about the Downs Committee being under sustained pressure from several sources about the way they were managing the Downs. I reported the comments of Cllr. Christine Townsend including a call for the Merchant Venturers to be excluded from the Downs Committee and that only those with a mandate to represent the people should make decisions on how the Downs are managed.

The Downs Committee heeded the criticism and in response agreed to review its governance procedures and commissioned a wide - ranging public consultation. The consultation concluded that there was no real appetite to change the remit of the Downs Committee or to amend the Downs Act, but there were calls for changes to be made. In the Autumn issue of the Magazine, I reported that in November the Downs Committee had accepted a proposal to explore the possibility of forming a partnering arrangement with a suitable organisation and you will be aware from recent updates that FOD+AG is that preferred partner. We are now in regular talks with Downs Committee representatives as we seek to agree a way forward that will work for both parties and more importantly work for the Downs. Later in the Magazine you will see an extract from a City Council budget report. The report paints an alarming picture of yet more cuts to the already depleted Parks service. Cuts that may well impact directly upon the day-to-day activities of the Downs. This is why the

partnering arrangement is so important to the Downs. It will permit us to seek charitable status and explore income generating opportunities not available to the Downs Committee or the City Council.

Early in December it was something of a coup to welcome the Lord Mayor, Cllr. Paula O'Rourke, to our AGM as our guest speaker. This is the first time that the chair of the Downs Committee has attended an AGM. Over forty members attended on a very cold night at Redland Bowls Club and listened to Cllr. O'Rourke speak very favourably about the work of FOD+AG and described with great enthusiasm the new proposed partnering arrangement.

As Chair I was able to update members on our current activities, talk about future plans and to thank the many individuals and groups that have helped us throughout the year.

The AGM provided an opportunity for Committee member Dave Jones to present to the assembled members a revised work plan and a scheme to appoint Downs Ambassadors or monitors. The Ambassadors will have informal responsibilities for specific areas of the Downs and report observations or concerns to a central point. At the AGM the FOD+AG committee, as required by our constitution, stood down, but reassuringly all expressed a wish to stand for a further year. As no further nominations were received a vote was not required and all were reconfirmed for the coming year. The officers of the FOD+AG committee were confirmed as Robin Haward -Hon. Vice chair, Bob Bell Hon. Treasurer and I have the honour of serving as your Chair for a further year. We are hoping to appoint a committee secretary in the near future.

To conclude members, 2023 may well prove to be a pivotal year for FOD+AG, the Downs and for all our Parks and Open Spaces. The Downs is in some measure more fortunate in that it is in a position to have some control over its evolution. As we advance into a brand-new year it is the intention of your committee to achieve the best possible outcomes and to wish you all a Happy New Year.

Robert Westlake Chair *robertjwestlake@gmail.com*

FOD+AG ANTI-LITTER ACTIVITIES

VOLUNTEERING ON THE DOWNS 2023

Deep Litter Collection

Saturday 4th February

Saturday 25th February

Saturday 25th March - a general clean-up in a more open location

Please sign up, if you would like to join us in the usual way via email to martinwerdnacollins@gmail.com or by phone on 0117 924 9435.

The more of us who help, the less the burden on anyone. Martin Collins

Dead Hedging

Protect the wild flower meadows by restoring the 'dead hedges' that guide runners and walkers away from sites. Do come and join us...it makes a huge difference to the wildflower meadow!

Tools provided - bring gloves and secateurs if you have them.

DATES

29th January 9.30am.

5th February 2.00pm.(note time)

12th February 9.30am.

19 February 9.30am.

To sign up please email Robin robinhaward@blueyonder.co.uk



Fox strolling through a garden by the Downs at 2pm December 5th!

THE GREEN FLAG AWARD

Earlier in the century Bristol Parks Department had an aspiration to achieve Green Flag status for some of its locations.

The Green Flag Award scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world.

In 2007 two sites, the Downs and Troopers Hill were successful in achieving this coveted award and over the years Bristol Parks increased the number of Green Flag locations achieving a very creditable eleven sites.

In 2013/14 Government imposed budget cuts led to large numbers of management posts within Bristol City Council being lost. After further review it was decided not to enter any Bristol locations in the Green Flag Award Scheme from then on. The main reason was the administrative burden (and cost) in preparing and submitting documentation entries and then organising the judges' visits, with significant staff input being required for each site. Quite simply the Parks Department could no longer afford it.

The scheme imposes 27 criteria, including: Being a welcoming place, providing a healthy, safe and secure site, must be well maintained, able to demonstrate effective environmental management and biodiversity, manage landscape and heritage issues, have a comprehensive management plan and active community involvement. It is this last criterion that brought the Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge into being. Without a Friends group Green Flag could not be achieved. The scheme marks heavily for effective local community involvement and FOD+AG has stepped up to the mark ever since. If you are near the Downs café you may have noticed a lonely flag pole near the road-side. That is where our hard-won Green Flag used to fly.

Should we in the near future achieve a closer working arrangement with the Downs Committee, then it must be an aspiration to see that Green Flag flying proudly once again. Robert Westlake

You can read more about the scheme at www.greenflagaward.org



DOWN'S AMBASSADORS



BCC BUDGET PROPOSALS NOVEMBER 2022 PARKS SERVICE

Briefing Document for Park Groups & Your Park Trustees

On 11th Nov 2022, the Council launched its consultation on its Budget for 2023/24 and beyond. The proposals include large cuts to the Parks Service.

Background

The proposals presented in the consultation amount to £45.7 million of cuts over the next five years across all Council services. The Council's financial challenge is significant (at 11th Nov the budget gap was estimated to be up to £87.6m) and means they are likely to need to make more cuts beyond these to bridge the remaining estimated gap. It is important to remember that a cut of £45.7m to the budget is a reduction of spending of £45.7m in that year and every succeeding year. If the Council had an extra £45.7m that would only delay the cuts by one year.

National Government funding is putting all Councils in an impossible position. Around two thirds of our Council's budget is spent on Adult & Children's Social Care, the increasing needs for this without adequate increases in Government funding are driving the Council's financial position. This is an issue that is impacting all Councils who have responsibility for social care. It is not yet clear what impact the Government's statement of 17th Nov will have on the Bristol City Council's budget position. To achieve a 20% cut in the Council's overall budget (which is being suggested might be needed of the next few years) means cutting well over 50% of the remaining departments' budgets. Within that, there are certain statutory services that the Council has to provide, for example it has to continue to collect household waste. Provision of parks & green spaces is not a statutory service; the Council does not have to provide parks. If cuts are not made to the Parks Service, they will have to be made elsewhere to achieve a balanced budget; while we need to argue the case for parks & green spaces it is important to remember the overall position.

Likely Impact on parks & green spaces.

It is understood that the proposed cuts have been imposed on the

Parks Service by the Council. It is a top-down process. Having been told the extent of the cuts they have to achieve; the Parks Service has been told it now has to find a way to make it work. There is therefore no clear indication yet of what the impact of these cuts will be but we do know that a large share of the costs of the Parks Service are staff costs. A cut of 25% in spending is likely to be reflected in a similar scale of cuts in staff numbers, this would be at all levels.



The impacts described below include a degree of speculation but are based on what we have heard and experience of how parks & green space maintenance works in Bristol and elsewhere and we believe are likely outcomes. 'Stop, reduce, change or pause activities to make savings and reduce staff costs' Reduced staff costs mean reduced staff numbers, this will mean less work will be done, less grass cutting, less bin-emptying, less repairs, fewer people to answer queries, fewer people to plan changes (for example to enhance biodiversity) fewer people to support park groups and other volunteers, fewer people to assess the likely impact of events or activities planned in parks and green spaces by other organisations. We do not know exactly what

the £1.9m investment in 2023/24 will be spent on, but we understand that much of it will cover redundancy payments, some may be used for purchasing new equipment, such as that necessary to cut longer grass. It is certain that the current work on the Parks & Green Spaces Strategy and Managing for Nature will be delayed. Leaving grass to grow long and then collecting the arisings when it is cut for ecological benefit is expensive – plans to increase the areas where this is done may be dropped. There is a suggestion that volunteers can take up some of the slack and do more, however, volunteers are likely to lose heart if basic maintenance isn't done and, in any case, will in most cases, not have the time, skills, training or equipment to take on maintenance activities. Further they will not want to be in a position of taking on work previously done by staff who have been made redundant. Volunteering should provide the 'cherry on the cake' adding extras to the service provided by the Council. An impact of the cuts may be to reduce rather than increase volunteering in parks and green spaces, particularly if support staff are made redundant. Extracted from a document prepared by Rob Acton-Campbell on behalf of the Bristol Parks Forum Committee.

A copy of the full report can be found at:

www.bristolparksforum.org.uk/BudgetBriefing301122.pdf

It is clear from the report above that the very future of our parks is under severe threat. As a consequence, it becomes ever more critical that the ongoing talks on a partnering arrangement between FOD+AG and the Downs Committee progresses smoothly and without delay. If FOD+AG is able to attain charitable status it will mean that grants and other funding opportunities can be pursued. This is an option not available to the Downs Committee or the Parks Department. An agreed arrangement will also permit FOD+AG a much greater say over future Downs governance.

RJW

SITE FOR PLANNED RETIREMENT AND LEISURE SCHEME SET TO BECOME TEMPORARY REFUGEE ACCOMMODATION

A building on the former site of St Christopher's school is set to become temporary housing for refugees living in the city.

Investment firm FORE Partnership and care operator Amicala acquired the former grounds of St Christopher's School at Westbury Park last year for an undisclosed sum. Earlier this year the joint venture submitted plans to transform the site, which borders Clifton Downs, into an £85m retirement community and leisure hub.

While the companies await the outcome of the application, they and developer Socius are set to repurpose vacant buildings at the site, starting with the refurbished Hampton Lodge, into homes for people from Afghanistan, Sudan, Russia, and Ukraine who have been granted refugee status.

The building will offer fully furnished one-bedroom homes, where residents will have a minimum lease of 12 months and be offered at least 3 months' notice ahead of any future development works commencing. Those staying in the building will receive support from social enterprise ACH, an organisation dedicated to breaking down the barriers of entry to work and housing which refugee and migrant communities face.

Mike Dodd, project director at Socius, said: 'As a partnership with FORE and Amicala, we are deeply committed to making a positive impact in the communities we work in, both socially and environmentally'.

RJW

Source MSN

Response from SCAN??

SAVE BRISTOL ZOO.

On December 8th 2022 local press sources reported on a campaign to save Bristol Zoo and to reopen the iconic site at Clifton. The campaign, which is being supported by a petition already signed by nearly 3000 people, claims Bristol Zoo has misled people about the reasons it took a decision to close down and move entirely to the Wild Place site near Cribbs Causeway.

Notable campaigners include Alastair Sawday, the co-founder of Sustrans, and Iain Boyd, National Trust and led by local musician Tom Jones. A 50-page report into the zoo's finances and plans have been unveiled and questions the reasons for the decisions that led to the closure last September. Bristol Zoo has defended its decision saying it was proud of the plans for the old site, and the new site at the Wild Place would be more closely linked to its conservation work.

In 2021 the zoo revealed it would be closing the Zoo Gardens and moving to its Wild Place location at Cribbs Causeway. The zoo finally closed its doors in early September 2022, and the move to the Wild Place is ongoing, with a big relaunch planned in 2024.

Plans for the development of the Clifton site are proving controversial in some quarters. Plans include 196 flats but retaining public access to some parts of the gardens. The Zoo said the development would fund the work at Wild Place.

Tom Jones and the Save Bristol Zoo campaign say there is an alternative, which is that the zoo reimagines a new kind of visitor attraction. Mr Jones said there was 'much to questions about the Zoo's position, strategy and actions. Obviously the Zoo suffered like everywhere else during Covid restrictions, but they always attracted over 500,000 visitors each year up until Covid. The financial and visitor numbers do not support the closure. With sufficient will, there seems no good reason the Society shouldn't continue to operate the Clifton site'.

Brian Zimmerman, the zoo's Director of Conservation and Science defended plans to redevelop the Clifton site. 'We are proud of the quality of the proposals submitted for the Clifton site', said Mr Zimmerman. 'The design brings much needed housing for Bristol,

with 196 high-quality homes - of which 20 per cent will be affordable - located mainly in areas where there are already built structures’.

In a statement Bristol Zoo stated, ‘These plans will secure the site as a vital community asset, so everyone can enjoy its heritage for many years to come. Approximately 80% of the site will be retained as open space and the gardens will be accessible to the public for free, for the first time since the site opened to the public in 1836. Historic England has called this “a significant heritage benefit”, saying there is much to admire in the proposed development which they feel, on the whole, is a sensitive response to its historic context.”

RJW



In June 2022 Clifton & Hotwells Improvement Society commented on the Zoo project as follows:

CHIS strongly opposes these depressingly unimaginative and potentially destructive proposals which are entirely unacceptable in their current form.

The scheme includes half a mile of modern blocks of flats several storeys high adjacent to all the Zoo boundaries which will dominate and overpower the neighbouring streets. This is especially the case along the west perimeter which would face the monolithic block proposed for the West Car Park site, permanently altering the feel, landscape, treescape, and skyscape of the Conservation Area. The scheme takes little, if any, account of the heritage, character and sense of space that makes this historic neighbourhood special, if not unique. Despite strong concerns expressed during various public consultations, it has been the experience of residents that most of their concerns have either been dealt with only at the most basic or cosmetic level or just completely ignored.

The following points summarise some of the most blatantly pernicious aspects of the proposals:

1. 201 dwellings represent a massively over-dense development of the site.
2. Given the provision of only 100 parking spaces the circular access drive is likely to be permanently littered with cars and so appear even less discreet than the plans suggest.
3. The potential impact on the Conservation Area is poorly considered. In particular, the impact on the surrounding listed buildings and gardens of a development so monolithic in its scale and massing has not been justified. Especially appalling in this respect is the six-storey block on the northern boundary.
4. The proposed terracing is not appropriate in this area.

The loss of trees will be compounded by the inevitable damage to the root systems of many other trees by infrastructure work.
Source: Clifton & Hotwells Improvement Society



A GENTLE STROLL ON LADIES MILE



The date of this image of Ladies Mile Road is unknown but the elegance of the walkers suggests around the 1930's. Note the absence of traffic and how relaxed the group looks. Try this today and you would be leaping for your life. Isn't about time the Downs Committee gave serious consideration to closing Ladies Mile to through traffic?

RJW

THE ASH PATH

Many people are puzzled when I refer to the path across the Granny Downs as the Ash Path. It may be worth recording again the story I was told by old Mrs. Collingwood.

About 40 years ago I suddenly realised that many of the old people who contributed so much to making Westbury Park a good, mixed community would not be with us much longer. They were mostly in their late 80s and 90s and had known Westbury Park since its earliest days. So I rushed around asking then if I could interview them. I didn't do things with any expertise (interrupting their answers far too much) and spare time was limited because we had a young family. But I managed to record Mrs. Collingwood, Bert Spiller (age 100), Miss Bird and Mrs. Bunting. Mrs Collingwood talked most about the Downs: wide, open spaces of great silence (save for horses' hooves) and farming (sheep and hay-making) and recreation (football, cricket, Sunday walks to Sea Walls and political meetings at the top of Blackboy). She explained the story of the Ash Path.

When she was a girl in the late 1880s, the whole area of the Granny Downs was clay pits where good clay for bricks and pots was excavated. The workings filled with water in winter and anyone walking across them was sure to get muddy or even fall in. No big problem until children in the first-built streets (Etloe, Albert, Victoria, Berkeley) needed to attend school. School attendance from 5 to 10 was made compulsory in 1880. Westbury Park School was not opened until 1893 so all the children had to walk across the clay pits, morning and afternoon, to attend St. John's School at the top of Blackboy Hill. It was a hazardous journey. In 1891 there were 62 children under 11 in Westbury Park.

After several serious accidents, parents decided it would be better to make a causeway across the clay. Ash was obtained from factory furnaces and household fires. A straight, safe path was constructed. No more accidents. Lime trees were planted along the edges to ensure the route was clearly marked. The route was always called The Ash Path

Barry Williamson

Postscript: I heard recently on the radio that there is a simple method of calculating the age of a tree: measure the circumference of the trunk about a metre from the ground and divide by 2.5 to get roughly the age of the tree. So I went out to the Ash Path to do this on the lime trees along the path. Several people stopped to ask me: a) what I was doing; b) why I was doing it; c) whether I needed help.

TIP: if you want to engage with strangers and make new friends, do something weird like hugging a tree and a few people will ask what you are doing (not many because we are British, aren't we and we don't interfere do we?). The answer in every case was 130 to 140 years so they were planted about 1880 or 1890.

The Ash Path
with limes in
May.



**OLD WINTRY PHOTOS
OF THE DOWNS**



THE GRANNY DOWNS -The golden trail: autumn 2022

13th September. I'm walking under this yew, the warmest of all trees to shelter beneath. Berries are gorgeous backlit. I can hear a bluetit, but not making much of a sustained effort this morning.

15th September. Boiling black skies and a dragonfly! A squirrel starts to nibble a conker and then tosses it away in disgust. Later I look among the conkers and a lot have been nibbled, just a little. So little wildlife eats conkers, deer and wild boar but the Downs is not full of either. Do you remember the story of the ghostly herd of deer on the Downs? The Evening Post really enjoyed itself on that one.

17th September. I pass a robin and his singing perks up a bit after I compliment him. Or he could be her. Both sexes sing and they look alike.

21st September. The high winds ensure that familiar bonking sound as conkers fall on cars, and one woman tells me she is being attacked by conkers!!

25th September. Loads of acorns here, wildlife likes acorns.

4th October. The sycamores are becoming coats of many colours. Also this morning I discover something else astonishing about conkers. Each conker has a unique watermark, but when I looked into several of the cases I see that there is an image of a tree or a wood in them. Astonishing. Its as though the tree has been dreaming of forests. I actually discovered this at the craft table in Meadowcare Nursing Home where we were doing a session on autumn fruits. We were very excited.

10th October. High winds and trees roaring and rustling but despite all the leaves falling, I cannot catch one.

11th October. This is the early morning when the trees light up the sky, rather than the other way round. They turn on their own lights like torches and so many have golden shadows. For some reason I run my hands through the silver birch leaves and experience the unbearable lightness of their being, quivering in the sunshine.

14th October. What is this about? One, two, three trees with squirrels in them and the squirrels are ALL barking. No jays or magpies visible but the squirrels are very angry and persistent. Aha! Mystery solved,

there is a cat on the Granny Downs, an unusual occurrence. Squirrels don't bark at dogs. Dogs can't climb trees, cats can although it's not recommended.

20th October. It's almost guaranteed to see a jay collecting an acorn and scarpering off to hide it. Huge abundance of acorns.

21st October. Oh the sunshine on the yellow and apple green lime leaves, and so much goldfinch song up there that surely the leaves are singing too.

28th October. A shaggy ink cap fairy ring. I stand in the middle and make a wish, never one to pass up an opportunity!

29th October. Exquisite sunshine. My grandchildren are here, trying and succeeding in catching falling leaves so that they can make a wish, too. And the ladybird tree! In the middle of the Granny Downs, the tall tree stump – hundreds of ladybirds on it in the sun. I presume they are usually hibernating under the bark. Ladybirds of all colour combinations.

1st November. In this mist and golden points of light, every glade, every little landscape is Camelot. I expect unicorns.

3rd November. The crows are tossing themselves into the air and tumbling down like five stones. Starlings and goldfinches windsurfing.

11th November. I return to the ladybird tree, but no sign of any ladybirds now, despite the sun shining on the bark. The silver birch is now a golden fountain. I want to sit under it with my unicorn and catch golden coins in a bucket.

14th November. Nuthatches noisy this morning. Can't see them. Folk wander past and wonder why I am looking up. Two people ask me but I think they are none the wiser when I answer.

22nd November. A robin is singing in this dome made of blackberry suckers. The bird has maximum visibility and protection. The life of birds is one of risk assessment, the wrong move could be fatal.

26th November. Our local jays are restrained in their protests compared with those in Leigh Woods. There, they are the gatekeepers to the woods and shout off with their head every time anyone enters. The Woodland Trust calls them highly intelligent loudmouths.

12th December. Winter is really here. A magpie crosses my path and

has an intact fatball in its beak.

16th December. And yet there are still leaves to fall...

17th December. A white, frosty wonderland. But why does every blackbird I pass this morning look so indignant.

19th December. Rain dissolves the white wonderland. And yet still fall the leaves...

20th December. Hundreds of starlings play in the wind and rain and flutter to get the rain off their wings as they fly. They look like swifts. Marvellous.

25th December. Wet, muddy. Three blackbirds and a robin. Plus a couple of daisies.

27th December. A magpie ballet, tails quivering and expressive in the music of the wind.

30th December. One grey wagtail, just the one. Attracted to the lake under the birch tree. Exquisite bird. Gift of the year.

31st December. The loudest bird call I have heard on the Granny Downs! Even allowing for it to be amplified by the wet air. I wait. Is this a human being having some kind of joke. Another loud call, and from the top of this horse chestnut. And now, hundreds of starlings from all over, heading to this chestnut. Was that a call to action?

So dark and wet. And for now, the lights have gone out in Camelot.

Geraldine@geraldinetaylor.co.uk



THE CLIFTON SUSPENSION BRIDGE

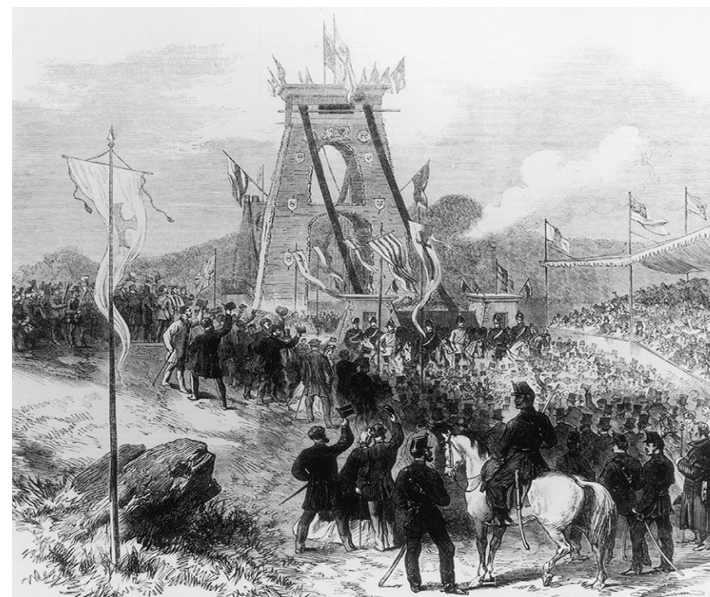
Brunel is rightly credited with the design of the Clifton Bridge but he is not the only individual who had a hand in spanning the Avon. It was Thomas Vicks a wealthy Bristol wine merchant who offered the original sum of £1000 funding for a bridge to cross the Avon.

Brunel's design had been won at competition but the renowned engineer Thomas Telford, who had been retained to oversee the project, thought the span of the whole gorge too long, hence the abutments that support the towers.

It was Sir Greville Smyth the nearby owner of Ashton Court Estate that paid for the road widening that would permit carriages to pass one another.

Brunel never lived long enough to see his bridge finished, the final works were completed by engineer Sir John Hawkshaw and William Henry Barlow and finally opened to great fanfare in December 1864. A crowd of around 150,000 people gathered to watch the formal opening ceremony, with a massive procession of soldiers marching out from the centre of Bristol played along by 16 bands with flags flying everywhere.

RJW



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The news item below from over 100 years ago illustrates that nothing really changes. It's just that now we have our modern-day boy racers on the Downs.

To the Editor Western Daily Press.

January 28th. 1912

CLIFTON AND DURDHAM DOWNS.

Sir, —Whilst strolling over the Downs this morning, I felt very much annoyed to see how the ground was ploughed and cut up by the galloping of horses. It is not just in one part, but it seems that they nearly go over the whole place. From what I can ascertain, very few of the horses belong to those who pay the rates, but to outsiders. I do think it ought to be put a stop to and to my mind, the horses do more damage than all the ratepayers who visit the Downs the whole year round. I was glad to see the other day that many voted against the extra proposed expenditure. Why should the struggling ratepayer be called upon pay his money for the upkeep while others who do not pay anything should be allowed so much injury? I must ask for fair play. RATEPAYER.



THE GREAT HOUSES OF THE DOWNS SPRINGFORT HOUSE. SAVILLE ROAD.



The cool clean air of Clifton and Durdham Downs has always been an attraction to the citizens of Bristol, none more so than the wealthy traders and merchants of old Bristol, many of whom made their living in that peculiarly miasmic atmosphere generated by and around the workings of the Bristol Dock.

As fortunes were made many looked to escape the noise and stench of central Bristol and established homes at the Downs on what at that time would have been open countryside. One such business baron was John Lysaght, recorded in the census of 1891 as a Civil Engineer and Iron Manufacturer. Originally from Cork, John with his wife Ellen and their children are listed as living just off the Downs in Springfort House.

The business initially employed six men and a boy. Lysaght expanded the business, buying in iron sheets and galvanising them for the expanding factory market. Demand grew quickly, and in 1869 Lysaght purchased a larger site at St Vincent's, Netham, for a new factory which by 1878 employed 400 men and produced 1000 tons of

galvanised iron sheet a month. The company also diversified into making constructional ironwork, exported around the world from Bristol. John expanded the business further and this enabled Lysaght's to produce 40,000 tons of rolled iron sheet each year. After the founder's death in 1895 the business passed to nephews in the family. Much of what was manufactured went to Australia where it was needed for prefabricated houses. The Second World War provided another chapter of success for the corrugated rolling mills with the production of Anderson air raid shelters. Made of panels of galvanised iron bolted together they were partially buried at the bottom of peoples' gardens with some still in evidence in the 1980's. Another noteworthy resident of Springfort was Sir Edward Burnett James. Born in 1857 to Stephen James who was the senior partner in James & Pierce which later merged with the Bristol Brewery Co. (Georges).

He married a daughter of Sir George Edwards and became managing director of the tobacco company Edwards Ringer & Bigg Ltd. and then a director of Imperial Tobacco Company Ltd when it was formed. In 1861 when aged only 3 he was living just a few doors away from his future wife aged 10 months in Buckingham Villas, Clifton.

Sir Edward was a tall, strongly built man with dark hair, eyes and moustache. He was considered an amiable rather retiring man, popular with all who knew him.

He was Master of the Merchant Venturers in 1895/6, Sheriff in 1900 and Lord Mayor of Bristol twice - in 1904/5 & 1907/8. He was a Conservative and was knighted on 9th July 1908 during the royal visit to open the Royal Edward Dock (when he was Lord Mayor). He died on 27th December 1927, aged 70 years at his residence, Springfort, Stoke Bishop, Bristol.

Research John Moore.

RJW

Sir Edward Burnett James 1857 – 1927



Those Winter Sundays

*Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blue black cold,
Then with cracked hands that ached
from labour in the weekday weather made
banked fire blaze. No one ever thanked him.*

*I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house.*

*Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
Of loves austere and lonely offices?*

Robert Hayden

Source: *Collected Poems of Robert Hayden*
(Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1985)

COMMITTEE:

Robert Westlake (Chair), Bob Bell, Martin Collins, Derek Catterall, Terry Hannan, Joan Gubbin, Robin Haward, Tim Clarke, Luke Hudson, & Dave Jones.

SECRETARY: position vacant - volunteer welcomed!

KEY CONTACT: Membership: mail@gubbin.co.uk

Please Note: Deadline for submissions for the Spring edition is 15th April 2023. Articles and photographs to:

fodagcontent@gmail.com

Subscriptions: £10.00 per individual or £19.00 per household per calendar year. Please ask for a standing order.

You can apply via the website: www.friendsofthedowns.org

OR

by post: The Membership Secretary, 3 Wallcroft, Durdham Park, Bristol BS6 6XJ.

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Website: <http://www.friendsofthedowns.org> The website has further information on events and a regular blog on the Downs.

Facebook: Do please join the group on Facebook, and like/share the page to spread the word. @fodagbristol.

Instagram: Friends_of_the_Downs.

Downs App: This is now working again, with grateful thanks to Emily Smithson.

DOWNS EVENTS

Join us at an event to make a presentation to Mandy Leivers: Friday 3rd February at 7.00pm. at 7 Exeter Buildings. Drinks and light refreshments.

Essential to RSVP to robinhaward@blueyonder.co.uk



FOD+AG AGM 2022



Photo: Derek Catterall