



THE ARTS  
SOCIETY  
TRAILS OF  
DISCOVERY

# **BRISTOL OLD CITY CENTRE**

Welcome to this trail.  
We hope you enjoy it as  
much as we have  
enjoyed making it!



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# BRISTOL OLD CITY



## PART ONE

There is a link at the end of the trail for more information about some of the places featured in the trail.



The Trail starts at St John on the Wall, Broad Street.

Only open between 10am - 2pm Monday to Saturday.

1. St John's dates from 1480 and is the last remaining church of the five that were in the medieval city wall. Have a look at the map of the medieval city which is in the church to see how the town looked, and then maybe attempt The Arts Society's children's trail. The answers are particularly interesting.

Click here to download the trail: <https://qrco.de/bdv9Cz>

If you are lucky and the Churches Conservation Trust volunteer is not busy, you may be able to go down into the Crypt. One of the most remarkable things to notice there is how small people were at that time.



As you leave St John's walk a short distance up Broad Street. To your left and set back between two other buildings is an unusual facade with brightly painted tiles.

## 2. Everard Printing Works. (Now the Clayton Hotel.)



It has been designated a Grade 2\* listed building.

The name EDWARD EVERARD stands out. He was a printer and this was his printing works. The building was designed by the Bristol architect Henry Williams in 1900 and the tile designs are drawn as from nature in the Art Nouveau manner by James William Neatby.

This artwork is in the entrance to the hotel



The lady illustrated in the top gable of the frontage is carrying a lamp and a 'looking glass', symbols of light and truth, to represent the ambitions of the printed word and of these print works.

The building has now recently been redesigned as a hotel but its transformation has been very sympathetic and the connection to the print world has remained.



Several works of art were commissioned to reflect the work of the print works and the city environment in which it lies.

Some of these were commissioned as a commemoration of printing techniques and practices.

It is worth remembering that Banksy is a printmaker, though we don't find any of his work here.

Walk uphill just a little way to John Street and turn left. Walk along to find commissioned artwork and graffiti at the end, by St John's churchyard.



Walk through the arch and turn left to look at the pillars before going down the slope, back towards Broad



Street. On the way look at the tiles on the ground to see, embossed in brass, some of the common phrases which were inspired by the printing process and which have gone into common usage.



Carry on up Broad Street.  
At the top on the left you  
will come across a church  
with an interesting frontage.

### 3. Christ Church with St Ewen.



There is a delightful arched doorway in the Romanesque manner but the church frontage is currently missing its quarter jacks, two figures of Roman soldiers which sound the quarter hour with hammers on the black bells. They are currently awaiting a remake as the wood has deteriorated.



If you look further up to the top of the spire, you will be able to see a very unusual wind vane. It is a seven foot gilded copper dragon and if it is windy it will probably be swinging.



If you are still looking up you might also see where the 10 bells hang in a listed bell frame near the top of the tower. You can see the louvres in the window, designed to stop the rain getting in and to let the sound out.

There is a fine church pipe organ in the building.

The church is normally closed, but open for services on Sunday at 11am and 6.30 pm and for Holy Communion on Tuesdays at 1.05pm and sometimes for concerts.

Turn to walk across Corn Street promenade.

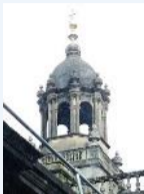
You can see the tower of All Saints church, diagonally opposite.

#### 4. All Saints Church





It can be quite difficult to distinguish the church from the buildings around it, but the tower with its lantern above is unmistakable.



Next to the tower, lower down, you can see the perpendicular windows of the body of the church. It is one of the four churches that surrounded the Bristol Cross and is currently not in use. The church is interesting for a number of reasons.

It was first recorded in 1153 and also has a good Anglo-Saxon dedication. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Kalendars, a brotherhood of clergy and laity attached to All Saints, built a library over the north aisle of the church and by a deed of 1464 they gave free access to the library for all who wished to study.

This was the first 'public' library in the kingdom.

However, many of the manuscripts were destroyed by a fire in 1466.

Continue walking along  
Corn Street.

## 5. The Nails



Look for these 'nails' on the nearby pavement. There are four 'nails' spread out in front of the Corn Exchange, which is the very large impressive building along from All Saints church.

The nails are approximately 1 metre high.

Sometimes they can be difficult to see if street sellers put their wares on and around them.

The nails here are made of bronze with a flat top where merchants would display their corn and other commodities, agree transactions, and exchange money 'on the nail' and thereby buy and sell the goods. They are from different eras and the earliest is from 1623.

Modern street merchants use the nails to help spread out their goods to sell and one could say that to a certain extent they are continuing this tradition.

Now take a look at the very impressive building behind the nails.



## 6. The Corn Exchange

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century this building was used for buying and selling corn and other grain and commodities, but now it is offices and a market.

Look up at the clock.



Can you see something odd about it? Look carefully and you will notice that it has two minute hands, one red and one black, and they don't tell the same time. The clock was first installed in 1822.

A second minute hand was later added to show the time in London as well as local time in Bristol.

Until the need for a train timetable, and in particular Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Great Western Railway timetable, it wasn't necessary to synchronise the different times across

the country which had always been set in each place by the sun at midday.

Bristol's midday sun is about 11 minutes later than that of London.



## 7. St Nicholas Market

Go into the Corn Exchange and explore the market.

Having crossed the entrance lobby with its black and white tiles, you are straight into a hall full of stalls selling all manner of goods and food.

This huge hall was once an open courtyard, then the main market hall for grain sales, and more recently in the 1960s it was a dance hall and venue for concerts where rock bands like the Rolling Stones and The Who played.

Now it has returned to being a market but of a different kind. It is a treasure trove of clothes, china, jewellery and all kinds of bric a brac.



As you carry on you find yourself walking out of the building and into the myriad of stalls of St Nicholas Market outside. These were once exposed to the elements in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the Victorians roofed in the area with glass and put in the permanent stalls.

The market is closed on Sundays but is open all other days of the week, though some stalls choose to open only on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday, depending on the weather and footfall at the time.

Exit the right-hand side of the market into Exchange Avenue, that runs down beside St Nicholas Market, and notice the old stables that served the market.

Walk down to St Nicholas Street and when there, face left. You will notice a Victorian stone drinking fountain in the wall of the market, rather garishly painted.



There are several Victorian drinking fountains in Bristol which were supposed to assist in preventing the consumption of alcohol.

Carry on left along St Nicholas Street where you can see the north wall of St Nicholas Church on your right.

8 St Nicholas Church.

It has a modern glass doorway leading into it, which is likely to be closed. St Nicholas church is the last building here in St Nicholas Street and the last building inside the old city wall before Bristol Bridge.

St Nicholas closed as a church following serious bomb damage and fire during the Second World War and, following repairs, became an archive for the city. It has recently opened as an active church ministering to people in the area.

A central feature of the church is a very large altar triptych by William Hogarth originally commissioned for St Mary Redcliffe Church. It is unlikely that you will be able to see that today but here is a photo:



The church will be open for viewing the triptych, with a talk by a curator of Bristol City Museum on the following dates:-

Thursday 22 June 2023,  
2pm – 3pm.

Wednesday 27 September 2023,  
2pm – 3pm and on other dates, to be confirmed. It is also open for Sunday services at 10.30am and 6.30pm

Walk to the end of  
St Nicholas Street by the  
High Street.

Ahead you can see the  
tower of St Mary le Port  
Church protruding from  
behind a colourful hoarding.  
There were 12 churches  
inside the city wall in  
medieval times! The  
painting in front of you on  
the hoarding is by a Bristol  
based artist called Hazard  
One, real  
name  
Harriet  
Wood.





The hoarding was painted as part of 2022 Upfest.

All the artists were female and all the images have an anti-harassment message.

Other graffiti has been added to it, though most of it has respected the original painting.

This is not commissioned art and it hasn't been treated to protect it, so it will come down as soon as the building development behind is completed.

Bristol City Council have a fairly relaxed attitude to street art and graffiti artists.

One of the artists told us that as long as you don't do anyone else any harm, on the whole you are free to paint.

Bristol has developed a counterculture that has become world renowned and a culture in its own right, helped not least by Banksy

Turn right to cross Baldwin Street but before crossing have a look at the south wall of St Nicholas which is beside you. It is pitted with shrapnel holes from World War 2.

Now cross Baldwin Street to get a good view of St Nicholas and then turn to walk down Welsh Back with the river on your left.

If you haven't yet taken a break, there are a number of places to eat and drink along here, or if you wish to wait a little you might like to try one of the pubs or restaurants in King Street or beyond. It won't take long to get there.



## PART TWO

### 9. War Memorials.

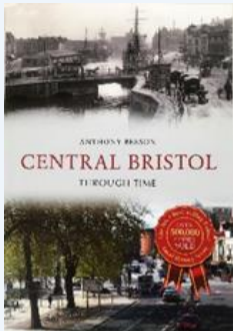
Walking beside the River Avon, there are memorials to the merchant seamen and merchant ships lost at sea in World War I and World War II. It is sad to see that quite a few 15 and 16 year old boys were among those killed. Individuals are remembered on brass plaques attached to the attractive ironwork seating that curls around here.



Bristol has always been a seafaring place, but the site of the port has changed over time. Ships used to come into the city centre itself on high tide, where the river is now covered over.

If you have walked in the city centre, you have undoubtedly walked over the old harbour and the River Frome.

The first quays were built here along the River Frome near where it joins the River Avon and that is how the city centre came into being.



The cover of this book shows ships in the city centre at the top of the front cover. The buildings on the right are just as they are today!

It was from here that John Cabot sailed in 1497 to find a passage to Indonesia but found Newfoundland instead.

A replica of his ship The Matthew is alongside the quay at Hotwells and this ship has actually done the same journey.

Continue to walk along Welsh Back and then turn right into King Street.



## 10. Llandoger Trow



The Llandoger Trow dates back to 1664, bearing what is thought to be a unique name. It comes from a Captain Hawkins, who retired to run the pub after a life sailing a trow (a flat bottomed sailing barge) between South Wales and Bristol.

The Llandogo part comes from Llandogo, a small Welsh village in Monmouthshire situated on the river Wye, probably Hawkins' home.

When it was built, the building had five gables and stood beside Welsh Back where ships from across the River Severn were moored.

At first the pub only occupied one of the five gables, the others being used by tradesmen, such as basket makers, grocers and tobacconists.

In September 1942, after bombs had destroyed the end two gables beside Welsh Back, the pub moved to occupy the three remaining gables.

Carry on along Kings Street, crossing Queen Charlotte Street.

11. The Theatre Royal and Bristol Old Vic.



Here on your right is the original Theatre Royal with the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Company, brightly signed in red, next to it.

We tend to think of the theatre and theatre company as one nowadays, but in the past things were very different.

Until recently, the entrance to the theatre used to be through the arches of the 18<sup>th</sup> century building at ground level and into a foyer there.

However, the theatre has been radically altered in recent years to keep as much of the original as possible while making a more user friendly space for both the theatre and the audience.



The entrance is now through the part of the building marked Bristol Old Vic and the foyer is now there.

Continue a little further along King Street and turn left into King William Avenue.

12. Queen's Square and William III sculpture.

In front of you is Queen's Square with a grand statue to befit a king.

William III was born Prince of Orange in 1650 and also became King of England.

He and his wife Mary, his cousin, were both crowned together in 1689 and their reign in England is usually known as the reign of William and Mary.

He was king of England, Ireland and Scotland as well as Prince of Orange (Holland) until his death in 1702.



It is by John Michael Rysbrack, a highly respected sculptor who was also born into a Dutch family and came to England where he spent most of his life.

Exit Queen's Square via Bell Avenue.





He was victorious at the Battle of Boyne in 1690 which is commemorated by unionists in Ireland and Scotland via the Orange Order.

He was a staunch protestant and fought several wars against Louis XIV of France supported by other protestant European countries and won the crown of England from the Catholic James II, his uncle and father-in-law. This statue represents him as the fearless soldier he evidently was.

## 13. The Hole in the Wall



The Hole in the Wall is a public house, bar and restaurant and was named after a spy hole that you can see in a kind of roofed side box-like structure, rather like a closed-in sentry box, on the side of the building where it faces the water.

The Hole in the Wall and other harbourside pubs were prime recruitment territory for the Navy, and men would wake up after an inebriated night to find themselves at sea where they were put to work.



The landlord would sometimes hide men in the cellars when the press gangs were about and the current landlord might tell you stories of a secret tunnel....

Of course there are caves and tunnels nearby....look across the quay to St Mary Redcliffe and you will see the openings to caves by the quayside.

It is also claimed that The Spyglass Tavern in Treasure Island is surely based on the Hole in the Wall in Bristol.

Leaving The Hole in the Wall, cross Redcliffe Bridge and head towards the large church diagonally across to your right, using the pedestrian crossings.

## 14. St Mary Redcliffe Church



This is the largest parish church in the country and was described by Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> when she visited in August 1574, as “the fairest goodliest and most famous in England”.

Take some time to look at the church and maybe try The Arts Society's St Mary Redcliffe children's trail and enjoy the answers as you go around.

Click this link for the trail:  
<https://qrco.de/bdc01Z>

This completes the Bristol Old City Centre Trail and we hope you have enjoyed the walk discovering some of Bristol's history.

Further information may be found on The Arts Society website by clicking this link:

<https://theartsociety.org/arts-news-features/new-trail-bristol>

This trail has been created by The Arts Society Bristol.

