

Discover Bristol Bike ride through Redland, Westbury Park, Henleaze & Clifton, 25th July 09. Please note history text © Julian Lea-Jones, Learn more quirky fact about Bristol in my book 'Bristol Curiosities' 25 chapters for under ten pounds! email enquiries@history4u.info

1. Redland Station,

Nowadays we generally think of Bristol's reduced railway system as a single system, but it was not that long ago that Bristol had a multiplicity of separate railway systems. As well as Brunel's Great Western Railway, there were the Midland, the Bristol and Exeter, the South Wales Union, and the North Somerset railways. By the 1870's a need for links to the national network was recognised and the Clifton Extension railway was established with stations at Clifton Down and Montpelier linking to the Midland Railway, but Redland's inhabitants had to wait for twenty-three years to get their own station because the land, part of the Redland Court estate wasn't available. It was the donation of the remainder of the Grove, known as Lovers Walk to the city for a public open space that made the land available. Also selling off of some of the estate for building plots provided the necessary rail customers. The Grove, (Lovers Walk), A memory of the days BTR (before television & radio), when it was the fashion to promenade and the grove of trees that formed the front drive to Redland Court was the place to be seen of a summers evening, (and perhaps for the lovers, the trees and shrubberies provided places not to be seen!).

2. Redland Road at the corner of Lower Redland Rd

Is this the sign for Redland's oldest road? This street sign is unnoticed even though it is more than twice the height of the conventional signs and has links with Redland Green, Durdham Downs, Sneyd Park, Sea Mills and Bath. The former names of the last two places, Abonae and Aqua Sulis provide a clue. The line of the Roman road from Bath to their port at Sea Mills has been historically confirmed where it passes through Bitton, and again at Durdham Downs by the water tower. It was also assumed to cut through the line of the modern Redland Hill, and possibly Redland Green past the tennis courts, (favoured by our own Tim Henman). This was the thought when the shops in Woolcot Street, (Redland's only street), Lower Redland Road and Redland Hill were built, which explains why when the corner building, occupied by Redland Village Mini Market, was built the sign 'Via Julia 1901' was placed on the frontage.

3. Redland Court Road

Weather Report, relax this is nothing to do with either hosepipe bans nor a homily about global warming but relates to a visitation that took place on the 25th December 1758. The visitation has been observed about every seventy six years since 240 BC. By now you might have guessed I'm referring to Halley's Comet, or as it officially known, 1P/Halley, in honour of Edmond Halley who first calculated the frequency of its visits. Sadly he died in 1742 before the 1758 visitation so he never got to see his own comet. But what has this to do with Redland? In 1732 Mr Cossins, the former London Grocer whose name is commemorated by Cossins Road bought the Tudor mansion of Redland Court, and had it rebuilt in the modern style, as befitted an up and coming gentleman. His mansion, now the home of Redland High School for Girls, was built at a time of great interest in scientific discoveries, and following the fashion Mr Cossins added a representative weather vane to commemorate the 1758 visit of Halley's comet. The 18c visit is also celebrated by the weather vane on the Unitarian Chapel at Frenchay, and even nearer at British Aerospace in Filton were the Bristol space scientists who developed the Giotto satellite that did the successful fly past of Haley's comet in 1986

4. Redland Green

The mystery stone on Redland Green Can you guess what some of Bristol's most historic features have in common with this ancient stone on Redland Green? By features I mean, Churches, Hills, Hermitages, Bronze-age Earthworks and Wells. The answer is that they are all in alignment. The summit of Brandon Hill where Cabot Tower (can be seen in the middle distance if you stand by the stone) is now sited was once the site of ancient chapel. The viewing platform of the Tower has direction plaques complete with a pictorial representation of one of the alignments or Ley Lines that include the tower and this Redland Green stone. What are these alignments? Although no one has yet given a definitive explanation for their source and existence it was Alfred Watkins, business man, inventor and innovator who in the 1920's first coined the term 'Ley Lines'. His discoveries arose from his observations noticed during his travels around his native Herefordshire. The Redland Green

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Stone must be special because it is a node point for at least three Ley Lines that cross Bristol. One from Pylle Hill to Blaise Camp, another from earthworks at Bedminster down to a Bronze age burial mound in Southmead, whilst a third comes from the stone circle at Stanton Drew to Westbury on Trym Church. This stone must have been a marker, but for what? What was the sites significance, and what mystic happenings took place here – perhaps we will never know.

~~Cossins Road,
Bayswater Ave,
Westbury Park,~~

5. Greendale Road

Passing No 14 one might just notice that the house number hand painted on a tile plaque it's a bit unusual, but not as unusual as it once was. The home of a mathematician the house name was " $\pi_3 (S^2) \neq 0$ " Mystifying most visitors and the postmen, but signifying an aspect of algebraic topology" in which some things called "homotopy groups appear. ...roughly speaking they measure how many "holes" of different dimensions a geometrical object has. A "3-dimensional hole in a 2-dimensional sphere" was first discovered about 1930 by Hopf, a German mathematician, memorialised as the 'Hopf fibration'. Perhaps the mathematician's house was an estate agent's dream because like the Tardis it occupied many dimensions, and really was 'deceptively spacious'.
Coldharbour Road,

6. Springfield Grove,

No 33 has a brass plate on the gate marking it as the home of Temple Local History Group and www.history4u.info

7. Owen Grove

The pillar post box has an unusual claim to fame. (One of two in Bristol, the other is or at least was at Hazelbury Road in Knowle, and believed to be only 16 in the country), has the royal cipher KEVIII for the King 'who never was', King Edward the Eighth.

8. Lawrence Grove,

Prior to the establishment of Bristol Telephone exchange in 1879, telegraphs were the Hi-tech messaging systems of the day. A photograph showing operators at work in the Small Street telegraph offices makes one realise that working conditions in the crowded nineteenth century telegraph office were similar to any modern call centre. But what has this got to do with Henleaze, I hear you ask? When cables went underground the 2ft by 3ft rectangular cast iron pavement manholes were marked 'Post Office Telegraphs'. In due course the telegraph system gave way to speech – telephony, and gradually the manholes were replaced by those marked 'Post Office Telephones' or 'BT Telephones'. However survivors of the telegraph era were reused and many anachronisms such as this on the corner of Owen and Lawrence Groves still exist in Henleaze and across the city – how many can you spot.

9. Henleaze Road,

Looking incongruous alongside all the 20th Century buildings, Bristol's only Thatched Cottage on a main road that is still a private house (there are other thatched cottages in Bristol, but they form part of Blaise Castle estate). This cottage on the corner of Henleaze Road and Wanscow Walk, would have been one of the gate or lodge keeper's houses for Claremont house, at the top of the hill, that was once the home of Packer the Bristol Chocolate manufacturing family, and now the Claremont special needs school. Incidentally, the road name Wanscow is a made up name deriving from Wansborough and Cowlin, the developers.

**Antrim Road,
Brecon Road,
Carmarthen Road,
Cavendish Road,**

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**Westbury Road (briefly),
Henleaze Avenue,
back lane running behind Westbury Road,**

10. Downs Park West,

Dating from the beginning of the 20th century both Downs Park East and west contain a very nice selection of different architectural styles. Ranging from Queen Anne to Arts and Crafts, Although to the architectural purist some may seem a bit over decorated and to eclectic, they make a pleasing contrast with so much of the drab uniformity characteristic of many suburban streets and are well worth a visit.

North View,

11. White Tree Roundabout (using zebra crossing)

The White painted tree, once a large Elm in the middle of the road junction, roundabout-is a waymark, originally for those making their way across the lonely and unlit road to Westbury-on-Trym, subsequently with the realignment of the Roads, the nearest tree was designated when that elm suffered from Dutch Elm disease, it was again replaced. The trunk is repainted annually.

12. Saville Road,

In the grass verge, along the stretch of the Downs opposite Wills Hall one of Bristol University's Halls of residence are a series of Downs Boundary stones about 12 inches square, set flat in the grass incised H Xiii et seq. Although many have been lost or damaged there are still a number of survivors, that repay a careful search.

13. Circular Road (possible stop for ice cream),

The Sea walls above the Black Rock Quarry, and a good vantage point for those wanting to see Wales without having to cross the Bridge! The safety railings have recently been replaced, It's a very long drop) and it nice to see that the new pillars all have the words 'Sea Walls Bristol' in the casting. – a nice decorative touch.

**College Road (using pedestrian crossing by zoo),
Cecil Road,
Canyngge Road,**

14. Suspension Bridge Road,

15. Sion Hill,

- Lookout point for the Suspension Bridge, Notice the full sized Brass Giraffe watching you from the balcony opposite,
- Next is the top entrance to the Clifton Rocks railway tunnel that goes from here down to the Portway. It once housed a two car hydraulic railway, linked by a cable that ran around a wheel at the top. The cars had water tanks beneath the of sufficient capacity so that when car A tank filled with water at the top, the brake released, had sufficient weight to pull car B full of passengers up from their visit to the Hotwell Spa at the bottom of the cliff. After the closing of the Spa, during WWII the tunnel was used as bomb proof studios for the BBC. After the war, abandoned and years of neglect, local enthusiasts within the Clifton & Hotwells Improvement Society, CHIS, are restoring the fabric if not the functioning of the system. Volunteer helpers are always welcome.
- St. Vincents Priory, opposite the hotel, This was NEVER a religious establishment but a fashionable 19 century private house designed in the Strawberry Hill Gothic, (coined by Walpole), The superb decoration, much, much more inside, but did you spot the two Dolphins, and two Sphinxes, and how many caryatids did you count? (Caryatids, the characters supporting the balconies). There are 8; 4 ladies and 4 men. There are no tunnels or any mysterious history associated with the house, As this was the home of my wife

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Diane's, who researched and wrote a history of the house, however Diane did discover that at one time a tenant of the house was the controversial Tom Provis, claimant to the Smythe estate, (Owners of Ashton Court). Unmasked as a fraudster he was sentenced to transportation to Australia but died after only two years.

- Princes Buildings, beneath the mid terrace pediment look for the Ostrich feather, a White Horse and a Blue Dragon, (the c of a of the Prince of Wales)

16. Royal York Crescent,

- Britain's longest crescent, whose residents have the best Guy Fawkes night's view in Bristol. The development was interrupted by the post Napoleonic recession at one time there was even talk of using it for military barracks. However the money was found and the development completed as you see it today.
- Another bizarre link with Australia, Francis Greenway, an architect was found guilty of forging a deed associated with one of the houses in order to facilitate a sale in those hard times, sentenced to death, influential friends persuaded the judge to change to Transportation to Australia. Once there, rather than the chain gang, the Governor welcomed his known architectural skills, and put him to work designing many of their new public buildings. He became known as the 'Father of Australian Architecture' and in the 1990s his place in history was assured when his likeness featured on Australian banknotes. Thus becoming the only convicted forger to appear on a government banknote – I'm sure he would have appreciated the irony.
- Ironically, there is also another link with Napoleon, (the 3rd), His wife, Princess Eugénie attended a private school at the end nearest the steps down Wellington Terrace.
- Did you notice the exhortations carved into the wall of the steps? "*Stick no Bills*"
- During the Tour Andy? Wilmott told us about the WWII Anti Aircraft Gun emplacement in the end garden of the Paragon, just below. The circular guide tracks were still there until quite recently.

Regents Street,

17. Birdcage Walk, (Churchyard walk of pleached Lime trees. - Birdcage walk is the one through the middle of Victoria Square).

- The Churchyard and the maintenance of the walk limes are another community activity undertaken by CHIS members. The walk past the bomb site of the former Clifton Parish church St Andrew. Also in the corner by the gate entrance from Clifton Hill the outline of the earliest parish Church can be seen marked by box hedging.
- One of the people memorialized in the bombed church was Robert Dinwiddie, former Lt Governor of Virginia, it was he who saw the military potential of a young major in the war against the French, and gave him his first command opportunity. The name of the person who built on that opportunity and went on to fame was George Washington. Was Dinwiddie's decision a hinge moment in history?

18. Tea stop in Clifton Village (most likely in Boyces Avenue by Victoria Square), Kensington Place,

- Approaching from Victoria Square, A green plaque on the end house marks it as the home of Dr W. G Grace, a Downend lad who became a quite well known cricketer!
- Victoria visited Clifton when she was still a Princess, a fact commemorated in the name change of one of the longest streets from Nelson St to Princess Victoria St., a visit also marked in stone - the keystone of the archway, partially covered by vines, is the likeness of the young Victoria, as seen on Rowland hill's famous Penny Black postage stamp.
- The 'battle of Boyce's buildings' - gateway railings at the archway were a cause célèbre. A curmudgeon who owned the right of way, understandably stopped carriages but also classified a mother with her baby carriage as banned. In spite of numerous

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court cases which went against him the Magistrates finally lost patience with him and in
his eighties he was sent to prison.

**Richmond Park Road,
Arlington Villas,
Oakfield Place,
Southleigh Road,
Oakfield Road,**

19.Oakfield Grove

'Pickled Tongues', Spot this bizarre sign under a house window '. Could be a bit worrying as this is not far from the BBC whose motto is 'Nation shall speak peace unto nation', However more understandable if you realise that the house was once a butchers shop.

**West Park (using zebra crossing to cross Whiteladies Road),
Cotham Hill,**

20.Abbotsford Road, and Waverley Road,

I'm sure that when the suburb of Redland was being developed the civic authorities would have deliberated on the important task of 'naming the parts'. What a challenge, should they name the new roads after each other, the great and the good, or those listed in Contemporary Biographies? Their preoccupation with the aristocracy could explain why out of the 150+ roads in BS6, forty-six are named after the Aristocracy. However at least one member of the committee must have been a master of allusion, or a fan of the romantic novel and all things Scottish because these two roads are amongst at least fourteen road names in Redland with Scottish connections, nine of which allude to Sir Walter Scott's works. In case you have forgotten, they are:

- **Waverly** - his first novel, about the Jacobite uprising of 1745. The hero Edward Waverly was used as the figurehead on the 1899 Waverly paddle steamer.
- **Ravenswood** - characters in 'The Bride of Lammermoor', and the Bristol paddle steamer of the same name.
- **Roslyn** - Grail legends and the 'lay of the last minstrel'.
- **Woodstock** - not a pop allusion, a novel about Charles II's escape at the Battle of Worcester in 1651.
- **Abbotsford** - Scott's baronial home in Roxburghshire.
- **Kenilworth** – as in castle, portrayed life at the court of Q E I.
- **St Ronan's Av.** – the novel St Ronan's well, written in 1824.
- **Rokeby** – A poem that was considered to be far too long.
- **Montrose** – The story and exploits of James Graham, 1st Marquis of Montrose, (my favourite this one as he was one of my collateral ancestors).

**Meridian Road,
Redland Station.**

\\Julians Talks & walks\\Discover Unseen Bristol #1 Redland Henleaze Clifton