Homes for Heroes 100

Book of Walks

By Melanie Kelly

Bristol Festival of Ideas

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Captions for cover images: Front cover: Illustration by Miles Tewson. Inside front cover (top): Children from Hareclive Primary, Hartcliffe taking part in a neighbourhood walk interviewing residents in St Pauls (Room 13 Hareclive, St Pauls Neighbourhood Walk). Inside front (bottom): Participants in a walk through Hillfields (Local Learning). Inside back (top): Gathering in Sea Mills beneath the Addison Oak to celebrate the centenary of its planting (Evan Dawson). Inside back (bottom): A walk in Knowle West passing the Filwood Community Centre (Marcus Way). Back cover: captions and credits for these images are within the main text.

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Foreword/

I write this following a Thames walk in Oxfordshire. Days out often focus on the historic cores of cities or the countryside but there is much of interest to see in residential parts of our cities.

When I lived in the Hartcliffe estate in Bristol, it was always great to walk up onto the crest of Dundry Hill. To the north the whole of the city was laid out before you, the streets and tower blocks of the estate in the foreground. To the south was the Somerset countryside with the Chew Valley Lake glistening in the sunshine (when it was sunny, of course). Walking east would take you to Maes Knoll, an Iron Age hill fort. To the west Dundry with its fifteenth-century church and the remains of stone quarries dating back at least to the Roman occupation.

This book contains walks around some of Bristol's historic council estates, highlighting points of architectural and social interest. With over a century of life, development and even struggle these areas are as deserving of interest as those found in more traditional walking guides. If you haven't visited these places before you may be surprised at how varied the buildings are, how much green space they include, how many links they retain to a more distant past.

I hope this book will inspire other cities across the country to re-examine this often overlooked aspect of their heritage and produce new walking guides of their own

Councillor Paul Smith
Cabinet Member for Housing, Bristol City Council

Five 11-storey blocks under construction at Hartcliffe, 1964 (Bristol Archives 40826/HSG/56/2).

Council Housing in Bristol Since 1919/

Homes for Heroes 100 is a programme of coordinated community projects, special events and new publications marking the centenary of the Housing and Town Planning Act 1919 (sometimes referred to as the Addison Act).

This Act led to the development of the first large-scale council estates in the UK. This was not just about building homes; it was also about creating new communities and changing the social fabric of the country.

Originally promoted as homes for the returning heroes of the war and as fresh starts for those displaced by slum clearance, in recent decades council housing – and the social housing that has partly come to replace it – has attracted an unwarranted stigma. Council house residents have been marginalised for generations and the culturally important heritage that lies within their estates is little-known. Through community-based heritage research, hands-on creative activities and showcase events, the Homes for Heroes 100 programme aims to celebrate the council estate and its residents – past, present and future.

Postcard of Forest Avenue, Hillfields Park estate in Fishponds, early 1920s (Bristol Archives 43207/4/17).

Communal kitchen in the Wade Street lodging house depicted by Samuel Loxton (Bristol Reference Library A47).

In November 1918, Prime Minister David Lloyd George delivered a speech in which he called for 'a country fit for heroes to live in' (frequently misquoted as 'homes fit for heroes'). During the First World War, the Tudor Walters Committee had been set up with the aim of improving the country's housing provision by ensuring higher standards of design and location. This had been prompted by the realisation that many recruits had health problems which were the result of inadequate living conditions at home. Housing became a major government responsibility in the post-war period because the private sector was unable to meet demand. Although widely accepted as a bold vision that would make a positive difference to the lives of citizens, it could also be argued that the council housing programme was at least partly driven by political necessity. It was a means of smoothing the transition to peace, driven by the government's anxiety to avoid an uprising in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917.

With the 1919 Act, councils across the country began to establish housing committees, guided by recommendations from central government. Before 1919, local authorities had supported a range of rentable housing opportunities for those on low incomes who were unable to afford private-sector rents or to buy a home of their own. In Bristol, for example, an early instance of council housing was a municipal lodging house for 123 men built in 1905 on Wade Street, St Jude's, under powers granted by the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890. Other small-scale pre-war developments included what were described as 'workmen's dwellings' built in 1901 in Baptist Mills, Easton, St Philips and St Werburghs. The West Block at 19A-19J Mina Road, St Werburghs survives to this day. (An optional diversion on the St Pauls walk will take you there.)

However, nothing had previously matched the ambitious scale of state intervention embodied by the new Act. It is from this point that the term 'council housing' becomes widely recognised. These were homes where costs were shared between tenants, local rate payers and the Treasury. The first council-estate homes to be completed in Bristol were located on Beechen Drive (1919), and the first houses to be occupied were on the corner of Briar Way and Thicket Avenue (1920). (You will pass both of these sites during the Hillfields walk.)

Other estates that were largely completed during the early 1920s included Knowle, Shirehampton and Sea Mills. The first sod at Sea Mills was cut by Christopher Addison, the government minister who was largely responsible for the Act, in a ceremony that took place on 4 June 1919: an oak was planted in Sea Mills Square to mark the occasion. (You will see the mature tree during the Sea Mills walk.)

Housing supply still fell well below demand. Out of the original 5,000 homes planned in Bristol under the 1919 Act, only 1,189 permanent and 141 temporary dwellings were completed before work was suspended following Addison's resignation from government and the ending of the subsidy. The following passage is from a booklet entitled *Bristol House Famine Campaign*, 1923 (Bristol Reference Library B21855 p3).

> The house famine must be relieved, and it can only be relieved by the building in the immediate future of several thousands of dwellings. Thus a very serious situation has to be faced, and faced without delay.
>
> Just pause for a moment and try and think of your own Home and then try and imagine what this shortage of houses means to the thousands of unfortunate people – men and women, youths and young women, and little children herded together, two, three, or even four families in one house, boys and girls occupying the same bedrooms, common decency, to say nothing of privacy, quite impossible. Try and imagine the babies born every day under these conditions, and the mothers at childbirth and after. Think of sickness and death when the whole family inhabit one or two rooms. Think of these things and the grave possibilities to all citizens of Bristol inherent in the housing shortage will be clear to you.

It was calculated that there was a shortage of 7,270 habitable dwellings in the city in the early 1920s.

Work did eventually resume on building new homes: first under Neville Chamberlain's Housing Act 1923, which favoured the subsidising of private builders erecting houses for sale, and then by John Wheatley's Housing Act 1924, which provided subsidies to build cheaper council homes for which lower rents could be charged. To reduce building costs, the size of council homes had already begun to shrink while estates had increased in density.

The Housing Act 1930 focused on the post-war inner-city slum clearance and relocation programmes. The quality of the new homes generally remained good, although council housing was increasingly associated with the very poor rather than the more affluent members of the working class for whom it had originally been planned.

Many residents of the new suburban estates would have previously lived in homes deemed unfit for human habitation. The following is from The *Housing Needs of Bristol in Relation to the Greenwood Act*, February 1931 (Bristol Reference Library B22170 p25).

> Considering the conditions under which they had lived, with insufficient accommodation and lack of proper facilities for cooking, washing, drying and other domestic duties, without gardens to afford relaxation or to stimulate interest in pursuits other than ordinary daily toil, it is generally regarded as highly satisfactory that the response of tenants to improved conditions has been so marked. They take a real pride in their new homes and gardens are well cultivated.

Between 1919 and 1939, 21,985 homes were built privately in Bristol of which 3,020 were state subsidised. Over the same period, 14,610 council homes were built of which 711 were built without state subsidy. (These figures are taken from *Housing Estates* by R Jevons and J Madge, Arrowsmith 1946). The newer council estates included ones in Bedminster, Horfield, St Anne's Park, St George and Southmead. As with the earlier estates, they lacked enough shops and services to meet the needs of residents for at least the first few years of occupancy, and they were inconvenient for those still employed in the city centre and dependent on costly and unreliable public transport. (This is still often the case with new developments.) The residents gained a superior quality of home at an affordable level of rent, but the clearance programmes meant that they also often lost contact with a strong, settled community that had grown up over several generations.

Photo of housing clearance in St Philips from the 1934 *Bristol Housing Report* (Bristol Reference Library B14102).

Public opening of a pre-fab at Shirehampton (Bristol Aero Collection).

The Second World War interrupted the house building programme. By the war's end it was estimated that 750,000 new homes were required to meet demand in England and Wales alone. This was the result of the ongoing housing shortage and slum clearances as well as the loss of so many dwellings from bombing raids.

Among short-term solutions was the construction of pre-fabricated aluminium housing in kit-form that was estimated to have a life of ten years. In February 1944, the Minister of Aircraft Production, Sir Stafford Cripps, brought together representatives of the UK's leading aircraft manufacturers to discuss how they could help solve the housing crisis, recognising that the industry possessed the necessary skills, technology and materials. This work was overseen nationally by the Aircraft Industries Research Organisation on Housing, which had been jointly formed by the Ministry of Aircraft Production and the Ministry of Works. Founder members included the Bristol Aeroplane Company. Other companies were also involved in pre-fab construction locally and nationally and it is estimated that nearly 157,000 pre-fabs were erected between 1945 and 1949, of which around 2,700 were built in Bristol.

In 1955, it was reported that 43 families per week were moving into new Bristol council homes. Some of the shortcomings of the estates of the inter-war period were repeated in those built at Hartcliffe, Henbury, Lawrence Weston, Lockleaze, Stockwood and Withywood after the war. They too had limited local amenities and public transport. They also suffered

from the abandonment of the garden suburb principles – which had been a redeeming feature of the earlier developments – and other cost-cutting measures. The increasing use of pre-cast reinforced concrete construction resulted in major structural problems (sometimes referred to as concrete cancer) that would begin to come to light in the 1980s and eventually lead to the demolition of hundreds of council homes across the city.

Photo of prize-winning front garden created by Mr Edgell at his home in Hartcliffe from the 1955 *Bristol Housing Report* (Bristol Reference Library B14100).

The Right-to-Buy policy introduced with the Housing Act 1980 meant that councils had to sell homes to sitting tenants who wished to become owners at the same time as the building of new homes was being cut back, thereby drastically reducing availability. By the first decade of the twenty-first century, many local authorities were faced with major housing debt and restrictions on investment, bringing a complete halt to new building. Funding was available from government for improvement and regeneration, but this was often conditional on transferring ownership and/or management to not-for-profit housing associations (also known as Registered Social Landlords). These stock transfers had been facilitated by the Housing Acts of 1985 and 1988. This was accompanied by a shift from the term ‘council housing’ to 'social housing'.

Council housing had become a safety net for the most vulnerable in society but more recently there are signs that it is becoming a tenancy of choice again rather than a tenancy of last resort. Bristol City Council is committed to delivering a renewed building programme.

Hartcliffe, March 1988 (*Bristol Post*).

Homes for Heroes 100 is helping to raise awareness of the mistakes of the past that should not be repeated – including problems of social alienation, lack of essential facilities and limited availability – as well as the many positive outcomes that should be publicly recognised and aspired to in the future. There will be a showcase for work created during the course of the programme as part of a day of debates on council housing issues that will take place during the 2019 Festival of the Future City (16-18 October **www.futurecityfestival.co.uk**).

Design for new housing at Challender Court, Henbury (Emmett Russell Architects).

4 June 1919: 4 June 2019/

On 4 June 2019, the centenary of Christopher Addison's visit to Bristol was celebrated with two events.

Cllr Paul Smith, dressed as Addison, reads extracts from the minister's speeches in support of the Housing Act 1919 at a birthday celebration for the Addison Oak, Sea Mills.

Tree-planting ceremony at Ashton Rise, South Bristol. The mixed tenure housing development being built by Willmott Dixon is a unique funding model for the council. Sixty percent of the 133 homes will be sold to the private market, with the proceeds reinvested to support the cost of construction of new council homes (photos Evan Dawson).

The Centenary Poem: Vanessa Kisuule/

Bristol City Poet Vanessa Kisuule read her new poem at the celebratory events that took place on 4 June 2019.

Close your eyes
Picture the house of your dreams.
Is it nestled in the wooded ribs of a glade,
laced by the gentle sound of the sea?
Perhaps perched on a hill overlooking
The twinkling lights of the city
Looking down at those that
live side by side and top to toe.
When we imagine perfect homes
They're tucked away on private acres
Unsullied by the bonds of social living
Yet we lament the rise of loneliness
the sickness making graveyards
of us long before our last breaths.
The underclass is frowned upon,
their livelihood a punchline, a
cautionary tale told with half
its chapters missing.

Their grievances are many, but
Too few of us listen.
So many facts too often forgotten:
the good faith that built these dwellings
The rich communities that flower here,
every family behind every window
With a story as unique as a fingerprint
These buildings once trembled
with the soft glow of utopia.
In the aftermath of war, a bold law was passed:
An act to build homes that would last.
Fertilised by green space and great hopes,
Owned and enjoyed by those in need.
A young man hollowed out by
The horrors of combat could return
To a home 'fit for a hero',
A low earning mother could
raise her children in a house
with working lights and running
water.

This was not a given.
It still isn't. We have yet to make
good on this 100 year promise.
We've neither the space or
luxury to be islands, not whilst
Waiting lists for houses gets longer
And the life span of the homeless
Gets shorter. Let idealism
Gleam on the horizon once again
as it did in 1919, bolstered
by the lessons we've learnt
Let's meet the ever urgent
need for all of us to live
amongst and for each other
In a city where everyday living
Makes heroes of us all.

Vanessa Kisuule reading her poem beneath the oak at Sea Mills, 4 June 2019 (photographer Evan Dawson).

The Walks and Acknowledgements/

The walks in this book give you an opportunity to look at the development of three inter-war suburban council estates and to explore an inner-city residential area that is over 200 years old.

The maps in this book are from the award-winning Bristol Legible City way-finding information system. The scale of the maps means that, in some places, only an approximation of the route can be shown on the page, but the detailed written directions should keep you to the right path. Always look for the safest place to cross roads if there is not a pedestrian crossing nearby.

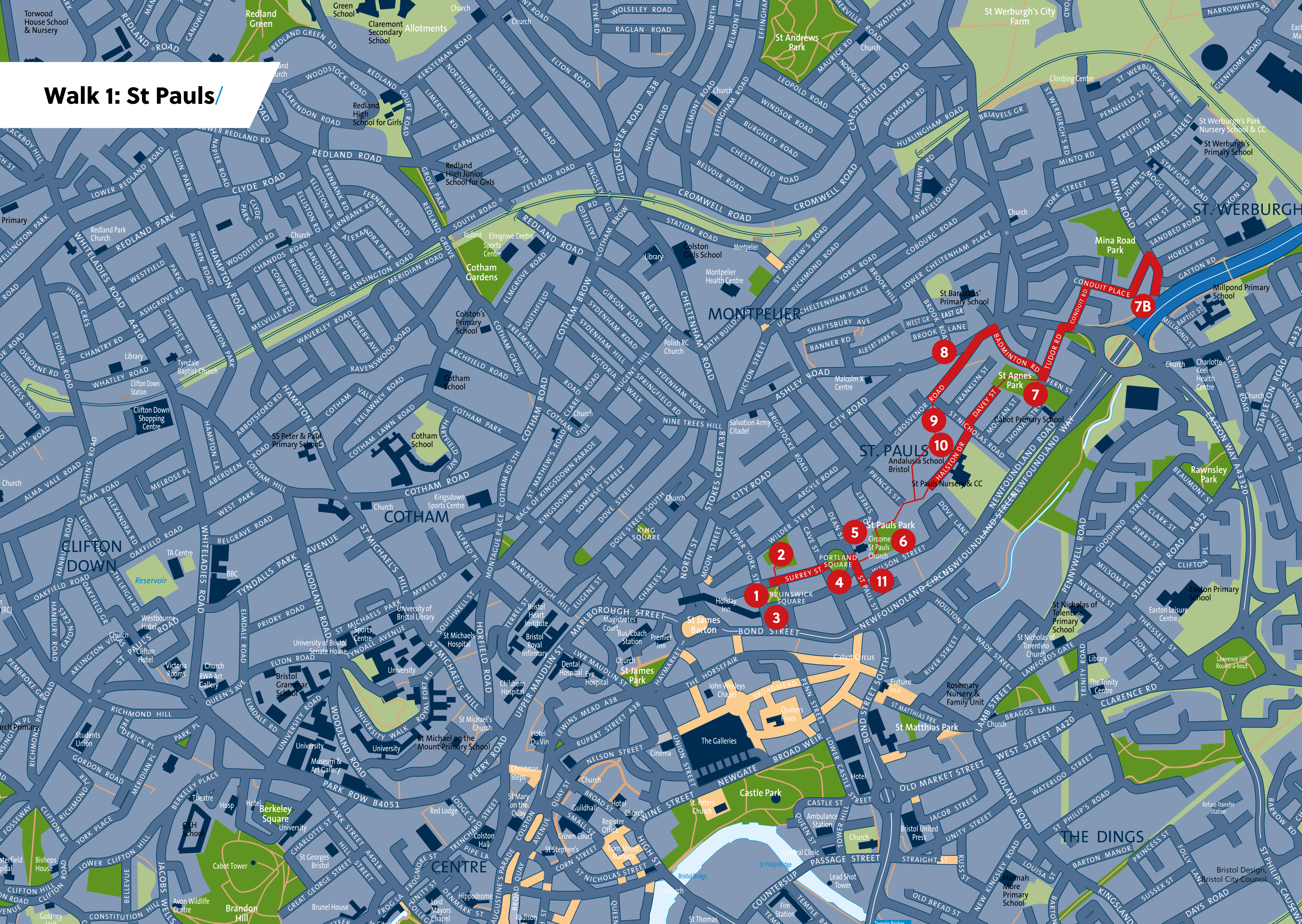
The routes are mainly on level pavements with no significant hills to climb or descend. Pavement surfaces are generally good and there are no high kerbs to negotiate. The walks will each take around an hour to complete at a leisurely pace, allowing time to linger at particular points of interest. As you will be walking through residential areas, please be respectful of other people's privacy, especially when taking photographs.

The St Pauls walk is partly based on the current re-imagining of the 'Green link' route in St Pauls – a network of inter-linked green community spaces that have the potential to be re-activated through a local partnership project led by the Architecture Centre, funding pending (our thanks to Georgina Bolton and Amy Harrison). The route for the Hillfields walk was devised by Peter Insole of Local Learning who, with Ruth Myers, is leading the Hillfields Homes for Heroes project. Peter also devised the route for the Sea Mills walk, with additional input from Mary Milton who leads the Sea Mills 100 project. The route for the Knowle West walk was devised by Celia Turley, who is leading Knowle West Media Centre's Homes for Heroes 100 project, guided by local resident Cheryl Martin and artist Lukus Robbins.

Thanks also go to: Ed Bramall, Debra Britton, Jane Duffus, Jacqueline Gerrard, Fiona Gilmour, Anna Keen for proof-reading and commenting on drafts; Andrew Kelly, Naomi Miller, Julia Trow from BCDP; Dawn Dyer from Bristol Reference Library for all her help in identifying research material; Madge Dresser for her guidance and research support, particularly for the St Pauls walk; members of the Homes for Heroes 100 advisory group.

Please note that although we realise that the local authority would have been referred to as a corporation during much of its history, we are using the word 'council' throughout this publication.

Walk 1: St Pauls/



Walk 1: St Pauls/

This walk through St Pauls examines the area's housing history, which dates back to the late 1700s. It considers how residential neighbourhoods have changed over time and how poverty and inequality have informed the city's housing stock.

Charting the rise of municipal and state-provided housing in this inner-city area, it includes a look at compact, low-rise apartment-block council housing of the 1960s but will also take you past the tents and makeshift shelters currently belonging to people who are homeless. This contrast shows that the issues which first inspired the need for publicly-provided housing have yet to be resolved.

(Note that 'St Pauls' is sometimes written with an apostrophe and sometimes not. For consistency, we are not using the apostrophe in this publication.)

The Walk

The starting point, Brunswick Square (1), is a short walk from Bristol Bus and Coach Station. The garden in the centre of the square provides a pleasant place in which to read the opening text.

In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, St Pauls was set to rival Clifton as a fashionable residential district for the city's wealthier citizens. Brunswick Square was laid out at a time when Bristol was starting to spread eastwards. An advertisement in the *Bristol Journal* on 15 February 1772 referred to uninterrupted views that could be enjoyed from a ground-floor window at a rental property which adjoined the square.

The houses in the square were constructed on behalf of various speculators – such as Messrs Lockier, Macaulay and Co who had interests in the African trade and Guyanan plantations. Construction was intermittent. Some houses were occupied by 1771 but the east side was not completed until the mid-1780s and the north side was not finished until some years later.

Brunswick Square's – and St. Pauls' – elite status was short-lived. Industrialisation and an expanding urban population brought prosperity to a few but was accompanied by cholera, pollution and congestion for the many, compounded by poor drainage. By the 1840s, the wealthier residents abandoned the area for Clifton and elsewhere. Many single homes were converted into multi-occupancy lodging houses or commercial premises.

Aerial view of St Pauls taken in the 1930s (Bristol Archives 44819/3/224). You can see Brunswick Square, Portland Square, St Pauls Church and, at the top right, St Agnes Park. The area that would become St Pauls Garden Estate still comprises terraced streets in this image.

As conditions deteriorated, private landlords – many of whom were themselves struggling financially – resisted the city's attempts to impose sanitation reforms. By the 1880s, poor Jewish immigrant families fleeing Eastern Europe colonised many of the area's buildings, working as boot and shoe workers and cabinet makers, and living ten to a room in what were sweatshops.

A 1931 report entitled *The Housing Needs of Bristol in Relation to the Greenwood Act* (Bristol Reference Library B22170) examined five areas of bad housing in the city including St Pauls where over a quarter of the 117 houses surveyed were deemed to be overcrowded. It was reported that 'the odour of pickles does not appear to disturb the number of rats in this neighbourhood' (p15). (This was a food associated with Eastern European Jews.) Vermin, leaking roofs, rotting floors and uninhabitable rooms meant many of those interviewed were anxious to leave for the sake of their children. The report cited the case of a husband and wife and their six children (two of whom were adult) living in one rented room who had been on the waiting list for council housing for a year.

When people from the Caribbean responded to the invitation to help rebuild Britain after the Second World War and began to settle in St Pauls, critics were quick to blame them for the deterioration of the area. However, St Pauls had already become run-down. That is why it was the first port of call for poor migrants looking for somewhere cheap to live, just as it had been 50 years previously. Directly after the war, St Pauls had attracted de-mobbed Poles, Ukrainians and people from the Baltic States who wanted to remain in this country. In addition to those from the Caribbean, the later 1940s and early 1950s also saw the arrival of Hungarians, Irish, Cypriots, Italians and South Asians, among many others. A *Bristol Evening Post* article on 21 March 1968 reported that 50 percent of the children in the primary schools of St Pauls and the neighbouring parish of St Agnes were first or second generation immigrants. Because one had to be resident in Bristol for a year before even getting onto the council housing waiting list, migrants were largely confined to sub-standard private accommodation – and racism further limited where those who were not white might live. The vicar of St Agnes was quoted in the article saying: 'We are the last great reservoir of rented accommodation in Bristol'.

Facing the Unitarian Meeting Hall, on the north side of the square, take the path on your left that leads into* Brunswick Cemetery Gardens *(2).

An article in the *Bristol Evening Post* on 13 January 1956 referred to the Brunswick burial ground as the 'cemetery no-one wants'. It was created in the late-1760s and had been used as the cemetery of Lewins Mead Unitarian Church for much of its history. The most recent burial at the time of the article had taken place four years previously. In the *Western Daily Press and Bristol Mirror* on 5 August 1958, it was described as a 'white elephant' by the Rev Birtles, minister at Lewins Mead. Only a few burial spaces remained and these were mainly in plots belonging to families who no longer had a connection to the area. All the houses in the adjacent square were occupied by commercial firms with only a few residents remaining, among whom was the cemetery caretaker.

The last burial here took place in 1963. In the 1980s, the cemetery was reconceived as an informal public park. An extensive re-landscaping programme was completed in 2010. It forms part of a green corridor developed by Places for People, working in partnership with Bristol City Council. St Pauls is a densely developed and populated neighbourhood, but also has green spaces, like this one, providing recreation, tranquillity, nature conservation and visual interest.

Hew Locke's artwork *Ruined* in the north-east corner comprises a series of cast-iron grave markers. These are based on share certificates and other historical documents belonging to commercial companies that have either ceased to exist or been transformed as the result of economic and political change. Among the locally-linked companies depicted is that of W D and H O Wills Ltd, a family-run firm that grew from a small tobacconist shop on Castle Street in the late-eighteenth century to being one of Bristol's biggest employers, with extensive factories in Bedminster, Ashton and Hartcliffe, all of which have now closed.

Return to Brunswick Square. Remain by the Meeting Hall but stop to look across to the* south-side terrace *(3).

In 1832, Dr Francis Black opened a homeopathic dispensary on Upper Berkeley Place, which developed into Bristol's first homeopathic institute. By 1883, interest in homeopathy had grown so strong in Bristol that a group of patrons were able to raise sufficient funds to pay for a homeopathic hospital, which finally opened at 7 Brunswick Square in 1903. An operating theatre, lift and veranda were added in 1907. Further extensions were needed by 1911, a sign of its popularity. The hospital could accommodate 12 in-patients. Louisa Wills, a rich and enthusiastic supporter of homeopathic treatments, raised money for the endowment of a free bed to be offered to those who would otherwise have been unable to afford to stay.

During the First World War two wards in the hospital were allocated for wounded soldiers. Walter Melville Wills, managing director of the family's profitable tobacco company and husband of Louisa, was appointed the hospital's president in 1916. He commissioned a new building as a gift to the city in remembrance of his son Bruce who was killed in action in 1915. This opened at Cotham Hill in 1925. The old premises were sold to the Bristol Maternity Hospital. They have since been demolished and a new building erected on the site.

By the 1980s, the remaining houses in the south-side terrace of Brunswick Square were in a particularly poor condition. The effects of bomb-damage and neglect grew worse because owners postponed paying for repairs

Vaughan collection postcard of the Bristol Homeopathic Hospital, 7 Brunswick Square, c1920, and John Trelawney-Ross' photograph of 1-6 Brunswick Square, c1980 (Bristol Archives 43207/9/45/4 and 45212/Of/3/47).

and renovations in anticipation of redevelopment schemes that failed to materialise. In the early-1970s, the local press carried articles about what they termed 'the Brunswick Square Battle', the campaign to stop the demolition of numbers 1 to 6 to make way for a multi-million pound development at St James Barton. Objectors included Bristol Civic Society, The Georgian Group and the Bristol Visual and Environmental Group, whose members argued that east central Bristol should be returned to residential use and that its unique character was just as important historically as that of the more esteemed Clifton. It was the work of such groups, combined with private and public investments, that gradually brought back some of Brunswick Square's original elegance. Where possible, the focus has been on the improvement and conservation of what already exists rather than demolition and redevelopment. However, the buildings are still primarily occupied by businesses rather than residents.

Turn left and walk along Surrey Street into* Portland Square *(4).

In 1787, an Act of Parliament gave the local council the powers to carve out a section of the existing parish of St James to create the parish of St Pauls. Portland Square was planned around the new church. The land was owned by John Cave (who campaigned in support of slavery), William Pritchard and the Dean and Chapter of Bristol, and plots were first advertised for sale to speculators in 1789.

One of the arguments put forward by supporters of the proposal to knock down part of Brunswick Square was that the square's architectural significance was diminished because the terraces were never completed. By contrast, Portland Square was completed by around 1820 on all four sides, although it also had a somewhat chequered history. Several of the original building contractors were bankrupted by the financial crisis of 1793 that followed the outbreak of war with France.

Like Brunswick Square, Portland Square changed from a place where Bristol's more prosperous citizens aspired to reside (members of the Wills family were residents, for example) to becoming the site of warehouses, industrial premises and commercial offices. Among the light-industrial companies based in or near here were manufacturers of boots and shoes, hardware and corrugated paper. A local writer recalled that as a child in the 1880s he associated the square with 'the appetising smell that came from one of the tall houses, beyond the church, where Packers had started chocolate making' (*Western Daily Press* 8 October 1957). As the nineteenth century progressed, established families moved out to the quieter suburbs and houses fell vacant or were converted into boarding houses. By 1906 Portland Square included the Working Jewish Girls' Club; by 1916 a hostel for women; and from 1939 to 1975 a Salvation Army men's hostel.

The square was partly rehabilitated after the damage and destruction of the Second World War but the collapse of the building boom in the early 1970s left the area with 'the highest concentration of derelict buildings in the

Vaughan postcard: Scout March, Portland Square, 23 July 1916 during a visit by Sir Robert and Lady Olave Baden-Powell (Bristol Archives 43207/36/9/3/9). Number 15 Portland Square was the headquarters of Bristol Boy Scouts from 1915 to 1933.

city', according to an article by John Cornforth in *Country Life* (3 November 1983). Like other parts of St Pauls, Portland Square had been in decline for many years and was deteriorating rapidly, with many of its structures in a dangerous condition. It was designated part of a conservation area on 19 June 1974, and new permanent residents began to move in from the late 1980s. At the time of writing, there are sections of the square that remain in need of major repairs.

Pausing in the circular garden at the centre of square, it seems opportune to remember that for more than 200 years many people have tried to make the best of things while living in St Pauls. In the survey of bad housing referred to earlier, investigators remarked how very clean most residents kept their homes under the circumstances, and how one elderly couple was in the process of repapering and painting the walls. Although many parents were torn between deciding whether they should spend what little money they had on food or on rent, their children were often still out playing and having fun.

For example, contributors to the *Western Daily Press* in the 1930s and 1950s recalled how Portland Square had once been a popular destination for novice cyclists. 'Boneshakers' could be hired for a few pennies from a shop on nearby Milk Street and many local children 'first experienced the pleasures – and sometimes pains – of learning to ride a bicycle' by going around the railings of the central garden in relative safety (6 March 1936 and 8 October 1957).

Cross to* St Pauls Church *(5) now the home of Circomedia.

The residents of Portland Square and its surrounding streets could not be accommodated at the church of St James, which had no spare pews available to buy or rent, hence the necessity of building a new church. In his book *Bristol's 100 Best Buildings* (Redcliffe Press Ltd, 2010), Mike Jenner writes that, at that time, pews, 'like parking spaces today, affected house prices and rents' (p69). Daniel Hague, the architect responsible for developing Portland Square, was also commissioned to design its church, which was completed in 1794. Initially it was considered an elegant structure, but tastes changed and later commentators called it a monstrosity. The tiered tower was rumoured to have been designed by the vicar because it appeared so amateurish.

Dwindling congregations led to the closure of the church in 1988. It remained empty until 2004, when it reopened as the premises of a circus school.

Facing the church, follow the alley on your right into St Pauls Park (6).

This was originally the church's burial ground but it was designated a public park in 1935. Like Brunswick Cemetery Gardens, this park contributes to the St Pauls green corridor developed by Places for People. It contains play areas, innovative artworks and space for community events, and was awarded the Best Urban Green Space in the Local Government News Street Design Awards. The overall regeneration scheme, which cost almost £1million, received the Green Flag Award, the national standard for parks and green spaces in England and Wales. Places for People also manages over 300 homes in the area and in 2018 was granted permission to develop a vacant site between St Pauls Gardens Estate and Cabot Primary (which you will pass shortly) for 230 homes plus shops and office space. A percentage of the homes are classified as affordable.

Keep to the left-hand path. Turn left just beyond the children's play area. At the exit, turn immediately right onto another path. When you reach the road (the top of Prince's Street), turn right and then take the right-hand path that will bring you out in the parking area at the top of Halston Drive. Continue along Halston Drive and you will pass Cabot Primary School on your right. Cross St Nicholas Road, turn left, then right into Davey Street. Continue to St Agnes Park (7), another part of the award-winning green corridor.

In order to counter mid-Victorian Bristol's reputation as Britain's third most unhealthy city, reformers such as the Rev James M Wilson (headmaster of Clifton College) pressed for a series of 'parks for the people' and other urban improvements for those living in East Bristol. Wilson successfully petitioned the council to purchase an old orchard near St Agnes Church for use as a park which by 1885 had become a popular local amenity.

It is worth noting, however, that St Agnes Park and the new speculative housing around it had displaced allotment holders who before 1870 had squatted the area by installing chimneys in their tool-houses and converting them into dwellings. So long as they did not build a second storey, they had been left alone by the authorities. In all, some 500 of what were described as 'the roughest class of people' lived there breeding chickens, pigeons and pigs, growing vegetables, and watching boxing matches and cock-fights. The newly-built terraces that replaced these homes were let to artisans and mechanics escaping the congested city centre. In effect, the very poorest Bristolians were moved on in the interests of the social class just above them.

In his memoir *A Family in St Pauls 1920-1940: Scenes from Childhood* (Redcliffe Press Ltd, 1985), Cecil Pope writes:

> St Agnes Park was nearby. There was a pond there with fish in it. The pond was raised up and you could see the fish close up. The Play Park was separate and all tarmac. Nothing in it. We preferred it out in the road for hoops. I had an iron hoop which was rusty with a wire handle... The hoop snapped one day but the blacksmith up in Conduit Place or Lower Ashley Road (I think) patched it. It always had a bump in it after that and bounced in an ugly unpleasant way and made a noise. Sometimes coming down Bishop Street it ran away and dashed across St Nicholas Road into the cobbled Davey Street right in front of a bus. (p14)

St Agnes Park, one of the best-funded of the city parks, remained an attractive destination for local people for nearly a century. However, by the 1970s, as conditions declined, it developed a reputation for being a dangerous haunt of drug dealers and their customers. It became overgrown and derelict until the beginning of the twenty-first century when improvement schemes – involving volunteers of the Friends of St Agnes Park – helped to make it a welcoming place once more.

Another important local organisation was St Pauls Unlimited Community Partnership (SPUCP, 1998-2017), which until 2014 was funded by Bristol City Council. It was central to much of the area's regeneration, including urban renewal programmes which focused on social cohesion, green space and housing. SPUCP made a significant contribution to developing the St Pauls Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2006), creating St Pauls Learning and Family Centre (seen later on this walk), improving local parks and minimising the impact of crime.

In an interview conducted by the Architecture Centre, long-term St Pauls resident, Sue, said:

> St Pauls Unlimited was a great organisation for the neighbourhood. It gave voice and agency to the local people with the council, businesses and developers. For years St Pauls was used as a bit of a dumping ground for people perceived to have social issues (ex-offenders, those with drug, alcohol or mental ill health issues) and so it had more problems than other parts of the city and a rather negative

reputation. St Pauls Unlimited started to change the narrative of the neighbourhood and change people's perceptions, championing all the positive things about the area. It is such a shame that it had to close. There are still active residents, but it feels the community has ceased to have a voice in the same way and this is really worrying when developers are trying to buy up every spare bit of land for high-end development. It really does feel like gentrification rather than community regeneration and there are times when I feel like I don't recognise my neighbourhood anymore.

When discussing regeneration, the less favourable term of 'gentrification' is sometimes used. This is a contentious issue. Gentrification can reverse decades of suburban flight and inner-city decline, but those who have benefitted most have often been small groups of young, educated and affluent people, thereby widening the gap between rich and poor. An article in the *Observer* on 11 December 2016 had the heading 'Riot flashpoint to housing hotspot: hipsters help to bring St Pauls back to life'. Many residents will feel safer if the streets are free from litter, vandalism, gap-sites, boarded-up shops and anti-social behaviour but, unless they are property owners or council tenants, their housing situation may become more precarious due to gentrification. This is because when house prices rise, private landlords will be tempted to raise rents or sell-up.

Cross the park. On your right you will pass a mural of Clifford Drummond, one of the co-founders of the St Pauls Carnival. This is part of the Seven Saints of St Pauls® Art and Heritage Trail, a project led by local artist Michele Curtis, which celebrates positive black history. Keep left of the play area and exit into Fern Street. The mural of Barbara Dettering, another pioneering community activist and co-founder of the carnival, is opposite.

At this point in the walk you can either continue to the next location on the main route – Grosvenor Road (8) – or take a 20-minute diversion to see Bristol's oldest surviving council-built housing on Mina Road (7B).

If you are going to Mina Road, cross into Tudor Road. Turn left on Lower Ashley Road. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing then turn right and left into Conduit Road. Near the end of Conduit Road, on your left, you will see Owen Henry House, named after one of the organisers of the Bristol Bus Boycott of 1963 (of which, more later), a co-founder of the St Pauls Carnival. His mural portrait is on the junction of City Road and Ashley Road.

Turn right into Conduit Place. Ashley Street Park will be on your left and you will pass Parkway Methodist Church on your right. Conduit Place leads into Rosebery Avenue. Keep on this road to the end, then turn right into Mina Road. The tenement blocks you are looking for are on this side of the road, at the far end, by the exit from the M32.

These maisonettes are the only survivors of 73 municipally-funded council dwellings completed in Bristol before the First World War. The others were in Chapel Street, Braggs Lane, Fox Lane and Millpond Avenue. They were built to house those displaced by slum clearance programmes, and were referred to in the local press as 'houses for the industrial classes'. Their design was condemned by some. Members of the local Independent Labour Party, for example, dismissed them as 'brick-built barracks'. Tenants complained about cold floors, damp walls and chimneys that did not draw properly. The land at the Mina Road site was described as permanently boggy and was at risk of flooding from the River Frome (which now runs under the motorway). By the 1980s, the Mina Road homes were only being used by the council for short-term lets. In 1991, the council leased them to the local charity Solon Housing. Since 1998, the non-profit-making, volunteer-run Members In Need of Accommodation (MINA) Housing Co-operative has provided self-managed housing for a small group of single people living here. All that remains of the original Mina Road properties is this West Block; the East Block was demolished in 2007 as it was deemed beyond repair.

Return to St Agnes Park to resume your walk along the main route. From the park, turn into Badminton Road and walk up to the junction with Ashley Road. Ahead you will see the old signage of Jenner and Co: Drapers and Milliners. Bear left into Grosvenor Road (8).

Between the First and Second World Wars, Grosvenor Road was a thriving shopping street with a wide variety of stores that met all the community's

Postcard from the Vaughan collection showing a view of Grosvenor Road, c1910 (Bristol Archives 43207/9/4/57).

needs. A nostalgic letter in the *Evening Post* on 27 September 1974 recalled some of these: Norris the baker; Watts the cycle shop where bicycles could be hired for three-pence a half an hour; Miss May's wool shop; Chamberlain's fish shop; Bartlett's greengrocers; Saxton's the grocer; and Browning's hairdressers, where regular customers had their own shaving mugs, marked with their name.

After the Blitz, many locals moved out of central Bristol and the demographic profile of the area changed to include a more transient and poorer population with higher rates of unemployment. The housing stock was left to deteriorate and by the 1970s homelessness grew despite the presence of empty houses. Under the Housing Act 1974, the St Pauls Housing Action Area E was established with its lower boundary in Grosvenor Road. The area comprised 209 dwellings built before 1881. Of these, 96 were deemed in whole or in part unfit for human habitation, with 283 households being identified as lacking access to standard amenities. The 92 properties in multiple occupation contained a total of 340 households, indicating over-crowding. There was a mix of owner-occupied and privately rented properties. This was just one part of St Pauls that was of continuing concern to the council at the time. Although it may have been more effective to declare the whole of St Pauls a General Improvement Area in order to address long-standing housing problems, there was only funding available to focus on small, scattered housing zones.

Continue along Grosvenor Road. In the small park on your right is a bust of Alfred Fagon, the poet, playwright and actor. The location was chosen as Fagon reportedly regarded the corner of Grosvenor Road and Ashley Road as 'the heart of St Pauls'. In the 1980s, the council's Land and Administrative Committee backed a locally-led campaign to save this 'village green' and prevent a supermarket building on the site. Stop at the St Pauls Learning and Family Centre (9) on your left.

This centre provides a range of meeting rooms, learning and office space, art rooms, computer rooms, a woodwork space, a photographic dark room and a café. The library is on the ground floor. Since 2015, it has been run by The Ethical Property Company.

Take the path on the café-side of the centre (to your left, when facing the main entrance), and look for the mosaic based on a diagram of the Liverpool-registered slave ship, the Brookes. This diagram became one of the first images to be widely distributed in abolitionist propaganda. In 1789, it appeared on 700 anti-slavery posters produced to illustrate the inhumane conditions in which enslaved African people were transported to the British colonies of the Caribbean to work on plantations. The economic prosperity that financed the early development of St Pauls was largely built on profits from the transatlantic slave trade and the sale of goods dependent on slave labour (tobacco, sugar, rum).

This image of suffering is in contrast with the celebratory 'All our tomorrows', the *bas relief* on the external end wall of the Learning Centre created in 2003 by Valda Jackson, a Jamaican-born artist resident in Bristol. With this commission, she became the first black woman to produce a piece of public sculpture in the city.

Continue along the footpath that runs along the café-side of the centre. Cross Ludlow Close and enter St Pauls Gardens Estate (10). Use the path to the right of the wall that has the map of the estate on it. At the play area, turn right and, with the spire of St Pauls to guide you, walk to the enclosed park at the heart of the estate, where you will find more mosaics.

These council-built, low-rise concrete blocks of flats were completed in the late 1960s. The original plans show that the intention was to extend the estate further south and west, reaching to Portland Square. The estate is the oldest, modern public-sector housing in St Pauls.

In *Portrait of Bristol* (Robert Hale, 1971), author Keith Brace writes of this area:

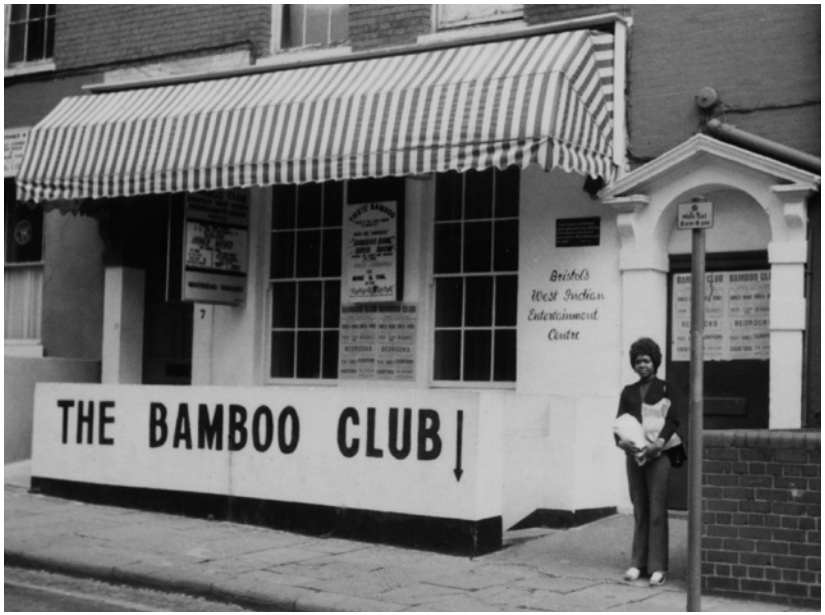
> A recent low-rise flat-development in the Bishop Street-Martin Street area behind St Paul's Church, replacing decrepit terraces, has brought residents back to or into the district, though, ironically, many of the nearly 200 flats were occupied in 1970 by people evacuated from a nearby high-rise block regarded as potentially unsafe. The flats in various groupings are clustered around grassy central spaces.

Bristol City Council Public Relations artist's impression of Bishop Street, St Pauls after redevelopment, c1960s (Bristol Archives 40826/PLA/36).

> Probably they will never fully replace the arms-akimbo, door-step camaraderie and bantering of the old streets. But one only has to look at the exposed backs of the remaining old houses round about, with their domestic rubbish, old bath tubs, broken bicycles, outhouses and outside lavatories, washed-up like flotsam around the end of a pier, to understand that the elbowing friendliness of the old way may be a small loss compared with the warmth and comfort of the new flats. (p63)

Another movement of immigrants into St Pauls came in the late 1990s/early 2000s including refugees fleeing the conflict in Somalia, some of whom were housed on this estate. Somali is the third most commonly spoken of the estimated 91 languages in Bristol today and around 20,000 people of Somali heritage now live in the city. The first Bristol Somali Festival took place in 2015 to celebrate this well-established community.

Continue walking in the direction of the spire. You will pass the mural celebrating Full Circle, the youth and family project, on your left. Keep left and cross the small patch of green. You will exit near the end of the path you took from St Pauls Park earlier. Return to Portland Square. Turn left. At number 15, you will see a Bristol Civic Society plaque honouring race equality champion Batook Pandya. Cross Wilson Street and continue down St Paul Street. Stop at number 12, where there is a BBC Music Day blue plaque marking the site of* The Bamboo Club *(11).



Entrance to The Bamboo Club, c1970 (Bristol Archives 43845/Ph/3/6).

Owners Tony and Lalel Bullimore pictured in The Bamboo Club's Orange Grove Restaurant, which served Jamaican food (Bristol Archives 43845/Ph/3/3).

Tony and Lalel Bullimore opened The Bamboo Club on 28 October 1966. It was the original headquarters of the Bristol West Indian Cricket Club but is best remembered for the musicians who performed on the top floor. They included Jimmy Cliff, Desmond Dekker, Ben E King, Bob Marley and Percy Sledge. Alfred Fagon was among those associated with the club's theatre workshop. It was one of the first music venues in the country to cater for the African-Caribbean community and was a cultural hub for St Pauls until 1977, when it was destroyed by fire.

An article on St Pauls in the *Western Daily Press* on 15 October 1969, included an interview with a Jamaican-born man named Leroy who had lived in Bristol for eight years. Leroy was employed as a bus conductor. He said:

> One of the chaps on my beat came to me one day and he says 'You know, Roy, I didn't have much to do with coloured people till I worked with you. But you seem a genuine sort.' He and his missus and I go to The Bamboo Club, and, man, did we have a good evening out.

In 1968, the first St Pauls Festival was held, led by local residents. It was in part a celebration of community unity following the Bristol Bus Boycott. This had been the first black-led campaign in Britain against the colour bar and it successfully overturned the open racial discrimination of the Bristol Omnibus Company, which would not hire non-white crews. The festival was an opportunity for local people to come together, enjoy themselves, learn about the different cultures to be found in the area and dispel negative stereotypes. It later evolved into the St Pauls Afrikan-Caribbean Carnival.

The walk ends here. If you continue down St Paul Street, turn right into Newfoundland Street then right into Bond Street, you will be able to find your way back to the bus station.

St Pauls/ Community Voices

The following comments were collected in projects run in St Pauls by the Architecture Centre. **www.architecturecentre.org.uk**

Lisa: I lived in a rented house of multiple occupancy in St Pauls. It backed on to St Agnes Park and the house was always lively (sometimes too lively) and full of people. I wasn't used to city living back then and my bedroom overlooked the park – it was a real sanctuary for me, that view over the park – a kind of a green oasis with the grass, trees and beautiful stone church tower in the background – like a surprising little slice of middle England in the heart of the city! Don't get me wrong, it wasn't without its problems, especially after dark, but I think that view, and the access to green space on our doorstep, helped to keep me (a country girl at heart) sane during those lively years in my 20s. I also have happy memories of community events and parties that happened in the park around carnival time and throughout the summer – music, food and people of all ages and different cultural backgrounds all hanging out happily in the sun. Like many of the people living nearby, we only had a tiny yard outside our house, so the park was a haven to chill out in during those summers... with the noise of music and kids playing you could hardly even hear the grumble of traffic on the M32!

Michael: In the late 80s my partner and I lived in a Housing Association flat on City Road. My son was born whilst we were living there and so it holds a special place in my heart. The area was pretty run down then, but very friendly and genuinely multi-cultural. At that time the Housing Association was helping long-term residents buy a home (outside of the area as it wanted to keep the inner-city properties) of their own through the Tenants Incentive Scheme. They gave us a pretty reasonable deposit to buy our first house over in East Bristol – not something that would happen nowadays! We had mixed feelings about leaving as we'd had happy times living in St Pauls – there was always lots going on, the Malcolm X [Centre] was a real hub and everyone knew each other. At that time lots of people (especially if they had/were planning kids) wanted to move out of the area to somewhere perceived as safer, with more space and into houses with gardens, rather than flats. I think we were really lucky – I'm not sure my children will ever get an opportunity to get on the housing ladder – I can't believe the house/rental prices in places like St Pauls now.

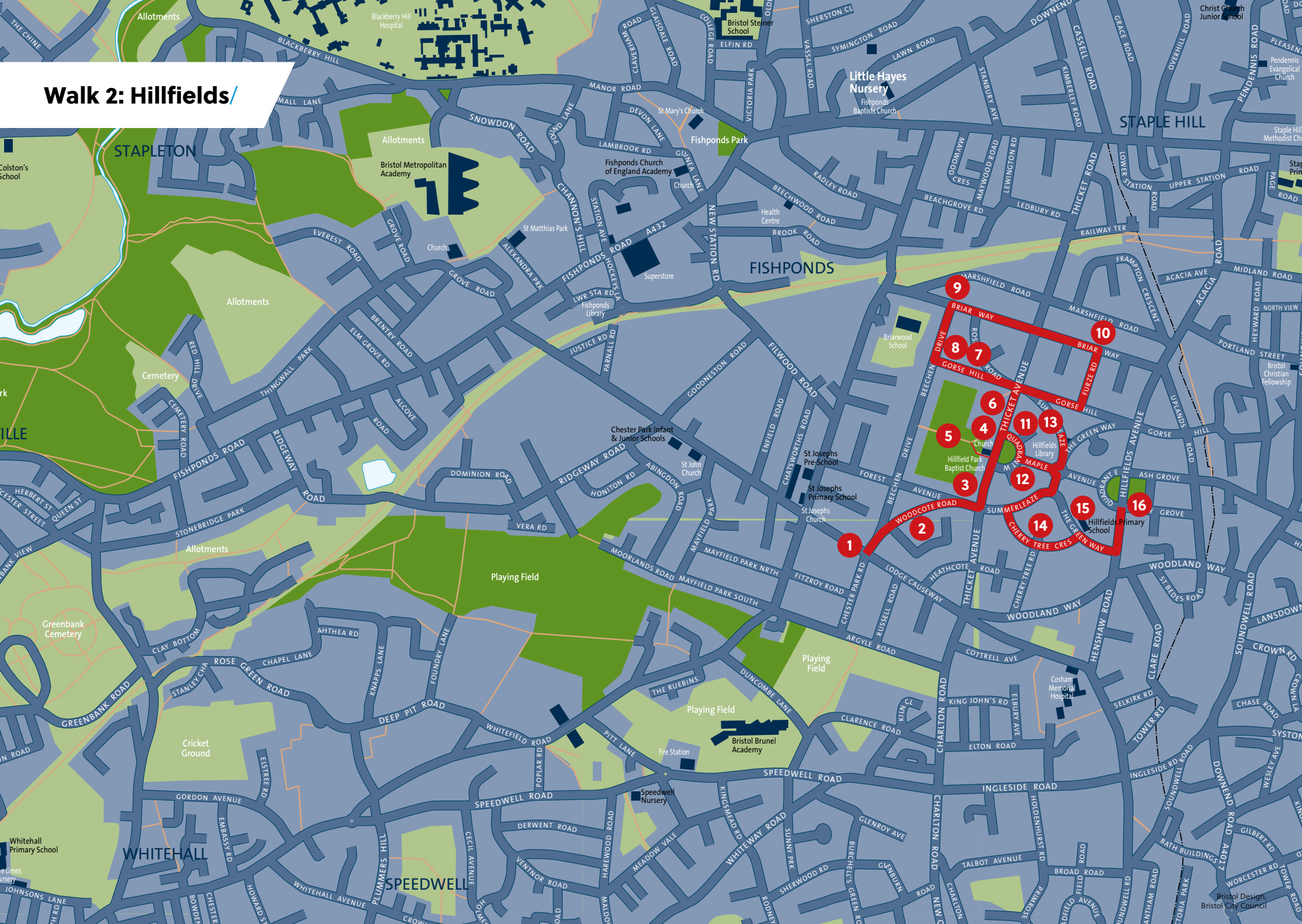
Sue: When my sons were younger, City Road was such a friendly, mixed community where everybody knew each other. There was a motorbike and car repair shop on the corner of Brunswick Street and City Road. It was a focal point. Not only could you get your car fixed but you could drop by, have a sit, a chat and a cuppa. It's now a barbers and an independent record shop. My neighbours were Afro-Caribbean as well as Ugandan Asians who taught me how to cook dahl, Italian families from Naples, a tall Hungarian chap always out with his huge St Bernard dog, along with a midwife, an artist and visiting Cuban musicians. Nowadays the population in parts of the neighbourhood is much more transient, with a constant turnover of tenants. They are nice people but we don't get to know each other and they don't emotionally invest in the area, as they don't stay for long – it's not their fault of course – the private rents are too high, so they move on to other parts of the city.

The row of houses I lived on had long gardens, which backed on to a green space with mature trees and even a family of foxes. It was a lovely place for my sons to play in. Green space like this is so important in the inner city for people's (especially children's) wellbeing. My neighbour only had a small back yard, so her children used to come across the road to play in our garden. As developers buy up more and more spaces in St Pauls, I really worry about the impact of the loss of green space in the neighbourhood. Bristol Churches and Knightstone Housing Associations owned many of the larger Victorian properties in the area so were able to rent out whole town houses to extended families. I remember one large Jamaican family who lived near Hepburn Road – they always had herbs like thyme growing out the front for cooking with their rice and peas. Most of the new housing in the neighbourhood now is tiny flats for single people, as I guess it's more profitable, but I don't feel it's better for residents and the community.

Member of TALO women's group: We moved into St Pauls nearly ten years ago as a young family with one small child and another one on the way. Before moving in, I was anxious about the area as living in Bristol for most of my life, I was well aware that St Pauls always had a negative reputation and questioned whether it would be safe bringing up my children. I was contradicted instantly and found in St Pauls a peaceful and welcoming community from the moment we moved in. My first taste of this helpful spirit was in the communal (St Pauls Gardens) laundry room. I must have left the laundry room for less than half an hour to come back to my clothes all folded and ready to take home. When asked who was responsible for this good deed as I wanted to thank them, I was told that it was maybe 'so and so... but it wasn't a "big deal" as we all do this for each other'. I came to realise that this was the norm, helping each other with school runs, car sharing for groceries shopping or keeping an eye on all children whilst at the park. Ten years on, I do all these things and more for my neighbours and I hope that my children and other younger generations continue this culture of supporting each other without expecting anything in return.

Tara: I moved from the hustle and bustle of London to St Pauls eight years ago where I feel a sense of strong community. Neighbours are friends and we look out for another. I feel very blessed to be a part of a rich and diverse community. I hope the needs for affordable and decent housing in St Pauls will be a top priority for the local authority.

Walk 2: Hillfields/



Walk 2: Hillfields/

On 5 June 1920, more than 500 delegates from the Inter-Allied Housing and Town Planning Congress came to Bristol to see a range of new council-built housing, including the first homes to be built under the Addison Act.

The visitors were drawn from across the UK, the British Dominions (Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand), Europe and the USA. They were led through the Hillfields Park Demonstration Area by groups of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. On this walk, you will see some of the houses they inspected that day. These experimental housing blocks are in the north-west of the estate and were funded through the Local Government Board, the president of which was Christopher Addison. Following Right-to-Buy, private owners have added personal touches to their homes but you should still come to recognise many of the original forms.

The Walk

The number 6 bus will take you from Bristol city centre to the starting point – The Lodge Causeway Shops (1). Alight at the Forest Road stop.

The Hillfields Park housing estate (now generally known as Hillfields) is located on the edge of Fishponds on land once covered by the Royal Forest of Kingswood. Lodge Causeway is an ancient route that, in Saxon times, led from Fishponds to the Kingswood Lodge on Lodge Hill. By the seventeenth century, Fishponds had become a thriving village occupied by the families of locally-employed quarry men and miners. During the General Strike of 1926, it is reported that some Hillfields residents were able to dig for coal in the shallow seams that ran under their back gardens. Fishponds was later associated with the aeronautical and automobile industries.

Hillfields represented a new approach to working-class housing that followed the recommendations set out by the Tudor Walters Committee during the First World War. These recommendations informed the Housing Act 1919. The middle-class suburbs had traditionally marked a clear physical division between work and home. Now this division was seen in a planned working-class community, with many residents commuting to the city centre for work. The new council estates aimed to be self-contained and self-sufficient, following the principles of the garden suburb movement. However, the Lodge Causeway shops were not completed until 1925/1926, so the first residents were often dependent on door-to-door hawkers charging higher than average prices, or deliveries from shops in Soundwell,

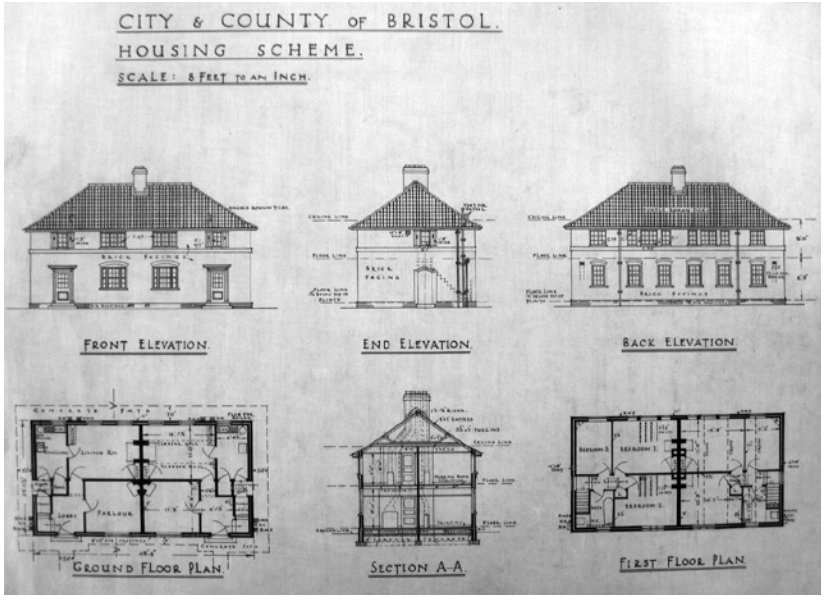
Aerial view of Hillfields taken in the 1920s/1930s (Bristol Archives 44819/3/176). You can see the crescents of Summerleaze and The Greenway, the east and west Quadrants linked by Maple Avenue, Market Square and the Recreation Ground.

Maple Park and Staple Hill. For many local people, Lodge Causeway eventually became the principal shopping street for the estate. Some shops were also later opened at Market Square, the final stop on this walk.

Walk to the junction with Beechen Drive. Turn left here then bear right into Woodcote Road (2). The road sign may be hard to spot but it is the turning immediately after Woodcote Walk.

The variety of homes found on the early post-war estates contrasted with the uniformity of working-class terraces built in the city centre. There was enough repetition of styles to give a sense of order, but also enough diversity to prevent visual monotony. Hillfields is exceptional because it has 30 individual types – the average is 15 – of which the majority were designed by winners of an architectural competition, rather than the City Engineer's Department. A few examples of these different types will be pointed out along the way.

In the fork formed by the junction of Woodcote Road and Beechen Drive there is an example of the MGA2 by the architectural firm of Maidman and Greenen, one of the principal designers of Bristol council housing in the 1920s. This early version of its three-bedroom non-parlour semi-detached house was built between 1921 and 1925. On the left-hand side of Woodcote Road are some REA5s, designed by the architect S S Reay. There are more of these on the right-hand side along with some WDB5s designed by Benjamin Wakefield.



Architect's drawing of the three-bedroom WDB5 (Bristol Archives Red Label Plans 22/3/30). More than half the houses built under the Housing Act 1919 at Hillfields and Sea Mills had parlours compared with only 15 percent of those built at Southmead under the Housing Act 1924.

The WDB5 became one of the standard parlour-housing types in Bristol. Around 2,000 were built in the city between 1921 and 1939. A parlour could serve as a second living room – often kept for best – or provide ground-floor sleeping accommodation, perhaps for a former serviceman injured during the war and unable to manage stairs. In September 1920, more than 87 percent of the 676 applicants for houses on the Hillfields estate were from ex-service personnel, in keeping with the 'homes for heroes' campaign. These were designed as family homes and there was no provision for single people. Many of the first residents would previously have lived in overcrowded, insanitary conditions in the city centre.

At the end of Woodcote Road, the road joins Forest Avenue. Turn right up Forest Avenue then left into Thicket Avenue (3).

This is the only road within Hillfields that pre-dates the estate. It was previously a track running through the fields between St George and Staple Hill. Most of the land on which Hillfields was built was purchased by the council in early 1919 and comprised 128.5 acres. Additional plots totalling just over 31 acres were acquired soon after.

Work commenced at the site on 12 May 1919, before the drawings had been

officially approved and before the Housing Act received royal assent (31 July 1919). At the peak of activity, 184 men were directly employed by the council on the initial layout work. Between 1919 and 1921, this entailed widening Thicket Road (previously a lane and later renamed an avenue) by 20 yards across a distance of 854 yards; completing 383 yards of new roadways; ballasting 6,200 yards of ground for further roadways; and laying 4,361 yards of pipe for soil sewers and 5,221 yards for storm-water (taken from the 1921 *Bristol Civil Engineer's Report*, Bristol Reference Library B6521). (A yard is approximately 0.92 of a metre.) During this same period, 15 contractors were engaged in house building; 134 homes were completed and occupied; and 530 other houses were either constructed or on course for completion soon.

By the time of the 1930 *Bristol Housing Report*, the estate had 788 parlour and 670 non-parlour homes built by the council and 22 privately-built parlour homes.

Continue on Thicket Avenue to the Baptist Church (4), on your left.

The church appears on the original plans for the estate. It was opened on 8 May 1929. In her book *Rough Hewn and Gentle Pride* (1994), recollections of her life on the estate in the 1930s and 1940s, Dolores Powell writes:

> Every child used to attend Sunday School in those days... We loved Sunday School as we were bathed and dressed in bonnets, white socks and satin dresses... My sister and I wore identical clothes and would walk hand in hand carrying small prayer books to Thicket Road Baptist Church which was situated on the edge of 'The Rec'... playing fields. Sunday School was held in a room under the main church and we had to descend steps into the basement. (p9)

The house to the left of the church is a WSA2 designed by W H Watkins who was then better known for his work on public buildings including cinemas. This became a standard type of non-parlour Bristol housing.

Facing the church, take the path to your right, which will take you to the Recreation Ground (5).

This Recreation Ground quickly proved to be a popular play area for children. Among the memories of early residents gathered by Jane Baker in a local history study of the late 1980s were those of the old blackthorn tree nicknamed Twisted Willie, which the children liked to climb, and the occasional visits from Pruett's fairground roundabouts. From the 1950s, the site was used by the Hillfields Park Community Association for the annual summer fete if the weather was fine.

Enclosed open spaces with a clear, designated function were an important part of the design of a garden suburb. The focus was on providing amenities that supported the moral, cultural, religious and approved recreational needs of residents. Playing fields and churches were in; public

Children on the Recreation Ground, c1922 (Know Your Place, Community Layer, submitted by Mr Baker, March 2012).

houses were out. Bristol's Baptists were among those who successfully campaigned for the new estates to be alcohol-free. You'll find out more about garden suburbs in the Sea Mills walk.

To one side of the Recreation Ground is the* Community Centre *(6).

Before this centre was built by more than 40 volunteers in 1950/1951, there were few public meeting places on the estate other than those provided by churches. The Hillfields Park Community Association was formed in October 1945, but discussions about having facilities such as these had begun in the mid-1930s. Fundraising schemes led by the association included children's fancy dress parties held on the Recreation Ground. The official opening ceremony for the centre was on 29 September 1951.

Return to Thicket Avenue and turn left. Turn left at the junction into Gorse Hill, crossing to the right-hand pavement. The first few houses on the left-hand side are examples of the BOA5, a three-bedroom parlour home designed by Austin Botterill, one of the first semi-detached council houses to be built in Bristol. Stop just past the junction with Rosedale Road to look at* Mr Mitchell's Semi-Detached *(7) on your right. You are now entering the Demonstration Area.

Many of the houses assessed by the visiting delegates in 1920 would become standard types used on estates throughout Bristol. This semi-detached property by the architect Arnold Mitchell is the only one of its kind to have been built. The MIA5 was spacious, with three good-sized

bedrooms, a parlour and a downstairs toilet. However, higher quality meant greater construction costs and the necessity of charging dearer rents, putting such homes beyond the means of poorer tenants.

Generally, Hillfields and Sea Mills were designed for better-paid workers who could not only afford the rent and rates but also cover the costs of travel, furniture, food and other necessities. These tended to be more expensive outside of the city centre because of the lack of competition. Heating costs would also have been more because homes were larger. Residents were expected to keep high standards of housekeeping and garden maintenance and were closely vetted by council officers. The Hillfields Park Tenants Association was founded in March 1922 following a meeting of around 300 people to discuss rent reductions for the estate. The association had 20 members, five of whom were women. In addition to lower rents, they demanded a reduction in the rates, better public transport, the provision of more shops and other amenities, and the right to buy their homes (showing that some tenants were clearly better off than others). The council's Housing Committee was broadly sympathetic and in the autumn of that year the Ministry of Health approved the proposed rent revisions. However, with growing unemployment, many tenants still found themselves in arrears, forcing them to sub-let rooms (a practice that was unauthorised). The need to build for those who were only able to pay low rents meant that cheaper construction methods were used and council homes became smaller.

Continue down Gorse Hill. The chimneys you see in the near distance relate to the E S and A Robinson packaging company, once one of the main local employers. The houses on your right are WSA5s designed by W H Watkins. Turn right into* Beechen Drive *(8) and stop at the plaque above the archway between numbers 84 and 86.

This plaque marks the first properties to be completed in Bristol under the Housing Act 1919. It is a block of four three-bedroom parlour homes.

In 1968, campaigning journalist Barbara Buchanan wrote an article headlined 'Living in Bristol's first council house is "pure bliss" (says Angela,

Housing Department photograph of volunteer labour building the Hillfields community centre out of a former army Nissen hut, c1950 (Bristol Archives 40307/1/128). The adjacent mess centre was built by council-employed labour at the same time.

a pretty mother of three)' (*Bristol Evening Post*, 21 February 1968). Angela Piaseki lived at 82 Beechen Drive with her husband and their three young children. They had previously been living with Angela's parents-in-law in Ashley Hill. The family had been offered the council house in Hillfields in November 1967.

> They... moved in straight away with the furniture they had stored and the wedding presents they had kept unopened and now it is pure bliss – a bedroom for Anthony [the youngest child], one for the twins, one for themselves, a sitting room, a parlour, a kitchen, a bathroom and a separate toilet. They don't, to use the familiar phrase, 'know themselves'.

Eveline Nicholas, another of Buchanan's interviewees, had lived at number 86 for 36 years, having first arrived with her husband and young son. Now widowed and with her son in a place of his own, she shared the house with her sister and brother-in-law. Eveline remembered the area when it was still fields and number 82 had been a show-house. She said: 'I think the Co-op furnished it and everyone crowded to see it. I think the furniture they put in was more modern than mine is now!'

Number 88 was one of 1,200 council homes in Bristol that had been bought by its tenant, well before the coming of Right-to-Buy. Audrey and Ivor Johnson had purchased it eight years previously. At the time of the interview, the house was technically overcrowded because ten people lived there, of whom two (the Johnsons' eldest son and his wife) were on the council waiting list. The parlour had been converted into a bedroom for Audrey and Ivor and their youngest son.

Continue along Beechen Drive. The last houses on your left before you reach Briar Way comprise a short terrace of three-bedroom non-parlour REA2s, designed by S S Reay. This is the only block of its type as it was considered too expensive. Cross Briar Way and stop at the Heathman-Blacker HBA2 (9), the short terrace facing down Beechen Drive.

A total of 400 three-bedroom non-parlour HBA2s were built in Bristol, but this is the only block of this type in which the gables face the back garden rather than the street. Eveline Dew Blacker, Bristol's first female architect, co-designed with Harry Heathman several house types that can be found on local council estates. The firm later went on to design Bristol's Cenotaph. Blacker served her apprenticeship under the architect George Oatley, whose work you will see on the Sea Mills walk.

Turn right along Briar Way. The first block of houses on your right comprises two-bedroom WSA1s by W H Watkins. They can only be found in Hillfields because the visiting delegates thought them too small. Continue along Briar Way crossing Thicket Avenue (the first houses to be occupied on the estate are at this junction) and stop at the Heathman-Blacker HBA1 (10), facing Furze Road.

Furze Road depicted on a postcard from the early 1930s, looking towards the HBA1 block on Briar Way (Know Your Place, Community Layer).

This block of four two-bedroom non-parlour houses designed by Heathman-Blacker is the only one of its type. However, you will see three-bedroom terraces with similar gables fronting the street on many inter-war estates. Like the WSA1, the visiting delegates thought the HBA1 was too small and that council homes should provide for growing families with a minimum of three bedrooms.

Cross into Furze Road. At the bottom, turn right into Gorse Hill then left into Thicket Avenue. Stop at Quadrant West (11).

The government review of spending in 1921/1922 (sometimes referred to as the Geddes Axe) brought a temporary halt to many of the building projects started under the Addison Act, though some houses were completed under existing contracts in Hillfields, including those around the Quadrant West. Those to the left are Heathman-Blacker HBA5s, semi-detached pairs of three-bedroom parlour homes of which 338 were built in Bristol in the 1920s, mostly in Knowle Park. Those on your right are Heathman-Blacker HBB5s, of which 62 were built, again, primarily in Knowle Park.

During the Second World War, underground air-raid shelters were built on the Quadrant West green, some of which were assigned to pupils at Hillfields Park Primary School. Many residents would have had their own Anderson shelter in their back garden, a few of which survive to this day. Hillfields was on the flight path for German bombers heading to attack the Bristol Aeroplane Company at Filton, but did not itself sustain much damage.

Walk half way around the Quadrant and turn into Maple Avenue (12).

Several of the houses in this street were built in 1923/1924 by the Robinson company to accommodate local employees. Occupants paid weekly instalments – deducted from their wages – towards the eventual purchase of their homes. Ground rent was paid to the council. The firm specialised in the manufacture of paper bags, waxed paper and cardboard boxes, as well as printing. Employees who lived in Hillfields but had to work at Robinson

factories elsewhere in the city were issued with travel vouchers to use on the trams. With the Geddes Axe and the cancellation of the Addison subsidy, members of the Hillfields Park Tenants Association expressed concern that empty sites would be taken up by private developers and the estate would lose the quality associated with a garden suburb, but this was not the case. All the other houses here were built by the council. The trees that give this avenue its name are thought to have been imported from Canada.

Turn left into Summerleaze and stop at Hillfields Library (13).

The library was built in the 1950s on a site that is shown on the original plan for the estate as an open grassed area. It is providing a hub for displays, memory-sharing events and hands-on activity during Local Learning's Hillfields Homes for Heroes project. It is usually open three days a week. Check the Local Learning website for details of what's on: **www.locallearning.org.uk/hillfields-homes-for-heroes**

Return to Maple Avenue, cross over the roundabout and continue along the crescent of Summerleaze, which is on the right. Turn left into Cherry Tree Crescent and stop at the entrance to Cherry Tree Close (14).

To your left is a group of one- and two-bedroom flats designed for sheltered independent living for people more than 60 years in age. It is one of 23 purpose-built schemes in the city managed by the charity Brunelcare. Applicants for homes here need to initially contact Bristol City Council's HomeChoice team, who will pass on referrals.

This was formerly the site of St Bede's church, which was included in the original plan for Hillfields and opened in 1926. St Bede's was initially designated as a mission of St John's parish in Fishponds but became an ecclesiastical parish in its own right in 1929. It was abolished in 1962 and reabsorbed into the parish of St John. At the outbreak of the Second World War, the vicar of St Bede's, the Rev G H Dymock, was briefly detained by the authorities because he was rumoured to be a member of the British Union of Fascists and, thus, a potential security threat. In 1934, Dymock had been among those who welcomed Sir Oswald Mosley and 500 of his 'blackshirts' to Bristol, attending a rally at the Colston Hall. Residents recall that Dymock was a heavy drinker and that he campaigned – unsuccessfully – to have a public house built on the estate.

Continue along Cherry Tree Crescent which reaches The Greenway, stopping at Minerva Primary Academy (15).

Hillfields Park Primary School (now the Minerva Primary Academy) opened in 1927. The site was set aside for the building of a school on the original plan of the estate but, as with the shops, there was a delay of several years so the children of the earliest residents had to travel elsewhere for their education. Until the community centre was completed, parts of the school were used in the evenings by the community association for 'Old Time'

Photograph of a classroom at Hillfields Park Primary School, 1933, submitted by Lorna Tarr to the Hillfields Homes for Heroes project (Know Your Place, Community Layer).

dancing and general get-togethers, and for meetings of the Hillfields Youth Club and Drama Group. The oak tree near the school entrance was planted in about 1932 and featured on the school crest until recently. In 2012, the school joined the Cabot Learning Federation, leaving the control of Bristol City Council. Since then, this modern structure has replaced the 1920s buildings that were demolished.

In 2008, ten pupils from the school represented Bristol at the Portrait of a Nation showcase that formed part of the high-profile European Capital of Culture programme in Liverpool. Portrait of a Nation engaged young people from 18 cities across the UK in celebrating their local, regional and national identities through arts projects. At Hillfields, Class 3/4M focused on the diversity of their community, exploring how they had all come together in this place with heritages that included Indian, Vietnamese, Swedish, Belgian, Somalian, Italian, Irish, Hungarian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani as well as British.

Turn right down The Greenway and continue to Hillfields Avenue. Turn left and stop at Market Square (16), which is on your right.

Despite its name, there was never a market in this square. The original estate plan shows shops on the corners, of which four were eventually built. The Green (as it is referred to locally) proved popular as a place for games, a counter-part to the Recreation Ground on the other side of the estate. By now, you may recognise the semi-detached WDB5s that make up most of the properties facing The Green. The central terrace comprises WDA5s, another type of three-bedroom parlour home designed by Benjamin Wakefield. Some of the houses around the square were built for Robinson employees to live in and purchase.

This is where the walk ends. There is a number 6 bus stop by Market Square, where you can catch the bus back to Bristol city centre.

The following comments were collected in projects run by Local Learning in Hillfields. **www.locallearning.org.uk**

Philip: We lived in St Bede's Road in a three-bedroom, semi-detached house with a downstairs toilet as you went out the back door. It had a coal house just inside the kitchen and a larder in the kitchen. Although it had three bedrooms, my mother and father had six children; four brothers including myself and two sisters... Everything was very basic. Mother done the washing in a big gas boiler with a gas-ring underneath and ironed it with an iron that you had to put on the fire to get hot. That's how it was. Our garden was quite small, but my father had an allotment. You got Woodland Way, you got Uplands Road and then you've got Hillfields Avenue. In the back of all those houses there's a big area of ground which was converted into allotments and my father had an allotment there. The official gate was off Woodlands Road, but my mother and father were quite friendly with someone who lived on Woodland Way and they used to allow us to walk round the back of their house down the back garden and into the allotments... I used to go there digging, helping father grow vegetables; potatoes and anything like that.

Bryan: I live in Frampton Crescent. I was born there in 1932... I moved away for 20 years, but the greater part of my life has been at Frampton Crescent. One of the things I always remember about living on the crescent and living on the estate was the honesty: you never locked your doors and you could leave your push-bike outside the local shops overnight and it would still be there next morning, or even parked up against the kerb. There were no cars in those days or very, very few... At home, you got up and it was a fight for the bathroom... The bathroom consisted of just one bath and to fill that bath, down in the scullery in the corner was the boiler. You boiled the water up by gas – a lot of people don't realise, but all the houses have four chimneys, but only three fireplaces, the fourth chimney was the flue for the gas boiler. Having boiled your water up it was pumped by a large hand pump – backwards and forwards – to fill the bath up... The houses were well-built, and the windows had loads and loads of little panes. The house was heated by coal and you had the coal-man come round every week to see if you wanted coal. As you went into the porch on your left you had the coal house and on your right the toilet and then you had your main back door. After the war they were classed as outdoor toilets and that's why every council house had a door put on the porch... so the toilet was classed as indoors. Some houses had the toilet just inside the front door and there was always the joke that you could be sat on the toilet and your mail could drop in your lap or your morning paper.

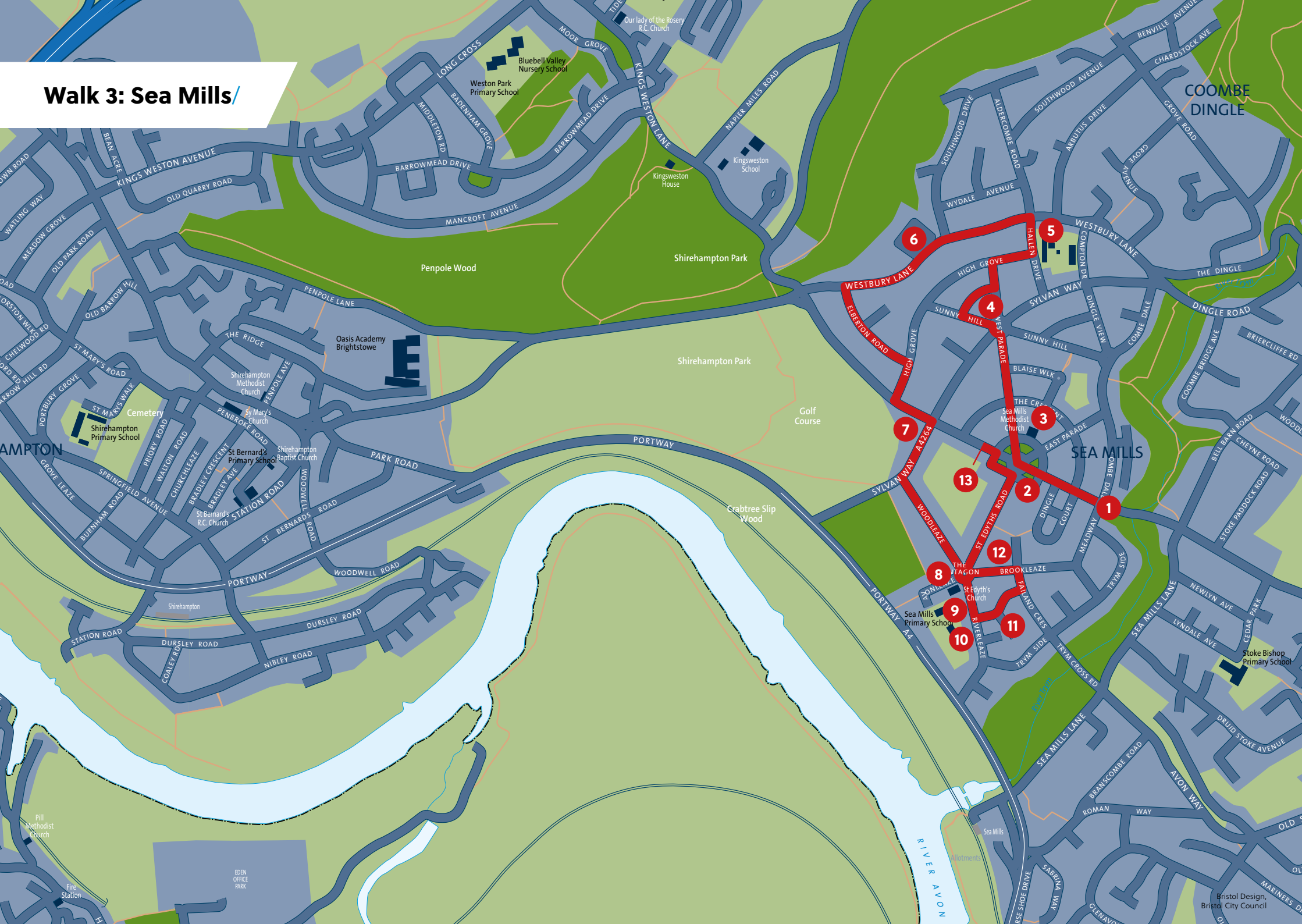
Janet: I live in Forest Avenue now. I moved up to this area when I was a child and moved to Frampton Crescent and we lived in that house for about ten years 'til it got too small for us because we had a large family and we moved to Forest Avenue. There was my grandmother, my mum and dad and five children. We were a happy family. In Frampton Crescent, the street was lovely and there was lots of families. When we came up to this area we didn't feel lonely at all because there was such a lot of children around. You could make friends very easily in those days. We had lived in a very small terraced house in town. I think it had two rooms downstairs and a kitchen, but it had no toilet or bathroom. The toilet was out in the yard and we had to bath in a big tin bath in the kitchen. So when we moved out to Frampton Crescent as children we thought we were in heaven because we had a garden at the front. We could open the front door and go in and run out the back door into another lovely garden and there was also an allotment attached and it was lovely... Yes, we loved that house. It was good because there was so many friendly people around, all children playing together, going to school together, going out for walks together, playing in the street. My brothers used to sit on the kerb and play marbles and we could play hopscotch in the road, there wasn't any traffic about. It was good, it was good fun...

We moved [to Forest Avenue] because we could make the little parlour into a bed-sitting room for my gran and the two boys had the small front-bedroom, us three girls had the big front-bedroom and Mum and Dad had the back room, so we got there all right. But one bathroom between eight people: you can imagine us going to school in the morning all trying to get in the bathroom before somebody else. But it was fun. It was a good house. We appreciated it. I used to know everyone in the street almost, but I hardly know anyone now... I have some nice neighbours, I just don't see them very much.

Cyril: Our house on Gorse Hill was just red-brick with a garden. For people who moved from the centre of town it was quite good. Indoor bathroom, upstairs, and upstairs loo. I always thought there were two bedrooms. They're now saying that there can be three at a pinch – there's a parlour-type thing, downstairs, front room. My father always said it could be used as a miner's bedroom. There was quite a lot of miners around here from Speedwell Pit and to save going upstairs and disturbing the house they could use the front room because of their shift work. I don't know how far it's true.

Tina: I currently live on Beechen Drive, but I grew up on Holly Grove, just up by Market Square. We always had the [community centre] Hub. It was the playgroup, it was the youth club, it was somewhere I always went and thankfully that's still there. The park I think is great. I miss the wooden structure. When I was a kid there used to be a wooden bridge that you used to be able to launch a friend off if you stood just right, I used to love that... There used to be an event up on Market Square every year when I was a kid and I used to love that because it was local and there was a little fair and there were games and things to do. It's not something that goes on anymore which is a shame. I still feel a sense of community around here and it's a joy to be a part of. If I'm asked where I'm from I say Hillfields.

Walk 3: Sea Mills/



Walk 3: Sea Mills/

This walk will take you around one of the country's finest municipal garden suburbs, one that was praised by John Betjeman in a 1937 radio broadcast for its 'vistas of trees and fields and pleasant cottages'.

Among the characteristics of garden suburbs to be found in Sea Mills are: a planned layout of low-density housing and clearly defined streets; houses coherently grouped in symmetrical pairs with occasional short terraces to add variety; generous rear gardens and spaces between properties to maximise access to sunlight and circulating air; a pleasant green setting and attractive outlooks; tree-lined streets and deep grass verges with houses set well back from the road; and provision of allotments, recreational areas, shops, schools, places of worship and a library. Sea Mills was designated a Conservation Area in February 1981.

Bristol's earliest garden suburb was at Shirehampton. It was set up by the Bristol Garden Suburb Company Limited before the First World War. The company was founded by Elizabeth Sturge, a pioneer in education for women; her nephew Frederick Allen Sturge Goodbody; and Eliza Walker Dunbar, one of the first female physicians in the UK. They had been inspired by a visit to Bristol by Ebenezer Howard, one of the early leaders of the garden city movement. George Oatley was appointed the company's architect and in 1909 land was purchased for the building of the estate from Philip Napier Miles, the biggest landowner in the north-west of the city. The project faced financial difficulties. Only 44 cottages for rent had been built by the time war broke out and the scheme was never completed. Napier Miles was a keen supporter of garden suburbs and would go on to be an important figure in the development of Sea Mills.

The Walk

If travelling from Bristol city centre, you can reach the starting point of the walk – Meadway (1) – by taking the number 4 bus to the Sea Mills Lane stop and then walking in the direction of the estate along Shirehampton Road. If you prefer to take the train from Temple Meads to Sea Mills station, walk up Sea Mills Lane then turn left into Shirehampton Road.

Meadway is marked by one of the last of the original 1920s road signs for the Sea Mills estate to survive. The name is set on a wooden board attached to a tall concrete post. You'll see another later in the walk.

If you have travelled here from the direction of Bristol, you will have reached this spot by crossing the River Trym, which provides a natural buffer between Sea Mills and neighbouring Stoke Bishop. Until the late eleventh century, the river was navigable from the Avon as far as Westbury-on-Trym. Shifting land patterns have reduced its flow but it is rich in biodiversity and a valuable green asset for the area.

Coins and various fragments discovered at the mouth of the river have provided evidence of Portus Abonae, a Roman ferry station and military port that was located where Sea Mills now stands. It was abandoned by the Romans around the fourth century. If you walked up from the train station, you would have passed remnants of a dock built here in the eighteenth century. It was used for the fitting out of privateer and whaling ships, but was too far from the city centre to be commercially viable for trade and was abandoned in 1770. Although attempts to operate a dock at Sea Mills have proved fruitless, in the early years of the estate many local residents would have been employed at the docks in Avonmouth. Sea Mills tenants were charged the highest council rents in the city (a reflection of the high-quality of the housing) so people needed steady work and good wages to live here. Other estates were expanded after the Housing Act 1930 to accommodate those relocated from inner-city slums (see the Knowle West walk, for example). Sea Mills was left untouched by this, with little by way of new building until the infilling that took place after the Second World War. Therefore the community remained relatively prosperous and relatively stable for years

Continue along the left-hand side of Shirehampton Road. You will pass Dingle Close where the Olympic champion ice skater Robin Cousins grew up. Stop at The Square (2) by the Addison Oak and Sea Mills 100 Museum.

On 4 June 1919, the Bristol Housing Scheme was officially launched at a ceremony held here. Government minister Christopher Addison cut the first sod and Emily Twiggs, the Lady Mayoress, planted an oak tree. In his speech, Addison said that 'the scheme would be one that not only Bristol but the nation at large would be proud of' and he could 'not imagine a more glorious position than that of Sea Mills'. Later that day he spoke at a public meeting at Colston Hall where he encouraged the council to provide 'houses with air about them' because, unless they did so, they would 'have to spend enormous sums annually on sickness'. At the time, Addison was president of the Local Government Board but he was appointed the first Minister of Health and Housing shortly afterwards.

Work on the Sea Mills estate commenced officially on 28 January 1920 and, at the height of activity, 185 men were employed by the council on laying roads and preparing the ground for housing. The only building contractor was William Cowlin and Sons. By the time of the 1921 *Civil Engineer's Report*, 58 homes were occupied; 1,200 yards of new roads had been completed; and more than 3,720 yards of sewage pipes laid.

The bus stop at The Square, c1930 (Bristol Archives 43207/9/247).

This square, which comprises five greens bisected by axial routes, is the heart of the estate. It provides views to Kings Weston Hill in one direction and the trees of the Trym Valley in the other, and is edged by cottage-style, two-storey buildings with shallow-pitched roofs. The Tudor Walters Report on post-war council housing had recommended that on the new estates there should be no more than 12 units per acre. At Sea Mills, there were fewer than 12 (in some places only eight), thus enhancing access to light and air as well as the sense of openness and space.

As part of the centenary celebrations, the volunteers of the Sea Mills 100 initiative have converted the old telephone box which stands by the oak into a mini-museum with information boards, audio recordings and take-away material. Opening hours are currently Monday-Friday 9am-5pm, Saturday 10am-2pm with additional opening hours in school holidays. See **www.seamills100.co.uk** for the latest news.

Cross to the other side of The Square (there's a pedestrian crossing on Shirehampton Road) and go to Sea Mills Methodist Church (3).

This landmark building provides a focal point for the square and was completed in 1930. It was designed by George Oatley, the architect of, among many other structures, the Wills Memorial Building for the University of Bristol (which you can see from The Northern Slopes on the Knowle West walk) and Bristol Homeopathic Hospital at Cotham (which is referred to in the St Pauls walk). He was actively involved in Bristol's social housing movement and charitable programmes that aimed to alleviate problems faced by the poor. Eveline Blacker served as Oatley's apprentice for four years and his assistant for six. By 1919, she had set up an independent architectural practice in Bristol with Harry Heathman and together they designed several housing types for the city's inter-war estates. (See also the Hillfields and Knowle Park walks.)

Take West Parade to the Sea Mills Library and Community Centre (4). From the junction with The Crescent onwards, you will be passing a few of the more than 400 CNA2 type three-bedroom, non-parlour homes designed by the City Engineer's Department that were built in Bristol's inter-war estates. Alternating with these along West Parade are W H Watkins' WSB2s, a three-bedroom, non-parlour home. (The significance of parlours is explained in the Hillfields walk.)

The library is another landmark building on the estate. It was designed by C F Dawson, Chief Architect in the City Engineer's Department, and opened in 1934. This is one of Sea Mills' secondary centres and is located at the convergence of six roads with a clear line of vision in each direction.

The Community Centre is behind the library. (To reach it, go up Sunny Hill, to the left of the library entrance when facing the building.) The Sea Mills Community Association was founded in September 1945 and led a long grass-roots campaign to build a community facility for tenants. Residents

Building the Community Centre, late 1950s (photo submitted by Lisa Dicker to Sea Mills 100).

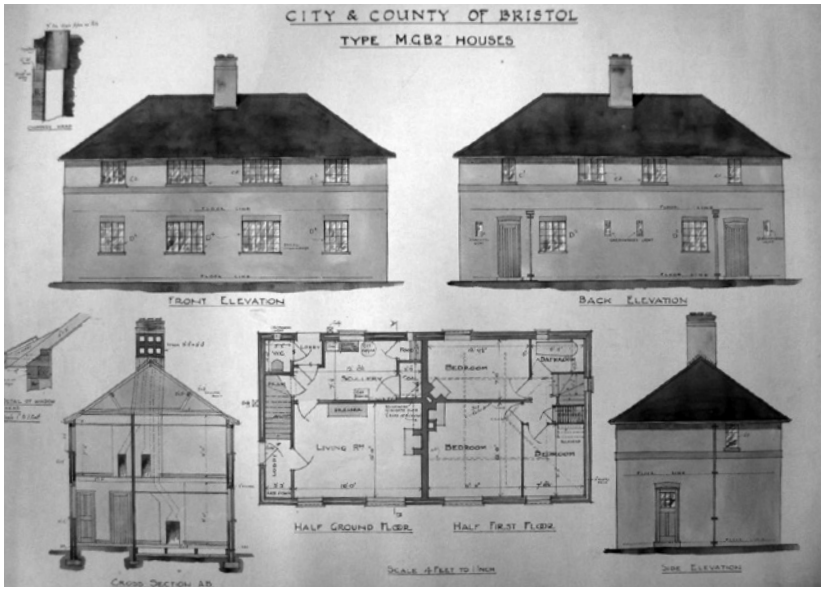
Children at the play group at the Community Centre, 1960s (photo submitted by Mary Wallis – who ran the group – to Sea Mills 100).

were invited to purchase shares in the project for £1 each and enough money had been raised to begin construction by the late 1950s. Work was carried out over a period of five years by volunteers. The Centre is currently open for a variety of events each day including regular meetings of Sea Mills Amateur Dramatics. It also hosts the Sea Mills Flower Show, which dates back to the estate's early days.

Continue past the Community Centre and turn right into Alveston Walk (there's another original 1920s road sign on the corner). Turn left into West Parade. The houses in this section of the Parade are MGB2s designed by Maidman and Greenen. This is a three-bedroom, non-parlour housing type of which 686 were built on the inter-war estates. At the end of West Parade, turn right into High Grove then left into Hallen Drive. Stop opposite what was once* Sea Mills Infant School *(5).

Land was reserved for a school on Hallen Drive in the original estate plans, but it was not built until the 1950s. By then, the mixed infant and junior school on Riverleaze (which you will see later) had become too small to accommodate both age groups. The site is now awaiting redevelopment.

Continue on Hallen Drive and turn left into Westbury Lane, which has a mix of WDA5 and WDB5 three-bedroom, parlour homes designed by Benjamin Wakefield. The Red Bus Nursery, on the opposite side of Westbury Lane, is located in a former public house, The Progress Inn, which opened in 1936. In a perhaps naïve attempt to deter unruly



Original plan for MGB2 (Bristol Archives Red Label Plans 22).

behaviour on the part of council tenants, no pubs were allowed on the estate itself. Its building was controversial at the time with petitions gathered by both sides. However, as technically Sea Mills only occupies the left-hand side of this road, the pub could be built on the right-hand side in the neighbouring suburb of Coombe Dingle. Continue along Westbury Lane and stop opposite* Haig Close *(6) on your right.

These almshouses, positioned around a central green, were built for disabled ex-servicemen after the First World War on land donated by Napier Miles. Sixteen dwellings were completed between 1929 and 1930 with more added in 1936 and 1955. There is a mix of three- and two-bedroom houses, three-bedroom flats and two-bedroom bungalows.

After Haig Close, take the next turning on your left off Westbury Lane into Elberton Road. Continue to High Grove. Turn right then left into Shirehampton Road. Turn right again into* Sylvan Way *(7) keeping to the left-hand pavement.

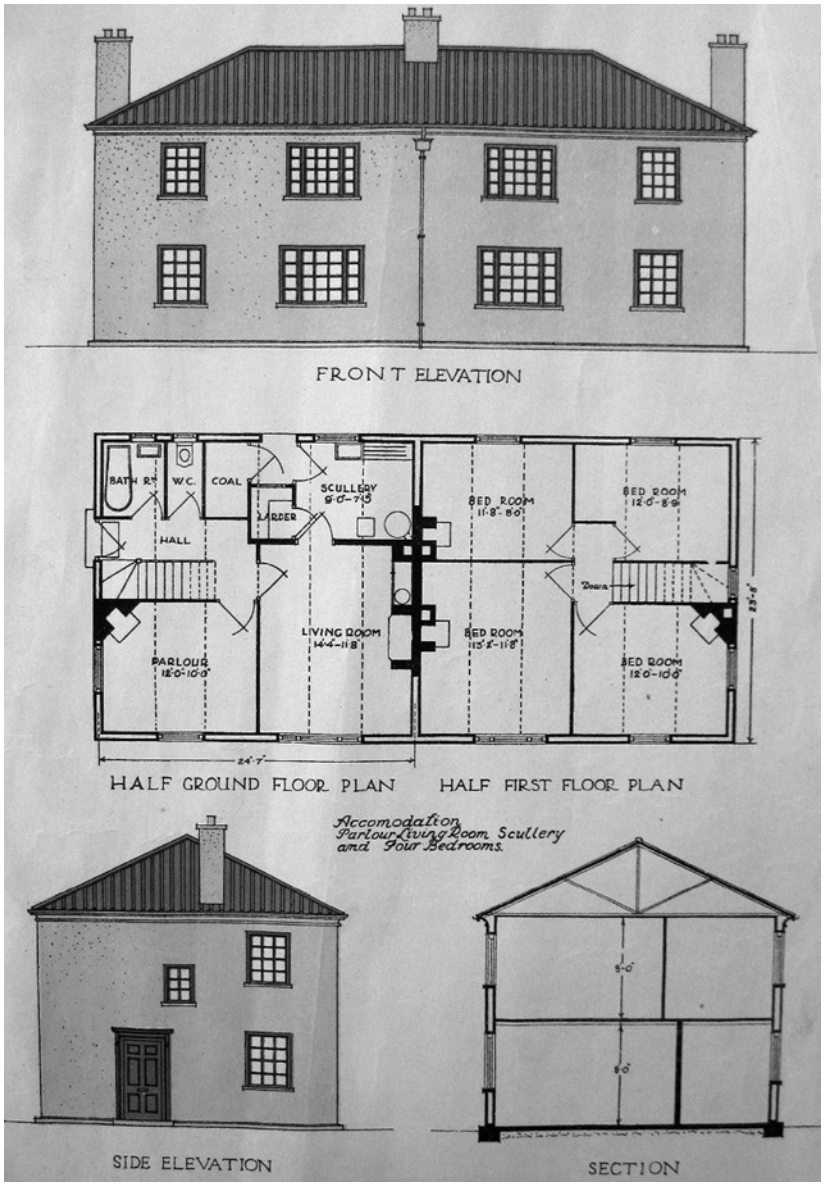
The houses on Sylvan Way were the first to be occupied in Sea Mills, with residents moving in from August 1920. Within a couple of years, an article in the *Western Daily Press* remarked how Sea Mills was no longer a sleepy spot as every train between Bristol and Avonmouth now stopped there on weekdays, providing a regular commuting service to the new residents (30 June 1922).

Image from *The Builder* (28 May 1920) showing construction of houses on Sylvan Way (Know Your Place, Community Layer).

Sylvan Way is the widest main route through the estate and has the deep grass verges characteristic of garden suburbs. It provides an attractive green gateway to the estate leading up from the Portway. Short terraces alternate with semi-detached houses. Their design is influenced by the simplicity of form of the Arts and Crafts movement – with minimal ornamentation and mainly flat fronts and backs – that might be considered unremarkable individually but collectively make a picturesque impression. Construction of the homes was partly financed through the selling of Bristol Bonds, as promoted in an advertisement in the *Clifton and Redland Free Press* on 22 April 1920 headed 'Do Your Share to Solve the Housing Problem'. Bonds ranged from £5 to £100 in value and could be redeemed after a minimum of five years at an interest rate of six percent per annum.

When the delegates of the Inter-Allied Housing and Town Planning Congress had completed their inspection of the Hillfields Demonstration Area on 5 June 1920 (see Hillfields walk), they came to Sea Mills to view some of the 250 Dorman, Long and Company (DorLonCo) homes that are unique to the southern half of the estate and include those on Sylvan Way. The houses were constructed on a steel frame. The outer walls are of cement and sand; the inner ones of breeze block. This was a non-traditional method that provided a quick alternative to brick-built homes when skills and materials were in short supply, but they were not cheap and the experiment dwindled from lack of funds after the Geddes Axe of 1921.

Another non-traditional method used in Sea Mills was for the Parkinson Pre-Fabricated Reinforced Concrete (PRC) houses built under the Housing Act 1924. They were finished in roughcast render with the exception of four red-brick pairs in Failand Crescent. Concrete proved less durable than brick and by the 1980s the council considered the Parkinson homes too expensive to repair, and demolished and replaced 132 of them. Locals campaigned to stop the demolition programme as there was no guarantee that people could move back again. It is a period remembered as one of uncertainty and



Original plan for a four-bedroom Dorman, Long and Company steel-frame parlour home (Bristol Archives Red Label Plans).

sadness, although the campaign was ultimately successful and the council reverted to repairing the properties.

Continue down Sylvan Way. When you reach Woodleaze (on your left), look across at the pair of semi-detached houses on the opposite side of Sylvan Way. These are the only DLA6s – four-bedroom, parlour homes – to be built. Turn into Woodleaze. The houses immediately to your left and right are DLA2s, three-bedroom, non-parlour homes of which 100 were built. Alongside them are blocks of DLB5s. Continue to* The Pentagon *(8).

This is another of Sea Mills' secondary centres, marking a convergence of five roads. The pillar box is of interest. It was made for use in Scotland in the 1950s and therefore does not have the cipher for Elizabeth II that would normally be found on post boxes from this period. The Catholic Scots did not recognise Elizabeth I, hence the reluctance to refer to our current queen as being the second to have that name. Despite extensive research, it is not known why the box ended up in Sea Mills. It is an unusual sight in England.

Adjacent to The Pentagon is* St Edyth's Church *(9).

This landmark building makes what is referred to in garden suburb planning as a 'terminal feature', one that arrests the eye when looking down the long straight stretch of St Edyth's Road from The Square. It is the focal point for The Pentagon. The foundation stone was laid in 1926 and the church was consecrated in 1928. Like the Methodist Church seen earlier, it was designed by George Oatley, who was knighted for his public service in 1925.

Evacuees from Sea Mills in Wellington, Somerset, 1941. They were accompanied by the Rev Wilson, vicar of St Edyth's who is in the centre of the back row (submitted by Peter Hodgson – fourth from left in front row – to Sea Mills 100).

Pupils from Sea Mills celebrate the coronation in 1937 (photo submitted by Jane Macfarlane to Sea Mills 100).

From the church, turn into Riverleaze and stop at* Sea Mills Primary School *(10) (formerly Sea Mills Junior School).

The first block of this school, designed by Alfred Oaten, was opened in 1928; the second in 1931. It uses the same red pennant stone that can be seen at St Edyth's Church. Until permanent buildings were erected, a repurposed wooden hall that had been moved from a nearby aerodrome had served as both a school and church for the estate. The separate school blocks were used for the infants and the juniors until the site became overcrowded. Once the new school on Hallen Drive – which you saw earlier in the walk – was built, the infants could move out. In 2009, the schools were merged again.

Turn left into Bowerleaze. The houses on the corner are three-bedroom, CBA5-type parlour homes designed by the City Engineer's Department, of which only a few were built. On Bowerleaze you will pass CNA5s, another rarely built City Engineer's Department design for a three-bedroom, parlour home. Stop at* Sea Mills Farm *(11) on your right.

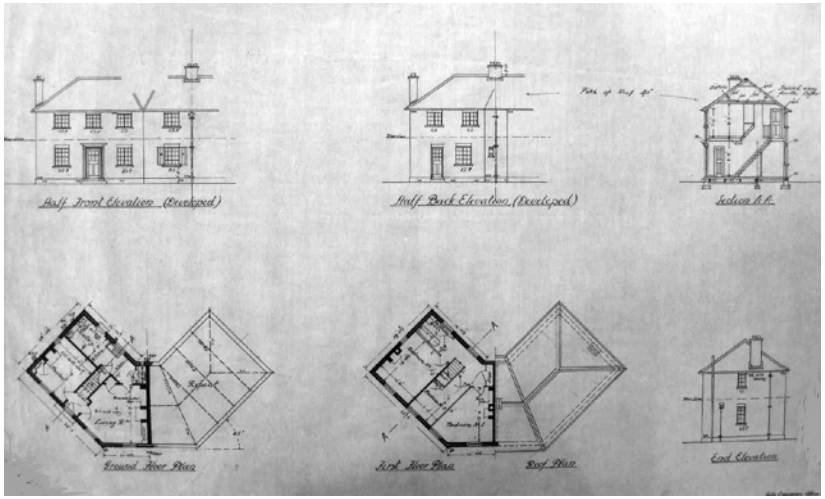
Sea Mills Farm, which was owned by the Napier Miles family, originally covered most of the land used for the Sea Mills estate. Napier Miles sold 205 acres to the council at the cost of £160 per acre on condition that it would be used for no other purpose than the building of the garden suburb. Records suggest the land was purchased in segments while it was still

being worked. The farmhouse dates from 1772, with some later additions. By the time the estate was being built, it was in a poor condition and the sitting tenant, Charles Pearce, insisted that repairs should be carried out at the council's expense. Pearce seems to have been persuasive as he was also compensated for the cost of fencing that would stop his cattle straying beyond their fields and into the new development area. Research carried out by James Powell as part of the Sea Mills 100 project shows that the council only gained possession of the house when the longest surviving family member – Charles' youngest daughter, Alice – died in 1983.

Bowerleaze merges into Failand Crescent. Turn left along Brookleaze to The Pentagon. Turn right into St Edyth's Road (12).

The houses on the corner are more of the council-built CBA5s. The rest of the housing on St Edyth's Road was built for private sale in 1923/1924. After an enthusiastic beginning in 1920, progress on the estate faltered following the cut to the housing subsidy in 1921 and did not pick up again fully until 1927. During the time of the slump, the council was left with empty plots and no money to build on them and so some land was leased to private developers. St Edyth's Road was an owner-occupied enclave in a municipal estate making Sea Mills an early example of mixed development. Like Sylvan Way, this is a partially tree-lined street characteristic of garden suburbs, with houses placed well back from the traffic. The houses have bay windows and are finished in a rough-cast render combined with redbrick. Semi-detached homes alternate with terraces of three or four dwellings.

Continue to the end of St Edyth's Road. The shops on The Square are versions of the WDB5 design that you will also see on the Hillfields and



Original plan for CBA5 (Bristol Archives Red Label Plans 22).

The team of Sea Mills AFC 1932-1933 at the Recreation Ground (with kind permission of Sea Mills AFC). The ball is held by Bert Gill.

Knowle Park walks. There were originally 12 shops but some have been converted to residential use. Turn left into Shirehampton Road and then left into the Recreation Ground (13).

Napier Miles recommended to the council's Housing Committee that at least five acres of the new estate should be set aside for sport. Like the Recreation Ground in the Hillfields walk, this is an enclosed yet open space with a perimeter of houses. A cricket pavilion was opened in May 1923, which became an important venue for social activities. The Sea Mills Tenants Association was formed there, holding its first meeting in November 1927. It was destroyed by fire several years ago. Sea Mills Amateur Football Club was founded in 1925 and continues to play to this day though the games now take place in Kings Weston.

The walk ends here. If you are in need of refreshment before continuing your journey, The Café on the Square (converted from a former toilet block) is recommended (see www.smci.org.uk/cafeonthesquare.htm for opening hours). The café is run by Sea Mills Community Initiatives, a charitable company set up in 2009 by the local churches, which has also developed a community garden on the estate. You can catch the number 4 back to Bristol city centre from the nearby bus stop. Alternatively, you could go to the library and catch the number 3 bus, which will also take you back to the centre.

Sea Mills/ Community Voices

These quotes from residents have been extracted from oral histories recorded by Sea Mills 100 volunteers.
www.seamills100.co.uk

Joan: I was born in a house just the next street away from where I live now. When my parents moved in it was a brand-new house. They moved in three weeks before I was born. It was the first time they had electricity or anything like that. They had been living in a tiny flat in Clifton. They were thrilled to bits to have a house... We grew up knowing all our neighbours and what their husbands did and what all the children did, and we all went to school together. I started school at five. I can remember it so well. It was a lovely school. Sea Mills school was then Infants and Juniors together. It was a lovely warm little [class]room and in the winter it had a coal fire. Everyone who went to that school will remember Mr Godwin. He was the caretaker. He was a very strict caretaker and in the winter he would come with the coal and that and light the fire in the babies' class... You used to come home for dinner. There was no such thing as school dinners. When you were small your mum would have to come and pick you up and take you back again. I remember well being in the Juniors over the other side of the playground. There was one teacher, a man teacher, and he was a wonderful teacher and I am sure his name was Mr Hunkin. All the teachers used to teach everything then, but he's the one teacher who got me interested in the world and geography. He's the one person that made me want to travel. I used to love his lessons. I couldn't wait for them. Before I had finished there the war started.

Stan: We lived in one of the concrete houses (DorLonCos) in Failand Walk. It was where you could have a hot bath and a cold shower all in one operation because the water used to condense on the ceiling and then drip cold into the hot water. One of the chief tools you took into the bathroom with you was a sponge on a long handle so you could wipe the ceiling dry so you could avoid the cold water dripping on you while you enjoyed a hot bath. All the houses in the road were the same, one sitting room downstairs, the kitchen with the obligatory larder and coal house, downstairs toilet with three rooms upstairs. The bathroom was downstairs.

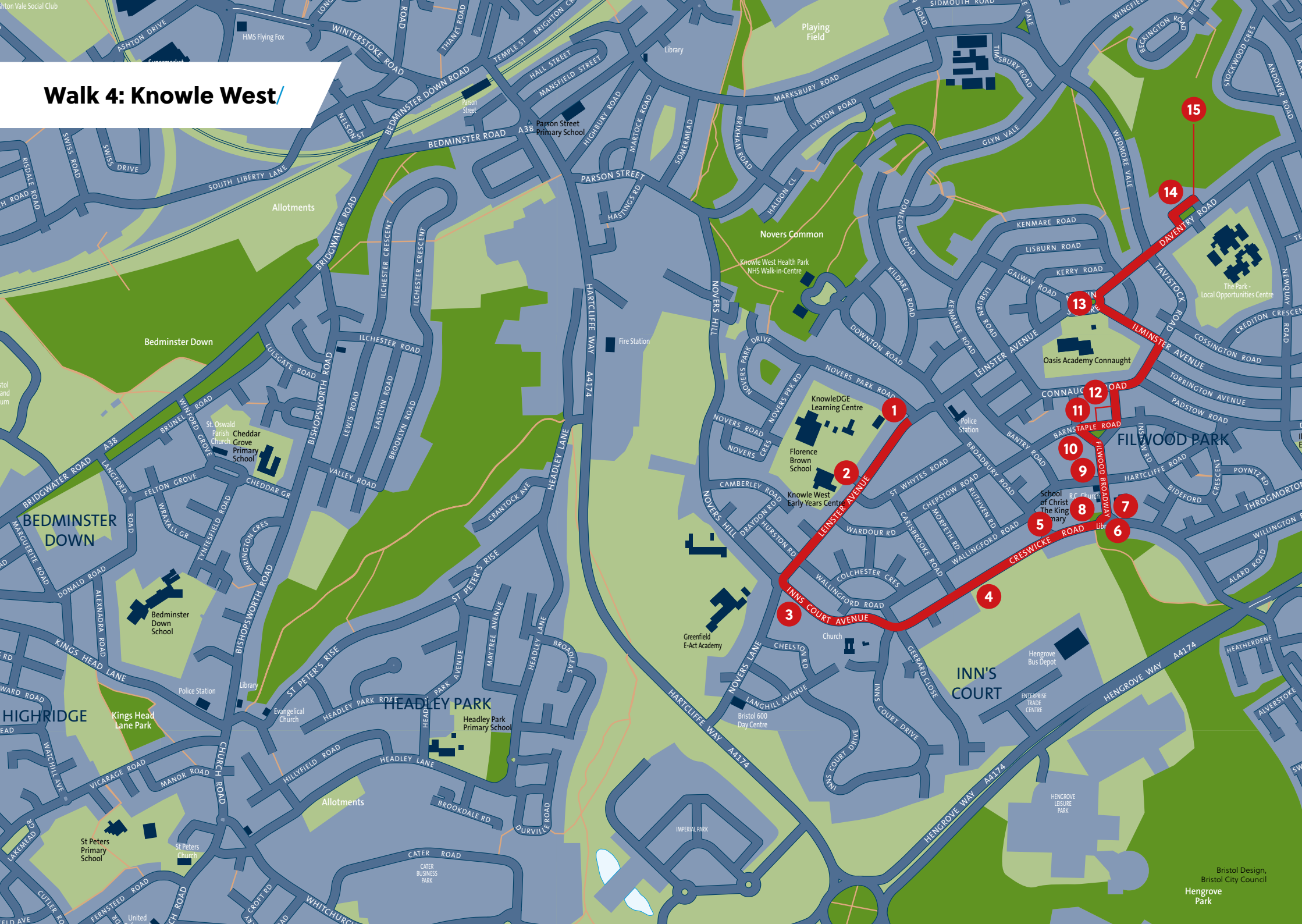
Gill: Sea Mills library made a great impression on me. I didn't read before I went to school and when I went to school I didn't find it difficult to read but I loved going round to the library. I really, really did. I loved the fact that there was a children's section and the adults' section. When you went in you turned left and there was the children's section with lots of lovely books to enjoy. I would take them out with my ticket. I remember when I was 12 or 13 thinking I can go in the adults' section now and I remember that transition. I remember they had newspapers on boards that were slightly inclined so that you could read the newspapers.

Derek: The community was pretty friendly. In fact, I knew people everywhere in Sea Mills. I think because it was very mixed. There were people I knew who were dockers, or whose fathers were dockers. If you're a docker you were not on regular pay. They might be working today and not working tomorrow. There were a whole load of people you would meet, in the shops, in school, at church, in the scouts. What I remember about Sea Mills that I did not realise at the time was so good was that it was in an astonishingly beautiful setting. Not many council estates have hills rising on one side with Blaise Castle, which is marvellous walking country. Almost continuously it led to the golf course which was National Trust country which was great tobogganing. We had much more snow in those days. Then there were the woods and fields of Portway and on the opposite side was endless, endless Somerset, going forever. Yes, it was a landscape that came free, and it made a great improvement in life in general that you came out and looked around and saw trees and hills. The standard walk for the youth club was to meet on the Sea Mills Square around 2 o'clock on Sunday, set off and walk to Blaise Castle where there was a tea shop just beyond the big house and then turn round and walk back again. It was very healthy indeed.

Jane: My favourite haunts were with my bestie Sue. We used to fish. The damage I did to the Sea Mills environment was appalling when I was a kid! We used to fish for tiddlers with jam-jars in the stream behind where Sue lived in Trymside. I'd bring them home in jam-jars because I wanted to look after them, but they would always die because I did not get that they needed oxygen. They always died while I was in that lane between Failand Walk and St Edyth's Road. Oh no! So I used to run, and by the time I got home they were all dead. Once I got one tadpole, just one, and grew it into a frog in a goldfish bowl. When it was a tiny little frog, I took it to my uncle's pond.

Mervyn: The doctor's surgery used to be in a house in St Edyth's Road. On the outside, on the right-hand side of the front door, completely unlocked was a wooden box. That's where they put the prescriptions... We would put all the prescriptions in there, and people would rifle through all the different ones. You'd pick out your own one and off you went. We only had one incident of someone who was very angry and threw the whole lot over the garden. The waiting room had these benches which were probably a death trap because they were so old. It was small, like anyone's living room, and there was a hatch where someone was answering the phone behind. They could hear everything that was being said in the waiting room and they could probably hear everything that was going on in the back room.

Walk 4: Knowle West/



Walk 4: Knowle West/

This walk will take you through an inter-war estate in South Bristol that owes its existence to the Housing Act 1930 and the government's commitment to a slum clearance programme.

Knowle West was constructed primarily to accommodate those who had been moved from parts of Bedminster and other areas of housing deemed unfit for human habitation in Bristol's city centre. Knowle Park – further to the east – was built under the more financially generous terms of the Housing Acts of 1919 to 1923. During this period, houses were of the highest quality, expensive to construct and aimed at more prosperous council tenants. A wide band of cheaper housing commanding slightly lower rents was built adjacent to Knowle Park under the Housing Act 1924.

In the introduction to his post about Knowle West on the Municipal Dreams blog (**municipaldreams.wordpress.com**), author John Boughton writes:

> If a single estate can be taken to encapsulate the social, political and planning history of council housing in this country it is probably Knowle West in Bristol. You'll find in it all the hopes and dreams, all the good intentions and unintended consequences that have marked the complex story of council housing over the last hundred years or so. And you'll find families and communities that have lived this story in all its complexity.

The new arrivals to Knowle West encountered broad streets containing a mix of semi-detached houses and short terraces laid out in accordance with garden suburb principles. There was access to green open spaces, as well as freedom from the industrial pollution that plagued the inner-city. Those who had been moved out of the slums had left behind the sociability (as well as the health hazards) of closely-packed, densely-populated dwellings, and lost touch with many of their former neighbours. Although some were unable to settle and took the first opportunity to leave, it is thanks to the commitment of those who remained that such a strong sense of community exists in Knowle West today.

Jayne Cogan, who has contributed to Knowle West Media Centre's 100 Years of Knowle West Style (of which more later), says:

> I have memories of popping up to Filwood shops to get the shopping after school and queuing outside the veg shop on Xmas eve to get the Christmas veg before they shut at dinnertime. I also remember a balloon coming down in Creswicke fields and me along with all the

Plan of Knowle and Bedminster in the 1936 *Bristol Housing Report* (Bristol Reference Library B14103). This shows the area before the completion of the Knowle West housing.

> other local kids running down to have a look. I also remember the icecream vans that used to come round, and going to get an icecream for 10p! My grandad used to take me and my brother for walks in Creswicke fields and all over the old knocked-down houses nearby and show us the wild flowers (and weeds) growing. It's all been built on now.
>
> At 15 while still at school I worked at Jarman's off-licence two days per week on their sweet counter – and remember weighing out the old-fashioned sweets from the jars – and the kids and adults alike coming in for a '20p mix-up'. It was quite tough living in Knowle West at the time, but it never deserved the reputation it always had to outsiders. I'm always proud to tell people I come from Knowle West. It's full of spirit.

The Walk

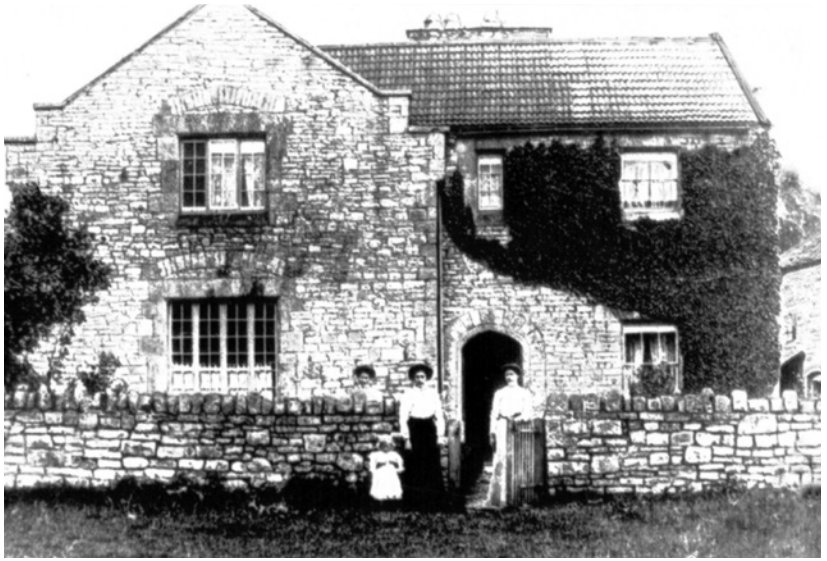
If travelling from Bristol city centre, you can reach the starting point of the walk – Knowle West Media Centre (1) – by taking the number 91 bus and alighting at the Broadbury Road stop. Cross Leinster Avenue, turn left and the Centre will be on your right.

Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) is an arts venue and registered charity that supports people to make positive changes in their lives and communities by harnessing the power of technology and the creative arts. As part of Homes for Heroes 100, KWMC is working with the artists Lukus Robbins, George Lovesmith and Holly Beasley Garrigan on a project called 100 Years of Knowle West Style. This celebrates the estate's distinctive culture and stories, giving residents the opportunity to decide what is remembered by future generations. Cheryl Martin, who has lived in Knowle West for 50 years and leads neighbourhood health and photography walks, is providing invaluable background knowledge to both the KWMC project and the wider centenary programme. She believes it is important to know more about our history. She says: 'to understand where you're at, you have to know where you've come from.'

KWMC is an environmental construction, with the external walls made from straw bales and over 100 solar panels on its roof. It was designed in partnership with local young people and was opened on 14 February 2008. Prior to this, the KWMC team were based in the former William Budd Health Centre, which was located on this site until its demolition in 2007. Budd was a Bristol surgeon who worked in the area of contagious diseases. His name lives on in the William Budd Health Centre on the nearby Knowle West Health Park.

Continue along Leinster Avenue. Stop at the Knowle DGE Learning Centre (2) on your right.

This was formerly the site of the South Bristol Open Air School, one of a number of purpose-built education establishments that were developed in the late 1930s to combat the widespread rise of tuberculosis among children. In 1938, some 1,035 children in Bristol were reported to be infected by the disease, partly as a result of the malnutrition prevalent among the poor during the economic depression of the 1930s. The schools were built on the concept that fresh air, good ventilation and exposure to the outside contributed to improved health. This was part of the wider philanthropic efforts of the era that aimed to improve the quality of life for families living in poverty. A 1939 survey showed that half the children in Knowle West lived below the poverty line, with one in four heads of household unemployed or dependent on casual labour. The South Bristol Open Air School was the first of its kind to be built in the city and catered for 315 children transferred from existing local schools. It opened in January 1940 and closed in 1953.



Inns Court Farm, c1890s (Know Your Place, Community Layer).

Previously, this had been the site of the Novers Hill hospital for infectious diseases. In 1892, the Bristol Sanitary Committee purchased 13 acres to build a facility here for smallpox victims, which opened in 1897. It was also used for the treatment of those infected by measles, diphtheria, tuberculosis, scarlet fever and influenza. By 1933, the construction of the surrounding housing estate meant the site was no longer sufficiently isolated. Instead it became a convalescent facility for patients at Ham Green Hospital before closing in 1937.

From here, continue to walk down Leinster Avenue until you reach the roundabout. Turn left into Inns Court Avenue and look across to the pastel-coloured houses on the edge of the Inns Court estate (3) on your right.

By 1946, there were approximately 26,000 people on the waiting list for council housing in Bristol. This demand was caused by the suspension of the much-needed house-building programme during the war and the damage to existing properties through bombing raids. Over the coming years, new large-scale estates were built in the suburbs, including Hartcliffe, while existing estates were extended wherever possible.

In the 1960s, Inns Court was developed on the edge of Knowle West. Its design marked a radical departure from the garden suburb principles of the rest of the estate. Instead of wide streets and open spaces, homes were constructed around small cul-de-sacs and enclosed pedestrianised

areas. The planners' aim was to increase the sense of living within an intimate community. This is often referred to as a Radburn design, taking its name from the place where it was first used: the town of Radburn in New Jersey, USA. By the late twentieth-century, this type of design had been discredited. It was blamed for intensifying social isolation (cutting residents off from the surrounding streets) and the risk of crime. Following a review in 2009, Bristol City Council planned to demolish Inns Court and relocate residents, but this was successfully resisted by those who lived there. The chair of the residents' committee said at the time:

> I don't see there is any necessity for demolishing our homes. When they were built, we were told they would last for 100 years but now they are talking about taking them down. I have lived here for more than 30 years. My wife and I are happy here. We brought up our family here. If they demolished the estate and rebuilt it, it would devastate the community.

Evidence of a Roman settlement from the third and fourth centuries has been found in the Inns Court area. At the heart of the estate, there are also the remains of an early fifteenth-century manor house built by Sir John Inyn that was demolished in the nineteenth century, save for its medieval stair tower. The tower was incorporated into the Holy Cross Inns Court Vicarage, which was built in the 1950s and can be glimpsed from Inns Court Green off Inns Court Drive (a short optional detour). The building is now empty and the tower is on the English Heritage 'At Risk' register. The Knowle West estate was developed on fields that formerly belonged to Inns Court Farm. In the mid-1950s, an open barn still existed on Inns Court Green that was used as a milk-collecting point.

Continue along Inns Court Avenue, which becomes Creswicke Road once you've passed Inns Court Drive and Gerrard Close on your right. Stop at Filwood Fields (4) on your right.

This has been an area of play for generations of children in Knowle West. At one time, it was possible to walk from here to the hangars of nearby Bristol (Whitchurch) Airport. The airport opened in 1930 and closed in 1957 when the operation moved to Lulsgate. During the Second World War, it was one of the few British airports to continue running a regular civilian service.

After the war, temporary pre-fabricated housing was erected along Creswicke Road. Former Inns Court resident Bonita Croot shared her memories of the area with KWMC during the 100 Years of Knowle West Style project. She says:

> Whilst living in the pre-fabs, approximately aged four, I can remember hearing bells and cheering around the area and neighbours going in to a neighbour's home a few doors away to watch Queen Elizabeth II crowned on 2 June 1953 from the only TV in the Walk! On Creswicke Road, near the pre-fab shops of Inns Court, there was a cow shed and sty where we would buy our fresh milk. As a child it was brilliant [living there], with friendly, helpful neighbours/kids. We used to go on long walks.

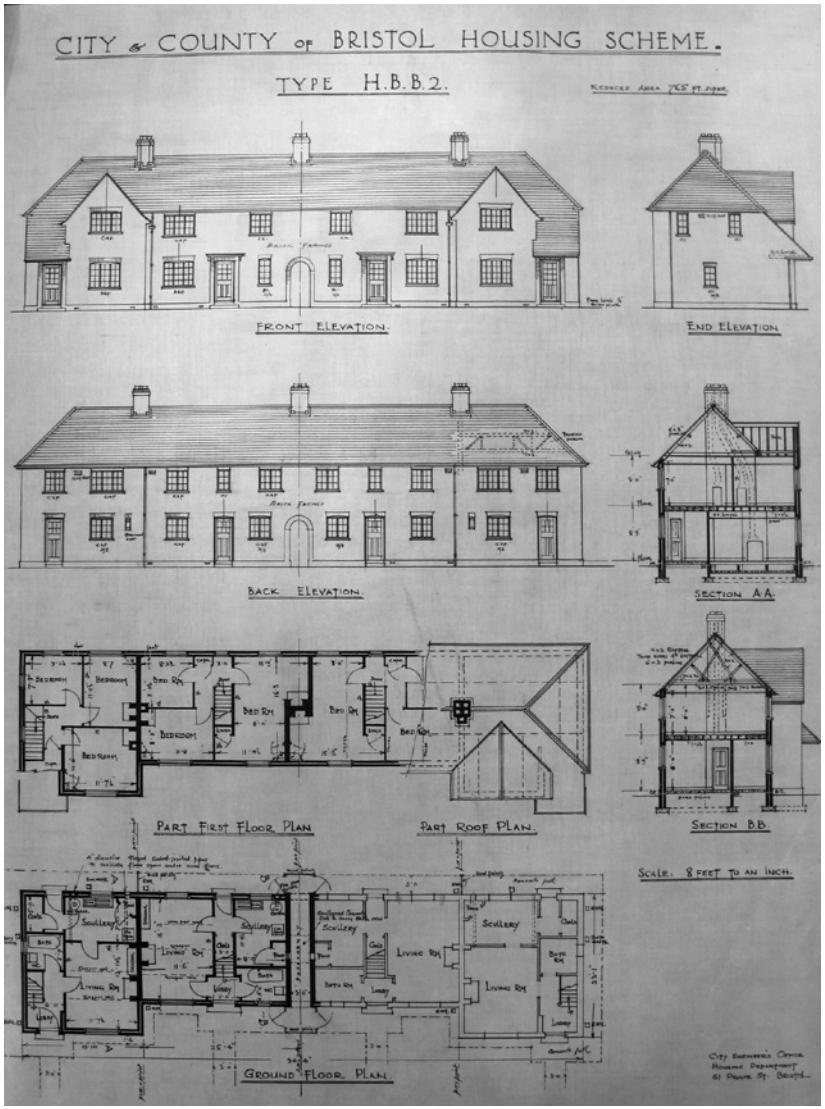
Continue along Creswicke Road, stopping at the junction of Broadbury Road (5) on your left.

The houses on the corner of this junction are Maidman and Greenen MGC2s, one of the most widespread designs for three-bedroom, non-parlour semi-detached homes built on Bristol's inter-war estates. They are normally located at junctions such as this one. The short terrace on the right of Creswicke Road, facing Broadbury Road, is made up of HBB2s, a three-bedroom, non-parlour home designed by Eveline Dew Blacker and Harry Heathman. There are 620 houses of this type to be found on the later inter-war estates of Bristol including Horfield and Southmead, as well as in parts of Knowle and Bedminster.

Continue along Creswicke Road until you reach Filwood Broadway (6) on your left.

Filwood Broadway was designed as the central hub of Knowle West. In the early stages of the estate's development, there were few community facilities, in part because government subsidies only covered the cost of building homes. It was also felt moving people out of the unhealthy slums should be the council's first priority. As a result, thousands of people were relocated to 'a wilderness of houses' that were likened by some to 'barracks' (Martin J Powell in *Bristol: The Growing City*, 1986, Redcliffe Press, pp110 and 112). With the construction of the Broadway in the mid-to-late 1930s, residents were able to shop locally, having previously been dependent on the shops in Bedminster or door-to-door hawkers. However, many families still went to Bedminster for their weekly 'big shop' and a fish and chip van was among several mobile retail services making regular rounds of the estate well into the 1950s.

Some of the shops on the Broadway are now closed. There are several reasons for this: people increasingly using their cars to shop further away where there is more choice and more competitive prices; the growth of online shopping; the loss of major local employers and the reduction in household income for many; and, some argue, the unacceptably high business rates. As part of the council's Knowle West Regeneration Framework – a 20-year plan for meeting community aspirations that was launched in 2008 – this area is set for redevelopment. In both council consultations and their own 'grassroots' projects, residents have made it clear that they wish the Broadway to remain at the heart of Knowle West. There are many community-led initiatives currently working to create positive change in the area. One example is the Filwood Fantastic programme – which was devised by residents working with Filwood Community Centre and KWMC. The programme secured funding from Creative Civic Change in 2019 and will focus on improving and enlivening the Filwood Community Centre building and Broadway. In recent years



Original plan for HBB2 (Bristol Archives Red Label Planns 22/3/4).

children have also painted bollards and street furniture on the Broadway while a group of gardeners and makers constructed benches and planters for flowers.

Opposite the library, on the right of the Broadway, is the former site of Filwood Swimming Baths (7).

These were the first public baths to be built in Bristol after the Second World War and were large enough to host international events, accommodating up to 500 bathers and 450 spectators. They were opened on 14 July 1962 and closed in 2005. Live West (formerly Knightstone Housing Association) won the bid for the now vacant site with a proposal to build 41 new homes for sale and rent. Work is expected to start at the end of 2019.

Jayne Cogan, who contributed her memories for the 100 Years of Knowle West Style project, says:

> I mostly spent my leisure time at Filwood swimming pool from about the age of ten. We used to go about five times a week and stay in there as long as we could get away with [it]... I got my first job there where I worked while at college. I have memories of Saturday and school holiday fun – swims when all the local kids would turn up in droves, and us lifeguards would have fun with them, squirting them with hosepipes and trying to knock them off the floats with the water... For me, Filwood swimming pool was an iconic place.

Continue along the Broadway to the* Church of Christ the King *(8) on your left.

This landmark church was completed in the 1960s. Prior to this, Mass had been held in the hall of the Catholic primary school around the corner on Hartcliffe Road (built 1938). Since the cross was stolen from the statue on the baptistery wall, some locals refer to the figure that remains as 'The Floating Jesus'. The sites of the church and school were acquired by the Bishop of Clifton during the early planning of the estate. He also acquired

Filwood Swimming Baths, exterior, in the 1960s (Bristol Archives 40826/BAT/4).

the site further along at 2 Filwood Broadway that was used to build a convent for the Religious Sisters of Charity (opened in 1937). This became a small missionary community of the Lee Abbey Movement in the mid-2010s.

Cross Hartcliffe Road and continue to the site of the now derelict Filwood Broadway Cinema (9).

The license to build a cinema in Filwood Broadway was put out to tender in 1937 and won by Roy Chamberlain, who was granted a £7,000 mortgage by the council and a 99-year lease. The three-storey Art Deco-style building opened on 20 October 1938 and had 1,000 seats. As stipulated in the council agreement, it had a separate rear entrance for lower-class patrons. Known locally as 'The Bughouse', boxing matches and other live events were staged here in addition to film screenings. In 1971, unable to compete with the attractions of television and other entertainments, the building was converted from a cinema into a bingo hall. It closed in the mid-1990s and has been empty ever since. The removal of asbestos is due to start in summer 2019 so the site can be redeveloped as part of the Knowle West Regeneration Framework. Some of the original cinema projectors and seating are now in the possession of M Shed, the museum of Bristol history on the harbourside.

Continue along the Broadway, past a row of shops. The last of these was once the site of the Bristol Rediffusion showroom (10).

Bristol Channel was a community TV initiative set up by the Rediffusion cable network in 1973. Between December 1973 and March 1975, a team of volunteers and up to 16 staff members worked with organisations across the city recording hundreds of hours of footage that was transmitted to around 23,000 Bristol homes, initially only at weekends but later also on weekday evenings. Among the groups involved was a large contingent of Knowle West residents who contributed 21 hours of material. They conducted street interviews, filmed around the community, and presented the Knowle West TV news bulletins. In 2014, the Knowle West TV stock was digitised. As well as being held by KWMC, footage is at Bristol Archives, alongside the administrative paper archive. Extracts of the show can also be found on the YouTube channel Knowle West TV. It is well worth a watch. Although the Rediffusion showroom moved from Filwood Broadway to Old Market in 1961, many locals associated the programme with this site.

Take a look at the former convent building, referred to earlier, just beyond the shops, then cross Barnstaple Road to the Filwood Community Centre (11), opposite the green that marks the end of Filwood Broadway.

Since 2010, the Filwood Community Centre (filwoodcentre.org.uk) has been managed on a day-to-day basis by the charity Community in Partnership Knowle West. The Centre was built in 1937 at a cost of £16,000. It was arranged around a central lawn that could be used for outdoor

entertainments. One side of the quadrangle was designed for the use of adults, the opposite side was for children and adolescents. It contained a dance hall/theatre; a fully-equipped gymnasium with changing and shower rooms; meeting and games rooms; reading and common rooms; a canteen; a skittle alley; and workshops. Its aim was to provide a homely club where the community could make friends and experience a range of leisure opportunities. It remains a well-loved community asset and a source of pride for the estate with many of the original design features and services still intact. KWMC has its origins here, beginning as a 1995 photography project that refurnished the dark-room facilities and taught photography skills to local people.

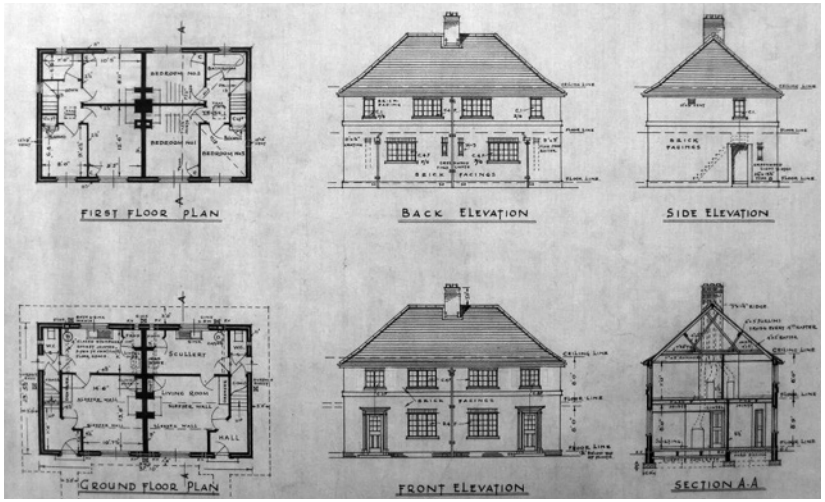
If the Centre is open, you can walk through the quad and out to the community garden at the back. On your right, a path will lead you to the wood-clad We Can Make prototype home (12). Alternatively, you can walk past the Centre along Barnstaple Road and turn left into Marwood Road to reach this stopping point.

Over the summer of 2017, this eco-friendly Transportable Accommodation Module was built as part of the We Can Make housing initiative – an ongoing collaboration between local residents, KWMC and the architectural practice White Design. The programme aims to support people to develop the housing solutions they want and need. The house is fully plumbed and wired, has walls made of straw bales and has triple-glazed windows. Over 400 people have now stayed overnight to test it out. Melissa Mean, Head of Arts at KWMC, explains the reasoning behind the project:

> From our research and conversations with families in Knowle West, we've seen that the current competitive housing system doesn't work for many people – they are struggling to find the kind of home they need at a price they can afford. However, there's a keen interest in trying something new. Ninety percent of people we asked said they thought 'micro-plot' homes were a good idea for the neighbourhood and 73 percent thought they were a good idea for their street.

Knowle West residents were part of the construction team and worked with artists Charlotte Biszewski and Alex Goodman to ensure the house reflected the local area. They made curtains, cushions and tiles using natural dyes, and built furniture for the kitchen with support from the technicians at KWMC's manufacturing and making space KWMC: The Factory, which is based at Filwood Green Business Park.

Before leaving Marwood Road, look at the houses opposite. The first, coming up from the direction of Barnstaple Road, are CND2s designed by the council's City Engineer's Department and among the most common variety of three-bedroom, non-parlour homes built on Bristol estates from the mid-1920s to late 1930s. Next to them are Maidman and Greenen MGD2s, another common type of three-bedroom, non-parlour home.



Original plan for MGD2 housing (Bristol Archives Red Label Plans 22).

From Marwood Road, turn right onto Connaught Road. Head towards Ilminster Avenue. Turn left and continue to* Melvin Square *(13).

Before the building of Filwood Broadway, this square was the only purpose-built shopping area for the estate. A once prominent feature was The Venture Inn, owned by the Bristol brewery George's, which opened on 16 December 1935. None of the other inter-war estates were provided with public houses so this was a significant exception. It also represented a new venture for the brewery (hence its name). It functioned as both a licensed pub and a neighbourhood social centre. There were separate entrances for the club room and for a café that provided soft drinks and light meals. Concerts, dances and meetings were held in the assembly hall that could hold up to 300 people. The licensed area was extended to cover the hall in 1938 to reduce overcrowding in the public bar and smoke room, and the need for people to spill out into the street. The building was demolished in 2006 and the Carpenters Place flats built on the site. Many locals have memories of times at The Venture; you can still hear the long-standing local joke that patrons would 'venture in and stagger out'.

George Campbell, who shared her memories with KWMC's 100 Years of Knowle West Style project, says:

> An icon of Knowle West was the off-licence situated behind the Venture pub. Dad would send me up the 'Vench' where I dodged the small beer crates along the grey, dark alleyway which eventually took me to the main door. He'd also send me down Newquay Road to get a packet of ten Woodbines from the machine next to what I think was Harpers shop. Next to the fag machine was the chewing gum machine where every fifth turn you'd get a free packet of Beech-Nut chewing gum. The other icon was the rare trip to the Gaiety cinema [located on Wells Road, Knowle]. We'd make our way to Salcombe Road and weave the streets until we finally got to Broadwalk and the Gaiety. All this for a Western! We slept, ate and played out our Cowboy and Indian fantasies.

The Venture Inn, c1950 (Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives, Hartley Collection 259235).

There was another dance hall above the parade of shops at Melvin Square that is also fondly remembered.

There are now no pubs remaining within Knowle West and community gatherings and social events circulate within the numerous social clubs in the area, of which there is a rich tradition. Eagle House Social Club in particular (situated on Newquay Road) has played a significant role in the music scene of the neighbourhood. The Eagles, a local band formed at the club in 1962, soon turned professional and featured on the soundtrack of the Kenneth More/Angela Douglas 'Swinging Sixties' film *Some People*, which was filmed in Bristol and promoted the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. In later years, Fresh Four, pioneers of the hip-hop-inspired Bristol Sound epitomised by their top-ten single 'Wishing On A Star', held their first gig at Eagle House. Knowle West resident band-member DJ Krust went on to be a leading light of the UK Drum and Bass scene. Trip-hop legend Tricky was also from Knowle West as his 2008 album *Knowle West Boy* attests.

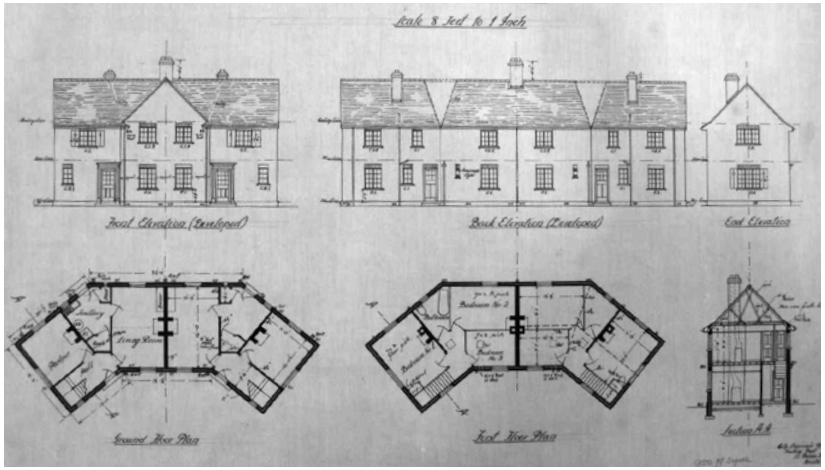
From Melvin Square turn right into Daventry Road and stop at* St Barnabas Church *(14) on the left.

The church was completed in 1938. The houses on the corner of the green, nearest Daventry Road, are CBE5s, a semi-detached, three-bedroom, parlour home designed by the City Engineer's Department. Those next to them on the green are CNE2s, also designed by the City Engineer's Department and a variation on the CND2s seen earlier in the walk. The houses on the opposite side of Daventry Road are Benjamin Wakefield's WBD5s, the most common type of three-bedroom inter-war parlour home in Bristol. The design was used for private as well as council housing. There is a plan of a WBD5 in the Hillfields walk.

Facing the church, look to your right for the footpath that opens out to The Northern Slopes (15). Walk out to the viewing point from where you can see the top of the Wills Memorial Building and Cabot Tower in the city centre and the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

This area of woodland, wildflower meadow and scrubland fed by two seasonal streams, gives you a sense of why Knowle West was dubbed 'the five thousand island forest' by the workers who built it. From this vantage point you can see how the estate – which comprises about 100 streets, 5,000 homes, and 12,000 people – is sited on a hill surrounded by green space. It is poised on the edge of the city and the rural landscape, somewhat isolated and detached from both.

During the Second World War, nearly all of this area was turned over to food production as part of the Dig for Victory campaign. A temporary water store was built outside St Barnabas church to facilitate this. On 3 January 1941, Knowle West was hit by German bombs, including one that landed but did not explode at Beckington Road, at the other side of the Slopes.



Original plan for CBE5 (Bristol Archives Red Label Plans 22).

This might be the origin of the local nickname 'The Bommie' to describe this part of the estate.

Sharing her thoughts on the significant places in Knowle West, as part of 100 Years of Knowle West Style, Rianna Dyer, says:

> I spent my time when I was younger playing in The Bommie, taking the dog out with my mum to The Bommie, spending time with my aunties in what is now allotments... [They] used to have horses at the back of our house... We used to go swimming at Filwood swimming pool... I was devastated when they knocked it down.

This is where the walk ends. However, if you can manage walking on what might prove to be a steep and slippery path, it is worth continuing down into the Slopes and up the other side in order to look back at this viewing point.

The Park Centre (theparkcentre.org.uk/wp) opposite St Barnabas Church and the entrance to The Northern Slopes, has a community café and would be a good place to get some refreshments. Eggs from the local Springfield Allotments are sold here as well as handmade chutneys and jams. Filwood Chase History Society is also based at The Park and can be visited to learn more about the rich history of the local area.

If you need to return to Bristol city centre, you can either walk back to Melvin Square or forward to Broadwalk Square to catch the bus.

Further Information/

In addition to resources cited in the text, the following material has been used in researching this publication.

Peter Malpass and Jennie Walmsley *100 Years of Council Housing in Bristol* (UWE, 2005)

Madge Dresser 'People's Housing in Bristol 1870-1939' in *Bristol's Other History* (Bristol Broadsides, 1983)

Portland and Brunswick Square: Character Appraisal (Bristol City Council, May 2008)

Sea Mills: Character Appraisal and Management Proposals (Bristol City Council, January 2011)

The websites Know Your Place Bristol (**www.kypwest.org.uk**) and Homes for Heroes Story Map (**www.locallearning.org.uk/hillfields-history**)

Most of the local newspaper articles came from various collections of clippings kept at Bristol Reference Library.

We hope you enjoy reading *Homes for Heroes 100: Book of Walks*. To help us plan future projects and to provide data requested by our funders, please complete the online survey.

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/V5SGWW6

You can also post comments on our Facebook page

www.facebook.com/homesforheroes100
#homesforheroes100

Thanks to the support of Bristol City Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, this book is being given away free of charge.

These walks have been devised as part of the Homes for Heroes 100 programme, which marks the centenary of the Housing Act 1919. They will take you to three suburban housing estates in Bristol built between the First and Second World Wars, and a part of the inner-city that was developed for residents over 200 years ago.

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