



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024

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

www.friendsofbmga.org.uk

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**Friends of BMGA, c/o Bristol Museum & Art Gallery,
Queen's Road, Bristol BS8 1RL**

www.friendsofbmga.org.uk

Chair's Report

The Friends are in a very strong position financially, thanks largely to the kindness of some late members who remembered us in their wills. The decline in membership numbers has markedly slowed to 3%, an improvement on last year's drop of 8%.

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

The most immediate need for additional volunteers is in the Events Group, but despite limited resources they have run a varied and interesting programme raising an impressive total of over £19,000. Compared to last year we have been more successful in attracting members to sign up to our events, so they have each become more effective at generating funds. Without the Events Group, led by Mary Bailey, the Friends would be unrecognisable as the organisation we all know and love, so I cannot thank them enough. Please let Mary know if you would consider joining the Group, or even just helping support one or two events a year.

This year we have received, or are very soon due to receive, significant bequests from Daphne Smith, Ros Rome, Martin Davies and Brian Toms. These additional funds mean that we are even better able to support the museum. Our thanks go not just to the benefactors but also to their friends and family who might otherwise have benefited. For members to remember us when they write their wills is an affirmation of what we and the museum are

doing, and of the real sense of friendship and belonging that they found in the many events we run.

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

Newsletter and communications

Our newsletter has continued to be vital in keeping us connected with all our members, not just those who join us for events, and the museum team have contributed some fascinating and well-received articles to complement reports of our own events and trips. In October it was awarded Joint Runner-up in the national Newsletter Awards run by BAFM, the British Association of Friends of Museums. Editors Tim and Ann Wood do a wonderful job of putting together each fully illustrated edition and making it so enjoyable to read: many thanks to them both for their skill and hard work, to our many contributors of both articles and photographs, and to Mary Bailey and Richard Avery who are responsible for printing, enveloping and dispatch.

Working with the museums service

Our relationship with the museum team continues to be key to what we do as Friends, and we are grateful to staff across the service for their continued enthusiastic support. I know that in return they appreciate not just our financial and practical contribution but also our "moral support" and the genuine friendliness of our committees and volunteers when we work with them in organising and running events and other activities. In the spring the museum team welcomed a new permanent Head of Culture & Creative Industries, Philip Walker. Phil's most recent role was

running the Culture team in Gloucester but he is to many of us a familiar face as he was part of the Bristol Culture Team's then Senior Leadership Team until 2019 and prior to that was for a couple of years the Museum Friends' committee's main point of contact with the museum. There have been too many other staff changes to mention in detail, but as far as possible they have been reported in the newsletter. We wish all the staff who have left the best for the future.

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

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

The Executive Committee

I would like to thank all the officers and committee members for their commitment and hard work behind the scenes. Special appreciation is due to our officers: Katherine Martin our Secretary; Robert Walters our Treasurer; and Richard Avery our Membership Secretary. Also to Steve Sparks who has been shadowing Robert's role as treasurer so we now have effective back-up, and Clive Burlton who has taken the lead in investigating how best to invest our growing funds. The committee have met monthly

in person throughout the year, and thanks also go to Giles Woodward (an attendee at our meetings but not a trustee) for taking on the task of drafting the minutes. Thanks, too, to the volunteers who are not part of the committee or the Events Group but whose work is vital to our success, including Peter Newley who collates and submits our valuable gift aid claim.

The Future

With the benefit of recent bequests we are in the strongest position financially that we have ever been and, thanks to our loyal membership and to all our officers, committee & Events Group members and other volunteers – and supportive staff from the museums service – I am confident we shall continue to thrive in the coming year. Online booking has been a step forward, but further fine-tuning is in hand to make it even more effective. To maintain and grow our activities we need to recruit new members to the Events Group and volunteers interested in shadowing and later taking on all the key roles essential to our success. If you think you might be able to help, while at the same time extending your social circle and having the satisfaction of supporting such a good cause, please let me know in person or by email.

Sue Thurlow

Treasurer's Report

This has been an excellent financial year for the Friends. Due to the generosity of Friends through substantial legacies we have never had so much money. Mary Bailey's hard-working Events Group has produced an improved profit compared to last year. Applications for trips are rising so that now some trips have waiting lists. This is the first

year we have tried booking events online using PayPal. It has been very successful.

The strong financial position enables the Friends to make generous donations to the museums. Further legacy income is expected in 2024/25, allowing us to continue making more donations.

Most of our funds are invested in short-term (mainly one year) fixed bonds with high rates of interest. Onerous regulations for opening new accounts have meant that it can take months to open an account, to the frustration of the signatories to the Friends accounts.

We are grateful to Richard Avery, our Membership Secretary, for managing the subscriptions and to Peter Newley for recovering the gift aid from HMRC. Geoffrey Clements has, again, expeditiously reviewed our accounts.

We are in an excellent position to start a new year.

Grants made in 2023-2024	£
Reprinting of Bristol Region Geology book	1,000
Woodblock print of Gioji Temple, Kyoto, Japan	550
Benjamin Lund porcelain sauce boat	5,000
Image of Artistic interpretation of Palaeolithic dragonfly	200
Archival boxes for Asian textiles	935
5 17 th century Japanese porcelain dishes	4,965
4 drinking glasses from Lazarus Collection	4,658

Sound Archives	2,000
Contribution to building plans conservation project	1,500
Artistic interpretation of ancient cockroach fossil	200
17 th century porcelain coffee can	2,100
Payment to Steph Kempson for Family storytelling re Mary Anning	5,500
Contribution towards new Protest display, including Edward Colston statue	30,000
Coombs 'china burned' octagonal dish	100
William Watt lead weight	120
Grant to Lisa Graves for attending a conference in New Zealand	450
Edward Godwin plans of Assize Court	5,008
1831 Bristol Riots police truncheon	2,250
Transfer of 16 th century carved wooden beam	570
Kate Newnham's purchases for the Japanese collection	2,982
Winter lectures and summer walks	943
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	70,088
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Grants approved for 2024-2025	£
Video art	5,954
Facsimiles of documents for display at M Shed	1,344
Contribution to Sounds of South West	10,000
Nancy Holt photo works "Wistman's Wood, Dartmoor"	9,250
Pyronaut repairs	30,000
Whitchurch Roman hoard	100
Tai Shani video art <i>Neon Hieroglyph</i>	5,500
Port of Bristol instructions for crane drivers	600
Kings Weston Roman Villa interpretation and conservation	7,800
	70,548

Robert Walters

Treasurer

Membership Secretary's Report

Membership numbers fell again and at the end of our reporting year (30 June) we had 323 single members (330 last year) and 300 (310) joint members. With our membership skewed towards the older age bracket, each year there will inevitably be those who cannot continue in

membership for a variety of reasons. It is encouraging to note that we have seen 29 new memberships for 2024.

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

Richard Avery

Membership Secretary

Events Group Report

We have welcomed Sally Dore as a new member to the group; she has already taken on responsibility for organising visits – and also bakes cakes (a much-appreciated attribute).

We took the plunge and introduced online booking for all events, using PayPal as the payment method. This has been largely very successful with a few minor hiccups as we fine tune the system to suit our requirements. It does, however, generate extra admin in reconciling the accounts.

Bookings for our events have been unpredictable – some only just viable and others oversubscribed. This may be due partly to our increased charges but we do our best to keep costs to a minimum. We cannot, however, avoid the huge increase in coach hire, which is the main reason for the higher prices of trips.

As a group we try to provide a varied programme to appeal to as many members as possible; the result is a bit hit and miss in terms of popularity. Behind the Scenes events, however, are always well supported and special thanks are

due to Carol Ouvry for organising these. Richard Avery and Carol Lear have worked really hard to provide interesting trips to destinations outside Bristol and deserve our thanks too. The full list of our events is given below.

Some of our talks at the Studio at M Shed have encountered technological problems, leading in the worst case to a talk being abandoned. We are working with the staff at M Shed to ensure that this does not occur in the future.

We welcome suggestions for and feedback on the programme and also any offers of help in organising events. Please do get in touch with me if you have comments or think you would like to be part of the organising team: events@friendsofbmga.org.uk or 0117 942 1944/ 07779 244308.

List of events

1 Holiday

Visit to London Docklands

13 Trips

Geology and wildlife of Clevedon Beach

National Waterways Museum, Gloucester

Compton Verney and the Audubon exhibition

Croft Castle

Nantgarw China Works and Museum

Killerton House at Christmas

Ashmolean Museum: *Colour Revolution – Victorian art, fashion and design* exhibition

Painswick Rococo Garden

Museum of Somerset, Taunton: *Journeys in Art* exhibition

STEAM, Swindon

Winterbourne House, Edgbaston
Dyrham Park with travel by Royal Blue heritage coach
Quenington – *Fresh Air* exhibition

18 Behind the Scenes Visits

Bristol Harbour Working Exhibits
Circomedia
Corn Exchange & St Nicholas Market – 3 groups
The Mount Without
M Shed Stores tour – 2 groups
The Puppet Place – 2 groups
Tour of Jade Gallery – 3 groups
Tour of *Opulent Origins* exhibition – 2 groups
Tour of *Hay Wain* exhibition 'Truth in Nature' – 2 groups
Tour of *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition with
Roz Kidman Cox

1 Walk

Blood and Butchery in Bedminster with Sheila Hannon

8 Talks

Angelica Kauffman – Dr Jan Cox
Bristol on the Box - David Parker
Clifton Observatory - Mary Coward
Communicating Christmas - Clive Burlton
Fascinating Spiders – Mark Pajak
Il Duchetto - who is he? - Robert Walters
Paintings: Ways of Looking, Ways of Seeing - Maud Rowell
Three Archaeological Finds – Kurt Adam

2 Lectures and Lunch

Summer lecture & lunch, Trinity College – Augustus John
Spring lecture and lunch, M Shed – Chinese glass

2 Public events

Bristol Harbour Festival – books, jigsaws and cakes sale

Pyronaut's 90th birthday weekend – cake sale

Mary Bailey

Chair, Events Group

Volunteering Report

Baking cakes was top of the agenda for volunteers this year. The Harbour Festival was busy as usual in July so, with a bumper display in L Shed of books and jigsaws as well as cakes and preserves, we made a surplus of £1,230 – an excellent result. We could not have achieved this without the help of all the volunteers who gave up their time to bake cakes, provide books and jigsaws and/or to sell the items from our stalls. We are grateful to you all for supporting the museums service in this way. However, it required some effort to dispose of the remaining books after the weekend so we took the decision to concentrate on cakes, preserves and jigsaws in future – and leave the selling of books to charity shops.

The Archaeology Festival at Blaise took place in September this year. We had a stall sited next to the Thatched Dairy, where we displayed food made with milk or cream dating from the Iron Age through to the 18th century, when the dairy was built. The weather was disappointing but the Roman, Tudor and Georgian food looked inviting and we had many children attempting to make butter by beating cream vigorously with a twig whisk in a bowl or using wooden butter pats to form the butter into shapes (very messy). Many thanks to Rosemary Silvester for providing food and props for the display and also to Sue Pears and Sue Pettit for their time helping on the stall and to Sue Thurlow, who took up her usual position on the welcome desk for the whole day.

In June we were invited to participate in Pyronaut's 90th birthday celebrations with a cake stall in L Shed over the weekend. Our baking volunteers got busy again and we had plenty of cakes to sell, making a surplus of just under £450. Thanks to everyone who baked and helped on the stall.

Our cakes always attract many compliments from the crowds at these events – one customer proclaiming that it was worth travelling 2½ hours to enjoy the fruit cake. He bought four slices in all. Another customer tasted a lemon cake and promptly bought eight slices to take home for his family.

Mary Bailey

Harbourside Working Exhibits Report

Firstly, a huge thanks from the Working Exhibits team for the help and support given by the Friends – a long-standing collaboration, which is much appreciated.

The 2023-34 period has put a lot of pressure on our team but they have overcome all the hurdles to maintain the exhibits, enabling us to continue the visitor offer.

Portbury locomotive is currently in the Whitehouse workshop awaiting the removal of boiler tubes while undergoing its ten-yearly standard overhaul. This project has been slowed down because the team has had to work on the track, replacing many life-expired railway sleepers.

Mayflower has a boiler problem which is preventing her sailing until new parts arrive. *Pyronaut* also needed repairs so *John King* became the only working boat.

The Fairbairn steam crane is also showing its age and has been out of action, awaiting repairs to the boiler; these will be carried out by an outside contractor.

Maintaining the electric cranes is similar to the painting of the Forth Bridge: the team are working on them constantly. The good news is that No 29 is coming closer to being operational since it ceased working in 1975. Watch this space.

The Bristol lorry had a problem with the cab developing a droop, which meant it became unusable. The lorry is a favourite at Docks Heritage Weekend in September, when the volunteers have some fun re-enacting life on the docks in the 1950s.

Apart from the exhibits themselves our plant, which enables us to maintain them, also had issues during the year. We had a scissor lift which went up but not down, a rail crane which had an electrical fire, various batteries died and the loader shovel was starved of fuel. It has undoubtedly been a testing time for the team, who deserve our thanks for their dedication in maintaining and operating the working exhibits.

Chris Ecclestone

Working Exhibits Manager

Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives Committees

2023-2024

Executive Committee

Officers:

Sue Thurlow – Chair
Katherine Martin – Secretary
Robert Walters – Treasurer
Richard Avery – Membership Secretary

Elected Members:

Lucy Bailey
Mary Bailey
Clive Burlton
Susan Hibberd
Carol Lear
Toby Pinn
Sir Stephen Sparks

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives' Representatives:

Beth Cutter/Caroline Booth Morris – Joint Development Managers
Allie Dillon – City Archivist

Events Group

Mary Bailey – Chair
Richard Avery
Catherine Dixon
Sally Dore
Gary Gostelow
Carol Lear
Carol Ouvry