

BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE  
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# BRISTOL 1934-1939



THE BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
LOCAL HISTORY PAMPHLETS

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*Cover illustration:* St Augustine's Bridge  
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**BRISTOL**  
**1934-1939**

During this period Bristolians were becoming more aware of international events particularly in Spain, Abyssinia, Central Europe, Italy and Germany. Locally, the clashes between Fascists and Communists and the increasing friction between the Labour and Citizen parties became newsworthy. National government was having a growing impact on citizens' lives; a National Assistance Board assumed some responsibilities previously exercised by the Public Assistance Committee, the Ministry of Transport influenced the Corporation's activities by its grant making powers and the protection of the public from air raids became a national concern. The period saw the death of one king and the abdication of another and the early months of the war.

Unemployment and temperance continued to be issues of considerable public concern. Slum clearance was not without its problems: some tenants found the level of rents beyond them and shopkeepers suffered when their customers were moved to the newly built estates; property owners complained of the level of compensation. Despite the apparent inadequacies of its airport Bristol saw an increase of air services. Traffic problems in the inner city manifested themselves and halt signs, speed limits and Belisha beacons made their appearance. The new road from St. Augustine's to Victoria Street changed the face of the Centre and Queen Square. Work started on the new municipal building in College Green only to be suspended for the duration of the war. Bristolians saw the beginning of the end of travel by tram car and the mining of coal in the city.

The period is covered by Reece Winstone's *Bristol As It Was 1934-1936 and 1937-1939* and *Bristol's Suburbs in the 1920s and 1930s*. Readers wishing for a more detailed description of the immediate pre-war period are referred to the early chapters of *Bristol At War* by the late Professor C.M. MacInnes.

**1934**

William Henry Wise, the Clerk to the Justices, died on 31 December 1933. At the end of January his assistant, A.J. Orme was appointed to the position.



Following the quinquennial review of rateable values there was a meeting of some 4,000 ratepayers on 18 January to protest at the new rating assessments, which they considered to be unfair; they also urged a more careful consideration of expenditure. The matter was raised at the Council meeting on 30 January when the Rating Committee was requested to report on the basis of the revised valuations and other matters. Their report was considered by the full Council on 13 February when some councillors claimed that council houses were treated more favourably than other properties. This was denied by the committee chairman and the Council accepted the committee's report.

On 21 February Lord Dulverton opened a welfare centre for the unemployed at British Road, Bedminster. The facilities included rooms for carpentry, recreation and reading and a canteen.

Adam Cottam Castle, who served as Sheriff in 1913/14, died on 9 March. He was a solicitor and had been a councillor from 1910 until 1929. William Alfred Titley who had been a councillor from 1908 until 1919 and had served as Sheriff in 1919/20 died on 11 March.

On 12 March the local branch of the British Union of Fascists held a meeting at the Empire Theatre; Sir Stafford Cripps and the Bishop of Malmesbury declined to be present. Rev G.H. Dymock of St. Bede's, Fishponds tried to voice his protest against the church flirting with politics but could not make himself heard above the rival singing of the National Anthem and the Red Flag. Sir Oswald Moseley addressed some 3,000 people in the Colston Hall on 28 March; 500 black-shirted stewards patrolled the gangways and there were scuffles resulting in five men being treated for injuries and two taken to hospital; one of Moseley's bodyguards was found unconscious. A further public meeting in June provoked a question in Parliament. In reply the questioner was told that the meeting (in St. Matthias Park) had been closed on the advice of the police and that two persons were injured. Lord Apsley (Conservative, Bristol Central) commented (to ministerial cheers) 'If there is any rising of Fascism in Bristol is it not due to paid Communist rowdies who infest every meeting and have expressed the intention of making free speech impossible?'. On 22 June there was further trouble at the Ropewalk when some 100 men exchanged blows at another public meeting. The police arrested 12 men and a number were injured. As a result Frank Phillips of Clifton and George Elvy of Jacobs Wells Road appeared in court charged with disorderly conduct and obstructing the police. Phillips accepted that he was well known to the police as a local leader of the Communist party and told the court that he was defending the working class people in the city. In sentencing them the magistrates observed 'any party, whether Fascist or Communist or any one else has

a right to a decent meeting without interruption.' At the July Council meeting a questioner was told that during the past six months opponents of the British Union of Fascists had seriously interfered with many of their meetings and that on occasions it had been necessary to draw a cordon across a street in the interests of law and order. In October a group of the Bristol branch headed by A.V. Gough and J.N.P. Mountjoy was refused admittance to a meeting at Cheltenham being addressed by Sir Oswald Moseley; they wanted to discuss with him the estrangement between the Bristol and Gloucestershire branches. At the end of that month Jefferson Thomas Davis was imprisoned for three months for obtaining goods by false pretences. He had falsely claimed to be authorised by Mr. Goodman, a commander of the Bristol branch, to order items for the officers' mess in Park Row.

On 13 March the Council discussed a report from the Housing Committee on some of the difficulties encountered in their slum clearance programme. Some of the displaced tenants, particularly the elderly, found it difficult to afford council house rents in the new housing estates and the committee considered it might be preferable to rehouse them in smaller houses nearer to the centre of the city. Shopkeepers in Hotwells complained that they suffered a loss of trade when their customers were rehoused in other districts. The committee also considered restricting tenancies to those with incomes below £250 per annum but had rejected the idea because it would be difficult to enforce. However the Council passed an amendment directing the committee not to grant new tenancies to tenants with an income in excess of that amount. Later in the month the committee agreed to recommend the erection of 300 houses at Horfield without recourse to the rates or government subsidies to be let at economic rents. In May the committee proposed the clearance of an area in St. Jude's comprising 192 dwellinghouses; the plan would displace some 1,400 people and was one of the largest slum clearance programmes ever undertaken in the city.

At the same meeting a questioner was told that ten percent of classes in Bristol schools had over 50 pupils.

During the weekend of 24/25 March twelve rhesus monkeys escaped from Clifton Zoo. All except one were quickly recaptured, one of them from Poole's House at Clifton College. A few days later the remaining monkey was still in residence on the roof of the house on the corner of Guthrie and Pembroke Roads.

A deputation of unemployed men was received by the Council on 27 March to urge the restoration of the cuts in Poor Law relief that were made in 1932. They claimed that payments were such that men and families had to live on an average of 1½d per meal.

The officers and committee of Bristol Choral Society had approached Sir Dan Godfrey to become their conductor in place of Mr. S.W. Underwood. However, when the proposal was put to the society's annual meeting on 23 April it was rejected by the members by a large majority. The officers and committee resigned and declined to offer themselves for re-election and the society continued under Mr. Underwood's baton and with a new committee.

On 2 May a Housing and Town Planning Conference of a number of local authorities met at Bath. The conference passed a resolution urging the government to reintroduce financial assistance to local authorities for house building.

Rev. Harry William Blackburne was installed as Dean of Bristol on 4 May.

Also on 4 May Professor Julian Huxley addressed the Colston Research Society's annual dinner in the reception room at Bristol University. He expressed the view that science was not making all the discoveries that it might and that those already made were not being fully exploited.

Ivie Mackie Dunlop, who was associated with Dunlop Mackie of Baldwin Street, wine merchants, died on 11 May. He was a councillor from 1908 until 1921 and served as Sheriff in 1918/19.

In May the Coroner held an inquest on Maggie Morgan ('Welsh Maggie') who had died of natural causes in a lodging house. Evidence of identification was provided by a police officer who had referred her fingerprints to the New Scotland Yard Fingerprint Bureau.

In the same month a new air service linking Bristol, Cardiff, Bournemouth and the Channel Islands was inaugurated by six local MPs. The service was known as the 'Sunshine Express' and flew twice daily using a ten-seater Dragon Moth.

At their meeting on 25 May the members of the Public Assistance Committee learned that 6,312 unemployed had been relieved during the month compared with 7,165 in the preceding month.

The Hospital Pageant and Festival was held on 26 May. A large crowd watched a procession from Queen Square to Durdham Down that took two hours to pass; it included the most up to date fire engine in the country and a 100 horse power car.

On 26 June there was a serious fire at the premises of J. Epstein's picture frame business in Milk Street. The premises were destroyed along with some neighbouring houses as the area was densely populated. Many families were rendered homeless.

A meeting of the Property Owners Association held at the YMCA hall on 28 June protested at the inadequacy of compensation paid when property was acquired for a slum clearance programme. They called for a qualified local tribunal to assess compensation.

The Council meeting on 10 July had to be adjourned with the agenda only half finished because of the intense heat. The members declined to receive a deputation who wanted to present a petition asking for more schemes of work for the unemployed, the restoration of the cuts in relief and a 25% reduction in council house rents.

At the end of August the Staple Hill magistrates heard a complaint against Broadmead Wireless Co. for operating a loud speaker at Wick to the annoyance of residents. It was in a van testing a new system and could be heard half a mile away. The bench found the case proved but merely ordered the company to pay the costs of the hearing.

In August the magistrates began hearing a series of summonses for failure to pay rates. They heard that a number people affected had previously been unemployed and were running small businesses but experiencing poor trade. They dealt with 460 cases on 21 August and 375 on 28 August and in a number of cases remitted the arrears.

On 5 September Mr. E.S. Tipple of New York unveiled a tablet in King Square commemorating the occasion 150 years previously when John Wesley, then staying with a friend in Dighton Street, 'set apart' two men for the work of Methodism in America.

At the Council meeting on 11 September the members considered a report from the Colston Hall Committee recommending improvements to the hall. The work envisaged included the installation of a new entrance and foyer partly covered to shelter people queuing in the rain and a sprung dance floor for 700 dancers. The estimated cost was £34,396 but the Council referred the report back for a less costly scheme.

The Lord Mayor opened the new Broadcasting House on 18 September. The building contained four complete studios and was constructed by Stone & Co. Ltd.

Hiatt Cowles Baker, a former Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers and Pro-Chancellor of Bristol University, died on 19 September. In November Lord Bedisloe was appointed Pro-Chancellor.

On 3 October the Annual Conference of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations opened in Bristol under the chairmanship of Miss Regina Evans. The principal speakers were Stanley Baldwin (who became Prime Minister in the following June), the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Neville Chamberlain), the Minister of Agriculture (Walter Elliott) and the Minister of Health (Sir E. Hilton Young). The meeting called for fair compensation on the acquisition of slum property and the immediate reform of the House of Lords and debated the future of India. With regard to armaments Neville Chamberlain told the conference that the government was alive to the dangers of the situation. The meeting concluded on 6 October with a resolution in favour of a national lottery.



At the beginning of October some valuable books were stolen from the premises of J.S. Cox, a bookseller in the Upper Arcade. Mr. Cox had recently acquired first editions of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600) and *The Tragedy of Richard Duke of York and Henry VI* (1565) and they were on display in a glass case in his shop.

The Director of Education, Dr. Freeman, retired after 14 years' service. He attended his last committee meeting on 25 October and was replaced by his deputy M.O. McAuliffe, a barrister-at-law.

Ernest Board RWA died on 26 October. He was responsible for painting a number of scenes representing the city's history including a portrayal of John Cabot's departure that hung in the Art Gallery.

Jonathan French of Brentry Road, Fishponds appeared before the Staple Hill bench at the end of October and was fined for organising a series of whist drives at the Page Institute contrary to the Betting Act 1853. This was despite the fact that they had been openly advertised in the local press.

Local elections were held at the beginning of November and there were contests in 14 wards. The Labour party gained four seats.

The Prince of Wales came to the city on 6 November. He had requested that there would be no excessive display and he visited houses in the Dings and at Knowle West and Bedminster. He had lunch at the Red Lodge, inspected members of the British Legion, was taken round the Cathedral and visited the Dockland Settlement before returning to Temple Meads.

At the Council meeting held on 9 November the Labour members boycotted the election of the Lord Mayor; the Selection Committee had asked for a Labour party nominee but when a name was put forward a number of members felt that he was not the best qualified member of that party and declined to recommend him. Consequently a member of the Citizen party was proposed. The meeting approved byelaws proposed by the Education Committee to the effect that no child under the age of 13 should be employed and that no child under the age of 14 should be employed on Sundays or between 5.00 and 6.00pm on any other day.

On 1 December there was a serious fire at the Victoria Rooms in the course of which the main hall was destroyed.

Sir James O'Grady died on 10 December. As a boy he worked in a mineral water factory in the city and, after being an organiser for the National Furnishing Trades Association, he became a councillor and in 1906 Member of Parliament for Leeds East. Upon his appointment as Governor of Tasmania it was said that he was the first member of the Labour party to be styled 'His Excellency'.

At the Council meeting on 11 December members discussed the proposed raising of the school leaving age and learned that the Education Committee considered that it could not be implemented until the spring of 1937.

The Medical Officer of Health told the January meeting of the Health Committee that 730 patients had died from cancer in the preceding year; this was an increase of 69 on the previous year and the highest number on record. He added that most of the victims were in the prime of life.

The January Council meeting was informed by the Town Clerk that during the previous three months clerical staff had worked a total of nearly 5,400 hours of unpaid overtime. Although the work was unremunerated, the clerks (except those above grade D) received 'tea money' and during the period the sum of £137:17s:6d had been paid.

Baron Cartier de Marchienne, the Belgian Ambassador, visited the city on 22 January. He was received by the Lord Mayor and visited Avonmouth Docks and Clifton College. The ambassador also gave a lecture on the Belgian Congo at the Royal Empire Society.

On 25 January Winston Churchill addressed an audience in the Colston Hall on behalf of the India Defence League.

On 28 January in the County Court Judge Parsons rebuked a female witness for not wearing a hat whilst giving evidence. He told the court that if that sort of behaviour occurred again he would adjourn the case until the end of the day.

There was a serious fire at the Guildhall on 1 February. It completely destroyed the civil court and some other rooms and as a consequence, later in the month, the Assizes had to be held in the magistrates' court.

May Etheridge died in February. She was the daughter of a Bristol commercial traveller, a Gaiety Girl and the divorced wife of the Duke of Leinster. An inquest in Brighton heard that she died from an overdose of narcotics.

The Unemployment Assistance Act 1934 established a national Unemployment Assistance Board to administer benefits through local offices to able bodied paupers who had hitherto received assistance through the local authority's Public Assistance Committee. The rates to be paid were determined nationally and in many areas (including Bristol) were not as generous as the existing payments. This prompted a number of protests and at a meeting on 8 February the Lord Mayor was able to tell representatives of the Bristol Trades and Labour Council that the Government had suspended the national rates in favour of the old local rates.

The annual festival of the Transport and General Workers Union took place at the Colston Hall on 16 February. The General Secretary, Ernest Bevin, told the assembly that branches would have to consider a curb on overtime and that they would soon have to form a union for air workers. In the evening the Bristol Cooperative Society hosted a reception for delegates at which the entertainment comprised a recital of gramophone records.

The Council meeting held on 12 March discussed arrangements for the celebration of King George V's jubilee. A committee had proposed spending £6,150 (the product of a halfpenny rate) but some Labour members considered that no public money should be spent in view of the fact that the Education Committee's budget had been pruned, following an economy drive, so that essential furniture and equipment had not been purchased and school windows had not been cleaned for three months. They were out-voted.

Appearing before the Traffic Commissioner on 29 March, the Town Clerk, on behalf of the Corporation, objected to the renewal of the Tramway Company's licences. The objection was withdrawn when the company agreed to introduce workmen's return fares (at the same price as single fares) on all services before 8.30am.

On the same day there was a luncheon attended by the Lord Mayor and Sheriff to celebrate the opening of the Gas Company's new showrooms known as Radiant House adjoining the Colston Hall. The building was designed by H. Austen Hall and constructed by William Cowlin & Son Ltd.

A 30 mph speed limit in built up areas came into operation on 31 March. The Chief Constable was authorised to hire motor cars from Messrs Henlys at a cost of £50 per month to facilitate enforcement. The first offenders appeared before the magistrates on 10 April when some 50 motorists were fined amounts between 10/- and £3. A number of offences took place on the Portway which many drivers were surprised to find in the restricted zone. There were some challenges to the accuracy of the police cars' speedometers.

In April the Housing Committee, following a plea from Lord Apsley (on behalf of a man who had moved to Knowle as a result of a clearance order) decided to review its policy of not allowing tenants to keep racing pigeons.

On 17 April 2,000 anti-war demonstrators marched from the Rope-walk to the Colston Hall where they resolved to press for the resumption of the Disarmament Conference and to urge that all international disputes should be submitted to the League of Nations.

Lt. Col. Joseph Beaumont Butler died on 30 April; he had served in the Boer War and was Sheriff in 1916 but relinquished the post in order to take up military duties. He was the son of William Butler and a director of Wm. Butler & Co. Ltd of Silverthorne Lane and Crews Hole.

Jubilee Day was celebrated on 6 May and 70,000 children received beakers filled with Fry's chocolates. Buildings were floodlit and bands played in the parks; there was a funfair on Durdham Down, a service in the Cathedral and a charity football match between Bristol Rovers and Wolverhampton Wanderers. The Planning and Public Works Committee decided that their employees should receive a full day's pay.

Sir Oswald Moseley addressed a meeting in the Colston Hall on 16 May. After the meeting he marched at the head of several hundred adherents to Queen's Café for supper; women supporters were taken to the café in a brick-proof van. There were complaints that the police had allowed the Fascists to march four abreast on the pavement in Colston Street forcing pedestrians to walk in the road. The Chief Constable denied that preferential treatment had been given to the marchers.

At their meeting on 13 May the Council approved proposals to improve the facilities at Bristol Airport. The committee wished to provide for wireless and meteorological stations and lighting equipment for night landings and provided the following information:

	1932/3	1933/4	1934/5
Aircraft arriving from other aerodromes	792	694	3546
Passengers	1636	2604	5500

The refurbished Temple Meads Station came into use on 26 May. The work, costing £1,000,000, included the provision of 15 platforms (replacing the existing nine), one of which was the longest in the country, a subway instead of over bridges, a spacious booking hall and electric signals replacing semaphores.

In the June Birthday Honours Francis Nicholas Cowlin, the Sheriff in 1921/22, received a knighthood.

The July Council meeting discussed a proposal from the Housing Committee to purchase 485 acres of land to extend the Knowle and Bedminster housing estates. The chairman of the committee had been against the proposal and expressed his views in council. It was proposed to let the houses at 13/- per week and members questioned whether it would be possible to find sufficient tenants prepared to pay such a sum. An amendment to postpone consideration of the report for 12 months was carried by 39 votes to 31.

The Road Traffic Act 1934 authorised the installation of pedestrian crossings marked by 'Belisha beacons'. Schemes had to be submitted by local authorities by 15 March but the Watch Committee had decided not to submit a scheme because the experimental crossings that they had already laid down were not being used by pedestrians; they were probably also influenced by their understanding that no Government grant was available. Their decision was not acceptable to the Ministry of Transport who urged a reconsideration and indicated that, as an exceptional measure, a 60% grant would be forthcoming provided a scheme was submitted by 31 July for crossings to be laid down by 30 September. Consequently the committee prepared a scheme for 307 crossings at a total cost of £5,800 with a net cost to Bristol ratepayers of £2,400. The first crossings appeared on 3 September.

Hitherto a laboratory at the Central Police Station under the supervision of the Chief Police Surgeon had been giving assistance to the force. In April the Watch Committee had approved the Chief Constable's plan to recruit a chemist to take charge of it and in July the Chief Constable reported that the Home Office had decided to develop the laboratory as a facility for the southwest region. In August Edward Burden Parkes (from the analytical laboratory of the Royal Dental Hospital) was appointed to the post. His annual salary was £300 and the furniture for the laboratory was to be made in the Fire Brigade workshop.

In August at the Cheltenham Festival Gloucestershire County Cricket Club (despite a poor championship record) defeated the South African touring team.

On 2 August the Canons of Bristol Cathedral and leaders of the Free Churches held a special service of prayer in view of the serious Italo-Abyssinian situation. The Lord Mayor was unable to attend but the Sheriff was present.

The Great Western Railway inaugurated a new service between Bristol and London on 9 September. At a luncheon in the Great Hall of Bristol University to celebrate the occasion the Chairman of the company, Sir Robert Hoare, announced that the train would be known as the 'Bristolian' and the journey time would be 105 minutes.

On 10 September the Council declined to receive a deputation from Bristol Peace Council who wished to express their concern at recommendations from the Government to Local Authorities concerning air raid precautions. One member commented that it was ridiculous for the Corporation to be asked not to take precautions to defend its citizens. In December the Council set up a sub-committee to prepare a scheme for an organisation to protect citizens from air attacks.

At the same Council meeting the members passed a resolution instructing committees to purchase no typewriters that were not of British manufacture.

There was a serious fire followed by an explosion at Crane's Firework factory in Warmley on 16 September; the last such event had occurred 30 years previously. The factory employed over 100 girls and five of them were injured, three of them seriously.

A new footbridge across the New Cut to replace the Gas Ferry came into use on 10 October.

At their October meeting the Council approved expenditure for a new mental hospital at Barrow Gurney. They resolved to proceed with the first stage (making provision for 96 staff and 285 patients) of a hospital that would eventually cater for 1150. The cost of the first phase was £250,000.

In October the Lord Mayor officially opened a new abattoir at Gordon Road. The facility cost £24,242 and included the provision of a railway siding and loading dock, which were to be constructed.

The Duchess of Beaufort opened the new Eye Hospital in Lower Maudlin Street costing £55,000 on 21 October.

A contingent of 50 police officers was loaned to the Glamorganshire Constabulary from 18 to 29 October during a miners' strike.

At the municipal elections held on 1 November nine wards were contested and the Citizen party gained one seat from Labour.

The results of the parliamentary election held on 14 November were:

<u>Bristol Central</u>		
Lord Apsley (Con)	15,774	
J.J. Taylor (Lab)	<u>14,258</u>	
	<u>1,516</u>	No change
<u>Bristol North</u>		
R.H. Bernays (Nat Lib)	20,977	
W.H. Ayles (Lab)	<u>16,149</u>	
	<u>4,828</u>	No change
<u>Bristol East</u>		
Sir Stafford Cripps (Lab)	22,009	
A.G. Church (Nat Lib)	<u>15,126</u>	
	<u>6,883</u>	No change
<u>Bristol West</u>		
C.T. Culverwell (Con)	36,820	
Paul Williams (Lab)	<u>15,058</u>	
	<u>21,762</u>	No change
<u>Bristol South</u>		
A.G. Walkden (Lab)	22,586	
N. Ker Lindsay (Con)	20,153	
J.O.M. Skelton (Lib)	<u>2,090</u>	
	<u>2,433</u>	Labour gain

The Recorder, Stuart James Bevan KC, died on 25 October. In December F.P.M. Schiller, the Recorder of Southampton was appointed in his place.

On 31 October a meeting convened by the League for the Prohibition of Cruel Sports at Redland Park Hall called for the abolition of all blood sports. The speakers had difficulty in making themselves heard owing to the amount of interruptions by cat calls, interruptions, foot stamping and, finally, fireworks.

At meetings in June and November the Council discussed traffic congestion in the centre of the city. They accepted proposals from the



Planning and Public Works Committee to construct a road from Stokes Croft to Victoria Street (the 'Eastern Road') and one from St. Augustine's to Victoria Street (the 'Western Road'). The latter involved the construction of a new bridge at St Augustine's and a bascule bridge and its route passed diagonally through Queen Square.

On 3 December Sir Oswald Moseley addressed a Bristol Round Table luncheon at the Grand Hotel. There were some 170 members and guests including a number of Rotarians. In his introduction the chairman pointed out that the organisation was non-political but members were interested to learn about current matters of concern. In his address Sir Oswald described the machinery of government as slow and inadequate and concluded 'Our first task and duty is to awaken the soul of England again.'

Jacob Cloor, the chief confectioner at J.S. Fry & Sons Ltd., a Swiss citizen, appeared before Bristol Magistrates on 6 December. He had offered to Rowntree & Co. Ltd information concerning the process of the manufacture of Crunchie bars (which retailed at 2d each). Rowntrees informed Frys and he was prosecuted and convicted under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The magistrates fined him £50 but did not recommend him for deportation.

At their December meeting the Council approved the establishment of a Child Guidance Clinic at Fern House, St. Pauls. The establishment comprised a psychiatrist, a psychologist with training in educational matters and a clerk. It cost £300 to set up and annual running costs were £1,200.

In December 100 miners at Parkfield Colliery were given notice to terminate their employment on account of the heavy costs of production due to underground water and other geological difficulties. C.R. Gill, the miners' agent, praised the engineering abilities of the colliery company's management saying that he had been aware of the difficulties for some time and that there was little hope of the continuing employment of the men who had been dismissed.

At a previous meeting the Watch Committee had decided not to grant a pension to the widow of a police pensioner on the ground that she was not a person of exemplary character. In December the committee was told that she was intending to appeal to the quarter sessions but she subsequently withdrew her appeal as a result of certain information as to her character supplied by the Town Clerk to her solicitor.

## 1936

The Lord Mayor opened the Horfield Occupational Centre in Filton Avenue on 6 January. It was founded and financed by Bristol Rotary Club and built by unemployed men. The centre comprised two large rooms for occupational work, a canteen and a library.

The Housing Committee met on 20 January and heard a letter from a number of temperance societies regretting the fact that a new public house was to be opened on the Knowle estate. On 3 February a solicitor on behalf of the local licensed victuallers applied to the licensing justices for the permitted opening hours to be extended by 30 minutes to 10.30pm. Representatives of a number of churches and temperance organisations appeared to oppose the application but the chairman told them that it was not necessary to hear them as the applicants' case had not been made out and it was therefore refused. On 9 March an application was made to the bench for the removal of the licence of the Midland Railway Inn to new premises (to be erected at a cost of £9,000) in Westbury Road to serve the Sea Mills estate. Despite many objections the justices granted the application subject to the enlargement of the proposed lounge/tea room.

Dame Clara Butt, the 'Caruso of contraltos', died on 23 January at her home in Oxfordshire aged 62. She had spent her early childhood in Bristol and attended South Bristol Girls' High School where her headmistress, impressed by her voice, persuaded her reluctant parents to allow their daughter to be trained as a professional singer.

The death of King George V gave rise to a proclamation of the accession of King Edward VIII; it was read at the Council House and in Colston Avenue on 25 January and was accompanied by a 21 gun salute fired by the 66<sup>th</sup> (SM) Brigade Field Artillery on the parade ground of the 6<sup>th</sup> Gloucesters at St. Michael's Hill.

Fritz Kreisler appeared at the Colston Hall on 3 February.

At the assizes on 14 February a soldier from Horfield Barracks aged 19 was convicted of robbery with violence; the judge sentenced him to four months' hard labour and 12 strokes of the birch.

In February a number of 'Halt' signs appeared at major road junctions and it became an offence to ignore them.

On 22 February 2,000 supporters of the Transport and General Workers' Union met at the Colston Hall for their annual festival. They were treated to a reception with gramophone records given by the Cooperative Society, a concert by Clifford Hensley's Balladmongers and dancing to Freddie Downe's Band. During the interval Ernest Bevin was presented with a tantalus to mark his jubilee in the trade union movement.

Conwy Lloyd Morgan died on 6 March. He became the Principal of the University College in 1887 and when Bristol University was chartered in 1909 he was its first Vice Chancellor, serving in that office until the following year.

On 10 March the British Union of Fascists held a meeting at the Colston Hall and, in the absence of their leader, heard an address by W. Joyce, the director of propaganda. The constant interruptions made it



impossible for him to be heard and a number of protesters were ejected by black-shirted stewards. A crowd of several thousands waited outside the hall for the meeting to finish and the Fascists decided to disperse in small groups instead of marching away, as was their usual custom. They held a further meeting in Melvin Square, Knowle West on 26 August when they were pelted with cabbages and apples; after about 30 minutes the police advised them to leave.

On 10 March the Council heard a report that during the past year 276,619 free school dinners had been supplied to 5,253 individual children at a cost of £5,737.

At their March meeting the Bristol & District Local Employment Committee were told that at the end of February there were 21,000 registered unemployed as against 25,000 at the same time in the previous year.

On 31 March representatives of the Labour and Citizen parties agreed on the allocation of aldermanic vacancies. From that time each party would have one alderman for every three councillors.

On 7 April the Lord Mayor opened the new public library in Falcondale Road. The building which cost £2,000 held 6,000 books and the Lady Mayoress was enrolled as the first borrower. The chairman of the Libraries Committee told the gathering that the issue of books in the city was nearing the 2,000,000 mark and that the committee did exercise a certain scrutiny over books as they did not want to issue volumes of a doubtful character or which were likely to be demoralising.

The reconstructed civil courts at the Guildhall opened on 17 April.

On 21 April the licensee of the White Horse Hotel, Barrs Street, appeared before the magistrates charged with allowing bagatelle to be played on a Sunday. He told the court that the balls were normally locked up but that on this occasion that was not done and two young men were knocking the balls about without actually playing a game; he added that he had now fitted a special board made to cover the table. The charge was dismissed on payment of costs of one pound.

At their meeting on 21 April the council approved a proposal from the Education Committee to purchase Badminton House, Clifton Park for use as an Art College.

On 22 April the centenary of Muller's Orphanage was celebrated with a thanksgiving service in the Colston Hall.

At the beginning of January the closing of Speedwell pit had been announced and the miners' agent C.R. Gill had expressed fears that, although attempts were being made to locate workable seams at the colliery, he was not optimistic about its future. He pointed out that the pit was due to be closed in 1932 but that, thanks to a public appeal, it had been possible to continue working it for a further three years giving

employment to 200 men who produced 130,000 tons of coal and received £70,000 in wages. He called for an enquiry by the Mines Inspectorate and their report was published in May. They confirmed that the owners were justified in closing the pit and the Secretary for Mines, in accepting the report, pointed out that no Government funds were available to assist private enterprise. Also in May the proposed closure of Parkfield colliery was announced and it ceased working on 27 June.

At the annual general meeting of the Bristol Choral Society on 12 May the members discussed a proposal that they should omit the second verse of the National Anthem at the start of their concerts. The question was referred to the committee for further consideration.

The Central Hall inaugurated a series of early Sunday morning services (comprising a short address with prayers and hymns) on 24 May. They were held at 8.30am and intended to provide an act of worship that would enable cyclists, hikers, motorists and others to spend a day in the open air.

On 2 June Major C.R. Attlee MP presented the prizes at the sports held by the Bristol Workers' Sports Association at Blaise Castle.

Two notable chairs were returned to the city. In June a Hepplewhite chair taken from the Mansion House during the 1831 riots was donated by the family into whose hands it had fallen and in August John Wesley's chair was returned to the New Room.

The Royal Agricultural Show was held at Ashton Court from 30 June until 4 July. The Duke and Duchess of York paid a visit on 1 July and on the following day the Lord Mayor of London paid a 'state visit', the first one ever held; he was entertained to dinner at the Mansion House. Total attendance was 72,806 compared with 179,148, the numbers attending the show held on the Downs in 1913; the show lost £2,500.

The poor attendance at the Royal Show was affected by heavy rain during the week; on one day two inches of rain fell in 40 minutes. Many roads in the city were flooded and residents held a number of protest meetings. The Council were aware of the problem and at the beginning of the previous year had appointed six temporary engineering assistants to prepare a flood relief scheme.

On 22 July a two-seater aeroplane piloted by Lord Apsley, MP for Bristol Central came down into the sea off the Isle of Wight. He was rescued by the crew of a yacht and chartered another aircraft to continue his flight to London.

A party of Hitler Youth leaders visited the city on 15 August. They were welcomed by the deputy Lord Mayor who told them, 'At a time when people have fears and suspicions of each other's good intentions we shall be well advised to encourage such visits.'

Work was starting on the construction of the new road between St. Augustine's and Temple Meads (the 'Western road'). The Merchant's

Arms at the corner of Prince Street and King Street was demolished in September and a number of concerned citizens had already expressed their objection to the manner in which Queen Square was to be spoiled; some of them held a protest meeting on 31 August. It was said that when some councillors voted in favour of the road they did not realise that the route involved cutting a swathe through the square. A petition was sent to the Government but it was too late and unemployed men were clearing the route by the middle of September.

In September Aer Lingus inaugurated a service from Bristol to Dublin.

On 17 September Sir Kingsley Wood, the Minister of Health, visited the city and saw Southmead and Ham Green Hospitals, the Blind School, the Portway Joint Clinic School and various housing estates. He commended Bristol's scheme for a memorial to the late king particularly the provision of playing field accommodation.

On 23 September Ernest Bevin was elected President of the Trades Union Congress.

Mrs. Yda Richardson died on 22 September. She was one of the adopted daughters of Lord Winterstoke and charitable gifts in her lifetime amounted to tens of thousands of pounds.

Also on the 22 September there was a meeting of the Bristol Committee for the Defence of Spanish Democracy. It took place at the Cooperative Hall in Castle Street and Alderman Hennessey presided. Those attending comprised individual members of the public and representatives of political and religious organisations. The meeting called for the recall of Parliament to enforce an arms embargo on the rebels.

On 28 September an experimental Bristol 138 aeroplane fitted with a Pegasus engine broke the world altitude record by flying to a height of 49,967 feet (nearly nine and a half miles). The aircraft piloted by Squadron Leader F.R.D. Swain took off from Farnborough and had a wingspan of 66 feet, making it geometrically the largest single-seater plane ever built.

On 29 September the Council resolved to purchase 188 acres of the Kingsweston estate for the sum of £17,852.

At the beginning of October the licensing justices approved the plans for a new cinema to be built at the bottom of Union Street. The proposal involved the demolition of a considerable part of Fry's factory including a chimney stack that was one of the city's best known landmarks.

On 27 October 500 unemployed Welsh marchers arrived in the city. There was a meeting organised by the Trades and Labour Council; University students collected for them and they were given a meal at the University Union Club.

On 29 October there was a sudden explosion at the premises of Bodey, Jerram and Denning Ltd, corn and flour merchants in Queen

Street. Hundreds of tons of masonry were flung into the street and a lamp standard was uprooted and deposited 30 yards away. Men were tossed into the air and ran into the street suffering from injuries and burns. 12 men were injured but there were no fatalities. The proprietors of the business were unable to give any reason for the occurrence; the mill was powered by electricity and the explosion could not have been caused by an escape of gas or steam.

Prior to the municipal elections that took place at the beginning of November there had been 23 wards with 92 representatives but following a redistribution of the wards there were 28 wards with 112 representatives. The old council comprised 56 Citizen party members (16 aldermen and 40 councillors) and 36 Labour party members (7 aldermen and 29 councillors). At the election 19 wards were contested. There was a by election on 30 November in four wards and in all of them the Labour party candidate was successful. Following this the composition of the Council was: Citizen party 56, Labour party 55 with one aldermanic vacancy.

Alderman Walter Bryant died on 9 November aged 61. He was associated in business with the quarrying industry, served as a councillor from 1921 and had been made an alderman earlier in the year. He was chairman of the Education Committee and Lord Mayor in 1929/30.

At their meeting on 10 November councillors debated and defeated a proposal that there should be no display of arms at the forthcoming Armistice Day ceremony. At the same meeting the Labour party members refrained from voting on the election of a member of the Citizen party as the new Lord Mayor.

The 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Edward Colston's birth was celebrated on 13 November. The Anchor, Dolphin and Grateful Societies made record collections.

On 7 December a recruiting rally took place at the Drill Hall, Old Market Street. In the absence of Mr. Duff Cooper, the War Minister, Sir Victor Warrender, the Financial Secretary of the War Office, addressed some 2,000 men; he told them that recruiting for the Territorial Army in November had shown a 100% increase over the same month in the previous year.

Following the abdication of King Edward VIII the proclamation of King George VI's accession was read outside the Council House and at the Haymarket and Colston Avenue on 14 December.

At the end of December Miss H.E. Nott resigned as City Archivist in order to be married. She was succeeded by Miss Elizabeth Ralph who had been educated at Fairfield Secondary School, trained as a librarian and worked at the Reference Library for eight years during which time she studied local history and palaeography.



On Sunday 19 December for the first time since the completion of its reconstruction 2,500 people filled the Colston Hall for the Sunday Evening Service for the People. In addition to an improvement of the facilities the organ had been refurbished (at a cost of 7,500 guineas) at the expense of Mrs. Yda Richardson.

## 1937

The first branch of Martin's Bank in Bristol was opened on 11 January. It operated from temporary premises in Baldwin Street.

At their meeting on 12 January the Council agreed to build 1,000 houses over a period of three years ending in March 1940 to be let at rents not exceeding 12s:6d per week.

In January a start was made to renovate the nails in Corn Street. The first one was removed and taken to the premises of Llewellyn & James, brassfounders.

At their January meeting the members of the Health Committee were told by the Medical Officer of Health that in 1936 the city's net increase in population amounted to no more than 100. There had been an increase in the birth rate but the increase in the death rate was the highest since 1929. During the year 765 people died from cancer.

A report to the meeting of the Juvenile Employment Committee on 25 January showed that there had been an improvement in the number of jobs for juveniles. Such local industries as tobacco, chocolate manufacture, printing, engineering and building had given employment to 2,000 boys and girls in 1936 and very few had been placed as errand boys.

On the following day the Council recorded their acceptance of Canon Cole's gift of 7, Great George Street ('the Georgian House'). The same meeting, by a substantial majority, rejected and referred back the Watch Committee's proposal to increase the rent allowance paid to the police but agreed to increase the salaries of council officers earning in excess of £500 per annum.

On 27 January a meeting of the Bristol East Labour Party (with nearly 100% attendance) expressed regret at the disaffiliation of the Socialist League. They recorded their approval of the united front with the Independent Labour and Communist Parties as proposed by the league and their confidence in Sir Stafford Cripps who supported the united front. At the Labour Party conference in October Sir Stafford proposed that the section of the party's report rejecting the united front should be referred back but his proposal was rejected.

The first honours list during the reign of King George VI contained a knighthood for Alderman James Inskip. He was a solicitor who had been a councillor since 1916 and was chairman of the Finance and Electricity Committees. He served as Lord Mayor in 1931/32.

At their meeting on 9 February the members of the Council agreed to acquire a site in Leek Lane for the erection of a technical college. They also accepted the proposal of the Public Assistance Committee to build homes in Fishponds for the aged and infirm poor at a cost of £80,000.

On 23 February the Governors of Bristol General Hospital (whose deficit for the previous year had amounted to £14,956) agreed to amalgamate with the Royal Infirmary.

Councillors discussed the proposed level of general rate at their meeting on 23 February. They were told that the rate originally proposed by the Finance Committee could be reduced because the Government had agreed to pay all expenses incurred by the Unemployment Assistance Board; hitherto the local authority had borne 60% of the cost.

On 4 March a further attempt was made by the local licensed victuallers to persuade the licensing justices to extend the permitted opening hours to 10.30pm during the summer months. Their solicitor told the bench that during the previous year 307 licensing districts (including Bath) had agreed to such a proposal. A number of temperance organisations together with some private individuals were in court to oppose the application but the magistrates said that the case had not been made out and refused the application without hearing any objectors.

On 9 March the Council approved a proposal to issue a compulsory purchase order in respect of 27 acres required for a runway extension at Whitchurch Airport. At the same meeting the Education Committee reported that the number of school children receiving free school meals were: 1931/32 - 1539; 1932/33 - 2433; 1933/34 - 2694; 1934/35 - 5253; 1935/36 - 5491.

At the end of March the statue of King William III in Queen Square was removed for renovation. It was replaced in September, this time facing west whereas it had previously faced north.

At the Council meeting on 13 April there was a protest concerning the Watch Committee's action in refusing permission for a street collection to pay for an ambulance to be sent to Spain. A proposal to overturn the action was defeated by 49 votes to 48.

Frogmore Street was affected by a new street line that would have removed the front 11 feet from the Hatchet public house. At their meeting on 22 April the members of the Planning and Public Works Committee considered an application to replace decaying timbers in the front part of the premises. They agreed subject to a requirement that the new street line would be implemented when other properties in the vicinity had their frontages set back.

Captain the Hon. Frederick Edward Guest died on 28 April. He was Liberal MP for Bristol North from 1924 to 1929; he was supported also

by Unionists and was in effect a Coalition member. He was defeated in 1929 in a three cornered contest and joined the Conservatives in 1930.

On Sunday 9 May there was a service in the Cathedral to celebrate the forthcoming coronation; it was preceded by a procession in drizzling rain of civic dignitaries and representatives of about 70 organisations. On 12 May, the day of the coronation, a grand display by youth organisations took place on Durdham Down, half a million flowering plants adorned the city and buildings were decorated and illuminated. Despite a dull morning the afternoon was sunny for some 60 street tea parties and a fine evening enabled people to enjoy a number of firework displays. All school children had a day's holiday and when they returned to school received a souvenir mug filled with Fry's chocolates.

On 10 May the chairman of the Baths Committee, Col. H.S. Woodcock, opened Speedwell Baths. The baths were all electric and cost £21,143. After the speeches 100 school children entered the pool from all four corners and as they jumped in they released coloured balloons.

Plans for a proposed memorial to King George V were published in May. The principal feature was to be a stone pylon with a night shining beacon. The plan had been prepared without charge by a panel of local architects and supporters of the scheme (which would also include a playing field in Barton Hill) hoped to raise £12,000 of which £5,000 had been collected when the plan was published. When, in November 1935, the Council had approved the plan for the new Western road from St. Augustine's to Victoria Street it included a new bridge across the harbour at St. Augustine's. In the architects' plan for the memorial it was proposed to fill in a further part of the floating harbour between the new bridge and the old one at Narrow Quay and this necessitated a new layout for the Centre. The plan envisaged the creation of an area from Colston Avenue to the new Quay Head with the Cenotaph at one end and the King George V memorial at the other, incorporating an avenue of trees, lawns, gardens and fountains between them; the new bridge head over the Frome would commemorate Empire builders. The scheme, which was estimated to cost £100,000, was accepted in principle by the Council on 13 July.

On 29 June the Council conferred honorary freedoms on Aldermen James Fuller Eberle and Frank Sheppard and on Walter Melville Wills.

On 27 July lawyers gathered in the County Court to pay tribute to Judge Parsons who was retiring. His successor was Judge E.C. Wethered, at that time a County Court judge in Exeter and who took up his post in Bristol at the start of the following year. Judge Wethered was a Bristolian and when he was elevated to the County Court bench in 1934 the local bar held a complimentary dinner for him; the judge was a talented amateur magician and the dinner concluded with a brilliant display of his art.

Also on 27 July councillors were concerned to learn that the work to renovate the Colston Hall had cost £6,000 more than the estimate; they set up a committee of enquiry to investigate the matter. At the same meeting they reluctantly agreed to increase rent allowances for the police following pressure from the Home Office. The members also approved proposals (costing £263,266) from the Health Committee to extend Southmead Hospital; the work included ward blocks for 100 maternity patients, a nurses' home and a casualty clinic.

In reply to a member's question at the July Council meeting the chairman of the Education Committee stated that there were 51,780 children in the city's elementary schools and between 1,800 and 2,000 in secondary schools. He added that approximately 5% of children between 10½ and 12½ annually progressed to secondary schools.

In October 1936 the Air Raid Precautions Committee had appointed Mr. J.D. Fry, previously Director of Experiments in the Chemical Research Department of the War Office, as their advisor. In his report to the committee which came before the Council on 28 September he advised that the cost of preliminary precautions would amount to £12,000. The Home Office had indicated that a Government grant of 50% would be available but the Association of Municipal Authorities considered that the whole cost should be borne centrally and advised their members to abstain from expenditure until further notice. Despite this advice, the Council decided to retain Mr. Fry's services.

From 1 October the Corporation became the joint owner of the city's transport undertaking. They paid the sum of £1,125,000 together with the further amount of £235,800 towards the cost of new buses to replace trams. The system was to be run by a committee comprising representatives of the Corporation and the Tramways Company with the revenue divided equally between them.

On 21 October a reception at the Museum and Art Gallery celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Royal Infirmary.

On the same day the Liverpool steamer *Etrib* arrived in port carrying a group of 13 young refugees who were supporters of the Spanish government; they had commandeered a trawler from a fishing village near Gijon having overpowered its crew. When found in the Bay of Biscay by the *Etrib* they were drifting, short of fuel and low on food. The British ship took the refugees on board and put a tow line on the trawler. When the ships docked the refugees were singing patriotic songs but the crew of four, still on the trawler, did not appear to be as cheerful.

In October work commenced on the construction of the Electricity Department's new showrooms in Colston Avenue near the Cenotaph; the line of the outer city wall passed across the site. Sir Giles Gilbert Scott RA designed the building and the contractors were William Cowlin & Son Ltd.



At the municipal elections held at the beginning of November 17 wards were contested. The Labour party won two seats and gained control of the Council; they then had 58 representatives and the Citizen party had 54.

On 18 November the Poet Laureate, John Masefield, paid a stirring tribute in proposing a toast to 'the immortal memory of Thomas Chatterton' at the Chatterton dinner at the Royal Hotel. His speech was broadcast.

The Council meeting on 14 December heard that the estimated cost of the proposed municipal buildings in College Green had risen from £304,879 to £453,000. The councillors approved a proposal to substitute Portland stone for granite in order to save £33,000 and referred the matter back to the relevant committee for further consideration.

### 1938

In January George's Brewery celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary by issuing a souvenir booklet.

In the Magistrates' Court on 5 January four shoplifters from Knowle West were found guilty. Their conviction was based on the evidence of Detective Constable F. Miles who stood on an eight foot ladder in the passage of a shop in Redcliffe Hill with a telescope in his eye looking through a hole the size of a sixpence bored in the wall for that purpose.

On 11 January the Municipal Buildings Committee reported back to the Council and the plans were approved, subject to the Ministry of Health's sanction of the loan application, despite an unsuccessful attempt to have the proposed lowering of College Green omitted.

In January plans were announced to construct 200 buses (most of them at the Tramway Company's Brislington works) to replace the trams. It was planned to have 23 of them on the road by Easter so that trams could be taken off the Westbury, Durdham Downs and Hotwells route. On 3 September souvenir hunters stripped the last trams to Brislington and Staple Hill.

On 19 January Kingswood Urban District Council discussed a proposal put forward by a councillor that they should rescind a decision taken in 1934 that no political meetings should be permitted in Kingswood Park. The chairman of the Parks Committee said that the ratepayers as a whole wanted the ban to be maintained and the proposal was defeated by 9 votes to 2.

Queen's Court flats in Clifton, designed by Alec French LRIBA, were advertised by William Cowlin & Son Ltd in January. Rents were from £140 to £250 per annum with bachelor flats available from £80 to £90.

The Planning and Public Works Committee reported to the Council on 8 February on the state of the sewers and storm water drains in the city. The population had increased by some 100,000 in the past 30 years and the

whole of the sewage discharged into the Avon at various points between Netham Weir and Avonmouth without any treatment or screening except for some chlorination during summer months. The storm water culverts were unable to cope. They proposed a new gravity outfall sewer for sewage and three storm water intercepting sewers. The proposed facility for sewage could not function until the stormwater interceptors had been completed and they therefore proposed that the first part of the scheme to remedy the situation should be the northern and eastern stormwater interceptors.

The same meeting received the report of the special committee to investigate the overspend on the Colston Hall renovations. The major part had been due to the architect agreeing to extra expenditure without authority; they decided that the bills had to be paid but that the part of the architect's fee relating to amount of the excess should be withheld. They also recommended measures to prevent a repetition of the occurrence.

On 28 February the Housing Committee discussed the arrangements for the opening ceremony for Knowle Community Centre. They decided that the fee of eleven guineas requested by the Police Band was excessive, one member commenting that it would be better to use the services of a band of unemployed musicians.

On 4 March a special meeting of the Council accepted a scheme proposed by the Air Raid Precautions Committee subject to the deletion of some words that a member considered would introduce an element of compulsion. They proposed to install sirens to inform the public of an impending raid, the dissemination of information about air raid precautions, the recruitment of wardens and to investigate what wardens' posts and first aid stations would be required. The cost to the ratepayers would be £13,250 (the product of a 1d rate) and the scheme would attract a Government grant of £37,850. 12,000 volunteers would be needed. The proposal was accepted subject to an amendment protesting that the Government's attitude towards costs cast an additional burden on ratepayers and deploring the Government's foreign policy which made necessary the creation of vast armaments thus necessitating air raid precautions.

On 8 March the Housing Committee reported that on the previous 31 December 13,138 houses and flats were under management and that between 1930 and 1937 an annual average of 838 houses and flats had been completed. As at 31 December 1937 3,463 houses had been included in clearance or demolition orders. One of the effects of slum clearance was the Council received a number of petitions from shopkeepers expressing their grave concern at the effect on their businesses.

In March the Governors of Bristol Grammar School appointed Ralph Westwood Moore, the sixth form master at Shrewsbury School, as headmaster to succeed to Mr. J.E. Barton who was shortly to retire.

The half-yearly meeting of the Governors of Bristol General Hospital heard that the overdraft then amounted to nearly £50,000 and that the deficit for 1937 amounted to £15,776, nearly £2,000 more than the previous year. The number of admissions in 1937 was 145 more than in 1936 and the chairman expressed the hope for a material increase in the amounts received under contributory schemes. The future of the hospital and the voluntary system were said to be in jeopardy. The meeting also heard that an application had been made to the Charity Commission for a scheme of amalgamation with the Royal Infirmary.

The Lord Mayor opened a new open shelved library in Redcatch Road, Knowle on 24 March. The library contained 1,000 volumes and had been built by James Pugsley & Sons.

At the Council meeting on 29 March the Watch Committee's proposal to increase the pay of police superintendents and inspectors prompted a heated debate. Voting was equal with the result that the recommendation was not adopted.

Judge Parsons, the former County Court Judge died on April and at the commencement of the court's sitting on 11 April a number of lawyers paid tribute to him.

The Council's Air Raid Precautions scheme was announced publicly on 13 April. Arrangements, to be supervised by the Chief Constable, made provision to enroll special constables, air raid wardens and auxiliary firemen with enrollment cards being made available at public libraries. Volunteers were to be given a course of training in anti-gas measures. In August five members of the local clergy, including the Dean, were being trained as air raid precautions instructors. In September number 55 Broadmead was purchased for use as a headquarters and the committee reported that trenches were being dug in parks, first aid posts had been set up and wardens were visiting houses to assess the number of gas masks required. Depots for the collection of gas masks opened on 1 October, the day after the announcement of the Munich Agreement.

In April the organisers of the King George V memorial had purchased land at Feeder Road which they proposed to use as a playing field; the cost was £4,500 to include a memorial gateway. A total of £7,500 had been subscribed and it was intended to use the remainder to lay out a memorial garden at St. Augustine's. The fund closed at the beginning of June by which time £12,000 had been collected and the playing field was officially opened by Sir Francis Cowlin on 27 July.

At their meeting on 10 May the councillors appointed John Nelson Meredith as City Architect. Some members were not happy at the proposal that he should be supervised by a sub-committee of the Estates and General Purposes Committee and that aspect of the appointment was

referred back for further consideration. In the following month a proposal to set up a special committee to deal with the City architect's department met with general approval.

On 16 May what was described as an all-party peace meeting took place at the Colston Hall. The principal speaker was Winston Churchill who advocated a group of strongly armed nations standing behind the League of Nations. He was supported on the platform by Conservative and Liberal MPs and the chairman of Bristol Cooperative Society. Messages urging support for the League of Nations were sent by the Bishop of Bristol and the secretary of Bristol Trades and Labour Council.

On 25 May Dr. T. Howard Butler opened extensions costing nearly £16,000 at Cossham Hospital. The work included a new X-ray department, additions to the casualty department, new kitchens and additional nurses' accommodation.

On the night of 2 June Albert Gourd aged 17 of Easton, a reservist in the 501 (County of Gloucester) Bombing Squadron, was a member of the crew of a bomber that took off on a training flight. Without the knowledge of the pilot he decided to attempt a parachute jump and left the aircraft as it was flying over Durdham Down. He landed on the roof of 86 Woodland Road and was suspended over the side wall of the house. A couple of students rescued him and he suffered a grazed shin and a headache.

Sir Thomas Lennard died on 1 June. He founded the business of Lennards Ltd. and served as Sheriff in 1912/13. He was keen to promote the idea of a new municipal building and bought land on the western side of College Green which he later sold to the Corporation at the price he had paid for it. Amongst his other charitable gifts Sir Thomas provided the sites for the Royal Colonial Institute (later the Royal Empire Society) in Whiteladies Road and the church, parish hall and vicarage in Sea Mills; he was also largely responsible for the acquisition of the site of the Congregational Western College at Cotham.

On 10 June at a low-key ceremony lasting 30 minutes the Duchess of Beaufort laid the foundation stone for the new municipal building on College Green. Alderman Sheppard laid a stone on behalf of the people involved in the construction. A scroll bearing the names of city councillors was buried at the same ceremony.

The new postal sorting office at Temple Meads opened for business in June.

During the six months from January to June deposits by Bristolians in the National Savings Bank amounted to £892,760, an increase of 7.8% over the previous six months. The figures showed that Bristol had saved more than other leading cities; Liverpool's inhabitants had saved £771,880.



At their meeting on 12 July councillors accepted the Housing Committee's proposal to buy 112 acres between Purdown and the railway line for housing purposes. Some members expressed reservations because they thought that the price (£183 per acre) was too high.

Captain Frank Sowter Bamwell, the chief aircraft designer at the Bristol Aeroplane Company was killed whilst flying a plane built to his own specification when it crashed shortly after take-off at Bristol Airport on 2 August. It was the first fatal accident at the airport since its opening in 1930.

On 8 August the Licensing Justices heard an application to remove a restriction imposed in 1929 that prevented the Hippodrome from applying for a licence to sell intoxicating liquor in the theatre bar. There were objections from licensees of neighbouring public houses and the application was refused.

The 'Round House' in Pennywell Road that was once a windmill was demolished in August.

On the morning of 7 September there was a serious fire in Portland Square that started in the Surrey Street premises of Thomas Williams & Sons, bent timber and wheel manufacturers. The factory and four houses were destroyed causing damage estimated at £30,000. There were no fatalities but two firemen were injured.

Herbert Edwin Chattock died on 17 September. He was Sheriff in 1912 and again in 1917 when he had to stand in for Colonel Butler who had been called up for military service. Mr. Chattock was the first president of Bristol Rotary Club.

In September 'in view of the national emergency' the Air Raid Precautions Committee authorised the digging of trenches in some parks. By December it was thought necessary to complete some of the trenches and to fill in others. On 20 October there was a debate in the Air Raid Precautions Committee when all parties expressed concern at the lack of preparedness during the Munich crisis which members blamed on the Government's inaction. The 'freeze' on expenditure had been relaxed in August; sirens had been ordered but not yet delivered. Nearly 400,000 respirators had been received and had to be assembled; this was done with voluntary labour, many people being supplied by local employers. The cardboard boxes also had to be put together and, working day and night, it had been possible to send some 150,000 to distribution centres. The members, who felt that the lack of preparedness had been due to the Government's policy of over centralisation, agreed to strengthen the committee by increasing the number from nine to sixteen including four co-opted members.

On 8 October Lord Apsley, the MP for Bristol Central made a forced landing in his private aeroplane in Poland. He was en route to stay with Count Alfred Potocki in his castle.

October saw the introduction of road safety wardens helping school children to cross the road at some dangerous school entrances.

In November Alderman Frank Sheppard resigned as leader of the Labour group on the city council. His successor was A.W. Cox.

At the Council meeting on 9 November one member drew attention to a report in a Sunday paper that during the recent crisis the Home Office had sent a secret letter to all Town Clerks outlining steps for superseding democratic government in municipalities in the event of hostilities. Bristol's Town Clerk said that he had received no such letter.

At the municipal elections at the beginning of November the Citizen party gained three seats. This resulted in a stalemate with each party having 56 representatives. When the new Lord Mayor was installed on 9 November the Labour party, despite protests from the Citizen party, indicated that they had decided to retain control of all committees.

By December the Air Raid Precautions Committee reported that 3,364 wardens had been recruited and that all the necessary respirators had been received.

## 1939

At the January Council meeting the Public Assistance Committee reported that it proposed to construct two new relief depots at St. Werburghs and in Jacobs Wells Road; the committee considered that modern buildings were more advantageous than using unsuitable existing buildings and also that there was a stigma attached to having to go to St. Peter's Hospital. Citizen members opposed the scheme on account of cost, one member expressing the view that many elderly people enjoyed the walk to St Peter's but their amendment to refer the matter back was not successful.

In January Sir Stafford Cripps, the MP for Bristol East, was expelled from the Labour party because of his support for a united front of Socialist and Communist parties who opposed the Government's rearmament programme. On 1 February a meeting of his constituency party agreed to write to all divisional and central Labour parties asking them to protest against his expulsion. Their effort was not successful.

On 26 January Commissioner Catherine Bramwell opened a new wing, costing £10,000, at the Mount Hill Maternity Home at Ashley Hill. The Bishop of Bristol presided at the opening ceremony until the arrival of Lord Apsley. The commissioner told those present that the Salvation Army was overcoming prejudice against its work of ante and postnatal care for unmarried mothers.

On 31 January at a dinner of the Bristol and District section of the Institute of Transport the chairman, Mr. R.G. Pittard of the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company, said that he could visualise the time

when cars would be not only restricted from waiting in the central areas but would be entirely prohibited from those areas of cities. On 14 February a deputation of traders from the central area was received by the Council and expressed their views about the inadequacy of parking facilities. The same meeting approved a report from the Watch Committee recommending the purchase of some land with entrances to Park Row and Trenchard Street to provide a garage to accommodate 198 cars. The scheme was abandoned on the ground of economy in the following August.

In February Mr. F.A. Wilshire, a Bristol barrister, lectured on 'Handel in England' during the Handel Birthday Week at Halle in Saxony.

On 28 February a meeting at the Colston Hall protested against the savage treatment and enforced eviction of Jews in Germany and Central Europe. The Rev H.M. Webb-Peploe spoke of the terrors of the Czech purge and the torture of Polish Jews.

Early in the year Mr. E. McIntyre approached the Corporation with plans to stage a Bristol Municipal and West of England Industrial Exhibition. His proposal was enthusiastically received and during the year plans were well advanced. A site in Eastville Park was obtained and a number of local companies agreed to be exhibitors. It was planned to hold the exhibition for 17 days from 26 September and construction of the buildings was in progress when war was declared. The event never took place and the military authorities took over the site.

Tom Mix, the well-known film star, accompanied by his wonder horse 'Tony' appeared at the Hippodrome for the week commencing 6 March. He arrived at Temple Meads on 5 March and rode to the Hippodrome watched by crowds who lined the station approach and surrounding streets. The horse was stabled in Barrs Street.

A National Service Rally at the Colston Hall on 9 March heard Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd, the Under Secretary at the Home Office, say that recruits in large numbers were required for the Army and Royal Air Force and that volunteers were needed for the whole range of the ARP service. Ben Tillett told the meeting 'I want the peoples to rise; let us blow them to hell rather than sit on our haunches and let them do it to us.' There was a demonstration in the audience with shouts of 'Chamberlain must go'. Later in the month the Planning and Public Works Committee gave permission for streamers bearing the words 'National Service is a Business of the Citizen' to be suspended over some of the city's busiest streets. On 28 and 29 March crowds visited Durdham Down to watch a demonstration of barrage balloons; it was hoped that this would increase the rate of volunteering. A recruiting information bureau at the Council House opened in April.

On 13 March in the Colston Hall there was a League of Prayer and Service Meeting. Hundreds were turned away; people started queuing

five hours beforehand. They listened to the Rev. W.H. Elliott, Vicar of St. Michael's, Chester Square, London, who was famous for his Thursday evening broadcast services during the previous seven and a half years and to Dr. S.M. Berry, a leading personality of the Congregational Union. The Bishop of Bristol presided.

A bill before Parliament in March would compel Local Authorities to provide cancer treatment as part of their normal health services and it was proposed that the General Hospital would become the principal centre for such treatment in the West Country. The sum of £5,000 had recently been authorised by the Bristol Joint Radium Committee to duplicate the existing equipment. In August the Health Committee discussed the arrangements necessary to enable the local authority to provide maternity services to replace those to be given up by the Royal Infirmary and the General Hospital.

The first shelters were delivered to some households at Broad Walk, Knowle at the end of March. In due course it was expected that 80,000 would be available after assembly at Canons Marsh goods depot. Each shelter comprised 20 components and weighed 8½ cwt. when complete. Distribution of respirators in the Bedminster, Knowle and Central divisions started at the end of April.

A special Council meeting was convened on 4 April to receive a report from the Air Raid Precautions Committee. The members approved the appointment of Mr. H.M. Webb, the City Engineer, as the ARP Controller. The meeting also discussed the setting up of an Emergency Committee to consist of two Labour and two Citizen councillors. The Citizen members expressed surprise that the Labour group did not nominate Alderman Sheppard as one of the committee men since, they said, he had been a very effective chairman of the ARP Committee and they wanted to propose an amendment to substitute his name. At Alderman Sheppard's request the amendment was withdrawn. Shortly afterwards, at a supper held by the Bristol Labour group the alderman was presented with an illuminated scroll by Ernest Bevin.

In April the 70<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Grand Lodge of the International Order of Good Templars took place at the Victoria Rooms. Brother J. Rowe-Brooks was elected Grand Chief Templar for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in succession; born in Bristol, he was the managing director of the Birmingham branch of Henry Riseley & Sons, insurance brokers. He told the meeting that 3,500 new adherents to the movement's temperance cause had been obtained. A proposal by some delegates to introduce card games and whist drives at ordinary lodge meetings was overwhelmingly rejected.

Alderman James Fuller Eberle died on 22 April in his 85<sup>th</sup> year. He was connected with the business of Fuller & Co, coach builders and was the senior member of the Council. He was an honorary freeman and



chairman of the Museum and Art Gallery Committee for 25 years and it was through his efforts that the Red Lodge was secured for the city. On 19 November a gateway at St. Stephen's Church erected to his memory was dedicated. He had been master of the Antient Society of St. Stephen's Ringers in 1887-1888 and its treasurer from 1889 until his death.

Also on 22 April there was a mock air raid when a single aeroplane passed over the city; it was illuminated by searchlights and anti-aircraft guns fired blank rounds.

In April Norman Whatley, headmaster of Clifton College retired. He was succeeded by Bertrand Leslie Hallward, a Fellow of Peterhouse, Cambridge.

On 3 May a Royal Air Force Hart trainer and a Tiger Moth from the Bristol Flying School at Filton collided. The flight sergeant pilot of the trainer was killed and the other pilot seriously injured.

At the beginning of May Sir Lawrence Brook, chairman of the Board of Control (on behalf of the Minister of Health) opened Barrow Hospital. The hospital cost more than £250,000 and the plans were prepared by Sir George Oatley in consultation with Dr. E. Barton White on behalf of the Board of Control.

On 26 May Winston Churchill, as Chancellor of the University, conferred an honorary LL.D degree on Joseph Kennedy, the United States ambassador. After lunch with the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House he was asked if he would accept an 'honorary degree Fahrenheit' from the University students. He agreed 'provided it involved no exceptional violence.' He arrived at the Victoria Rooms for the ceremony in the Lord Mayor's coach and was greeted by an orchestra comprising a piano accordion, a banjo and a double base viol.

On 3 June Miss Florence J. Sutherland unveiled a statue of Charles Wesley at the New Room. The statue was the work of Mr. Brook Hitch of London and was the gift of Sir Arthur M. Sutherland.

On the same day Bristol's quota of the new militia registered at various Labour Exchanges.

A crowd of over 20,000 watched a parade of 2,500 members of the Territorials, the RAFVR and the RNVr on Durdham Down on 11 June.

At the end of the month the Lord Mayor unveiled a plaque at the Orpheus Cinema commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the granting of a patent for cinematography to William Friese-Greene.

On 5 July the Duchess of Gloucester laid the foundation stone at the new Clergy Daughters' School at Henbury.

On 11 July the Council discussed a report from the Airport Committee during the course of which the vice-chairman of the committee said that the condition of the airport was a disgrace and he was ashamed of it. He added that he was not surprised at the decrease in the number of aircraft landing

and that this was due to the poor surface of the landing ground; he considered that it needed £100,000 spending on it.

On 15 July the last tramcar left the Centre. Its destination was the depot near the junction of Gloucester Road and Ashley Down Road; as it left the crowd sang *Auld Lang Syne*.

At the beginning of August the names of the members appointed to local tribunals to hear appeals from conscientious objectors were announced. The first tribunal sat a week or so later in the Senate Room of the University. Under the chairmanship of Judge Wethered it heard appeals from 28 objectors.

There was a small congregation in Bristol Cathedral on 3 September and at about 10.50am the Dean slowly ascended the pulpit to introduce the Prime Minister's broadcast announcing that war had been declared. The service then continued. At the Council meeting on 12 September the Lord Mayor referred to the outbreak of war and the chairman of the Emergency Committee made a statement as to the measures relating to civil defence taken by the committee. The members then noted that the Prevention of Damage by Rabbits Act had received the Royal Assent and agreed that the council's responsibilities under the act should be delegated to the Health Committee. The Education Committee decided that schools should reassemble after the summer holiday on 18 September except for those for children under the age of seven; the latter opened on 2 October.

On 7 September Sir Thomas Inskip was appointed Lord Chancellor and took the title of Viscount Caldecote of Bristol in the County of Gloucester.

Queen Mary, who was staying at Badminton House, visited the city on 4 October. The Queen, whose love of old buildings and antiques was well known, saw St. Mary Redcliffe, the Georgian House and the Red Lodge. On 18 November she paid a surprise visit to open the Red Cross Society's new headquarters and regional supply-depot in Lewin's Mead.

In September the Housing Committee decided that council houses under construction should be completed but that no new houses should be started. In the following month they agreed that no general reduction in rents could be given to tenants serving in the forces.

In October the University had to make room for students from King's College, London who were evacuated to the city together with pre-clinical students from Middlesex Hospital.

Felix Felton, the BBC's West Region Programme Director, spoke to Bristol Rotary Club on 20 November. After his talk one member complained of the frivolity of programmes following the outbreak of war although another Rotarian expressed the view that there was much to be said for frivolity. The speaker agreed that programmes might have been too light hearted in the early days of the war.

In December the Council agreed to complete the main external walls and roof of the new municipal building in College Green but not to undertake any interior work. They agreed to defer the proposed Eastern road from Stokes Croft to Victoria Street and the main drainage scheme but to complete the relief depots planned by the Public Assistance Committee. A revised scheme for the Centre which involved completing the bridge at St Augustine's and the bascule bridge works was agreed; the scheme did include the work to cover the floating harbour but omitted the planned King George V memorial. The Lord Mayor had expressed the hope that 'whatever works were carried out at the Centre nothing would be done to prejudice the ultimate realisation of the layout scheme approved by the Council and the Royal Fine Arts Commission.'

The King's Christmas Day broadcast to the Empire concluded with the words:

*I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year*

*'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.'*

*And he replied 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.*

*That shall be better for you than light and safer than a known way.'*

There was much speculation as to the authorship; many literary experts including the Poet Laureate were consulted without immediate success. Eventually it was discovered that the author was Miss Minnie Louise Haskins who had written the words more than 30 years previously when she was living at Warmley House, the building that later became the headquarters of Warmley District Council. Miss Haskins herself heard the King's broadcast and even she did not immediately recall that she was the author.

### Lord Mayors and Sheriffs.

The Civic year ran from November.

1933/34 Francis Crispin Luke  
1934/35 Herbert John Maggs  
1935/36 Charles Theodore Budgett  
1936/37 Albert Francis Moon  
1937/38 John James Milton  
1938/39 William Albert Winchester  
1939/40 Albert Whitfield Stone Burgess

Francis Sydney Philpot  
Thomas Hosegood Davies  
Gilbert Sidney James  
Vivian John Robinson  
Sidney Cox  
Ernest William Lennard  
Charles Loraine Hill

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