

Edward Colston - Timeline of dissent and protest

1920 to 2020

Summary – Timeline

Post-World War I (1920-1945)

1920s

1920 – Rev. H. J. Wilkins publishes a comprehensive history of Edward Colston highlighting his leading role in the transatlantic slave trade and his political and religious bigotry. [1]

7 July 1922 – Wilkins writes to the *Western Daily Press* stating that “Party political considerations gave Edward Colston his pre-eminence” and proposing a general celebration of benefactors, a ‘Commemoration day for Bristol’ - not just Edward Colston. [2]

1925 – Wilkins publishes a supplement to his history of Colston exposing his role as a money-lender and criticising the “unhistorical and ill-proportioned position Bristol has given to Edward Colston”. [3]

3 November 1925 – An editorial in the *Western Daily Press* refers to the publication of Rev. H. J. Wilkins supplement to his history of Edward Colston. The editorial supports Wilkins in arguing that Colston Day excludes many other Bristolians “deserving of being remembered” and suggests that the day “shall be still more radically altered so that instead of being devoted to singing the praises of one illustrious citizen it shall be used for paying tribute to many who have found a place in local history”. [4]

14 November 1927 – Dean of Bristol attempts to defend Edward Colston in a sermon at the Colston Day celebrations in Bristol Cathedral. The Dean “laid special emphasis upon the necessity of placing Colston’s connection with the slave-trade and money lending against the historical background of his day”. [5]

1930s

13 November 1930 – During his sermon on Colston Day at the Cathedral the Rev. G. W. L. Wynne refuted the claim that Edward Colston had been tarnished by his association with the slave-trade. Instead he stated that “everyone who could made money from the slave-trade in those days, and anyone who did not was regarded as a freak”. [6]

1934 – In *The Guide to Bristol*, published in the year of the centenary of the implementation of the Slave Emancipation Act, all reference to Edward Colston was dropped. [7]

13 November 1936 – An article in the *Western Daily Press* acknowledges Edward Colston’s religious and political bigotry and his involvement in the slave-trade. The author, Eric Buxton a member of the staff at the paper, attempts to defend Colston by stating he was as “human as [the] rest of us”. Buxton did concede that “Experience suggests where a public man has a black mark on his public character, it is hushed up and passed over in silence when he is being praised - not brought up and

exposed for what it is worth.” Several letters to the paper follow this article discussing Edward Colston’s involvement in the slave trade. [8]

13 November 1937 – Canon Fitzgerald provides another defence of Edward Colston in his sermon at the Cathedral on Colston Day, stating “if he did make much of his money by the slave-trade it was unfair to blame him for not being in advance of his time”. [9]

1940s

1941 – Marguerite Steen’s popular and acclaimed novel *The Sun is my Undoing*, focusing on a slave-trading family in Bristol is praised by historian and Caribbean politician, Eric Williams, who pronounced her novel superior to academic histories of British slavery. [10]

Post-World War II (1945-2000)

1960s

30 October 1961 – In a letter to the *Bristol Evening Post* a writer points out Edward Colston’s involvement in the slave-trade and his religious and political bigotry. [11]

1963 – In his pamphlet *Bristol & the Slave Trade* Prof Charles MacInnes of Bristol University refers to the “macabre self-satisfaction which some Bristolians appear to derive from the recollection of the presumed moral depravity of their forbears”, a direct reference to recent comments about Edward Colston and his ilk. [12]

1970s

1971 – In his historical guide *Portrait of Bristol* author Keith Brace refers to Edward Colston’s statue, his involvement in the slave-trade, religious bigotry and selective philanthropy. [13]

1973 – In response to the historical silences surrounding the 600th anniversary of Bristol as a city and county Derek Robinson’s popular and controversial *A Shocking History of Bristol* is published. The book exposed Edward Colston as a leading financier of the slave-trade and drew attention to his continued celebration in annual rituals. [14]

1979 - David Foot publishes *Famous Bristolians* which points out Edward Colston’s involvement in slavery and the fact that this history has been obscured by his supporters and the Church of England. [15]

1980s

6 June 1980 – At the Southey lecture Bristol University Professor of History Patrick McGrath criticises Edward Colston claiming “he only gave his money away so he would be remembered”. He also stated “I object to him being worshipped just because he gave his money away ... that doesn’t make him a good man”. In the subsequent furore in the press he is accused of doing a “hatchet job and a character assassination” on Edward Colston. [16]

6 August 1981 – In a feature article entitled ‘The secret life of Mr Bountiful’ in the *Bristol Evening Post* historian David Foot explicitly criticises Edward Colston stating “Whatever the dotting contemporary history book writers might imply his generosity should not obscure the shadier facets of his character. He grew rich and fat on the slave-trade conveniently ignoring it or even condoning it like many leading churchmen of his day” [17]

1990s

1992 – Ex-Colston’s Girl’s school student Carole Drake’s installation *Commemoration Day*, part of the *Trophies of Empire* exhibition at the Arnolfini uses an image of Colston’s statue “to expose the denial of Colston’s trading in the lives of African peoples, a fact never openly discussed”. [18]

9 September 1995 – An exclusive event in Queen Square to celebrate the launching of the replica *Matthew*, John Cabot’s ship, is disrupted by hundreds of protestors. They claimed the event represented Bristol’s wealthy elite celebrating their own version of maritime history whilst ignoring the mass suffering caused by colonialism and trans-Atlantic slavery. Almost 50 arrests were made by police. [19]

May 1996 – Bristol’s ‘Festival of the Sea’ celebrates the city’s seafaring past; the largest maritime festival ever hosted in Britain. There were many complaints about the festival regarding its near total omission of Bristol’s role in the slave trade. In reaction an ‘Anti-Festival of The Sea’ was launched by multi-cultural art groups and fly posters exposing Bristol’s historical involvement with slavery appeared across the city. Internationally famous Bristolian band *Massive Attack* assert their boycott of the Colston Hall [now Beacon Hall] and criticise the festival for its partial histories. [20]

December 1997 - European Year Against Racism plaque unveiled at the Bristol Industrial Museum/M Shed. This was the first public, physical recognition of Bristol’s role in the slave trade. [21]

January 1998 – Statue of Edward Colston in the city centre is graffitied with FUCK OFF SLAVE TRADER the first of several similar actions on the monument over the succeeding years. *The Times* reported; “Leaders of the black community in Bristol yesterday condemned Colston...as one of the worst offenders in the history of slavery and said the statue should be taken down.” [22]

2 February 1998 – Bristol City Councillor Ray Sefia likens the statue of Edward Colston to that of Adolf Hitler and calls for its removal, stating “we shouldn’t have one to Colston who was one of the worst offenders in the slave trade that did so much destruction”. [23]

April 1998 – Peter Courtier, Director of the Bristol Race Equality Council calls for “a plaque explaining Colston’s role as a slave-trader” to be added to the statue of Edward Colston. [24]

August 1998 – After plans for refurbishment of the Colston Hall were announced *Massive Attack* band member 3D reasserted their boycott and stated “it should be renamed as a building and not continue to celebrate the name of someone who was involved in the slave trade”. [25]

22 March 1999 - A plate of raw liver on a blood-spattered table is set before the statue Edward Colston to symbolise how he "dined" on slavery. The statue of 18th Century merchant Colston has been at the centre of controversy since it was daubed with the words "Slave Trader" last year. [26]

1999 - Kenneth Morgan’s biographical pamphlet *Edward Colston and Bristol* is published which provides further evidence of Colston’s involvement in transatlantic slavery. [27]

1999 – The painting *Sold Down the River* by Bristolian artist Tony Forbes is exhibited in the ‘A Respectable Trade? Bristol & Transatlantic Slavery’ exhibition, at Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery. The painting depicts “ a young black man, bound in police tape and held in chains by Edward Colston is being hauled down the Avon by the good ship *Matthew*, centrepiece of 1996’s Festival of the Sea, the huge celebration of Bristol’s maritime heritage which so pointedly ignored the city’s slaving past.

The Matthew is powered by sails bearing the logos of the BBC, HTV and the Evening Post. All the while, the folks in Clifton party". [28]

2000s

2001 – Historian Madge Dresser's *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in Bristol* is published. The introduction (and cover) to the book feature Edward Colston, referring to his involvement in the English slave-trade in the seventeenth century. [29]

April 2003 – A major redevelopment of the Colston Hall leads to calls in the local media for it to remove its name due to the associations of Edward Colston with the transatlantic slave trade. [30]

2004 – Andrew Foyle's *Bristol: Pevsner City Guide* part of the Pevsner Architectural Guides series is published. Referring to Edward Colston, Foyle acknowledges that he profited significantly from slavery and that suggestions that the statue should be removed as a recognition of Bristol's "shameful role in the slave trade" have not been followed. [31]

2006 – Artist Hew Lock exhibits in St. Thomas the Martyr Church, Bristol images of the statue of Edward Colston hung with gold jewellery to demonstrate that "the legacy of empire is all around us on a daily basis...the buildings and public statues you see in cities across the country that came into being out of the economy of empire". The images are exhibited in the *Artist and Empire* exhibition at Tate Britain in 2015-16. [32]

10 May 2006 – A debate is hosted at the Empire and Commonwealth museum in Bristol entitled *Is it time to apologise for slavery?* Direct references are made to the memorialisation of Edward Colston in the City. [33]

March 2007 – Renewed calls, including from Bristol civil rights campaigner Paul Stephenson to rename the Colston Hall lead to articles in the national press exposing Edward Colston's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. [34]

26 March 2007 – A televised BBC debate at the Arnolfini arts centre entitled *Abolition* brings up the issue that 'Abolition 200', the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire, had not challenged the existing 'infra-structure' of memorials, celebrations and organisations that were connected to the history of slavery and the slave trade in Bristol. [35]

2007 – The *Two Coins Project* launched by artist Graeme Mortimer Evelyn during the 'Abolition 200' year was a plan to erect an installation around the Colston statue and to project a film about slavery, using images from Bristol, West Africa and the Caribbean. Although the films were made and the project received development funding from the Arts Council and Bristol City Council, it was never realised after it appears the latter body got 'cold feet'. [36]

September - October 2007 Several protests outside Colston Hall by 'Artists for a name change' angry at the venue being used to host Abolition 200 events. Performers at the events echo the message of the protestors to the audiences to rapturous applause. [37]

September 2007 - Debate entitled '*Who was Edward Colston – Merchant, Philanthropist or Criminal?*' at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum. [38]

October 2007 - Debate '*Should the Colston hall name be changed?*' organised by Africans in One at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum. [39]

2009 – Art and Activism workshop protest to rewrite the narrative at the “slave trader Colston fiefdom in the Centre” of Bristol is stopped by police. [40]

2010s

April 2011 – The new management body for the Colston Hall, the Bristol Music Trust (BMT), recognising Edward Colston’s links with the slave trade and that as a result many Bristolians boycott the venue announces it could be renamed “if that’s what people want”. A debate ensues in the local media. In August the BMT reject any change, leading civil rights campaigner Paul Stephenson to state it was another “lost opportunity”. [41][42]

31 August 2013 - Elected Mayor of Bristol George Ferguson (2012-2016) states that annual celebrations of Edward Colston are “perverse...not a celebration that I shall join”. [43]

November 2014 – Bishop of Bristol is secretly filmed at the Society of Merchant Venturers Charter Day apparently denying Edward Colston’s involvement in the slave-trade whilst preaching to the assembled school children. In the media furore after the video of the event goes online the Bishop claims his words had been “misinterpreted”. [44]

January 2015 – Local teacher Christine Townsend launches complaint to the Archbishop of Canterbury via Lancaster House, accusing Bishop Hill of preaching falsities about Edward Colston. The complaint was eventually rejected on grounds that the Bishops words were not “deliberately misleading”. [45]

31 October 2015 – A live DIY radio station event *BS2: Resist and Revolt, Black History* discusses the celebrations of Edward Colston by Colston’s Girl’s School. On air the panel resolve to organise a protest at the forthcoming Commemoration Day event. [46]

7 November 2015 – A group of protesters hand out leaflets explaining Edward Colston’s leading role in the transatlantic slave trade to those attending Colston’s Girl’s School annual commemoration day at Bristol Cathedral. The protestors ask why the school and the church are celebrating a slave trader. The protest makes both local and national media. [47]

December 2015 – Meetings between protestors and Dean of Cathedral and later Colston’ Girls School Principal to discuss the appropriateness of celebrating the slave-trader Edward Colston in Bristol schools. [48]

Spring 2016 – The campaigning group *Countering Colston* is formed by the protestors. [49]

September 2016 – Colston Girl’s School and the Diocese of Bristol break off negotiations with Countering Colston. However, the Dean states he “will instruct preachers that if they are going to mention Colston they must include, at the very least, an accurate account of his life and legacy [including]... a statement about his involvement in the slave trade”. This marks the first time in decades that the history of Colston’s involvement in the slave trade was to be referred to in any of the ceremonies taking place in Bristol. [50]

8 October 2016 – In a public discussion at M Shed emanating from a Bristol University Archaeology project future Bristol Poet Laureate Vanessa Kissele expresses her disquiet at the civic toleration of the Colston statue. [51]

9 November 2016 – During development work on the City Centre protestors break into the area surrounding the Edward Colston statue and fly post the plinth with “human trafficker”, “kidnapper”, “murderer” and “slave trader”. [52]

November 2016 – Protests at the continuing celebrations of Edward Colston, outside the Cathedral at the Colston Girl’s School Commemoration Day and on 13th November ‘Colston Day’ at St Stephens’s in central Bristol where the traditional march of the Society of Merchant Venturers is confronted by protestors. [53]

December 2016 - March 2017 – Countering Colston hold a series of protests outside Colston Hall on its 150th anniversary, demanding that its name be changed. [54]

December 2016 – Meeting between Countering Colston activists and the Chief Executive Louise Mitchell of the Bristol Music Trust (BMT) to discuss the renaming of Colston Hall. [55]

23 February 2017 – Dean of Bristol Cathedral grabs the attention of both local and national media by announcing that the Diocese were considering removing the Colston window from the Cathedral. [56]

3 April 2017 - Bristol Music Trust (BMT) decide unanimously to change the name of the Colston Hall, with Chief Executive Louise Mitchell making it clear after claims that the decision had been motivated for financial reasons, that it had been “entirely moral”, rather than financial and referring to Edward Colston as a “toxic brand”. [57]

April 2017 - The face of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol city centre is painted white in protest. [58]

Spring 2017 – Proposed referendum amongst Colston’s Girl’s School pupils about changing the name of the school is blocked by the governing body the Venturers Trust. Internal consultation with students at the school shows majority of pupils in favour of name change. The result of the consultation with the students is suppressed by Venturers Trust. [59]

1 May 2017 – Bristol Radical History Group publish the first of a series of articles on the history of Edward Colston. Research Paper #1 calculates for the first time the estimated numbers of enslaved Africans transported (84,500) and deceased (19,300) in Royal African Company ships whilst Edward Colston was a manager or deputy-director of the monopoly. [60]

17 June 2017 - Bristol Radical History Group publish the second of their research papers on the history of Edward Colston. Research Paper #2 calculates the size of the investments Edward Colston had in the Royal African Company, explicates his leading roles in the management of the monopoly and demonstrates the various methods he used to extract wealth from the slave-trade. [61]

August 2017 – An ‘unofficial’ plaque calling Bristol ‘capital of the Atlantic slave trade’ appears on the plinth for Edward Colston’s statue. It remains there until Bristol City Council remove it two months later. A second plaque is attached some time after by the same artist whilst being filmed by Channel 4. [62]

16 October 2017 – John Whitehead, Principal of Colston’s Girl’s School announces that, after consultation with the students, all reference to Edward Colston will be removed from the annual Commemoration Day service and “we will no longer be asking the students to wear a chrysanthemum in his memory”. [63]

18 October 2017 – Protest by Countering Colston at the Colston Society annual commemoration of Edward Colston held at St Mary Redcliffe Church and including pupils from both St Mary Redcliffe CE Primary School and St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School (secondary). Demonstrators are barred from entering by police and PCSO officers. [64]

13 November 2017 – Countering Colston protestors arrive at St Stephen’s church to be told that the Colston Day celebrations had been cancelled. A representative explained that St Stephen’s wants “nothing more to do with [Edward] Colston”. [65]

December 2017 – Colston’s Primary School decide after a three-month consultation with teachers, parents and pupils to change their name. The new name, Cotham Gardens Primary School, is adopted in September 2018. [66]

February 2018 – Project to place a ‘corrective’ plaque on the statue of Edward Colston is launched by Bristol City Council with little or no public consultation. [67]

6 May 2018 - A ‘yarn bomber’ attaches a bright red ball and chain to the statue of Edward Colston. [68]

June 2018 – Bristol Lord Mayor Cleo Lake has Jonathon Richardson’s 1702 portrait of Edward Colston removed from her office in the Mansion House. The event makes local and national news. [69]

12 October 2018 – Bristol MP, Thangam Debbonaire, calls for the removal of the statue of Edward Colston. [70]

14 October 2018 – Bristol Radical History Group publish the article *Myths within myths...Edward Colston and that statue* which debunks the idea that the statue of Edward Colston was contemporary to his time, popularly funded by public subscription or “erected by citizens of Bristol”. More than 50,000 people read the article, which exposes the Victorian reinvention of Edward Colston more than 150 years after his death. [71]

18 October 2018 – An art installation made up of concrete figures depicting enslaved Africans packed into a slave-ship, reminiscent of the *Brookes*, appears in front of the statue of Edward Colston. [72]

January 2019 - St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School announce they are changing the names of the pupils’ Houses from James, Canynges, Francombe, Cartwright and Colston to Müller, Liddell, Equiano (the ex-slave abolitionist), Franklin and Johnson. [73]

March 2019 – Statue of Edward Colston (originally used as a half-size model for the full-size version on the Centre) in the foyer of Colston’s Girl’s School (now Montpelier High School) is shrouded by the Principal of the school for a Parent’s evening. [74]

24 March 2019 – Bristol Radical History Group publish an article *The Edward Colston ‘corrective’ plaque: Sanitising an uncomfortable history* exposing in detail how the wording on the plaque had been altered, against the historical evidence, to suit the wishes of a member of the Society of Merchant Venturers and his supporters. More than 10,000 people access the article. [75]

25 March 2019 – Elected Mayor Marvin Rees steps in to halt the Edward Colston statue corrective plaque project saying the proposed wording was “unacceptable” and that it was “extremely naive” of the Merchant Venturers to believe it should have the final say on the words for a new plaque. The project was stalled and remained so until the statue fell in June 2020. [76]

2020s

5 June 2020 – Bristol Radical History Group publish *From Wulftan to Colston* which summarises and expands on previous research on Edward Colston and includes new information on his investments and involvement in the Spanish slave-trade. [77]

5 June 2020 – A petition asking Bristol City Council to remove the statue of Edward Colston receives nearly 7,000 signatures in a few days. [78]

7 June 2020 – During a Black Lives Matter protest which attracted 10,000 people the statue of Edward Colston is pulled down and thrown in the Floating Harbour by Pero's Bridge.

Sources

[1] Reverend Dr Henry John Wilkins – *Edward Colston (history)* 1920 Arrowsmith, Bristol

The social and political changes in pre-WW1 Bristol which were undermining elite patronage, creating new organisations within the working classes and disrupting cosy civic identities created a space for critical assessments of the City's icons. In the run-up to the bi-centenary of Colston's death in 1921, the Rev H. J. Wilkins, Vicar of Westbury-on-Trym and Minister of Redland Chapel wrote a comprehensive and provocative history of Edward Colston highlighting his leading role in the slave trade, the profits he acquired from this business and how he multiplied this wealth as a major money-lender and mortgage broker. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulftan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 259.

Wilkins, H. J. *Edward Colston (1636-1721 A.D.), A Chronological Account of His Life and Work Together with an Account of the Colston Societies and Memorials in Bristol* (Bristol, Arrowsmith: 1920).

Richard Coates – *Wilkins of Westbury & Redland (history)* 2017 AHLA, Bristol

...It is a characteristic piece of Wilkins [his 1920 *Edward Colston* book], the bulk of it being a simple chronology of the major events and publication of the key documents of Colston's life, followed by a five-page assessment of the man's character. Despite having been elected president for 1919 of one of the societies that had been financed by Colston's munificence, the Anchor Society, Wilkins does not shy away from the subject's involvement in the slave trade, and is quite blunt about his narrow-minded, partisan, overbearing, unforgiving and otherwise unpleasant personality. He comes reasonably close to saying that Colston was a nasty piece of work, judged by the standards of any age, calling him 'extremely difficult to co-operate with', 'unbending', 'narrow', and mentioning 'the distortion of his judgement by his favourite religious obsession,' his bigotry and his prejudice, while at the same time acknowledging his public generosity.

Coates, R. *Wilkins of Westbury & Redland: the life and writings of Rev Dr Henry John Wilkins (1865-1941)* (Bristol: ALHA Books No. 24, 2017) p. 14-15.

[2] Reverend H. J. Wilkins – *Commemoration day for Bristol (letter)* 1922 *Western Daily Press*, Bristol

Letter Wilkins wrote to the *Western Daily Press* in 1922 proposing a general celebration of benefactors 'Commemoration day for Bristol' - not just Colston. *Western Daily Press* 7 July 1922

[3] Reverend H. J. Wilkins – *Colston Supplement* (history) 1925 Arrowsmith, Bristol

I have urged (having regard to the unhistorical and ill-proportioned position Bristol has given to Edward Colston through the absence of documentary evidence and political partisanship with its charitable efforts) that Bristol should free herself from such a position, recall her heritage and rise to a true “Commemoration” on November 13th in each year of the noble galaxy of benefactors and worthies of “The Metropolis of the West”.

Wilkins, H. J. *Edward Colston (1636-1721 A.D.), Supplement to a Chronological Account of His Life and Work Together with an Account of the Colston Societies and Memorials in Bristol* (Bristol, Arrowsmith: 1925) p. 6.

[4] WDP supports Rev. H. J. Wilkins on Colston Day Western Daily Press 3 November 1925

“Then and Now” *Western Daily Press* 3 November 1925

[5] Dean defends Edward Colston Bristol Cathedral, 14 November 1927

“Colston Celebrations” *Western Daily Press* 15 November 1927

[6] Rev. defends Edward Colston Bristol Cathedral, 13 November 1930

“Tributes to Bristol’s Great philanthropist” *Western Daily Press* 14 November 1930

[7] Comment on Colston, or lack of – *1934 Guide to Bristol* 2009 Slavery Document, Bristol

It is interesting, by the time the 1934 edition of the official guide to Bristol was published, in the year of the centenary of the implementation of the Slave Emancipation Act, all reference to Colston had been dropped.

Dresser, M. “Remembering Slavery and Abolition in Bristol” *Slavery & Abolition*, 30, no. 2, (2009) p. 227.

[8] Article discusses Edward Colston’s bigotry and involvement in the slave-trade 13 November 1936

“What Bristol Owes to Edward Colston” *Western Daily Press* 13 November 1936

[9] Canon defends Edward Colston Bristol Cathedral, 13 November 1937

“301st Anniversary of Colston’s Birth” *Western Daily Press* 15 November 1937

[10] Marguerite Steen - *The Sun is my Undoing* (novel) 1941 Collins, London

...this book traces the lives and fortunes of the Floods, a local family involved in the slave trade. It also looks at those whom the Floods had enslaved in both Africa and the Caribbean...Steen’s willingness to confront with such a shrewd and unflinching eye the realities of interracial sexual relationships, commercial corruption and the brutalising influence of slavery earned her the unqualified admiration of many Bristol readers. The book was also praised by none other than the Marxist historian and Caribbean politician, Eric Williams, who pronounced her novel superior to academic histories of British slavery.

Appraisal by Madge Dresser, quoted in Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 261.

Steen, M. *The Sun is My Undoing* (Collins: London, 1941).

[11] Neptune – *There were two sides to Mr Colston* (letter) 1961 Evening Post, Bristol

Not all his [Colston's] personal qualities were wholly admirable, I read that he was obstinate, short-tempered, and intolerant, with a narrowness of outlook that bordered on bigotry in religious and political matters...Then there was the fact that much of his wealth came from the slave trade, his sympathies were narrow.

Neptune, "There were two sides to Mr Colston" *Bristol Evening Post* 30 October 1961.

[12] Prof Charles MacInnes – *Bristol & the Slave Trade* (history) 1963 BBHA, Bristol

In the course of the eighteenth-century mayors of Bristol, sheriffs, aldermen, town councillors, Members of Parliament, the Society of Merchant Venturers and, indeed, men of the highest repute in the place were engaged in this traffic [the slave trade]. **These were not wicked men but pillars of society in their own time and there seems to be little justification for that macabre self satisfaction which some Bristolians appear to derive from the recollection of the presumed moral depravity of their forbears.** If these men are to be judged then it should be by the moral standards of the time in which they lived. Since the nation as a whole at that time condoned their activities and applauded them for their enterprise, there would appear to be no special reason why they should be selected for particular condemnation. Many of them honestly believed that though negroes [sic] looked like men they were not really human.

MacInnes, C. M. *Bristol and the Slave Trade*. (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1963.) p.9.

[13] Keith Brace – *Portrait of Bristol* (historical guide) 1971 (& 1976) Hale, London

In Bristol you cannot escape the name of Colston, which was once a popular second Christian name in the city in honour of the philanthropist. There are hid two schools, his alms-houses on St Michael's Hill and in King Street, the Colston Hall, Colston Avenue and Colston Parade; and in Colston Avenue Colston himself in bronze leans on a tall cane and broods. On what: the vanity of earthly riches or his involvement in the slave trade? He gave vast sums of money to found charities that survive vigorously today. Yet he was a bigoted High Churchman, who made money from the slave trade and stipulated that the boys at his schools were to be Anglicans only and were not to be apprenticed to Dissenters. Can philanthropy make conditions so narrow and still be accounted philanthropy?

Brace, K. *Portrait of Bristol* (Robert Hale: London, 1971 & 1976) p.34.

[14] Derek Robinson – *A Shocking History of Bristol* (history) 1973 Abson Books, London

Derek Robinson – *A Darker History of Bristol* (history) 2005 Countryside Books, Newbury

1973 was a big year for Bristol. It marked six hundred years as city and a county. Joy was unconfined. The thunder of self-congratulation was deafening. The city fathers danced in the streets. So many people tried to slap themselves on the back that casualty wards for miles around were full of dislocated shoulders.

Well I didn't buy it. Not all of it anyway.

I'm a Bristolian, born and bred. I knew that, during the past six hundred years, the city and county had generated its fair share of blood and thunder. Also thud and blunder.

So I wrote this book, to help balance the story. I was not out to blacken Bristol's reputation. Some good things have happened here. Equally, you don't have to look hard to find bungling and swindling, cock-ups and carnage, ferocity and farce.

The book drew blood. A disgusted ratepayer, George Bodger, wrote to the Western Daily Press demanding that it be burned in the gutters. But Bristolians are a fair and level headed lot. They know their history is like their geography: full of highs and lows. The true picture is the whole picture and this New Edition aims to offer nothing less.

The slave trade was a huge, roaring bandwagon and all the city fathers were on board: mayors, sheriffs, aldermen, councillors, Merchant Venturers, and last but not least Mr Edward Colston, MP, who shrewdly invested much of his considerable wealth in the slave trade and got it all back again umpteen times over, a feat which the boys and girls of Colston's Schools might ponder as they kneel in prayer on Founder's Day'.

Robinson, D. *A Darker History of Bristol*. Bristol: Countryside Books, 2005.p.7 & 78. (First published as *A Shocking History of Bristol*. London: Abson Books, 1973.)

[15] David Foot – *Famous Bristolians* (history)

1979 Redcliffe, Bristol

Perhaps it's just as well not to analyse too carefully how Bristol's most famous philanthropist made most of his money – the Church, after all, turned a blind eye to Slave Trade exploitation. Succeeding generations of Colston's admirers would prefer to point to the £75,000 he gave to charity...

He was Bristol's MP, a dogmatic Tory who hated Whigs as much as he hated any rival businessman who threatened him in a deal.

Colston was astute, stubborn and self-willed. He died a bachelor in 1721 at the age of 84, his private life fleetingly touched by allegations of scandal, supposedly the work of his political opponents...

Foot, David *Famous Bristolians* (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 1979).

[16] Professor criticises Edward Colston at Southey Lecture

Christ Church, Bristol 5 June 1980

'Hatchet Job' row erupts *Bristol Evening Post* 6 June 1980

[17] David Foot exposes "shadier facets" of Edward Colston *Bristol Evening Post*, 6 August 1981

Foot, D. "The secret life of Mr Bountiful" *Bristol Evening Post*, 6 August 1981

[18] Carole Drake *Commemoration Day* (installation)

1992 Arnolfini Arts Centre, Bristol

As part of the *Trophies of Empire* project (Bristol, Liverpool and Hull) exhibited at the Arnolfini, ex-Colston's Girl's School student Carole Drake presented the installation *Commemoration Day*. Drake stated "My confirmation of this [Edward Colston's] involvement [in the slave trade] forced a reappraisal of my experience as a part of that school and its activities, particularly Commemoration Day with its insistence on an idealised and partial image of Colston. The installation *Commemoration Day* seeks to expose the denial of Colston's trading in the lives of African peoples, a fact never openly discussed, acknowledged but treated as a skeleton to be kept under lock and key in some musty cupboard." The centre piece of the installation was a projection of the image from 1973 of

“Colston’s Gils climbing over his statue in Bristol City Centre to cover it in Chrysanthemums after the [Commemoration Day Service] service”.

Trophies of Empire (Liverpool: Bluecoat Gallery and Liverpool John Moores University 1994) pp. 41-42.

E-mail to Roger Ball from Bryan Biggs 17 July 2020.

[19] Launch of the *Matthew* disrupted

1995 *Bristol Evening Post*

Protests would dog the ‘celebrations’ of Cabot on both sides of the Atlantic. In July 1995 members of the SMV announced they were going to have an exclusive ball in central Bristol to celebrate the launching of the *Matthew*. The 1,800 wealthy guests, paying £75 a ticket, would be wined and dined in marquees in Queen Square that September. Within days of the announcement the banquet was renamed the ‘Slave Traders Ball’ by protesters from the Bristol Peoples’ Party (BPP). Fronted by anarchist agitator Ian Bone the BPP and a number of other groups planned to converge on Queen Square to demonstrate against the event. For the protestors the ball represented Bristol’s wealthy elite lavishly celebrating their own version of maritime history whilst ignoring the mass suffering caused by colonialism and trans-Atlantic slavery. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 266.

Bristol Evening Post 31 July 1995.

[20] *Festival of the Sea* (Celebration of Bristol’s maritime past)

1996 Bristol

Bristol’s ‘Festival of the Sea’ celebrated the city’s seafaring past. It was the largest maritime festival ever hosted in Britain involving over 700 vessels, 1,000 performers, 360,000 ticket holders and, it is claimed, a TV audience of 23 million. There were many complaints about the festival regarding its near total omission of Bristol’s role in the slave trade. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 267.

Atkinson, D. and Laurier, E. “A Sanitised City? Social Exclusion at Bristol’s 1996 International Festival of the Sea” *Geoforum* 29, no. 2 (1998) p. 199.

Artist Tony Forbes commented: -

“The Festival of the Sea in 1996 was an example of how some of the institutions that run the city have failed to understand the people of Bristol. They celebrated Bristol’s maritime history and ignored slavery. The centrepiece was the launch of the replica of John Cabot’s ship, the *Matthew*. His voyage in 1497 opened the way to the genocide of Native Americans and colonisation. This festival, encouraged by the Council, funded by big business and hyped by our media, was a slap in the face to the black community and an insult to the intelligence and sensitivity of many Bristolians. It was the weekend that broke my heart.”

Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) pp. 268-269.

[21] *European Year against Racism* plaque unveiled December 1997 Bristol Industrial Museum/M Shed

The first public recognition of Bristol’s role in the slave trade, the plaques wording is as follows: -

IN MEMORY OF THE COUNTLESS AFRICAN MEN, WOMEN & CHILDREN WHOSE ENSLAVEMENT & EXPLOITATION BROUGHT SO MUCH PROSPERITY TO BRISTOL THROUGH THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

UNVEILED ON 12 DECEMBER 1997 DURING EUROPEAN YEAR AGAINST RACISM.

BY IAN WHITE MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FOR BRISTOL & PHILLIPA GREGORY
AUTHOR OF 'A RESPECTABLE TRADE'.

[22] Colston Statue damaged ('Slave Trader' graffiti on plinth) January 1998, Bristol

On a dark night, a protestor scrawled FUCK OFF SLAVE TRADER on the base of Colston's statue in the city centre, the first of several actions on the monument over the succeeding years. According to an article in The Times which reported the attack:

Leaders of the black community in Bristol yesterday condemned Colston...as one of the worst offenders in the history of slavery and said the statue should be taken down.

Wilkins, E. "Graffiti attack revives Bristol slavery row." *The Times* 29 January, 1998.

[23] Bristol City Councillor calls for removal of Edward Colston statue Bristol Post 2 February 1998

After the statue to Edward Colston had been attacked by vandals, councillor Ray Sefia said he could understand why the statue had been targeted. He said: "It's like having a monument to Hitler.

"We don't have a statue to Hitler and we shouldn't have one to Colston who was one of the worst offenders in the slave trade that did so much destruction.

"Hitler was responsible for one of the greatest holocausts in history. We believe slavery was the greatest holocaust.

"We have to be very clear about Colston's role in the slave trade.

"For too long we have had a glossed-over view of him in books."

"What councillor Sefia said..." , *Bristol Post* 2 February 1998

[24] Peter Courtier calls for plaque to be added to Colston Statue Venue April 1998

Raza-Syed, R. A city in denial? *Venue* No. 415 17 April – 1 May 1998

[25] Massive Attack call for the renaming of Colston Hall Venue August 1998

Mitchell, J. Hall or nothing? *Venue* No. 424 21 August – 4 September 1998

Cavell, N. "Under Attack: Band snub Colston Hall because of city father's slave links" *Bristol Post* 21 August 1998.

[26] Colston statue liver protest (art installation) Bristol Post 22 March 1999

A plate of raw liver on a blood-spattered table was set before the statue of Bristol benefactor Edward Colston to symbolise how he "dined" on slavery. The statue of 18th Century merchant Colston has been at the centre of controversy since it was daubed with the words "Slave Trader" last year. Colston made his fortune from the slave trade, but donated vast sums to education and charity. The plate of liver was set before the statue to coincide with the opening of Pero's Bridge, named after a slave, across the city docks.

"Colston statue liver protest" *Bristol Post* 22 March 1999

[27] Kenneth Morgan's Edward Colston and Bristol published Bristol, 1999

Morgan, K. *Edward Colston and Bristol*. Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1999.

[28] Tony Forbes' Sold Down the River painting exhibited Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, 1999

Black artist Tony Forbes says he's suffered his share of racism, and part of the experience has gone into his painting 'Sold Down the River', currently showing in Bristol City Museum's exhibition about the transatlantic slave trade. A young black man, bound in police tape and held in chains by Edward Colston is being hauled down the Avon by the good ship Matthew, centrepiece of 1996's Festival of the Sea, the huge celebration of Bristol's maritime heritage which so pointedly ignored the city's slaving past. The Matthew is powered by sails bearing the logos of the BBC, HTV and the Evening Post. All the while, the folks in Clifton party.

The picture is not just about race, he says. "That's supposed to be me in the picture because I'm not a spokesperson for anyone else. But what I'm hoping is that white and black people can put themselves in that picture and be able to feel some of the things I feel."

Byrne, E. FLYERS 340/EB Tales from the River [supplied by email 9 March 2021]

[29] Madge Dresser – *Slavery Obscured* (history) 2001 Continuum, London & New York

Dresser's work shows how a class of powerful merchants, through the lucre of slavery and the slave trade, had emerged in the eighteenth century and grasped economic, political and cultural influence over the city. Ironically, it appeared that the legacy of that bourgeois seizure of power endured, represented by the continued influence of the SMV in protecting their history and traditions, despite the horrific sub-text of slavery. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 269.

[30] Still A Slave to Political Correctness *Western Daily Press* 8 April 2003

Historian and television presenter Dr Tristram Hunt says Bristol should pledge to build a Museum of Slavery modelled on the Holocaust Museum in Washington. Bristol, he says, ought to have the bravery to recognise that its cultural heritage has been based on the elimination of other cultures. The grisly record of our involvement in the slave trade, in which Bristol profited as a pivotal city in the transport of black slaves from west Africa to the Caribbean, is not widely acknowledged, he insists. Understandably, the city's 2008 European Capital of Culture bid did not stress its "dirty history", Dr Hunt adds, but if Bristol has aspirations to be a cultural capital, it must come to terms with its bloody past. Others have also suggested that Bristol makes amends by marking properly the forthcoming 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. And the more extreme would have us change the name of the Colston Hall concert venue, which is named after the 17th century merchant and slaver Edward Colston. Mixed-race Bristol band Massive Attack has boycotted the hall and demanded that Colston's statue be removed.

"Still A Slave to Political Correctness", *Western Daily Press* 8 April 2003

[31] Andrew Foyle – *Pevsner's Bristol* (architectural guide) 2004 Yale, New Haven & Oxford

Further is the statue of Edward Colston by John Cassidy, 1895. Bronze plaques on the plinth, an early manifestation of Art Nouveau in Bristol. Colston (1636 – 1721), the city's most famous benefactor, invested in the Royal African Company and profited significantly from slavery. Suggestions that the statue should be removed as an acknowledgement of Bristol's shameful role in the slave trade have not been followed, but the city has made other gestures, e.g. Pero's Bridge.

Foyle, A. *Bristol, Pevsner Architectural Guides* (Yale University Press: New Haven & Oxford) p.125.

[32] Hew Locke – *Restoration* (Series of four 'Blinged' sculptures including Edward Colston) 2006 Central Bristol

Hew Locke and others – *Artist and Empire* (exhibition)**2015 – 2016 Tate Britain**

Commissioned by Spike Island and first shown at St. Thomas the Martyr Church, Bristol, 10 years later included in major exhibition in London. Colston statue covered in gold tinsel. **Hew Locke:** “For me, the legacy of empire is all around us on a daily basis – not just the variety of ethnic backgrounds that we have living in the UK, but the buildings and public statues you see in cities across the country that came into being out of the economy of empire.”

Hew Locke: <http://www.hewlocke.net/restoration2.html>

The expo was: <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/artist-and-empire>

See also: <https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-35-autumn-2015/legacies-empire>

[33] Debate – *Slavery is it time for an apology?* 10 May 2006, Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol

Milmo Cahal, SLAVERY IS IT TIME FOR AN APOLOGY? Bristol got rich on the back of the slave trade as its fleet transported 500,000, chained in appalling conditions. Last night, 200 years after abolition, the city debated whether to admit its part in the 'African holocaust'. The Independent May 11, 2006.

[34] Calls for the renaming of Colston Hall**March 2007**

Colston row - *Western Daily Press* 14 March 2007

I have watched many a rock gig - *The Independent* 31 March 2007

We're £32m short of a new Colston Hall - *Western Daily Press* 3 July 2007

[35] Abolition 200 – Public Debate**2007 Arnolfini, Bristol**

Several critics made the point that 'Abolition 200' had not challenged the existing 'infra-structure' of memorials, celebrations and organisations that were connected to the history of slavery and the slave trade in the city. In a televised BBC debate in the Arnolfini Arts Centre, the question was asked 'what should be the legacy of the 'Abolition 200' year in Bristol?' To rapturous applause, BRHG member Christina Heatherton replied that the best legacy would be to disband the archaic Society of Merchant Venturers and donate their money to schools and hospital projects in the Caribbean. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 269.

BBC Bristol "Abolition". March 26, 2007.

[36] *Two Coins Project* – Art Installation**2007 Colston's Statue, Central Bristol**

A measure of this 'sacred' status was the failure of the 'Two Coins Project' project launched by artist Graeme Mortimer Evelyn during the 'Abolition 200' year. The idea was to erect an installation around the Colston statue and to project a silent subtitled film about slavery, using images from Bristol, West Africa and the Caribbean.

Although the films were made and the project received development funding from the Arts Council and Bristol City Council, it was never realised after it appears the latter body got 'cold feet'. It was interesting that of all the 'Abolition 200' official projects and events, the only one that aimed at actually confronting a physical legacy of the slave-trading dynasties in Bristol was blocked without explanation. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 274.

Dresser, M. "Remembering Slavery and Abolition in Bristol" *Slavery & Abolition*, 30, no. 2, (2009) p. 237.

[37] Protests at the Colston Hall

September - October 2007

Activists like Ros Martin questioned the role of 'Abolition 200'. What was being marked by whom and for whom? Where did the Diaspora of African descent in Bristol fit in with the narrative being created about their ancestors? Were the memories and struggles of the enslaved Africans even going to feature in this narrative? She also raised the question about Colston's role in Bristol; what did he represent and why was he still feted? Martin and her supporters instigated several protests outside the Colston Hall highlighting these issues and the hypocrisy of staging 'Abolition 200' events in an institution named after a major slave trader. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) pp. 273-274.

Several protests outside Colston Hall by 'Artists for a name change' angry at the venue being used to host Abolition 200 events.

[38] 'Who was Edward Colston – Merchant, Philanthropist or Criminal? – Debate at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum September 2007 Bristol

In September 2007, partly in response to these demonstrations [at the Colston Hall], a debate was held at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum where Martin argued passionately for change, that it was time to deal with icons such as Colston and that their 'sacred' status was over. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) pp. 273-274.

Dresser, M. "Remembering Slavery and Abolition in Bristol" *Slavery & Abolition*, 30, no. 2, (2009) p. 238, Fig. 6.

[39] Debate 'Should Colston hall name be changed?'

October 2007

Debate organised by Africans in One at the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum.

Martin, R. *Timeline* (March 2021).

[40] Art and Activism workshop protest

Statue of Edward Colston, Central Bristol 2009

DIY Art and Activism workshop (Hamilton House, Stokes Croft) identifying issues to respond to. Ros raises her concern and objection to slave trader Colston fiefdom in the centre. Identifying Colston statue site, her group proceed down to centre with materials, begin working on alternative narrative and are stopped by police. Martin, R. *Timeline* (March 2021).

[41] If people want Colston name changed, then we'll change it

Bristol Post, 1 April 2011

A NEW debate has opened up over a possible name change for the revamped Colston Hall. The venue's new chief executive Louise Mitchell has told the Evening Post that it could get a new name - if that is what people want. But opinions are divided on the issue, which has been raised several times in the past. On the one hand, equal rights' campaigners believe the name should be changed because of Edward Colston's links with the slave trade.

[42] Colston name is hall right

Bristol Post, 18 August 2011

A NAME change for concert venue Colston Hall has been ruled out. The Bristol Music Trust, which took over the running of the hall from Bristol City Council earlier this year, made the decision at a board meeting in the light of a continuing debate over the name's connections with the slave trade.

A number of campaigners have called for the Colston Street venue to be renamed, notably leading Bristol band Massive Attack, who refused to play there in protest. But the idea of renaming it has been dismissed as "tokenistic" by the board.

**[43] Celebrations of slaver Colston are 'perverse'
2013**

Western Daily Press 31 August

Bristol mayor George Ferguson has admitted he thinks the city's celebrations of slave trader Edward Colston are "perverse". After he tweeted about the Bristol bus boycott, which celebrated its 50th anniversary earlier this week, another Twitter user mentioned Colston.

Eddie Briggs wrote: "Bristol still perversely celebrates the slaver Colston every year. It's time for a victims' plaque on his statue! Not flowers."

And Mr Ferguson responded: "Agreed - it does seem perverse - not a celebration that I shall join."

[44] Charter Day event

Bristol Cathedral, November 2014

Bishop of Bristol secretly filmed by an independent journalist at Society of Merchant Venturers Charter Day preaching to assembled school children "I think he [Edward Colston] was a man who lived a life of significance, and I've found there may be still some speculation however, on some of the circumstances around his business roots right here [in Bristol]. It is speculation." Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 276.

Public Enquiry "Bishop Michael Hill: Merchant Venturer Edward Colston profiting from slave trade is 'speculation'". Filmed [November 2014]. YouTube video, 04:25. Posted [November 2014]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNHBdpvGYHc>.

"Bristol bishop says slave trader remarks 'misinterpreted'" BBC News Bristol 12 November 2014.

Brown, C. "Bishop defends views on slave trader" *B24/7* November 12, 2014.

[45] Complaint to the Archbishop of Canterbury

January 2015

A Bishop, preaching to school children that Colston was a man of "significance" whilst apparently denying his role in the slave trade was going too far. Teacher Christine Townsend made a written complaint to the Archbishop of Canterbury via Lancaster House, accusing Bishop Hill of preaching falsities. In the meantime Townsend made contact with BRHG and encouraged them to investigate Edward Colston's involvement in the slave trade. Although her complaint to the ruling body of the Church of England was not upheld, the Bishop's sermon initiated a chain of events that would begin a significant challenge to the 'cult of Colston'. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) pp. 276-277.

[46] BS2: Resist and Revolt, Black History – Live Transmission 31 October 2015, Portland Square, Bristol

This arises from an on air/community pirate radio station, BS2 DIY radio project discussion of Colston Girls Cathedral celebrations hosted by artist/activist Libita Clayton. Present are Cleo Lake an old Colstonian, Roger Ball (of Bristol Radical History Group) and Ros Martin. During the on-air conversations Cleo confirms upcoming date and all agree there and then to demonstrate outside the Cathedral. Martin, R. *Timeline* (March 2021).

[47] Commemoration Day (protest)

November 2015 Bristol Cathedral

On November 7th, 2015 a small group of protestors gathered outside Bristol Cathedral, they included a retired teacher, a security guard, an historian, a grandparent, an educator, three artists, a mother with a toddler in a buggy and a former student of Colston Girls. They handed leaflets out to teachers and pupils from Colston Girls' School who were attending the annual Commemoration Day, a ceremony that celebrated the so-called 'founder' of the school Edward Colston. The leaflets entitled Colston and Slavery still obscured? (for adults) and Why we are protesting outside today (for pupils) contained historical facts about Edward Colston's involvement in the slave trade. This event spawned the creation of the campaigning group Countering Colston.

De Bruxelles, S. "Protesters target girls over school's links to slavery" *The Times* November 17, 2015

Daily Mail "Schoolgirls face 'slave' protest: Pupils warned about wearing uniforms in public after protesters target them over link to 17th-century slave trader" November 17, 2015

Francis, W. "Pupils told 'don't wear uniform' for fear of backlash" *The Sun* November 17, 2015

Yong, M. "Pupils at girls' school warned not to engage over slave trade roots" *Bristol Post* November 17, 2015.

"Slavery protest spun by Colston's school and media" *The Bristolian* n.d.

[48] Meetings between protestors and Cathedral and CGS Principal

December 2015

The two meetings in December 2015 between the protestors and the Dean of the Cathedral, David Hoyle and Headmaster of CGS, Alistair Perry were essentially fact-finding exercises. The protestors wanted to hear what these institutions believed the Commemoration Day and Charter Day ceremonies actually were. Through the discussions, the content of the events was explained and the meaning of the various symbols of Edward Colston, the chrysanthemum worn by the CGS pupils and the Colston buns and coins that were handed out at both events, were revealed. An historian from BRHG outlined the evidence for Edward Colston's significant role within the seventeenth century slave trade. This was acknowledged by CGS history teacher, John Whitehead, who added that the "students often want to pull the statue down" when they learned about Colston's role in the slave trade.

From the protestors' perspective, the most interesting aspect of the discussions was the difference in what both institutions thought the ceremonies were. The Dean claimed that both events were not 'celebrations' of Edward Colston and said the Cathedral should not be 'celebrating' a slave trader and he was deeply concerned if this was the case. Whereas the Head of CGS had already stated in the letter to parents that they were "celebrations and events commemorating the life of Edward Colston". This contradiction would dog both institutions and eventually lead to a schism between the SMV and the Diocese. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 278.

Countering Colston: Minutes to Colston School Meeting 17/12/15.

Countering Colston: Minutes to Meeting between 'Colston Protestors' and representatives of Bristol Cathedral, Bristol Cathedral, 8 December 2015 2.30pm

Perry, A. Letter to parents. Colston Girls School. 13 November 2015.

[49] Countering Colston campaigning group formed

Spring 2016

During spring 2016, the group of protestors attracted more active members and supporters, named themselves Countering Colston (CC) and launched a website. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 278.

[50] CGS and the Bristol Diocese break off negotiations but make a concession September 2016

By August CC had completed much of the research into Edward Colston, the various ceremonies of remembrance to him and had collated the statements from the discussion with both institutions. CC then decided to invite the head of CGS and the Dean to a joint meeting at the Cathedral to present its findings. However, both organisations declined to meet the protestors and broke off negotiations. Anthony Brown, Chair of the CGS Trustees, reversed their previous stance, claiming in a letter to CC that the Commemoration Day Service was not a celebration “of a single life” and that the Charter Day “has no relationship to any individual”. Significantly, the ‘elephant in the room’ Edward Colston was not mentioned in the letter. The Cathedral in stark contrast stated:

We acknowledge Edward Colston's involvement in the slave trade and recognise that it is entirely inappropriate to celebrate his life.

The Dean went on to accept that Edward Colston was (of course) referred to in the ceremonies and that his will was read out on Commemoration Day. He claimed that in future:

I will instruct preachers that if they are going to mention Colston they must include, at the very least, an accurate account of his life and legacy...Steps have already been taken to ensure that the quotation from Colston's will (describing the foundation of the Girls' School) will be balanced with a statement about his involvement in the slave trade.

This statement marked the first time in several hundred years that Colston's real history in terms of his involvement in the slave trade was to be referred to in any of the ceremonies taking place in Bristol. Despite the refusal of both the Cathedral and CGS to negotiate or even communicate with CC any further, this was a step forward. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) pp. 278-279.

Letter to CC from ARE Brown, Chair of Trustees, CGS. September 19, 2016.

Letter to CC from Dr David Hoyle, Dean of Bristol, Bristol Cathedral, September 2, 2016.

[51] Vanessa Kissule

8 October 2016, M Shed

Poet Vanessa Kissule in *Can we know what it was like to be enslaved?* a (public) discussion ensuing from UoB Literary Archaeology project. In her public address she expressed her disquiet at the civic toleration of the Colston statue in our midst. She [Kissule] was responsible for the great *Hollow* poem following from the toppling of statue. Martin, R. *Timeline* (March 2021).

[52] Fly poster attack on Colston statue

9 November 2016, City Centre

During development work on the City Centre protestors break into the area surrounding the Edward Colston statue and fly post the surround with “human trafficker”, “kidnapper”, “murderer” and “slave trader”.

Countering Colston: <https://counteringcolston.wordpress.com/colston-statue/>

[53] Protests continue

Bristol Cathedral and All Saints Church, November 2016

As a result of the cessation of dialogue and the refusal of the SMV to discuss the issues around the celebrations of Edward Colston, the protests continued in November 2016. The ceremonies at the

Cathedral weren't the only commemorations of Edward Colston that were being hosted in the Diocese's churches. Every year on November 13th, 'Colston Day', members of three Colston charities, the Anchor, Dolphin and Grateful, march along Corn Street to St Stephen's church in the centre of Bristol to celebrate his birthday. In 2016, the parade of about 40 men in Edwardian style top hat and tails, many of them members of the SMV, was confronted by demonstrators with placards reading "Colston was a slave trader", "Stop celebrating slave traders" and "Reparations not celebrations". At the end of the service of 'thanksgiving' several clergymen came out to discuss the protest with demonstrators. Whilst this was happening some members of the SMV angrily confronted protestors in an attempt to intimidate them. The historic impact of this event would only become apparent a year later. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 279.

Countering Colston carousel images 273, 275, 276, 279, 280 and 281.

<https://counteringcolston.wordpress.com/who-was-edward-colston-2/#jp-carousel-273>.

[54] Protests outside the Colston Hall

December 2016 - March 2017

2017 marked the 150th anniversary of the opening of the Colston Hall, which had been tainted with its connections to slavery for many years. There had been an unofficial boycott by some Bristolians, the highest profile being the internationally famous and influential Bristol band *Massive Attack* who said they would never play there whilst the Hall retained its name. In early 2017, in response to the 150th anniversary 'celebrations' and armed with knowledge of dissent within the BMT, CC mounted several protests outside the hall calling for a name change. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 280.

[55] Countering Colston activists meet with Director of Bristol Music Trust

December 2016

"There was a meeting December 2016 attended by myself [Ros Martin], Cleo [Lake], Marti [Burgess] and Colston Hall CEO Louise Mitchell, followed up by an email by myself in Jan 2017 supported by Cleo urging CEO to make an immediate public statement re name change. All CC [Countering Colston] work."

Email to Roger Ball from Ros Martin 11 March 2021.

[56] Colston window in Bristol Cathedral to be removed

23 February 2017

In early 2017, the Dean of Bristol Cathedral, David Hoyle, grabbed the attention of both local and national media by announcing that the Cathedral was considering removing the Colston window. Hoyle subsequently backtracked on this claim but failed to state which person or organisation had exerted pressure for the removal in the first place. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 248.

"Dean of Bristol considers 'slavery' window removal" *BBC News* February 23, 2017.

Grimshaw, E. "Stained Glass Window has Colston Link" *Bristol Post* February 23rd, 2017.

[57] Colston Hall to be renamed

April 2017 Central Bristol

On April 3rd, 2017 the Bristol Music Trust (BMT) took the brave and momentous decision to change the name of the Colston Hall. The Bristol Post gave over more print inches to this topic than any other; it made national and international news and is still bubbling away in the letters pages of the Post to this day.

One of the Bristol Music Trustees was campaigner Marti Burgess who had lobbied for a name change as part of the planned refurbishment of the hall. Burgess's heartfelt letter to her fellow trustees, which included research from Countering Colston's historians and activists, helped win the argument (see Appendix 8). In April the board of the BMT voted unanimously for the name of the Hall to be changed. In a public announcement, Chief Executive, Louise Mitchell, stated that the Colston Hall had originally taken its name from Colston Street and that the hall had not benefited from Colston's money. She summed up by saying:

We really don't feel that an association with Edward Colston, however tenuous, is something we want...The name Colston does not reflect the trust's values as a progressive, forward thinking and open arts organisation...We want to look to the future and ensure the whole city is proud of its transformed concert hall and so, when we reopen the new building in 2020, it will be with a new name.

Mitchell added in a later statement, after claims that the decision had been motivated for financial reasons, that it had been "entirely moral", rather than financial and referred to Colston as a "toxic brand". Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 280.

Yong, M., Cork, T. and Davies, N. "Colston Hall to be renamed for 2020 relaunch". *Bristol Post* 26 April, 2017.

Yong, M. "Colston Hall name change was a 'moral decision' not a financial one, as bosses gear up for backlash". *Bristol Post* 27 April, 2017.

[58] Vandals paint face of Edward Colston statue white ***Bristol Post*, 20 April 2017**

The face of a bronze Edward Colston statue in Bristol city centre has been painted white by vandals. The statue, which depicts a middle-aged Colston leaning pensively on a stick, is situated on the Centre, near St Augustine's Parade. It is not known exactly when the 19th century statue was targeted but one pedestrian claimed it has had a white face since February.

Wood., A. "Vandals paint face of Edward Colston statue white", *Bristol Post*, 20 April 2017

[59] Referendum amongst pupils at Colston's Girl's School suppressed **Spring 2017**

Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) pp. 252-253.

[60] Edward Colston Research Paper 1#, Bristol Radical History Group **BRHG website 1 May 2017**

Ball R., Calculating the number of enslaved Africans transported by the Royal African Company during Edward Colston's involvement (1680-92) Bristol Radical History Group 2017.

[61] Edward Colston Research Paper 2#, Bristol Radical History Group **BRHG website 17 June 2017**

Ball R., The Royal African Company and Edward Colston (1680-92) Bristol Radical History Group 2017.

[62] Unofficial plaque calling Bristol 'capital of Atlantic slave trade' removed from Edward Colston statue ***Bristol Post*, 27 October 2017**

A plaque labelling Bristol "the capital of the Atlantic slave trade" has been removed from a Bristol statue. The unofficial plaque reportedly appeared in August this year on the base of the statue of Edward Colston in Magpie Park, by the Cenotaph in the city centre.

Davis, K. Unofficial plaque calling Bristol 'capital of Atlantic slave trade' removed from Edward Colston statue *Bristol Post*, 27 October 2017.

[63] Colston's Girls' School Commemoration Day will not mention Edward Colston - but will remember slavery *Bristol Post* 16 October 2017

There had already been signs that there was change in the air prior to the annual celebrations of Colston in 2017. In October, John Whitehead the new Principal of Colston's Girls' School announced, in reference to the annual Commemoration Day service at the Cathedral:

After consultation with students from all year groups we have decided to remove all reference to Edward Colston from the service and we will no longer be asking the students to wear a chrysanthemum in his memory. The focus of the service will be on the values of CGS throughout its existence and a clear acknowledgement of the damage done by slavery in the past and the present.

The intervention of the students was a welcome step forward and it is clear they certainly could see the contradiction in celebrating a slave trader. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 284.

Cork, T. "Colston's Girls' School Commemoration Day will not mention Edward Colston - but will remember slavery" *Bristol Post* October 16, 2017.

[64] Protest at Colston Society commemoration St Mary Redcliffe Church, Bristol, 18 October 2017

In October 2017, another Colston ceremony was 'discovered' by CC at St Mary Redcliffe, a huge church that is the equal of Bristol Cathedral. The Colston Society holds its annual commemoration of the slave trader on October 18th, ironically 'World Anti-slavery Day'. The event had not been advertised on the church's website and when two protestors from CC arrived they were met by five police and PCSO officers who were apparently 'guarding' the entrance. The Vicar of St Mary Redcliffe led the service, which included members of the Colston Society and pupils from both St Mary Redcliffe CE Primary School and St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School (secondary). A local newspaper journalist who was allowed passed the police guard recounted the Vicar's awkward attempt to balance Colston's philanthropy with the deaths of thousands in Royal African Company ships:

They had gathered, he said, to give thanks for 'Edward Colston's generosity', before following it with words spoken slowly that clanged like bells around the children's ears. They were words that obviously had been very carefully thought through indeed, perhaps even decided on by a committee. He was, the vicar said, a man of his time who 'like all of us, did what he thought was right at the time'. Colston was, also a man who, 'like all of us, with the benefit of hindsight, may have done things differently'.

Dean of the Cathedral, David Hoyle, who spoke after the Vicar made more direct reference to the slave trade in his sermon, as did Nick Hutchen, the President of the Colston Society. However, as the school pupils collected their 'Colston Buns' and were marshalled out of the church, one CC protestor held up a white board with a more direct message "How is worshipping mass-murderers outstanding education?". Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) pp. 284-285.

Cork, T. "Buns, sermons and slave songs - how slave trader Edward Colston was awkwardly commemorated on Anti-Slavery Day" *Bristol Post* October 20, 2017.

[65] Colston Day cancelled

November 2017, All Saints Church, Central Bristol

On Colston Day in 2017, members and supporters of CC headed down to the ritual at St Stephens to demonstrate once again. When they arrived: ...someone from the church came out and explained that St Stephen's wants "nothing more to do with Colston". A little later the church administrator appeared and confirmed that "the ceremony was cancelled, not postponed". Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 283.

Cork, T. "Bristol church refuses to host most important thanksgiving service to honour slave trader Edward Colston for the first time in almost 300 years" *Bristol Post* November 15, 2017

[66] Colston's Primary School decides to change name **December 2017**

In 2015, the issue of Edward Colston's involvement in the slave trade was raised by a governor and a teacher at Colston Primary School. In 2017, the 70th anniversary of the founding of the school, an extensive consultation process involving staff, pupils and parents was launched. In December of that year, after a vote, the Governors decided to change the name of the school in line with the wishes of parents and pupils. Fittingly, the announcement of the change came the day before the international celebration of the Abolition of Slavery.¹ The new agreed name, 'Cotham Gardens Primary School', was launched in September 2018 and, despite the dire warnings of some Colston apologists, the sky didn't fall in. Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 252.

Yong, M. "Colston's Primary School makes decision on removing controversial slave trader's name" *Bristol Post* December 1, 2017.

[67] Edward Colston plaque project launched by BCC **February 2018**

A plaque explaining that Edward Colston was a major player in the creation of the transatlantic slave trade is to be placed onto his statue in the centre of Bristol. The official plaque will adorn the statue near the Cenotaph in St Augustine's Parade as part of a council project to begin to face up to Bristol's slave trading past and Colston's part in it. The plaque will be installed alongside an accompanying history programme, which is being planned by Bristol City Council, the arts and education organisation Journey to Justice and school children from Colston Primary School, whose governors voted to drop the name of the controversial Bristolian last year.

Cork, T. "Plaque marking slave trade victims to be put on statue of Edward Colston in Bristol" *Bristol Post* 28 February 2018.

[68] Ball and chain attached to Edward Colston's statue in Bristol city centre *Bristol Post*, 6 May 2018

A mystery yarn bomber has attached a bright red ball and chain to the statue of Bristol's most famous slave trader. Edward Colston is a Bristol-born slave trader, and was at one point the deputy governor of the Royal African Company, which transported hundreds of thousands of slaves around the world.

Yong, M., "Ball and chain attached to Edward Colston's statue in Bristol city centre" *Bristol Post*, 6 May 2018.

¹ Yong, M. "Colston's Primary School makes decision on removing controversial slave trader's name" *Bristol Post* December 1, 2017. Accessed March 2018.

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/colstons-primary-school-makes-decision-864514>.

[69] Slave trader's portrait removed from Bristol lord mayor's office *The Guardian* 19 June 2018

Bristol Lord Mayor Cleo Lake has Jonathon Richardson's 1702 portrait of Edward Colston removed from her office in the Mansion House.

[70] Thangam Debbonaire MP calls for removal of Colston statue *Bristol Post*, 12 October 2018

In 2018, during Black History Month, Thangam Debbonaire, the MP for Bristol West, called for the removal of the statue during an event at City Hall, saying:

"Having statues of people who oppressed us is not a good thing to be saying to black people in this city... Edward Colston did many things, but he was not completely defined by that, and it's an important part of saying to black people in the city 'you are welcome'."

"Edward Colston statue should be removed says Bristol MP", *Bristol Post* 12 October 2018.

[71] Myths within myths...Edward Colston and that statue Bristol Radical History Group website, 14 October 2018

Ball, R. Myths within myths...Edward Colston and that statue, Bristol Radical History Group 2018.

52,483 page views as of 9 March 2021 (BRHG analytics).

[72] Art installation at Edward Colston's statue 18 October 2018, City Centre

Miniature shrouded concrete victims, similar to those in the famous slave ship Brookes diagram, appeared overnight in front of Colston's statue organised in the shape of a slave ship.

Bristol Rad History: @BrisRadHis <https://twitter.com/brisradhis/status/1052937198050439170>

[73] House names changed at St Mary Redcliffe & Temple School January 2019

Just over a year later, in January 2019 St Mary Redcliffe & Temple School announced they were changing the names of the pupils' Houses from James, Canynoges, Francombe, Cartwright and Colston to Müller, Liddell, Equiano, Franklin and Johnson. The Head teacher explained the reason for the change:

"Role models matter to people when they are growing up. The hidden messages that a school gives about what is 'normal' and what we can aspire to be are really important. Our society has not always provided the best role models that empower every young person. We cannot change the past, but we can change the future!"

Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020) p. 285.

"House Names" St Mary Redcliffe & Temple School Newsletter (January 2019).

[74] Half-sized Colston statue shrouded at CGS March 2019

Sandra Stancliffe from Historic England has a daughter at CGS, and so Sandra went along to a parents' evening last week. She said that she noticed that the statue of Colston has a black shroud over it!!! She asked the history teacher how this had come about. He said that head teacher John Whitehead was the one who had done it, and that his impression is that John wants rid of Colston but the SMVs haven't allowed him to do it!!! E-mail: J. Burch-Brown to R. Ball 15 March 2020.

[75] The Edward Colston 'corrective' plaque: Sanitising an uncomfortable history Bristol Radical History Group BRHG website, 24 March 2019

Ball, R. The Edward Colston 'corrective' plaque: Sanitising an uncomfortable history, Bristol Radical History Group 2019.

11,350 page views as of 9 March 2021 (BRHG analytics).

[76] Edward Colston: Plaque to Bristol slave trader axed over wording BBC News, 25 March 2019

A plaque which aimed to explain the past of a Bristol slave trader has been scrapped because of a row over the wording. It was due to have featured on a statue of Edward Colston, who was involved in the enslavement of more than 80,000 Africans in the 17th Century. A group which runs charities bearing Colston's name said it wanted to "present another side to the debate". But city mayor Marvin Rees said the proposed wording was "unacceptable".

The wording on the scrapped plaque referred to Colston as one of the city's "greatest benefactors", and later adds "a significant proportion of Colston's wealth came from investments in slave trading, sugar and other slave-produced goods". Colston, who made his fortune through slavery, was on the board of the Royal African Company. Between 1672 and 1689, ships from the company, are believed to have transported 84,000 men, women and children from Africa to the Americas. His statue, which stands on Colston Avenue in the city centre, currently makes no mention of his slave-trading past. However, in his home city, his memory has been honoured for centuries. On his death in 1721, he bequeathed his wealth to charities and his legacy can still be seen on Bristol's streets, memorials and buildings.

Several of those buildings have since distanced themselves from any association with him, including the Colston Hall music venue which is to drop the name. The Society of Merchant Venturers runs many of the institutions and charities which bear Colston's name. Its spokesman, Frances Greenacre, said the city should not give up on "qualifying this misleading image that the statue presently gives, and the offence that it gives".

Mr Rees said it was "extremely naive" of the Merchant Venturers to believe it should have the final say on the words for a new plaque "without reference to the communities of descendants of those Africans who were enslaved and treated as commodities by merchants like Colston". He said it was "an oversight... not to have even had a conversation with him as 'Europe's first Mayor of African heritage' and the mayor of a city whose wealth has been inseparable from slavery and plantations and who is himself the descendant of enslaved Africans".

Edward Colston: Plaque to Bristol slave trader axed over wording BBC News, 25 March 2019

Cork, T. "Second Colston statue plaque not axed and will still happen but mayor steps in to order a re-write" *Bristol Post*, 25 March 2019.

[77] Publication of *From Wulfstan to Colston*

5 June 2020

Steeds, M. and Ball, R. *From Wulfstan to Colston* (Bristol: BRHG, 2020).

[78] Petition calling for the fall of Edward Colston statue

***Bristol Post*, 5 June 2020**

A petition of a controversial Bristol statue has amassed almost 7,000 signatures in a matter of days. The bronze figure of Edward Colston has loomed over Colston Avenue in the city centre since 1895, and has been repeatedly defaced by protesters. Colston was a slave trader who came from a family of merchants, who had a prominent presence in Bristol for more than 300 years.

People have campaigned for the removal of the statue for years, but a petition on 38 Degrees has gathered fresh momentum this week and gained more than 6,800 signatures. Its success could be linked to the airing of BBC 2 programme A House Through Time, a four-part history series which exposes Bristol's past links to slavery.

Many people signing their name have also cited the Black Lives Matter movement as the catalyst for their support, following the death of George Floyd and subsequent protests. One person, writing on the petition, branded the statue "a disgrace". Another, Danny, said: "A society that continues to venerate or absorb somebody who profited from the dehumanisation of fellow human beings is not the mark of a civilised community that values humanity. "Those who claim this statue promotes education or reflection are disingenuous. Statues do not speak, they glorify."

Grubb, S. "It's a disgrace' - Thousands call for removal of controversial Bristol statue" Bristol Post 5 June 2020.

Notes

This timeline of dissent and protest concerning Edward Colston was largely collated in the winter of 2021 under lock-down due to the Covid19 emergency. In this period there was no physical access to archives, libraries or other deposits for primary and secondary sources. Consequently, all the research had to be carried out online which limited, in particular, newspaper searches for the period 1950-1990. The data presented here will be updated when these restrictions are lifted.

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