

# BRUNEL'S OTHER BRIDGE NEWS

August 2023 (1)



View of the Tongue in 1963 before the Plimsoll Bridge was built. Bristol History Group Facebook Page

## **DON'T MOVE BRUNEL'S SWIVEL BRIDGE !**

The Swivel Bridge is under threat. A Planning Application is about to be submitted for permission to relocate the Bridge to the Albion Dockyard as a viewing platform.

This would be costly and put the Bridge at risk of serious damage. Evidence of the Victorian road crossing here would be lost, and Brunel's Lock nearby would probably be abandoned. It is already filled with silt, but could be scoured clean.

The Grade 2\* Listed Swivel Bridge, Replica Bridge and Brunel's Lock are iconic features representing Bristol's maritime and trading history. They are an important part of the City's identity and should form the much-needed focus of the new Western Harbour development.

**Please sign** our petition requesting Bristol City to retain the Bridge in situ and restore these 'Three Graces'. Visit: <https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/mgEPetitionListDisplay.aspx>

It's easy, and you don't have to live in Bristol to sign, just leave the residence options blank.

**Petition Facts** Our Petition on Bristol City's Democratic Services website received over 200 signatures in its first six weeks, an average of more than 4 per day. It is currently the second most supported live petition. Supporters have posted the Petition on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Linked-in, and it has been reported in the Bristol Evening Post and 24/7.

BUT we need 3,500 signatures for Cabinet consideration, **SO PLEASE POST WIDELY.**

Even if we don't reach this level, Louise deCordova The Council's Democratic Services Manager confirms that when the planning application is received it will be referred to the Development Management Team for consultation with interested parties.

The Hotwells and Cliftonwood Community Association have circulated our appeal for signatures and other organizations will do so as well. We have already had lots of messages of support and appreciate you caring about the City's surviving historic structures.

### **Institution of Structural Engineers. (ISE)**

The Convenor of the ISE's History Study Group Andrew Smith has carried out research on the Swivel Bridge and assesses Brunel's pre-tensioned tie rods as an historically important innovation, ahead of its time. He has written to Historic England suggesting that the Bridge should be Listed Grade 1, not 2\*. They took this into account during their recent listing review, but the innovation was not considered sufficiently significant. Surprising.

### **Historic England resurveys Listed Structures in Cumberland Basin**

In April we reported our Group's involvement in Historic England's resurvey of historic buildings for WECA in advance of the Western Harbour Scheme. This is now complete, see: <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/in-your-area/south-west/early-electricity-substation-in-bristol-is-listed/>

There is good and bad news. First the **GOOD NEWS**



The 1905-6 substation, on Avon Crescent, has been designated a Grade II Listed Building for its early and innovative use of concrete construction (the Hennebique system) and as a rare survivor from a pioneering period of electricity supply before substations were common.. It was built to service the adjacent docks, and still houses the transformer that provides 365V 'Bristol Voltage' to Underfall Yard to drive the 1908 Hydraulic Pumps.

The Grade 2 listing for Cumberland Basin Dock walls has been extended to include Lysaght's 1925 Junction Lock Swing Bridge, previously unlisted, and the paddles on the lock gates of Howard's North Entrance Lock, but, curiously, not the lock-gates themselves. Unfortunately, the hydraulic jiggers which operated these gates, and their pits, remain unlisted, which is a serious omission.

This Listing also specifically includes the approach ramps and locking gear to Brunel's Swivel Bridge.

The Plimsoll Bridge, approach roads, and 'Sid's Café (from 'Only Fools and Horses') were considered for Listing, but they were declared of insufficient architectural or historic merit.



The Brunel Swivel Bridge, Brunel South Entrance Lock, and Replica Bridge were confirmed as Grade 2\*, the last two now being one Listing. All descriptions were updated, and make interesting reading, see: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1202186?section=official-list-entry>

## BAD NEWS



Unfortunately the Dockmaster's Office (C 1889) **remains unlisted**. It is said to have '*construction typical of the time*', '*relative lack of architectural sophistication*' and is not rare enough. There may be other Dockmaster's offices in UK but this is BRISTOL'S Dockmaster's office and we value it!

Similarly the Italianate 'tilting ticket Office' was **not considered worth listing** being associated with '*a later phase of the harbour's development*'. Surely these are serious omissions and we risk losing these structures in the new Western Harbour Development.

You can obtain details of the Listings on Historic England's searchable website, but if you would like to see the full discussion document on any of the re-listings please e-mail Geoff Wallis on [jandgwallis@gmail.com](mailto:jandgwallis@gmail.com).

## Animation of BOB.

Paco Lluna and his colleagues at Balfour Beatty have now processed their amazing laser-scanned animation of the Bridge. See [www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk](http://www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk). There is even a buggy driving over the Bridge and a surprise at the end. Thanks again chaps!

## Certificate of Lawfulness

This was issued by Bristol City Council in April this year authorising our work on the Listed Bridges, covering all our currently proposed work.

**The Harbour**, a new photobook by Jem Southam has recently been published. It chronicles the end of the Dock's working life with photographs shot between 1978 and 1983. <https://www.rrbphotobooks.com/collections/publishing/products/jem-southam-the-harbour>

## Underfall Yard

We offer our deepest sympathies for everyone affected by the fire at Underfall Yard. We know that it has been devastating for all the businesses based in the yard and for local residents on Avon Crescent who notified the emergency services. We would also like to extend our thanks to both the police and fire brigade for the support that they offered to local people and all concerned on the night.

You can support Underfall Yard by donating online here:

<https://www.justgiving.com/theunderfallyardtrust>

You can also support some of the local businesses affected by the fire:

- [Benj Espinoza](#)
- [Joanna Williams of Fire Iron Art](#)
- [Boatbuilders](#)
- [Bristol Community Ferry Boats](#)



## Bristol Monopoly

We have nominated the Cumberland Basin for the new edition of Bristol Monopoly.

## Heritage Assets List

If you have not already done so, please check out our member John Willis's website *Heritage Assets in Bristol* *Western Harbour*  
<https://bwhha.wordpress.com/>



## Association for Industrial Archaeology Conference in Bath

The Association (AIA) will be holding its 50th anniversary conference over six days, which will include some interesting visits to places not open to the general public. Based at the University of Bath, it will run from 1st to 6th September 2023. 100 people have already booked, so don't delay: <https://industrial-archaeology.org/conferences/service001/>

## MV Balmoral

Our friends at the MV Balmoral are making good progress restoring the ship for return to service next year, see <https://www.thebalmoral.org.uk/> Volunteers meet on Tuesday and Friday every week, so why not join them? You don't need to have any specific skills, just a desire to help return this fabulous 1947 passenger ship to full service.

## Bristol City Council By-Election

Patrick McAllister (Green Party) was elected to represent the Hotwells and Harbourside Ward on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. He takes an interest in our project and is supportive.

## Vols Workdays 2023

We meet on August 19<sup>th</sup>, September 16<sup>th</sup>, October 14<sup>th</sup>. Please check our website for changes: [www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk](http://www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk)

## A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT

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