

**Embargoed to 00.01
Thursday 24 January 2008**

The launch marks the beginning of Bristol's *Portrait of a Nation* activities: a year-long celebration of local identity by young people that links with Liverpool's reign as European Capital of Culture 2008.

The Bristol Great Reading Adventure – now in its sixth year – aims to get more people reading. *The Bristol Story* presents the history of the city in a new and exciting way, accessible to readers of 11 and over. The project runs to 31 March 2008. It is led by Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP) – Arts Council England, Bristol City Council and Business West.

And what did the Anglo-Saxons call this town?

Brycgstow.

In their old English it just means Bridge Place'. Imaginative, eh?

How did Brycgstow become Bristol?

Try saying 'Brycgstow' quickly a few times in a proper-job Bristol accent.

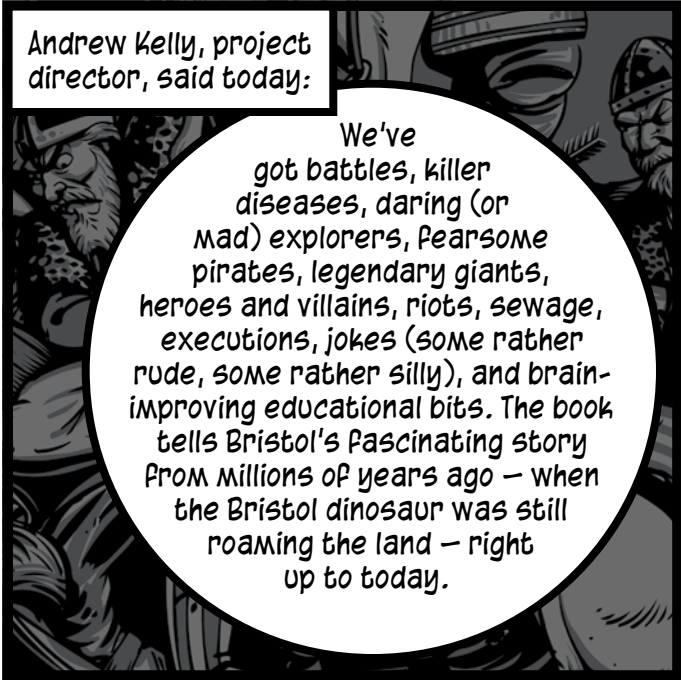
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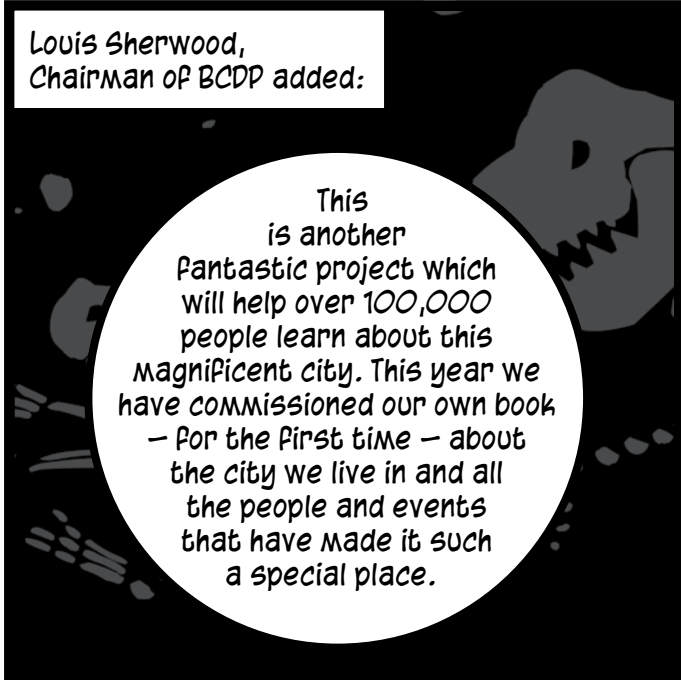
BRIZZLE!!!





Andrew Kelly, project director, said today:

We've got battles, killer diseases, daring (or mad) explorers, fearsome pirates, legendary giants, heroes and villains, riots, sewage, executions, jokes (some rather rude, some rather silly), and brain-improving educational bits. The book tells Bristol's fascinating story from millions of years ago – when the Bristol dinosaur was still roaming the land – right up to today.



Louis Sherwood, Chairman of BCDP added:

This is another fantastic project which will help over 100,000 people learn about this magnificent city. This year we have commissioned our own book – for the first time – about the city we live in and all the people and events that have made it such a special place.

The 2008 adventure is linked to the national *Portrait of a Nation* initiative, led by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Liverpool Culture Company, in which young people across the UK are expressing thoughts and feelings about their city's heritage and identity through creative participation. One of Bristol's contributions to *Portrait of a Nation* will be work produced in a series of creative workshops in schools and colleges including banners, comic strips, poems/ short stories and short drama pieces about the area in which the participants live and study. The banners will be on display in Bristol city centre through the year.



Adrian Tinniswood, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund's South West committee adds:

Portrait of a Nation is a unique partnership of 18 cities, including Bristol, encouraging young people to explore what makes their home town unique. It's the first opportunity of its kind for the UK's youth to explore and express what is special to them about where they come from, their local culture, community and identity.

I am particularly excited by the potential that *The Bristol Story* has to get people talking about the city's past, as that is the core of *Portrait of a Nation* – stimulating debate through creative exploration, around roots, identity and culture: Where do we come from? How did we get here? Who are we now? Where are we going? Who do we want to be?

All publications are distributed free of charge. Among those taking part include every member and officer in Bristol City Council, employees in Airbus UK, Rolls-Royce, Business West, ArnolPini arts centre, Watershed Media Centre and nearly 70 schools. Readers will also be able to obtain a free fully illustrated guide, which provides further information about Bristol, and copies of a comic devised for young people.

ENDS

WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT THE BRISTOL STORY

Nick Capaldi, Director, Arts Council England South West:

The Bristol Great Reading Adventure goes from strength to strength. Last year's national project on slavery and diversity was one of the best of the 2007 projects. This year's *Bristol Story* promises to have the same level of impact – this time in one city. I'm especially delighted that a new book has been commissioned – one that has excellence in art and writing at its heart.

Helen Holland, Leader, Bristol City Council:

The city council has always been a strong supporter of the Great Reading Adventure. We live and work in an amazing city with an incredible history and this year's book promises to teach us all about Bristol. I'm delighted that so many schools and businesses are participating and I look forward to reading the book myself, as I am sure other members and officers of the council will.

John Savage, Executive Chairman, Business West:

The Bristol reading adventure is brilliant. Reading and learning are essential for business prosperity and a better life for all in the city. I'm delighted that Business West is participating fully and that the whole of Airbus and Rolls-Royce, among others, will be joining in.

Kerry McCarthy MP for Bristol East:

I am very pleased to support this year's Great Reading Adventure. It is a tremendous idea to get so many people reading across the city, and this year's project, *The Bristol Story*, is particularly special. I am glad to see that so many schools are participating, and hope that this will help encourage pupils to read more, for pleasure as well as in school.

Stephen Williams MP for Bristol West:

I'm really passionate about encouraging children to enjoy reading. Picking up a book can take you on a great adventure that you'll remember for life. *The Bristol Story* is a great way to get everyone, adults and children alike, interested in the history of Bristol. Now that work has started on the new Museum of Bristol there is an opportunity to give everyone a thirst for more knowledge about the history of our city.

CONTACTS

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The following are available:

- * Images from the comic
- * An interview with the authors

All can be obtained from
Melanie Kelly
01225 470180
bristolreads@btopenworld.com

NOTES TO EDITORS

Bristol's sixth annual Great Reading Adventure runs from January to March 2008. The project aims to develop standards of literacy through the promotion of reading; to stimulate new forms of creativity inspired by the reading experience; to use reading to facilitate learning about the past; and to foster a sense of shared identity by bringing diverse communities together in the act of reading. For 2008, the chosen book is a specially commissioned 200-page graphic style history of Bristol by Eugene Byrne and Simon Gurr called *The Bristol Story*, which traces the rich and dramatic history of Bristol from the earliest times to the present day. It is aimed at a readership aged from around 11 and upwards, and its mix of historical research and irreverent humour appeals to both children and adults. Copies of the book are being distributed free of charge, while stocks last, to individual members of the public through libraries and museums, and local businesses. There is an extensive website providing detailed background information on Bristol's history, contributions from local people sharing their stories and memories of Bristol, photographs of some of the activities taking place in schools and downloadable educational activity sheets. The website is at www.bristolreads.com

Between January and March each year, everyone in Bristol is encouraged to read the same book at the same time, one that is either set in Bristol, is by a Bristol author, or is about issues that are of interest to people in Bristol. Books that have been chosen since the project was launched in 2003 are Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (partially set in Bristol), John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (which allowed debate about environmental issues and GM technology) and Helen Dunmore's *The Siege*, which promoted learning and debate about the Second World War. In 2006 the project extended across the South West region as a contribution to Brunel 200 – the year-long programme celebrating the life and work of the engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, marking the bicentenary of his birth. The selected book was Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, a classic novel that dramatises the sense of excitement and limitless possibilities brought by nineteenth-century innovations in transport. In 2007 the book chosen was *Small Island* as part of the 2007 slavery and diversity commemorations.

The Bristol Story is an initiative of:
Bristol Cultural Development
Partnership – Arts Council England,
Bristol City Council and Business
West.



KEY DATA:

- * 85,000 copies of *The Bristol Story* will be distributed Free of charge.
- * 40,000 copies of a Full-colour, illustrated guide will be distributed Free of charge.
- * 15,000 comics for younger readers will be distributed.
- * Free books are available while stocks last at designated locations including Bristol libraries and museums, Blackwell on Park Street, Arncliffe and Watershed.
- * A programme of workshops linked to the project will be held in schools and colleges in association with the *Portrait of a Nation* initiative.
- * An extensive website – www.bristolreads.com – was launched today and will provide news of events taking place as well as further information and links to resources.

PORTRAIT OF A NATION

- * From dialects to local landmarks, fashion to football teams, local traditions to famous residents, all cities have their own sense of local identity, and *Portrait of a Nation* is giving young people in 18 cities across the UK the chance to tell their contemporaries across the country what most matters to them about their city, and what their aspirations are for the future.
- * This unique campaign is being run during Liverpool's year-long reign as the European Capital of Culture 2008 by the Liverpool Culture Company, 17 other member cities of the Urban Cultural Network and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Importantly, *Portrait of a Nation* will extend the Capital of Culture celebrations beyond Liverpool and Merseyside to involve communities across the UK in activities that will last all year. Each of the 17 other cities will be holding similar showcase events over the next few months, and the creative work from each city's event will be fed into a spectacular celebration at the end of 2008 to culminate the year-long Liverpool European Capital of Culture programme of events.
- * A fully interactive website will shortly be going live to give youngsters across Bristol the chance to interact with their contemporaries from the other cities involved (including Oxford, Cardiff, Brighton and Norwich), enabling them to develop their ideas through online dialogue and networking, and those conversations will be taking place throughout the year, until Bristol's very special heritage is represented in Liverpool for everyone to see.

