

Brislington Community Museum News

2026 July

(Issue 18)

ISSN 2753-7773

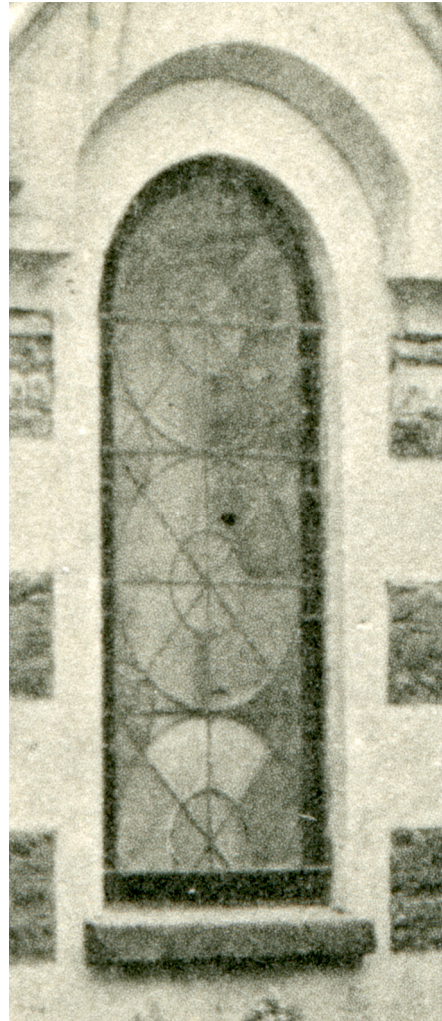
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Photographs by Bailey, Kent, Thompson, Rigden and Marshall, Keene & Co

All five of these postcard publishers were based outside Bristol, in places as diverse as Edinburgh, London, the Isle of Wight, and Northern Ireland, yet they all took an interest in Brislington.

Ken Taylor, chair



Detail of a window in the postcard of Arno's Court convent (page 3, lower).

Contact us

Email us - secretary@brislington.org - to enquire about any of our community museum's exhibits, to provide feedback or new information etc about them, or to contribute items for this newsletter. Our publication schedule is flexible so we can react quickly to important events (also, during quiet times we can focus on other matters such as out-reach activities and sourcing and researching new exhibits).

Marshall, Keene & Co

The company that produced a series of postcards at the convent of Arno's Court (currently Arnos Manor Hotel, 470 Bath Road, Brislington) was based in London. They routinely worked with private commissions from organisations (such as schools and religious institutions), printing photographs as postcards that could be used for publicity and fund-raising.

Six postcards are known in a series, each is titled 'Arno's Court, Bristol.' and all are shown below. One other postcard of the convent is known by this publisher, bearing the title 'Arnos Court Bristol, The Chapel.' The backs of the six postcards in the series state: 'Photographed and published by Marshall, Keene & Co., 24/25, Hart St., Holborn, W.C.' - a company founded in 1902 (Historic England 2026).

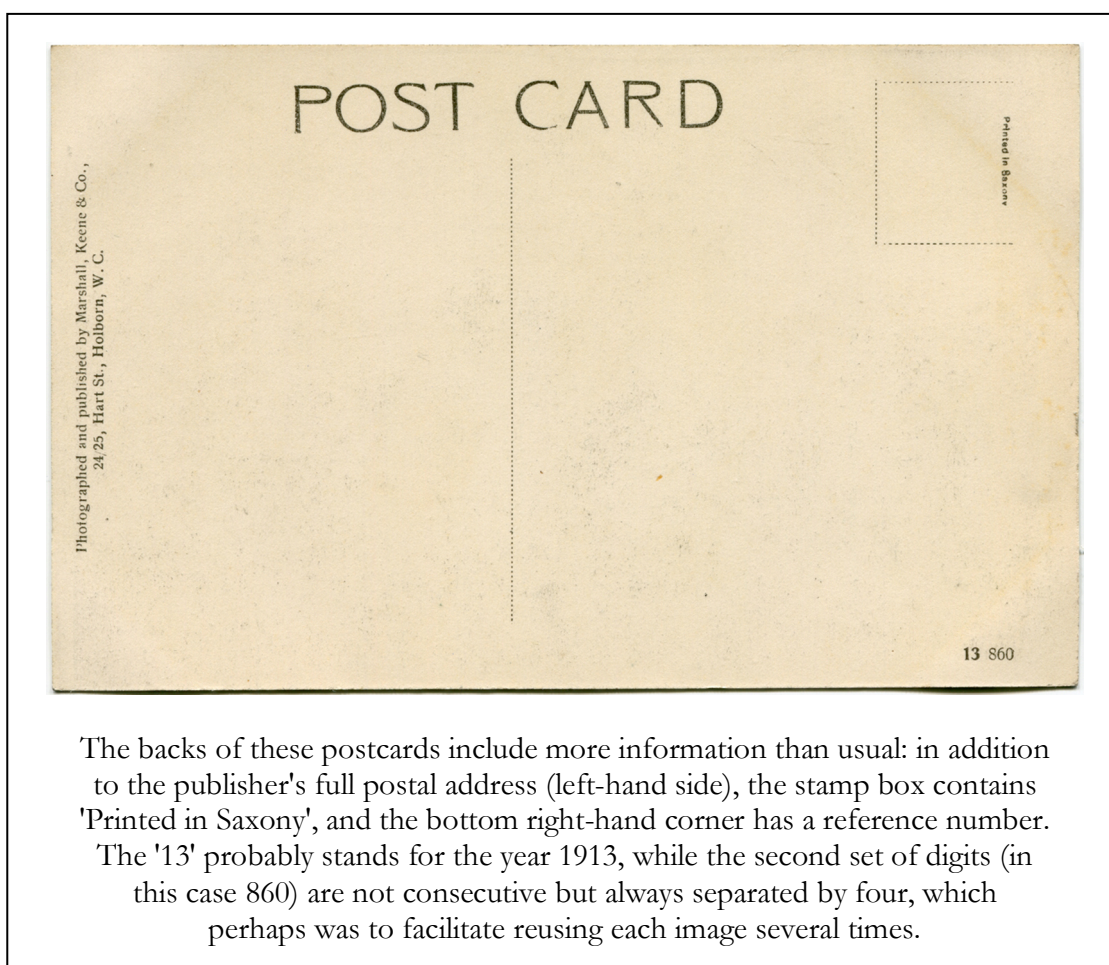
The backs also have a reference number, and it's thought the first two digits signify the year in

which they were printed (Williams undated), which suggests these were published in 1913.

These monochrome postcards were printed in Saxony using a collotype process (at that time, the Continent was renowned for high quality collotype printing). The outbreak of the first world war in 1914 stopped most British companies employing printers from any part of the German Empire (including Saxony).

The postcard of the Chapel is published online (<https://archives.bristol.gov.uk/records/43207/29/19/1>) at Bristol Archives. The photograph was taken inside the chapel of what the 1911 Census calls the 'Reformatory School for Girls, Arno's Court'.

The chapel, incidentally, was partially demolished to allow an expansion of the A4 Bath Road. One ornate column shown in the postcard, supported the arch that separated the nave from the chancel, survived although now it's an exterior feature.



The backs of these postcards include more information than usual: in addition to the publisher's full postal address (left-hand side), the stamp box contains 'Printed in Saxony', and the bottom right-hand corner has a reference number.

The '13' probably stands for the year 1913, while the second set of digits (in this case 860) are not consecutive but always separated by four, which perhaps was to facilitate reusing each image several times.



Twenty women and girls are seated in a long, narrow hall that served as the school room - Arno's Court was not only a convent but a Reformatory School for Girls. This building was demolished and the site is now occupied by television studios beside the Bath Road (A4). Reference number 13 856.



Twenty women and girls are arranged individually and in small clusters among flowerbeds, with a conservatory and tall buildings behind them. The site is now enclosed and occupied by the restaurant of the Arnos Manor Hotel (although it never was a manor house). Reference number 13 860. An enlargement of a window is on page 1.



Twenty women are in an open field that's now part of Arnos Court Park. In the background are the reformatory and convent of the Order of the Good Shepherd (much since demolished). This postcard was sent from Bristol to Dover one 14th September hoping her niece had no more air raids (Dover suffered repeated aerial bombing in WW1, starting in December 1914). Reference number 13 864.



Eighteen young women are in a recreation area: one sits on a swing and has a toddler on her lap, another (on the far right) holds one end of a skipping rope, there is a seesaw and some other apparatus. The large building on the left is part of Arnos Manor Hotel and can still be seen from the Bath Road (which lies further to the left). Reference number 13 868.



Some twenty young women are positioned beside the pool in what is now Arnos Court Park (it has been drained, covered in concrete and is used as a skatepark - in dry weather at least). The houses on the horizon are on Bath Road.
Reference number 13 872.



Twenty-one women and girls are arranged individually and in small groups on a wooded hillside. The houses on the crest of the hill are on Somerset Road. In the distance on the far left-hand side, is the sequoia conifer that has grown to become a prominent local landmark on the skyline. Reference number 13 876.

Fred E Bailey

A visitor who apparently couldn't resist the opportunity to photograph Brislington for a postcard was Fred E (Frederick Eric) Bailey. The back of his postcard gives his address as 92 & 96 Nicolson St, Edinburgh.

He was born in England in the 1860s, and his photographic studio in the Scottish capital city operated from 1887 to 1915 (Stubbs undated).

He married Isabella Greig in 1885. The 1891 census shows Fred and Isabella (aged 29 and 30 years, respectively) with a five-year-old daughter living at 96 Nicolson Street. Fred's occupation was photographer.

The 1901 census shows Fred aged only six years, and his wife only aged five (both were stated to be 35 years old). Their daughter, though, accumulated the normal tally of years, and had duly reached her 15th birthday. They were living at the same address as ten years earlier, and Fred's occupation was also unchanged.

Fred died in 1924, at the age (so these records inform us) of 55 years.

Only one Brislington postcard is currently known to be his work, and it was printed as a real photograph. The picture was reproduced several times (including by Brislington postcard publisher J B Comer in the 1920s); the illustration below is from Bailey's own branded version.



This postcard is titled "THE MAIN ROAD BRISLINGTON" and shows the number 224 tram on its way from Brislington through Bristol to Hotwells. In the foreground is Ye Olde Village Tea Rooms and shop (now demolished) and, on the far side of the bridge over Brislington Brook is the Kings Arms Inn. Earliest known postmark: 3 June 1911. An enlargement of the shop window can be seen on page 10.

Walter Kent

There's currently only one known postcard of Brislington by the person who identified themselves on the postcard simply as Kent. The address alongside their name is Chale, Isle of Wight. While concentrating on his native isle, this publisher also produced postcards of Bristol and elsewhere in the south of England.

Walter Harry Kent was born to Ellen and George Kent in April 1882, and was baptised in Chale, a village on the south coast of the island.

The 1891 census shows Ellen (aged 34) and George (40, working as a carrier) living with their son (who was attending school) at George's parents home - Needles View - in Chale.

The 1901 census shows the couple and two children at their own address in the village. While George still worked as a carrier, Walter worked as a carpenter's apprentice.

In 1903 Walter's marriage to Charlotte May Marsh was registered on the Isle of Wight. She was the daughter of Elizabeth and George Marsh who, at the time of her baptism in May 1883, lived at Shanklin, on the east coast of the isle. The 1891 census lists Charlotte by her middle name - May - and her mother (aged 37) and father (31, working as a baker) at nearby Ventnor.

In 1911 the census records Walter, Charlotte and three children living in the Post Office in Chale. Walter gave his occupation as sub postmaster and builder.

The 1939 register shows the family living at Ryde, Isle of Wight, and Walter's occupation is now shown as commercial photographer (master man). Their daughter June (born in 1904) worked as a photographic finisher.

Walter died while living at the same address in Ryde, in October 1948. Charlotte, still at the same address, died in December 1969.



This postcard is titled 'WESTTOWN LANE BRISLINGTON.' It was printed as a real photograph and shows the bridge over Brislington Brook. The earliest known version of this picture was printed with a message on the back advising the sender that a halfpenny stamp is required, which means the postcard was printed before 3 June 1918 when the postal rate increased to one penny).

John Rigden

John Sydney Rigden was born in the summer of 1870 to Georgina (nee Kyle) and Augustus Rigden, at Sandwich, Kent. The 1871 census shows him as the second of two sons at the family home in Chain, Sandwich. His father, aged 28, worked as a carpenter; his mother's occupation isn't recorded, she was 29 years old.

A decade later the census shows the family had grown to include another son and three daughters. Their father's occupation was carpenter and joiner, and they lived at The Chains, Sandwich.

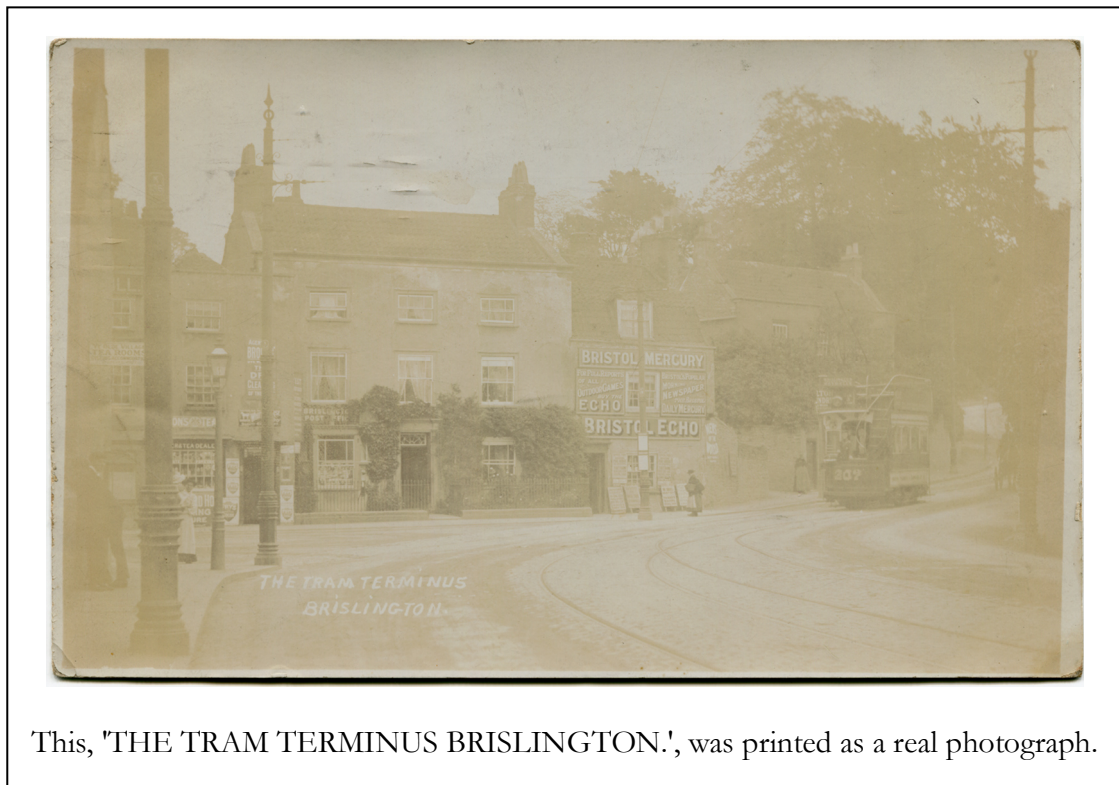
In June 1903, John (whose father now worked as a master carpenter) married Catherine Odgers, a spinster aged 28, whose father worked as an underground agent. They were married at the church of St Tudfil in the village of Minera, in north Wales. She was born in 1874 to Mary and Ephraim Odgers, in the village of Coedpoeth (near Minera). The 1881 census shows her as third eldest of five daughters, with three older brothers, living at the family home on the High Street, Coedpoeth (a neighbouring village to Minera). Her father, aged 46, worked as a lead

miner, and her mother's occupation was listed as a lead-miner's wife, she was 42 years old. The 1891 census records Catherine attending Bridge Gate House School, Chester.

The 1911 census shows the couple with two children born in Coedpoeth, and living at 49 High Street in that village. John was employed as a dispenser (medical). The family was still living together in 1939 when the national register records them at East Ham, Essex. John still worked as a dispenser, while Catherine's occupation was unpaid domestic duties.

The couple appear to have moved to or near John's birthplace, as his death, aged 76, was recorded at Thanet, Kent, in 1946. Catherine lived until 1956, aged 81, with her death registered in the same district.

The only known postcard of Brislington by this photographer contains five lines of advertisement on the back: "J SYDNEY RIGDEN, Photographer, 49 High St, Coed Poeth. Wholesale and Retail Post Card Printer, Selected Album of 100 Real Pictorial Photo Post Cards, £1. Views of Districts taken to order. Distance no object. Enlargement from any faded copy in any style and process."



James Thompson

Only a single example of this photographer's work is so far known from Brislington. The credit printed on the back of the postcard is "Photo by J. Thompson, Crane's Buildings, Wellington Place Belfast." The earliest known posting date is 24 June 1910.

James Thompson was born in Liverpool in or around 1869 and, at the time of the 1901 census of Ireland was living at Stranmillis Gardens in the Shankhill parish of Belfast with his wife Minni (elsewhere known as Mary) and six children (only one was a daughter). Minni (aged 31) was born in Belfast, as were all their children. James was working as a photographer.

A decade later the census shows the family, still living in the same parish, now included three further children, one being a daughter. The eldest son living in the family home at the time of the census was James (17 years old) who, like his father, worked as a photographer.

Directories of Belfast from 1906 to 1912 show James Thompson (Snr) had a photographic studio at 26 Crane's Buildings, Wellington Place (the 1910 Belfast Street Directory lists him as a photographic artist residing at 4 Stranmillis Gardens). In 1913 the studio moved to 1 Grosvenor House (still in Wellington Place), and then from 1918 until 1933 it was at Prudential Chambers (Wellington Place) - its name unchanged throughout (McFaull, undated).

Mary died in 1918, a victim of the 'Spanish flu' influenza pandemic. James (Snr) lived on until 1941 and was buried in a family plot in Dundonald Cemetery, Belfast.

It's exceptionally rare to identify anyone in these old postcards, but on the back of a variant of this picture published by

J B Comer, is a message that identifies the girl facing the photographer as being Ethel Gingell, who was around ten years old.

Ethel was born in November 1899 in Bristol to Sarah and Henry Gingell who, at the time of the 1911 census, were living with nine of their children at 21 Grove Park Road, Brislington. The census shows four of these children were born in Brislington, the eldest of these being aged seven (it seems likely at least two of these are also included in this postcard).



This postcard is titled 'WATER LANE BRISLINGTON' and was printed as a real photograph. It shows the part of Water Lane visible upstream from the bridge on Homestead Drive (sadly, only the stump of the tree shown here with its roots eroding from the bank of Brislington Brook, survives). See a partial enlargement on page 11.



Detail of the shop window in Fred Bailey's photograph, published as a postcard titled 'THE MAIN ROAD BRISLINGTON'. The window of the upper shelf has advertising for Lyon's Tea, and Fry's Pure Cocoa and Victory V Gums. The middle shelf has, on the left-hand side, a partially obscured advert for Fry's Chocolate, and a topical sign that places this photograph as being taken at Easter: Hot + Buns (where the image of the + stands for the word Cross - hot cross buns). This is a detail of a postcard published anonymously and with higher contrast, postmarked 14 January 1913.



Enlargement of James Thompson's postcard showing, at front, Ethel Gingell.

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Credits

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