

For more information about the Barton Hill History Group go to www.bhhg.co.uk and www.voicesofthepast.org.uk

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The production of the Barton Hill History Group Heritage Trails has been very kindly supported by Bridging Histories. For more information, go to bridginghistories.com

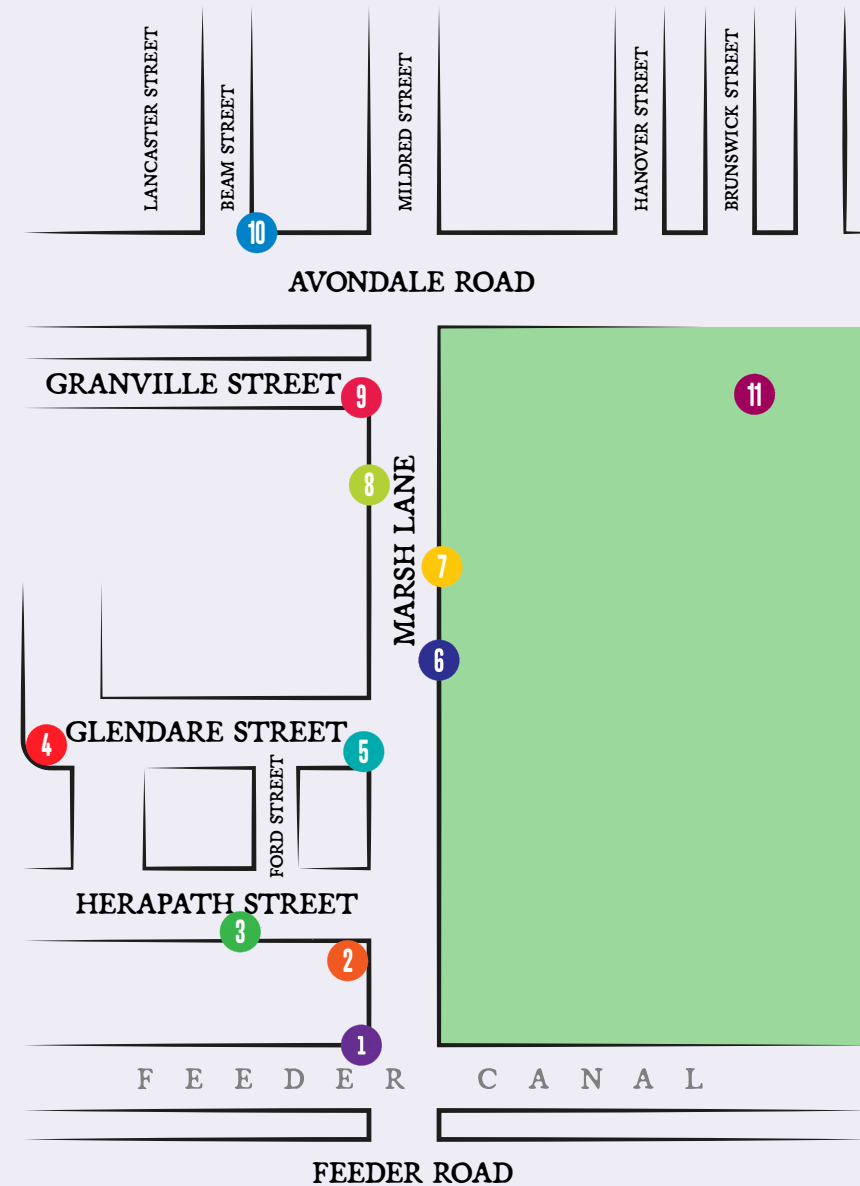
The following people helped develop this project: Garry Atterton, Jen Grove, Jackie Naysmith, Tim Northover and Alexander Smith.

If you have any memories to share, please get in touch via our Facebook group, [bartonhillhistorygroup](https://www.facebook.com/bartonhillhistorygroup) or email garry@voicesofthepast.org.uk



HERITAGE TRAIL FOUR

Down The Brillas



Barton Hill has a unique heritage that was once dominated by the Great Western Cotton Works that employed 2,000 people. The growth of the cotton factory led to the development of rows upon rows of terraced houses. During the 1950s and 1960s the built environment and community was ripped apart by so called Slum Clearance. Houses, pubs and churches were knocked down and replaced with high rise flats and the community of Barton Hill was split up and spread across the city.

Just a fragment of the old Barton Hill heritage is left. In 2021 the last pub closed and the old Infant School and community centre have been left to rot. The Barton Hill Heritage Community are now more vocal about the diminishing heritage assets. The Barton Hill History Group has been instrumental in getting the community to identify what buildings are of heritage value. A list of over 30 key heritage assets have been created.

During 2021 and 2022 a small group of volunteers, with the support of Bridging Histories, planned and produced four high quality, very informative Heritage Trails. A broad range of ages, backgrounds and skills enabled the heritage trail team to share and develop their connected histories of knowledge and develop research, writing and presentation skills. During the Summer months of 2022 we walked the heritage trails with members of the public. By working together we created an important community heritage project that we are very proud of. Our aim is also to ensure the heritage of Barton Hill is understood, shared, managed and protected.

**Barton Hill
History Group**



BARTON HILL HERITAGE TRAIL



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Down the Brillas Trail

This short walk takes in two former major industrial sites, the Netham Chemical Works and the Cotton Works. This area was the first part of Barton Hill to be demolished in the so-called “slum clearance” of the 1950s and 1960s. Many rows of terraced houses in Bush, Barton and Aiken Streets were lost for ever and replaced by high rise flats. Let’s go down the Brillas!

- 1 The walk begins at March Lane bridge to observe the tree-lined Feeder Canal and the former site of the Netham Chemical Works, known locally as the Brillas.**



The **Feeder Canal** was built between 1804 and 1809 to feed water into the floating harbour to maintain water levels and to provide a link to the River Avon at Crew’s Hole. Industry such as the Great Western Cotton Works and John Lysaght’s grew up alongside the canal, providing the main source of employment for the people of Barton Hill.

The Feeder Canal closed to commercial traffic in 1970, followed by the demise of local industry. It was known as the “Dirty Old Feeder”, but today the Feeder Canal is a vital part of the National Waterways Network.

- 2 Walk back up Marsh Lane to the small green on the left hand side.**

When the Cotton Works opened in 1838 Pinney Terrace was built for the workers who were brought into the area. The terrace is named after one of the owners, Charles Pinney, one time Mayor of Bristol. The Pinney family business used the labour of enslaved people in its West Indian sugar plantation. The Cotton Factory was funded by compensation that Pinney and others received after the abolition of slavery.

- 3 Continue to walk up Marsh Lane and turn left into Herapath Street**

Herapath Street is named after nationally-renowned scientist and social reformer William Herapath (1796 – 1868).

- 4 Walk to the gates of the Barton Hill Trading Estate and bear right until you get to the junction of Glendare Street. To your left in Great Western Lane is the last remaining large building of the old Cotton Works.**



This card from 1843 shows the spinning shed on the left-hand side. The other side of this shed can be seen from Great Western Lane today. This key building from Barton Hill’s heritage is now a thriving centre of highly skilled artists and crafters. The site of the Great Western Cotton Works is not only fundamental to the heritage of Barton Hill, but to the industrial history of Bristol.

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- 5 Turn right and follow the terraced houses of Glendare Street. Stop at the junction with Marsh Lane.**



On the 8th July 1952 this area was approved by the council for compulsory purchase for the first stage of the slum clearance scheme. The north side of Glendare Street was damaged during the Blitz in WWII. Glendare House, a tower block located on the north side of Glendare Street was opened in 1959 but demolished in 1999 due to “concrete cancer” caused by the rusting of steel reinforcements.

Barton Hill resident Martin Smith recalls “We went to a party of a friend who previously lived at Glendare house before the block was to be demolished, and at the party they started the demolition beforehand by throwing things off the balcony, even knocking down the stairs in his flat... while guests were still upstairs! They had to reclaim a ladder that was thrown from the balcony to help the guests get back down.”

- 6 Cross from the left to the right side of Marsh Lane. Take care crossing as this is a very busy road. Walk up Marsh Lane following the wall on your right side.**

At the start of WWII, air raid shelters were needed as protection from German bombing. It was decided to build shelters along the wall of the chemical works tip, which ran

down Marsh Lane. The inner walls and roof were made of thick reinforced concrete. Remarkably, the shelter could hold up to 1,000 people. The shelter was hit by a bomb, resulting in casualties. The bricked-up entrances to the Marsh Lane air raid shelters can still be seen today, but the rest of the structure was demolished many years ago.

- 7 Continue on up Marsh Lane and stop at a large vertical pipe on the pavement.**

Stink pipes were introduced following the “Great Stink” of London in 1858. The purpose of the Marsh Lane Stink Pipe was to allow toxic and flammable gases such as methane to be expelled from the underground sewage system and up above the heads of those passing along the pavement.

- 8 Be careful when crossing back over Marsh Lane. Stop at the edge of Barton House.**

Barton House was officially opened by the Lord Mayor on Monday 23 June 1958. At the ceremony, the only reference made to the old community of Barton Hill was one inaccurate and generalised comment: “Some of the dwellings were unfit, others would have been unfit within a few years and most of the remaining properties were of a poor standard.”



- 9 Continue walking up Marsh Lane until you get to Granville Street.**

Granville Street is one of the few Victorian terrace streets that survived the demolition of Barton Hill. Eccleston House stands at the end of the street. Photograph by Stephen Dowle from 1974.

- 10 Walk to the junction of Marsh Lane and Avonvale Road. Use the zebra crossing and stop outside the old Avon Vale School.**

Avon Vale Board School was opened in 1884 for 750 primary pupils (boys and girls) and infants. Education reformer Thomas Macnamara was appointed headmaster of the boys’ division at the age of just twenty-two and did much to



improve education for the young people of Barton Hill. Nevertheless, in this working-class neighbourhood many children left school early to work. In 1893 “elementary education” was made free for the majority of children. This increased attendance significantly at Avon Vale, but not for long! By the end of the first term only 190 of 287 boys were present. Among the varied reasons given to the school by parents for the absences was “He has been out all night sleeping in railway trucks.”



- 11 Turn right and follow Avonvale Road, passing Hamblin’s Fish and Chip Shop (Perhaps call in for a bag of scrumps). Keep walking along the road, stop by Lancaster Street, then cross over Avonvale Road. Enter Netham Park. At the top of the entrance are some seats and tables. Look back onto Barton Hill and enjoy the wonderful view of St Luke’s Church in the background.**

What is now Netham Park was “The Brillas”, where the waste material for the Netham Chemical Works was dumped.

The Chemical Works started production in the 1840s becoming part of Imperial Chemical Industries in 1927 and eventually closing in 1949. The buildings, sheds, tanks, cranes, gantries and chimneys were demolished thereafter. Old stone buildings from the Chemical Works remained on Netham Road until 1982.

In the 1950s and 60s the Civil Defence Corps used many of the old works structures and the derelict industrial landscape for a major rescue training ground. The building now used by the St Annes Board Mills Social Club was originally built by ICI in the 1920s.

Alan Sheppard says “The kids from around there could write a book about their adventures on the Brillas. Used to love building our dens out of the curved corrugated tin sheets that somehow used to find their way over to our side (Marsh Lane), fire pits dug just outside and potatoes and carrots and onions cooked, or should I say ‘burnt to a cinder’. Tears running down our cheeks from the smoke getting in our eyes, and getting a telling off for coming home with our clothes smelling of smoke.”