

# BRUNEL SWIVEL BRIDGE NEWS

## JANUARY 2026



Courtesy of Facebook.

### SAD STRANDINGS

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 1857, the 800-ton barque Mary Ann Peters ran aground on the Rownham Ferry Slip in the River Avon. She was stranded for over a week until refloated on April 7th and returned to the Cumberland Basin.



A century later another stranding took place nearby, this time without a happy ending. Brunel's iconic Swing Bridge was left stranded and redundant when the Plimsoll Bridge was opened.

Now, with £1million pledged towards restoration, the Brunel Swivel Bridge Group charity aims this year to have plans in place to restore this important structure for public use as Brunel intended.

**Our success will depend on the active support of Bristol City Council, Historic England and you, our many individual and corporate supporters. Please see over the page how you can help.**

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**Join our SUPPORT TEAM.** Help research funders and support our busy trustees in other ways. Contact [Secretary@brunelswivelbridge.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@brunelswivelbridge.org.uk)

**TREASURER** Our current treasurer has two trustee roles so needs the help of a new treasurer. This is an important but straight-forward role, so please volunteer if you have financial experience. Contact: [Treasurer@brunelswivelbridge.org.uk](mailto:Treasurer@brunelswivelbridge.org.uk)

**JOIN US.** Add your name to the hundreds of supporters who receive regular newsletters updating on project progress and developments/events/activities in the area.

**VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS.** We carry out conservation and maintenance on a Saturday each month, see dates below. Come and join us -- we are friendly, it's fun and you'll get fit!

**DONATE.** Please donate via [www.brunelswivelbridge.org.uk](http://www.brunelswivelbridge.org.uk) Better still, help us plan our expenditure by donating monthly. Contact: [Treasurer@brunelswivelbridge.org.uk](mailto:Treasurer@brunelswivelbridge.org.uk)

## VOLUNTEER WORKDAYS 2026

Our workdays around the Bridge are nominally on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month but please check [www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk](http://www.brunelsotherbridge.org.uk) for changes. Dates for 2026:

Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>	May 16 <sup>th</sup>	August 15 <sup>th</sup>
March 28 <sup>th</sup>	June 20 <sup>th</sup>	September 19 <sup>th</sup>
April 18 <sup>th</sup>	July 18 <sup>th</sup>	October 17 <sup>th</sup>

## AVON RIVERSIDES 2100

Bristol City Council's Avon Flood Strategy is moving into its detailed design and consenting phases. Re-named Avon Riversides 2100, this is a long-term partnership between Bristol City Council, the Environment Agency, and the West of England Combined Authority to protect Bristol from flooding from the River to 2100 and beyond.

The initiative is responsible to Councillor Andrew Brown, Chair of Bristol City Council Economy and Skills Committee, with responsibility for flood resilience.

Jacobs (UK) Ltd have been appointed new Consultation and Engagement Project Lead, responsible for preparing a full Business Case which will take approximately five years to complete. This large international consultancy headquartered in the US has an office in Bristol. See [www.jacobs.com](http://www.jacobs.com)

Avon Riversides first newsletter states:

*Jacobs' team will work with Bristol City Council, residents, businesses, community groups and others to develop detailed designs of the flood defences. This phase will include engagement, consultations and preparation of an application for consent to construct.*



Early last year the Council appointed Hannah Crichton-Smith, as Consultation and Engagement Project Lead to: 'work closely with Jacobs' team to make sure communities

*and stakeholders can help shape the design and character of the riverside-enhancing flood defences in their area and remain updated as the project progresses.'*

The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group looks forward to engaging with Avon Riversides 2100 to address our concerns over the impact of the flood defences on the Grade 2\* Replica and Brunel Swivel Bridges, and other heritage assets.

## FLOOD DEFENCES PROGRAMME

Avon Riversides 2100 outlines the following programme:

**2026** Website established at [www.avonriversides.co.uk](http://www.avonriversides.co.uk)

**2026-2028:** Designs developed and public consultations completed

**2028-2030:** Application for consent to construct submitted and obtained

**2030-2040:** First phase of construction completed

The Swivel Bridge Group plans to complete restoration of the Bridge by 2029, which fits well with the flood-defence programme.

## WESTERN HARBOUR DEVELOPMENT

Early in 2025 Bristol City's Western Harbour team gathered public feedback on the proposed flood defences. 75% of respondents supported the idea of integrating the proposed flood defences within the Grade 2 Listed Harbour Walls around the Knuckle (at the end of the Harbour near Entrance Lock). 80% were either very satisfied or satisfied with the idea of a new pedestrian/cycle route that extends the harbour loop along the flood defences.

The Brunel Swivel Bridge Group CIO supports the plans but has concerns over the impact the flood-defence will have on the two listed bridges and the historically-important hydraulic equipment that survives intact in the pits on the Knuckle.

## ENTRANCE LOCK-GATE REPAIRS

Last year parts of the platework started to fail on the entrance lock's outer gates. The City Council secured funding, and has carried out emergency repairs to keep them operational. The project team will progress detailed inspections and surveys of the lock to better understand its condition and plan replacement gates under Avon Riversides 2100.

## UNDERFALL YARD SLUICE GATES

There are concerns over the condition of the sluice gates and the underfall culverts, so specialists have developed detailed plans for their repair. Works began in autumn 2025 and are expected to be finished by next summer.

## GUIDED TOURS

**Bristol City Museum** offers guided walks around part of the historic centre on Thursdays, starting at 10.30am on 15 January, 19 February, 19 March, 16 April, 21 May, & 18 June.

See: <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/whats-on/m-shed/historical-walk-old-city/>

## COMMONWEALTH MUSEUM THEFTS

The Museum, formerly sited in the offices of the Brunel Temple Meads Station, closed in 2008 amidst financial difficulties and subsequently went into liquidation. In 2011 the Museums Association announced that the Director of the museum, Gareth Griffiths, had been dismissed pending a police investigation into the 'unauthorised disposal of museum objects'.

Then, late last year the media reported that over 600 artefacts had been stolen from the collection, now owned by Bristol City Museum and held at B Bond in Bristol: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8dyr37qzrno>. The theft is said to have taken place on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025.

The collection included items from the Commonwealth Institute, extensive photographs, paper, film, and oral history archives, and a costume collection.

Missing items include figurines and other decorative artefacts, natural history items, including geological specimens. Jewellery taken includes necklaces, bangles and rings.

The store was broken into TWICE with most items being stolen on the second occasion. Police are looking for four men seen on CCTV.



## PS WAVERLEY HELPS MV BALMORAL

Bristol's famous passenger ship the M.V. Balmoral is moored outside M Shed. Volunteers are working hard to get the Ship back to sea, and invite you to support them by volunteering on Tuesdays or Fridays, and attending their free events on board, see: <https://www.thebalmoral.org.uk/>

The UK's last sea-going paddle-steamer P.S. Waverley will donate the profits of their Severn Estuary sailing on Friday June 12<sup>th</sup>, so put the date in your diary and book tickets on <https://waverleyexcursions.co.uk/> when released shortly. Come and join a group of Swivel Bridge volunteers for an evening cruise.

## WE WISH ALL OUR SUPPORTERS A HEALTHY 2026

Please follow us on Facebook and donate via our website.

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