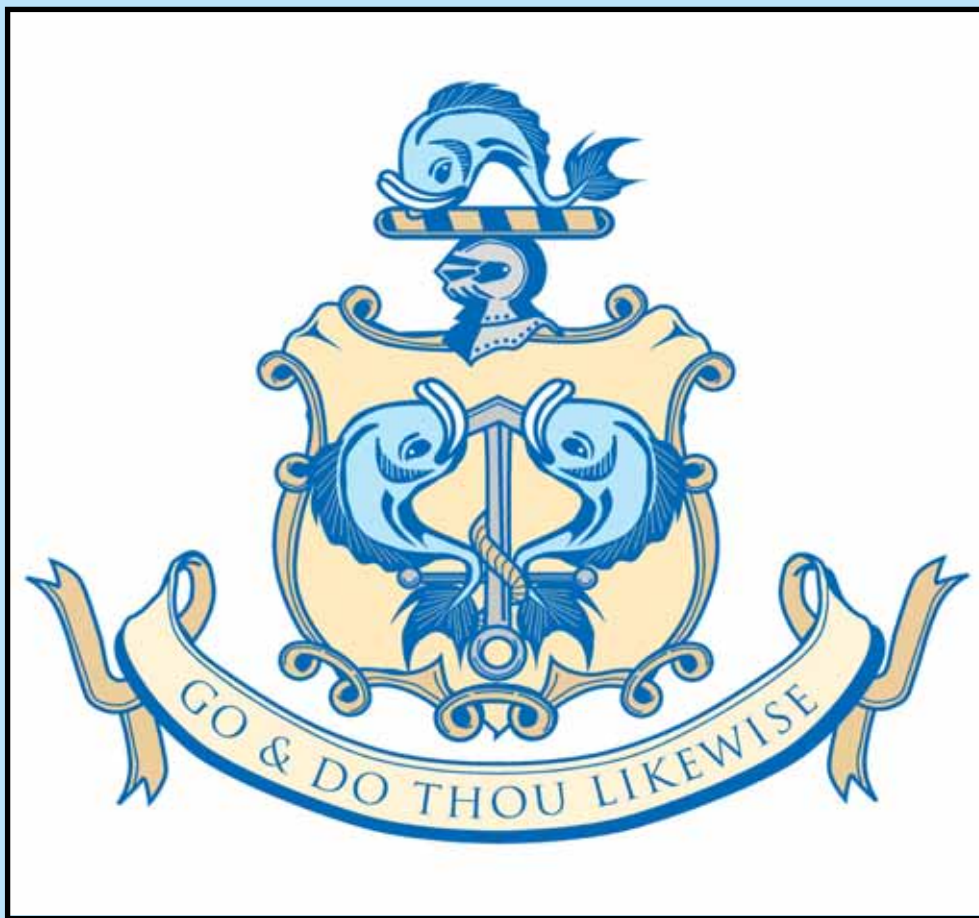
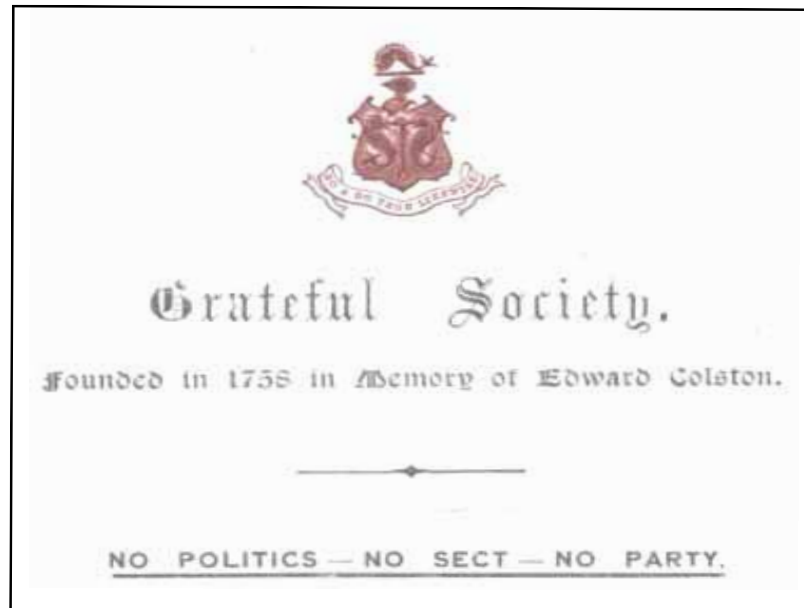


From apprentices to the elderly



Celebrating 250 years of
The Grateful Society



The origin of the Grateful Society crest is unknown but it incorporates three dolphins, no doubt on account of the story that one of Colston's ships was saved because a dolphin wedged itself in a hole in the hull thus enabling the ship to limp back to the safety of port.

The earliest surviving examples of the crest always show it in red or brown, as above. Interestingly at the start of World War II colour was abandoned and not used again until the current blue and yellow version was introduced in 2006.

From apprentices to the elderly

Celebrating the 250th anniversary of the Grateful Society

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Edward Colston





1 Preface

Unlike many cities, Bristol has an abundance of ancient charitable organisations with much interlinking that is confusing to the outsider.

Most of these organisations have evolved over the centuries so that their beginnings and original purposes become lost in the mists of time. Since the Grateful Society is now celebrating its 250th anniversary it seemed an appropriate time to produce a brief, simple booklet chronicling some of the more important aspects of the society's history and to mention some of its subtle links with Bristol's other ancient charitable organisations.

Many people have contributed to this booklet. Several members of the Society have written appropriate sections, for which I am most appreciative. Special thanks though must go to David Jones who wrote the majority of the work documenting the early history, and to Duncan Ogilvie and Stuart Andrews who both performed much needed radical editing.

John Newman
President of the
Grateful Society 2008

2 The Grateful Society – a synopsis

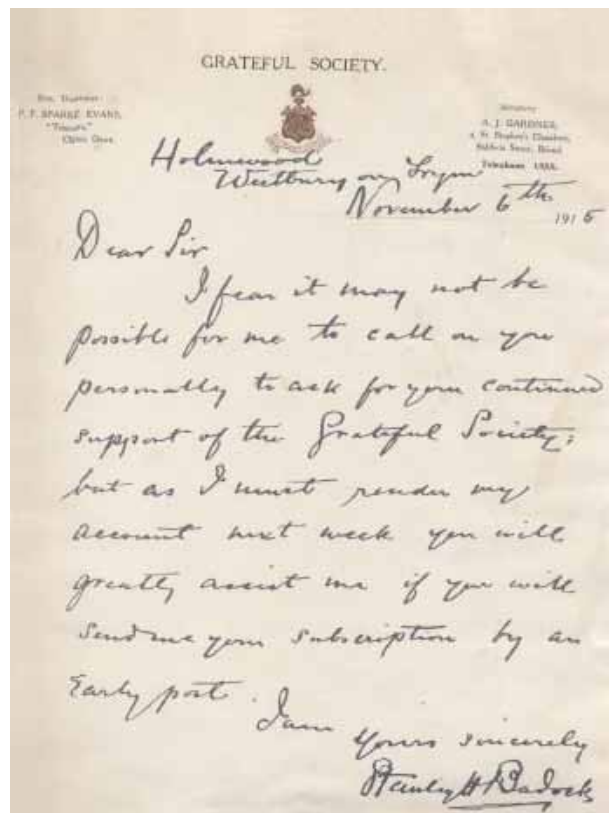
The Grateful is one of a triumvirate of societies (the others being the Dolphin and the Anchor) founded in the mid 18th century to honour the memory of Bristol's greatest philanthropist, Edward Colston. In contrast to the other two, the Grateful, which was founded in 1758, had no political affiliations. Like many such contemporary organisations its charitable works were based on a dinner for like-minded individuals followed by a collection. The Grateful Society devoted its collection to apprenticing poor boys and relieving distress.

Sadly, the early minutes of the society no longer exist so information is sketchy, having been gleaned from newspapers and journals.

In 1762 four boys were apprenticed, but the numbers grew rapidly so that 17 had completed their apprenticeship by 1764. With the passage of time, the charitable aims of the society changed: by 1841 an exceptional collection supported over 1200 "lying-in women" and apprenticed 24 poor boys. Quite when the provision of apprenticeships ceased is unknown, but the need to help women in childbirth diminished with the institution of the National Insurance Act of 1911. From then until now, the Grateful primarily aids impoverished, though previously independent ladies over 55 years old; grants or annuities help them to maintain independence and dignity. In the last 50 years support has also been given to help establish and maintain homes for the elderly; and, very recently to buy motorised wheelchairs for house-bound individuals.

Although the objectives of the society have evolved, the method of fund-raising has remained the annual appeal from each new president. This initially occurred at the Colston Day Dinner but within a few years the president visited his friends to seek support. Around 1900 this became too onerous so the presidents then sent hand written appeal letters. This custom continues to the present day, though increasingly support is sought from other charitable trusts as well as the President's personal friends and colleagues.

The annual dinner remains a pivotal event in the life of the society – since 1919 it has been held at the Red Lodge in Bristol. A collection is no longer held during the dinner, but other traditions including a silent toast to Bristol's greatest philanthropist, Edward Colston are maintained.



3 Bristol's philanthropic tradition

By the 19th century civic pride had led many Bristolians to claim that their city had "long stood at the head of all other cities, for the number, magnitude and diversity of its benevolent institutions". Such a statement was justified since between 1480 and 1660 the charitable sums endowed by Bristol's merchants were second only to London. The sheer scale of the generosity of merchants in assuming responsibility for the social needs of the city's children, poor, old and infirm can be traced back through the centuries to Simon Burton's founding of an almshouse charity in 1292 and to William Canynge (1399 to 1474) who "laid the foundations for the amazing tradition of civic responsibility". Bristol used to be known as the "City of Churches and Charities" but whereas the city centre's skyline still bears witness to the number of churches, it is more difficult to identify the city's charitable history.

In the 19th century Bristol was recognised for the sheer scale of philanthropic endeavour though at times the donors' generosity appeared to be linked to gaining political advantage. By creating endowments, which provided ongoing support, Bristol's merchant benefactors established institutions that would continue in perpetuity: some 90% of all bequests were in this form, a much higher percentage than in most other counties. These endowments ensured that the almshouses, schools, loan funds and apprenticeship schemes had ongoing support, thus meeting the benefactors' objectives and avoiding the need for any subsequent fund-raising.

Bristol merchants

Bristol's small merchant class boldly addressed contemporary social problems: they helped the "deserving" poor, and recognised that education most effectively alleviated poverty. In terms of urban and social history, English merchants had, until the end of the 16th century, a generally poor reputation as they did not enjoy the traditional status of land ownership. Also, they were in business to make money, with a reputation for 'avarice and rapacity'. However, in Bristol, this new merchant class, rarely exceeding 100 individuals, proved their generosity and their pride in what was the second city of the realm. Funding schools and almshouses appealed to business-minded merchants, who wanted the maximum benefit from their hard-earned charitable contributions.

The 18th century saw a change in emphasis in philanthropy, with a move away from the creation of endowed charities with their perpetuity assured by trustees. Instead the charities simply distributed the funds that they collected: it was during this period that the Colston societies were formed and all adopted this approach.

Unlike London, Bristol's benefactors donated their funds to causes within their city, an indication of the level of civic pride. For centuries charity had also played an important part in the city's ritual - a tradition which has been maintained by the three Colston societies: the Dolphin, Grateful and Anchor.

Modern awareness

Although today there is little awareness of the scale of earlier philanthropy, many Bristolians still benefit from the charities created during that period. Among the schools and almshouses founded by Bristol's merchant benefactors were the Foster's Almshouse in 1484, Bristol Grammar School in 1532, Queen Elizabeth's Hospital in 1590, Dr. White's Almshouse in 1610, and Red Maids' School in 1634. In addition to a wide range of grant-giving charities the merchants established funds to improve the city's roads and even set up loan schemes to assist new businesses.

4 Edward Colston

Birth and early life

Edward Colston was born on November 2nd 1636 in Temple Street, Bristol, the eldest of probably 11 children of the merchant William Colston (1608–1681) and his wife Sarah, née Batten. A royalist, William Colston was removed from his office of alderman by order of parliament in 1645, after Prince Rupert surrendered Bristol to the Parliamentary forces. The Colston family moved to London and although little is known about Edward's education, it is possible that he was a pupil at Christ's Hospital.



The statue of Edward Colston in Bristol's City Centre. *"Erected by the citizens of Bristol as a memorial of one of the most virtuous and wise sons of their city. AD 1895."*

Calendar change

Edward Colston's November 2nd birth date is not the current Colston Day (November 13th) because of a calendar change in 1752. At the time of Colston's birth, England still used the Julian calendar which had been introduced during the time of Julius Caesar, but by the 16th century this was 11 days adrift from the solar system. Most of Europe had already adopted the more accurate Gregorian calendar first introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, but it was not until 1752 that England and Scotland followed suit. King George II decreed that "several days of each month shall go and be reckoned and numbered in the same order ... until the second day of September 1752 inclusive, and that the natural day next after immediately following the second of September shall be called... the fourteenth day of September". Thus November 2nd became November 13th as 11 days were "lost". (It was during this period of "lost days" that the three Colston societies' annual appeals were traditionally held.)

International trade

In 1654 Edward Colston was apprenticed to the London Mercers' Company for eight years and became a member of this great livery company in 1673. From 1672 he shipped a variety of goods from London and soon created a successful business trading with Spain, Portugal and Italy dealing mostly in Spanish wine. In 1680 he became a member of the Royal African Company, which had received its royal charter from Charles II in 1672. He then became extensively involved with the triangular trade with its slavery connotations that are now so widely condemned. Yet in 1713 the trade was declared by the Mayor to be "one of the great supports of our people", and was clearly not perceived at the time as being in any way an unacceptable practice.

Charitable activity

During the 1680s Colston began to take an active interest in his native city, where his parents had resettled. In 1682 he made a loan to the Bristol Corporation and in the following year became a member of Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers and a burgess. After his brother's death in 1684 he inherited a mercantile business in Small Street and also became a partner in a sugar refinery at St Peter's Churchyard. He lived in Bristol until 1689 when he moved to Mortlake, Surrey, his home for the remainder of his life.

Though there is no record of a further visit by him to Bristol until 1700, Colston became one of the city's most famous benefactors: in the 1690s he founded and endowed almshouses in King Street and on St Michael's Hill. He endowed the school Queen Elizabeth's Hospital and was instrumental in helping the Merchant Venturers found Colston's Hospital (later School) for boys, which opened in 1710. Two years later he donated money for a school in Temple Parish to educate and clothe 40 poor boys. He gave money to other charity schools in Bristol and provided funds for the embellishment of several of the city's churches, including Temple, St Mary Redcliffe, St Werburgh and All Saints churches together with Bristol Cathedral. He was also generous in a less formal way. It is recounted that a young lady with whom he was walking out at the time expressed surprise when he gave his purse of silver to a beggar as they crossed London Bridge on their way to dine out. She was unceremoniously taken home and ceased to be a suitor thereafter.

High church

Colston was a committed Tory and high-church man: an opponent of Catholicism, Dissent and Whiggism, he insisted that the boys at Colston's should be Anglicans and prepared for apprenticeships. He founded a series of Lenten lectures in 1710 for which he chose the subjects. In October 1710 he was returned as an MP for Bristol, but took little active part in parliament and did not seek re-election after the dissolution that occurred with Queen Anne's death.

From the surviving records it appears that he was a strong-minded individual who set strict conditions for his charitable donations. He retired from business in 1708 and died on 11 October 1721 at his home in Mortlake. His public charitable donations amounted to nearly £71,000 and he bequeathed £100,000 to his relatives. According to one Bristol historian, Colston was an example of a merchant who elected not to marry and have children in order to assist those in need: "every helpless widow is my wife and her distressed orphans my children". His munificence was influenced by his being a prominent Tory, whose charitable efforts often countered his Whig opponents. He left detailed instructions for his funeral which required his coffin to be accompanied by those in Bristol who had benefited from his charities.

Virtual public holiday

Celebrating Colston's memory became part of the civic ritual of Georgian Bristol, with the anniversary of his birth becoming virtually a public holiday after the 1720s. As Thomas Garrard remarked in 1852, "The Societies formed for this purpose, by their annual commemorations, preserve from one generation to another, in an impressive, striking and appropriate manner, the memory of Colston and his actions".

Unlike many other major benefactors, Colston's name is well known in modern Bristol, owing to the founding of Colston's School and Colston's Almshouse, in addition to the naming of the Colston Hall and several Colston streets.

5 The early history

The Grateful Society was established in 1758 and differed from the other Colston societies "in not blending the elements of party feeling with the pure spirit of charity in which it originated." It was also suggested that it was established as "a protest against the strictly party complexion of the Dolphin" - though it was itself entirely non-political in character

More probably, its founders solicited the support of those educated at Colston's School and recommended that the after-dinner collection, instead of being distributed as bread and money as was then the practice, should be devoted to apprenticing boys and relieving distress. If one accepts this interpretation - and it cannot be checked in the absence of the society's early minutes - then the aims and character of the Grateful Society have undergone considerable change.

Apprenticeships

Before 1700 apprenticeships had been the means by which many businessmen had started their careers. In the 1700s, apprenticeships made a vital contribution to the mercantile vibrancy of the city as they had long provided both vocational training and a step into civic society. Many merchant benefactors recognised that it gave a poor boy or girl a trade: such help for the "deserving poor" resonated with those who had themselves become freemen of the city. Eighteenth century population growth caused the proportion of apprentices to decline, and although numbers picked up again after 1750, these were mainly apprentices funded by charities. From 1760 apprenticeship lost some of its appeal as the best means of relieving poverty, and charities instead helped others such as pregnant women and those in debt – as was indeed the case with the Grateful Society.

Grateful Society motto

It is not clear when the provision of apprenticeships ceased, though it must have continued through most of the 19th century. In 1879 it is recorded that "after breakfasting in the Montagu Tavern members of the society processed with the apprentices to All Saints Church". The text of the sermon on that day was taken from the parable of the Good Samaritan; St Luke 10 verse 37 "Go and do thou likewise" – the motto of the Grateful Society. The 1927 dinner invitation shows that the motto had already been in existence for at least 100 years, though when it was chosen and whether it relates to the parable of the Good Samaritan is unknown. However it can certainly be construed as advice to an apprentice and so would have been an appropriate motto for the society as originally established.

"Lying-in" women

Precisely when the society started supporting poor "lying-in women" is unclear but in 1827 the drawing on the dinner invitation clearly shows nurses attending on a pregnant lady suggesting this was the main activity of the society, and in 1863 S. G. Tovey wrote that "the professed object of the Society was to relieve

poor lying-in women at the time of their confinement and to apprentice orphan boys to decent trades." So it would seem that these two charitable objectives were undertaken by the Grateful Society for many years. Interestingly those who contributed to the collections were able to vote for the individuals whom they felt were worthy of support.



The dinner invitation from 1827 showing a "lying-in lady" being attended by nurses. The collage incorporates the Grateful Society's motto and a dolphin as well as showing two of Colston's hospital boys flanking the scene.

6 The early 20th century

Objectives

Despite receiving a letter in 1913 requesting that the society “continue to offer help and succour to poor women in childbirth” it was decided that this would be inappropriate as maternity benefits were then given under the 1911 Insurance Act. At around this time the Society redefined its objectives and started to concentrate its efforts on helping the elderly. In 1918 the appeal for subscriptions ran:

The objects of the society are to raise, by donations and yearly subscriptions, sums of money in order to enable the committee to grant relief to ladies of 55 years of age and upwards, who have formerly occupied positions of independence; but who, owing to misfortune, are now in need of the necessaries of life, and whose total income does not exceed £50.

The major portion of the income of the society will be so devoted, and in addition the committee have power, in their discretion, after setting aside such sums to reserve or emergency account as they may deem desirable, to make grants to such benevolent objects as would have appealed to the kindly heart and philanthropic views of Edward Colston.

In the early part of the 20th century there were many people in need of such support and the merits of individual candidates were pleaded by their supporters. Voting determined the recipients of the annuities, while those contributing to the collection formed the voting panel in proportion to their contribution. For example in 1918 and again in 1945 five votes were allocated for each guinea subscribed.

Gaining an annuity must have been of considerable importance because the whole process was taken extremely seriously with letters of support written, notices of the application created, voting papers printed and the results of the vote published. Such an elaborate process has long since ceased with the decision making being undertaken by the ladies committee with professional advice, though the basic objective has persisted with minimal alteration until the present day.

Hand-written letters

It was also in the early 1900s that the annual appeal by hand-written letters from the president started - replacing the collection at the November dinner and personal visits by the annually elected president to his friends and business colleagues.

By tradition the three Colston societies' fund raising is undertaken during the “lost” eleven days in November, with the outcome announced on November 13th at the Colston-day dinners. This practice continues to the present day and is regarded by many as important for the continued success of the charities.

EMMANUEL VICARAGE,
KNOWLE ROAD,
KNOWLE, BRISTOL
DEC. 22, 1927

DEAR SIR, OR MADAM,

Might I bespeak your interest on behalf of Miss Julia Guest Wheeler, of 43 Haversock Rd., Knowle, in view of the forthcoming Election, in January, of Candidates for the benefits granted by the Grateful Society to Gentlewomen in reduced circumstances.

Miss Wheeler is known to me, and I am convinced she is in very genuine need of the help the Grateful Society advances from time to time to such cases. She is 60 years of age, and in delicate health, and since the death of her mother in January last has to live alone. She has all her life remained home with her parents, and both by her upbringing, her age and state of health is totally unable to add to her slender income. Her father died 21 years ago, and since then Miss Wheeler lived with her Mother, renting a House at 43 Haversock Road, Knowle.

HER MOTHER RECEIVED THE OLD AGE PENSION AND IN ADDITION HAD HELP IN A SUM OF 12/6 PER WEEK, MAKING 22/6 IN ALL. IN ADDITION TO THIS SHE OWNED A HOUSE, A PROPERTY WHICH PRODUCES ABOUT £20 PER YEAR. THIS PROPERTY HAS NOW BECOME MISS WHEELER'S, AND THIS £20 PER ANNUM IS THE ONLY INCOME SHE RECEIVES, EXCEPT THAT SHE RECEIVES A RENTAL OF 11/6 A WEEK FROM A SUB-TENANT IN THE HOUSE SHE RENTS. THE RENT OF THIS HOUSE IS £26 PER ANNUM, PLUS RATES AND TAXES. THIS TENANT IS LIKELY TO MOVE INTO OWN HOUSE SOON.

I feel sure you will agree that Miss Wheeler is in very genuine need, and I can assure that any help you can give her will be well placed. I can state, without hesitation, that she is entirely worthy. Thanking you for your interest and help

Yours Sincerely,
(Signed) Rev. H. HILL, M.A.



Memorabilia of bygone elections

GRATEFUL SOCIETY ANNUITIES 1938-1939

TWENTY-SIXTH ELECTION · FEBRUARY, 1939

This Voting Paper to be returned (in enclosed envelope) not later than ONE o'clock on TUESDAY, the 21st. day of FEBRUARY, 1939

The Owner of this Paper is entitled to

5 VOTES

VOTES

THIRD APPLICATION

..... 1 MULLINS, MARTHA ANNE

SECOND APPLICATION

..... 2 CHAMBERS, ANNIE DORCAS

..... 3 DEAR, INA LOUISE

..... 4 HARRIS, ELLA MAUDE

..... 5 KEMPTON, EVA FRANCES

FIRST APPLICATION

..... 6 COOPER, ELEANOR LILIAN

..... 7 CROSS, ELIZABETH

..... 8 GUEST, ALICE MORGAN

..... 9 LAWRENCE, KATE

..... 10 MILLER, EDITH MARY

..... 11 PRICE, ETHEL

..... 12 FROWSE, ELIZABETH ANN

DIRECTIONS FOR VOTING

- The Votes must be inserted in the blank column headed VOTES, to the left of the Candidate's name in whose favour they are desired to be given, and the Signature of the Subscriber must be added on the first space below.
- The whole of the above number of Votes may be given to one Candidate or divided.
- If any alteration is made, or a larger number of Votes filled in than the Voter is entitled to, the whole will be void.

Subscriber's Signature:

I hereby authorise the Committee to record my Votes in favour of the case or cases they think most suitable.

Subscriber's Signature:

(Sign here only when Votes are left to the Committee's decision).

GRATEFUL SOCIETY.

List of Candidates and Number of Votes, 1914.

NAME.	No. on List.	No. of Votes	NAME.	No. on List.	No. of Votes.
Parnell, E. M.	41	465	Hawtin, J. A.	28	26
Lorymer, M. A.	32	289	Poole, E. K.	42	23
Curgenven, E.	13	250	Davies, M. E.	16	22
Hanson, J. G.	29	234	Moss, A. P.	35	21
Moore, C. M.	33	188	Edkins, B.	18	20
Porteous, S. A.	43	150	Haines, L. B.	25	18
Taylor, A. M.	49	120	Bull, A. M.	6	17
Dando, M.	14	116	England, A. E.	22	16
Etty, F.	21	99	Perry, L. A.	40	15
Dyer, M. A.	17	98	Tarr, S. A.	52	15
Windridge, E.	57	96	May, E. R.	36	14
Alty, M. J.	1	94	Oram, L. A.	38	13
Watkins, S. A.	55	74	Waters, E. M.	54	13
Brookman, A.	9	63	Price, A. M.	44	11
Stephenson, E.	48	63	Maskell, E.	34	10
Fountaine, L.	24	62	Chapple, E.	11	10
Richards, M. S.	45	58	Jones, M. A.	31	10
Pedler, J.	39	48	Forster, M. E.	23	8
Barton, J.	3	47	Townsend, D. M.	50	8
Brodribb, A. M.	7	47	Herepath, E. M.	30	6
Danger, F. A.	15	45	Barrow, T. B.	2	5
Harris, E.	26	43	Bale, L. S.	4	5
Croll, M.	12	40	Weeks, E. H.	56	5
Ball, J. F.	10	35	Smith, M. J.	47	2
Tovey, M. A.	51	34	Brett, L. F.	5	2
Etty, C.	20	32	Eyers, M. F. W.	19	1
Hatherley, M. A.	27	29	Bevan, H.	8	0
Shackell, A. F.	46	29	Uzzell, E.	53	0
Oaten, M. A.	37	26			

*Edna May Guest
13th March 1914*

In recent years fund raising has included appeals to trusts and foundations whose objectives are broadly similar.

Colston Day Processions

Before the First World War the three Colston societies organised their own processions and church services but support declined and there were no longer apprentices to swell the numbers. In 1920 and again in 1921 a letter was received from the Dolphin Society asking for a joint service in the Cathedral. On both occasions the approach was rejected but shortly afterwards the three Colston societies joined forces for their annual Colston Day service after which homage is paid at the tomb of Colston.



Ceremonial has always played an important part in the life of the Grateful Society, and in 1934 a presidential badge of office was presented. This continues to be worn by the president on all ceremonial occasions or when the society is represented elsewhere.

Around 1900 the annual Colston Day dinner was held in the Royal Hotel: not only was the amount of the collection announced, but so was the list of subscribers! These dinners lapsed during the First World War but were revived in 1919 by the president James Fuller Eberle who had recently purchased the Red Lodge for the city. Since then the dinner has been held in the Oak Room of the Red Lodge, a custom which is much valued.



7 The post-war years

Despite the austerity imposed by the Second World War, the presidents managed to maintain the level of their annual collections so that the work of the society continued uninterrupted. The focus remained the provision of annuities to impoverished elderly ladies and this continues to the present day, with the number of annuitants supported currently around 80, after the society took over responsibility for a number of annuitants previously supported by St Monica's Trust.

In addition, capital has slowly accumulated following successful collections and prudent financial management. As a result the society has been able to support the provision and maintenance of residential accommodation for the elderly.

In 1972 £14,000 was given to purchase 5 Eaton Crescent for Bristol Old People's Welfare (BOPW, now Brunelcare) and in the same year £5000 was given to the Bristol Flower Fund Homes. However the major contributions have been to two homes: Cote House and Robinson House. Members of The Grateful attend an annual party at both these residences and the Society contributes, when necessary to purchase first class equipment, though the standards are largely maintained by the hard work of the dedicated staff.

Cote House

Cote was the family home of Harold Robinson, a member of the ES&A Robinson paper and packaging family from 1919 until he died in 1954. After his death there was talk of developing the site but this was more than his unmarried sister Katherine could bear. She bought the house from the other family members and turned it into 16 flatlets for the elderly – and so was born the idea of the Cote charity, with the Society of Merchant Venturers appointed as trustee. In 1960 a wing was added to the rear to increase the number of residents to 27. In those days it only provided bed-sitting rooms with shared bathroom and lavatory facilities.



The main building of Cote House in its substantial gardens

In 1962 Katherine Gotch Robinson identified the need at Cote for modern accommodation with nursing care for those no longer able to look after themselves. As a result New Cote was built at the end of the garden, originally providing just eight bedrooms. It has been extended twice since then with one



New Cote

extension funded by the Grateful Society. In 1977 Katherine herself needed to be looked after and so she extended New Cote to give herself a suite of rooms. Thus New Cote has gradually increased in size to its present 23 residents, and a major redevelopment is now planned which, when built, will provide care for 40 residents. The Grateful Society has pledged major support for this development, which is to be known as Katherine House, after the original benefactor.

Meanwhile the original house has been altered significantly, much of it funded by the Grateful Society. Shared bathroom facilities are no longer acceptable and the house now has 12 self-contained flats together with a communal drawing room and dining room as well as an attached cottage. Residents are provided with a three-course lunch every day but have kitchen facilities in their flats to provide other meals.

Although Cote is run by the Cote Trust and overseen by the Merchant Venturers, the Grateful Society has always provided for special needs which have included:

- 1967 Purchasing land for the New Cote extension
- 1968 Landscaping New Cote
- 1981 Rewiring and gas conversion
- 2002 Extensive renovations and provision of en-suite bathrooms
- 2008 Agreement in principle for a major contribution to the planned redevelopment of New Cote

Robinson House (formerly the Grateful House)

In 1989 a major need was perceived to relate to care of the elderly mentally infirm (EMI). The society purchased land to allow the building of an EMI home by BOPW, this finally opened in 1993 at Whitchurch. The society also funded major renovations in 2000 and a peaceful garden in 2004. State-of-the-art equipment, such as hoists, has been supplied and a



The entrance to Robinson House.

physiotherapist employed. A gardener/handyman maintains the gardens, and it is planned to fund a summer room for the residents as part of the Grateful Society's 250th anniversary celebration.

“The Great Wheels” project

Enabling the elderly to maintain dignity and independence has been the society's prime objective for around 100 years. In our modern world this inevitably means mobility: hence a major new initiative, “The Great Wheels Project” was launched in 2006 to provide motorised wheelchairs for needy individuals. Like all projects the society supports, this is run with a professional organisation (Living, formerly the Disabled Living Centre) that provides technical expertise. The project has proved a great success with many needy applicants coming forward.



Two beneficiaries of the Great Wheels project with their new chairs, after assessment and fitting at Living

Careful screening for suitability has been carried out with most applicants being accepted, so that the first few recipients are now mobile. There is probably a substantial need for this initiative since no other organisation will fund an individual who is able to walk a few steps but can not get far from their house. Currently the project is being monitored carefully before significant expansion is funded but many recipients have already expressed their gratitude “... thank you for all your help in arranging the funding of the new scooter, you can't imagine what a new lease of life it has given me...”

There has always been some flexibility in the society's constitution which has allowed its areas of support to change. One-off grants are also made from time to time. In 1925 a contribution was made towards the stained glass window behind Colston's tomb; in 1968 £250 was donated to the Bedminster Rotary Club Flood Relief Fund and in 1999 support was given to the Barton Hill shopping bus for older people.

No doubt other needs will arise amongst our increasingly aged population. Hopefully the Grateful Society having survived and adapted during its first 250 years will remain in a position to support disadvantaged members of the community, and by so doing discharge its philanthropic objectives.



8 Ladies Committee and its work

The formation of the Ladies Committee in 1989 added an important pastoral element to the support given to annuitants who now all benefit from visits as well as from financial help. In earlier times, society members could nominate individuals to receive an annuity; this function is now performed by the Ladies Committee with professional help.

The Ladies Committee links the society with its annuitants and has proved a major enhancement of the work undertaken by the charity. Not only do the periodic visits combat loneliness but the visitors assess the needs of annuitants and at times help to "fight their corner". The visiting ladies also help with the



administration involved in obtaining the benefits to which the annuitants may be entitled.

Some examples illustrate ways in which the society helps annuitants:

In the time I have been on the Ladies Committee I have certainly had my eyes opened to the needs of some of those we set out to help. In this day and age one cannot fail to be shocked at seeing unhygienic conditions in poorly-kept homes, yet if you have the courage to look in the fridge for milk for a cup of tea there might be two shelves of tinned pet food for a beloved cat and nothing else.

Mrs A was helped after she and her husband managed to buy their council flat. They had no savings and when her husband died the pension was less, leaving her no money for maintenance. When the boiler failed and the windows fell into disrepair, the Grateful paid for a new boiler and window repairs. For 10 years, during which time she undertook some voluntary work, the country was spared the cost of providing her a council flat.

Mrs C had to move to a council flat when her husband left her for another woman. She had no savings and the Grateful helped her buy the necessities for a home.

Mrs P was referred to the society through Social Services. She had for a number of years been a carer looking after her husband; her own health suffered and she on a number of occasions had falls within their home. Another agency was involved with her but her savings dwindled because of the costs involved. The society was asked to help and it was felt that an annuity could enable this lady to remain in her home. The work of fitting bath aids and other assistance has helped Mrs P to remain in the house she and her husband had lived in for most of their married life.

Mrs G needed the council to build a ramp for her buggy to get in and out of her building: it took numerous phone calls and many months before the work was completed. The society financed the buggy and the lady is no longer house-bound – a very happy conclusion.

Mrs M had trouble with her house subsiding because of trees growing on nearby land. On visiting her, it came to light that £1000 was needed to get the restorative work started. The society gave her £500 towards the work.

Mrs P wrote asking for help towards a new cooker since the oven and grill had caught fire after a drip from the grill. Since it was a gas appliance she was frightened to use it. The Grateful was able to help out.

Miss B, a former nurse, managed to leave an abusive relationship when the police intervened while she was at hospital following a particularly severe attack. She was found a very basic home with minimal furnishing by another agency but had no cooker. Again the Grateful was pleased to be able to help.

9 Traditions of the Colston Societies (Dolphin, Grateful and Anchor)

All three Colston Societies were founded in the mid 18th century and each has a number of traditions that, while not directly relevant, provide the 'glue' that has kept them serving the community through the centuries. For many years "the bells of St Mary Redcliffe rang a muffled peel at midnight on November 12th each year, and many other city church bells followed on the dawn of the day and so continued throughout the 13th." This custom has now ceased but other traditions continue.

The Colston societies had political links in earlier years. The Dolphin Society was considered the Tory's charity. The Anchor Society was patronised by the Whigs, and for many years benefited at their annual dinners from the most important Prime Ministerial speech in the country after that heard at the Lord Mayor's Banquet in London. The Grateful Society's members always considered themselves to be without politics and indeed this was stated on their early headed paper.

Church services

Until the 1920s the three societies had separate church services on November 13th. Rumour has it that each society competed to have a more glittering procession to church than the others, with bands playing at its head. Morning coats, with black top hats and black waistcoats have always been the required dress: when the processions started this would have been fairly standard working dress in this business community. Although this is no longer the case, this dress code has been maintained and certainly makes the procession more prominent, even though a band no longer plays.



The Grateful Society members ready for the 2007 Colston Day parade

When the numbers attending fell it was considered appropriate that all three should celebrate together. Since the Grateful Society held their service in All Saints Church where Colston was buried, and at whose tomb all three societies paid their respects on that day, it was suggested that the other two societies should join the Grateful Society at their service. This practice continues until the present day.

The Church of All Saints is now no longer used for church services and so the annual celebration is held in St Stephen's Church. Nevertheless the tradition lives on and the Grateful Society leads the procession of the committees of each society into St Stephen's Church. The service is organised by the Grateful Society president and the Rector of St Stephen's: the preacher invited by the rector is chosen by the Grateful Society president. After the service, members of all three societies process to All Saints Church to pay homage at Colston's tomb.



The tomb of Edward Colston in All Saints Church.

Beneficiaries of all three societies are invited to the service after which they are entertained to coffee or sherry. It is an occasion for celebration of another year of charitable giving and a reminder of the philanthropy that has gone before.

In the evening each society holds a celebration dinner, funded by the members, when the collections of each society are announced: the gentle rivalry between the three helps to stimulate the collections! The dinners remain splendid and enjoyable occasions but they fail to match the opulence of those held in former times.



The 1927 menu shows the annual Colston Day dinner to have consisted of 11 courses. Current dinners remain excellent but are rather more modest in content.

Red Lodge dinners

Since the 1920s the Grateful Society has held its dinner, which used to be a substantial feast, in the Great Oak Room of the Red Lodge on Park Row. This building was saved from demolition and shipment to the United States by supporters of the Grateful Society, and the Elizabethan panelling within which the dinner is held lives on as a result. In addition to other toasts, a "silent toast for the pious and immortal memory of Edward Colston" is drunk, and it is at this dinner that the president for the forthcoming year is formally installed by transfer of the president's badge.



The Oak Room

Other traditions abound and are treated appropriately. One such tradition is the maintenance in a leather-bound book of the photographs of all presidents. At the annual dinner this book is on display and reminds the many past presidents in the assembled company how youthful they looked in earlier years. Three silver items – the sweetmeats dish, snuff box and stag – are placed before the president though none has a role in the proceedings nowadays.

These traditions enhance, and do not detract from, the purpose of the society, which remains the assistance of the elderly to maintain their independence and dignity in reduced circumstances.

10 The 250th anniversary

The Grateful Society has now reached its 250th anniversary, a major achievement which warrants celebration. Since the society is a charitable organisation the celebration is primarily in the form of increased charity. A summer room extension is being financed at Robinson House and major funding given to the New Cote development.

A commemorative grandmother-clock is being given to both Cote House and Robinson House and commemorative mugs have been given to our annuitants and residents. In addition, lady visitors are being invited to the annual dinner and this booklet about the society is being produced for Colston Day. Copies can subsequently be obtained on line or by contacting the office. It is hoped that these various undertakings will suitably mark the anniversary.



A proposal for the new Robinson House summer room



Just as the communities needs for charitable support have changed so too have other aspects of the Society and in 2006 a web site (www.gratefulsociety.org) was established to provide information about the organisation and it's activities.

Fund raising methods also continue to evolve and modernise. Initially all fund raising was undertaken at the annual Colston day dinner and then for many years by personal visits from the president to his friends and business colleagues. For around 100 years though fund raising has been by a personal letter from the president; this remains the main focus, but increasingly support being received from various trusts and other charities, as well as from prudent financial management. However after 250 years more modern methods have been introduced so that donations can now be received by debit card or on line via Justgiving. (www.justgiving.com/gratefulsociety/).

The gradual evolution of the Society with respect to both its charitable focus and fund raising methods means that it remains in good shape to continue supporting disadvantaged members of the community for the next 250 years.

APPENDICES

A Special years and special people

1762 Abraham Gadd: early apprenticeships

It is recorded in the Felix Farley's Bristol Journal that

The members of the Grateful Society held their annual Dinner at the Ship in Small street; after which they made a collection of £351.8s.7d; for Part of it they are oblig'd to several, to whom it was not convenient for them to attend, some of them residing in London, and they have all hereby the unfeigned Thanks of the said Society, who hope this will induce others (who have by their industry acquir'd large Fortunes, and who without the said Benefaction, could not be in their present affluent situation. ... The above sum, together with a Balance in the late President's Hands, and some Donations received since, will enable the Society to put out four Boys this Year, in order to which a Committee of that Body will meet at the Ship in Small-street, on Thursday next the 25th instant, at seven o'clock in the evening, in order to receive Petitions.

It thus appears that already the collection was not confined to those attending the annual dinner or indeed residing in Bristol. It is also interesting so see that members of the committee were petitioning on behalf of the potential apprentices.

1767 Henry Burgum: apprenticed pewterer

From a report in the Stroud Journal of 22nd February 1879:

The anniversary of the great and good man, Edward Colston, Esq, drawing nigh, it is with utmost pleasure that we inform those whose memory has slipped, and the public in general. That the Grateful Society still continues to carry out, in some degree, that high example of Christian liberality, by placing out poor Bristol boys to trades, with a view to rendering many who were deserted by their parents, and unable to work, useful members of society. The society will meet the President, Mr Henry Bergum, at All Saints Church, Friday 13th. November inst, to hear divine service and a sermon, and afterwards adjourn to the Hooper's Hall in King Street, to dinner, as usual. There are 36 boys in their apprenticeship.

The president, Henry Bergum, had come from Gloucester to Bristol early in his life: he obtained help from a Colston charity and was apprenticed as a pewterer. He rose to become one of the early presidents of the Grateful Society. He was so obsessed with a desire to be considered aristocratic that he acquired a fictional "De Bergham pedigree", with his ancestry traced back to William the Conqueror. He also had painted an almost life-size portrait, and affected a taste for literature and fine art, as well as being a lover of music.

He was much derided by some for his delusions of grandeur: one ex-Colston School boy published a slashing satire against the Tories dedicated to Henry Bergum to whom he devoted 23 pages filled with “the vilest personal abuse of the proud descendent of the De Berghams”.

1831 Richard Nott: response to the Bristol Riots

The notorious riots of 1831 had ended just over two weeks earlier and much of Queen Square, probably still smouldering, lay in ruins. This notice appeared in the Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal of 19th November 1831:

Owing to the late lamentable occurrences in this City, it has been considered advisable that the Annual Dinner of the society, on the present occasion, should not take place; but, as it may be justly inferred that a great deal of distress will be experienced by the lower classes this winter, Donations and Subscriptions are respectfully solicited, which will thankfully be received by Mr. Alderman Barrow, the Treasurer; or by the President, Mr. Richard Nott, Somerset-Street. This Charity relieved during the last year 657 married lying-in women and apprenticed 9 poor boys.

It is reported that £148 7s was raised by the president. The Dolphin and the Anchor Societies also elected to cancel their annual meetings and dinners, although they too sought contributions.

1840 Sir John Haberfield: an exceptional collection

The Bristol Mercury reported on 21st November 1840 that “the late president of the Grateful Society, J.K.Haberfield by the unparalleled exertions of himself and his family for the last five or six weeks collected and gave donations amounting to upwards of £900. The total amount of the collection was £1,144 4s 6d.”

The money came from the dinner, the church collection, attorneys in London, Bath, Exeter, Devonport, Liverpool and Plymouth, as well as collections made by the president and his wife. This unprecedentedly large collection allowed the committee “to relieve at their residences, upwards of twelve hundred lying-in married women, and to apprentice twenty-four poor boys to useful trades.” This was reported in the Bristol Mercury of 13th November 1841 in which a notice reminded members that donors were “at liberty to recommend two poor women for relief also during confinement, and boys for apprenticeship”.

The president, Sir John Haberfield (1785–1857) had also been president of the Dolphin Society in 1838, when he had raised £643 13s 6d. One imagines that his politics would have precluded him from considering membership of the Anchor Society! Born and educated in Plymouth, he came to Bristol at 17 to train as a solicitor. Soon founding his own legal practice, he made a mark in the city. In 1837 he became the Chief Magistrate but declined to draw the salary, so endearing himself to Bristol citizens. He was Chief Magistrate five more times between 1838 and 1851 and occupied other important commercial, political and charitable posts. He was knighted in March 1851, soon after which he was

presented with a "service of plate" worth £800, subscribed by 500 citizens. When he died in December 1857, his obituaries stated that he would "be remembered and revered as the princely philanthropist" having "loosened his purse strings to all our benevolent institutions".

1841 No president elected

In view of the unprecedented collection the previous year by John Haberfield, no president was elected. However the society "met with the treasurer and committee at the Montague, and from thence proceeded with about 100 apprentices to attend divine service at All Saints Church." The collection by the treasurer still amounted to £372. The apprentices returned to the Montague and received a "substantial dinner".

1918 Henry Wansbrough: record collection

The national trauma of the First World War and the heartfelt gratitude for the armistice of 11th November 1918 was very evident in the response of the Colston societies. The Bristol Times and Mercury reported on 14th November 1918 that a "novel and welcome feature" of the celebration of the "Colston Anniversary" was the joint attendance of the Dolphin, Grateful and Anchor Societies at divine service in the cathedral. Twice during the years 1916 and 1917 the president of the Anchor Society had accompanied the president of the Dolphin Society to church, but 1918 was the first year in which all three societies attended a service together, though this practice did not become fully established until a few years later.

The Grateful Society however kept their tradition of independence by an hour earlier attending their own short service at All Saints Church and then joining the procession from the Corn Exchange to the cathedral.

In 1918 the society raised £2,207 15s 2d including £845 6s subscribed to an emergency fund. Even ignoring the emergency fund, the sum raised was the largest until then, exceeding Sir John Haberfield's total from 77 years earlier, by £200.

1945 Alfred E Robinson: after the bombing

The newspaper reports and the language used were in marked contrast at the end of the Second World War. The headline in the Western Daily Press of 14th November 1945 reads "Pre-War Colston Day Customs Revived" with "collections reach very good totals". The Grateful Society held its traditional service at All Saints — the first time the ceremony had taken place "since the tomb of Edward Colston was divested of the covering which had protected it from bomb damage."

The objectives of the society were stated as being to grant relief to "ladies of 55 years of age and upwards who have formerly occupied positions of independence but who, owing to misfortune, are now in need of the necessities of life."

B Family connections

Several families have strong associations with the society: members of several generations having served as presidents. The first president William Fry (1758) had three other family members act as presidents (1818, 1885 and 1913). There were seven members of the Wills family (1874, 1894, 1919, 1927, 1930, 1942 and 1970); seven of the Robinson family (1880, 1893, 1912, 1925, 1940, 1956, 1968 and 1983); five of the Harvey family (1875, 1890, 1947, 1963 and 1978); and more recently four members of the Hood family (1953, 1965, 1976 and 2006),

Robinson

More than any other, the Robinson family has been associated with the Grateful Society: no fewer than six family members have served as president.

In 1884 Elisha Smith Robinson left the family grocery business and paper mill in Gloucestershire and moved to Bristol where in Baldwin Street he established a business providing wrapping paper for the grocery trade. Four years later he was joined by his brother, Alfred and the firm of ES&A Robinson was founded.

Elisha Robinson became president in 1880 and was followed by his son Arthur in 1893. His great grand-daughter's husband, Paul also served as president in 1968 as did his great-great-grand-daughter's husband, George Tricks in 1969. Alfred Esmond Robinson, grandson of Elisha Smith's younger brother John was president in 1945.

Sir Foster Gotch Robinson had two terms as president (1912 & 1940), a distinction he shares with the first president, William Fry (1759, 1760). He also ran the family business from 1929 to 1961.

The Robinson family have a further association with the Grateful Society in that Harold, grandson of Elisha Smith Robinson bought Cote House in Westbury-on-Trym in 1919. This was later sold to his sister Katherine who gave the building and grounds for the use of older people. The Grateful Society continues to fund special needs of Cote House which now provides sheltered homes for the elderly. In addition when the Grateful Society helped to establish a home in Whitchurch, the name was changed from Grateful House to Robinson House, in honour of the enormous contribution the family had made.

Although Thomas Lloyd Robinson (1962) was unrelated to the family he nonetheless worked in the ES&A Robinson business and his daughter married Charles Densham (president 1987). Charles's brother Ryan was also president (1995) and has subsequently served long spells as both secretary and treasurer, thus playing a major role in shaping the recent development of the society.

Harvey

In 18th century Bristol the ruthless sea captain Thomas Harvey used to strike fear into children who met him. His son maintained the seafaring and trading family tradition but his grandson forsook the high seas for the wine trade, eventually starting Harveys around 1840.

The family wine business continued until becoming part of Showerings in 1966 and two years later merging with Allied Breweries. Five family members served as presidents starting with John Junior (1875). His son Edward Arthur (1890) was followed by his nephew John St Claire (1947) and grandson George McWatters

(1963). The last family member to be president was John (1978), who continues to advise the incumbent president about appropriate wine for the Colston Day dinner.

Wills

The Wills family who made their fortune in Bristol from the tobacco business of WD & HO Wills have played a prominent role in the city for two centuries. Major donations helped found Bristol University and St Monica's residential home. Several of the family have been honoured for their commercial, political and philanthropic works. The family have strong links with the Colston societies.

Seven family members have served as presidents of the Grateful Society including three direct forebears of the current baronet: his father John Vernon (1970), grandfather George Alfred (1930) and great-grandfather George Alfred Wills (1894). Four other family members have been presidents of the Grateful Society and eight, including the current baronet, have served as presidents of the sister organisation, the Anchor Society.

The family is linked by marriage to the Eberle family. Four members of this family have served as presidents of the Grateful Society, one of whom secured the Red Lodge for the city and for the society's annual dinner.

C Other ancient Bristol charities

Edward Colston specified in his will that he wanted his memory to be preserved with a yearly sermon in Bristol Cathedral, on the date of his birthday, at which "my Hospital Boys are to be present." After his death, other means were sought to note his extraordinary benevolence to the city and a number of societies were formed during the eighteenth century, with both social and political objectives. The first to be formed was the Colston Society, at one time known as the Parent Society. Shortly afterwards the Dolphin, Grateful and Anchor Societies were all formed to maintain the memory of Bristol's greatest philanthropist. These three are confusingly known as the Colston societies.

The Colston societies

The Dolphin, Grateful and Anchor Societies have all been in existence for over two hundred years and now share the common objective of helping disadvantaged elderly people in the Bristol area.

The Dolphin Society

Formed in 1749, this was a Tory political society: it also gave annuities to the old and deserving poor. The society was formed when a group of friends, who wanted to continue Colston's charitable works, met for dinner on his birthday, November 13th. A collection for charitable work in Bristol was held. The tradition of raising money in early November has continued ever since.

The society is named after the dolphin on the Colston crest. The Colston Hospital boys displayed a dolphin emblem in the days when they wore blue-coat uniform and it is said that one of Colston's ships was saved from sinking by a dolphin that became stuck in a hole.

The Dolphin Society no longer has associations with the Tory party. In recent years the Dolphin has provided smoke alarms, security locks and lights, Tunstall lifelines and "easy" mobile phones to numerous elderly people. Currently a project is underway to develop on-line shopping.

The Anchor Society

The society was formed as a counter to the Dolphin Society when a group of 22 Whig friends dined at the Three Tuns and held a collection to benefit the poor and elderly in Bristol. Until the First World War the annual Anchor dinners were important political events associated with the Whig party. This is no longer the case but the annual collection continues.

The Anchor Society supports a number of annuitants both financially and by visitors who help the elderly. In recent years the society has helped fund sheltered housing and day centres in St George and Knowle in Bristol.

The Colston Society

In 1726 the members of the vestry of St Mary Redcliffe decided to commemorate the birthday of Edward Colston with a service at the church, later dining together and making a collection for charity. The Colston Society (for many years called

the Parent Society) was thus formed. It has continued ever since with its members, who have to be elected, restricted in number to 150 and with an interest in Bristol.

At its first meeting, on 2nd November 1726, the sum of £34 4s was subscribed by 33 individuals, "for a sermon to be preached in the Parish Church of St Mary Redcliffe, on the 2nd November, yearly for ever, and the interest of the surplus money, if any, shall be paid for the use of the Charity School of the said parish for ever." The society also used the funds to assist education, the sick and the poor of Bristol. In particular it chose to support those who followed bookish trades, such as bookkeeping.

The object of the society is to honour Colston's memory. One of the toasts at the annual dinner remains "To the pious and immortal memory of the late Edward Colston Esquire".

The president for the year makes his collection only from the members. The proceeds are spent for the benefit of children living or schooling within the parish of St Mary Redcliffe.

The Colston Research Society

It had long been felt by certain prominent citizens that some of the charitable monies collected in Colston's name should be devoted to furthering education. In 1899 at a meeting between University College representatives and prominent businessmen, the Colston Research Society was formed with the object of promoting higher education. At their first annual dinner the president expressed the wish that Bristol should become the home for a university for the west of England. A collection was held and after substantial grants from members of the Wills family the college achieved university status in 1909.

Currently the Society remains discrete and administers the accumulated funds, only occasionally seeking to raise further money. It undertakes two functions:

1. Pump priming for a major international symposium at the University: the proceedings of which are published by courtesy of the Colston Research Society
2. Hosting of the occasional dinner with the objective of bringing together university staff and appropriate leaders of Bristol's community.

The Bristol Savages and the Red Lodge

The Bristol Savages Society was founded in 1904 so that local artists could meet for sketching and conversation in a convivial atmosphere. Subsequently entertainers and others have been accepted as members though the president always comes from among the artist members. Initially the society had a variety of meeting places but in 1919 its members, notably George Wills and James Fuller Eberle who had both served as presidents of the Grateful Society (1894 and 1907 respectively) bought the Tudor Red Lodge to save it from being demolished and shipped to the United States.

The lodge was given to the city of Bristol with a proviso that the Savages could continue to meet there as long as they strove to support and encourage fine and applied arts. The Red Lodge now forms part of the city's museum complex but remains the home of the Savages. In addition, members of the Grateful Society have enjoyed their annual Colston Day dinner in the fine surroundings of the Great Oak Room since early in the 20th century.

The Canynge Society

The Society was founded in 1848 with the specific intention of raising money to rebuild the spire of St Mary Redcliffe Church which had collapsed in the 15th century during a storm. Considerable funds were contributed to the restoration of the spire, the work being completed in 1873. Following this the society ceased to exist.

By the 1920s the fabric of St Mary Redcliffe had deteriorated badly. In view of this a number of leading Bristol citizens decided to resurrect the society, which was re-formed in 1927. The specific purpose has been to raise funds for the improvement of the "fabric of St Mary Redcliffe and its environs."

A standing committee of about 20 members meets three times a year to fund the society's activities as well as to choose the president for four years hence. Funds are raised by an annual presidential appeal for a project of his choice which may relate to the fabric of the church or the immediate environment.

The Ancient Society of St Stephen's Ringers

There is no firm evidence as to the origins of this society but it is believed to have started in around 1470 as a guild of bell ringers dedicated to the craft. The society's purpose changed over the years so that by the late 17th century it was a mixed group of men, only some of whom were bell ringers, and by the mid 19th century members were merely concerned with maintaining tradition and enjoying a lively dinner.

In 1873 it was decided that the Ringers would dedicate themselves to the preservation of St Stephen's Church and its precincts. This worthy objective has been pursued ever since with the master's annual collection from the members having met the cost of many works.

Currently the society has a court of 28 present officers and past presidents plus 100 members and 40 colts. Each November a church service is held followed a few days later by a dinner at which many of the ancient customs are followed.

The Society of Merchant Venturers

Although documentary evidence is lacking, the society probably started to evolve in the 13th century but was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1552. In its early days the society was primarily concerned with regulating and undertaking maritime trade, managing the port and inspiring voyages of exploration, such as that of John Cabot in 1497, when Newfoundland was discovered.

Although no longer primarily concerned with maritime matters, the Merchants have played an important role in many aspects of Bristol's life, including the establishment of the Great Western Railway Company, creation of the Clifton Suspension Bridge and the preservation of the Downs. In addition, the organisation has strong educational links, having founded a number of schools including Colston's and being involved in the establishment of the University and, more recently, sponsoring a City Academy.

Care for the elderly has been a priority for 350 years since Alms Houses were first established in the city. Currently the organisation undertakes the management of the substantial endowment of St Monica's Trust, which provides independent living for the elderly, and of the Cote Charity, which administers Cote House and New Cote — two residential homes that receive support from the Grateful Society.

Bristol Charities, (formerly Bristol Municipal Charities)

Although only established in 1835 its roots go back some 700 years to the time when Bristol was emerging as a major port. Many entrepreneurial merchants made large fortunes from trade and several left enduring legacies to charitable organisations for the benefit of Bristol's poor.

These gradually came under the administration of Bristol Corporation which assumed the role of Trustee. However, the entangling of endowed charitable funds and local politics inevitably led to suggestions of improper use of the cash. In the 1830's a Royal Commission looked into the activities of municipal corporations and highlighted serious shortcomings. As a result of subsequent legislation municipal corporations ceased to act as Trustees and in 1838 this function was taken over by Bristol Charities.

Subsequently many other small charities have been brought within the administration of Bristol Charities, a process that is still continuing. Currently the organisation assists the disadvantaged elderly in Bristol by administering day care and residential services and by giving grants. It also provides management services to other charities from its offices in the city centre, which are shared with the Grateful Society.

D Previous officers of the Grateful Society

POST-WAR PRESIDENTS

1945	A E Robinson	1977	T C M Stock
1946	R J Sinclair	1978	J C T Harvey
1947	J St C Harvey	1979	S J D Awdry
1948	J F Robinson	1980	C W Thomas
1949	J R R Scull	1981	C R McCay
1950	H M C Hosegood	1982	D C Tudway Quilter
1951	M Whitwill	1983	A L Robinson
1952	P V Roberts	1984	J C S Mills
1953	T F Hood	1985	H Huntington-Whiteley
1954	R Verdon Smith	1986	A R W Eve
1955	C M Stock	1987	C H C Densham
1956	P N Robinson	1988	S M Andrews
1957	H C I Rogers	1989	C J L Moorsom
1958	The Duke of Beaufort	1990	W A Waldegrave
1959	C F Uwins	1991	T R Thom
1960	R Hill	1992	R E J Bernays
1961	T D Corpe	1993	N G K Hutchen
1962	T L Robinson	1994	J M Woolley
1963	G E McWatters	1995	P R C Densham
1964	G H R Goobey	1996	R Gaskell
1965	T J Hood	1997	D J Marsh
1966	J H Britton	1998	A R Thornhill
1967	C H Kinnersley	1999	G E C Lankester
1968	P Robinson	2000	C N Sommerville
1969	G M Tricks	2001	K T Pearce
1970	J V Wills	2002	P McIlwraith
1971	J Gordon	2003	C McAlpine
1972	The Earl Waldegrave	2004	C J C Wyld
1973	K A L Brown	2005	D Cryer
1974	J S Camm	2006	T A Hood
1975	J O Gough	2007	G S Watson
1976	W N Hood	2008	J H Newman

SECRETARIES

(also handled administration
from 1947 - 1967)

T F Hood (1947 - 1967)
T J Hood (1967 - 1972)
J O Gough (1972 - 1982)
P A Hilton (1982 - 1985)
P R C Densham (1985 - 1992)
C H C Wyld (1992 - 1997)
W Batstone (1997 - 2005)
W J M Gard (2005 - present day)

TREASURERS

J F Robinson (1957 - 1973)
G M Tricks (1973 - 1984)
W N Hood (1985 - 1996)
C J L Moorsom (1996 - 2004)
P R C Densham (2004 - 2007)
D J Marsh (2007 - present day)

ADMINISTRATORS

Vera Knights (1967 -1987)
Ann Cotton (1987 - 1992)
Julie Axford (1992 - 1997)
Joyce Liddiard (1997 - 2004)
June Moody (2004 - present day)

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www.merchantventurers.com

www.bristol.ac.uk/cms/go/colston-research-society



Some of the residents
of the Cote and
Robinson Homes, which
are supported by the
Grateful Society.



Grateful Society

Established 1758

Registered Charity No. 202349

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