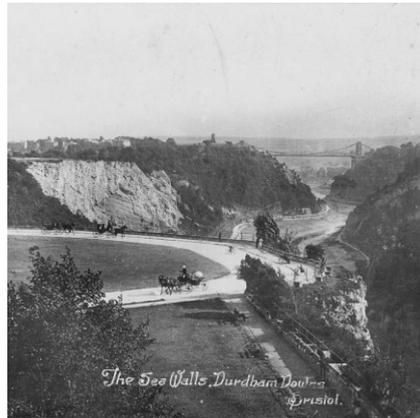


Clifton and Durdham Downs: A Landscape History



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Final Report
February 2006

Frontispiece:

Rowbotham's Panoramic View from
the Clifton Observatory c1830
(Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)

The Seawalls, Durdham Downs
Postcard c1900
(Private Collection)

Lavar's View of Bristol c1887
(Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)

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Clifton and Durdham Downs: A Landscape History

Introduction

Clifton and Durdham Downs are common land, and as such are a surviving rural fragment within Bristol's modern urban landscape. Their early history has been interpreted from a limited number of archaeological finds, and from Anglo Saxon charters and Medieval deeds. By comparison the modern history is more certain, and is supported by a particularly rich visual archive including numerous paintings, drawings and postcards.

The recent history of Clifton and Durdham Downs is in essence the history of change to their immediate surroundings. Threatened by rapid expansion of the city in the 19th century, farsighted and timely protection in the public interest secured the Downs in perpetuity. As the size of the surrounding population increased beyond recognition, Bristol's reliance on the Downs fundamentally evolved from agricultural need to social and recreational wants.

Others have undertaken several detailed studies, notably those constituting the University of Bristol Avon Gorge Project (c1988). The scale of the visual archive, together with the thoroughness of preceding studies, far exceeds that which can reasonably be drawn on within the confines of this paper. This report aims to provide an overview of the development of the modern Downs landscape.

Early History

Clifton and Durdham Downs lie on an extensive Carboniferous Limestone ridge, the Tickenham Ridge, running northeast from Clevedon to north Bristol. This ridge has been split by the River Avon, which has cut sharply through the Carboniferous Limestone to form the Gorge. The deep, narrow Gorge lies in immediate and stark contrast to the simple flat-topped form of the adjacent Downs plateau. The exposed rock faces within the Gorge show the folded nature of the underlying strata, and refer to a distinctive and complex geological history.

The Tickenham Ridge chiefly comprises limestone sediments originally deposited during the Carboniferous period. These sediments were compressed and uplifted in the Hercynian period, about 290 million years ago, forming a series of parallel folds across the Bristol district. Erosion during the subsequent Permian and Triassic periods lowered the mountain belt below sea level, leading to a further cycle of deposition and uplift at the end of the Cretaceous period. Erosion processes have since exposed the summits of the earlier upland landscape.

The shallow calcareous soils covering much of the Downs plateau have developed through weathering of the underlying Carboniferous Limestone. The soil type has in turn influenced the types and patterns of vegetation that naturally establish, and consequently the nature and intensity of historic human land use.

The Avon has laid down a series of gravel terraces during the Quaternary period and while the chronology of their formation is still uncertain, the deposits at Shirehampton and Chapel Pill have produced 90% of the Palaeolithic artefacts so far discovered in the South West region. Results from recent archaeological work in

Shirehampton indicated a complex process of formation, possibly spanning several glacial/ interglacial cycles between 350,000 and 60,000 years ago. The nature of the surrounding landscape is unclear but The Downs are the only location in Bristol not within the river system to have produced contemporary evidence. In 1842 a fissure was exposed in a limestone quarry at Durdham Down, apparently on the south side of Stoke Road, from which remains of animals were recovered. Species included rhinoceros, elephant, horse, hyaena and bear, implying a relatively warm climate.

At about 7500-5000BC the edges of the Downs and Gorge were likely to have been covered by 'wildwood' (*Rackham 1982*); consisting of small leaved lime, sessile oak, ash, wych elm, field maple, hazel and other shrubs (*Micklewright, 1989*). In the places where the slopes were too steep, or soil too thin, to support woodland vegetation, a sparser herbaceous/ grassland flora is likely to have established. Remnants of the historic woodland and grassland communities are still evident today in Leigh Woods and parts of the Gorge slopes respectively.

Archaeological work at Sneyd Park and at Deanery Road in the City Centre has indicated that felling of the woodland began in north Bristol during the Neolithic period (c4000-c2000 BC). Initially clearings were created and more extensive felling took place in the Bronze Age (c2000-c800 BC) when the relatively shallow, light soils of the Downs are likely to have been attractive for agriculture.

Evidence of early human settlement in the area is somewhat limited. There is a Neolithic long barrow at Druid Hill. Several Bronze Age metal artefacts were found along the Avon and at other locations in north Bristol during the 19th century. Several Bronze Age sites have now been identified in Southmead, Kingsweston and the North Avon Levels. Together these point to extensive activity, and the recent discovery of a short section of a Bronze Age ditch at Stoke Park Road South in 2001 implies that the area of The Downs was farmed.

However, it is the Iron Age hill fort of *Clifton Camp*, at Observatory Hill, that provides the most obvious evidence of the early history. The concentric rings of ditch and bank earthworks around the summit of the hill were originally dry stone ramparts, but these have since become overgrown with trees and scrub. *Clifton Camp* faced two other Iron Age fortifications, *Stokeleigh* and *Burwalls*, on the Leigh Woods side of the Gorge. Their elevated positions, combined with the unique local topography, afforded the three fortifications with a strong defensive advantage. A subsequent Roman use of the fort has been suggested by reported coin finds in and around *Clifton Camp* in the 19th century (*Russell 1999*).

There are extensive remains of an early field system at Clifton Down between Ladies Mile and Zoo Bank. Dating of these is not precise, and although they may be of Iron Age, they are more likely to be Roman in origin (*Russell 1999*). Definite Roman evidence exists in the form of the Roman Road, the *Via Julia*, linking Bath with the military base and port of *Abonae* at present day Sea Mills. The course of the road crosses the Downs close to Stoke Road, and a short length is extant as a wide, slightly raised grass bank. Roman finds were also reported from Clifton Down Road and Gloucester Row in the 18th century.

The local Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman populations, whilst relatively small in number, are likely to have had a significant affect on the appearance and character of the Downs landscape. Through these times the natural forest vegetation would have been progressively cleared to provide land for grazing and cropping. The Downs plateau, with its thin calcareous soils, provided pasture for the grazing of livestock. The more sheltered ridge edges, with their deeper, richer soils, would have been used as arable ploughland.

Anglo Saxon, Medieval and Early Post Medieval History (c400 – Mid 18th century)

An Anglo Saxon charter of 883AD offers the first documentary evidence in support of the archaeological evidence for early farming. The charter establishes grazing rights for an extensive area of land, which includes part of Durdham Down, and a perambulation is appended to describe the boundaries. For the Downs the perambulation runs from the bottom of 'Eowcumbe' (Walcombe Slade) to a site near the Water Tower. This ancient boundary is still evident, and is marked by seven boundary stones or 'Merestones', defining a number of historic administrative boundaries, including the Manorial boundary between Clifton and Durdham Down. 'Eowcumbe' is from an Anglo Saxon word 'Eow' meaning yew, referring to the presence of yew trees in the Slade, which are still evident today.

Oliver Rackham, in his *History of the Countryside* (1986), contends that the Downs at Bristol have the typical shape of ancient grassland common: elongated with the old roads that cross it, and irregular concave edges. The Clifton and Durdham Downs were the commons of pasture for the Manors of Clifton and Henbury respectively, and provided shared grazing for the livestock of the village Commoners. Clifton and Henbury were both small villages, rural in character, and resolutely separate from nearby Bristol. We know from the Domesday Book of 1086 that the Manor of Clifton had a small population of about 30, of which 15 were farm labourers (*Ralph* 1961). Clifton village was centred about a green, close to the present day Clifton Hill, and was separated from the Downs by an area of open arable fields and meadows. In contrast to the Downs this land made use of the more sheltered land corresponding closely with underlying Triassic marl bedrock, which through weathering had formed a more fertile, clay soil (*Russell* 1999). Henbury village would also have been separated from the Downs by a similar arrangement of arable land. Collectively, this arrangement of fertile meadows and arable fields, with the rougher downland pasture, would have met the needs of the villages for their food crops and the year round grazing of their domestic livestock.

The history of the Clifton and Henbury Manors is characterised by a range of divisions and changes of ownership. We know that by the 15th century the Manor of Clifton had been split to create the 'Greater' and 'Smaller' Manors. Eventually the Society of Merchant Venturers purchased the Greater Manor in 1676, and acquired the Smaller Manor ten years later. Through the medieval period ownership of the Manor of Henbury, and with it Durdham Down, was also changeable. By the 17th century Henbury had been divided and was controlled by three or four Lords. The Lords of the Manor tightly controlled the Commoner's use of the Downs by imposition of fines through their Manorial court. They also readily leased land for limestone quarrying, limekilns, lead mining and clay workings: the majority of which

appear to have been sited along the south and east margins of the limestone plateau (*Ralph 1961*).

This relatively peaceful, primarily agricultural, history was broken by disturbances in the 17th and early 18th centuries. During this period the Downs provided the assembly point for the Royalist army that captured Bristol in 1643. Two years later a Parliamentary army gathered on the plateau to recapture the city. Parliamentary victory was at Clifton's expense, which was set alight by the Royalists in their defeat.

'And lest, during the storm [i.e. the storming of Bristol], the Prince [Rupert] (in case he see the town like to be lost), should endeavour to escape with his horse; to prevent the same, Commissary-General Ireton's Colonel Butler's and Colonel Fleetwood's regiments of horse were appointed to be in a moving body upon Durdam Down; that place being the most open way, and most likely for the Prince to escape by: besides part of those horse did alarm that side of the line and great fort towards Durdam Down and Clifton during the storm, as likewise to secure the foot.'
(*Joshua Sprigg, 1647*)

Gallows Acre Lane, now Pembroke Road, was for several centuries the site of public executions. When tollgates were erected on the turnpike roads across the Downs in 1727 rioting miners, protesting about the poverty of their circumstances, quickly and repeatedly tore them down. Fortunately these unsettled episodes subsided and the Downs were to become increasingly associated with peaceful leisure uses (*Ralph 1961*).

Historically the Downs appear to have been extensively and consistently grazed establishing a rough open grassland landscape: probably with occasional scattered scrub, trees, bracken and gorse. The pastoral landscape between Clifton and Henbury remained largely unchanged even into the 18th century. This is evidenced in two key surviving 1746 documents; the surveys by Jacob De Wilstar and G.H Hammersley:

De Wilstar's 'Survey of the Manor of Clifton in the County of Gloucestershire' (1746)

This watercolour plan (Plan 1) shows the Downs around Clifton closely resembling the extent that we see today. The buildings are coloured red and common land is shaded green. The fields between the village and the Downs, bounded by a red or yellow line depending on ownership, are still undeveloped. So despite its proximity to Bristol, Clifton was still very much rural in character, but notably the field pattern closely reflects the modern residential road layout. The main topographic features of 'Vincents Rock' (Clifton Camp), 'The Cliff' (Bridge Valley Road) and 'Oakham Shoale' (Walcombe Slade) are titled on the plan and are shaded, using sweeping brush marks, to define 'the risings and fallings, the wast's and roads' and the steep and uneven ground along the Gorge. The survey includes the boundary between Clifton and Durdham Down showing the line of 'meere-stones' or boundary stones. Avenues of trees line key routes across the plateau. These presumably provided useful waymarking on an expansive landscape with few landmarks. The De Wilstar survey also shows the frequent quarries, lead workings and lime kilns along the south eastern edge of the plateau.

Plan 1: Survey of the Manor of Clifton in the County of Gloucestershire
Jacob De Wilstar 1746 (Society of Merchant Venturers)



Mid 18th to Mid 19th Century

Through the late 17th and 18th century Clifton had, due to the hot spring waters emerging from the Gorge rocks at Hotwells, established itself as an inexpensive, but fashionable summer spa. The waters were long understood to have medicinal benefit, and many visitors came in an attempt to treat their malaises or more chronic illnesses. Others came simply for relaxation, the emerging social scene, and the spectacular surrounding landscape. Visits by the aristocratic and the famous, including Haydn and Daniel Defoe, helped to raise the fashionable status of the resort. With this popularity came the need for additional accommodation and Hotwells, and subsequently Clifton, expanded to meet the needs of spa visitors, their servants and the numerous physicians.

St Mary's Well was at the foot of St Vincent's Rocks (Observatory Hill). Seafarers on their return from long voyages reputedly drank the spring waters as a treatment for scurvy.



Drinking at St Mary's Well
Samuel Grimm 1788
(British Library)

The site of the largest spring was below *St Vincents Rock* (Observatory Hill) from which water at 76°C emerged at almost 60 gallons per minute. The Society of Merchant Venturers had granted a lease to two of its members in 1696, and the Hotwell House was constructed to tap the water. Initially, Granby Hill provided the primary route between the Hotwells and Clifton. Horse drawn access was greatly improved in 1822 with the construction of a carriage drive along the line of today's Bridge Valley Road. A steep and treacherous flight of steps also offered a link between Clifton and the Spa, although this route was improved with the construction of the 'Zig-Zag Walk' in 1829.

As part of the spa going experience the Downs and Gorge were an important attraction. Visitors could promenade around Clifton, tour the Downs, and delight in the natural drama of the Gorge with its distant views of the River Severn and the Welsh hills. River trips through the Gorge, with musical accompaniments were popular, as were sporting events on the Downs such as horse racing, cricket, wrestling and cock fighting.

The benefits of the Hotwell, and the scenic delights of the Downs, are described in the Bristol section of Pierce Egan's guidebook 'Walks Through Bath...', published in 1819:

'..... a fine gravel-walk appears, shaded by a long line of trees, of 600 feet in length, contiguous to which is St. Vincent's Parade, an elegant row of houses, built of freestone; at the end of the Parade is a handsome Colonnade, in the form of a

crescent, filled with shops, that operate as an agreeable promenade in wet weather; and near to which is the HOT-WELL-HOUSE AND PUMP-ROOM. It is a very plain, small building. The water drank here is without smell, of a soft, warm, milky taste, and pleasing and grateful to the stomach. The spring from which it is taken rises near the bottom of the cliffs, ten feet above the low water mark, forcibly making its way through an aperture in the solid rock, and is of so copious a nature as to discharge 60 gallons in a minute. It has been analysed for the last 200 years by various eminent physicians, and pronounced to be extremely efficacious in cases of weakness of the lungs, fevers, in spitting of blood, chlorosis, dysentery, internal inflammation, &c. if timely taken in hand. It is also said to be beneficial in diabetes, stone, gravel, stranguary, gleans, loss of appetite, and indigestion; and consumptions have been stopped in their rapid career by its continued use in milk diet. It is however considered of a hard quality, and will not easily dissolve soap; but it is drunk generally by the inhabitants of Clifton, and brought into their houses by pipes. The above PUMP-ROOM, it seems, is shortly to be taken down to increase the towing-path, and also in consequence of the injury it has sustained from the attraction of Sion-House; a new one is to be erected in a more preferable situation, and a road made to it. Her late Majesty, when she visited Clifton, drank the water at the OLD PUMP-ROOM.'



The Hotwell House,
Samuel Grimm 1788
(Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery)

'Clifton-Downs now become interesting to the spectator, which is covered with verdure all the year. The invalids are here seen enjoying the light restorative breeze, several of whom are drawn, in small curricles, by a pair of donkeys.'

'The stupendous rocks, on each side of the river, called St. Vincent's, now burst upon the spectator with such sublimity and grandeur as to set description at defiance: the highest part of which is full 300 feet from the bed of the river. The Avon, which flows between them, for about a mile and a half, no where exceeds 150 yards in breadth; and it is conjectured they were separated from each other by some dreadful convulsion of nature.....Persons walking by the side of these rocks appear truly diminutive; and the majestic appearance of the above venerable cliffs must be pronounced one of the grandest scenes in nature.'

'...The view of King's Road and Cook's Folly must be seen to feel the beauty of the impression; on the latter place, it seems, a great number of the trees have been cut down to increase the prospect, and there is one of the most delightful "look-outs," from an old building, that can be imagined.'

‘..... upon turning to the right, and ascending the hill, the delightful village of CLIFTON will be gained, which, from the air being remarkably pure and salubrious, added to its elevation, is styled the MONTPELLIER of England. It is worthy of observation, that the turf abounds with aromatic plants, which grow here wildly, and are not to be met with in any other part of the kingdom, being natives of this peculiar spot. The fragrance from these plants proves of the most vivifying nature, not only to the valetudinarians, but to all the frequenters of this healthful retreat.’

Egan describes Clifton Camp and the burnt out Windmill, now the Observatory, as follows:

‘The remnants of some ancient fortifications belonging to the Romans are still visible, and may be traced upon these Downs, near to which are the remains of an old tower, a circular building containing some windows, but without any roof; the interior of which has only to boast of a brick floor and a fire-place; it has three open spaces, which were formerly doors. From the centre of this building are three most delightful views through the above openings. In the front, and extensive prospect of Gloucestershire. On the right, part of Clifton, Northampton-buildings; and in the back ground, Dundry-Hill. On the left, King’s Road, with the ships lying at anchor; the Bristol Channel, and the Mountains of South Wales.’

By 1785, when the lease expired, the Hotwell was in need of modernisation. The River Avon was the main sewer for the city, and contamination of the emergent spring was probably responsible for an increasing number of illnesses and even fatalities at the Spa. To fund the necessary improvements subscription costs for visitors were forced to rise sharply. It became increasingly difficult for Hotwells to compete with cheaper, modern spas at places like Cheltenham and Tunbridge Wells (Pascoe 2002).

Despite several attempts by the Merchants to reinvigorate and modernise the spa Hotwell’s status as a fashionable spa resort was in inevitable decline. Residential expansion as a fashionable, exclusive suburb was still to take place. To escape the increasingly overcrowded port city a small number of wealthy Bristol merchants had, since the early 18th century, built mansions and moved out of town to rural Clifton. Residential development markedly increased during a construction boom during the 1780s, when many of the terraces close to Clifton Hill were constructed. With the outbreak of war with Revolutionary France in 1793 however this initial phase of suburban growth was short lived, and residential development had still to extend across the fields to the Downs plateau. The farmland landscape was dotted only with occasional villas and mansions, and development was just beginning to extend along today’s Clifton Down Road. This area would remain largely undeveloped until later in the century (Pascoe 2002).

Several pictorial sources offer an unrivalled insight into the Clifton landscape at this time: Grimms topographical drawings, Rowbotham’s panorama, the works of the Bristol School of Artists, and various paintings, prints and drawings.

Grimm Topographical Drawings



The view from Bedminster shows the rural setting of Clifton village with the Clifton Camp windmill behind on the skyline. In comparison to Leigh Woods on the left, the Clifton side of the Gorge is open, with bare slopes dipping sharply towards the Avon.

'Clifton, from the Bedminster Road'

Samuel Grimm, 1788

By permission British Library ©
(Additional MS 15540, f.174)

This is a probably a view from the top of Gallows Acre Lane (Pembroke Road), looking across the future site of the Zoological Gardens, towards the ruined windmill on Clifton Camp (Observatory Hill). In the foreground the rough, uneven Downs pasture can be seen, this area probably having been worked for stone. The middle distance shows the fields and meadows, which were to be built on in the 19th century. The wooded skyline to the right is Leigh Woods on the opposite Gorge bank.



'Clifton, windmill and camp'

Samuel Grimm, 1789

By permission British Library ©
(Additional MS 15540, f.182)



This view from Seawalls on Durdham Down shows the open aspect of both the plateau and the Gorge slopes. The wall in the foreground marks the Gorge edge. The distinctive triangular section slag copings are still visible in the wall today. The skyline is dotted with scattered trees and scrub on Clifton Down. The shelving form of the Gorge slopes has now changed by both quarrying and through concealment by scrub invasion.

'The New Hotwells'

Samuel Grimm, 1788

By permission British Library ©
(Additional MS 15540, f.190)

This drawing shows the view west at the head of today's Bridge Valley Road. Behind the Turnpike lodge lies the site of Fairyland, Durdham Down and beyond that Cooks Folly at Sneyd Park. The Downs landscape is open in contrast to Leigh Woods.



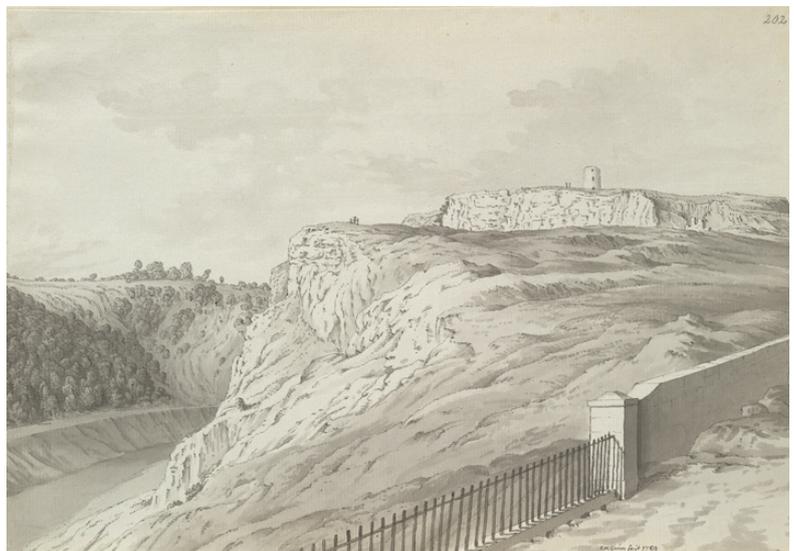
'The Turnpike above Cook's Folly'
Samuel Grimm, 1788
 By permission British Library ©
 (Additional MS 15540, f.198)



The view across the Gorge from Leigh Woods shows the ruined windmill on Clifton Camp and the Giants Cave below. On the Gorge walls the distinct geological strata is expressed. The plateau is open without trees or scrub on the Gorge edges

'St Vincent's Rock'
Samuel Grimm, 1789
 By permission British Library ©
 (Additional MS 15540, f.203)

This is the view from Sion Hill near the present day seating viewpoint. The origin of the name '*Hyacinth Point*' is unclear. It is possibly a name given only by Grimm, referring to the outcrop from which the Suspension Bridge now springs.



'St Vincent's Rock and Hyacinth Point'
Samuel Grimm, 1789
 By permission British Library ©
 (Additional MS 15540, f.202)



A similar Sion Hill view to the 'Hyacinth Point' drawing above. Note the line of trees; intentionally planted specimens with their canopies swept by the prevailing southwesterly winds. Horse rides on the Downs were part of the Hotwells treatment, and this drawing shows Spa visitors accompanied on horseback.

'Windmill, Clifton'

Samuel Grimm, 1789

By permission British Library ©
(Additional MS 15540, f.177)

Grimm lodged at Mrs Rossignol's House on Sion Hill. The rising ground to the left of the drawing is Clifton Camp, with the specimen tree planting as described above.



Mrs Rossignol's House, Clifton

Samuel Grimm, 1789

By permission British Library ©
(Additional MS 15540, f.176)

Rowbotham's Panoramic View from the Clifton Observatory (c1830)
(City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)

Thomas L. Rowbotham's 360° panorama is thought to have been drawn with the aid of a camera obscura, which was housed within an observatory on Clifton Camp. The observatory had been converted from a snuff grinding windmill, which in 1777 was overdriven in a gale and burnt down. In 1828 William West leased the ruined windmill from the Merchant Venturers for a five year period. By October of the same year he had installed a telescope and opened to the public. It was an immediate and popular attraction. The telescope was replaced by the camera obscura, and in 1834 West was granted a further twenty-one year lease allowing him to build a domed extension.



The Observatory, Clifton Down
William West c1834
Bristol Museum and Art Gallery

The Clifton Panorama is drawn across ten separate sheets. As an antiquarian Braikenridge, who lived locally in Brislington, would have expected a high level of accuracy. The panorama is of special importance because it is an early illustration of the full expanse of the Downs within its agricultural setting.



Sheet 7



Sheet 7 shows Cooks Folly on the edge of the Gorge, with the Kingsweston and Blaise Ridge behind, and the Welsh hills on the horizon. Seawalls is recognisable by its sharp horizontal outline and the exposed vertical rock face. Walcombe Slade to the right has open valley sides without the extensive stands of Austrian Pines and scrub we see today. The Gorge edge in the foreground is also open grassland without trees or scrub. The presence of sheep in the picture confirms that the land was extensively grazed; maintaining a short, rough calcareous sward.

Sheet 8

This shows the line of Clifton Down Road and the Promenade, with Clifton and Durdham Down in the middle distance, and the Blaise ridge beyond. Avenue tree planting and railings can be seen along the Promenade. The mansions along Clifton Down Road and the Zoological Gardens had yet to be built, and the triangular green at Cecil Road is seen as a separate field. At the head of Bridge Valley Road the Turnpike house can be seen, with Ladies Mile curving and rising behind onto the plateau, which is almost entirely open and is dotted with occasional scrub and bushes. At Sneyd Park the edge of the plateau is marked by a continuous tree line, beyond which lies the rural estates around Henbury.



Sheet 9



Sheet 9 shows the undeveloped farmland between Clifton village and the Downs plateau. Blackboy Hill and Redland can be seen in the distance. The curve of the road at the edge of the plateau marks the top of Gallows Acre Lane, now known as Pembroke Road. The differentiation between downland pasture and fertile arable fields is noticeable.

Sheet 10

The mansions in the middle distance are extant at the edge of Clifton Green on Clifton Down Road. The elevated view shows the rough quarried ground on the edge of Observatory Hill, although trees and scrub on the hill slopes now conceal this view.



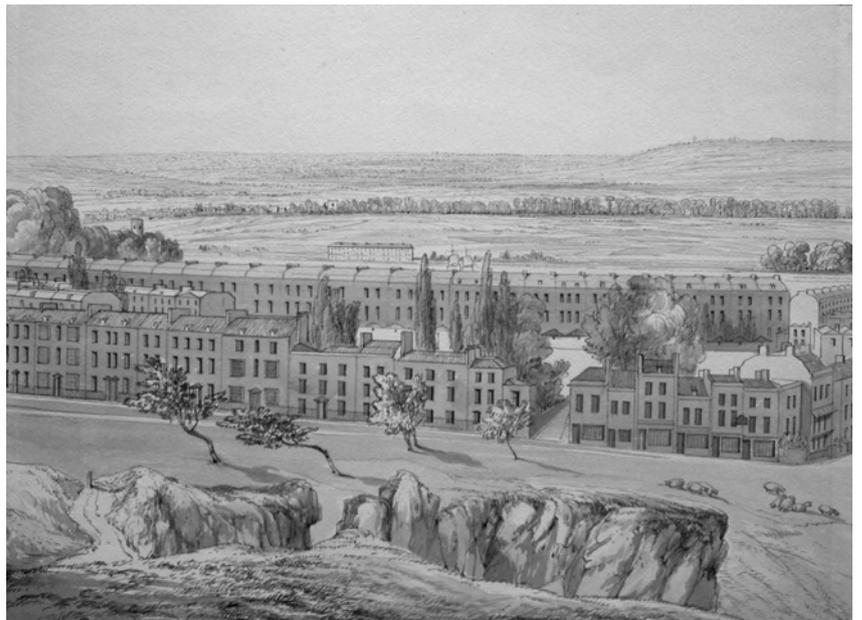
Sheet 1



The large porticoed mansion in the left of the picture is Manilla House. A number of monuments originally within the grounds of Manilla House were dismantled and re-erected elsewhere on the Downs. Although common land, the green is shown partially railed; presumably to control access and grazing. The rough quarried ground in the foreground are the Observatory Hill slopes and the site of today's play area. Gloucester Row is the prominent terrace of houses, and at the immediate right of the picture is the start of Sion Hill.

Sheet 2

Sheet 2 shows Clifton Green and Observatory Hill fronting the houses on Sion Hill with West Mall behind. Note the windswept trees in the shown in reverse view in the earlier Grimm drawings.



Sheet 3

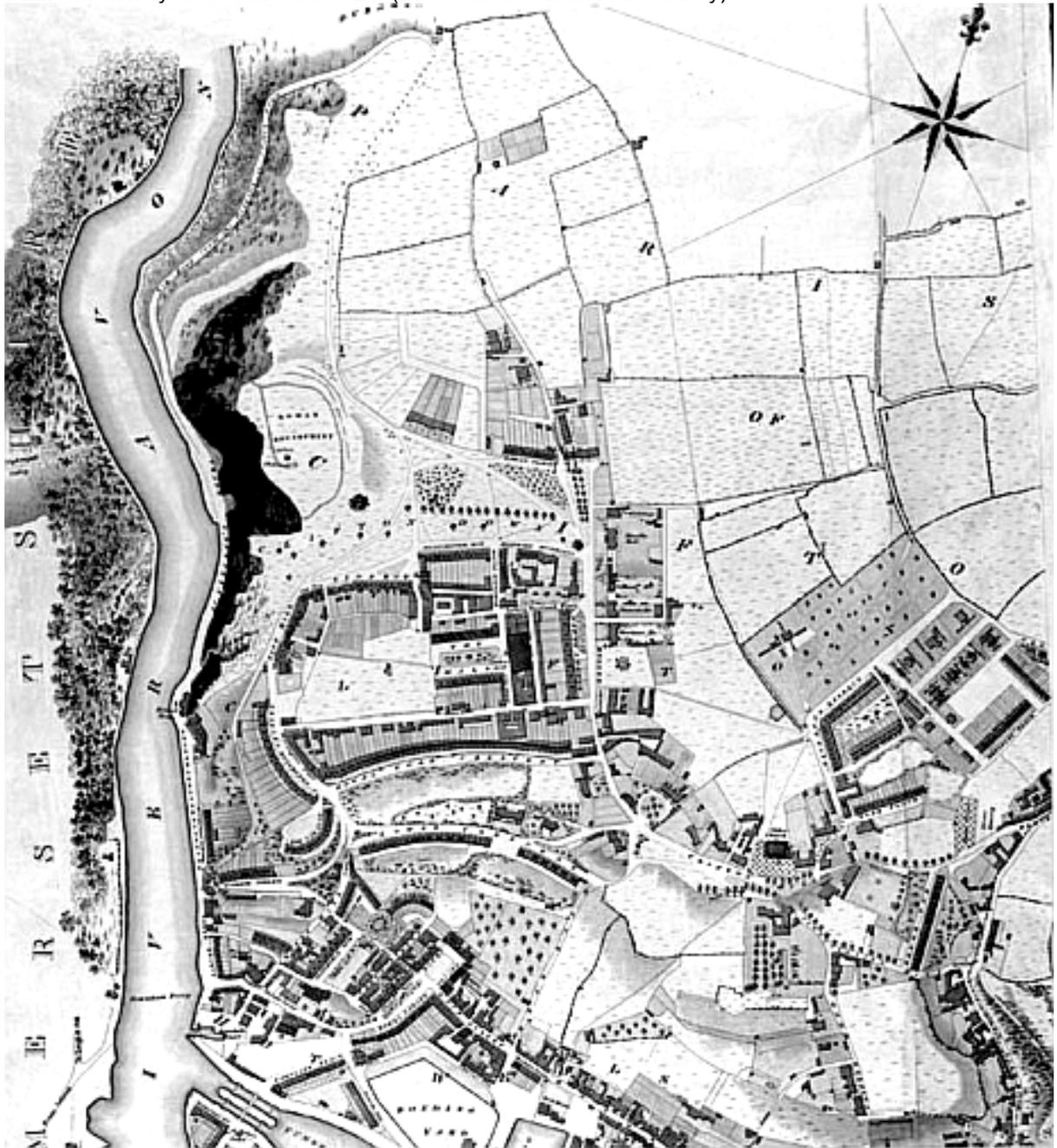


Sheet 3 shows the New Zig-Zag path which provided the improved route to the Hotwell. The houses are those along Sion Hill running towards Granby Hill. The butress of rock in the foreground is the springing point for Brunel's Suspension Bridge, the foundation stone for which was laid the following year in 1831. The fringes of the Gorge are shown grazed and almost entirely free of trees and scrub.

Plumley and Ashmead's Map Survey of 1828

The Plumley and Ashmead survey (Plan 3) shows a Clifton landscape contemporaneous with the Rowbotham panorama. Note the avenue tree planting along the Promenade, the stands of trees on Clifton Green, and the extent of residential development. These features correlate closely with the details in Rowbotham's work and substantiate the accuracy of each drawn document.

Plan 3: Plumley and Ashmead 1828 (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)



The Bristol School of Artists

In the early 19th Century the Gorge and Downs became the frequent subject of a specific group of local artists. The rugged scenery of the Gorge, in close proximity to the city and the increasingly sociable Clifton, made it a natural subject for both amateur and professional study. The artists, now referred to as 'the Bristol School', included Francis Danby (1793-1861) and Samuel Jackson (1794-1869). Their works are widely collected and are of international importance.

Danby shows the view from towards the Severn. Seawalls is just shown on the skyline at the extreme right of the picture. The Gorge edge at Durdham Down has a short sward with rock exposures and an absence of scrub and trees.



The Avon from Durdham Down, Francis Danby c1821 (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)



This view towards the city shows the vegetation contrast between the Clifton and Leigh Woods slopes. There is some indication of scrub below Durdham Down, but it is sporadic and the landscape is primarily open, rocky grassland. On the Leigh Woods slopes we see dense hanging woodlands that we experience today. The ruined windmill on Clifton Camp (Observatory Hill) is visible.

The Avon Gorge from beneath Sea Walls
Francis Danby 1820
(Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)

Jackson's watercolour is from near Clifton Observatory looking across Fairy Land towards Seawalls. Cooks Folly is visible in the distance. Note the recreational use formalised by the provision of a seat, from which to enjoy the prospect. The painting shows the grass sward interspersed by light trees and scrub, but the Gorge edge is largely open

The Avon Gorge,
Samuel Jackson c1845
 (Victoria and Albert Museum)



The view appears to be close to Bridge Valley Road. Seawalls is the exposed skyline in the centre of the picture. The rising ground on the right is the edge of Fairyland, which is grazed and largely open with occasional scrub.

Avon Gorge at Sunset
Samuel Jackson c1825
 (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)

The even topography of Durdham Down plateau lent itself to horse racing, which judging by the painting was a popular spectator event. The grandstand appears to be of wood and canvas construction, presumably temporary. Note the heavily worn grass sward. The Downs were almost treeless at this time and the artist is known to have included the foreground ash tree for compositional reasons. Cooks Folly is visible in the distance so this view appears to look towards Seawalls from near Stoke Road.

Horse Races on Durdham Down,
Rolinda Sharples 1829-1836
 (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)



View from Clifton Down
Clark and Duberg after Samuel Anstie 1810
By permission British Library ©
(K Top Vol. 13, 88)



View from Durdham Down
Clark and Duberg after Samuel Anstie 1810
By permission British Library ©
(K Top Vol. 13, 90b)

Mid 19th to 20th Century

Increasing industrialisation of the city docks in the mid 19th century, coupled with the consequent expansion of working class residential areas, provided impetus for the affluent middle classes to move north and west from the city centre. Clifton had long been a desirable residential district but, with land limited by topography, the property values were high, and the suburb was inevitably considered more exclusive (*Meller 1976*).

Demand for housing ensured that the fields and meadows were increasingly lost to residential villas and houses. At the end of the Promenade construction for the Mansion House was underway by 1866. Despite the residential properties being constructed close by, the Downs were still the expansive, grazed plateau landscape. But they were no longer remote, and they were under increasing risk from encroachment and speculative development. Furthermore, with the close proximity of the new and sizeable, middle class population, the Downs were increasingly required to meet the needs for formal and informal recreation.

Historically, the Merchant Venturers had been progressively concerned about misuse of the Downs landscape, including illegal encroachments and the nuisances of unauthorised quarry activities. They were keenly aware of the value of the Downs, both in terms of its mineral assets, and as an amenity for prosperous Clifton. In an attempt to preserve the Downs, and to more effectively prevent these nuisance and encroachment, the Society had gladly accepted the offer in 1766 of Sir William Draper to act as Conservator of Clifton Down (*McGrath 1975*). In 1849 a 'Clifton Improvement Association' formed, and for a number of years actively planted shrubs and provided seats on the Downs. However, this resident led initiative had been disbanded by 1855 through the active opposition of some quarry interests, and a general lack of public support (*Ralph 1961*).

The flat Downs landscape lent itself to organized sport and events, and the plateau was considered Bristol's main sports ground. During the Victorian period cricket and athletics were two of the fastest growing sports. Durdham Down had originally been home to Gloucestershire County Cricket Club, and a ground is shown on the Ordnance Survey first edition map (1880-1890). Since their opening in 1836 the Zoological Gardens had been used for athletics (*Meller 1976*).

Whilst events and celebrations on the Downs had long been popular it was the provision of tram services, from the city centre to Apsley Road by 1875, that put the Downs within convenient reach of a wider city population. A Royal Agricultural Show was first held on Durdham Down in 1878; commemorated by the drinking fountain at Stoke Road. In 1887 a crowd of 30,000 people assembled on the Downs to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. Celebrations, particularly at the public holidays, were especially popular, but were often witness to public misbehaviour. For many working people, individual leisure time was limited or non-existent, and public holidays represented an opportunity for the working classes to relax, albeit with occasional boisterousness. At the Downs, with the close proximity of affluent

Clifton, much concern was shown by both the residents and the local authorities (Meller 1976). However, this problem was by no means restricted to the Downs, indeed it was deemed a problem of public parks and resorts across the country. In Bristol, the increasing social calls for public parks had still to result in provision of sufficient green space for the working population. Parks close to the industrial residential areas were yet to be laid out and, until the 1880s, it was land such as the Downs and Brandon Hill that were required to meet the pressing social need for public open space.

The Downs were clearly a much loved local landscape, and public concern over development was such that in 1850 the Corporation of Bristol had passed a motion drawing attention to the loss of public rights over the land:

'the valuable Common Lands and Public Rights in the neighbourhood of this City, and the danger to which the Citizen are exposed of being deprived of the benefit arising from the enjoyment of such rights by repeated and systematic encroachments.'

Clifton and Durdham Downs were at this time still in private ownership, and the Corporation had little or no influence. To establish some control in the public interest, and working with the Merchant Venturers, the Corporation resolved to purchase Commoner rights on Durdham Down. These were acquired in 1857 through the purchase of two tenements at Stoke Bishop for the sum of £450. The following year the Corporation notified the Hayward of the Manor of Henbury that these rights had been exercised by turning 30 City of Bristol sheep out to graze (Ralph 1961). By using ancient grazing rights the Corporation had ensured survival as common land, although this was at a time that grazing of the Downs landscape was in progressive decline. Importantly it was the first step in safeguarding the Downs for public enjoyment.

The scale of mineral extraction and mineral working on the Downs had steadily increased up until the 18th and 19th centuries. Over time large scale quarrying had significantly modified some of the Gorge slopes, giving rise to many of the vertical, largely unvegetated, rock faces we see today. The land around Upper Belgrave Road was extensively worked for lead as evidenced by the rough ground locally known as *'the Dumps'*. At Westbury Park clay was extracted from clay pits and, although these have since been infilled, the historic land use is recorded in the existing road name of Clay Pits Road. However, the quarries, mines and claypits were increasingly deemed a public nuisance and danger.

In 1859 enclosure by Samuel Worrall of two pieces of land at the top of Pembroke Road, popularly considered part of the Downs, sparked widespread local concern. Consequently the Corporation resolved:

'that the Downs Encroachment Committee be authorised to enter into negotiating with the Society of Merchant Venturers and the Lords of the Manor of Henbury and Westbury for the purpose either by purchase of manorial and other rights or in such other manor as may be desirable of

securing for the Citizens of Bristol under the sanction of the legislature the free enjoyment of the Clifton and Durdham Downs.'

It was planned to achieve this via an Act of Parliament and, whilst the Merchants agreed to keep Clifton Down *'open and unenclosed as a place of public resort for the citizens and inhabitants of Bristol'*, the City negotiated and purchased Durdham Down, from the Lords of the Manor of Henbury, for the sum of £15,000. The Clifton and Durdham Downs Act received royal assent on 17th May 1861, and enshrined in legislation the agreement. The Merchants remained the owner of their property but, subject to agreed conditions, undertook to secure their land for public enjoyment without charge. The initiative in securing the Act was from the City, but it was also reliant on the cooperation, support and gift of the Society of Merchant Venturers. The 441 acres of the Downs were now secured and protected for public enjoyment, and all subsequent works would be for the express purpose of *'improving'* and *'managing'* the landscape for recreation (Ralph 1961).

A Downs Committee, consisting of seven representatives from the Merchant Venturers and seven from the City, assembled for the first time in November 1861, appointing a Downs Ranger to oversee works to *'beautify'* the Downs. Typical works included the provision of seats, drinking fountains and monuments. In February 1869 Alderman Proctor put before the Downs Committee proposals, designed by the City Surveyor Frederick Ashmead, for the laying out of roads around the Downs (Plan 4). The Bristol lithographer, Mr Lavars, was instructed to print the proposals for the purpose of public consultation.

In his report to the Committee Alderman Proctor made the following observations and proposals:

'When, at the last meeting, I ventured to lay before you a plan suggesting arrangements of the roads, the planting of trees, and the railing in of a portion of our beautiful Downs, I felt very much obliged for the ready consideration you then gave to this important and often-discussed subject.'

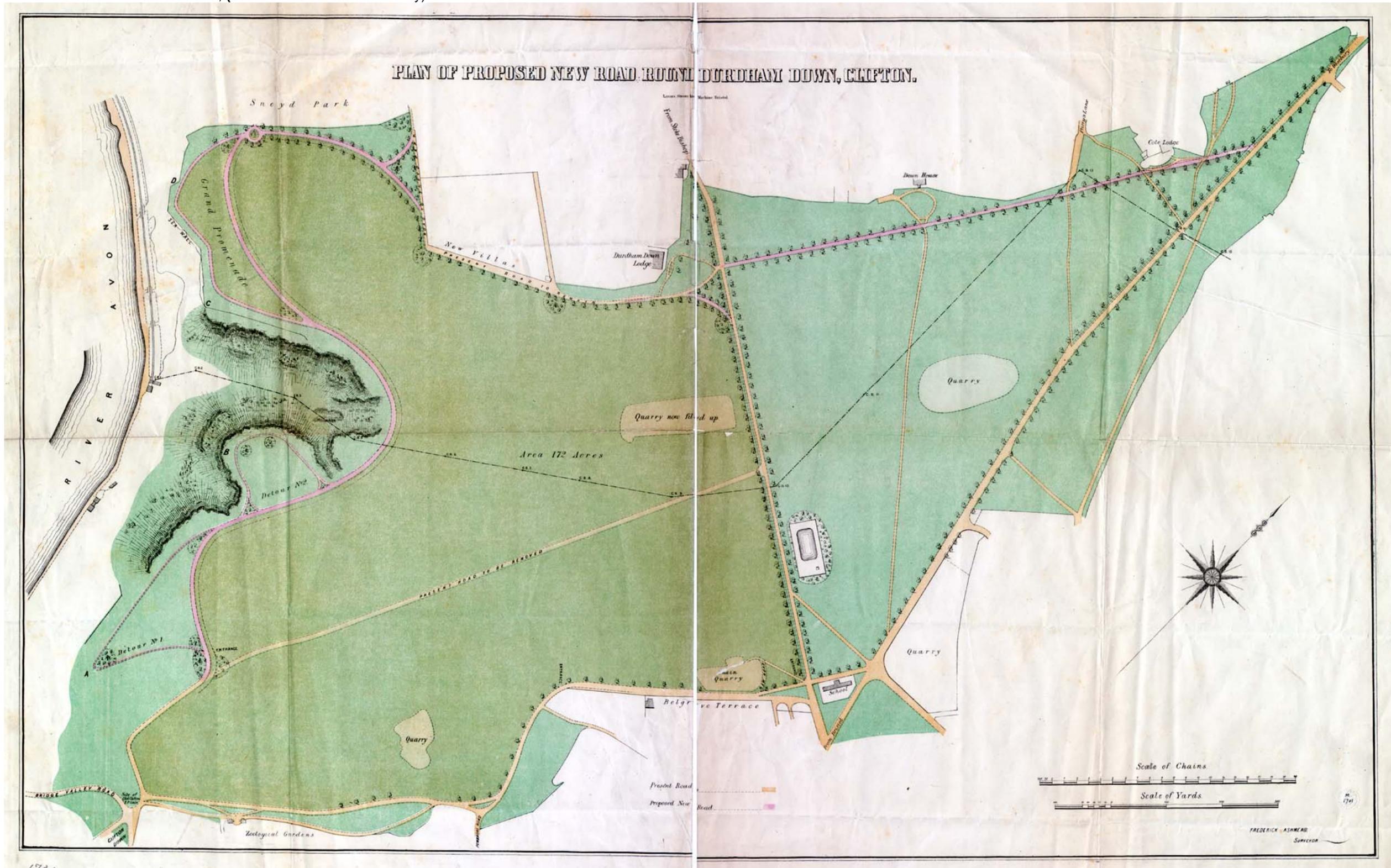
'.....I am induced to press this subject on your consideration at this particular time because of the removal of the Turnpike Gates; this will induce an increase in carriage traffic over the Downs to which the amount in past years will bear no comparison.'

'.....it is, in my opinion very desirable to arrange for the accommodation of those who visit the Downs for the express purpose of loitering about and enjoying the beautiful prospects, and also for those who take the drive for the sake of the air, or cross the Downs without desiring to wait in any particular place....'

'.....in proof of the necessity for extensive arrangements for the convenience of carriages in the vicinity of the Sea Wall, that I have seen upwards of forty vehicles there at one time, during the setting of the sun, in September.'

'....with regard to planting it would be pleasant to have a shady drive, and also more shade, where seats could be placed; at the same time it is important that we should not intercept or interfere with the distant views, or appear to restrict the Downs. It is therefore suggested that the shady drive should be right and left of the Stoke Road, on that side of the Downs where the view is, or will be, obstructed by houses. Clumps of trees and hawthorn bushes can be planted where shown in the plan, at the west side of the Down, for the advantage of shade, or on such other places as may appear more convenient.'

Plan 4: Plan of Proposed New Road Round Durdham Down, Clifton
 Ashmead and Lavars 1869, (Bristol Museum and Art Gallery)



'Care must be taken that plenty of openings are left in the railings, of 4ft. 6in. wide, for the convenience of pedestrians and horsemen. Within the railings, I trust, the cultivation of gorse, ferns, brambles, and bushes, will be more effectual than it has been lately, and that the characteristic wildness and beauty of the Downs will be successfully maintained; but without the protection of railing, I feel convinced that within a few years the beauty of the Down will be destroyed.'

'This road, it is proposed, shall be made in the following manner, namely, the portion overlooking the river to be left as free and open as possible, dwarf plantations being formed at the intersections of the several roads only, and the remaining portion of this road to be formed with an avenue of elm trees sixty feet in width, and at distances of sixty feet from each other, alternately planted, so as not to be opposite each other, and as the elm is not a quick growing tree, it is proposed to plant between each elm a tree of quicker growth, such as the sycamore, in order to obtain shade as early a period as possible, and after the elms have obtained a sufficient growth, to remove the intermediate trees. It is also proposed to erect an iron post and rail fence between these trees on the side next the Down, also at the side of the road overlooking the river, so as effectually to prevent carriages or carts driving over this portion of the Downs, ample space being left next each tree, and at intervals in the portion not planted, to admit the passage of horses and foot passengers; this rail fence, it is also proposed, shall be continued between the present trees on Stoke Road, and wherever necessary, to preserve the security of this portion of the Downs. The roadway, it is proposed, shall be in the centre of the avenue, and twenty feet in width, leaving space on either side for ten feet footway, with five feet space of grass on either side of same,....'

'By these means, and the removal of the present roadway over the downs, the whole of this area of one hundred and seventy-two acres will be preserved for foot and horse traffic only, except when it may be required for volunteer purposes or other public occasions, for which provision will be made by having three entrances made, namely, one at White Ladies Road, one at the end of Pembroke Road and one from Clifton Down.'

'The remaining or second portion of the proposed new road will then be continued in a direct line to the Westbury Road, crossing the private road to Down House, and the public road, "Parry's Lane" on the level, and filling up the quarry adjoining Parry's Lane; it passes into and along the private road in front of Cote Lodge, and from thence into the Westbury Road, thus forming a drive round the whole extent of the Downs, with access to the several roads at the points of crossing. It is also proposed to plant the sides of this portion of the road in a similar manner to the first described portion, but not to place iron railing at the side of the same.'

'...the total length of the drive, starting from, and returning to the site of the Old Clifton Turnpike Gate, will be nearly four miles'

We know from the Hammersley survey of 1746 that Stoke Road and the Westbury Road predated these road proposals, and that avenues of trees lined them both at this time. Ashmead and Lavars plan establishes Circular Road, Rockleaze, Downleaze and Saville Road broadly as they survive today, with some notable exceptions. The plan describes Ladies Mile as '*present road to be removed*': this recommendation was never implemented. The proposals for iron post and rail fencing around much of Durdham Down, to protect the grassland from vehicle traffic, do not appear to have been carried out. The proposed detours, from the main carriage drive to the Gorge edge, are an interesting feature, and are testament to the high level of design consideration within the scheme.

Micklewright (1988) reports that the works, approved by a Committee not guided by modern day ecological principles, typically involved the levelling of rough ground, and the planting of trees and shrubs, including Austrian Pines and other non-natives. Improvements to the Downs landscape were further aided by the closure of the various mineral workings. Black Rock Quarry, working since 1868 for road material, closed in 1877. The last quarry to be closed and infilled was at the top of Pembroke Road in 1883.

In addition to the early 'improvements' of the Downs Committee, the other principal force for change in the Downs landscape was the decline and cessation of a traditional grazed management regime. Sheep grazing serves to keep tree and shrub seedlings in check, favouring the development of a short and diverse grassland sward. Grazing of the Downs was in steady decline and we know that, although Commoners had a right to graze no less than 1,885 sheep, by 1872 only 300-400 sheep were being turned out to pasture (*Ralph* 1961). Grazing on Clifton Down actually ceased in the mid-late 19th century. On Durdham Down it continued until 1925, but regular grazing finally died out following drought in 1909, and a serious outbreak of sheep scab in 1924. This was to have a profound effect on the Downs landscape. The following year it was necessary to cut the sward with a horse drawn mower for the first time. Without the fertilising effect of sheep droppings more intensive artificial fertilisers were required from 1933 onwards to maintain an even, amenity sward (*Micklewright* 1988).

Two key documents, Lavars View (1887) and the Ordnance Survey First Edition map 1880-1890 (Plan 5), confirm that by the late 19th century the layout of the Downs and its environs were largely as we experience them today. There are also substantial numbers of postcards recording the recreational landscape.

Lavars View of Bristol c1887
Bristol Museum and Art Gallery



Plan 5: Ordnance Survey First Edition map (1880-1890)
(c) Crown copyright and Landmark Information Group



Archival Postcards

Generally these do not carry precise dates, but typically they record views and features from the late 19th to early 20th century.

The double avenue of trees appears to be elm or lime, rather than the existing beech. The railings have since been removed.



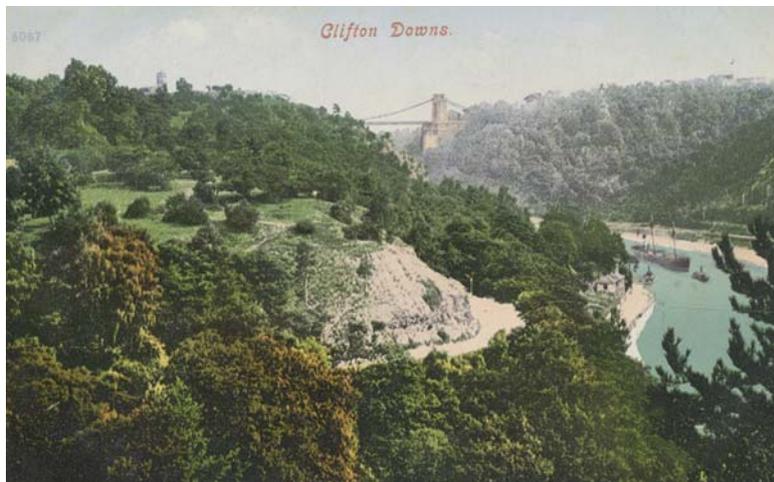
The Promenade, Clifton



This view is from the top of Bridge Valley Road. The monument on the right is Proctor's Drinking Fountain, moved in 1987 across the road to the triangular green. The landscape at the Gorge edge is more open and is dotted with planted specimen trees.

The Promenade, Clifton

This view of Clifton Down is from Fairyland above Bridge Valley Road.



Clifton Downs

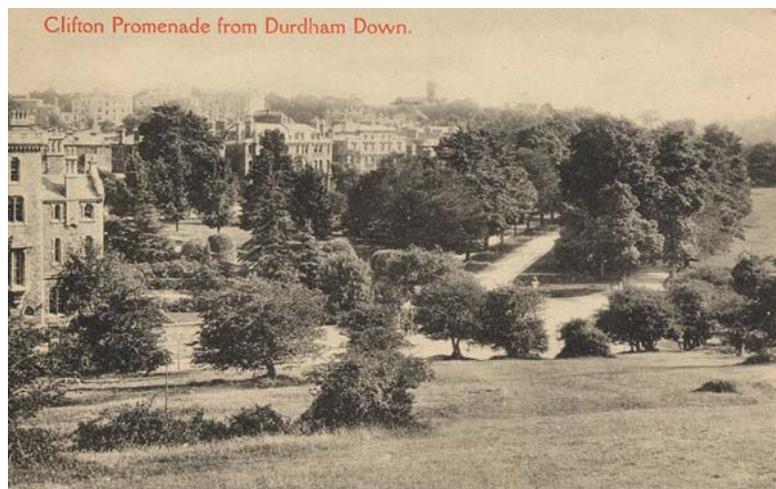


Clifton Downs near Promenade, Bristol.

This is similar view of from Fairyland above Bridge Valley Road. Note that the Observatory is visible

Clifton Downs

The elevated view is from Zoo Bank, which has isolated hawthorn scrub.



Clifton Promenade from Durdham Down.

Clifton Promenade



The Sea Walls,
Durdham Down, Bristol.

**Seawalls,
Durdham Down**

The Portway was constructed c1927



The Portway



Entrance to the Royal Agricultural Show, Durdham Down, July 1913



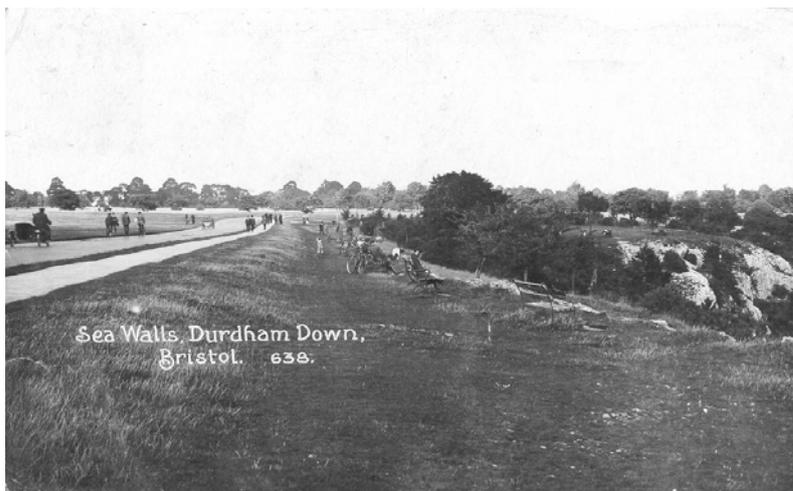
Westbury Road, Durdham Down



Clifton Down and Promenade from Observatory Hill



Durdham Downs



Walcombe Slade is on the right with planted specimen trees and scrub. The view is north towards Stoke Road.

Near Seawalls, Durdham Down

In terms of its evolution, the varied archive record confirms that the modern Downs landscape character was largely in place and managed by the early 20th century. The subsequent history is characterised by a number of influences:

- Invasion of open grassland areas by growth of scrub and secondary woodland particularly at the Gorge edges
- Increased vehicle traffic and visual intrusion of parked cars along the boundary roads
- Increased formal and informal leisure use
- Visual intrusion of built structures including the water tower, residential flats at Durdham Park and offices at Black Boy Hill
- Construction of the A4 Portway
- Commercial event use

A long tradition of organised sport, such as the Downs Football League, established at the turn of the 20th century, continues to this day. These uses were temporarily interrupted during the First and Second World Wars when the expansive nature of the Downs, together with Bristol's strategic transport links, meant that large numbers of troops were stationed on the plateau. Construction of the water tower in 1954, adjacent to the covered reservoir, provided a key visual reference for people enjoying the wide, open space.

The roads around the Downs have long been subject to heavy traffic use. The Westbury Road (A4018) was a primary route between Bristol and the Aust ferry to South Wales. Furthermore, prior to construction of the M5 motorway bridge at Avonmouth (finished 1976), large volumes of regional traffic would travel the A4 and the Westbury Roads to cross the River Avon at Cumberland Basin. In 1965, in an attempt to alleviate traffic congestion on the Downs roads, a large gyratory roundabout at the top of Blackboy Hill was proposed. The detrimental impact on the Downs landscape character would have been substantial and, following considerable public outcry, the scheme was finally shelved. Since the 1970s, the volume of regional traffic on the Downs roads has decreased, although local traffic numbers have substantially risen.

As time has passed, people's lifestyles have changed, and their available leisure time has increased. Consequently, the recreational pressures on the Downs landscape have steadily intensified. The visual setting of the Downs has also been subject to some change, although due to City planning policies, and more historically the land owning influence of the Merchant Venturers, this change has thankfully been less intensive.

To this day the Downs continue to be managed by a Downs Ranger, under the supervision of the Downs Committee, for the benefit of Bristol.

Extensions to this study should consider addressing the following work:

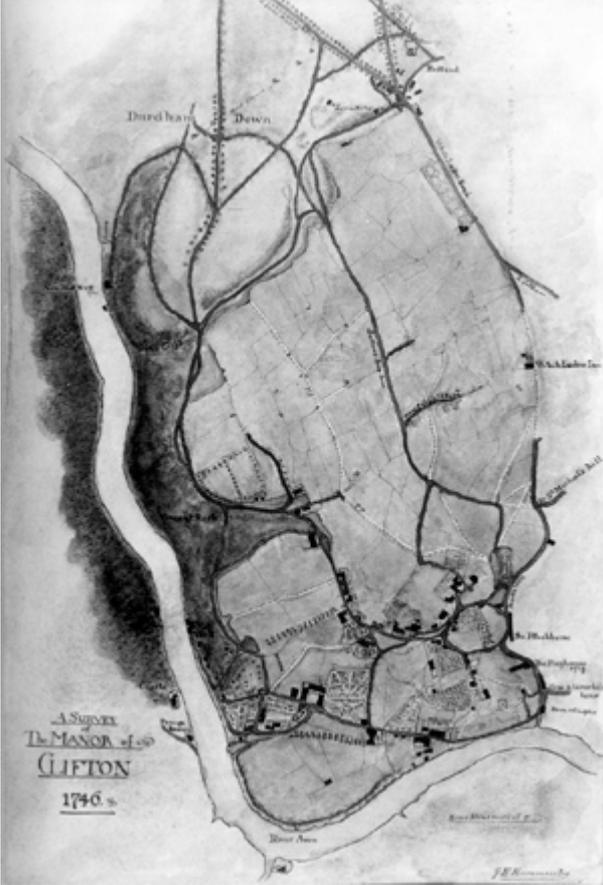
- Analysis of the historic map record and aerial photographs to map the development of scrub over time.
- Incorporation of a more detailed historical analysis of the Gorge and Leigh Woods landscapes
- Additional archival research for plans and surveys of Durdham Down as common land for the Manor of Henbury

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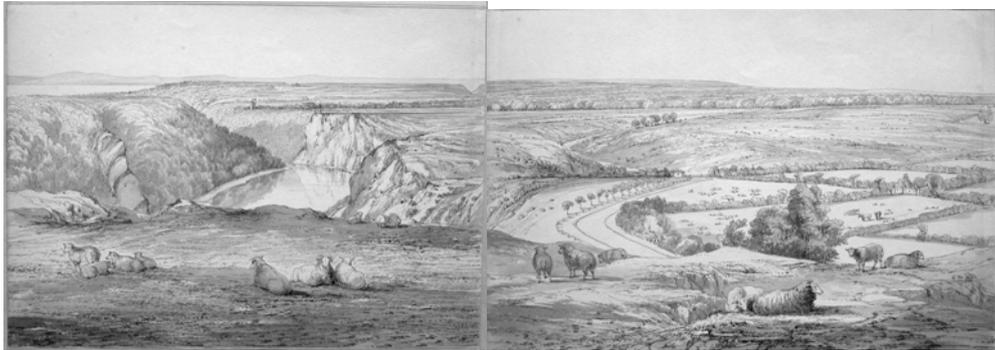
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Appendix A: Downs Chronology

Date	Event				
4500-2300BC	Prehistoric flints excavated at Observatory Hill, and a megalithic tomb at Druids Hill suggests local Neolithic habitation				
2300-700BC	Bronze Age round barrow at Seven Sisters				
700BC - AD42	Clifton Camp Iron Age hill fort (Observatory Hill)				
	Possible Iron Age field boundaries				
AD43 - 409	Roman settlement evidenced by Roman road (Via Julia) and possible Roman dwelling				
AD 883	Anglo Saxon charter. Confers grazing rights and describes boundaries				
	Clifton and Durdham Down commons of pasture of the medieval manors of Clifton and Henbury. Open expanse of uncultivated downland on which the manorial tenants had the right to turn farm animals out to pasture				
	Manor of Clifton (Clifton Down)				
1042	Manor of Clifton held by Lewin, the King's reeve				
1086	Manor of Clifton is the property of Robert fitzRalph. 15 farm labourers (6 villeins, 6 bordars, 3 serfs)				
1150	Ownership of Clifton has passed to William de Clifton.				
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Greater Manor of Clifton</th> <th>Smaller Manor of Clifton</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The Greater Manor passes through the de Clifton, St Loe and Broke families</td> <td>de Clifton and his descendents grants rights over certain manorial land, including commons of pasture, to the Abbey of St Augustine. This land comes to be known as the Smaller Manor of Clifton. Smaller Manor then passes to the Dean and Cannons of the college at Westbury on Trym</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Greater Manor of Clifton	Smaller Manor of Clifton	The Greater Manor passes through the de Clifton, St Loe and Broke families	de Clifton and his descendents grants rights over certain manorial land, including commons of pasture, to the Abbey of St Augustine. This land comes to be known as the Smaller Manor of Clifton. Smaller Manor then passes to the Dean and Cannons of the college at Westbury on Trym
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1543	At dissolution of the college Henry VIII grants the land to Sir Ralph Sadleir				
1676	Greater Manor purchased by the Society of Merchant Venturers				
1686	Lesser Manor purchased by the Society of Merchant Venturers				
1696	The original Hotwell House constructed				

1746	<p data-bbox="287 197 810 228"><i>Survey of the Manor of Clifton, Hammersley</i></p> 
1746	<p data-bbox="287 1171 783 1202"><i>Survey of the Manor of Clifton, De Wilstar</i></p> 
1746	John Wallis builds the wall at Seawalls
1752	Cricket Bristol XI v London XI
c1760s	Cenotaph commemorating Indian campaign originally in grounds of Manilla Hall but re-erected on Clifton Down in 1883
1777	Snuff grinding windmill overdriven in gale and burnt out
1809	Private Act of Parliament leads to enclosure of large parts of Durdham Down for fields

1820	<p data-bbox="284 192 965 226"><i>The Avon Gorge from beneath Sea Walls</i>, Francis Danby</p>  <p data-bbox="284 663 742 696">City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery</p>
1821	<p data-bbox="284 719 845 752"><i>The Avon from Durdham Down</i>, Francis Danby</p>  <p data-bbox="284 1180 742 1214">City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery</p>
1822	<p data-bbox="284 1240 758 1274"><i>View of the Avon Gorge</i>, Francis Danby</p>  <p data-bbox="284 1756 742 1789">City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery</p>
1822	<p data-bbox="284 1816 949 1850">Carriage Drive at site of Bridge Valley Road constructed</p>

1825	<p><i>Avon Gorge at Sunset</i>, Samuel Jackson c1825</p>  <p>City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery</p>
1828	<p>Merchant Venturers rent windmill site to William West for the purpose of conversion to an observatory</p>
1829	<p>Zig Zag walk constructed</p>
1829	<p>First competition to design bridge across the gorge at Clifton. The competition was judged by Thomas Telford, who rejected all the designs and submitted his own. The decision to declare him the winner was unpopular and a second competition was held the following year through which the design by Isambard Kingdom Brunel was selected.</p>
c1830	<p><i>Panorama of Clifton</i>, Rowbotham</p>  <p>City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery</p>
1831	<p>Foundation stone for the Suspension Bridge is laid.</p>

c1834	<p><i>The Observatory, Clifton Down, (painting) William West:</i></p>  <p>City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery</p>
1836	Bristol Zoological Garden opens
1836	<p><i>Horse Races on Durdham Down, (painting) Rolinda Sharples:</i></p>  <p>City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery</p>
1843	<i>Due to political and financial difficulties construction of the suspension bridge is abandoned with only the two towers completed.</i>
1848	Bristol Water Works acquires land at site of present water tower
1849	Clifton Improvement Association formed and begins to plant trees and provide seats
1850	Land at top of Blackboy Hill sold for building a parish school
1850-1865	Villas at Rockleaze constructed
1850	Corporation of Bristol passes motion drawing attention to the loss of public rights over the Downs
1855	Clifton Improvement Association dissolved following little support and active opposition by those with vested interests in the clay pits and quarries
1857	Corporation purchases land (£450) and associated 'Commoner' rights on Durdham Down
1858	Corporation notifies the Hayward of the Manor of Henbury that it's Commoner rights have been exercised by the grazing of 30 sheep

1859	The quarries, mines and claypits deemed a public nuisance and danger and the Corporation resolves: <i>'that the Downs Encroachment Committee be authorised to enter into negotiating with the Society of Merchant Venturers and the Lords of the Manor of Henbury and Westbury for the purpose either by purchase of manorial and other rights or in such other manor as may be desirable of securing for the Citizens of Bristol under the sanction of the legislature the free enjoyment of the Clifton and Durdham Downs'</i>
c1860	The Lords of the Manor of Henbury sell Durdham Down to the City of Bristol for the sum of £15,000
17 May 1861	<i>Clifton and Durdham Downs Act</i> receives royal assent
November 1861	The First Downs Committee is appointed, consisting of the Mayor, six members of the Council and six members of the Society of Merchant Venturers
1864	Clifton Suspension Bridge is opened
1867	Turnpike house at the top of Bridge Valley Road is demolished after abolition of tolls on Bristol turnpike roads
c1860s	Observatory Hill 
c1870	Railway tunnel vents constructed in Walcombe Slade and on Clifton Down.
1871	'Planting and Thinning' Sub Committee undertakes works to 'beautify' the Downs including the planting of Austrian Pines and other non-native trees.
1872	Alderman Proctor's Drinking Fountain by G&H Godwin commemorates gift of Clifton Down to the City by the Merchant Venturers.
1872	Only three or four hundred sheep reported grazing the Downs.
1875	Downs railway tunnel completed
August 1875	Tram service from the City Centre (Perry Road) to Apsley Road is in operation
Sept 1877	Black Rock Quarry (working since 1868 for road material) closes
1877	Drinking fountain at Stoke Road erected to commemorate the 1878 Royal Agricultural Show held on the site
1881-1890	Ordnance Survey 1 st Edition Map

1883	The last quarry, at Pembroke Road, closes. The others having already been gradually closed and filled
1883	18 th Century obelisk to William Pitt originally in grounds of Manilla Hall is re-erected on Clifton Down
1885	Proposals to extend City boundary to include Sneyd Park
1887	Lavar's View of Bristol 
1887	Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations: 30,000 assemble on the Downs City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
c1890s	Villas at Downleaze constructed
1894	Causeway river crossing, linking Observatory Hill and Stokeleigh Camp, blown up due to danger to shipping
1903	Ordnance Survey 2 nd Edition Map.
1903	A covered fountain, to the memory of Urijah Thomas, Minister at Redland Park Congregational Church, is erected at the top of Blackboy Hill
1909	Large numbers of grazing sheep greatly reduced due to drought
1924	Grazing ceases following serious outbreak of sheep scab
c1927	Construction of the Portway
1954	Concrete water tower constructed at Stoke Road on Durdham Down
1987	Proctor's fountain is relocated from the top of Bridge Valley Road due to traffic sightline concerns