



history 4u

Jottings 1 Street Furniture

"Street Furniture" is a common name for the everyday objects erected on or near the public highway to help or hinder the road user. Although we take the majority of these items for granted and do not show the curiosity which they often merit they provide us with a view of life and industry throughout the ages.

"Architecture may provide the bones, utilities the vital organs, but it is street furniture that provides the flesh on the body of the City".

People are quick to complain about the lack of imagination shown by planners and about the drabness and dirt of the city's environs. Nevertheless, style, flair and beauty, realised by imaginative design, is still there if only you take the trouble to open your eyes and mind and see!

Lamp-posts, relative newcomers to the scene, are probably the most noticed item. The interest they

arouse ranges from those providing target practice for vandals' stones and errant motor vehicles, through to conservation societies as CHIS in Bristol which petitioned for the installation of replica nineteenth century lamps in Clifton's streets.

Consider just one example of street furniture that we all notice - Railings. Dorothy Bosomworth writing about the development of Railings for the May 1985 edition of 'Traditional Homes' said that, "Iron railings came into use after the Great Fire of London in 1666. Prior to that date, and as far back as the 14th century, iron railings had been generally limited to Tombs. At Sarsden, near Chipping Norton, there used to be an early example of the transition which comprised vertical iron bars clamped between wooden rails. This would have been an example of adoption of the new fashion but retaining the existing carpentry techniques".



Lamp-post base decoration at Queens Sq., Bristol



PO Telegraphs manhole cover, Blackboy Hill

However street furniture comprises many more things than railings, each with their own story to tell. Consider for a moment things such as seats, bollards, lamp-posts, signs, shelters, litter bins, parking meters, telephone and mail boxes. "Why?" I hear you ask. Well, one reason is that these objects provide us with a snapshot view of the city's industrial development. In the nineteenth century urban growth and the need for kerb gratings, coal



"Please Keep off the Grass" cast iron notice

hole and utility covers and lamp-posts provided a 'bread and butter' sideline to local heavy industry. For this reason the names which survive, even today, on lamp-posts, drain gratings, bollards public clocks and park benches, read like a roll call of the industrial giants of Bristol.

See how many of these names you can spot in Bristol - names such as Douglas, Carron, Winwood, B.T & C.C., Crawford, Jones, Munroe, Heber-Denty, Parnall, Avonside Engine Works - and try to remember what else they were famous for.



Aero Engines Lamp-post, St Michael's

In future issues of 'Jottings' I will give you some examples of the delights to watch out for with examples from Bristol and around the World. In the course of our travels around Bristol, we have come across a number of such delights, although to the purists they should be classified as "Urban Features" rather than street furniture. We thought they were worth sharing with you. If you are interested in reading further on the subject, click on the 'Info' button on our **history4u** website and select the listing of books on the subject from this month's free downloads. Talks and Walks on the subject can also be arranged - go to the bottom of our 'Services' website page and click on the arrow next to 'Talks, Walks & Exhibitions'.



Sundial, Redcliffe Back

There are some more pictures of Bristol's 'Street Furniture' on the next two pages.

The next issue of 'Jottings' will explain about England's Window Tax. If you have a topic you would like to see included in a future issue, send us an e-mail.



Phoenix at Redcliffe, Bristol



Equestrian statue of King William IV, Queen Square



Semaphore at Redcliffe (Bascule) Bridge



Restored Boundary Stone, Queen Square



'One mile from the top of Park Street'



Fish sign, St Marks Road, Easton



Plaque to Emma Saunders at Bristol Temple Meads station



Fossil fern, Esso petrol station, Blackboy Hill



Restored shelter at White Tree on The Downs



Parish boundary mark (1790) at 9-10 Bath St, Temple