

# Brislington Community Museum News

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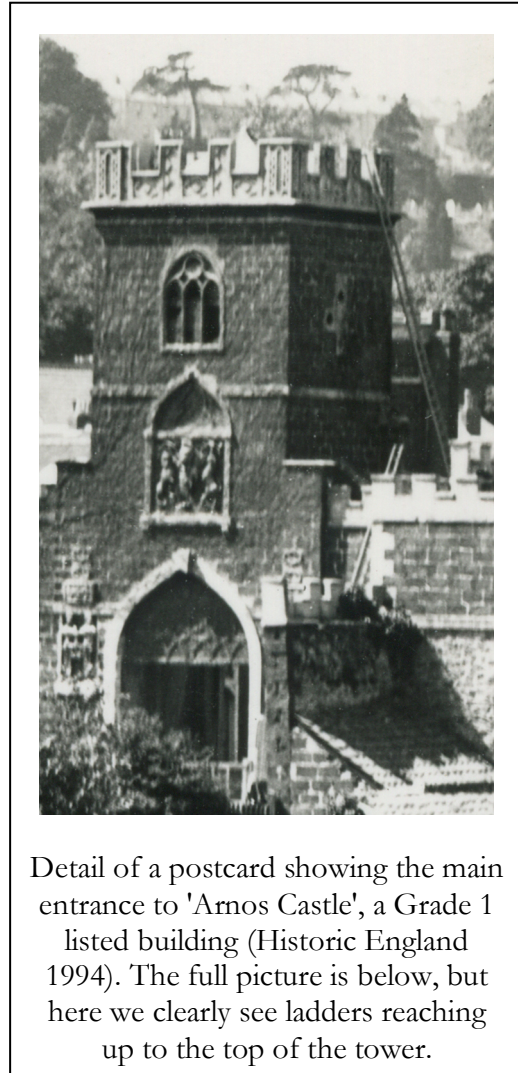
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## Fred Little's photographs

This prolific Bristol-based photographer was particularly interested in older places, and his pictures provide a valued record of long-lost buildings and landscapes.

His series of postcards of 'Arnos Castle' (now The Castle, St Phillips Causeway, a Greene King public house), and another one showing the heart of the old village of Brislington, are fully presented in this newsletter.

Ken Taylor, chair



Detail of a postcard showing the main entrance to 'Arnos Castle', a Grade 1 listed building (Historic England 1994). The full picture is below, but here we clearly see ladders reaching up to the top of the tower.

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## Contact us

Email us - [secretary@brislington.org](mailto:secretary@brislington.org) - to enquire about any of our community museum's exhibits, to provide feedback or new information etc about them, or to contribute items for this newsletter. Our publication schedule is flexible so we can react quickly to important events (also, during quiet times we can focus on other matters such as out-reach activities and sourcing and researching new exhibits).

# Fred Little - biographical notes

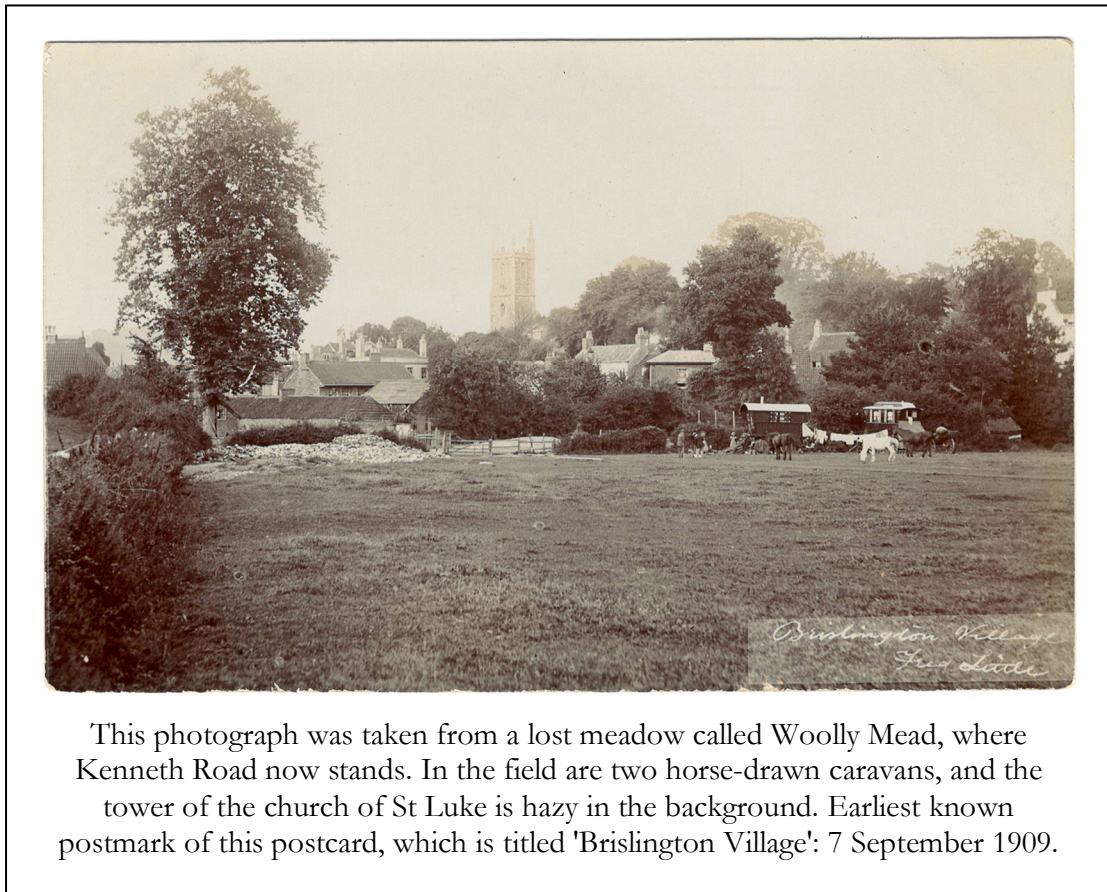
Fred Little was not only a keen photographer but also had a passion for old architecture. His photographs of 'Arno's Court', Brislington were published by his brother Arthur and Arthur's business partner (Little & Barber) as part of their trade in antiques. Many appeared simply under his own name too, as Fred Little was also a prolific publisher of postcards of Bristol, but only one is known of Brislington.

Frederick George Little was born in 1874, and the 1881 Census shows him living with his family at Castle Green, St Peter's, Bristol. His father, also Frederick, was born at Bath, 42 years old, and worked as a School Board Officer. His mother Mary, aged 43, was born in Bristol. Fred, who was attending school, had three elder half-sisters living at home, with the eldest being 21 years old and each bearing the surname Townshend. Fred also had a brother aged 3 - Arthur - whose biographical details are below.

The 1891 Census shows the family living in Narrow Wine Street, still in St Peter's. None of Fred's sisters were at home, but his brother was. His father had the same employment, and his mother was now said to have been born in Birmingham (Census returns often differ in this).

A decade later, the 1901 Census shows Fred self-employed as a photographer working from the family home (still at 18 Narrow Wine Street). His mother was now widowed, and Arthur completed the household.

In the final quarter of 1902, the marriage of Fred Little and Florence Kate Sims was registered in Bristol. She had been baptised in the spring of 1881 at Clandown, Somerset, the child of Harriett and Henry Sims. At the time of the wedding her father worked as a carter, and he was in the same occupation around a month later when the Census records the family as living in the parish of Midsomer Norton. That Census also shows her father was aged 27 and born at Radstock, her mother was 24 and born at Clandown, and Florence had an elder brother who was 2 years old.



This photograph was taken from a lost meadow called Woolly Mead, where Kenneth Road now stands. In the field are two horse-drawn caravans, and the tower of the church of St Luke is hazy in the background. Earliest known postmark of this postcard, which is titled 'Brislington Village': 7 September 1909.

The 1891 Census records Florence using her middle name Kate, and her father now worked as a coal miner. The family lived on Frome Hill, Radstock, and had grown to include five younger siblings.

In 1901 the Census shows Kate Sims working as a servant for a family in Old Market Street in the parish of St Philip & Jacob, Bristol. The family consisted of parents with adult two children (the father worked as the manager of a coffee house), four servants (including Kate), and four visitors.

In the spring of 1904, Fred and Florence's first child was baptised at the parish church of St Peter. The family lived in Castle Mill Street, Bristol, and Fred worked as a photographer. In the spring of 1908, their second child was born and was baptised in the autumn at the same church; the family now lived in Merchant Street, and Fred still worked as a photographer.

In the 1911 Census, Fred's occupation was described as photographer and dealer in antiques, and he was an employer. Florence assisted in the business. Both of their children were still living, and the family was still in Merchant Street.

The 1914 edition of Kelly's Directory of Bristol lists Fred Little as a commercial photographer at Castle Mill Street, Bristol.

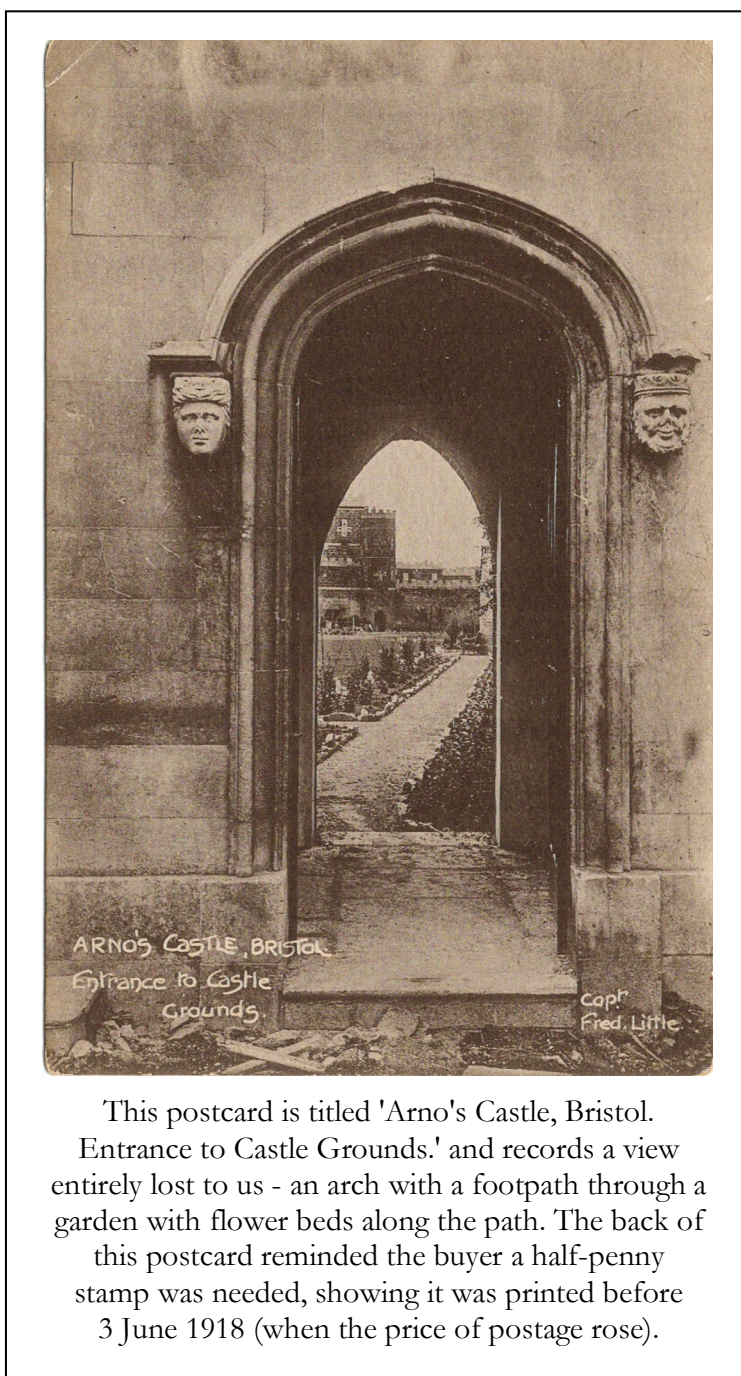
In February 1917 another child was born, and was baptised the following month in the parish of St James, Bristol. The family now lived at Alfred Place, Kingsdown, Bristol, and Fred still worked as a photographer.

Sadly, Florence, died in Feb 1933 while living at Failand, Somerset.

In the last quarter of 1933, the marriage of widower Fred and Mabel Mary Sims (born in 1890) was registered at Long Ashton, Somerset. Research has not yet found whether Mabel belonged to the same branch of the family as Florence.

The 1939 register shows them living at Long Ashton (actually the same address that Florence's probate describes as being in Failand), his occupation was given as retired photographer, and hers as unpaid domestic duties.

Sadly, in Feb 1953, Fred Little died while living at North Road, St Andrew's Park, Bristol. He left an estate worth more than £5,500. Some fifteen years later his widow Mabel died while living at the same address.



This postcard is titled 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. Entrance to Castle Grounds.' and records a view entirely lost to us - an arch with a footpath through a garden with flower beds along the path. The back of this postcard reminded the buyer a half-penny stamp was needed, showing it was printed before 3 June 1918 (when the price of postage rose).

# Little & Barber

## (postcard publishers)

This Brislington publisher produced a dozen postcards (six or twelve were common quantities for a series, but this may be misleading, as we shall see). All twelve carry a similar form of words on the back, such as 'Little & Barber, Buyers of Old English Furniture and Works of Art. Arnos Castle, Brislington, Bristol.' Fred Little is credited on the front of each postcard as the copyright holder (using 'Copr.' a standard abbreviation for copyright).

The business occupied not only what is now known as The Castle (formerly The Black Castle) but also extensive grounds stretching to the Bath Road (A4). The property included a bath house and colonnade (the latter was moved to Portmeirion, Wales, where it's known as the Bristol Colonnade), all built by William Reeve in or around the 1760s.

### Arthur Little

Arthur William Little was born in Bristol in July 1877. The 1881 Census shows him living with his family including his elder brother Fred, in the parish of St Peter's, as does the 1891 Census (for details see Fred's biographical notes, above).

The 1901 Census shows Arthur working as a self-employed clerk at the church of St Peter. His mother and Fred completed the household.

In the spring of 1904, the marriage of Arthur and Ellen Corbett was registered in Bristol. She had been baptised in Oct 1879 in the parish of Berkeley, Gloucestershire, and was the child of Margaret and Harcourt Corbet [sic]. The family lived in Berkeley, and her father worked as a chemist.

The Census of 1881 shows Ellen's family living on the High Street, Berkeley. Her father was aged 33 and born in Bristol, and her mother was aged 28 and was born in Wales. Ellen had a brother two years her elder who had also been

born in Berkeley. By 1891 her father had died, and in 1894 her mother remarried.

A couple of years after their marriage, in Nov 1906 Ellen gave birth to a daughter who was born in Bristol and baptised the following month at the church of St Peter, where Arthur was sexton. He was also conducting business as an antiquarian, and the family was living at 18 Narrow Wine Street, Bristol.

The 1911 Census found the family of three living at Ninetree Hill, Cotham, Bristol, while Arthur worked as an antique dealer.

The 1939 register records Arthur as a widower, still working as a dealer in antiques. Sadly, Arthur's death was recorded in the summer of 1959 at Bristol.

### Walter Barber

The 1881 Census shows Walter was born in Bristol in 1880, to William and Selina Barber who, the Census says, were living in Hampton Terrace, Bedminster, Bristol. William was aged 30, was born in Ilminster, Somerset, and worked as a railway foreman; Selina was 26 and was born in Bristol; they had another son, some five years older than Walter.

The 1891 Census shows the parents and two children living in Dean Street in the parish of St Paul, Bristol. The father now worked as a railway superintendent (and now claimed birth at Crewkerne, Somerset), the elder brother worked as a clerk at the Coal Wharf, and Walter was attending school.

In the summer of 1909 Walter married Alice Lapham in Bristol. She was born to Fanny and Alfred Lapham and baptised in Sept 1876 at the church of St Barnabas, Bristol. Her family lived at Campbell Street, and her father worked as a clothier's assistant.

The 1881 Census describes Alice's family as living in City Road in the combined parishes of St James & St Paul, Bristol. Alfred, who was aged 28 and born in Bristol, was working as a

salesman, and Fanny was aged 40 and was born at Pitchcombe, Gloucestershire. Alice had an elder brother and both had been born in Bristol.

The 1891 Census shows her family unchanged in its members but living at Raglan Road, Horfield, Bristol. Her father worked as a clothier's salesman.

A decade later the 1901 Census shows her family at the same address although now Alice's brother was absent and they had a boarder. Alice was self-employed as a music teacher.

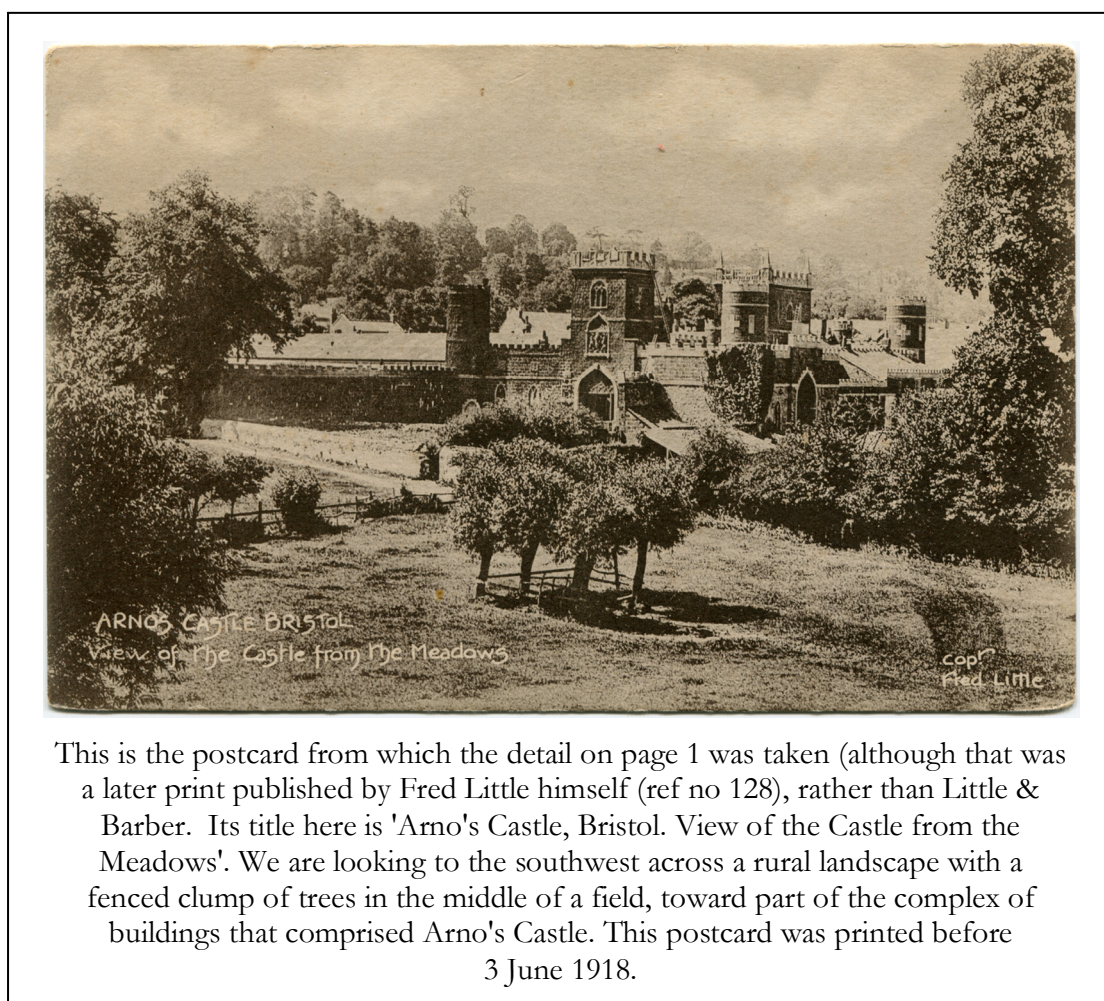
Alice and Walter's daughter was born in February 1910 and baptised the following month at the church of St Matthew, Cotham, Bristol. The family was living at Springfield Road, Cotham, while Walter was working as a carriage maker.

The 1911 Census shows the family still living in Springfield Road, and describes Walter's occupation as a baby carriage dealer.

In March 1919 the family was increased by the birth of a son who was baptised on the 30th of the same month at the church of St Luke, Brislington. The family's address was given as Arnos Castle, Brislington, and Walter worked as a dealer in fine art. The ceremony was performed by the vicar G R G Norris (Parish Register, 38).

Sadly, in December 1937, while living at Redland Court Road, Redland, Bristol, Alice died. She left more than £900. Walter was then working as a dealer in fine arts.

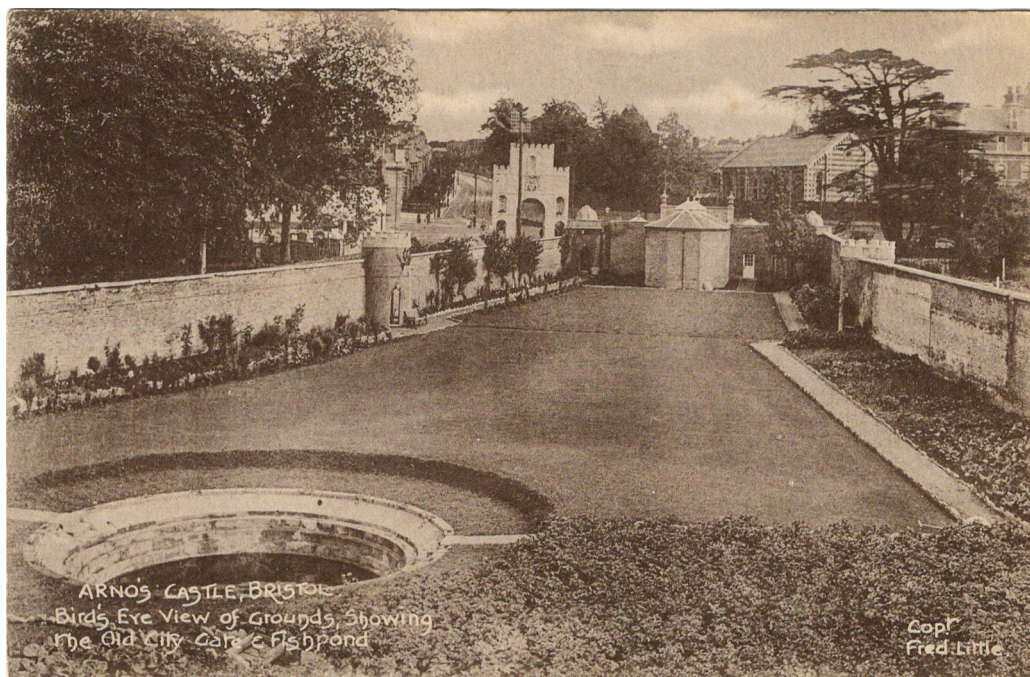
The register of 1939 lists Walter as living in Queen's Court, Bristol, and working as a dealer in fine arts and antiques.



This is the postcard from which the detail on page 1 was taken (although that was a later print published by Fred Little himself (ref no 128), rather than Little & Barber. Its title here is 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. View of the Castle from the Meadows'. We are looking to the southwest across a rural landscape with a fenced clump of trees in the middle of a field, toward part of the complex of buildings that comprised Arno's Castle. This postcard was printed before 3 June 1918.



This postcard shows the garden between the bathhouse and the main buildings (the latter are shown in the picture). Its title is 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. General View of Castle from the Grounds.'



This shows the same garden as above, but viewed from the other end. Its title is 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. Bird's Eye View of Grounds, Showing the Old City Gate & Fishpond', and was photographed from an upper storey of the castle. Both the garden and bathhouse have been demolished. In the distance on the far right-hand side, we glimpse the dormitories in the reformatory school at the convent of Arno's Court (now Arnos Manor Hotel). To its left is their chapel (demolished) with its eye-catching horizontal stripes on the end wall.



This shows a building lost to Brislington but the façade was moved to the exotic 'village' at Portmeirion, north Wales, where it's known as the Bristol Colonnade. The postcard is titled 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. The Exterior of the Roman Bath.' (it wasn't actually Roman, just in a classical style).



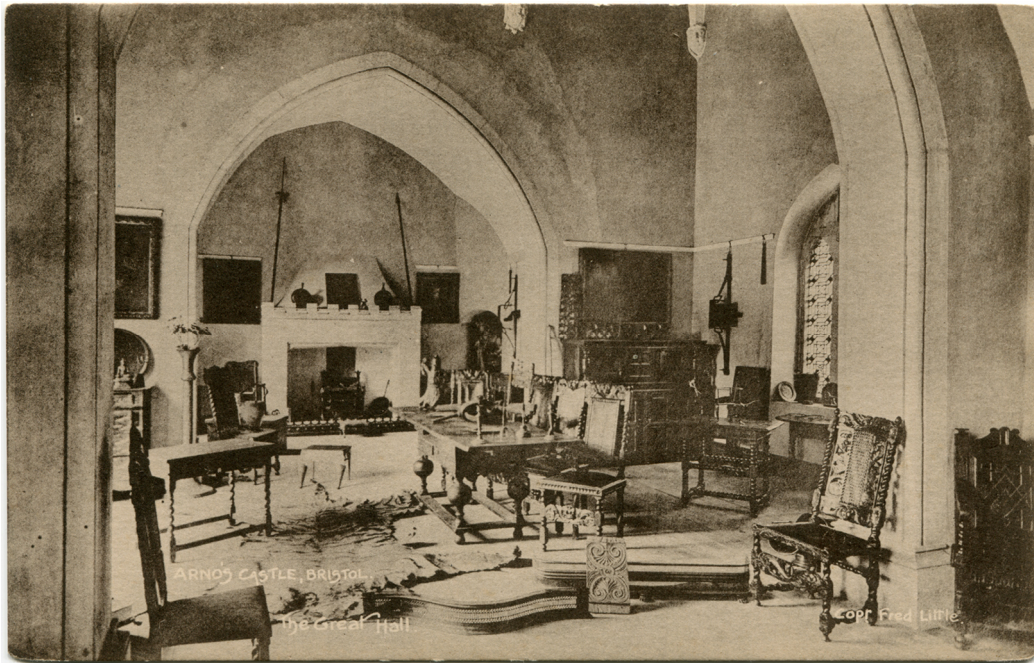
This view of the inside of the bathhouse (now demolished) is titled 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. The Roman Bath before Alterations.' The pool area was subsequently covered so the floorspace could be brought into service for displaying antiques for sale (see next page). Earliest known postmark: 17 October 1912.



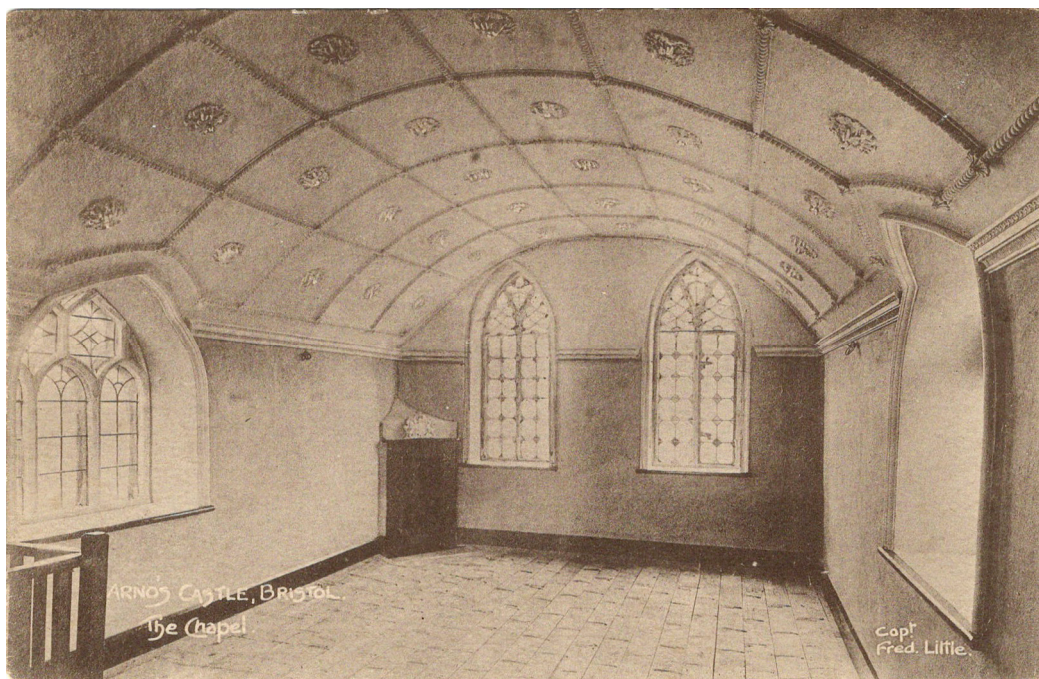
The title of this postcard is 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. Interior of the Roman Bath.'  
 Earliest known postmark: 6 April 1918 (this uncharacteristically late date, suggests it may have been in storage for some years before being posted).



Also titled 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. Interior of the Roman Bath.', this view looks away from the door. A selection of tables and chairs (including a chaise longue against the right-hand wall) are on display for sale in what was then an antiques shop. In the other, matching photograph (above), some of the furniture has been swivelled to face the camera (it's possible that although the photographs were taken on the same occasion, they were printed separately).



This postcard is titled 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. The Great Hall.', and again shows items on sale at the antiques shop. Most of these items for sale are wooden tables and chairs; the tiger skin rug adds a note of the macabre.



This postcard is titled 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. The Chapel.', and shows the room known as the chapel, which is situated at the top of the largest tower, and is noted for its white plaster mouldings on the ceiling.



ARNOS CASTLE BRISTOL  
 The Subterranean passage in 1911  
 now demolished.

Copied  
 Fred Little

This postcard is titled 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. The Subterranean passage in 1911 now demolished.' This postcard shows an entrance to the tunnel that ran beneath the Bath Road, connecting the house of Arno's Court with the bathhouse and offices/stables at Arno's Castle. Earliest known postmark: 8 November 1912.



ARNOS CASTLE BRISTOL  
 The Inner Courtyard

Copied  
 Fred Little

The title of this postcard is 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. The Inner Courtyard.' and the photograph was taken from the arch of the main entrance to the building. There is a flowerbed where the well is situated today.

# Printing

The twelve postcards of Arnos Court were all printed using the collotype process, a method that produced good quality prints although often with relatively low contrast between the monochrome tones. It was a less expensive option than real photographic printing.

Usually when we find exactly a dozen postcards that are clearly related, we may assume they were printed as a single batch or, perhaps as two sets of six each (these quantities weren't uncommon in postcard printing practices of a century ago).

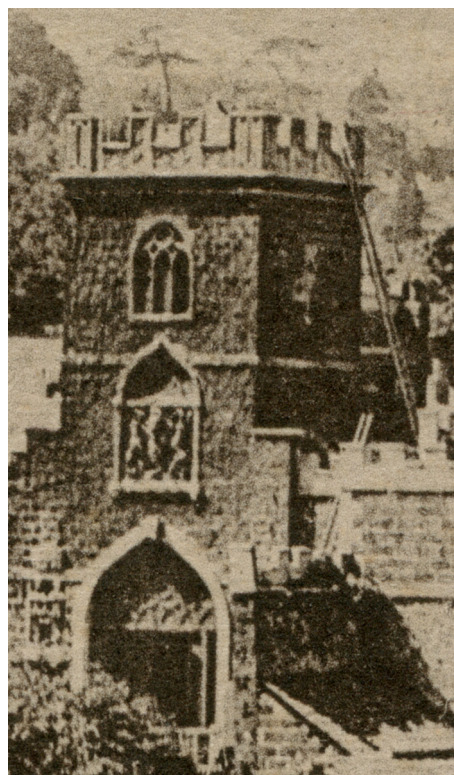
To check whether that is indeed the case we may look at the back of the postcards. If there were two printings (six each), for example, then perhaps we may find a difference in the printing on the back (six of one sort, and six of the other). Usefully, it can be possible to place those differences into chronological order, giving us a valuable clue as to which set of photographs came first.

In this case, though, the back of every picture is slightly different. The back of all these postcards includes text naming the publisher, and if six or twelve were printed as a set, it would be normal for the printing on the back to be identical (it seems inefficient to compose multiple letterpress blocks to print each picture on a different machine). It's notable, however, that where more than one example of a picture have been seen, the backs of that picture are all the same.

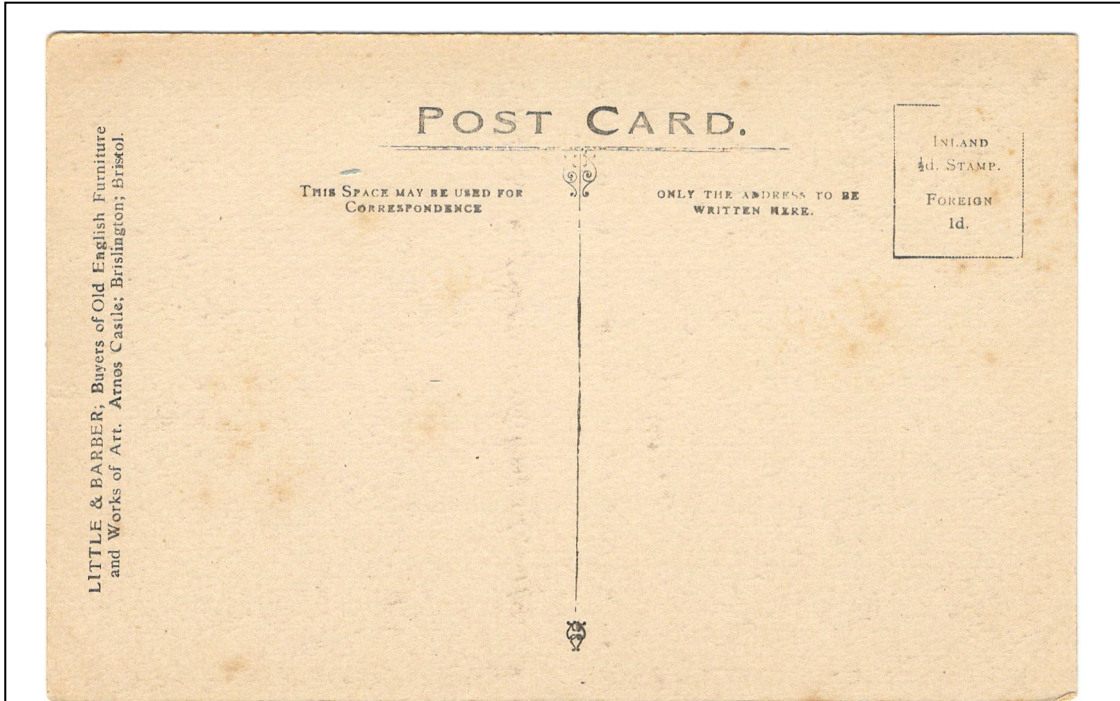
Although the number of postcards available isn't large enough to be sure, it seems possible - albeit tentatively - to propose each picture was printed only once, and they were sent one by one to the printer, with a span of time between each.

That said, the photographer did reproduce his picture here titled 'ARNOS CASTLE BRISTOL View of the Castle from the Meadows' on postcards under his own brand 'F Little', at least twice (using a different reference number each time: 128 and 235). Number 128 and, probably, 235 were published as a real photograph, which is a good technique for preserving details, which is why this version was used on page 1.

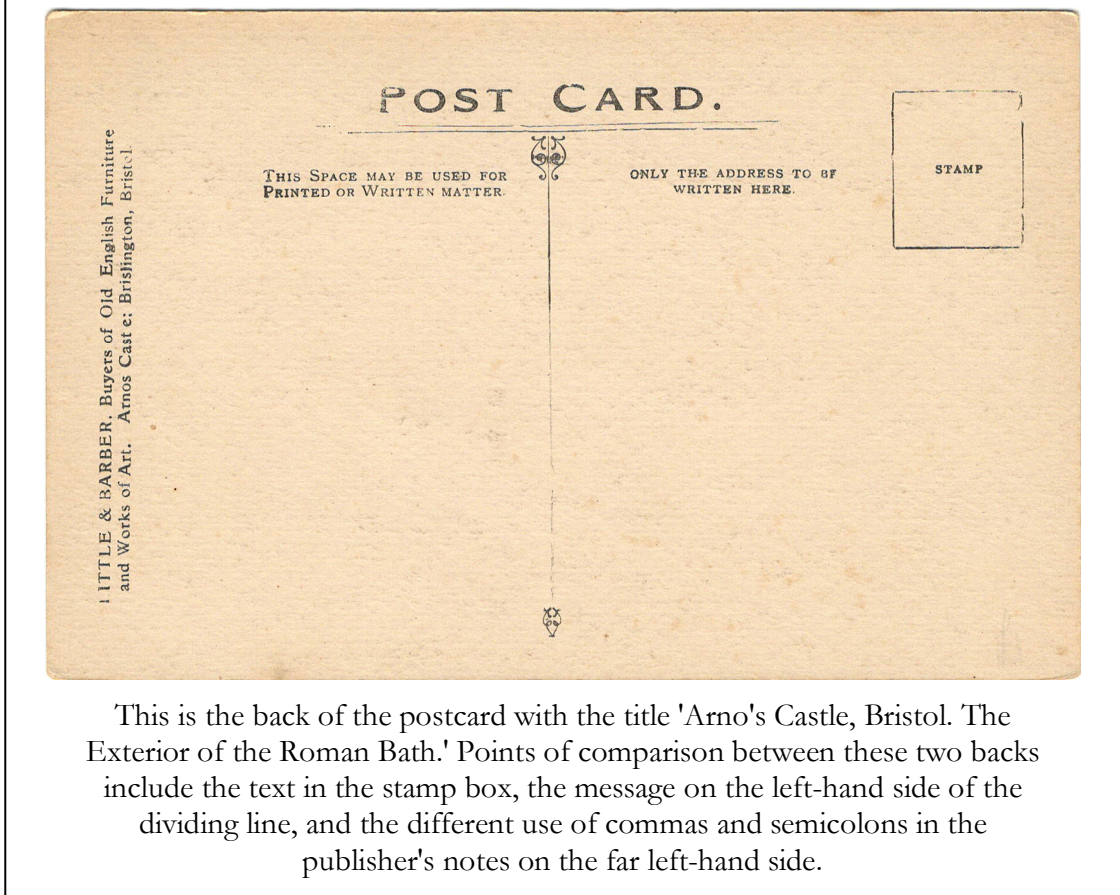
The picture of 'Brislington Village' was originally published as a real photographic print. A Christmas greetings card version was printed in halftone (the picture being converted into black dots of varying sizes to depict tone), and coloured using three lithographic plates (very pale versions of cyan, magenta and yellow). This coloured halftone postcard was also printed without the Christmas greeting. Neither of these halftone postcards identifies either the photographer or publisher (not illustrated as its copyright status is as yet unknown).



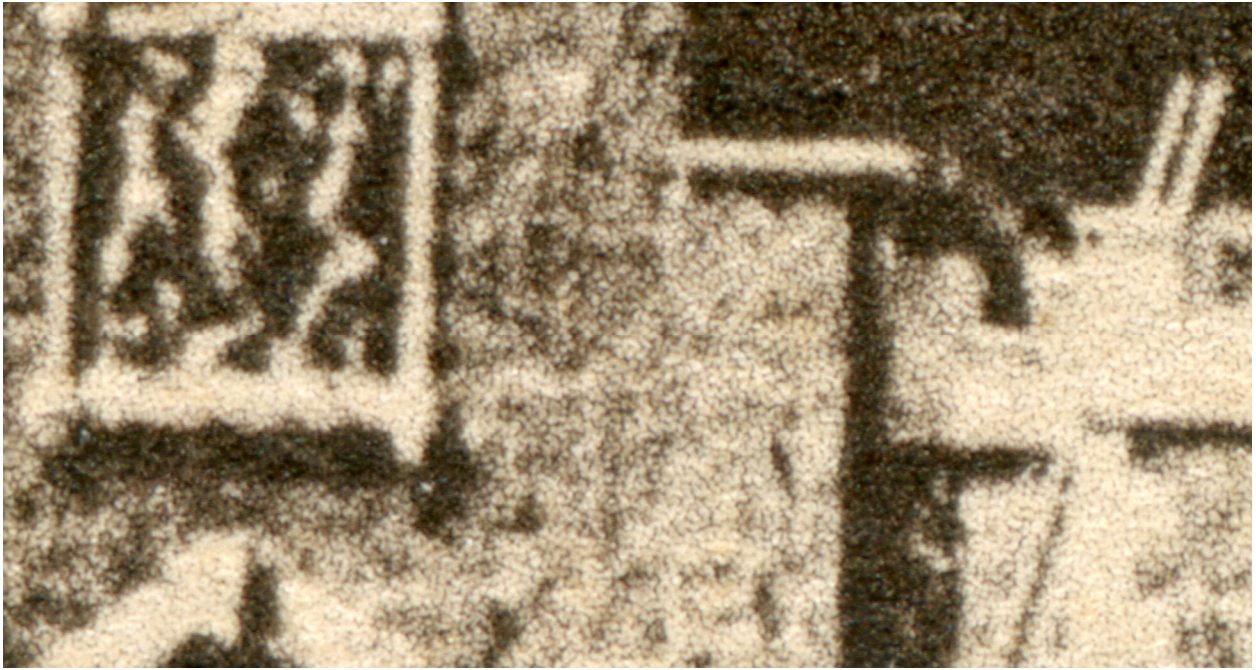
Detail of the Little & Barber collotype version of the postcard showing the main entrance to 'Arnos Castle'. To the naked eye there's not much to choose between the two postcards, but when enlarged, there is distinctly less clarity in this than in the real photograph version on page 1. Further enlargement would increase the discrepancy, which is why real photographic postcards tend to be prized by some local historians. In practice though, it's rare to have two versions of a single image like this.



Above is the back of the postcard with the title 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. General View of Castle from the Grounds.' While the layout of each back is broadly similar, detailed comparison of the twelve postcards reveals numerous differences of wording, punctuation, and font, etc.



This is the back of the postcard with the title 'Arno's Castle, Bristol. The Exterior of the Roman Bath.' Points of comparison between these two backs include the text in the stamp box, the message on the left-hand side of the dividing line, and the different use of commas and semicolons in the publisher's notes on the far left-hand side.



This further enlargement of the collotype of the central part of the tower, shows the characteristic pattern of reticulations that are printed using this method. These tiny marks are much too small for the naked eye to see, and they capture more detail than the halftone dot method that was used when producing long print runs (collotypes were relatively fragile and wore out sooner).

## Bibliography

Historic England 1994, *Black Castle Public House*, List Entry Number: 1292881, London, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1292881?section=official-list-entry> (accessed 27 March 2026).

Parish Register, *Register of Baptisms in the parish of S Luke Brislington in the Diocese of Bath & Wells in the county of Bristol & Somerset from April 25 1915 to [June 1925]*; at Bristol Church of England Parish Registers, Reference: P.st.lb/R/3/D, Bristol Archives, Bristol City Council.

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## Credits

Contributors of text and images retain copyright of their work. Text by Ken Taylor.

All photographs were taken by Fred Little. We're particularly grateful for the following scans of postcards that have been provided by Andrew Palmer: pages 2, 3, 6 both, 7 both, 8 lower, 9 lower, 10 both, 12 both.

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