

Brislington Community Museum News

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Jesse Caleb Young's photographs

This prolific Bristol-based photographer was particularly interested in street scenes, and his pictures provide a valued early record of key sites and especially new housing developments in Brislington.

He published the postcards himself as real photographs, a printing technique that captures a wealth of detail. Tragically, he died - if we may pardon this saddest of puns - young, but there are surely many more of his excellent postcards of local streets that haven't been found in time for inclusion in this collection. Hopefully, anyone who has copies will find themselves able to share them.

Ken Taylor, chair



Just 10mm wide in the postcard of 'HARROW RD. BRISLINGTON. (2)', enlarged here, we even may glimpse the pattern in the curtain.

Contact us

Email us - 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).

Jesse Young - biographical notes

This Bristol photographer's initials - JCY (the middle initial standing for Caleb) - are on the front of many photographic postcards of Bristol and also on some of Brislington. These latter are mainly in the part of Brislington that became incorporated into the city of Bristol by the boundary change of 1897, but some are also in that area remaining in Somerset in the early decades of the 20th century.

His birth was registered in Bristol in the spring of 1883.

The 1891 Census duly shows Jesse aged 8 living at Victoria Place, St George, Bristol, with his parents Caleb (aged 36, born in Hambrook Gloucestershire, and working as a self-employed leather seller), and Elizabeth (35, born in Timsbury, Somerset). The family included another son, three years older than Jesse.

The 1901 Census shows the family consisting of the same four individuals (both children, it states, were born in St Phillips, Bristol), living in Church Road, Easton, Bristol. Jesse's father was pursuing the same occupation, a business he ran from home, and now had the assistance of the older son. Jesse himself was employed as an insurance clerk.

A decade later, the 1911 Census shows the household with the same four family members, living at 227 Church Road. Jesse's elder brother was now described as working as a shop assistant, and their home included the shop. Jesse himself was now also working from home as a self-employed photographer.

In World War I, with his home address still as 227 Church Road, Jesse became a soldier and served as a private in the 1st Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders.

On 14 June 1917 Jesse was killed in action in France or Flanders. He was posthumously awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

In 1919, probate valued his estate at more than £400 but, for us, as well as his tragic service in the war, his legacy is the invaluable photographic record of our local history.



This postcard is titled 'TEA GARDENS, CONHAM.' and is one of the earliest of Jesse Young's Brislington postcards. The large space below the photograph was intended to allow the sender to write a message at a time when the post office prohibited the use of the postcard's back for anything other than the recipient's address (that regulation ended in 1902).

Jesse Young's postcards

In addition to the twelve postcards illustrated in these pages, two others are known but copies haven't become available to include here. Fortunately, they have both been published in a book that although out of print, is still widely available second hand: *Brislington St Anne's on old Postcards* (published in 1992 as part of the Bygone Bristol series by Janet & Derek Fisher).

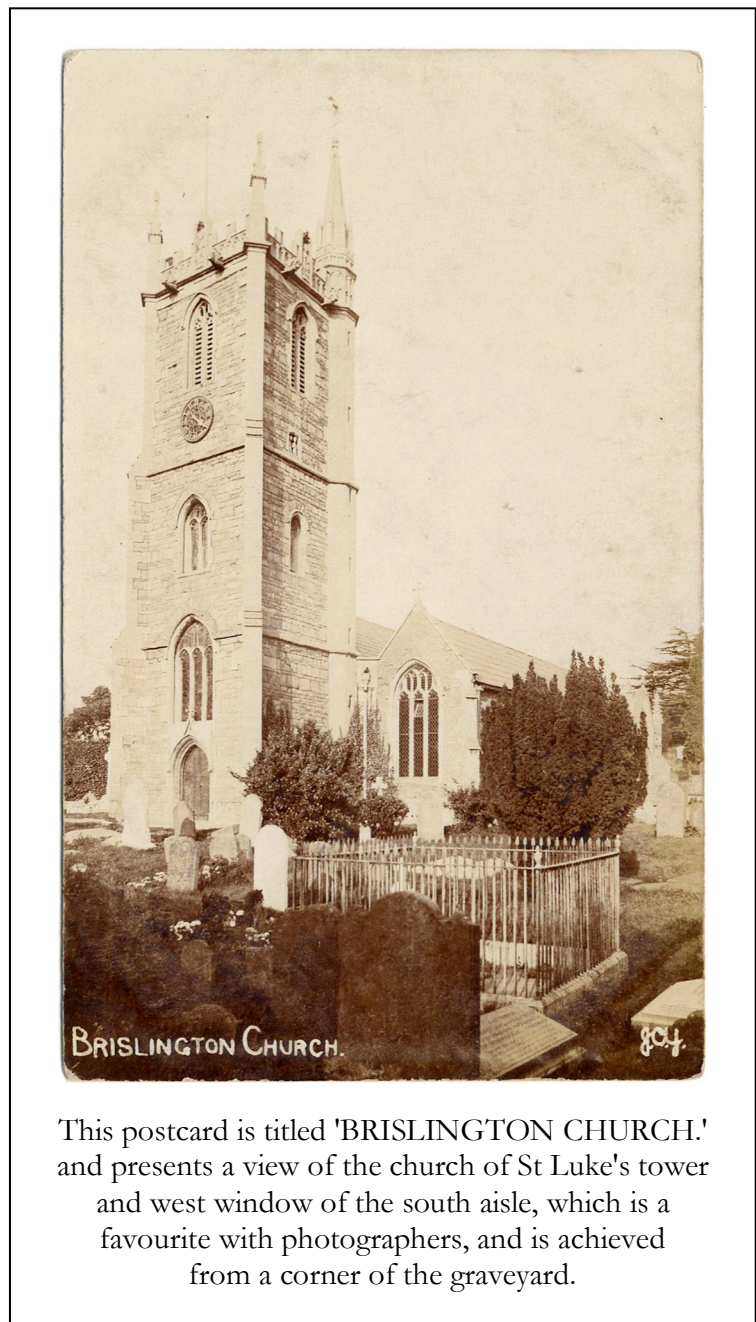
'CHURCHILL RD., BRISLINGTON.'
photograph taken from the top of the part of this road that heads straight down to join Bloomfield Road, looking downhill at the terraced houses on the right-hand side (page 23).

'SANDGATE RD., BRISLINGTON.'
photograph taken from the top of the hill looking downhill at the terraced houses on the left-hand side. (page 24).

Jesse Young did produce postcards of many of the usual subjects, such as the church of St Luke, the village square, and transport hubs including the Tram Depot and St Anne's Park railway station, as well as beauty spots such as Beese's Tea Gardens. These are, for the local historian at least, of lesser interest as other photographers were already capturing them. What many other postcard publishers neglected, however, were the everyday sights and scenes of the back streets of Brislington.

Jesse provided a valued service to new homeowners in recently developed streets in growing parts of Bristol. And, with a shop on almost every streetcorner, there was ample opportunity for people to buy his postcards and send them to friends and family - even sometimes marking their house with an X.

His postcards of urban street scenes aren't rare - he was prolific - but, because each picture included only a dozen or so houses, the quantity printed was never going to match the numbers published for an ordinary tourist attraction. So, although he very likely visited and photographed all the streets in the 'Sand' housing development (for example), we only have one in this collection - Sandgate Road. This, incidentally, points to the value of publishing this sort of collection, as few of us would otherwise get to see these unique local history postcards.



This postcard is titled 'BRISLINGTON CHURCH.' and presents a view of the church of St Luke's tower and west window of the south aisle, which is a favourite with photographers, and is achieved from a corner of the graveyard.



This postcard is titled 'FROM THE TEA GARDENS, CONHAM.' and shows the ferry service across the River Avon (at this time, Brislington's boundary ran along the middle of the river). The Tea Gardens - more recently known simply as Beese's - were opened in 1846 by Mrs Anne Beese. Earliest known postmark: 5 October 1906.



The title 'THE TEA GARDENS, CONHAM.' is, like the one above, misleading because although connected to the Conham Ferry, it's in Brislington. At least seventeen people are in this shady part of the tea gardens. The wide margins are characteristic of postcards with undivided backs (pre-1902), but the back here is of Jesse Young's usual divided type (perhaps he re-used an earlier photograph).



This postcard is titled 'ST. ANNE'S PARK STATION, NEW BRISLINGTON.' We're looking toward Bristol along the Great Western Railway's tracks that, in the other direction, connect with London. This station operated from 1898 to 1970, and the buildings and platforms shown here are all demolished.



With the title 'TRAMWAY DEPÔT, BRISLINGTON.', this postcard celebrates another key hub in Brislington's transport network. Purpose built as the country's first major depot for electric trams, services began running here in December 1900. This Grade II listed building survives as a prominent landmark on the A4 Bath Road at the junction with Sandy Park Road (on the right of this picture).



The title of this postcard is 'Churchill Rd, BRISLINGTON. (2)' and shows terraced houses on the left-hand side as we look roughly north toward, at the far end, buildings on Bloomfield Road. Although not part of the 'Sand' development (such as Sandgate, below), these houses are fairly typical of those built in this part of Brislington in the first decade of the 20th century.



This postcard is titled 'SANDGATE RD., NEW BRISLINGTON!' and looks up the street toward Sandringham Road. It's thought the phrase 'New Brislington' arose when a large part of the village was annexed by the city of Bristol in its boundary expansion of 1897, a development that coincided with a huge increase in the building of housing estates on greenfield sites.



This postcard is titled 'HARROW RD., NEW BRISLINGTON.' and shows the terraced houses on the right-hand side of the street, looking north toward the rear of buildings on Sandy Park Road. Jesse is believed to have cycled around Bristol to take his photographs, and it's tempting to wonder whether the bicycle featured at the foreground of this picture might just be his own.



The title of this postcard is 'HARROW RD. BRISLINGTON. (2)' and again we're looking toward the rear of buildings on Sandy Park Road, but this time focussing on the left-hand side of the street. The enlarged detail on page 1 shows the man (in a bowler hat) and a girl by the doorway of one of the closest houses - both are watching the photographer, the girl just managing to peep over the gatepost.



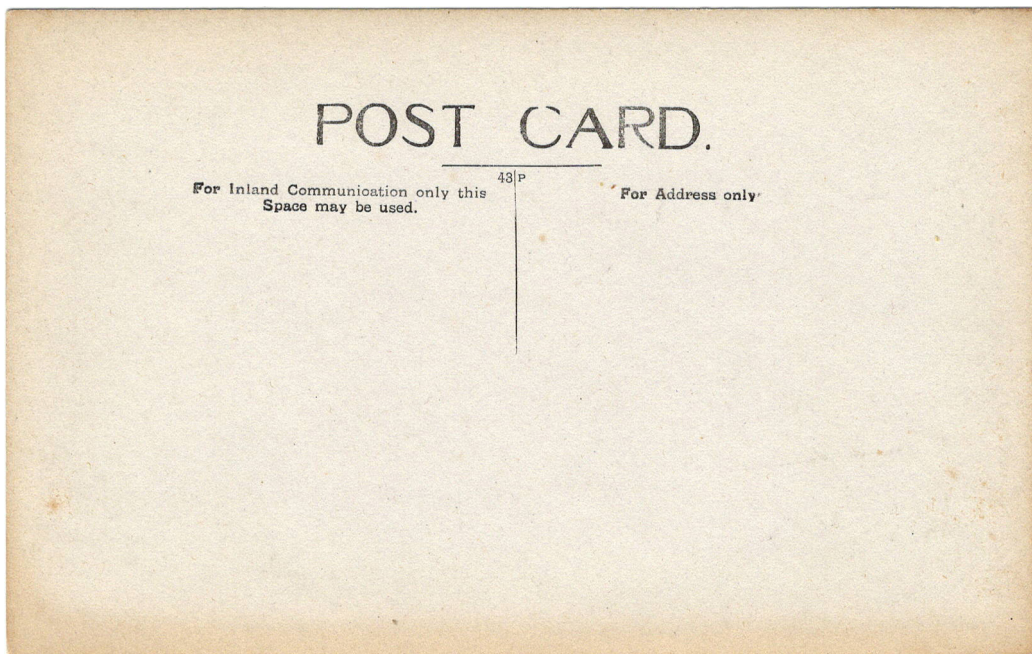
This postcard titled 'WINCHESTER RD., BRISLINGTON!' looks north along Winchester Road toward the rear of buildings on Sandy Park Road. The wagon is piled with crates of beer, and on its back, between the words Pale Ales, has a logo formed of a monogram of AK inside a diamond. The corner shop is shown in greater detail below.



This postcard titled 'BRISLINGTON!' shows a tram at its terminus, pairs of traction poles can be seen, supporting the overhead wires from which the trams drew the electricity for their motors. The largest building in the row beside the tram was Brislington Post Office. On the extreme left-hand side of the postcard, bearing the shadow of the man in the bowler hat, is the wall of the bridge over Brislington Brook.



The back of the postcard titled 'TEA GARDENS, CONHAM.' has an unusual Art Nouveau printed greeting. It is still technically an 'undivided back' because it lacks the dividing line between the places where the sender can write correspondence (on the left-hand side), and the address (right-hand side). This postcard wasn't posted but had a brief message, which has been removed for reasons of copyright.



The back of the postcard titled 'BRISLINGTON.' This is the most common type of back for Jesse Young's Brislington postcards. The meaning of the code '43P' isn't known, and most of his postcards have a different code (ranging from just the 'P' up to '48P'). The vertical line in the middle is the 'dividing line', with the texts explaining the use of each side.



This enlargement of the postcard titled 'WINCHESTER RD., BRISLINGTON.' shows the corner shop (now no longer a shop) at the junction with Rugby Road. On the door is an advert for Fry's Pure Cocoa (at the time Fry's operated a major chocolate factory in Bristol).

Credits

Contributors of text and images retain copyright of their work. All photographs by Jesse Caleb Young. We're particularly grateful for the following scans of postcards that have been provided by Andrew Palmer: pages 2, 3, 4 both, 5 both, 6 both, 8 lower, 9 both. Text and other illustrations by Ken Taylor.

With thanks to Richard Curtis (relative of Jesse Young and researcher into his photographic legacy), for getting in touch and sharing insights into their family history - his gran met Jesse when she was a girl.

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