Brislington Community Museum News

2026 November (Issue 21)
ISSN 2753-7773

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And, after the final chapter…

The September issue was scheduled as our final newsletter. Naturally, with that milestone passed, our thoughts returned to the puzzle of how to make the series as accessible as possible once our website has closed (on or around 23 November).

Each issue has been archived with the British Library, but that's not easily accessible for most Brislings (a term coined as collective noun for local people by Kai Taylor in or around 2020). So, we contacted the Bristol Central Reference Library, who are happy to accept them.

In fact, the prompt and helpful reply from Sophie Evans, Heritage Development Librarian, inspired this extra issue. In an almost throw-away query she asked *Do you have an index by any chance?*

We didn't (but we do now :)

We finally have an index. We'd simply overlooked the necessity of it, focussing so much on content creation rather than information management. I was rather embarrassed to find some typos (some issues were created in great haste), but the information itself is what's important.

Oh, and we've taken the opportunity to include notes on a Stone Age tool found at St Luke's church in September.

Incidentally, no AI has ever been used in this series (or our website content).

So, thank you Sophie, and thanks once again to all who supported and enjoyed using Brislington Community Museum through the years - it truly has been a pleasure.

Ken Taylor, chair

Whole series - list of contents

This publication (ISSN 2753-7773) was always available as a free download (.pdf) on the museum's website (brislington.org). It carried news of events etc and also articles on exhibits and other matters of interest. It launched in July 2022, and ended in November 2026.

While the index (see below) will assist with particular interests, the general contents of each issue is listed here.

July 2022 (Issue 1)

Our Neolithic exhibits - Multi-purpose flint, Half-moon scraper, Waste flakes, Flint blade (narrow), Flint blade (broad), Arrowhead
Acquisition numbers

October 2022 (Issue 2)

Brislington's Roman villa - Glass bead from Brislington Meadows, Glass beads from Brislington villa, Window glass
Metal finds from Brislington Villa - Pewter flagons, Coin of Constantius II, Bow brooch, Finger ring key, Spoon
Organic finds from Brislington Villa - Bone pins, Horse teeth, Boars' tusks
Stone finds from Brislington Villa - Moulds, Fossils, Tesserae
Painted wall plaster

May 2023 (Issue 3)

Ceramics from Brislington's Roman villa - Amphora handles, Black burnished ware, Samian, Oxfordshire ware mortaria, Oxfordshire red ware, Castor ware, Severn valley ware, Jug
Other Romano-British ceramics - Grey ware, Coarseware
Brislington's Roman Villa - Structure

June 2023 (Issue 4)

Excavations at Brislington Meadows
Iron Age / Roman rimsherd
Medieval ridge and furrow ploughing
Notes on a likely medieval Priest's Path through Brislington Meadows

July 2023 (Issue 5)

The Chapel of St Anne in the Wood - Rood screen, Floor tiles
Bristol Pottery Type (BPT) 46
Midland Purple (or Cistercian) ware
Malvernian ware
Tudor green
Whetstone
Carved stone
Coins from the wishing well

October 2023 (Issue 6)

Iron-working at Broomhill - Iron ore, Crystal structure, A box of nails
Notes on a set of 'Acre' fields - The study area, Do the names measure up?, Summary of field areas, The fields in the landscape, The baseline and the perpendicular, Other observations

January 2024 (Issue 7)

Brislington Meadows - lynchets, Heap of stones, Veteran hawthorns
A pond at Brislington Meadows
1778 - Enclosure of the Common

April 2024 (Issue 8)

Brislington Pottery - Plate
Falfield Ware
Wanstrow pottery
North Devon GTW
Nether Stowey
Feathered slipware
Tiger Ware
Tobacco pipes - Decoration, Pipe bowls

July 2024 (Issue 9)

Metal finds from Eastwood Farm - Georgian coins, Bronze oval ring, Lead
The railways - Railway key, Graffiti
Brislington Brook valley - Figurine, Intaglio seal fob
Hampstead Road - Slate pencil, Ammonite, Oyster shell, Cast slag block

October 2024 (Issue 10)

19th and 20th century ceramics - Jam jar, Jasperware, Fry's canteen cup, Kiln furniture
Glass bottles - Beer bottle, Clear glass
Brislington Brook valley - Figurine, Intaglio seal fob
Stone
Biological remains
Metal - Finger ring, Badge/brooch, BTCCL button, Bronze plaque, Toy car, Cartridge case - WWI, Cartridge case - WW2, .22 Calibre

July 2025 (Issue 11)

Boundary wall of Mount Pleasant - Definitions, Location, History, Type of wall, Description, Concluding thoughts

January 2026 (Issue 12)

Two pictures by Rowbotham
Seven granite setts

February 2026 (Issue 13)

Casualties of war
Stained glass
South side, west of the porch
West end of the south aisle
Interpretation
Appendix - measurements

March 2026 (Issue 14)

Street name signs - Street name only, 4 (Bristol district), BS4 (modern postcode)
Book review - Daisy Wheel, Hexfoil, Hexafoil, Rosette: Protective Marks in Gravestone Art

April 2026 (Issue 15)

Fred Little's photographs
Fred Little - biographical notes
Little & Barber (postcard publishers)

May 2026 (Issue 16)

Jesse Caleb Young's photographs - Biographical notes, Postcards, Credits

June 2026 (Issue 17)

John Garratt - biographical notes - John Garratt's postcards
James Lawrence - postcards
Harry Jones - postcard
Martin Ridley - postcard

July 2026 (Issue 18)

Marshall, Keene & Co
Fred E Bailey
Walter Kent
John Rigden
James Thompson

August 2026 (Issue 19)

William Winchester's topographical and commissioned postcards

September 2026 (Issue 20)

Dating photos of postcards in books
Five-star ratings

November 2026 (Issue 21)

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Toffee-coloured prehistoric stone tool found at St Luke's

Index - Brislington Community Museum News

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Brislington and the name Ken Taylor appear too often in the series (the latter as editor, and as contributing photographer and author) for inclusion in this index.

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Toffee-coloured prehistoric stone tool found at St Luke's

On the morning of 9 September 2026 local resident Ken Taylor spotted an unusual stone in a bare patch of a flowerbed in the churchyard of St Luke's, Brislington.

It was by the footpath, roughly half way up the slope from Church Parade to the south porch, on the west side. Having discussed the find with the vicar, Revd Sarah Hancox, the finder took it Bristol Museum & Art Gallery for identification.

Kurt Adams, Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, examined it on 7 October. His opinion was that, on a balance of probabilities, it was a palaeolithic scraper around twelve thousand years old. However, it may have been used more recently during the Bronze Age as people then often picked up flints and such-like and reused them (around 1,100 BCE). The stone was the sort of chert that occurs naturally in the find area but was formed in the limestone of the Cotswolds. [The rest of this report relies on the author's independent research.]

Functionality

The stone has two cutting edges, and they would most likely be used for cleaning hides in preparation for their use as leather clothing or containers, etc. Both edges are slightly convex, suggesting they would have been used on something soft that naturally bowed a little under the pressure of the tool as it worked.

The short edge could be used for high-pressure work over a small area, while the longer one provided more gentle pressure over a larger area. The locations of the working edges - one on an end and the other along a side - classifies this tool as an 'end-and-side' scraper.

The size of this tool wouldn't be suited to the initial rough processing of a large, tough hide, but instead was used either for the pelts of small animals, or in the later stages of a larger project, when a medium to fine grade tool was required, perhaps including finishing touches.



Vital statistics
(Spoiler - this section contains jargon.)

Surface find in the churchyard of St Luke, Brislington: Ordnance Survey grid reference at (or near) ST 62082 70758.

The stone is translucent light brown ('toffee-coloured') chert. Pebbles and nodules could be picked up from the shore (or from ancient shorelines) along the River Avon, having been eroded out of the Cotswolds limestone where it formed (the site lies within a large loop of the river, which at its closest is 1,400m to the east-northeast.

This end-and-side scraper is complete and in unaltered condition. It's a secondary bipolar blade struck from a pebble with a flat striking platform. Shallow bifacial retouch all along the distal end. One side of the dorsal face retains some cortex but has been ground smooth to the extent that all cortex has been removed from a strip along the blade's only sharp edge, honing the side scraper.

Length	47mm
Width	18mm
Thickness	10mm
Weight	13.4g

The making of the tool

The stone preserves many clues that tell of its journey from a river pebble to a sophisticated dual-purpose tool, allowing us to attempt a plausible reconstruction of the stages in its creation.

The small end of the tool is flat and almost exactly a quarter circle, while the other end is wider with a broader radius, so we may imagine it to have come from an egg-shaped pebble (from a slightly-larger-than-average hen). With only a little practice, such pebbles could easily be spotted among the rest of the stones on a beach of the River Avon (or on an exposed surface of an ancient beach). Chert pebbles have a characteristic thin rind of oxidisation called cortex, that completely covers the surface of the stone (the geological conditions in which the cortex develops produces a distinctive range of colours, the cortex of our specimen is whitish (pale buff).

Having been harvested as a natural resource, the lucky finder would likely have taken the pebble to a convenient place with good light, to turn it into one or more useful tools. Manufacture could be improvised almost anywhere, even on the river beach, suiting the nomadic palaeolithic lifestyle.

Because the shape of the scraper so conveniently matches an egg-shaped pebble, the pebble may have been selected specifically for the creation of this tool.

The first step in the knapping process would be to hold the egg-shaped pebble in one hand and use another pebble as a hammer stone to strike off the narrow end of the egg. This prepares the pebble for tool-making, so we can acknowledge this new status with a technical name - a core. The core had an exposed circular patch of the toffee-coloured chert surrounded by the pale rim of cortex (the detached primary flake may have been useful as a tool in its own right, but it played no further role in the creation of our scraper). The newly created small, flat, circular surface would be the target for the hammer stone's future work and, therefore, is called the striking platform.

The broad base of the core would have been placed on a large stone, which is termed the anvil. The striking platform would have been uppermost, and the hammer aimed at the platform in such a way that a strike split a flake from the side of the core. That process was repeated a few times, working around the core, until there was only half the core remaining (perhaps less). The flake that will become the scraper was then struck off the core (one day, perhaps, the other flakes and the remainder of the core will be found).

Our blade (a technical terms for a flake more than twice as wide as it is long) has a quarter-circle platform, a wide flat side where it was detached from the core (known as the ventral

face), a rounded side with cortex, and a narrower flat side from which the previous flake was detached (these two together are termed the dorsal face).

Incidentally, the narrow facet of the dorsal face has a 'step' where the shockwave from the hammer-blow couldn't flow smoothly through the stone but was diverted by a patch of more granular chert (such imperfections often occur and spoil many attempts at tool making). It's likely the converging shockwave from the anvil helped save this blade as, without it, the split may have continued in its unintended direction.

Evidence for the use of an anvil stone also comes from a careful examination of the striking platform. Without an anvil, the blade should have a clear bulb of percussion (a characteristic rippling shockwave that flows away from the hammer-blow, and which shapes the break between core and blade). Instead, both ends of this artefact are slightly bulbous (as if struck from both top and bottom simultaneously), which is characteristic of 'bipolar working' - where the shockwave from the hammer is almost immediately reflected from the point of compression on the anvil stone. This technique splits the pebble from both directions, often producing a slightly raised ripple in the middle of the ventral face (this tool does indeed present a slight thickening there).

At this stage, the artefact had a sharp edge both on its short end (the distal end, opposite the platform) and on one of its long sides, so it could be used immediately as a scraper. But the maker had the knowledge and skill to refine and improve the tool.

A smaller hammer is best for the next stage of more delicate work (probably still a stone, but possibly a softer hammer such as an antler). The flake was held or supported firmly (perhaps using a sheet of leather to protect the hand from the sharp edges), horizontally and with the dorsal face uppermost. Its broad end was held out, and the hammer struck down on its edge - detaching a small flake from the underside.

That was repeated twice more along the edge of the end. Then the blade was turned over, with the curved ventral face uppermost, and a further three small flakes were struck off. That gave the end of the blade a sharp V-shaped edge.

Detaching those sorts of small flakes is known as retouching and, because flakes were detached from both sides, our tool has is said to have bifacial retouch. Those precisely placed hammer blows made the sharp edge of the end scraper a lot stronger and more hard-wearing than its thin and fragile original edge. The scars on the scraper, where the retouch flakes were removed, are only about 5mm wide and not much longer (finding such tiny flakes in the ground would be a good sign that knapping took place at the site).

The rounded side of the tool still retains some of the cortex that would have surrounded the original pebble. Cortex is porous and rough, and might not only have snagged, gouged and damaged the hide the scraper was meant to clean, but would also soak up fatty and other deposits from the skins, making it unpleasant, smelly and unhygienic to store and use again. Further work on the chert was required to make it fit for its purpose.

An entirely different technique was used - the cortex was ground away, by being repeatedly rubbed against a larger, tough and abrasive substance. It may have been a block of the local pennant-type sandstone that served as the grindstone (perhaps it was the anvil stone itself). The quartz sand in pennant is rounded, which may account for this artefact lacking the distinctive striations often left by coarser, sharper grindstones (a 10x magnification hand lens does reveal many tiny scratches in a variety of directions). The resulting smoothness both allowed the tool to slide safely across the surface of the hide, and made it easy to clean.

Notes on the photographs

In the photographs, the striking platform is at the bottom (proximal end), and the end scraper is at the top (distal end).

The photograph to the left, adjacent to the scale, shows the smooth curved side with its patches

of white cortex remaining from the outside of the chert pebble. This is part of the dorsal (back) side of the tool and would have been sliding on the hide being worked. At the top, in the dark patch in the middle, a thin line runs diagonally down to the right - this is a tiny ridge between two concave flake scars left by the retouching that shaped the end scraper. The side scraper runs the full length of the right-hand side.

The photograph to the right is the ventral (front) side of the tool, and the side scraper is on the left-hand side. At the top edge, we can see concave curves left by the removal of the retouching flakes.

Chert and when it was used

This sort of light brown ('toffee- or honey-coloured') chert is typical of the sort that forms naturally in limestone of the Cotswold area (I'm grateful to Kurt Adams for informing me of this). Pebbles or even larger nodules could be transported into Brislington by the River Avon (and its predecessors through the expanse of geological time).

Incidentally, geologically-speaking, flint is also chert, but it forms in chalk instead of limestone. Archaeologically-speaking there's a world of difference between flint and its limestone-born cousin. Flint has a much finer grain, which makes it easier to control, so it's possible to make tools with much more finesse.

Chert makes a durable stone tool but doesn't offer such a razor-sharp cutting edge as flint, and chert tools tend to be comparatively heavy, lumpy and crude. The use of chert for tools, therefore, tends to relate either to a time before trade routes for flint existed (such as the palaeolithic), or to times of poverty when flint wasn't affordable.

In the author's experience, most stone age tools being found in Brislington are mottled grey or black flint (the latter being the highest quality for tool-making) rather than this sort of chert. This find is particularly unusual.

It's not surprising to find stone age tools lying around - Brislington was a nice a place to live during prehistory too - and the soil collects everything dropped into it. Flints etc are often discovered in people's gardens, but a lot of flint was brought here during modern times, as ornamental gravel for paths or other building projects, so care needs to be taken in identifying ancient tools.

The promontory on which the church is built would always have been an attractive spot. Its position in the landscape, at the end of a ridge overlooking a steep valley, makes it a good place to spend some quality time - a place from which to see, and also a place to be seen.

Credits & Contact details

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