Survey of Cast Iron Lamp Posts in Clifton and Hotwells, Bristol BS8

Maggie Shapland

Introduction

I became interested in street lights as a result of people contacting the Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society complaining about the loss of lamp posts in their streets over the years. Many residents were given the choice of paying £50 about 20 years ago by Bristol City Council to have traditional lanterns on their posts instead of the dreadful looking cone shaped lanterns. Thus it is even more galling to lose ones lantern as well as the post, and have an incongruous modern lamp installed looking totally out of place with old posts. After a particularly indignant letter from a Clifton resident about a new style lamp post by the side the grade II* listed Christ Church and my help with the Clifton Conservation Area statement which required a survey of street furniture, I decided to do a full survey of all the street lights in BS8. I soon discovered what a wealth of different types of posts there was and amazed that there was nearly 400 original posts were still around. I then decided to delve into the manufacturers of the posts to see if I could date them, and find out which companies made most of them. Although there has been much research into the gas[4] and electric suppliers[5], there does not seem to have been any research done on local lamp posts and their manufacturers.

Most of BS8 was in place by 1874, a lot of building taking place after 1849, which is one reason why there are so many Victorian lamp posts.

Gas lighting comes to Bristol

In 1800 Bristol Corporation declined to spend more than £26 12s towards lighting the city (this amount was less than the £32 12s to pay sundry coachmen to attend 6 months of meetings with their masters carriages on public days).

The first example of exterior gas lighting was on the premises of Boulton and Watt in Birmingham in 1802[17]. In 1807 gas lamps were first introduced into Golden Lane, London. Before that, the streets were lit with oil lamps outside peoples' houses. People who lived in the bigger and more expensive houses were often ordered to put lanterns and candles outside to help passers by see their way. In 1811 Mr Breillat gave a lecture and exhibition of gas lights at his house in Broadmead, Bristol and set up a few lamps in the street. In the Annals of Bristol[3] it is written “It seems strange that the Bristolians who witnessed Briellat’s success should have been reluctant to abandon their flickering and malodorous tallow candles; but for some time the Broadmead dyer passed amongst the vulgar as a man having unholy dealings with an infernal power while the upper classes treated the innovation with contemptuous indifference”. Pall Mall, Westminster was the first public throughfare in Britain to be lit by a series of gas lamps on free-standing posts in 1812

At a meeting in the Commercial Rooms, Corn Street in December 1815 a decision was made to form a company ‘for lighting the streets, shops and other buildings of the City of Bristol with gas’ It resolved that a Bristol Gas Light Company (manager Mr Breillat) be formed with a capital of £5,000 in £20 shares. The gasworks was built (despite worries about it being close to the city depot of gunpowder) and by May 1817 a few shops were using gas lighting. In July 1817 street lighting began in the High Street, but it was not until December that all the principal

streets were supplied (Water Lane, Temple Street, Bath Street, Bath Parade, Bristol Bridge, Broad Street, Wine Street, Corn Street and Clare Street)[2]. By 1823 1050 lamps were in use. A sprinkling of gaslights and a few night-constables were established in Clifton in December 1824[3] as a result of the Lighting and Watching Act. There followed a proliferation of cast-iron lamp posts in a large range of designs. By the mid century nearly 2,000 lights were provided in the city (Bedminster, Redland and Cotham had no lights at all in 1849[6]). Oakfield Road only had one lamp in 1850, and Clifton was imperfectly lit until 1851 when the city paving commissioners were abolished by the new Bill, and watching bodies in Clifton and the District received the royal assent[3]. By 1881 there were 4,274 street lights in Bristol.

The typical street light was the 16 candle-power open gas burner (there are still two in Trafalgar Square). The gas mantle, at eight times brighter had been invented prior to this time but a commercially viable design did not become available until 1895[1]. In September 1881 the Western Daily Press referred to improved gas public lighting using Sugg's patent burners. "At the Victoria Rooms there is a group of three lamps representing 300-candle power, and a similar group at the fountain near the Triangle, the rest of the lamps between the Victoria Rooms and the top of Park Street being of 60 candle-power". Gas mantles continued to be developed to produce the shadowless lamp in 1908. It was cheaper to develop the mantle, than to replace the 8-10' tall posts by taller posts to take advantage of the extra power available[19].

About 1,600 lamps are still lit by gas remain at such landmarks as Buckingham Palace, St James's Palace, the Palace of Westminster, Westminster Abbey and the Mall. These are attended to daily by British Gas's team of six gas lamp attendants, who maintain the clocks that switch the lights on at dusk until dawn (they were switched to an automatic timing system in 1985). In Clifton, 7 lamps are still lit by gas in Canygne Square and Cobblestone Mews.

Electric lighting comes to Bristol

The first recorded public display of electricity in Bristol was on 10 March 1863 when a Grand Ball and Supper was held at the Victoria Rooms on the occasion of the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra. A Mr Phillips from Weston-super-Mare put on a display. He was again employed to illuminate the Clifton Suspension Bridge at the celebration of its opening on 8 December 1864. He fitted an arc light at the top of each pier, two more in the centre of the bridge, two lime lights at the base of each pier and four magnesium lamps in between. Press reports suggest that the effect did not entirely live up to expectations[5]. The Bristol Mercury remarked that `at times the effect of the light was exceedingly brilliant, the rays being distinctly pencilled and elongated and all the outlines and tracery of the bridge were rendered clearly visible, while at others the light presented a dim appearance and caused great disappointment.' The Bristol Daily Post remarked 'The illumination though successful from a scientific point of view, failed to afford that amount of gratitude to the public which had been anticipated and universal disapprobation seems to have been engendered in all quarters which we visited'. The magnesium lights were difficult to keep alight due to strong winds. This may explain why it was another fourteen years before a further experiment was undertaken. In 1878, electric light had been tried in Bristol cathedral to good effect.

The first recorded commercial use of electricity in the city was when the Corporation's Docks Committee in March

1879 allowed Mr Brain of the Pyramid Electric Lighting Company to place lamps at Bathurst Wharf and Prince Street Bridge.'

In 1881, the Council ordered an experiment to be made, and seven electric lamps were placed in the four great business thoroughfares converging at the Council House. Owing to defective generating apparatus, the experiment was not satisfactory and the lamps withdrawn in a few weeks. The chief objection was the enhanced cost of electric motors as compared with gas. Mr William Smith then suggested that the ebb and flow of the tide might be made available for generating electricity. The power required to light by electricity the 4,274 existing street lights was calculated but no practical results occurred.

On March 11th, 1891 the Electrica1 Committee, in a report to the Council, recommended that 90 arc lamps of 1,000 candle-power each should be erected in the central streets. The yearly cost of lighting was estimated at £2,500, or double the expense of gas. Arc lights were at least twice as tall as the existing gas lights.

On October 21st, 1892, another report of the committee, recommended the acceptance of a tender for the erection of an electric power station at Temple Back. Bristol Corporation's electricity supply plant in 1893 was the fourth in the country. (Westminster and Waterloo supplied forty electric lights in 1879, Chesterfield was next in 1881, and Taunton in 1886). On November 20th, 1893, the works being in full operation, Bristol Bridge and the neighbouring thoroughfares were illuminated with great success ; the system was extended a few days later to other streets. On December 7th the new lamps were completed in the last section of the district selected by the Council, namely, from St. Augustine's Bridge to the Victoria Rooms. The total number of arc lights was then 93. The arc light in high columns at 1500 candle-power[1], was more suitable for public lighting since it was so much brighter. It was not until about 1907 though, when metal-filament electric lamps came into use, that electricity was a lot cheaper than gas.

On December 14th, 1897, the Council, at the suggestion of the Committee, resolved on obtaining an additional loan of £25,000, for the purpose of erecting 200 more lamps in various thoroughfares. On September 2nd, 1898, arc lamps were extended throughout Whiteladies Road, and soon afterwards to the main thoroughfares in Clifton. In July 1900 the number of arc lamps in the streets was 311. By 1911 there were 695 arc lamps involving five different types of arc lamp[1]. They needed a lot of maintenance so tungsten filament bulbs began to be used in the 1920s.

Conversion of over 4,000 gas lamps to electricity depended on whether there were mains near the post. Only minor modifications to gas lamps were required for electric use. Later electric posts tended to be taller than the original gas lamp posts and have maintenance doors. Sometimes lamp posts were combined with sewer vents, functioning as vents for foul air (the one at Temple Way just after junction with Temple Back is particularly ornate). In the 1930s, only one third of the Country's street lighting was electric.[18]. Bristol City Council now owns and manages 31,000 street lights.

Lighting Acts

- Sewerage, cleansing, paving and lighting Act (1806) for Bristol city passed
- Much opposition in the House of Peers to gas lighting including Sir Humphrey Davy (1809).
- Bristol Gas Light Company incorporated by Act of Parliament (1819)

- The Lighting And Watching Act (1824) passed in Bristol to make it safe to walk at night and give protection from highway robbers. The Bristol Journal of November 27, 1819 wrote 'The roads leading to Clifton are so infested at night with desperadoes that few gentlemen think it safe to walk about alone or unarmed'[3].
- The Lighting And Watching Act (1833) passed. This act allowed Parish Councils to become Lighting Authorities in their own right.
- Bill passed enabling Bristol Corporation (1851) to apply the powers of the Health of Towns' Act. The Council, as the Local Board of Health was vested with sole jurisdiction over the city streets, roads (except turnpikes), sewers, lighting etc. This avoided the power clashes of administration. One of the first and most striking improvements was the efficient lighting of Clifton and other suburban districts.
- The Metropolis Management Act (1855) requires the Metropolitan Boroughs to provide adequate street lighting in their districts. Therefore some London boroughs are legally required to provide street lighting.
- The Public Health Act (1875), Section 161 permits County Boroughs, Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts to provide equipment for the lighting of streets and public buildings at their own expense and to enter into agreements for the supply of gas and electricity. (If this act is in force, the 1833 Lighting and Watching act ceases to apply).
- The Public Health Act (1875), Section 276 allows Rural District Councils to obtain the power to light roads or delegate their lighting powers to the Parish Councils in their area.
- Electric Lighting Act passed (1882). Ten companies gave notice to apply for powers to supply electricity to Bristol
- Bristol Order (1883) required the Council to light the main thoroughfares with electricity within two years. Motives of economy deterred the authorities from exercising the powers.
- Private Street Works Act (1892) require frontages on to a private street to provide proper means of lighting before the street is adopted as a Public Highway by the council.
- Electric Lighting Clauses Act (1899) states that where a supply of electricity is required by a Lighting Authority for a lamp within 75 yards of a distributing cable, the supply authority must provide a supply.

Manufacturers

Some of the plates are fairly difficult to read as they are covered in layers of paint. The post styles are referred to by code numbers described later.

Manufacturer plate	Manufacturer + Inscription	Description	Address	Town	Dates
	Aero Engines Kingswood Bristol	Douglas business traded under this name after death of William Douglas the founder in 1937[14] Post Style: P10, P12		Kingswood	1937-1945?
	Avonside Engine Co Limited Engineers Bristol	Started as Slaughter and co in St Phillips. Locomotive engineers. General engineering 1880s. Avonside Engine Co. Limited 1865 until 1882 then became Avonside Engine Co. after liquidation in 1885. Moved to Filwood Rd, Fishponds from St Phillips 1906[10.] Became a limited company again in 1910. By 1927 advertised themselves as iron founders as well as loco engineers Post Style: P10	Avon Street, St Phillips	Bristol	1867-1934

Manufacturer plate	Manufacturer + Inscription	Description	Address	Town	Dates
					
	Bristol Foundry Company Thomas Street	Ironfounder. Made the biggest variety of posts, for longest period- from Victorian times to mid 20th century Post Style: P7, P10, P12	Thomas Street	Bristol	1881-1958
	Edward Crawford Bristol	E Crawford iron founder and scale beam maker. John Crawford iron founder lived at 6 Greville Place Hotwells Post Style: P7, P8	39 Bridge Street and Cheese Lane, 15 Narrow Plain	Bristol	1881-1912
					
	Douglas Kingswood Bristol	Douglas started out making drain-covers and lamp-posts[14] but in 1907, thanks to designer Joseph Barter, the company fitted a unique horizontal twin-cylinder engine on to a standard cycle frame. The Douglas	5 Redcross St. Moved to Kingswood 1887?	Kingswood	1882-1935.

Manufacturer plate	Manufacturer + Inscription	Description	Address	Town	Dates
		motorcycle was born Post Style: P10, P12			
	A Gardiner	Firm started by Zacharius Cartwight as builders and cabinet makers, and ironmonger. When he died, firm taken over by Emmanuel Chilcott who took on partner Alfred Gardiner in 1860. Expanded to making windows, ironwork, church furnishings, lighting, and ironmongery[9] Post Style: P7	5 St Nelson Street, Midland Ironworks in Wellway St, St Phillips upto 1956. Now trading as Gardiner Homecare in Broad Plain	Bristol	1860 to present day?-
	E Jones & co Bristol	Edwin Jones ironfounder. Moved to Counterslip 1890 and became Jones and Calcott. Post Style: P7	128 Redcliffe St.	Bristol	1874-1890
	Jones and Calcott Counterslip Bristol	Jones moved from Redcliffe St in 1890 Post Style: P7	Counterslip (off Temple Street)	Bristol	1890-92

Manufacturer plate	Manufacturer + Inscription	Description	Address	Town	Dates
	Mcdowall, Steven and co Ltd Glasgow & London	Mcdowall Steven had their roots amongst the founders of the cast iron industry in Scotland in 1804, perhaps the first true ornamental ironfounders in Glasgow. The most prolific period of the Foundry's success was from 1862 to 1909, after moving. The company became McDowall Steven & Co Ltd at the Milton Ironworks foundry. McDowall Steven & Co was incorporated in 1894 with the registration number SC002628, and was dissolved in 1964. Post Style: P1	Moved to 142 Woodside Road in Glasgow in 1862	Glasgow and London	1894-1964
 	W Pope and co, Engineers and Ironfounders 102 Temple St Bristol (sometimes St Phillips) W Pope and co, Engineers, Ironfoundry Barleyfields Iron Works Bristol	Piget 1830:Copper & Brass Merchant,Spelter & Patent Zinc Maker, Wire Manufacturer, Iron Manufacturer, Sheet, Battery & Brass Ingots at Avon Mills. Made many posts upto 1874, and a very ornamental one in Alma Vale Rd after having built a new foundry Post Style: P5, P7, P13	1867 engineers at 102 Temple St. Moved to new foundry in Barley Fields in 1874	Bristol	1830 - 1894

Manufacturer plate	Manufacturer + Inscription	Description	Address	Town	Dates
	A Munro Iron Founder Bristol	Iron founder and bent timber manufacturer Post Style: P5	Meadow Street, then moved to Stratton Street in 1882	Bristol	1865-1886
	REVO	REVO had good range of ornate municipal brackets and lanterns. Custom items produced. Rose to prominence in 1930s. Started as Cable And Accessory, founded by Frederick Reeves, with Vaughan of VONO. Linked with Hardy And Padmore who probably produced some of the cast-iron brackets and columns. In 1960s REVO's streetlighting division sold to Tubes Limited who developed Relite range[12]. Post Style: P11		Tipton, nr Birmingham	1930-60 The logo is from 1933
	Richards and Son Bristol	Founder was Edward Richards- skilled blacksmith manufacturing hooks, trivets, iron hoops and sundry ironwork. Son Edward expanded with manufacture of gutter brackets etc. Thomas Richards also iron founder from 1886. The business was transferred to 7 Cart Lane Temple. In 1914 the “Brass Knocker” public house in Church St, Temple was taken to form the last premises.	Victoria Road, St Phillips (Thomas). Church Street (Edward)	Bristol	1886-present day

Manufacturer plate	Manufacturer + Inscription	Description	Address	Town	Dates
		Post Style: P5, P7			
	Ware D.W.Windsor Herts England	Make replica posts. Examples in Sion Hill (installed 1991). Post Style: P12	Ware	Hertford shire	1976 onwards

In Park Street, and University Road, replica tall posts by Urbis have recently been installed.

Styles of Post

Height is given to top of post so does not include lantern. There are also some bracket lamps but these have not been included.. Victorian posts are mostly heavy and solid, often with a good deal of ornamentation. More modern ones are plainer and more slender.

P1:
Examples in Caledonia Place etc
Height: approximately 27'.
Not used until 1890s. There is a picture of one of this style from 1899[6].
Fluted base bearing the City crest, topped by a foliate bulb, tapering shaft to a foliate top turned over into a half circle with curly brackets to the lamp with a cast-iron flower. The more ornate top came later- seen in 1914 photographs.

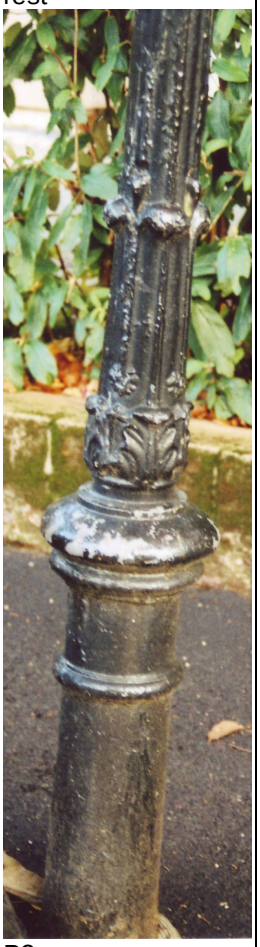
P1 base.

P2:
Examples in Caledonia Place etc.
Height: approximately 27'.
Not used until 1893. HF Proctor used this style for the arc lights, but was also used for normal electric 1899. Half round top shown in 1899 photographs but without ornate top decoration.
Wide moulded base with panels bearing the City crest, topped by a foliate bulb, tapering shaft to a foliate top turned over into a half circle with curly brackets to the lamp with a cast-iron flower. The more ornate top came later. One of two remaining 1897 posts with arc lights knocked down by a lorry backing into it - replica installed in June 2008 at cost

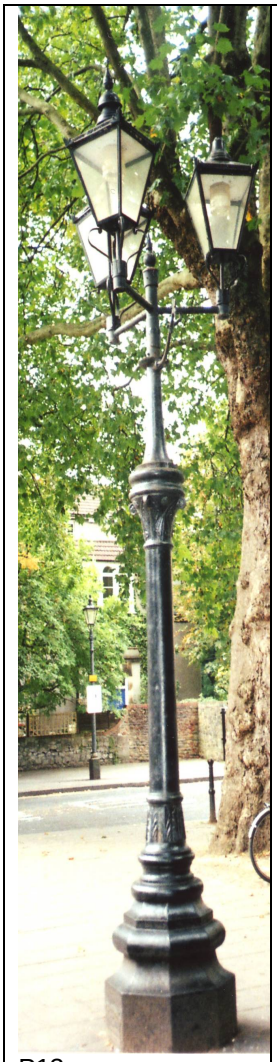
Arc light in the Mall

P2 tops.

P2 base.
Ref 1 shows this style post in a technical drawing personally signed by the then Chief Engineer Harold Faraday Proctor (nephew of Faraday)..

Manufacturer: Mcdowall, Steven and co Ltd Electric.		of £42,000 (covered by insurance). **Manufacturer** unknown. Electric.		
 very ornate ladder rest  P3: 4 are to be found in St Andrews Churchyard Lime Walk (which dates from the 1860s). Height: 8'3" Moulded base with foliate end to a reeded shaft, ornate	 P4: This lost is in Upper Berkeley Place. Height: 11'10" Dates between 1851 and 1860 (from photos[6]). Note the square base. Later photos do not show posts on square bases. Fluted shaft, 4 astragals. **Manufacturer:** unknown Originally gas	 P5: Examples in Victoria Square etc. Height: 10''7" In use between 1865 and 1894. Fluted shaft, 4 astragals **Manufacturer:** A Munro, Richards, W Pope. Originally gas	 P6: Examples in Belgrave Rd etc. Height: 10'2" In use from 1860[8]. Fluted shaft, 4 astragals, larger diameter. **Manufacturer** unknown Originally gas.	 P7: Examples in Princess Victoria St etc. Height: 10''7". In use between1889 and 1912. This style was in Park Street before the arc lights replaced them in 1893[7]. Fluted shaft, 3 astragals. **Manufacturer:** Edward Crawford, Bristol Foundry, Jones and Calcott, W Pope. Originally gas

switch bars. 3 astragals (rings). **Manufacturer** unknown. Originally gas				
 P8: Examples in Sion Place, Cornwallis Crescent and High Street. Height: 10'2". This style dates from 1851 (from photos[6]) Fluted shaft, 1 astragal. **Manufacturer:** Edward Crawford Originally gas.	 P9: Examples in Lower Clifton Hill, Frederick Place, Clifton Park Rd, Melrose Place, Oakfield Place. Height: 9'10". Unsure of date. Fluted shaft, octagonal base, 2 astragals **Manufacturer** unknown. Originally gas.	 P10: Examples in Princess Victoria St etc. Height : 9'9". Many cast by Avonside Engine Co Limited so made between 1865-1882 or 1910-34. Not seen in photos until 1913 and many evident in 1930s. Fluted shaft. 2 astragals at base. **Manufacturer:** Aero Engines, Douglas, Bristol Foundry. Originally gas.	 P11: Examples in Berkeley Square etc. Height: 11'0". Has opening door for maintenance. **Manufacturer** unknown except for one in Fosseway which has 1933 REVO logo. Electric.	 P12: Examples in Victoria Square etc. Height: 12'. Style could date from 1881 since the square base was originally made to house a gas meter, necessary to measure the erratic gas consumption by the burners of the time[18]. Still being made in 1930s. Opening door in base useful for maintenance. Fluted shaft, 1 astragal. **Manufacturer:** Aero Engines, Douglas, Bristol Foundry. Originally gas.



P13:
Alma Rd, dates between 1874 and 1894. Octagonal moulded base with a foliate capital, and top with 3 square lanterns. Similar bases seen in photos from 1885.
Manufacturer: W Pope.
Originally gas.

note the ladder rest has a pointing arrow

Detail from the base

P14:
experimental post: corner of Royal York Crescent
Height: 7'6"
Date unknown but forms part of railings.
Moulded base with foliate capital.
Manufacturer: unknown

Detail from the experimental post

Typical ladder rest. Most post tops had a square plinth and a simple ladder rest. Only early or ornate posts had ornate rests

The majority of cast iron posts in BS8 were originally used with gas and then converted to electricity judging by the style and the manufacturer. The tall half round lamps were only used with electricity.

Numbers of lamp post by manufacturer

manufacturer	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	P15	total
No plate+3 undecipherable		12	8	1	12	4	1	1	5	20	6	11		1		82
Aero Engines										1		3				4
Avonside Engine Co Limited										56						56
Bristol Foundry							39			12		31				82
Edward Crawford							29	2								31
Douglas										2		2				4
A Gardiner							2									2
E Jones							23									23
Jones and Calcott							5									5
Mcdowall, Steven and co	36															36
A Munro					6											6
W Pope and co					21		27						1			49
Richards and son					3		4									7
REVO											1					1
D.W.Windsor															8	8
Total	36	12	8		43	4	130	3	5	91	7	47	1	1	8	395
listed	35	3	2				8	1		8	4	1	1			63

The earliest styles had no manufacturer plates and some of the later electrical ones, but when more lamps were being installed there must have been some competition for making posts and manufacturers started to advertise their work. The Bristol directories show the manufacturers as either Engineers or Iron Founders, and making lamp posts must have been a useful sideline. It is pleasing that all the shorter posts seemed to have been cast in Bristol, and that Bristol appears prominently on the post together with the manufacturers name. Possibly some lamp posts are the only evidence left of some founders work. In 1841 there were 12 founders, rising to 25 in 1862, peaking to29 in 1890, and 24 in 1900. By 1921 there were only 12, but there were still 10 in 1950.

The early style P5 (1865-94) had at least 4 different founders- W Pope making most. P7 (1889-1912 and of which the most survive) had 8 different manufacturers- Bristol Foundry making most. This was at a time when there were most founders. Later styles such as P12 were mostly made by Bristol Foundry but also by Douglas and Aero Engines (which did not come into existence until 1937). P10 was mostly made by Avonside but also by Bristol Foundry and Douglas. This presumably shows that the style was dictated by the Council at the time.

The tall half round posts are the most ornate posts, advertising the use of electricity, and are much loved. The only ornate gas post is the one in Alma Road. There used to be a massive ornate post in Victoria Square.

Many streets have lamp posts same style by different manufacturers, or different styles. This shows that the Council had a stock of lamp posts by different manufacturers, and they were installed when required. Clearly as lamp posts got knocked down, or development took place, new ones would be added or they would be replaced. A few

streets have as many as four different styles (Canygne Square, Clifton Park Road, Cornwallis Crescent). This may have been the Council preserving the conservation area by reusing spare cast iron posts (not recently). To adapt to safety standards they need an separate adjacent feeder pillar.

There are also nearly 200 pressed steel replicas which blend in well since they have a fluted cover over the shaft.

Listed lamp posts

There are no less than 103 listed street lamps in Bristol, 63 of which are in BS8. There are three grade II* in Bristol (three lamps in Bath Road, Guild Hall in Broad Street, and Wills Memorial Building in Park Street BS8). They were listed in 1994. The lamp post in Alma Road (P13) is listed, as are many of the half circle posts (but not all), but there are examples of most of the other styles. This is shown in the table above. There are also listed lamps attached to University Botany department and Wills Memorial Building I would like to see all cast iron posts in the 33 conservation areas listed to protect them. All one needs to do is to supply their grid references, photos, and a description. My next job!

Bristol City Council Conservation area policies[15]

2004: In conservation areas, there is, quite rightly, significant public interest in the appearance if the street lights which replace the old ones. Broadly speaking, two types of lighting column exist in conservation areas, painted mild steel modern columns and decorative cast iron columns. Existing mild steel columns will be replaced with similar modern units at appropriate spacing and painted as at present. Existing cast iron units will be maintained in current locations and, to raise lighting levels, cast iron columns from non-conservation areas will be installed between existing columns.

- All existing cast iron street light columns, will be kept on site and maintained with appropriate lantern and/ or bracket.
- All columns will be painted black.
- Where practical, additional street lights will not be positioned outside listed buildings.
- Street lights fitted with decorative lanterns previously paid for by residents retained until impractical to maintain them when they will be replaced with appropriate lantern / bracket.

Bristol City Council non-Conservation area policies[15]

In Sept 2008, following a man chaining himself to a cast iron lamp post in St Andrews, a non-conservation area, after no consultation with the residents about removing their posts, the Transport Scrutiny Commission met to discuss the 2004 Council Policy with regards to cast iron columns. (It is worth noting that even in 1974, residents of Eastbourne had petitions (to little effect) to stop removal of cast iron posts![18]). The Commission also considered proposals to save energy and to reduce carbon emissions. Options that were discarded:

- Retain 1100 existing cast iron columns in-situ wherever the column can be adapted to meet electrical safety standards. Introduce 500 modern columns between existing cast iron columns to achieve desired lighting levels in all areas of the city - cost £1,985,000
- Retain 1100 existing cast iron columns in-situ, add 1000 mini shaft, introduce 1100 replica columns into conservation areas in lieu of relocating columns from non conservation areas - cost £2,590,000
- To introduce replica columns into all areas with cast iron columns to

supplement lighting levels - £3,195,000

What was presented to the Commission was that the 2004 policy for cast iron columns was to be retained to preserve the character of conservation areas and give consistent appearance to all parts of city, but in addition:

- Cast iron street lights in non-conservation areas replaced with standard ones to provide better lighting. Where these columns have 'built in' electrical compartments, they will be removed and stored until a suitable location is identified within a conservation area.
- To meet highway health and safety requirements, 500 columns without these compartments sold for £50 to architectural salvage companies to generate £25,000 funds to cover additional costs involved in installing decorative equipment in conservation areas.
- A relaxation with respect to cul-de-sacs with less than 25 dwellings that have no through pedestrian flow via a footpath or right of way
- painting of lighting columns (£5,000 for painting new columns where cast iron columns removed. £90,000 for city wide programme of column painting on 8 year cycle.)

This would cost £885,00 (550 units upgraded, 500 units added).

To leave streets with cast iron columns as they are was considered inappropriate as most existing cast iron column installations, even with modern lanterns, would fail to meet 50% of the British Standard for road lighting design. It is envisaged that conservation or residential groups will identify roads where residents may wish to contribute towards the council's costs so that decorative equipment can be used and will act as a contact point for the council (including collecting contributions from all interested parties).

The Commission decided that there was not enough detail to make a decision, so it was reconsidered again in December.

Council Cast Iron Column Funding costs September 2008

This gives an idea as to how much it costs to maintain iron posts.

Costing for Cast Iron Columns	Materials	Servicing	Total
Upgrade bracket and lantern (Non Decorative lantern)	£300	£ -	£300
Upgrade bracket and lantern (Decorative lantern)	£700	£ -	£700
Non Decorative lantern only	£150	£ -	£150
Decorative lantern only	£550	£ -	£550
Replace cast column with galvanized column and road lighting lantern	£500	400	£900
Replace cast column with galvanized column and decorative lantern	£800	£400	£ 1,200
Replace cast column with cast column from non cons area	£300	£400	£700
Replace column with new cast column and decorative lantern	£1,600	£450	£ 2,050
Fit mini shaft to all mains at top columns (meet health and safety requirement)	£450	£270	£720
Refurbish existing column to meets health and safety requirements	£850	£400	£ 1,250
Install new column replica cast column	£1,500	£450	£ 1,950
Install new galvanized column	£400	£450	£850
Install additional column from non-conservation area	£300	£400	£700
Sell cast columns	£50		£50

Conclusion

It was surprising to find so many of the tall circular posts still existed- 8% of the total 443 tall posts along wider throughfares. 17 reproduction tall posts have been installed. There was an unexpectedly high percentage of short Victorian posts in residential streets- 35% of the total 980. 198 replica posts of various ages have been installed. Incidentally there are 38 posts with square bases (style P12) on College Green (a conservation area), which is encouraging.

I was lucky to find enough decipherable manufacturers plates to be able to date the different styles. This was backed up by being able to look at old photos which often include lamp posts. It was however difficult to find out any information about the founders themselves except that they were all located in Temple Street/ St Phillips area by the river, and that sometimes they described themselves as engineers with other industries such as locomotive builders, motor cycle manufacturers, scale beam manufacturers and domestic appliances. There was an expansion of iron workers in the Victorian times- this being reflected in the ornate streetscape at the time. There were 22 iron founders in 1867, 10 in 1939. There was then a decline of founders and streetscape became more austere with concrete lamp posts, and the ugly steel posts of today. There is now only one founder in Bristol and he has only started up in the last few years. It is ironic that he has he has helped both Dorothea Restorations and Acorn Restorations – who are both based in Bristol, by casting parts when restoring lamp posts. His furnace is not big enough to make huge parts, hence the casting of the Mall pillar had to be done in Poland.

In their Victorian and Edwardian heyday the range of designs in cast iron posts was prodigious, and there were many local Bristol founders churning them out. The success of both gas and electric street lighting coincided with the greater use of cast iron, making ornate design possible. I am lucky enough to walk past all these different styles of posts on the way to work. They are a historic part of our heritage, Bristol's in particular since so many were made in Bristol. Many residents are very proud of "their" posts- enough to raise petitions, write many letters, and even chain themselves to them. In view of the fact that so many are listed in BS8, I consider that the rest in all 34 conservation areas of Bristol should be listed to protect them. The information gained as a result of this survey was used when I made a statement to preserve them at a Council Scrutiny meeting in December 2008. I was amazed that the Council should wish to sell their heritage posts without maintenance doors for £50 each rather than reusing them. They only need an adjacent feeder pillar to bring them up to electrical standards. I also stated that conservation policies were not being followed either. Fortunately, I was reassured that none had been sold so Bristol's heritage posts are saved, but whether any of the spare 500 will end up in Clifton is a mute point! I little thought that my original survey at the beginning of the year would have been so useful and been involved in so much politics.

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