

## The Story of Queen Bristol

Queen Square is one of the largest residential Georgian squares in Europe. It was probably the first landscaped residential square to be completed in England outside of London, however it was neglected and forgotten for more than 80 years. In 1999, its 300th anniversary, the square began to be restored to its former glory with the help of Heritage Lottery funding, and it is now once again a unique space in the heart of the city.

## History (1699-1999)

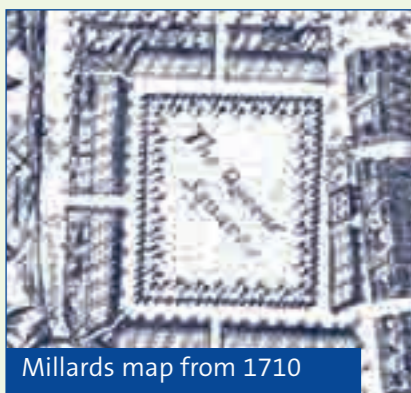
Prior to 1650 the site was occupied by the "Town Marshe" and lay outside the city walls which ran along King Street. It was used for refuse tipping, weapons practice, and hanging pirates. By planting trees, some attempt was made to provide a public park and by 1610 a committee was appointed to repair and maintain the marsh, constructing a bowling green in 1622.

The construction of Queen Square began in 1699 with strict rules imposed regarding the materials, building dimensions and use. It was named by Queen Anne in 1702.

The completed houses had expensive brick facades and iron railings, bearing testimony to the considerable wealth of their inhabitants who were mostly merchants, clergy and members of the Bristol Corporation (now known as Bristol City Council). 29 Queen

Square is the finest surviving example of a typical house of that period.

By 1710, building work was nearly complete, with final



Millards map from 1710



Queen Square from North West Corner, 1827 – TL Rowbotham

construction work and tree planting taking place up to 1726. The statue of William III by Dutch sculptor, John Michael Rysbrack, was erected in the centre of the square in 1736 and the fashionable gravel tree-lined paths completed by 1750. However in 1776 some trees were removed following complaints that the square too shady for the residents. Number 37 Queen Square opened in 1792 as one of the earliest American consulates in Europe, and in 1819 the square was lit by gas lights for the first time.

In 1831, the year of the electoral reform bill which proposed improved democracy, Queen Square was the site of one of England's most bloody riots. Opponents of the reform were staying at the Lord Mayor's mansion in the square when a crowd of reformers gathered to protest. The crowd turned violent when the mayor read the Riot Act and over three nights many houses were destroyed. Following the riots, financial wrangles delayed the repair and Queen Square began to lose its prestige.

The aesthetics of the square then again changed dramatically in 1936 when the Bristol Corporation agreed the construction of a dual carriageway diagonally across it, demolishing buildings at its north west and south west corners. Prince Street roundabout was added in 1951 and by 1990, 20,000 vehicles a day were crossing the square.



Queen Square as it was 1993

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## Restoration (1999-2007)

A change in the square's fortunes began in 1999, its 300th anniversary, when the city council, supported by English Heritage and the Queen

Square Association, received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore the square.

The £5 million restoration programme began in September 1999, based on a 1817 map of the



Reinstated forecourts – 2002

square by J Plumley showing its simple path layout and perimeter trees.

The Grade I listed Rysbrack statue was restored and replaced in its

original position, and the gravel pathways, missing trees and wooden boundary fences were reintroduced. Buses were prevented from using the square and tarmac was removed to reveal the original cobbled setts. The pavements were also widened, boundary walls and railings were reinstated around each property, and new seating and lighting were installed.

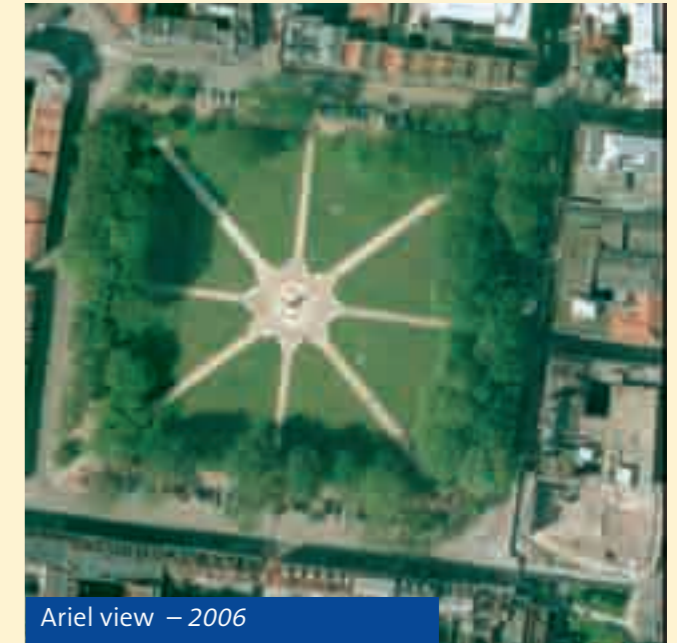
Finally, in 2007 the Prince Street



The restored Rysbrack statue



New path layout – 2002



Ariel view – 2006



Thunderbolt Square – 2007

roundabout was removed and improvements made to the entrances to Queen Square from Prince Street and King Street to create a new public space called Thunderbolt Square, linking Queen Square to the city centre. This smaller square is named after a street that now lies hidden beneath Broad Quay House on Prince Street.

The restoration has won two national awards – the Royal Town Planning Institute planning award for the Built Heritage 2003, and the National Civic Trust Award 2004.

## Queen Square Today



A place to relax

Today the square is a place to visit, not simply a place to pass through on the way to somewhere else. During the summer months office workers enjoy their lunch on the grassed

areas or a game of petangue on the gravelled paths, children play and young people gather for an informal game of frisbee.

The square is easily accessible from the city centre and Temple Meads station and public toilets are located 80m from the square in Prince St with facilities available



Shakespeare in the square

for disabled people available in Colston Avenue.

Walking maps and trails are available from the Tourist Information Centre on Bristol's harbourside or visit [www.visitbristol.co.uk](http://www.visitbristol.co.uk) to download the slave trail tour, maps and other walking tours. A city centre nature trail is also available to download from [www.bristol.gov.uk/parks](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/parks)



Colston Hall summer sessions

## Events

An exciting summer event programme has developed to include outdoor theatre, cinema and music and there is a growing sense of community among businesses that take part in an annual petangue competition hosted by the Queen Square Association.

For details of forthcoming events check out the noticeboards on the square or visit [www.queensquareassociation.org.uk](http://www.queensquareassociation.org.uk)

If you would like to use Queen Square for an event, contact the Arts, Festivals and Events team to discuss your enquiry on 0117 922 3858 or email [parcs.events@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:parcs.events@bristol.gov.uk) and visit [www.bristol.gov.uk/cityspaces](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/cityspaces) for detailed advice on site use, including application forms and site plans.

## Queen Square Management

Queen Square is managed by City Centre Spaces Management, Culture and Leisure Services at Bristol City Council. This team coordinates all aspects of management and maintenance and facilitates and monitors the event programme.

The Queen Square Management Plan 2007-2017 sets out a vision for future management and may be viewed at Queen Square Dining Rooms or viewed and downloaded at: [www.queensquareassociation.org.uk](http://www.queensquareassociation.org.uk) and [www.bristol.gov.uk/queensquare](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/queensquare)

For general enquiries and comments please contact:

**City Centre Spaces Manager**  
 Bristol Harbour Office  
 Underfall Yard  
 Cumberland Road  
 Bristol BS1 6XG  
 tel 0117 9031484  
 email [harbour.office@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:harbour.office@bristol.gov.uk)

## Queen Square Association

The Queen Square Association formed in June 1999 and is a registered charity composed of interested residents and occupants of the Square. It was formed by Metcalfes Solicitors in conjunction with Lipfriend Dawson (now Colliers CRE) and Osmond Tricks.

The Association supports the conservation and enhancement of the square for the benefit of its members, local people and visitors to Bristol.

For more information, please visit [www.queensquareassociation.org.uk](http://www.queensquareassociation.org.uk), or call Metcalfes Solicitors on 0117 929 0451.

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