

The Broadmead Courtyard Garden at the New Room

The official Opening of the new Garden will be held on
Tuesday, 24th May at 6.00 pm
in the presence of many of those who have made this new green space
in the shopping centre of Bristol possible.

In 2008, the New Room trustees launched a funding appeal to help transform the Broadmead Courtyard of the New Room into a garden. It was hoped that this would not only enhance one of Bristol's premier heritage sites but also contribute towards the transformation of the retail city centre that has taken place over the past few years.

Reckless Orchard, a local, award-winning landscape architect firm, were commissioned to develop a design that would use themes echoing mid-eighteenth gardens with formal layouts, clipped hedges and well proportioned lines and areas.



Today, a new garden has been created in the Broadmead Courtyard which provides a 'green oasis' for visitors and shoppers to enjoy in the heart of the city and offers a more suitable setting in which to welcome people to this historic chapel; the oldest Methodist building in the world. The chapel, which is a Grade One listed building and dates from 1739, is the cradle of the early Methodist movement begun by John and Charles Wesley that is now an international Christian denomination of over 75 million members.

The section of the courtyard in which the garden is located was not part of the chapel during the eighteenth century. Various buildings occupied the space up until the 1930s when it was purchased by the Methodist Church in order to create a larger courtyard. The equestrian statue, which was commissioned by the New Room trustees with the specific request that it showed John Wesley heading off on his next round of preaching engagements with 'purpose and adventure', was unveiled in 1932. Its location was also deliberately chosen in front of the stable block to demonstrate the itinerancy of the Methodist ministry. However, apart from the statue, the courtyard remained an empty space that, over the years, began being used as a car park for those visiting the chapel.

The wall that dominates the garden section of the courtyard has been covered with climbing plants and espaliered fruit trees so as to help soften the outlook of the whole courtyard; this is also an echo of eighteenth century gardens and reflects Wesleyan principles on health and well-being. The steps that were around the statue and led into the chapel have been replaced with gentle inclines so as to improve accessibility.

The garden itself has been sub-divided into three interconnected spaces which are defined by clipped hedges and the re-use of cobbles and flagstones.

The central space provides a setting for the John Wesley statue which is now complemented by stonework around the plinth on which four of his most famous quotations have been engraved. The quotations are:

- 1) 'I look upon all the world as my parish' – from his journal of June 1739
- 2) 'An ounce of love is worth a pound of knowledge' – from a letter written to a school teacher at the school Wesley created (Kingswood) in November 1768
- 3) 'To invite, to convince, to offer Christ, to build up, and to do this in some measure in every sermon' – from the minutes of the first Methodist Conference in June 1744
- 4) 'The best of all is that God is with us' – his final words in March 1791

The space closest to the street is characterised by a simple herb garden to reflect John's interest in their use for medicinal purposes, and the tree is designed to soften the long gable end of the shops. This simple arrangement, which can be viewed through the gated stone archway, will provide a calming and unexpected green oasis in contrast to the visual barrage created by retail shops.

The space closest to the chapel has a simple arrangement of stone paving, clipped hedging and a tree which will help screen the unattractive views of the adjacent buildings and also provide a 'roof' to the space. It can also be used for a variety of different purposes, such as music and drama performances, and this arrangement again reflects John Wesley's focus on using space in a multi-purpose way.

The courtyard has six benches located along the wall for people to relax and enjoy their time in the garden and bespoke lighting has also been sited in the courtyard. This will not only highlight both the garden and chapel at night but will also be brought into use when the New Room hosts special evening events.

The New Room trustees would like to thank all those who have contributed towards the creation of this garden and hope that this 'green oasis' will offer a place for thought and reflection for people to enjoy for many years to come.

The chapel is open from Monday to Saturday 10am to 4pm and welcomes over 25,000 visitors annually from all over the world.

David Worthington – Manager, The New Room/John Wesley's Chapel
0117 9264740

info@newroombristol.org.uk
www.newroombristol.org.uk