

**Redland Past Revisited for the Redland Directory - No. 21**  
**Who remembers the Bellman?**

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Who remembers the Bristol Bellman? No, not the maze solving algorithm or official proclaimer, but a delightful twentieth century publishing endeavour. The name was probably chosen with the historic role in mind. In the opening issue, exactly seventy years ago this month, the editor expressed the belief that there was a need for a West Country review magazine; “which would compete with those of London”. Founder members and famous West Country Writers who would set the literary standard were listed. The Bellman Press was in this, since rebuilt, cottage on the corner of Grove Road and St Vincent’s Hill. Sadly in spite of its optimistic start I have been unable to find any copies after September 1939. If any of our readers remember it or have any later copies tucked away **PLEASE** contact us. These extracts from early issues give a flavour of the magazine.

Violet Lamb’s account of her itinerant Shakespeare repertory group, travelling to schools, living and rehearsing in their old bus, pushing it up hills, camping in fields of buttercups, but enjoying all of it.

Another article reported on Bristol City Council’s annual rate-setting, expressing alarm at the rate increases and reduction in services, (nothing changes, does it?).

Poetry was included, Jeremy Taylor’s opening, “O silent Monk, O hermit grave, Why sit ye in your cells alone?”

On a lighter note, I am sure that the intrepid Bristol University Professor Tom Troscianko, who on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2009 fulfilled his lifelong ambition by skiing down St Michael's Hill, will be pleased to learn that he was upholding a Bristol tradition that was described by Anthony Gittins’ in his ‘An unauthorised guide to the West’. “*At the first sign of snow Park Street was decked with Chinese lanterns and all the shopkeepers raced down using the most suitable object from their window displays. Booksellers rode encyclopaedias, Jewellers - silver trays, Furnishers - upturned tables.... The first to reach College Green with the least injury won*”. If the Bellman was published today I am sure that Anthony Gittins would have lauded Tom Troscianko’s achievement. I wonder what other ventures we can uncover from Redland’s past.

