

Redland Past Revisited for the Redland Directory - No. 23
Australia & Colston meet in Redland© Julian Lea-Jones. June2009

This month's story of Redland Past starts in 1850, not in BS6 but on a sheep station north of Adelaide in Australia. The station owned by Richard James became one of Australia's most influential sheep studs and was responsible for the selective cross-breeding of the imported Spanish merino sheep which resulted in a new variety to meet Australia's market and climatic conditions. The success of Mr James' station brought in record market prices and many prizes. By 1871 this success allowed Richard Boucher James to retire to England, bringing with him his wife Mary and their three children. Settling in Bristol, they had a large house built overlooking the valley of Redland Green, and not unsurprisingly he named their new home after his successful Australian sheep station. When the area was redeveloped as part of the urban expansion of Bristol, the house name was also used for the new road, 'Canowie'.



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But what of the link to Colston? Edward Colston the philanthropist endowed a boy's school on the site of Sir John Young's Great House in the centre of the city, however in 1857 the school moved to Stapleton and the former school site was developed as a concert hall whilst retaining Colston's name. However one hundred and ten years ago a fire that started in a clothing factory spread to the Colston hall completely gutting it. The site was cleared and the hall rebuilt and in an example of nineteenth century recycling, a local builder used some of the pillars from the old Colston Hall to decorate & support the front porches of the new houses he was building in Canowie Road. This is why the front pillars of some of the houses in Canowie Road seem unusually robust compared to the size of the porches.

For this month's 'visit' I have to thank two late friends, Veronica Smith and Frank Reece Winstone as well as Erika Dicker of the Powerhouse Museum for background information.

As I mentioned at the start of this series I was pleased to be numbered amongst those who were able to help Veronica ferret out information for her gazetteer, 'Street names of Bristol' as well as Frank who was one of our friends who often drew our attention to odd bits of Bristol, such as the Colston hall pillars that had been relocated to unexpected places.