Welcome to Windmill Hill City Farm and the golden cabbage trail. In this leaflet you get two trails for the price of one.

The first is at the City Farm, can you find the ten golden cabbages? To help you there are pictures in the leaflet that match pictures on the cabbages. When you have found these, you can go out into Bedminster and look at the sites where these stories actually happened.

Bedminster is stuffed full of stories of unusual characters, gruesome happenings and inspiring anecdotes. Bedminster has a history older than Bristol; it goes back to Saxon and even Roman times. Have a look at the 'trails page' on the City Farm's webpage to find out more.
Above is a map of the farm. The trail is marked out with the 'C's you can see. Match the picture of the story with the picture on the cabbage. Can you find all ten? Good luck - some are quite tricky.
1. John James

These golden cabbages are in honour of John James, a local businessman. In 1976 he offered to give Windmill Hill City Farm £1000 to help get the project off the ground. He promised to continue the offer in the following years, his reward was a lovely cabbage grown at Windmill Hill City Farm. He also knew he was supporting a fantastic community resource.

John James, who was born in Bristol in 1906 at 96 Philip Street, Bedminster and died in the city in 1996; originally made his fortune from a string of TV and radio shops. During his lifetime, in his struggle to reach the top, John never forgot his roots. He used his money to help lots of local people, not just Windmill Hill City Farm. To this day, there is the ‘John James Bristol Foundation’ that gives grants to local people for community projects.

We can all help each other in small ways every day, spreading a bit of kindness around Bristol. What kind things can you do today? Maybe give someone else a smile? Or help out a friend by listening?

There is a blue plaque in remembrance of John James' generosity on Philip Street.
2. Demon Barber

There was once a barber from Bedminster, who was so brave and bold he became known as a daredevil. He had a barber shop on West Street and he entertained people far and wide with all his stunts, and there were many:
- He entered a lion’s den where he kissed the lion on the lips!
- He had a boxing match inside a cage prowling with lions, who watched the action hungrily.
- He jumped out of hot air balloons wearing a parachute.
- He asked knife throwers to use him for practice!
- He invited sharp shooters to shoot sugar cubes off the top of his head.

Eventually, this daredevil was given the name ‘Demon Barber’ because of his amazing stunts. He also became famous for giving a shave and a haircut to men in a cage filled with lions; the Demon Barber claimed he could shave them in just three seconds. Would you want to have your hair cut in a cage filled with lions?

The most memorable and daring of the Demon Barber’s stunts was when he attempted to go over the top of Niagra Falls in a barrel. Unfortunately, Professor Stephens, the real name for the Demon Barber, did not survive this last stunt. All that was found at the bottom of Niagra Falls was a tattooed arm with the words ‘Forget me not, Annie’.

Annie was his wife and she was also a brave risk taker; she made an impression after going up five thousand feet in a hot air balloon, which was pretty scary in those days (early 1900’s).

What’s the bravest thing you have ever done? Do you think Professor Stephens was brave or a bit silly?
In 1817, a mysterious woman arrived in a small village near Bristol. She wore a dark turban and spoke a language that was unintelligible to confused locals. Local people assumed she was a foreigner in need of help. The woman’s language was translated by a Portuguese sailor who claimed to understand what she was saying, convinced her hosts that she was, in fact, a princess from an island called Javasu. Princess Caraboo, as she became known, spun enchanting tales of her adventures, some as exciting and dramatic as being abducted by pirates. She said she saved herself by escaping overboard and swimming to shore through the freezing cold English Channel. Princess Caraboo quickly became famous and enjoyed the life of a celebrity; sadly though this did not last long. A woman who had employed ‘Princess Caraboo’ as a servant when she was known as ‘Mary Wilcocks,’ read her story in a local newspaper. Mary’s game of speaking in invented tongues was well loved by the children and her employer put two and two together and realised who Princess Caraboo really was. It turned out that she was no more exotic than the cider that was made in Devon where she was born as Mary Wilcocks, the daughter of a cobbler.

There is a plaque in remembrance of her trickery in Princess Street, where she lived at number 11 from 1851 until her death. She was buried in Hebron road burial ground, in an unmarked grave.
If you like to eat meat, you will be familiar with the local butchers in Bedminster area. There is one well known butcher from the past, Alfred Collard. He wasn’t just any butcher Alfred was also a poet. He wrote rhyming couplets and ballads and sold them for 1d, which is an old penny. He gave the money he raised to the general hospital. One poem was titled ‘The Redcliffe and Bedminster Christmas Meat Show of 1885’ in that piece of writing he named twenty-six butchers’ shops between North Street and Redcliffe Hill, how many butchers do you know? The bust of a poet was built in 1882 on the corner of Merrywood Road and North Street in 1882. Some people thought it was to remember the poets, Southey, Coleridge or Wordsworth, all of whom had remote connections with Bedminster. Most people know it was built to honour the butcher Alfred Daw Collard.

At poets’ corner, the Bedminster miners could buy a candlestick for 6d to fasten to the peak of their caps before the introduction of safety lamps.

Can you finish this poem?
Meat, meat, glorious meat,
even better than sucking my.....
5. For one night only...

Legend has it that in a pub not far from here at the bottom of Dean Lane there are many stories held behind the bar. The pub has gone by many names 'The Bull' 'The Star' 'Bar Salt' 'Steam Crane'. In the 1830's the landlord of the time bought a live tiger from the Bristol Docks, which he displayed in a cage. Locals visited to admire the creature but once they had looked at him a few times, the novelty wore off. The landlord did not give up, in order to drum up business and impress the crowds he started taking daring risks. He paid (believe it or not), Joseph Kiddle to get in the cage with the tiger, which was enough to create an appealing sense of danger. This was maybe not the best way to sell a few pints however, as one night the tiger had enough and ate the poor man. Unfortunately that was a one night only show.
Can you imagine being stuck in a small dark space, under the ground for hours on end? No electricity or internet, which means no TV; no mobile phone, not even the radio. If you worked in South Liberty Lane Colliery as a door-boy in the mine, that would be a normal night or day's work. An average age for the job would be 12 years old. You would arrive at work, get your safety lamp and get in a lift, that looked like a cage with ten others. The gates would shut, a bell would ring and it would drop you away at breath-taking speed, it felt like you just dropped away into space, like a theme park ride, except it wasn't for fun. When you got out of the lift you had to travel even further down on a 'donkey' not the four legged type, there were no sounds of 'eeyore'. This 'donkey' was the name for a block of wood with a groove in it, you put it on a tram line and you could scoot along it, like how you would ride a modern scooter now. Even deeper down you would walk the last bit, is where you would sit to do your job, on your own. The mines produced gas filled air, which would be moved around by a fan, this didn't always work as well as it could. You would have to operate the doors of the air system, to direct the flow of fresh air, round the workings of the mine. So you would have to sit and open the door every half hour or so. It was lonely but if you were lucky you could make friends with the mice down there.

Bedminster used to be a mining area. The first pit was opened in South Liberty Lane in 1744 by 1830 eighteen pits were in operation the biggest of which was in Dean Lane, under Dame Emily Park. The last pit closed in 1924.

You can stand where the old bandstand used to be and imagine what happened under your feet.
Wills Tobacco Factory was a massive business in Bedminster and a great employer of local people. It was built in 1886 on the old site where St. Catherine's Hospital was and where ASDA now stands. People felt lucky to work for Wills: employees had their own food canteens, free medical care, sports facilities and paid holidays. Before the NHS existed, you had to pay to see doctors and dentists, so free medical care was a huge bonus. There were evening clubs where employees could enjoy themselves playing cards, billiards, table-tennis and many other activities.

Wills wanted employees to be clean and have a neat appearance; these things indicated that an employee had an eye for detail. Male employees were expected to wear a shirt and tie all the time. There were also a huge number of female workers in the factories. Any girls or women had to be interviewed first. They would bring a sample of their sewing for inspection and needed a Sunday school reference. As with the male employees, they had to show that they had clean hands and fingernails.

Wills was said to be the highest paying employer in the area and you knew you would be looked after—if, of course, you did your job well. Wills had a ‘black book’ where a record of any misbehaviour would be kept; it is on show at the M-shed now. In 1915, one woman was sent home for three days just for laughing out loud! However there was a lot of laughter from many people when they told their stories about working at the Wills Tobacco Factory, which finally closed down in 1988.

Go to the M-Shed to find out more, you can even see the black book.
8. Rope Walk

Have you ever thought about where rope comes from or how it is made?

Have you ever wondered why the pub on Nelson Parade is called ‘The Rope Walk’?

Philip Street, the road that runs along one side of the farm, began as a rope walk. A ropewalk is a long, straight and narrow lane that can also be a covered pathway. This lane is where long strands of hemp material used to be laid out before being twisted into rope. Can you imagine how many people would have to be working together, or how much space you would need?

St Catherine’s Hospital

Lots of people ask if there really was a windmill on Windmill Hill. Around the year 1200, not far from the farm there was a windmill that ground corn to supply St. Catherine’s Hospital. Which used corn to feed their patients. Two hospitals. St. Catherine’s and Mary Magdalene, were built on these meadows where the corn was grown. St Catherine’s stood on the site where ASDA is built today. As well as looking after sick people, it was known to provide hospitality to travelling pilgrims. They would be given a chunk of cheddar cheese, or a mug of ale and a loaf. The pilgrims were travelling to Glastonbury or St. Ann’s well in Brislington.

St. Mary Magdelene Hospital (which was at the opposite end of Philip Street) treated women with leprosy. At the time, people feared leprosy and sufferers were required to carry a bell that they had to ring to warn people when they were approaching. The idea was that people could hear them and keep a safe distance to avoid being infected. The leper hospital existed until 1471 and St. Catherine’s for just over a hundred years longer until 1573.
9. The Church of the Vow

Can you imagine waking up in a place so beautiful that you think you have woken up in heaven? Well, in 1775, John Hare did, after travelling to Bristol from Somerset on a wagon. When he arrived at Bristol, he jumped from the wagon, climbed over a wall and immediately fell asleep.

When he awoke he thought he was in heaven. He was surrounded by an orchard; above him a canopy of cherry blossoms were lit by the sunlight falling through the leaves onto his skin. In that moment, he made a vow to himself that if he did well and made lots of money, he would return to buy the orchard and build a temple under the cherry blossoms.

John kept his word; he made his fortune manufacturing oil cloths and eventually he came back to find the spot in Bristol where he had been inspired. Sadly the cherry orchard was gone but John did not give up. He bought land nearby and, true to his own word, built a church by Bedminster Bridge called ‘Zion Church’; locals know it as ‘The Church Of The Vow’. The church closed in 1983 and today it is filled with offices. Do you think the office workers know they work on top of such a special place?
The first public execution that took place at the newly opened Old Gaol in 1821 on the New Cut not far from the City Farm, was quite a story. John had asked Eliza Balsum to be his girlfriend. She said 'no thanks'. In fact he had asked her to be his girlfriend quite a lot and she still said no thanks. John did not like this and wanted to let her know how cross he was. He threw a big stone at her which killed her. No-one was happy about this, it was shocking, people wanted the act to be remembered.

John’s punishment was to be hanged and for his body to go to the local hospital to be dissected. A huge crowd turned up to watch the hanging of John, who was only 17 when he died. Richard Smith, the surgeon who dissected him, has John’s skin tanned and it was used to bind a book that had the story of the murder, trial and execution in it. That book is now kept at the M-shed, you can go and have a look at it if you like!
Did you find all the golden cabbages? What was your favourite story? Do you know any stories about your local area that aren’t here already? Do you know why Luckwell Road is called Luckwell Road? Or do you know where St. John’s Burial ground is?

There are so many more stories to find out about, you can look at the links on the trail page on Windmill Hill City Farm’s website, visit the M-Shed, or look out for the ‘Malago’ publications, magazines with local history stories. Even ask your neighbours or older relatives if they would like to share some stories.

Over the page is a map of the local area, you can have a walk and see the places where these stories came from, they are all true!

This walk will take roughly 35 minutes.

1. ‘John James’
   Philip Street - Blue Plaque

2. ‘Demon Barber’
   West Street - where Professor Stephens barber shop was.

3. ‘Princess Caraboo’
   At the top of Hebron Road, you will see the burial where Princess Caraboo was buried.

4. ‘Poets’ Corner’
   On the corner of Merywood Road and North Street. Look up!

5. ‘For one night only.’
   Pub where Joseph Kiddle was eaten! Where Cannon Street meets North Street.

6. ‘Mining’
   Look at the bandstand. Underneath this park was a huge mine.
   Dean Lane / Dame Emily Park

7. ‘Wills Tobacco’
   East Street Asda

8. ‘Rope Walk’
   Nelson Parade
   ‘St. Catherine’s Hospital’
   Asda East Street

9. ‘Church of the Vow’
   At the ‘Rope Walk’ pub carry on up the road towards Coronation Road. Past a small car park on the left is the site of the old ‘Church of the Vow’.
   Bedmister Bridge leading to Coronation Road

10. ‘Skin Book’
   St Paul’s Church on Coronation Road. Directly opposite the front entrance of the church is a ramp that led down to the Old Gaol ferry. It was replaced by a bridge in 1935. You can look over the river and see the spot where the ‘New Gaol’ was; or walk over the bridge and head on over to the M-Shed. If you stand at the back of the museum and look over at the carpark, you can see the remains of the Gaol where John was hanged.
   On Cumberland Road, across the new cut from St Paul’s Church, the facade of the Gaol is still visible.
Contact Us

Visit the farm online for news, upcoming events and more at:
www.windmillhillcityfarm.org.uk

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