

Destination Bristol

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PRESS FACT SHEET – LITERARY BRISTOL

As you wander through the streets of Bristol it is easy to see how writers have been inspired by this beautiful and diverse city.

Bristol is well known for being the birthplace of **Robert Southey**. Southey, a close friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge, whom he met in Bristol, later became a Poet Laureate. Although he only spent his early years living in Bristol, his time here had a lifelong influence on his work.

William Wordsworth was also influenced by Bristol, it is said that he wrote the famous poem 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey' in Bristol at the house of Joseph Cottle who owned a book shop on the High Street.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge launched his magazine, 'The Watchman,' in Bristol in 1795 at The Rummer hotel, in the heart of the Old City.

Not all the poetry in Bristol has a happy history. The young Bristolian **Thomas Chatterton**, now a respected and revered contributor to Britain's literary past, was born and brought up near Redcliffe, where his family had held the office of sexton at St Mary Redcliffe for nearly 200 years. Educated at Colston's School, Chatterton later moved to London to find fame and wealth. After finding that he was not fitting in with his peers and failing to get his poems published, he took his own life at the young age of 17.

In recent years Bristol has given birth to a new type of poet. Award-winning author **Helen Dunmore**, who lives in Bristol, has impressed the world with her wonderful talents as both a writer and a poet.

Daniel Defoe and Robert Louis Stevenson - Bristol's rich maritime history has inspired stories of exploration and daring voyages. Robinson Crusoe is allegedly based on Alexander Selkirk, a shipwrecked sailor, whom Daniel Defoe met in The Llandoger Trow in King Street. The Hole in the Wall in Queen Square is said to be the basis for The Spyglass in Robert Louis Stephenson's Treasure Island.

Treasure Island Trail is a self-guided walking and cycling route around the city's historic Floating Harbour starts at the Merchant Venturers Almshouses on King Street. It was launched in September 2015 and celebrates Bristol's connections with Robert Louis Stevenson's classic novel Treasure Island. The trail has been devised and implemented by Bristol-based Long John Silver Trust and features eight recycled 54-gallon wine barrels from Bordeaux. Each barrel is planted with a palm tree and carries information about the trail and the relevance of the eight sites to Treasure Island – the early part of the book was set in Bristol.

Jane Austen spent time in Bristol with her mother, and is thought to have stayed in Clifton. The folly at Blaise Castle Estate is mentioned in Northanger Abbey. The nearby city of Bath also features frequently in her books.

There are many buildings in Bristol that hold particular literary significance. **Bristol Old Vic** – the UK's oldest working theatre - on King Street was opened in 1766 (it celebrates its 250th anniversary in 2016) and played host to many famous actors and actresses, such as Sarah Siddons and Elizabeth Inchbold.

The Victoria Rooms, built in 1841, were host to many a literary icon. **Charles Dickens** and his friend **Wilkie Collins** performed two plays here in 1851, and **Oscar Wilde** also spoke at the Victoria rooms at great length on aesthetics.

During 2014, Bristol Cathedral was delighted to play its part as a filming location for popular BBC series **Wolf Hall**. The vaulted ceilings, exquisite chapels and hushed splendour inside the Cathedral always make an impression, and now visitors can follow the Wolf Hall Trail around the Cathedral using the specially-produced leaflet that highlights the parts used in filming and the scenes that they appeared in.

Bristol Film Office has produced a series of '**Bristol Movie Maps**' to allow people to take self-guided tours around the famous Bristol filming locations of film and popular television programmes including **Sherlock**. A **Sherlock** special is due to air on 1 January 2016 including great Bristol locations like Arnos Vale Cemetery, King Street and the National Trust Tyntesfield Estate. The movie maps are currently online only but new printed versions will be produced in spring 2016.

Literary events in 2016

Sherlock's Super Sleuth Mystery Trail is a new trail at the National Trust Tyntesfield Estate running from 28th November, 2015 to 21st February, 2016. Visitors will follow in the footsteps of the great Victorian detective and his trusty associate to solve the mysteries around the estate.

To coincide with the 100th anniversary of Roald Dahl's birth in 2016, **Watershed** is planning five family-friendly film screenings throughout the summer holidays including James and The Giant Peach, Matilda, Fantastic Mr Fox, BFG and a fifth to be announced. Four August Sunday Brunch daytime screenings of classic Roald Dahl story adaptations will include The Witches, Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang and Gremlins.

Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire's Berkeley Vale near Bristol has a strong link to **Shakespeare** – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written for a Berkeley family wedding that took place in 1596. There will be performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the beautiful gardens of the castle from 17th to 21st July, 2016. Shakespeare Season at the Tobacco Factory Theatres will include a production of Hamlet from 11th February to 26th March and All's Well That Ends Well from 31st March to 23rd April, while the annual Bristol Shakespeare Festival takes place in July and includes outdoor performances at unusual spaces across Bristol such as Leigh Woods and Brandon Hill nature reserve.

In spring 2016 there will be a performance of Henry V within **Bristol Cathedral** to coincide with Shakespeare 400.