

THE STATION.

Bristol DoorsOpen

Saturday 14th September 2013

Welcome to the Old Fire Station. If you'd like a tour please ask at reception and one of our young volunteers can guide you round. If you'd prefer to go alone, just follow the arrows.

We have been joined today by another Bristol organisation, the Tblisi Twinning Association. If you're interested in all things Georgian, please feel free to join them in the first floor chill-out room at 11.30am and 1pm where celebrated Author and Photographer Peter Naysmyth will be giving talks.

The Old Fire Station*

*Copy by Cai Mason, 20 Jan 2012

Bridewell Fire station was designed in 1924 and opened in 1930. Designed by Ivor Jones and Percy Thomas, it formed part of a single development which included the former Police Headquarters and Central Police Station.

Fire appliances, control room and vehicle workshops were situated on the ground floor, with offices, mess and other rooms on the floor above. In the early 20th century, fire officers worked on a continuous-duty system and were therefore expected to live at the Fire Station. To this end it was built with nine 2-4 bedroom flats situated on the floors above the station. The Superintendent and Inspectors occupied the larger flats; the remainder were for married Sergeants.

The flats were heated with open fires and natural light was provided through single-glazed steel-framed windows. Their front doors opened onto an external balcony which provided access to three enclosed shafts containing sliding poles, allowing rapid access to the appliance rooms below. The Superintendent's quarters was fitted with a sliding pole inside the flat. Due to the fact that families were housed in the flats, all the doors to these shafts were fitted with catches at the top, designed to prevent child-related accidents.

In 1940 the German Luftwaffe dropped large quantities of high explosive bombs and incendiary devices on Bristol and Bridewell Fire Station was at the heart of the battle to control the huge fires that raged across the city. The Station Building itself survived the War relatively unscathed.

Although the Fire Station was built to house the most up-to-date fire-fighting equipment, rapid technological change meant that within 20 years it was already becoming obsolete, unable to accommodate the larger appliances in use after the War. This, and the shortage of parking and training space, and a desire to avoid housing fire officers in fire stations, led to Bridewell Station's closure after only 43 years of use. Since 1973 the building has had various uses with alterations most apparent on the first floor where it is now difficult to determine the exact function of the rooms. The basic structure of the building remains intact and is an excellent example of a large purpose-built inter-war fire station.

TODAY - Bristol's Old Fire Station is The Station - an exciting city-centre youth space owned and managed by the Creative Youth Network.

With brilliant facilities including a music department, performance space and dance studio it enables established and emerging young artist the opportunities to develop their skills and further their careers. It's also home to some of Bristol's well known youth service organisations; Young Bristol, Basement Studios, 222, YMCA, Brook and Off The Record.

More than a youth centre, The Station provides a unique balance of professional services for young people and a high quality arts experience for all, offering musicians, theatre companies, dancers, art professionals and youth workers a distinctive space to work with young people of all ages.

Creative Youth Network is proud to host this venue in the city centre. We hope it will become a leading venue for arts audiences of all ages.

Ground Floor – What to see

Then:

- Fire Station trucks were parked in the main space, the floor is sloped to so that when the trucks were washed the water flowed away into a drainage system
- Two fire poles up on the tech balcony and two poles in 'risers' visible from the courtyard

- Training tower in the courtyard with ledges on either side so the cloth hoses could be hung out to dry.
- Original fire alarms painted red on the outside of the building
- The area now occupied by the café and Laser quest was once the engineering area where mechanics worked on the fire trucks
- The building's main stairwell was the site of the old lift shaft.

Now:

- 600 capacity multi purpose main space fully kitted out with PA, staging and lighting system.

First Floor – What to see

Then:

- This area was officer's flats with separate toilet cubicles and showers

Now:

- Chill out space for 13-19 year olds. Young people can enjoy access to table football, pool, games consoles and computers as well as just having a space to chill and hang out with friends.

View from afar

Then:

The Officer's mess was located on the roof. Now the plant room, this space housed a bar area for officers to relax and have a drink after work.

www.thestationbristol.org.uk.

www.creativeyouthnetwork.org.uk