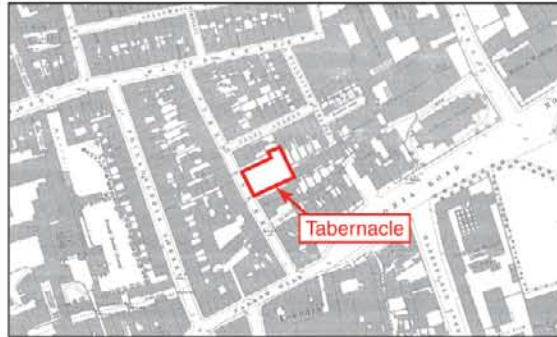


BROADMEAD EXPANSION ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS - Update 6



The 18th century was a time of increased prosperity resulting from the industrial revolution and the population became more prosperous. This success led to a population explosion, leading to the expansion of the city eastwards over the floodplain.

The ground level was raised to prevent flooding and many new streets including Penn Street, were laid out. Many nonconformist communities flourished in the area, and in 1753 the Calvinist Penn Street Tabernacle was built by the famous preacher George Whitefield. Beneath the building lay a crypt, under which many leading members of the Tabernacle's congregation were ultimately to be buried.



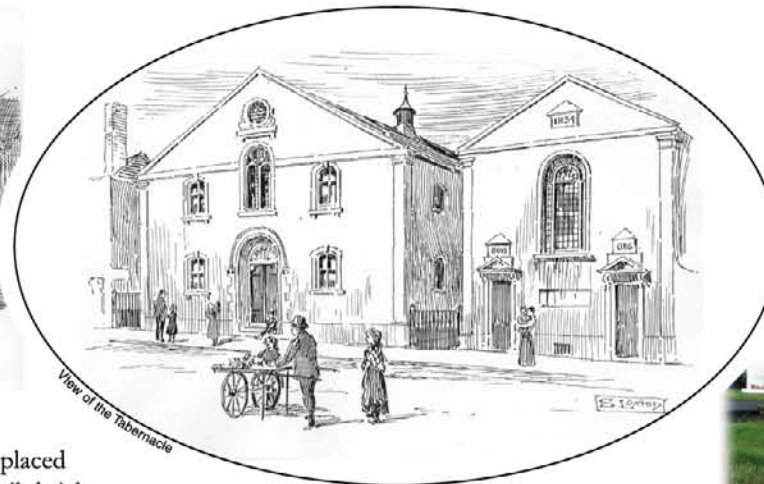
Extract from the 1886 OS map showing the location of the Tabernacle



At an early stage in the excavations, it became clear that individuals buried inside the Tabernacle vaults represented the upper echelons of the local 18th and 19th-century community. The burials showed that these people may have led hard lives but had achieved a good standard of living by the end of their lives. The coffins were decorated with felts held in place by hundreds of small studs, together with ornate handles and name-plates.



The Tabernacle crypt



View of the Tabernacle



Excavating the brick vaults built to contain coffins



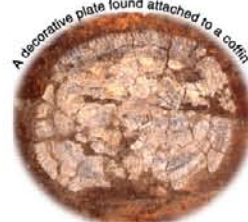
The Tabernacle excavations (bottom left, within the green fence)



The coffins were placed within purpose-built brick vaults which highlighted the status of their occupants and separated them from the lower classes who were buried in a much simpler fashion. The chambers were not complex structures, made from bricks to form a roughly coffin shape. They appeared to have had no clear markers on the ground to show their position, although one gravemarker was revealed. The chambers had been built so that multiple burials could be placed inside, for family members to be buried together.



The Tabernacle was in active use until the 1950s when Broadmead was redeveloped. At that time the then Bristol Corporation removed more than 1,000 bodies during cemetery clearances. The bodies were re-buried at Avon View cemetery in St George.



A decorative plate found attached to a coffin



The excavations at Penn Street Tabernacle are now over, and the human remains were reburied at Avon View cemetery in November, alongside remains moved there in September 1958 during the previous redevelopment.



Grave marker for the human remains moved in 1958

For further information on the Broadmead excavations please visit the Cotswold Archaeology website:

www.cotswoldarch.org.uk

For further details on the Broadmead Expansion development please visit:

www.bristolcitycentre.com

