

BRISTOL AIR RAID SHELTER TOUR – JANUARY 2025

Fifteen Adventurers gathered on a damp, grey afternoon at the entrance to St Nicholas Market in Bristol. We were all there in good time, our guide Duncan appeared...and off we went.

First, he explained the significance of the area around the Corn Exchange (which is also the entrance to St Nicholas Market) and we were all very impressed by the ornate carvings on the wonderful building opposite the Corn Exchange – layers of carved figures and motifs depicting the city's trading heritage. Duncan explained that 'The Nails' were purely ceremonial and had been moved into their current position from further up Corn Street.

He then gave us a brief history of the blitz and the major bombing raid that had decimated the old city centre around Wine Street/Chapel Green area in September 1940 – but was not named in the Bristol Post, the newspaper reporting only that bombs had fallen on a town in the west.

Then we descended down the stone steps to the air raid shelter, through an underground room used by the City Valuers as a bar in the 1950s/1960s, that was now filled with war time artefacts, to the two small reinforced bricked rooms that served as an air raid shelter under the Corn Exchange. It was a small space, Duncan said that the number of people who sheltered here was unknown, but was unlikely to be more than 50. No mobile food canteens serviced this shelter, so people had to bring any supplies that they needed – and the longest air raid trapped people in this shelter for 12 hours. No wonder someone had made pencil drawings on the wall!

Then we headed back upstairs to the first floor of the Corn Exchange, an area that seemed to be very under used except when being used as a film set. The tour finished and we thanked Duncan for a most interesting and informative afternoon enjoyed by everyone.

(Pictures on next page)

