

How we recreated the bottom of the ocean ... in Bristol



Colourful: Latex coral going into the coral seas tank called the Edge of the Rainforest

It takes quite a leap of imagination from grey cement and dusty ladders to vibrant corals surrounded by colourful tropical fish, but the finishing touches are now being put to Bristol's new aquarium. In the coral reef tank, two marine artists have spent weeks sculpting "corals", making them as realistic as possible for fish and for visitors, who will be able to view the tank from an underwater walkway. Pete Samuels and Rachel Bemrose are just two of the dozens of staff putting the finishing touches to the £4 million Blue Reef Aquarium, which is due to open by the end of this month in the site formally occupied by WildWalk. Pete and Rachel have laboriously created the towers of coral from render, a mixture of sand and cement. It may be grey now, but it will soon be painted in bright colours with even brighter corals attached to help replicate the coral reefs of the Pacific Ocean. By this half-term, the empty tank will be filled with black-tipped reef sharks and smaller fish such as damselfish, shoals of electric blue snappers and angel fish.

"It's going to look absolutely amazing," said Rachel, 25, originally from Somerton. Working from a small scale model, Pete and Rachel aim to create a perfect habitat for the fish, while also ensuring that the lines of sight mean visitors in the underwater viewing area and above the tank will not be looking at each other. In the wild, reefs take hundreds of years to grow but Pete and Rachel have had slightly less time to achieve the same effect. They admit it has been a challenge, but say that the real test will only come when the sharks and other tropical fish arrive. "The variety of shapes and colours is extraordinary and it's been great fun coming up with different methods to create them," said Pete, 36, from Weymouth. "We've even put in tunnels so the fish will be able to colonise it just as they would in the wild." Blue Reef curator Zahra d'Aronville, said: "We're so excited to be so near the opening date, and we're on schedule to open on time. "There are no other aquariums in the country that have got what we are going to have here in Bristol. It will be amazing."

Pride of lions will be next pig thing

A unique art project in the Georgian city of Bath will next year pay tribute to the city's centuries-old association with a regal emblem. Rupert Hall reports



Landmark: A statue of a lion at the entrance to the Royal Avenue



Watering hole: The pub sign at the Lamb and Lion in Bath



Roaring welcome: A door knocker at one of the buildings at Abbey Green

When an army of model pigs invaded Bath last year, the city took the swines to heart. The popular porkers hit the headlines and raised tens of thousands of pounds for an environmental project. Now, more than a year after the final few pigs trotted off the streets, Bath is preparing to repeat the exercise with a grander breed of animal. In May next year, around 100 individually decorated life-size lion sculptures will be taking up prominent positions around the city. The big cats will become familiar fixtures for six months before being auctioned for a variety of charities. Last year's King Bladud's Pigs in Bath project was based around the story of the king who discovered the healing spa waters that the city was founded on while out walking his pigs. Next year's art project also traces its roots back to another royal link. Lions are featured on the city's coat of arms, which dates back to the crowning of the first king of England, King Edgar. The Anglo-Saxon monarch was crowned at Bath but not until 973, in an imperial ceremony planned not as the initiation but the culmination of his reign. This service, devised by St Dunstan and celebrated with a poem in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, forms the basis of the present-day British coronation ceremony. Since the introduction of the royal lion to its coat of arms, Bath has become home to more than 500 images of lions and organisers of the Pride In Our City scheme are hoping to underline their place in the history of the city. The creatures guard the entrance to Royal Victoria Park, which was the first park in the world to bear the name of Queen Victoria after she opened it in 1830 at the age of 11. The animal also crops up in a host of city pub names and signs such as the

Coeur de Lion, the Lamb and Lion, the Red Lion and The White Lion. Businesses, communities and individuals will have the chance to sponsor the lions, which will be decorated and personalised by artists.

Home to more than 500 images of lions

The models will then be auctioned, just as the King Bladud's Pigs in Bath were last year. Proceeds from Pride In Our City will go to: Off The Record, which supports young carers aged five to 18 in Bath; the Quartet Foundation, which funds community projects across the West; and the Mayor's Relief Fund, which gives emergency funds to city residents in need. A percentage of the money raised will be put back into a rolling fund for future public arts projects in Bath.

Pride In Our City will be run by a steering group involving people who were instrumental in the pigs project, including PR consultant Sue Yates-Price, entrepreneur Wendy Learoyd and former TV producer Megan Witty, who has experience filming lions in the wild in Kenya. Mrs Yates-Price said: "If you walk around Bath with your eyes open you will spot hundreds of lions. "It is the most prevalent symbol in the city and it has connections with King Edgar, who was crowned in Bath Abbey. "Our lion will be a teenage lion with attitude rather than a civic lion." The lions will be 40 per cent bigger than last year's pigs and are being made in Salisbury. Around 35 businesses in Bath and Bradford on Avon have already expressed an interest in sponsoring a lion. For more information, visit the website www.lionsofbath.com.



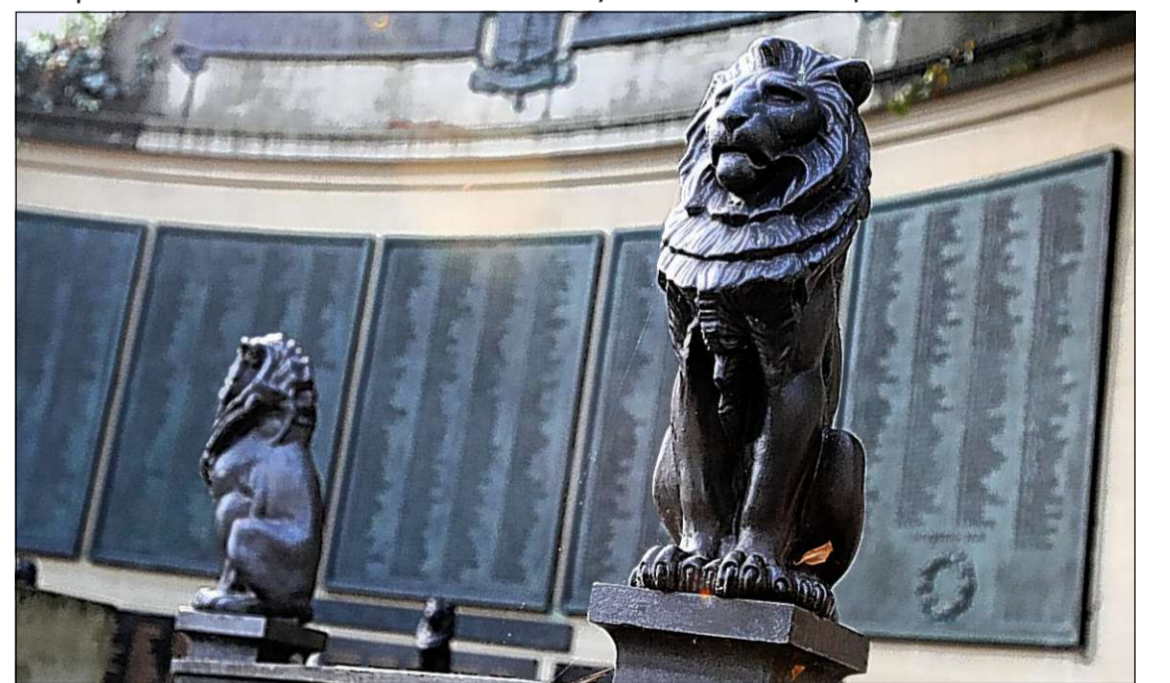
Little trotters: Decorated pigs outside Bath Abbey - the models were a familiar sight around the city last year



Lion's pride: A statue at the entrance to Victoria Park



Symbol: The Coeur De Lion pub in Northumberland Place



City guardians: Lion sculptures stand guard in front of the War Memorial name plaques in Queens Parade, Bath

venue
Bristol & Bath's magazine

...Bristol through and through!

Blair sells constituency home for £300,000

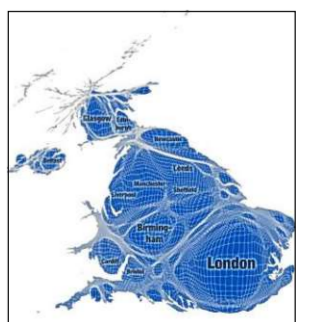
Tony Blair is selling his former constituency home for £300,000, it was announced yesterday. Myrobella House, in Trindon Colliery, County Durham, once welcomed the US President George W Bush, and has its place in history. The £300,000 price tag represents ten times what the Blairs paid for the four-bedroom pit manager's house in 1983 when he was elected as MP for Sedgfield. In 1997, the young would-be prime minister strolled from his home with family in tow across the open playing field to his local polling station on his last day as Leader of the Opposition. In November 2003, he invited his American counterpart Bush to see how a British prime minister lived. The village had seen nothing like it when the president's two Sikorsky Black Stallion helicopters landed on the field outside Myrobella. French former prime minister Lionel Jospin was also a visitor to Sedgfield in 1998. The house is being sold by Robinsons in Sedgfield, where an estate agent said: "It is a beautiful big period property. We hope to generate a quick sale, we like to do our best for all our vendors." Since the ex-prime minister stood down as the headquarters of the Tony Blair Sports Foundation. The organisation, which supports young people and coaches to get into sport, said yesterday it was moving to bigger premises in Newcastle.



Shaping up: How the population atlas shows the world

New atlas changes shape of the world

A new world atlas which concentrates on population rather than land mass has been published. Researchers from the University of Sheffield created the online atlas of 200 maps that have been redrawn to show, at a glance, which cities are the largest, how all urban areas compare, and whether many or few people live in the countryside. The images, which were created as part of a Leverhulme Trust project to remap the world and extend the Worldmapper project, have been created using population distribution data so viewers can understand how many people make up each nation. Benjamin Hennig, a postgraduate researcher at the university's Department of Geography, was part of the team that created the maps by using the gridded population of the world database of the Global Rural-Urban Mapping Project. Mr Hennig said the new projections give an "interesting insight into different countries". He added: "The map of Afghanistan, for example, shows a country dominated by Kabul and a few other urban centres. "The UK on this new global projection is a tale of London and the other cities. The maps can be viewed at www.worldmapper.org/countrycartograms/



Change: The UK on the atlas