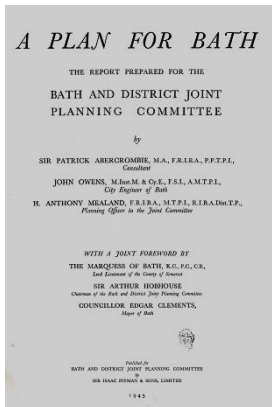


From Abercrombie to Buchanan

A walking tour of Post-war Walcot

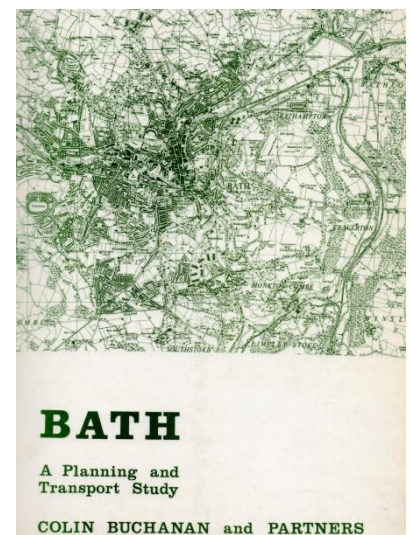


In 1943 the town planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie was commissioned to produce a report on the potential replanning of the city of Bath. The report was presented at a public exhibition which opened on 1 February 1945, after which it was subsequently published. *A Plan for Bath* acknowledged that the city required replanning and substantial change due to the increased impact of the motor car, and also acknowledged the need to clear areas of dilapidated buildings, both as a result of the 1942 bombing of the city and of general decay and lack of repair.

As well as creating potential new road systems in and around Bath, Abercrombie's plan recommended the creation of distinct neighbourhoods or precincts in the city and suggested possible new buildings and street plans. This however, would occasionally come at the cost of historic buildings that would need to be demolished in order for the new proposals to be carried out.

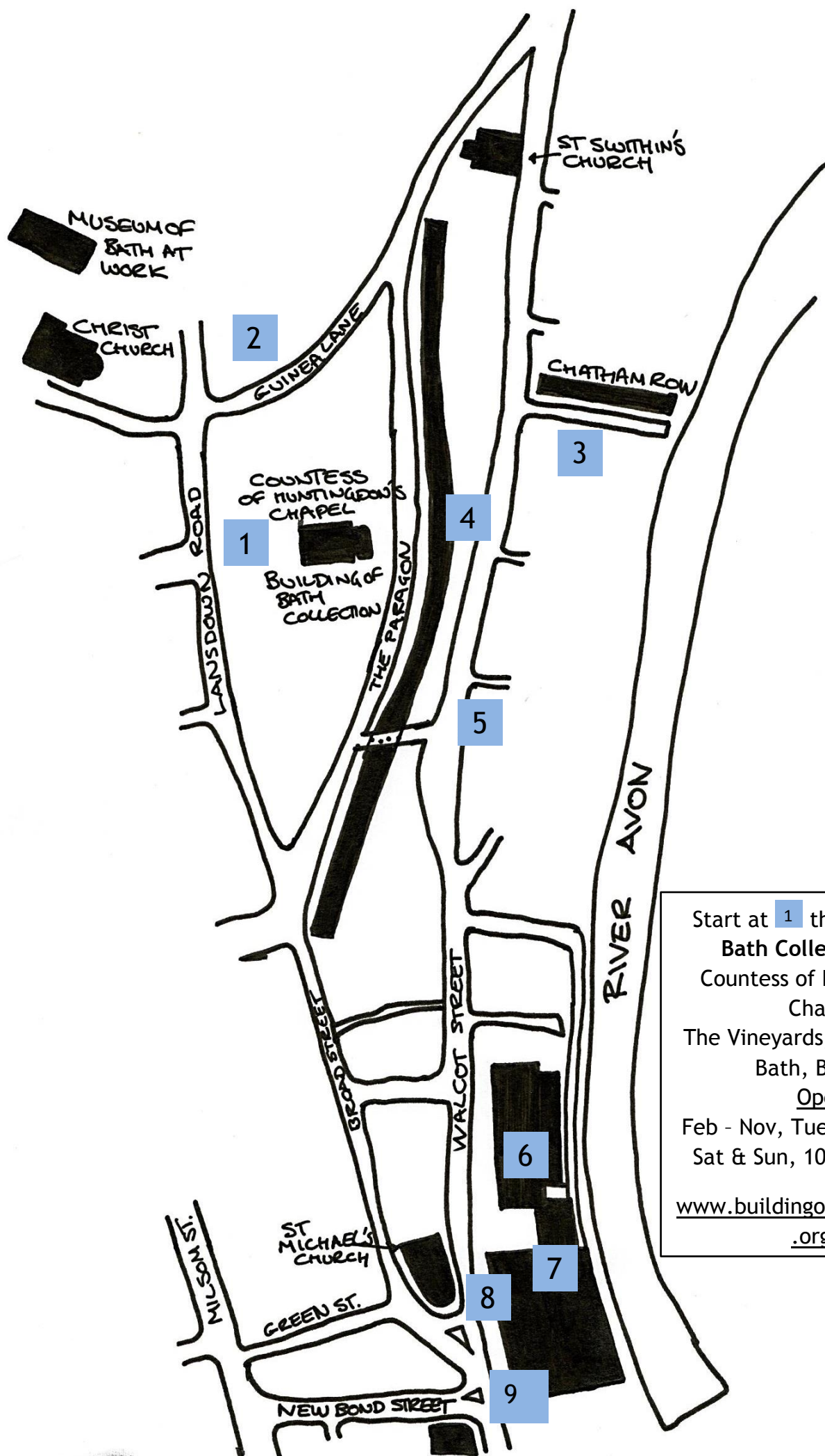
Some elements of the Plan were acted upon, but most would have been impossible to execute due to limited finances available in the immediate post-war period. However, the basic ideas of Abercrombie's plan would inform the next major planning proposal for the city created twenty years later.

In 1965 Sir Colin Buchanan produced for the city authority a report on the potential replanning of the city and feasible solutions to the ever increasing problem of traffic in a city not designed for cars. *Bath: A Traffic and Transport Study* assessed the major problems of the city's traffic and analysed what future problems were likely to appear. It was also intended to advise on the redevelopment of the Walcot area of the city, centred around Walcot Street. The fundamental problem of the city was the east - west traffic as cars moved from the London Road to the Bristol Road. The only feasible solution to alleviate the problems this cross traffic produced was the construction of a tunnel under the upper part of the city. This has become infamously known as 'Buchanan's tunnel' although it was only a suggestion of the report and the actual plans for the tunnel were created by another firm of consultants.



In both plans the proposal was to create a Walcot Loop, essentially turning Walcot Street into an island around which new roads circulated. This walking tour takes you through some of the elements of both the 1945 and 1965 plans for Bath that impacted the Walcot Street area some realised and some which never happened.

As you follow the route beware of the greatest problem that faced both Abercrombie and Buchanan and continues to challenge us in Bath today - TRAFFIC.



Start at **1** the **Building of Bath Collection**, The Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel, The Vineyards, The Paragon, Bath, BA1 5NA

Open:

Feb - Nov, Tues-Fri, 2 - 5pm,
Sat & Sun, 10.30am - 2pm.

www.buildingofbathcollection.org.uk

Start at the Building of Bath Collection

1 Exit the Building of Bath Collection and turn left out the gateway. Walk along the Vineyards and up the alley alongside the old Walcot School building. This brings you out onto Guinea Lane. Go to the Top of Guinea Lane and look across the road toward Julian Road.

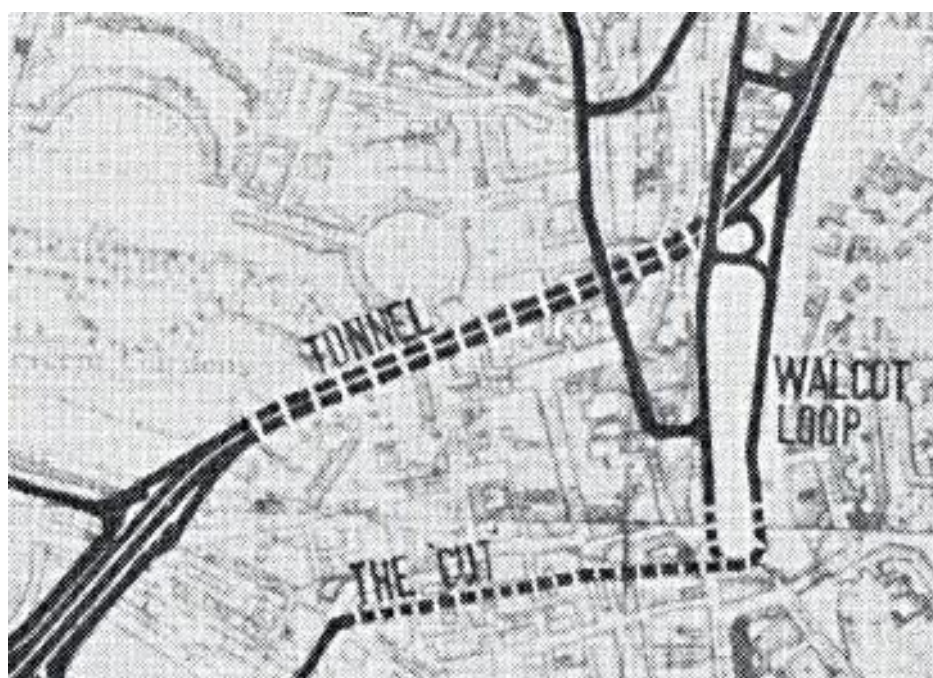
2 Abercrombie's Plan from 1945 suggested the creation of a new main road that would go up Guinea lane, underneath Lansdown Road and out onto Julian Road. To do this would have required demolishing all the buildings on Guinea Lane and many along Julian Road. The drawing shows the proposed view from Julian Road looking back down Guinea Lane.



Go back down Guinea Lane, cross over the Paragon at the zebra crossing by St Swithin's Church and walk down Walcot Street.

3 On the left as you walk down Walcot, you come to Chatham Row, turn left and walk down the street until you reach the last house. Chatham Row was at risk of demolition in the 1960s as it was used by the city council to show how unsanitary and dangerous the historic building could be when in dilapidated conditions. This last house was set on fire by the council to show how unsafe they buildings were. However, the house survived only proving how enduring and sustainable well-built Georgian properties could be. Carry on down Walcot Street.

4 One of Abercrombie's concerns in 1945 was the amount of advertising hoarding that could be seen around the city and how unsightly it was. He showed this on Walcot Street by using this photograph of the wall at Ladymead covered in advertising.



5 Walk until you reach the Framing Workshop shop. Stand outside the shop and on the other side of the road you will see the Ladymead Fountain in the wall and a flight of steps that lead up to the Paragon. The 1965 plan showed the likely location of the suggested tunnel started on Walcot Street and went under the Paragon in the area near these steps. It would then have gone under Gay Street just below the Circus and eventually come out on the Bristol Road.

6

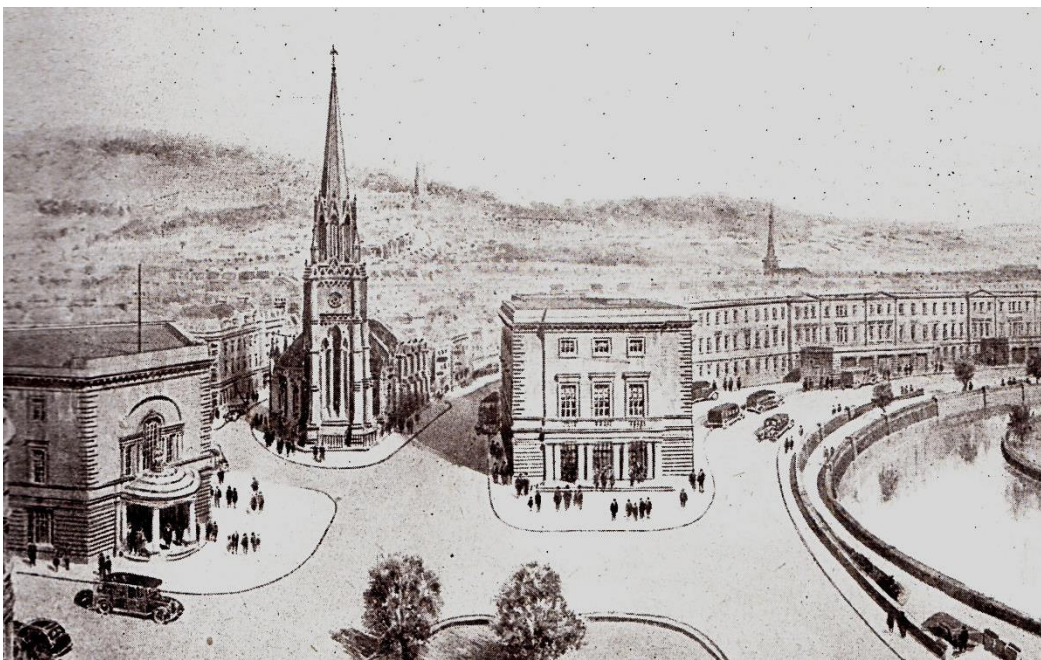
Carry on down Walcot Street until you reach the Hilton Hotel. Part of Buchanan's plan was to create an area at this part of Walcot Street that would have shops, underground parking, offices a Hotel and new Law Courts. Of this plan only the hotel and the underground parking were completed, leaving an empty podium (an elevated platform) empty until in the 1980s the Podium Shopping Centre was built.



Empty podium with hotel in background

8

Walk down past the hotel and stand on the traffic island (with bike racks) in front of the Podium shopping centre/Waitrose supermarket looking back towards Walcot Street and St Michael's Church.

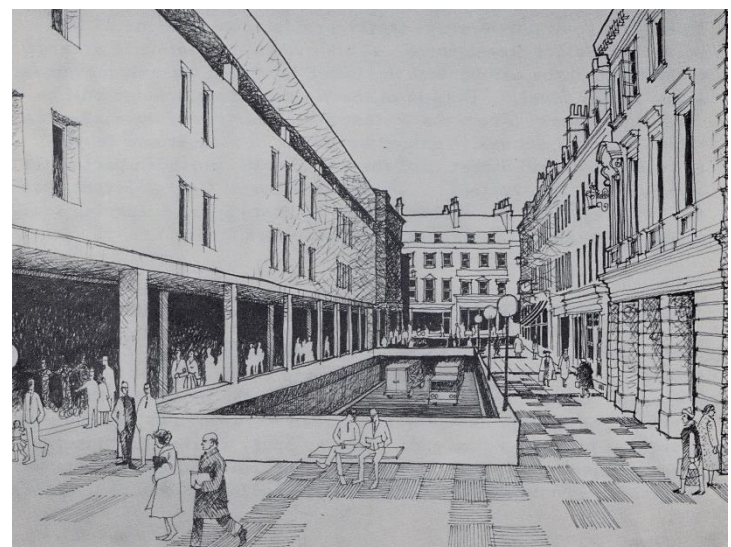


In 1945 Abercrombie proposed creating a new road that ran along the riverside and looped back up Walcot Street. He also suggested a long, impressive range of buildings in a modern classical style overlooking the river. This proposal view shows what it could have looked like had it been built.

8

Move onto the traffic island outside Waitrose Supermarket and look along new Bond Street (towards Russell & Bromley shoe shop at the end).

Alongside the Tunnel, Buchanan in 1965 suggested a cutting to take traffic out from the underground car park (now below Waitrose supermarket) and over to the Bristol Road. This would have been part tunnel, part cutting where traffic below street level would have been visible but separated from pedestrians. Like the tunnel this was never executed but if it had been, the streetscape of New Bond Street would be radically different today.



View of proposed cutting from Buchanan's 1965

Walking tour by Amy Frost at the Building of Bath Collection, 2014. All images are Bath in Time - Bath Preservation Trust.
www.bathintime.co.uk