

In the summer of 2022 Chris Johnson sent the following message. It makes a wonderful RIP to Frenchay Hospital.

Some news of former consultants made me think that possibly those of you who worked at Frenchay Hospital, but have not visited recently, might like an update on the changes since the hospital site was sold. Living as I do in Frenchay Village (even though most of my anaesthetic life was spent at Southmead), I visit the grounds of the hospital several times a week whilst out walking and have seen the gradual development of the new housing estate and its surroundings.

Entering the grounds from the mini-roundabout, you could be forgiven for thinking that nothing had changed. The original hospital signs, increasingly faded with age and neglect, remain in place and the Beckspool building behind is still used by NBT for HR and financial services.



However beyond this point everything has altered, with the new housing estate gradually extending from around the A&E entrance eastwards and southwards, until the stretch of properties facing the main drive and open area is now nearly complete. The concrete parking within the driveway was removed and replaced by a very nicely landscaped pedestrian route, while a lot of work has been done to improve and where necessary replace the ageing trees.





Trust HQ was bought by an extended family and converted into a series of apartments. A lot of upgrades were done including the replacement of a good many of the windows, but the external appearance is more or less unchanged, although the view of the facade is no longer impeded by the tennis courts, which have been moved to the other end of the site.





The old cricket pitch/helipad open area has been upgraded with a bowling green, new tennis courts and a children's playground. New tree planting and picnic tables mean that it is popular with locals - both from the older parts of the village and the new estate. It is being taken over by the Council as another Common within Frenchay Village.



A new School is being built where the eastern car park used to be but is currently under construction and not worth a photograph. We have been promised a new doctor's surgery and a community hospital, but there is no sign of either at the moment - the site allocated for the community hospital is turning rapidly into a bramble jungle surrounded by hoardings.

The Old Stables, nearly derelict when owned by the Trust, have been tastefully converted into smart dwellings.





One of the two of original hospital buildings to survive is the Occupational Health Block. It spent several years looking very sad and vandalised before being last year being extended and converted into three bungalows.





The other heritage structure is the Water Tower, which now sports a glass penthouse roof above four flats. The conversion included filling in a couple of rather threatening looking cracks in its structure, but the surveyors reports to the Council suggested that it remains structurally sound. The plans I saw did not include a lift, so ownership of the penthouse demands decent knees and a competent cardiovascular system.



Elsewhere the best way of comparing the old with the new is to spot the larger trees, all of which were preserved. The pair of tall trees beside this nice little play area used to lie immediately behind the canteen.





Finally within the estate roads, two familiar names - at least to those with longstanding memories of the hospital personnel.





Briggs Road, which leads to the still functioning Brain Injury Rehabilitation Centre, and Belsey Road which is the next left along the main entrance roadway.

NB. James Briggs added.

The Head Gardner, Mr Mustoe, also has a road named after him. Other former staff that have had roads named after them are: George Alexander, Senior Neurosurgeon. Vera Wilson, Matron and John Sage, Hopspital Secretary and Chief Executive. Ronnie Belsey was the senior Thoracic Surgeon.

Many of the other names, such as Tanner, come from the historical past. All names, I guess, were suggested via the Frenchay Village Museum.

Sinatra Way recognises the fact that Frank Sinatra sang at the Hospital in the war, when it was a US Military Hospital.

PS. James Briggs was a Consultant Histopathologist from 1966 to 1993. He wrote a book on the History of the hospital which was initially published by the hospital, with subsequent updates by the Frenchay Village Museum. The book proved a good source of possible names for the new roads.





From the point of view of a local resident, the contractors have done a decent job of minimising disturbance and improving the local facilities. We struggle much less with car parking than in times gone by, the quality of the building looks pretty good and there is sufficient off-street parking that - at least at present - the estate is less overwhelmed by cars than most.

Much of my retirement is spent creating specialist maps for my sport of orienteering. I mapped the hospital site in 2012 for an event in the surrounding area, but since then the various building works have made it an unsuitable place for an orienteering. However the next few months should see the opening up of a lot of the currently fenced off dead-ends and it should once again be possible to roam the area more freely.

Best wishes  
Chris Johnson