



# Walks from the Severn Beach Line

## 2020

	Section	miles
1.	Severn Beach Circular	3.0
2.	St Andrews Road to Severn Beach	3.9
3.	St Andrews Road to Avonmouth	3.3
4.	Avonmouth to Shirehampton	1.7
5.	Sea Mills to Shirehampton	2.6
6.	Sea Mills Circular	3.2
7.	Sea Mills to Clifton Down	2.5
8.	Clifton Down Circular	3.0
9.	Clifton Down to Stapleton Road	2.6
10.	Stapleton Road to Temple Meads	2.0

Compiled and Revised July and August 2020

by

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Inspired by Julie Boston of FoSBR and Bristol Amblers

## INTRODUCTION

All of the walks here were planned and documented during the Covid-19 lockdown & post-lockdown of 2020. This means that, at the time of writing, some facilities including public toilets, pubs and cafes were not necessarily available.

The author is a walk leader with Bristol Amblers who operate a free and friendly walking group within Walking for Health (WfH) under the auspices of The Ramblers though not as a Ramblers walking group.

WfH walks are intended to be three miles or less and suitable for the over 55's as a safe and sociable form of moderate exercise. Each WfH walk has two walk leaders, one in front and one at the back. Bristol Amblers only uses public transport to get to a walk start and from a walk end.

In normal times, other things built in to the planning of each walk are the presence of public toilets, the option of suitable refreshment facilities at end of walk and, where available, the ability of walkers to safely leave the walk if necessary. In general, we also try to ensure the absence of stiles and challenging terrain.

As an experienced walk leader, the author of this work has strayed a little from those normal walk planning conditions. Here, each of the walks is centred on the Severn Beach railway but could easily be combined with other forms of transport.

The walks in this document generally fall within the WfH constraints but keener walkers will doubtless want to combine or extend these walks; please feel free to do so. Suggestions and improvements are also welcome.

For information on Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways visit: [fosbr.org.uk](http://fosbr.org.uk)

For more about Bristol Amblers visit: <http://www.wellspringhlc.org.uk/walking-for-health/>

John Beales - Bristolwalker

## FoSBR01 Severn Beach Circular



**Severn Beach** is a small village on the eastern banks of the Severn Estuary in South Gloucestershire, and is the terminal station of the Severn Beach Railway line that runs from Bristol Temple Meads. The Great Western Railway built a rail link between Avonmouth and the mainline station at Pilning in 1900. Around 1922 the village of Severn Beach was created mostly built by local entrepreneur Robert Stride, becoming a minor seaside resort with a swimming pool, boating lake, donkey rides and dozens of fun-fair rides and stalls. People from nearby Bristol came in large numbers attracted in part by less strict licensing laws.

As with many other resorts, its decline started post WW2 when potential visitors found cheaper alternatives abroad. By the 1970s, most of the shops had closed. The village pub the Severn Salmon, formerly Severn Beach Hotel, was demolished to make way for housing and the last remnant of the amusements, a children's roundabout, lingered on till the early 1980's sited at the point where Beach Road bends inland, and replaced in 2018 by the 'Just As You Are' Tea Cottage. Shirley's Cafe still operates near the station and is justifiably popular.

## THE WALK

As you walk from the train (1) across the Station Road in front of you is a large metal clad gate (2), a reminder that until the Beeching cuts of 1963, this line continued northeast to connect with the mainline at Pilning. On leaving the station turn left into Station Road. Ahead is the rising ground of the sea wall. Shirley's Café (3) is on the left and Beach Road on the right.

Turn right into Beach Road where you will find on the right hand side, a convenience store, a bakery and public toilets (4). Past these on the left you will see the Tea Cottage (5). Turn left here and go up the steps and onto the sea wall. This is a walk with little shelter. In wet or windy weather, it can be chilly if strong winds are blowing along the estuary.

Here, on the sea wall, you are standing on the final stages of the Severn Way (6) a two-hundred and ten mile long-distance path that follows the Severn from its source on Plynlimon, Powys. Originally, the Severn Way finished at here at Severn Beach, but it has been extended into Bristol via Lawrence Weston, Shirehampton and the Avon Gorge. The official end of the River Severn is where the river crosses the notional line between the islands of Flat Holm and Steep Holm where it becomes the Bristol Channel.

Turn right towards the motorway bridge now named with a large sign over the westward carriageway, the Prince of Wales Bridge. After a few yards there is an access point to estuary beach and the path below the sea wall (7). You can walk on either path, upper or lower, as they rejoin just before the motorway bridge. As you approach the bridge, just after the rejoining of the two paths, there is a fenced off-area (8) to the right of the path. This area encloses a ventilation shaft and pumping station for the Severn Railway Tunnel some 50 feet below.

Just under the motorway bridge, the path again divides (9) as before. Again, either path can be followed as they rejoin just before you reach New Passage. As you walk northwards along the sea wall, depending on the state of the tide, there is lots to see out in the estuary (10). In the estuary every rocky out-crop, and every pool has a name. In bygone years, this part of the estuary was a major shipping route with trade both up and down the waterway and across to Wales and back. Ferries carried people, goods and animals and in past times of conflict large numbers of soldiers. With the large tidal range local sailors needed to know exactly where they were and what perils lurked. The water also provided large quantities of fish, particularly salmon. Nets of various types and static fish traps, known locally as 'putchers' and 'kypes', have been sited here for generations. The lines of stunted wooden stakes that you may see as the water recedes are the bases of such traps and some are very old.

As you approach New Passage, on your right, next to the sea wall is Severn Lodge Farm (11), notable for its 24 chimney pots and nine bedrooms. Believed to date from 1750's it was semi-derelict for many years but is now fully restored. It was used as a hotel for many years for mail and passenger coach travellers waiting for the right state of tide for a ferry crossing to Wales, it became part of the railway hub of the original Pilning Station when the Bristol and South Wales Union Railway arrived in 1863.



The stone stub of a jetty (**12**) is all that remains of the landward end of a 546 yards (499 m) wooden pier built to carry the Bristol and South Wales Union Railway trains out to waiting steamers. A plaque here gives more information. The small modern housing development is built on the site of New Passage Pier railway station and hotel. This hotel – boasted a promenade, tea rooms and private gas works. It operated until 1886, becoming redundant with the construction of the Severn Tunnel; at which time the station and pier were then demolished. Even after the railway had gone, the New Passage Hotel continued to prosper as a popular privately owned public house. In 1921 the hotel was the location of experiments by the inventor H.G. Matthews in the projection of moving films with a sound track who, like other better-known inventors, also experimented, unsuccessfully, with ‘death rays’ as a form of aerial defence. The hotel closed in 1973 and was left empty. Ravaged by the elements, vandalism and neglect, it was finally demolished in the late 1970s.

This area of the estuary is a favourite with birdwatchers, particularly in the spring and autumn. More than 28 species of seabirds and waders have been recorded along with migratory passerines such as Ospreys and other rarities.

At the end of the concrete sea wall, the Severn Way (**14**) continues northwards towards Aust and beyond. It first crosses a rifle range so walkers should beware warning signs and red flags if present. If you are tempted to continue north remember it is a further than it looks to the original Severn Bridge. From this point to Aust by the most direct route (the Severn Way) is about 4½ miles. There is a good pub there and on the motorway service roundabout a bus stop for the Newport/Chepstow service to Bristol.

Also, from this point there is an alternative path, (**15**) which skirts round the West side of the range to re-join the walk route at the inland end of New Passage Road. The author has walked this path. It is little used and difficult to locate in places.

In WW2 the whole area between Aust and Avonmouth was littered with Anti-Aircraft gun sites, searchlight batteries and Starfish decoy bombing sites as part of the Bristol defences. Little remains today but a couple of miles or so north of this point can still be seen several eroded bomb craters created by Luftwaffe victims of those decoys. Better the empty marshes of Northwick Warth than the streets of Bristol.

Turn right through the metal gate and go along the service road in front of the new houses. Note that near the end of this the road rises and falls (**16**) as it crosses the old railway embankment. The uneven garden on the right here covers the remains of the station and turntable.

At the end of this short service road you could turn right and return to the start point by going back along the sea wall. Otherwise, turn left and go along New Passage Road. This is usually a quiet road but with the bends and absence of pavement do beware of traffic. Some of the Victorian houses along this road were built for ferrymen or railway staff.

If in need of refreshment, Just before crossing the M4 motorway there is a track off to the left parallel to the motorway, that will lead you to the White Horse pub at Redwick, while just after crossing the M4 if you turn left at the road junction you’ll come to the slightly nearer Red Lion (**17**).

At this road junction turn right and head back towards Severn Beach. Before the climb to cross the M49 there is an alternative path (**18**) back to Severn Beach. Again, the author has walked this path. It skirts the emergency access point for the Severn Railway Tunnel but appears to be little used and partially overgrown with Blackthorn bushes. At its junction with another footpath it turns right to cross the M49 by footbridge to re-enter Severn Beach from the east.

Ignoring the alternative path and crossing the M49 by the road bridge, on the other side is a minor crossroads. The detached house on the left here is called Crossings House (**19**) and was originally the crossing keeper’s residence for a level crossing on the Severn Beach line as it headed towards Pilning.

Here, either turn left and then immediately right along Gorse Cover Road, or continue straight ahead along Beach Avenue. Both will eventually come to Station Road and the station for the train journey home. The original track-bed of the Severn Beach line lay between Gorse Cover and Beach Avenue roads, their positions of these roads reflecting the curve of the former track-bed. You could also turn left at Crossings House and return along Little Green Lane, but as it is a narrow road with no footpath, the other routes back make for safer walking.

# FoSBR02 St Andrews Road to Severn Beach



I have to admit that this particular walk is not my favourite. The section between St Andrews Road and Chittening involves walking along the side of St Andrews Road and is the main link between the industrial estates with their multiple distribution centres and the M48 (the old M4).

A little further North there is another section from the entrance to Seabank Power Station to near the roundabout entrance to SUEZ Energy Recovery Centre where, again it is a pavement walk and there are a lot of heavy lorries on this road.

Having said that, there is quite a lot of this walk that is truly delightful with a lot to see and discover. From long-gone industrial sites that fed the ravenous war machines of both WW1 and WW2 to glimpses of natural wildlife-friendly locations, with the ever-present railway line that links them all. I certainly had the feeling that this area officially known as the Lower Severn Vale levels is something of a “forgotten landscape”.

If travelling to the start by train to St Andrew’s Road, check your timetable carefully: for some reason, not all outbound trains stop at St Andrew’s Road. Should you find yourself, like me, speeding through this station, don’t despair – either revise your plans and walk the route in the opposite direction or, alternatively, stay on the train for the return journey when it *will* stop at your chosen destination.

While I have described this walk from south to north, the choice of direction is yours. One consideration as to direction is that there are better refreshment facilities at Severn Beach.

From the platform of St Andrew’s Road **(1)**, cross the line by the footbridge. In sequence turn left and right to emerge on St Andrews Road itself. Do not attempt to cross the road here but turn left and head north along a wide pavement. Eventually this comes to an end, but a pedestrian crossing enables a safe crossing to the other side of the road. Turn left and continue in the same direction northwards away from Avonmouth along a long straight busy road with many lorries. Eventually, St Andrews Road bends gently to the right and changes name to Smoke Lane **(2)**.

*Just out of site over on the estuary side of the road sandwiched between Wainwright’s and King Lifting Is a remnant of Avonmouth’s WW2 history: the remains of a four-gun Heavy Anti-Aircraft battery for the defence of Avonmouth and Bristol **(3)**.*

Smoke Lane then bends back to the left and here is a roundabout with two large signs declaiming the entrance to Cabot Park **(4)**. Cross this roadway entrance, Poplar Way West, and continue as before along Smoke Lane here rising gently as it crosses the Henbury Loop railway line by a road bridge **(5)**. Here you have re-joined the Severn Way.

*If you look over the parapet of the bridge to the right, just about at the limit of your vision, on the left of the double track, once stood from 1917 to 1964 the long-gone station of ‘Chittening Platform’ **(6)** briefly mentioned in the Flanders and Swann 1964 song “Slow Train” [ ... indeed, “... no passenger waits”]*

After crossing the bridge and at the bottom of the slope down, the road bends sharply to the right. Our path goes through the metal gate on the opposite side of the road. It is safer to walk on, away from the bend, cross when safe to do so and return to the gate by the pavement on the opposite side.

The metal gate bears the waymark of the Severn Way. It has a little-used kissing gate on the right hand end and a gap in the fence on the left. Go through and walk on for about 50 yards to an un-marked path on the right hand side **(7)**. (Do not go straight on along the track or you will end up in an impenetrable area of seriously overgrown sidings.)

Turn right onto the unmarked path and in a couple of yards is an overgrown siding with a waymark fixed to a sleeper. Turn left here walking along the wooden sleepers. In a short distance leave this siding by a well-worn path with overhanging bushes to the right. The path here wanders a little but generally heads in much the same direction. Cross a second siding and pass a memorial seat. The footpath heads north again along the narrow strip between the Severn Beach line on the left and a factory complex on the right.

*The sidings you have just crossed were built in 1917 by the Ministry of Munitions to service the site on the right then known as Filling Factory No.23. In conjunction with nearby foundries and chemical works, by November 1918 with largely unskilled female labour force this facility had produced nearly 85½ million mustard gas shells. Officially the human cost of this production was 1,213 cases of serious illness and two deaths (later attributed to Spanish Flu). Unofficially there were 3,000 casualties and several deaths. Shortly after the armistice of 1918 the factory closed and converted to civilian use*

Eventually the path re-emerges again onto Smoke Lane **(8)** where it bends sharply to the right again to run parallel with the estuary. Do not go into the road as there is no pavement here.

This corner is littered by fly-tipping but our path continues in the top corner near the road and continues close between road and railway. Near the entrance to Seabank Power station with its distinctive towers the path re-joins the road **(9)** and continues north on this pavement which is a bit overgrown in places.

Just before a roundabout (which provides access to the futuristic-looking recycling facility) the path turns left off this pavement **(10)** turning right alongside the Severn Beach railway track. There are large dry drainage ditches on the right hand side between the path and the road.

In a short distance the path emerges from the shrubby trees and bushes to a cleared fenced area with a bridge and weir draining to the channel **(11)**. After crossing the bridge, the path turns to the left and crosses the railway line by a pedestrian level crossing **(12)**. It then turns right to closely parallel the rails.

Eventually, this path diverges gently to the left, away from the railway and into more scrubby woodland. Another clearing, this time with a pumping station **(13)** on the left and large iron pipes crossing under the path marks the final stage of our northward journey.

The official Severn Way path continues straight ahead in the same direction along the vehicle track. However, if you would like a change of scenery, turn left down the track alongside the pipes. At the end of this track, turn right and follow the footpath through the scrub just above the high tide line till on reaching a small picnic area **(14)** you re-join the Severn Way again. Turn left here and walk along the top of a low concrete sea wall until you reach a metal gate on the southern edge of Severn Beach. The next service road on the right takes you to the station or other facilities.

**With the paucity of trains to Severn Beach, should you miss the train and face a long wait, there is a bus service, the 12 and the 823/625 that will get you to the Cribbs Causeway bus hub.**

**There are stops just outside the station on the same side of the road and just outside The Tea Cottage.**

## FoSBR03 St Andrews Road to Avonmouth Station



Avonmouth is not my favourite place to take a walk. It is a busy place, noisy with traffic and construction works. Where trees and green fields once stood is, in all too short a space of time, converted into the charmless and characterless architecture of windowless distribution centres with their apparently inevitable acreages of tarmac parking areas. Where footpaths once wandered through copse and stream bank, their replacement is, all too often a ruler-straight four-lane highway flanked by impassable drainage channels.

Having said that, the area does have a long history of cultivation and modification by human activity. The remnants of some of those past activities can still be found in the odd corner. Human labour in sometimes unpleasant or dangerous occupations in the manufacture of munitions and their chemical constituents have left less of a mark beyond fading memories. Plotting a walk in this place can have its own problems. Each industrial park may erect security fences without regard to the transit of walkers who have to detour round them.

Some things have improved. When I relocated to Bristol in the early 1970s, the all-engulfing residue of carbon black production and the constant bright yellow plume of zinc refinement were all too obvious; there wasn't a hedgerow in the whole surrounding area that didn't contain more than its share of dead trees. So, this walk is subject to variations – the route may have changes forced upon it

***A word of warning: Not all Severn Beach trains stop at St Andrews Road - check your timetable carefully.***

From St Andrews Road station (1) walk to the main road and turn left along the wide pavement.

Where this pavement ends, use the pedestrian crossing and, leaving St Andrews Road, (2) go straight along Kings Weston Lane signed Avonside Trading Estate. Passing the tyre facility on the left and the lorry dealership on the right the forlorn

remnants of a railway level crossing are passed **(3)**. Go past the first wind turbine on the left and a bit later turn left into Meerbank Road **(4)** with another wind turbine on the right. Pass this second wind turbine and the Superdrug distribution centre on the left and the Driver and Vehicle Standards agency also on the left. Just before a roundabout, cross the road turning right down Lawrence Weston Road **(5)**. Follow Lawrence Weston Road to pass a third wind turbine. The roadway here is lined on both sides by rather full drainage ditches usually topped with chickweed. Take a slight bend to the right and then left between the vast Amazon distribution centre on the left and Wessex Water sewage facility on the right. Pass a third turbine on your left

Ahead of you is the M49 and an underpass leading to Lawrence Weston should you choose to go that way. However, we turn right after passing a fourth turbine, through the gap on the left side of a metal farm gate that opens into a field **(6)**. The footpath is in a straight line at right angles to the road we have just left, following a line of electricity pylons, parallel to the sewage works fence and a strong smell.

The footpath and grass surface across this field is badly eroded by heavy use of trail and quad bikes. It ends in two linked steep slopes created by these vehicles. Ascent on foot was difficult in dry weather: in wet probably impossible. To bypass, head to the left, towards the M49 and ascend here.

On the reverse of this slope are eroded wooden steps down to a service road **(7)** which connects two fenced off areas. There is a large vehicle gate to the right. The footpath runs from the left hand end of this gate and follows the outside edge of the metal fence along the western edge of the sewage facility.

This footpath does not get a lot of traffic and in places is very overgrown. It has been cleared in the past and can be walked but only with difficulty when overgrown. The metal fence provides useful support when fighting through the undergrowth. Eventually, you will come to a signposted gap in a wooden fence and emerge onto another service road. Here turn left to reach Kings Weston Lane again **(8)**. There are signs here telling have just left the Bristol Bioresources and Renewable Energy Park by Gate B.

Cross to the other side of Kings Weston Lane and turn left. Unfortunately, it is not possible at this point to cross the Kings West Rhine to a cycle path parallel to the roadway. Walk on the right hand edge of Kings Weston Lane, facing the traffic. This is a busy road linking Avonmouth with Kings Weston but the road here is straight and reasonably wide so danger from vehicles should be minimal. In 200 yards or so, off on the right, is a row of tall poplar trees lining Ballast Lane. Just before reaching the same line of pylons again, turn right along the poplar lined track **(9)** of Ballast Lane. This will take you in a straight line to an access road between Avonmouth Way on the left and the large depot buildings on the right.

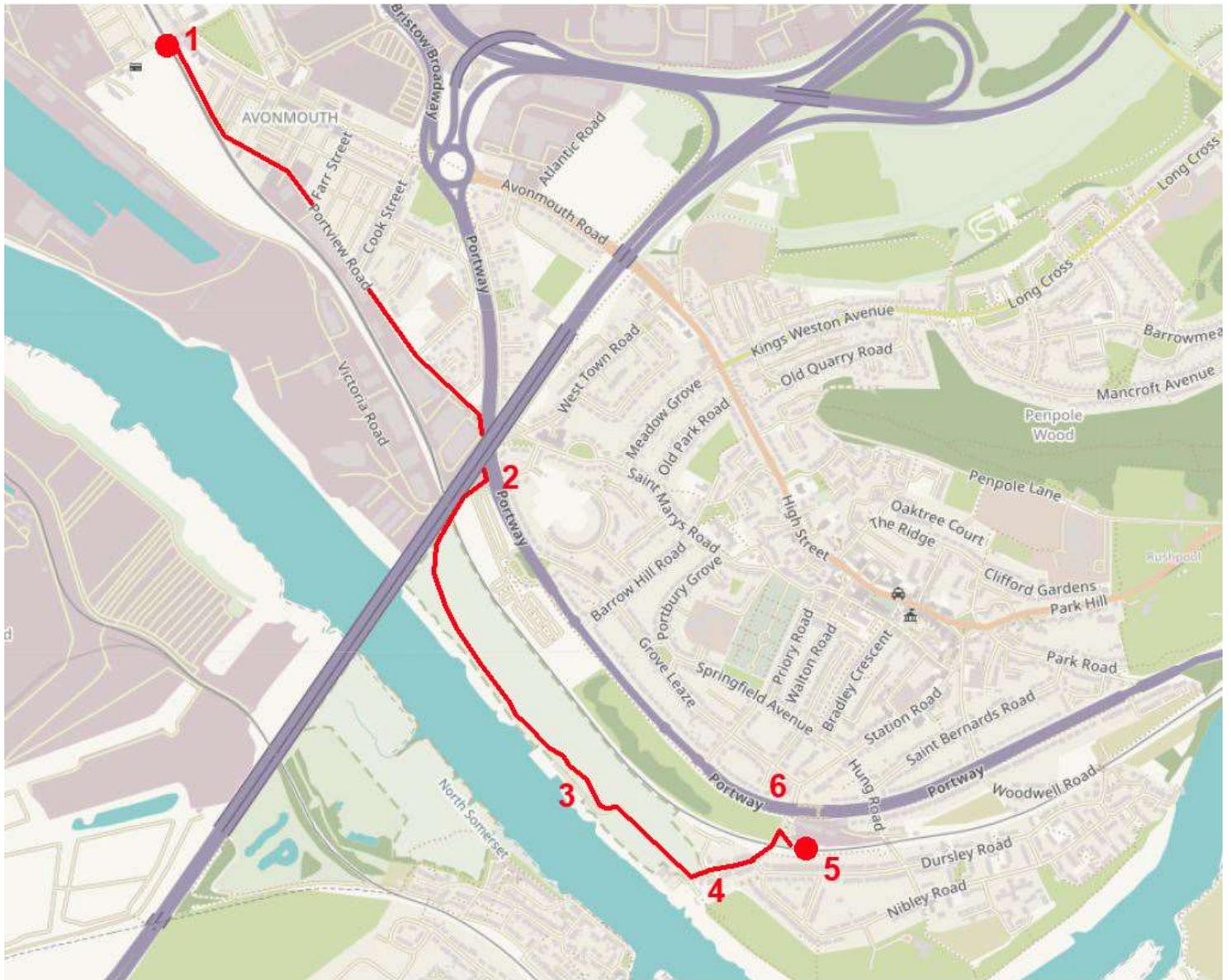
Cross this access road **(10)** and continue along Ballast Lane. After Ballast Lane crosses Shirehampton Rhine by a small bridge **(11)** it comes to an end with a large willow that has presumably been felled to prevent vehicle access. Pass this tree by the gap to the left and enter a wide field with what appears to be a circular trail bike circuit. Veer to the right and go through a wide gap in the hedge. Continue straight ahead to meet a tarmac cycle/footpath. Turn left and emerge onto Avonmouth Way **(12)** via a pinch point.

Turn right along Shirehampton Way and keep on the right hand side to the next big roundabout **(13)**. Use the pedestrian lights on the west side of this roundabout to turn to the left along Crowley Way which is the end of a spur off the M5. After the pedestrian crossing, on Crowley Way continue to the left along a foot/cycle path till Nisbets "National Catering Equipment Centre" is on your right. Here, turn right down St Brendan's Way **(14)**. This road bends to the right and then to the left where it is blocked to vehicle traffic but continue to the end where it emerges onto the very much quieter end of St Andrews Road opposite Avonmouth Park **(15)**.

*In the days before the extensive new road system was built through Avonmouth, air quality monitoring equipment proved that this was then the most highly polluted place in Britain.*

Turn left and follow the park railings to the right along Avonmouth Road. Near the far end of the park cross Avonmouth Road by the pedestrian crossing, then turn right and left down Gloucester Road to reach Avonmouth train station **(16)**.

## FoSBR04 Avonmouth to Shirehampton



Like most of these walks it can be done in either direction. I describe it here from Avonmouth to Shirehampton simply so it could end with refreshments at The Lamplighters. It could also be extended by adding the next section to Sea Mills. If you do combine the two walks, I suggest that you do it from Sea Mills to Avonmouth as there are no refreshment facilities at Sea Mills and the only public loo has long since been rebuilt as a residential house.

From the platform of Avonmouth station **(1)**, exit the station and turn sharp right into Portview Road, parallel with the railway line with the high blue-brick wall to your right. Keep on to the end of this road passing the Avonmouth Tavern also on your right. It then joins The Portway almost under the huge bridge of the M5 Motorway; unavoidably, this is a noisy area. Turn to the right and go under the motorway bridge. On the other side, still very close to the bridge, turn right, down West Town Road **(2)**.

*West Town, Avonmouth really is a "lost" suburb. It was started in the 1870's between the railway line and the River Avon to provide accommodation for the workers employed in the nearby industrial sites. There were several rows of terraced houses complete with shops and a mission hall. The end came on the night of 17th January 1941, when the area was devastated by German incendiary and high explosive bombs. The inhabitants were evacuated and re-housed and the dwellings were never rebuilt. The little community which lived here was dispersed forever and the land was taken over in part by the Port of Bristol Authority. By 1970 West Town was no more than a convenient gap on the map to push the new M5 through and the bridgeworks were completed by 1974.*

First left is an entrance to the Park and Ride, so it's best to use the right hand pavement in West Town Road. Cross the Severn Beach railway line by a level crossing and, still under the motorway. Cross West Town Road to a scruffy parking area. Go through the row of large boulders, ignoring the locked metal gate to the right. Go through a second gate into the long and narrow wildlife area sandwiched between the railway and the river. There is a hard path all the way to the Lamplighters.

Near the far end of this reserve the pathway joins an access road that leads to a boat repair **(3)** facility on the banks of the Avon. At the far end of this access road is The Lamplighters public House **(4)**.

*The Lamplighters was built in the late 1700s as an hotel. To the right is the access ramp to the Avon formerly the landing for the Pill passenger ferry.*

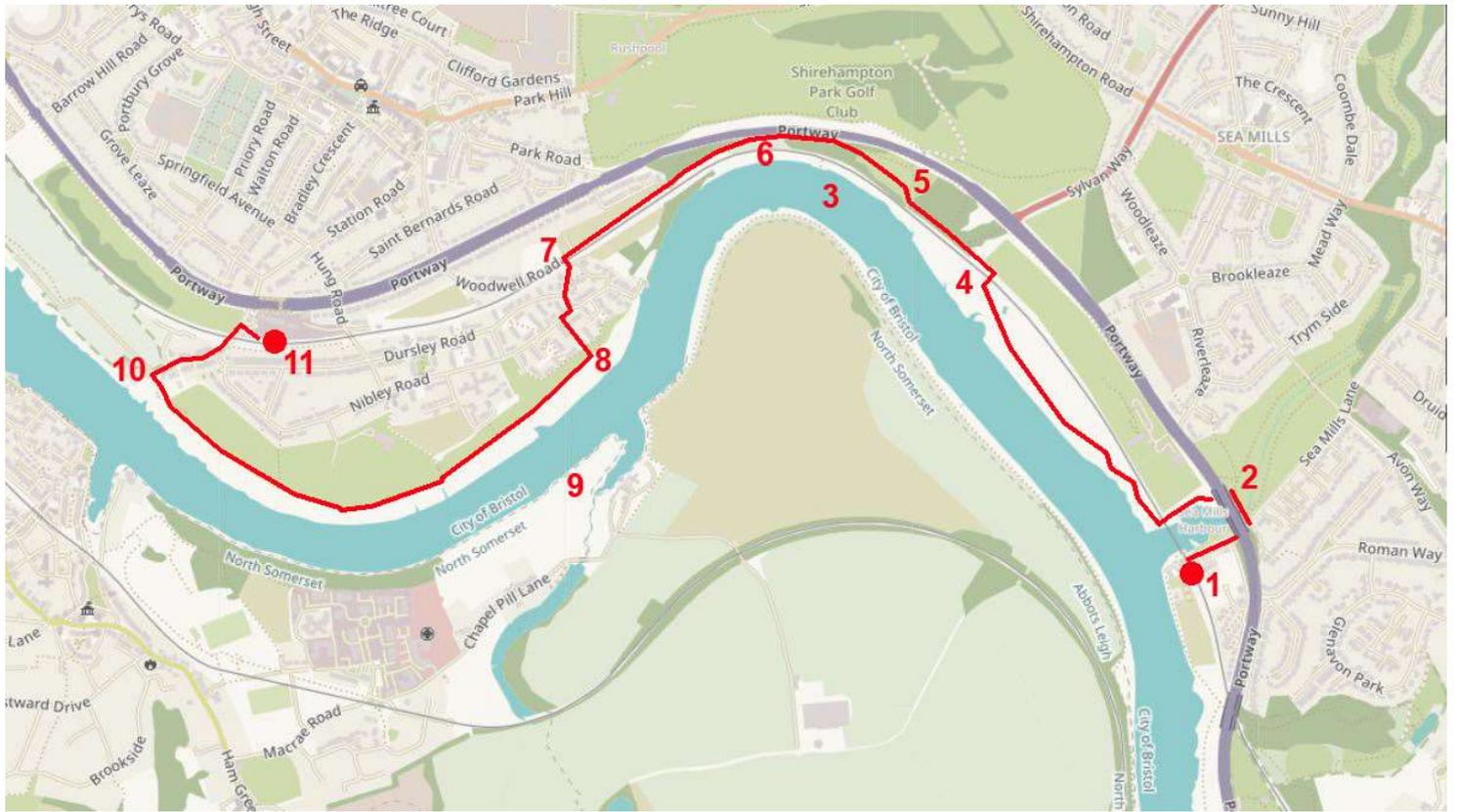
If you intend to walk on to Sea Mills, go straight on keeping the pub on your left. Otherwise, turn left into Station Road and keep to this road, ignoring the footpath sign indicating right into an impenetrable fence and bramble patch. Just before the bridge on the left of this road, set into the wall of No.91 is an old cast-iron milestone indicating that its five miles to Bristol

Go under the railway bridge. Before reaching The Portway, turn right and, to the right of the entrance to Fraikin's, take the pathway to Shirehampton station **(5)**.

Should you not wish to take the train, you could cross the Portway by the footbridge and catch the Park and Ride bus at the stop opposite **(6)**.

Alternatively, cross by the same footbridge and continue in roughly the same direction along the other part of Station Road to reach the Shirehampton High Street for pubs cafes and more buses.

## FoSBR05 Sea Mills to Shirehampton



This walk follows a section of the extended Severn Way from Sea Mills railway station round Horseshoe bend to Shirehampton station. You might see the occasional way mark in the form of a small blue Severn sailing trow. It is a path easy to follow but has a series of wooden stairs both up and down taking you through old earthworks above Horseshoe Bend in the river Avon. These earthworks were created either in the construction of the (then) Port and Pier Railway of the 1890s (more recently, the Severn Beach line) or The Portway in the 1920s.

This walk starts at Sea Mills simply because there are better walk end facilities at Shirehampton. Leave Sea Mills station (1) turning right into Sea Mills Lane, with the crumbling C17th harbour in the mouth of the Trym to your left. Go under the arches of the Portway viaduct, turn left over the footbridge (2) then, following the path left again back under the Portway and the railway bridge on the other side of the harbour. The path now curves to the right along the now overgrown mud banks of the River Avon.

*It is interesting to compare the present-day landscape here with old photographs of the same stretch of this river. It would appear that less than 100 years ago this channel was a lot wider though presumably no deeper.*

Walking along this path towards Shirehampton, the River Avon curves to the left into the then notorious Horseshoe Bend (3) while the railway on your right follows the curve of the Avon and enters cuttings through the rising ground in front. As you follow this section of the path you will encounter a series of large bollards, some dated 1930, near to the path.

*These bollards were installed here in 1930 in response to a series of shipping accidents on this stretch of the river. Lacking present day safety devices such as radar, on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1829 the descent of a sudden thick bank of fog caused five large ocean going vessels, five tugboats and numerous smaller vessels to be grounded between Horseshoe Bend and Sea Mills on a single tide. Luck was with the mariners on this occasion and all were refloated by the following afternoon. The danger to a stranded ship in this river was severe. On a falling tide in a narrow channel, a ship could be swung by the tide across the river. With only the bows and stern supported, the unsupported weight of the hull could cause the ship to break its back with the total loss of the ship and total blockage of the river until cleared. This had happened on several occasions. The bollards were sited here so that a stranded ship could be lashed to fixed points on the bank and prevent a swing across the river.*

As this grassy area narrows on approaching the Horseshoe Bend, the path turns sharply right up over a low sloping wall towards the railway (4). Do not attempt to go straight on or you will end up in the river or its mud.

Go through a gap in metal fencing and pass under the Severn Beach line by a large bridge. The path turns to the left up rising steps in a wooded area to the level of a playing field behind fencing on the right.

*There is a small gate here giving access to these fields which could be of use as an alternative route if a walker coming in the opposite direction encounters an unusually high tide on the River Avon.*

A little further up this rising path there is a wooden stairway leading down to level boardwalk. At the end of this section of pathway yet another flight of wooden steps up to the bottom corner of a large grassy area of meadow (5). Keep to the left hand path following the hedge-line, beyond which is the railway.

*From here you can see the Old Powder House atop a high stone wall that drops to the river. It was built around 1776 when an Act of Parliament required the offloading of stocks of gunpowder and other highly inflammable materials. Ships picked them up again on their outward journey, a crane on top of the high wall being used for the transfers.*

Climb to the top of this slope but pause occasionally to admire the panoramic view of the Avon behind you.

At the top of the meadow, enter more woodland and follow the meandering path at times quite close to either the Portway or the railway cutting. Near the top of this small hill, descend yet another flight of wooden steps and then emerge into a large lay-by (6) just off the Portway. Five park-style bench seats here are adequate provision for the weary who want to pause and admire the view.

When rested, walk to the other end of the lay-by go through a gate and along a limestone chipping path that soon comes to steps up the low railway embankment which starts the long, straight and gentle descent towards the western end of Shirehampton. When the end of a row of houses becomes visible, the path widens and continues between the railway on your left and allotments to the right. The footpath widens into a vehicle access track for the allotments till it joins Woodwell Road (7).

Go through the pedestrian gate to the right of the main metal gate and immediately turn left over the Severn Beach line.

On the other side of this bridge, turn right and downhill on Nibley Road to the junction with Riverside close. At this point take any of the turnings (to left or right) that lead on down to the grassy parkland area (8) behind the houses in front of you and head to the right along the bank of the River Avon. This grassy area with some trees is succeeded by a fenced off playing field. The footpath is to the left, between the playing field fence and the river.

On the opposite bank (9), are the inlet of Chapel Pill, Adam and Eve and the low cliffs of Hung Road.

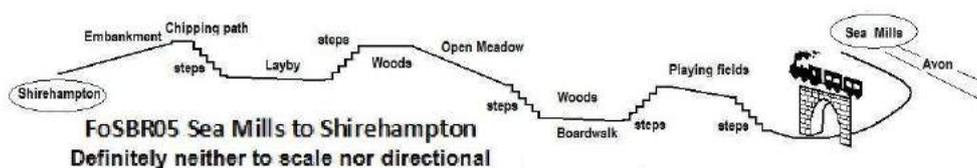
**Chapel Pill** - The name "Pill" means a tidal inlet or harbour. Ham Green Pottery kiln was excavated some time ago and was located in the fields above Chapel Pill. The pottery was made in the period from 1100 AD to 1250 AD and was exported from Pill by boat. This pottery has been found and identified in archaeological digs from the Algarve in Portugal to Iceland.

**Adam and Eve** – This a small curved white building with two towers and a gate between them. Built mid C18 as a water gate for Ham Green House which is located behind. Set either side of the gate are two statues, a man and a woman.

**Hung Road** - Larger ships were once moored at Hung Road and their cargoes taken by barge to Bristol docks: The ships were secured by heavy chains from large iron rings embedded in the stone cliff. As the tide, fell these ships literally hung there until the water rose again. The chains were removed in WW1 but the rings are still there.

Once past the playing fields, follow the path slightly away from the river and past a play area for children. The gap in a group of trees opens out into the end of Station Road. On your right is The Lamplighters public house (10), to the left of which Station Road will take you up to Shirehampton railway station (11). On the left are the premises of the Shirehampton Sailing club whose riverside landing stage was, until the mid 1970s, the site of the ferry across the Avon to Pill.

*Pill was traditionally the residence of the Bristol Channel pilots, who would guide ocean going boats though the sandbanks and channels of the Severn estuary up the Avon and through the Avon Gorge to the Port of Bristol. Each Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter carried one pilot and was crewed by a man and a "boy" with fierce competition to get their pilot onto an approaching ship. They often ranging as far as Lundy Island. Pill was, in its heyday a wild and lawless place once home to 21 public houses. So proud were pilots of their skilled and often dangerous job that, if you visit their parish church today, you find their occupation carved into their tombstones.*



## FoSBR06 Sea Mills Circular



The small dock with crumbling stone walls is all that remains of a floating harbour (only the third such in the country) built in 1712 as an alternative to the navigational perils of the Avon Gorge but closed by 1766 because ships were getting larger and the poor roads between Sea Mills and Bristol prevented safe onward passage of goods.

This stone dock was constructed on the site of a large early Roman harbour, Portus Abonea, built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century as a crossing point to Wales and as an export centre to the rest of the empire for Mendip lead. Abonea fell into disuse on the departure of the Romans in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century.

Bristol was never a Roman city, they considered it too marshy and unhealthy so was bypassed by all major roadways. Abonea was connected to Bath (Aqua Sulis) by the roadway Via Julia.

The main Roman settlement here lies under a succession of later developments including the Port and Pier Railway of the 1890s, the construction of The Portway in the 1920s and residential housing of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The small plot of allotments between the railway station and the river Avon still disgorges occasional shards of Roman pottery in the form of Samian ware.

From Sea Mills station **(1)** turn right, away from the river Avon.

Go under the Portway viaduct and turn left to cross the River Trym by the footbridge. Turn right and either follow the pathway or go across the grass **(2)**. Either way, keep parallel to the River Trym moving away from the Portway. The lower reaches of this largely level grassy area almost certainly cover some of the remains of the Roman port and shipyards.

*The name Trym is from Old English trymme or trum meaning firm and strong*

On meeting an unfenced crossing roadway appropriately called Trym Cross Road, turn right and re-cross the Trym. On the other side turn left **(3)** along a path which soon enters scrubby woodland and brings you to Shirehampton Road.

Almost opposite is a pub, The Millhouse **(4)**. Our path goes immediate behind this pub.

On Shirehampton Road, turn right, cross the end of Sea Mills Lane and turn left over the pedestrian crossing. On the other side turn left and then right across the front of the pub and then immediately left down a footpath off Bell Barn Road right next to the pub. In wet weather the next section of path may be muddy.

On reaching the bottom of this slope down from the pub turn sharp right

After a short distance there is a joining path on the right. Take this right hand path which climbs up to Bell Barn Road **(5)**. Cross to the other side and turn left. Pass Cheyne Road on the right and Coombe Bridge Avenue off to the left. In a few yards turn right up a pathway **(6)** between the houses.

This is Ebenezer Lane named after Ebenezer House which once stood at the end of this lane in the 1850's.

Soon the right hand side of this lane opens up with a view across playing fields while on the left are mature back gardens.

Continuing along Ebenezer Lane it meets the end of a newer housing development called West Dene.

*If you could see past the houses at the far end of West Dene you would see the University's Coombe Dingle Sports Pavilion **(7)** burnt down by the Bristol Suffragettes in 1913 and later rebuilt. This act of arson gave rise to a revenge wrecking by male undergraduates of the WSPU shop and HQ in Queens Road just opposite the museum.*

Do not turn up West Dene but keep on in the same direction along Ebenezer Lane with the playing fields to your right.

On reaching the far end of Ebenezer Lane, keep going straight ahead crossing Cross Elms Lane keeping to the pavement on the left hand side of Parry's Lane **(8)**.

*It is not clear who Parry was. Some sources say the name comes from a nearby Paddy's Well; others say a Perry's Well, while yet others say it is from Old English Pirige meaning pear tree.*

Walk on and, when clear of the corner, cross Parry's Lane using the traffic island and continue in the same general direction. On your right should be a stone wall with a hedge behind.

Ignore a small access road to the houses behind this wall on your right. On the next bend to the right of Parry's Lane, just after the street name sign, turn right into a footpath **(9)** between the houses.

When this path bends to the right, do not enter the cul-de-sac of Parry's Grove, instead turn to the left, keeping on the same footpath until it meets Hollybush Lane. Here **(10)**, turn left go downhill to meet the crossing road called Sunnyside.

*Hollybush Lane, which we are not walking, apart from this little section, is one of a group of old "lost" lanes that come downhill from The Downs to farms, hamlets and villages now long since incorporated into the conurbation of Bristol. Hollybush Lane threads its way up past the University's halls of residence and its Botanic Garden to emerge on the northwest edge of the downs in Saville Road.*

However, now turn right into Sunnyside **(11)**. The houses here were built around 1906 for some of the senior staff of George's Brewery down by Bristol Bridge. Ahead is Druid Hill, here keep to the left hand side.

Before crossing the road, Druid Hill, have a look at Taggart's Fountain **(12)**. This is a drinking fountain erected in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee (50 years). It has an elaborate wooden surround and roof. The fountain was donated by Francis Taggart of Old Sneed House.

*You'll notice the variation of spelling Sneyd or Sneed; the word is Old English meaning a detached piece of land. Like Redcliffe or Redcliff, both are correct.*

Cross the main road, Druid Hill and turn left along the row of shop fronts. Keep going in same direction along the upward slope of Old Sneed Avenue **(13)**.

At the next junction, where two roads enter close together on the left, turn down the right-hand one called Old Sneed Park.

On the right there is a low thatched dwelling **(14)**. This was formerly the lower lodge house of Druid's Stoke, an 18<sup>th</sup> Century mansion further up on top of the hill to the right. This mansion and grounds, much changed and now surrounded by roads and housing is still there though now a BUPA care home.

Ignore Mariner's Drive, next to the lodge and continue down Old Sneed Park to turn right up Glenavon Park. Near the top of this rising road turn left down a side turning also called Glenavon Park. Just opposite the entrance to garages for Westonian Court, turn left down a low stone wall lined path signposted Old Sneed Park Nature Reserve **(15)**.

This pathway leads down to open grassland and a small lake. Don't take the path across the end of the lake but continue across the pasture towards the far right corner near the railway.

The rising woodland area beyond the lake and down to the railway are the "lost" gardens of Bishops Knoll **(16)**, now managed by the Woodland Trust, the area's delights are worth an outing in their own right.

Continue down and across the grassland area to join another path coming downhill from your right. Eventually, you will come to stone steps leading to The Portway **(17)**.

At this point, if you don't want to face the dangers of the Portway traffic, turn right and go up the step stone steps to Horseshoe Drive walking to the far end parallel with The Portway and the Avon.

At the end of this road, behind a hedge and fence are the exposed foundations of a Roman building **(18)**, believed to be workshops, which were excavated in 1934 having been discovered during the construction of The Portway (1919 to 1926).

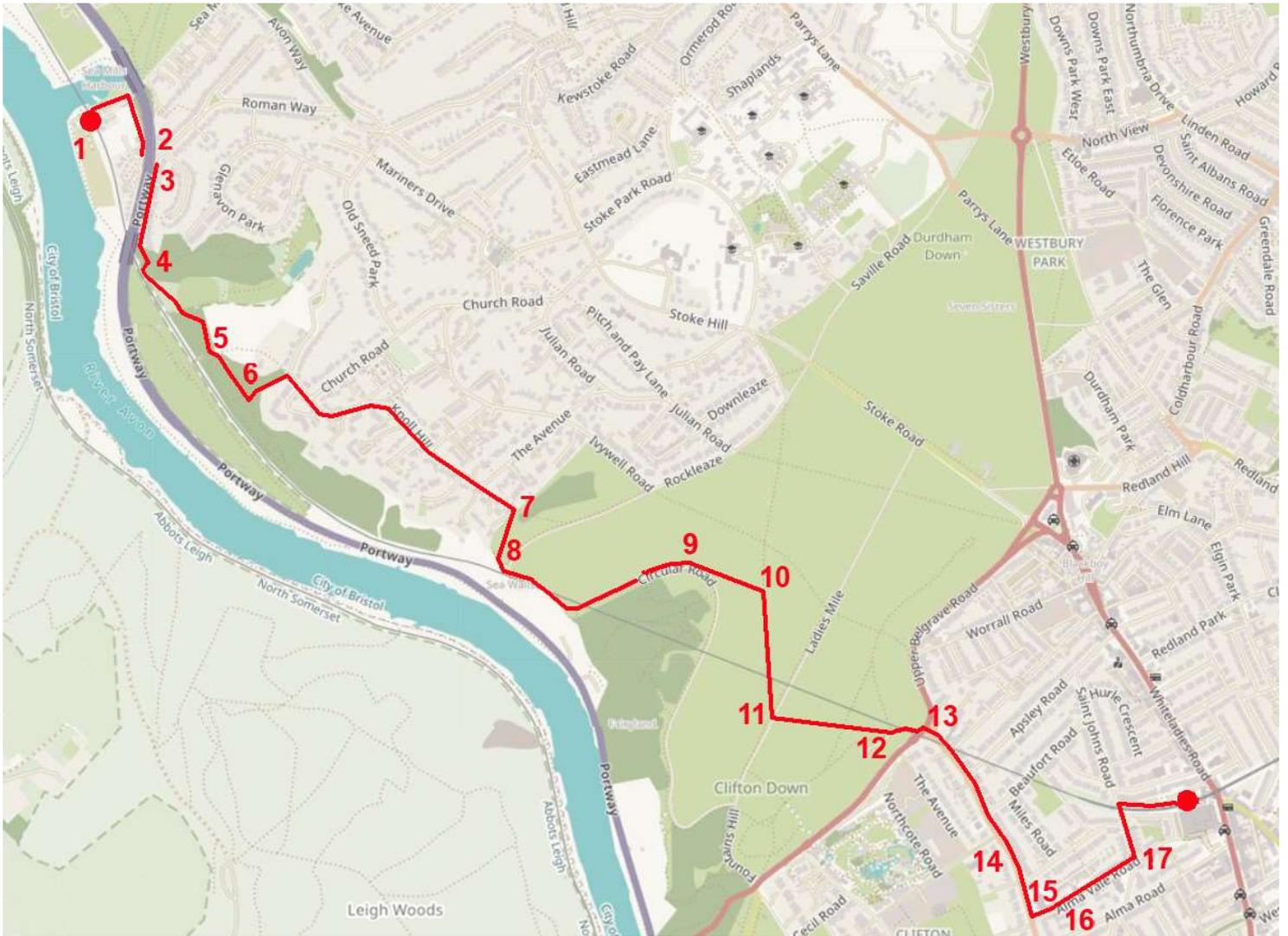
Walk to the pavement alongside the main road and use the pedestrian crossing over the Portway.

Turn right and go down the slope of Hadrian Close then left at the bottom along Sea Mills Lane to reach Sea Mills Station.

***Alternative ending:***

If, on first reaching The Portway after the nature reserve, you do feel brave enough to cross the Portway here, do so and then turn left over the railway bridge. At the far end of this bridge parapet turn right through a small gateway and down to the banks of the Avon **(19)**. This is another part of The Severn Way. Keep going with the allotments on your right. Join an access road and having passed two houses reach Sea Mills Lane again. Cross the railway tracks and turn right into the station.

## FoSBR07 Sea Mills to Clifton Down



Leave Sea Mills station **(1)** and turn right into Sea Mills Lane. Turn first right into Hadrian Close just before the Portway viaduct and walk up to the pedestrian crossing **(2)** at the top of this road. Cross the Portway passing the excavated foundations of a Roman building **(3)**. Turn right up Horseshoe Drive, parallel to the Portway.

At the far end go down the stone steps and, while on the edge of the Portway, turn sharply left and enter the path going down more stone steps turning to the right into the open meadow area of Old Sneed Park Nature Reserve **(4)**. Follow the paths to the right, keeping approximately parallel to the railway and cross the bottom end of the reserve. Go through a wooden gate or stile to enter a narrow trackway **(5)**.

Cross the track and go forward to explore the mysterious woodland gardens of Bishops Knoll **(6)**, then taking the footpath up the hill emerging at the same point on Bramble Lane. There is an information board here.

On reaching the top, by either variation in route, turn right along Bramble Lane. Ignore Church Lane and keep going ahead along Knoll Hill and then Seawalls Road, ignoring all side turnings to right and left.

When road markings indicate a swing to the left into The Avenue, do not turn left but go straight on along a narrowing Seawalls Road now signed as a No Through Road **(7)**.

At the far end there is a stone wall with a wrought iron gate on the left hand end, opening onto the Downs **(7)**. Go through this gate turning right towards the wall and fence of Sea Walls viewpoint **(8)**.

As you approach the viewpoint look to the right at the nearest turreted Victorian villa.

*This is the mock-Tudor Towerhurst, occupied in 1867 by a wealthy owner James Jones who used the tower to watch shipping passing along the Avon. His ghost is said to haunt the tower room.*

*In the wall next to the public toilets is one of Bristol's many public drinking fountains. This one was erected in 1883 as Sneyd Park was being developed. The installation of drinking fountains was one of the activities of the nationwide Temperance movement to provide non-alcoholic refreshment. The parapet of this wall is made of the distinctive triangular brass slag coping stones, another long-gone Bristol industry.*

*During WW2 this part of the downs right up to Stoke Road was requisitioned for the use of the military. The only relic of this occupation is the toilet block constructed for military use. A recent proposal to demolish it and rebuild as a cafe is still making its tortuous way through the planning system.*

*Below the viewpoint to the right is the Severn Beach railway line with the entrance to the downs tunnel. Before this mile-long tunnel was excavated under the downs in 1877, this railway operated as The Bristol Port and Pier Railway between Avonmouth and Hotwells. To the left is the Clifton Suspension Bridge.*

*Also below us is the A4 Portway, built between 1919 and 1926 and opened 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1926. At that time it was the single most expensive road in Britain costing £800,000 (approximately £42 million today).*

*On the opposite side of the gorge is the wooded valley called Paradise Bottom.*

*On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1957, Flying Officer John Crossley staged a one-man protest over the disbandment of the Royal (Auxiliary) Air force. He stole a de Havilland Vampire jet fighter from his squadron at Filton, flew it around Bristol and then under the Clifton Suspension Bridge. Pulling up into low cloud, he stalled his aircraft and crashed near the Portishead railway in Paradise Bottom, where he was killed.*

Having enjoyed the view, continue along the pavement, turning away from the gorge towards the head of The Gulley, the wooded area to the right.

*In the 1860s a tramway was constructed up the gully to the downs carrying tons of spoil from the Bristol Docks improvement scheme and the building of the River Frome culverts, uphill to fill the various old quarries on the downs.*

Where the road starts to curve to the right, cross over to a small group of trees and bushes. Amongst them is a Bristol Whitebeam **(9)** which has its own plaque.

*This particular tree was planted here in 1973 as part of the Bristol 600 celebrations, marking the 600th anniversary of Bristol becoming a City and County in its own right. The Bristol whitebeams only grow wild in the Avon Gorge area.*

Continue walking away from Sea Walls towards a long double line of trees **(10)** crossing ahead.

On reaching this line of trees, turn right and walk between the two rows until Ladies Mile **(11)** is reached.

Cross Ladies Mile and continue across this part of the downs, at approximately right angles to the road behind you. This area is studded with trees and clumps of bushes so the line of your walk will probably be not too straight.

Our aiming point is the small enclosed Parks Dept Downs Depot **(12)** on the edge of the downs between the top end of Pembroke Road and Bristol Zoo.

*You will notice on approaching the depot that the ground surface here is very uneven with a large depressed area. This is the lip of the particularly deep Pembroke Road stone quarry. Closed in the 1880s it remained in partial use until finally filled in 1925. So long did the infilling take that in 1921 it was suggested that the remaining hole be converted into an ornamental lake.*

When the depot comes into view, pass to the left of it and join the small service road that leads to it. Right next to this track is a small tower.

*This is the top of a Ventilator shaft for the Clifton Down tunnel (there is a second one in The Gully). When built in 1874, it was adorned with battlements and a turret in an attempt to make it blend in with the surroundings.*

*Pembroke Road was formerly known as Gallows Acre Lane. The top end of Pembroke Road **(13)** was for several centuries the scene of many executions until the opening of the Cumberland Road gaol in 1820. One of those executed here was the notorious dwarf highwayman Jenkins Protheroe; his ghost is said to haunt Pembroke Road.*

Continue down Pembroke Road, ignoring side turnings, until you reach the first turning on the right.

This is Guthrie Road, named after Canon John Guthrie a popular benefactor of Clifton College. This road leads to both Clifton College and Bristol Zoo.

Do not go along Guthrie Road but note the tall stone tower **(14)**, formerly part of the Guthrie Road Emmanuel Church. The body of this church has been rebuilt as Brunelcare sheltered housing but the tower remains.

*It was in this church on the afternoon of Christmas Eve December 24<sup>th</sup> 1914, that 24-year old Agatha Mary Clarissa Miller married 25-year old Captain Archibald Christie of the Royal Flying Corps. The marriage lasted some eight years but Agatha went on to considerably longer fame as a writer.*

Keep going down Pembroke Road until you reach All Saints Church **(15)**, on the left, with distinctive needle spire.

*The original church was built between 1868 and 1872. On 2 December 1940, an incendiary bomb set fire to the building, destroying the chancel and nave of the church. It was rebuilt in the 1960s and the new nave and altar were consecrated on 1 July 1967.*

Next to the church, turn left into Alma Vale Road.

*On the right hand side, just opposite the church hall, is stone and redbrick building **(16)** with ornate stonework over the central doorway still bearing the name of its original occupant Edgar Edwards, a cabinet maker and undertaker. This building has achieved minor cult status being the film location as a vampire's HQ in the BBC's first series of 'Being Human'.*

Continue along Alma Vale Road passing shops, restaurants and the pub/theatre which is the Alma Tavern.

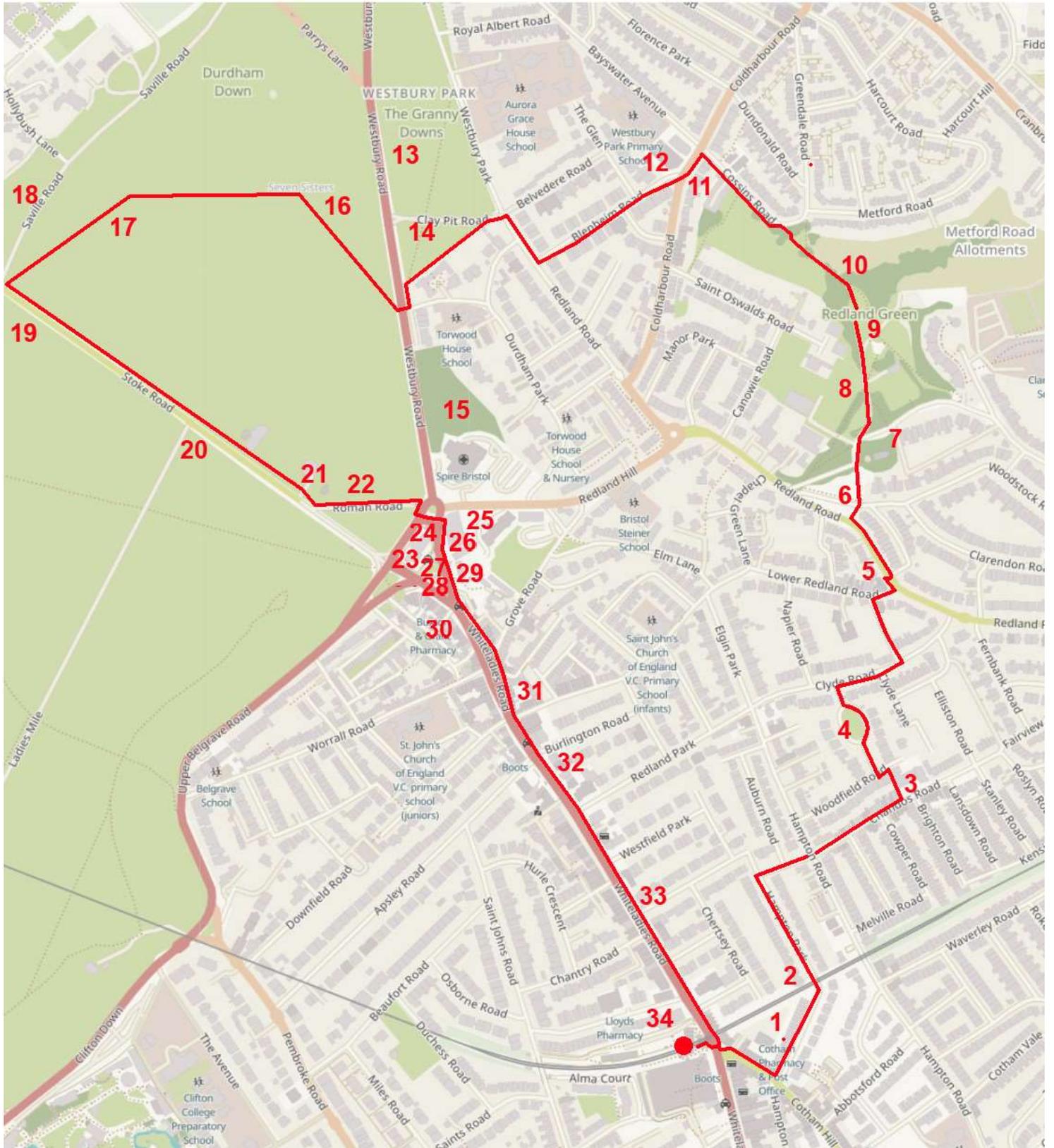
On reaching tree-lined St Johns Road **(17)**, turn left up the gentle rise until you cross the bridge over the Severn Beach line.

Here, on your left, is the entrance to the Downs Tunnel, while on the right is Clifton Down Station

Cross the bridge and turn right, down the old station yard.

To the right of the old station buildings (now converted into more modern use) is a gateway to the station platform.

## FoSBR08 Clifton Down Circular



From Clifton Down station cross Whiteladies Road by the pedestrian crossing, turn right up Cotham Hill then left into Hampton Park

*All the houses on the left hand side of this road (numbers 1 to 35) are, with their frontages, railings and gates, Grade II Listed [1]*

Hampton Park bends to the left and crosses the Severn Beach Railway by road bridge

*Here in a cutting with a double track for passing trains. [2]*

Take the next left down to the pedestrian crossing on Hampton Road. Cross here and keep going in same general direction as before along Chandos Road opposite Hampton Park.

Walk along Chandos Road passing several shops, many with original shop-fronts until you come to the large church (formerly St Saviours) on the left converted in housing in 2003. Turn left into an alleyway between the last shop (No.23) and the church.

*Just at the start of this pathway is a war memorial (3). Originally located in the church grounds next door it commemorates the deaths of 48 local servicemen. The date of 1914 to 1920 is unusual but not rare. Such monuments can present end dates of 1918, 1919, 1920 or even in a few cases 1921. The conflict we call World War I did not end with the armistice on the Western Front with Germany. Fighting continued for two more years in Russia between allied forces and the Bolsheviks. This memorial was erected in 1920.*

Walk along the alleyway to emerge via an iron gate into Woodfield Road. A quick left and right brings you into Clyde Park (4) with its own pleasant though small oval residents' park, a rarity in this part of Bristol. Continue and turn right in Clyde Road, turn left into Woolcot Street (oddly, the only "street" in Redland) turn to the right and stop on the corner, opposite the convenience store.

*The road in front of you is Redland Road and, a little surprisingly, started life as a Roman road. This was the Via Julia (though some academics would argue Strata rather than Via) which, from the second century ran from Portus Abonea (present day Sea Mills) to Aqua Sulis (Bath). If you look up to roofline of the shop, opposite, you can still make out (though badly eroded) at least the second half of the Roman name in tile work (5). Not original, of course but something of a Victorian tribute.*

Cross Redland Road and go uphill along Harrington Park. At the top of this rise bear left into the open space of Redland Green. Take the footpath to the right towards the church

*Note the largish boulder (6) half buried in the grass to the left near the start of this path. The stone has certainly been there for more than 150 years. It appears to be type of limestone not found locally and has a number of interesting hollows on its top surface. Some reckon it to be a Roman milestone or boundary marker or even a road-side shrine.*

Walk along this path until you reach the church

*Redland Parish Church (7) is an elegant though small building with cupola tower built 1742 as private chapel for Redland Court, further back down Redland Road which was for many years Redland Girls' School.*

At the gates of the church, do not follow the churchyard wall and Redland Green Road but cross over the roadway veering to the left along a tarmac road past the sign welcoming you to Redland Green. Do not go down the other roadway to the left which only leads to the well-known facilities of Redland Green Tennis club (8)

Keeping to the roadway, pass between the high hedge of the tennis courts on your left and the immaculate bowling green on your right and keep straight on.

Ignore all turnings to the right, though over to the right beyond the children's playground the modern curved residential building is the former site of the Bishop of Bristol's Palace (9).

*The bishop's palace built in 1898 was destroyed on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1940 by Luftwaffe incendiary bombs.*

Keep onwards along the now descending path. This is Redland Green Park (10) and covers approximately 10 acres. Passing the allotments to the right of the path and the remains of a stone wall on the left, the path now rises up the slope ahead. Ignore all paths to the right, including the rising steps and continue uphill till reaching more stone steps, climb them to reach Cossins Road. Turn left, in the same general direction, towards Coldharbour Road. Just before the junction with the main road note the pillar box on the left hand side (11). This is a King Edward VII type B pillar box installed in 1902

Turn left on Coldharbour Road then cross over to enter Blenheim Road to the left of St Alban's Church. The church's large stained-glass window is a WW1 memorial window installed 1919.

*In Blenheim Road, the first building on the right is Redland Knoll (12), one of two large villas built in the early 1880's. The other, Redland Lodge, was destroyed in WW2 bombing. In 1881, Redland Knoll was the home of Henry Overton Wills of tobacco production fame.*

Walk to the end of Blenheim Road and turn right along Redland Road. On reaching the edge of the Downs, turn left, crossing Redland Road into the short Clay Pit Road. A footpath on the left, which veers left away from Clay Pit Road, will bring you to a pedestrian crossing on the main road, Westbury Road.

*The elongated triangle of grass and trees between Redland Road and Westbury Road is very uneven (13): the origin of these variations is indicated by the name of the Clay Pit Road. In recent times, the establishing of a number of care and retirement homes here has given rise to the local name of Granny Downs (14).*

When you have successfully crossed Westbury Road, take a moment to look towards Blackboy Hill. On the left of this busy road, behind a low stone wall, is a large old quarry known as The Glen **(15)**.

*Between here and Bristol Zoo there were five major quarries in a line cut into this edge of the downs all working until the 1870's. Three have been completely filled in and one partially filled. This one here, originally called Redland House Quarry was the biggest and closed in 1876.*

*Pre WW2 it contained a large roller-skating rink which was destroyed in the Blitz. The quarry floor was used as a public recreation site after 1946 equipped with swings and roundabouts.*

*The dance hall was rebuilt post-war as the Locarno which became The Glen and was renowned for its classy plastic palm trees.*

*In the early 70's it was renamed Boobs, which, in the late 70's became Tiffany's, known for the Thursday Night Rule: girls get in free. A little surprisingly, Bob Marley and the Wailers played here May 1973.*

*Tiffany's closed in 1983; the site is now occupied by a BUPA hospital - The Spire.*

After crossing Westbury Road and considered the nightlife of Bristol, turn right and walk parallel to Westbury Road

*The large level open space to your left is Durdham Down now mainly used for sports activities but before WWI it saw one of the world's first air displays. On Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 1910, Sir George White of the Bristol and Colonial Aircraft Company held a flying display here which attracted a crowd of 30,000 spectators. On that day, the world's first paying air passenger Mrs Farnell Thurston (his niece) was flown from here in a Bristol Boxkite. Newspapers reported that she lost her hat during the flight.*

Veer slightly left towards a small clump of tall trees. This group of Scots Pines is known as The Seven Sisters **(16)**.

*In 1871 a local doctor planted a ring of six trees around a seventh tree in the middle to celebrate his seven daughters.*

*The daughters thrived but the trees were less fortunate. The central tree expired in 1900; another fell in a storm of 1990, and two more succumbed to honey fungus. Seven new trees have been planted a few yards further on.*

Standing to the left of the Seven Sisters, with your back to Westbury Road, there is a long curving line of six or seven well spaced mature beech trees **(17)**.

*These trees were planted in 1860 as part of the boundary to Gloucestershire Cricket Club's ground then sited here. The famous cricketer WG Grace played here regularly till the club moved to its present-day site in Horfield. The Gloucestershire County Cricket Club played its initial first-class match, against Surrey, on Durdham Down in June 1870.*

Walk along this row of trees until you reach the traffic lights where Saville Road meets Stoke Road. To the right is a war memorial **(18)**.

*This memorial was dedicated on 15 May 1920. It is a little unusual in that it has two later additions: one for a Palestine casualty of 1947 and one for Korea in 1951.*

*There are estimated to be more than 100,000 war memorials in the UK. There are 10,500 parishes and all but 52 have war memorials. Those 52 are known as "Thankful Villages" where all the men returned. Of those fifty-two, fourteen are "Double Thankful" where all returned from WW2 as well.*

Cross Stoke Road at the traffic lights and walk out to the left onto this part of the downs, keeping equidistant from the two roads (Stoke Road and Downleaze). After about 50 yards you will again meet the Roman road, Via Julia **(19)**.

*Look across the grass towards the Water Tower. You will see a long, raised strip with hollows along either side. This is a remnant of the original Via Julia. The raised strip is the roadway, the hollows are drainage ditches.*

*The Romans were not the last army to pass through here. In June 1944 this part of the downs all the way down to Sea Walls played host to a large part of the American 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. Hundreds of tanks were parked here. Many men slept here in tents, others were locally billeted eight to a house. At the end of June, they all departed for newly captured Cherbourg, sailing from Avonmouth.*

Walk along the line of the Roman road and continue in the same direction till meeting Ladies Mile

Ladies mile was originally a safe riding track much used by society ladies frequenting Hotwells Spa.

Just beyond Ladies mile, just opposite the cafe and well hidden under the turf is Durdham Down Bone Cave **(20)**.

*Discovered by quarrymen in 1842, workmen found an opening into a ninety foot deep cavern containing a large quantity of animal bones. The bones belonged to hyenas, bears, rhinoceros, hippopotami, wild bulls, deer, elephants, and animals of a later date. It was concluded that the cave had been the retreat of hyenas, which had carried in portions of their prey.*

*Most of the material was acquired by Bristol Museum, while some was lost in the Blitz of 1940, there is a significant collection present there today including a scale model of the cave.*

Cross Stoke Road near the Water Tower **(21)** and turn right.

*The original ground-level reservoir was built by the Bristol Waterworks Company in 1850. Clean water was pumped from a spring at Barrow Gurney. The water tower was added in 1954 to improve pressure.*

To the right of the water tower are public toilets. The Ladies is nearest the road and has a blue plaque **(22)** dedicated to former attendant Victoria Hughes.

Walk down the short one-way road called Roman Road to the Westbury Road roundabout. The long low building with strikingly patterned roof tiles to the right of the pedestrian crossing was originally St John's Parochial School **(23)** built in 1851. Closed and sold in 2012, it is now residential apartments.

As you cross the pedestrian crossing facing you is a large green painted wooden shelter **(24)**.

*This shelter was paid for by public subscription being erected to provide shelter for the recovering wounded soldiers during WW1. These wounded soldiers came from Queen Victoria House **(25)**, the large redbrick building a few yards away on the right hand side of Redland Hill. Queen Victoria House was completed in 1885 as a private boys' school, later becoming a maternity hospital opened as such by Queen Victoria in 1899 during her Jubilee visit to Bristol. During WW1 it was requisitioned for the treatment of wounded soldiers, so many of whom would walk around here that this area became known as 'Convalescents' Corner'. Wounded military personnel wore a blue military style uniform and cap, white shirt and red tie. More recently, Victoria House reverted to a maternity hospital then became offices, and much more recently was converted to residential apartments for the over 60s and called The Vincent.*

Cross the second pedestrian crossing and turn right in front of the modern AXA-PPP Healthcare building. Look through the foyer windows of this building to see the statues of Gromit and Shaun the Sheep **(26)**.

The walk from this point goes straight down the left hand side of Blackboy Hill and Whiteladies Road until Clifton Down station.

**Points of interest along this road, follow:**

**Gents Toilet (27)** on the right just below the old school, one of only three survivors in Bristol. It is a dark green painted prefabricated cast iron building made in Glasgow and installed in the 1880's it was moved a few yards to its present location in 1903 when the fountain and clock tower was installed.

**Memorial Fountain and Clock Tower (28)** erected in 1903 in memory of the Reverend Urija Rees Thomas (1862-1901). He was the first minister appointed to Redland Park Chapel – a United Reform Church. Aged 22 when appointed he organised missions, clubs, social activities as well as being a civic and political campaigner. He died aged 39.

**Fossil Fern leaf (29)** built into the low wall of the Asda filling station, little is known about this particular fossil except that it probably came from one of the nearby quarries in the 1840's and is around 250 million years old.

**Blackboy Hill (30)** Many people believe that the name Blackboy Hill is related in some way to the slave trade. The truth is that they are named from public houses. Until 1874 the Blackboy Inn stood near the top of the hill between the division into two roads. The inn sign carried a portrait of Charles I, who was commonly known as "the blackboy" because of his black hair and dark complexion.

Similarly, the name of Whiteladies Road also comes from the White Ladies Inn, depicting a Carmelite Nun, shown on maps in 1746 and 1804 to be at Whiteladies Gate, near the present site of Clifton Down station.

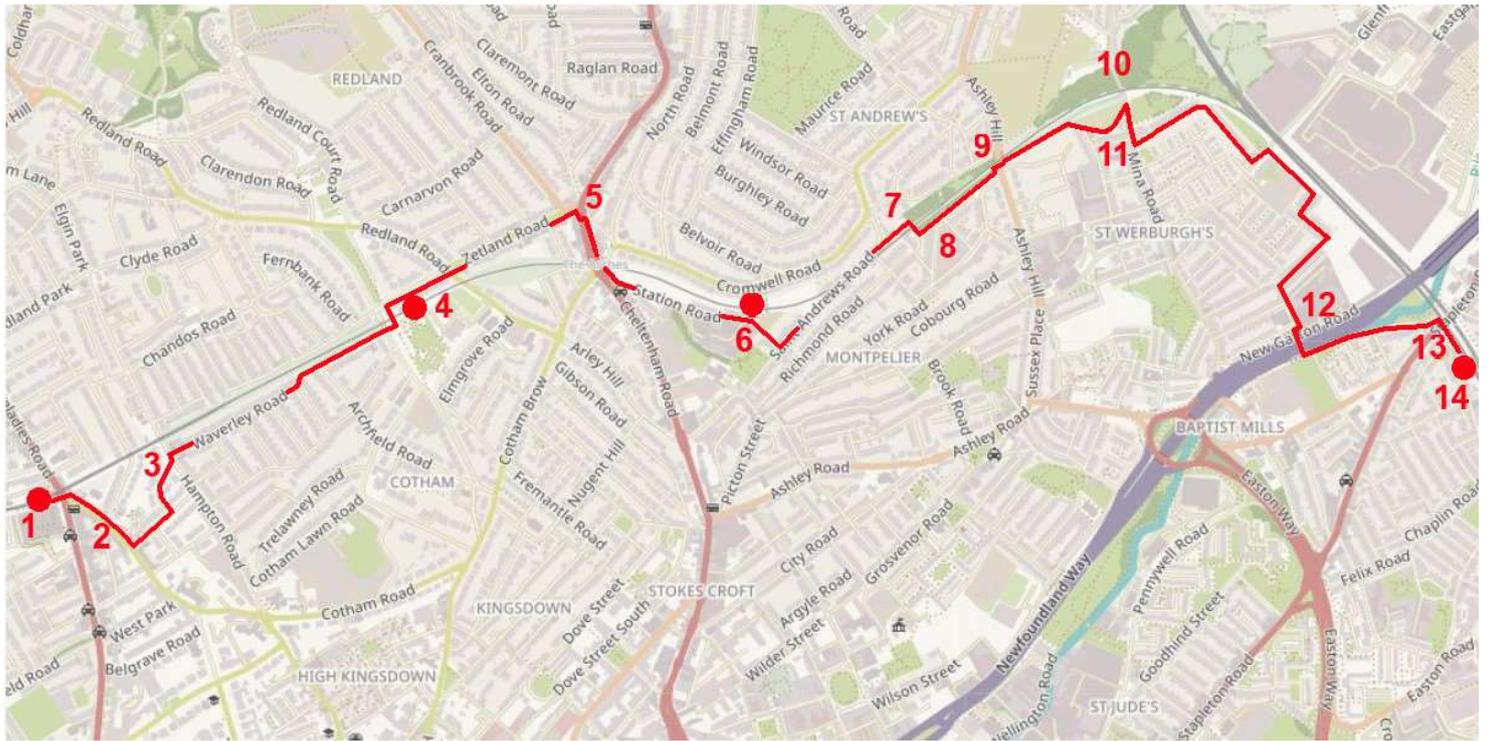
Parish boundary marker **(31)** Pass The Jersey Lilly bar on the left and at head height between Ocean Estate Agents and Mr Doner is a cutaway square of woodwork exposing an 1848 Westbury on Trym parish boundary stone

After passing Burlington Road with its attractive frontages on the left, the road we are walking becomes Whiteladies Road. On the wall of No.155 just behind the large bus shelter is a blue plaque commemorating author Frank Norman. Next door at 157 with the blue painted frontage used to be Colley's Supper Rooms **(32)**. An individual establishment where everyone had to be seated on communal tables by a certain time and there was no menu to choose from, but each main course and pudding would be presented to customers before making their choice. It closed mid to late 1980s.

Further along on the corner of Ashgrove road is a stone structure **(33)** looking like a heavyweight stone gazebo. It is in fact the bell chamber from base of steeple of Trinity Wesleyan Church which stood on this corner from 1866- to the late 1980s Redland Library **(34)** opened 1885 is still under threat of closure. The building is reportedly in poor condition internally and externally while its conservation status as a listed building makes changes and improvements difficult and expensive.

Finally, we cross Whiteladies Road on the pedestrian crossing and re-enter Clifton Down Station.

## FoSBR09 Clifton Down to Stapleton Road



From the platform of Clifton Down Station **(1)** follow the exit route to emerge onto Whiteladies Road. Use the pedestrian crossing to get to the wide corner pavement opposite. Turn right and branch left up Cotham Road **(2)**. Take the second left, Abbotsford Road then left again into Warwick Road **(3)**. At the far end of Warwick Road, use the pedestrian crossing over Hampton Road. A quick left and right into Waverley Road brings you walking parallel to the Severn Beach line again. In a gentle left and right the road becomes Meridian Way with the railway now visible in a cutting on the left hand side.

On reaching Redland Grove, cross it and the grass verge opposite to reach a path rejoicing in the name Lover's Walk and here turn left.

*Lovers Walk and the avenue of Lime trees is all that remains of an 19<sup>th</sup> Century approach to Redland Court. The avenue ran from the top of the hill behind you to the gates of the court.*

*The Court, now visible ahead, was rebuilt in the 1730's on the site of an older manor house. The surrounding estate was sold for housing in 1865. The Clifton Extension Railway line arrived in 1874 being opened to passenger traffic in 1885, Redland had no station despite its expanding population. Following the petitions of 1885, 1887 and 1892, Redland station **(4)** was built in 1897.*

Cross the railway by the bridge with cast-iron balustrades and turn right down South Road. Cross Redland Road and continue straight ahead down Zetland Road.

*South Street and Redland Road are both wider than the average road in Redland as this was the double-track tram route from Gloucester Road to Durdham Down.*

Continue down Zetland Road to the traffic light junction **(5)** with Gloucester Road, cross at the traffic lights and turn right to go under The Arches. Then cross the end of North Road (leading to Cromwell Road) and veer left up Station Road towards Montpelier Station **(6)**. Continue to St Andrews Road where you then turn left.

*Incidentally, Cromwell Road gets its name from Oliver Cromwell who from the top of this hill oversaw the recapture of the Royalist city during the second siege of Bristol in 1645.*

Keep going up St Andrews Road but do not take the very steep uphill road where it swings off to the left. Instead go straight on along what appears to be a dead end. The Severn Beach line is, in fact in a tunnel under your feet at this stage for a little more than the whole length of this road.

As you approach the end of this road note the large residential building on the right. This was converted to flats in the 1980s, having been built in Victorian times as a brew house **(7)**.

To the right at the end is an iron gate and footpath off to the right. Take this path which is poised over the tunnel mouth and follow it along the top edge of the railway cutting. Pass an iron footbridge over the cutting – built for pedestrian access to Fairfield School **(8)** on your right – and continue down to Ashley Hill.

On reaching Ashley Hill note that on the opposite side there are footpaths each side of the railway road bridge. These two alternative paths will meet again in St Werburghs at the bottom of the hill.

Cross Ashley Hill and enter the footpath to the right of the railway. Descend the hill between the railway and Briavels Grove. At the bottom of the hill, pass a free-flowing culvert that emerges from the embankment. This is one of the rare visible sections of Horfield Brook which used to feed the large watercress beds on the other side of the embankment, now occupied by City Farm. Note also the remains of street gas lamps, still working in the early 1980's, possibly the last in Bristol.

On reaching Mina Road **(11)** turn right away from the road tunnel. The path to the left of St Werburgh's church is known as Cutthroat Lane in memory of Ada James murdered here in January 1913.

St Werburgh's church originally stood in Corn Street. It closed in 1877, was demolished, and the stones numbered before being transported to this site in Mina Road. The Corn Street site became a branch of Lloyds Bank. The church was de-consecrated in 1988 and converted into Bristol's first indoor climbing centre.

Pass the front of the church/climbing centre and immediately turn left into St Werburgh's Road and follow it round until it emerges into Glenfrome Road opposite St Werburgh's Park Nursery School.

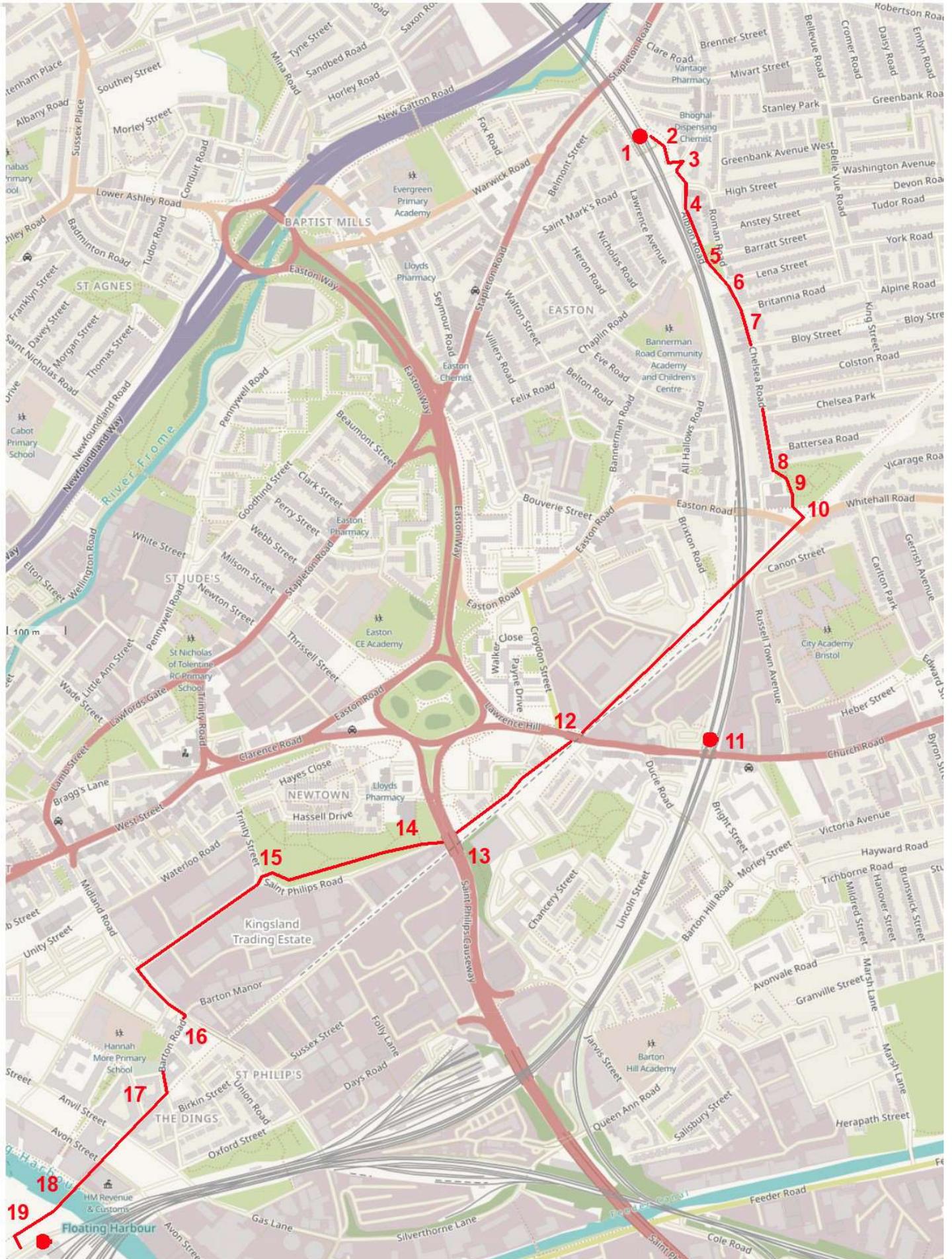
Cross Glenfrome Road and turn left. Between the school fence and the railway, turn right along a paved footpath to Norman Road: do not go under the bridge.

Turn right and at the far end of Norman Road turn left into Warminster Road. Where this road bends sharply right it becomes Saxon Road. At the end of Saxon Road turn left into Merstham Road. Ahead you will see and hear the M32 and the footbridge over it **(12)**.

Cross the footbridge then head left to where the path joins Fox Road keep going straight ahead parallel to the motorway. The large white building on the other side of the road was formerly a late C18 public house The Old Fox which narrowly escaped demolition when the M32 was built.

Continue to the end of Fox Road, passing through the houses to Stapleton Road. Just opposite is a stone stairway up to Stapleton Road Station. Next to the bottom of these steps is a tall turreted tower **(13)** with a bricked-up doorway at street level. Mystery surrounds the date of origin and its purpose, but it is classified as a building of historic importance and is graded Class II. One theory is that it was a gazebo, the only one surviving of four, part of the local Manor House, called Queen Anne Manor House. Cross the road climb the steps to reach Stapleton Road station **(14)**.

# FoSBR10 Stapleton Road to Temple Meads



From the platform of Stapleton Road station **(1)**, leave the station on the east side, using the footbridge if necessary. Follow the path to the right away from Stapleton Road and emerge onto St Marks Road **(2)** next to The Sugarloaf pub. Turn right along St Marks Road away from the pub and at the junction with High Street, turn left. On the opposite side of the road, at this junction you will see a blue sign, pointing left, to the Bristol & Bath Railway Path: this is where we are heading.

*On this same corner, pause to look up at the architecture of the tower St Mark's church **(3)**, now sheltered housing, with the many grotesques lurking on the tower roof. These will be a familiar sight to train travellers.*

With your back to St Marks church, cross the High Street and enter Albion Road **(4)** with the high stone embankment of the railway on your right hand side.

Proceed along this road until you see the small Albion Green Amenity Area **(5)** on the left. Here, ignore the right hand turning, Bannerman Road, which goes off to the right under the railway through the newly painted Frogmarsh Bridge and continue on in the same direction as before. Albion Road now bends a little to the left. At the next junction bear right into Chelsea Road **(6)**.

Proceed along Chelsea Road keeping straight on ignoring Britannia Road, Bloy Street, Colston Road, Chelsea Park and Battersea Road all, on the left hand side of Chelsea Road.

*Bloy derives from Old English field name, blaw – meaning cheerless or windswept.*

Just opposite Bloy Street you will pass a Sikh Temple **(7)**.

Passing the Old Coop Business Centre on your left you begin to see a large red-brick building in front of you near the far end of Chelsea Road. As you get nearer you will see that this is the Bristol Central Mosque **(8)**, behind which is the Easton Community Centre.

Do not follow the road past the mosque but turn left into Owen Square Park **(9)**. At the entrance to this park is another blue sign pointing to the Bristol & Bath Railway Path. Skirt round to the left of the buildings, go up a short slope and join the Bristol & Bath Railway Path **(10)**.

Turn right on the Bristol & Bath Railway Path. Do beware of cyclists here – this is a popular cycling route. You should now be heading towards the city,

*The cycle path started life as the track bed of the Bristol & Gloucester Railway in 1844 but was dogged by financial and Broad-gauge vs Standard Gauge engineering problems. It became part of Midland Railways using the GWR Temple Meads station as its terminus. Temple Meads was fairly limited in size until enlargement in 1878, and was already handling the Bristol and Exeter Railway traffic in addition to its London route.*

*In 1858 the Midland Railway established its own goods facilities at St Philips, and on 2 May 1870 a single platform passenger station was opened there, dealing chiefly with Bath trains. Passenger services here ended 1953 and the former Midland Railway line closed on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1967.*

*Between 1979 and 1986, the line was converted into the present-day Railway Path.*

At the bridge over the railway, if you can, look over the parapet on the left for a glimpse of Lawrence Hill Station **(11)**. Having crossed the bridge over the mainline railway, again on your left is a much overgrown branch line that goes nowhere, all that survives from the Midland Railway days.

After the path goes under the A420 Lawrence Hill bridge **(12)**, it becomes a little narrower and less of a straight line, but still goes in the same general direction.

Ahead is the imposing bridge of the St Philips Causeway **(13)**, site of the Barrow Lane road viaduct that once carried a long and narrow roadway across the extensive Midland Railways goods yard.

Pass under the causeway and enter the green area of Newtown Park **(14)**. Here the path divides, but we bear to the left and the Trinity Road entrance. (The right turn takes you to Old Market),

At the Trinity Road entrance **(15)** continue straight ahead to Midland Road (which marks the other end of the goods yard, hence the name), and here turn left. A short way along Midland Road it starts to rise in another old railway bridge. This bridge is another remnant of the Midland Railway which serviced a small docks facility on the River Avon.

Don't go over this bridge but just before it you should turn right down Barton Road **(16)**.

Pass the Barley Mow pub on the left and the Old Jewish Burial Ground (behind the high stone wall and gate) on the right.

Ignore the turning into Les Brown Court on the right but take the next right hand turning called Chimney Steps **(17)**. Thus we regain the former Midland line down to the Avon.

*On the left of Chimney Step was the original site of the huge Avonside Engine Works (1837-1905) with its own extensive network of railway lines and turntables for the production of locomotives.*

Continue along Chimney Steps until you reach the crossing Anvil Street where residential housing gives way to office buildings.

Keep straight on in the same direction as before, crossing Avon Street to reach the pedestrian/cycle bridge **(18)** over the river Avon. Cross this bridge, also known as "the cheese grater" because of its structure, and go through a small car park to the rear of Temple Meads station **(19)**.

Here, on your right are various refreshment outlets and, on your left Brunel's original Bristol terminus. Other than trains, bus services are available in the station approach or a little further on in Temple Gate.