

Greater Avon Valley Way

INTRODUCTION

This is a new 48 mile walk route from Bradford-on-Avon to Portishead via Bath and Bristol. It is designed to be fully supported by public transport, with stations at Bradford-on-Avon, Avoncliff, Freshford, Bath, Keynsham and Bristol and, one day, Portishead. For now the Bristol to Portishead section is easily accessible from bus services. The walk explores the hills on both sides of the Avon Valley as it leads from Bradford-on-Avon to Bath. The Cotswold Way is then followed for a while before we head to Keynsham via Bitton. A stretch by and above the river takes us to Troopers Hill before we wend our way to Temple Meads. The path leads out of Bristol to reach Leigh Woods and the undulating countryside of the Failand area. Eventually we reach the coast for the final couple of miles to Portishead. The route gives local walkers to walk a long distance path without having to arrange accommodation. It can also be walked in shorter sections or some may prefer to design their own circular routes to incorporate sections of the Way. No doubt there will be a very few brave souls who walk the whole route in one day! There is plenty to enjoy on the way and most will enjoy a more leisurely approach. There is pleasing variety of scenery and a number of points of interest many of which are highlighted in the route description. Whichever way you decide to walk this route we hope that you will enjoy it.

Day 1 - Bradford-on-Avon to Bath 16 miles (Explorer maps 156 and 155)

An undulating route on both sides of the Avon, including the crossing of two aqueducts, a wooded climb to a folly, and the hills around Bath.

The walk may be shortened at Limpley Stoke from where a short walk south leads to Freshford station or at Bathford where you can catch a bus to Bath. There are buses from Winsley and Limpley Stoke to Bath and Bradford-on-Avon as well as a service from Bathampton to Bath.

From Bradford-on-Avon station, turn right to leave the car park and then turn right again. When you reach a park on your right follow the path that runs diagonally through it to reach a narrow road on to which you turn right. Take the next path on your left to follow the signs for the tithe barn which is worth a visit. A path the far side of the barn leads up to the towpath of the Kennet and Avon Canal where you turn

right.

The stone barn was built in the 14th century and has a timber cruck roof.

Follow the towpath all the way to Avoncliff passing numerous moored canal boats. It then swings right to cross the aqueduct.

The aqueduct was built between 1797 and 1801 and crosses the Avon and the railway line.

The canal then swings left and to your right steps descend to the platforms of Avoncliff station. Ahead of you across a small car park is a footpath junction. Take the left-hand option which you follow on its undulating course just above the canal. It emerges into a large field which you cross diagonally to the left to steps and a stile.

Turn left on to an enclosed track and after 60 yards take the stile on the right to follow a path which climbs the left-hand side of a field. The path then follows the same line but becomes more confined and eventually you will reach a stepped section. At the top of the steps go straight ahead, crossing a driveway and a minor road, to follow another enclosed path. At the next junction turn right on to another enclosed path to reach a minor road. Turn left and follow it round two bends and past the bowling club to reach the main part of the attractive village of Winsley.

Go straight ahead to pass the pub on your right and then turn left at the sign for St Michael's church. Follow the narrow and winding road to reach the junction with a wider road. Turn right and after 200 yards cross the road to briefly enter the road leading to Quarry Lane before taking a footpath to your right which follows the left-hand side of a large field. It then continues through a parking area before continuing on the left of the next field. Look out for Murhill Bank nature reserve on your left. There is a seat from which you can look out at the lovely views across the valley.

Return to the original field path which follows the left-hand edge. Look out for a kissing gate on your left to reach a narrow woodland path which is followed down to a minor road. Turn right to reach the B3108. Cross this busy road to use the pavement and turn left to descend to the bridges over the Kennet and Avon Canal and the Avon. Walk under a railway bridge and turn left into Limpley Stoke.

Turn right by the pub and climb the hill. The road splits into two; follow the one on the right with no entry signs to reach the entrance to a small park which you enter by a footpath sign. There are seats from which another fine view can be admired. Continue to the end of the park and turn right. There is another short climb followed by a turn to the left. After another 25 yards turn right (just past Manhattan!) to climb to the A36.

Cross this very busy road with great care and continue the ascent on the footpath directly opposite. This reaches a lane where you turn right. Follow the road for about a quarter of a mile before taking the turning on the right (Old Track). This is initially metalled but soon becomes a sunken path which descends to reach another minor road.

Turn right for 25 yards and turn left on to the path as it descends to cross two bridges before joining a road which climbs to the middle of Monkton Combe. At the T-junction you turn right to continue the walk but please note that there is a pub on your left and the church a short distance after that. The churchyard is a very pleasant place for a stop.

Before leaving the village it's worth mentioning that Monkton Combe station was used as a location in the 1953 film *The Titfield Thunderbolt*.

Returning to the original route, look out for a sign on your right denoting cycle path 24. This descends past school buildings before turning left to pass a cricket ground with a thatched pavilion and then to go under the A36. A further left-hand bend is followed to reach the splendour of Dundas Aqueduct. The Canal Centre and its café are above this last junction.

As you approach, if you think the aqueduct looks familiar you will be not surprised to hear that it was built at the same time and had the same designer as the one we crossed at Avoncliff. The stretch of water joining the Kennet & Avon here is the Somerset Coal Canal.

At the aqueduct the path now reaches the Kennet and Avon Canal which is crossed by a footbridge just past a mooring area. Return on the opposite bank in the same direction to cross the aqueduct with the canal on your right. Immediately you leave the aqueduct take the footpath on your left which descends to the banks of the Avon. Follow the riverside path north-eastwards to eventually reach Sheephouse Farm in about a mile and a quarter after a short climb. The path goes through the farmyard to meet a narrow road.

Turn left and follow this road for about 400 yards. Turn right on to the footpath opposite a group of houses. The path climbs a large field before entering woodland and continues its ascent in the same direction following a wall on the left. It then crosses a stone stile and passes under the A363. Immediately after this point, turn left to reach the edge of this main road. Turn right and follow the verge of this very busy road for about 200 yards to reach a signposted footpath on the same side of the road.

This path climbs steadily through woodland to enter a nature reserve. Keep following

the main path ahead for about a mile from the road until you reach a junction where a footpath goes off to the right and another descends half-left. Ignore both these and continue straight ahead with a wall on your right. You will soon reach Brown's Folly.

The folly was built in 1845 to provide employment during an agricultural recession.

A path to the left of the folly descends steeply before swinging right across open land at a gentler gradient. Turn sharp left at the next junction to join a broad track for about 200 yards to turn sharply right at a waymarked junction to resume your descent. This new path leads to a stile at the edge of the woodland from where you can see Bathford Church, our next objective.

Follow the field path diagonally left to reach a stile on the edge of Bathford. Turn left down a road which is part of a housing development. Turn right at the bottom and then immediately left on to a footpath which follows the boundary of the churchyard to reach a lych-gate on your left.

Turn right and left and follow the road (Ostlings Lane) down a hill through the village until you meet a wider road in front of you. There is a large pub on your right.

Cross the road and turn left to follow the pavement above a rugby ground to your right. You then cross By Brook and you will see a bridge in front of you which carries the main railway line.

Re-cross the road and take the footpath immediately before the bridge. It climbs to run parallel with the railway line for a short distance before it descends to a field.

The field is potentially the site of a new park-and-ride. It is to be hoped that this scheme will not proceed as it will mar the views from the surrounding hills to say nothing of affecting the route of this walk.

Follow the path diagonally right across this large water meadow to meet another railway line, the link between Bath and Bradford-on-Avon. Cross the line carefully and then follow the road ahead until you reach a grassy area on your left which you cross to briefly join the towpath of the Kennet & Avon Canal. There are usually lots of barges moored here and there are seats for those seeking a stop.

There is an attractive church to your right and just past the next bridge there is a pub. In any event you need to cross the bridge and to swing right on the road and continue gradually uphill for about 300 yards. Turn left onto Down Road, signposted for Warminster, and continue up to its junction with the A36 which you cross to take the footpath almost directly opposite.

Continue your climb on this enclosed path. Shortly after passing through a large gate

the path splits. Follow the right-hand branch. The path is not always obvious on the ground so keep the vegetation on your right and gradually climb across the hill. You will reach a waymark post with an arrow pointing to the right. Turn left here and continue to follow the right-hand side as the path bends right to reach a gatepost with a waymark.

The next section can be muddy so at a convenient point head up to your left to meet an obvious path which passes to the right of some masts. The path now becomes a rough track with woods to your right. Follow it to reach the golf club car park. Ahead of you is the folly of Sham Castle, built in 1762, which you keep to your left. Follow the path ahead in the same direction, before keeping to the left-hand boundary of the next field until you reach a stile. Turn right on a path above the road leading to the Bath University campus. At the end of this path descend a grassy bank to reach North Road where you turn left to reach a five-way junction.

Turn right into Copseland and follow it to its junction with Combe Hill. Go straight across and on to the metalled private road. This soon becomes a track with woodland on the right. Follow this track until you reach open land and a National Trust sign. From this point head half-right on a path across grass until you reach the gates to the private property of Rainbow Wood House. Continue in the same direction to descend the path with a low metal fence on your right.

Ignore the first kissing gate on the right at the bottom of the descent and instead continue on the same path until you reach another gate with a National Trust sign for Rainbow Wood Farm. There is also a small waymark for the Palladian Way. Head half-right to the field boundary and then continue your descent through a long sloping field to eventually turn right on to a confined path which completes the descent to an entrance to the National Trust property of Prior Park.

The highlight of Prior Park is the beautiful Palladian bridge which dates from 1755. It cannot be seen from the walk but a visit is recommended if time permits.

Follow the road ahead (Church Lane) until you reach Widcombe church. Immediately after the church, turn sharp left into Church Street. Soon after, pause at the gates on your right to view the imposing façade of Widcombe Manor. Continue along Church Street as it bends right and climbs to meet the main road.

Turn right and cross the road. Just before a right-hand bend turn left into Lyncombe Vale and then immediately right into Rosemount Vale. You are faced with probably the steepest climb of the whole walk. Keep straight ahead into Greenway Lane at the next junction and after a further 75 yards turn right on to a footpath which completes

the climb of Lyncombe Hill over open ground with extensive views. You then meet an enclosed path on to which you turn left to soon enter Alexandra Park. There is a fine viewpoint over the city and seats from which to enjoy it.

Continue on the same direction keeping the steep wooded escarpment of Beechen Cliff on your right and a row of houses on your left. The path starts to lose height and the easiest line of descent is to follow the zigzags until it reaches the road (Holloway). Turn right and continue the descent and then follow a dual-carriageway footpath to your left to reach the main road. Continue along the pavement until you reach twin pedestrian crossings which lead to a bridge over the Avon and the rear of Bath Spa station.

SOME PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS

Stations at Bradford-on-Avon, Avoncliff, Freshford and Bath Spa.

Bus from Bathford to Bath.

Bus from Winsley to Bath and Bradford-on-Avon.

Day 2 Bath to Bristol - 17 miles Explorer map 155

This section includes a stretch of the Cotswold Way, panoramic views from Kelston Round Hill, a walk by the banks of the Avon and the industrial archaeology of Trooper's Hill.

There are opportunities to shorten the route at Weston, Bitton and Longwell Green, all of which are served by a bus service between Bristol and Bath.

Those wanting to walk this stage in two roughly equal sections can do so by using Keynsham station (trains to Bristol and Bath).

Whole books have been written about Bath's many attractions so the short additional notes here only cover points of interest once the city has been left behind.

From Bath Spa station, head up Manvers Street, opposite the station entrance. Follow this to a small triangle on the left of the road and turn left into York Street. A path on your right leads you between the Roman Baths on your left and the Abbey on the right. In the pavement in front of the main entrance you will see a stone which marks the start and finish of the Cotswold Way, a 102 mile National Trail to Chipping Campden.

From the Abbey, head past the entrance to the Roman Baths to reach Stall Street where you turn right. Follow this busy shopping street which becomes Union Street.

You then cross Upper Borough Walls to follow a pedestrianised section (Burton Street) which leads to New Bond Street. Turn left and follow the road round a right-hand bend and then turn left again into Quiet Street. Follow this road which becomes Wood Street until you reach Queen Square.

Turn right, keeping the square on your left. Cross the road just above the square and head straight ahead up Gay Street to the Circus. Take the first turning on your left, Brock Street, which you follow to the start of Royal Crescent. Follow the famous Crescent to its end and turn right into Marlborough Buildings. At the top turn left into Weston Road from where you will see a pitch-and-putt course to your right. Use the zebra crossing to enter a path which climbs between the two courses.

You are now on the Cotswold Way which you follow for some time. This is very well waymarked with its distinctive acorn logo which denotes it to be a National Trail.

At the top of the path turn left into Sion Hill and follow it as it swings right and climbs to a junction. Turn left into Summerhill Road and continue to the end where a footpath descends between two walls to cross a road and to continue uphill. The path then forks and you should follow the right-hand option.

The path then emerges into open space and you follow it straight ahead as it crosses the lower section of this sloping field. You will then reach a stile in the left-hand boundary which you cross to descend a path either side of a crossing road. A further road is followed past the churchyard on your right.

At the bottom of the road turn sharp right for the very short climb to the church. Walk through the churchyard to descend to a paved path which passes the library and then reaches the main road.

Cross on the zebra crossing and continue to follow the Cotswold Way signpost to climb Pen Hill Road to its junction with a busier road. Follow this for a short distance before you reach a stile at the edge of a playing field. The Cotswold Way crosses this field and another steeper one to reach a confined path which climbs to the top of Penn Hill. Note the trig point on your left.

This ascent shortly emerges into a large sloping field. Follow the same line to reach a stile and the head of a minor road. Go straight across and continue to follow the Cotswold Way, now a track, to a point beneath Kelston Round Hill. Climb the stile ahead of you and undertake the short grassy climb to the trig point by a small copse at the summit.

Keeping the trees on your right, cross another stile and head right to reach the opposite side of the copse from the trig point. A field path leads you down to a stile

where you rejoin the Cotswold Way and turn left.

This path reaches a junction where the Cotswold Way goes ahead at a staggered junction. Ignore this and turn left along an enclosed bridle path which is followed all the way to North Stoke. There are fine views of the Avon at Saltford.

On reaching the village road in North Stoke turn right and follow it around a bend. In another 50 yards turn left on to a surfaced path. The post box in the facing wall is a good marker for this junction.

Follow the path past stables and around a left-hand bend. Ignore the first path on the right and instead go through a kissing gate at the start of the second path to your right. Descend on the grassy path which keeps a wire fence on its left. The path bends left to reach another kissing gate and the descent is continued through a second field. You then reach the third field which is followed to its bottom left-hand corner where an often muddy path leads down to a bridge over the stream.

Cross the bridge and follow the fence upwards. Turn left with the fence and continue until the path swings right to cross a stile. A second field is crossed to another stile where our route goes diagonally right across the next field to reach a stile admitting us to an enclosed path which ascends to the road.

Turn left and climb a short hill which leads into Upton Cheyney. Turn left and follow the road down until a point immediately before the pub. Follow the footpath on the right which passes some cottages before entering a field. You can now follow the signs for the Monarch's Way all the way to Keynsham.

Follow the right-hand side of the field to reach a stile. You then follow an enclosed path before you reach another field. Follow the right-hand boundary of two fields to enter a third one which is crossed diagonally to the right. You now enter a narrow path between houses and this is followed until you reach the road.

Turn left and continue until you reach the main road. Go straight over to join Church Road, the destination of which is predictable but very attractive. Enter the churchyard but just short of the church, turn right and follow a wall on your right. When you reach the road turn right and then look out for the continuation of the Monarchs Way on your left after about 25 yards.

The enclosed path is on a bank above a track. Follow it to the bridge over the River Boyd. Once across, in about 25 yards turn right on to a path which follows the right-hand side of the field. Continue to follow the right-hand side of the next field until you reach the corner and a signpost indicating the way to Keynsham. Turn left to follow the sign and walk along the boundary of this large field. Just short of a railway

embankment you leave the field and turn left to walk under the Bristol to Bath Cycle path. Enter the field in front of you, still waymarked with The Monarch's Way logo.

Follow the right-hand boundary to a stile. Turn left in the next field to reach a kissing gate which admits you to an enclosed and often muddy path. Enter the next field and follow its right-hand edge and that of its successor. In the third field you will see a metalled driveway leading to an isolated house. Follow it to the riverbank at a point opposite factories on the far bank of the Avon.

Turn right and follow the track to a cattle grid. In about 150 yards keep your eyes peeled for a narrow path going off on the left on the opposite side of the track to the drive to Sydmead Bungalow. This riverside path is followed as it passes a large marina on the right and the water is crossed by a metal bridge. The path emerges by the Lockkeeper pub.

If you're finishing at Keynsham turn right to join the main road and turn left and head uphill to reach the station in 5 minutes.

Keynsham is possibly most famous for its links with chocolate. Sadly the factory has now closed following a takeover by an American company and the premises are now being converted into retirement flats. Those of a certain age will recall radio adverts for Horace Batchelor's infra-draw method for winning the football pools in which the spelling of the town's name was a prominent feature. Lovers of 1960s music trivia will know that the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band's fourth album was called "Keynsham".

If you are continuing the walk, follow the path ahead of you signposted for Bristol. It passes under the road and a short section by a canal follows. It then keeps the Avon immediately to its left until you reach a complex junction by a large house on the right (Londonderry Farm). Ignore the path on the right before the house. Cross a stile to a junction of three paths. Do not follow the river or the path on your right heading up the valley. Instead follow the signpost for Longwell Green and head half-right on the path bordered by a barbed wire fence on both sides. This climbs immediately towards woodland. As the climb eases follow the left-pointing waymark to enter the wood by a stile marked "easy access" (EA).

This woodland path climbs to reach an exit also marked EA. You now enter a field and turn left and head for a further kissing gate some 25 yards in from the left-hand field boundary. Now follow the enclosed path straight ahead, also marked EA.

In the next open field follow the left-hand side until you reach a stone stile which admits you to a larger field. Follow the path in the centre of the next field as it crosses

a slight depression. Eventually the path descends more steeply to enter a more enclosed path, still marked EA.

At the end of this path you will see some of the buildings of Hanham Court. A small detour to the left leads to the church. To continue the walk turn right and keep the buildings on your left. Follow the way ahead until you are about 30 yards short of the road and you have just passed a pond on your left. Look out for a gap in the metal fence on your left and a short path to exit through a gate on to a grassy area.

Turn left to reach a minor road. Take this road, passing Hanham Lodge on your left, and follow it as it descends to the river. Turn right and pass the pub on your right.

The next stage presents no navigational difficulties as you just follow the river all the way to the Conham River Park, a distance of about 2.5 miles. Just before the Park you will see for Beese's Tea Gardens on the opposite bank, a favourite destination for boat trips from Bristol. Shortly after, there is a boathouse on the far bank. You will then reach a grassy area on your right with picnic tables. There are toilets just beyond.

Our path now meets a road. Cross and turn left, following the pavement. When this runs out cross the road again and continue to follow it to the Bull Inn on your right.

Take the second turning on the right past the pub, Troopers Hill Road, After 50 yards take the path on the left to enter the nature reserve. Follow this path which soon becomes stepped for a while and head for the chimney on the summit of the hill.

Troopers Hill is now a nature reserve which is particularly noted for its variety of invertebrates including 77 species of bees and 23 species of butterflies. At various times it was previously the site of copper and lead smelting, the quarrying of sandstone and a coal mine.

From the chimney turn left, and follow the path which shortly swings right to reach a recreation ground. Follow the path on the left which soon heads to the right to reach an exit gate, Go down the road until you reach the turning on the left signposted "To Lamb Hill". Walk along this until you reach a junction of footpaths. Take the right-hand enclosed path waymarked for the South Bristol Circular. At a fork take the left-hand path and follow it until it eventually climbs to reach the road by a sign for Strawberry Lane.

Turn left on to the road and after a few yards turn left into Avon View Cemetery opposite Beaconsfield Road.

Take the second path on the right to reach the chapel. Take a moment to look at (but

not use) an old urinal on the near wall. Continue past the chapel and follow the path ahead to reach a crossing road where you will see toilets on your left. Pass the toilets and take the next path right to descend to the exit from the cemetery opposite a car repair business.

Turn left to follow Blackswarth Road which swings right as it descends. Take the next right, Netham Road. Cross the low fence on the left to enter the Netham open space. Climb a small grassy hill in front of you and at the top follow the left-hand boundary all the way to the end of the open space. A path on your left descends through trees to reach the exit.

Turn left to cross the Feeder and then turn right to follow Feeder Road all the way to its traffic light junction with Avon Street. This is scarcely a scenic highlight but some relief from road walking can be found just after the road goes under railway and road bridges. A gap in the fence on the right leads down to a grassy path along the banks of the Feeder all the way to the Avon Street bridge.

Turn right into Avon Street and follow it until you pass under the railway bridge. Turn immediately left to reach the river and then cross the silver bridge for the exclusive use of walkers and cyclists to reach Temple Meads station.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS

Stations at Bath Spa, Keynsham and Bristol Temple Meads.

Bus between Bath and Bristol accessible from near the route at Kelston, Bitton, Keynsham and Longwell Green.

Day 3 - Bristol to Portishead 16 miles Explorer map 154

An exploration of Bristol's Floating Harbour is followed by woodland, lovely undulating countryside and a final stretch on a coast path.

The route may be shortened at Abbots Leigh and by a short detour to Easton-in-Gordano to catch the bus between Bristol and Portishead.

As was the case with Bath, no additional information is given about Bristol's attractions seen from the route.

Leave Temple Meads by the main exit to the left of the ticket offices and walk down the right-hand side of the station approach. Cross Temple Gate by the light-controlled crossings and then turn right. Follow the pavement as it swings left to join Redcliffe Way. Pass the hotel on your left to reach St Mary Redcliffe Church.

Cross the road on your left using the zebra crossing and take the path leading to the

left of the pub. Join Redcliffe Parade East and, immediately after the car park on your right, descend a ramp to reach the quayside which is followed until it deflects left to the Ostrich Inn. Use the footbridge and turn right to regain the waterside along Merchants Quay which is followed until it reaches Prince Street.

Cross this road and continue to follow the quayside as the path passes the M Shed and a popular snack bar. You will then reach the visitors' entrance to the SS Great Britain. Turn left along Gas Ferry Road at the signpost for Baltic Wharf Marina and CREATE and after about 100 yards turn right into an enclosed path indicated by a blue signpost "Harbourside Walk". Turn right again at the end to reach a marina and use the gap in a fence to reach the waterside.

Continue along the banks of the Floating Harbour to reach the Cottage pub. Turn left immediately after this building to reach Cumberland Road. Turn right and cross the road just before the junction to Avon Crescent on the right. Go through a gap in the railings and turn right to pass the old bonded warehouses which are now part of the CREATE Centre. Turn left to cross the old Ashton Avenue railway bridge and then head right along the banks of the Avon.

Due to the current closure of Ashton Avenue Bridge it is necessary to follow Avon Crescent round to the right before walking up to Brunel Way on the Cumberland Basin road and crossing the river using the pavement on the side of the dual carriageway. Steps and a temporary ramp on the left take you back down and it then a very short walk to the riverside path.

The path continues under the Suspension Bridge. From this point it is about 200 yards to a path on the left which passes under the Bristol to Portishead railway line. There is a gate and a National Trust sign welcoming you to Leigh Woods. You are now entering Nightingale Valley and the main path is followed right to the top which is by the main entrance to Leigh Woods.

The route follows the path into the woods, waymarked with blue arrows, on the far side of the fence. It rises through trees to reach a small clearing with a building and picnic tables ahead of you. Continue to the left of the building and you will soon see a wall on your left. Turn left through a gap in the wall at the point where there is a signpost for Cycle Route 41. Follow this path at the edge of the woods until it meets a forest road.

Turn left for 200 yards before turning right to join the Monarch's Way. This path leads you along the right-hand edge of a large field. The boundary is followed as it deflects left and then right to bring you out to a track. Go straight across to follow a

field-path which initially follows the right-hand edge. It descends to the field boundary and the path then climbs the left-hand edge of the next field to reach an area with seats and a small playground. You have now reached Abbots Leigh.

Exit on to the road opposite the church and turn left to follow it to its junction with the A369 opposite the pub. Please use the crossing to the left and then follow the lane by the side of the pub to a gentle climb past the old priory. The Manor House will soon be seen on your left and once past it you should look out for a narrow path on your right just past the first house on that side of the road. This crosses another minor road and descends a lane with houses on your right. Continue to the end of the road where a stile leads you onto a stepped footpath descending by a wall. At the bottom turn left for the short climb past a picnic table to the dam of Abbots Pool.

The pool was part of a series of water features used by medieval monks for fish farming. Abbots Leigh itself was mentioned in the Domesday Book.

Turn right along the dam and then right again to join a path which swings to the left. Take the next path on your left, immediately after a stone outbuilding. You climb through woodland to reach a stile. Cross it and follow the right-hand boundary of the field to enter another stretch of woodland through which a path leads straight ahead to a stile of the edge of the coppice. A path follows the left-hand edge of the field to a kissing gate and ladder stile.

Turn right to follow an enclosed lane which is also used by cyclists and horse-riders. The route descends to a minor road with an isolated house on your right. Turn left for around 300 yards, a distance which includes a short climb and descent.

Immediately before the road bends to the right and starts to climb take the metalled path to your left. This climbs steeply past houses on the right and you may receive a welcome from geese in one enclosure. You eventually reach a level stretch and ultimately the minor road you recently left!

Turn left and follow this road to Failand Church on your right. There are fine views to your right on this section. Once past the church the road drops to the point where the Portbury Road goes off to the right. Ignore this and climb on the same road to a point where it turns sharply left.

At this point turn right on to the footpath which initially runs between buildings before reaching a field. Follow the left-hand boundary of this and the succeeding fields, before the path falls away to the left. Look out for a stile on your right from where a short and steep descent leads you to the road. Cross this and go straight across.

The path then rises through woodland before deflecting slightly to the left to pass a derelict house on the right. Our route then reaches a stile into a field. Turn right to climb the edge of the field before turning left on to the signposted path which follows the near side of the boundary at the top of the field to reach another stile. This leads to a school playing field. Please keep to the path by staying on the left-hand edge of the field and then turning right to follow the far boundary on to a private road. The school buildings are now on your left.

You now reach a junction of private roads. Turn right and look out for a stile in a wooden fence on your left, opposite a private car park. Head half-left to the large tree and from there keep to the left of a row of trees coming in from the right. From there you should see the stile in the boundary ahead of you. A sign advises you that you are entering Prior's Wood nature reserve.

Should you be here in spring you may wish to detour to the woods ahead of you past the left-hand turning described in the second line of the above paragraph. Prior's Wood has a stunning and extensive display of bluebells at this time.

Follow the winding path as it descends to cross the stream in Bullock's Bottom before climbing straight ahead and steeply out of the valley. You now enter an enclosed track which soon becomes grassy. The fence on the left is the boundary of Noah's Ark Zoo. Eventually the path kinks to the right to enter a large field. Bear half-right to cross the field diagonally to reach a stile. Cross the minor road and enter the path running through a paddock to a stile on your left. From here a short drop leads to a path alongside the busy road of Naish Hill.

You will shortly cross the bridge over the M5 and follow the road down to Clapton-in-Gordano. Please take care when walking on this road near the bends. At the bottom of the hill turn left into Clevedon Lane and walk through the village to reach the Black Horse pub. Continue along the road for a further 200 yards and then take an enclosed path on your left.

This path continues along the bottom edge of two fields before reaching the entrance to Clapton church. Turn right down the drive to rejoin the road.

You now stay on this road for about a mile. At the point the road is very close to the motorway viaduct you will pass Clevedon Lane Farm and Wynhol Farm cattery and kennels. From this latter building it is about 60 yards to a stile on your right which you cross.

Go straight down this field to a further stile from where you continue in the same direction to cross a drainage ditch. Now head half-right to a double stile by a larger

water course and follow it briefly until turning left over a bridge. You are now on the drove road which you follow all the way to Weston-in-Gordano.

Cross the main road through the village and head up the enclosed path opposite to cross a stile into a field. Your exit in the form of a narrow path is in the top right-hand corner of this field. You then follow this path all the way up. It is initially enclosed but then crosses a couple of clearings before passing Brockley Cottage on the left of the path. Our route becomes a track and it is followed up to its meeting with Valley Road which is followed straight ahead to a T junction.

Turn right and cross the road and immediately look for a footpath on the left after about 10 yards. This leads down to a residential road and you turn left and then right. The route zigzags down to Redcliffe Bay. Turn left into Hillside which is followed round a right-hand bend. The second turning on the left leads to the bay.

Follow the road round to the right and walk on the grassy area on the left of it. A National Trust sign marks the start of the coast path to Portishead which is followed to the end of the walk, a distance of about two miles. In the course of this journey you will cross the top of a stony beach just past a lighthouse and, later, see a pitch-and-putt course on the slope to your right.

Once past the pitch-and-putt course look out for the side of a large house in front of you and swing right to reach the exit from this open land. At the next junction turn left to follow the road to the esplanade which you then follow until just before the swimming pool where a short climb on steps leads you to the open space of Battery Point.

Portishead's history dates back to Roman times although the architecture of the older town is predominantly Victorian. More recently the town gave its name to a band formed in Bristol in 1991.

Turn left and you will see a monument stating that Battery Point the nearest point of the UK coast to where large ships pass. The monument commemorates the seafarers of the West Country and is an appropriate end for our own land journey.

To reach the bus stop for your return to Bristol head uphill past the swimming pool and take the first road on the right (Battery Lane). At the next junction head straight across to join Battery Road which is followed to another intersection. Again, go straight across to follow Slade Road to turn left into Combe Road and you will see the bus stop on your left.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS

Station at Bristol Temple Meads. We are promised one at Portishead although progress to this goal appears to be very slow!

Bus from Portishead to Bristol accessible from near the route at Abbots Leigh, and Rudgeleigh Inn, Easton-in-Gordano.

Thursday, June 30, 2016