

Routes in Central and South Bristol

Walk 3 - Brunel's Footsteps

Walking Bristol



Bristol Group Ramblers

As members of the Ramblers we promote walking, protect the rights of way, campaign for access to open country and the coastline and defend the beauty of the countryside.

We have regular walks of varying distance and difficulty on Saturday mornings, Sundays and Wednesdays. In the Spring and Summer we have shorter walks on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Our walks on Wednesdays and Tuesday evenings are usually accessible by public transport.

Non-members are most welcome. After a few walks they will be invited to join the Bristol Ramblers Group. We have a membership of almost 1000 walkers in Bristol and over 2000 in the West of England area.

For details of membership and our walks programme visit **www.bristolramblers.org.uk**. Then just choose a walk to suit your ability and contact the walk leader to introduce yourself and obtain further details.

Even though these walks are within the city, suitable footwear and a waterproof are still advised. All of the walks are accessible by public transport. The times for buses and trains can be

checked at **www.travelinesw.com**. We have done our best to provide accurate and up to date information, but services are liable to alteration at short notice.

Whilst every effort has been made to check the routes in this book, mistakes do happen and the city is subject to changes, so neither Bristol City Council or the Ramblers can accept responsibility for any inconvenience this may cause. To advise of mistakes or recommend new walks for future editions contact Bristol City Council at **transport.plan@bristol.gov.uk** or **0117 9036701**.

Neither Bristol City Council or the Ramblers necessarily endorse the opinions expressed by the authors of the walks.

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Introduction

Walking is the simplest and cheapest form of travel and also one of the best forms of exercise. It helps you to feel good, reduces stress, increases your energy levels, reduces blood pressure and helps you to sleep better at night. It is a very good way to help you to lose weight.

Walking also helps you to appreciate the city that you live in. Other forms of transport race you past those lovely views or small points of historic interest. They make it more difficult to pop in to that small shop or stop off for a drink and a bite to eat. Walking lets you appreciate all of these at a leisurely pace.

In 2002 Bristol City Council and Bristol Group Ramblers collaborated to produce a delightful publication called 'Bristol Backs – Discovering Bristol on Foot'. This book contained 27 walks around the city, all over varying length and all taking in various features of this great city.

The book was intended to be sold, as it had been lovingly produced to a high quality. Unfortunately, this meant that when stocks began to run low, the cost of re-production proved to be prohibitive.

It seemed a real shame that access to these walks could be denied to so many people, so it was decided to re-produce a selection of these in a smaller format. The beauty of this new publication is that it will be free for all to enjoy.

Trying to decide which walks to exclude was very difficult and this led us to producing two booklets, one for the north and east of the city and the other for the south and central. You may wish to pick up the one that is local to you or both of them to explore other parts of the city. Although a number of walks are in or close to the city centre a conscious effort has been made to take these walks to the majority of the population out in the suburbs. There are some little gems in the most unexpected of places.

So please, go out and walk around your city and enjoy its little hidden pleasures and explore those alleys and lanes that you might not have known existed and if it means that you occasionally leave the car at home, it will have all been worth it.

Brunels Footsteps



Brunels Footsteps - *walk* 3

Description: This City Centre walk explores some of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's engineering projects in Bristol from 1829 to 1850, following a linear route from Temple Meads to the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

Length: 3.5 miles (2.5-3 hours).

Refreshments: Numerous cafés and pubs along the route.

Transport: Bus nos 8 and 9 link Temple Meads and Clifton.

Isambard (father's second name) Kingdom (his mother Sofia's maiden name) Brunel was born in Portsea, near Portsmouth on April 9th 1806. His first reported visit to the city was in 1828 for a long convalescence at the new Clifton and Hotwell Spas. This was following an accident in the tunnel his father, also an engineer, was building under the River Thames in London.

On hearing, the following year of the competition for a new Clifton Bridge, he returned to the city with four designs which were submitted by the 19th November.

Thus began his 30 year commitment to Bristol. (His reputation did not always stand so high in the city as it does with posterity. John Latimer seldom has a good word for him, and describes him as 'an inexperienced theorist, enamoured of novelty, prone to seek for difficulties rather than to evade them, and utterly indifferent as to the outlay which his recklessness entailed upon his employers'.)

*Begin at Temple Gate
walking up the Approach
Road towards the Station*

The Old Station **A**, best viewed from Temple Gate, opened in 1840, designed by Brunel for wide gauge railways, and is the earliest surviving major rail terminus in the world. A Grade I listed building in Tudor revival style housed the GWR offices and the train shed, at first floor level, which had the widest single span of the age, some 72 feet, with a mock timber hammer beam roof. The left hand portal was the main entrance for pedestrians and carriages. An identical portal was demolished on the right hand side to build the station approach and was originally the main exit. It was last used by trains in 1965.

Enter the Station and follow the directions to the Ferry Service on the left, Cross Temple Quay's, The Square, to left hand exit into Temple Back East to the statue.

B Brunel's bronze sculpture by John Doubleday was originally erected on the City Centre in 1982 at the same time as the seated version by the same sculptor at Paddington Station. It was moved to its current position on the bi-centenary of his birth in 2006 . In 1841 Brunel had completed the Great Western Railway from London to Bristol.

Turn left along Temple Way crossing Friary, Temple Gate and Redcliffe Way into Portwall Lane to join the Brunel Mile footway, noting the information boards.

Re join Redcliffe Way and cross Redcliffe Bridge, turn left into The Grove.



The Severn Shed **C**, now a restaurant, is reputed to have a wrought iron structure designed by Brunel originally to test out his engineering design for Old Station.

*Cross The Grove and into Queen Square **D** following Brunel's Mile along the south side of the square.*

During the Bristol Riots in October 1831 Brunel was enlisted as a special constable and helped to salvage silver plate and pictures from the Mansion House, which was looted and destroyed by fire. He also gave evidence for the defence at the trial for negligence of Mayor Charles Pinney.

Turn left into Prince Street and cross bridge to Wapping Road.

On the eastern gable of the Museum of Bristol **E** is a plaque commemorating the launch of the ss Great Western at Princes Wharf on the 19th July 1837.

The timber-hulled paddle steamer designed by Brunel sailed to New York in April the following year. This was Brunel's dream of extending the railway with a steam ship to take passengers from London via Bristol to New York.

Retrace your steps back across bridge turn left

and follow Narrow Quay to walk alongside harbour to cross the horned Pero's Bridge into Anchor Square.

Turn right by Explore @ Bristol and cross Anchor Road, continue up Trinity steps to College Green turning left.

Brunel was invited by the Dean in 1850 to report on defects in the fabric of Bristol Cathedral. **F** Brunel replied in his letter, 'I can be at the Cathedral at 5am on Tuesday morning next, having to leave Bristol by train to Exeter at 7-30am'. This gives an insight into Brunel's method and working hours!

Continue to western end of Cathedral, into Deanery Road and right into College Street then left into St George's Road.

Brunel House **G**, on the right hand side, built in 1837-39 to the designs of R.S. Pope and Brunel, was originally The Royal Western Hotel to provide overnight accommodation for rail travellers en route from London to New York. See plaque on south gable.

*Turn right up Brandon Steep and along Queens Parade, noting harbour viewpoint at **H**. Continue on footway to Brandon Hill and take steps on left to Jacob's Wells Road. Turn left to cross roundabout to south side of Hotwell Road.*

From the dockside you can view Brunel's masterpiece, the ss Great Britain, **I** launched by Prince Albert on 19th July 1843 becoming the world's first iron screw-driven steamship in the dry dock where she was constructed. The ss Great

Britain left the harbour 18 months later as Brunel had to enlarge the Cumberland Basin Lock to take the vessel!

(To visit the ship you can take the cross harbour ferry to the rear of the Capricorn Quay flats)

Follow harbour-side walk to Merchant's Road, turn left over bridge, then right along dockside parallel with Brunel Lock Road under Bridge, turn right.

The South Entrance Lock **J** was completed by Brunel in 1849 with unique features: wrought-iron caisson single-leaf gates which were hollow and slightly buoyant at high water to make the heavy gate easier to operate, and an elliptical arch-shaped dock for self cleaning. Between the two locks, standing on the harbour, is the world's first wrought-iron tubular swing bridge. Designed by Brunel,

he used similar construction later for the bridges at Chepstow and Saltash (Royal Albert Bridge).

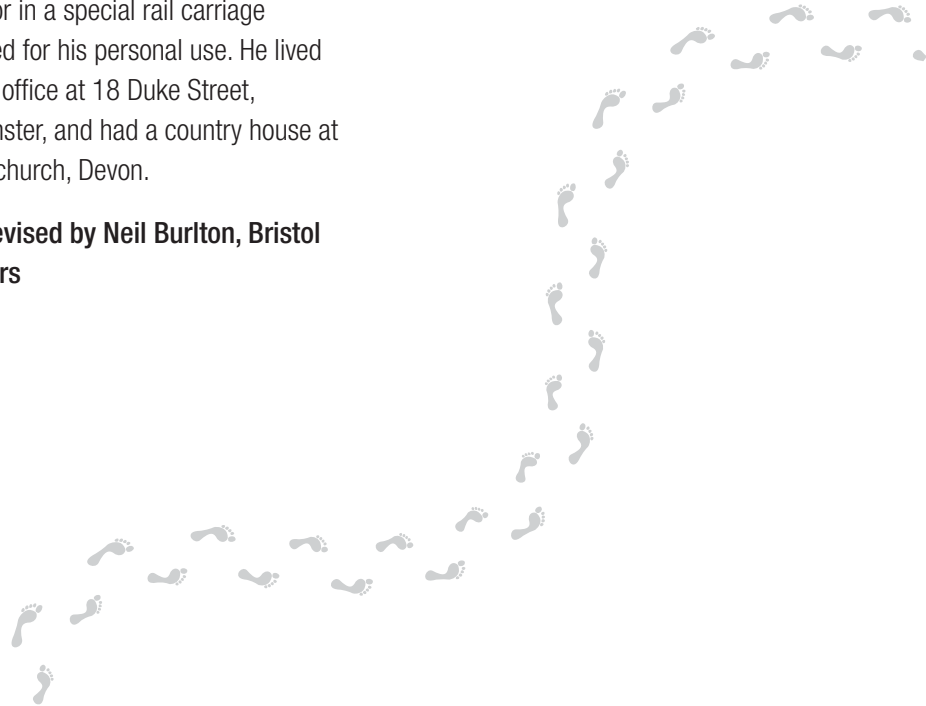
Cross over North Lock Gates and through gate below Swing Bridge Control Tower, turn left along Cumberland Basin Road. Take footbridge over road, left Granby Hill, right Hotwell Road. After last houses and the old rock railway entrance turn right up zig-zag path to Sion Hill.

This is the viewpoint **K** of Brunel's famous Clifton Suspension Bridge completed in 1864, spanning 630 feet of the Avon Gorge, based on the original competition design submitted in 1830. After funding problems the bridge was completed in memory of Brunel who had died in 1859. Visit the Bridge and Visitor Centre for more information.

Walk along Bridge Road to Clifton Down Road for return bus 8 or 9 to City Centre and Temple Meads.

Footnote: interestingly there is no record of Brunel staying in the city over his 30 years of projects. It is thought that he either stayed in the GWR Office at Temple Meads or in a special rail carriage converted for his personal use. He lived over his office at 18 Duke Street, Westminster, and had a country house at St Marychurch, Devon.

Walk devised by Neil Burlton, Bristol Ramblers

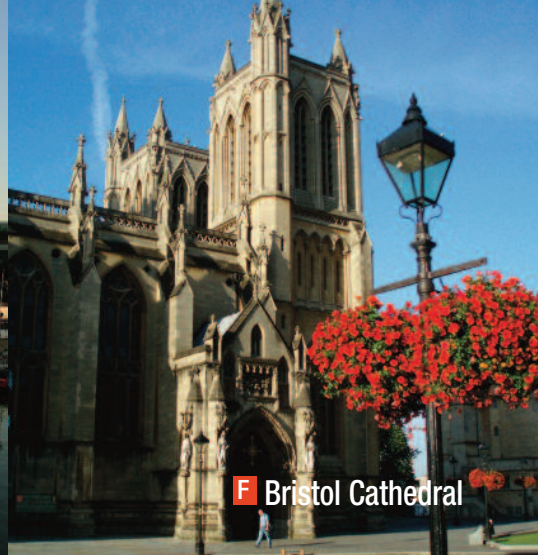




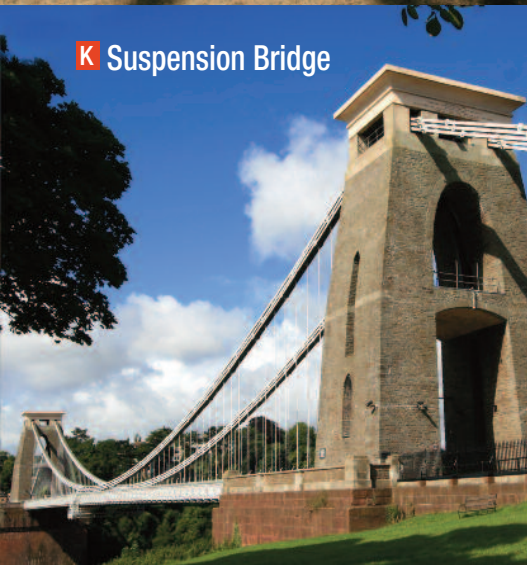
D Queen Square



E Museum of Bristol



F Bristol Cathedral



K Suspension Bridge



G Brunel House Architecture



H Harbourview