

# Walking Bristol

Routes in North and East Bristol  
Walk 2 - Durdham Down



## 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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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.



# Durdham Down - *walk 2*

**Description:** This walk starts from Sea Mills Railway Station, follows a series of footpaths along the River Trym, climbs up to Durdham Down along little used paths and returns along a footpath by the River Avon.

The walk can also start at The Water Tower on Durdham Downs

**Length:** Approx 5 miles circular. (2.5 to 3 hours)

**Refreshments:** The Mill House. Ice cream vans. Café at Water Tower

**Transport:** Trains on the Severn Beach Branch.

**Bus routes:** 902 Park and Ride bus from City Centre to Roman Way and head for the station or Sea Mills station on the Severn Beach line.

*Leave Sea Mills Railway Station turn right and cross over the road towards the small harbour at the mouth of the River Trym.*

A Roman ferry station known as Portus Abonae **A** was situated here and has been considered the distribution centre for the lead and silver mined in the

Mendip Hills, though this theory has lost favour. The site of the Roman harbour became one of the earliest wet docks in the country, constructed by Joshua Franklyn of Bristol in 1712. The name Sea Mills may derive from the cloth mills on the Trym which manufactured a rough serge cloth. The Trym was navigable by ships up to Westbury-on-Trym until 1099 when shifts in the land reduced it to a stream.

*Pass under the A4 Portway road bridge. Do not cross the footbridge over the river. Cross over the Trym Cross Road, keeping to the right of the river, and walk up the river basin to the far end. The path comes out opposite The Mill House in Shirehampton Road. Take care crossing the*



busy Shirehampton Road (Use Zebra Crossing) and go down the footpath running behind the pub car park or from round the back of the pub in Bell Barn Road. Follow the path round to the right and after 200 yards turn right to follow a small wooded valley up on the right. (If you cross the footbridge over the River Trym you have gone too far). The path leads up steps to Bell Barn Road again. Cross the road, walk left for a few paces past the unmade Cheyne Road and then turn right into a signed footpath between the houses, called Ebenezer Lane. This comes out on a sharp bend in Parry's Lane.


Cross over Cross Elms Lane, then over Parry's Lane, at the bollards, turning left to follow Parry's Lane again. After 100-150 yards, where Parry's Lane bends round to the right and opposite Stoke Lane, turn right into a signed footpath which weaves right, then left, between the houses and gardens. Go down some steps and turn left at a footpath junction and follow this next footpath down a gentle slope. Keep straight ahead, ignoring left and right turns and pass by Sunnyside Cottages. Cross Kewstoke Road and go up the lane ahead called Hollybush Lane. Follow this all the way up to Saville Road on

Durdham Down. Cross over the road and head towards the line of trees and water tower where there is a Café with toilets on the far side .

### Directions for walk from Water Tower Start Here:-

The drinking fountain **B** was erected in 1877 by the Bath and West Agricultural Society to commemorate the 1874 show. The water tower was built in 1954. 400 feet above sea level, it holds 600,000 gallons. The reservoir below, dating from 1848, holds another 720,000 gallons. Water was delivered by gravity from Barrow to Whiteladies Road and pumped up to the Downs. The company levied a supplementary rate on property more than 200 feet above Bristol Bridge.

Go across the road in front of the water tower and head half-right and

*cross Ladies Mile, a tree-lined road across The Downs, so named after the well-to-do ladies who used to ride along it but later frequented by 'ladies of the night'. Continue towards the far right end of the Downs which has fine views overlooking the Avon Gorge and as far as Wales on a clear day. This is known as Sea Walls . There is often an ice-cream van here. There are more toilets in the corner to the right.*

The drinking fountain to the right by the wall was erected and presented to the inhabitants of Bristol by William Hird in 1833. The house with a hexagonal tower, Towerhirst, should not be taken for Cook's Folly, which stood for centuries a little

further along the cliff. The traditional story is that Cook imprisoned himself in it to escape death by snake bite. This stratagem failed when an adder was delivered in the firewood. In dull fact it was built as an ornament. John Wallis constructed a wall to stop people falling off the edge of the gorge. Unlike the prison-camp fencing now used, it did not spoil the view.

**Let Cook and Norton tow'ring  
Follies raise Thy wisdom, Wallis,  
will I sing and praise**

**Let heroes and Prime Ministers  
of State**

**Smile when they're called  
ironically, great;**

**Superior merit shall my muse  
employ,**

**Since better 'tis to save than to  
destroy.**

Baker, the Sneyd Park property developer, claimed as his own a strip of land at Sea

Walls which the public had always enjoyed. This, coupled with similar designs by one of the Worralls, caused such indignation the Corporation set in train the process which protects the Downs for the citizens of Bristol.

Before Sneyd Park became too genteel, there was a pub at Cook's Folly. Because it had better beer than the one in the quarry hamlet on the site of Bridge Valley Road, one of the workers sent his nine year old daughter, Melinda, across the Downs with a jug. On the way back she was brutally murdered. The criminal was never caught.

*Go to the right of the toilets and house and leave The Downs through the kissing gate in a gap in the wall on the left. Go along the lane ahead and into Seawalls Road and down Knoll Hill and finally Bramble Lane.*

Where this turns sharply right into Bramble Drive there is a Woodland Trust nature reserve named Bishops Knoll **D**, and the entrance to a house named Casa Mia. The route is down the footpath to the right of this house but, if you feel adventurous and wish to make your own way through the nature reserve first and come out later on the footpath, carefully study the map in the entrance which clearly shows the way. Alternatively, go down the footpath and cross over the Severn Beach Line railway bridge. Turn left and follow the footpath between the railway embankment and playing

fields until it comes out on the A4 Portway. Take extreme care crossing this busy road which carries heavy traffic from Bristol to Avonmouth. Turn left towards Bristol a short distance and go down onto a footpath and turn right alongside the River Avon. Keep on this path until it eventually turns right to arrive at Sea Mills Railway Station. If going on to The Water Tower, follow the footpath to the left under the railway bridge and continue as indicated at the start.

Walk devised by Alan Burton, Bristol Ramblers



Climbing on the Sea Walls

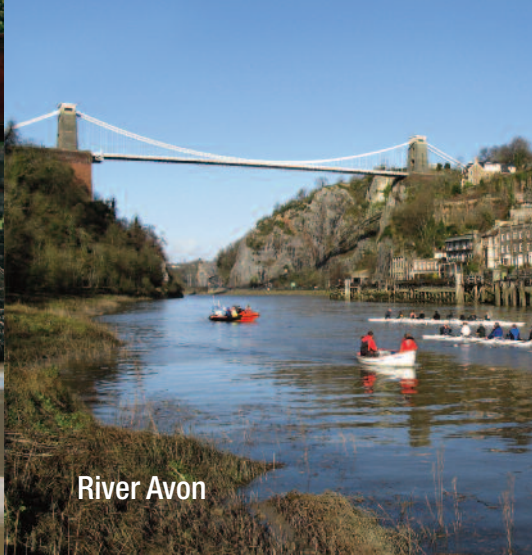


A Sea Mills Station





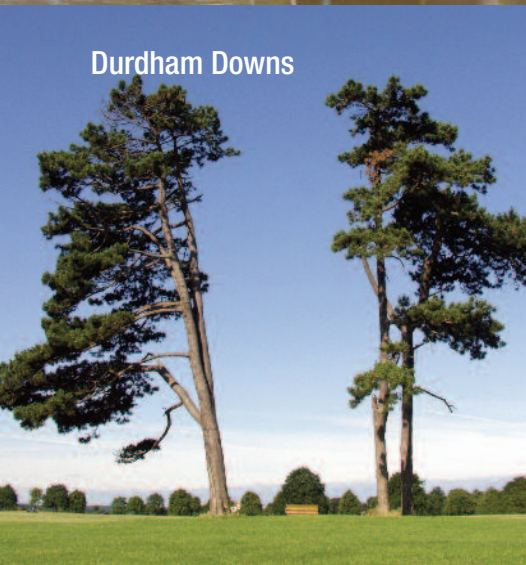
Sea Mills Harbour



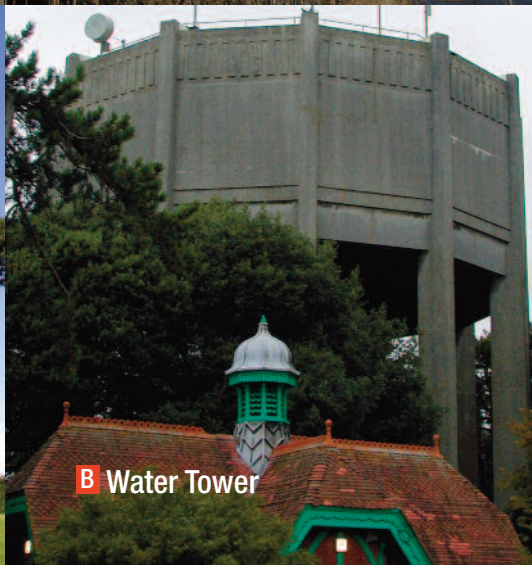
River Avon



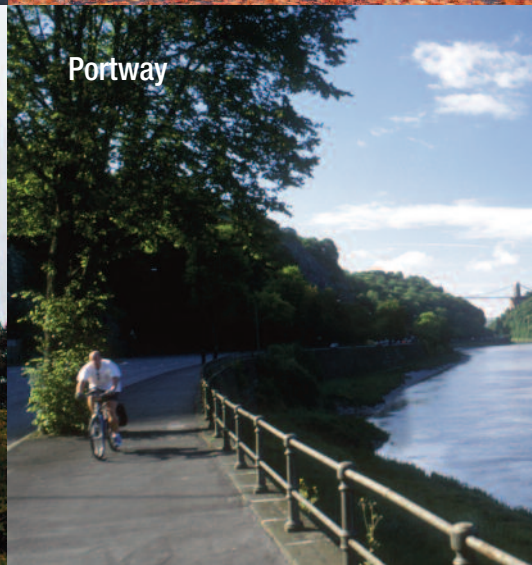
Autumn on the Downs



Durdham Downs



**B** Water Tower



Portway