

Routes in Central and South Bristol  
Walk 1 - Plaques of Central Bristol

# 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](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.

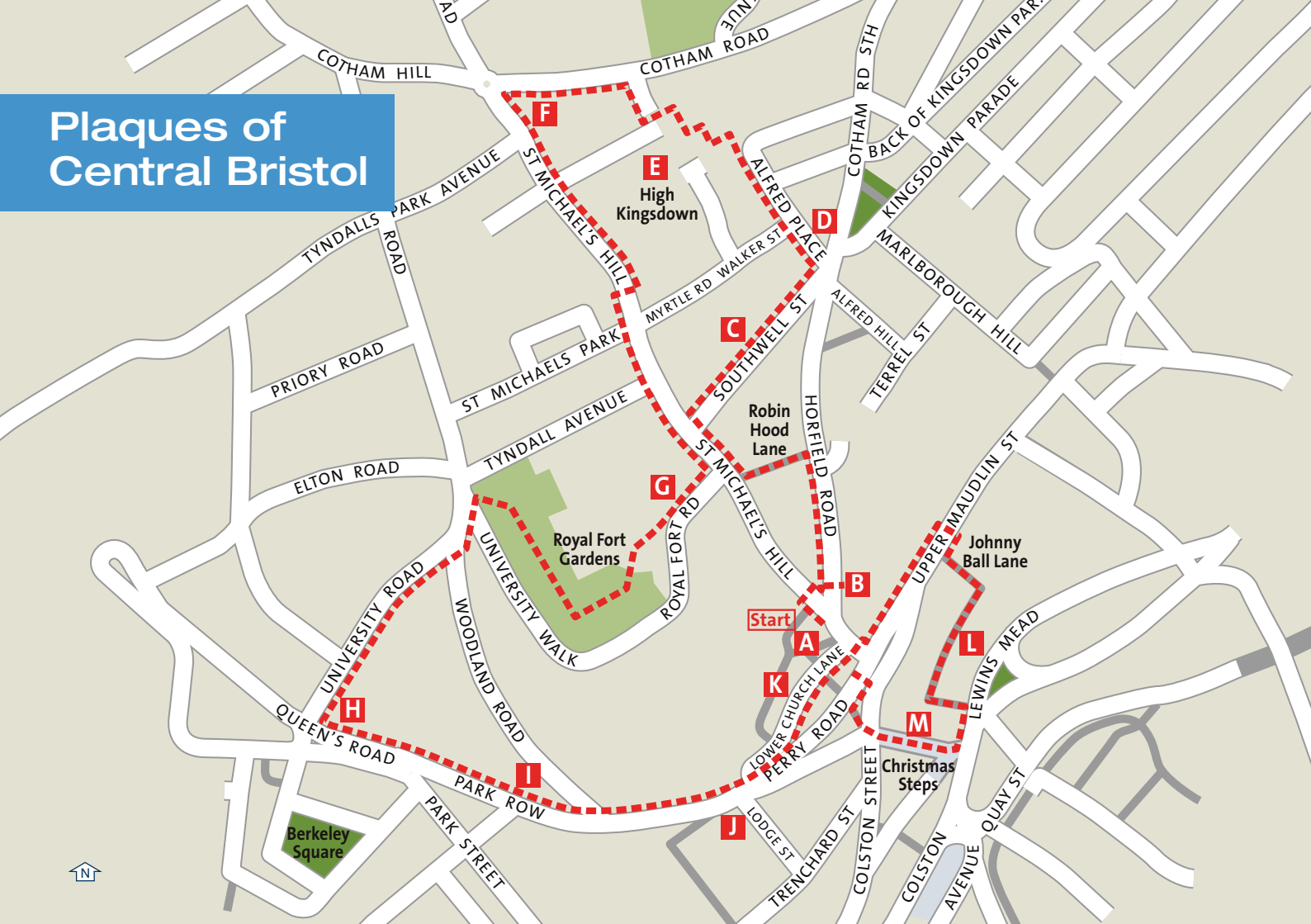
The book was intended to be sold, as it had been lovingly produced to a high quality. Unfortunately, this meant that when stocks began to run low, the cost of re-production proved to be prohibitive.

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.

# Plaques of Central Bristol



# Plaques of Central Bristol - *walk 1*

**Description:** A short but steep walk taking in the 'blue plaques' near the centre.

**Length:** 2 miles.( 1- 1.5hours )

**Refreshments:** Pubs and cafés en route.

**Transport:** Buses to Centre. Walk up Colston Avenue, cross Perry Road to St Michaels Hill.

St Michael's Church **A** is mostly Georgian with a fifteenth century tower, unfortunately the church has been redundant for many years.

*From the west door of St Michael's Church, go to St Michael's Hill*

Most houses date from sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Nearly all are listed. The bottom stand of four are timber framed and built in 1637 by a family from Axbridge. George Pocock, who lived near the church, experimented with kites to power boats and carriages. In a good wind, a tricycle

carrying four people could reach twenty five miles an hour. Better still, it was exempt from turnpike tolls. A schoolmaster, Pocock also designed a flogging machine. Surely he deserves a plaque with a citation for green transport and old fashioned values.

*Cross to Horfield Road.*

Note the plaque to Sir Michael Redgrave **B**, born in theatrical digs at No 4 and named after the Church.

Bengough's almshouses were built in 1818. Bengough was unlucky. On his

last day in office as Lord Mayor in 1793, at a demonstration against the toll on Bristol Bridge, the Hereford Militia whose assistance he had enlisted without regard for proper procedure, shot and killed an innocent bystander. Bengough's last official acts were attempts to regularise the use of troops in retrospect and to rig the inquest. (Under his successor, 14 more rioters were killed.)

*Turn left up steps into Robin Hood Lane. Go right past St Michael's Hospital and right into Southwell Street.*

The University Veterinary College **C** occupies an Edwardian school building. The Bristol School Board had previously had a special school for truants on the site, subjecting them to two hours military style drill a day.

*Turn left into Alfred Place - note colourful display of late seventeenth century houses. At the end go left into High Kingsdown and right into Oxford Street to emerge in Cotham Road. Turn left to Cotham Parish Church.*

Above eye level on the last house in Alfred Place **D**, backing on Montague Place, a small sculpture depicts a few of the workers on the restoration project. High Kingsdown **E** was a prize winning 1974

housing scheme, attempting to combine high density, low rise and privacy. The Kings Arms, a Victorian pub was refurbished for its 'village green'. Note plaque on the outside wall of the church, denoting the boundary stone of the mediaeval City of Bristol. It was rescued and repositioned when the chapel was built.



Note: the Arts and Crafts movement Western College and the Homeopathic Hospital by Oatley. Just down Cotham Hill, Cotham House on the left, with a frieze of Cotham Landscape Marble, was the home of George White who ran the tram system and founded the Bristol Aeroplane Company.

*Turn left into St Michael's Hill see wall plaque **F** .*

This is the site of one of the city's places of public execution. The nimby's of 1773 complained that the crowds at this entertainment were damaging their property and asked that the gallows be removed to Brandon Hill instead.

*Continue for 300 yards down the hill, past the old Childrens Hospital with its listed facade and turn right into Royal Fort Road.*

The Corporation began to fortify the city in 1642, nevertheless it was captured by Prince Rupert in 1643. The Royalists reinforced the Windmill Hill Fort which was used as Rupert's Headquarters and renamed Royal Fort. The City was recaptured in 1645 and the fort strengthened again. The defences were built by conscript labour and paid for by local taxation and forced loans. After the Parliamentary victory, in 1655, Cromwell made the citizens of Bristol meet the cost of destroying the works. Of the Royal Fort, only the gate house remains. Note Plaque on Prince Rupert's gate **G**.

*Exit into Woodland Road and cross to University Road, walking down past the Grammar School and left into Queen's Road.*

Note the Bristol Byzantine façade of Brown's Restaurant **H**, formerly the City Museum, then the University Refectory.

Read the plaque on the wall of the present Museum and Art Gallery dedicated to Colonel Henry Washington - an ancestor of George Washington. Many skirmishes were fought along this road during the Civil War.


*Pass the Wills Tower with its fine views down Park Street and stop by the University Engineering Building.*

Oatley's Wills Tower was not erected until after the First World War, which must make it the last public building in its style. The construction, however, was modern steel frame. Note façade of a cinema incorporated into the building and read the plaque to Nipper the HMV dog **I**. Opposite, by the garage, is a plaque to remind us that the Princes Theatre stood there. Opened in 1867, as the New Theatre, it seated 2,400. Two years, later a disastrous crush on Boxing Day, killing

fourteen people, had a calamitous effect on the theatre's fortunes until its name was changed. Famous for its pantomime, which Bernard Shaw praised, the Princes, not the Royal, was Bristol's principle theatre until it was destroyed in the Second World War. Note the fine fin de siècle loos on the corner of Woodland and Park Row, now sadly closed.

*Proceed along Park Row and where this becomes Perry Road, turn left up Lower Church Lane.*


The Elizabethan Red Lodge **J** on the right was built as a retreat for the family who lived in a much grander house on the site of the Colston Hall. The Red Lodge has stunning panelling and a restored knot garden. Note plaques on the front of the building. On the left of Lower Church Lane is a fine Victorian school. The Old Rectory is partly built in Strawberry Hill Gothic **K**.

*Cross at lights, go left down Upper Maudlin Street, with the Children's Hospital on the left. Here, cross the road at the lights, find Johnny Ball Lane  signed and slightly to your right beside Jameson's Restaurant and wander down. Then turn right.*

Note the St James' Parish Boundary stone eight foot up the right-hand wall and at the bottom the restored sugar refinery, now the Hotel du Vin. Note the fine statue of a horseman by David Backhouse and the twelfth century St Bartholomew's Hospital. The Hospital was founded in 1240 the remaining ruins renovated in 1984. The informative Plaque is somewhat obscured by overgrown ivy. Here was the original establishment of Bristol

Grammar School(1532-1767) and subsequently Queen Elizabeth Hospital School(1767-1847)

*Climb Christmas Steps to the right.*

A plaque  on the wall to the right commemorates Colonel Lunsford, a Royalist shot through the heart when Prince Rupert took the city. (For a while, the street was known as Lunsford's Steps.) An inscription above the alms gatherers' niche at the top of the steps, commemorates the 'stepping down' of the street. Foster's Almshouses, with the Chapel of the Three Kings of Cologne are built in Burgundian style and are in direct contrast with the tram sheds opposite, built in 1888 to provide a horsedrawn tram service to Clifton. The tram sheds have been well restored and now comprise a micro brewery and restaurant.

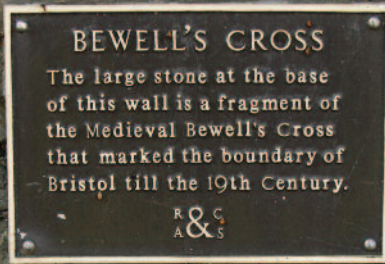
*Go up the steep Bristol Steps, cross Perry Road and return to St Michael's churchyard.*

Refresh yourself at the Scotchman and his Pack. One explanation of the name derives it from a 'scotch', a portable brake which the scotchman applied to carts descending the hill to prevent them getting out of control. Sometimes the scotch glowed red from the friction created. Another more plausible theory is that the pub, at one of the main entrances to the city, tried to attract the custom of pedlars. Traditionally, Scots, besides living on oatmeal and suffering from the itch, made their living as itinerant tradesman, carrying their wares in packs.

A walk that touches on a mass of history - perhaps to be explored again and in more depth.

**Walk devised by Gillian Davies,  
Bristol Ramblers**

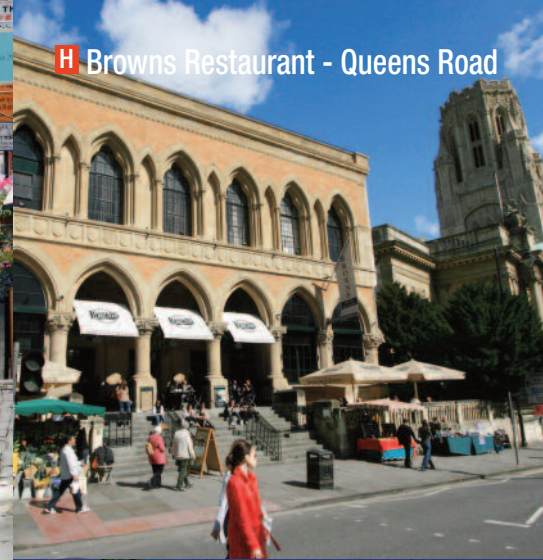
Plaque Bewells Cross



Christmas Steps



H Browns Restaurant - Queens Road



## ROYAL FORT-PRINCE RUPERT'S GATE

Near this spot, on 11 September 1645, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, nephew of King Charles I and Commander of the Royalist garrison of Bristol, surrendered the City to Sir Thomas Fairfax, Commander of Parliament's New Model Army and to Oliver Cromwell, his Master of Horse.

This brick gatehouse is the most substantial remaining portion of the Royal Fort, a pentagonal bastion reconstructed by Prince Rupert after he had captured Bristol in 1643.

Because of Bristol's strategic military position and value as a port, its capture by the Parliamentarian forces was a turning point of the Civil War.

Erected jointly by the Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society and the University of Bristol

G Prince Ruperts Gate



St Michaels Hill