

Routes in Central and South Bristol  
Walk 6 - South Bristol Parks

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.

# South Bristol Parks



# South Bristol Parks - *walk 6*

**Description:** This is more than a stroll in the park! And it's more than one park. In fact it's six. So give yourself plenty of time because this walk could take up to three hours to complete. It's a circular walk, all on a hard surface with one lengthy climb and one flight of steps.

**Length:** 5½ miles. ( 2.5 to 3 hours)

**Refreshments:** Cafés and pubs en route.

**Transport:** Trains and buses to Temple Meads Railway Station.  
The number 1 bus links Arno's Vale and Temple Meads.

*The walk starts from the front of Temple Meads station. At the bottom of the station approach, turn left and left again into Cattle Market Road to go under the railway bridge. Now cross the road opposite the derelict pub on to the riverbank to proceed up stream along the St Philip's Greenway, under the Totterdown*

*Road bridge and through Sparke Evans Park.*

Sparke Evans Park **A** was developed about the time of World War I. Note the restored bandstand - a very popular amenity in parks during that age.

*Still keeping to the riverside walkway, do not cross the pedestrian bridge, but follow the river to the far end of*

*the park and beyond\*. Eventually you will be forced to turn left away from the river, emerging into Feeder Road. Cross Marsh Lane Bridge, turn right into Netham Park following Feeder canalside path to rejoin Feeder Road at its junction with Netham Road. Turn left, cross river bridge and bear left*

*to go up hill in Newbridge Road, taking the second right hand turning into Langton Court Road. Now go through park, number two, St Anne's Park.*

*\* Alternative route if the path by the river is impassable: after walking under St Philip's Causeway Bridge, turn left to follow stepped footway to St Philip's Causeway, then right and first right into Avonmeads. Continue past cinema following left hand footpath. Turn left under railway bridge and continue along Cole Road. Turn right into Feeder Road to rejoin route at Marsh Lane Bridge.*

This would not always have been a pleasant walk. In the 1899 Bristol pantomime, the villain considered how to get rid of his enemy: 'If I could persuade him to bathe in the River Avon, that would do it: yet, no, that would be too horrible.' At the end of the nineteenth century there was a long trial, involving nearly two hundred witnesses, when the landowner tried to suppress a ferry and close the paths to it. The St Anne's Ferry had been used for centuries. In the Middle Ages, it took pilgrims to the shrine at St Anne's Well. With the industrial development of east Bristol, it was a way to work, whilst St Anne's itself was still a beauty spot. Local opposition and the intervention of the Bristol and District Footpath Preservation Society saved the ferry and the paths leading to it. In 1957, the footbridge replaced the ferry. In 1923, the woods were sold to the city. St Anne's Park itself **B** dates from 1900.

The Langton Court Hotel was built on the site of the original Langton Court Manor House, Brislington's second, which was almost completely demolished in 1902. The Lacy family of Shipton-under-Wychwood in Oxfordshire bought the manor of Brislington in 1586. Built between 1590 and 1610, the house was extended circa 1620 and again in 1667 when it was purchased by Sir Thomas Langton, a Bristol merchant, Alderman and, in 1666, Mayor. In 1663, he lent £50 to the Corporation towards the cost of a banquet for the King and Queen. In the same year, for purposes of tax evasion, his goods were valued at £9. (Colston himself declared £4.) His descendants became the Gore-Langtons in 1783, inheriting the title Earl Temple of Stowe in 1892. The oldest part of the house still survives in Highworth Road.

*Over Langton Road railway bridge, turn right down Bloomfield Road to Arno's*

*Court on Bath Road. You can now cross the main road to Arno's Park.*

The gateway to Arno's Castle **C**, with the Black Castle behind, is connected to Arno's Court mansion by a tunnel under the road. The name is said to originate from a copy of one on the banks of the River Arno in Italy. The courtyard of the Black Castle (known locally as 'The Devil's Cathedral', a phrase coined by Horace Walpole) was built by William Reeve out of black slag from his copper smelter at Crews Hole. He built Arno's Court mansion about 1760 and the Black Castle was used as his stables. Arno's Court became a convent about 1851. Opposite Arno's Court, the Brislington tram depot, built 1898, has an ornate clock tower. The last tram ran in September 1938.

*Follow the main path to top left corner and climb*

*up Withleigh Road to Wells Road. At traffic lights, turn down Broad Walk and right into Redcatch Park.*

Redcatch Park **D** took its name from Redcatch Lane, now Redcatch Road, which was called after Catch House Farm, extending over 80 acres. On 19th March 1873 Albert, Prince of Wales opened the Knowle race-course which ran across the southwest of the park. An estimated crowd of 100,000 were in attendance but the race-course's popularity was short-lived and it closed, a financial failure, in 1880. The pavilion was said to hold 8,000 people. The original Knowle golf course was laid out on the site of the old race-course but it was moved to Stockwood when the housing came in the 1930s. The park was laid out on allotments.

*On exit, proceed along Bayham Road and down through Perrett's Park noting a wonderful view of the City.*

Bounded by Bayham and Ravenhill roads and Sylvia Avenue, Perrett's Park **E**, laid out in 1929, was named after Councillor C.R. Perrett who had contributed £500 of the £1,000 needed by Bristol Corporation to purchase the land in 1923. A marble drinking fountain with copper mugs on chains once stood in the top corner of the park near the site of a spring which issued as a stream down the valley in St John's Lane.

*Turn right along Ravenhill Road, left into St John's Lane and over pedestrian crossing, going through Monmouth Street into Victoria Park.*



Like so many parks at this time, Victoria Park **F** used to contain an ornate bandstand which has been replaced with swings and slides. The fields which were at the bottom of the park were built over in the 1920s and '30s. At its highest

point, a large drinking fountain was erected, marking the then Queen's Golden Jubilee, but it is no longer there. Also gone is a large Crimean War cannon which was used for scrap metal in the 1939-45 War. This was originally sited in front of and to the left of the park-keeper's house which still remains. The 51 acre park was purchased from Sir Greville Smyth's trustees in 1889. Victoria was one of three Bristol parks where open-air schools were set up in the 1920s for the benefit of children, especially consumptive children, too delicate to attend ordinary schools. (The others were Eastville and St George's.) The theory was that fresh air, food and a more relaxed curriculum would benefit children otherwise excluded from the educational system. The classes, each with an average of 25 children between seven and fourteen, were open throughout the year. Even during bad weather, though the only shelter was the bandstand, attendance was usually over

90%. One day in 1929 there were only 13 children at the class. In the night, a snow blizzard had brought the lowest temperature on record. The year before, written work had been cancelled because the ink was frozen into solid blocks. In 1938, the Education Committee turned down the teacher's request that the children be provided with wellingtons. Classes moved to an open-air school in a redundant smallpox hospital on Novers Hill in 1940.

*Now make a circular clockwise tour to exit at lowest point.*

The brick and terracotta plaque structure to the right is the Water Maze,(1984) by Peter Milner and Jane Norbury ,marking the end of the conduit from Knowle which, until it was bombed, fed a fountain at St Mary Redcliffe. (The dry fountain head is on the churchyard wall on Redcliffe Hill. The model for the maze is

one of the smaller gilded roof bosses in the aisle left of the north door.)

*Cross St Luke's Road next to railings and follow public footpath sign that indicates the climb of St Luke's Steps. Walk along Richmond Street and Cambridge Street to the junctions of Wells Road (A37) and Bath Road (A4). A detour round Bellevue Road is recommended.*

In Richmond Street, on the left, note the plaque to Irene Rose, quondam president of the Music Hall Ladies' Guild. On the left hand side of Bellevue Road is a plaque to Clara Butt, the first musician to be made a dame. At the very start of her career, a Bristol University professor introduced her to the audience, saying it was her 'debutt'. From Bellevue, the unusual view of Temple Meads displays not only the architecture but the complex railway

system. Pylle Hill which you are standing on top of, was cut back steeply to make the railway. Traffic from Bath used to come over the hill to Bristol Bridge before the new road was built on the A4 line. (The Great West Road from London was alleged to be one of the worst in eighteenth century England.)

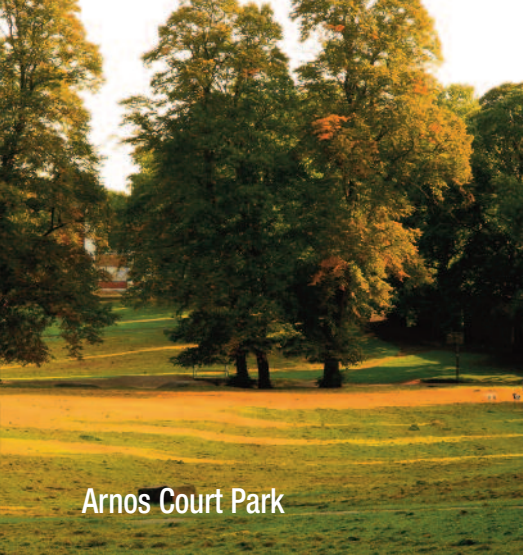
Back at the busy junction **G**, note the resplendent finger-sign, denoting the ways to Bath and Wells. Dismantled in 1970 to make way for a grandiose road scheme that was later to be abandoned, it was put into store in a local council depot for many years before being restored and re sited in its present position.

*Descend the steps by the traffic lights on the far side of Bath Road. They lead you onto the footbridge over the river.*

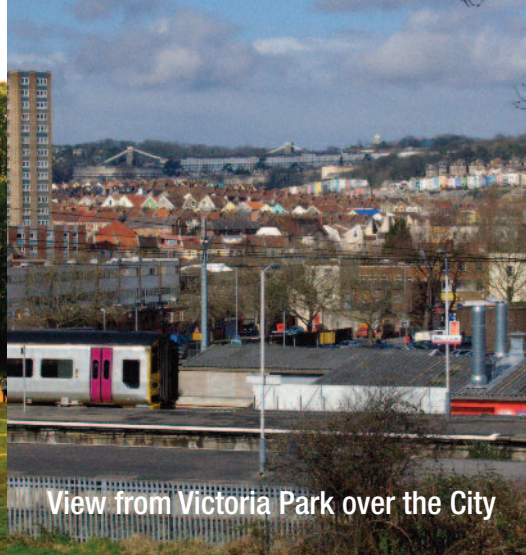
The railway bridge was opened in 1892. It carries the Bristol Relief Line which allowed non-stop trains to avoid the bottleneck of Temple Meads Station.

*Turn left to retrace your steps along part of St Philip's Greenway to Temple Meads*

**Walk devised by Bob Emerson,  
Bristol Ramblers 2002 (updated 2008)**



Arnos Court Park



View from Victoria Park over the City



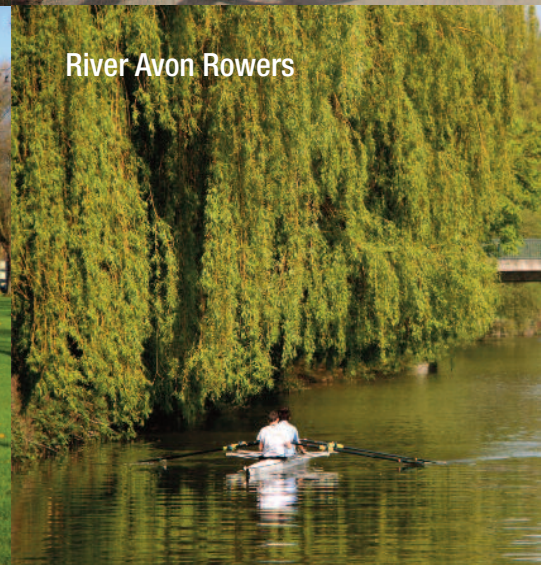
St Philips Greenway



Wildlife



**F** Victoria Park



River Avon Rowers