

Bradford-on-Avon and Avoncliff Circular

Distance: 4½ miles
Walking Time: 2 hours
GRADE: Easy/Moderate 3

6

Bradford-on-Avon is a picturesque Saxon town tucked away in the western corner of Wiltshire, situated eight miles from Bath. This distinctive and delightful settlement forms the focal point for a circular walk that explores the beautiful Avon Valley countryside and Kennet and Avon Canal. A route suitable for wheelchairs follows the towpath to the Cross Guns pub, before doubling back and returning through Barton Farm Country Park.

Maps:

Explorer 156

Chippenham & Bradford-on-Avon
1:25 000 scale

Landranger 173

Swindon & Devizes
1:50 000 scale

Grid Ref.

ST 824 607



PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION

Train

The walk can be joined from either Bradford or Avoncliff Stations. Trains run from Bristol Temple Meads approximately hourly Mondays to Saturdays, with fewer trains on Sundays, and take about 30 minutes. For further information call National Rail Enquiries on 08457 484950 or log on to www.nationalrail.co.uk.

Train companies have adopted a code of practice to offer a high quality service to people with disabilities, provided that advanced warning of travel arrangements is given. If you require advice or assistance on your journey please call First Great Western on 0800 197 1329 or visit www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk

PUBLIC HOUSES/CAFES EN ROUTE

The Cross Guns, Avoncliff, 01225 862335

Various Pubs & Cafes - Bradford-on-Avon

PUBLIC TOILETS

Railway Station Car Park, Bradford-on-Avon

Tithe Barn

CREDITS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Information on this walk has been reproduced with the kind permission of the Weymouth to Bristol Rail Partnership. The Partnership has produced a leaflet describing walks from eleven stations on the Weymouth to Bristol line, available from stations and Tourist Information Centres. Further information about the town and the surrounding area can be obtained from Bradford Tourist Information Centre.

PLACES AND FEATURES OF INTEREST

Barton Farm Country Park

The 36 acre Country Park is the last remnant of the farmland attached to the medieval buildings of Barton Farm. Barton Farm is thought to be the manor house of the Manor of Bradford. The farm extended over a large area on both sides of the river, linked by the Pack Bridge.

Tithe Barn

The Tithe Barn is maintained by English Heritage and information on its history is available at the entrance. The building is constructed from polished stone and a massive timbered roof supports the stone roof tiles, weighing 100 tons. The barn was constructed in 1341, making it over six centuries old.

The Kennet and Avon Canal

Work to build the canal was completed in 1810, including the construction of two wharves and a dry dock in Bradford. At first the canal proved to be a commercial success with barges carrying goods to Bath, Bristol and London, including stone from local quarries. The building of the Great Western Railway ended this period of prosperity and the canal company was forced to sell out to GWR in 1852. The canal remained in navigable condition until the 1950s when it went into decline. More recently The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust and British Waterways have worked to restore the canal.

Follow the path down and underneath the aqueduct. Turn right at the Cross Guns pub and turn right again over the aqueduct towards the station. Where the road to Bradford leads off to the right take the footpath straight ahead. Climb the hill and turn right through kissing gate to Turleigh Farm and then left into Green Lane. At the T-junction in Turleigh turn right and walk back to Bradford.

Avoncliff

Note how the river, canal, road and railway all run along the valley floor to converge at Avoncliff. At this point the railway passes under the canal, the fine aqueduct carries the canal over the river and the road stops.

The Town Bridge, Bradford-on-Avon

The Town Bridge crosses the 'broad ford' on the Avon, which is most likely the origin of the town's name. A wooden bridge may have existed in Saxon times but it was the Normans who built the first stone bridge. This was narrow and many people fell into the river. In 1617 the width of the bridge was doubled by constructing another alongside it. Two ribbed and pointed arches of the original Norman construction can be seen on the eastern side. The little building in the middle of the bridge was originally built as a chapel, but it was subsequently used as a lock-up or prison.

Cross Guns Inn at Avoncliff



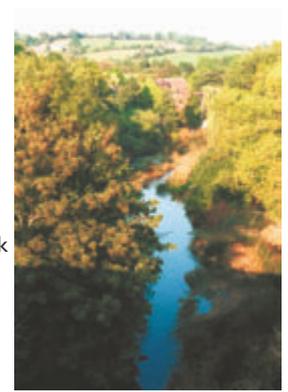
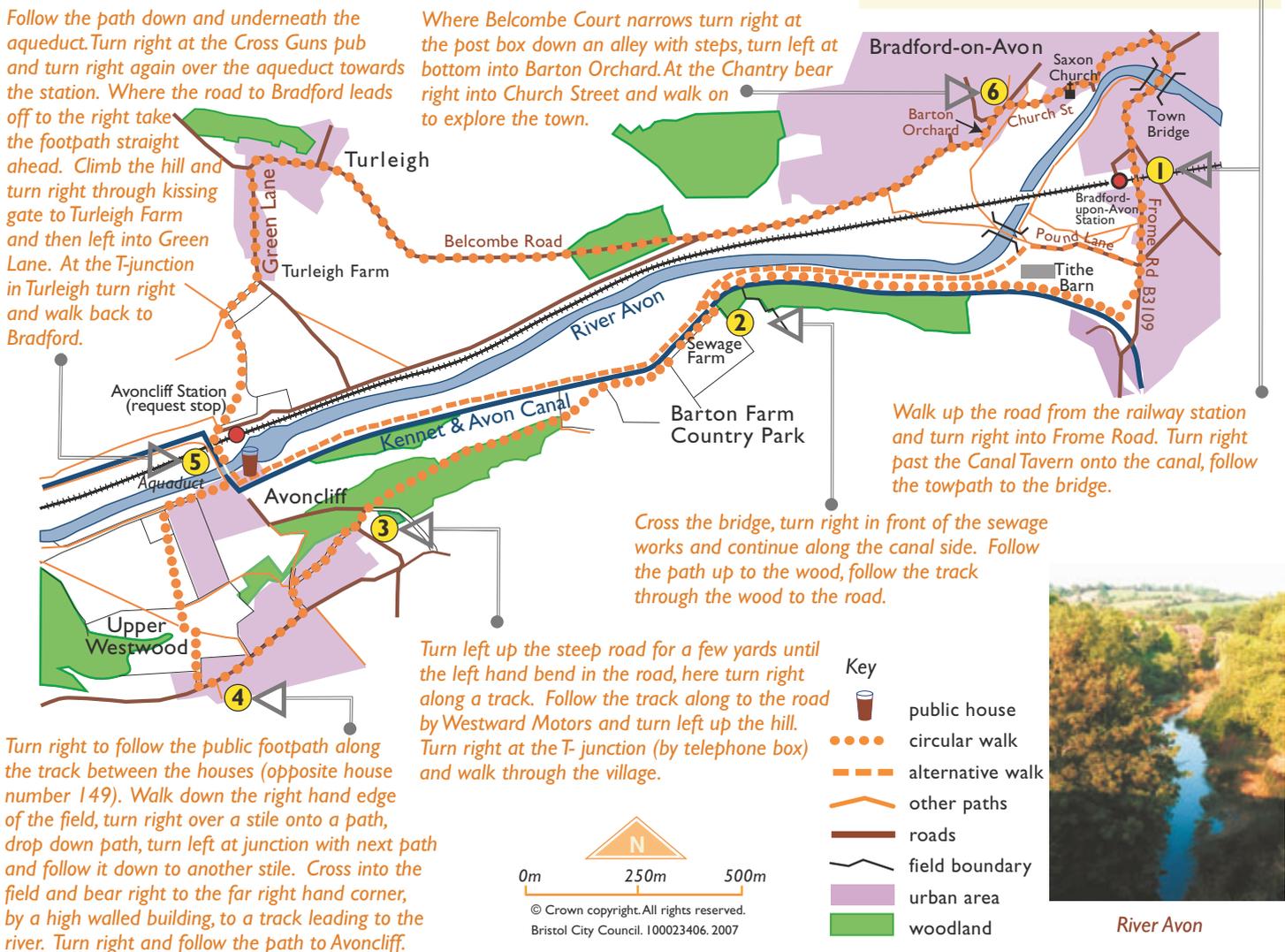
Saxon Church of St Laurence

The early history of the church is unclear, but it is thought to date from the seventh or eighth century, in the time of Adhelm, first Abbot of Malmesbury. The Saxon Church would have been neglected when the Normans built their own grander church. Records of the church are found every two centuries or so until 1715 when it was described as the 'skull house' or 'bone house'. Legend has it that when the local people died in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they were buried in the corner of the graveyard of the Norman Church. When their bodies had decomposed they were dug up and moved to the Saxon Church. The church was later used as a school before being restored later in the nineteenth century. This is the only complete church of Saxon architecture in this country.

Easier alternative, suitable for wheelchairs:

- Walk up the road from the station and turn right into Frome Road. Continue to the canal and turn right past the Canal Tavern onto the canal towpath continuing along to the Cross Guns pub.
- Return the same way as far as the bridge, bear left here down the track into Barton Farm Country Park. By the bridge turn right past Barton Farm and the Tithe Barn into Pound Lane. Turn left into Frome Road and then turn left after the Three Horseshoes pub to the station.

Where Belcombe Court narrows turn right at the post box down an alley with steps, turn left at bottom into Barton Orchard. At the Chantry bear right into Church Street and walk on to explore the town.



River Avon