

River Avon Trail - Willsbridge Mill to City Centre or Conham to City Centre

Distance: 8 or 5 miles
Time: 3½ or 2 hours
GRADE: Easy/Moderate 2 / 3

25

The River Avon Trail extends for thirty miles following the River Avon from Pill in the west to Dundas Aqueduct in the East. The River Avon Trail provides the walker with an excellent opportunity to explore the Avon Valley. Two options for walks of differing length are given, both provide an opportunity to explore sections of the River Avon rich in industrial archaeology. Leading straight back to Bristol City Centre the first option is from Willsbridge Mill, whilst a shorter route is suggested starting just to the south of Conham. Further walks are possible along other sections of the Trail, exploring the spectacular Avon Gorge, open countryside and the splendid Georgian City of Bath. The route of the River Avon Trail is marked on the Ordnance Survey Explorer 155 map.

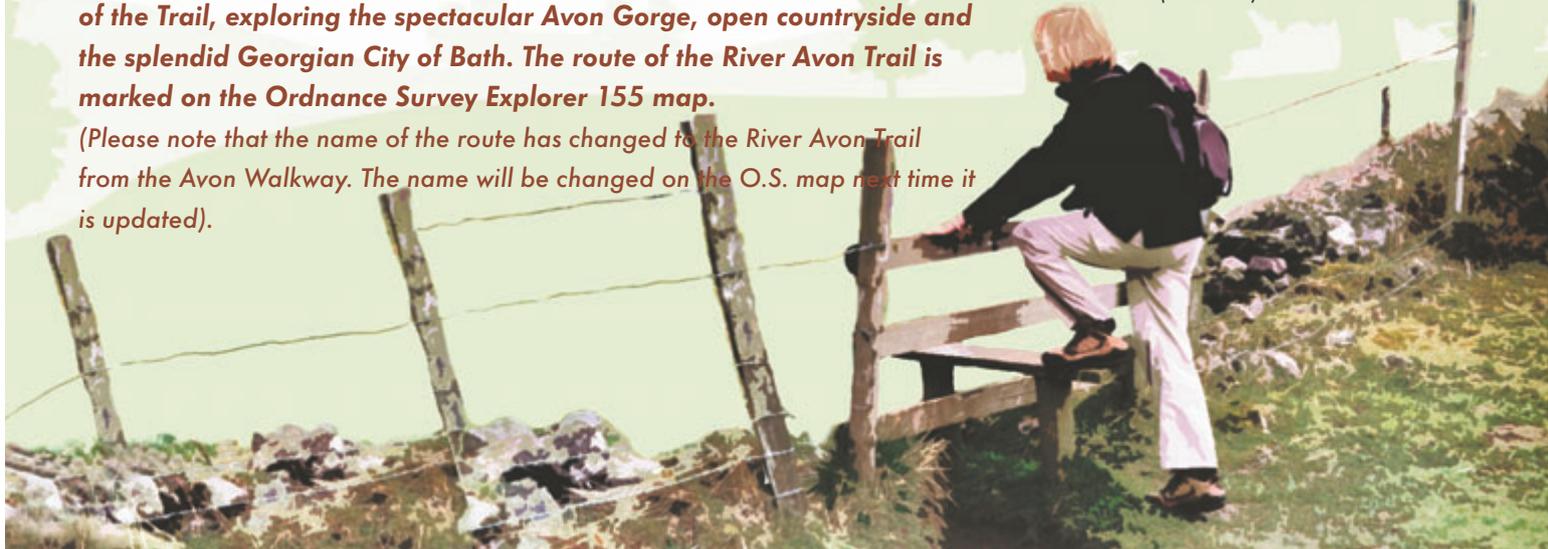
(Please note that the name of the route has changed to the River Avon Trail from the Avon Walkway. The name will be changed on the O.S. map next time it is updated).

Maps:

Explorer 155 Bristol & Bath
1:25 000 scale

Landranger 172 Bristol & Bath
1:50 000 scale

Grid Ref: (Willsbridge Mill) ST 666 707
(Conham) ST 638 718



PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION

River Avon Trail from Willsbridge Mill

The most frequent service to Willsbridge Mill is the number 45 to Park Estate. Leave the bus about 50m before the Willsbridge Mill car park on Long Beach Road. Ask the driver if you are unsure of its location. The service runs from the city centre Mondays to Saturdays, every 20 minutes. On Sundays and Bank Holidays the 45 service operates hourly along the same route.

On Mondays to Saturdays the 332 Bristol to Bath service runs hourly from Bristol Bus Station. On Sundays and Bank Holidays the 632 service operates along the same route at two hourly intervals. Leave the bus at the Queens Head at the bottom of Willsbridge Hill; again ask the driver if you are unsure of its location.

River Avon Trail from Conham

Take the number 44 Park Estate service from St Augustines Parade in the city centre and get off the bus along Memorial Road near Hanham, at the Memorial Close bus stop opposite Kings Drive. Opposite Kings Drive take the public footpath between the houses and walk down into the Avon Valley to join the River Avon Trail footpath. Turn right and follow the Trail into the city centre. The 44 service runs every half hour Mondays to Saturday whilst the 44A service runs hourly along the same route on Sundays.

PUBLIC HOUSES/CAFES EN ROUTE

The Queen's Head	0117 932 2233
The Chequer's Inn	0117 967 4242
Lock and Weir	0117 967 3793
Beese's Tea Garden	0117 977 7412
Bristol City Centre	various pubs and cafes

PUBLIC TOILETS

Conham River Park



traveline
public transport info
0871 200 22 33

CREDITS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Industrial Archaeology of the Avon Valley - Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society.

PLACES AND FEATURES OF INTEREST

Willsbridge Mill

Willsbridge Mill stands on the ancient site of Oldland Manor, referred to in the Domesday Book as lying deep in the heart of Kingswood Forest. In 1790 John Pearsall acquired the site and erected an iron rolling mill powered by large water wheels. In the 1800s the mill was converted into a corn mill which operated well into the 20th century. The building is built from local Pennant sandstone, a distinctive red rock that contrasts with the limestone and calcareous mudstone found in much of the region.

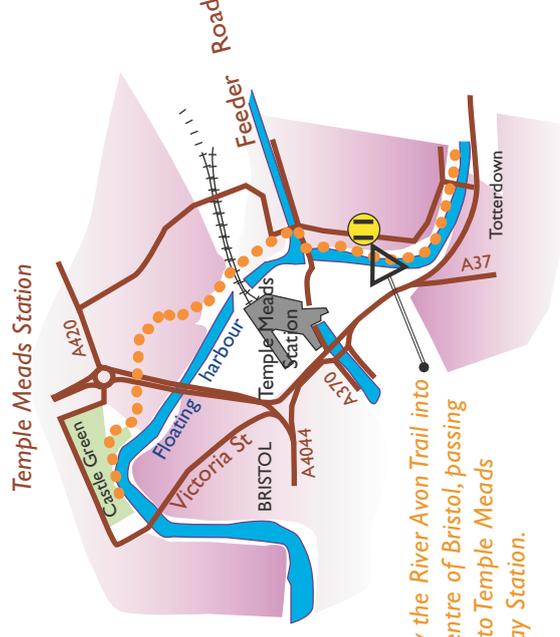
The Mill was renovated by the Avon Wildlife Trust and has an impressive heritage sculpture trail. It is now a key Forest of Avon Gateway site and provides leaflets describing other walks and nature trails, including a trail that is wheelchair accessible. The Mill is open to the public for school visits and special event days.

Conham River Park

Parts of Conham River Park lie on the site of a former sewage works; this was built in 1937 and served the southern part of Kingswood until 1968. Other areas of the park belonged to Conham Hall, which was demolished in 1971. The Hall was associated with the growth of the non-conformist movement in the seventeenth century. Religious persecution forced the early Baptists to hold secret meetings in Hanham Woods and in 1680 - 1685, when all the Bristol chapels were closed, Conham Hall became a haven for members of their congregations.

Hanham Mills

At Hanham Mills the River Avon swings around between wooded banks where a lock allows boats to pass the mill weir. This is the lowest of six locks built between Bristol and Bath in the 1720s by the Avon Navigation Company. The mill weirs had been an obstacle to river transport between the two cities since the thirteenth century. A group of eighteenth-century cottages and The Chequers Inn make an attractive riverside scene.



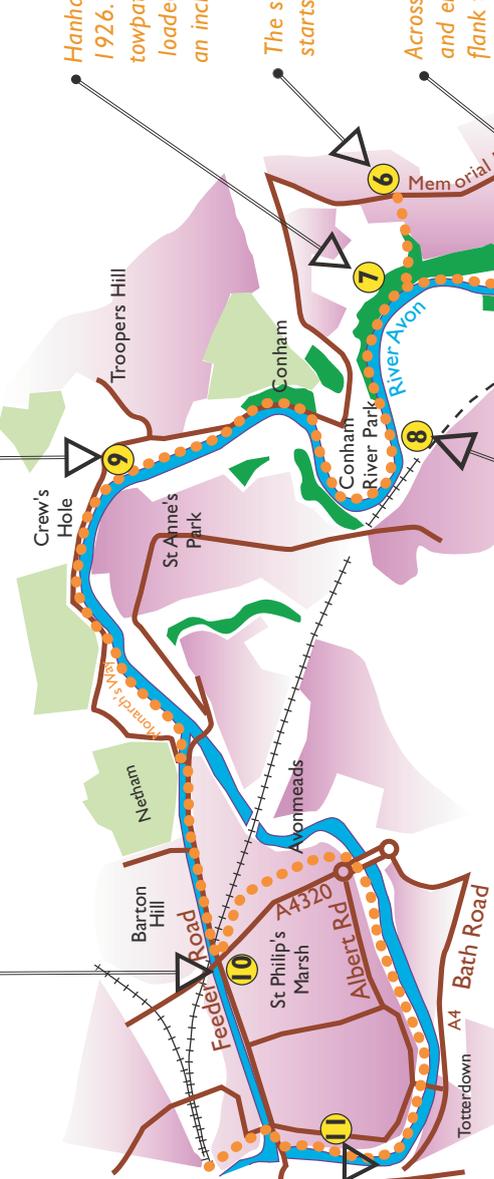
Follow the River Avon Trail into the centre of Bristol, passing close to Temple Meads Railway Station.



Footpath at St Philip's Greenway

Crews Hole has witnessed many industries including copper making (1710 - 96), lead working (18th century), bottle glass making (c.1763), pottery making (1812-19), sulphuric acid and soda-ash production (early 19th century), coal mining (19th century) and tar distillation (1843-1981).

After crossing the railway track, follow the path through Avonmeads in front of the shops, rejoining the river path by the roundabout.



At Connam, from the site of an eighteenth century copper works, the river can be crossed to Beese's Tea Gardens. The Tea Gardens are open from Easter to September and the owners operate a ferry on Saturdays and Sundays. Connam River Park is a pleasant place to relax with its grassy slopes and picnic area. The park contains a rich variety of wildlife.

The riverside cottages are probably of eighteenth-century origin, but have been much altered. The nearby three-storey house has a datestone inscribed 'J. Couch 1840' and it is adorned with Masonic symbols. Between 1819 and 1839 John Couch's Hanham quarries produced walling stone, tombstones and paving slabs, the latter being supplied to customers as far afield as Reading, Oxford and Worcester.

Hanham Mills. Although the brass mill has disappeared there are good examples of early industrial housing nearby, dating from the eighteenth century.



The Weir at Hanham Lock

Hanham Colliery was worked from 1906 to 1926. The spoil heap is still visible from the towpath. The stone wharf where the coal was loaded into barges was linked to the pit by an inclined tramway.

The shorter Connam to City Centre walk starts in Memorial Road, opp. Kings Drive.

Across the river the impressive stone bridges and embankment of the Great Western Railway flank the river. I. K. Brunel was the engineer of this line, which opened in 1840 and is the main line to London via Bath.



Footpath to the Old Lock and Weir Inn

From Willsbridge Mill walk through the Wildlife Garden to the Queen's Head Pub. Follow the path downstream alongside the Siston Brook to join the River Avon Trail.

Londonderry Wharf was the end of a branch of the Avon and Gloucestershire Railway, known locally as the 'Dramway'. This was a horse-drawn railway used for carrying coal from collieries east of Bristol to the River Avon for transportation by barge. The dilapidated stables and weigh house still remain and the kerb of the weighbridge pit and stone sleeper blocks are still visible on the wharf.

Key

- public house
- walk route
- other paths
- field boundary
- road
- railway
- urban area
- woodland
- open area