

# Willsbridge Mill Circular

Distance: 6 miles

Walking Time: 2 hours

GRADE: Easy/Moderate 3

8

Passing through a diverse range of landscapes, this walk takes in the narrow wooded valley of the Siston Brook, the elevated embankments of the Bristol to Bath Railway Path and the wide floodplain of the Avon with its meandering river channel and open meadows. The walk, centred on Willsbridge Mill, is particularly rich in industrial archaeology and wildlife interest. The route travels along sections of the Community Forest Path, Monarch's Way and Avon Towpath. Willsbridge Mill forms the starting and finishing point for the walk. 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.

## Maps:

Explorer 155

Bristol & Bath  
1:25 000 scale

Landranger 172

Bristol & Bath  
1:50 000 scale

Grid Ref: (start of walk) ST 664 707



## PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION

### Bus

The most frequent service to Willsbridge is the number 45 to Park Estate. Leave the bus about 50 metres 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 Sunday and Bank Holidays the 45 service operates hourly along the same route, with a journey time of approximately 30 mins.

On Mondays to Saturdays the 332 Bristol to Bath service from Bristol Bus Station, runs hourly. Leave the bus at the Queen's Head at the bottom of Willsbridge Hill; again ask the driver if you are unsure of its location. The 632 service runs at a 2 hourly interval on Sundays and Public Holidays. This journey will take approximately 25/30 minutes. We recommend you check your journey times by logging on to [www.firstgroup.com](http://www.firstgroup.com) or by calling the Traveline number below.

## PUBLIC HOUSES/CAFES EN ROUTE

|                  |                               |               |
|------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| The Lock Keeper  | Keynsham Road, Keynsham       | 0117 986 2383 |
| The Queen's Head | Willsbridge Hill, Willsbridge | 0117 932 2233 |
| Bitton Station   | Cafe                          | 0117 932 5538 |

## PUBLIC TOILETS EN ROUTE

Willsbridge Mill  
Bitton Station

## CREDITS

Thanks to Avon Valley Railway for the photograph of Bitton Station.

For further information on the Avon Valley Railway log on to [www.avonvalleyrailway.co.uk](http://www.avonvalleyrailway.co.uk) or call 0117 932 7296 for train times or 0117 932 5538 for general enquiries.

For further information on Willsbridge Mill log on to [www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk) or ring 0117 932 6885.



**traveline**  
public transport info  
0871 200 22 33

## 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 1721 John Pearsall acquired the site and erected an iron rolling mill powered by large water wheels. In the 1800's the mill was rebuilt into a corn mill which operated well into the 20th century. Flour milling continued until 1968 when heavy thunderstorms burst the dam wall. The building is built from Pennant Sandstone, a distinctive red rock that contrasts with limestone and calcareous mudstone found in much of the region. Information on the wildlife and industrial heritage of Willsbridge Valley can be found in the exhibition centre.

### Bristol to Bath Railway Path

The path was constructed on the track bed of the former Midland Railway Line. The Railway closed in early the 1970's and was converted to a railway path between 1979 and 1986. Linking Bristol City Centre with the edge of Bath, the railway path provides a 20km traffic free green corridor for walkers and cyclists.



Willsbridge Mill

### Bitton Station, Avon Valley Railway

The Avon Valley Railway Company operate steam trains (accessible to wheelchairs) from Bitton Station. The trains run every Sunday and additional days in the school holidays. The station is open every day. It has been carefully restored and now contains toilets, a cafe and gift shop selling railway memorabilia.



Footpath along River Avon

Willsbridge Valley was once wild woodland. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, this woodland became a royal hunting forest, known as Kingswood Chase. Within the valley there are several disused quarries where Pennant Sandstone is well exposed. At one time the valley was scarred by industrial activity but it is now a haven for wildlife. The quarries and woodland have been planted with trees and shrubs and the valley supports species such as kingfishers, grey wagtails, migrant redwings, foxes, badgers and bats.

From the bus stops at either Long Beach Road or Queen's Head Inn, proceed to Willsbridge Mill. Start the walk at the Mill, following Willsbridge Valley upstream along the Siston Brook to St Anne's Church.

Cross the footbridge; turn left along School Road to a flight of steps up to the right before the bridge to join the Bristol to Bath Railway Path.

Note the impressive rock exposure of red deltaic sandstone at Cherry Garden Cutting. This was laid down in warm shallow seas approximately 300 million years ago.

The Dramway terminus at Londonderry Wharf was built to avoid toll charges at Keynsham Lock. Look out for the kerb of the weighbridge pit and more stone sleepers. Walk past the weighbridge and stables and over the Siston Brook. Turn right and follow the path alongside the brook upstream to the Queen's Head.



In June 1685 Monmouth's army amassed at Sydenham Meadows for an assault on Bristol during the Monmouth Rebellion.

Buildings here are part of Avon Wharf, once a busy terminus of the Avon and Gloucestershire Dramway. This was a horse-drawn railway used for carrying coal from collieries east of Bristol to the River Avon for transportation by barge. Look out for iron 'fish belly' rails re-used for fences along the river path and also stone sleepers embedded on the ground at the Wharf. They were quarried at the nearby Sydenham Mead Quarry.



Avon Valley Railway - Bitton Station

Leave the Railway Path via steps on the right hand side, immediately after the road bridge. Field Grove Farm is situated on the right; it was here in 1590 that John Hardington invented the principle of the WC. At this point the walk joins the Monarch's Way, a long distance walk reputedly following the escape route of Charles II after his defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651.

- Key**
- bus stop
  - public house
  - circular walk
  - other paths
  - roads
  - field boundary
  - urban area
  - woodland



© Crown copyright. All rights reserved.  
Bristol City Council. 100023406. 2007