



## WALK 6

### THE BATH AND NORTH STOKE TRAIL HIGH POINTS AND RIVER CROSSINGS/VIEWS AND VALLEYS

Start Point	Bath - Newbridge Park & Ride site
Distance	16km (10 1/2 miles) complete route 12km (8 miles) via Kelston
Difficulty	Medium/hard some steep sections
Time	2-3 hours half route / 4-5 hours complete route
Refreshments	Pubs in Bath, Newbridge, Kelston, Swineford and Upton Cheyney

### INTRODUCTION

**T**his walk explores the rural landscape of the Avon Valley between Bath and Bristol. You'll find secluded woodland and meadows, and hills with panoramic views. And there's evidence of man's use of the valley for thousands of years, with an ancient hillfort, a Roman vineyard and a racecourse as well as canals, railways and contemporary cyclepaths. It's a walk with something for everyone!

## THE ROUTE

There are many options with this walk. You can start in Bath, Swineford or Saltford and complete the full walk over the day or take a shorter route through Kelston. The route described below starts at Newbridge Park & Ride site, Bath.

- 1 Go to the metal gate at the end of Car Park A adjacent to the Boat House Pub, Squeeze past the gate, turn right, walk across the field and follow the well-defined path up the wooded hill. Turn right at the road and left 50m further along, following the track between the two parts of Oldfield School. At the road turn left and continue along Pen Hill Road to the first entrance to the playing field on the left.
- 2 Enter the playing field and follow its wooded boundary for 100m to a kissing gate, where we join the Cotswold Way National Trail. Follow the well-signed Cotswold Way National Trail to climb Penn Hill, across fields to Pendean Farm and on towards Prospect Stile.
- 3 For a shorter route via Kelston take the bridleway on the left and follow route instructions for walk 6B below. Continuing on the main route, follow the Cotswold Way up to Prospect Stile, around Bath Race Course and across the ancient hillfort.
- 4 We leave the Cotswold Way at this point, turning left and following the track into North Stoke.
- 5 Turn right next to Chesnut Barn and follow this old track down into Piple Bottom.
- 6 Turn left and follow the lane into Upton Cheyney. Walk along the road signposted to Swineford and Bitton, past the Upton Inn. Take the second public footpath on the left, signposted to Swineford and follow the path through fields to emerge into Swineford Picnic Site.
- 7 Continue past the car park and through a farmyard. Cross the road by the Swan pub and follow the riverside footpath. Cross under the old viaduct and up the slope to join the Bristol and Bath Railway Path. Turn right. Follow this wooded route past Saltford and the woodlands of Kelston Park
- 8 After the bridge turn down left to follow the riverside path back to New Bridge and the Park & Ride.

## Walk 6B: Shortcut via Kelston

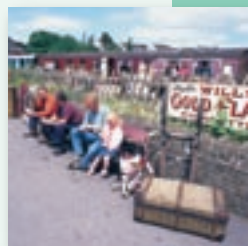
From point 3 above follow the old farm lane all the way to Kelston. Turn left into Bath Road and walk past the Old Crown pub to the sharp road bend and turn right down the lane. Follow the lane past Manor Farm and the village hall and continue through the gate, emerging to the rear of Old School House. Turn left along the track and then right over a stile, follow the path through fields to a track leading to the Bristol and Bath Railway Path. On joining the railway path turn left and follow instructions at point 8 above.



## BOATS AND TRAINS, PASSENGERS AND PATHS

You'll have excellent views along and into the wide, open valley of the River Avon for much of this walk. The Avon Valley is a busy place, and you're likely to see canal boats, trains, cars and lorries from various viewpoints as well as cyclists and other pedestrians. It's been a major route for centuries, following transport trends and developments as people have found different ways to move themselves and their goods along the valley. Initially the river was the main route, carrying agricultural goods and coal from the rural areas to Bristol and out to the Bristol Channel and beyond. Locks added in the 1720's made the Avon navigable as far as Bath, and once the Kennet and Avon Canal opened in 1810, linking the Avon and Kennet rivers between Bath and Reading, there was a navigable inland waterway between Bristol and London. Roads and railways followed, with the A4 and two railway lines.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel's Great Western Railway opened on the south side of the valley in 1841, linking Bristol and Bath with London. The Midland Railway followed soon after, opening their line on the north side of the river, linking Bristol and Bath, in 1869. The road and mainline railway on the south side remain busy with traffic, but the river and the old Midland Railway have become popular recreational routes, with narrowboats and pleasure craft on the river and a wonderful car-free route on the old railway line. It's called the Bristol to Bath Railway Path and is a multi-access route for walkers, cyclists and has good access for disabled users. There's also the River Avon Trail, a 32km riverside path between Pill Harbour and Bath and a picnic site accessible from both the trail and the cycle path. Numerous other paths, bridleways and lanes link the Avon Valley with the Cotswold Hills.





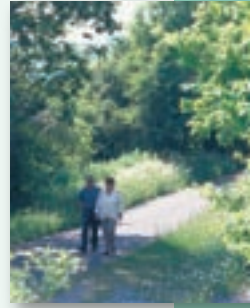
**The River Avon  
near Kelston  
Park**

## **A TOWERING FOLLY**

The southern end of the Cotswold Ridge rises up from the Avon Valley, and the Cotswold Way National Trail climbs up Penn Hill and on towards Kelston Round Hill with its characteristic clump of trees at 218m. Some of the trees were damaged during the gales in 1990, but the remaining trees and the hill remain a prominent feature of the landscape, visible from many viewpoints in the valley and from the surrounding hills. In front of you is your first glimpse of Bristol, while on the western skyline you can see the Beckford Monument, an Italianate tower over 30m high, built as a retreat by the author William Beckford in 1827. Beckford used the tower to house his collection of art and books and lived there in seclusion until his death in 1844.

## PROSPECT STILE

The topograph at Prospect Stile explains the near and distant features visible from this point. You can see for miles around, eastwards towards Westbury on the Wiltshire Downs, south down to the Georgian city of Bath, a World Heritage Site and westwards over the Avon Valley to the Mendips and along the river, past Saltford Marina towards Bristol. On clear days you can see the two Severn Bridges spanning the silvery strip of the river and estuary to the dark woodland of the Forest of Dean and, sometimes, beyond to the Black Mountains in Wales.



## HIGH HORSES

Bath racecourse moved to this site on Landsdown Ridge in the late 1780's and people have flocked to enjoy flat racing here ever since. In the days before the Midland Railway line closed for passengers in 1966, Kelston was a popular stop for the racecourse. Spectators had to walk to Kelston village and then up the steep hill to the race course itself. At 235 metres it's the highest racecourse in England. There are around 18 meetings each year, between April and October.



*The Old Crown,  
Kelston*

## FORTS AND VINES

There are numerous signs of Roman settlement around the village of North Stoke, including earthworks and enclosures as well as Little Down Camp, a Scheduled Monument with a well-defined ditch and rampart. Just north of the village at Piplely Bottom, you can see stepped terraces on the hillside. Some of these are believed to date from late Roman times and may be one of the first places in Britain where vines were grown. The steepness of the valley and the warm southerly aspect made it suitable for wine production.

## SALTFORD

Saltford is the main settlement in this part of the Avon Valley and is visible from many points on this walk. It's an attractive village on the west bank of the River Avon, roughly midway between Bath and Bristol. The historic centre is around the church of St Mary, which is close to the Bristol to Bath Railway Path. The village expanded in the 19th century, as more houses were built nearer the river, and it grew again during the 20th century. Saltford is a thriving village, attracting lots of weekend visitors who come to enjoy the river, the railway path and the valley.

There are four pubs and there is always something to watch on the river, especially around the lock and weir. These were constructed as part of the Avon Navigation in the 1700's when a series of locks were installed to enable barges to travel upstream as far as Bath. Not everyone was happy with this 'improvement' - there are reports of poverty stricken local colliers damaging Saltford lock because they were concerned that the waterway would bring cheaper coal from the Midlands. Nowadays the river is mainly used for recreation. It's popular with all kinds of boaters - there are canoeists and rowers as well as narrowboats and cruisers. The Avon County Rowing Club is based at Saltford, and the village also has its own marina.

