

Bristol Harbour Heritage Trail



Bristol's Floating Harbour was built at the beginning of the 19th century and opened on 1 May 1809. The famous canal engineer William Jessop devised a scheme that impounded 83 acres of the tidal river Avon, meaning that for the first time ships in the port of Bristol could stay afloat at all times – hence the (to modern ears) curious name.

For centuries, ships visiting Bristol had used the strong tidal current to carry them the six miles between the city and the mouth of the river Avon. Careful navigation was needed to ensure that they reached their destination before the tide ebbed, forcing the ships to go aground at whatever point they had reached. The quaysides couldn't accommodate many ships and by the late 1700s lots more ships wanted to visit than could be fitted in.

The Floating Harbour allowed the city's merchants to continue trading from their long-established warehouses on Narrow and Broad Quays, the Grove and the Backs. At the same time, it inadvertently allowed masses of room for port expansion over the next 150 years. Jessop didn't intend this, but by placing the entrance locks at Hotwells, as far up the river as anyone believed a ship could safely travel on one tide, he impounded far more of the river than was needed for trade at the time.

The Harbour complex also contains three miles of man-made waterways – the New Cut and the Feeder Canal. The former provided a tidal bypass for smaller vessels to enter or leave the Harbour further inland, at Bathurst or Totterdown locks. This delivered the barges and small sailing vessels closer to the parts of the Harbour they wanted to use. The Feeder provided both a supply of fresh water to maintain the level of the Harbour and a route for inland waterways craft to rejoin the river Avon above the weir at Netham, on which they could journey to Bath and later in the century to London.

The Harbour officially ceased to be part of the commercial Port of Bristol in 1975 and has since been the scene of extensive regeneration. The extent of it – nearly eight miles of water across three miles of the city – makes for a tremendously varied landscape. This booklet describes several trails that walkers and cyclists can follow alongside all of these waterways. We encourage you to explore for yourselves the byways and mysteries that this unique feature of Bristol offers.

Along the Harbour - Prince Street to Cumberland Basin



Along the Harbour - Prince Street Bridge to Cumberland Basin

Starting on the south (Wapping Road) side of Prince Street Swing Bridge, travel westwards in front of L and M Sheds, the home of the new Museum of Bristol (due to open in 2011).



Be wary of the sunken railway lines if you are cycling – they are very slippery in the wet and it is advised that cyclists walk this stretch.

- 1 This is Princes Wharf. Before the wharf was built up in the 1860s, it had long been a shipbuilding area, and it's here that IK Brunel had his first ship, the Great Western built in 1837. The Great Western was one of the earliest steamships to cross the Atlantic. Later, the wharf was built up and a 7-storey granary erected on the site. Everything here was destroyed during the Blitz on Bristol and the wharf was remodelled in the early 1950s with new electric cranes, railways, flush roadways and transit sheds to handle general mixed cargo on ships from the Baltic and southern Ireland.

It was the last wharf to operate commercially when the Harbour closed in 1975. The transit sheds then became the home of Bristol Industrial Museum and now the new Museum of Bristol in M-Shed. The Museum service looks after the cranes and three historic vessels (the tugs Mayflower and John King and the fire boat Pyronaut) and operates a steam railway.

- 2 Further along Princes Wharf, you'll see the Fairbairn steam crane, finished in 1878. It was built to handle occasional heavy lifts up to 35 tons. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, but it still works and is demonstrated by the Museum on some weekends.

(Just by the steam crane on the left is a cycle path that will link you to the New Cut at 36.)

As you approach the brick building ahead, pedestrians can go to the right, onto the quay edge. Cyclists and wheelchair users must go to the left, into the roadway. TAKE GREAT CARE AT THIS POINT - CARS AND TRAINS CONVERGE HERE AND THE RAILS ARE PROUD OF THE ROAD SURFACE.

- 3 The steam crane marks the start of Wapping Railway Wharf. From the 1870s, this was open quayside with railway sidings where The Point residential development now stands. Brunel's Buttery has a citywide reputation for its bacon sandwiches!
- 4 At the end of Wapping Wharf is the Bristol Packet, from where you can take a tour of the Harbour or, when the tide is right, have a trip down the Avon Gorge.
- 5 Beyond is Brunel's s.s. Great Britain, the world's first iron passenger liner. This great ship was launched from here in 1843 and travelled the world's oceans, before returning to Bristol as a hulk in 1970. By extraordinary chance, she now lies in her original building dock, and both this and the ship have been restored to create a unique visitor experience.



At the s.s. Great Britain, turn left onto Gas Ferry Road and travel 100 metres.

- 6 On the left are the former main offices and studios of Aardman Animations, the Bristol-based company that has produced the Wallace and Gromit series of films and the Oscar-winning Chicken Run. It was built in the 1980s as a banana-ripening warehouse for Fyffe's. Aardman's later purpose-built offices and studios, completed in 2008, are further along the road on the left.

Just past the red brick warehouse on your right, there is a pathway that leads to the head of the Albion dry dock.

- 7 The dry dock on your right and the industrial buildings around you are the last remains of a shipyard that thrived on this site from 1820 until 1977. When they closed, Charles Hill & Sons were the oldest shipbuilding company in the UK, having been established in 1772. The Albion Dockyard extended across the whole of what is now Bristol Marina. Boatbuilding and repair still continues here on a smaller scale.

Beyond the building on the corner, turn right and head towards the gated entrance to the Albion Dockyard. You can make a diversion here to look around but this is a working area, and, whilst you are unlikely to be prevented from wandering amongst the craft under repair on dry land, you must exercise due care.

Continue to the left around the top of the Marina basin and to the right down the slipway, veering to the left onto the waterside walkway.

- 8** This area is Baltic Wharf, once the home of several timber yards where ships from the Baltic, Canada and Russia came to offload cargoes. The quayside was never built up, so that dockers had to run on planks laid across barges between ship and shore carrying long lengths of wood. The pub called the Cottage at the end of this stretch was once the office for one of the timber firms.



Continue straight ahead past the Cottage towards the Underfall Yard. This is another working area, and you should exercise due care.

(Note: if access through the Yard is closed for working operations, you can skirt around it by leaving through the green gate on the left onto Cumberland Road and following Avon Crescent. You can also access the New Cut at 40 by carefully crossing Cumberland Road here).

- 9** The Underfall Yard is named after the sluices ('underfalls') that control the level of water in the Harbour. This is where the tidal river Avon was originally dammed (the Overfall dam, a form of weir) to create the Floating Harbour in 1809, and remains the operational centre for maintenance and operation of all the lock gates, bridges and leisure activities today. JB Girdlestone, Docks Engineer, mostly installed the facilities that you can see today in the 1880s and the Yard is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Part of the Yard is operated by a Trust to encourage traditional boat-building and –repair skills. The haul-out slipway is in regular use to maintain vessels. There are interpretive panels to tell you more about the Yard.

At the far end of the Yard, turn left to the road. Turn right here and proceed towards the swing bridge. Turn right at the Nova Scotia pub.

- 10** The water to your left here is Jessop's original junction lock into the Harbour from Cumberland Basin. It was blocked after the new Junction Lock was built in the late 1860s. The row of cottages on the far side was built for its employees by the Dock Company in the 1830s and now houses a number of maritime organisations.

Retrace your steps to the bridge and cross the road carefully to a ramp leading down to the quayside at Cumberland Basin. Continue along the edge of the water towards the flyover.

(Note: some people will find it impossible to cross the locks at the far end of Cumberland Basin, although access up to them is good. Instead, cross the Harbour here on Junction Lock Bridge and continue to the Pumphouse at 17).

- 11** Cumberland Basin was one of the most expensive elements of the Harbour to build. It was designed as a half-tidal basin, enabling more ships to arrive and leave safely for some hours either side of high tide than could have been managed by locks alone.
- 12** As you approach the flyover, you'll notice a blocked branch to the left; this was the way in to the southern entrance lock, one of Jessop's two originals and later enlarged by IK Brunel. Under the flyover is another piece of 'Bruneliana', a wrought-iron swing bridge that originally crossed Brunel's lock. It uses tubular construction that Brunel later adopted for his major railway bridges at Chepstow and Saltash.
- 13** The flyover is part of a major road scheme built in the mid-1960s. It crosses the Harbour on the Plimsoll Bridge, named for Samuel Plimsoll, the shipping safety campaigner who was born in Bristol. The bridge can open and close in three minutes to allow shipping to pass.

Continue under the flyover onto the promontory alongside the lock. Take particular care here on the unfenced quaysides with very long drops and deep water. It is recommended that cyclists dismount to explore this area. Start on the left of the promontory, near the fixed wrought iron bridge.

- 14** From the fixed bridge (a copy of Brunel's swing bridge, which was originally positioned here) you will have good view of the remains of the southern entrance lock. This was the smaller of the two built by Jessop in 1809, and much enlarged in 1845 by IK Brunel. It had one large gate at each end, hinged on the left and designed to swing back into the curved recess that is usually visible. The right-hand side of the lock has a ledge that was intended to allow clearance for the paddle wheel on one side of the largest steamers at the time, saving the cost of making the entire lock to this width. You also get a good view of the Clifton Suspension Bridge from here.

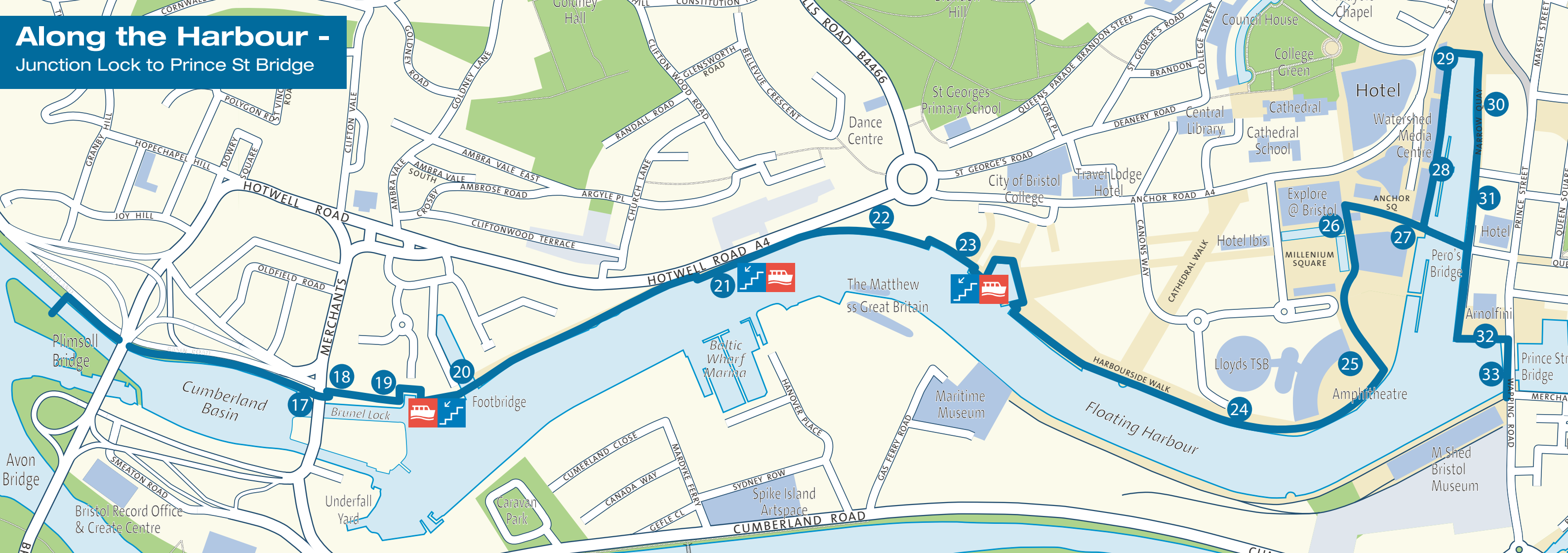
(You can join the walk along the New Cut at 43 from here by continuing down the left side of Brunel's lock and heading to the left.)

- 15** To the right of this lock are the remains of Jessop's northern entrance lock. It was here that the s.s. Great Britain nearly came to grief as she left Bristol in 1844. At low tide you can see in the mud the gridiron, where ships could be dried out as the tide receded for minor repair or inspection work on their hulls.
- 16** The current entrance lock was opened in 1873, replacing the earlier two. It can accommodate the largest ships that can navigate the Avon. The lock gates were operated by the hydraulic system from the Underfall Yard, but by 2010 this will have been replaced. From here it is six miles by water to the mouth of the River Avon where it joins the Severn estuary. The tidal range there can be as much as 52 feet (16 metres), and even here at the lock the river rises as much as 37 feet (11.6 metres), covering the whole promontory on some spring tides.

Cross the lock gates on the walkway with care. Cyclists will need to wheel their bicycles. On the far side turn right and pass under the Plimsoll Bridge. There is a mark on the control cabin to record the highest ever tide - over 40 feet (12.4 metres). Continue down the side of the Basin to Junction Lock swing bridge and carefully cross the road towards the Pumphouse pub.



Along the Harbour - Junction Lock to Prince St Bridge



Along the Harbour - Junction Lock to Prince Street Bridge

- 17** The swing bridge was installed in 1925 to replace an earlier bridge. John Lysaght & Co, a major Bristol-based structural steelwork company, built it. It bridges the Junction Lock, which links the Basin to the Harbour. It is rarely used as a lock today, but does house the stop gates, which are closed when the tide in the river is expected to rise higher than the Harbour level. These are an essential part of Bristol's flood defence system.
- 18** The Pumphouse housed the original hydraulic pumping system for operating the lock gates and bridges of the 1870s locks. It was superseded by the Underfall Yard system in the late 1880s.

Continue with the water on your right towards the next bridge

- 19** Notice the brick remains of the railway swing bridge that crossed the lock at its inner end, bringing the Bristol Harbour Railway from Ashton swing bridge to Canon's Marsh. Just beyond is the inlet for the entrance to the now-filled Merchants Dock. This was built in 1768 by William Champion as Bristol's first wet dock and was operated for many years by the Merchant Venturers.



- 20** The next bridge crosses the former dry dock of the shipyard that was on the site, now called Poole's Wharf. Established by Hilhouse in 1772, it was later occupied by some of Bristol's more pioneering shipbuilders, including GK Stothert. Shipbuilding finished here in 1904, but repair continued until the 1930s, after which the area became a coal-importing yard and then the final home of Bristol's sand-dredging fleets. After they left in 1991, the area was redeveloped with housing.

Continue past the housing here and onto the Mardyke.

- 21** The Mardyke was traditionally a waiting area for ships when berths in the city centre were occupied. It was built up in the 1860s and became the mooring for the Royal Naval Reserve drill ships Daedalus, and Flying Fox.



Continue to Capricorn Quay

- 22** Capricorn Quay is the modern name for a residential development on the site of the Lime Kiln Dry Dock. The grass area between the two blocks shows its outline. The dry dock closed in 1903.
- 23** The old roofless large stone buildings at the end of Capricorn Quay are the last remaining structures of Canon's Marsh Gas Works. This was Bristol's first gas works, initially making gas from whale oil in the 1820s but later converting to coal gas. The works remained active until the mid 1960s when natural gas arrived.



Continue round the harbour inlet and on to Canon's Marsh as far as the tower with a weathervane on it - about 500m

- 24** Transit sheds close to the water and a railway goods yard behind once occupied this heavily redeveloped area. None of it existed before 1900 – the quaysides and railway yard were part of a major expansion of facilities at the turn of the century. In the 1920s, huge concrete bonded warehouses for tobacco were constructed in this area too. These were blown up spectacularly in 1988 for the construction of the Lloyds Bank headquarters to begin.

- 25** The amphitheatre in front of Lloyds takes its radius from the stone tower. This was originally the base for a steam crane, scrapped in 1969. The weather vane and turret were rescued from a demolished building elsewhere in the city and placed here in the 1970s.

Head up the ramp close to Lloyds and past the four square columns into Millennium Square.

26 The concrete building with the silver sphere attached to it is the remodelled Great Western Railway goods shed, one of the earliest surviving reinforced concrete buildings in the UK. It houses the hands-on science centre Explore @t Bristol. Round the corner to the right is Anchor Square. The stone building on the right was Rowe Bros lead works, built here in the late 1890s to take advantage of the railway that was about to arrive here.

Continue toward the footbridge over the Harbour.

27 The bridge is called Pero's Bridge for an enslaved African boy who was brought to Bristol as a servant for the Pinney family in the 1740s. He was one of very few Africans that came here; most were shipped directly from Africa to the West Indies to be exchanged for plantation crops like sugar which was brought to Bristol for processing, a triangular trade on which much of the city's wealth was based.

At this point you can cross the bridge moving on to 30 in the itinerary. OR you can turn left along the quayside to the end of the water.

28 This stretch of water is called St Augustine's Reach, after the abbey church of St Augustine (now Bristol Cathedral). The Reach was the course of the river Frome, diverted into this man-made trench in 1247. The water once remained open for another 400 metres through what is now the city centre (you can still find the end where the road is called Quay Head) but was covered over in stages from the 1890s to the late 1930s, initially to create a terminus for Bristol's electric tramways system.

29 The last transit shed along the Reach, E Shed, (now home to the Watershed complex) has a very ornate end wall, designed to make the vista from the city centre more interesting when it was completed in 1896. Right up to the 1960s, cargo ships tied up on this stretch of water, making the port very much part of the life of the city.

Cross to the far side of the Reach and continue down the opposite side to Pero's Bridge.

30 This side of the Reach is called Narrow Quay. Together with Broad Quay (now landlocked to the north) this was the main trading wharf of the port for centuries. It was constructed alongside St Augustines Reach in the 1240s. It remained Bristol's principal wharf until the major expansion of quaysides on Wapping in the 1860s.

Continue towards the end of the Quay.

31 The Architecture Centre is housed in one of the few buildings that date from the time of the Floating Harbour's construction.

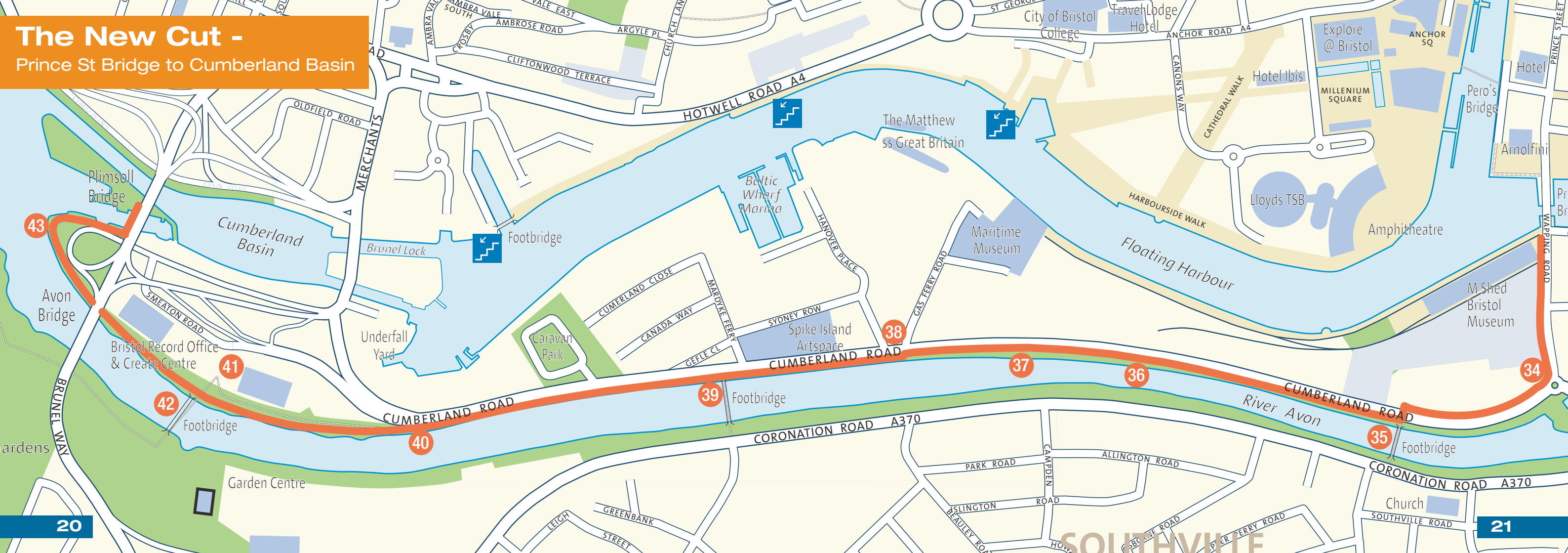
32 The last building on the Quay is the Bush warehouse, home to the Arnolfini art gallery. Originally built in about 1833 as an anchor warehouse and offices by the major Bristol engineering company Acramans, it was expanded in the mid 1830s in expectation of the tea trade coming to Bristol (although it never did).

33 Prince Street swing bridge replaced a drawbridge in 1878. It is operated by water hydraulic power and swings regularly during the summer months. It is the lowest bridge in the Harbour. Before the Floating Harbour was built, there was a ferry across the tidal river at this point.

Cross Prince Street Bridge to 1.



The New Cut - Prince St Bridge to Cumberland Basin



The New Cut – Prince Street Bridge to Cumberland Basin

From the south side of Prince Street Bridge, continue south on the right hand-side of Wapping Road. At the mini-roundabout, turn right

- 34** The curved section of stone wall on the corner and the gateway a little further along Cumberland Road are the last remains of Bristol's New Gaol. Built in 1816, it suffered considerable damage during the Bristol Riots of 1831. It continued in use until 1883, with regular public executions on top of the gateway until 1845.

Cross the road at the lights

- 35** The ornate footbridge at the lights is Gaol Ferry Bridge, built in the 1930s to replace the ferry that crossed the Cut here. You can still see the ramps leading to the ferry on both sides. The bridge is also a good viewpoint from which to see the most spectacular section of the New Cut.

Return to the road and turn left. In about 200 metres fork left down the ramp to the waterside path

- 36** Known colloquially as the 'chocolate path' because of the resemblance of the paving blocks to chocolate bars, this waterside walkway was built when the Bristol Harbour Railway linked Ashton Bridge with Wapping Wharf in 1906.
- 37** The New Cut was dug as part of the scheme to create the Floating Harbour in 1804-9. Its role was to create a tidal bypass for smaller vessels that could lock in at Bathurst lock (74) or Totterdown lock (85), allowing the main locks at Cumberland Basin to handle larger ships. It was used for this until the Second World War. Over 1000 men were employed in digging it. A persistent local myth says that French Napoleonic War prisoners were used, but the labour force was largely composed of English and Irish navvies, well experienced in digging canals across Britain. There are interpretation panels along the Cut, placed here by the Friends of the Avon New Cut (FrANC).

- 38** On the right, across Cumberland Road, there are three buildings of note. Aardman Animations new studios and offices (see 6) precede Gas Ferry Road. Next is the former office building of Charles Hill & Sons, shipbuilders and operators of the Bristol City Line of Steamships from 1820 until 1977, one of the city's longest-lived companies. Finally, Spike Island Artspace, a former Brooke Bond tea-packing factory (25% of Britain's tea came through Avonmouth Docks during the 1950s and 1960s).
- 39** Vauxhall footbridge was built in 1900 to link the developing suburbs Ashton and Southville with the rest of the city via the Harbour ferries. It was designed to swing to allow masted vessels past, although it hasn't swung since 1936. It is another of the bridges built by John Lysaght & Co in Bristol (see 80).

Continue along the path.

(Steps to Vauxhall footbridge can be used as a link back to the Harbour at 21 via Mardyke Ferry Road.)

- 40** The point where the path is constricted by a steel hut marks the junction of the Cut and the original tidal Avon. This is where the dam was built to create the Floating Harbour and until the 1840s there was a weir – the Overfall – here to control the Harbour level. Sluices – the Underfalls – replaced its function and much of the land around it was reclaimed to create the Underfall Yard (9). At low tide you can see the outlets from the Underfalls at this point.

Continue along the path.

(A little further along, you can carefully cross the railway and the road to reach the Underfall Yard and the Harbour walkway at 9.)

- 41** Three very large red brick buildings dominate this area. They were built as bonded tobacco warehouses by the Corporation so that the local manufacturers WD & HO Wills could import large quantities through the port and store it here. The first one you come to, A Bond, was finished in 1905, followed by B Bond (now the Create Centre and Bristol Record Office) in 1908. The third (C Bond over the river) was delayed by the First World War and a fourth projected one was never built.

42 Ashton swing bridge was constructed as a two-level railway and road bridge in 1906. Another Lysaght construction, it carried the Bristol Harbour Railway extension that linked the main line to Wapping Wharf and Canons Marsh. It last swung in 1934 and was fixed in place in 1951. The road deck was removed in 1965.

Continue past B Bond and fork left behind the buildings below the flyover. Follow the footpath to the end of the promontory.

43 There is a concrete memorial on the promontory commemorating the completion of the Cumberland Basin flyover scheme in 1965. The view down the gorge to the Clifton Suspension Bridge from its seat is spectacular, but marred by the constant traffic noise.

Continue around the promontory to the fixed wrought iron bridge, which links with the Harbour walk at 14.



Then



Today



Then



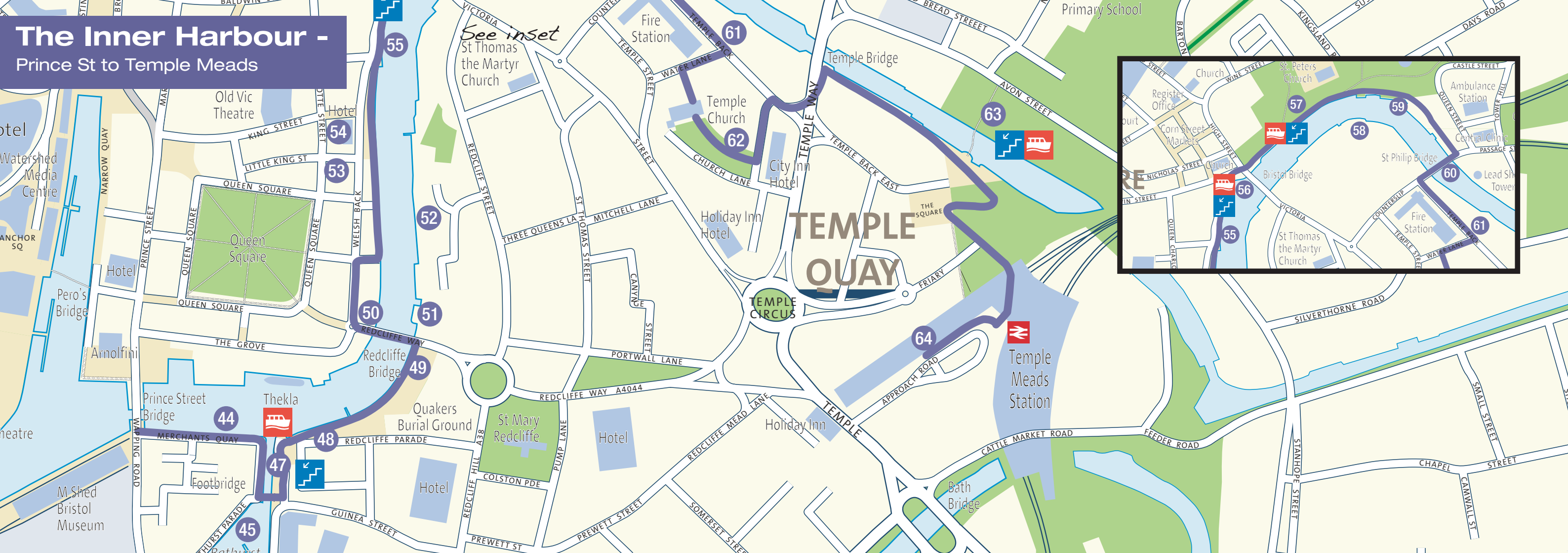
Today



Then



The Inner Harbour - Prince St to Temple Meads



The Inner Harbour – Prince Street to Temple Meads

Start at Prince Street Bridge, south side. Keeping the water to your left move east along the quayside to the corner.

- 44** This was Bathurst Wharf (now called Merchants Quay), constructed in the 1860s and for many years the home of transit sheds and an oil seed mill. On the opposite side of the Harbour you can see the Thekla, a Baltic coaster brought to Bristol in 1983 to serve as a floating entertainment venue, and River Station restaurant, once the River Police base, built in the 1950s. The lock at the end, now disused, leads into Bathurst Basin.

Continue to the footbridge.

- 45** Bathurst Basin was part of Jessop's Floating Harbour scheme and was created by enlarging the mill pond of the tidal Trin Mills which had stood here since the Middle Ages. At the far end of the Basin another lock led into the New Cut, used as an access by smaller vessels bypassing the main entrance to the Harbour. Bathurst Basin could be used as a half-tidal basin. The footbridge stands on the site of a railway bridge (see 68).

(From the lock in the south west corner you can cross the road and join the New Cut at 34)

- 46** Bristol General Hospital was completed in 1858, with its ground floor devoted to warehousing for ships visiting the Basin. It was used as a location of the BBC drama Being Human in 2009. It is scheduled to close as a hospital in 2010.

Cross the footbridge and turn left

- 47** The Ostrich is one of remarkably few traditional dockside pubs in Bristol. Above it is the splendid Georgian Redcliffe Parade – worth a detour up the steps for the view over the Harbour from the car park.



- 48** Continue past the old ferry slip onto Midland Wharf (renamed Phoenix Wharf in the 1970s for the renovation work funded here by Phoenix Assurance). There are metal plaques on the wall commemorating this and explaining about Redcliffe Caves, which you also pass. The black wooden shed is named for Benjamin Perry, the tug and barge owner whose base this was. Follow the quayside around the shed.

- 49** Redcliffe Wharf was for decades the base for the Lucas Brothers who traded with West Africa for palm oil, a staple in the manufacture of soap. Currently it is a base for traditional boatbuilding and occasional events whilst it awaits redevelopment. Opposite the wharf is Severn Shed, now a modern restaurant, but also the earliest remaining transit shed in Bristol built for short-term storage of goods from steamships in 1865.

Continue along the quayside to the road gate and cross the road at the zebra crossing to your right. Make your way to Redcliffe Bridge.

- 50** The bridge was completed in 1942, and is a bascule bridge (one which lifts to allow ships through). There are excellent views from it up Welsh (on the left) and Redcliffe Backs towards Bristol Bridge. The Backs are named such because they were once literally the backs of merchants' houses from where goods were loaded directly to ships. Vessels from Wales frequented Welsh Back, whilst Redcliffe Backs were named for the once-autonomous township on this side of the river.

Cross the bridge to Welsh Back and follow this to Bristol Bridge. You can pick your way along the water's edge behind the single-storey transit sheds and more modern buildings.

- 51** Redcliffe Backs on the opposite bank were lined for most of their length with granaries and mills. The Western Counties Agricultural Society had a mill on the site of the new flats by the bridge, and they also owned the next three buildings. The imposing red brick warehouse was completed in 1910, a pioneering concrete framed structure; the less-glamorous neighbouring cheese warehouse is entirely concrete. Alongside this is an older red-brick warehouse from the mid 19th century.
- 52** Next, after a modern infill building that replaces a granary destroyed in the war, are the red brick towers of the Buchanan's Wharf development. These were another granary and mill built by Proctor Baker, a prominent local grain merchant and the chairman of the Docks Committee for many years at the end of the 19th century. He later sold his business to Spillers, who moved to Avonmouth in 1937.

53 As you emerge from the sheds on Welsh Back at Little King Street, you should look inland for The Granary, a grain store built in the Bristol Byzantine style by architects Ponton & Gough in 1869. In the 1960s it housed a well-known nightclub and has recently been converted into flats.

54 Also close to Welsh Back, in King St, is the Llandoger Trow, a pub in a 17th century half-timbered building, one of the last remnants of this style of building in a city once renowned for its early architecture. The pub takes its name from the regular sailing barges that came from Llandoger in South Wales. Tradition has it that Daniel Defoe met Alexander Selkirk here and was inspired by his tales to write Robinson Crusoe.

55 Close to the end of King St, back by the water, is the 'bomb hole', part of Welsh Back that was damaged by bombing during World War II and retained as a memorial. Alongside this is the Merchant Seamen's memorial, commemorating those who lost their lives sailing from Bristol.



56 Bristol Bridge is the reason for Bristol being where it is. In the early days of the city, this was the best point at which to cross the river and to which to bring ships conveniently on one tide. A settlement grew around the crossing from about 1000AD. The bridge was made a permanent structure about 1247 and replaced in 1769 with the one seen today. Its roadway was widened in the 1880s. It marks the limit of navigation for any vessel that can't pass beneath its arches.



At Bristol Bridge, cross to Castle Park. Continue through Castle Park, bearing right to keep close to the water.

57 Castle Park has been formed from the centuries-old commercial centre of Bristol that was destroyed by bombing in the Second World War. That centre developed on and around the site of Bristol Castle, which had been destroyed by Cromwell in 1647. There are interpretive panels in the Park that explain its history. On the Harbour wall, look out for the large fig tree, one of many alien species that have arrived with shipping over time and continue to thrive.



58 On the opposite side of the Harbour are the remaining structures from Georges' Brewery (later Courage's). There was a brewery on this site from the mid-18th century, run from 1788 by Philip George and his family. Next to it was Conrad Finzel's sugar refinery, the largest of many in Bristol, which finally closed in 1881. The refinery sprawled around the corner as far as St Philips Bridge, but part of it was redeveloped in 1900 to create the tall red-brick building. This was the Bristol Tramways generating station, where the power for Bristol's tram network was created. In 1940, the bridge was bombed, cutting off the supply to the whole network and putting an end to the trams.

59 Part-way round the path crosses Castle Ditch, the remains of the moat that once surrounded Bristol Castle.

(To avoid the steps at the end of the next stage, turn left after Castle Ditch bridge and right onto Queen Street, then right again to St Philips Bridge).

Continue on the path to St Philips Bridge and up the steps. Cross the road carefully.

60 From the centre of the bridge, there is a good view down Temple Backs. This was once Bristol's industrial backyard, particularly on the left bank. From the bridge in about 1890 there was, in quick succession, a lead works, an iron foundry, a glass bottle works, a white lead works, a railway locomotive factory, a major railway bridge, a gas works and a soap factory. The right bank wasn't much more salubrious. There's little to show where any of these were, but the phallic-shaped shot tower, now part of an office development, was latterly part of the lead business here. This tower was a replacement for the world's first shot tower devised and patented by William Watts in 1782 on Redcliffe Hill but demolished in 1968 for road improvements.

Cross the bridge and turn left into Temple Back.

61 On your left, integrated into a new building, is the façade of the Central Electric Lighting Station, Bristol's first generating station for electric street lighting. It opened in 1893.

Turn right into Water Lane and then left into Petticoat Lane alongside Norfolk House. Fork left at the footpath in the gardens

62 This takes you into the gardens surrounding the ruins of Temple church. As well as being a lovely place for a break, it has a connection with the story of the Harbour. In 1791 its vicar, William Milton, proposed a New Cut as part of the projected scheme. Jessop adopted his idea in the final plan, but Milton had to wait nearly 20 years for recognition of his role.

From Temple church gardens, exit to Temple Rose Street in front of the City Inn and turn left to rejoin Temple Back. Turn right and continue to Temple Way. Cross at the pedestrian crossing and turn left, back towards the bridge. On the right just before the bridge is a ramp leading back to the waterside.

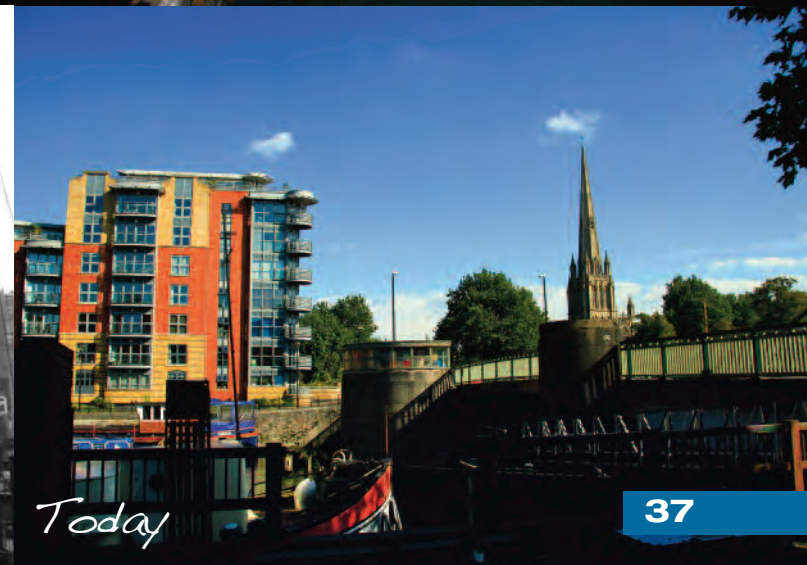
63 On the opposite bank is the site of Bristol's last major glass works, which closed in 1923, and the Midland Railway's goods warehouse. The Great Western Railway maintained a stranglehold on the Harbour, effectively barring its competitor from obtaining a rail connection closer than this. Where you are standing was the edge of the GWR goods yard, alongside Temple Meads railway station and once the largest covered goods yard in Europe.



Head up the steps or ramp away from the water and towards Temple Meads station. Follow the route into the station booking hall, exiting again through the main doors to the right. Continue to the bottom of the station approach ramp.

64 Temple Meads station was built in several stages. IK Brunel designed the first, a terminus, and this is the stone building on the right at the bottom of the ramp. It opened in 1833 and closed to trains in 1965. Sir Mathew Digby-Wyatt completed the station that we use today in 1878.

(From here you can join the Railway route at 65 or the New Cut route at 69 or the Feeder Canal and River Avon route at 75.)



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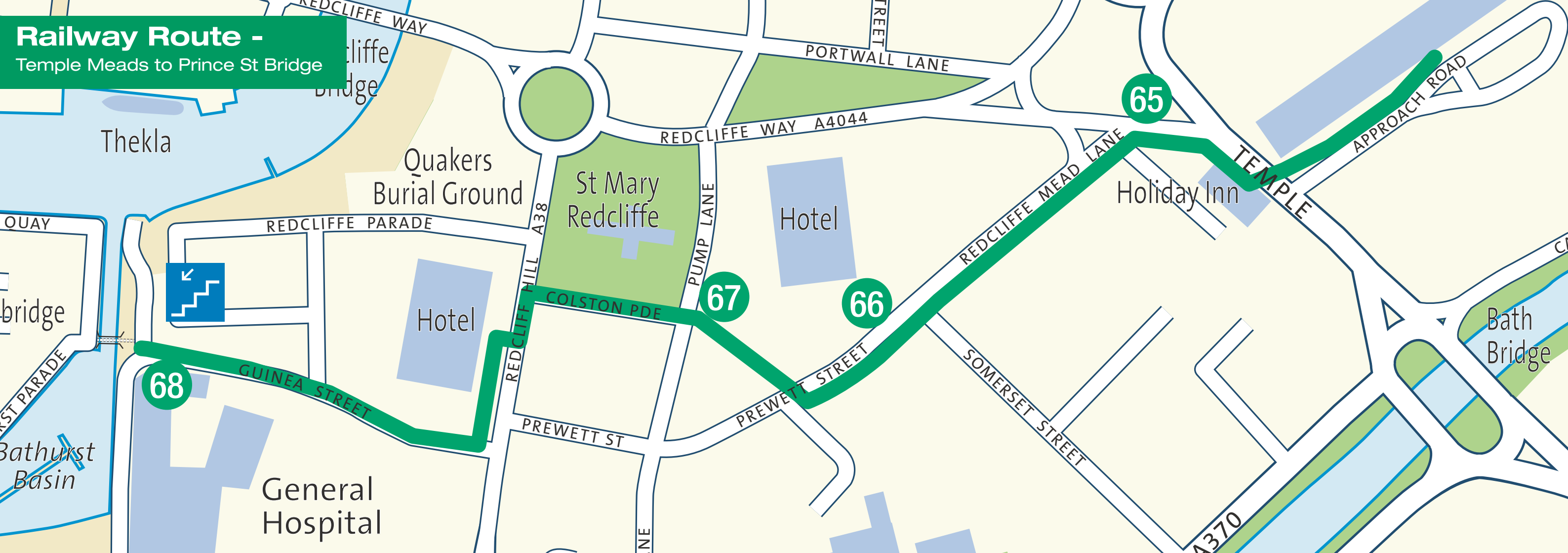
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Railway Route - Temple Meads to Prince St Bridge



Railway Route – Temple Meads to Prince Street Bridge

From the bottom of the approach road ramp at Temple Meads station, cross Temple Gate and turn right. About 50 metres further along, turn left into Redcliff Mead Lane.

65 When the Great Western Railway finally agreed to build a goods line into the Harbour, the route they chose started from the Temple Meads goods yard and ran parallel to Brunel's station building, crossing the road on a bridge behind the George & Railway pub and heading towards St Mary's, Redcliffe church.

Ascend the slope. As you pass Somerset Street, the road becomes Prewett Street.

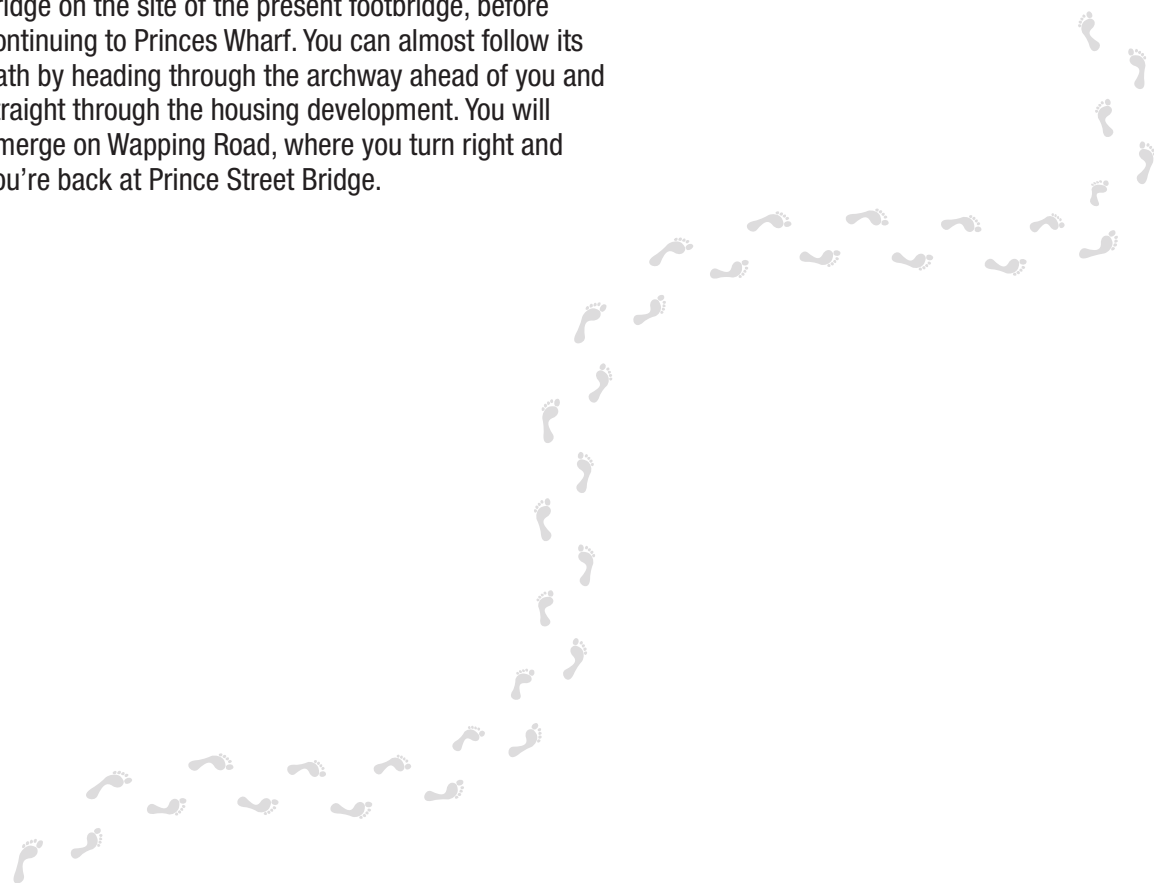
66 On the right here is the base of Bristol's last glass cone, now a hotel restaurant. Glass made in Bristol was world-famous and the city had many of these tall, distinctive structures. Nearly all had closed before 1825, and this one spent the majority of its life as home to H & T Proctor's artificial manure works. It was truncated in the 1930s when the upper structure became dangerous.

Continue to a footpath on the right just before Redcliffe Methodist church. Follow this to the junction with Pump Lane.

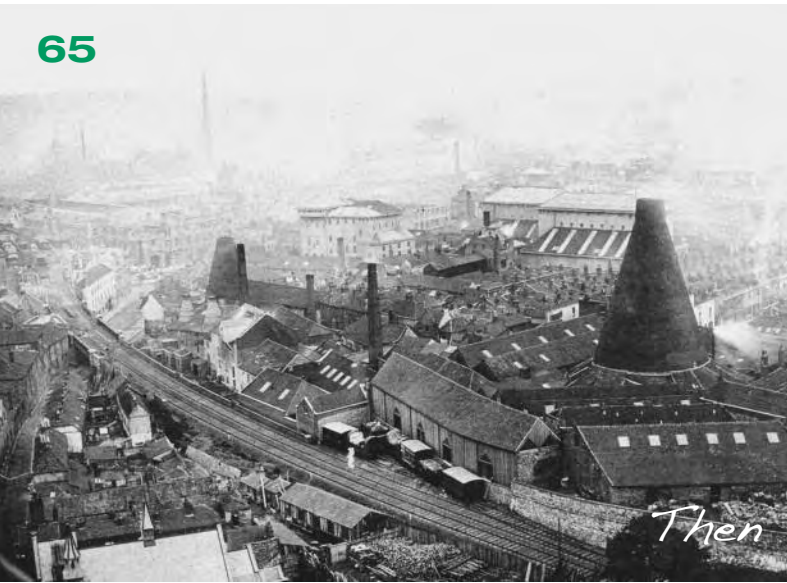
67 Below the railings here can be seen the eastern mouth of the railway tunnel underneath St Mary's churchyard. The tunnel broke through the middle of Redcliffe caves.

Turn left into Colston Parade and continue to Redcliffe Hill. Turn left and proceed to the pedestrian crossing. Cross here or use the underpass. On the opposite side, turn left and then right into Guinea Street. Pass the entrance to the General Hospital and at the bottom of the hill turn right towards the Ostrich pub.

68 On your right as you approach the Ostrich you'll see the mouth of the tunnel exit. The railway crossed Bathurst lock on a steam-powered bascule (lifting) bridge on the site of the present footbridge, before continuing to Princes Wharf. You can almost follow its path by heading through the archway ahead of you and straight through the housing development. You will emerge on Wapping Road, where you turn right and you're back at Prince Street Bridge.



65



Then



Today

68

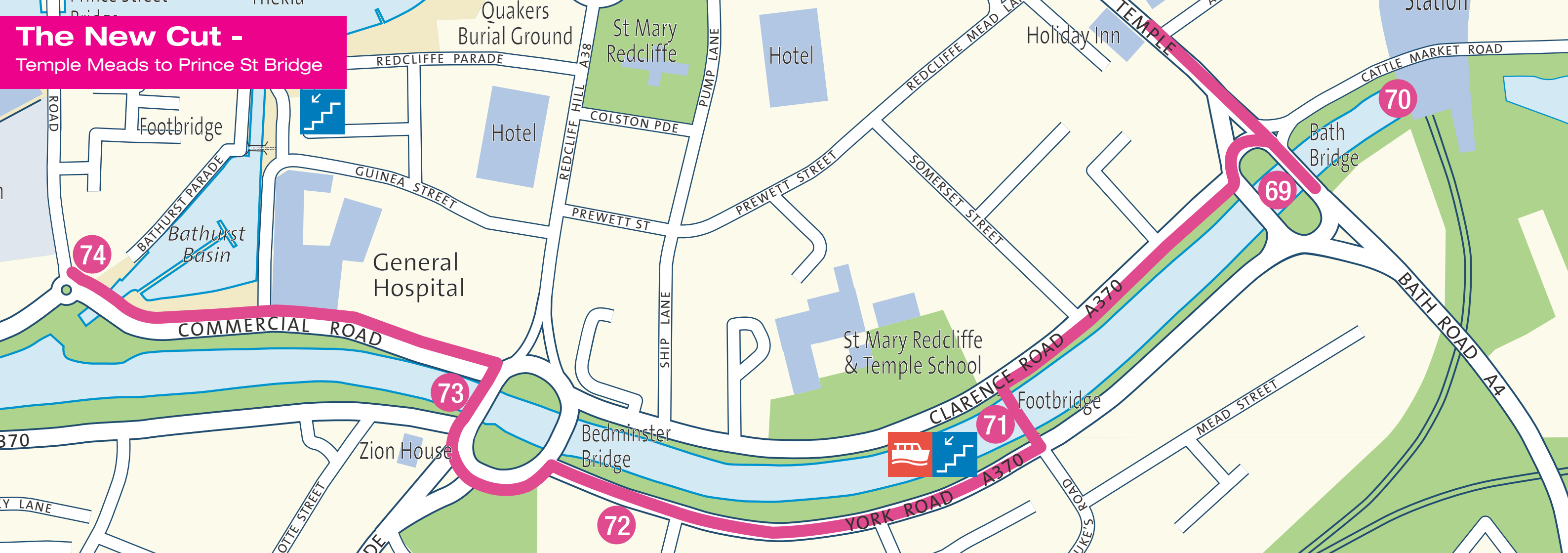


Then



Today

The New Cut -
Temple Meads to Prince St Bridge



The New Cut – Temple Meads to Prince Street Bridge

From the bottom of the approach road ramp at Temple Meads station turn left to Bath Road Bridge. Don't cross the bridge!

69 When the New Cut was constructed, two new highway bridges were installed, one here (Hill's Bridge) and another at Bedminster (Harford's). Both were cast iron and supplied by the Coalbrookdale Company. In 1855 the coal barge John collided with Hill's Bridge, resulting in its collapse and the death of two people. The present bridge was built in the 1880s and another was built alongside to double its capacity in the 1960s.

70 From the bridge, looking east, you can see the major railway bridge that carries all the southbound traffic of Bristol's busy railway system. This bridge was reconstructed in the 1930s as part of a government work creation programme that saw massive expansion of Temple Meads railway station. Several of the new platforms are carried on the bridge.

Cross the road at the crossings keeping the water on your left and head along Clarence Road.

71 Langton Street footbridge was installed here in 1883. It was used first as a temporary bridge at Bedminster whilst a new one was built. Then two barges were brought underneath it and, as the tide in the New Cut rose, these lifted it clear of its base. The barges were then towed upstream and repositioned so that the bridge settled into its new position as the tide ebbed.

Cross the bridge and turn right along York Road.

(Note: there are steps on the bridge. The alternative flat route is along Clarence Road to the Bedminster roundabout.)

72 The Victorian buildings along York Road are remarkable survivals in one of Bristol's longest-running conservation battles. Originally blighted by 1960s planning proposals to drive a new major road through the industrial areas of Bedminster, the houses were reprieved but remained derelict until the 1990s. Their survival creates a pleasant backdrop for the New Cut; compare them with the 1950s and 60s council developments on the other bank.

At Bedminster roundabout cross to the far side leading to Coronation Road, and then cross the Cut and turn left into Commercial Road.

73 Bedminster Bridge dates from 1883. It replaced the cast-iron Harford's Bridge that had been built to carry the Bedminster road over the Cut in 1809. It was doubled with a concrete bridge in the 1960s.

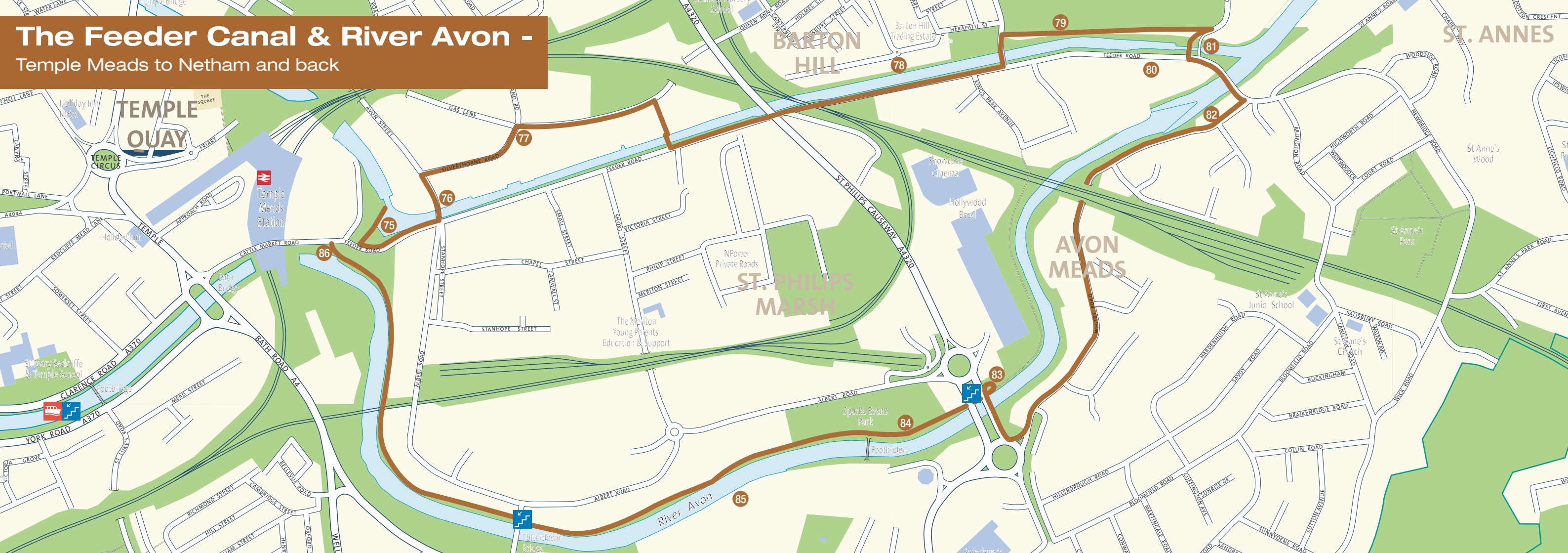
Continue to the end of Commercial Road

74 The fixed swing bridge at the end of Commercial Road spans the former lock entrance into Bathurst Basin. This lock enabled smaller craft to bypass the Cumberland Basin system and enter or leave the Harbour nearer to their likely berths. It was blocked at the beginning of the Second World War to stop the Harbour draining if the lock was hit by bombing. The lock was permanently sealed in the 1952.

At the roundabout, you can turn right to reach Prince Street Bridge, or you can continue the New Cut walk from 34.



The Feeder Canal & River Avon - Temple Meads to Netham and back



The Feeder Canal and River Avon – Temple Meads to Netham and back

At the bottom of the approach road ramp at Temple Meads turn left towards Bath Road Bridge and then left into Cattle Market Road. Go under the railway bridge (see 70) and continue until you reach the entrance to the derelict Post Office Parcels building. Turn in here and, keeping right, walk towards the water.

75 Here you can see the right-angled junction between the Feeder Canal, leading off in a straight line to the right and the Floating Harbour, off to the left beneath the railway bridge. The narrow junction once held stop gates that allowed the Feeder or the upper Harbour to be drained for maintenance. Turn back to the road. In the bushes on your left was once Calcraft (later Totterdown) Lock, which allowed barges and smaller vessels to lock in and out of the New Cut. You'll see the remains of the lock at the end of this section of the trail.

Turn left onto Feeder Road and then left at the traffic lights into Avon Street. There's a good view along the Feeder from the bridge.

76 Avon Street was traditionally associated with the heavier industries in Bristol and the Feeder Canal convenient extension of this after it was completed. There are many accounts of the smoky, choking atmosphere that surrounded this area throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th. On the corner of the junction was one of Bristol's many soap works, neighboured by the Avon Street gas works, the first of Bristol's coal gas production sites. This continued to operate until the 1950s.

Continue up Avon Street and turn right into Silverthorne Lane.

77 About 150 m along here you will be confronted by Lysaght's Castle, a Victorian Gothic fantasy office building designed for John Lysaght, whose works occupied all of the land on the left that you have passed and more beyond. Lysaght made his fortune galvanising corrugated iron and shipping this from Bristol to the developing colonies for building. At one

time this was the biggest galvanising works in the world. Before Lysaght, the Acraman family used the site for their Bristol Iron Works. This, too, was a major industrial undertaking, producing railway engines for the early Great Western Railway and sectional ships. It was described as the largest iron works in Europe (perhaps an exaggeration) in 1840.

Continue along Silverthorne Lane, which forks to the right at Lysaght's Castle. In about another 150 metres, there is a signposted footpath on the right. This leads to a footbridge over the Feeder. Turn left off the bridge and follow the cycle lane along Feeder Road.

78 On the opposite bank of the canal, just after the railway bridge, was the site of the Great Western Cotton factory. The five-storey spinning mill was demolished in the late 1960s, but there are still remnants of the weaving sheds in the industrial estate. The factory was the biggest cotton factory outside the north-west and thrived from 1837 until the 1920s, employing about 1000 people from Barton Hill.

At Marsh Lane Bridge, cross the water and then turn right onto the footpath alongside the Canal.

79 On your left as you travel towards the lock is Netham Recreation Ground. Known locally as The Brilllos, the park is the reclaimed spoil heaps of the Netham Chemical Works, where alkali products such as caustic soda and ammonia were made for a century after 1850. There is little evidence of it today.

80 On the opposite bank, occupying the whole of the area now filled by an industrial estate was John Lysaght's structural steel works. Here many of the bridges that span the Harbour's waterways, and many others elsewhere, were designed and built.

81 Netham Lock marks the end of the Feeder Canal. It plays an important role in Bristol's flood defences; the lock gates here ensure that extreme high spring tides that come over Netham weir do not enter the city, and that flood water from the inland river in spate are similarly excluded.

From Netham lock, return to Feeder Road and cross at the lights. Turn left to cross the road bridge and turn right into Whitby Road. About 50 metres along on the right is a good view of Netham weir, down a half-hidden path behind the advertising hoarding.

82 Netham weir governs the mean depth of the Floating Harbour. Excess water spills over the top, but at times of high spring tides the weir is covered and the current is reversed for a few hours. The river Avon remains tidal at these tides as far as Hanham, a further three miles inland.

Taking great care on this busy road, cross to the other side. Continue along Whitby Road to the roundabout with St Philips Causeway, past a rather spiritless stretch of industrial estate called Pioneer Park. This was the base for many of the factories run by the Bristol branch of the Co-operative Society.

At the Causeway roundabout, use the footpath on the near side to cross the bridge. On the far side of the bridge turn right onto the Avon Walkway path.

83 The Walkway follows the unaltered stretch of the river between Netham weir and Totterdown lock, where the New Cut connects. The river is tidal and, although there are few man-made features, you can get a glimpse of various flora and fauna that live here. It's a really peaceful part of the Harbour's waterways. Look out in particular for the grey wagtails, cormorants, gulls, and occasional herons and kingfishers that live here.

84 You start in Sparke Evans Park, a public garden presented to Bristolians by PF Sparke Evans in 1902. He had made his money from the leather trade in the city, particularly in sole leather for shoes. The park gained a reputation for roses, because the level of soot from industry and railways locally helped to keep them pest-free. The park was connected to Brislington by a footbridge.

(As a diversion, the footbridge leads to Bath Road, via Edward Street and emerges next to the entrance to Arnos Vale Cemetery and Paintworks. Otherwise, stay with the Walkway, which gives a good view of the Paintworks estate.)

85 The Paintworks was the base for Colthurst & Harding, one of the numerous paint manufacturers based in Bristol, as well as a wide range of small-scale businesses established after the Second World War on the industrial estate. The estate is being redeveloped as a centre for creative industries. Just before the road bridge on the opposite bank was the former boatyard of the Brown family who maintained barges here until the 1960s. At low tide you can see the tidal slipway where barges were inspected.

86 The Walkway continues past the Dog's Home on Albert Road and the railway bridge (the footpath over which takes you to Three Lamps and Totterdown). Eventually the path passes the remains of the Calcraft (Totterdown) Lock. By the Second World War, very few vessels were using these locks, and they were blocked to avoid bomb damage emptying the Harbour.

The Avon Walkway emerges on Cattle Market Road, opposite the starting point of this trail. From here you can return to Temple Meads and pick up other routes at 65 or continue to follow the New Cut from Bath Road Bridge at 69.



This trail was devised and written by Museum of Bristol Project staff as part of Floating Harbour 200, a celebration of the bicentenary of the Harbour in 2009. Contact andy.king@bristol.gov.uk to suggest improvements or additions.

The historic images all come from the collections held by Bristol Museums Galleries & Archives. They are a tiny selection from over 3000 images of the Harbour. These can be seen by appointment only at the moment but will be available online in the future.

The modern photographs were produced by Chris Bahn and the booklet was designed by Naomi Winter, both of Bristol City Council.

For further information about the history of the Harbour see the book 'Bristol's Floating Harbour: The First 200 Years' by Peter Malpass and Andy King (Redcliffe Press 2009) or go to www.bristolfloatingharbour.org.uk.

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