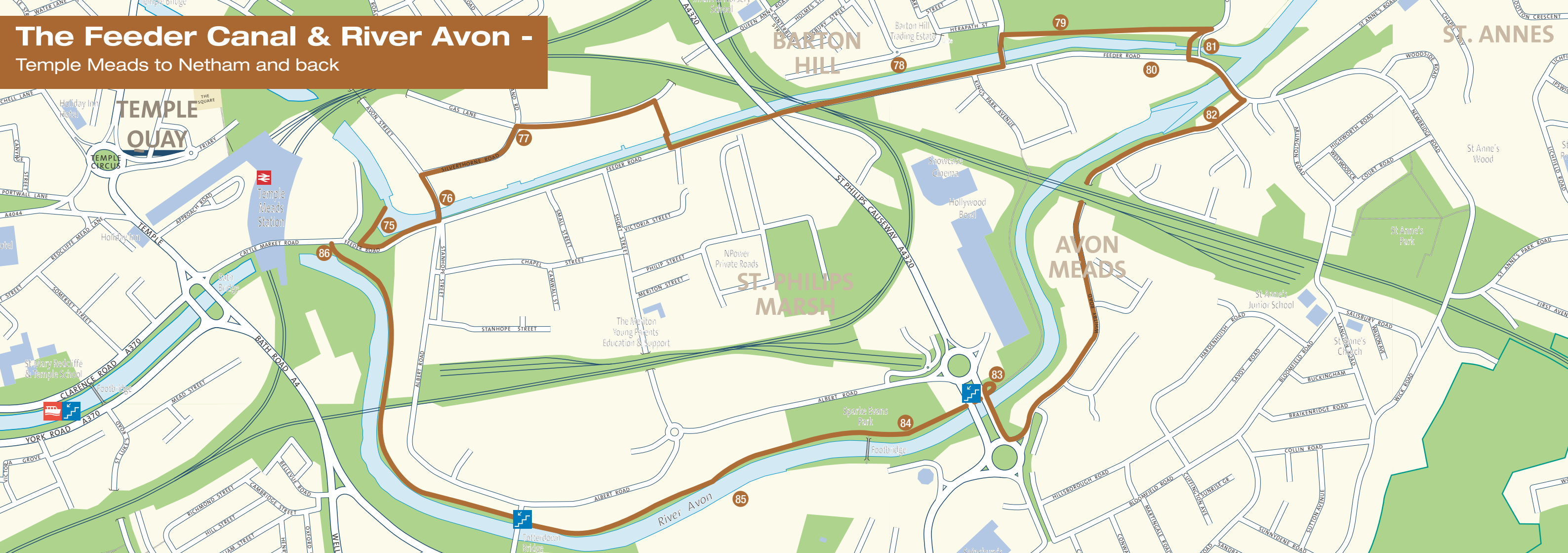


The Feeder Canal & River Avon - Temple Meads to Netham and back



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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.

