

# Friends of the Community Forest Path Quarterly Bulletin: 4

## ON THE BUSES

Now that Chris Hogg of JLAF has succeeded in securing funding for the Outdoorswest Website, due to go live in March, the top priority of the Friends of the Community Forest Path is to make the Path fit for the Website. That means making the links between the Path and the bus network explicit.

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The need for links to public transport was always acknowledged by the team that designed the Path, and links to buses had been included from the start. But the format of the original map/leaflet did not allow for anything more than hints about how the Path could be accessed. We need to do the work to show exactly how the Path can be made accessible and how it can fit the format of the new website.

**The CFP can be divided into 8 sections linked to the bus network:** [Clifton to Dundry](#), [Dundry to Pensford](#), [Pensford to Keynsham](#), [Keynsham to Emerson's Green](#), [Emersons Green to Parkway](#), [Parkway to Patchway](#), [Patchway to Henbury](#) and [Henbury to Clifton](#)

### Clifton to Dundry

**The best bus services to start with are the 8 and 9 to Christchurch, Clifton.** There are many reasons to begin with these routes, which are clockwise and anti-clockwise versions of the Temple Meads Circular, via the Centre, Cotham and Redland to Clifton. The first is the fact that the 8 and 9 are among the most frequent services in the City. Secondly Christchurch is a landmark visible for miles around. But most importantly, it is only a short stroll from the bus stop to the Clifton Suspension Bridge, which is the most obvious and arguably the most important Gateway from the City out into the Countryside and certainly the most direct route out to the start of the Green Man and the start of the Green Man Challenge route to Dundry.



Christchurch, Clifton

**The section of the Community Forest Path between Clifton and Dundry is particularly important because it follows sections of the National Monarch's Way, the Regional Samaritan's Way Southwest and the local Ramblers' South Bristol Circular. This route also goes past the café at Ashton Court and the Angel in Long Ashton (in one version) and there is a convenient pub at Dundry. It is therefore an excellent candidate for Outdoorswest if the descent of Dundry Hill to the 75 bus stop can be made acceptable.**

This section is threatened by plans for an urban extension and the proximity of the planned City FC stadium, but these plans need not interfere with the Community Forest Path if planning policy is followed as it should be. We have already considered these concerns in connection with **The Ashton Gateway**, and recent discussions about the stadium have not added anything that needs comment. On the other hand, the number 24 and 25 buses from Muller Road Top to Ashton Vale via Lockleaze, Eastville and the Centre provide six buses an hour between them during the day from Monday to Saturday. Since these buses go through some of the most deprived areas of the City, we should be alert to the possibilities of Ashton Vale as a conduit into the countryside. But that is something for the future.

**The 672 bus to Dundry is not much use to walkers because its purpose is to ferry people into Bristol in the morning and back in the afternoon or evening, whereas you or I would probably want to go in the opposite direction. A better bet is to go the extra distance down into Withywood and catch the 75, which is one of the two most frequent services in the city. The problem is – none of the paths down the hill is perfect.**

The westernmost route, following the South Bristol Circular off the hill onto Highridge Lane won't work because the footpath from the lane into Withywood is completely blocked. The second most westerly route is blocked before it reaches Oxleaze Lane. Probably the best route descends the steps from the junction of Hill Road and Ham Lane, crosses Oxleaze Lane and descends through fields marked on some versions of Bristol A-Z as Withywood Adventure Playground to the junction of Hersey Gardens and Sherrin Way. From there, it is only a short walk through Withywood to catch a 75 bus in Four Acres. You could also catch a 36 in Sherrin Way if you wanted to get to Filwood Park or Brislington.

Route 5 in Bristol's Exploring the Countryside Series also uses the 75 bus (See [www.bristol.gov.uk/countrysidewalks](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/countrysidewalks)). This route was devised by the now-defunct Dundry Hill Group, and for some unfathomable reason does not actually describe how to visit either of the pubs shown on the map.

## **Dundry to Pensford**

**This section follows bits of the South Bristol Circular, the Samaritans Way Southwest, The Three Peaks of North Somerset Walk and, in some versions, the Two Rivers Way. It is relatively easy to get to the start by taking the 75 bus to Four Acres in Withywood and following the path up to the church from the junction of Hersey Gardens and At Pensford, you can catch the reliable 376 from Wells into Bristol, which is a half hourly service Monday to Saturday and an hourly service on Sundays. If you miss the bus, the wait can be made tolerable by visiting one of the three pubs in the village.**

**The opening up of St Andrews Gateway will provide routes onto the CFP from the 75 on Bishport Avenue and the 76 on Hareclive via the Symes shopping centre.**

## Pensford to Keynsham

This section, which relies on catching the 376 from the centre to Pensford, follows the Two Rivers Way and is also route 11 in Bristol's Countryside Walks series. As the section between Dundry and Keynsham is arguably the most attractive section of the Community Forest path, we probably shouldn't quibble about the lack of promoted circular routes off the Path here. There is a short circular route out to Chewton Keynsham from the civic centre, which was a try out of the Outdoorswest surveying system, that could be extended to the excellent pub at Compton Dando by using the Conservation Paths on the opposite side of the river from Burnett. There is also a useful circular path from Compton Dando using permissive paths linked to the Conservation Woodland around Knowle Farm. The problem is access to these paths is linked to a sell by date.

## Keynsham to Emerson's Green

Keynsham is something of a transport hub but none of the services is particularly frequent. There is a mainly hourly train service, which has the advantage that the travel time is much shorter than the bus services'. The twenty minute 349 service from Unity Street is pretty good during the day and has an hourly evening service, but there is no Sunday Service that I could find.



**Dramway towards the Rosary**

When I tried out this route, I took the 349 bus and followed the CFP to Brandy Bottom Colliery on the Dramway, from which I took a footpath to Emerson's Green Sainsbury, where I caught the 48 back into the Centre. This is a 20 min. service, but I found a Costa Café round the other side of Sainsbury, which was a predictable brand. I stupidly failed to take the 518, which pulled out ahead of it, and would have dropped me on my doorstep! The 48 (and the 49) go through Easton, which is probably the most deprived area of Bristol, and ought to be a prime target for the Outdoorswest website.

This route follows parts of the Dramway Path, the Bristol and Bath Cycle Path and the River Avon Trail. There are some shorter circular routes off this section: Route 8 from the Bristol Series ([www.bristol.gov.uk/countrysidewalks](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/countrysidewalks)) The Willsbridge Circular looks good. There is also a shorter route produced by Avon Wildlife from Willsbridge. The Shortwood Short from the Bridge Inn Shortwood provides a good link between the Dramway and the Community Forest Path at this point.

## Emerson's Green

Emerson's Green Sainsbury is another transport hub, well placed to access the countryside. There are two problems. Firstly, you have to cross the Ring Road near the Rosary Roundabout to reach the countryside. Secondly the land on the other side of the traffic is designated as development land. The good news is that the traffic problem will be solved when sufficient houses have been built, as I found out at a planning meeting at Nibley Court in Yate. South Glos. Council seem well aware of the potential of the site for walkers and riders and the pitfalls.

In the meantime, you must either be very careful at the Rosary Roundabout or walk through the car park to the footbridge.

## Emerson's Green to Parkway

Having spotted the 518 on a previous visit, Libby and I caught this bus at the Henleaze Lake stop on Southmead Road to check out this route. It was an interesting trip as it was Sunday so we had to change buses in Mangotsfield. The bus was late when we caught it, so it touch and go whether we would make the connection, but the driver went like a goodun and we didn't have a problem. My jacket had suffered a washing accident and was no longer waterproof, but I was able to buy a new one at a good price at Sports Direct next to Sainsbury.

This part of the Community Forest Path links sections of the Dramway Path with Frome Valley Walkway. When we walked the route the only section where we had any problems was the link between these two paths, where we found rubbish on the path on Kendleshire Golf Course and some missing signs, of which the most significant was on Ivory Hill.

Stoke Gifford Parish Council has published half a dozen parish walks, several of which might be described as loops off the Community Forest Path (see [www.stokegifford.org.uk](http://www.stokegifford.org.uk)).



A pond on Kendleshire Golf Course

## From Parkway to Patchway

I actually surveyed this route the other way round but it can be walked, run or ridden in either direction. Parkway is another transport hub, and there are a number of buses as well as the train which serve it. I found the 73 from the top of Gloucester road and the 518 useful. On the day, I took the 54 to ASDA because I wanted to explore the link along part of the Patchway Greenway to join the CFP at the Banana Bridge, which meant I arrived at the Traveller's Rest on the A38 in time for coffee with chocolate fudge cake, ice cream and hot chocolate sauce. This might have been a bit early if I had started from the 75 bus stop on Coniston Road, but it would be ideally placed if you started from Parkway and did the walk the other way round. This route is on very flat surfaces and would be useful for pushchairs etc, especially if you kept out of Savages Wood and Sherbourne Brake, where the going can get slippery underfoot where fallen leaves have rotted.

This section follows part of the **Patchway Greenway**, the **Three Brooks Way** (or Walk) and Stoke Gifford Parish Council's "**Walk along the Brook**". Stoke Gifford's walks can be downloaded at: [www.stokegifford.org.uk](http://www.stokegifford.org.uk) although the maps don't always download. The Patchway Greenway leaflet is out of date, and I am not sure where to get hold of the Three Brooks leaflet – the last version was produced under the Health Walks umbrella. Part of it can be found on the Nature Reserve site: <http://www.three-brooks.info> but this does not show the complete route. On the other hand, it does have several other useful leaflets – but not the orienteering pack, which is obtainable from Bradley Stoke Library.

## Patchway to Henbury

This is another route that we actually checked out in the “wrong” direction” (from Henbury to Patchway). But The first part of this route is also covered by part of Walk 1 in Bristol’s Exploring the Countryside series (follow the Countryside links from [www.walkbristol.co.uk](http://www.walkbristol.co.uk)), which starts at the top of Lysander road, descends Hollywood Road and then joins the CFP along Spaniourum Hill and finishes in Henbury.



As you can see we met a couple of members of Town and Country Harriers who were checking out the route for an attempt at the Green man Challenge. We stopped half way at the Fox at Easter Compton for a coffee and a biscuit and arrived on Coniston Road just as the 75 bus was pulling up at the bus stop. This dropped us off at the top of Muller road, from which we had a short walk home.

This worked as an excursion, but it could be improved. For example, when we crossed the Banana Bridge over the motorway, we could have turned right and followed part of the **Patchway Greenway** along the top of the motorway embankment to ASDA, from which we could have caught the number 1 back to Westbury or the 54 to our doorstep (more or less). This would have been neater and would probably suit more people.

On the other hand, we could have got the 76 from the Muller Road Top on the Gloucester Road near the Wellington pub and got off at Crow Lane Lay-By, which would require an additional bit of the CFP through Crow Lane Open Space and catch the 75 in Coniston Road back along the Gloucester Road. This would be much more convenient for people living in Horfield or Bishopston, for example.

## Henbury to Clifton

This is the Bristol City Council stretch of the Community Forest Path through the Blaise Estate, up the Mariners’ Walk and across the Downs back to the Suspension Bridge. The no. 1 bus is probably the best bet to Henbury, and you can also catch it on the Downs if you miss out the last bit of the walk. Alternatively, you can catch the number 9 to the centre. There are several published loops off this part of the Community Forest Path. The Seamills Circular and Bristol Countryside Walks 2 and 18 have been designed to work with the railway line to Avonmouth and Severn Beach But route 2 involves five crossings of the Portway and the route description is incomplete, so probably ought to be omitted. The routes from Westbury in the Crossing Boundaries Series should probably be added as the facilities and transport links in the village are excellent.

## Green Man Challenge

The Green Man Challenge is growing in strength with at least four groups planning to have a go before next summer. We have one pair of walkers on the 12<sup>th</sup> and a night time attempt to celebrate the coincidence of a lunar eclipse with the winter solstice. Then Moti are planning a Green Man Challenge related event in February.

There is also a pairs relay planned for the Spring (not a race). This is an interesting concept. I think a supported pair is probably the ideal unit for a Green Man Challenge attempt. Large groups have proved unwieldy, and have a tendency to split. (This has even happened with groups as small as three!) There

have also been successful solo attempts. However, I think a pair is a safer unit, which also confers psychological benefits. In a pair, you have to think about the other person, which helps to eliminate "ego" problems. At any rate the current record is held by a pair. Whether the steadying effect of being in a pair is sufficient to make a pairs relay race a safe proposition is another matter.

I happen to know that there are other people training for an attempt over the winter, but they don't want to commit to a particular time yet, because they don't want to offer hostages to fortune. Marcus Mumford has taken the trophy away for engraving. Anyone who thinks their name should be on it should talk to him. By the way, there is no longer any money available to pay for engraving so if you want your name on the trophy, you need to pay yourself – unless you happen to break the record I suppose!

## Quiz

The quizzes, which have been taking place at the Green Man in Kingsdown on the last Sunday of the month for the past few months have been a modest success, with a core of stalwarts coming from Town and Country Harriers and Bristol and District Triathlon Club, with contributions from Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways, some Hashers and others. Thanks to the generosity of prize winners who have donated their winnings, we have made a magnificent £95. There will not be a quiz on the last Sunday of December, because that is Boxing Day and I will be entertaining the family, who may not be in the mood for a quiz!

## Tools

We have spent the quiz money on tools suitable for guerrilla gardening on the Community Forest Path. We do have some magnificent slashers, bow-saws and some other tools, which we have inherited from a Ramblers' group, but these are only really suitable for large scale official operations. So I have bought some secateurs, protective gloves, a folding sickle that will fit in a haversack and some folding pruning saws. This equipment makes walks with a pruning purpose a pleasant prospect!

## Volunteering

Over the next few months, we will be looking for three sorts of volunteer.

- 1) We need volunteers for pruning parties.
- 2) We need people with map reading skills to help in preparing routes for the Outdoors West Website.
- 3) We need people without particular map reading skills to test the route description after they have been prepared, but prior to publication.

If you would like to get involved with any of these, please get in touch with Chris Bloor on [chris\\_bloor@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:chris_bloor@tiscali.co.uk).