

Walk 3

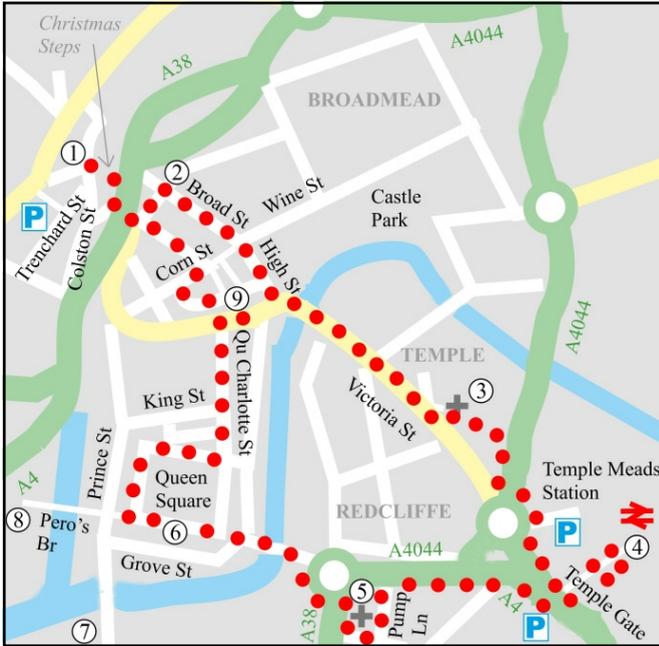
BRISTOL



Queen Square



Once the most important port in Britain this historic city is packed with impressive relics of its past. Buildings which record the wealth of its former merchants still line its busy streets and adorn the hills above the city. A graceful square, a ruined church, the industrial docks and one of the most important railway stations in the country, this walk touches just some of Bristol's architectural highlights.



This walk from July 2012 was principally to visit Brunel's station and Queen Square stopping off to explore some of the buildings I found along the way. There is plenty more to explore in addition to this walk if you have more time.

Distance: 2 ½ miles approx

Parking: There are numerous car parks all around the city. I used the large multi storey car park in Trenchard Street from where this walk starts but there are also a number around Temple Meads which would make a good starting point.



From the car park exit opposite Colston Hall walk up Trenchard St, left into Colston Street and almost immediately you come to Foster's almshouses and the top of the Christmas Steps on your right.

① **Christmas Steps, BS1 5BS**

At the top of Christmas Steps stands the rather whimsical Foster's Almshouses (now converted into private accommodation). Although founded over 500 years ago most of what you see today dates from the 1860s-80s and displays the Victorian's love for turrets, tall chimneys and decorative timber work (top and bottom left). It is not clear where the Christmas Steps got their name from (bottom right). Some say it is a corruption of Knyfesmyth Street, its former title, others that it comes from the nativity scene in the window of the Chapel built in 1504 but now part of the Almshouses.



Go down Christmas Steps past its 18th and 19th century shops and then turn left along the main road at the bottom up to the pelican crossing. Go across here and then right and left down Christmas Street up to St John's Church and Gate.

② *St John the Baptist Church and Gate, BS1 2EZ*
The last remaining Medieval gateway to the old city (right) has a church tower and spire standing proudly above. St John's Church was built in the 14th century as a place for travellers to worship and displays the memorials of some of Bristol's wealthiest men. Today it is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust and is regularly open to visitors (you can also tour inside on Google Maps Street View).



Go through the gateway and up Broad Street. At the top take a quick look at some of the exuberant buildings on your right along Corn Street (pictured above). Carry on down High Street, over Bristol Bridge and a few hundred yards along Victoria Street until two lanes enter on your left and you turn up the second, Church Lane, and reach the park with the ruined Church.

③ *Temple Church, BS1 6DE*
Named after the Knights Templar who founded this church in the mid 12th century. It was originally circular in form but was replaced by the current building in the 14th century (the round plan was excavated after the church had been bombed in 1940). The tower started to lean after it was built in the 1390s so the upper stage was put on top vertical hence at a different angle to the lower.



Back onto Victoria Street continue up to the roundabout and go around its left side on the crossings and then down the third exit, Temple Gate, to the station on your left.

④ *Temple Meads Station, BS1 6QH.*

Bristol Temple Meads Station is perhaps the most important historic railway station in the country as its three stages of development can still be seen. Unlike most major stations where the earlier buildings were demolished Brunel's original 1840 train shed and offices survive (centre left). Its Tudor style facade originally had gateways both sides for arrivals and departures. His timber roofed train shed behind it has been restored as a cafe and hall.



Facing the old GWR station on the other side of the entrance ramp are the former offices of the Bristol and Exeter Railway who's line terminated at right angles to Brunel's. This Jacobean style building (centre right) was built in the 1850s. Finally in the 1870s the station was expanded and rebuilt along the curved line which linked the two railways. This included a Gothic style entrance tower (top right) above the current entrance and booking hall (bottom right). This originally had a spire on top but it was destroyed by a bomb during the Second World War.

From the station cross over Temple Gate and head back towards the city and docks along the left hand side of Redcliffe Way, A4044. After a few hundred yards there is a small Classical building on the right side and St Mary's Church on your left.



This little Classical facade on Redcliffe Way is the frontage of the former school attended by Thomas Chatterton which was fixed to the house of his birth when the road was widened in the 1940s. Chatterton was a talented poet who fooled experts into believing the fake medieval manuscripts he had written were genuine. He moved to London but after struggling to make a living from his political writings he committed suicide in 1770 aged only 17.



⑤ **St Mary's Redcliffe, BSI 6RA**

One of the largest and finest parish churches in England. Magnificent in its scale with a glorious interior, it owes its splendour to wealthy merchants from the port just below the red cliff on which it stands. Look for the rusty rail monument in the churchyard (right). It was a tram rail which was thrown into this position by a German bomb in April 1941.



From the church walk around the roundabout and carry on along Redcliffe Way, over the bridge and then on the other side carry on in a straight line across the green space and into Queen Sq.

⑥ **Queen Square, BSI 4QS**

This large Georgian square has many listed buildings overlooking its pleasant green space. This was not always the case though as a dual carriageway used to pass through the middle until it was finally removed in 2000. Some of the buildings (right) date from the early 18th century but on the north and west they are later, replacing houses destroyed during the riots of 1831.





Queen Square

From Queen Square you can head out of the south west corner, pass over Prince Street Bridge and explore the M shed museum and SS Great Britain. If you head west from the same corner you can cross Pero's Bridge and visit the Millennium Square.

⑦ **The M Shed, BS1 4RN.**

The M shed (named after the letters used to identify the port's sheds) is a free museum outlining Bristol's history. Outside are working cranes, the strange curved (one not in this view) is the only working steam powered Fairbairn crane. Ingeniously designed to reach into the hold of a ship using the same box girder technology William Fairbairn used on Stephenson's Britannia Bridge.



The M Shed

⑧ **Pero's Bridge and Millenium Sq, BS1 5UH.**

A smart modern development and popular meeting and eating spot around the old docks. Pero's bridge named after an 18th century slave was designed by the Irish artist Eilis O'Connell and opened in 1999.



Pero's Bridge



Millennium Square



The walk carries on around Queen Square and out of the north east corner up Queen Charlotte Street. Have a look down King Street where there are some old timber framed buildings and the magnificent Theatre Royal. Carry on up Queen Charlotte Street, turn right at the top and then left up the steps to the side of The Old Fish Market ⑨ .

King Street, BS1 4ED

This cobbled street has some of the city's finest old buildings. It was laid down just outside the old medieval walls in 1650 on land known as the Town Marsh. The only original building from this date is No33 (far right in right hand photo), currently Renato's Restaurant, which incorporates part of the old wall at the rear. Many of the others date from shortly after this with a few still timber framed like No 7 which was found to have reused ship timbers in its structure. The most notable building on the street is Coopers Hall (bottom right). It was built in 1744 as a hall for the Coopers' Company and later became an assembly room, a chapel and a warehouse. In 1972 it reopened as the entrance and foyer for the Theatre Royal, the oldest continually used theatre in the country.



Turn left at the top of steps beside the Old Fish Market and walk along St Nicholas Street and then at the end turn right along Corn Street then left down Small Street. At the bottom turn right up to St John's Church and Gate and then trace your way via the Christmas Steps back to the car park.

If you want to find out more details about the city's architecture then look out for the Buildings of England series, originally written by Nicholas Pevsner (in this case Somerset: North and Bristol).



If you would like to discover more about Georgian houses and Medieval churches then look out for my books pictured below. They are packed with photos and drawings explaining in an easy to understand manner how they were built, what the different styles were and where you can find some outstanding examples. They are available from Amazon, my publisher's website www.countrysidebooks.co.uk and your local bookshop and most are under £10 each. Go to my website www.trevoryorke.co.uk for more details and to take a look inside.

