



## Countryside Code

### Advice for the public

Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs  
 Leave gates and property as you find them  
 Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home  
 Keep your dog under close control  
 Consider other people

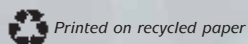
### Advice for land managers

Know your rights, responsibilities and liabilities  
 Make it easy for visitors to act responsibly  
 Identify possible threats to the safety of visitors

To find out more about the Countryside Code, contact [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk) or email [openaccess@countryside.gov.uk](mailto:openaccess@countryside.gov.uk) or telephone 0845 100 3298



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 South Gloucestershire Council



*The route of a  
 19th century  
 tramway  
 that carried  
 coal from  
 Coalpit Heath  
 down to the River Avon*

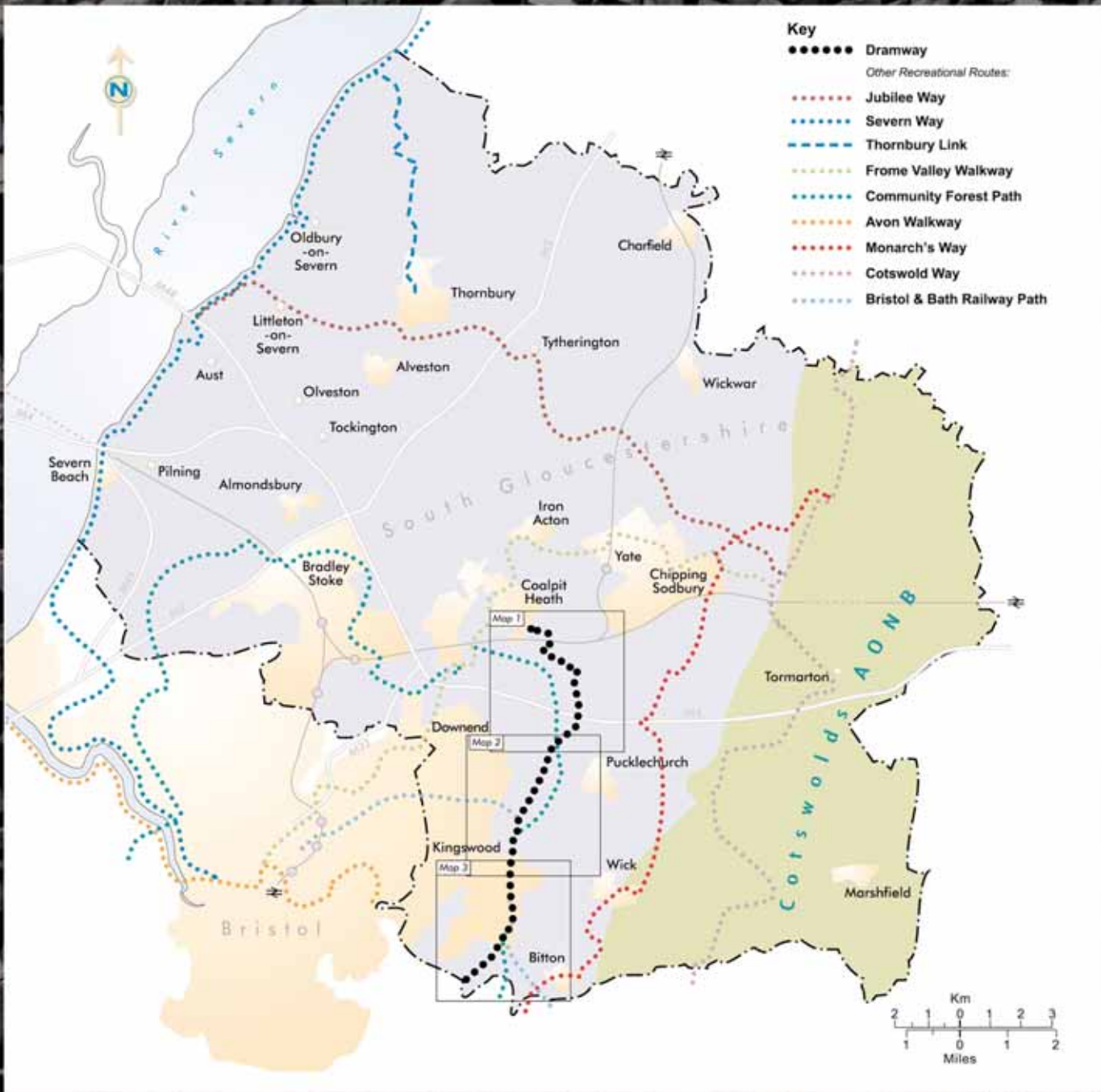


# The Dramway Path



## Key for Route Maps

- Route
- Motorway
- A Road
- B Road
- Minor Road
- Lane
- Track
- Railway
- Footpath
- Field Boundaries
- Public House
- Church, Chapel
- Telephone
- Buildings
- Ponds, Streams, Rivers
- Built-up Areas
- Woodland
- Trees
- Viewpoint
- Station
- Golf Course
- Museum
- Site of former Colliery
- Bus Stops
- Bristol to Bath Railway Path



## Bus Services

### Bus Services serving the Dramway

| Bus Stops near the Dramway  | Service                               |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Londonderry Farm            | 318, 532, 533, 535, 684               |
| Willsbridge, Keynsham Road  | 318, 532, 533, 535, 684               |
| Willsbridge, Queen's Head   | 318, 332, 535, 632                    |
| Cherry Garden Lane          | 533                                   |
| Oldland, Cherry Tree        | 41, 44A, 45*, X67, 319, 532, 533, 545 |
| Oldland High Street         | 41, 42, X67, 532, 533, 544            |
| North Common, Victoria Road | 41, 42, X67, 532, 533, 544            |
| Warmley, Station Road       | 43, 43A, 319, 634, 635                |
| Siston Common               | 7, 686                                |
| Mangotsfield, Carsons Road  | 686                                   |
| Shortwood, Chapel           | 689                                   |
| Emersons Green, Sainsbury's | 48, 49, 462, 517, 518, 686            |
| Henfield (no fixed stop)    | 686                                   |
| Ram Hill (no fixed stop)    | 686                                   |
| Coalpit Heath, Church       | X30, X40, X42, 342, 686               |

\* certain journeys

**The Dramway Path** can be accessed by a number of bus services. Bus stops are shown on the maps in this booklet where possible.



For timetable information about bus service contact Traveline on

**0870 6082606** or go to [www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)

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## *Introduction*

**T**he **Dramway** Path is a 15km/ 9 mile linear walk that follows sections of the route of a nineteenth century tramway which carried coal from Coalpit Heath in the Bristol coalfield down to the River Avon.



This booklet describes some of the fascinating remains of the Dramway and the features found alongside the linear route of the Dramway Path. There are also excellent opportunities to create your own attractive circular walks, using existing footpaths to connect sections of the Dramway Path with villages, towns and other places of interest that are within easy walking distance.

The Avon Wildlife Trust has developed a series of short, circular walks around their visitor centre at Willsbridge Mill, and there are pleasant countryside footpaths that link the Dramway Path with the village of Pucklechurch. The main footpaths that join or cross the Dramway Path are also marked on the maps.



*Willsbridge Mill*

# The Dramway

## What kind of walking to expect

This is comfortable walking, along the gently rolling hills that slope down to the River Avon. There are no steep inclines and much of the route is along the original route of the Dramway, a horse-drawn railway that carried coal from Coalpit Heath to the River Avon. Sections of the Dramway share the route of the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, and, between Warmley and Willsbridge Mill, the two routes run close to each other, offering opportunities to return along a different route. The Bristol and Bath Railway Path has an all-weather surface and is ideal for cycling with young children as it is all off-road, on flat or very gently sloping ground.

## Public transport, inns and cafés

The middle section of the Dramway Path is well served by public transport. A number of bus services operate in the Kingswood and Warmley area and there are regular services to Coalpit Heath and the Keynsham Road near Willsbridge Mill. Further details of public transport services are given on the inside back cover. There are various inns and cafés along the route and these, and the bus stops, are all marked on the route maps.



Ceramic at Carson's Road Tunnel

# Walking to Health

Walking to Health in South Gloucestershire is part of a national scheme supported by the British Heart Foundation and the Government's Countryside Agency. The project aims to get more people walking in their own communities, encourages people to take exercise, and particularly targets those who take little exercise or live in areas of poor health.

## What's happening locally?

The Walking to Health project is open to people of all ages across South Gloucestershire, with three programmes produced quarterly covering:

- **Kings Chase**  
*(includes Kingswood, Staple Hill and Downend)*
- **Filton, Patchway & the Stokes**  
*(includes Thornbury)*
- **Yate, Chipping Sodbury & Dodington**

There is a regular programme of weekly walks across South Gloucestershire, as well as walks on evenings (summer only), Saturdays and rural walks (held monthly). Walks in the Kings Chase programme often include sections of the Dramway path. All walks are led by trained walk leaders, and we are always looking for new walkers and people to help lead walks.



For more information contact the **Leisure & Libraries Helpdesk on 01454 868006** or email [foodandhealth@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:foodandhealth@southglos.gov.uk). Further information can also be found on the Council's website [www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk) under W in the A-Z.

# The Dramway

**The Dramway** is the local name for the Avon and Gloucestershire Railway that carried coal from the Coalpit Heath collieries near Yate, down to the River Avon in the south. It was a horse-drawn railway and got its name from the 'drams' or carts that carried the coal. Construction work started in 1829, with sections opening between 1830 and 1834, and the line was in use until around 1866. The route of the Dramway was carefully constructed to make maximum use of the slope of the land down to the River Avon, and there are several cuttings and embankments along the route, to give an even, gentle gradient. Coal was loaded into carts and these rolled slowly down the slope, led by horses and controlled by a brakeman or 'guide'. Horses pulled the empty carts back up the track to the coal mines.

## An intriguing legacy

Although the Dramway has been abandoned for many years, it has left an intriguing legacy of landmarks and features in the landscape. This walk follows the original route of the Dramway for much of its length, and passes some fascinating features and buildings along the way, giving glimpses of the past when this area was part of a booming coalfield and a burgeoning, busy industrial area.

## Fish-belly rails and limestone blocks

The Dramway used special tracks with 'fish-belly' rails that were curved underneath to give them extra strength. They were made of cast iron and were fixed onto limestone blocks with iron 'chairs'. The limestone blocks came from a quarry near the River Avon and were drilled with two holes that held the iron 'chairs'. Several sections of the route still have lines of limestone blocks set into the ground in pairs. Most of the track was taken up during the First World War for scrap iron, but there are still occasional pieces of track being used as handrails or to fill holes in fences and hedges along the route.

## Last of the line

The Dramway is a particularly interesting railway as it was one of the very last horse-drawn railways to be built in the country. It was built just a few years before the steam locomotive boom, and, although its makers did not know it, the Dramway was out of date almost as soon as it was built. 'Railway mania' swept across Britain in the 1830's and 1840's following the success of Stephenson's Rocket at the Rainhill Trials in 1829, and by the 1840's, transport in Britain had been completely transformed as dozens of companies built new railways for steam locomotives. The advent of steam trains revolutionised transport in Britain in the nineteenth century, bringing about the decline of the canals and the growth of new towns and cities.



*Limestone blocks near Warmley*



# The Dramway Path

## Another world under our feet

Nowadays the northern half of the Dramway path passes through a rural landscape with quiet country lanes and farmland. But, in the nineteenth century, it was a noisy, busy industrial area, with dozens of coal mines surrounded by engine houses, smoking chimneys and railways, all working to deliver coal to the rapidly growing industries of Kingswood and Bristol. Meanwhile, below ground there was another, equally busy, hidden world, with a complicated network of shafts and tunnels reaching down into the numerous layers of coal-bearing rocks that underlie the parishes of Kingswood and Westerleigh.



*A replica section of Dramway track*

## Mining 'Black Diamonds'

Coal has been mined from the South Gloucestershire and East Bristol coalfield for centuries, since at least the 1200's when coalmining is mentioned in various historic records. The earliest workings were small quarries and shallow pits where people dug the coal that was found at the surface. During the 1600's and 1700's there was an increasing demand for coal as it started to be used as fuel for baking and brewing, and by 1750 there were over 140 collieries in and around Bristol. The industrial revolution created an ever-increasing demand for coal to fuel the rapidly developing manufacturing industries and metal works in Bristol and Kingswood. New coalpits opened, existing shafts were deepened to meet this seemingly never-ending demand for coal, and fortunes were made in this dirty but profitable business.



# *Transport routes over the years*

## **Lines of transport**

Walk along the Dramway path and you travel through transport history. The route passes along or beside many different types of transport, and each one was chosen as the most innovative and appropriate solution at the time that it was built. The Dramway path travels along disused railway lines, along quiet country lanes and countryside footpaths, crosses busy main roads, goes under the M4 motorway and alongside the recently completed Avon Ring Road on its way to the River Avon, historically the most important transport route in the area.

## **Inventive solutions**

As times change, new opportunities arise and, over the centuries, people have been coming up with exciting ideas for transport routes. The Dramway was a solution to the problem of transporting coal from the mines in South Gloucestershire to Bristol via the River Avon. Two companies were involved in its construction, the Avon and Gloucestershire Railway Company and the Bristol and Gloucestershire Railway Company. Numerous branch lines were built to connect different pits with the main trackway and another line was built down to Londonderry Wharf on the River Avon. This gave the Dramway two southern termini, its original one at Avon Wharf upstream of Keynsham Lock, and another downstream of the lock at Londonderry Wharf. This second wharf saved time and money for cargoes bound for Bristol, as they did not have to pay tolls at the locks at Keynsham.



*The Dramway path next to the Avon Ring Road*

## **Ring roads and motorways**

There have been two new important transport routes added to the South Gloucestershire landscape in the last 50 years. Firstly the M4 and M5 motorways were built during the 1960's and 1970's, linking Bristol with London and Birmingham; and, more recently, the Avon Ring Road has been completed, providing a fast and convenient route around Bristol. The Dramway walk experiences these new transport routes as it goes under the M4 at Lyde Green and runs alongside the new Avon Ring Road between Shortwood and Warmley. These new routes are a striking reminder of the difference in the speed of travel between the mid-1900s and the twenty first century.



# Transport routes over the years

## Avon Valley Railway

### Bristol and Bath Railway Path and other footpaths

When the former Midland Railway line between Bristol and Bath was closed to passengers in the 1960's, a local campaign group created the Railway Path, a cycling and walking route, along part of the line. Now the Bristol and Bath Railway Path ([www.bristolbathrailwaypath.org.uk](http://www.bristolbathrailwaypath.org.uk))



*Bristol and Bath Railway Path*

is a 21km/13 mile off-road route between the two cities. The Dramway path follows a similar route to the Railway Path between Coxgrove Hill and Bitton. The southern end of the Dramway path joins the River Avon Trail on the banks of the river near Keynsham, offering links with this 45km/28 mile path that follows the River Avon from Bath to Pill on the Severn Estuary.

## River Avon and the Kennet and Avon Canal

The River Avon has been a major transport route for centuries, carrying passengers and cargo along the valley to Bristol and Bath ever since 1727 when it was officially opened to water traffic between Hanham and Bath. Travel on the river was not particularly fast; it could take a week to travel from Avonmouth in the Bristol Channel to Hanham, but it was much easier than carrying heavy cargo by horse-drawn cart. The river was ideal for moving large, heavy loads like coal, stone and foodstuffs, and these were the barges' main cargoes. Locks and weirs were constructed at various points along the river to make it navigable as far as Bath, where it joined the Kennet and Avon Canal and the rest of the canal network of England.

## Bitton station and Avon Valley Railway

Bitton railway station is the home of the Avon Valley Railway ([www.avonvalleyrailway.co.uk](http://www.avonvalleyrailway.co.uk)).



*Bitton Railway Station*

It is not on the Dramway, but is close to the route. Steam trains run between Oldland and Avon Riverside stations on a restored 3 mile section of the former Midland Railway from Oldland Common to Avon Riverside. Bitton Station is open daily, facilities include buffet for drinks and light refreshments, toilets, car and cycle parking. Timetable available at Bitton station.





## SECTION 1 (See Map 1)

# Coalpit Heath to Lyde Green

### Coalpit Heath and the Ram Hill Colliery

As its name suggests, coal mining has been associated with this area for centuries and many pits have been sunk here over the years. The Dramway path goes through the site of Ram Hill Colliery, which dates from the early 1800's. The mine's main period of activity was between 1830 and 1860. It was the northern terminus of the Dramway and the line split into two branch lines, each with a loading bay. Today the Ram Hill site is being researched and managed by the Friends of Ram Hill Group.



### Bitterwell Lake

This man-made lake is now used as a fishing lake and is owned by the villagers of Henfield. George Newman, a local benefactor, gave the lake to the village in 1930. In the past the lake was used to soak the pit props for the mine, and more recently as a local swimming pool and a site for model boats.

### Lyde Green Farmhouse



This sixteenth century farmhouse has a beautiful gabled roof and interesting diagonal chimneys. It was known as the 'red house' in 1799,

reflecting the colour of the local sandstone from which it is built.

### Pucklechurch

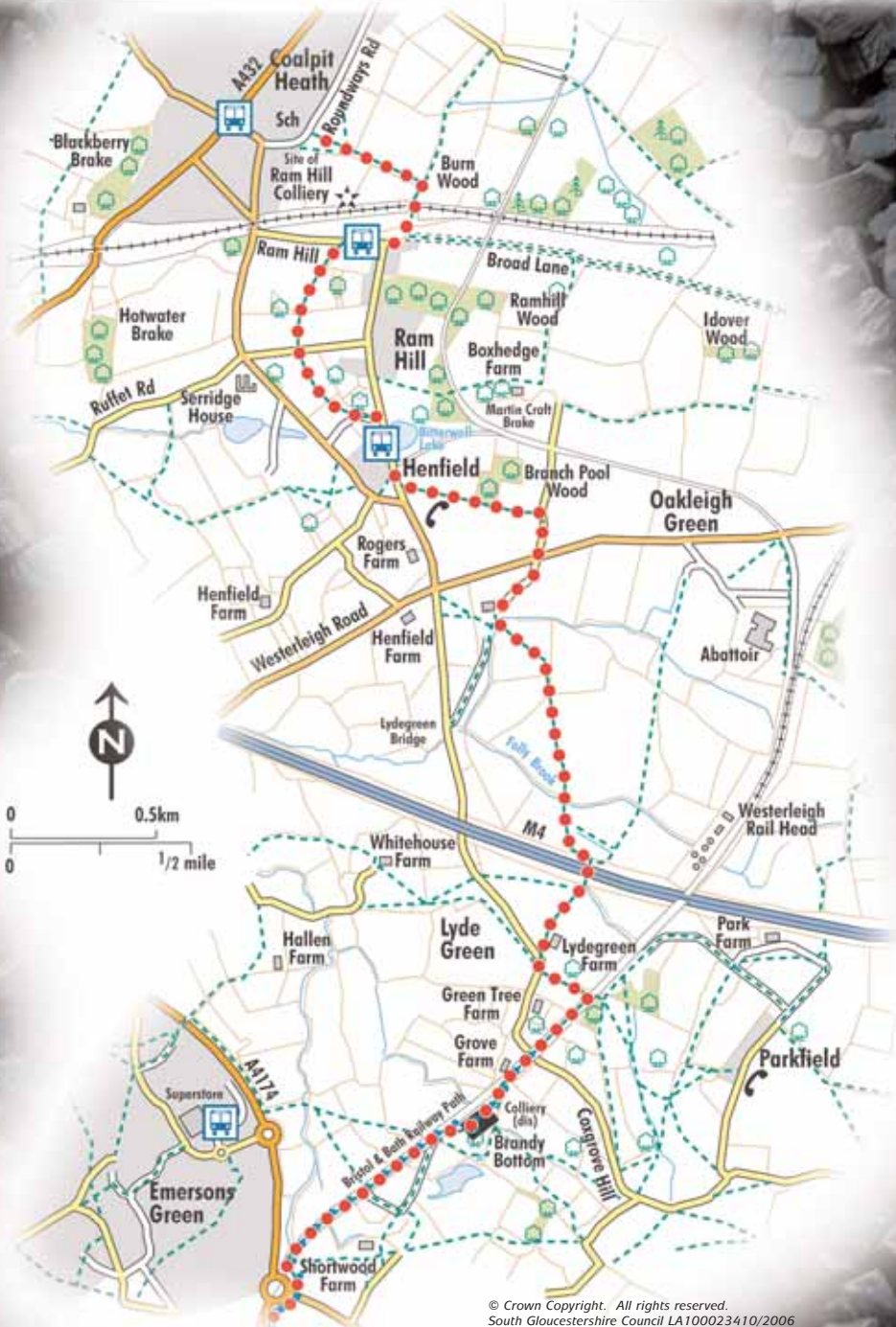
The village of Pucklechurch lies slightly to the east of the Dramway path. This attractive village was originally within the medieval Royal Forest of Kingswood. It's an historic village built on the site of a Saxon Palace which was the scene of a dramatic murder in 946 AD, when King Edmund was killed by an outlaw called Leofra.



*Find out more about many interesting seventeenth century buildings in the village by following the Pucklechurch Village Trail.*



# Coalpit Heath to Lyde Green





## SECTION 2 (See Maps 1 & 2)

### *Lyde Green to Warmley*

#### **A busy industrial area**

The section of Dramway path between Brandy Bottom Colliery and Mangotsfield Junction, near Shortwood, was subsequently used by the Midland Railway Company. Their line was also closed and this stretch is now used as a spur of the Bristol and Bath Railway Path. There are more colliery remains in this part of the Dramway than anywhere else along the route, and it's easy to imagine this area as a bustling industrial site, with noisy pumps, smoking chimneys and rattling rail wagons.



#### **Brandy Bottom - colliery and the remaining chimney**

Brandy Bottom is the appealing name given to one of the coal pits at this site that was operational during the 1800's. Brandy Bottom has some of the best-preserved colliery buildings in the area, including a tall, square brick chimney with an unusual octagonal-shaped top. There are also the remains of two engine houses and a raised

embankment which may have been a link to Brandy Bottom and other pits. The remains of a huge pit wheel are laid on the verge of the Dramway, half-hidden by vegetation.

#### **Shortwood Brickworks**

Shortwood Brick Company started production in the late 1800's, using local clay from the deep quarry at the site. At one time, a movable tramway linked the quarry with a rail link to the Midland Railway Line. The brickworks thrived during the first half of the twentieth century, supplying bricks throughout the area. They were finally closed in 1969, and the buildings were demolished in 2000.



*Carson's Road Tunnel*

#### **Carson's Road Tunnel and the Ghost Bridge**

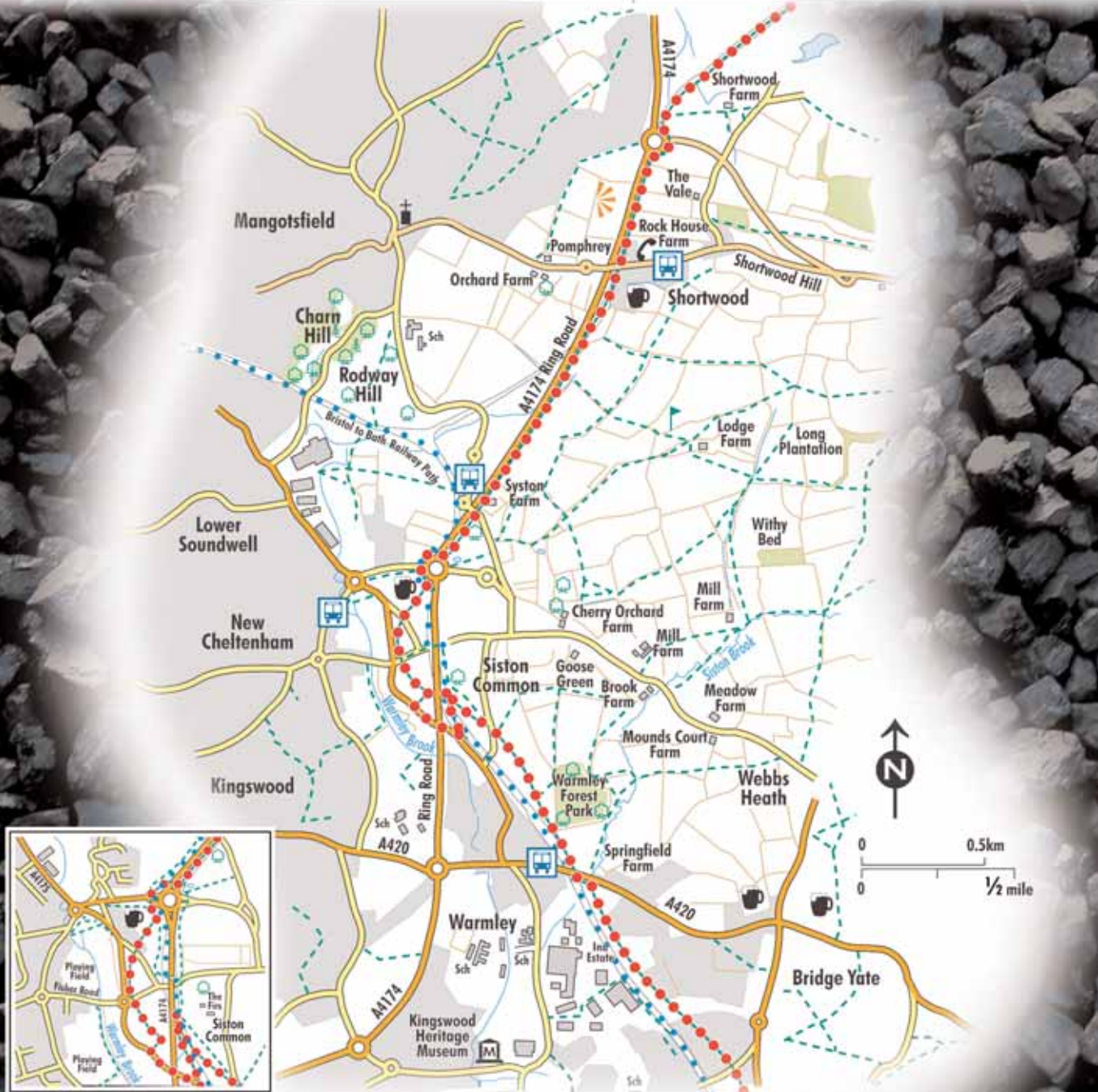
These two bridges are alongside the new Avon Ring Road and have been carefully renovated and repaired so walkers can follow the original route of the Dramway. The bridges were originally built to carry local footpaths and roads safely over the Dramway.

#### **Siston Common**

Siston Common is a very old piece of common land that dates from the time before most fields were enclosed in the late 1700's and early 1800's. It's a particularly valuable area as it's an open, unfenced space right on the edge of the Bristol suburbs. There were two branch lines running from the Dramway in this area, one to the stone quarry on Siston Hill and a second to Soundwell and Siston collieries. There are several sets of limestone blocks easily visible in parallel lines along the embankment near the Horseshoe Inn. Siston Common is designated as a site of importance for nature conservation, with many wildflowers and grasses offering food and shelter to insects, birds, bats and other animals.



# Lyde Green to Warmley



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## SECTION 3 (See Maps 2 & 3)

### Warmley to the River Avon



*The path near Warmley*

#### Warmley

The Dramway and the line of the Old Midland Railway (now the Bristol and Bath Railway Path) run parallel to each other for part of the route south from Warmley to Willsbridge, with the Dramway to the east of the Railway Path. There are well-preserved sections of the Dramway under the bridge near Warmley station and in the cutting behind the renovated

signal box. Kingswood Heritage Museum ([www.kingswoodmuseum.org.uk](http://www.kingswoodmuseum.org.uk)) in nearby Tower Lane has an excellent selection of material about the Dramway, including some of the original fishbed rails, chairs and drilled limestone blocks as well as many drawings and maps.

#### California Colliery

The California Colliery in Oldland was famous for its high-quality coal that was extracted from the Parrott Seam. This coal was particularly popular with blacksmiths because it had a low sulphur content. The mine was re-opened in 1876 on the site of an earlier pit, and a tramway linked the colliery with the route of the Dramway, which had been closed for a number of years.

The tramway on the incline was operated by gravity and it was so steep that the weight of the full trucks going down was enough to pull the empty carts back up the slope.

#### Willsbridge Mill

There have been mills in this part of the valley for centuries, using waterpower to drive their machinery. Willsbridge Mill was built from locally quarried sandstone and was used to mill flour from the early 1800's. It was in use until 1968 when huge floods caused the dam on the mill pond to burst, seriously damaging the mill. The buildings have been carefully restored by the Avon Wildlife Trust ([www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk)) and Willsbridge Mill re-opened in 1986 as an education centre. There are a series of attractive walks exploring the wildlife and history of the area around the mill.



*Willsbridge Mill*

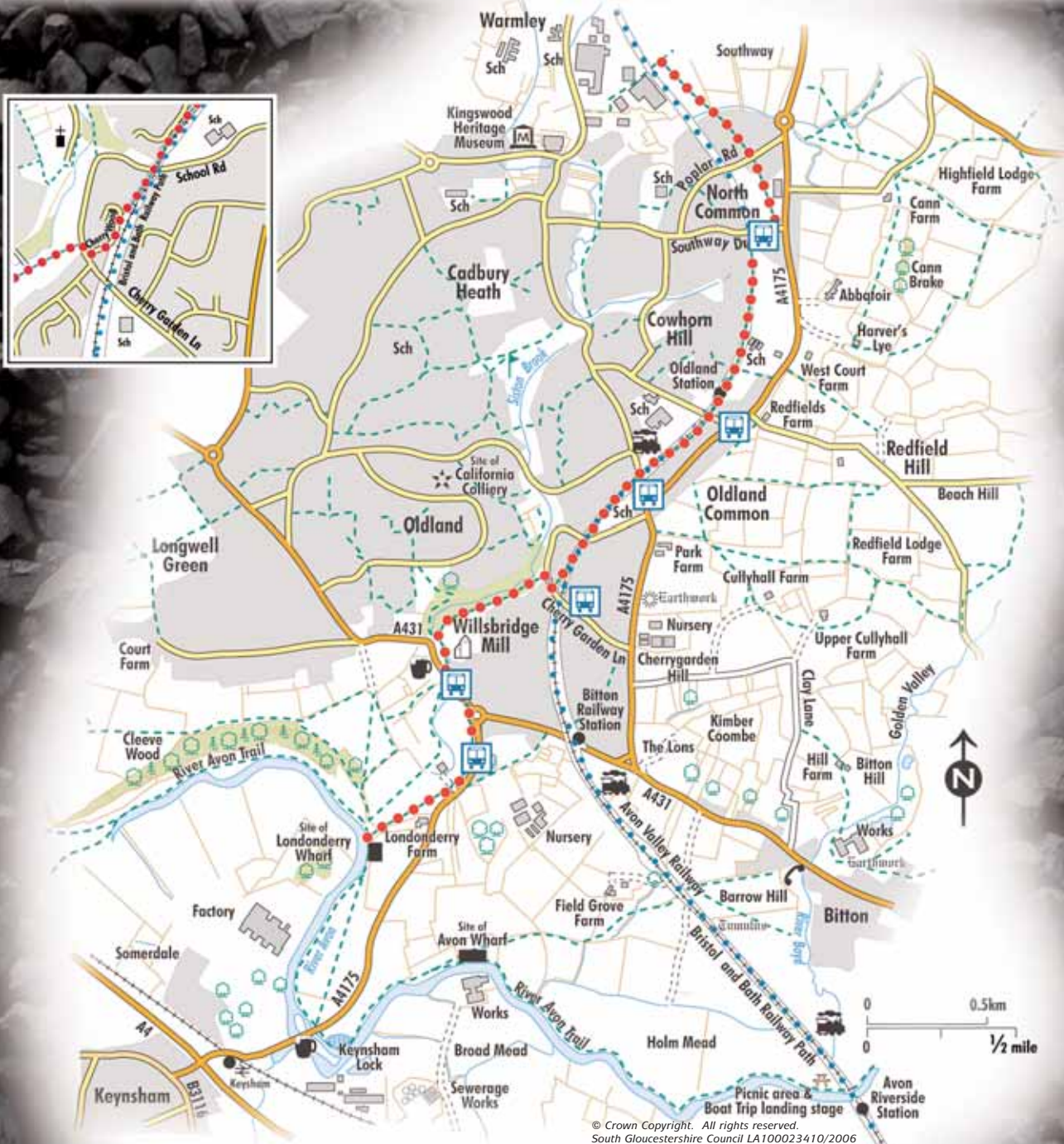
#### Londonderry Wharf and the River Avon

Londonderry Wharf was built around 1833 as a branch line off the original Dramway, which ended at Avon Wharf, upstream of the lock at Keynsham. It was built to save time and money on loads that were destined for Bristol, as it avoided paying tolls at Keynsham lock. The small weighbridge house is still visible, as is the Wharf itself and a number of limestone blocks buried in the ground.



### MAP 3

## Warmley to the River Avon



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## *Additional information*

### **Enjoy walking**

Parts of the northern section of the Dramway can be muddy at times, especially after rain and during the winter months. Wear sensible shoes or boots and carry a waterproof so that poor weather won't spoil your walk.

### **Ordnance Survey Maps**

OS Explorer map 155 covers the entire route of the Dramway path

### **Links with other promoted walks**

The fold-out map on the front inside cover shows all the promoted recreational path networks in South Gloucestershire. The Dramway links with the Community Forest Path and the River Avon Trail, and the Bristol and Bath Railway Path

### **Useful Contacts**

#### **The Public Rights of Way Team in South**

**Gloucestershire Council** look after the Dramway path as well as all local footpaths in the area.

They undertake essential maintenance on public rights of way. Based at Broad Lane, Yate, South Gloucestershire;

**Tel: 01454 868686** or go to **[www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk)**

**The Community Forest Path** is looked after by the Forest of Avon Team, who are based at Ashton Court Visitor Centre, Long Ashton, Bristol, BS41 9JN;

**Tel: 0117 9532141** **[www.forestofavon.org.uk](http://www.forestofavon.org.uk)**

**The Avon Frome Partnership Officer** is based at Colston House, Colston Street Bristol, BS1 5AQ. This officer works on a number of projects within the Avon Valley, including the River Avon Trail.

**Tel: 0117 922 4325**

#### **South Gloucestershire Heritage Forum**

The South Gloucestershire Heritage Forum represents those involved in heritage activities, arranges visits to heritage sites, lectures, exhibitions, open days and special events. It is a voice in the protection, public access and recording of the heritage of South Gloucestershire. **Tel: 01454 865783**