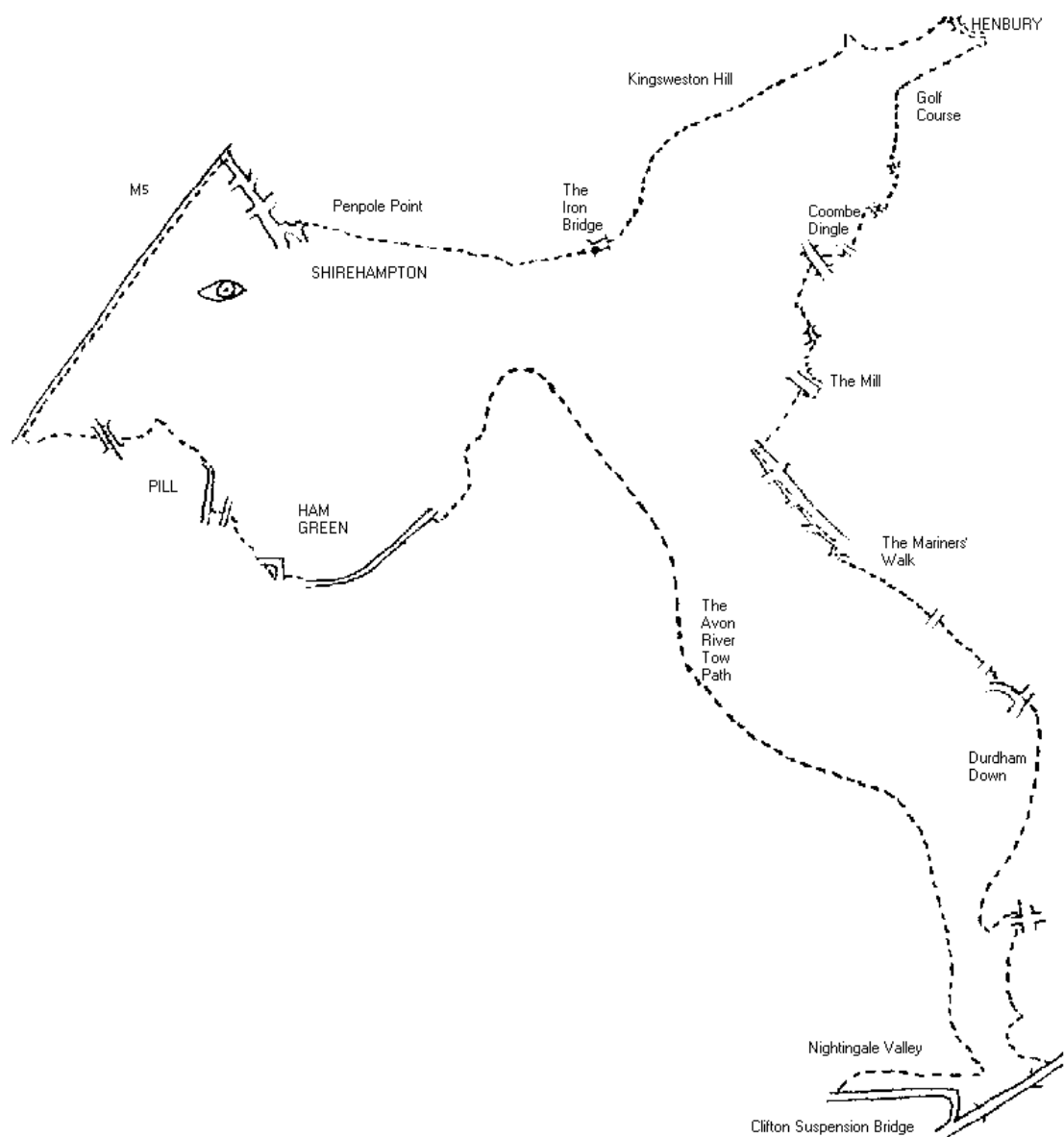


THE BRISTOL GIANTS

OR 'GORAM'S LEAP' (15M)



This pea-brained individual is the giant, Goram, on the point of flinging himself into the Severn Estuary in a fit of depression, brought on by his failure to win the hand of the fair maid, Avona. He does not look very impressive on the page, but if he were to stand upright, he would be a hazard to cruising aircraft. His bones form the islands of Steep Holm and Flat Holm in the Bristol Channel, and his fall is one of the mythical explanations of the Severn Bore.

A not very convincing sixteenth century version of the story of Vincent and Goram is told in a pamphlet put out by the City Museum in 1975. This piece of doggerel describes how the giants Vincent and Goram decided to settle their violent quarrel over the river goddess Avona by digging a new course for the River Avon. Vincent won by slicing a path through the Avon Gorge, whereas Goram fell asleep on the job, while digging a less impressive gorge for the Hazel Brook in the Blaise Estate.

It is possible that this is a garbled version of a Welsh story that was first referred to in a fifth century manuscript. If it is, it was probably brought over by some of the Welsh followers of Henry Tudor who settled in Bristol after his victory at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485.

I first came across the general idea for this route in 1994 while training for the London Marathon with Westbury Harriers. I cannot remember whose idea it was, but it certainly wasn't mine. I do remember we started from the Beehive in Wellington Hill West.

I later conceived the idea of using the course for a race, which meant a change of starting point to avoid road crossings. The remaining trouble spots are the Suspension Bridge, Bridge Valley Road, Shirehampton Road (Sea Mills) and Lower High Street, Shirehampton. Shirehampton Road could be avoided by sending runners under the bridge by the Millhouse pub, which might be amusing. A Shirehampton start would mean the runners would be sufficiently strung out by the time the Suspension Bridge was reached, but Bridge Valley Road would still need to be closed. On the other hand, that is only one road, so it might be possible.

My fantasy race might begin at the Robin Cousins Sports Centre or Avonmouth Rugby Club and finish beside the trig point on Penpole Point, but if you are going to do it as a walk, it might be better to start at the Hope and Anchor in the Lower High Street in Shirehampton. (I found the locals had a keen sense of humour when I turned up there with a bunch of Hash House Harriers dressed in togas a few years ago.)

This is very much a pared down version of the route, and it is possible to make it more interesting by diversions through Limekiln Wood and Evergreens Wood in the Blaise Estate and through Paradise Bottom and Leigh Woods on the other side of the River Avon.

If you require refreshments en route, Thatcher's Cider, Bass and Courage Best can be used to wash down a proper ham roll at the Duke of Cornwall in Pill, whilst Butcombe beer and Long Ashton cider can be had at the Star. Once you get over the Suspension Bridge into Clifton, you are spoilt for choice, but you will need to make a diversion from the route, if you want more than an ice cream from the Observatory. The closest pubs are the Grapes Tavern and the Coronation Tap in Sion Place. (Turn right across the grass after the bridge.) There is good beer at the Tavern (although some think it expensive) and the Coronation Tap is a famous cider house. The Millhouse in Sea Mills is on the route and serves ? and food. The illustrated route takes a racing line back to Shirehampton, but short diversions could take in a Toby Carvery and a ciderhouse (The Blaise Inn) in Henbury and there are cafés near the Blaise Estate car park and at Kingsweston House before you get back to the Hope and Anchor.

There are several buses that get close to this pub including the 41, 43, 43a, 57, 517, 518 and 525. The route works equally well from Clifton where the 8, 8a, 9, 9a, 586 and 587 may be found helpful. (Parking is difficult during the week near the Suspension Bridge due to commuter.)

The best map for this route is the OS Explorer Map for Bristol West and Portishead number 154, on which the pub is at ST527775.

FROM THE START TO THE SUSPENSION BRIDGE

From the Hope and Anchor, turn left and left again to get on the cycle path alongside the motorway.

Descend from M4 Bridge on the other side and continue along the cycle footpath, under a new railway bridge.

When you can, turn left down a road toward the river,

As the road bends to the right go straight ahead onto a grassy bank, which runs between the river and some flats.

At the end of the bank descend to a footpath alongside the floodwall.

At the yacht club turn right alongside Pill Harbour wall. *The Duke of Cornwall is nearby.*

At end of the harbour, turn left across the grass to the entrance to the cycle track opposite. *The Star is off to the right.*

The cycle path is clearly marked through Ham Green.

Past Ham Green, the track descends past a fishing lake toward Chapel Pill Farm.

Follow the cycle track to the right of the farm and around a field onto the riverside.

Follow the Towing Path upstream until 150m before the Clifton Suspension Bridge and look for tunnel under the railway on the right into Nightingale Valley.

Climb up the rocky valley until you come to a kissing gate on the left.

Through the gate, turn left along North Road until it emerges at a T-junction.

At the junction, turn left across The Suspension Bridge and admire the view of Vincent's Rocks on the left.

FROM THE SUSPENSION BRIDGE TO THE MILL INN

From the Bridge, go up the path on the left to Observatory overlooking the Suspension Bridge.

Follow the path to the left of the Observatory along the cliff-edge fence.

At end of the clearing follow path to the right to emerge in an avenue alongside a road.

Turn left through avenue of beech trees to Bridge Valley Road.

Cross road to path opposite.

On path, turn right and then left up Fountain Hill.

Look out for path on left, and follow it through the trees to cliff-side fence.

Turn right alongside, fence with cliff on left to emerge by a road. (This is a peregrine falcon viewpoint.)

Cross road and go straight ahead, parallel with Ladies' Mile on the right, for about 400m and then bear left across Clifton Down to Julian Road.

Go down right hand side of Julian Road to pick up Pitch and Pay Lane.

At end of lane cross road to follow Roman Way past Stoke Bishop Church to road at bottom.

On road, turn left then right on footpath through trees, then straight on across two roads.

Turn right along path along open space alongside River Trym.

Follow the track through the scrub.

At this point, my fantasy racetrack goes over the edge into the river and follows it upstream under the bridge. I have not checked the safety of this course and do not recommend it.

Instead, go up to the road, turn right and then left to the Mill Inn.

FROM THE MILL INN TO THE IRON BRIDGE

From the Inn, turn left and left again to find the path behind the back of pub.

Follow the path around to the right and alongside the river to a footbridge over the river.

Over the bridge, turn right through a meadow alongside the river.

This is where my fantasy and your reality come back together.

At the end of the meadow, follow the path under the road bridge to a concrete path along the top of a sewer, which emerges into a minor road. (Be careful of manhole half way along.)

In road turn right and then left into Coombe Dingle car park.

Go through the car park to a kissing gate into the Blaise Estate.

Through kissing gate, bear right to follow streamside to a bridge on right to a kissing gate into a meadow.

In the meadow, turn left and follow the stream to a kissing gate and bridge at the far end of the meadow.

Across the bridge, follow the path alongside the stream until you reach a path up some steps on the right.

Go up the path until a path branches off to the left, close to the top.

Follow the winding path through the trees and along the edge of a steep slope planted with beeches to the left.

Pick up a track on the far side, which snakes past Goram's Chair, a cliff top to the left.

Follow this track until it emerges on a metalled drive beside a rustic cottage.

On the drive, turn left and follow it as it zigzags down the gorge to a bridge by a mill-house.

Cross the bridge and turn left on path alongside the stream on the left.

Follow the path for about 400m until you reach a path by a wall on the right.

Turn right up the path, which follows a wall on the left through a beech plantation, until you emerge onto parkland at the top.

Turn left along the edge of the grass to a track concealed in a wood.

Follow the track to the right and look for some steps on the left.

Climb these steps to the remains of a kissing gate.

Through the gate, go past an earthwork along Kingsweston Ridge for about a mile, until you emerge via a cinder track past some houses at an Iron Footbridge over a road.

FROM THE IRON BRIDGE TO THE FINISH

Over bridge, go up steps on right onto a track in the Kingsweston House estate.

From this point, the exact course of the race would depend on exactly what arrangement had been made for the finish.

To get back to the Hope and Anchor:

On the track, turn left and follow it to a cross-track.

Turn left between boulders and then right along another track.

Keep on track until you emerge in a clearing on a ridge (Penpole Point).

Go straight ahead past circular stone seat and trig point and descend rustic steps to a road.

On road, turn left and follow pavement on right down to a major road (Lower High Street, Shirehampton).

Cross road and turn right on pavement towards M4 motorway flyover.

The Hope and Anchor is on the left.

Just before flyover, turn left up cycle/footpath across River Avon.