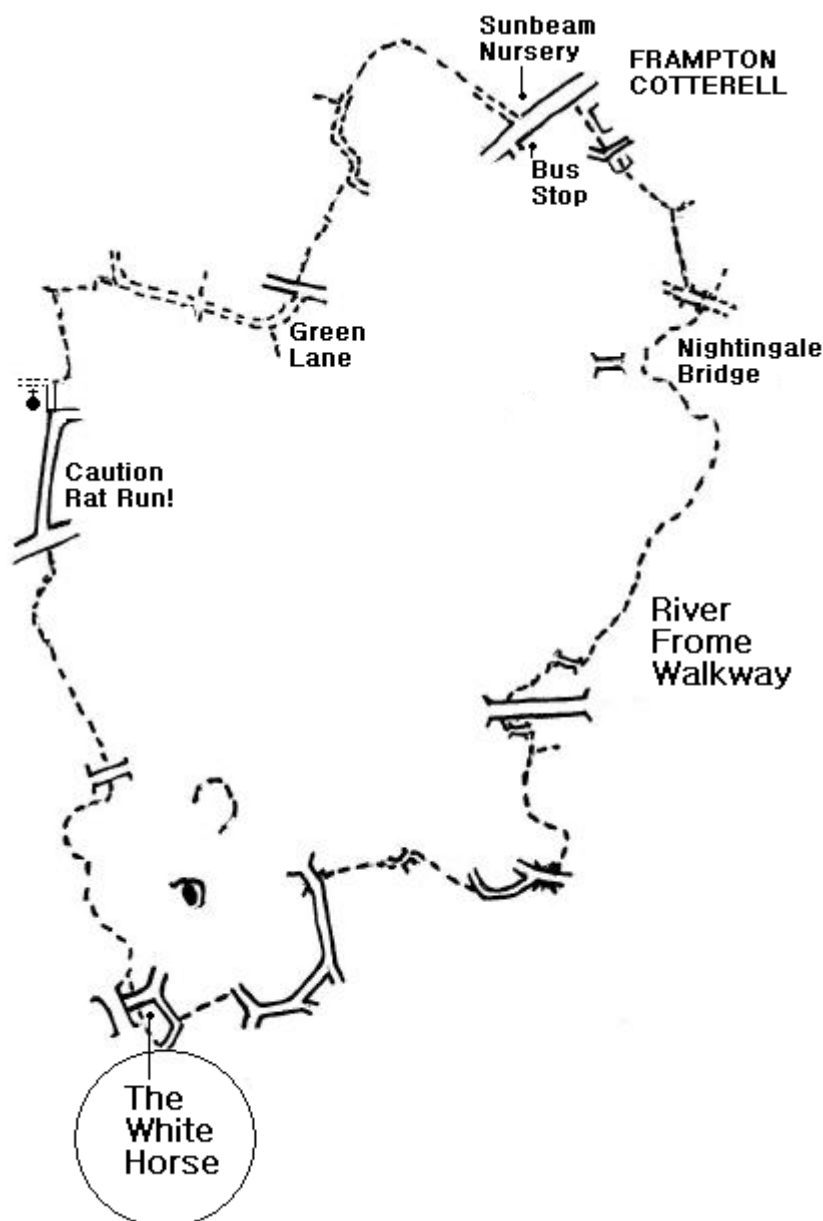


FROM THE WHITE HORSE

STARRING SIMON SMITH'S AMAZING DANCING BEAR



This is a work in progress for the next volume of Crossing Boundaries, which will be called Beyond the Fringe. The start is at the White Horse in Hambrook, which is potentially a good pub. Unfortunately, it is too smoky for some TACH runners; but that will no longer be a problem after the smoking ban comes into effect.

From the social point of view, the route establishes a link between the White Horse in Hambrook and the Crossbow House Social Club in Frampton Cotterell. It also provides a link with the parish church, whose isolation from the main village of Winterbourne is legendary. However, it is mainly an excuse to explore the natural potential of the White Horse, placed as it is near the confluence of the River Frome and the Bradley Brook. As well as offering an opportunity to explore the two streams closely, the route passes near two nature reserves at Huckford Quarry and Monks Pool.

The pub, which has a large car park, is on the B4058 from the ring road at Frenchay to Winterbourne. It is also on the route of the 328 and X30 buses, which provide an hourly service during the day from Monday to Saturday. The 329 operates a two-hourly service in the evenings and on Sunday.

The route can be followed on the OS Explorer no 155 (from ST644790), except for a few hundred metres past the Sunbeam Nursery, which can be found on map no 167, if you are nervous about my directions.

FROM THE WHITE HORSE TO NIGHTINGALE BRIDGE

(Along the River Frome Walkway)

Turn down the lane between the car park past the Hambrook Inn and Chinese Restaurant.

Take the first footpath on the left alongside the Frome.

At the end of the path, turn right on the road across the river. Take care as there is a blind bend.

Follow the river on your left.

Turn left at the first junction on your left.

Turn right alongside the river just before the road crosses a bridge.

Follow the track alongside the river, through a new kissing gate and an older one until you reach a footbridge over the river.

Over the river turn right along a substantial path, which emerges, past a garage, into 'The Dingle'.

Go straight ahead to a T-junction and then turn right over the river.

Turn left through a kissing gate on the other side and follow the enclosed path alongside the river.

(The Forest Path veers off to the right just before the first stile to block the path close to a railway viaduct.)

Climb this stile and another and cross the footbridge.

To the left is a kissing gate into the Huckford Quarry Nature Reserve. The pennant sandstone from the quarry provided the core of the viaduct, which is faced in brick. There does not seem to be anything particularly rare in the reserve, although the stunted oaks to be found there are more common in Wales than they are in the lowlands of England. The leaflet mentions three varieties of grass, none of which are rare, and three common types of fern, polypody, lady fern and hart's tongue fern. The point, apparently, is that the conditions in the quarry are more acidic than the surrounding countryside. The flowers are common enough as well. At least two of them grown as weeds in my garden; but many of them are pretty.

Turn right and follow the path under the viaduct. Do not be seduced into climbing the path up the hill, the correct route is straight on to a stile into a field and a path that leads to a pair of stiles onto a track that leads to a bridge back to the other side of the river.

Turn left to follow the path alongside the river. (The path beside the river was partially underwater this afternoon. You may prefer to avoid it by climbing the bank.)

A kissing gate leads to a long damp meadow beside the river and another kissing gate leading into the scrubby forerunner of a wood.

The barrier into the wood has been removed.

There is a kissing gate out of the wood.

The next kissing gate showed a thigh high tide mark.

There is no right of way across the bridge on the left, which is not marked on my map.

You need to go through a kissing gate next to the track that leads away from the bridge and then through another onto a track on the far side of the field.

This is the track to Nightingale's Bridge.

FROM NIGHTINGALE'S BRIDGE TO WINTERBOURNE CHURCH

Cross the bridge and go through the kissing gate on the right.

Through the gate, bear left along the line of the electric cable poles to another kissing gate.

Through the gate, turn left up an enclosed path. Carry on past a skate board ramp, a rugby pavilion and a car park to emerge on the road next to Crossbow House.

Turn left and then right down the path opposite number 56. Keep going until you reach Bristol Road.

On the main road, turn left along the pavement to the bus stop opposite the Sunbeam Nursery and then cross the road into the track leading to the Tudor Livery Stables.

Keep straight on past the various buildings, which include the livery stables on the left and a ruined nursery littered with crashed police vehicles on the right.

Go into the field ahead through a V-shaped stile and continue along the right hand hedge to a makeshift wooden V-stile beside a gate.

Bear left across the next field to a stile consisting of a pair of widely spaced rails and some stones in the left hand hedge. (Ignore the more conventional stile in the corner of the field.)

Over the rails, go straight ahead along the left hand hedge to a stile into an enclosed path.

Ignore the first stile on your right.

The path bends gradually to the left, more sharply to the right and then sharply to the left. At the latter bend go over a stone stile on the right and turn sharp left.

Follow the wall on your left past a redundant wooden stile and a gate to find a stone stile over the wall into the field on your left.

Turn sharp right along the wall to find another stile into a large field.

Over this stile, bear slightly left toward the gable end of a yellow cottage. There is another stone stile onto a road to the left of it.

In the road, turn left and then right up 'Green Lane'.

Carry on up the RUPP past Norman's Farm and other distractions.

Ignore one kissing gate and a turning on your left and a stile on your right. In wet weather, you may find it harder to ignore the enormous red puddle that sometimes forms in a dip in the track.

Go straight on when the track bends to the right and look for a kissing gate into a field on your left.

Over the stile turn sharp right and then sharp left in the corner, just before a stile. You should probably resist the temptation to cut the corner towards the distant steeple!

In the next corner there is a kissing gate beside a pond.

Turn left beside the church. *(If you want to visit the Monk's Pool nature reserve, it is straight on down the lane. After you have visited it, return to the church and turn right.)*

FROM WINTERBOURNE CHURCH TO THE WHITE HORSE

Continue past the church to a double gate and go through the pedestrian version.

Go straight on down Church Lane, which is a bit of a rat run, but not as bad as Beacon Lane, which is the local name of the B4057 or Winterbourne Road, which you meet at the bottom of the hill.

Cross the stream of traffic carefully to a stile into a field that contained young and very inquisitive bullocks, when we tried it.

Go straight ahead to a supernumerary metal stile next to drinking trough and turn right along the line of a derelict hedge.

At the end you will come to a substantial bridge over the Bradley Brook, protected by stiles at either end.

The path across the next field bears slightly left up and over a spur.

As you descend toward a muddy gap or gate (it was an enormous puddle when we went through) you get a good view of the Bradley Brook winding away on your left.

Ascend the field on the other side, keeping a hedge on your right to a tunnel under the railway guarded by a stile on the nearside and a gate on the far side.

If you are thin, you will be able to squeeze through a gap to the left of the gate, but take care. There are several strands of wire on the left.

At a T-junction, turn right along a track that becomes an enclosed path between the motorway and the Bradley Brook. Enjoy the views down to your left, but be aware that the stone walls are in a poor state of repair and there are several low branches or fallen trees that make frequent stooping necessary.

At the end of the path, there is a stile built into a farm gate onto a road.

It is the B4058. The bad news is: it is difficult to cross. The good news: the White Horse is only a few metres off to the left.