

## Lower Wye Ramblers

### Bristol Walk

The first Sunday of February 2014 saw 18 members turn up for an urban walk around the historic city of Bristol.



From Ashton Court Estate the group walked down through the estate of 850 acres passing the deer park and the Court House, now a banqueting and wedding venue, once owned by the wealthy Smyth family, but now Bristol City Council.

It is a multi-leisure park these days, with paths for walkers, dogs and joggers. Cycling and mountain biking routes, golf, a miniature railway are also part of this green area on the south side of Clifton and the suspension. High above Bristol and the river Avon, marvellous views make this a lovely place to visit. The success of this was plain to see with the number of people in and around the park enjoying the sunshine on what is proving to be a muddy and wet start to 2014.

The walkers followed a cycle path down to the floating harbour at the Cumberland basin where earlier that day the river had flooded over its banks; sandbags in evidence stacked around protecting properties near to the river.

After a short coffee break adjacent to *SS Great Britain* in her dry dock, they walked along the harbour side passing the *Matthew*, a replica of a caravel sailed by *John Cabot* in 1497 from Bristol to North America, presumably Newfoundland, then beside the M Shed, a museum dedicated to telling

the amazing history of Bristol, with the many objects and stories of the people who have made the city what it is today.

Once on the opposite side of the floating harbour by crossing over the modern Pero's footbridge the group had lunch on the steps of the TSB amphitheatre. Their route continued around the harbour side path back to the river Avon beside the many contemporary developments that makes harbour side life attractive. What the navvies and dockworkers of the past would have made of the change in the use of this dock and now marina?



Before tackling the steep winding path to the Clifton Suspension Bridge from the Portway, the group read the plaque telling the history of Hotwells. In Georgian times hot springs came from the Clifton Gorge and a spa for entertainment and leisure was built, which attracted wealthy citizens, an attraction popular for 200 years. The colonnade built in 1786, now a row of cottages, was once a shopping arcade, with shops and a library. Close by the now derelict Clifton Rocks a funicular railway (1893-1934) was built to bring the rich people from Clifton down to the shopping and spa at Hotwells.

After an energetic walk up to Brunel's Suspension Bridge and posing for a group photograph, they walked across enjoying magnificent views over Bristol bathed in sunshine, a bonus. A short walk to return Ashton Court, with all agreeing this had been an ideal winter walk with no sign of mud anywhere!