

# BioBlitz



## Broadsheet

*I'm Sir Robert Southwell.*

*Welcome to my park and gardens at Kings Weston.*

*My garden has changed much since I remember it, but you'll still find traces of it if you look hard enough. When I lived here three hundred and thirty years ago I was fascinated by natural history and I hope you will be too.*

*As a President of the Royal Society many of my companions were the famous scientists, botanists, and*

*naturalists of their day. One of my dear friends Robert Hooke designed the sea wall below Kings Weston. He also made some extraordinary discoveries using his new microscope. Indeed, he publish'd a book in 1665 with images such as this flea. You too can look into the same tiny world using more modern equipment.*



**Bristol Rock Cress** only grows in Bristol. Nowhere else in the world! It used to be found at Kings Weston but no one knows if it's still here. Help find it again on any rocky outcrops

## THE GARDENS

In 1679 Sir Robert Southwell bought Kings Weston house and the estate that surrounded it. Sir Robert was an important man in his time and was part of the courts of King James II and King William III. He was renowned for his wisdom and patience and had many friends. In 1690 Sir Robert was honoured by William III when the king stayed at Kings Weston as his guest.

Sir Robert was quick in designing the gardens around the old mansion. He laid out and planted formal walled courts close to the house. He also extended his garden out into

the landscape with long avenues of trees and less formal paths through Penpole Wood. Parts of the avenues he planted can still be seen today.

Sir Robert had strong connections with the English colonies that were developing in North America. His friends there sent him back newly discovered seeds, plants, and trees for him to grow at Kings Weston.



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# FROM GARDENS TO PARK

The landscape of Kings Weston has changed as frequently as fashions in garden design. Soon after Sir Robert Southwell died his son Edward began some ambitious plans to update the estate. He started by demolishing the old mansion and rebuilding it into the grand classical house we see today. As soon as that was finished he looked to modernise the gardens to match his new home.



He swept away most of the formal gardens that his father had planted and added new ornamental buildings such as the Echo and Penpole Lodge as well as massive terraces on which to walk and take in the views. He also extended the park to the south as far as the River Avon and to the north where Lawrence Weston is now. When he'd finished it must have been one of the finest private parks in the

Like his father Edward Southwell was also elected as a member of the Royal Society in London. Although he wasn't as active as Sir Robert he did support other scientists in their work. This print was dedicated to him by Eleazar Albin who published *A Natural History of Insects* in 1720. Many of Edward's friends were also recognised in this way as subscribers who paid for the book.

Can you help identify these moths?



country. Although Edward's garden and buildings were admired it was always nature and the spectacular views that impressed people most.

Later landscape designers like 'Capability' Brown were hired to make the landscape look much more naturalistic. Rolling slopes and clumps of trees replaced rigid terraces and avenues. An informal garden with new rustic paths was laid out in an old quarry in Penpole Wood and a menagerie (a small zoo) was built. Sadly we don't know what exotic animals or birds it housed.

Today Kings Weston has landmarks from all periods of its history and is now a public park managed by Bristol City Council and the National Trust. A lot has changed since it was a private garden, but now it is open for everyone to enjoy.

*I'm Edward Southwell, Sir Robert's son. He used to like calling me Neddy! When he died in 1703 I inherited Kings Weston, its estate and many treasures in the house. I got the best architect of the day, Sir John Vanbrugh, to create a new house for me and together we also redesigned the gardens.*

*I died in 1730, but this view from about 1760 shows a lot of what I built. It looks out across the open parkland towards Penpole Lodge, a gate and tower Vanbrugh designed for me in to catch the eye on the horizon. Some of the trees here are still in the park today.*





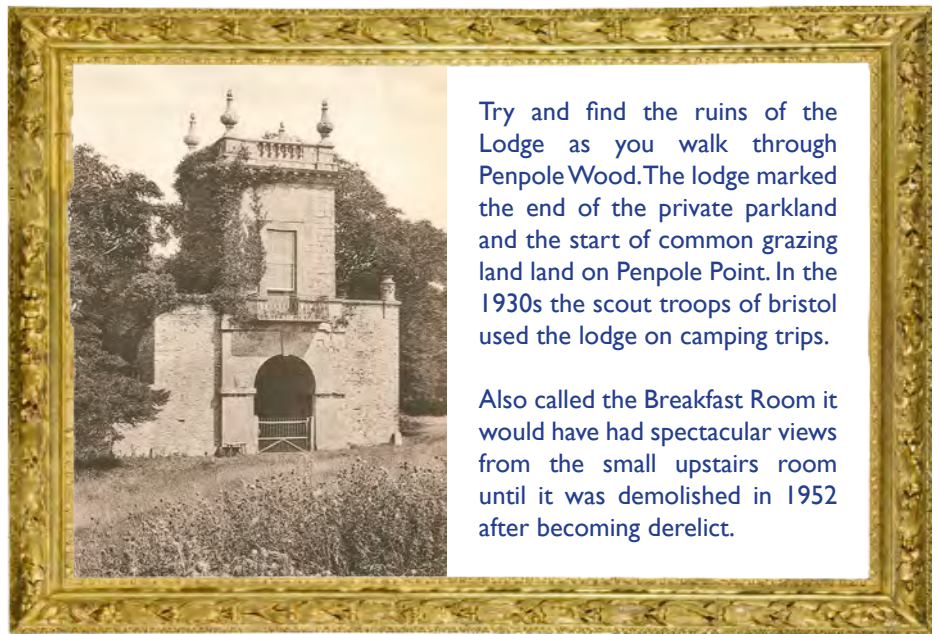
# PENPOLE POINT

The name Penpole comes from two words in ancient British that together mean 'head' or 'end of the country'. You can see why it got that name. Look closely at how high it is above the river level and how steep and abrupt the sides of the hill are. Keep a safe distance from the edge of the ridge as the headland was also used for quarrying stone and there are some sudden vertical drops.

Penpole Point was Common Land used by the people of Shirehampton to graze their livestock. This would have helped keep the hill open and clear. As the farms below Penpole were replaced by houses and industry the hill was grazed less and less and the undergrowth grew wild.

The stone here is very similar to the Avon Gorge and the rare plants that grow there today used to grow here too. The trees and shrubs that have sprung up in the old quarries now smother these rare species and obscure the views.

In the Victorian era many great celebrations were held here by the people of Shirehampton. Huge bonfires were set up to celebrate Royal Coronations and Jubilees, and also to commemorate the opening of Avonmouth Dock in 1877.



Try and find the ruins of the Lodge as you walk through Penpole Wood. The lodge marked the end of the private parkland and the start of common grazing land on Penpole Point. In the 1930s the scout troops of Bristol used the lodge on camping trips.

Also called the Breakfast Room it would have had spectacular views from the small upstairs room until it was demolished in 1952 after becoming derelict.

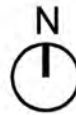
*I'm Elizabeth Southwell, Neddy's wife. My friends call me Betty. You'll see lots of people enjoy taking their dogs walking at Kings Weston, and once upon a time there were many more who came here. The views from Penpole Point used to be famous across the kingdom and beyond, inspiring artists, poets and authors including Jane Austen.*

*This was the view two centuries ago before trees grew up and blocked the view. Rare wildflowers including the Bristol Rock Cress used to grow amongst the rocks.*

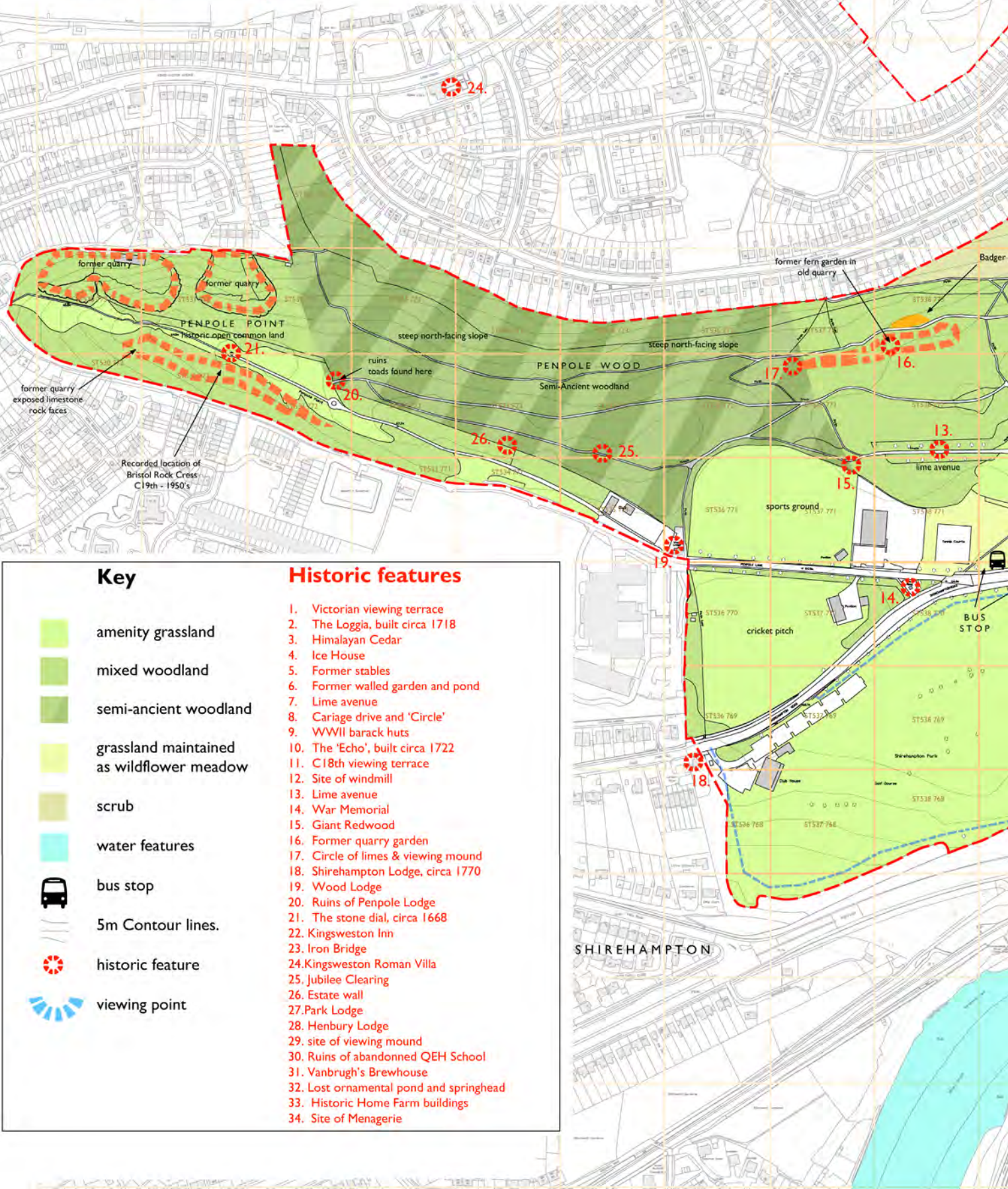
At the edge of Penpole Point is an ancient stone dial that was erected by the merchants of Bristol as a look-out point. From here their servants could see ships returning with cargo and anchoring in the Severn. It could take weeks for the tide and wind to be right to complete their voyage into the city docks so an early warning was useful. In 1668 it cost £5 to repair - a lot of money at the time.







### KINGS WESTON ESTATE BRISTOL BIOBLITZ 2013



#### Key

- amenity grassland
- mixed woodland
- semi-ancient woodland
- grassland maintained as wildflower meadow
- scrub
- water features
- bus stop
- 5m Contour lines.
- historic feature
- viewing point

#### Historic features

1. Victorian viewing terrace
2. The Loggia, built circa 1718
3. Himalayan Cedar
4. Ice House
5. Former stables
6. Former walled garden and pond
7. Lime avenue
8. Carriage drive and 'Circle'
9. WWII barack huts
10. The 'Echo', built circa 1722
11. C18th viewing terrace
12. Site of windmill
13. Lime avenue
14. War Memorial
15. Giant Redwood
16. Former quarry garden
17. Circle of limes & viewing mound
18. Shirehampton Lodge, circa 1770
19. Wood Lodge
20. Ruins of Penpole Lodge
21. The stone dial, circa 1668
22. Kingsweston Inn
23. Iron Bridge
24. Kingsweston Roman Villa
25. Jubilee Clearing
26. Estate wall
27. Park Lodge
28. Henbury Lodge
29. site of viewing mound
30. Ruins of abandoned QEH School
31. Vanbrugh's Brewhouse
32. Lost ornamental pond and springhead
33. Historic Home Farm buildings
34. Site of Menagerie





LAWRENCE WESTON

32.

34.

33.

JUMP

4.

5.

2.

1.

31.

30.

3.

KINGSWESTON HILL  
historic common land

12.

recently cleared scrub land

KINGS WESTON HOUSE

Mixed woodland  
post-war establishment

concrete-lined ponds  
Still water. Low light levels.

lime avenue established  
circa 1740

path planted with ornamental and specimen trees

10.

11.

22.

23.

27.

PUBLIC CAR PARK

SHIREHAMPTON ROAD

BUS STOP

LONGCOMBE WOOD  
historic woodland.

LONGCOMBE

YEW WOOD  
historic mixed woodland

steep north-facing slope

beech woods

old castle pond  
fed by spring

SEA MILLS

SHIREHAMPTON PARK  
National Trust  
Managed as golf course

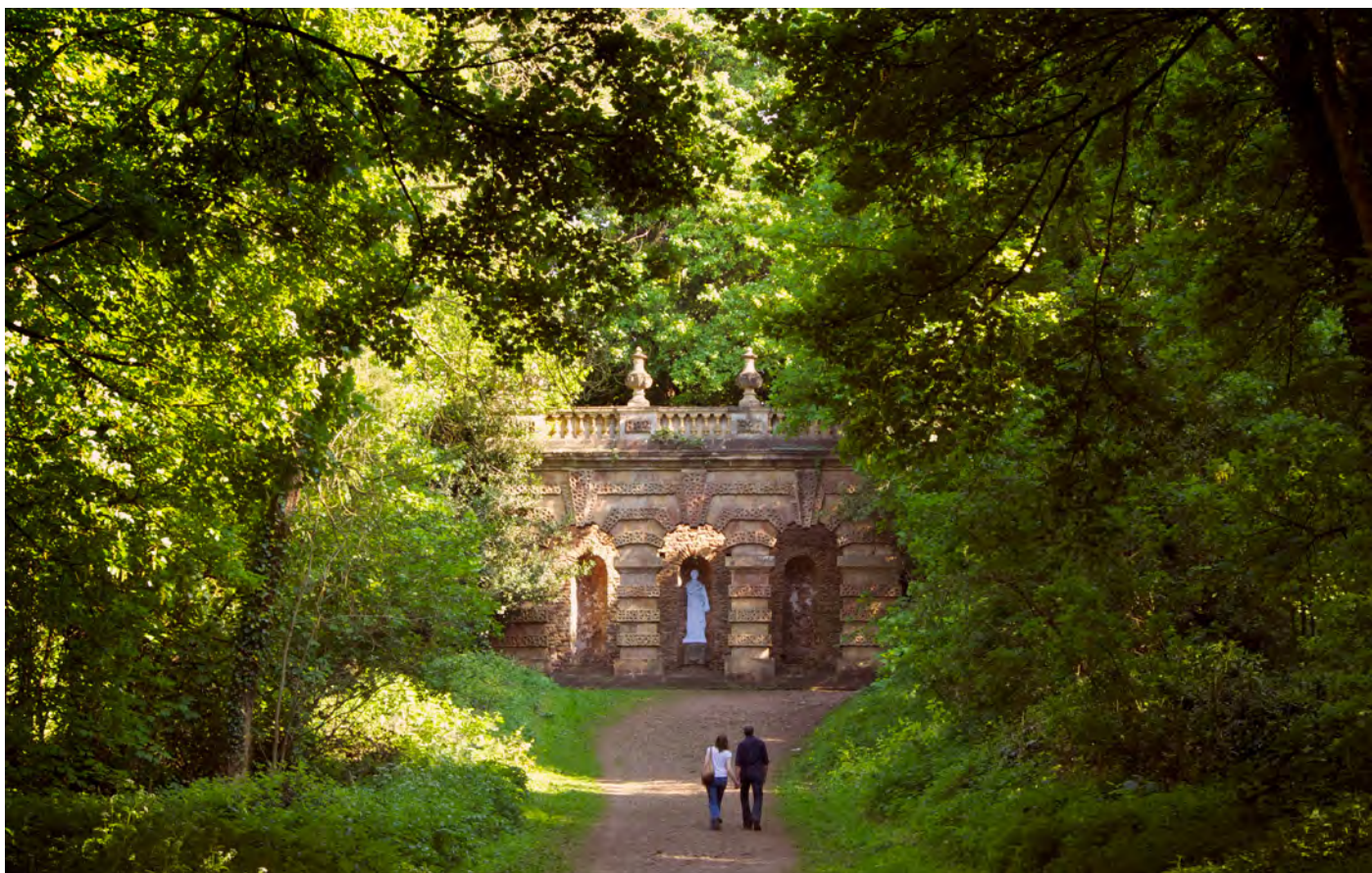
RIVER AVON

wild flower meadow

CRABTREE SLIP WOOD







## THE WOODLAND

There are lots of wooded areas across the Kings Weston estate. The oldest parts are around Penpole Wood and are natural. Others were planted deliberately to enhance the parkland. Woods on Kingsweston Hill were planted with beech and sweet chestnut trees as well as giant cedars to create attractive carriage rides.

*It's not wealthy Lords or merchants who live at Kings Weston today. Now it's a public park it's been taken over by wildlife. I'm now boss around here and you can find my big sett in Penpole Woods if you look hard enough.*

Evergreens including the Himalayan Cedar next to the house and the Giant Redwood (*Wellingtonia*) in Penpole Wood were imported into Britain in the Victorian era to decorate gardens like Kings Weston. What we might think of today as wild and natural started off as controlled garden planting.

The woods were also productive. Timber was used in construction and shipbuilding and what wasn't used on the estate could be sold. Also look out for Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos*) in Penpole Wood. This was planted to feed pheasants that were bred in the wood for eating.

In the woodland close to Kings Weston House you will find the Echo, a pavilion designed to catch the eye at the end of the gardens. It was built by Edward Southwell and his architect Vanbrugh at about the same time as the main house. A statue on a plinth was added later. Sadly the statue has gone, but take a look instead at the monstrous beasts that decorate the urns on the roof.



North-facing woodland like Penpole Wood is an ideal damp environment for fungus to thrive in. They grow in many unusual shapes and colours throughout the year. This Turkey Tail fungus likes decaying wood but different species prefer different locations. **Remember fungus can be poisonous!**





## KINGSWESTON HILL

Kingsweston Hill has always been a special place. In prehistoric times it was used for ceremonial burials. There are the remains of tumuli up here as well as the earth embankments of a small settlement. In more recent times it has become downland habitat for rare plants and insects. The hill was bought by the City Council in 1937 to preserve it for the public to enjoy.

Surrounded by trees it is easy to forget that you are in the city, but the woodland that now blocks out the noise of the motorway has only grown here for 150 years. The painting below was made in the 1790's by local artist Nicholas Pococke and

shows the open views that were once enjoyed from the hill. You could see across the roof of Kings Weston House and as far as Portishead and Wales. Avonmouth didn't even exist back then.

Kingsweston Hill was a popular place to come in the Georgian era. People would ride their horses out from Bristol and Clifton to enjoy the spectacular views. There was even an inn built to cater to the day-trippers.

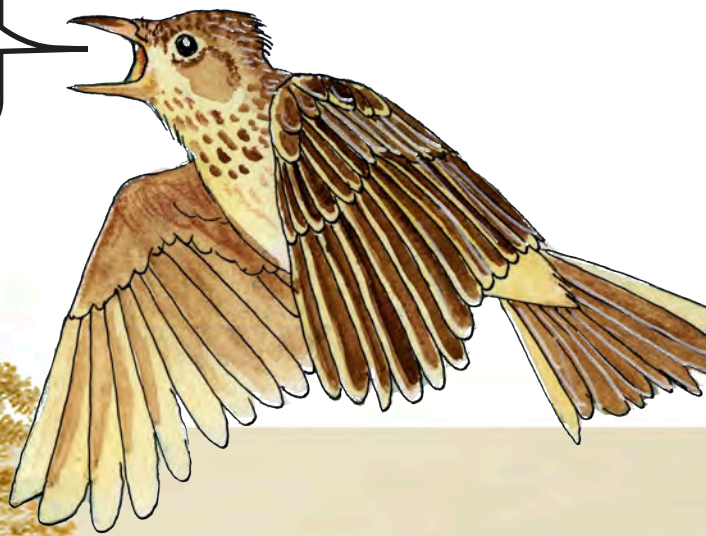
Keep your eyes open for deer. They might come up here to graze, but you need to be very quiet and patient if you want to see them.



If you live in Bristol next time you turn on your TV remember that you are probably receiving transmissions direct from Kings Weston's historic park! The transmitter on Kingsweston Hill serves about 16,000 people in the city and has since the 1970's. It wasn't the first mast on the hill though. In 1804 during the Napoleonic wars a tall mast equipped with a flagstaff was erected as part of an early-warning system against French invasion.



*You might have heard of a piece of music called Lark Ascending; it's been voted Britain's favourite piece of classical music. It was written by the composer Vaughan Williams who frequently visited Kings Weston and must have admired the countryside here. Although it wasn't originally composed about Kingsweston Hill Williams might have been inspired enough to dust-down his old composition and rewrite it. Its first ever public performance was in Shirehampton Public Hall in 1920. There are still larks singing on the down today.*





# SHIREHAMPTON PARK

There are some spectacular views to be had from Shirehampton Park. The area was added to the Kings Weston landscaped grounds in the 1720's, probably to take advantage of the beautiful scenery. The River Avon dominates views and before Avonmouth Docks opened in 1877 every ship that used Bristol's harbour would have had to pass along it. It must have been an incredible sight.

A deep glen called Longcombe is hidden in the middle of the park. It is surrounded by woodland and some ancient trees. Horticultural festivals and local fairs were often held here

in the Victorian era and a special railway platform was built alongside the nearby track so visitors could come directly from the centre of the City.

The park was donated to the National Trust in 1922 by the then-owner of Kings Weston, Philip Napier Miles. It was given with the instruction that it should always be kept open for the enjoyment and recreation of the people of Shirehampton and Sea Mills. Napier Miles believed sport and exercise were important and Shirehampton Golf Course still uses the land, so take care if you are walking here. There are footpaths marked on our map so be careful to stick to them.



National Trust



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Community Projects

The Kings Weston Bristol BioBlitz has been a partnership between the Kings Weston Action Group and Bristol Natural History Consortium, with support from Extraverte Community Projects. We are very grateful to Norman Routledge for allowing us use of Kings Weston House for this event. Thanks also to Bristol City Council and the National Trust for the use of their land. Thanks are also due to Dru Marland for permission to use her painting of a lark.

The Kings Weston Action Group is a volunteer organisation set up to protect Kings Weston Park and House, fight for its future and protect its past. Formed from a group of local and professional volunteers it hopes to increase awareness of the history of the estate, take direct action to improve and maintain the park, and work with the City Council to inform and secure a new plan for conservation and enhancement.

Bristol Natural History Consortium is a collaboration between Avon Wildlife Trust, BBC, Bristol City Council, Bristol Zoo Gardens, Environment Agency, Defra, Natural England, University of Bristol, The University of the West of England, and Wildscreen. It exists to engage people with the natural world through collaborative action.



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