



# Swindon Blooming Trail

An absolutely blooming-wonderful linear walk around Swindon town. Explore GWR Park, railway cottages, the old railway path and town gardens.

**Distance** 5.7 kilometers / 3.5 miles

**Duration** 1 hour and 30 minutes



Wildlife



Public loos



Public transport



Picnic spot



Dog friendly

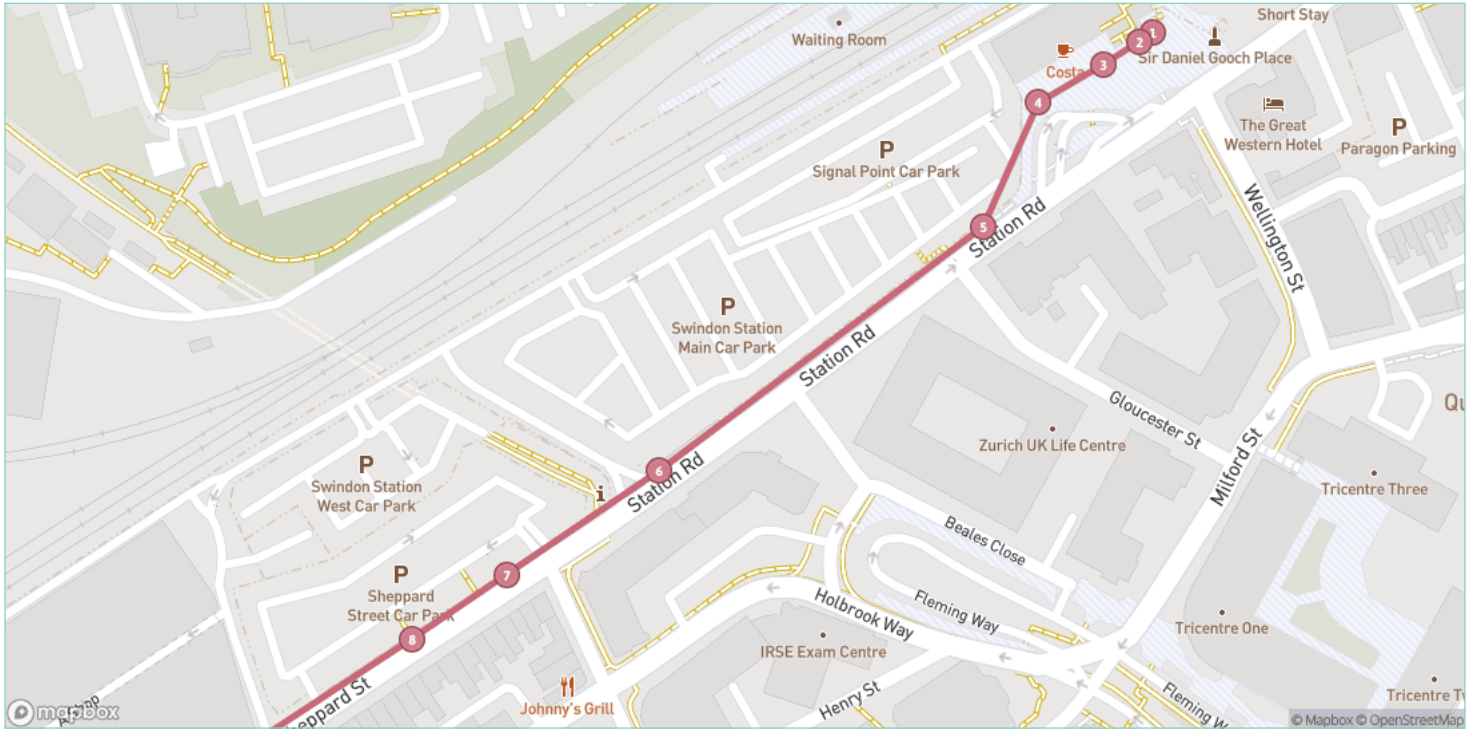


Botanics



Disclaimer: Directions are provided as guidance only. Weather, construction, closures or other factors may affect routes. Please take care when crossing roads and avoid private land. Always follow local signage and use common sense.

Created by Go Jauntly Ltd © 2026. Last Updated: 03 April 2026.



**Step 1:** Welcome to the Big Blooming Walks. We've teamed up with the National Trust to bring you a series of special spring walks celebrating the most beautiful time of year. Get ready to stop and smell the blooms! Let's go.

**Step 2:** This walk starts outside the entrance to Swindon train station.

**Step 3:** Exit the station and turn right to head along the plaza which includes newly planted trees and lots of seating options.

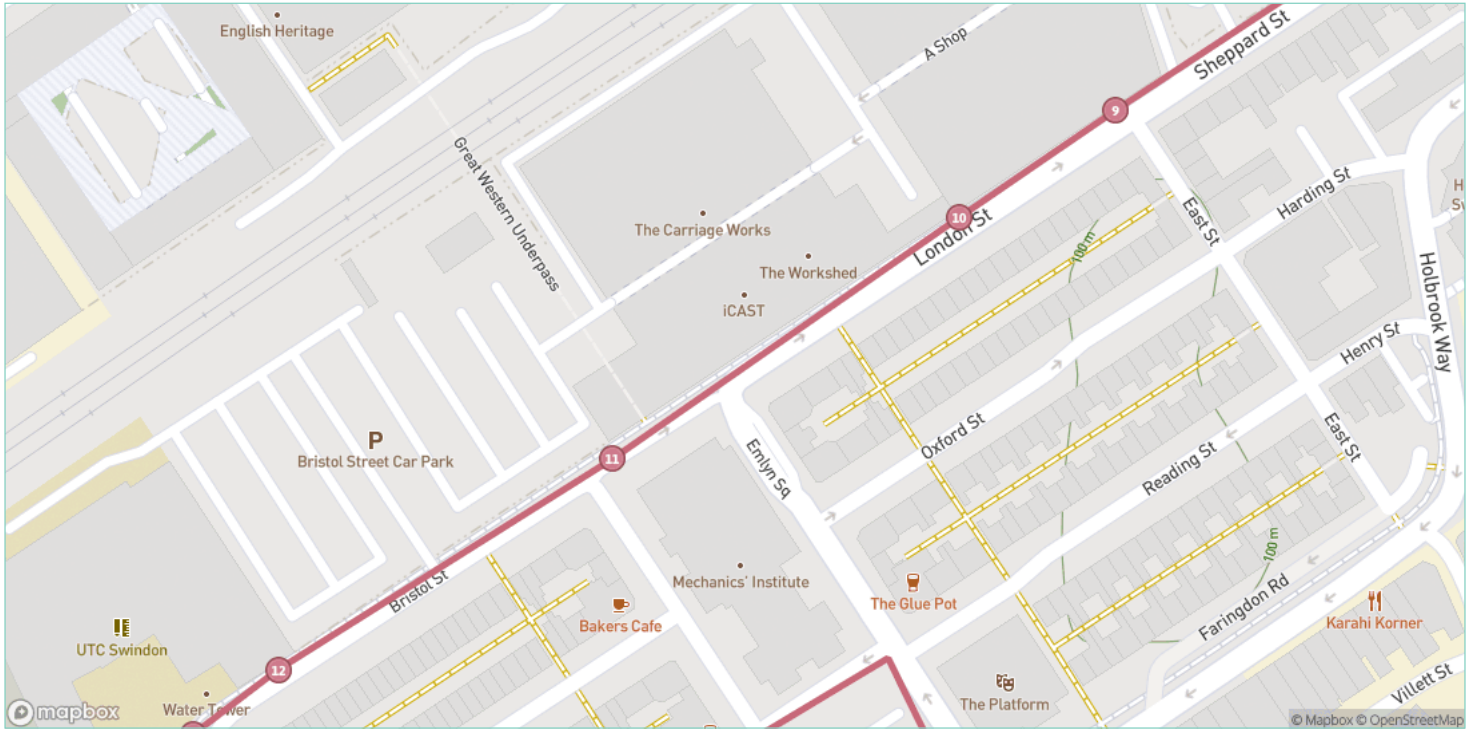
**Step 4:** Follow the path to the left, all the way to the end of the plaza with a tall wall on the right.

**Step 5:** At the end turn right and continue along Station Road.

**Step 6:** Carefully cross this side road and continue along Station Road.

**Step 7:** Station Road turns into Sheppard Street.


**Step 8:** Notice the small blossom trees lining the other side of the road.



**Step 9:** Continuing along the road which now turns into London Street after these pretty planters.

**Step 10:** In March, take notice of the blossom trees planted within the residential houses on the other side of the road.

**Step 11:** Continue past this roadside rain garden and continue on the right hand side.

**Step 12:** The houses on the opposite side of the road have stunning pink blossom trees in their front gardens. Find out more about the area below. 

### History of Swindon

Before 1840, Swindon was a quiet hilltop market town of around 2,500 people. Then engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859) and Daniel Gooch chose the flat land below it as the site for the Great Western Railway's new locomotive works, roughly halfway between London and Bristol, and everything changed. Workers arrived from Scotland, Wales, the north of England and beyond and a new town grew up almost overnight to house them.

Daniel Gooch (1816-1889) was the Great Western Railway's first locomotive superintendent, recruited by Brunel at just 21 years old. He was responsible for designing some of the finest steam locomotives of the Victorian era and ran the Swindon works during its formative years. He later became chairman of the GWR and was also instrumental in laying the first transatlantic telegraph cable in 1866, for which he was made a baronet. There's a carved wooden statue of him in GWR Park. He's one of Swindon's most important



historical figures and in many ways the man who built the town as much as Brunel did.

At its peak in the early 20th century the works employed over 14,000 people and had its own hospital, library, swimming baths and medical fund. It was a blueprint that Nye Bevan (former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care of the United Kingdom) later said inspired the National Health Service. When the Works finally closed in 1986 after nearly 150 years, it marked the end of an era. Today the Railway Village it created is one of the best preserved examples of Victorian industrial housing in Britain, saved from demolition in the 1960s by a campaign led by the poet John Betjeman.

**Step 13:** At the end of Bristol Street, continue as the road bends around to the left.

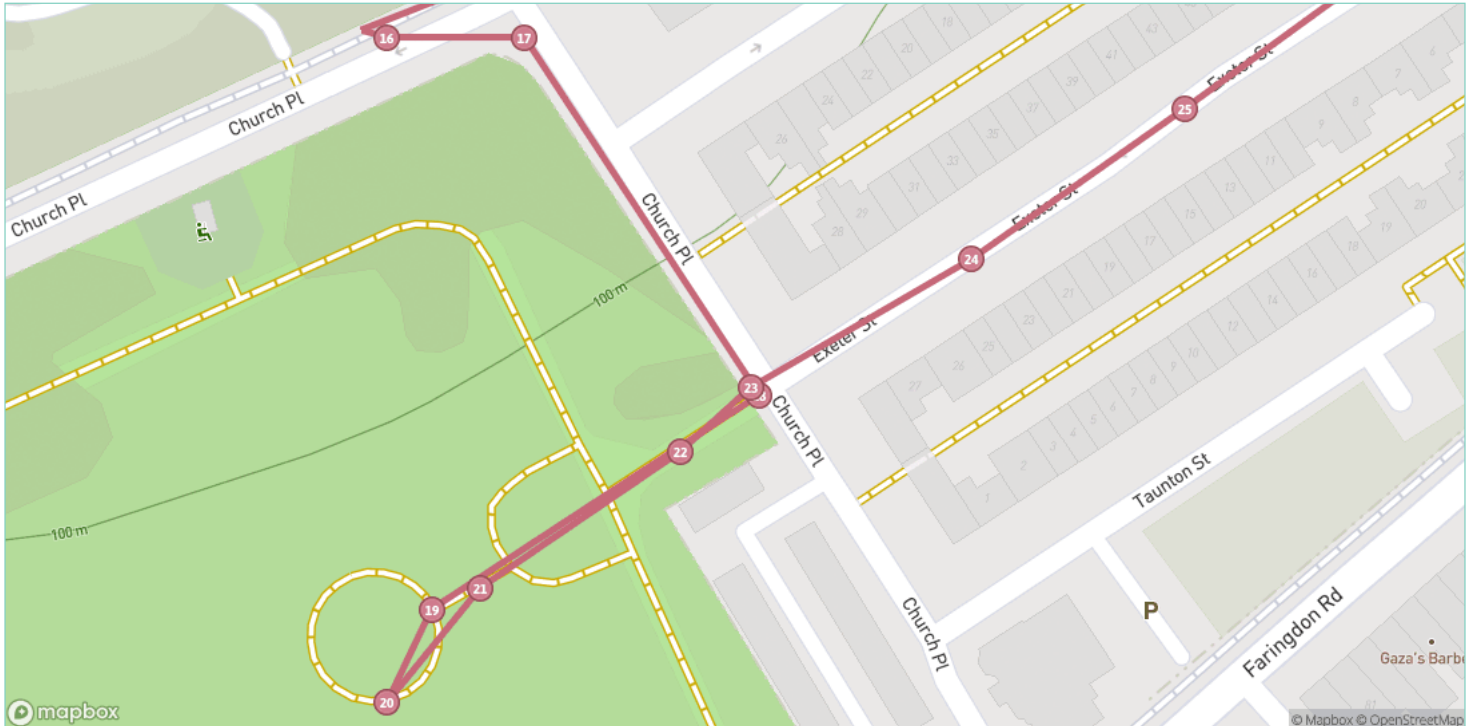
**Step 14:** Then head along Church Place on the right.

**Step 15:** Here you'll reach St Mark's church on the right. Tap 'Read More' below to learn more.

### St Mark's Church

Built between 1843 and 1845, St Mark's was the GWR's gift to its new community. A proper church for the thousands of workers who had flooded into Swindon from across Britain. Designed by George Gilbert Scott, who would go on to become one of the great architects of the Victorian era, it was funded by public subscription and a legacy from a GWR director. The stone came from the same Wiltshire quarries that built the railway cottages. The church became the heart of the Railway Village in more ways than one. When the works superintendent Joseph Armstrong died in 1877, over 6,000 people attended his funeral here, shops closed across the town and special trains were laid on. In 1944 Benjamin Britten composed his Festival Te Deum specifically for the church's centenary and it was first performed here the following year.

**Step 16:** Carefully cross over Church Place at this drop curb.



**Step 17:** After crossing turn left and then right and continue along Church Place with GWR park on the right.

**Step 18:** Turn right and head into GWR Park, Swindon's oldest park and first used as a cricket pitch for GWR railway workers in 1844.

**Step 19:** Directly ahead after the Willow tree we find the GWR Blossom Circle. The blossom circle was planted in 2023 by the National Trust.

**Step 20:** These twelve newly planted trees were planted on the footprint of the former bandstand and should blossom in March or April.

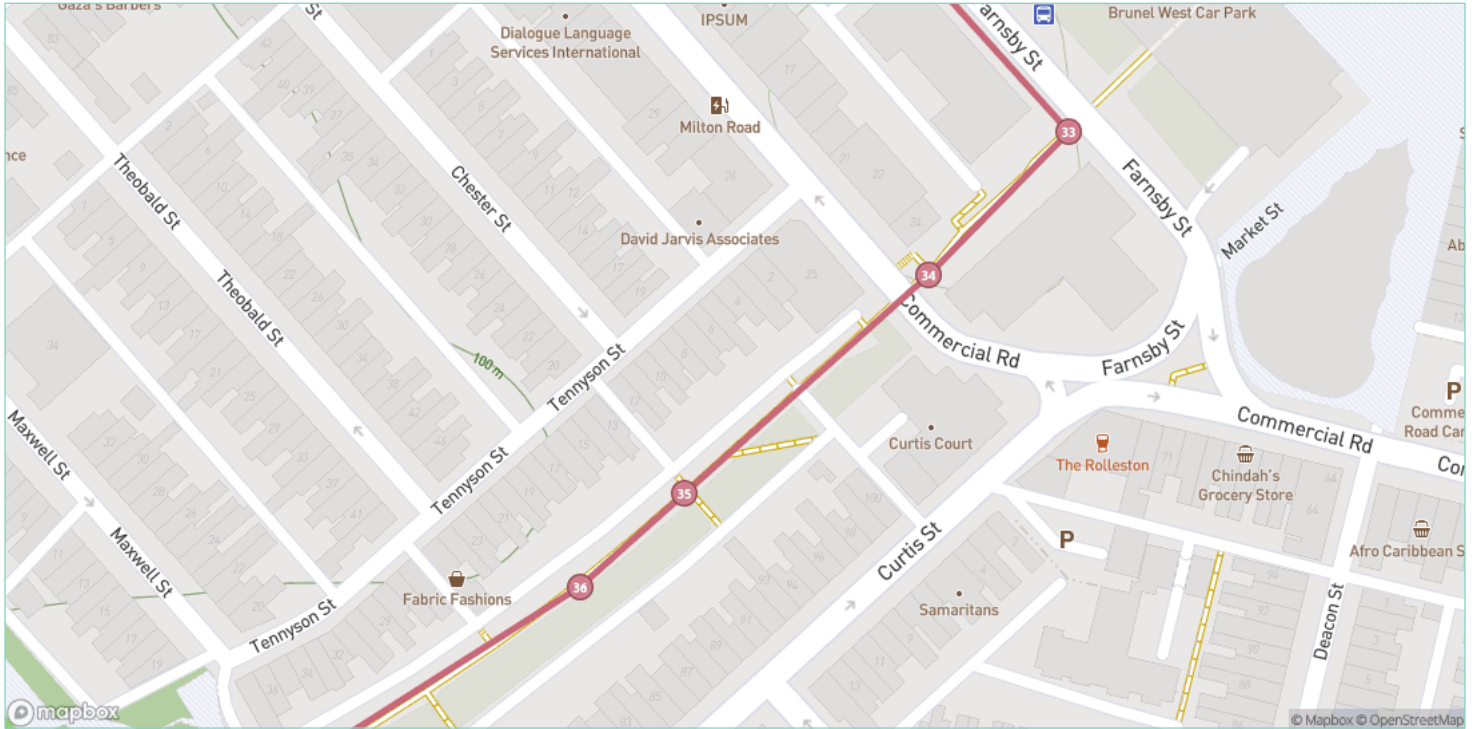
**Step 21:** Head back towards the entrance and past the gorgeous willow tree.

**Step 22:** Take a moment to enjoy the blossom trees lining both sides of the entrance.

**Step 23:** Exit GWR Park, carefully cross directly over Church Place onto the right hand side of Exeter Street.

**Step 24:** This street also has beautiful pink blossom trees in the front gardens. These limestone cottages were built in 1842 for GWR railway workers.






**Step 33:** Now turn right onto Canal Walk.

**Step 34:** Continue along Canal Walk under this bridge over Commercial Road.

**Step 35:** Canal Walk is a shared pedestrian and bike path.

**Step 36:** Keep an eye out for any blossom either side of the pathway. Would you like to try and identify some blossom? Find out more below. 

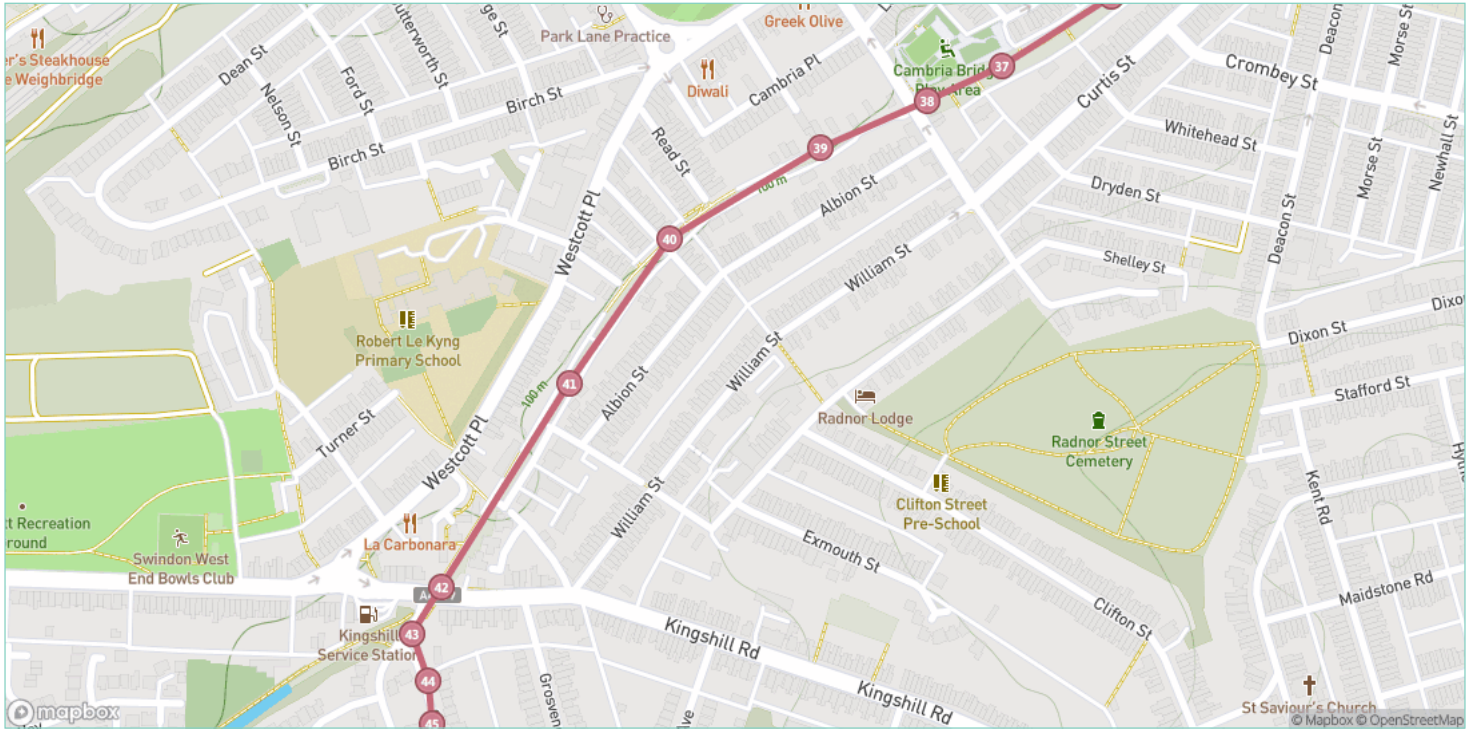
### Blossom spotting

Not all blossom is the same. Once you start looking, you'll be amazed at the variety! Apple blossom is one of the easiest to identify, appearing from March to April in white with a hint of pink and a sweet fragrance. Cherry is another one to look out for, flowering in shades of pink or white, it hangs in umbrella-shaped clusters and appears before the leaves.

Later in spring, hawthorn takes over, usually flowering from late April into May with small rounded white petals around bright pink anthers. It's also known as the mayflower. Have a look around you, how many different types can you spot on this walk?

### Blossom Types

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/discover/nature/trees-plants/how-to-spot-different-types-of-blossom>



**Step 37:** Continue past Cambria Bridge Play Area on the right.

**Step 38:** Walk under the bridge.

**Step 39:** The path continues here but it's also an access road for residents so please take extra care.

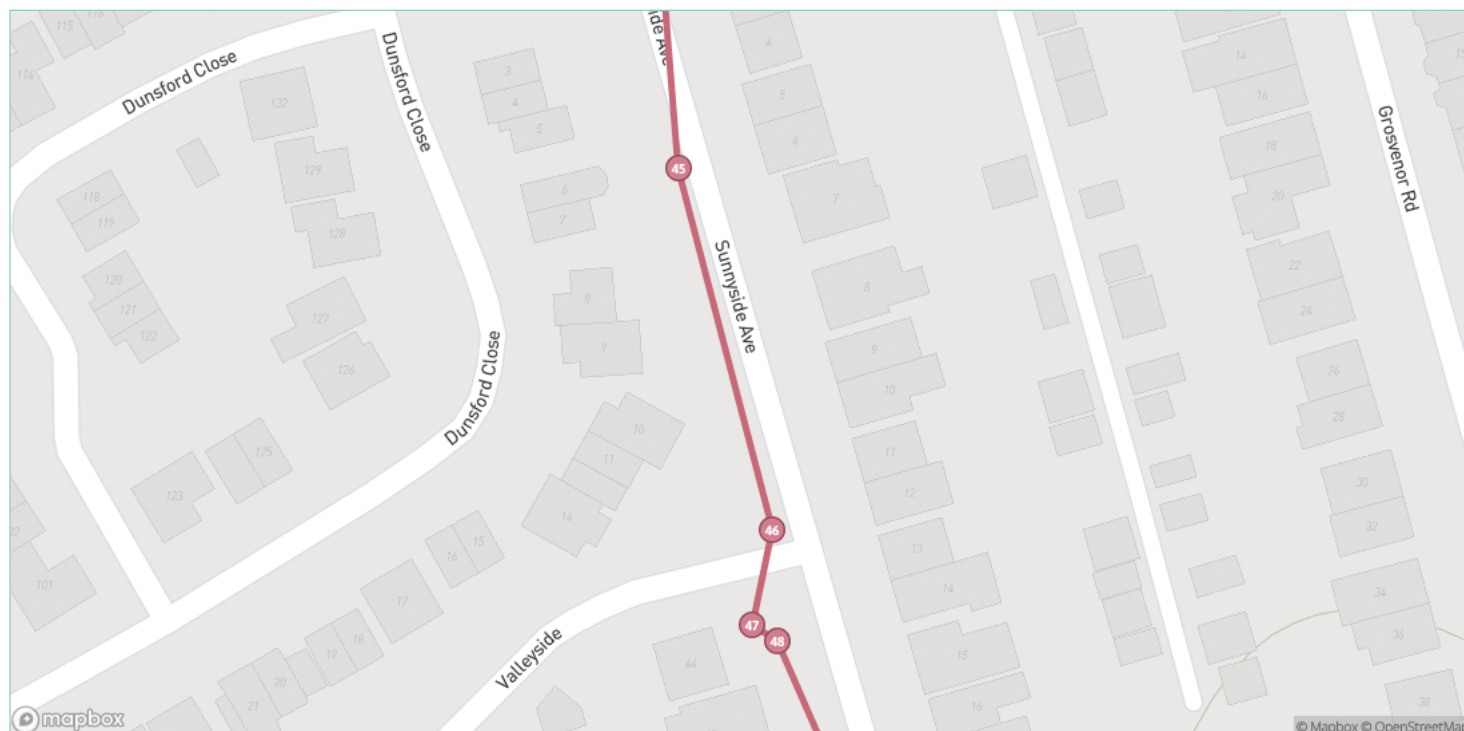
**Step 40:** Cross over Joseph Street.

**Step 41:** There's more blossom along the central area of the path to be found in spring.

**Step 42:** At the end of this section of Canal Walk, cross over Kingshill Road at this central island and keep going straight.

**Step 43:** Continue ahead, then turn right onto Sunnyside Avenue.

**Step 44:** Cross over Sunnyside Avenue to the right hand side of the road.



**Step 45:** On the right hand side of this lovely quiet residential street there lots of beautiful planting to enjoy.

**Step 46:** Cross over Valleyside.

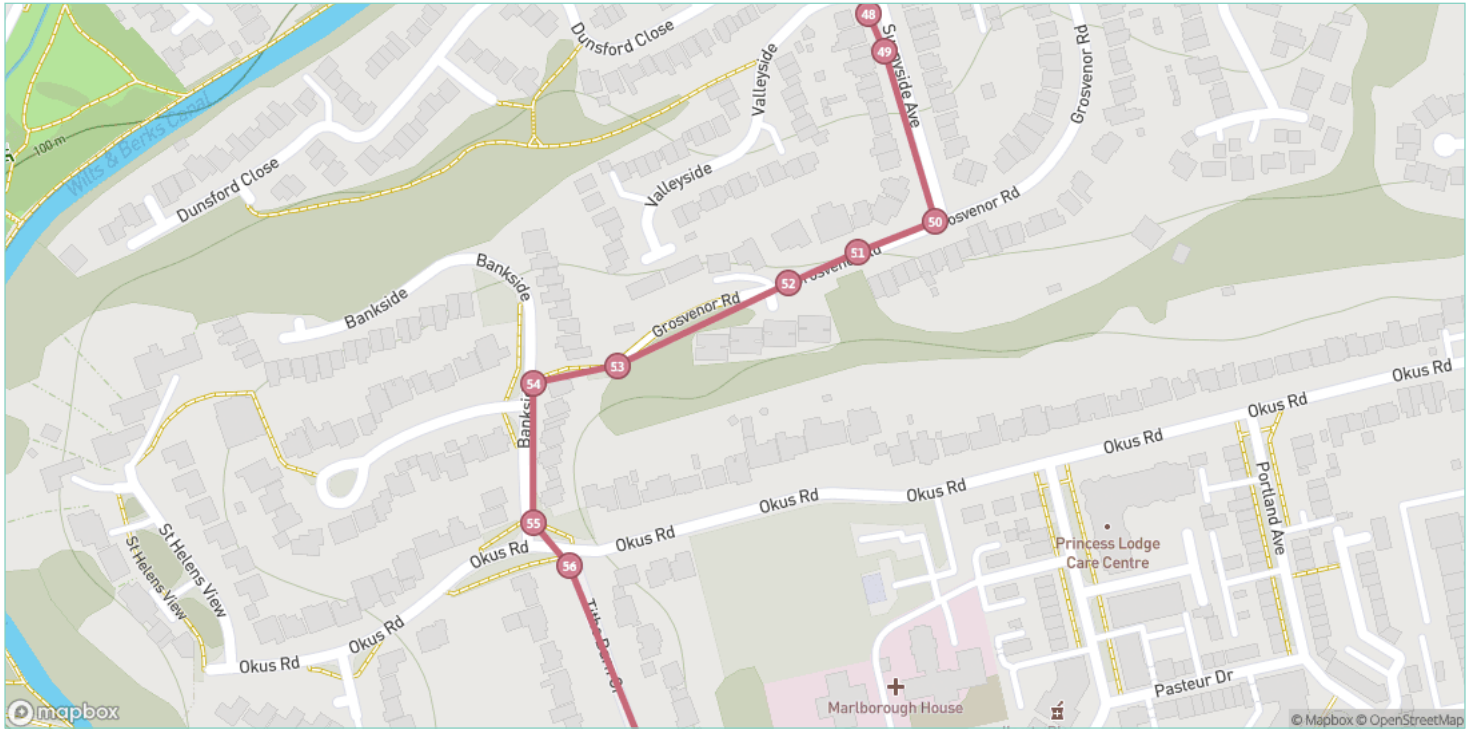
**Step 47:** Just on the right there's a stunning magnolia to enjoy. Usually blissing in early March.

**Step 48:** The blossom on these trees are fleeting but magical all the same. Find out more about magnolia trees below. 

## Magnolia

Magnolia trees are among the oldest flowering plants on earth, with fossils dating back over 100 million years; long before bees existed. Because of this, their flowers evolved to be pollinated by beetles, which is why magnolia blooms are so robust and waxy, built to withstand a beetle's weight. There are over 200 species of magnolia, ranging from small shrubs to trees 20 metres tall, flowering in white, pink, purple and yellow. In spring, deciduous magnolias do something particularly spectacular; they burst into bloom before a single leaf appears, the bare branches are suddenly covered in flowers.

Across cultures this has made them a symbol of renewal and the fleeting beauty of the season. In Japan the brief magnolia bloom is associated with 'mono no aware'; the bittersweet awareness that beauty is transient. It is hard to argue with that when you are standing underneath one in early spring.



**Step 49:** Continue up Sunnyside Avenue.

**Step 50:** At the top of Sunnyside Avenue, turn right onto Grosvenor Road.

**Step 51:** Continue up Grosvenor Road, on the right hand side.

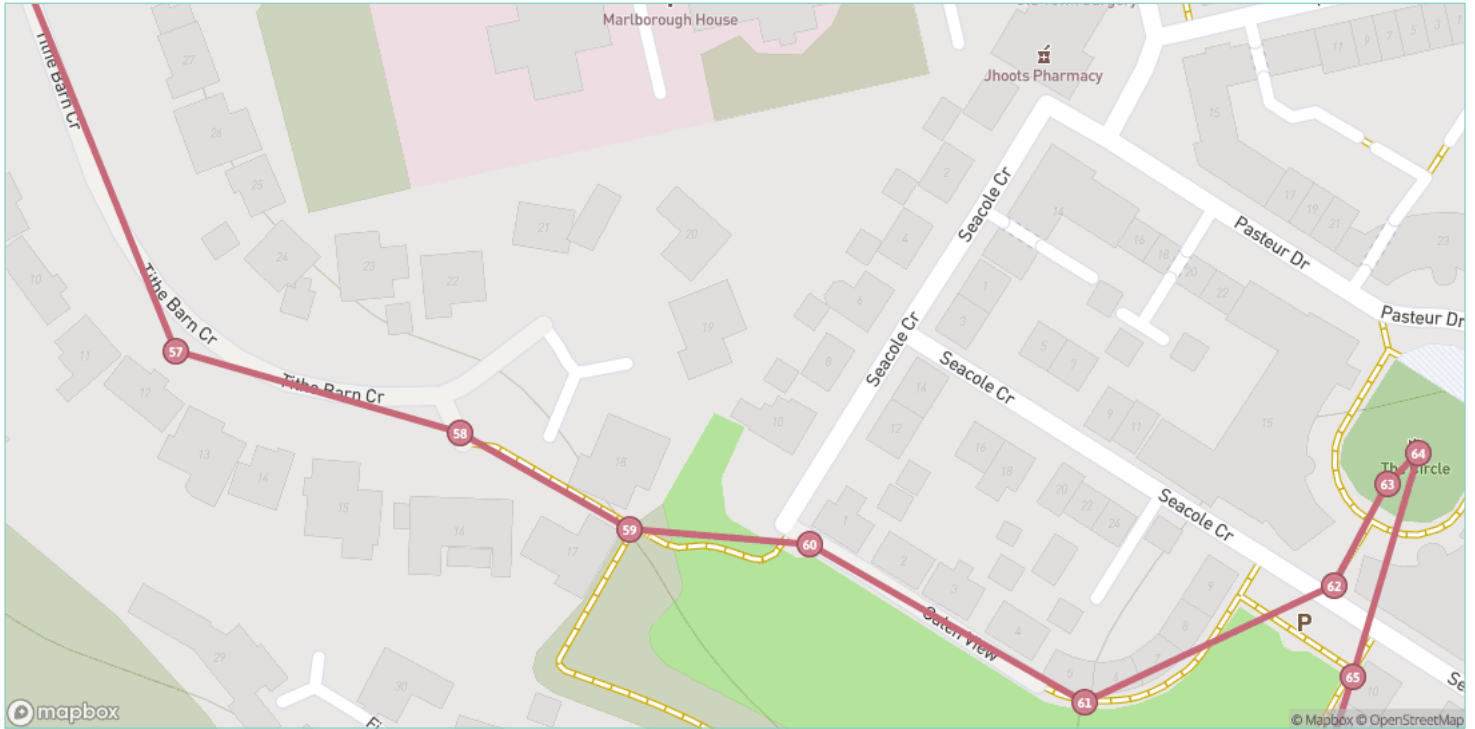
**Step 52:** At the top of the hill, the pavement disappears, continue on the shared road/path.

**Step 53:** Continue past the houses on the left, the path heads uphill, continue through this barrier.

**Step 54:** It opens up onto Bankside, turn left and continue up the hill.

**Step 55:** At the top of Bankside, cross over Okus Road.

**Step 56:** Then head along Tite Barn Crescent.



**Step 57:** There are more beautiful blossom trees long this road.

**Step 58:** At the top end of Tithe Barn Road, turn right and walk down this side path.

**Step 59:** Continue up these steps and into Angel Ridge.

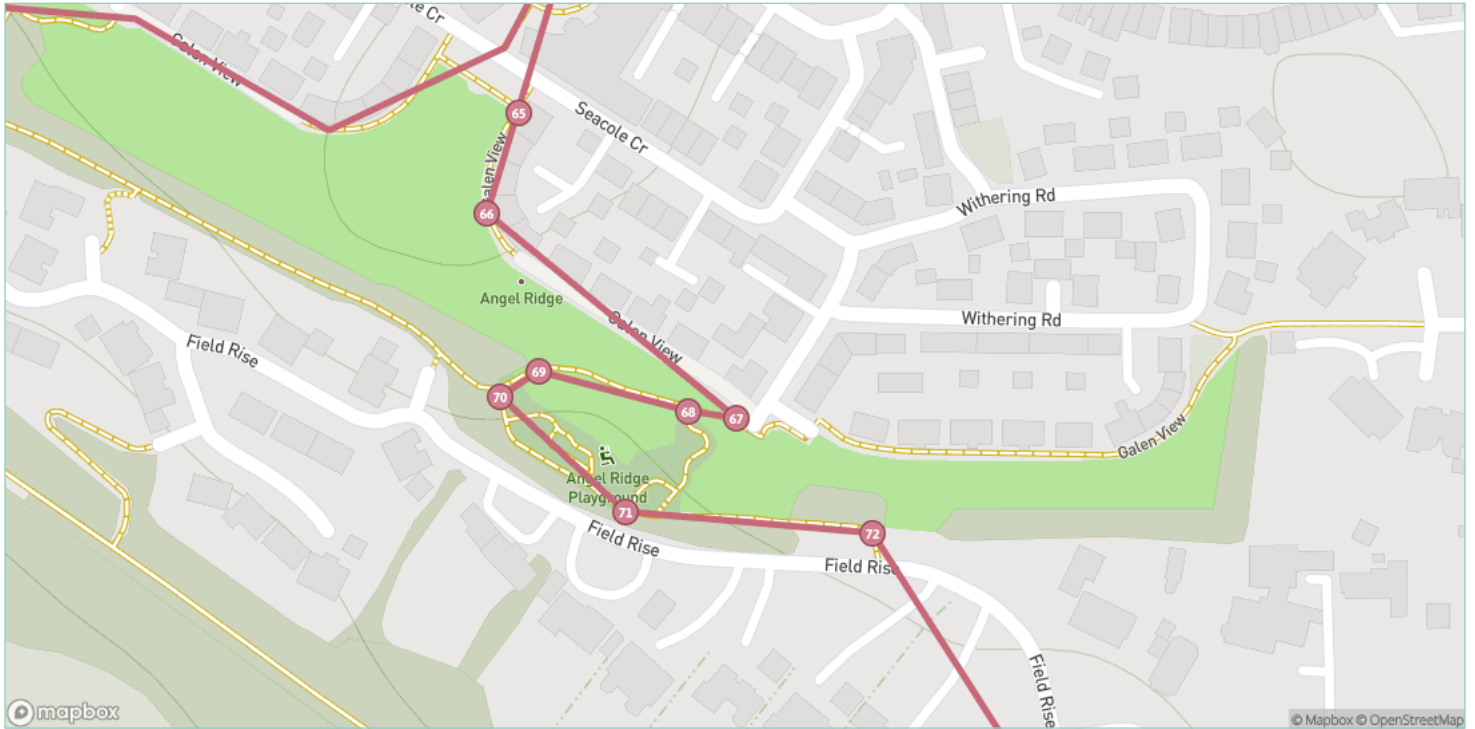
**Step 60:** Follow the pavement around the left hand edge of the park.

**Step 61:** Continue along the pavement as it bends around to the left. This large residential area used to be an NHS hospital.

**Step 62:** At the gap between the houses, on the left, head up these steps.

**Step 63:** At the top of the steps, you'll find Angel Ridge Community Gardens. The name Angel comes from the nurses from the hospital, and the ridge

**Step 64:** This community garden was set up by local residents as a way for the community to come together and have a place to connect.



**Step 65:** Head back down the stairs and continue around the edge of the park along the pavement.

**Step 66:** Walk along the path as it bends around to the left along side the edge of the park.

**Step 67:** At the end, turn right and walk down the path into the park.

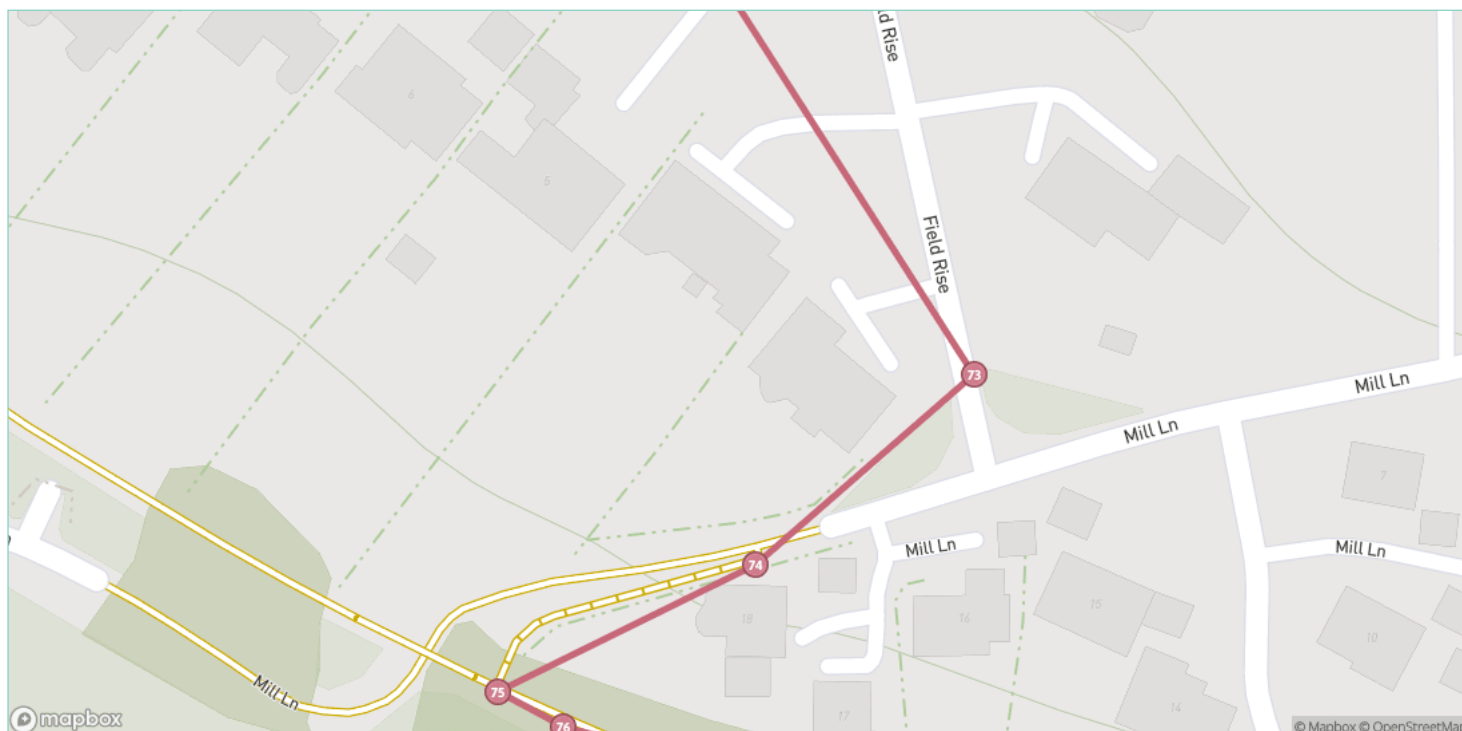
**Step 68:** The lovely Angel Ridge Play Area is on the left.

**Step 69:** As the path heads down the hill, more areas of this great play area are revealed.

**Step 70:** At the bottom of the path, turn left and continue along the bottom of the play area.

**Step 71:** Keep to the path following the park wall on the right.

**Step 72:** Take the path out of the park on the right and follow the footway as it curves around.



**Step 73:** Cross over Field Rise.

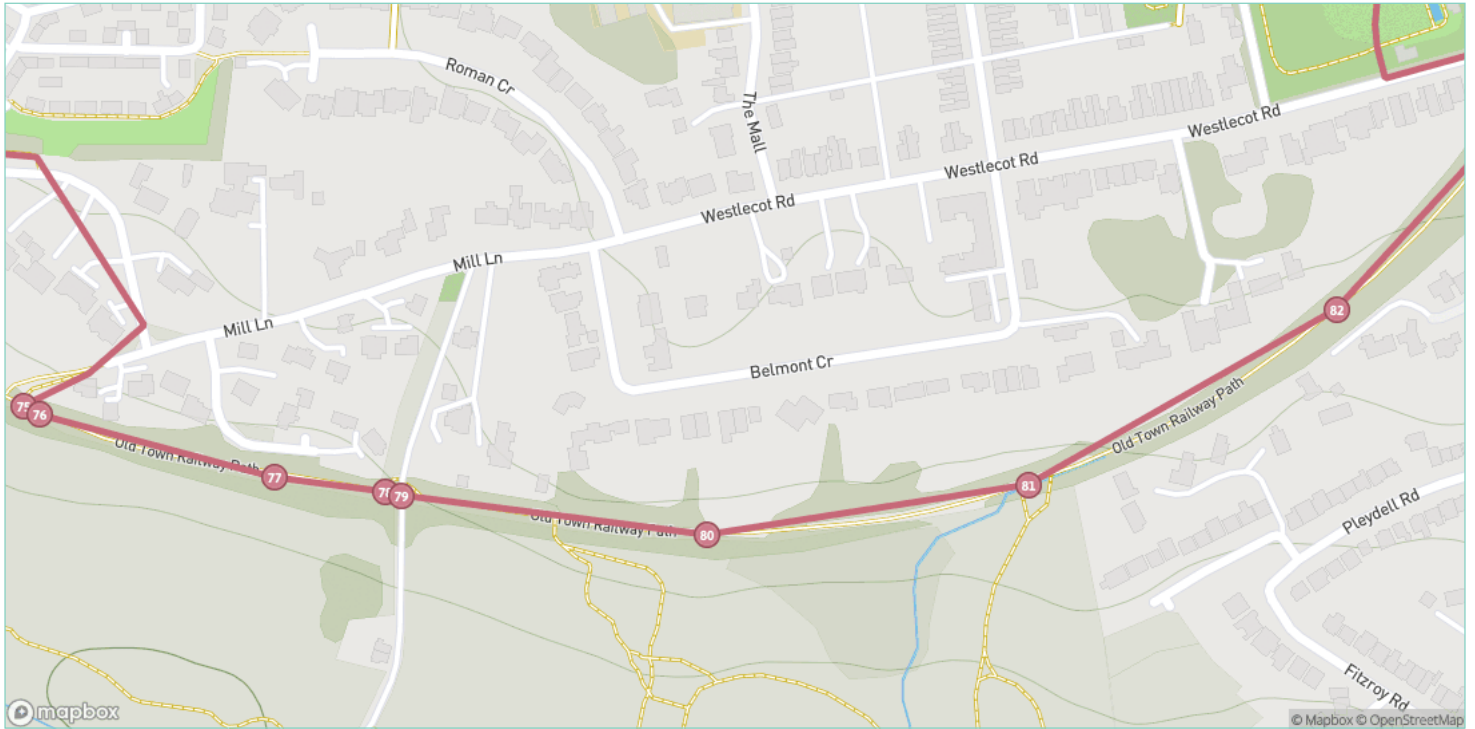
**Step 74:** After crossing the road continue right, then go up the small path on the left, up the side of the main path.

**Step 75:** At the end of this small path we reach the Old Town Railway Path. 🚂 You can find out more about this railway path by tapping 'Read More'.

### Old Town Railway Path

The path you're walking follows the route of the Midland and South Western Junction Railway, a line with an ambition that rather outran its budget. The original plan, drawn up in the 1870s, was to tunnel directly through the Old Town hill, It was a project that began in what is now Queens Park before the money ran out. The railway eventually wound its way around the southern edge of the hill instead, finally opening in 1881.

The line served Swindonians for 80 years before closing to passengers in 1961. Its final years were unglamorous and involved carrying materials for the construction of the M4 motorway before the track was lifted in the early 1970s. The cutting you pass through is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its Jurassic geology, the ancient rock exposed when Victorian engineers blasted their way through the hill. Look out for the five Portland stone wheel sculptures along the route, created in 1995, each representing one of the classical elements.




---

**Step 76:** Turn left and head along the path.

---

**Step 77:** To the right we get a great view across the ridge.

---

**Step 78:** At these steps, you can head up to the Mill Lane Community Gardens.

---

**Step 79:** But we continue along the Old Town Railway Path, over the bridge.

---

**Step 80:** To the right, there is paths down into this open heath area.

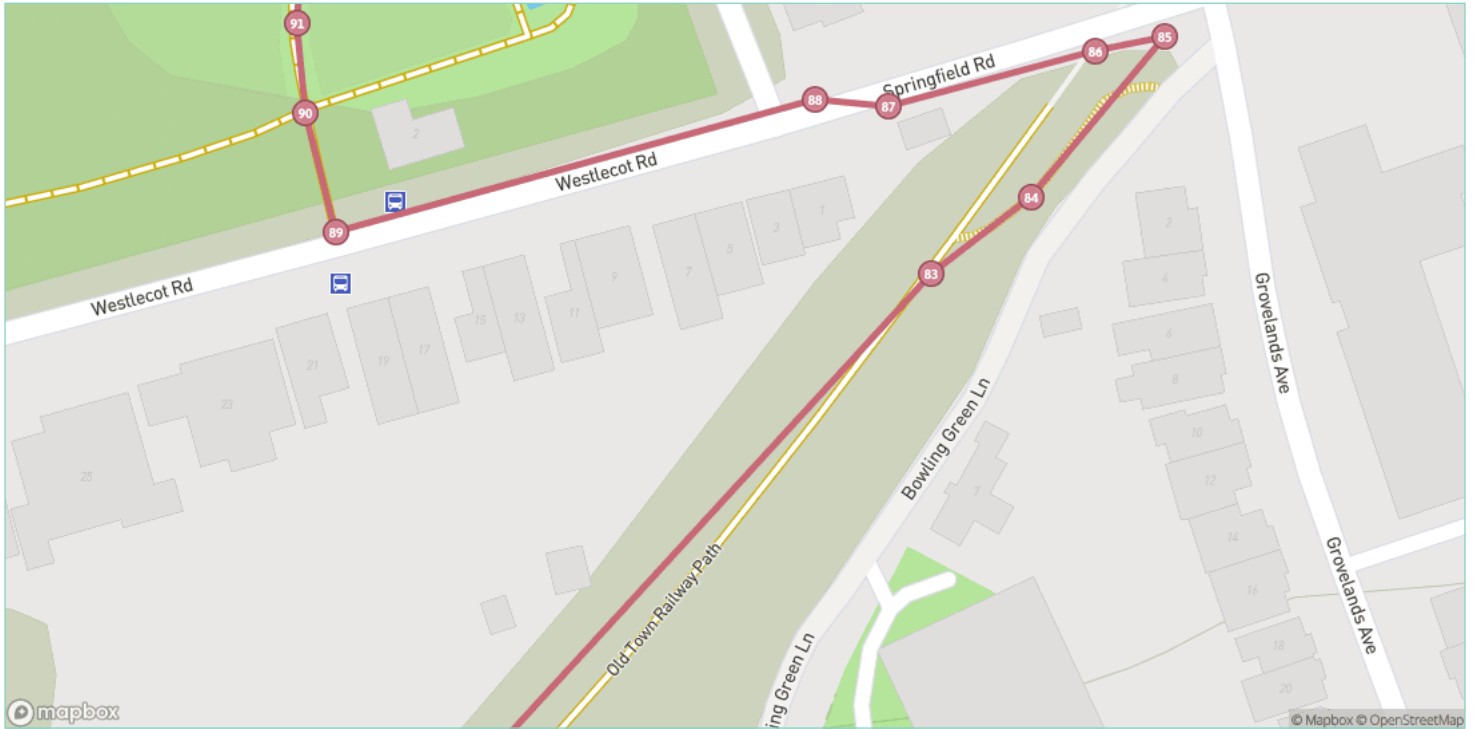
---

**Step 81:** This is a shared cycle and pedestrian path.

---

**Step 82:** Look for these sculptural markers along the path. There are five of them along the path, each with their own poem.

---



**Step 83:** Continue along the path heading towards this large bridge.

**Step 84:** Just before the bridge take the path on the right hand side, up out of the Railway Path. The path is uneven here.

**Step 85:** At the top, turn left onto Springfield Road.

**Step 86:** Head over the bridge with the path down below.

**Step 87:** Carefully cross over Springfield Road on the right.

**Step 88:** Continue along Springfield Road on the right hand side.

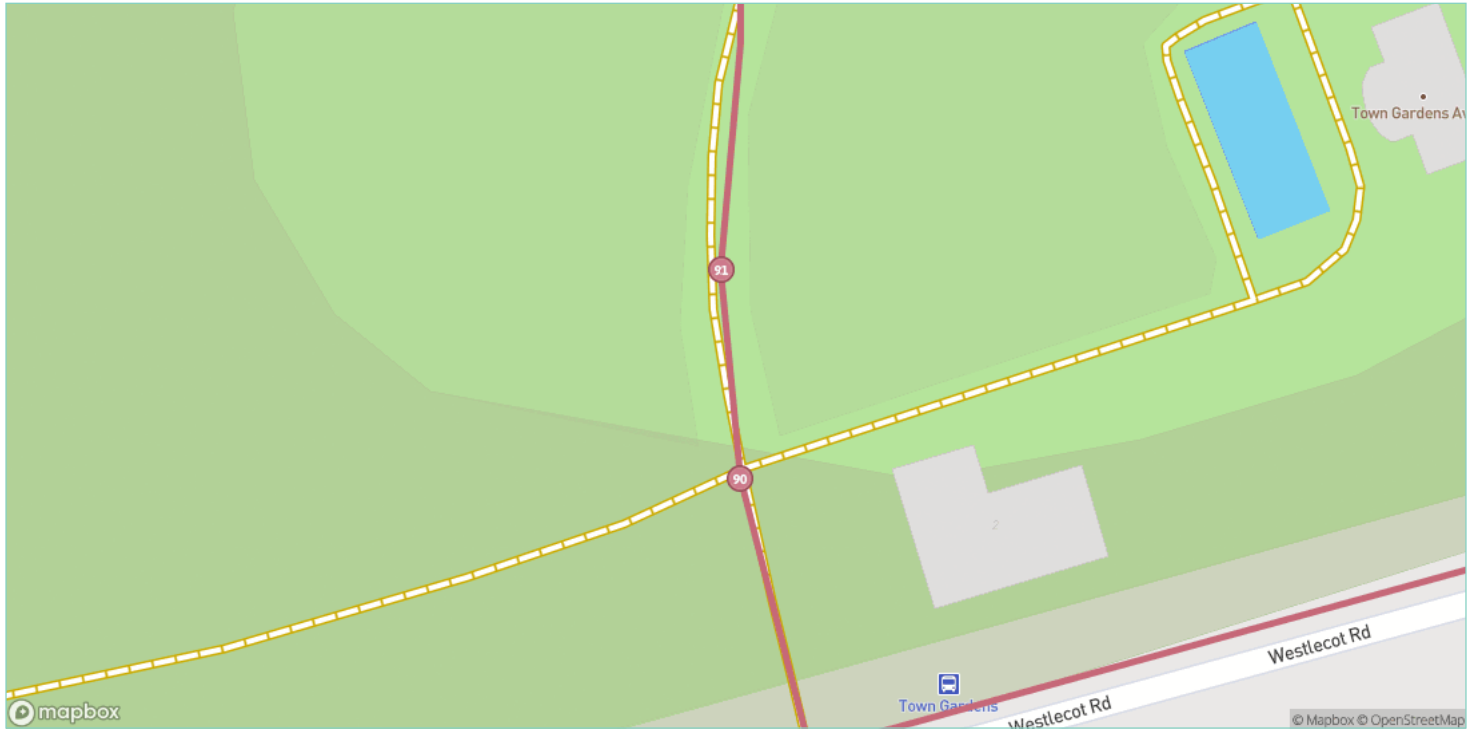
**Step 89:** Turn right and go into Town Gardens, it's our last stop on this bloom-filled walk.

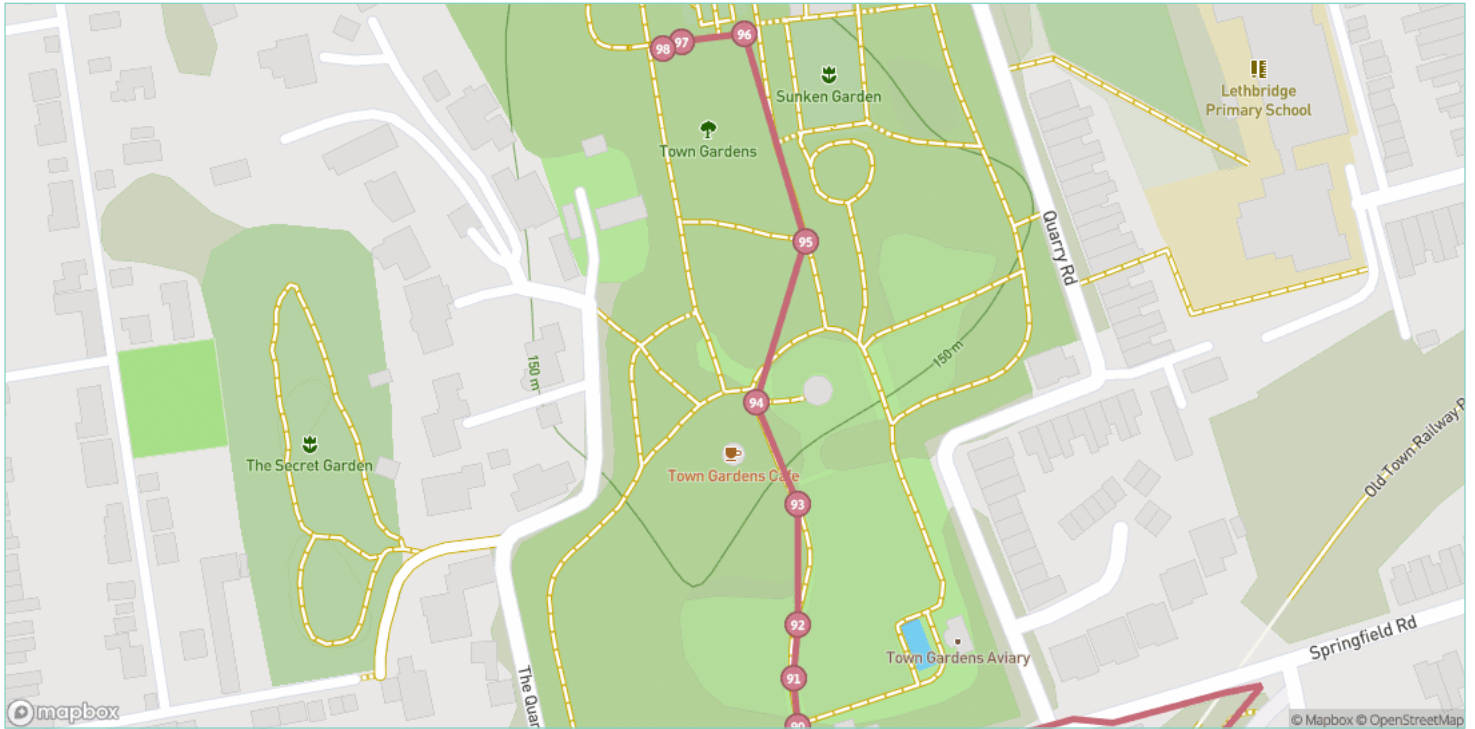
**Step 90:** Find out more about the Town Gardens below, otherwise continue ahead (or visit the pond and aviary on the right).

### Town Gardens

Long before the railway arrived, Old Town sat on a valuable seam of Purbeck limestone, and the quarries that extracted it gave Swindon its first industry. When quarrying eventually ceased, the undulating landscape it left behind was transformed into something rather beautiful. The Town Gardens opened in 1894 on the old quarry workings, and the changes in level that make the park so pleasingly irregular are a direct legacy of those excavations.

The Victorian bandstand, the rose garden and the aviary have been here since the beginning. The Art Deco concert bowl, tucked into a natural valley in the northern part of the park, was added in 1936 and is one of only a handful of its kind in the country. The café kiosk nearby has its own story. Built in 1915 as a travelling exhibition stand for the GWR, it journeyed the country for decades before finally settling here in 1942. In 2024 the Town Gardens was named the most popular destination in the UK for cherry blossom. Fitting, given you're here for exactly that reason.





**Step 91:** Follow the path directly ahead, through the center of this beautiful park.

**Step 92:** It is planted with stunning flower beds throughout.

**Step 93:** Wander as you wish or head up these steps.

**Step 94:** At the top you'll find the Bandstand encircled by blossom trees and flowerbeds.

**Step 95:** Continue along the central path beyond the bandstand. With the meadow of flowers on the left.

**Step 96:** At the end of the meadow on the left is this small statue.

**Step 97:** You'll also find more blossom trees to enjoy. Perhaps you'd like to listen to a Blossom meditation. Tap 'Read More' below.

### Take a breather in blossom

Take a seat on a bench or sit on the grass and enjoy a little breather amidst the blossom. Grab your headphones and try this short guided 5 minute blossom meditation.

If you've never tried meditation before, this is the perfect way to start. Adding just 5 minutes of mindfulness to your day can help slow things down and boost your mood.

### Blossom Meditation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v;=fkmb7a4YNEU>

**Step 98:** This is the final stop of this walk. We hope you've enjoyed it immensely. Buses back to the center of Swindon can be found on Westlecot Road (where you entered earlier).