

PRISTON PARISH SNAPSHOT

PRISTON VILLAGE

Introduction and Key Characteristics

Priston sits within a valley and on adjacent sloping land in the foothills of the Mendips, some 12 miles and 6 miles respectively from the city centres of Bristol and Bath. Set within a very rural landscape, there is some level ground within the village, particularly close to the centre, but beyond the houses the surrounding countryside is undulating, and there is a significant slope to the North East and East. It is impossible to walk far in any direction without going up or down hill. This is very similar to other villages in the immediate area such as Combe Hay, Dunkerton and Compton Dando. However, all these settlements, Priston included, have their own character on a micro scale which makes them very distinct.



View 1: Almost invisible. Priston in its green setting

Landscape Description

The village of Priston is quite heavily wooded, though this is not so evident from within the village itself. The largest and most dense tree cover is to be found in the grounds of the Manor, old Rectory and Church, though almost every garden has its share of hedges, shrubs and smaller trees. There is no well-defined division between the village and the surrounding field systems and consequently there is a green backdrop to buildings everywhere. Farmed land abuts all the housing and there are one or two small woods /brakes close to the village so the feel is very rural. A small stream runs through the village.

The countryside immediately around the village and indeed in the rest of the parish is farmland (used for dairy farming, sheep and arable). Field sizes are small to medium (there is probably only one over 15 acres) and are irregular. There are also horse pastures with 3 livery stables on the outskirts of the village. Though there has been some planting of mixed woodland areas this could not be classed as forestry. Game shooting has been developed and, as well as being a recreation, is an important business and influence on the landscape. The only

industrial site is the set of units down at Priston Mill but they are half a mile from the village, and hidden away. Sadly only the remnants of the orchards for which Priston was once famous are left - ' a sea of pink and white' was how one old resident described it.

The field boundaries are principally hedges, with occasional tall trees in them. The hedges may be clipped or allowed to grow tall. Some are clipped in the A-style, reputed to be the best shape for encouraging birdlife. There are few fences, and no walls per se – though there is evidence of old walls in the banks of the lanes. The land around the village to the north and east is quite enclosed whereas to the south and west it is more open. The one thing the landscape is NOT is 'vast'.

Hard spaces are limited to the Village Hall's back yard/car park and the public highway round the village green and pub which is used extensively for local fund-raising events and for the Priston festival. The area is also used, particularly in the summer months, as a socializing and meeting area. The village is fortunate in being able to access adjacent land at the Manor for such popular events as May Day.

The combination of green cover, a small stream, as well as a lack of heavy traffic make the village a valuable site for a wide variety of wild life. Bird and insect life is prolific. We note in particular the large rookery in the trees adjacent to the Churchyard, starlings roosting in the Manor grounds and owls around Church Farm. One of our surveyors registered 23 bird species in her garden in 2013 as well as 12 species of butterfly and many dragonflies. Another has observed within and around the village red kites, buzzards, sparrowhawks, kestrels, barn owls, little owls, tawny owls and kingfishers.

Much other wildlife has been observed including roe deer, muntjaks, badgers, mink, foxes, hares, rabbits, squirrels, stoats, weasels, bats, shrews, voles, water rats, otters, hedgehogs, newts, frogs, toads, adders, grass snakes, slow worms, glow worms and lizards.

Among the flora are to be found orchids, primroses, violets (white and mauve), Bath asparagus, golden hops, meadow blewitts, St George's mushrooms and at least 9 other varieties of edible fungi, wild mint and wild marjoram.

Settlement Character Pattern

Priston is broadly a linear village with most of the buildings lining the winding main street. There is one 'estate' (Summer Lea), which is quite small and, generally, the housing is spontaneous and irregular- giving an informal feel to the village. Most of the 81 houses are close to the road, with small front gardens and larger back gardens. The plots of land vary considerably, but tend to be long and thin, and are backed by open fields. There are several substantial dwellings in their own grounds. A fairly well defined centre exists around the small village green.



View 2: Old and new. Houses lining Priston High Street

The main street and other lanes in the village (abutted by stone walls or grass verges) are seldom wide enough for two cars to pass in comfort. There is rarely any specific provision for pedestrians other than a couple of small sections of pavement. Narrow lanes lead away from the village in 5 directions, quirky, winding and often sunken so there are no views ahead. There is only one bridleway running out of the village (though there is an excellent network of bridleways close by) and a couple of footpaths.

While the volume of traffic is small by most standards, it is growing alarmingly due to the practice of taking rat runs. Perhaps more than the volume is the speed of through traffic such that the issue of pedestrian safety is coming to the forefront. The advisory 20mph speed limit, while often not observed, is judged to be essential to promote road safety.

Due to the expansion of multi-car households and a lack of parking capacity, the main street tends to become a parking lot which adds to the issue of pedestrian hazard. The village hall car park is available at modest cost to village residents for parking, but is little used.

Priston is a dark village with no street lighting, which most villagers seem to prefer.

Drainage on the roads is a problem. Apart from the two runnels leading down Priston Hill (not well maintained) there is very little effective drainage contributing to the flooding problem in the lower part of the village. The four lanes which access the village are technically through roads, though one in particular is unsuitable for vehicles of any size (Watery/Wood Lane) and all are prone to flooding.

An attractive feature outside the village is the Priston Brook which rises 2 miles away to the west, and flows through Priston and down to join with its larger sister watercourse, the Conygre Brook. This supplies the water for Priston Mill in

the next valley. The combined brooks, known from there as the Newton Brook, flow on to join the River Avon at Twerton in the western suburbs of Bath.

There are several wet ditches, mainly to the west (higher ground) of the village, and two ponds, both man-made. One of these two is a duck flighting pond, made by damming the Priston Brook half a mile upstream of the village. This has affected the flow of water through the village; ironically, since one of the principal complaints about Priston is its liability to flooding, the brook can dry up in summer. This means that the sewage works at the eastern end of the village is discharging onto an almost dry stream bed.

Key Views and Landmarks

From outside the village, the Grade 1 listed Church with its extremely distinctive golden cock weather-vane is virtually the only recognizable building due to the lie of the land and the extensive green cover. Within the village, apart from the church, the main landmarks are:

- The Grade II listed village hall.
- The Ring O’Bells pub.
- The ancient Grade II listed granary at Church Farm.
- The cricket pitch.
- The village green complete with its well and trough.
- The traditional cast iron signpost near the Manor entrance is a valuable and distinctive feature.
- The willow avenue in Evan’s orchard.
- Priston Brook edging the village main street.
- The curved road bridge between Brook Cottage and Village Farm.
- The remains of the old ha-ha around Priston Place.
- The Village Tap which supplied water for over 100 years until the 1970s.
- The ancient yew tree in the churchyard.

From the main street of Priston, lying as it does in a valley, the views out are limited. There are few “public” views out from the village, although several houses on the higher slopes have superlative ones. There are certain vantage points offering more distant views, for example from Church Farm out towards Tunley, and from Pressbarrow Farm to Bath, Wilmington and the Conygre Valley. Within the village, views along the main street from either end, and from the village centre up to the church are highly important.

The most accessible views in are from the top of Priston Hill which gives virtually the only complete view of the village. From Farmborough Common (One Tree Hill), the Church tower is visible and from Priston New Farm the line of poplars towards Wood Lodge is distinctive. From certain viewpoints just outside the village there are some sweeping views. On the outskirts, at the top of Evan's Orchard, at Wood Lodge or Rockhill House, there are beautiful views of several miles to, for example, Beckford's Monument up on Lansdown near the racecourse; and from Pressbarrow Farm Cottage and Holt House far reaching views to the west and north. From the very top of Priston Hill just before joining the B3115 can be seen the Westbury White Horse, at least 12 miles away. Also from Priston Hill Marksbury Church is visible and, less attractively, the sodium lighting on the Marksbury dual carriageway. The main natural feature to be seen is the south-facing bluff of The Sleight at Timsbury. Closer at hand is the Priston Brook, which curves its way down through the village, parallel to the village street and then down through the wooded brake of Village Farm. One Tree Hill is a well-known local landmark to the south west, while the complex of buildings at Priston Mill, including the Grade II listed farmhouse, is visible to the north.

Buildings and Details

In terms of vernacular architecture, Priston is composed mainly of fairly humble and small two-storey cottage-type dwellings of largely 18th or early 19th Century origin. There is a mixture of detached, semi-detached and two longer terraces. While there is a pleasing irregularity and informality to houses in Priston, there is also a good deal of consistency in terms of height, depth and general appearance even though most buildings have been extensively modified and added to over the years. A large proportion of the houses in the village have been altered by knocking two cottages into one or by the construction of single or double storey extensions.

Outside the village cluster there is only one (hardly visible) farm in close proximity and two isolated sets of farm buildings, those of Whidlecombe Farm and Pressbarrow Farm. There are no clusters of houses in the countryside surrounding the village, only a couple of barns on the outskirts. There are no pylons or masts. The usual quota of overhead electricity and telephone wire is not on the whole obtrusive.



View 3: Purpose with elegance: A typical Priston farmhouse

In addition to the Grade I listed Church, there are a handful of more substantial old buildings. These range from the fairly grand Manor House and Old Rectory to more modest but very attractive buildings such as Pressbarrow Farm, Church Farm and Village Farm.

There have been a number of architecturally successful conversions of agricultural buildings to residential use, eg. at Church Farm and Hill Farm which vary considerably in scale and height. There are also conversions which have arisen from change of use (The Old Post Office, Priston Garage, the new Rectory, the Dog Inn).

Modern development, apart from the cul-de-sac of bungalows at Summerlea, has been confined to infill though there is a block of half a dozen Council-built properties close to the village centre. Though the character of the village is defined by the old buildings, about 40 per cent are post war dwellings. With certain exceptions, and in common with many other similar villages, the modern dwellings do not complement the architectural style of their older neighbours, nor do they use traditional materials. Their design and construction was not informed by a sense of the uniqueness of their situation. Yet, partly because many of them are bungalows or chalets with rooflines which do not stand out, they do not dominate the character of the village which still takes its cue from the traditional cottage dwellings.

The rooflines of the traditional cottages are fairly higgledy-piggledy, which contribute greatly to their charm. Most roofs have a fairly steep pitch and there are several flat roof extensions, but these do not dominate.

Vernacular buildings are generally roofed with old clay tiles which have a pleasing colour and texture which complements the buildings and surrounding landscape. Over the years, buildings have been reroofed and this has sometimes been carried out in slate rather than tile, which also fits in well with the architecture and landscape. Some of the grander dwellings were probably always slated rather than tiled. Many dwellings now have appropriate parts of the roof covered in solar panels.

Postwar buildings are also generally tiled but concrete tiles have been used which give a hardness and regularity contrasting unfavourably with the older buildings. However, many of these are weathering to become less noticeable.

Vernacular buildings are mostly built from the local white lias and appear organically connected to the surrounding landscape. Dressed Bath stone is used in the Manor and is often used in the form of quoins on corners and window and door surrounds. The majority of village properties are walled to the front (and are often decorated with the odd fossil commonly found in the area) but rear boundaries are more often hedges or fences. Paved parking areas are tarmac or gravel.

Modern buildings are constructed in a variety of materials, but rarely in natural stone. Brick (fortunately not red) has been used in some of the council-built properties, which is rather at odds with the character of the village. Render is extensively used which can blend successfully with traditional materials. Many of the modern buildings are built of reconstituted stone which does not match natural stone textures nor does it age well.

Vernacular buildings have simple but quite diverse features in terms of doors, windows, porches etc., sometimes enlivened by Bath stone detailing. Fenestration consists normally of small window openings sometimes defined by stone mullions, though larger window openings have sometimes been introduced to let more light in. As window frames require replacement from time to time, styles and materials are quite varied. There is some tendency for cost and insulation reasons to employ UPVC instead of the more traditional timber.

Many houses have traditional oblong letter boxes in their front doors, but more and more houses are using American-style mail boxes at their garden gate.

The only flagpole is on the church tower. The Union flag or St George's flag are flown on important days, and there is a touching tradition whereby, on the passing of a villager, the flag is flown at half-mast, and the church bells are half-muffled until the funeral.

Archaeology

With regard to recent archaeology, there are several more domestic signs of the past, like the old ha-ha which once encircled most of Priston Place, and the lime kilns set into the cliff-wall of the 'sewage farm footpath', and the old mill leat that fed water from Priston Brook to Priston Mill. Ancient archaeological artefacts abound particularly in the form of pottery sherds and worked flints. Significant remains have been reported. For example, just outside the southern perimeter of the village the existence of two Round Barrows was reported by the Rev John Skinner in 1821, though these have subsequently been destroyed. There is strong evidence of occupation during Roman times. A Roman coffin was unearthed in Great Croft Close in 1917 and in 1953 Bill Wedlake excavated 1st-

3rd Century AD pottery and bronze items (as well as some iron-age pottery). On the western edge of the current village lies the site of a possibly independent settlement which later came to be known as Westend Town.

In terms of historical record, we note that Priston's name is a mixture of Brythonic 'Prisc' and Anglo-Saxon 'tun', indicating early settlement. The Anglo-Saxon Charter of 934 granted much of the land to Bath Abbey and the Domesday Book lists 20 tenements. There is a Norman Church (listed Grade I). The parish cross and priest's house no longer exist. Post-Dissolution, Priston was owned by absentee landlords but in the 1750's it was sold to William Jenkins who swept away the old tenements and allocated blocks of land to individual farms where the farmhouses and outbuildings were all rebuilt. The estate was broken up in 1919.

Sense of Place

Though Priston does not contain any architectural masterpieces other than the Church, and the quality of the vernacular architecture is not distinguished, there remains a quality of gentle harmony between the built environment and the natural world which both visitors and residents find very welcoming. Priston is rural (despite its proximity to two major cities), has definite boundaries, and is surrounded by countryside in good heart on every side. Despite the addition of many modern houses as well as various conversions and changes, the overall feeling is very pleasant and not at all 'twee'. The village is very well kept and the gardens, many visible from the highway, a pleasure to the eye. There is a particular view, beloved by all Pristonians, from the top of Priston Hill, from where you can see the village nestling securely in its valley giving the impression of slumbering. It is very 'easy on the eye', nestled along the valley bottom, surrounded by sloping gardens and the open hilly farmland beyond, with a wonderful diversity of trees and shrubs to catch your attention all year long. The views and landscape elements change rapidly as one moves around. The smells – perhaps not quite so good. The sewage farm can smell, as does the slurry, and the oil seed rape. On the other hand, you can smell the earth as it is ploughed, and the hay and silage as they are harvested, plus the scents from gardens within the village.

Activities

As well as farming, there is a number of small businesses in or around the village, such as liveries, shooting, and various home-run enterprises.

Activities, for a community of some 250 people, are endless: Church, Cricket Club, Priston Jubilee Morris, book club, history group, bellringers, pilates and circuit training classes, art classes, children's Thursday after-school Kids' Club, the Saturday café, Mayday, the Priston Music Festival, quizzes, duck races,

dinners, concerts/gigs. The Ring O'Bells pub is a very valuable centre of social activity and in addition provides well-supported gourmet nights.

The village and its surrounding landscape are often photographed. A well known artist, Annie Parkin, lived here in the 1980s-90s, and immortalised many views in and around Priston in her pointillist style.

The village has had a magazine, The Link, for the last 36 years. This is becoming an increasingly important domestic historical record, and is in the process of being archived. Much more recent is the Priston Web which is a veritable mine of information on Priston, both historical and current.

Positive Features and Special Qualities

- Sufficient size and diversity to encourage balanced community development.
- Rural location but with ready access to city facilities.
- Historic feel but equipped for modern living.
- Community focal points at the Village Hall, pub and Church.
- Inclusive community.
- A regular, if infrequent, bus service.

Negative Features and Detracting Elements

Villagers understand that, as is to be expected in such a small community, Priston lacks many facilities including any sizeable public space, school, allotments, a communal children's play area, shop, and gas supply. However, there is great concern about the vulnerability of Priston to flooding in the lower part of the village due to a high water table and run-off from the surrounding hills. Storm drainage is poorly maintained and unable to cope; the main street runs like a torrent in heavy weather. The sewage works can become very overstretched resulting in an increasing problem of build-back affecting several houses at the bottom of the village.

Other facilities give rise to concern, particularly the erratic electric supply and the poor broadband, television and radio reception. There is also only one reliable mobile phone service available in the village.

The bus service is sufficiently infrequent to make car use almost essential.

Looking Ahead

Priston, like many of the surrounding communities including Bath, has 'fingers' of countryside protruding into the village which give a great tranquility and feeling of spaciousness. The tendency for these spaces to be regarded as natural sites for infill development (supported in Planning policy) has worked against

this. But such green spaces as remain (for example, Evan's Orchard between Applecot and Brook Cottage, the Church Farm vegetable plot adjacent to the listed Granary, and the graveyard) should be valued and preserved for the contribution they make to the character of the village. Such development as does occur must be much more mindful of the village context in terms of design and materials. It must avoid the 'one size fits all' approach which has blighted many of our towns and villages. In addition, the benefits of any additional development must be weighed against the already stretched infrastructure.

WILMINGTON HAMLET

Character Summary

Wilmington lies in the north of Priston Parish. The hamlet sits high on the ridge above the Newton Brook Valley with a small combe dissecting two ridgelines. Access to the hamlet is via narrow winding lanes with occasional passing places. There is no direct link between Priston village and Wilmington.



View 1: Wilmington viewed from across the combe

The hamlet comprises of Wilmington Farm and 8 houses, half detached and half semi-detached, with a linear layout and single track road. The historic centre would always have been Wilmington Farm, which, before its replacement in the 1970s, was in part medieval. It still retains 18th and 19th century farm buildings and Grade II listed gate piers and is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall.

The building material is predominantly oolitic limestone with two instances of rendering and roofs are clay tile. There are no community buildings and no children's play areas other than surrounding fields and larger gardens.



View 2: Wilmington Farm showing 1970s building with listed gate piers

Landscape Description

The landscape has a generally open character with views both across the Newton Brook Valley to Inglesbatch, and down the valley with commanding panoramas of Englishcombe, the Royal Crescent Bath, and Lansdown.



View 3: Inglesbatch viewed from Wilmington

On the ridge opposite the hamlet, across the small combe, sits Wilmington Copse, which has been replanted in the second half of the 20th century but is a particularly important skyline feature. Within the combe there is a small stream that feeds into Newton Brook. There are also a higher number of standard oak trees on Wilmington land than elsewhere in the Priston Parish. Several boundary hedges of the former medieval manor have been noted for high ecological and archaeological interest: the northern boundary with Stanton Prior, the western boundary with Newton St Loe and the southern boundary with Priston.

Archaeology

There are possible megaliths situated along the ancient estate boundary between Wilmington and Priston Manors. There are spectacular early field systems in Further Moor and Baker's Butts.

History

The northern parish boundary with Stanton Prior is described in several Anglo-Saxon charters between 934 and 965 AD. Wilmington is mentioned in Domesday but the Manor passed from the Bishop of Bath and Wells to the Champeneys family in the late 12th century, staying in Champeneys ownership until 1792, when it was bought by William Gore-Langton of Newton Park. The land is now owned by the Duchy of Cornwall.

Sense of Place

The hamlet relates very closely to the surrounding farmland with its animals and crops, the abundant wildlife and the changing seasons. It enjoys spectacular views across the Newton Brook valley and down to the urban fabric of Bath.

Positive Features and Special Qualities

With wide ranging views over a beautiful valley, the hamlet is peaceful in its small, isolated location surrounded by farmland.

Negative Features and Detracting Elements

The narrow access lanes are often dangerous and muddy as they are much affected by bad weather; the hamlet could be somewhat isolated for children.



CONYGRE BROOK VALLEY

Character Summary

Conygre Brook runs through Farmborough Parish and enters Priston Parish upstream of Priston New Farm. This snapshot covers the section from Priston New Farm to Priston Mill Farm and considers the settlement at Priston Mill. Initially the landform is gently undulating, however past Priston New Farm a combe begins to form with increasingly steep sides on the north up to the Priston to Marksbury Road and the Wilmington Ridge while to the south lies Pensdown Hill and the lower Priston plateau.

Priston New Farm, the last of the 18th century farms created in Priston enjoys fine views across gently undulating land to Priestbarrow Hill and Farmborough Common. The farm is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall.



View 1: Towards Priestbarrow Hill and Farmborough Common

Priston Mill Farm is a small grouping of farmhouse and buildings by the Conygre Brook sited around the historic Priston Mill, with a pair of 1930s semi-detached cottages and 20th century farm buildings further up the access track. The farm is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and most of the buildings have been converted either to a well used hospitality centre or to other business uses.

Landscape Description

Around Priston New Farm is more open arable land that quickly changes to grazing land in the developing combe with good tree cover along the watercourse. Near New Farm the watercourse trees are somewhat mixed, comprising of Hazel, some Elm (dying back again) some Ash and Blackthorn but closer to Mill Farm they are almost all fine, multi-stemmed due to much earlier coppicing, Alders.



View 2: Coppiced Alders on Conygre Brook

Above the stream and the Priston to Marksbury Road to the north is Pottern Brake (7 indicator species) while the smaller Conygre Brake lies to the south on the edge of the plateau.

The Priston village to Marksbury Road crosses the brook and then lies on the higher ground on the lower slope of Wilmington Ridge along half the combe, before leaving the valley at New Farm. The Priston Mill connecting lane to the Priston to Marksbury Road similarly lies below the Wilmington Ridge. There are no public footpaths in the Conygre Brook valley between the Farmborough border and Priston Mill.

Settlement Character and Pattern

The buildings comprising the core of Priston Mill and their layout are still recognisably 18th century though many individual buildings have come and gone as farming practices changed. The backdrop to Priston Mill is still working farmland, with brook and mill-pond.

Buildings and Details

The following Priston Mill Farm 18th century buildings are all Grade II listed: the farmhouse, mill and large barn. These buildings are built of liassic limestone (the farmhouse is now rendered) with clay pantiles; the mill and farmhouse are both double-gabled while the mill and barn both have finials (obelisk and bell respectively). The complex is beautifully sited below the Wilmington Ridge and along the Conygre Brook with the farmhouse standing above, overlooking the farmstead.



View 3: Conygre Brook at Priston Mill

Archaeology

Land between the Conygre Brook and Priston village contains the remains of early field systems around Pensdown hill. In both Coneygar and Red Fields (Priston New Farm) are sites of small 18th century coal workings.

History

It is reasonable to assume that the mill mentioned in Domesday occupies the same site as the 18th century Priston Mill structure existing today.

Positive Features and Special Qualities

The Priston Conygre Brook mostly lies in a small intimate valley that can only be viewed by walkers, riders and motorists from the road above. Because it is grazing land and there is no footpath, it is a space where wildlife is probably less disturbed than in other areas of the parish. Otters have very occasionally been seen in the brook, there are hares and deer in the fields, glow worms in the road banks near the stream crossing, rooks, little owls, buzzards and sometimes a kite hunt over the land. Farm children and their friends play by the stream.

Negative Features and Detracting Elements

None.

PRISTON BROOK VALLEY

Character Summary

Priston Brook rises in Timsbury Parish and runs through a small northern section of Camerton Parish before entering Priston Parish. This snapshot only covers the section from the Camerton boundary downstream to the edge of the village.

Landscape Description

The Priston section of the valley is an intimate, enclosed linear space and following the course of the brook downstream, there is open farmland to the north with woodland to the south. The valley fields are used for sheep grazing but maize and miscanthus are planted as ground cover for game birds in small areas, as the valley is also a centre for game shooting which is an important influence on the landscape.

The stream is supplemented by several springs on the valley hillside. It has an artificial dam, which ponds the stream to create a habitat for the duck shooting. However, the pond also inhibits the flow of water downstream so that it can run dry in summers of low rainfall.



View 1: Priston Brook Valley looking west with Priston Wood

There are mixed hedges, some fences and also a walled gate with stile and fossil built in the 1990s. In 1991, several hedges on the western boundary were surveyed and listed as Grade I, with others as Grade II.

Priston Wood is classified Ancient Woodland and was first mentioned in 1258 A.D. as "Southwood". It has great value as a habitat with 21 indicator species and plays a very important role for both animal and plant life.

From higher parts of the north side of the valley towards the village, the long view, which terminates the vista, is of Duncorne Hill with a possible prehistoric hilltop camp. Also towards the long raised mound forming the spoil of Priston Colliery 1917-1930, now covered by vegetation but once giving employment to 180 local men. At 750ft it was the last deep mine to be sunk in Somerset. Closer by is the landmark of Priston Church tower with its distinctive golden cock weather vane. Near the western boundary, but not seen from the valley, is Tunley hill camp.



View 2: From the side of the valley towards Priston village

Routeways

Priston Brook has long had an old trackway running beside sections of it. It lies partly along the streamside and then climbs away up the hill to the old hundreds meeting point near Tunley Farm. There are several footpaths in the valley and a popular circular route runs from near Wood Lodge through the valley and back past the cricket field to the centre of the village.

Archaeology

The site of 2 round barrows, noted by John Skinner in 1821, has been obscured by 19th century quarrying and backfilling. The location is presumed to have been at the top of "holloway" running up from Priston Lane, across Priston Brook, to meet the lane by the cricket field. There are also the remains of small quarries on the north side of the stream where the limestone outcropped.

History

The western parish boundary is mentioned in Priston's Anglo-Saxon charter of 934 A.D. The plateau to the north of Priston Brook Valley was part of the 'South Field' of Priston. The stream's Anglo-Saxon name was the Lox, which changed to Southbrook in the Middle Ages and later to Priston Brook.



View 3: Looking east showing Priston Lane leaving the valley, the duck pond in the background with Priston Wood beyond.



View 4: Looking towards Duncorne Hill.

Positive Features and Special Qualities

Priston Brook valley's topography contrasts the intimacy of the valley bottom with its steepish hillsides. The whole is given life by the flash of moving water, the changing colours of the ancient woodland and the movement of children at play in the water or tobogganing in the winter, and walkers or joggers moving through the landscape.

Negative Features and Detracting Elements

None.

Note: Historical, archaeological and botanical references have generally been taken from the **Priston Farm Survey, Avon County and English Heritage, 1991, unpublished.**