

# Brunel50 Path



I G Liddell



# The Brunel50 Path

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A fifty-mile walk linking the five sometime campuses  
of Brunel University London

Dedicated to the University  
and to the memory of  
Isambard Kingdom Brunel

In celebration of the fiftieth anniversary  
of the foundation of the University

Uxbridge, 2016  
Amended 2017-20

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All photographs are by the author, with the exception of historic photographs of Osterley, Twickenham and Runnymede campuses, which are by University photographic staff.

Routes and conditions are always in flux, and descriptions in the text may fall out of date.

Neither the author nor the University can be considered responsible for any accident, loss, damage or inconvenience sustained by any person who ventures onto the path having read this book.

Each walker has sole responsibility to act and walk within the law, taking full responsibility for her/his own safety and security, and for the safety and security of all others and of their property.



# Introduction and general information

## Introduction

It was fifty years since the formation of Brunel University London when this route was set: here, we take fifty miles to make the circuit of its five sometime campus locations. Note that we have only included locations which have housed Brunel University London as such: locations used by institutions solely before they became part of the University (such as Borough Road College in Southwark) are declared to be out of scope.

Starting on the campus in Uxbridge (the principal site of the University for almost all its life), at the statue of Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806-1859) which was unveiled in 2006, the Brunel50 Path makes its way first to Acton, the birthplace of the University, then turns westwards to visit the Osterley and Twickenham campus sites. A long haul takes the walker to Cooper's Hill in Englefield Green, home of the Runnymede campus site, before the final northbound stretch is made to return the walker to the Uxbridge campus, back to the statue.

Yes, of course a route may be devised to link up all the sites in a shorter distance, but apart from the symbolism of a fifty-mile route (it is truly unfortunate that a fifty-kilometre route is just beyond the capabilities of geometry and geography), the route prefers quieter places than Uxbridge Road if they can sensibly be found. It also takes the opportunity to acknowledge the work of IKB along with his fellow engineers and scientists en route.

Here, let us explain that the word *Brunel* in this text will refer to the institution (sometimes we shall use its full title when that is more relevant); when we refer to Isambard Kingdom Brunel himself, we shall use *IKB*.

## Choosing the route

The aim has been to keep very close to the fifty-mile distance, taking advantage of parkland, countryside and river banks as much as possible, preferring quiet streets to major thoroughfares. In some places, established routes exist which will allow for local alternatives.

Two specific alternative (parallel) routes are described within the text, one in Southall and the other between Chertsey and Runnymede campus. These are given to accommodate local historical opportunities (Southall) or local path conditions (Surrey). Sections for the alternative routes are presented following the section of the equivalent stretch of the main route. Minor divergences (e.g., to follow a river bank) are mentioned in passing within the main text.

Nevertheless, there are occasions along the way when there is simply no sane alternative to tramping along a busy road (such as the stretch of Uxbridge Road from Ealing Common to Acton), or an especially dull one (please step forward, Coppermill Road,

*Brickwork of Wharncliffe Viaduct*





*Southern entrance, Hanwell Station*

Horton — though see also the Childs alternative from earlier in the history of the University, mentioned at the end of the text).

In such instances, there is nothing for it: you must simply grit your teeth and revel in the shops, the architecture, and the contrast with the meadows and river banks in other parts of the route — of course, the author would never suggest that you might just hop on a bus when nobody is looking (if you are on a bus route).

You just need to take the rough with the smooth.

## Getting to and from the route

Public transport is well served along the route, if a little sketchier in the western section (essentially, the part that lies within Surrey) than in the Oystercard zone, and the route attempts to provide opportunities to return to base (usually to Uxbridge, either directly or by using Heathrow Airport as a connective hub).

Public transport information for services within London is available at <https://tfl.gov.uk/> — this will cover access to and from all the Brunel50 Path except for the sections (and alternatives) between East Molesey and Colnbrook.

When dealing with the parts of Surrey and Berkshire which are traversed by the route, you will find <http://www.traveline.info/> to be your most reliable online aid for routes and timetables, and it is almost as easy to use as the TfL website. Bus fares in Surrey and Berkshire to the airport are usually £4 or £5 single: details and updates are available from operating companies on the Web and by using other contact media.

The logistical notes indicate public transport possibilities at suitable points in the text.

## Sustenance on the route

Using parkways and quieter roads means that there isn't necessarily a shop, pub or café on each corner: although you will not need to pack the copious reserves of Kendal Mint Cake and water which you would if you were out on the Lakeland fells, you should pack a modest set of supplies (particularly water). In general, though, the author suggests that you support such local businesses as may be found *en route*.

## Clothing and footwear

Wear footwear and clothing appropriate to the terrain. Heavy walking boots should be unnecessary: a decent pair of trainers are quite adequate for this route in dry conditions, but only if they still have springy, uncompacted soles.

If you wear a pair of slightly padded walking socks (such as Bridgedale Merino — other manufacturers' goods are also available), your shoes will be filled out nicely, and this will enhance your comfort when walking on the hard surfaces of streets and towpaths.



Normal clothing for a walk in the park should suffice for most of the route. There is, however, one part of the Brunel50 Path where a little more preparation may be necessary.

Footpaths in the west of the route are, in the main, less walked than elsewhere, so nettles and brambles can flourish in profusion — out to the north and west of Chertsey, you may meet particularly challenging tracts. In such conditions, wearing shorts, skirt or kilt invites countless stings and scratches, as does walking with bare arms. A well-fitting hat and a pair of spectacles (or even goggles) will help avoid injury to your head and eyes. Indeed, ladies seeking protection from higher foliage may wish to consider the adoption of an appropriately padded sartorial solution!

Here, sturdy trousers and long-sleeved shirts are in order. In the same area, you may find mud and/or waterlogged ground: some walkers may prefer to wear lightweight boots on these stretches.

You should know that removing overhanging brambles (etc.) from a public footpath with a pair of secateurs has the full support of the law, just so long as you remove only sufficient obstruction to allow you to pass along the footpath.



*Nettles on the path near the M25/M3 junction*

## Breaking down the distances

The distances break down into inter-campus sections, and into subsections thereof, as shown below: these divisions correspond to the chapters of the book. Despite the use of miles to capture the desired symbolism of the total length, these sectional and subsectional distances are presented (as are, indeed, all distances within the text) in metres and kilometres, since that is the measuring system adopted by the Ordnance Survey for its map scales (and by the great majority of nations on the planet), and it will be easier to read off such distances against the gridlines.

Most people are comfortable walking at either 4, 5 or 6 kilometres per hour — that works out neatly at 15, 12 or 10 minutes per kilometre. The arithmetic is therefore much easier in assessing breakpoints and emergency exits.

### **Uxbridge to Acton — 17.62km**

Uxbridge to Charville Lane at Raeburn Road — 3.48km

Charville Lane at Raeburn Road to North Road, Southall — 5.92km

North Road to Wharncliffe Viaduct — 2.35km  
via Three Bridges — 4.17km

Wharncliffe Viaduct to Acton — 5.87km

### **Acton to Osterley — 6.93km**

### **Osterley to Twickenham — 2.81km**

## Twickenham to Runnymede — 33.71km

Twickenham to Richmond — 1.27km

Richmond to Hampton Court — 8.24km

Hampton Court to Walton Bridge — 8.29km

Walton Bridge to Shepperton Ferry — 2.02km  
via Shepperton village — 2.87km

Shepperton Ferry to Chertsey — 4.09km

Chertsey to Runnymede — 9.80km  
via Penton — 9.86km

## Runnymede to Magna Carta Centre — 1.63km

## Magna Carta Centre to Uxbridge — 18.35km

Magna Carta Centre to Colnbrook — 9.82km

Colnbrook to Uxbridge — 8.53km

## Finding the way

Of course, the first step in finding the Brunel50 Path is to read and to follow the detailed route-notes contained within this publication! But a map is still a very helpful aid, especially to find context, exit routes and alternatives, and the very best maps for walkers are the Ordnance Survey Explorer series.

*Waymark, Colne Valley Park, near M25/M4 junction*



As luck would have it, though, the Brunel50 Path happens to fall on the corners of four sheets — these are 160, 161, 172 and 173. To buy the four will cost you over £30. Assuming, though, that you have access to a computer and printer, there is a far better option open to you.

A subscription to the Ordnance Survey's online map service (for full details, see <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/osmaps/>) is one of the best investments any walker in Great Britain can make. For less than £20 per year (at 2018 prices), this will give unlimited access to online Ordnance Survey cartography stretching from Shetland to Scilly: you will note that they have a range of subscription plans available.

With this subscription, you may import GPX routes and create your own routes: these may be stored in the cloud, accessible only to you with your account. Also, you may export basic GPX data for any route to a file, and the software is able to calculate optimal directions for road trips too. You may then print maps and route-plans, using your own decisions as to paper size (A4 or A3), scale, and orientation, without limit) for your personal use. The map quality is second to none, just as one would expect from the Ordnance Survey.



The A-Z atlases and maps are also useful for street names, etc., and show some of the paths used in this route, particularly in the built-up areas, but the limitations of scale are greater with a mapset which prioritises roads and streets, so the precision is diluted.

Needless to say, Google Maps (and similar) can show the route of an imported GPX file on top of their base maps. However, the map quality, and the resultant print quality, will suffer in comparison to the Ordnance Survey's offering.

It is a simple job to weigh up the value for money and make your choice. Do not, however, leave it to chance, or be reduced to asking the locals for directions:

no matter how kind they are in helping you, your unnecessary questioning is still an unnecessary imposition on them, and may serve to bring the walking fraternity into disrepute.



*Shepperton ferry*

## Respecting the route

Responsible walkers will always obey the Countryside Code when in the country, but respect for the route does not stop at the 30mph signs. Whether you are on a street, a towpath, or any other part of the route, you are only a guest passing through the community of others. The residents and other users have every right to expect that you do not abuse their environment while you borrow it for your transient use.

- Parking in residential roads at the start or end of your walk is dissuaded most strongly — use local car parks if you really must arrive by car (though using public transport while walking the Brunel50 Path is a far better option, especially in walking linear sections of the route).
- Do not make excessive noise as you go along — play no music, and quiet conversation barely above a whisper is loud enough. Let the surroundings do the talking.
- Do not block the way for other users by walking in large groups or more than two abreast (this is, of course, the most civilised way to act wherever you walk, be that along Oxford Street or in the Outer Hebrides).
- Be extremely careful not to leave litter anywhere. Always try to replenish your supplies at local shops, cafés, and so on: this helps to pay back the community for your use as you pass through.

Finally, be sure to enjoy your passage through the areas borrowed by the Brunel50 Path — and show it by smiling to the locals you meet.

# Conventions used in this guide

One convention has already been mentioned — the use of metric measurements to correspond with map scales. But other conventions give you, the reader, help in reading the text. Within the route sections of the guide (that is, excluding the preamble pages), plain text is used to denote the detailed route descriptions, while italicised text is used for other types of information.

- Text in black is used for detailed route description.
- Text in maroon is used for logistical information, such as access to public transport or the whereabouts of cafés, restaurants, pubs or shops.
- Text in blue is used for historical and other background information, and for descriptive discussion text.

Clearly, these classes of information may overlap in places to a greater or lesser degree, and there will be some leakage of text into what some readers may consider the ‘wrong’ colour. This is simply inevitable.

*Uxbridge campus, main entrance on Kingston Lane*

