

Get out of London!
West to Maidenhead
I G Liddell



The text in this document is merely an indication of what might be possible ... or what might have been possible at the time of researching (2019) or later revision. All walking routes are subject to change, but the pace of urban change is greater than in rural areas.

Each reader must assess whether each part of the route qualifies as suitable or safe for public access. The author does not warrant any point of legality or safety in any part of the description of the route.

Thanks are due to many people who have helped me with route-finding and with intelligence local to a number of areas traversed by the route. Their contributions enrich the route and the stories along it. Clearly, any mistakes and misinterpretations remain with the author.

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Front cover photograph:
Hyde Park

Trafalgar Square to Maidenhead

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Start	Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square — WC2N 5DU
Finish	Maidenhead — SL6 1EW
Distance	60.6km
Duration	12 hours 29 minute
Ascent	242m

Introduction

The route of the walk starts at the foot of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, one of the most iconic spots in London.

Trafalgar Square was laid out from 1830, on land which used to be royal mews stabling for Whitehall Palace (which is down Whitehall on the left). Work began on the National Gallery in 1832, and Nelson's Column was erected in 1843 (the Landseer lions only arrived in 1867).

The statue of King Charles I to the south of the square is the London zero-point for road distance measurement. Rather confusingly, the

Landseer lion, with Canada House, in Trafalgar Square



epicentre of road *numbering* for England and Wales is at St Paul's Cathedral, next to St Martin le Grand, which was the headquarters of the General Post Office. The days of the post coaches may have passed, but the atavistic streak maintained the GPO at the heart of the road system.

Of course, the route to Maidenhead could be the very simple case of slipping down Whitehall to join the Thames Path at Parliament Square, following the National Trail as far as Maidenhead Bridge, and following a few streets in Maidenhead to reach the railway station.

However, the walk described below follows a more northerly route, taking in the adjacent Royal Parks of Green Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, following on through various parks in West London to pick up the Grand Union Canal near Boston Manor.

The canal towpath is followed through Hanwell to Yiewsley, and the remainder of the route takes in Langley Park and Burnham Beeches before it descends via Cookham to end at the centre of Maidenhead.

The route is divided into four sections, *viz*

- Trafalgar Square to South Ealing (*see* page 5).
- South Ealing to West Drayton (*see* page 17).
- West Drayton to Farnham Park (*see* page 25).
- Farnham Park to Maidenhead (*see* page 31).

The map for each section is referenced at its introduction.

Public transport access is easy throughout the route as far as West Drayton, after which the only access points are at Iver, Farnham Park and Cookham, before the final steps to Maidenhead.

The situation regarding shops, cafés and other services largely mirrors that for public transport, though there is the benefit of a café at the south-eastern end of Burnham Beeches and a pub at the north-western edge of Corporation land there.

Trafalgar Square to South Ealing

17.2km; 3hr 32min
69m ascent

Introduction

1.1 This, the first section of the route, has much greenery. After crossing Green Park, Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens to reach Notting Hill, the route crosses Holland Park on its way to Hammersmith. Alternating with streets, Ravenscourt Park, Acton Green and Gunnersbury Park take the route to South Ealing, with bus and Tube connections nearby.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/1856446> covers this section of the route.

Route

1.2 Begin by walking to the west side of the square and cross onto Cockspur Street, keeping Canada House on your right. At the far end of the building, by the statue of King George III, continue to cross Haymarket, which descends towards you on your right. Follow the right-hand footway of Pall Mall ahead.

At the foot of Regent Street, pass the memorial to the Crimean War, with the statue of Florence Nightingale the most recognisable element, and continue ahead across the street.

Memorial to the Crimean War, Waterloo Place

Florence Nightingale is rightly known for her nursing of the soldiers of the Crimean War, but it may come as a surprise to some that she was also one of the first people to understand the importance of statistical analysis of health data in identifying opportunities for improvements — indeed, her classification on the Wikipedia site is given as “statistician” rather than “nurse”.

Cross Pall Mall at the traffic lights to continue along its left-hand footway. At the end of the street, turn left onto



Marlborough Road, with St James's Palace on your right and the memorial to Queen Alexandra, wife of King Edward VII, on the left opposite the palace.

St James's Palace was built by King Henry VIII, and is still an important royal building, even if it has been upstaged by Buckingham Palace for the past 250 years or so.

It is still a royal residence, and all foreign ambassadors and High Commissioners are accredited to the Court of St James. On the night before his execution, King Charles I stayed in St James's Palace, and the first of the six treaties which created the United Nations Organisation was signed here.

1.3 Turn right onto the Mall, and walk towards Buckingham Palace. In front of the Victoria Monument, at the pillar honouring South Africa, turn right and follow the curve, with the balustrade on your left, past the Canada Gates and onto Constitution Hill. Walk the full length of Constitution Hill, past the Commonwealth Memorial Gates, to the Hyde Park Corner gyratory system. Go ahead and cross by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

Ahead is the Wellington Arch. Pass through (or round) the arch. On your left is the granite wall of the Australian War Memorial. Turn right at the Royal Artillery memorial, then take two light-controlled pedestrian crossings to reach the gates next to Apsley House.

Hyde Park Corner station is down below, and the network of subways which give access to the station form a subterranean alternative to jousting with the traffic at the street-level crossings.

Apsley House is the London residence of the Dukes of Wellington, since it was bought by the first Duke in 1817. The house was built by Robert Adam in the 1770s, and some features remain following the renovations of 1819 by Benjamin Wyatt on the instructions of the first Duke. Because the house was the first dwelling seen by people arriving from the west, it was given the facetious address of *Number One, London*.

1.4 Go through the gate, and cross South Carriage Drive. Turn right, then left along the long straight avenue which is Serpentine Road. This takes the north side of the Serpentine lake. Where the lakeshore bends slightly to the right, rise to road level to turn left onto West Carriage Drive.

The Serpentine lake was created in 1730 on the instructions of Queen Caroline, and was originally fed by the River Westbourne. However, that river became too polluted, and water was later pumped from the Thames to

Wellington Arch,
Hyde Park Corner



fill the lake. Nowadays, the water comes from three bore-holes within Hyde Park.

The Serpentine Swimming Club is very active, and has organised a Christmas morning race since 1864. The Serpentine Bridge was built by John Rennie in the 1820s, when the West Carriage Drive became the boundary separating Hyde Park from Kensington Gardens.

1.5 Cross the bridge, then turn right onto Kensington Gardens. Take the path which slightly left of straight ahead (a bit south of due west), then at the first crossing (where five paths meet), head off half-right (that is, to the north-west) along an avenue.

Remain on this avenue for 900m, passing the *Physical Energy* statue (George Frederick Watts, 1817-1904) on the way. When you reach the north perimeter path, turn half-left, then, at the end, turn right onto the Broad Walk for a few metres, then exit onto Bayswater Road.

Queensway station (Central Line) is on the other side of Bayswater Road.

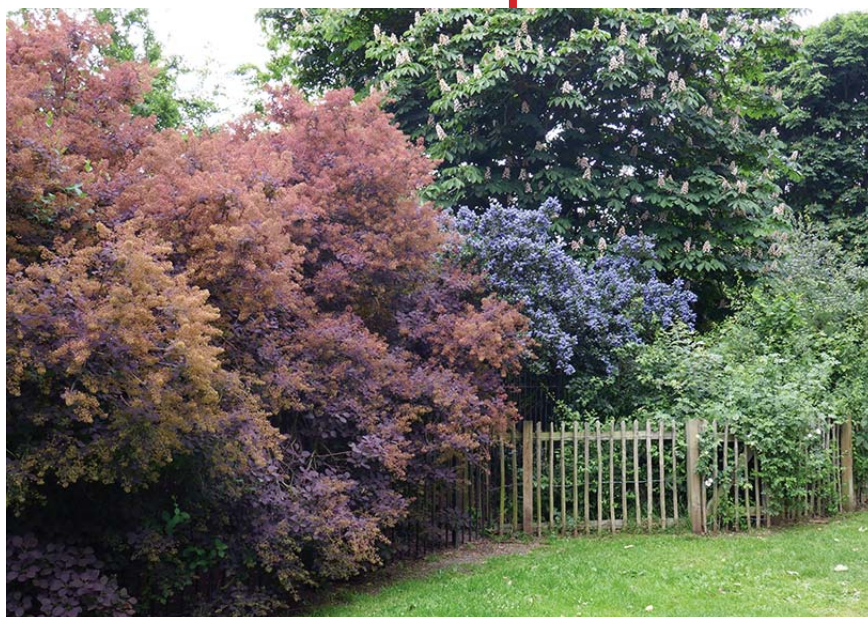
1.6 Pass a coach park on the left, then the Russian Embassy. Pass the gates which lead into Kensington Palace Gardens, then the grey post-war building which is home to the Czech and Slovak embassies. This leads you into the commercial centre of Notting Hill Gate. Keep resolutely to the left-hand footway, past the station entrances.

1.7 When the shops have given way to back garden gates, the street-name changes to Holland Park Avenue, and the road descends towards Shepherd's Bush Green. Pass Campden Hill Square (home to many celebrities in their time, and to some municipal heroics in *The Napoleon of Notting Hill*, the novel by GK Chesterton). At a bus stop named Holland Park, turn left onto the street of that name. The first building on the left houses the Ukrainian Institute in London, and St Volodymyr stands guard on the street corner.

Follow the left-hand footway of Holland Park (the street of that name) past some buildings: the right-hand bend is taken up on your left by a white wall. At



The Serpentine lake, looking west from the north-shore boathouses, Hyde Parke



Kensington Gardens, near the north-western corner



St Volodymyr stands guard over the Ukrainian Institute Alcove seating in the formal gardens of Holland House



the end of the wall, an archway, topped by the arms of the defunct London County Council (1889-1965), gives access to the green space of Holland Park (the park of that name).

Enter the park: the path bends slightly left. Where the path bends right, a side-path goes off half-right: take this to reach the statue of Lord Holland.

The third Baron Holland was a minister in the Grey and Melbourne governments, having had a colourful political career earlier in the century. The park was bought for London in 1952 from the sixth Earl of Ilchester, who was a descendant of the first Baron Holland. Holland House was largely destroyed during the Second World War, with only the east wing surviving: this wing was used for some time as a youth hostel.

Bear half-left at the statue to take a path to the south-south-east to reach Holland House. Turn right, to pass the formal gardens on your left. Turn left at the end of the formal gardens, then left and right to descend to an archway. Pass beneath to emerge onto the southern access road to the buildings of the park.

There are public toilets on the right, and a café to the left as you descend to leave the park.

The area to the west was developed for housing, and is known as the Ilchester estate. This area was originally part of the park.

Follow the access road out of the gate, and turn right onto Ilchester Place. Cross Abbotsbury Road, then turn left, across the frontage of a large redbrick block of houses. At the bottom of the street, turn right onto Melbury Road. Cross Addison Road, and continue on Napier Road, which becomes Fairfax Place after you cross Holland Road. Turn right onto Russell Road, then left to take the footbridge over the railway tracks to Kensington Olympia station. Take the left-hand side if you are not using the station, otherwise you will need to touch in with your Oystercard (or contactless bank card)

The station is now served by Overground services and Southern services between East Croydon and Milton Keynes, and also by occasional District Line services, but the station used to be much busier. It was for some time the London terminus of Motorail, before cars

became so reliable that a trip to Stirling or Perth was no longer a frightening test of a whole catalogue of vehicle components.

The bridge is free to cross nowadays, but it used to be considered part of platform access, and users were charged 2d for a platform ticket. In those days, an architect friend of the author had reason to cross the bridge in both directions when visiting offices on the other side of the tracks, so in jest, he asked for a return platform ticket. He was surprised to be charged 2d for a “platform day return” ticket to cover the two crossings. The ticket had always been available, but had never been advertised. If one knew about it (or if a kindly clerk had acknowledged its existence), one could benefit.

1.8 Turn right on Olympia Way (the roofed car park ahead was once the Motorail terminal), then immediately left onto Maclise Street. Take this street out to its end, bearing slightly right at a junction with a few small shops, and turn left onto Hazlitt Road.

Turn right onto Blythe Road at the magnificent building ahead (it forms part of the archive of the Victoria and Albert Museum), then left onto Girdlers Road (no apostrophe). At the end of the street, you will reach Brook Green. Turn right, and keep to the left-hand footway on the far side of the green. There is a path running through the green, but it is broken up and is not worth the effort.

The *Brook Green Suite*, by Gustav Holst, was written in 1933 for the junior orchestra of St Paul’s Girls’ School, which at the time was located here: Holst was director of music at the school for almost thirty years. It was also the location of Holst’s wedding in 1901, so the title may do double duty. The piece was written from Holst’s hospital bed: he died the following spring.

Some years ago, a teacher was tidying up a cupboard in the school, and he discovered some old music manuscripts. They were piano transcriptions which Holst had made of several of his works, and



The great gable of Olympia towers over Napier Road

The former Motorail terminal at Kensington Olympia





included a revelatory four-hands version of what is surely the best-known of his works, *The Planets* suite. The work has been performed by the teachers in a husband-and-wife duo to great acclaim.

At the far end of Brook Green, turn left onto Shepherd's Bush Road, and follow its right-hand footway all the way to the end, where it meets Hammersmith Broadway.

As well as trains from the station, and from the main Hammersmith station across Broadway, buses from Hammersmith bus station (to the left of the station complex) contribute to an important transport nexus.

1.9 Walk in a west-north-westerly direction along Beacon Road, crossing to the left-hand footway at the pedestrian crossing, as far as its junction with Glenthorne Road, where turn left along the left-hand footway of the latter. At the far end, turn left onto Dalling Road, and pass beneath the railway. Take a lane on the right parallel to the railway, then turn right to pass beneath the tracks at the entrance to Ravenscourt Park station.

Pass beneath the railway (that is to say, turning right if exiting Ravenscourt Park station) and immediately turn left along a path parallel to the tracks. Pass some tennis courts on your right to reach the entrance to Ravenscourt Park from Ravenscourt Avenue (the street arrives from beneath the railway to your left).

Keep on ahead, but take a path which eases away from the railway, making sure there is a children's paddling pool on your left, to exit the park through a gateway opposite the end of Ravenscourt Gardens.

Continue ahead on Ravenscourt Gardens, using its right-hand footway, to reach the junction with Goldhawk Road. Cross the road ahead using the refuge just to the right of the end of Ravenscourt Gardens.

Stamford Brook station is off to the left.

Top — the former campus of St Paul's Girls' School, Brook Green

Bottom — alleyway leading to Ravenscourt Park station



1.10 Turn right onto the left-hand footway of Stamford Brook Road, keeping the petrol station on your right. Turn left onto South Side, with a park on your right. Turn right at the end of the park onto the left-hand footway of Prebend Gardens. Just before you reach the traffic lights, cut left on a diagonal path, and turn left onto Bath Road. Follow the left-hand footway of Bath Road, past the Arts Educational School.

The site was formerly occupied by Chiswick Polytechnic, which merged into the West London

Institute of Higher Education, vacating the Turnham Green site in 1976. The West London Institute merged with Brunel University (to become known as Brunel University London following a 2006 change to its Charter) in 1996.

At the end of the road, reach Turnham Green Terrace.

Across Bath Road on the right stands the church of St Michael and All Angels, known to TfL simply as *Turnham Green church*. The church bears the air of a rather well-to-do cricket club's pavilion. Norman Shaw is said to have influenced the design.

There are many shops and refuelling opportunities on Turnham Green Terrace, and more may be found on Chiswick High Road at the end of Turnham Green Terrace.

Turnham Green station is adjacent on your left, and the buses of Chiswick High Road extend the possibilities for connections.

1.11 Cross Turnham Green Terrace and follow a path ahead onto Acton Green, keeping close to the railway.

It would be easy to deduce that this piece of green space would be called Turnham Green, based on the Tube station name. However, this is the southern extremity of Acton, which may come as another surprise to those whose mental geography is based on the Harry Beck Tube map.

Cross Fisher Lane by the pedestrian crossing, and continue ahead on a path. Pass a typically suburban brick-barn church on the right to exit Acton Green on Acton Lane, opposite Cunnington Street.

Cross Acton Lane using the pedestrian crossing, and follow the left-hand footway of Cunnington Street to its junction with Antrobus Road.

There is a convenience shop on the corner.



Turnham Green church

Follow Cunnington Street ahead, crossing its junction with Rothschild Road onto Kingswood Road, and follow it all the way to its end at South Acton station.

Between 1907 and 1959, a shuttle service operated between South Acton and Acton Town, linking the North London Line (between Richmond and Broad Street) with the Tube network. Little or nothing remains of this line, save a bridge abutment on Bollo Lane at the entrance to the Acton Underground Works. South Acton station is now on the Mildmay Line of the Overground between Richmond and Willesden Junction.

Cross the railway using the station footbridge, and continue northwards on Palmerston Road. Follow Palmerston Road out to its end at Bollo Bridge Road.

There is a small supermarket on Bollo Bridge Road opposite the end of Palmerston Road.

This area has been redeveloped in recent years into a high-density area of flats, with only a few of the older buildings (principally the school) remaining, all of this being driven under the marketing tag of Acton Gardens: the rail transport links at Acton Town and South Acton are now little more than dormitory portals to workplaces elsewhere in London, backed up by connections using local bus services.

Apart from the supermarket and a neighbouring coffee shop, little seems to have been done by the developers to provide a range of services. I am sure that the developers are not driven by the same ethos as, say, the Cadburys were when designing Bournville in

Osborne Road, where bar snacks and IPA are no longer provided



Birmingham, but an online map-search for “pub” shows a remarkably empty quarter which matches the Acton Gardens site footprint. Even the post-war New Towns built pubs, libraries and community halls into their planning — some of these have been retired or replaced, but after 100 years, the Admiral Vernon pub in Becontree (the world’s largest public housing development), for instance, is still operating and has been listed Grade II.

Turn left along Bollo Bridge Road and, after 90m, turn right onto Corbet Gardens. On your left is Bollo Brook Park: follow a path which begins parallel with Corbet Gardens, passes to the right of some basketball courts, and eases to the left to reach Osborne Road at a traffic barrier.

Turn left and follow the right-hand footway of Osborne Road between school buildings, passing fragments of what went before, out to Bollo Lane, where turn right.

Bollo Lane still has some small-scale industrial units on the side adjacent to the railway, but it must be questionable how long these businesses can hold out against the march of the more aspirational kind of brownfield housing development seen locally.

Follow the right-hand footway of Bollo Lane, ascending to its end at the junction with Gunnersbury Lane with the entrance to Acton Town station across the road to your left. Cross Bollo Lane by the pedestrian crossing to reach the entrance to Acton Town station on the left-hand footway of Gunnersbury Lane.

Clearly one may follow the right-hand footway of Bollo Lane all the way from Chiswick Park to Acton Town, but the 450m saved is outweighed by the greater interest on the present route.

There are cafés and shops clustered around Acton Town station, some on Gunnersbury Lane beyond the station to the west. There are toilets inside the station — they are located outside the ticketing gates.

Acton Town is a “box of light” station designed by Charles Holden (see). The station is the bifurcation-point for the two branches of the Piccadilly Line (which lead towards Uxbridge and Heathrow), and is also on the Ealing Broadway branch of the District Line. The Piccadilly Line route between Acton Town and Uxbridge was operated by District Line trains until 1932.

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1.12 If you are exiting Acton Town station, turn left. Continue along Gunnersbury Lane to the junction with the North Circular Road, traversing this busy thoroughfare by the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing just to the left of the junction.

At the far side of the crossing, turn left and go downhill for a few metres, then turn right to enter the tranquillity of Gunnersbury Park.

If the gate is locked, return to the junction and follow the left-hand footway of Popes Lane to the main park entrance, and follow the main path to reach the café.

You will soon come to the Small Mansion on your left, with a small car park. Beyond is the Large Mansion, now a museum. Pass to the left of the Large mansion, with the Small Mansion on your left. A magnificent vista opens out in front of you, as the parkland falls



Acton Town station, seen from Gunnersbury Lane to the west of the station



*Gunnersbury —
Large Mansion (south face)*

away in front of you, leading down to a lake called Potomac — the connection with Washington DC is unclear.

Gunnersbury Park and Mansion have been in local authority hands since 1929, but a full millennium's history is stored here, starting with Gunylde, the niece of King Knút (or Canute). This area was called "Gunylde's burh" (or stronghold); the name has come down to us today as "Gunnersbury".

Gunylde's grim fate was to find herself banished out of England and into exile under a

charge of *spowsebrech* (spouse-breach, or adultery) in 1044. Later, she was able to clear herself of the charge by means of a 'champion', whereby a knight chosen by the royal defendant (who could not be seen to be tried in the same manner as a commoner) fought against a knight appointed by the court. In the contest, Gunylde's champion slew the court's knight, so Gunylde was acquitted. If the court's knight had prevailed, Gunylde would have thereby been considered guilty, and she would have been executed without trial.

Much later on, the Gunnersbury estate was purchased for Princess Amelia (1711-1786), daughter of George II; the Princess held a lively political salon at the house, and had the park designed in the landscape style as was fashionable at the time. In later years, the well-known Rothschild banking family held the estate. During the early 1960s, the Orangery was allowed to be used by the Brunel Students' Union (the university was then based in Acton) for entertainment and other events. Today, Gunnersbury Park accommodates one of the campuses of Capel Manor, London's land-based further education college.

Walk along the south face — the garden frontage — of the Large Mansion, and then turn right to approach a park café (in the Italian style).

There are toilets nearby, as well as a toilet block near the Large Mansion passed earlier.

Turn left at the café (or turn right if you have approached from Popes Lane) and advance

*Gunnersbury Park —
lake and temple*



to reach a lake on your right, with an ornamental pillared temple at the far end. Continue ahead with the wall of the Capel Manor estate on your right, to reach a bulky modern sports centre.

At the far end of the sports centre building, turn right and follow the path past the building to reach tennis courts on your left. The path stops here, so ease to the right and continue ahead across the grass towards the park's perimeter path, aiming to the right of a football goalpost. When you reach the perimeter, turn left to follow the path all the way to the north-western corner of the park (passing an exit path part-way along). Turn half-right, passing a disused lodge on your left, to reach the junction of Popes Lane and Lionel Road North.

There is a parade of shops ahead on the left.

1.13 Cross Lionel Road North by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and continue ahead along the left-hand footway of Popes Lane, with a row of shops on your left, until you reach the gate of South Ealing Cemetery.

If the gate is shut, continue along Pope's Lane, and then turn left down South Ealing Road to re-join the route at the cemetery's main entrance.

Enter the cemetery by the gate and walk down the broad avenue. Your way through the cemetery is simple: just follow the signs to the chapel, which is at the South Ealing Road entrance. Turn right at the end, then left just before the end of the next (transverse) avenue.

Pass the local war memorial on its little roundabout with its familiar Cross of Sacrifice (designed by Sir Edward Lutyens), then turn right at the next little circle. Cross a narrow public footpath which bisects the cemetery and is enclosed by fences separating the two parts of the cemetery (but proceed with great care — local cyclists use it frequently for their egotistical charade of sprint practice), and continue out through the chapel arch onto South Ealing Road, where cross the road and turn left to take the right-hand footway.

Buses here connect with Ealing Broadway and the A4. South Ealing station (Piccadilly Line, Heathrow branch) is about 600m away to the north.

*South Ealing Cemetery
War Memorial*





South Ealing to West Drayton

13.3km; 2hr 43min

36m ascent

Introduction

2.1 From South Ealing, the route makes its way through streets to Boston Manor, where it descends through Elthorne Park to the Grand Union Canal. The canal towpath is followed all the way to the end of the section at West Drayton, passing the flight of locks at Hanwell and the renascent areas in Southall and Hayes, the development having been fuelled by the arrival of the Elizabeth Line.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/1856448> covers this section of the route.

Route

2.2 Turn right onto the right-hand footway of Murray Road; at its far end, turn right onto the right-hand footway of Windmill Road. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing, and continue ahead on a path which leads through to the eastern end of The Ride.

Pass Gunnersbury Primary School on your left, and continue to the far end of The Ride, where you will reach Boston Manor Road. Here, turn right uphill along Boston Manor Road to reach a pedestrian crossing near the gate of Boston Manor House and Park. Cross to the left-hand footway by the crossing.

Boston Manor House is a Grade I listed Jacobean manor house with links to, among others, the Earls Spencer of Althorp and the merchant family of the Clitherows. The house and park have been held in public ownership since 1923.

Prior to the building of the Manor House, the estate (previously seized from the Duke of Somerset following his defeat at, and execution after, the Battle of Hexham in 1464 during the War of the Roses) was given by Queen Elizabeth I to the Earl of Leicester, who started a sort of pass-the-hot-potato sequence through several well-connected owners until the Somerset taint was sufficiently distant.

Keep to the left-hand footway of Boston Manor Road to reach Boston Manor station.

Boston Manor station is on the Heathrow branch of the Piccadilly Line: buses connect with Hanwell and Brentford.



*Boston Manor House
East frontage*

Elthorne Park



There are shops and a café on Boston Road.

2.3 From Boston Manor station (turning left if exiting the station), start off in a north-westerly direction along the left-hand footway of Boston Road. Take the first road on the left (Wellmeadow Road), then turn right onto Southdown Avenue, following the left-hand footway. After about 240m, turn left to enter Elthorne Park.

Follow the crushed stone path ahead, then bend with it to the right, to keep the playing fields on your right, and trees on your left. Keep to the main path until, after a thin belt of trees is passed on your right, the path splits.

Take the right-hand option at the split, and continue until you are approaching a road (Trumpers Road). Before you reach the road, though, bear off left to descend to the Grand Union Canal.

Turn right on the canal towpath (with the water to your left), and follow it to the confluence with the River Brent, which you cross by a footbridge, to reach the bottom lock of the Hanwell flight.

2.4 Continue along the towpath past the bottom lock and the next one to reach

the parting of the ways with the Brent River Path, which is signposted to the right.

If you take the Brent River Path, it will lead you in 700m to Uxbridge Road. There is a pub on the east side of the bridge, and buses run between Uxbridge, Hayes End, Ealing, Acton and White City along this road. There are shops to the east of the bridge on Hanwell Broadway

Continue along the towpath, ascending past another four locks. On the way, you will notice a bricked-up arch in the wall which borders the towpath on the right. Behind the wall was the Hanwell County Asylum, now incorporated into Ealing Hospital, and the archway was into a private wharf for the asylum. Beyond the hospital buildings, you will come to a bridge.

This crossing point is Isambard Kingdom Brunel's remarkable Three Bridges site, a site historically significant enough to have been designated as a scheduled monument. Of course, there are only two bridges, but three levels of transport: the miscounted name, though has stuck.

The railway line running between Southall and Brentford, which you crossed at the north end of Glade Lane, was Isambard Kingdom Brunel's final railway project (1856-59). There were two principal obstacles in the way of the railway: the Grand Junction — today, the Grand Union — Canal (built in 1794), and Windmill Lane, which led from Southall to the bank of the Thames at Isleworth.

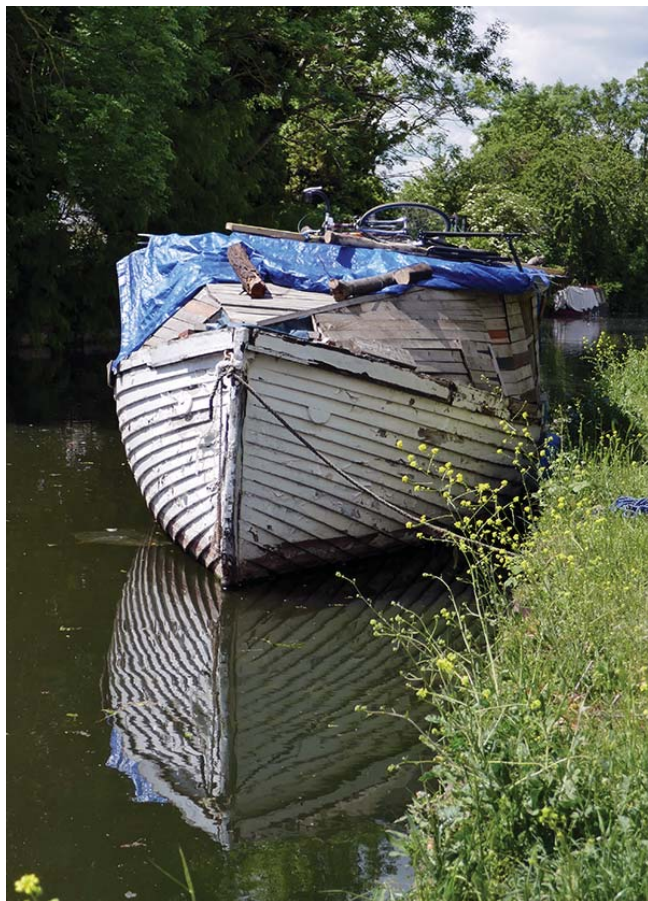
Brunel decided to meet both of these obstacles head on, and devised a route which would create a three-decker bridge: road over canal over rail. The railway needed to be in a deep



Hanwell locks

The trough carrying the Grand Union Canal, with the railway below, from beneath Windmill Lane at Brunel's Three Bridges





Reflections, Norwood Green

Paddington arm of the Grand Union Canal, seen from Bulls Bridge



cutting, so that it would not spoil the view from Osterley Park. Large metal beams on a central brick pier carry the weight of the canal (in a trough 2.4m deep, a flange of which forms the towpath) and the road over the railway line.

Access to road level is on the east side of the bridge: it is worth going up to look at the structure from all of the available angles — though not, of course, from the railway.

2.5 Continue along the towpath past the top two locks of the Hanwell flight, with open land to your right. Pass beneath a bridge to arrive at Toplocks.

At Toplocks, there is a bus stop with services to Southall, and a convenience shop.

Pass beneath the bridge which carries Norwood Road at Norwood Green. This section of the canal is arrow straight.

There are rather spartan opportunities for refuelling just south of the bridge, where there are a few shops.

Buses link this point with Southall.

2.6 Press ahead: shortly after a bend to the right, North Hyde Lane crosses the canal.

Here, there is a small shop and pub adjacent to the towpath, with further spartan refuelling opportunities.

2.7 Continue along the canal towpath for 1.5km to reach Bulls Bridge, where the Paddington arm of the canal branches off to the north.

Across the canal at this point, there is a large supermarket with its own moorings. However, it is hardly worth the effort to reach it, since you will soon be in Hayes Town.

2.8 Cross the Paddington arm at Bulls Bridge, pass beneath the busy A312, then pass beneath North Hyde Gardens (a rather bucolic term for the access to an industrial site).

The Paddington Arm is graced by a new crushed-stone towpath. The re-surfacing of towpaths is generally a condition of permission for developments nearby. In this instance the development is of

a huge area west of Southall station, where flats are being built on what was the site of Southall gasworks. The decontamination of the land was as big a job as that of the North Greenwich peninsula for the Dome (now the O₂ Centre) and the subsequent rash of tower blocks which have grown up to crowd it out.

The next bridge carries the Great Western Railway, and the development of the Elizabeth Line which uses these tracks has brought substantial renovation to Southall, Hayes, and West Drayton.

To feed this development, large tracts of industrial land have been converted to offices, houses and (particularly) flats, in expectation of increased commuting into London on the new line. Many service companies (new and established) are locating in the area, often into new-build premises, in the hope of picking up new business from an incoming tide of residents, and thus adding to the local workforce.

The site of the venerable Nestlé factory, which lies on the south side of the canal between North Hyde Gardens and the railway, is a major redevelopment project for the developers — and the aroma of coffee which used to hang over Hayes and the surrounding area now emanates from the new coffee shops and stands.

Continue underneath the railway for the last short step to Hayes. Take a bridge across the entrance to a small dock on the right.

Hayes and Harlington is also the junction station for Elizabeth Line trains to Heathrow Airport.

Continue beneath the railway for the last short step to Hayes. Take a bridge across the entrance to a small dock on the right. If you are leaving the route at Hayes, take the higher path which leads out to Station Road via Western View; if you intend to continue westwards towards West Drayton and Yiewsley, keep to the towpath.

From the end of Western View at Station Road, Hayes and Harlington station is up to your left,



The new Hayes colonises the site of the Nestlé factory

A glimpse of the new Hayes commercial development west of Station Road



for Elizabeth Line services and occasional Great Western services. There are local bus connections to Uxbridge, Harrow, Heathrow and elsewhere.

All facilities are available in Hayes to your right.

2.9 Follow the canal towpath west from Station Road. Soon, you will pass the former EMI factory (which worked on a broad spectrum of science from the Beatles' recordings to magnetic resonance imaging, some of the profits from the former being used to help fund the latter) to reach, and pass under, Dawley Road. Continue along the towpath with the modern offices of Stockley Park to the right.

You will see a London Loop signpost ushering Loopers off to the right, away from the canal, at the second of two simple benches beside the towpath. This path allows you to reach bus stops within the business park: these stops have services to Uxbridge, Hayes and Heathrow (some services run to the central bus station and others to Terminal 5).

Press on along the towpath to pass beneath the A408 (Stockley Road), and then beneath an older bridge. Advance to the next bridge, which carries Iron Bridge Road.

If you find yourself regretting the decision to turn off at Stockley Park, you may make personal amends by taking Iron Bridge Road to the right to reach bus stops for the same services as may be found at Stockley Park.

Continue along the towpath to pass a footbridge which spans the canal and railway on your left-hand side as Horton Bridge Road comes in from your right. Soon after passing the railway footbridge, West Drayton station may be seen on the other side of the canal. The next bridge carries Yiewsley High Street.

There are frequent departures to Uxbridge, Hayes, Heathrow and Hounslow from the bus stops on Station Approach ... when the state of the fragile road surface allows. When these stops at the station are out of action, use the ones on Yiewsley High Street.

There is a convenience shop and a coffee stall (a sure sign of the new West Drayton) next to the station entrance on Station Approach. Nearby, all facilities are available on Yiewsley High Street to the north of the canal, or on Station Road to the south of the railway.

Old and new bridges over and beside the Grand Union Canal near West Drayton



Note that West Drayton is the endpoint for using an Oystercard on the Elizabeth Line. For travel west of here, use a contactless debit or credit card, or return to the twentieth century and buy a ticket from the machine.



West Drayton to Farnham Park

14.6km; 3hr 00min

54m ascent

Introduction

3.1 From West Drayton (Yiewsley High Street, actually), the route cuts across country to pick up the Slough Arm of the Grand Union Canal, which is followed to Iver. Between Iver and Farnham Park, the route is generally rural, with an interlude of villagery at Stoke Poges.

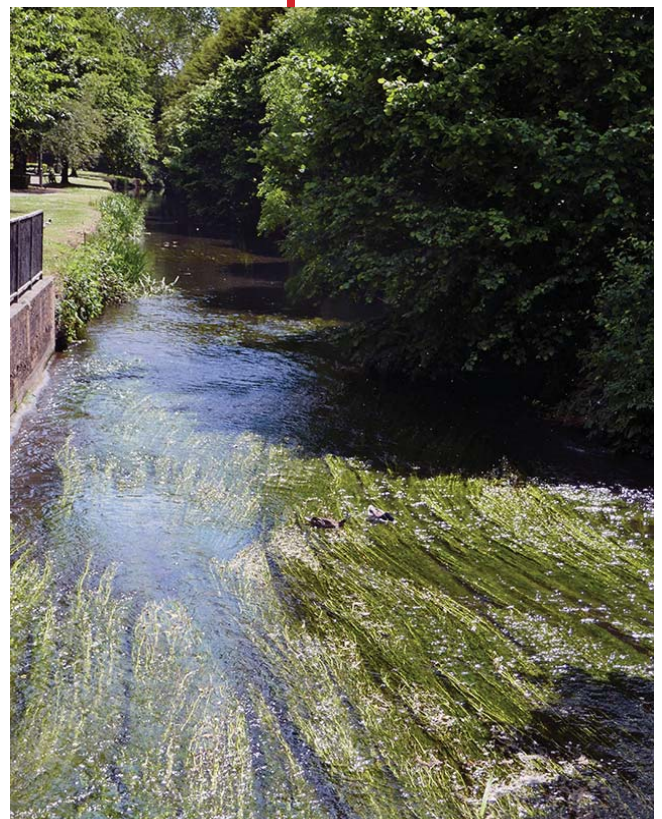
The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/1856451> covers this section of the route.

Route

3.2 Continue along the canal as far as the next bridge, which carries Trout Road. Rise to road level, and cross the canal. Continue along Trout Road, carrying straight ahead at a crossroads. Turn right with the road, and take Trout Lane, which branches off half-left. Ignore a path to the left which crosses a bridge: keep on in a generally westerly direction. Soon, you will be able to see a lake over to your left. Continue ahead, the path rising slightly towards a bridge.

*Left — Bridge over
Grand Union Canal at
Yiewsley High Street*

*right — Frays River
at Trout Road*





*Coal Tax obelisk
on the Slough arm,
Grand Union Canal*

When you reach the bridge over the Slough arm of the Grand Union Canal, do not cross the canal. Drop down to the left and turn left to keep the canal on your right.

The Slough arm of the canal, which has no locks, was opened in 1882 to serve brickworks: commercial traffic ceased in 1960. After the abandonment of plans to fill the canal in to build an access route for a trading estate, the canal was re-opened

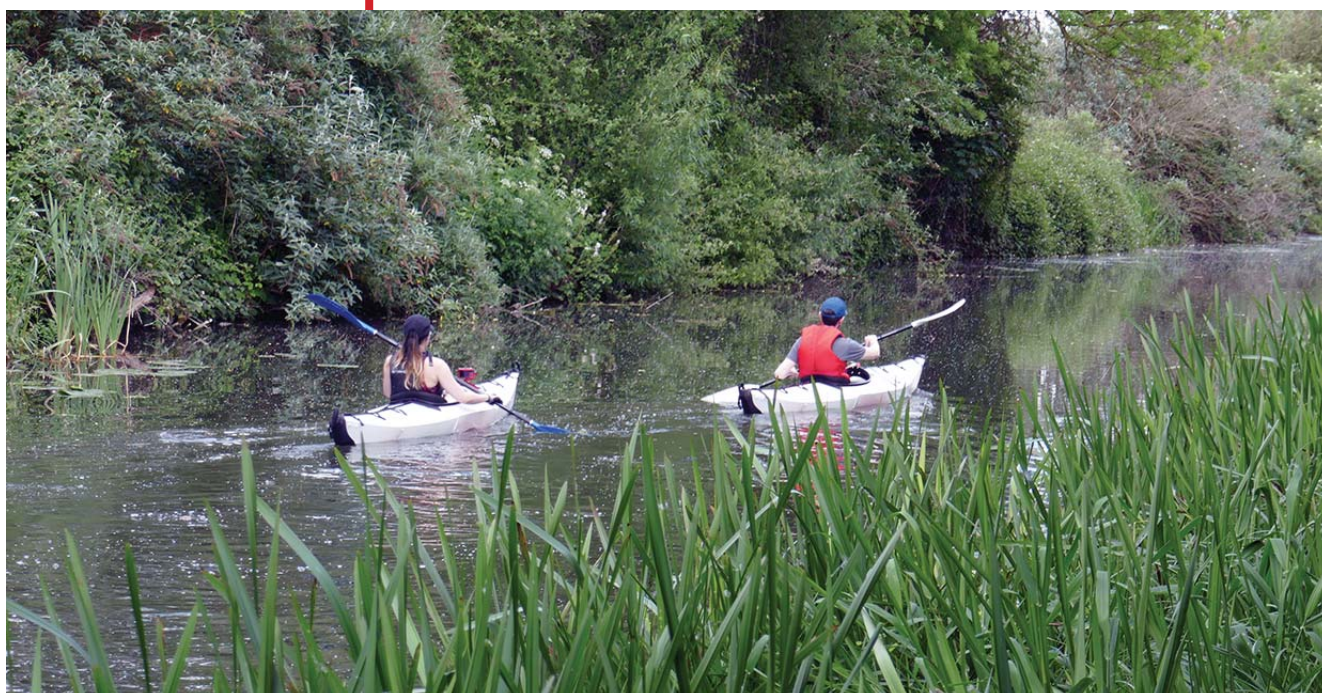
in 1975 for leisure purposes.

Our route crosses two aqueducts, one over the River Colne and the other over the Colne Brook.

You should note also the obelisk (where you join the towpath) indicating the boundary of the Coal Tax area. Traders importing coal or wine into London were subject to taxation in order to keep the roads and docks in the City of London up to standard. The obelisk is the standard marker on canals, with a taller version used beside railways. The great majority of markers, beside roads and tracks, are white metal bollards. The real purpose of the markers, which were erected in the 1860s, may have been little more than a publicity plea by the Corporation of the City of London, as "London" was expanding well beyond the Square Mile.

For more information about the Coal Tax posts and a 320km circuit walk, see <https://lwalks.london/london/personal/coaltax/> and plan your next walk! The page contains links to text and maps.

*Leisure activity
on the Slough arm,
Grand Union Canal*



Follow the towpath to the aqueduct over the River Colne.

3.3 Continue along the towpath, crossing over the Colne Brook. Pass beneath the M25.

By reading the Ordnance Survey map, it appears that there is a footbridge across the canal, with a route beyond which leads into Iver with less road-walking than as described below. Be assured that there is no such bridge, and that the route described below is the only option.

Beyond the M25, take a rising path parallel to the canal but on the left of the towpath: this will bring you out onto Thorney Lane.

Cross the road and turn right, to cross the canal and follow Thorney Lane into Iver to reach the Swan Inn at a roundabout, the junction with High Street.

Iver has shops (including a small supermarket) and a café on High Street. The Swan Inn opens at noon every day, and serves food from its opening until well into the evening.

Turn left at the Swan Inn, and follow the right-hand footway of High Street to the junction with Bangors Road South.



Approaching the M25 on the Slough arm of the canal

The Swan Inn, Iver





Leangley Park house

Just beyond the junction are bus stops: on the right for Uxbridge and on the left for Slough.

3.4 Make your way westwards along the right-hand footway of High Street, passing the school on your right. Where the main road swings to the left, continue ahead across the end of Widcroft Road, then take an enclosed footpath to the right (northbound). After a dog-leg, this path comes out onto Love Green Lane. Turn left, then swing right onto Swallow Street. Take a signed footpath half-left past a house,

and continue ahead.

3.5 Cross Wood Lane, and continue westwards on Bellswood Lane. When you reach Billet Lane, take a path ahead into Langley Park. Follow this path, which trends to the left round the north side of the arboretum. At the stable block, turn right to pass the main house.

Langley deer park goes back to 1202, and a house was built in 1603: the stable block is of that age. The third Duke of Marlborough ordered a new house to be built in 1756: the landscaping was by Capability Brown. The house is now an event location.

3.6 Pass the lake and continue ahead: at a Y-junction of paths, take the right hand option. This leads out onto Uxbridge Road. Turn right here, then cross to take Wexham Park Lane opposite.

3.7 After about 600m, just beyond the point where the road bends to the left, seek out a footpath on the right which, once through the hedge, strikes diagonally left across a large field to its far corner. Here, bear half-left and follow a lane, with first a farm on the right then a hospital on the left, to reach Wexham Street. Cross the road and turn left to reach the hospital car park on the right.

3.8 From the footpath sign at the entrance to the car park, set off at right angles to Wexham Street to reach the back of the car park. The footpath continues in the same direction to pick up a narrow path through a berm and into a field.

Keep to the left-hand side of the field, eventually reaching an access road to Snitterfield Farm. Bear right (that is, to the north) on a path which eventually comes out, with a left turn right at the end, onto Farthing Green Lane.

3.9 Turn left along the road to reach a crossroads. Turn left at the crossroads to take Grays Park Road to its junction with Park Road, the middle of Stoke Poges, then on for 60m to a footpath on the right. Take this footpath as far as a clear half-right turn will allow you to reach Church Lane. Turn left on Church Lane for about 80m, where there is an access, with National Trust sign, for Gray's Field. Enter the field, and go over to the massive monument to Thomas Gray.

Thomas Gray is generally reckoned to be surpassed only by Alexander Pope as an eighteenth-century English poet. Immensely self-critical, he published only a handful of poems. However, his *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* was probably sketched out at Stoke Poges, and the monument is inscribed with the poem which has brought several phrases into common language, including "kindred spirit", "paths of glory", and "far from the madding crowd". He is buried in the adjacent churchyard.

3.10 Bear left around the monument, then strike off west to the trees, behind which is the churchyard. Turn right to follow the left-hand edge of the field, out onto Park Road.

Turn left along Park Road, and after about 500m, beyond a left bend and where there is a gap in the houses on the right-hand side of the road, take a path on the right, which strikes off northwards but soon bends a little to the left, gradually getting closer to back gardens on the left. This path eventually breaks to the left to come out onto West End Lane.

3.11 Turn right along the lane, then where the lane bends right, turn left through 90° to pass through a band of trees and out onto Farnham Park golf course. Make straight across the course, in the end fading slightly right to cross a footbridge and continue out to Parsonage Lane, just to the right of its junction with Farnham Park Lane. Take Farnham Park Lane to Beaconsfield Road, where this section ends.

To the left, you will see bus stops: the one on the left has services to Slough, while the one on the right serves Beaconsfield.



*Thomas Gray monument,
Stoke Poges.*



Farnham Park to Maidenhead

15.6km; 3hr 14min

84m ascent

Introduction

4.1 The bulk of this section is rural, as it crosses Burnham Beeches and descends to the River Thames at Cookham. The route then follows paths to the centre of Maidenhead, after which there are essentially only two streets to be walked to reach the railway station, the end of the route.

Note that the only access to public transport on leaving Farnham Park is at Cookham, 10km away.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/1856453> covers this section of the route.

Route

4.2 From start off northwards along the left-hand footway of Beaconsfield Road, branching off left to take the old route of the road, now a service road. Take the signed footpath off to the left: it runs between houses, crosses Blackpond Lane, and comes out onto Hawthorn Lane. Bear left, then pick up the path which passes to the right of Coronation Cottages and plunges into the wooded oasis of Burnham Beeches.

*Halse Drive,
Burnham Beeches*





Burnham Beeches

Burnham Beeches was purchased by the Corporation of the City of London in 1880 to provide for public recreation and to preserve wildlife. The area had been earmarked for “superior housing development”, so it is little short of a miracle that the woodland has been preserved for well over a century.

Keep to a straight line as you climb, eventually reaching a crossroads, with a café over to the right.

Despite the café owners’ tendency to apply excessive price markups on standard items of food and drink, it is good to know that this establishment exists — and there are toilets attached.

4.3 From the café, return to the main route (bear right from the café). The main path (Halse Drive) bends to the left to descend, crossing Victoria Drive at the bottom. Bears right here and climb, keeping to the main path until it crosses Park Lane.

4.4 Beyond here, the path forks: take the right fork to swing right, eventually dropping to a small valley, where you will exit the forest. Climb out of the valley with animal pens to your right, emerging onto Littleworth Common at the Blackwood Arms.

4.5 Go straight across the road (unless visiting the pub first, of course) and follow the path across Littleworth Common: this will bring you to a road junction.

Littleworth Common



Take the road on the left — but be sure that you do not take Dorney Wood Road, which goes off sharp left! Just beyond a wooden telegraph pole on your right, turn right through a gate onto a footpath which heads off (in a west-north-westerly direction) — on your left is a field, and soon a wood takes up the right-hand side of the path. At the far end, the path dips into a little copse before emerging onto Wooburn Common Road.

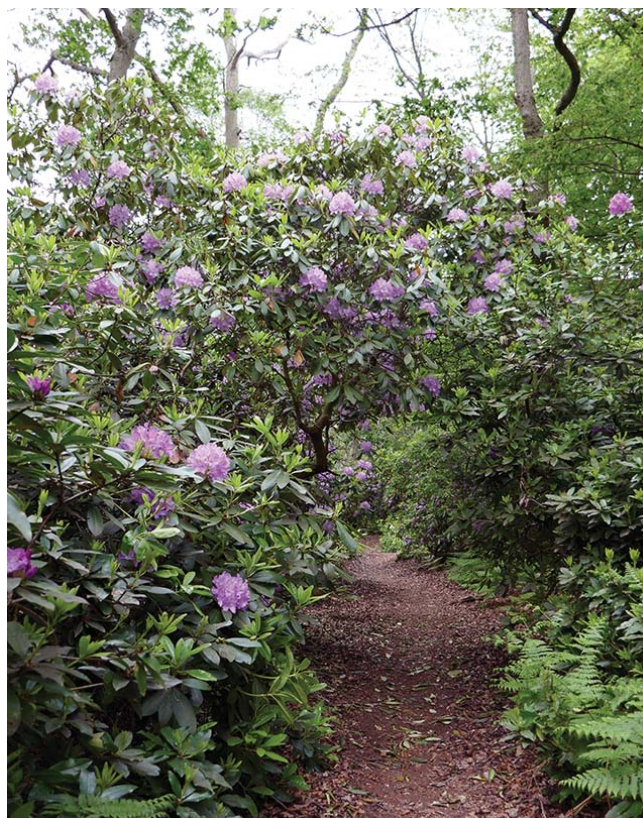
Cross Wooburn Common Road, and take a path into the woods. This path bends right to run parallel to the road, and then bends left to run parallel to Sheepcote Lane: eventually, this most welcome alternative to walking the two roads comes out with a right turn onto Sheepcote Lane where the road makes a slight bend.

4.6 Across the road, you should be able to see a four-finger footpath signpost.

To the left of the signpost, take the driveway/track: this leads past Coach Alley Cottage and on to Broad Lane. Turn left onto Broad Lane, and follow the road across a crossroads.

Pass the weight restriction signs: where the road to Bourne End swings to the right, continue ahead on a narrower road (still Broad Lane, though!) past the imposing Hedsor Farmhouse.

4.7 Just after the trees begin to encroach on your left, take a path which branches off Broad Lane half-left: it is called Church Lane. Soon, this path forks: ignore the branch to the left but continue straight ahead (to the south-west), descending fairly steeply as you go.



*The route west of
Wooburn Common Road*



*Hedsor Farmhouse
and the route ahead*

For reassurance here, look out for a waymark with the well-known representation of William Shakespeare — you are following Shakespeare's Way, a long-distance route which runs from Stratford-upon-Avon to the Globe Theatre in Southwark.

Descend steadily: eventually, the path comes out onto a road (it is the access road for Hedsor Priory). Descend with the road to a crossroads: go over the major road and take the gated road opposite (there is a pedestrian gate to the left).

4.8 Bend to the right, and then to the left, reaching a footbridge. Cross the bridge and keep to the left of the field beyond to reach the river — this is the original course of the Thames, indicated by the line of the municipal boundary.

Follow the riverside path round a left-hand bend, then strike off half-right on a path which leads diagonally across the field (Cookham church is a good sighting-point) to the road. Turn left onto the road, and cross the Thames on Cookham Bridge — the footway is on the downstream (left-hand) side of the road.

Continue along the road until you reach the main junction in Cookham, with the Stanley Spencer Gallery prominent in front of you, where you should turn right along High Street.

Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) was born in Cookham, where he lived much of his life: he is buried in the local churchyard. He is best known for his large-scale paintings of Biblical subjects as if they took place in Cookham (*The Resurrection*, Cookham depicts Spencer's friends and neighbours: it hangs in the Tate Gallery), but he also spent time as a war artist painting shipbuilding on the River Clyde at Port Glasgow.

Cookham is well supplied with shops, pubs and restaurants, mainly along High Street.

Follow High Street along its commercial length: where the buildings end on the left-hand side, bear slightly left of the roadway on a path known as The Causeway. This leads to a bridge — cross it to reach a Green Way footpath sign on the left.

Cookham station, on the Marlow branch line from Maidenhead, is 450m distant, straight ahead past the White Oak Inn.

Cookham is the point where this radial route really connects with the national network. Here, the Thames Path may be followed upstream to the river's source, through Henley,

*The River Thames and
Cookham church*



Reading, Oxford and Lechlade. We have already met Shakespeare's Way and the Chiltern Way. However, it seems logical to run this route out to finish in the centre of Maidenhead, where transport connections and opportunities for refreshment are more numerous.

4.9 Walk southwards on Green Way, and go through a gate. Follow the path along the right-hand side of the field, and successive fields. Cross a minor lane and then another field. At this point, turn right to cross a footbridge, then immediately turn left to continue in a south-south-westerly direction. After about 370m, take the path to the right for about 200m.

4.10 Turn left before reaching the little stream. Keep close to the stream, now on your right, for about 750m before crossing the stream (towards a cricket field) and trending right onto a piece of common land, with the houses of North Maidenhead across the common.

Do not cross the common, but bear left alongside the stream on your left. The path becomes more distinct, and you will pass a car park over to your right, while maintaining a southerly bearing on the path.

After a bank of trees is passed on your left, cross an access road: the path now bends to the left and then to the right, passing wooden sculptures to reach Ray Mill Road West.

4.11 Take the path opposite, now with Strand Water on your right, and follow it for about 430m to reach a footbridge. Cross the bridge, bear right, and pick up the southbound line of the stream on your right.

Pass beneath the town centre by-pass, then ascend to street level. Turn your back on the car park entrance on your right. After a few metres with a building on your right, turn right at the mini-roundabout to follow the road out to High Street for the final urban section of the route.



Green Way south of the start at Cookham



Green Way approaching North Maidenhead



High Street has numerous opportunities for refuelling or replenishment before the final steps to the station.

Turn right along High Street, and cross Strand Water. Continue westwards, and where the road narrows and the road surface changes to patterned brick, advance to Queen Street.

Ahead lies the pedestrianised stretch of High Street: turn left, though, down Queen Street. Where Broadway comes in from the left, continue ahead. Here, the standard High Street shops have been left behind for smaller, liminal businesses.

Gradually, Queen Street curves to the right: eventually, you will reach a major junction with much more modern business buildings dominating the landscape. Cross Grenfell Road to reach Maidenhead station.

Maidenhead station is served by faster services between Reading and London, as well as Elizabeth Line trains and stations on the Marlow branch line.

What is now the Marlow branch originally linked Maidenhead with High Wycombe (hence the need for trains today to reverse at Bourne End). The Wycombe branch from Bourne End closed in 1970 (though the line's alignment at Loudwater was preserved when the M40 was constructed). Maidenhead station opened on its present site in 1872. Prior to that date, the station was on the east side of the Thames, near the current Taplow station. The clock tower outside the station commemorates the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897.



Top — Sculpted wood on the approach to Ray Mill Road West

Bottom — Maidenhead clock tower, with its head in the clouds