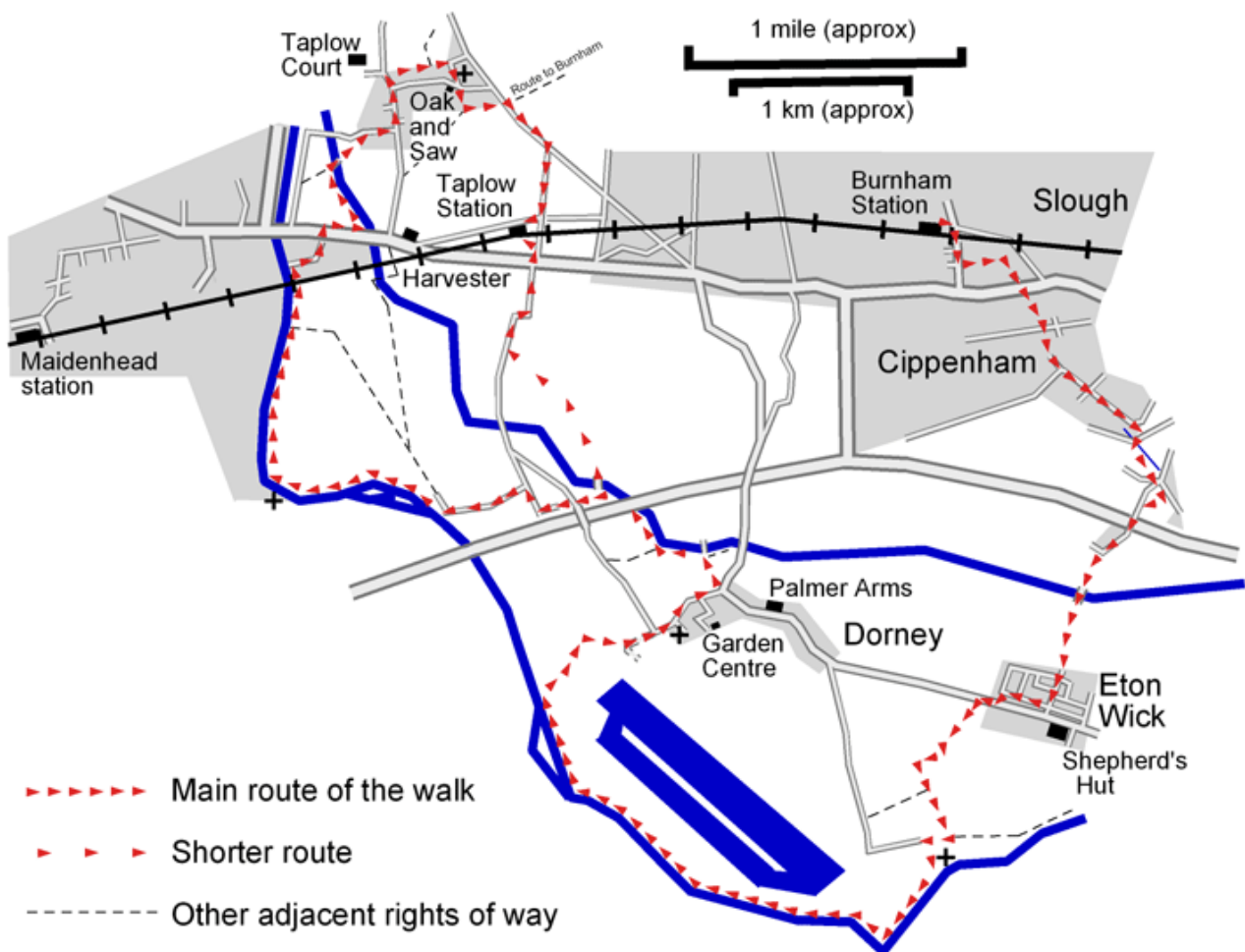


Burnham - Taplow

Much of this walk is along the Thames, with optional visits to the attractive villages of Dorney and Taplow. You also see the recently constructed Jubilee River, which is already blending well into the landscape and providing a natural habitat. There are glimpses of Dorney Lake rowing course.

The first mile (1.6 km) of the walk is urban, but then the country opens out, and this bank of the Thames has practically no buildings until you approach Taplow.

If you are doing this walk on a Sunday, please see the note at the end.



Distances

Burnham to Taplow station direct 8.5 miles (13.5 km)

via Taplow village 11 miles (17.5 km)

A climb of about 30 metres (100 ft) on the route into Taplow village, otherwise practically flat.

Travel

Burnham and Taplow are on the main line from Paddington and Slough to Reading, with about two trains per hour, but there are no Sunday trains from Taplow (please see the note at the end). Travel information for Buckinghamshire is available at Buckinghamshire County Council Travel Information or by telephoning 0871 200 22 33.

Refreshments

Eton Wick: the Shepherds Hut pub (no food at present, but there is a food store and a fish and chip shop nearby).

Coffee shop at the Walled Garden Centre at Dorney Court.

Dorney village: the Palmer Arms.

The Harvester Inn on the A4, 400 yards from the main route and 700 yards from the shorter route.

Taplow village: Oak and Saw (which sells wine from the local vineyard).

Please always be considerate about muddy boots in pubs etc; either take them off, or cover them up. Never eat or drink your own provisions on pub premises (including the garden, if there is one).

Ordnance Survey Map

The start and finish of this walk are on O.S. Explorer Map 172 *Chiltern Hills East*, and the central part on 160 *Windsor, Weybridge & Bracknell*.

There have recently been considerable changes in this area, notably the construction of the Jubilee River, so an up-to-date map is desirable.

Route

Leave Burnham station (which is not in Burnham parish, but in Slough Borough) by the access road and turn right.

Go under two railway bridges then, just after Balmoral Close on the right, cross over and go through bollards into a park.

Follow the path to the exit at the far side, and immediately turn right along a footpath, with the park railings on your right.

Go ahead at a staggered junction and continue to the busy A4 (Bath Road).

Cross with great care (if very busy, it is safer to cross at traffic lights to the left) and continue on Brook Path opposite.

This becomes a road, which you follow to cross another road at a sign "Brook Path leading to Selwyn Place".

Continue on the path ahead until it becomes a road and then emerges at a bend in Lower Cippenham Lane.

Turn left and then go ahead at a roundabout to stay on Lower Cippenham Lane (a no-through road at this end and a pleasant backwater just minutes from Slough centre).

Note the old granary on 'toadstools' (to keep out the rats) in the front garden of Cippenham Place on the right. This house marked the end of Cippenham hamlet in medieval times. Also known as The Old House, it was built in 1550, on the site of an earlier building and is mentioned in a document of 1650 listing holdings connected with an ecclesiastical community known as Windsor College.

Ramblers' Association: Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area

Follow the road at two slight left bends, then at a footpath sign immediately after the third bend, go right through a gap in the hedge.

Bear right across a green (Richards Way Open Space) heading just left of a playground to join Richards Way (very new and not shown on older OS maps for this area).

Turn right and then where the road goes right, cross over to fields opposite (Little Chapels Way Open Space) and continue on (or parallel with) the tarmac footpath/cycleway to Wood Lane.

Cross over Wood Lane and follow the fencing ahead for a short way, then go through a gap on the right into the site of Cippenham Moat.

This open area is thought to have been the site of a 13th century moated manor house.

Go round to the left of the earthworks to the left-hand corner of the site (by the ASDA supermarket), where there is a signboard giving details of the site.

Continue on round the edge of the enclosure to the next corner, to exit at a gap, immediately turning right along a short path leading back to Wood Lane.

Cross over and go left over the bridge that crosses the M4 and after 200 yards continue on a bridleway to the left, with open fields on your left, leading over the Jubilee River.

Formally known as the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme, the Jubilee River was created to reduce flooding. The last major flood happened in 1947, when over 2000 homes were affected and the river was nearly a mile wide in places. Large areas of Eton were underwater and almost a third of Windsor's population suffered in one way or another.

The Jubilee River leaves the Thames at Boulter's Weir, north of Maidenhead, and rejoins it at Black Potts Viaduct, Windsor. It was designed to replace habitats and breeding areas previously lost from the Thames and looks and acts like a natural river, except that its capacity is controlled so that it will not flood.

Continue on the bridleway to Eton Wick, then ahead on Moores Lane past a green on your right almost to the end of the road.

To go to the Shepherds Hut pub continue ahead to cross Eton Wick Road and turn left, otherwise turn right along the service road.

Near the end of the service road (opposite Colenorton Crescent), bear left on a short path to Eton Wick Road, cross over then turn right to reach metal gates at the entrance to Dorney Common, entering Buckinghamshire.

Go through the gate on the left of the cattle grid and bear left across the corner of the meadow heading for a footbridge about the middle of a line of trees.

This is not a public right of way but following the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the common has been declared open access land.

Cross the bridge (over Boveney Ditch) and turn right beside the stream as far as the field corner. Turn left along the field edge, ignore a path to the right, and continue to a tarmac drive with tall trees.

Turn right along the drive, go through a gate, and after The Old Place on the right, turn left at a footpath sign, go through a kissing gate and follow an enclosed path to the Thames, with the old church of St Mary Magdalene, Boveney, on your left.

St Mary Magdalene, Boveney, a grade 1 listed building with origins dating back to the 12th C, is currently under the care of The Friends of Friendless Churches. It is distinguished by its 15th C weather-boarded and timber-framed tower, 18th and 19th C fittings, and its location adjacent to the Thames. The church was originally built to serve the bargemen who worked on the river, and it once had its own quay. Outside there are little slivers of flint pressed into the mortar coursing lines – a partly decorative and partly functional technique known as galletting.

(The church is not open to visitors at the moment as it is currently undergoing major repairs)

www.friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk/churches/boveney/boveney.html

Turn right along the Thames Path and follow this for 2 miles (3 km), passing in succession:

a boathouse on the right;

Dorney Lake (seen through trees on the right; see comments below);

Windsor Marina on the opposite bank;

a curious Gothic-looking, turreted building (Oakley Court Hotel) opposite;

a low metal post (to the right of the path, shortly after you lose sight of the hotel) inscribed “The Conservators of the River Thames”;

a large white castellated building opposite (Bray Film Studios);

and Queen’s Eyot (island).

At a black signpost labelled “National Cycle Network 402” (with Bray Marina on the other bank),

turn right and follow the footpath past the western end of Dorney Lake and over a small bridge

(where there used to be a conveyor belt for the gravel extracted during the construction of the lake).

The lake was constructed by Eton College to ensure the future of rowing at the school, as there was no still-water multi-lane course in the area. For centuries, pupils have rowed on the Thames, but unpredictable river conditions have always been a concern, and in the summer there were conflicts of interest between rowers and leisure craft.

The boating lake is part of a £17m project financed by Eton College (and partially offset by royalties from gravel extracted to form the lake) which includes a public park, arboretum and Nature Conservation Area. The whole site is managed by an independent charity called Dorney Lake Trust. The arboretum was planted in 2000, but includes many older trees. www.dorneylake.com

Continue to a tree lined drive (car park and information panel on the right).

Bear left alongside the drive in the direction signposted “Jubilee River, Dorney” to the junction of Marsh Lane and Court Lane.

Continue ahead, either on the pavement or on a footpath behind a hedge on the right, to the driveway leading to the church (and the rear, private, entrance to Dorney Court) on the right.

Parts of the Church of St James the Less (chancel and nave) date back to the 12th century. In the nave is a stained glass window to the Palmer family of Dorney Court. The remains of an old rood screen can be seen, with a door which could be closed to separate the chancel from the nave. The floor of the church was originally lower than it is now (probably raised because of flooding and/or to accommodate the Palmer family vault). Evidence of this can be seen in the low height of a blocked up 13th century priest's door in the south wall of the chancel. Seven of the pews date from the 17th century and there is a large family box pew. There are also some faded wall paintings.

www.stjohnstjamesed.org.uk/page8.html

Continue on the path on the left of the road to the entrance to Dorney Court and the Walled Garden Centre (with coffee shop) on the right.

Dorney Court is a Grade I listed Tudor manor house of outstanding architectural interest. It was built around 1440 and has been the home of the Palmer family since 1629. It has always been the manor house of Dorney village (first recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 in which it was referred to as Dornei). The village name is Old English and means "island frequented by bumble bees".

The house is open in the afternoons Sundays to Fridays in August, and bank holiday Sundays and Mondays in May.

Continue on a path to the left of the road, behind fencing, to the junction of Court Lane and Village Road.

Dorney village is to the right along Village Road, with the Palmer Arms on the left in 300 yards, past some attractive old houses including Dorney Cottage (glimpsed over the brick wall ahead), Dorney House and Priors Croft.

To continue on the route, turn left at a footpath sign just before the junction of Court Lane and Village Road and to the left of gates and a gravel drive.

Go through a short enclosed section, over a stile, and continue ahead along the field edge to a gate on to the bank of the Jubilee River.

Do not cross the bridge, but turn left along the bank to a path junction with a gate ahead.

If the gate ahead is not locked (see below), continue along the river bank and 150 yards beyond the motorway to a signpost, where there is a choice of routes: the shorter one going direct to Taplow station or a longer route via Taplow village.

[M4 underpass flooded

If the way ahead is flooded at the M4 underpass, the gate will be shut and a warning sign displayed.

In that event, take the left fork along a path to Marsh Lane, and turn right along the road to a point immediately beyond the motorway where there are footpaths to both right and left.

For the direct route to Taplow station, go down a sloping path to the right. At the bottom, follow an enclosed path adjacent to a drive, emerging at the Jubilee River. Go left to cross the river by the footbridge, as described below.

*For the route via Taplow village, go down the sloping path to the left, as described at *** under "Route via Taplow village" below.]*

Direct route to Taplow station

Cross the river by the footbridge and on the other side continue ahead inside a narrow strip of woodland until the footpath emerges on to Marsh Lane.

Cross over and turn right, following the road until the junction with the A4. (The Harvester Inn is 700 yards to the left.)

Cross the A4 and continue up Station Road, noting the old 1885 boundary marker between the parishes of Taplow and Hitcham on the opposite corner.

Hitcham parish was dismembered in 1934, parts being allocated to Taplow, Burnham and Dorney parishes. This was done as part of a re-arrangement of local parishes arising from the growth of Slough.

Just before the railway bridge, turn left into the access road for the station car park, where there is a footbridge to reach the London-bound platform if needed.

Route via Taplow village

Just before the footbridge over the Jubilee River turn left and go along an enclosed path to the left of a garden and parallel with the motorway, then up a sloping path to the road (Marsh Lane).

Cross to the opposite side and go down the sloping path,

*** then follow the road ahead to another road.

Turn right, and at the next junction turn left.

Follow this lane to Amerden Lodge, and then continue ahead to rejoin the Thames Path on the river bank.

Turn right for a mile (1.6 km), passing Bray Lock and the elegant riverside houses of Bray (with the church tower rising above them) further along on the opposite bank.

The path then goes between hedges to join a driveway that passes under Brunel's railway bridge on the approach to Maidenhead.

This famous bridge was one of Brunel's earliest railway works, constructed in 1838 to carry GWR steam trains over the Thames at Maidenhead and is shown in Turner's painting *Rain, Steam and Speed*, in the National Gallery. Its elegant brick arches, the widest and flattest in the world, broke new ground in structural engineering. Each span is 128ft, with a rise of only 24ft. Brunel's use of a compressed-air caisson to sink the pier foundations helped gain acceptance of compressed-air techniques in underwater and underground construction. The right-hand arch is known as the Sounding Arch because of its echo effect.

You can see where the bridge has been widened to take four tracks.

www.newcomen.com/mhead.htm

Take the first road to the right (Ellington Road), and follow this round to the junction with the A4 (which goes left over the Thames into Maidenhead).

Cross with care as this road is always busy (island to the left), turn right and in 150 yards (opposite the Silchester Manor School), turn left to join the Jubilee River Way.

Follow the path as it bears to the left and then right, with Taplow Court coming into view at the top of a rise on the other side.

Turn right over the bridge and up a sloping path on the opposite bank, to Mill Lane.

Turn right and then left up Berry Hill (can be a busy road but it has a pavement) to a small green on the left just after the road bends left at St Anne's House.

On the left at the green is the gateway of Taplow Court Estate and at the end of the drive (note the wood carving on the old cottage to the left) there is an important 7th C Anglo-Saxon burial mound; the site also affords a good view of Taplow Court (now owned by a Buddhist organisation, though the house is open on Sunday afternoons in the summer). Treasures found at this site (thought to be of a local Saxon chief Taepa, from which the village derives its name) are on display in the British Museum.

To continue on the route, cross the road to the right of the green and go up an enclosed path opposite.

Continue on this path, ignoring a turning to the left, to where it joins High Street.

Turn right and walk into Taplow village.

At the green, with the church on the left and the Oak and Saw pub on the right, continue ahead along an enclosed path, to a field.

Turn left along the field edge to a road (where our Taplow to Burnham walk goes along the footpath ahead).

Turn right along the road (there is a grassy path along the other side) to a road junction.

Turn right and continue 400 yards to turn right just before the railway bridge, up Station Approach to the station (at present no toilets). Trains to London go from the near platform.

Sunday travel

If you do this walk on a Sunday, when there are no trains from Taplow, there are three options:

1) Take the longer route, via Taplow village, and 450 yards after passing Taplow church pick up our short Taplow to Burnham route (3 miles, 4.8 km, from this point) to return to Burnham station.

2) Take the shorter route direct towards Taplow station, and on reaching the A4 turn right along the main road for 2 miles (3 km) to Burnham station. (700 yards past the M4 roundabout turn left along Station Road.)

3) Take the longer route toward Taplow village, and after going under the railway ridge continue ahead to the A4 and turn left to Maidenhead station (1 mile, 1.5 km). (Where the main road bears right at crash barriers nearly half a mile (0.7 km) beyond the bridge, continue ahead, past Waitrose and traffic lights and walk the “wrong” way along a one-way street, to a very tall building (the upper parts red brick and glass), with a pedestrian area ahead. Here turn left along Queen Street, which you follow, crossing two road junctions, and curving right. At the end of Queen Street turn left, then half right to cross the main road, to the station.)

Alan Sheppard