

David Hampshire

LONDON'S WATERSIDE WALKS

21 Walks Along the City's
Most Captivating Rivers,
Canals & Docks

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**21 Walks Along the City's Most
Captivating Rivers, Canals & Docks**

David Hampshire



Grand Union Canal, Westbourne Park



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River Brent, Brentford

Author's Notes

Please note the following regarding the walks in this book.

- ◆ **Length & Duration:** The length of walks is approximate – shown to the nearest quarter mile – as is the time required to complete them, particularly if you make a lot of stops (coffee, lunch, museums, shopping, etc.). The average walking speed is around 3mph but we have allowed for a much slower pace of just 2mph. (The idea isn't to get from the start to finish as quickly as possible!) You can, of course, start a walk from either end, combine a number of walks to make a longer walk, or alternatively, shorten a walk. Most walks are graded easy or moderate with relatively few steep hills or steps.
- ◆ **Opening Hours:** Most of the buildings and public spaces (e.g. parks) included in the walks are open seven days a week; opening times may vary from weekdays to weekends and the season. Most parks and gardens offer free access, unless otherwise indicated. The opening hours of many sights and museums (etc.) are listed, though these are liable to change. Where there's an entry fee, it's noted.
- ◆ **Transport:** All walks start and end at or near a tube or railway station. Most can also be reached by bus (routes aren't listed as there are too many to include them all) and sometimes by river ferry. The postcode of the starting point is shown should you wish to drive. However, the nearest car park or on-road parking may be some distance away, particularly in central London – and can be expensive. Also, walks don't always return to the starting point.
- ◆ **Maps:** The maps aren't drawn to scale. Points of interest are numbered. An overall map of London is included on pages 8-9, showing the approximate location of walks.
- ◆ **Food & Drink:** Recommended 'pit stops' have been included in all walks – shown in **yellow** in the map key and in the text (other food and drink places are included as landmarks but aren't specifically recommended). When not listed, a pub/restaurant's meal times are usually the 'standard' hours, e.g. noon-2.30 or 3pm and 6-11pm, although some are open all day and may also serve food all day (as do cafés). Many pubs are also open in the mornings for coffee and breakfast (etc). Telephone numbers are listed where bookings are advisable or necessary, otherwise booking isn't usually required or even possible. Note that in the City of London (the financial district), many establishments are open only from Monday to Friday. A rough price guide is included (£ = inexpensive, ££ = moderate, £££ = expensive); most recommended places fall into the inexpensive category.

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Beverley Brook

Introduction

London sits astride the celebrated River Thames, one of Europe's great rivers and the longest river in England, stretching 184 miles (296km) from its source in the Cotswold hills to the sea. Along the way the river navigates peaceful water meadows, unspoilt rural villages, and a wealth of historical towns and cities, before finally wending its way through the heart of London to end at the Thames Barrier in Greenwich. It's possible to walk the length of the river via the Thames Path, a national trail – indeed, eight of our walks include stretches of the Thames. The river provides a stunning backdrop to many of the city's top tourist attractions and has been witness to over 2,000 years of (recorded) history, as well as providing inspiration for generations of artists, musicians and writers.

The Thames once had many tributaries, some of which have ended up being buried in sewers, while others, like the Fleet, Tyburn and Walbrook, have been covered over and now run underground. However, some rivers escaped this fate – such as the Brent, the Lea and the Wandle – and continue to flow in the open to this day and feature in our walks. As well as rivers, the city is also awash with charming canals, including the Grand Union and Regent's Canals, former docks and other water features.

London's Waterside Walks explores 21 of the city's most captivating rivers, canals, docks and reservoirs. The walks are between 2¼ and 8½ miles in length, with the average around 5½ miles. However, it's best to allow half a day for the shorter walks and as much as a full day for the longer walks – particularly if you plan to partake of the many excellent pubs, restaurants and cafés along the routes (for your author, a good lunch is a prerequisite of a good walk!) – not to mention the many other diversions along the way. The aim is to take the 'scenic route', taking in as many interesting features as possible, rather than simply getting from A to B as fast as possible.

Writing *London's Waterside Walks* has been a fascinating and enjoyable journey of discovery. We hope that you enjoy these walks as much as we did; all you need is a comfortable pair of shoes, a sense of adventure – and this book!

David Hampshire
March 2019

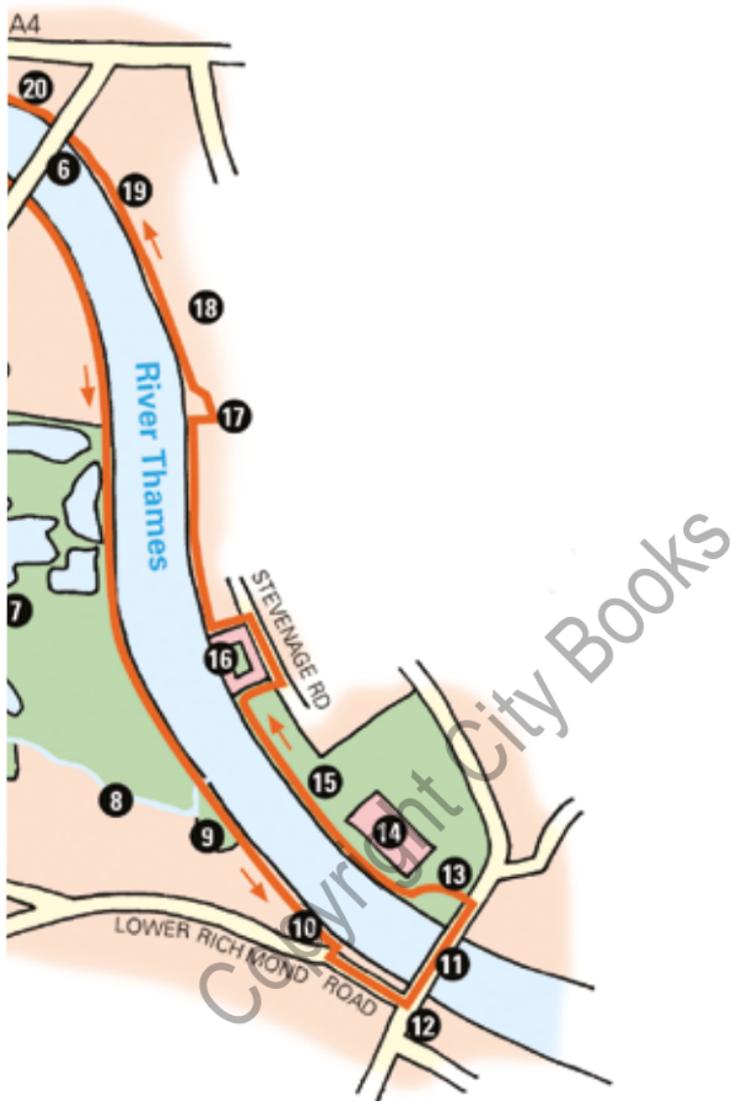






- | | |
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| 1 The Terrace | 11 Putney Bridge |
| 2 Boathouse Café | 12 St Mary's Church |
| 3 Bull's Head | 13 All Saints, Fulham |
| 4 Leg o' Mutton Reservoir | 14 Fulham Palace |
| 5 St Paul's School | 15 Bishop's Park |
| 6 Hammersmith Bridge | 16 Craven Cottage |
| 7 London Wetland Centre | 17 The Crabtree |
| 8 Beverley Brook | 18 The River Café |
| 9 Leader's Gardens | 19 The Blue Boat |
| 10 Duke's Head | 20 The Blue Anchor |

● Places of Interest ● Food & Drink



- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 21 Furnivall Gardens | 26 Chiswick Eyot |
| 22 The Dove | 27 Fuller's Brewery |
| 23 Kelmscott House | 28 St Nicholas Church |
| 24 Linden House | 29 Duke's Meadow |
| 25 The Old Ship | 30 Barnes Railway Bridge |

Barnes to Putney



Distance: 8 miles (13 km)

Terrain: easy

Duration: 4 hours

Start/End: Barnes Bridge rail

Postcode: SW13 0NP

This walk takes you along a scenic section of the Thames Path – the long-distance National Trail footpath running along the banks of the River Thames – from Barnes Railway Bridge to Putney Bridge and back again. This stretch of the river is a sporting mecca, home to a plethora of rowing clubs and the venue of the annual University Boat Race (between crews from Cambridge and Oxford) that starts at Putney Bridge and ends at Chiswick Bridge. Our route includes some of London's most coveted residential areas, not least affluent Barnes and fashionable Chiswick, with their splendid Thameside mansions and village atmosphere. We also take in the former working-class areas of Fulham – with an industrial history dating back to the 15th century – and Hammersmith.

Highlights include Barnes village, the Leg o' Mutton Reservoir, St Paul's School, the London Wetland Centre, Putney Bridge, Fulham Palace, Hammersmith Bridge, beautiful Chiswick Mall and its elegant Georgian architecture, and a wealth of lovely gardens, parks and historic riverside inns.



The Terrace, Barnes

Start Walking...

Exit Barnes Bridge railway station and cross over **The Terrace 1**, a handsome street lined with pastel-coloured Georgian houses overlooking a peaceful stretch of the Thames. Head right along the Thames Path, away from the bridge, and after a few hundred metres you reach the junction with Barnes High Street – if you need a caffeine boost, visit the **Boathouse Café 2**, some 200m along the High Street on the right. Just past the junction is the **Bull's Head 3** pub, one of London's premier jazz venues for the last 60 years. It does a good brunch from 11am (noon at weekends) and a tasty Sunday roast.

Keep walking north along Lonsdale Road and follow the Thames Path as it curves along the western edge of the intriguingly-named Small Profit Dock Gardens, an urban meadow that surrounds the **Leg o' Mutton Reservoir 4** (aka Lonsdale Road Reservoir). The reservoir was constructed in 1838 by Thames Water and has a capacity of 260,000m³, although it was decommissioned in 1960. It was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1990; covering some 20 acres/8ha, the reserve is managed by Richmond Council and is home to an abundance of birdlife, including cormorants, herons and common terns. Just after the reserve you pass the Swedish School, founded in 1907 and located in Barnes since 1976, while some 400m further on you come to an altogether more famous seat of learning, **St Paul's School 5** (see box).

A short way after St Paul's School, the Thames follows a loop south beneath beautiful **Hammersmith Bridge 6**. This Grade II* listed suspension bridge was designed by Sir Joseph Bazalgette – who

St Paul's School

Located on a 43-acre (17ha) site alongside the Thames, St Paul's is an independent school for boys, which was founded by John Colet, Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, in 1509, when it was situated just north of the cathedral. Renowned for its academic excellence, St Paul's survived the Great Plague, the Great Fire of London (which destroyed the school's building but not its spirit) and the Civil War. The school moved to Hammersmith in 1884 and to its current location in 1968.

built London's sewerage system – and opened in 1887, replacing an earlier bridge constructed in 1827. Two failed attempts to destroy the bridge were made by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in 1939 and 2000.



Beverley Brook

Continuing south, the Thames Path runs alongside the **London Wetland Centre 7** (see box on page 14), an unexpected urban wildlife oasis. A little way past the Wetland Centre you cross over the **Beverley Brook 8** (see **Walk 2**) where it flows into the Thames, and arrive at Putney Embankment

Walk 1

(a conservation area) and **Leader's Gardens** **9**, a popular riverside park with a play area and café. The park is the start of the unique Putney Sculpture Trail (2008), which features nine near life-sized figurative sculptures donated by sculptor Alan Thornhill positioned along the south side of the Thames on either side of Putney Bridge. Soon after Leader's Gardens you pass a cluster of rowing clubs and their handsome boathouses, which include the London Rowing Club, founded in 1856.

WWT London Wetland Centre

The London Wetland Centre (entrance fee) covers an area of over 100 acres (40ha), an unexpectedly large wildlife habitat close to central London, and Europe's best urban wildlife viewing area. The centre was created by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) and is based on four concrete reservoirs which became redundant after the completion of the Thames Water Ring Main in the '90s. It took five years to establish the centre – during which time 300,000 plants and 27,000 trees were planted – which opened in May 2000. For more information see wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/london.



London Wetland Centre

From here, the path leads past some handsome Victorian terraced houses and

the 150-year-old **Duke's Head** **10** pub on the corner of Thames Place. A boathouse-style pub, occupying a Grade II listed building, it's a good choice for lunch. A bit further along Putney Embankment is another popular Victorian pub, the Star and Garter, closely followed by Thai Square Putney Bridge restaurant. Soon after the restaurant (just before Waterman's Green) bear right onto Lower Richmond Road, then go left across **Putney Bridge** **11**. Like Hammersmith Bridge, it was designed by Sir Joseph Bazalgette and was constructed in 1884. It's now best known as the starting point for the annual University Boat Race. On the opposite side of the bridge approach is **St Mary's Church** **12** (Grade II* listed), parts of which date from the 15th century.



All Saints, Fulham

On the north side of Putney Bridge descend the stairs on the left, adjacent to a bus shelter. On the right is **All Saints, Fulham** **13**, which has a Kentish ragstone church tower dating from 1440 – a local landmark. The rest of the church is Victorian, designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield in Gothic Perpendicular style, although the interior contains many fine monuments from the old (pre-Victorian) church. Take the path to the left leading to the Thames Embankment and head northwest past Pryor's Bank Gardens and ancient **Fulham Palace** **14** (see box opposite).

Fulham Palace



A residence of the Bishops of London from around 700 AD, Fulham Palace (Grade I listed) was their country home from at least the 11th century and their main residence from the early 20th century until 1973 (when they moved to Dean's Court, near St Paul's Cathedral in the City). The current building consists of a Tudor manor house, dating from the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509) – said to be haunted by the ghosts of Protestant heretics who were persecuted in the great hall – with Georgian additions and a Victorian chapel (see fulhampalace.org for information).

Just past the palace is **Bishop's Park 15**, which opened in 1893 and contains tennis courts, bowling greens, a clubhouse, playgrounds, a lake and unique urban beach, plus a café. Continue along the shady Thames Path to the end, where you need to cross Bishop's Park (Fielder's Meadow) to Stevenage Road to circumnavigate **Craven Cottage 16** football ground. The home of Fulham Football Club since 1896, the club was founded in 1879 and is the oldest-established London football club to play in the Premier League.

Just past the Cottage take the path on the left across Stevenage Park to return to the Thames Path. Turn right and for the next 400m, you pass several housing estates and then Rowberry Mead, a small local park, before turning inland and down some steps to The Foundry. Turn

left past **The Crabtree 17**, a Victorian gastropub with a pretty orchard beer garden, and left along the passage beside the garden to continue along the Thames Path. A few steps along you pass the Dorset Wharf Community Hall and 200m further on come to **The River Café 18**, Ruth Rogers' (and the late Rose Gray's) legendary Italian restaurant on the site of the former Thames Wharf. Further along is another fine hostelry, **The Blue Boat 19**, which has a patio garden with panoramic views. From here the path passes under Hammersmith Bridge, which you encountered earlier, before continuing along Lower Mall where there's another historic riverside inn, **The Blue Anchor 20**, dating back to the early 18th century.

The first green space you reach is **Furnivall Gardens 21** (named after the scholar Dr Frederick James Furnivall) – once the location of the mouth of Hammersmith Creek – just after which the path turns inland and then left to the tiny **Dove 22** pub, which used to be a coffee house but is now a quintessential English pub. Charles II and Nell Gwyn allegedly had assignations here and it has reportedly inspired writers and musicians. In 1740, the poet James

The Dove



The Blue Anchor

Thomson is said to have written *Rule Britannia* in an upstairs room, while Gustav

Walk 1

Holst used to compose music here – it must be something in the beer! From the pub continue along the Upper Mall to number 26: the handsome Georgian mansion, **Kelmscott House** **23** (see box). This was the former home of artist, designer and man-for-all-seasons, William Morris (1834-1896), who lived here from 1879 until his death.

A few hundred metres further along is **Linden House** **24**, a grand brick building dating from 1733 with an entrance flanked by Ionic columns; it's been home to the London Corinthian Sailing Club (founded 1894) since 1963. Continue along the Thames Path through an arch and, just before the Upper Mall Open Space, you come to yet another handsome pub, the **Old Ship** **25**, dating from 1722. After the open space the path leads right, then left into Hammersmith Terrace; look for number 7, the former home of Emery Walker (1851-1933), engraver, photographer and

Kelmscott House



William Morris' last London home was built in around 1780 and was originally called The Retreat. Morris renamed it after his Oxfordshire home, Kelmscott Manor, and occasionally travelled between the two by boat – those were the days! Today, the William Morris Society occupies the coach house and basement rooms, and curates a small but interesting museum (Thu and Sat, 2-5pm) with a collection of Morris designs and memorabilia.

Fuller's Brewery



printer. Hammersmith Terrace leads into Chiswick Mall, which is lined with large, attractive, mainly 18th-century houses, some of which are separated from their riverside gardens by the road! Some 200m along the Mall you pass **Chiswick Eyot** **26**, an uninhabited island (3.3acres/1.3ha) in the Thames that can be reached on foot at low tide. Just past the eyot is **Fuller's Brewery** **27** (tours can be booked), which dates from 1845, although beer has been brewed in Chiswick for over 350 years.

At the end of Chiswick Mall the road swings right into Church Street past **St Nicholas Church** **28** (see box opposite), where the old village of Chiswick was established. St Nicholas is the patron saint of fishermen and sailors, among others, which is appropriate as Chiswick began life as a fishing village. Take the left-hand walkway next to the small wharf and continue along the Thames Path to the Chiswick Lifeboat Station. From here, if time allows, you can take a detour some 400m inland, via Corney Reach Way and Grantham Road, to visit splendid Chiswick House & Gardens. A few hundred metres further on you pass **Duke's Meadow** **29** – owned by the Duke of Devonshire until 1923 – and the King's House Sports Grounds, before arriving back at **Barnes Railway Bridge** **30**. The Grade II listed bridge dates from 1895 – the original bridge, constructed in 1849, still stands on the upstream side – and has an adjacent footbridge leading to the railway station, which marks the end of the walk.

St Nicholas Church



Built in the Perpendicular style with a ragstone tower dating from 1446 – the only reminder of the medieval church – St Nicholas was rebuilt in 1882 by John Loughborough Pearson, one of Britain's leading Victorian architects. William Hogarth (1697-1764), fellow artist James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) and architect William Kent (1685-1748) are buried in the churchyard.

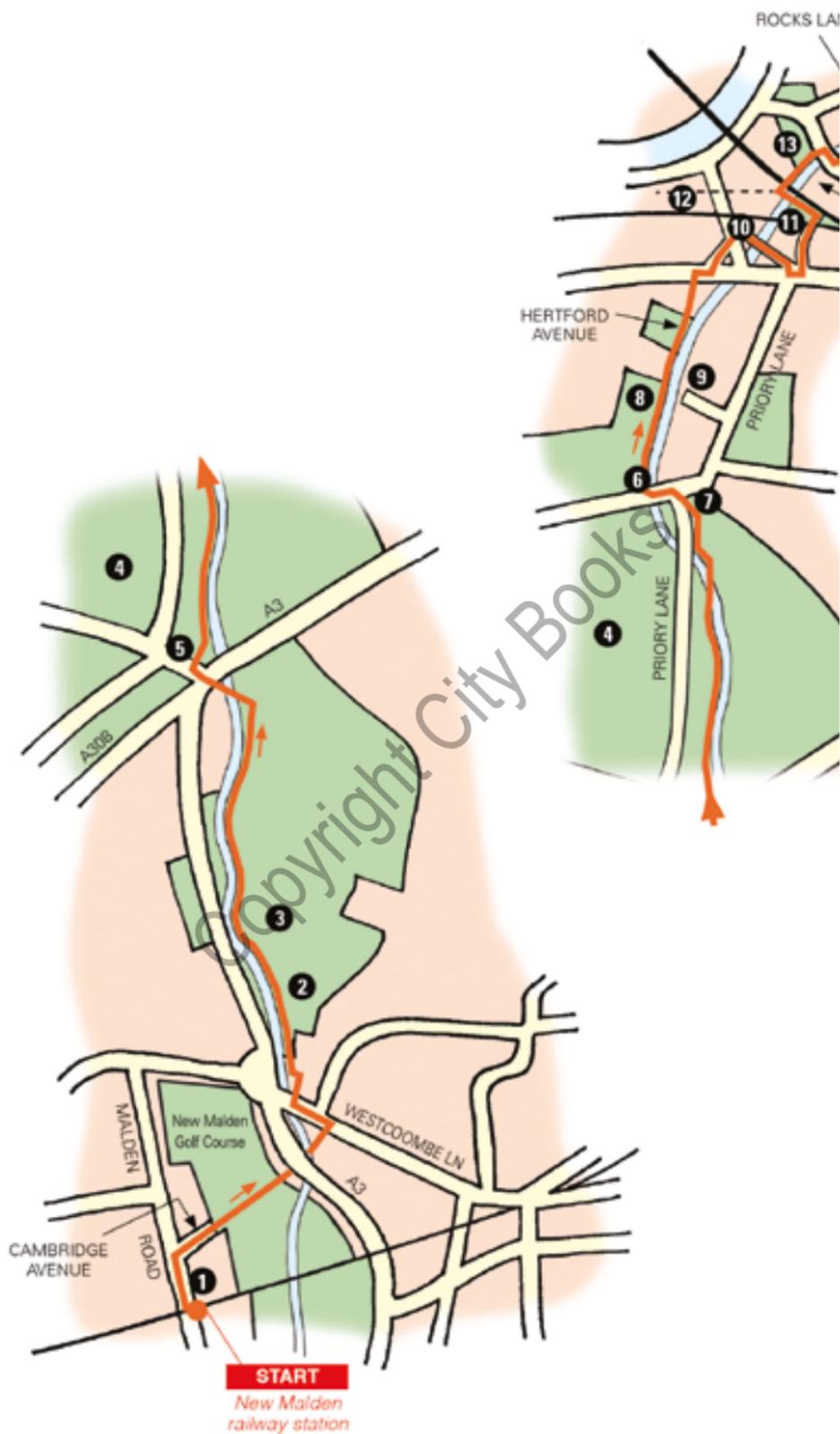
Food&Drink



- 2 **Boathouse Café:** At 4 Barnes High Street, the Boathouse is the ideal place to get your morning caffeine fix (8am-5pm, Sun 9am-5pm, £).
- 10 **Duke's Head:** Grand Victorian pub on Putney Embankment serving tasty food, with a small terrace overlooking the Thames (noon-11pm, midnight Thu-Sat, £-££).
- 17 **The Crabtree:** Iconic gastropub on a quiet stretch of the Thames between Hammersmith and Putney bridges with a pretty garden (Mon-Sat noon-11pm, Sun noon-10.30pm, £-££).



Barnes Railway Bridge





● Places of Interest ● Food & Drink

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Village Café | 12 Beverley Path |
| 2 Beverley Meads Recreation Ground | 13 Barnes Green |
| 3 Fishponds Wood Nature Reserve | 14 Barnes Common |
| 4 Richmond Park | 15 Rocks Lane Multi Sport Centre |
| 5 Robin Hood Gate | 16 Barnes Old Cemetery |
| 6 Roehampton Gate | 17 Barn Elms Playing Fields |
| 7 Roehampton Gate Café | 18 WWT London Wetland Centre |
| 8 Palewell Common | 19 The Rocket |
| 9 Bank of England Sports Centre | 20 St Mary's Church |
| 10 The Stag's Head Barnes | 21 Fulham Railway bridge |
| 11 Vine Road Recreation Ground | |

Beverley Brook



Distance: 8½ miles (13½ km)

Terrain: easy

Duration: 4 hours

Start: New Malden rail

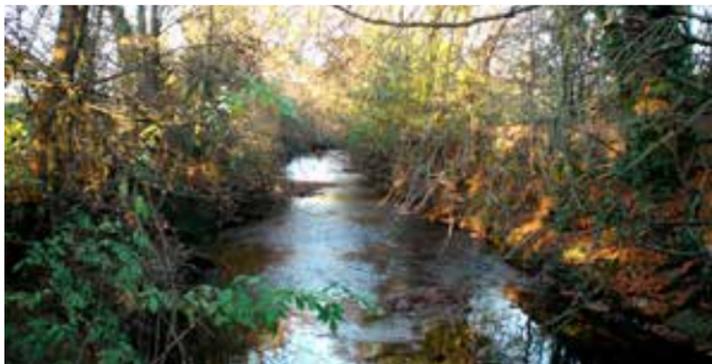
End: Putney Bridge tube

Postcode: KT3 4PX

This walk follows the course of Beverley Brook (9 miles/14½ km), one of only a handful of tributaries of the River Thames that hasn't been buried underground. The brook rises in Worcester Park (Surrey) – where it runs through a culvert for its first few miles – and flows into the Thames to the north of Putney Embankment at Barn Elms. The walk is waymarked, although you need to take care as there are a number of junctions where the signage is missing or ambiguous.

The brook derives its name from the European beaver, which became extinct in Britain in the 16th century. For much of the 20th century, Beverley Brook was the depository for poorly treated sewage from sewage works in Worcester Park. However, the redirection of sewage pipes and improved treatment methods (coupled with on-going regeneration) have dramatically improved water quality, and increased the variety of fish and other wildlife in the river. Today, the brook is a (mostly) peaceful oasis offering a surprisingly varied and beautiful walk through some of south London's most attractive countryside.

We join the river in New Malden and follow it across Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park – one of the brook's most beautiful and tranquil stretches – to Roehampton and Barnes, where it runs along the fringes of Barnes Green and Barnes Common, before emptying into the Thames just north of Putney Bridge.



Beverley Brook