



Putney, Hammersmith, Chiswick, Barnes Chiswick Mall, Chiswick House, Barnes Common

Distance: 13 km=8 miles or 10½ km=6½ miles easy walking

Region: Greater London Date written: 23-may-2021

Author: Thwelder Date revised: 7-aug-2023

Refreshments: everywhere Last update: 20-dec-2024

Optional Map: Explorer 161 (London South) or the larger A-Z

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Riverside parks, towpath, pubs and cafés, historic artist's house, Palladian mansion and park, village, common, woodland, brookside walk

In Brief

This is a walk of dazzling variety, combining a long easy Thames walk, a visit to two places of huge historical beauty and interest, and a “green walk” through Barnes and Putney Lower Common.

Even the “green” section is mainly tarmac, so there are no problems with undergrowth and clothing and footwear will depend only on the season.

This is probably not a good walk for your dog, unless you stay by the river in Chiswick, thus missing the most spectacular features of this walk..

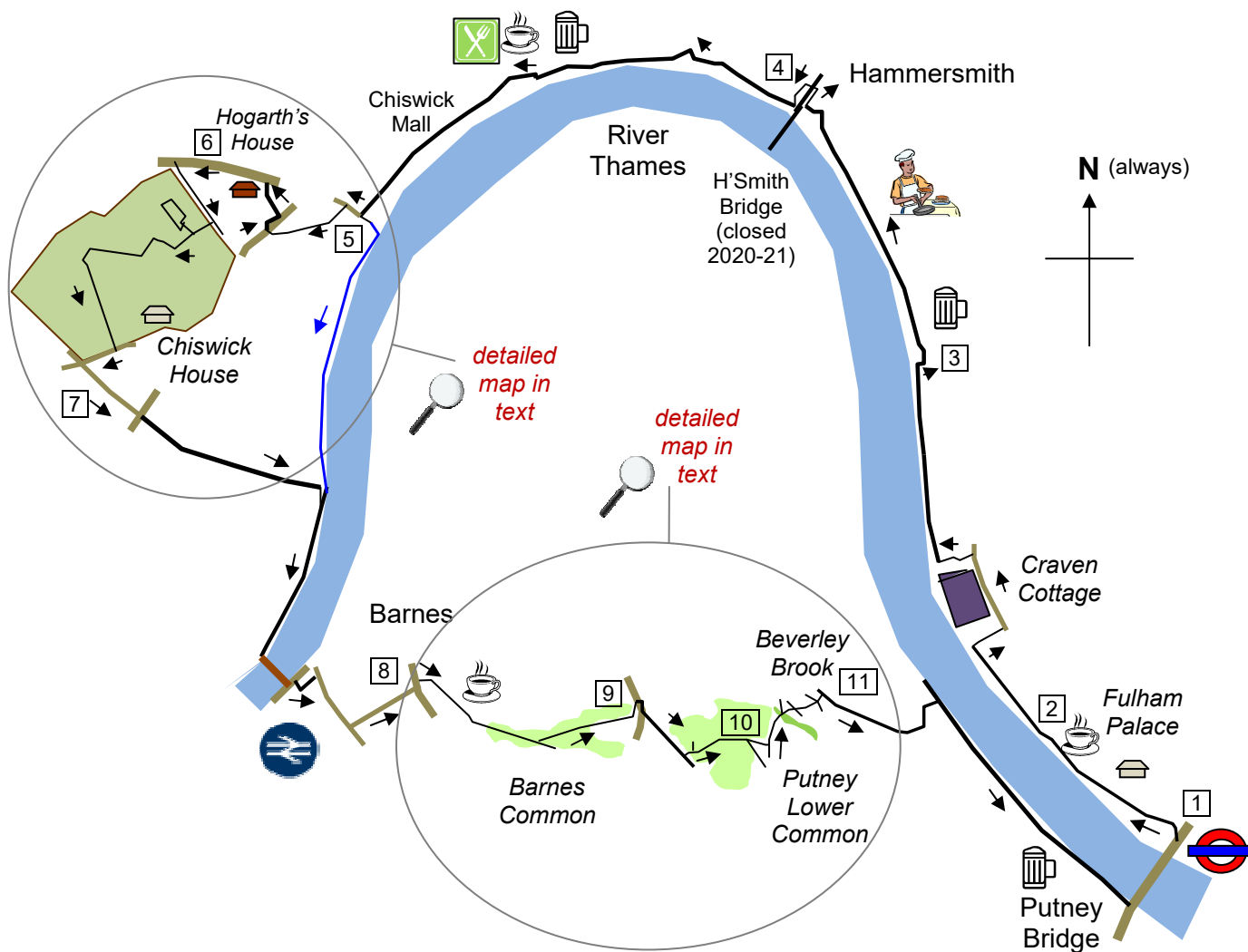


The walk begins at **Putney Bridge underground station**, or a bus stop on Putney Bridge. You can also start at Barnes Bridge railway station. See **Getting There** at the end.

Putney Bridge was originally wooden. The story begins when Robert Walpole arrived on the south side of the river and shouted for someone to get him across. But the ferrymen were in the pub and didn't hear him. What they didn't know was that next year he would be England's first Prime Minister, with the power to order the construction of a bridge, in 1729. Remarkably, the wooden bridge lasted for 150 years. Mary Wollstonecraft, author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" jumped off the bridge in a fit of depression but was resuscitated by some watermen. She died shortly after giving birth to Mary Shelley, author of Frankenstein.

The new stone bridge was completed in 1886 to a design by Sir Joseph Bazalgette (who also designed Hammersmith Bridge, see below). Serial killer John Christie (of "10 Rillington Place") was arrested on the bridge in 1953. In 2017 a jogger on the bridge pushed a woman into the path of a bus and the CCTV went viral, but the offender was never caught. Amazingly, the jogger returned the other way across the bridge 15 mins later; the woman tried in vain to speak to him. This incident is now the subject of a play, "Once Upon a Bridge".

The Walk



Leg 1: Putney to Hammersmith

- 1 From the north side (that is, the Fulham end) of Putney Bridge, exactly opposite a food and wine kiosk you will find some steps leading down into the gardens below. (If you are on the east – or London – side, you need to go through a tunnel under the road.) You are in Bishop's Park, one of Fulham's historic parks. Walk straight ahead, passing sculptures *Adoration* and *Protection*. Veer **right**, away from the river, towards All Saints church. Go out through one pair of tall gates and veer **left** through another pair of tall gates onto a wide tarmac path. (In the very unlikely event that the gates are closed, simply slip left to use the tow path.) Follow this path past clipped yews on your right, with the river just over to your left. On your right are the grounds of Fulham Palace and soon you pass the building itself. *Fulham Palace is the subject of another walk in this series*. Shortly you reach a junction of paths. Straight ahead is the wider park with refreshments and on your right the entrance to the palace. However, your route is **left** just before a skateboarding space, to continue on a wide path parallel to the tow path.
- 2 Continue beside the river with the large landscaped park on your right. Finally, at the far corner of the park, you meet (in 2021) a boarded-up construction and are forced to turn* sharp **right** to the quiet Stevenage

Road, then **left** on the road, passing a statue of Johnny Haynes and the entrance to Craven Cottage, Fulham's football ground. *The building work is for the new Riverside Stand, which will extend partially over the Thames, with a public river walkway through the stadium concourse "on non-match days".* [* new reports say there is now (Dec 2024) access to the walkway although work is incomplete.]

Craven Cottage was originally a small house in a wild hunting forest. After it burned down, the land was cleared in 1894 for a wooden stand known as the "rabbit hutch". Fulham FC had used a number of locations till they settled in the new ground with a redbrick stand in 1904. Hemmed in between residents on one side and the Thames on the other, the ground was always too small and the Riverside Stand grew in size, till the 2019 plan to extend it even further, reclaiming part of the river bank.

Assuming the diversion is still in force, take the first opportunity to turn **left** beside Stevenage Park and **right**, back onto the tow path. After various flats and cottages, on your right is Rowberry Mead, another small park which in the 1800s was a source of reeds for basket making. Just after some redbrick apartments, the river path turns **right** and **left** across a tiled area, past the *Crabtree* pub (a worthy stopping point with an orchard beer garden), re-joining the towpath. *Hammersmith Bridge is now in view.*



- 3 Thames Wharf Studios, with their tall blue arched terrace, and Palace Wharf and a converted series of historic wharves are next. Through the passageway, on Rainville Road, and visible from the river, is the famous *River Café* - and a waiting list!

The River Café was founded in 1987 by two women, passionate about Italian food, Ruth Rogers (wife of Richard the architect) and Rose Gray. Several notable chefs stirred their first risotto here, including Jamie Oliver and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall.

The pink building on the opposite shore is Harrods Furniture Depository, built in 1894 on the site of an old soap factory, now a block of penthouse suites known as "Harrods Village". Fulham Reach is the next development, a combination of a new Research Centre, wharves and new edifices resembling the decks of an ocean liner, fronted by a figurehead sculpture, incorporating an artisan bakery. At the corner is a statue of Capability Brown who lived here.

Lancelot Brown was the most legendary of the new school of the 1700s of English landscape gardening, who radically changed the taste for formal geometric gardens into a new "natural" style of carefully planted trees, lakes and vistas. He was nicknamed "Capability" because of his odd way with the English language when he would say "this landscape has great capabilities".

Just before Hammersmith Bridge you pass the Riverside Studios, built on the site of an iron foundry, now much used by the BBC, also a film studio and theatre. Your next encounter is with Hammersmith Bridge. Keep straight ahead under the bridge (unless you'd like to visit the *Old City Arms* pub).

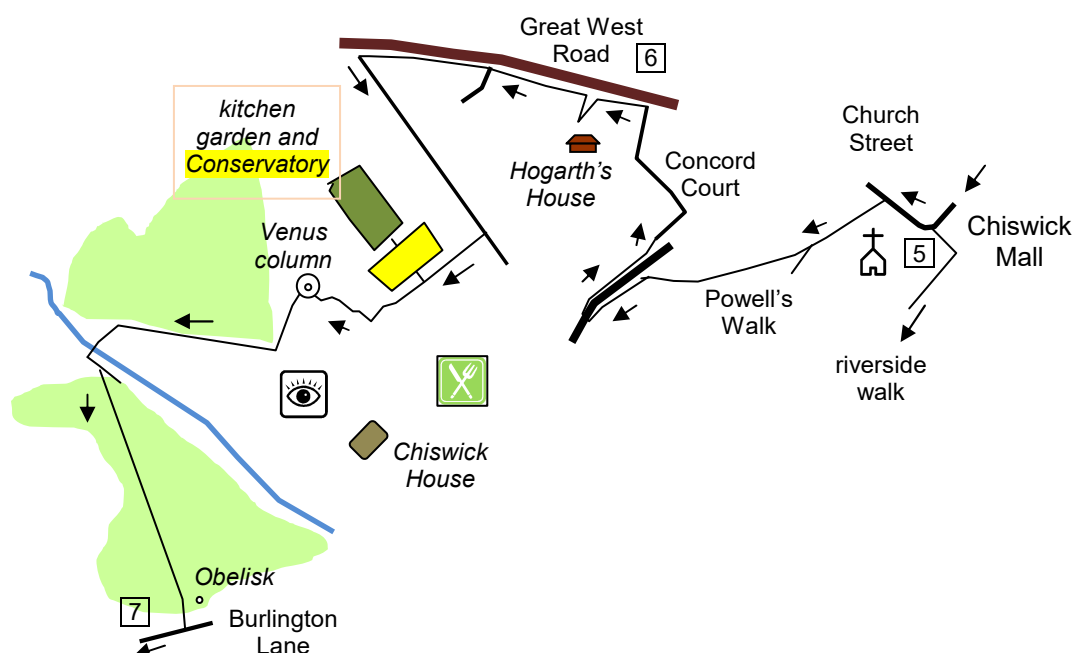


Hammersmith suspension bridge was designed by civil engineer Joseph Bazalgette in 1827 after local people wanted an alternative to the distant Kew or Putney Bridges. In 2019 cracks were discovered in the pillars and in 2021, ironically, local people including schoolchildren and businesses, had to divert after the bridge was closed, even to cyclists, walkers, and even to river traffic passing beneath. On 14 February locals illuminated the bridge with a Valentine's Day message reading "Broken Hearts, Broken Promises. Broken Lives, Broken Bridge". On July 17 2021, the bridge re-opened for all but motorised traffic. However, the bridge is not a good short cut for this walk.

Leg 2: Around Chiswick

- 4 You are on the Lower Mall, notable for pubs such as the *Blue Anchor* and the *Rutland Arms*, and shortly Furnivall Gardens, named after the co-founder of the Oxford English Dictionary and keen oarsman, Frederick Furnivall. (You may like to note that Ravenscourt Park tube station is only 400m away in case of emergency.) At the next corner, the Thames Path takes you **right** and **left** through a passage, passing the historic *Dove* pub (once a Victorian coffee house). As soon as you emerge from the passageway, it is worth pausing to admire the Georgian mansions. This is the Upper Mall, location of the little *William Morris Museum* (*open Thur, Sat, Sun 2-5), *Corinthian Sailing Club* and *Linden House*, and the *Old Ship* pub. In 500m, the path bends **right** to the corner of the *Black Lion* pub. Opposite the pub is the excellent *Elder Press Café*, usually with a billboard outside to tempt you in, now with waitress service. Turning **left** through blue-plaqued Hammersmith Terrace, you pass *Mari Deli*, a small South Italian delicatessen. *There are tables on the pavement, inside and under an awning. You can plan your own dish from the wide array of savoury and sweet treats on display.* This author has devised a dish specially for this walk which you could try: “*trofie salsiccia e melanzane fritte*” (be the first to give feedback please!). You are now on Chiswick Mall, a pleasant quiet stroll beside some wonderful Stuart and Georgian frontages, including *Walpole House* former home of Barbara Villiers, mistress of Charles II, but without any life, cafés, shops or pubs! The road ends at Chiswick Parish Church.

Decision point. This walk now diverts away from the river to visit the home of a painter and a (truly!) stunning Palladian mansion in a garden, as shown in the detailed map below. Should you wish to stay by the river, reducing the walk to 6½ miles but missing two historic wonders, do as follows: Turn squarely **left** on a private footpath which leads to a wide riverside path, fronted by blossoming private squares and residences. You come out by two pointed pillars onto Dukes Meadow. Take either the tarmac or the dirt path. *Note the stork's nest sculpture.* The path re-joins the main walk at the indicated point in section 7, leading to the Barnes railway bridge.



- 5 Turn **right** on Church Street and, at the corner of the church, turn **left** on narrow Powell's Walk into the churchyard. (If you prefer to continue straight on to the Fuller's Brewery, turning **left** on the busy main road there are some compensations for the traffic noise, such as the *George and Devonshire* and little Chiswick Square (1689) quoted in *Vanity Fair*.) Keep to the **right** of the cemetery, picking up a long narrow passage between brick walls. At the end, turn **left** on the main road, cross it by the pelican lights and turn **right** on the other side, doubling back. Fork **left** shortly into the forecourt of Concord Court and turn **left** at the end between tall apartments, finally coming out to the Great West Road. Turn **left** to arrive in only 50m at a wooden gate surmounted by a sign *Hogarth's House*. This is the only entrance to the house of one whom some consider England's greatest artist, William Hogarth.

William Hogarth (1697-1764) was a painter, printmaker and satirist, famous for his engravings that depict "modern morals" such as A Harlot's Progress, A Rake's Progress and Marriage À-la-Mode. He practically invented the idea of a "cartoon strip" portrayal, now still referred to as "Hogarthian". Hogarth's House is open 12-5pm Tue-Sun and b/hol Mon. However at least before 21 June 2021 you need to email or ring, when up to six people may visit together (see their website: Hogarthshouse.org). After that date, it's still best to contact the house but you can probably just call in, depending on the situation.

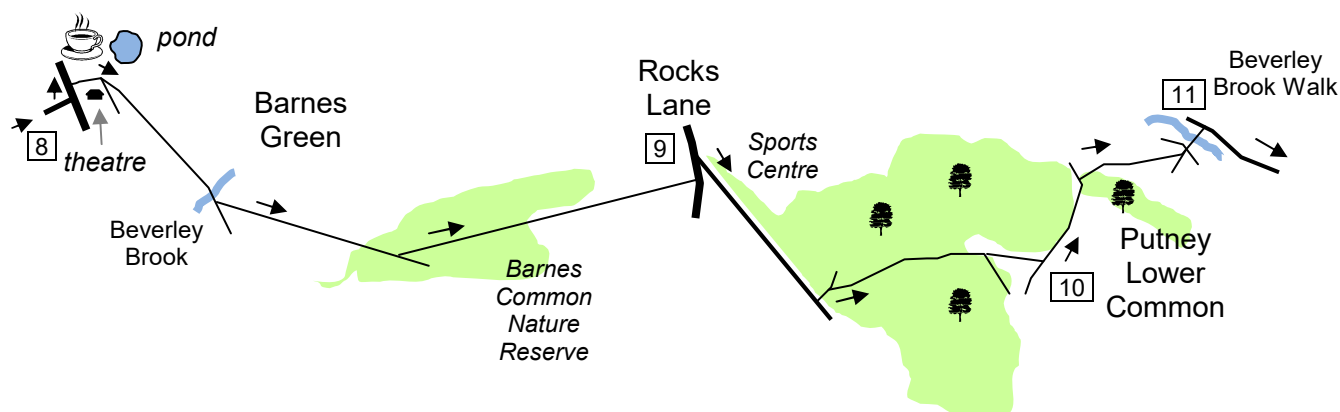
- 6 After your possible visit, continue another 250m, crossing a side road, Sutherland Road, and turning sharp **left** at the first opportunity through ornate gates into the grand linden-tree-lined Duke's Avenue. Take the **second** entrance on the **right** into the grounds of Chiswick House.

Chiswick House is a villa, designed and built by Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington in 1729. Burlington was captivated by the clean, comfortable, classical style of Palladio (1508-1580) after his trips to Italy. The villa was always too small to be a grand residence (Lord Hervey called it "too small to live in, too large to hang on my watch chain"). The wonderful gardens are open daily from 7am to dusk. The house is open late May-end Oct 10am-4pm, Thur-Sun, other days by pre-booking.

What meets your eye at once is the great glass Conservatory. The gardens have a host of precious features, mostly free-of-charge, plus the House itself and the Kitchen Garden (both chargeable to non-English Heritage members). [The following is only a suggested short tour, but your choice could be much more adventurous: the essential is to come out at the Burlington Lane exit, next to the Obelisk.](#) After the Conservatory, turn **right** to the little round garden with the column of Venus, then **left** to meet the main boulevard with a grand view of the house. Turn **right**, following part of the *Classical Trail* and go **left** over James Wyatt's ornate bridge. Turn **left** on the other side but immediately fork **right** on a long narrow avenue. It leads to the *Obelisk*. (Note the picture of William Kent, designer of the garden, leaning against the *Obelisk*.) Go out into Burlington Lane and turn **right**.

Leg 3: Through Barnes

- 7 In 100m, take the next **left**, at the corner of Chiswick School, on Staveley Road. At the end of the road, cross over the main road to the quieter Riverside Drive, passing allotments, then playing fields on each side. Continue to the end and turn **right** with the road, parallel to the river, with a view on the other side of Barnes village and its colourful houses. Shift **left** across the grass to join the towpath. [The short cut re-joins the main walk here.](#) In about 200m you pass another boat club, going up and down steps as you approach Barnes railway bridge. Ignoring the brand new footway on your left, go up the stairs and turn **left** over the bridge, with wide views of the river. At the far side, avoiding Barnes Bridge station (alternative start), keep **left**, down stairs and turn **right** on the riverside road The Terrace. 200m away, *not on your route*, is the *Bull's Head*, legendary Jazz venue. Immediately turn **right** on narrow Malthouse Passage. At a T-junction, turn **left** with the passage alongside gem cottages and their front gardens. At the end, turn **right** on Cleveland Gardens. Ignore Terrace Gardens but, in a further 150m, turn **left** on Cleveland Road. Follow this road all the way to the end, where it meets the main road, Station Road.



- 8 Turn **left** on Station Road but immediately cross over and turn **right** by a *Côte Brasserie* into a park. This is Barnes Green, beloved of the villagers, containing the Barnes Pond and the OSO Theatre and Arts Centre. The OSO has an open-air café and loo. Turn **right** at the corner onto a long straight path which diverges a fraction away from the building. Cross straight over a 6-point junction. *You are on part of the Barnes Trail, a 2.3 mile walk through "the best of Barnes".* The path leads you across a bridge over the Beverley Brook which you will meet again soon. *(The Beverley Brook is the same as you may have seen on the Wimbledon Common or Richmond Park walks in this series.)* Immediately after the bridge, take the **left** fork, a tarmac path, across the Barnes Common Nature Reserve. In 200m or so you come beneath a dark canopy of oaks and meet a diagonal crossing path. Fork **left** here, on another tarmac path, past Tony Welsh's seat ("I told you I was ill"). *(You won't miss this turning as it is taken by most people.)* In 350m, the path ends at Rocks Lane.
- 9 Turn **left** on Rocks Lane and cross it by the pelican crossing. Turn **right** and immediately fork **left** on a wide tarmac drive signed to the *Rocks Lane Multi Sports Centre*, leading under a height restrictor to the car park, beside tennis courts on your left. At the end of the drive, continue between posts on a tarmac footpath. 100m from the start of the footpath, you will see a bench seat on your right (the first of its kind). Turn **left** here onto a dirt path



into the woods and, in only 10m, take the **right** fork, the wider option. You pass some stag beetle loggeries. About 150m after the start of the dirt path, there is a waste bin on your right. Keep straight on past it, avoiding minor paths on your left. You suddenly come out of the trees heading for the open space of Putney Lower Common.

- 10 As soon as you are out of the trees, take the **left** fork, the much narrower option, leading out onto the main expanse of the common. Turn **left** on a crossing path, keeping close to the woodland on your left, passing two bench seats. Stay next to the trees for a further 50m or so to reach the corner of the common which is bounded by a dense band of trees. Keep straight ahead through the band of trees and immediately fork **right** across the grassy space. Keep right to go over an oblique crossing path and continue a further 100m to meet a junction of paths. Keep straight ahead to go over a wide bridge across the Beverley Brook.
- 11 At a T-junction, turn **right** onto part of the *Beverley Brook Walk*. Follow this broad path, with the brook on your right, for nearly 500m, finally wheeling left and right and coming out onto the Thames bank. Turn **right** over the Beverley Brook Bridge and continue on a wide terrace overlooking the Thames, soon becoming a roadway, passing one boathouse after another. The *Dukes Head* pub is your final call for refreshments, before you reach Putney Bridge where the walk began.

Getting there

By Underground: Putney Bridge station.

By train: Barnes Bridge station, trains from Clapham Junction and Waterloo (start in Section [7](#)).

By Bus: numbers 93, 14, 22, 220, 74, 430.

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