

EA-THAMES

Box 6

ENGLAND'S RIVER

A Guide to the Thames
from Remenham to Cookham



THE ATTRACTIONS, THE WILDLIFE AND THE PEOPLE

Most people think of the Thames as London's River. But those who live around and along its banks will tell you it's England's River. Those who live and play on it know its quiet backwaters, its locks with pretty gardens and dedicated lock keepers, its wildlife, and the folk of the Thames. Describing beautiful countryside, quaint riverside villages and rushing weirs, this brief guide aims to give you a taste of a most picturesque stretch of the Thames from Remenham to Cookham.

Blue kingfishers dive from low overhanging branches, swans glide elegantly by, grey herons patiently stalk the shallows and great crested grebes, nearly extinct at the end of the last Century, show off their splendid plumage in midstream.

The summer months bring sand martins to form colonies in the river banks and the beautiful tree-nesting chinese mandarin duck which is becoming increasingly common.

The river banks are rich in wild flowers among them meadowsweet



Marsh Marigold

and cuckooflower while closer to the waters edge you can see purple loosestrife and water mint.

Within the channel common reed, reed mace and yellow flag iris provide cover for

breeding coots and moorhens and are important features for the emergence of dragonflies and damselflies.

The shady wooded islands on this stretch of the river are ideal for the rare loddon lily which flowers in late April.

Away from the river there are other valuable wildlife sites.

Downstream of Marlow, the steep slopes of Quarry Wood, an ancient beech woodland, harbours rare species of flora.

The flat expanse of Cock Marsh is an example of unimproved grassland, once common along the Thames.



Kingfisher



1. **FAWLEY** Buckinghamshire begins at this point. Remenham Farm and village lie on the opposite side of the river, these were fortified in time of Civil War. Fawley Court (*above*) was designed by Wren and built in 1684. The grounds were laid out by Capability Brown in 1770. You can moor your boat here and walk up from the river. Open to the public from March to October.



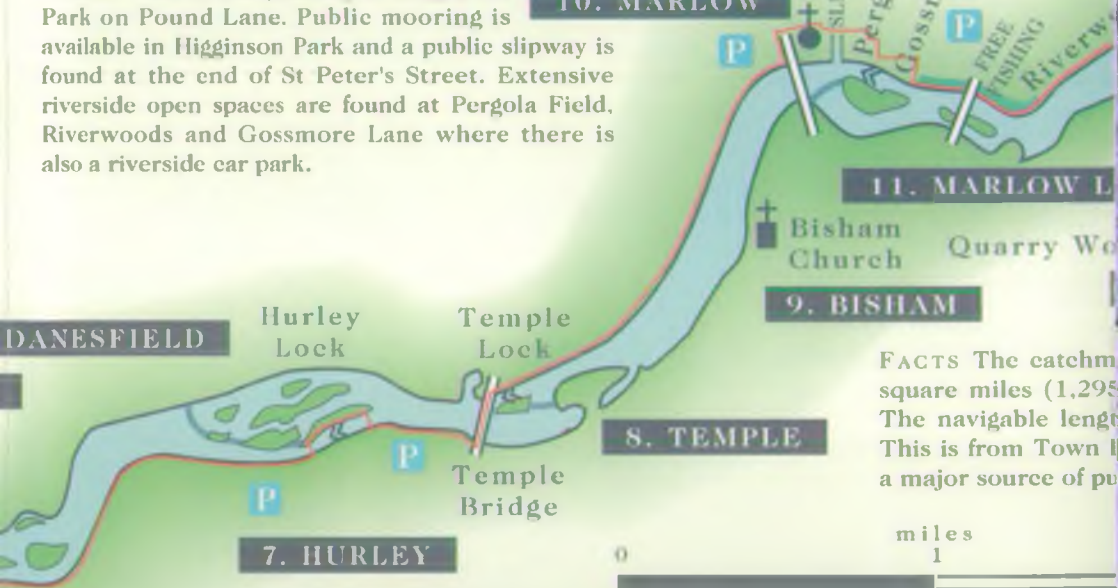
5. **MEDMENHAM** The site of another disused ferry and a favourite rendezvous for those who journey along the river. The road through the village provides access to the river and towpath. There is also a slipway for small craft. Nearby, Medmenham Abbey (*above*) has remains of the 13th Century Cistercian foundation which later achieved notoriety as a meeting place of the infamous Hellfire Club.





10. MARLOW With its graceful suspension bridge and Gothic 19th Century Church opposite the rushing waters of the weir, the riverside at Marlow makes a charming scene. There is access to the river as well as car parking at Higginson Park on Pound Lane. Public mooring is available in Higginson Park and a public slipway is found at the end of St Peter's Street. Extensive riverside open spaces are found at Pergola Field, Riverwoods and Gossmore Lane where there is also a riverside car park.

10. MARLOW



11. MARLOW L

9. BISHAM

8. TEMPLE

7. HURLEY

FACTS The catchment area is 1,295 square miles (1,295). The navigable length is 110 miles. This is from Town Lock to Marlow. A major source of pollution is from the River Thames.

miles
1

RIVER THAMES

Well End



ent area of the Thames basin measures 5,000 (,000 hectares) and extends into 14 counties. h of the river channel is 134 miles (216km). Bridge Cricklade to Teddington. The Thames is ublic water supply for London.

2 0 1 2
kilometres



- 2. REMENHAM -

A pretty collection of buildings are clustered around the church on the south bank, backed by the woods of Remenham Hill. Parking spaces are available adjacent to the church. By walking downstream from this point along the towpath you can view Temple Island. Built by James Wyatt in 1771 as a vista for Fawley Court. This is the earliest example of 'Etruscan' style.

- 3. HAMBLEDEN LOCK -

This delightful lock and weir with picturesque weather boarded mill nearby can be reached from the large car park on Hambleden Road outside Mill End. The river is dotted with small islands. A walk from the river to Hambleden village - one mile - reveals a 14th Century Church and 17th Century Manor House. The village has no road names.

- 4. ASTON -

The village is a very rural spot. A ferry once operated across the river. A narrow lane runs from the Flower Pot Inn down to the river's edge. There is a small slipway where craft can be launched and there is also space for cars. A popular walk takes you along the towpath to Hambleden Lock.

- 6. DANESFIELD -

The house, now a luxury hotel, was built between 1899 and 1901 in Italian Renaissance style and possibly named after the Danes who were camped here during

Viking ship-borne attacks on Anglo Saxon England between the late 8th and the 11th Centuries. There is an extensive view over the valley from this location.

- 7. HURLEY -

The village, lock and the river flowing between the many islands present a year round attraction. Close to the river are several splendid buildings including the church, dovecote and tithe barn. These were once part of the Benedictine Hurley Priory which was founded in 1087. The large lock island provides an ideal place for riverside picnics and walking downstream along the towpath to the new Temple Bridge.

- 8. TEMPLE & TEMPLE BRIDGE -

Temple derives its name from the Knights Templar who once owned land here. The splendid new wooden Temple Bridge now carries the Thames Path from Bucks to Berks and gives a direct riverside walk from Marlow to Henley. The different streams unite at this point to form a broad reach of the river.

- 9. BISHAM -

A largely Georgian village. The Abbey, built mainly in the 14th & 16th Centuries, is the scene of a ghost story. Lady Hoby walks here without her head at the witching hour. Once owned by the Knights Templar. The church, although rebuilt, still has a Norman tower.

- 11. MARLOW LOCK -

There is pedestrian access to the Lock from which there are fine views of the church, suspension bridge and river.

- 12. SPADE OAK -

Open space by riverside, accessible from the car park on Coldmoorholme Lane.

- 13. BOURNE END -

A riverside commuter village, famous for 'Bourne End Sailing Week'. A commercial marina is located here and pedestrian access to the river is along Wharf Lane. This is an ideal centre for walking.

- 14. COCK MARSH -

Owned by the National Trust. This attractive area of pasture is often flooded in winter helping to retain its valuable wildlife. The Saxons buried their dead here. Now accessible along the footpath from the car park at Bourne End railway station, across the new footbridge.

- 15. COOKHAM DEAN, WINTER HILL -

Large parts of Cookham Dean, including the village common, are owned by the National Trust. Winter Hill is an ideal location to enjoy wide views to the north and over the Thames as it winds around Cock Marsh heading towards Bourne End and Cookham. There are spaces to park cars on the top of the steep, wood covered hillside lying southeast of Marlow. You can walk from this point to the river, and then on to Marlow. Quarry Woods stretch from Bisham Road to Winter Hill. A tragic legend

concerning a monk from Bisham Abbey surrounds a bluff in these woods.

- 16. COOKHAM, ODNEY

COMMON & COOKHAM LOCK -

A self-consciously pretty village with bijou cottages and fine 16th Century monuments. The Romans crossed the river here on their journeys southwest from St Albans. Footpaths from the car park on Cookham Moor lead to the Thames towpath and Cock Marsh. Only a short walk from the bustling centre of Cookham village is Odney Common, a peaceful open pasture flanked by backwaters of the Thames. Beyond Odney Common lies Cookham Lock from where you can enjoy views of the beautiful Cliveden Reach and the graceful arch of nearby Cookham Bridge.

- 17. HEDSOR -

Hedsor House, a priory and a church on the hill grace this small location. Hedsor Wharf was once an important shipping point and is now privately owned.

- 18. CLIVEDEN -

Hills and hanging woods stretch from the rivers edge. Ferry Cottage is a point of interest. Today's Cliveden House, owned by the National Trust, stands on the site of one destroyed by fire. The House was erected in 1862 for the Astor family. Only 3 rooms and wonderful grounds, not forgetting the water gardens, are open for visitors to explore.

—THE HISTORY OF
THE THAMES IS THE HISTORY
OF ENGLAND —

Through the years, the Thames has served as a highway, line of defence, trade route, natural playground and major tourist attraction. Expansion of the railways brought greater appreciation of the river and its adjacent towns and villages. Much of the appeal lies in the many reaches which have changed little over the Centuries.



*Thames lock
keeper, 1926*

—LITERARY CONNECTIONS—

Herries School in Cookham Dean is where Kenneth Grahame, a descendant of Robert the Bruce, wrote the children's classic *The Wind in the Willows*. The Stanley Spencer Gallery in Cookham is devoted to the painter who was born and spent most of his working life in the village, and was noted for his paintings of Christ in a contemporary English setting.

The poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and his wife Mary, the author of *Frankenstein*, lived on West Street in Marlow as did T S Eliot and Jerome K Jerome whose *Three Men in a Boat* celebrated the wonderful inn by the bridge, *The Compleat Angler*. Now a hotel, it was named after the famous work on fishing by Izaak Walton who stayed there to write.

— WILDLIFE ON THE
THAMES —

Look with care and you may see the animals and plants which share the river with boaters and anglers.

-FURTHER INFORMATION-

If you require any further information on access along and to the river, or its flora and fauna, please contact the Environment Agency Thames Region, on Reading (01734) 535000.

For information regarding attractions and other general enquiries, please contact Wycombe District Council's Tourist Information Centre, High Wycombe on (01494) 421892.

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