

Chiswick & Barnes

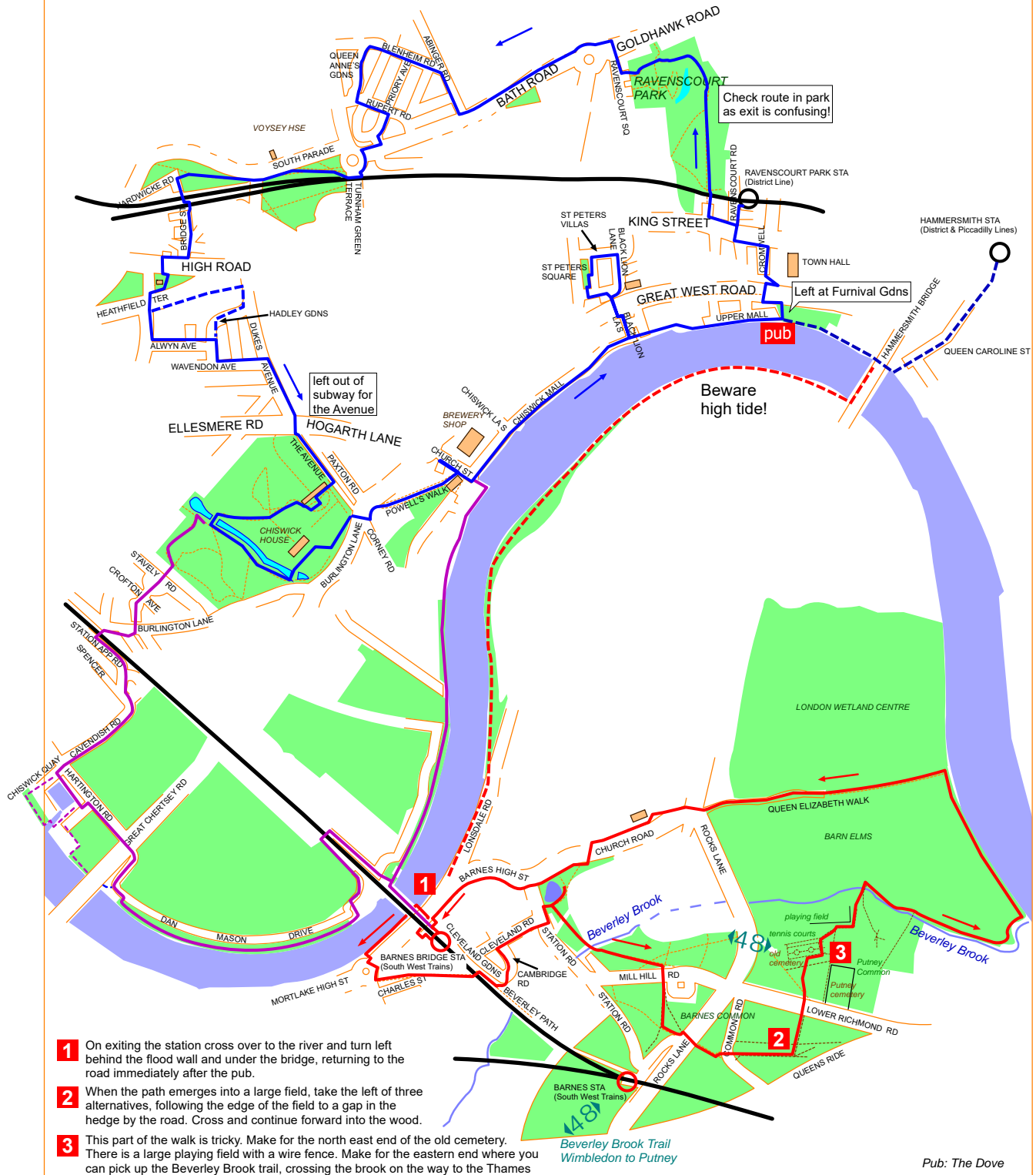


1 kilometre

After completing the 6 km Barnes walk consider crossing the bridge and following the other walk along the river to Ravenscourt Park.

- Chiswick circular walk 9.5 km
- Chiswick walk extension 4.9km
- Barnes walk 6.4 km
- Railway

◀48▶ interconnecting walk



walk notes

Chiswick and Barnes

The pavement and riverside walk actually starts and ends at Ravenscourt Park in the Borough of Hammersmith.

Ravenscourt Park

The medieval manor and estate of Palingswick in the 12th Century was once home to King Edward III's mistress Alice Perrers. A royal mistress and notorious woman, Alice Perrers rose from daughter of a town labourer and tavern whore, to become the mistress of the most powerful man in England. From accusations of witchcraft, devilry and usurpation of power, historians have called her everything from Alice the Destroyer, the greedy, the embezzler, to Alice the Unattractive. Today the lake in the middle of the park is a remnant of the moat that surrounded her manor. The park is also home to the walls and wrought iron gates of the Shakespeare Garden, as well as the former stable block to Ravenscourt Mansion, now the cafe. The manor house was rebuilt and sold to Thomas Corbett who named it Ravenscourt, probably derived from the raven in his coat of arms, a pun on his name as corbeau is French for raven. In 1812 the Ravenscourt House and estate were bought by its final private owner, George Scott, a builder and philanthropist who developed St Peter's Square. Scott employed leading landscaper Humphrey Repton to lay out the gardens of the estate, and encouraged the building of houses along its edges. According to a park plan from 1830, there were 78 houses within the park, and by 1845 this number had risen to 330. In 1887, representatives of the Scott family sold the estate to a developer for building purposes, to be covered, as rumour had it, with working class dwellings. Fortunately, however, it happened that each of the ground-leases of the row of detached and semi-detached residences called Ravenscourt Park, contained a proviso giving the ground-tenants the right to forbid any building on the width of the park, opposite their frontages. Attempts by the new owners to buy out the proviso failed, much due to the efforts of residents Ebenezer Stanley Burchett and Frank Dethbridge (who lived in The Hermitage). On these terms the property was acquired by the Metropolitan Board of Works, the Vestry of Hammersmith contributing one half of the purchase-money and the park was rescued

from destruction in 1887. Ravenscourt House was demolished after severe damage by incendiary bombs in 1941 during the Second World War.

Bedford Park

The walk continues westward to Bedford Park a 'garden suburb' which owes its origins to the Aesthetic Movement. Jonathan Carr, a cloth merchant with a taste for property speculation and family connections in the world of art, married the daughter of a man who owned land near Turnham Green station and in 1875 he bought 24 acres and set about his scheme. The site was ideal, with many fine trees, and with connections to all parts of London and the City only 30 minutes away. He planned a new kind of estate in which aesthetically acceptable houses at cheap rents would be set in an informal layout which preserved as many mature trees as possible. Architecturally, Bedford Park can be seen as the embodiment of the newly-fashionable but inaccurate term Queen Anne Revival style of the 1860s. Richard Norman Shaw's first designs for Bedford Park were produced in 1877, and were built next to Godwin's houses at the bottom of The Avenue. Carr was delighted with them, so he commissioned from Shaw a further range of different designs.

Turnham Green

Many see Turnham Green as the embodiment of Chiswick even though it is somewhat distant from the original riverain settlement of Chiswick village, separated by the common, and being on the Bath Road had by the 1700s grown larger than Chiswick. The walk explores Turnham Green first then Old Chiswick. In 1642 an army of 24,000 Roundheads assembled to prevent Charles I from reaching London and nearly a thousand men died in the ensuing Battle of Turnham Green. The common was rife with highwaymen and in 1776 a lone gunman robbed the Lord Mayor of London and his retinue. None of this lawlessness deterred several noble families from establishing country retreats here in the 18th century, while the village grew in significance as a coaching halt on the road to Bath. In 1821 the Horticultural Society of London began to lay out a garden that extended from the south of the green towards Chiswick. The society organised an annual fête that was the forerunner of the modern Chelsea flower

show. Turnham Green gained its church in 1843 and a (somewhat remote) station in 1877. By the end of the 19th century the substantial villas that had lined Chiswick High Road at discrete intervals were being replaced by a ribbon of terraces with shops at street level, while the hinterland filled with a mix of properties, generally getting smaller the later they were built.

Chiswick House

The walk continues south to Chiswick House. Chiswick House is among the most eye-catching examples of 18th-century British architecture. The third Earl of Burlington designed the elegant Classical villa seen today, drawing inspiration from his 'grand tours' of Italy. It was originally located in a modest estate purchased by his grandfather, next to an existing Jacobean house. The villa reflected the influence of the Italian architect Andrea Palladio and his English follower Inigo Jones, and its 'neo-Palladian' style soon spread across Europe and America. The villa itself was more a showcase for the arts rather than a home, and it provided a spectacular venue for entertaining. William Kent who designed the gardens and started the influential 'English Landscape Movement' also designed much of the building's lavish interior. By the 1770s Chiswick had passed to the fifth Duke of Devonshire who initiated a series of major changes to both house and garden. These included building the stone bridge over the lake, demolishing the earlier Jacobean house and adding new wings to the villa, turning it into a substantial mansion. These were subsequently removed in the 1950s in a move to restore the villa to something approaching its original appearance. As the home of successive members of Lord Burlington's family, including Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, Chiswick House has welcomed scores of significant guests over the years, including the musician Handel, the politician Charles James Fox, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. During the second half of the nineteenth century the house was occupied by a series of eminent tenants, including the Prince of Wales, but by 1892 the building had become a mental institution and entered a prolonged period of decline. In the 1950s Chiswick House was passed to the Ministry of Works, via Middlesex Council, and a much needed restoration campaign was undertaken. The

villa has been cared for by English Heritage since 1984, and the major restoration programme for the gardens which is now complete. Entry to much of the grounds is free but there is a modest charge for the house.

Church Street and brewery

Leaving the grounds the walk takes a walled pathway to exit by Old Chiswick's Church of St Nicholas, alongside the river and Church Street, which contains some picturesque old buildings. Immediately adjacent is Fuller's brewery. Brewing had taken place in the 1600s and continued until eventually the brewery passed to Douglas and Henry Thompson and it was under their stewardship, in 1816, that the brewery first acquired the Griffin name and emblem. To avoid bankruptcy John Fuller, a wealthy country gentleman was invited to invest and soon found himself the majority shareholder. By 1845 his son took over and invited John Smith, already helping to run a successful brewery elsewhere, to participate. He invested on behalf of his son, Henry Smith, and his son-in-law, John Turner and so it was that Fuller, Smith & Turner came into being. Fullers run up to 20 tours each week, all led by expert guides who aim to answer all questions and give a fascinating glimpse into British beer-making history. The tour lasts around one and a half hours and culminates with the highlight: a tutored tasting of some of Fuller's finest ales.

St Peter's Church and Square

The walk continues along the Mall (beware flooding at high tide) with a detour via St Peter's Square. The square was laid out during the economic boom of the 1820s, when the then owner, George Scott (see above) decided to build a speculative housing development on part of his Ravenscourt Park estate and also provided the land for St Peter's Church, Hammersmith. From 1827 plots were developed piecemeal by builders who undertook to conform to the master plan. The square was mostly complete by the end of the 1830s. The houses are mostly built in groups of three, with stucco fronts, pediments and Ionic porches. Some retain eagles, lions and dogs as decoration. Numbers 1 to 6 were the first to be built and are the grandest in the square. The public garden in the centre of the square is Grade II listed. The site of the church was donated by George Scott, born in

1780 to a wealthy family in Hammersmith. In 1807 he married Hannah Lucy Stoe, the daughter of another wealthy local family who brought as her marriage settlement the sum of £5,000, a large portion of land south of Ravenscourt Park and the land around Black Lion Lane (now St Peter's Square). By the 1820s Scott was deeply involved in the religious, social and business life of Hammersmith. He was a well-known and respected magistrate who provided generously to the causes of his poorer neighbours. Although George Scott donated the site, substantial financial contributions were provided by the Bishop of London (£250) and the the Rector and Vicar of Fulham, (£500). and it received a grant from the Church Building Commission towards its cost. The church is in the classical style, using the Ionic order, with tower and lobbies at the western end. The building is of brick with a limited amount of stone dressing. At the west end is a four-columned portico with stone columns and pediment, set into the brick wall of the church. The tower is of stone, on an octagonal brick pedestal. The interior space is not divided into aisles and nave, but has galleries on three sides, supported on Doric columns.

Furnival Gardens

The site of Furnival Gardens was once the mouth of Hammersmith Creek, which had a thriving fishing industry until the early 19th century. By 1830 the area had high quality residential property but later became a dense mixture of factories, housing and other uses. In the 1920s Hammersmith Council began to improve the area and the Creek was infilled in 1936. In 1948 it was decided to create a public open space on bomb-damaged land between the river and Great West Road, to be completed for the Festival of Britain. Laid out in 1951, the new riverside park was named after Dr Frederick James Furnivall, scholar and founder in 1896 of what is now the Furnivall Sculling Club. A secluded garden surrounded by a low wall was created on the former site of Hammersmith Friends Meeting House 18th century burial ground, which was destroyed by a flying bomb.

Barnes

Barnes was the place of the barns that stored grain for the manor of Mortlake, and appears in the Domesday Book. When Barnes became a manor in its own right, under the

ownership of the dean and chapter of St Paul's Cathedral, the manor house was built at Barn Elms and was later enlarged into an aristocratic mansion. Further inland, Barnes remained a remote farming community for several centuries. The most noteworthy event was a dispute in 1589 that resulted in the men of Barnes refusing to let their Putney neighbours continue to share Barnes Common with them. Perhaps surprisingly, given its proximity to the Thames, the village developed around the green, which had three ponds. Milbourne House has faced the green since the 15th century, albeit in several incarnations. Barnes Street, now Barnes High Street, was in existence by 1700. Several villas and mansions were built in the 18th and early 19th centuries, notably along the riverside on the Terrace. The Barnes peninsula was especially isolated until the opening of Hammersmith Bridge in 1827, affording its market gardeners improved access to their primary market and bringing residential potential to the locality later called Castelnau. The arrival of the railway in 1846 opened up the wider district to development. The original station building survives, making this one of the oldest such structures in Greater London. Barnes Bridge was built in 1849 to carry the loop line of the London and South Western Railway across the Thames to Chiswick, bringing a second station to the village. An embankment was constructed to raise the line as it approached the bridge, blocking the riverside path. At this time, much of the waterfront area was still covered by market gardens. These were sold in 1865 to the British Land Company, which laid out a tight network of terraced cottages. Only the Grand Pond survives from the original trio at the heart of the village – now called Barnes Pond. Barnes Fair is held annually on the green on the second Saturday of July. See also walk 48.