

A Thames-side Circuit: Pangbourne to Mapledurham Lock

5 miles (8km) starting and finishing at the Dolphin Centre, Pangbourne SU636767 knowledge.forgot.cubic
Allow 2.5 hours. Going: flat with kissing gates. Refreshments, Pay and Display and street parking in Pangbourne.



From the Dolphin Centre car park, go through the metal gate and cross the grassed area to reach the Thames-side path, turning right. Follow the Thames for 2.2 miles to reach Mapledurham Lock.

1. Whitchurch Bridge is one of two remaining private toll bridges across the river. There has been a bridge on this site since 1792, replacing a ferry. The ferryman was paid £350 in compensation. The grade II listed structure is the fourth and dates from 1814.

2. Pangbourne River Meadows are looked after by the Parish Council for the enjoyment of all. They were purchased by the National Trust and the people of Pangbourne, via public subscription, in 1936. Beyond the footbridge the path runs through private land with wonderful views over the river to the Chiltern Hills.

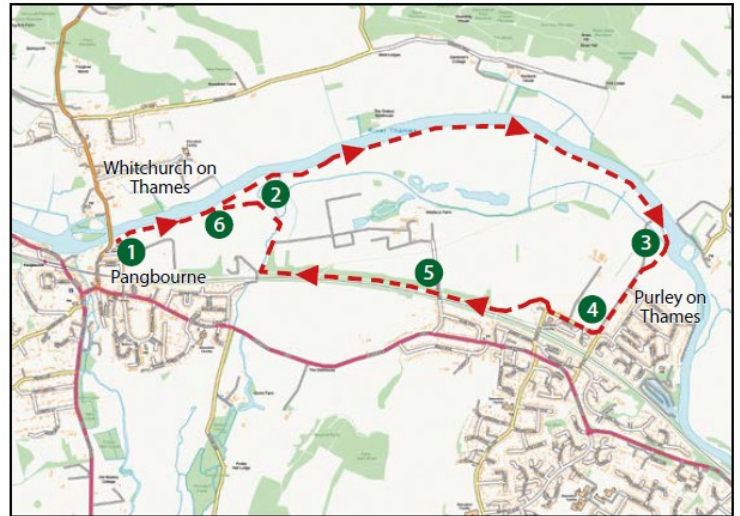
On reaching Mapledurham Lock, walk to the end of the tarmac path along its side.



3. From ancient times there were many obstructions across the Thames, for fish-pounds and millers' weirs, like these at **Mapledurham**. The weirs presented an obstacle to navigation and so locks were built alongside them. Originally these were flash locks that were essentially removable sections of weir. A boat moving downstream would wait until the lock was opened, allowing a "flash" of water to carry the boat through. In the opposite direction boats would be winched or towed up. The difficulty of using flash locks eventually led to their replacement with pound locks, similar to this one. **Mapledurham Watermill** (15th century) may be glimpsed through the trees on the opposite bank.

At the end of the lock path turn right across a small footbridge, through the gate into a field, and take the footpath going to the right, following the hedge on your right. At end of this field path go through a metal kissing gate and join a tarmac track called Mapledurham Drive. Walk the full length of this track until you reach Purley Village Road.

4. The village of Purley, developed on a low mound in the Thames marshes, has been a permanent settlement since Saxon times. By the 14th Century, it was a prosperous village able to build a road across the marsh so that farmers could take their corn to the mill at Mapledurham. When the railway arrived in



1837 it had a major impact, triggering on-going housing development. During the 1930s, land alongside the river was sold to campers for £5 a plot for weekend retreats. During and immediately after the Second World War, these plots began to be occupied permanently.



"Homes" were often old railway carriages, buses, huts or whatever was available.

Walk along Purley Village Road until you reach a sharp left-hand turn uphill. Take care - there is no pavement in the final 30m. At this point turn right onto a public bridleway, continuing across a road with the railway line on your left.

5. The Great Western Railway was approved by Parliament in 1835, work starting in 1836. It was Brunel's vision to link the

cities of London and New York via Bristol by rail and sea. The length that ran across Berkshire was open by 1840. In 1892 this section of the mainline was quadrupled to four tracks. Do not miss the lovely views to your right!

Where the post and wire fence on your right ends, near a mobile phone aerial partially hidden by trees, turn right onto a path. Continue to the first junction, taking care not to miss a left-hand fork crossing through a hedge. Take this field edge path with the fence line on your left heading back towards the Thames Path.

6. The Thames Path is a long-distance walking trail, following England's best-known river for 185.2 miles (298 km) from its source in the Cotswolds through several rural counties and on into the heart of London.

Once you reach the Thames path turn left and retrace your steps back to the Dolphin Centre and Pangbourne.

Kate and Tony McDonald, and Margery Slatter