

THAMES PATH STAGES 1 - 4

STAGE 1.

Surrey County Walkers started walking the Thames Path in the downstream direction over the weekend of Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th April 2012. The walk started at the source of the Thames in a field in Gloucestershire.

Following a dry winter, the source of the River Thames, in the stones at the front of the picture, was dry. This was the case for the first few miles of the course of the river, which was, at most, a stream but often only a collection of pools, with no flow of water.

Further down stream, the flow of water was sufficient to produce a proper river. The weather was dry but cloudy on our first day, as can be seen from a picture of the river at our lunch stop.



We passed a pretty village, Ashton Keynes,



which showed typical Cotswold stonework.

On the second day, we passed Cricklade, where the river is large enough to need a stone bridge



and which has an attractive High Street.



Beyond Cricklade, we reached North Meadow, a meadow famous for its wild flowers,



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particularly the snakes' head fritillary^{1,2}.



We passed an old bridge



The river was now getting larger.



and we found a swan on its nest.

¹ Joy Skull, Snake's-Head Fritillaries, The Countryman, pp 28 - 31, April 2012.

² Michael McCarthy, The Independent, p20, 25th April 2013



Much of this part of the walk was beside various lakes, such as this one with some ducks on it.



The peaceful Upper Thames countryside can be seen from this picture of a distant church.



The flood plain of the river must be wide here, as all the villages are some distance from it.

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STAGE 2.

The next stage of the Thames Path was walked on the weekend of Saturday 28th and Sunday 29th July 2012. On the Saturday, we walked from Castle Eaton to Buscot and, on the Sunday, we walked from Buscot to Buckland, via Ten Foot Bridge. We stayed overnight in Lechlade, an attractive Cotswold town.



Some of us stayed in the New Inn,



others in the Swan Inn.



From the garden of the New Inn, the old bridge could be seen.



The walk started at the bridge at Castle Eaton



The River Thames can be seen from this bridge both upstream,

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and downstream.



As we walked along, we looked back over the Thames to Castle Eaton church, with a swan in the foreground.



A canoe was spotted on the river.



An unusual house with a drum tower was passed.



A wooden bridge was passed,



before reaching Lechlade.

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After passing under Lechlade bridge,



we looked back across the Thames to Lechlade in the area of the New Inn.



Leaving Lechlade, we caught a view back to the church.



At the first lock on the Thames (St John's Lock), we found a statue of Old Father Thames.



A boat was approaching the lock as we were there.

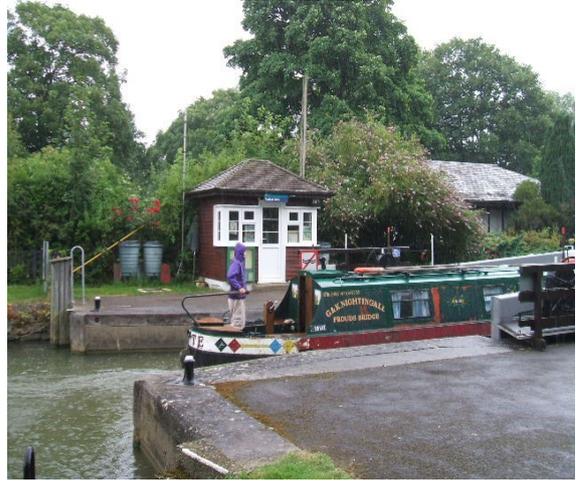


The next lock was Buscot lock.

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Boats were seen on the Thames near the turning to Kelmscot.



The final lock which we saw on this stage of the walk was Rushey Lock.



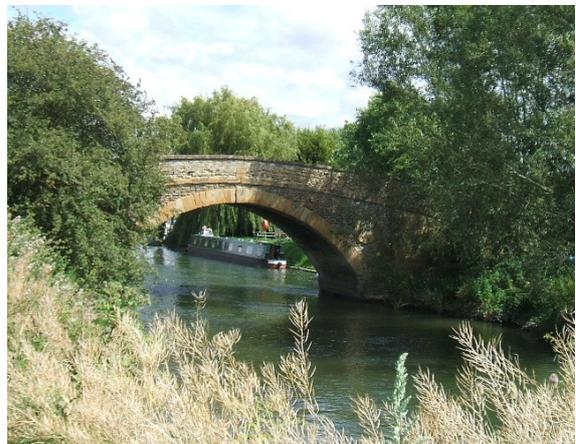
The next lock was Grafton lock.



We passed Tadpole Bridge,



We stopped at Radcot lock for lunch, where it rained, as can be seen from the crew member of this boat being well wrapped up for the weather.



on our way through a jungle of Himalayan balsam to Ten Foot Bridge

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where this stretch of our walk beside the Thames ended.

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STAGE 3.

Stage 3 of the Thames Path, was walked over the weekend of Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st October 2012. On the Saturday, we walked from Ten Foot Bridge to Bablock Hythe and, on the Sunday, we continued from Bablock Hythe to Oxford.

We initially met on a misty morning at Newbridge,



then moved onto Buckland to start the walk.

This is an old Cotswold town.



We walked from Buckland to the Thames at Ten Foot Bridge, which we reached at the end of the previous section.



The path beside the river was very wet underfoot, following heavy rain over a long period.



We crossed the river again at Shifford Bridge



and soon reached Shifford Lock.

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A canal boat passed us later on.



We reached Newbridge at lunchtime.



Numerous boats were moored downstream of the bridge.

The next lock was Northmoor.



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Sunday's walk started at Bablock Hythe. The walk initially led us away from the Thames through fields of sheep,



This day's walk ended at the Ferryman Inn at Bablock Hythe.



before we returned to the river.



Most of the group stayed overnight in local inns and guest houses, such as the Talbot near Eynsham, where we had dinner.



The next lock was Pinkhill.

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A boatyard showed that traditional occupations are still practised.



We passed under the toll bridge leading to Eynsham.



Boats were moored downstream of the boatyard.



The next lock was Eynsham



As we continued towards Oxford, the Thames winds around Wytham Wood, the high ground which prevents the Thames continuing its eastwards course.



where the high level of water can be seen from the downstream side.

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There is a small visitor centre at King's Lock,



and then Port Meadow, on the western side of Oxford,



which is close to the most northerly point on the Thames, as the river now starts to bend southwards, as it passes Oxford.

The river now approaches Oxford, reaching the remains of Godstow Nunnery.



which was partially flooded, after heavy rain.

Flooding can also be seen in the distance behind the boat marina.



We reached Godstow Lock,



This section of our walk along the Thames

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Path ended at the Botley Road bridge over the Thames at Oxford.



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STAGE 4.

Stage 4 of the Thames Path was walked over the weekend of Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th April 2013.

The walk resumed at Oxford and continued downstream.



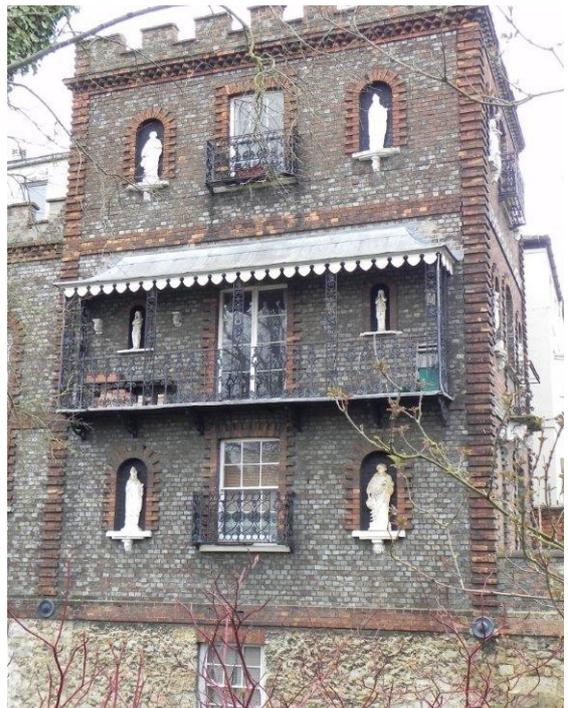
The first lock reached was Osney lock.



After walking around the outskirts of Oxford, we reached Folly Bridge,



where an unusual tower can be seen.



The other side of Folly Bridge is Christ Church meadows, where we saw a boat and some rowers.

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College buildings were seen in the distance.



Just after this point, the River Cherwell joins the Thames underneath a bridge.



The next lock was Iffley.



At the locks, there are display boards showing the route of the Thames.



The next lock is Sandford and a riverside pub is across the river at the lock.



The next lock was Abingdon lock. The river was in spate, following rain and a

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massive flow of water was passing over the weir.



end of the Saturday walk.



Abingdon is a very attractive historic town.



Most of the group spent the night in Dorchester, a historic town with old coaching inns.



The most important historic building in Dorchester is the abbey, now the parish church.

The next lock was Culham, which was the

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On Sunday 14th April, the walk continued from Culham lock.

The weather was brighter and typical riverside views were seen.



The next lock was Clifton.



As we walked downstream, the area was becoming less remote and large houses were seen beside the riverbank.



We stopped for a brief lunch break.

The next lock was Day's lock.



From this area, a distant view of Dorchester Abbey could be seen.



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Shillingford Bridge was passed.



The last lock of the day was Benson lock.



The walk ended at Wallingford.



A local church had an impressive spire.