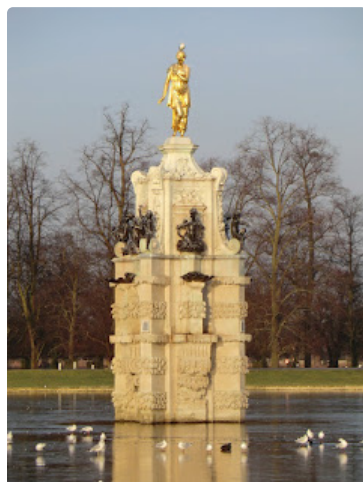




Hampton Court Circular walk

Two royal parks and Britain's finest surviving Tudor building.



Length **Main Walk:** 12 km (7.5 miles). Two hours 35 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 6½ hours.

Short Circular Walk, from Hampton Wick: 9¾ km (6.1 miles). Two hours 5 minutes walking time.

OS Map Explorer 161. Hampton Court is on the Greater London/Surrey border, 3 km **SW** of Kingston.

Toughness 1 out of 10.

Features This walk explores the two royal parks next to **Hampton Court Palace**. This was originally built for Cardinal Wolsey, but when he fell out of favour in 1529 it passed to Henry VIII and was enlarged into a royal palace. At the end of the 17thC it was again greatly extended by William III & Mary II, who grafted a completely new baroque palace onto the Tudor buildings as well as redesigning the surrounding parkland (but not perfectly: the king was fatally injured by a fall when his horse stumbled on an ant hill).

After a short stretch past the palace on the Thames Path the walk enters **Home Park**, the local name for Hampton Court Park. It was originally enclosed as a hunting ground for Henry VIII and still contains a herd of fallow deer, but its appearance has changed significantly since Tudor times. The **Long Water** was added by Charles I and the three lime tree avenues by William & Mary, completing its transformation into parkland typical of the 17thC baroque period.

The walk leaves Home Park at Kingston Gate and crosses the A308 to enter the larger **Bushy Park**. This too started as a royal hunting ground and has had a similar evolution into more formal parkland. Its many water features

were the result of Charles I ordering the construction of the Longford River to bring fresh water from the River Colne to Hampton Court Palace. In the 20thC two attractive plantations were created along the course of the river and the walk goes through these **Woodland Gardens** to the restored **Water Gardens**, another reminder of the park's baroque history. It then loops back through the centre of the park and goes alongside part of the mile-long **Chestnut Avenue** (with the iconic **Diana Fountain** as its centrepiece) to Hampton Court Gate, opposite the palace's **Lion Gates**. As it is no longer possible to cut through the palace grounds (see below) you have to skirt around them on the way back to the station.

The Water Gardens are closed on Mondays (except Bank Holidays, when they are closed on the Tuesday).

Additional Notes When this walk was originally devised it was possible to walk freely through much of the grounds of Hampton Court Palace. However, Historic Royal Palaces ended free winter entry to the formal gardens in 2016 and the rest of the grounds in 2020. These are now only accessible to ticket holders (with admission being almost £30 in 2022); even with a 2-for-1 offer which is sometimes available on the train companies' Days Out Guide, this is only worth considering if you plan to spend at least 2-3 hours there.

Walk Options A slightly longer alternative ending to Hampton Wick station has been added, replacing the uninspiring finish along the busy A308 necessitated by the closure of the palace grounds. As this station is also quite close to the outward route, the same link route allows for a **Short Circular Walk**. *As this variation only explores Bushy Park it would be worth considering in early July when the annual RHS Flower Show is held at Hampton Court. The Main Walk route through Home Park should not be directly affected, but the whole area around the palace will be much busier than usual at that time.*

There are many short cuts which you could take in Bushy Park, most drastically by omitting the entire 4 km loop out to the Water Gardens. Conversely, there are several ways of lengthening the walk slightly. In particular it is worth exploring the many attractive little paths inside the Woodland Gardens rather than taking the straightforward route through them described (for simplicity) in the directions.




There are bus routes along the roads around Bushy Park (but none through it), so head for the nearest gate if you want to abandon the walk in the middle.

Transport There is a half-hourly service between Waterloo and Hampton Court (in TfL Zone 6), taking 36 minutes. Hampton Wick (also in Zone 6) is on the Kingston loop line from Waterloo, with four trains per hour (two on Sundays) taking 30-35 minutes via Wimbledon; those via Richmond take around ten minutes longer.

If you want to arrive in style (if not speedily) there is a summer riverboat service from Westminster and Richmond to Hampton Court.

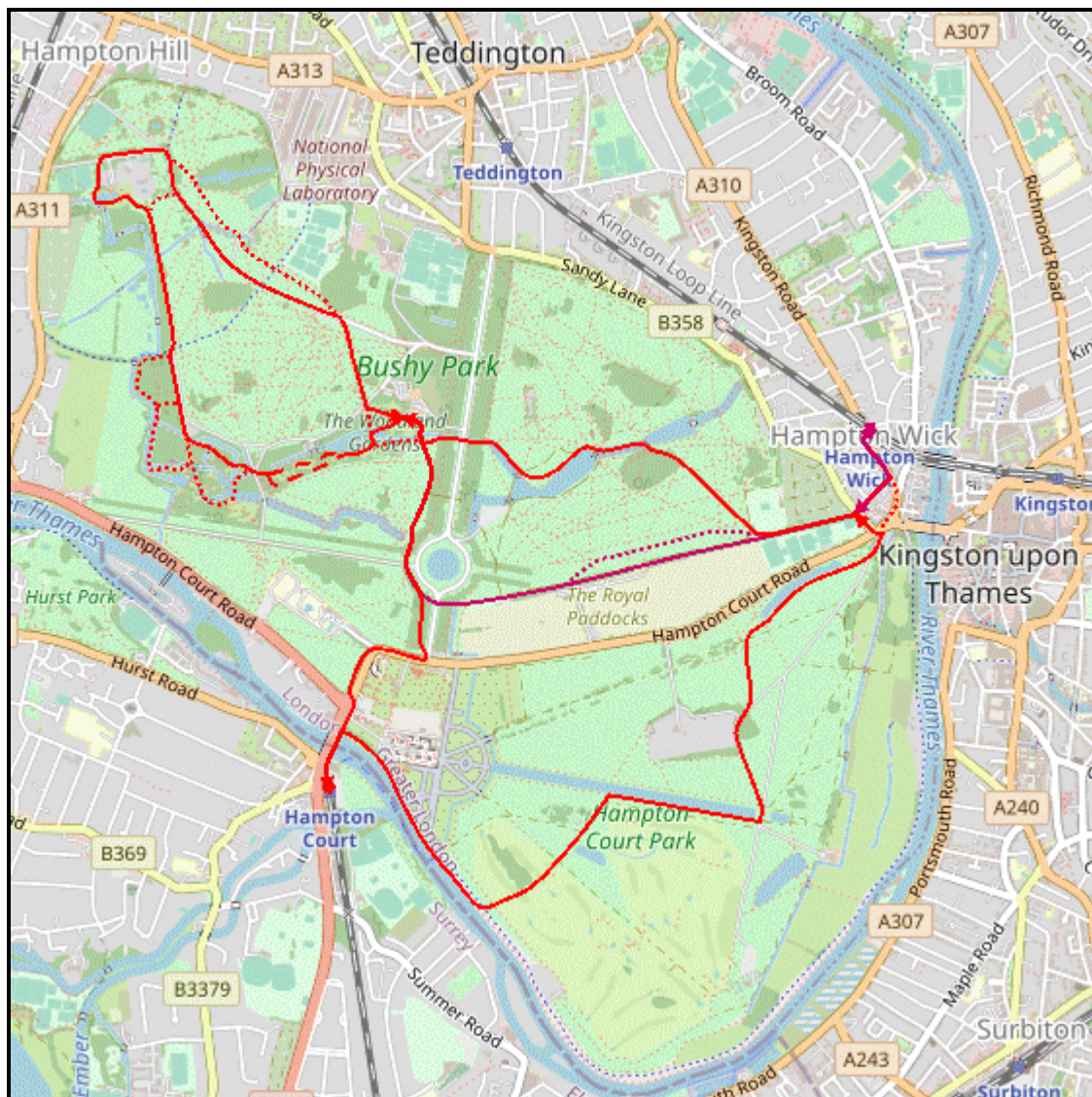
If driving, Hampton Court station car park costs around £8 Mon-Fri, £4 weekends & BH (2023). There are free car parks inside Bushy Park, but

these fill up quickly in fine weather.

Suggested Train	If you are planning to have lunch midway through the Main Walk at the café in the centre of Bushy Park, take the train nearest to 10:30 from Waterloo to Hampton Court . There are several other lunch and tea places (see below) and in practice you could start all the walk options at any convenient time.
Lunch	The most convenient place to stop for lunch is the Pheasantry café (020-8943 1347; open to 5pm winter, 6pm summer), just inside the entrance to the Woodland Gardens in the centre of Bushy Park and halfway round the Main Walk. It is likely to be busy on fine days but you have two chances to stop there for refreshment as the walk loops back to it an hour or so later. If you want a pub lunch you could stop earlier in Hampton Wick , after 4 km. The Old Kings Head just outside Kingston Gate has closed, but a short detour up the High Street would take you past the White Hart Hotel (020-8977 1786) at #1, The Swan (020-3581 3128) at #22 (closed Mon lunchtime) and the Foresters Arms (020-8943 5379) at #45.
Tea	If you have had an early pub lunch you could break for tea when you pass the Pheasantry café (see above) for the second time. On the main ending you pass some large inns on the way to Hampton Court station, while a short detour into East Molesey will reveal a number of independent cafés and more pubs. There is also a Coffee Bay kiosk in the small station concourse. The three early lunch pubs listed above are all possible refreshment stops on the alternative ending. The first two require a short detour but the Foresters Arms is on the walk route a few minutes before Hampton Wick station.
Help Us!	After the walk, please leave a comment, it really helps. Thanks! You can also upload photos to the   SWC Group on Flickr (upload your photos) and videos to  Youtube. This walk's tags are:
By Car	Start KT8 9AE
Help	National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234
Version	Oct-23 Sean
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Walk Directions

Walk Map



All maps © OpenStreetMap contributors

Walk Options

M. Main Walk (12 km)

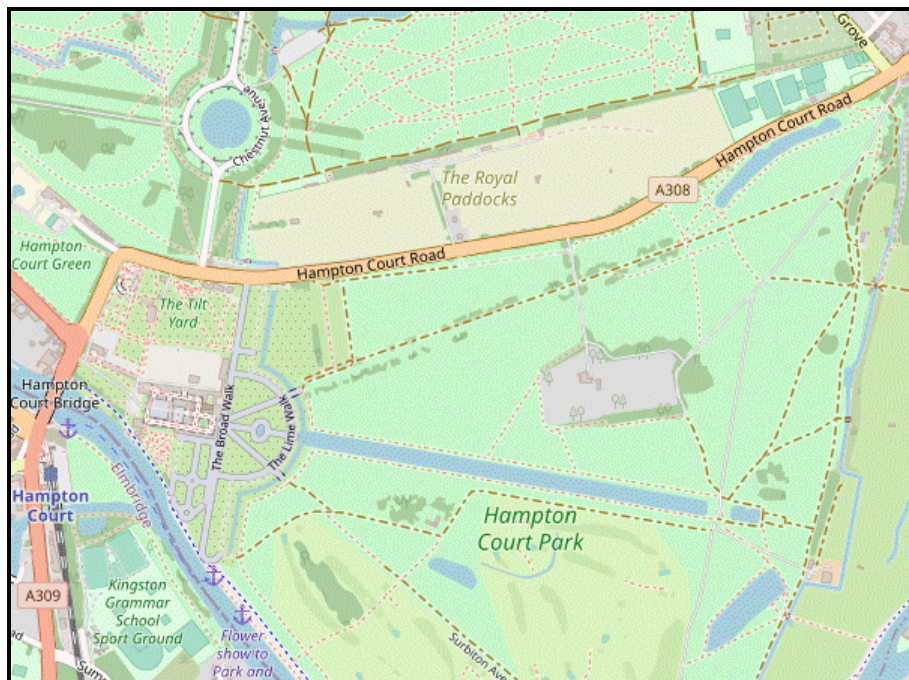
i. Main Walk, finishing at Hampton Wick (13¼ km)

a. Short Circular Walk, from Hampton Wick (9¾ km)

Walk Directions

If you are doing the Short Circular Walk (from Hampton Wick), start at [10] in §B.

A. Hampton Court Station to Hampton Wick (4 km)



1. Go straight ahead out of **Hampton Court station**, following signs to the palace. Stay on the right-hand side of the main road as you cross **Hampton Court Bridge**.
Opened in 1933, this is the fourth bridge over the River Thames at this site. Upstream is Molesey Lock.
2. On the other side of the bridge **turn right** onto Barge Walk, signposted as the Thames Path. You pass piers and mooring points on the river and **Hampton Court Palace** on the left, with the **Tijou Screen** in front of the **Privy Garden**.
The elaborate wrought-iron screen was designed by Jean Tijou (a French Huguenot ironworker) for William III's Privy Garden in the 1690s. When the baroque style went out of fashion the garden had been allowed to revert to a semi-wild state but was restored to its original appearance in the 1990s.
3. At the end of the palace grounds the path splits into a cycle route and footpath (you can take either). In 400m **go through Jubilee Gate in the park wall** and then another gate into **Hampton Court (or Home) Park**.
4. Keep ahead on a grassy path, taking care as you cross a number of golf fairways. You go through one of the long avenues of mature lime trees radiating out from the palace, then pass the tree-lined Oak Pond on your right and Farm Cottages on your left. Continue up to the **Long Water** and turn right to walk alongside it, away from the palace.
Two new avenues of lime trees were planted alongside the Long Water in 2004 to recreate its original appearance.
5. At the end of the Long Water turn left. Just after the start of an avenue of trees parallel to a tarmac lane on your right, **bear left** onto a track which leads to a surfaced lane in front of the **Stud Nursery**.
This was built in the early 19thC when George IV used Home Park for breeding and training horses.
6. Follow the lane round to the right and back towards the avenue of trees for a short distance, then **turn half-left** onto a clear grassy path.
7. At the end of the final avenue of lime trees from the palace there are a number of path crossings; **turn right** at the second one.
8. Follow the grassy path up to the right-hand side of the long Hampton Wick Pond and continue alongside it. At the end keep ahead and leave the park through **Kingston Gate**, passing the (closed) Old Kings Head pub on your left.

9. Unless you want to investigate other pubs in Hampton Wick, cross the A308 carefully at the traffic lights and go up Church Grove to the pedestrian crossing by St John's church, where there is a gate in the park wall on the left.
 - To detour through Hampton Wick turn right onto the A308, go over the pedestrian crossing and keep left at the roundabout into its High Street. The **White Hart Hotel** is by the roundabout, **The Swan** on the right at the junction with Lower Teddington Road and the **Foresters Arms** at the junction with Park Road and St John's Road. Go to the end of St John's Road to rejoin the main route at [11].

B. Hampton Wick to the Pheasantry Plantation (2¼ • 2¾ km)



10. Starting from Hampton Wick Station (+½ km)

- a. Turn left out of the station and go along the High Street for 200m, crossing over at some point (there are pedestrian lights outside the station and also further on, by the Foresters pub).
- b. After passing the **Foresters Arms** **turn sharp right** into Park Road and then **immediately left** into St John's Road. At the far end go straight across Church Grove.

11. Opposite St John's church go through **Church Grove Gate** into **Bushy Park**, with a **LOOP** waymarker.
The London Outer Orbital Path runs for 240 km around the edge of outer London. The route through Bushy Park to the Water Gardens more or less follows this well-waymarked path.
12. At the end of the tree-lined avenue (Church Grove Passage) go through another gate into the parkland. Keep ahead briefly on a surfaced path, then **bear right** onto a broad grassy track.
13. At the corner of a cricket pitch **turn half-right** onto the right-hand of two grassy paths and follow it towards the right-hand end of a wood 400m away.
14. At the edge of the wood bear left to come to a crossing point over a canal joining Leg-of-Mutton Pond (on your right) and the next pond, 200m further on. Go over the canal and turn left to walk alongside it.
15. At the end of the canal veer right and left to continue alongside Heron Pond, initially on a surfaced path and then on a potentially muddy path by the water's edge.
16. Follow the path round to the right to continue alongside the Model Boating Pond. At the end of this second pond keep ahead on a grassy path alongside a narrow water channel.
17. At the end of the channel **turn half-left** and make your way across the grass towards a cast-iron water pump and **Chestnut Avenue**, the main road through the park (but now closed to through traffic).
The mile-long avenue was conceived by Sir Christopher Wren as a grand formal approach to Hampton Court Palace. It is flanked on both sides by a row of horse chestnuts and several rows of lime trees.

18. Go straight across the avenue and head for a pedestrian gate in the boundary fence around the **Woodland Gardens**, about 100m to the left of a vehicle entrance from the main road.

This area was originally fenced off in 1823 to protect a new plantation of oak trees from the deer. The gardens were developed by the Park Superintendent in 1947, with informal clumps of rhododendrons and azaleas around a channel of the Longford River. They consist of two enclosures separated by a narrow strip of parkland, Ash Walk.

19. Go through the gate into the first enclosure, the **Pheasantry Plantation**. If you want to visit the **Pheasantry café**, bear right to cross the stream at Crocodile Bridge and follow the path up to the building.
- If you are not visiting the café you could turn left instead of crossing the bridge, going directly onto the main path through the plantation.

C. The Plantation to the Water Gardens and back (4 km)



20. Make your way to the main path through the Pheasantry Plantation, heading **W**. From the café the shortest route is to head **SW** towards some small ponds, where you can cross a stream at Duck Bridge and then turn right at a T-junction onto the main path.
21. Where the path splits into two you can take either route (or an earth path just off to the right, alongside Keeper's River). All routes lead to a wooden gate at the western end of the plantation.
22. Go out through this gate, straight across Ash Walk and through another gate into the second enclosure, the **Waterhouse Plantation**.

23. For the simplest route keep right at the first two path junctions to head roughly **NW** on the main path for 300m, then turn right at a T-junction to head **N** for 350m on a long straight path.
- a. For a more interesting route (using the map) you could detour off to the left and make your way around Fisher's Pond to the larger Waterhouse Pond (with a small brick building on its far side, the Water House).
*In a glade to the north of Waterhouse Pond, the **Canadian Totem Pole** was erected in 1992 to commemorate the country's links with Bushy Park. Upper Lodge was used as a convalescent hospital for Canadian troops in WWI.*

b. Paths zig-zagging **W** and **N** alongside the Longford River allow for further detours off the main path. 250m north of Waterhouse Pond there is a striking avenue of hornbeams connecting the two routes.
*The trees are a cultivar (*Fastigiata*) with upward-pointing branches creating a 'cathedral' effect.*
24. At its northern end leave the plantation through a wooden gate and **turn right**. Go out through another gate into the parkland and **turn left** onto a broad grassy path heading **N**, with a fence on your left.
25. In 550m, where the main path crosses a small stream and turns half-right, there is a narrow path off to the left leading to the Water Gardens.
- To bypass these gardens (eg. on a day when they are closed) stay on the main path as it goes round to the right, then turn right again onto a surfaced path leading away from the gardens. In 100m turn right onto a surfaced lane and (for the simplest route) follow it for 800m to a seasonal car park. If you do this, resume the directions at [30].
26. For the main route, **fork left** to come to another surfaced path, which leads to a gate. Go through this into the **Water Gardens**.
The Upper Lodge Water Gardens were created in 1710 by the Earl of Halifax, Ranger of Bushy Park, but gradually fell into disrepair and were virtually forgotten by the 20thC. After a long campaign and many years of detailed research they were eventually restored to their 18thC baroque style, reopening in 2009.
27. Keep to the left of the Lower Pool and go past the central Cascade to the far side of the Upper Pool, ignoring a bridge over the river leading to the Brewhouse (not open to the public).
28. Leave through a gate in the wooden fence and follow the path round to the right. In 125m **turn right** at a T-junction onto a surfaced lane, soon passing **Upper Lodge** on the right.
The present house dates from the 1840s; earlier buildings on the site were used as the Ranger's official residence. It was used as a wartime hospital in WWI and became part of Camp Griffiss in WWII, an important base for the US forces. The house is now part of the Crown Estate and privately occupied.
29. After it curves right to head **S**, the simplest route is to follow the lane (which becomes Cobbler's Walk) through the park, gradually curving left and coming to a seasonal car park on the right after 1 km.
- a. Alternatively (again using the map) you could bear left off the lane onto a faint grassy path, which in 150m goes past the right-hand end of the tree-lined **Canal Plantation**.
*The white buildings in the distance are part of the **National Physical Laboratory**, the national measurement standards laboratory for the UK. They were constructed between 1998 and 2007.*

b. You can continue on more grassy paths roughly parallel to the lane, off to the right. You would pass to the right of a house (Barton's Cottage) after 300m and later bear right in front of a wood to rejoin Cobbler's Walk by the car park.

30. Take the broad grassy path heading **SSE** from the far end of the car park, heading for a pedestrian gate in the wooden fence 300m away (well to the right of a more prominent vehicle entrance).

*The large house which comes into view behind you is **Bushy House** (originally Lower Lodge). This former hunting lodge became the original site of the NPL in 1900 and is still part of the organisation.*

31. Go through this gate to re-enter the Pheasantry Plantation. Inside the gardens the left-hand path leads past Mediterranean Mound to the **Pheasantry café**.
- If you are not visiting the café you could take the other path up to the ponds and across Duck Bridge, then turn left at the T-junction to reach the gate by Crocodile Bridge.
- If you are doing the alternative ending (to Hampton Wick), go to **SE**.*

D. The Plantation to Hampton Court Station (1¾ km)



← *South (map rotated 90°)*

32. From the café take the path heading **SE** to Crocodile Bridge and leave the enclosure through the gate by which you entered on the outward leg. Keep ahead on a broad grassy path heading **S**, to the right of a surfaced path.
33. In 350m the path goes up a small bank where the Longford River flows into a culvert. **Bear left** to follow the curve of Chestnut Avenue around the **Diana Fountain**.
The Royal Parks controversially maintain that the bronze statue (gilded in its 2009 restoration) actually represents the nymph Arethusa rather than the Roman goddess of hunting. It was commissioned by Charles I from Le Sueur in 1637 and originally stood at Somerset House. It was later moved to the Privy Garden at Hampton Court before being installed as the centrepiece of Wren's grand Chestnut Avenue in 1713.
34. Head **S** down the right-hand side of Chestnut Avenue and leave Bushy Park through **Hampton Court Gate**, with the imposing **Lion Gates of Hampton Court Palace** opposite.
The Portland stone piers and wrought-iron gates were designed by Wren in the reign of Queen Anne and her successor, George I.
35. Unless access through the palace grounds has been restored and the Lion Gates are open, turn right onto the A308 (Hampton Court Road). Follow it round a sharp left-hand bend, where you could move onto Hampton Court Green if you want to get slightly away from the traffic.
36. Before you reach the roundabout ahead you will need to cross the busy main road via one of the pedestrian crossings. On the palace side carry on past the main **Trophy Gate** and go back across Hampton Court Bridge to the station.
- There are some large inns directly opposite the palace entrance, and more pubs and coffee shops across the bridge in East Molesey. There is also a refreshment kiosk inside the station.

E. The Plantation to Hampton Wick Station (3 km)



37. From the café take the path heading **SE** to Crocodile Bridge and leave the enclosure through the gate by which you entered on the outward leg. Keep ahead on a broad grassy path heading **S**, to the right of a surfaced path.
38. In 350m the path goes up a small bank where the Longford River flows into a culvert. **Bear left** to follow the curve of Chestnut Avenue around the **Diana Fountain**. *The Royal Parks controversially maintain that the bronze statue (gilded in its 2009 restoration) actually represents the nymph Arethusa rather than the Roman goddess of hunting. It was commissioned by Charles I from Le Sueur in 1637 and originally stood at Somerset House. It was later moved to the Privy Garden at Hampton Court before being installed as the centrepiece of Wren's grand Chestnut Avenue in 1713.*
39. Cross Chestnut Avenue carefully near the traffic circle and head **E** on an access road, passing a children's playground and later toilets on the right. For the shortest route, follow this track all the way along the southern edge of the park.
 - About 200m after passing the toilets you could bear left onto a grassy path which curves right to run parallel to the main track. If you take this small detour, bear right at an oblique path junction 75m before reaching a cricket ground to rejoin the track.
40. At the end of the parkland go through a gate and retrace your morning route along Church Grove Passage. Leave Bushy Park through **Church Grove Gate**, cross the road and continue on St John's Road opposite.
41. St John's Road leads into Park Road near its junction with Hampton Wick's High Street, with the **Foresters Arms** on the corner.
42. The station is 200m off to the left on the other side of the High Street, so use the pedestrian lights near the pub or outside the station to cross the main road.

» *Last updated: October 9, 2023*

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