

TREC Section 4: Acton Town Station/Gunnersbury Park to Boston Manor Station (optional extension to Ealing Broadway). Distance: 8.4 km (5.4 miles).

Public Transport: Section 4 starts at Acton Town Underground Station (District and Piccadilly lines), finishing at Boston Manor Underground Station (Piccadilly Line). There is an optional exit en route at Brentford Station or an optional 3.7 km (2.3 miles) extension from Boston Manor to Ealing Broadway Station (using part of the TREC Section 1 route).

Surface and Terrain: The first half of the route is along level paths, including through parks: Gunnersbury and Carville Hall Park South; however the section along the Thames Path and the River Brent/Grand Union Canal Walk does involve some steps (an alternative route avoiding the steps is suggested); the route eventually reaches Boston Manor Park and Station.

Refreshments: Acton Town Station; Gunnersbury Park Café; Brentford High Street (near Brentford Lock); Boston Manor Park Café (seasonal), Boston Manor Station and shops nearby.

Covid-19 restrictions: *Check availability of refreshments and toilets before your walk.*

Public Toilets: Acton Town Station (charge); Gunnersbury Park; Boston Manor Park Café (seasonal).

The route starts from south-west Acton, one of the seven towns of the London Borough of Ealing, Acton means "oak farm" or "farm by oak trees". This final section of TREC does stray into the north east of the London Borough of Hounslow going through parts of old Brentford, however as this was historically part of the Parish of Ealing when it did extend to the River Thames we think it's appropriate to include in TREC.

Leaving Acton Town Underground station turn left on Gunnersbury Lane, heading west, crossing the dual carriageway North Circular Road to continue along Popes Lane to reach the main entrance, north gateway, for Gunnersbury Park and Museum.

Gunnersbury Park: *On the site of an estate owned by the Bishops of London since the middle ages, a Palladian style house was built in 1663 which was occupied from 1763 – 1786 by Princess Amelia, favourite daughter of George II, who improved the estate, and used it as her summer residence until her death. The estate passed through several hands, with the house being demolished in 1801 and the estate divided into two as the grounds of one and later two mansions. The Large Mansion and The Small Mansion were in separate ownership until the Rothschild family reunited the site in 1889. After the death of Leopold de Rothschild in 1917 the estate was broken up, with the then boroughs of Acton and Ealing and Middlesex County Council acquiring 75 hectares in 1925 to provide a public park. The park opened to the public in 1926 and is now jointly managed by Hounslow and Ealing Borough Councils. A major National Lottery funded restoration project was completed in 2018.*

Having entered the drive, to visit the café and public toilets, turn right to walk through the Italian Gardens, planted with roses. The path divides around a Temple folly (built for Princess Amelia) overlooking the Round Pond; keep to the left to find the Café, Toilets and Playground. *To continue directly on the walk, without touring the grounds, keep on the footpath heading*

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*south from the Café and Pond, passing on the left steps up through an archway (this leads to the 200m terrace which runs in front of the mansions) to reach the white, glazed Orangery building (where the main route will join). When ready to continue on a brief tour of the grounds, pass behind the Café to return to the drive, turn right passing the entrance to the 'large mansion', Gunnersbury Park House, now a free local history museum, well worth a visit. Continue on the driveway past the second building, 'small mansion', to walk around the east side of the building to reach a battlemented, Gothic style building (known as Princess Amelia's Bath House, although it is not shown on maps of the period) and beyond it a Shell House and outside courtyard from the Rothschild era. Continue walking south with boundary walls on your left and to your right a view of the lawns overlooked by the two mansions, to pass the remains of the Japanese Garden, created for Leopold Rothschild just after 1900, and in the distance you can see the Stables (listed grade II) built by Sidney Smirke for Nathan Rothschild, the north range (viewable from Gunnersbury House) being decorated with Gothic-style elevations. Keep on the path as it bears right towards the (recently restored) Horseshoe Pond, passing the east end marked by a cement-rendered, brick-built sham bridge, then at the west end a rock garden, to the south of which is the Orangery (listed grade II) built by Smirke c 1836-7. Having passed the Orangery turn left on to the foot path (*the shortcut route from the Café joins here*) and shortly afterwards right onto a path by a tall Nature Trail board, (passing the 'Lost Tennis Court'). The Trail takes you through shrubs and trees to a wide open meadow which in summer is carpeted by wild flowers. At the junction with the southern boundary path, turn right towards a ruined tower by a small fishing lake. (*As part of extending their estate in 1861 the Rothschilds acquired a former clay pit and tile kiln transforming the pit into the Potomac Pond and the kiln into the Gothic Boathouse (listed grade II)*). Keep to the path to the south of the lake to exit via the south west gate onto Lionel Road North at its junction with the major Great West Road, A4 dual carriageway. Having negotiated the crossings of the A4, turn right to walk approximately 25 metres west alongside the A4 to enter the east gate to Carville Hall Park (South).*

Carville Hall Park: *Formed from the remains of the garden of Carville Hall. The house is on the 1777 Bassett Survey of Ealing when it belonged to David Roberts (c1733-97), a wealthy distiller and brewer. It was extended and re-fronted in 19th century. Originally known as Clayponds its clay pits became lakes in its gardens). Bought by Middlesex County Council in 1918 for building the Great West Road, which divides the Park, it was opened in 1923 by the Brentford Urban District Council as Carville Hall War Memorial Park for local men who had fought in the First World War and to provide an open space for public use in an area of closely built houses and industry.*

Keep on the main path through the park, passing a pond on the right (former claypit) and house on the left to exit onto Clayponds Lane. Turn left onto a footpath over a railway bridge to reach Burford Road, then left and almost immediately right, onto a footpath passing a tower block on your left and then Green Dragon Primary School to join and walk the length of North Road to its junction with Brentford High Street. After crossing the High Street you

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have a good view over Waterman's Park (former gasworks and coal wharf) to the house boats moored on a stretch of the River Thames sheltered by the Brentford Ait (island). *The route now follows the Thames Path through the old docks requiring a number of stepped ascents or descents. To avoid these follow the High Street west through Brentford town for about half a mile to reach Brentford Bridge where the main route rejoins.*

Turn right on Brentford High Street and just before the entrance to the Waterman's Arts Centre, turn left down towards the river. Follow the path behind Waterman's and go down some quite steep steps to follow the path behind another building and exit through a gate at the end of the car park and go up steps to return to the main road. Turn left along High Street and then left by the Premier Inn hotel into Goat Wharf to reach the river and turn right passing the Peerless Pump Ltd building, part of which dates from 1704. *(Built on the site of the former Thames Soap Works owned by the Rowe family, prosperous soap manufacturers, from 1806. Brentford was a centre for hard soap manufacturing).*

Follow the paved promenade passing the end of Ferry Lane *(a free (until 1536) ferry ran from here across to Kew for several centuries, closing around the time of the Second World War when it became uneconomic to run)*. Continue around the moorings (Soaphouse Creek) and along the river frontage viewing the old wharves, disused docks, boat yards, creeks and islands, until it takes you back to the High Street where you turn left and shortly left again into Dock Road.

Brentford River Frontage and Docks: *Brentford is the first point on the tidal portion of the River Thames which was easily fordable by foot (this was before dredging took place). For 200 years Brentford's fortune and character were intrinsically linked with the river and its ford, firstly through market gardening on the fertile river gravels and later due to the important inland port that developed at the strategic confluence of the Rivers Thames and Brent and eventually the Grand Union Canal. Boat building had been happening in the area since the 1700s. Brentford Dock was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel and built between 1855 and 1859 as a freight terminus of the Great Western Railway. For over a 100 years it was an important part of the transport infrastructure, as a trans-shipment point linking the Great Western Railway and the canal system with the Port of London. The dock yard is now a Marina and housing estate.*

Follow Dock Road (which retains some of the best herringbone cobbles to be found in London) to reach a bridge over the Thames Lock (Lock 101); the exit to the River Thames for the Grand Union Canal (originally built as the Grand Junction Canal, linking the Thames to the UK Canal system). Looking down river from the bridge you should get a good view of Kew Palace on the other side of the River. After crossing the bridge (ahead is the estate built on Brentford Dock), turn right down steps onto the towpath, walking past some attractive barges, then up steps to reach a footbridge over the Canal and then left following a path under the elevated road (Augustus Close), bearing left to keep to the canal towpath (more steep steps) (to avoid these steps keep on the road, The Ham) to eventually reach the High Street again.

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Turn left to cross Brentford Bridge (a strategic river crossing, with a bridge since 1280; connecting Old Brentford to New Brentford) and use the pedestrian crossing to reach the towpath again; notice the sign for the Battle of Brentford, Civil War 1642. You are now following the Brent River Path. Head towards and past the Brentford Gauging Lock 100 on the right and its Toll House which may be open some summer Sundays and continue north on the towpath through the marina and covered wharf to eventually pass under the Great West Road. *(To leave the route at this point divert left from the towpath up to the Great West Road, and head east to the major traffic light junction and turn right on Boston Manor Road to reach Brentford Rail Station and local buses).* Continuing on the towpath re-cross the Canal using the wooden bridge, just after the GSK office building on the right, to enter Boston Manor Park. Follow the path straight ahead (keeping open ground on the left) to pass under the elevated M4 and through a small car park; then turn left into the manicured part of the park, walking uphill (café (seasonal) on right, playground on left) to reach Boston Manor house.

Boston Manor House & Park: *A Grade 1 listed Jacobean manor house built in 1623 and home of the Clitherow family for seven generations until 1924. The house and 20 acres of land were bought by the Brentford Urban District Council which opened the grounds as a public park. The House is currently closed for restoration). The formal parkland and lake are the original grounds of the House; the impressive Cedar of Lebanon tree dates from the early 1700s and is the largest of its type in Greater London. The name 'Boston' (recorded as Bordestun in 1377) is thought to mean 'Bord's farm'.*

Passing the back of the Manor House, continue on the path as it skirts a pond (on your left) to reach the Park's exit gate on the corner of Boston Manor Road and Boston Gardens. To walk to Boston Manor station turn left into Boston Gardens then right, walk to the end then go right and finally left onto Boston Manor Road and the Station. *For the optional extension to Ealing Broadway: leave the park onto Boston Manor Road turning left and crossing the road to reach a pathway, between houses 267 and 269, into Blondin Park to pick up, and follow in reverse, the part of the route in TREC Section 1 which runs from Ealing Broadway Station to Blondin Park.*

To provide feedback on The Round Ealing Circuit (TREC) route contact West London Ramblers via our website: www.westlondonramblers.org.uk.