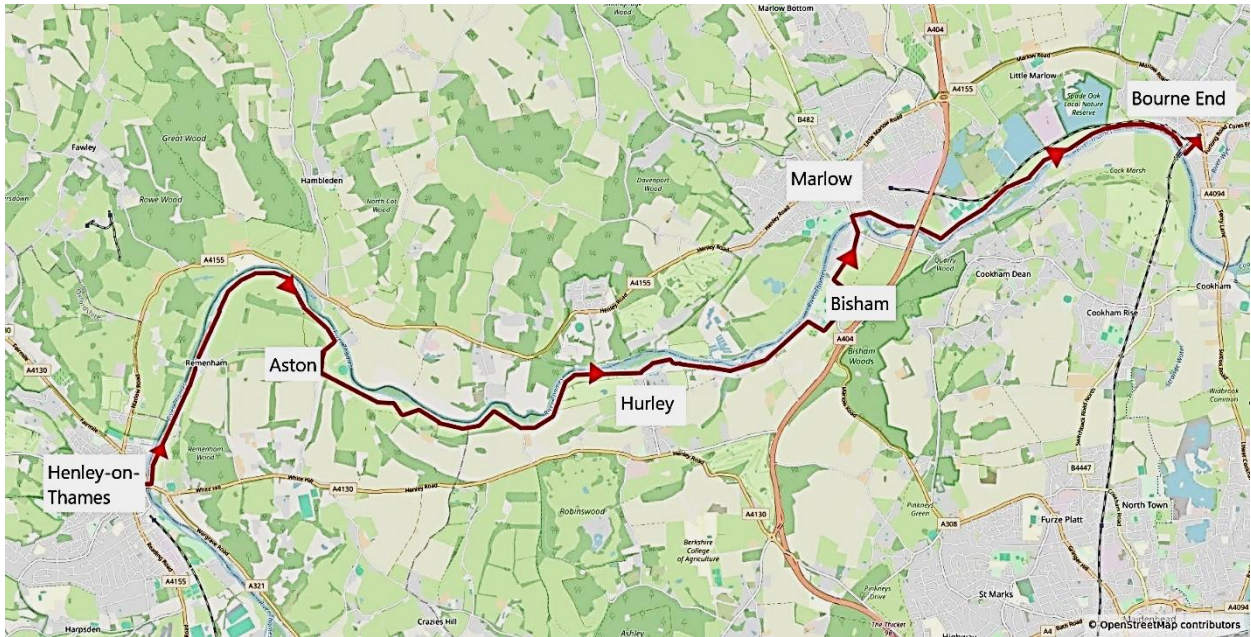


Day 7: Henley to Bourne End



We begin the day by walking alongside the stretch of the river which hosts the annual Regatta, then up to Hambledon Lock, which was the start of the first ever University Boat Race in 1829. At Aston we have to leave the river for a while, but have a pleasant walk through a deer park. Later, unless Temple Bridge has been repaired by the Environment Agency, we have a detour on the Berkshire side of the river, taking us away from the river and then along the road into Marlow; we then continue on the Bucks side along the river path to Bourne End.

Distance: 11¾ miles

Duration: 4¾ hours, not including breaks

Maps: Ordnance Survey Explorer 171,172

Car parking: Southfield car park in Henley (£6 per day); Bourne End station (£4)

Public transport: Henley is at the end of a branch line from Twyford; Marlow and Bourne End are on a branch line from Maidenhead (both GWR and Elizabeth Line)

Refreshments: Town facilities in Henley; pubs at Aston (3½ miles from start) and Hurley (6¼ miles); pubs and cafés in Marlow (8½ miles); and in Bourne End ice creams, and a Tesco Express.

Toilets: Aston, Hurley, Marlow.

Henley-on-Thames

The town is believed to have been founded by Henry II in the late 12th century. There are no particular Anglo-Saxon associations, although there is archaeological evidence of Romano-British habitation in the locality. From the 8th century, Henley belonged to the royal estate centred on Benson. There was probably a ford across the river at this point from very early times, but the bridge over the river does not receive any mention in official documents until 1234. There may have been a chapel on the site of the present parish church.

Day 7: Henley to Bourne End

Short Walk Option:

Henley to St Mary's Church, Hurley 6¼ miles. Directions 1 to 3.

Directions:

1. Leaving Henley, cross the bridge and follow the Thames Path sign to the left to take you to the river bank. The first mile and a half so of the walk is alongside the stretch of river used for the annual regatta, at one mile and 550 yards the longest naturally straight section of river in Britain. We pass the church of St Nicholas, Remenham, set back from the river: if you want to visit it, after the green field a footpath takes you back towards the church; the settlement was mentioned in the Domesday book. We pass Temple Island and the Hambleden Lock, keeping to the river until we have to leave it for a short while, turning right into Ferry Lane. If it's not too early in the day for you, a visit to The Flowerpot Pub in Aston would be well worthwhile.
2. 100 yards beyond the pub we turn left and left again as indicated by the signposts. At the end of the metal fence we continue straight ahead on the footpath through the gates and head into the deer park. We join the road from the cottages on the left and continue straight ahead until we reach a junction where we turn left onto the Thames Path footpath, taking us down to the river.
3. Further on, the Thames Path makes a shortcut across a bend in the river; the slightly longer path following round the river bank can be used if you prefer. Beyond the weir, a bridge takes you over a canal, and then another bridge to the left takes you across to Hurley Lock. At Hurley Lock there's a water tap and toilets, and a tea shop. A footpath in the other direction (away from the river) takes you to Hurley village where there are pubs and a shop (closed 1-2 pm), and **St Mary's Church**.

Hurley

The original church on the site of the present parish church is believed to have been founded by St Birinus c700 (see Dorchester, on Day 5). This church is likely to have been destroyed during the 9th century Danish incursions along the Thames. A village grew up around the small Saxon church, under the control of Escar, Master of the Horse to Edward the Confessor.

4. Beyond the lock we turn right across the bridge to return to the right-hand bank. A little further the Thames Path crosses to the other side of the river, and this would be our third county of the day: in Henley we crossed from Oxfordshire into Berkshire, and Temple Bridge would now take us into Buckinghamshire. Sadly, at the time of preparing the walk the footbridge has been closed since 2023; there is a chance that it might be repaired before September 2025, in which case we would use it and then follow the path on the left-hand side of the river, all the way into Marlow, admiring the 12th century All Saints Church in Bisham on the Berkshire side as we pass opposite it.

Day 7: Henley to Bourne End

5. Because of the bridge closure there's a rather dull diversion in place which takes us along private roads behind Bisham Abbey (a sports centre and wedding venue).

Bisham Abbey

Bisham Abbey is described in Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 novel *Three Men in a Boat*. "Grand old Bisham Abbey, whose stone walls have rung to the shouts of the Knights Templars, and which, at one time, was the home of Anne of Cleves and at another of Queen Elizabeth, is passed on the right bank just half a mile above Marlow Bridge. Bisham Abbey is rich in melodramatic properties. It contains a tapestry bed-chamber, and a secret room hid high up in the thick walls. The ghost of the Lady Holy, who beat her little boy to death, still walks there at night, trying to wash its ghostly hands clean in a ghostly basin."

6. Beyond Bisham Abbey the diversion joins the road to pass Bisham Church, leading towards **All Saints Church** over Marlow bridge, the iconic image of Marlow.

Marlow

A Mercian settlement ('Merlowe'), mentioned in the Domesday Book and settled since Saxon times. It was an important inland river port, and was the crossing point of the road from Reading to High Wycombe.

7. Leave Marlow by the footpath indicated from the north side of the churchyard, following it through to the road; cross the road, keeping to the right of The Two Brewers pub, along the alleyway to the right of the pub. At the end, a right turn takes you down past Marlow Lock and Marlow Mill. Then, after the left-hand bend follow the signs to the right through the park, and to the river bank. From here on, there is a pleasant, 3-mile riverside walk into Bourne End where there is a chandlery selling ice creams and cold drinks. The path continues to the railway bridge: pass under the railway and turn sharp left up the steps to bring you through the car park to Bourne End station (trains in one direction to Marlow, and in the other to Maidenhead).

Timings for Wednesday 27th August (approximate):

09:45-10.00	Registration and briefing – St Mary's Church, Henley. RG9 2AT.
10:00	Set off from Henley
11:15-11:30	<i>The Flower Pot</i> , Aston (2¾ miles)
13:00-14:00	Lunch – St Mary's Church, Hurley (6¼ miles)
15:00-16:00	Tea – All Saints Church, Marlow (8½ miles)
17:30	Arrive at Bourne End (11¼ miles)

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With thanks to John Dewhurst, Churchwarden of All Saints, Kingston, for information in the panels