



Windsor Great Park and Runnymede

Distance: 11½ km=7 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey, Berkshire

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Refreshments: Englefield Green

Map: Explorer 160 (Windsor) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Royal park, lake, river, historical monuments

In Brief

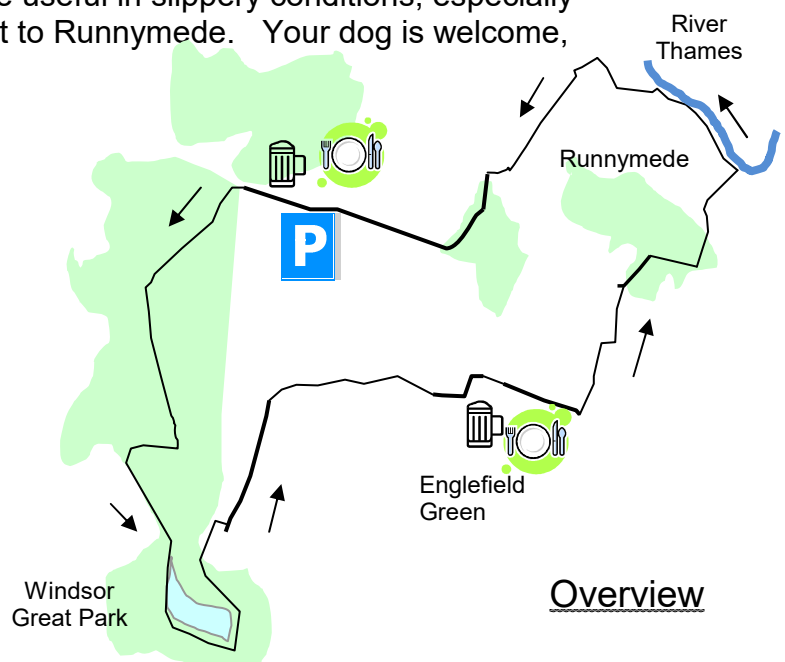
This is a most unusual and adventurous walk that connects the River Thames at Runnymede, with its various memorials, to Windsor Great Park, making a truly satisfying excursion, with some good places for refreshment along the way.

Because the spread-out village of Englefield Green lies between the areas of interest, a certain amount of road walking is unavoidable, more than we usually allow for these walks. However, the roads are green and peaceful with good pavements and the rewards on reaching the Thames and the Park are strong enough to make it definitely worthwhile.



Any kind of attire is fine in a warm summer. Boots are always preferable, and ankle-length waterproof boots are necessary in winter or after wet weather. A stick (hiking pole) will be useful in slippery conditions, especially for the uneven steps on the descent to Runnymede. Your dog is welcome, with a lead of course.

The walk begins at the end of **Bishopsgate Road**, Englefield Green, Surrey, near the **Fox and Hounds** pub/restaurant, **post-code TW20 0XU**. **As from June 2022, parking is by Ringo** (cost up to £12 for whole day!, subject to a furious campaign). Walkers now usually park **free** somewhere along the route, for example in Barley Mow Road, **post-code TW20 0NP**, in Englefield Green. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Round the Pond to the ex-Sun 4½ km=2¾ miles

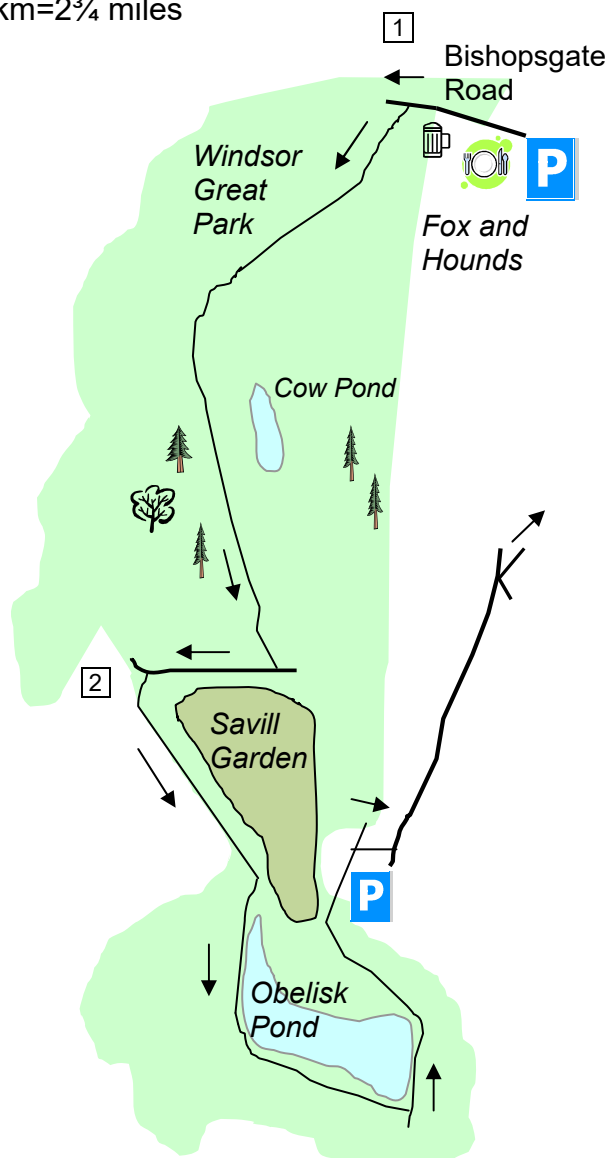
- 1 Windsor Great Park is a vast space, hardly a park in the usual sense, with endless scope for adventure. This first part gives you a flavour of the best of the park. Walk along Bishopsgate Road, with the *Fox and Hounds* on your left, through the magnificent white gates and into the Park (and incidentally into a corner of Berkshire). Just 50m into the Park, turn **left** on a horse track. After only 10m, fork **right** on a narrow path that runs parallel to the track. The path runs under oaks and goes over two little bridges, soon with a ditch on your left. Eventually the path crosses the ditch and the horse track and reaches a more open area. Keep left here staying close to the edge of the wood on your left on an improvised path. After 300m, this path takes you to the head of a T-junction of gravel tracks. Keep straight on along the track ahead. The Cow Pond can be seen on the left at this point (foliage permitting), worth a brief diversion. The track runs through an arboretum, a most interesting section of the Park, with more oaks. Windsor Great Park is dotted with plantations of assorted, sometimes exotic, trees, reminiscent of Kew Gardens. There are various conifers on each side, then a collection of Japanese maples. (There is short cut through the larches on your right if you like.) Eventually you come to a T-junction with a tarmac drive. Turn sharp **right** on it.

- 2 In about 250m, as the drive curves right in front of a large house, turn **left** on a narrow path towards a large open green space. Keep **left** on a wide grassy ride that runs down an avenue of trees towards the tall obelisk monument visible in the distance. You reach an arm of the Obelisk Pond. Fork **right** here on a wide path along the right-hand bank of the pond. (Of course, you can aim straight for the Obelisk, but the path round the pond is a delight.) In about 300m, the path begins to curve left around a corner of the lake and, after a similar distance, reaches a corner and tarmac track. Turn **left** here. Soon you reach a picnic area and a tea kiosk next to the Obelisk.



The Obelisk was built in honour of the Duke of Cumberland who was Ranger from 1746. He was the major landscaper of the Park, responsible for Virginia Water, many buildings and bridges and a huge number of native and exotic trees. He also happened to be son of the king (George II) and butcher of the Scots at Culloden.

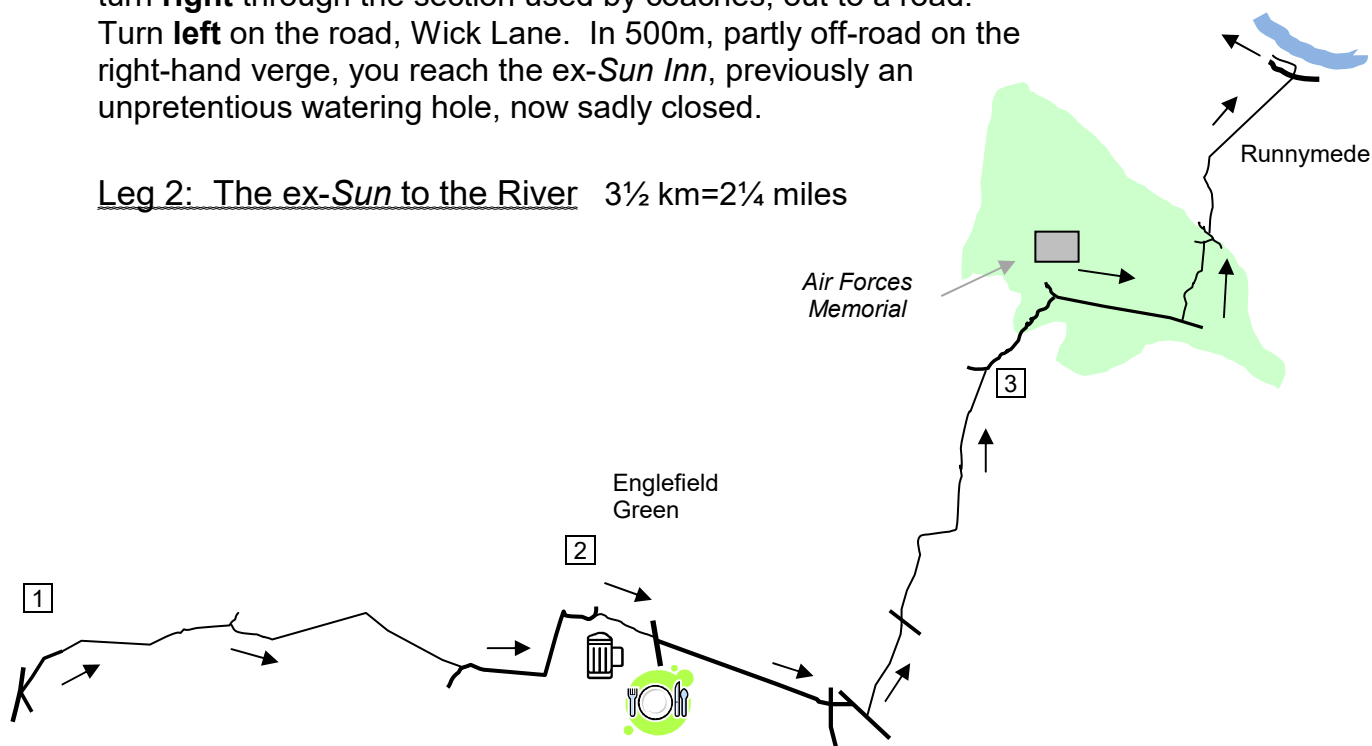
Continue on the tarmac, going past the Savill Garden car park on your right, soon with the entrance to the Savill Garden on your left.



The Savill Garden is named after its creator of the 1930s, Sir Eric Savill. It is one of England's truly great gardens. Once inside, you see tantalizing signposts to distinctive areas such as The Glades, The Hidden Gardens, The New Zealand Gardens and so on. The new Rose Garden was opened in 2010 and uses an innovative approach to display. The Garden is open every day. It also has a restaurant.

Keep going till you are next to the far end of the car park and turn **right** through the section used by coaches, out to a road. Turn **left** on the road, Wick Lane. In 500m, partly off-road on the right-hand verge, you reach the ex-Sun Inn, previously an unpretentious watering hole, now sadly closed.

Leg 2: The ex-Sun to the River 3½ km=2¼ miles



- 1 Ignore the sharp right turn (Kings Lane) and take the track, Prospect Lane, diagonally **right**. In 250m, the track leads you, through a wooden swing-gate on the right, onto a path by a fence and through a second swing-gate. You soon pass through the remnants of a third gate before quickly arriving at a fourth swing-gate. Do not go through this gate but follow a path beside a hedge to the **right** of the gate. At the end, keep **left** by another (disused) swing-gate into a meadow. **Ignore** a wide path that runs beside the hedge on the left and ignore the meadow over on your right. Take a narrow path going diagonally across the centre of the meadow on your **left** using a clearly trodden line of bruised grass. Keep right through a small (redundant) wooden gate on the other side, over a stream and then straight ahead beside a wire fence. Go through another swing-gate, between fences and, at the end, through a wooden gate to a road. Turn **left** on the road, Northcroft Road. This quiet residential road bends left and right and reaches the grassy expanse of Englefield Green. Close by on your right is the *Barley Mow*, a pub in a delightful situation overlooking the Green. *The Barley Mow has re-invented itself as a "pub/brasserie". In its heyday it kept as many as five real ales on tap. In case the tables in the front are occupied, there is a generous back garden. Interestingly (our Continental friends please note!) most of the (very good) on-line reviews all complained that the beer was too cold.*
- 2 Keep **right** past the pub, cross the main road and go down Barley Mow Road opposite. The road passes a school and a side road and, in 350m, reaches a road junction. Go straight ahead over a major road (Middle Hill) and take a signposted footpath between metal bars. The footpath crosses a road, Tite Hill, and continues opposite. It then crosses a drive, becomes tarmac, curves right and bends left again. You emerge onto Coopers Hill Lane. Turn **right**,

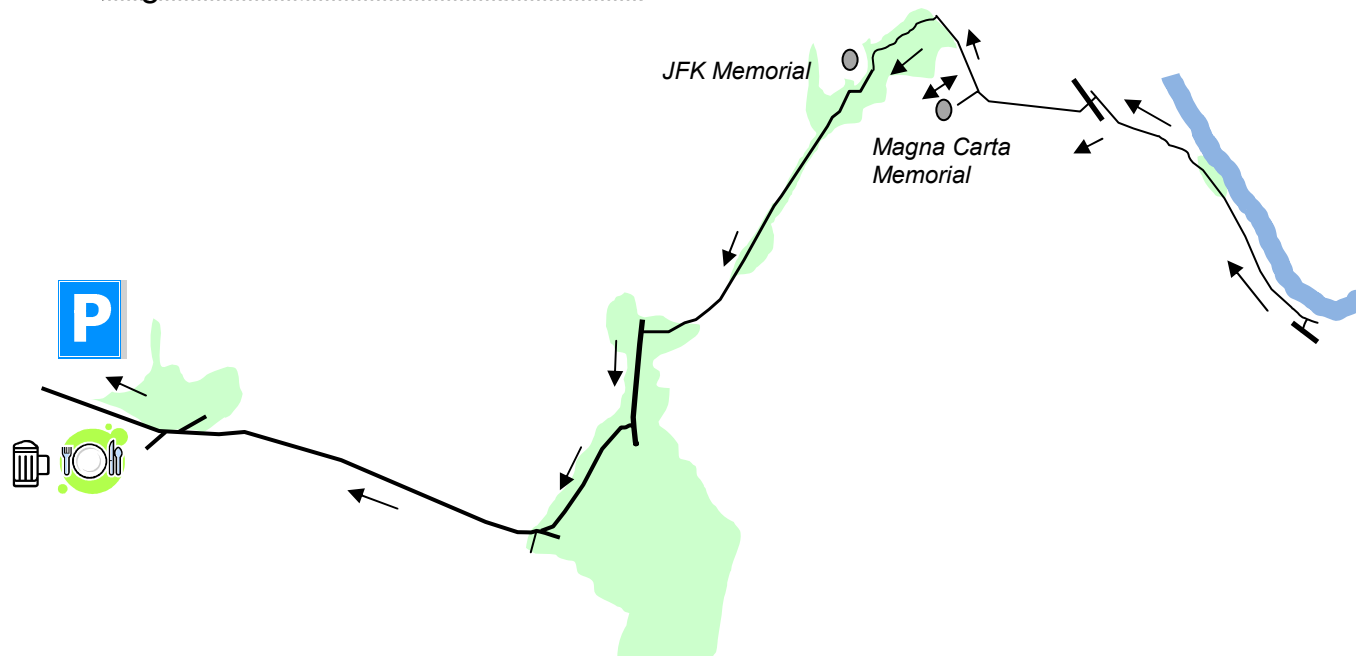
soon passing *Kingswood Hall of Residence*, part of Royal Holloway College. *There is a dense academic presence in this area: part of Brunel University is only 300m west on the same road.* Just 50m to the left, though not strictly on your route, is the entrance to the Air Forces Memorial which is definitely worth visiting. *The Air Forces Memorial is dedicated to more than 20,000 British and Commonwealth airmen who were lost in World War II. Their names are displayed on the pillars, amongst bronze sculptures, engraved glass and decorative ceilings.*

- 3 Turn **right** on Coopers Hill Lane and continue where it becomes a dirt track. At a bend, ignore a footpath on the left by a National Trust sign and stay on the track. In 350m, just after you pass a gate with a resident's driveway on your right and the beginning of a wooden fence, turn **left** just before two upright posts, through a wooden barrier on a narrow unsigned path. This path takes you down many steps. (Take great care after wet weather: some walkers use the banks each side which may be covered in leaves and less muddy.) As you proceed, a large meadow and a narrow pond come into view. At the bottom, on reaching a wide level path, cross this wide path, a fraction left, to go through a swing-gate into the meadows of Runnymede (possibly very runny after heavy rain). The path crosses the meadow diagonally to another swing-gate, follows a board walk and passes the Langham Pond where there is an information tablet about Runnymede. It then enters another meadow by a swing-gate. (In winter this area may be waterlogged and you may have to climb over the fence to your right where there is a drier patch and some wood.) Go straight across this large meadow, aiming for the road at the right-hand corner where you can see a fingerpost. Exit through a swing-gate beside a large wooden gate and cross the busy road carefully. On your right is the Runnymede car park with its café and toilets. However, your route is **left** along the riverside.



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Leg 3: The River to the Park Gates 3¼ km=2 miles



- 1 Follow the river now for a leisurely 600m. Ignore fingerposts on the left, one of which points to the Air Forces Memorial, visible on the hill, and stay as close as you like to the river, watching the river craft go by. This is a particularly peaceful stretch of the river. Eventually you reach a noticeboard shaped like a small horizontal triangle containing leaflets. Turn **left** here and cross the road to a swing-gate on the other side. Ignore a yellow arrow and turn **right** diagonally across the big grassy meadow

heading for some wooden gates in the distant corner. Once there, go through a swing-gate, keep straight ahead for 30m, then go **left** through a small wooden gate to the Memorial to the document known as *Magna Carta* drawn up by the English barons in 1215.

In fact the Memorial stands here in Longmede, not Runnymede, but the fractious meeting between King John and the barons took place on the other side of the river on Magna Carta Island. The hesitant king was caught between the wrath of his barons and of the Pope. This "great charter" written in Latin established that the king could not exercise arbitrary power but had to defer to the law of the land. It was therefore the first document of English constitutional law. One of the witnesses was the Pope's representative Stephen Langton (see the "Friday Street" walks in this series). It was another century before the document was formally written up and put into law. Three of its clauses are still on the books. The memorial was commissioned in 1957 by the American Bar Association and designed by the English architect Sir Edward Maufe.

- 2 Leave the Memorial enclosure and turn **left**, thus continuing your route, staying near the trees. *On your left soon is an oak planted with soil from Jamestown, Virginia, commemorating 200 years of the Constitution of the USA which was influenced by Magna Carta.* After 150m, your route is **left** at a marker post through wooden gates. *But before you leave the grass, look ahead to your right where you will see a new artwork, "the Jurors", twelve intricately worked bronze chairs inscribed with symbols representing law and equal rights (see www.hewlocke.net/jurors.html: if you have a smartphone, you can download an audioguide).* Having turned left through the gates, go up a cobbled path and many shallow steps, leading to the John F Kennedy Memorial.

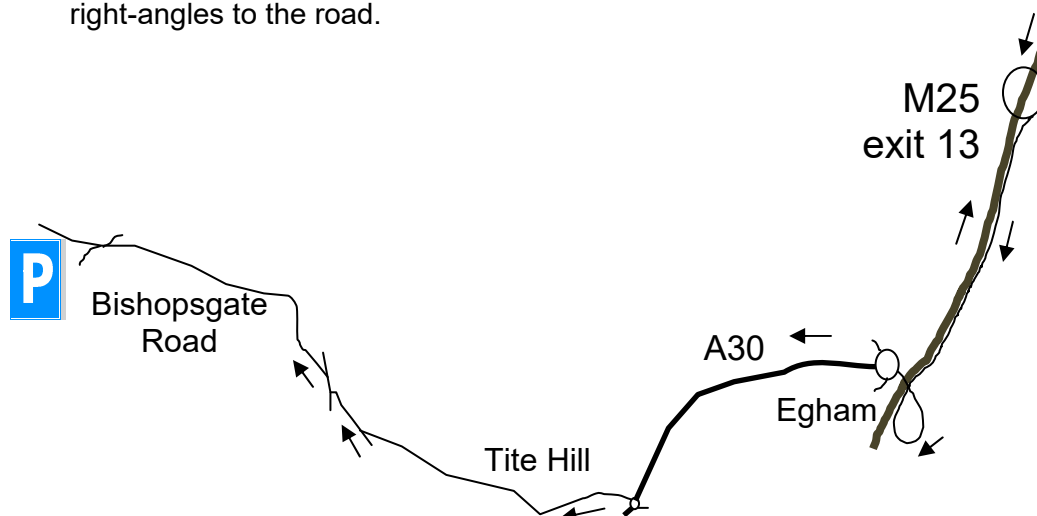
This monument to American President John F Kennedy, assassinated in 1963, was opened by Queen Elizabeth and Jackie Kennedy in May 1965. The portland stone memorial tablet was designed and inscribed by sculptor Alan Collins.

After the JFK memorial, continue straight ahead on a footpath, marked with a yellow arrow. The path passes a house on the left and continues ahead on a tarmac drive with some of the grounds of Brunel University on your left. After 500m, at the end, turn **left** on a main road, using a pavement on the other side. In 150m, turn **right** on Castle Hill Road and stay on it as it curves round to the left. (There are no useful paths through the woods here but they are enjoyable from the road.) At a crossroads turn **right** on Bishopsgate Road, using the generous pavement. You pass Bishopsgate School and several fine houses. When you reach the oblique turnings for Crimp Hill and Wick Lane, keep straight ahead, quickly arriving back at the roadside parking area, reassuringly close to the *Fox and Hounds*, where the walk began.



Getting there

By car: the following directions take you to the start at Bishopsgate Road from the M25. Leave at exit 13 (A30 Staines). Follow the sign for *Bagshot, Egham*, going on a slip road parallel to the M25 for a while. (If you came in the clockwise direction, this means doubling *back* parallel to the way you came.) Keep in the left lane so that you don't re-join the M25 and go round the cloverleaf, under the M25 to the big Runnymede roundabout. Take the **second left**, the A30 signposted *Basingstoke Camberley*. Just after a long art-deco garage, at the next roundabout, leave the A30 by turning **right** into **Tite Hill**. Follow Tite Hill all the way to a T-junction and turn **right** into Middle Hill. This road quickly takes you to a mini-roundabout by a very large green at Englefield Green. Go **right** and immediately **left** on Bishopsgate Road. Follow Bishopsgate Road to its end, near the *Fox and Hounds* and park on the left, at right-angles to the road.



By bus/train: bus 71 from Windsor or Staines station runs to Englefield Green (also Sundays). You can get out at Coopers Hill Lane, directly on the walk.

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