

COOPER'S HILL & RUNNYMEDE

THIS WALK INCLUDES RUNNYMEDE MEADOWS, PART OF THE THAMES LONG DISTANCE FOOTPATH AND SOME OF THE HISTORIC LANDMARKS IN ENGLEFIELD GREEN. THE START IS FROM COOPER'S HILL LANE CAR PARK (MAP REF. 995719). THERE ARE PUBLIC TOILETS THERE.

Turn left out of the car park into Cooper's Hill Lane and walk for 400 yards past the red brick walls of Brunel University to reach Priest Hill at the end. Turn right and walk on the narrow grass verge down the hill. After a few hundred yards take the first turning on the right by the footpath sign through the gate into Oak Lane.

This track winds past the University grounds down the hill to the John F. Kennedy Memorial. This simple Memorial bears the inscription "This acre of English Ground was given to the United States of America by the people of Britain in memory of John F. Kennedy, President of the United States of America 1961 – 1963". A flight of cobble stone steps leads you down the hill on the right hand side of the Memorial into Runnymede fields. Turn right through the gate and walk along the field boundary until reaching the Magna Carta Memorial on the right hand side. This temple-like structure is set in an enclosure and was erected in 1957 by the American Bar Association. The central plinth bears the following inscription: - "Dedicated in 1957 by the American Bar Association, as a tribute to the Magna Carta; symbol of freedom under law".

With your back to the Memorial walk towards the Windsor Road. Cross the road carefully to the bank of the River Thames. Magna Carta Island lies directly ahead. Turn to your right and walk down-stream along the riverbank heading towards Egham. After a short time a Public Footpath sign is reached directing you into Runnymede Pleasure Ground. This is an area of open space very popular during the summer season. At this time the riverbank can be full of people quietly fishing and the field behind populated by families, picnicking and enjoying the open space. Pass the former bathing pavilion and children's paddling pool, a short detour to the refreshment chalet and public toilets may be in order, and rejoin the towpath by the Wraysbury Skiff and Punting Club boathouse. Continue along the towpath. On reaching Yard Mead, your route takes a right turn down the road to emerge on the main Windsor Road. An optional detour continues along the towpath to Bell Weir to watch the myriad of boats passing through the Lock. If you decide to walk this stretch, retrace your steps back to Yard Mead to continue the route.

On reaching the Windsor Road cross the road with care. Public Footpath No. 12(E) leads from Windsor Road towards Egham Bypass at this point. Head along this tarmac path towards Hummer Road. The Tower of Egham Church can be seen ahead. On reaching the wooden footpath signs, turn to the right down Public Footpath No. 15(E). This leads up to a hedge. Follow alongside this until a gate and stile are reached. Pass through these and walk along the bank of the stream to two concrete stepping-stones. Turn left uphill, crossing the stile and turning right into Cooper's Hill Lane. Climb to the top of the hill bearing left at the lookout. Pass Kingswood Hall of Residence on your left hand side and the Air Forces Memorial on your right. The Memorial was designed by Sir Edward Maufe and consists of a shrine enclosed by cloisters. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II unveiled the memorial in 1953 as a fitting tribute to the 20,000 servicemen and women of the Air Forces who died during the Second World War and have no known graves. For a commanding view of the River Thames and its surrounding area climb the stairs to the roof area. Rejoin the road and turn right to reach Cooper's Hill car park where the walk began.

