

12 Weeping Willows. The Weeping Willow with its elegant pendulous branches thrives in wet habitats. The two here have become iconic residents of the riverside next to the Horseshoe Bridge.



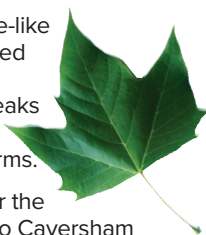
13 The Blade and Reading Abbey. The Blade was completed in 2009 and has become a famous symbol of Reading. It is located next to what remains of Reading Abbey. A popular myth is arising that Reading Abbey was as tall as The Blade. That is not correct though it may have been a similar height to the occupied portion.

14 King's Meadow. Originally owned by the Abbey, then the King, was purchased by the town as a recreation ground.

15 Water loving trees. Continuing along the South edge of the Meadow we pass Goat-Willow and several other species which thrive near water. Though not right by the river, these trees benefit from occasional flooding of the Meadow.

16 Thames Lido. There has been a bathing area here since 1860. In 1879, Reading Corporation built the largest pool in the South of England here, but for men only. This no longer exists. The Ladies' Swimming Bath was first opened in 1903 and is believed to be the largest surviving outdoor municipal pool of its type. The pool was closed in 1974. In 2004, as the result of a campaign, the building was awarded Grade II listed status and after significant refurbishment and extension opened as the Thames Lido in 2017.

17 London Planes. Have big maple-like leaves providing shade and are well suited to urban life. The bark absorbs carbon particles in the atmosphere and then breaks off, leaving a mottled appearance. They are large and sturdy and resistant to storms.



18 Civil War. As we come back over the bridge it's a good moment to look over to Caversham Bridge, the site of which (though not this later bridge) played an important role during the Civil War at the Siege of Reading in 1643. Reading repeatedly changed hands between the Royalists (Cavaliers) and Parliamentarians (Roundheads) in a series of bitter conflicts and its economy was ruined.

Useful information

How to get there:

- 1) By train: Take the North Exit from Reading Station and walk ahead, crossing Vastern Road. Go straight on through Norman Place and you emerge on the riverside. The pedestrian bridge is to your left. Cross it to reach the start point.
- 2) By bus: From Town Centre Friar Street take the pink 22, 25, berry 23, 24.
- 3) By car: Parking is available at Station North. Then proceed as in 1)

Walking time:

Approximately 2 hours.

This walk was produced jointly by **Reading Tree Wardens** and **Two Rivers Press** for the Reading-on-Thames Festival 2018. You can find more about Reading Tree Wardens at www.readingtreewardens.org.uk or on our Facebook page "Reading Tree Wardens". Two Rivers Press are at www.tworiverspress.com or Facebook, Instagram and Twitter @Two Rivers Press.

We thank poets Gill Learner, Sarah Smith and Damon Young for their appearance at the launch event.

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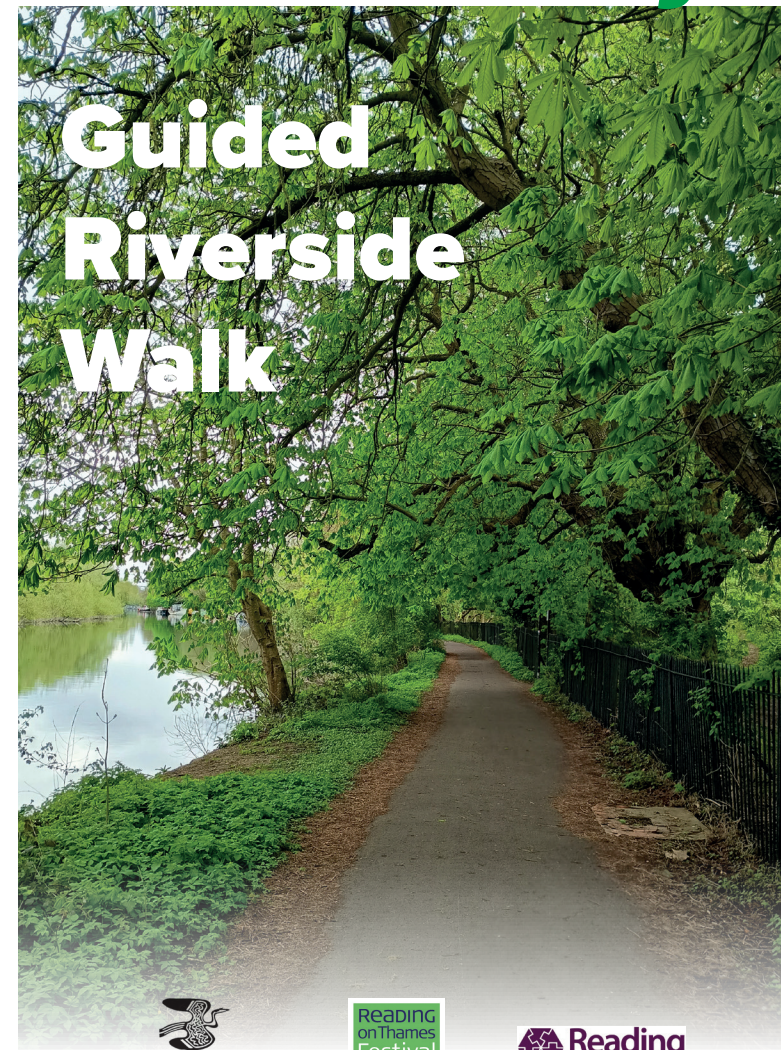
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From Town to Boundary:

Guided Riverside Walk



Introduction

The Reading suburb of Caversham is recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) as Cavesha (there are 25 different spellings of Caversham in documents over the years). By the Middle Ages it was a village clustered round the North end of the old Caversham Bridge. Nowadays it has a population of 32,000.

1 Christchurch Bridge. The new cable-stayed Christchurch Bridge, crossing the River Thames and available for cyclists and pedestrians, was opened in 2015. Note on crossing the beautiful Weeping Willows on the left and the clump of Silver Birch on the right.

2 Wingnut. An attractive tree, native to SW Asia, widely planted in parks, which bears unusual long and large pendant catkins carrying many flowers giving rise to broad winged nutlets.

3 Reading Bridge. The bridge dates from 1923 and is the first bridge on this site. In 1911 Caversham was transferred from Oxfordshire to Berkshire and the construction of this second bridge was part of the political negotiations that led to the extension of Reading's boundary. One gruesome tale: Amelia Dyer, known as

"The Ogress of Reading", was one of the most prolific serial killers in British history - possibly being responsible for over 400 murders. The evidence of the bagged corpse of an infant close to this bridge led to her downfall.

4 Giant Redwoods. Planted by Reading Tree Wardens on either side of the bridge, these native Californian trees could grow to a height of 50 metres.

5 Lombardy Poplar. These tall columnar trees, a form of Black Poplar, often planted in lines, derive from Italy, many being introduced in the mid 18th century.

6 Islands. Mill Green and Mill Island: Lower Caversham grew around Caversham Mill which was located on what is now called Heron Island. In the time of Edward the Confessor (1003-1066) it was held by Svain, a Saxon thane and Lord of Caversham. The mill ceased milling in 1929. View Island has a long history of private ownership including

a hotel and most recently a boatyard. In the 1990s it was derelict and dangerous and the Council took action to obtain possession in 1998. In June 2000 it was opened to the public as a nature park.

7 Sycamores at View Island. This space was originally a tennis court attached to a hotel now demolished. Note how the trees surrounding it have stayed at the boundary edge. Sycamores, members of the Maple family, are native to South and Central Europe, and produce winged seeds that spin like helicopter blades, thus carried on the wind. They can be invasive but, on the other hand, they support a rich range of wildlife.

8 Crack Willow. As you move on, on your right you will see a twisted and battered Crack- Willow. It illustrates how damaged a tree can become and yet survive. If not cut back and managed, a Crack-Willow will fall apart with pieces drifting down the water until it finds a spot to which it can attach and re-grow.

9 Caversham Lock and Weir. The first reference to the complex at De Bohun Island (now usually called Lock Island) was in 1493 when ownership of, and revenue from, a weir, mill, ferry and flash lock at the site was granted to Notley Abbey. The pound lock was opened in 1778, but the lock house, long promised, was not built until 1819. The lock was rebuilt in 1875.

10 Mixed woodland. Following the Thames Path, this stretch of mixed woodland features Dogwood, Hornbeam, veteran Horse Chestnuts, Oak, magnificent Ash, Crack Willow and Goat Willow.

11 Horseshoe Bridge. This listed restored wooden bridge spanning the River Kennet was built by I K Brunel next to his brick bridge which supported the Great Western Railway. It allowed horses towing barges to cross the river.

