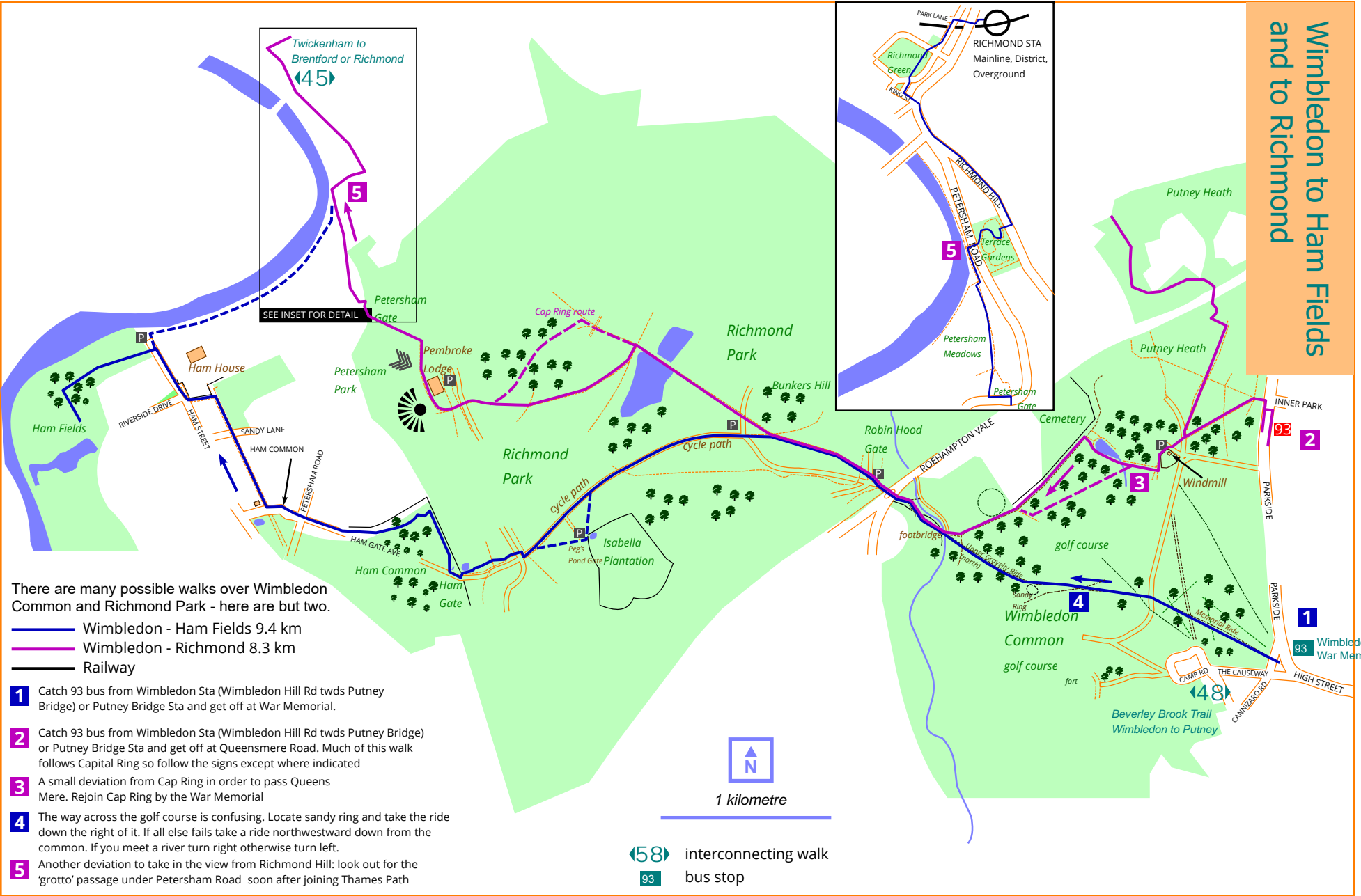


Wimbledon to Ham Fields and to Richmond



There are many possible walks over Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park - here are but two.

- Wimbledon - Ham Fields 9.4 km
- Wimbledon - Richmond 8.3 km
- Railway

- 1** Catch 93 bus from Wimbledon Sta (Wimbledon Hill Rd twds Putney Bridge) or Putney Bridge Sta and get off at War Memorial.
- 2** Catch 93 bus from Wimbledon Sta (Wimbledon Hill Rd twds Putney Bridge) or Putney Bridge Sta and get off at Queensmere Road. Much of this walk follows Capital Ring so follow the signs except where indicated
- 3** A small deviation from Cap Ring in order to pass Queens Mere. Rejoin Cap Ring by the War Memorial
- 4** The way across the golf course is confusing. Locate sandy ring and take the ride down the right of it. If all else fails take a ride northwestward down from the common. If you meet a river turn right otherwise turn left.
- 5** Another deviation to take in the view from Richmond Hill: look out for the 'grotto' passage under Petersham Road soon after joining Thames Path

58 interconnecting walk
93 bus stop

Wimbledon to Ham Fields and to Richmond

These two walks crossing Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park are a sample. Many other routes are possible. Although this is sand heathland much of the way is on unmetalled paths.

Wimbledon Common

Wimbledon Common is the largest expanse of heathland in the London area. There is an area of bog with unique flora. The western slopes, which lie on London Clay, support mature mixed woodland. Most of the Common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation.

In 1864, the lord of the manor, Earl Spencer, who owned Wimbledon manor, attempted to pass a private parliamentary bill to enclose the Common for the creation of a new park with a house and gardens and to sell part for building. In a landmark decision for English common land, permission was refused and a board of conservators was established in 1871 to take ownership of the common and preserve it in its natural condition.

To mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887, workmen dammed a stream running through meadowland near Wimbledon windmill, so creating a man-made lake. Queensmere soon became a popular attraction, both for boating and as

a venue for paddling and swimming. The Wimbledon Town Golf Club was founded in 1908. Membership was limited to 100 residents of Wimbledon and the entrance fee and annual subscription set at one guinea each. The Common course is also being played by London Scottish Golf Club, and a ladies' golf club that was absorbed by Royal Wimbledon in 1930. In 1919 the South London Golf Club merged with WCGC. The name became Wimbledon Common Golf Club in 1928.

Richmond Park

Richmond Park is the largest Royal Park in London covering an area of 2,500 acres. The royal connections to this park begin with Edward (1272-1307), when the area was known as the Manor of Sheen. The name was changed to Richmond during Henry VII's reign. In 1625 Charles I brought his court to Richmond Palace to escape the plague in London and turned it into a park for red and fallow deer. His decision, in 1637, to enclose the land was not popular with the local residents, but he did allow pedestrians the right of way. To this day the walls remain, partially rebuilt and reinforced.

Isabella Plantation

In 1831, Lord Sidmouth, the park deputy ranger, fenced off 42 acres of the Isabella Slade. He planted oak, beech and sweet chestnut trees as a crop for timber and

gave the area the name it has today, Isabella Plantation. The present garden of clearings, ponds and streams was established from the 1950s onwards, largely the work of George Thomson, the park superintendent. He removed *Rhododendron ponticum* from large areas and replaced it with other rhododendron species and established evergreen Azaleas around the Still Pond and planted other exotic shrub and tree species. The main stream through the garden from Broomfield Gate was dug in 1960 and the plantation enlarged to include Peg's Pond. In 1989 a wild stream was dug in the north section and this has been colonized by ferns, water plantains and brook lime.

Ham

Between the Royal Courts at Richmond and Hampton Court, Ham's predominantly agricultural area developed from the beginning of the 17th century, with the construction of Ham House in 1610. The related history of the Earls of Dysart dominated the development of Ham and Petersham for the following four centuries. When the park was enclosed by Charles I in 1637, Ham parish lost the use of over 800 acres, almost half of which was common land. In return, a deed was struck which has effectively protected most of the remaining common land, Ham Common, to the present day.