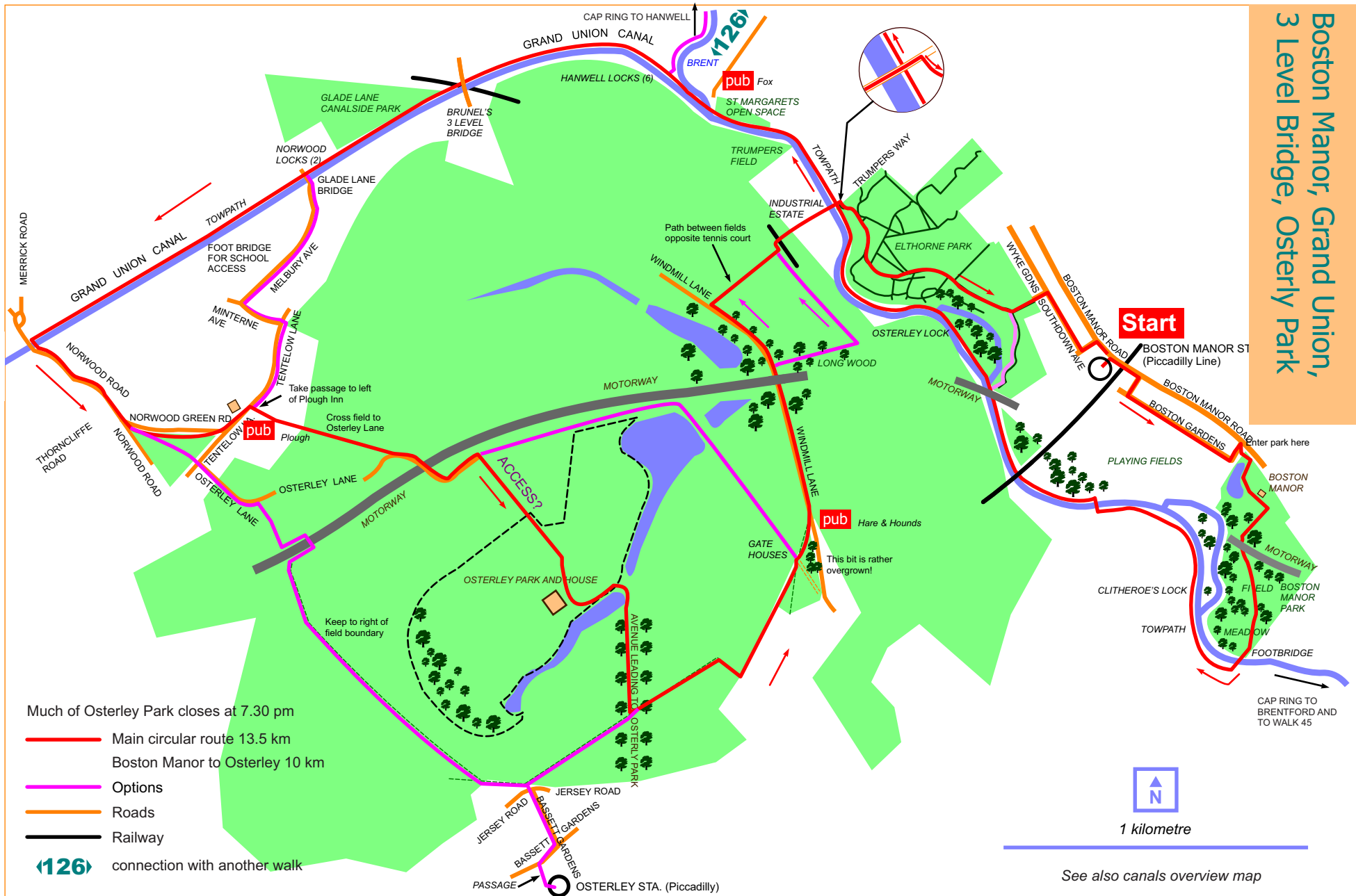


# Boston Manor, Grand Union, 3 Level Bridge, Osterley Park



### **Boston Manor, Grand Union, Osterley Park**

*This walk of varied terrain occupies mainly green spaces involving a canal with a fine bank of locks, Brunel's 'three bridges' and two country houses.*

#### **Boston Manor House**

Boston Manor House is a fine Jacobean manor house built in 1623. Set back from Boston Manor Road in Brentford, the three-storey building is situated in parkland containing a lake and ancient cedar trees. Boston Manor House was built for Lady Mary Reade, whose initials and the date 1623 appear on the ceiling of the State Drawing Room. In its original form, imagine a Jacobean-looking cube, i.e. square on plan and elevation, topped by two gables on each facade, windows on all sides, a staircase in the north west corner, and a massive core of fireplaces and chimney stacks. On the south facade there are remains of a small circular window, long blocked up, evidence that the window detailing may have been very different at this time. In 1671, James Clitherow, expanded the house to the north with a large addition blended with the original work and topped by more gables. So the east (front) facade presented a pleasing 3-bay symmetry, a desirable asset now that

the classical ideals of the Italian High Renaissance were appearing in built form in England with the work of fashionable architects like Inigo Jones.

#### **The Canal**

The Grand Union Canal is the longest canal in the UK at 286 miles. The canal was never constructed as an entity, but is the result of amalgamations between 1894 and 1929 of several independent waterways — the oldest being the navigations around the River Soar in Leicestershire, part we walk along was the Grand Junction Canal, built between Braunston (between Daventry and Rugby) and the River Thames to improve the communications between Birmingham, the Midlands and London. It was fully opened in 1805. Branches were added: to Paddington, Buckingham, Northampton and Aylesbury. The Slough Branch was one of the last to be built.

Although the Grand Junction is a broad canal it was generally used only by narrow boats, except at the London end. In 1894 the Grand Junction bought the canals which now comprise the 'Leicester Line', then in 1929 the Regent's, Grand Junction and the two Warwick Canals merged and the result was renamed as the 'Grand Union Canal'.

The new company embarked on a large-scale modernisation programme to enable broad-beamed boats to work between London and Birmingham. Long lengths were dredged and strengthened with concrete bank protection. Bridges were widened or replaced, and the narrow locks between Braunston and Birmingham were replaced with broad locks (the remains of most of the old locks can be seen alongside their larger replacements). The ambitious scheme was completed in 1937 but much of the canal remained too shallow for broad boats to pass each other. However, narrow boats could now easily and quickly work in pairs. Traffic increased in the short term, but after the war the long-term downwards trend was relentless as canalside factories ceased using coal transported on the canal as a fuel or obtained it from other sources.

Today, the Grand Union Canal is alive with pleasure boats, walkers, and cyclists'.

#### **Hanwell Lock Flight**

This scheduled monument is impressive. The series of six locks which raises the canal by 53ft in a third of a mile makes for a fascinating landscape to look around and explore. Five side ponds can be found alongside the flight on the south side of the navigation. Built in 1815, these were used

to store water to re-fill the locks in busy periods.

### **Three levels bridge**

Long after the Grand Junction Canal was completed, the Great Western & Brentford Railway commissioned their chief engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel to survey where and how the railway should pass beneath the canal and Windmill Lane on its route to Brentford. He chose a point where the road and canal crossed to build a unique example of a bridge where three modes of transport are directly superimposed on each other. Known locally as 'Three Bridges', it was part of the last railway project engineered by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Work began in 1856 to carry both Windmill Lane and the Grand Junction canal over the double-track broad gauge Great Western & Brentford Railway in a deep cutting 34ft below road level at the same point, so that the line of the railway would avoid violating the view of Osterley Park.

### **Osterley Park**

Three generations of the Child family at Osterley were intimately involved in the East India Company. As far as we know none of the Child family who owned the property in the seventeenth and eighteenth century ever travelled to Asia, or served as

employees of the EIC. However, the family was concerned with the governance of the Company at an important stage of its development, accumulating wealth through trading and substantial EIC stockholdings. In 1761, Sir Francis Child the Elder's grandson, commissioned Robert Adam to redevelop the house at Osterley in the Neo-classical style. Francis died suddenly two years later and his brother Robert Child further commissioned Adam to design Neo-classical interiors for the house. Osterley Park is one of the best examples of Robert Adam's work. Adam was responsible for the total design of Osterley – from the magnificent portico to the patterns on the ceilings and the designs for the furniture. He also designed garden buildings such as the Garden House, the Orangery (no longer standing) and the Temple of Pan. Adam's work at Osterley spanned from 1761 to 1779 and many of his designs have been preserved at the Sir John Soane's Museum in London. Robert Child's fortune passed to his eldest granddaughter, who married George Villiers, later 5th Earl of Jersey. Osterley Park proved expensive to maintain, but it stayed in the family until 1949 when the 9th Earl of Jersey gave the house and grounds to the National Trust.

### **Elthorne Park**

The name Elthorne goes back at least one thousand years. It was mentioned in the Domesday survey as being one of the six Hundreds of the shire of Middlesex along with Edmonton, Gore, Hounslow, Ossulstone and Spelthorne. The origin of the park goes back to the 1500s. The original much larger estate, called La Bromeland, was named after the wild yellow flowering Broom shrub, which still grows on the steep embankment of the river Brent. In the 16th century Thomas Gresham's widow bought the freehold of 'Broomland' which later passed down through Osterley to the Earls of Jersey. Fifteen years after the General Enclosure Act of 1801 the estate was reduced to 90 acres and then became known as Park Farm. At one time, with Cuckoo Farm it was one of the last two existing farms in Hanwell. In 1908 Lord Jersey started negotiations with the Council and Middlesex County Council about the use of the land. Whilst negotiations were going on he allowed a section of the land to be used as a temporary recreation ground. The farmland was finally broken up c1910 and some of the land is now open space and playing fields but seven and a half acres of the site were used to form Elthorne Park.