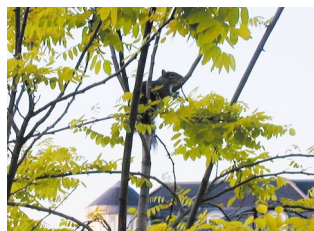




A STROLL AROUND THE HYTHE

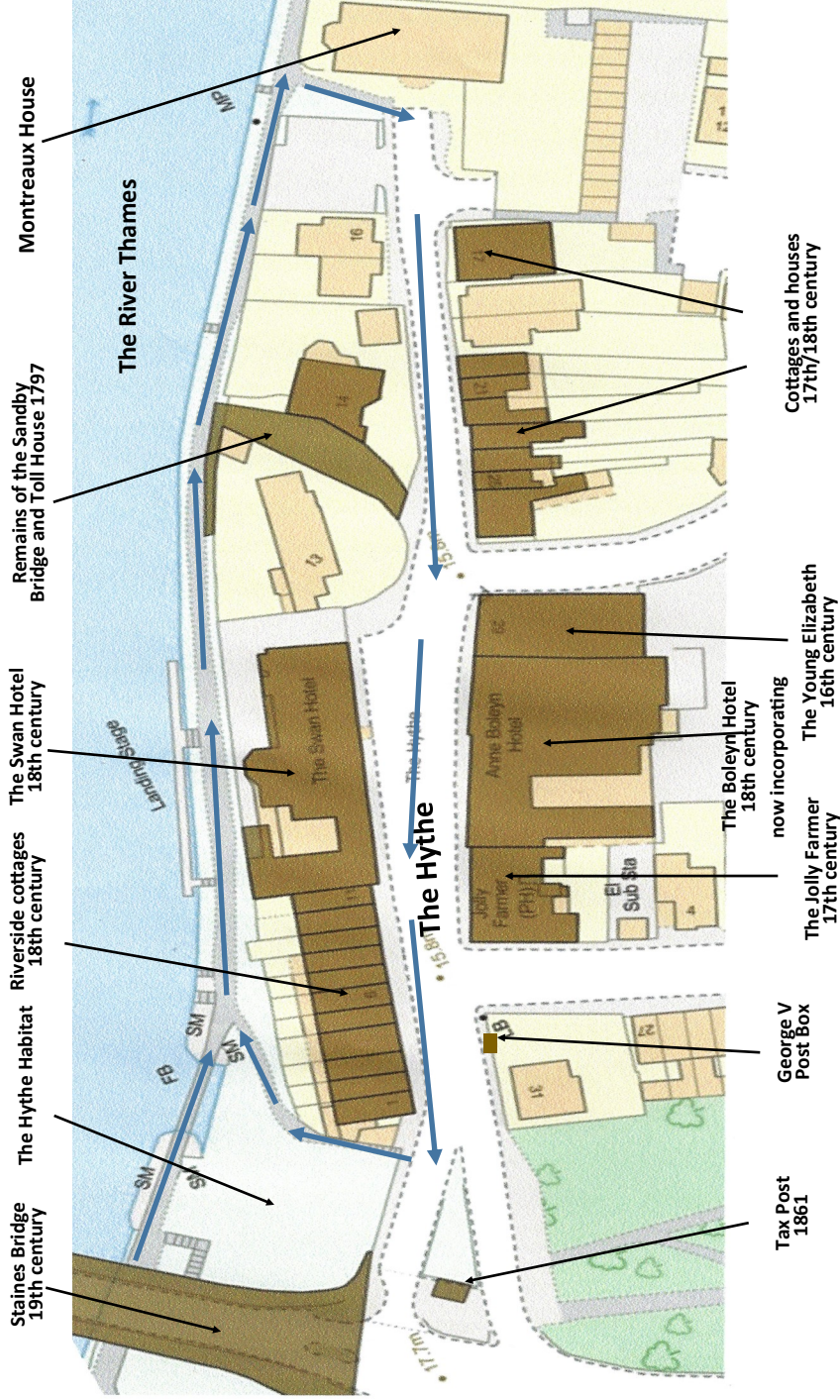
*... one of the most historically important
enclaves along the river Thames ...*



Grade II Listed buildings and other structures

Map courtesy of Runnymede Borough Council

A register of 'Listed' buildings and other structures of architectural and historic importance is maintained by Historic England. A Grade II Listed building or structure is deemed to be "of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve it". There are 28 Grade II Listed buildings and other structures in The Hythe.



THE HYTHE

The Hythe runs through the heart of the Egham Hythe Conservation Area. It is one of the most historically important and interesting enclaves along the river Thames. Its history reaches back to Roman times when this part of the river was a small port (“hythe”), and it has had a colourful history since then. Today, The Hythe boasts 28 Grade II listed properties and land-mark structures, most dating from the 17th and 18th centuries. The map inside will help you follow the fifteen-minute stroll around The Hythe suggested in this brochure.

Produced by

Friends of The Hythe

*Serving the interests of residents in and adjacent to the
Egham Hythe Conservation Area*

A STROLL AROUND THE HYTHE

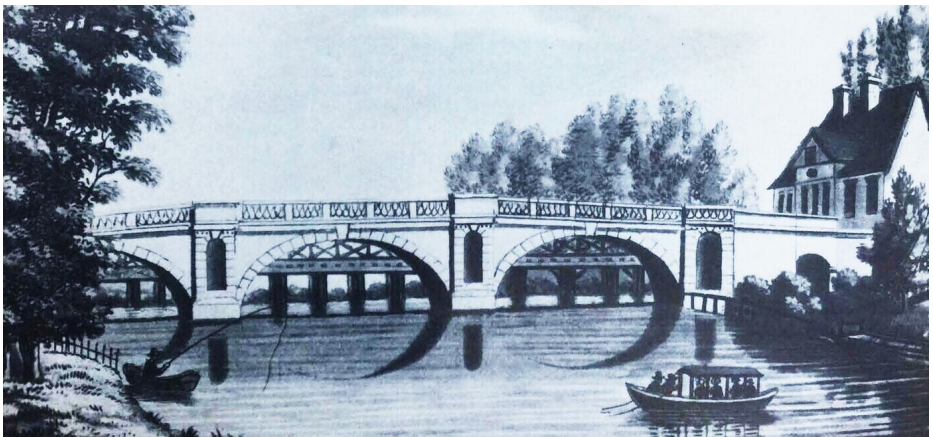
A chequered history of bridges

The best place to start is probably the towpath at Staines bridge (see map), at the western end of the Egham Hythe Conservation Area. In fact, the first bridge across the Thames a little down river from here was built by the Romans in the middle of the first century AD. It is believed to have been the only bridge across the Thames at the time apart from one in London. It was a critical transit point in what became known as the “Devil’s Highway”.

A small town developed at the bridgehead, then called Pontes (“bridge”) and today called Staines-upon-Thames.

Several bridges were built in subsequent centuries over the river within 100 metres of the existing bridge. A sturdy wooden bridge built in the 13th century is thought to have survived in use, with frequent repairs, until the 17th century.

The continuing importance of Staines during this period is reflected in Shakespeare’s “King Henry V” in which Hostess Quickly, telling her husband that she wants to accompany him to Southampton, says to him “Prithee, honey-sweet husband, let me bring thee to Staines”. For what purpose is not clear!



The Thomas Sandby bridge (1797), one of the earlier bridges with remains still in existence



Staines Bridge today

A new wooden bridge was built to replace the earlier one and this in turn was replaced in the 1790s by a stone bridge designed by Thomas Sandby. He was a war artist and architect who was also private secretary to the Duke of Cumberland and became a personal friend of King George III.

However, this transition from wood to stone was not entirely successful. Although parts of this bridge remain in evidence today, together with what was the toll house to collect dues from those crossing it, its foundations began to collapse within just a few years.

Nor was its cast iron replacement much more successful. It soon began to crack and was finally replaced in 1832 by the current granite bridge designed by engineer brothers George and John Rennie.

Because this was an important crossing of the Thames, a temporary second bridge was built nearby during the Second World War as an insurance against bomb damage. After the war this was used for a while as a pedestrian crossing. The current bridge was widened in 1958 to accommodate pedestrian walkways.



The Hythe Habitat

Immediately on your right walking downriver from Staines Bridge you first pass a plot of land owned by the Environment Agency. This became an unsightly and insanitary blight on the area during the 2010s when annual maintenance stopped as a consequence of constraints on the Agency's resources.

In 2019 the Conservation Area's residents' organisation (*Friends of The Hythe*) signed an agreement with the Agency to transform the appearance and amenity of the plot

into *The Hythe Habitat*. Overgrown vegetation and fly-tipped detritus were cleared away, the existing crack willow trees were pollarded, new mature trees and bushes were planted, a 'bug hotel' was constructed and bird boxes installed. It is still a 'work in progress'.



***The Bug Hotel with Eco Warriors from
The Hythe Community Primary School***



The Hythe Habitat (above and left) - a work in progress



The eleven riverside cottages

Down the towpath

Fourteen of The Hythe's 28 Grade II listed buildings and other land-mark structures back onto the towpath.

First you pass eleven cottages, built in the late 18th century initially to house the families of the workmen who constructed the Sandby stone bridge and toll house some 100 metres down river.



The Swan with a view over the river

Adjoining the last of the cottages is The Swan Hotel with its popular riverside restaurant and bar. It was built at the end of the 18th century to replace The Swan Inn, originally called White Horse Inn, which was demolished to make way for the construction of the Sandby bridge. Samuel Pepys (1633 – 1703), the diarist and Member of Parliament, is said to have been a frequent visitor to The Swan Inn.

Downriver from The Swan is what's left of the Sandby bridge and its toll house (subsequently enlarged), and two modern semi-detached properties on the site of what had been an engineering works.



Remains of the Thomas Sandby bridge and toll house



From there, you have a choice: continue some 200 metres down the towpath to where it ends at the railway bridge and Staines Boat Club, or take the short path alongside the recently refurbished Montreaux House office block to the bottom of The Hythe.



Montreaux House

Back up The Hythe

From Montreaux House, walking back up The Hythe to Staines Bridge, you pass several other properties of historic interest. First, on your left, is a detached house and then a row of cottages and houses, the earliest of them built in the mid-17th century for the lightermen and boatmen on the Thames.

The taller houses at the end of the row were built in the mid-18th century. High on the front wall of one of these properties are the original insurance plaques indicating an entitlement to the attendance of a fire engine.

The last property in this row, at the junction of The Hythe with Chertsey Lane, had at one time been an apothecary. This is No 26 and The Boleyn Hotel on the other side of the junction with Chertsey Lane, opposite The Swan Hotel, is No 29. Both Nos 27 and 28 were demolished to enable an extension to No 26 and the widening of Chertsey Lane in the 1950s.



***Insurance plaques
on 23 The Hythe***



27/28 The Hythe (above right of red line), were demolished in the 1950s to facilitate an extension to 26 and the widening of Chertsey Lane

Today The Boleyn Hotel comprises three connected Grade II listed buildings.

The earliest of the three, the first as you head towards Staines Bridge, dates back to the 16th century when the “hythe” was a very busy medieval river port. It was called The Young Elizabeth.

The main part of the property in the middle was built in the 18th century and until recently was known as The Anne Boleyn. (It is said that King Henry VIII used to meet clandestinely nearby with Anne Boleyn in the late 1520s. She became the second of his six wives in 1533 and was executed just three years later for adultery.)

The last of the three properties is The Jolly Farmer, built in the 17th century. It closed as a pub in 2010 and was subsequently incorporated into The Boleyn Hotel.



The Boleyn Hotel, including The Young Elizabeth (left)



Two artefacts of historic interest, both Grade II listed, will bring you to the top of The Hythe. The first of these is a George V post-box. The other, right at the top in a small triangle of land, is a tax post installed in 1861. This was the point at which the Corporation of London collected duties on all coal and wine cargo passing this point on the river and highway. From here you can return to the towpath via the steps and



**The George V
post-box**



**The tax post
(1861)**



The Hythe as it was a hundred years ago

... and as it is today

