



Royal  
Geographical  
Society  
with IBG

## Tales of a riverbank

A self guided walk from Marlow to Bourne End



Explore the physical characteristics of the Middle Thames

Discover how people earned a living along the river

Find out how it has been a place of leisure and recreation for generations

Learn about the literature inspired by this stretch of the Thames

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the stories of our landscapes  
discovered through walks





This booklet is to be used alongside the audio commentary for this walk

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Cover image: Marlow weir and church © Mike Jackson

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# Tales of a riverbank

## Livelihood, leisure and literature along the Thames at Marlow

Marlow is a fashionable commuter town that sits on the Thames half way between Oxford and London.

This delightful walk explores the riverside from Marlow downstream to Bourne End.

Along the way you will see the physical characteristics of the Middle Thames – its width and its bends, its floodplains and its sediments, its fish and wildfowl.



Rowers in Marlow's Spring Regatta  
© Mike Jackson

Find out how people have earned their livelihoods along the banks of the river, how Marlow was once a poor riverside port and how its trade declined with the coming of the railway.



Swan Upper from the Dyers Company with a cygnet  
© Mike Jackson

Discover how the Victorians found new uses for the river and made it a playground for the upper classes, and see the leisure activities that continue along the riverbank today.

Find out about literature written by authors who were inspired by the beauty of this stretch of the Thames. Hear some unusual tales about wild woods, puppy pie, a cardboard castle and the mysteries of Peterswood.

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## Practical information

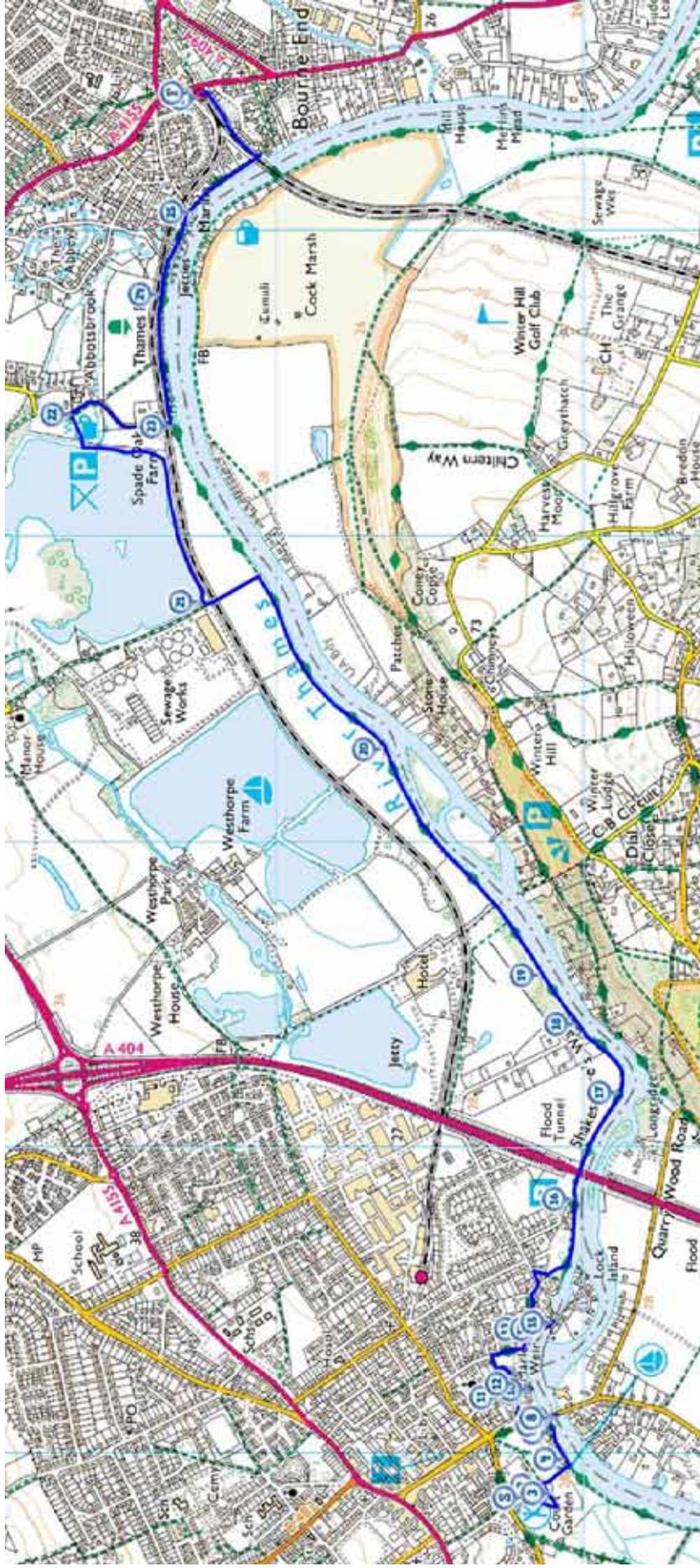
<b>Location</b>	Marlow, Buckinghamshire, Southeast England
<b>Getting there</b>	<p><b>Train</b> - Served by direct trains from London Paddington via Maidenhead (one every hour).</p> <p><b>Car</b> - Easily accessible from the M40 and M4. Parking available at Court Garden Leisure Centre (pay and display) and other places in the town centre.</p> <p><b>Bus</b> - Served by local bus services running from High Wycombe and Henley.</p>
<b>Start point</b>	Marlow Museum, Court Garden Leisure Centre, Pound Lane, Marlow, SL7 2AE
<b>Directions from railway station to start</b>	Walk along Station Approach to The Marlow Donkey pub. Turn left along Station Road. After about 400 metres is the junction with High Street. Go straight across into Pound Lane. After 200 metres turn left into Court Garden car park.
<b>Finish point</b>	Bourne End railway station, Station Road, Bourne End, SL8 5QH
<b>Onward journey</b>	You can return to the start in Marlow by train (one per hour), or on foot via Winter Hill. Alternatively you can travel onwards from Bourne End to Maidenhead (train or bus) or High Wycombe (bus).
<b>Distance</b>	4 ½ miles
<b>Need a shorter route?</b>	There is an option for a shorter walk around Marlow of around 1 ½ miles covering Stops 1 to 15
<b>Level</b>	Gentle - An easy walk along a flat route
<b>Terrain</b>	The first part of the route around Marlow (Stops 1 to 15) is on pavements and paved paths; much of the rest of the walk is on the riverside path.

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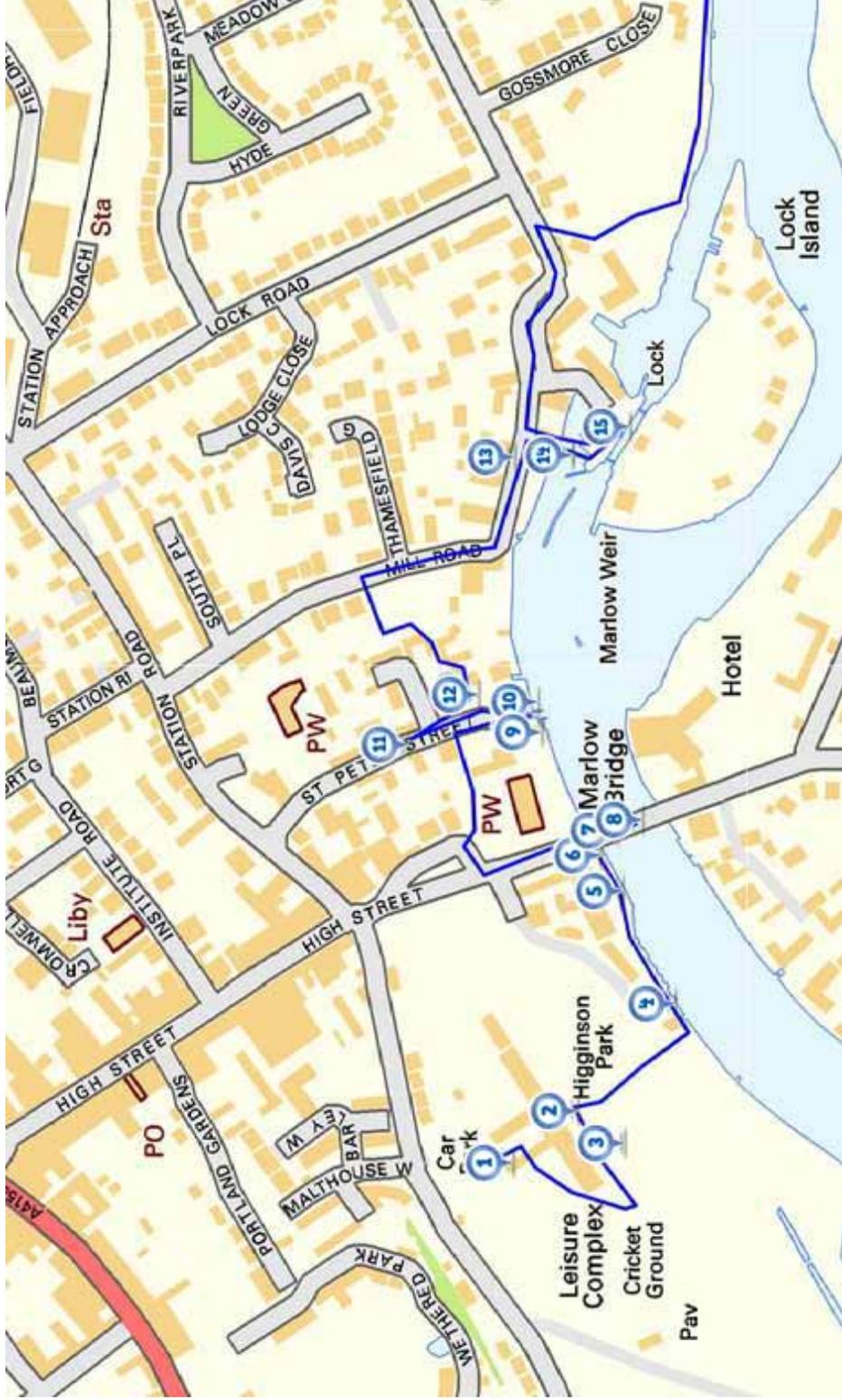
<b>Conditions</b>	The riverside path can be muddy in winter and sometimes impassable when the river is in flood.
<b>Suitable for</b>	<p><b>Families</b> - Plenty along the riverside to interest children</p> <p><b>Dogs</b> - keep on a lead on grazing land</p> <p><b>Wheelchairs and pushchairs</b> - The shorter route around Marlow (Stops 1 to 15) is suitable.</p>
<b>Refreshments</b>	<p>Various cafes, pubs and restaurants in Marlow and Bourne End including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Café at Court Garden House (Stop 2)</li> <li>- Two Brewers (Stop 11) (due to reopen in 2014 after a fire)</li> <li>- Café at Old Thatch Cottage (Stop 22)</li> <li>- Spade Oak pub (Stop 22)</li> <li>- The Bounty pub (Stop 25)</li> </ul>
<b>Toilets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higginson Park, Marlow (Stop 3)</li> <li>- Bourne End railway station (Stop 27)</li> </ul>
<b>Places to visit</b>	<p><b>Marlow Museum</b> is open on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays from 1pm to 5pm in summer, but only on Sundays in winter.</p> <p><b>Old Thatch Cottage garden</b> is open from mid-May to the end of August on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from 2pm to 5.30pm.</p>
<b>Other info</b>	<b>Sailing</b> takes place at Upper Thames Sailing Club on Sundays for most of the year as well as on Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons in the summer.
<b>Tourist information</b>	<p>Located at 55a High Street, Marlow SL7 1BA  N.B. Entrance round the corner in Institute Road  Tel: 01628 483597  <a href="http://www.visitbuckinghamshire.org">www.visitbuckinghamshire.org</a></p>

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# Route overview



## Detail of first part of route



### Stopping points

1. Marlow Museum, Court Garden car park
2. Court Garden House
3. Statue of Sir Steve Redgrave, Higginson Park
4. Thames riverbank in Higginson Park
5. Thames riverbank by Marlow Bridge
6. Under Marlow Bridge
7. On Marlow Bridge looking downstream at The Compleat Angler Hotel

8. On Marlow Bridge looking downstream at the weir
9. Jetty at the end of St Peter Street
10. Jetty at the end of St Peter Street
11. Fisherman's Retreat, St Peter Street
12. Seven Corners Passage, off St Peter Street
13. The Garth, 31 Mill Lane
14. Arched bridge over the mill pond near Marlow Lock
15. Marlow Lock

## Detail of middle section of route



### Stopping points

- 16.** Gossmore Park
- 17.** Opposite Longridge Activity Centre
- 18.** Opposite Quarry Wood Hall (the Cardboard Castle)
- 19.** Opposite Quarry Wood
- 20.** Kissing gate on riverside path opposite boathouse
- 21.** Beside Spade Oak Lake



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## Directions

Listen to each track then read the directions in the boxes below to get to the next stop.

### 1. Welcome to Marlow

#### Marlow Museum, Court Garden car park

##### Directions 1

From the Museum and car park go round the side of Court Garden House by the cricket pitch. Stop outside the front of the house overlooking the river. Listen to Track 2.

### 2. A batty beginning

#### Court Garden House

##### Directions 2

Go over to the statue of Sir Steve Redgrave which is just in front of Court Garden House and listen to Track 3.

### 3. Higginson's golden legacy

#### Statue of Sir Steve Redgrave, Higginson Park

##### Directions 3

Make your way across the grass to the bank of the river and listen to Track 4.

### 4. A swan in chains

#### Thames riverbank in Higginson Park

##### Directions 4

Walk along the riverside path towards the bridge. Stop just before the bridge, look across the river at the rowing club and listen to Track 5.

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## 5. Bridged with Budapest

### Thames riverbank by Marlow Bridge

#### Directions 5

Continue a few metres further. Stop right beside the bridge and listen to Track 6.

## 6. Who ate puppy pie?

### Under Marlow Bridge

#### Directions 6

Follow the Thames Path signs alongside the bridge. Go up the steps on the right or up the slope and then cross the road. Walk onto the bridge. Stop part way across looking towards The Compleat Angler hotel and listen to Track 7.

## 7. The one that got away

### On Marlow Bridge looking downstream at The Compleat Angler Hotel

#### Directions 7

Stay on the bridge. Look at the weir and listen to Track 8.

## 8. Taming the river

### On Marlow Bridge looking downstream at the weir

#### Directions 8

Retrace your steps across the bridge the way you came. Follow the perimeter of the churchyard round to the right. Turn right as if into the churchyard but then take the path on the left signposted for the Thames Path. Notice the swan emblems on the lamp posts here. Follow the path with the churchyard on your right. At the end of the passage turn right into St Peter Street. Stop at the jetty by the river and listen to Track 9.

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## 9. Gone in a flash

### Jetty at the end of St Peter Street

#### Directions 9

Stay at the jetty and listen to Track 10.

## 10. Wharves and warehouses

### Jetty at the end of St Peter Street

#### Directions 10

Retrace your steps back along St Peter Street. Pass the Two Brewers pub and notice the names of the houses you pass. After an entranceway on the right called Fisherman's Retreat, stop outside the next building which is a series of three red brick houses and listen to Track 11.

## 11. Boating and fishing

### Fisherman's Retreat, St Peter Street

#### Directions 11

Retrace your steps past the Two Brewers pub. Immediately after the entrance to the pub yard is a passageway signposted Thames Path. Stop at the entrance to the passageway and listen to Track 12.

## 12. Counting corners

### Seven Corners Passage, off St Peter Street

#### Directions 12

Walk along Seven Corners Passage – and see how many corners you count. At the end turn right into Mill Lane. Follow the road and shortly after it bends round to the left look for the second house on the left which is number 31 called The Garth. Stop outside this house and listen to Track 13.

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### 13. Bold as brass

#### The Garth, 31 Mill Lane

##### Directions 13

Continue along the lane. After about 25 metres take the footpath on the right signposted to Marlow Lock. Stop on the arched bridge and listen to Track 14.

### 14. Weirs and water wheels

#### Arched bridge over the mill pond near Marlow Lock

##### Directions 14

Continue across the arched bridge and round the corner. Stop by the lock and listen to Track 15.

### 15. A new pound

#### Marlow Lock

##### Directions 15

When you are ready retrace your steps over the arched bridge and turn right along the lane. Go past the entrance to the modern housing development on the site of Marlow Mill. After a short distance the road bends to the left and shortly after is a footpath on the right hand side signposted 'Thames Path, Bourne End 2 miles'. Follow this path to the river. Continue along this path until you reach a grassy field just before the large road bridge. Listen to Track 16 here.

**Note:** The lock is the end of the short version of the walk and from there you can retrace your steps back into the town centre. To return to the station continue along Mill Road which becomes Gossmore Lane. Take the first left into Lock Road. After about 400 metres turn right into Station Approach.

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## 16. Flooding and football

### Gossmore Park

#### Directions 16

Continue along the riverside path and under the road bridge. As the path and river start to bend around to the left stop in a place where you have a good view of the Longridge Activity Centre on the opposite bank and listen to Track 17.

## 17. Journey's End

### Opposite Longridge Activity Centre

#### Directions 17

Continue along the riverside path until you are opposite a large house that looks like a castle and listen to Track 18.

## 18. A cardboard castle

### Opposite Quarry Wood Hall (the Cardboard Castle)

#### Directions 18

Continue along the riverside path for 200 metres or so until you see the pitches of Marlow Rugby Club on your left. Stop at one of the benches or picnic tables by the river and listen to Track 19.

## 19. Wild woods

### Opposite Quarry Wood

#### Directions 19

Continue along the riverside path and through a kissing gate into a field (N.B. a kissing gate is a hinged gate with a small enclosure through which people but not animals can pass). Continue along the path and through another two kissing gates. Stop at the fourth kissing gate which is just past the end of an island in the river and opposite a prominent two-storey boathouse. Listen to Track 20 here.

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## 20. Sinister circles

### Kissing gate on riverside path opposite boathouse

#### Directions 20

Continue along the riverside path and through another kissing gate. When you reach the next kissing gate into Spade Oak Meadow, do not go through the gate but take the path to the left alongside the hedge. Go through the next gate and cross the railway line with care. Exit through the next gate and take the path to the right. Stop by the lake and listen to Track 21.

## 21. Gritty hollows

### Beside Spade Oak Lake

#### Directions 21

Follow the footpath around the lake keeping the lake on your left and the railway line on your right. After about 500 metres there is a footpath to the right. Take this path over the small bridge, through the gate and across a field. Go through the gate onto the lane. Stop outside Old Thatch Cottage opposite and listen to Track 22.

## 22. The mysteries of Peterswood

### Old Thatch Cottage, Coldmoorholme Lane

#### Directions 22

Old Thatch Gardens are open from May to August on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons and are well worth a visit (£4 adults; £1 children). You may wish to stop at the Spade Oak pub for refreshments or food. When you are ready follow the lane past the pub and cross the railway carefully. Stop by the river and listen to Track 23.

## 23. Horse power

### Riverbank at end of Coldmoorholme Lane

#### Directions 23

Follow the riverside path downstream (with the river on your right). Follow the path as it goes into the grounds of Upper Thames Sailing Club. Stop outside the club house and listen to Track 24.

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## 24. A gentleman's yacht

### Upper Thames Sailing Club

#### Directions 24

Leave the sailing club grounds through the gate and continue along the riverside path past Bourne End Marina. Go past the OTT Restaurant and Bar and continue following the Thames Path. Just after the end of the marina is a small grassy area with benches called Dinnie's Riverside. Stop there and listen to Track 25.

## 25. Gunpowder

### Dinnie's Riverside near Bourne End Marina

#### Directions 25

Leave the little park and continue along the riverside path which is narrow in places as it passes between garden fences. Immediately after going under the railway bridge take the steps on the left and follow the path with the railway line on your left and houses on your right. Go through the car park, stop at Bourne End station and listen to Track 26.

## 26. A metal donkey

### Bourne End railway station

#### Directions 26

Remain at Bourne End station and listen to Track 27.

## 27. The story of a riverside town

### Bourne End railway station

#### Directions 27

From here you can take the short train ride back to Marlow. Trains are once an hour. If you are a keen walker you may wish to walk back. Retrace your steps to the river and cross the railway bridge. From there follow the path over Winter Hill from where there are spectacular views of the river.



Modern housing development on the site of Marlow Mills  
© Mike Jackson



Swan Uppers with a mute swan  
© Mike Jackson



Marlow Lock  
© Mike Jackson



View across the weir to the end of St Peter Street  
© Mike Jackson



Rowing boats for hire at Marlow  
© Mike Jackson



Bourne End Marina  
© Mike Jackson

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## Credits

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- **Mike Jackson** for creating the walk and providing photographs
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- **Pamela Nottingham MBE** for kindly supplying an image of traditional lace making tools
- **David Hawgood** for testing the walk and providing helpful feedback

## Further information

### **Marlow Museum**

[www.marlowmuseum.org](http://www.marlowmuseum.org)

### **Marlow Regatta**

[www.themarlowregatta.com](http://www.themarlowregatta.com)

### **The Marlow Society**

[www.marlowsociety.org.uk](http://www.marlowsociety.org.uk)

### **Marlow Rowing Club**

[www.marlowrowingclub.org.uk](http://www.marlowrowingclub.org.uk)

### **Court Garden House**

[www.courtgardenhouse.co.uk](http://www.courtgardenhouse.co.uk)

### **Marlow Town Regatta and Festival**

[www.marlowtownregatta.org](http://www.marlowtownregatta.org)

### **Old Thatch Gardens**

[www.oldthatchgardens.co.uk](http://www.oldthatchgardens.co.uk)

### **The River Thames Society**

[www.riverthamessociety.org.uk](http://www.riverthamessociety.org.uk)

### **The Marlow and District Railway Society**

[www.mdrs.org.uk](http://www.mdrs.org.uk)

### **Upper Thames Sailing Club**

[www.utsc.org.uk](http://www.utsc.org.uk)

### **Longridge Activity Centre**

[www.longridge-uk.org](http://www.longridge-uk.org)

### **Westhorpe Water Sports Centre**

[www.westhorpewatersports.co.uk](http://www.westhorpewatersports.co.uk)

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