

On a sweltering Summer morning, I made my way to Twickenham to volunteer with the charity FORCE. The plan was to walk along the Lower Crane Valley from Twickenham Station to Mill Road (pictured left) down the main path, then trek the Dragonfly trail to Hanworth Road, finishing at Hounslow Heath. My aim was to compare these routes to the way they had been plotted on the existing map, identifying any new paths or other missing information that had not yet been included.

Once I arrived, with my mother in tow, I immediately set off walking along the paths. Initially unable to pinpoint to our exact location, we asked a friendly passerby, who was more than happy to guide us in the right direction. The new paths through Twickenham Rough provided an idyllic walk, with a huge display of flowers and shrubs lining the sides and magnificent trees branching over the top, a far cry from the rapid urban sprawl of Twickenham High Street just a few minutes away. We then made it to Kneller Gardens, where it was lovely seeing many families making the most of the hot summer day by bringing their kids to the local play area and walking their dogs (albeit socially distanced!) After taking a little break sitting at a cafe, it was time to set off again, so I strapped on my backpack, picked up my clipboard and walked from the recreation ground to Willow Way. After noting down the changes in the local area, we decided to call it a day and come back at a later date.



The following week, we arrived at the Lower Crane Valley newly invigorated to carry on the work there was still to do. Walking along the routes from Willow Way to Hounslow Heath we decided to keep off the main path and stick to the less developed footpaths, providing a totally different perspective than we received from traversing the main routes further downstream. It was wonderful seeing the Shot Tower in Crane Park, which I learnt was linked to the gunpowder trade in 19th century England and is now used as an educational center for young students. We also took a slight detour into the Crane Park Island Nature Reserve, providing wonderful scenery and a great view of the river.

After going through a fairly mysterious tunnel and walking over a newly constructed bridge, we finally reached the open plains of Hounslow Heath and sadly the end of our journey through the valley. In conclusion it was a wonderful experience and I'd seriously recommend visiting the area for anyone who wants to have a relaxing day, but also doesn't mind getting their shoes a bit muddy!