‘LADY BOUNTIFUL’S UPPER TOOTING’ HISTORY WALK
2.5 miles, (35-45 minutes)
Start at TOOTING BEC, UNDERGROUND STATION
Taking in two famous Tooting Churches, this glorious walk also covers the story of the not-so-famous Miss Eliza Jane Bell, a philanthropic recluse known as 'Lady Bountiful'. Inheriting a fortune from her father, she lived at Park Hill House in Tooting and was the owner of the famous Tooting Nursery and the tower has many distinctive floral decorations. The name Bountiful was in this area. The Bells moved here in the 1850s, Lady Bountiful’s father Alexander having made his fortune selling corn in the Crimean War.

10 Cross to the other side of Upper Tooting Road. A Tesco store marks the site of another Lady Bountiful landmark. This was originally an arcaded market by the name of ‘The Bell’. Eliza Jane bought it and converted it into the alcohol-free ‘Bell Coffee Palace’.

11 Another grand house on Miss Bell’s estate was Park Holme, once on the left. A Roman brick floor was reportedly discovered during its demolition in 1924. In the early 16th century this area was also the site of a medieval archery field.

12 Continue up the hill, crossing Fishponds Road and take the next right into Beeches Road. Follow that round the bend. All the houses here were built in the 1920s on the beautiful ornamental grounds of the Park Hill estate. The name lives on in Park Hall Court, a block on the corner. Lady Bountiful wanted her estate to be preserved as a public park but the area was already well-served by the nearby Commons and housing needs were more pressing.

13 On the left at the end of Morven Road as you enter Glenburnie Road, an unusual house with a tall chimney dating from the 1860s was one of the original gatehouses of the Park Hill estate. Look for Gateside Road on the right, the original Park Hill House mansion was in this area. The Bells moved here in the 1850s, Lady Bountiful’s father Alexander having made his fortune selling corn in the Crimean War.

14 Follow Glenburnie Road to the right, then left into Beechcroft Road. A short distance further on you will come to Ernest Bevin College. There has been a school here since 1926. Named after a leading light in Attlee’s post-war government and MP for Wandsworth, it is one of the best-loved schools in this area. Among its former pupils are Sadiq Khan, Lennie James, Ortis Deley and Marc Bolan. In 1985 ‘Nazi’ Sokol became the first Muslim headteacher of a British secondary school.

15 After the school, look for Wandle Road, the third road on your right. The prosperous homes here in what was once known as ‘Upper Tooting’ have a distinctly different character from those down the hill in ‘Lower Tooting’. Look on your right for ‘Old Farm’ and ‘Burlington Court’. Turn left into Trinity Road and at No190 on your left is a block where David Lloyd-George, Prime Minister of this country in the First World War. He was resident in this area between 1900-1908 here and also at a house on Routh Road near Wandsworth Common.

16 Cross Trinity Road and turn right into Brid Brock Road, on the corner at 172 Trinity Road is a house where Thomas Hardy once lived between 1878 and 1881 whilst working as an architect. He was recently married and his job at the time was helping exhume bodies from St Pancras Cemetery for a new railway line.

17 Brid Brock Road leads you down to St James’s Drive and the site of St James’s Hospital, closed in 1898. It was demolished in 1992 and a modern housing estate was built a few years later. Divert briefly to the left and just inside one of the entrances is a plaque placed here two years ago by the NubianJak Trust in honour of Dawhenee Stee. She was the first person of African heritage to be appointed a matron of a British hospital. She trained and worked here in the 1960s.

18 Turn around and continue down St James’s Drive and back onto Trinity Road. Ahead you will see the recently restored tower of Holy Trinity Church. Just before the church, on your left, you will pass the old police station at No76 and across the road a fire station dating from 1907 and still operational. The church dates from 1855 and has a famous ‘open door’ policy and works closely with local charities and community groups. One of the first church wardens was William Rollison of the famous Tooting Nursery and the tower has many distinctive floral decorations. The war memorial features Mary Cawston Boussfield, a nurse from Elmshorne Road who served in France for the entirety of the war and died of influenza in 1919.

19 Just past the garage on the left are Holdernesse and Chetwode Roads. This area was heavily blitzed in 1940, accounts of which were noted in a diary by local teenager Colin Perry. This later turned into a book ‘The Boy in the Blitz’. Alfred Butt House stands on the site of the worst damaged area. Butt was a theatrical impresario and MP for this area in the 1920s. Many local residents were regularly invited to attend his West End shows. This last street down to the station curiously has very little modern development and is full of character. On the corner facing the station is The Wheatsheaf pub where in 1802 plans were hatched for the construction of The Surrey Iron Railway - another walk for another day...

FOR INFORMATION AND MORE WALKS: summerstown182.wordpress.com
If you enjoy your walk, please consider making a donation to Critical NHS, sustaining local business by keeping the St George’s frontline staff fed www.criticalnhs.org