



*Summer 2020*  
**GREAT ESCAPES**

**'EARLSFIELD MANOR' HISTORY WALK**  
3.5 miles, (50-60 minutes)  
Start at **EARLSFIELD STATION, GARRATT LANE, SW18**

# THE EARLSFIELD MANOR (3.5 miles, 50-60 minutes)

Originally devised to help everybody through the lockdown, these great downloadable walks take in significant features of historical interest for you to enjoy in the **Tooting/Earlsfield/Wandsworth/Wimbledon** area. There are now multiple flavours of Summerstown182 'Great Escapes' to choose from, every one a winner! **Perfect for mind, body and spirit.**



**This blockbuster walk takes you up the hill and out of the Wandle Valley then back down again onto the famous Garratt Lane with everything covered in between. The cemetery, the prison, the workhouse, the estates, notable residents and industries. Its also the story of the great Elm Lodge House and its lands, purchased in the 1860s by a man from County Leitrim who turned it into Earlsfield House and bequeathed this area its name. If you want to know anything about Earlsfield, SW18 and its 'Celtic Connection', this is the one for you.**

**1 START EARLSFIELD STATION** - The railway line to Southampton first cut through here in the 1830s. The lands in the area were part of the All Farthing Estate, sold to the railway company by [Robert Davis](#). Earlsfield Road, authorised in 1878 was the first main artery. A new station opened for business on 1 April 1884.

**2** Turn left up [Magdalen Road](#), an echo of another major landowner in the area, Oxford University. Just past Sainsbury's is the much-loved library dating from the mid-1920s. Here Louis de Bernières famously wrote Captain Corelli's Mandolin'. In a previous era it was the site of Summerstown Football Club.

**3** Enter the cemetery just past the flower stall and follow the long straight path north in the same direction as Magdalen Road. At the first gate look out for the graves of notable gypsy/traveller families. Three quarters of the way along divert to the left to visit the war graves. Many soldiers from overseas serving in the First World War died at the [Royal Victoria Patriotic Building](#) hospital on Wandsworth Common. The plot for the Newfoundlanders is particularly moving, nurtured for many years by children from Beatrix Potter School. Other notable burials here include [Robert 'Mr Summerstown' Sadler](#) and laundry boss, [Alice Creeke](#).

**4** Turn right at the top of the path and exit the cemetery. Continue left along Magdalen Road past the tennis club and then left into Heathfield Road. Just before the prison, take a left down a path behind the tennis club called Heathfield Square. This is a loop which takes you on a circuit around [Wandsworth Prison](#), via a communal green space and out the other side opposite the nursery. You could carry on and pass the front of the prison but the diversion is more interesting. The prison opened in 1851 and it was here on 8 July 1965 that train-robber [Ronald Biggs](#) famously climbed over a thirty foot wall onto the top of an awaiting van. Other notable prisoners have included Oscar Wilde, Julian Assange, James Earl Ray and Gary Glitter. There have been 135 executions at Wandsworth including Derek Bentley, John 'Acid Bath Murderer' Haigh and 'Lord Haw-Haw'. The last of these was in 1961.

**5** If you followed the diversion, turn left again onto Heathfield Road and go over the railway bridge. Turn left onto Earlsfield Road, a characterful road stretching from Wandsworth Common to Garratt Lane. On the other side of the road look for a green plaque at No4, once home to the creator of 'The Wombles', [Elizabeth Beresford](#).

**6** Take your time to admire the grand houses, then take the first right turn into St Ann's Hill, leading to Swaffield School and beyond that the famous St Ann's '[Pepperpot Church](#)', built in celebration of the battle of Waterloo. Take the first right into Westover Road then second left into Swanage Road. Before all the house-building, imagine the great sweeping views from Earlsfield House at the end of the road looking down into the Wandle Valley. Here now is Killarney Road and in the area between this and All Farthing Lane until about 1891 stood Elm Lodge, renamed as Earlsfield House. No trace of it remains. Davis was still alive and living here with his family when this house building began. He died in 1890 and is buried in [Putney](#). Davis' roots were at another Earlsfield House near [Manorhamilton](#) in the county of 'Lovely Leitrim', where there are still many traces of the Earls and Davis families.

**7** At Killarney Road, turn left, then right into Barmouth Road. No39 was the childhood home of the much-loved boxer Frank Bruno. On the corner here was the last traces an estate office where local people paid their rents. A leading light in Wandsworth Methodism, Davis built a small chapel in the area.

**8** Turn left into All Farthing Lane and descend into the [Wandle Valley](#). At Vermont Road on the right look out for an old pub, once the HQ of the Wandsworth Mind charity with a 'Millenium Tree' in front of it planted by Frank Bruno. Adjacent to this is the Wendlesworth Estate, opened by Nye Bevan in 1949 with the first blocks named after 14th century Lords of All Farthing Manor. A road called Iron Mill Place gives a clue to an earlier history.

**9** At [Garratt Lane](#) you are entering a world which was once the centre of great industry and activity. On the other side of the road was the [Adkins Mill](#) site, location of the Veritas Gas Mantle Works, a huge employer of women in the area and the

[Benhams](#) engineering company. In earlier times it was the site of a major iron mill which produced '*shot, shells, cannons and other implements of war*'. Thirsty workers would have slaked their thirst in the Old Sergeant pub.

**10** Cross Garratt Lane, proceeding left and take the first road on your right, Twilley Street. Pass the Peabody housing block and go left into Esparto Street. The name commemorates the manufacture of paper in this area by [William McMurray](#) whose 'Royal Paper Mills' producing the material on which The Times, The Illustrated London News and many others were printed. Esparto was a particular type of grass grown in North Africa and Spain from which this was produced. The paper works were here until destroyed by a fire in 1903.

**11** Turn left into Furnage Street, then right into Garratt Lane again. You soon come to a major junction at Swaffield Road. To the left, on the site of Brocklebank Health Centre was an imposing building built in 1885, The [Wandsworth and Clapham Union Workhouse](#) with room for over 2,000 inmates. Vestiges of this terrifying establishment remained until the 60s and the building still standing on the corner, another 'Earlsfield House' was an orphanage. A blue plaque a little way down Swaffield Road on the right hand side marks the location of the main entrance.

**12** Cross here to the left hand pavement and pass the Anchor Church. Like many of the 'missions' in this area, built at the turn of the 20th century to cater for a rapidly expanding population, it fulfilled a social care role far beyond its religious remit. It is presently a food kitchen and a lively social hub for older people.

**13** On the other side of the road a little further on are a network of streets associating prominently with gypsy/traveller heritage. The most notable of these, is the now truncated Wardley Street with the Grosvenor pub on the corner. Famous for its caravans, horses, market-traders and costermongers. On the site of a nursery, many of its residents worked as flower-sellers. Neighbouring Lydden Road and Lydden Grove had similar associations, a tight-knit community proud of its enduring heritage. The London Gypsies and Travellers organisation have created a [heritage mapping project](#) that people are encouraged to add contributions to.

**14** A little further on is Bendon Valley. This was a major manufacturing centre, employing thousands of people. From 1905 the home of [Columbia Records](#), later Hunts Capacitors making radio component parts and the Airfix factory producing its modelling kits. [Aerial photos](#) show the extent of these enterprises and at the end of Bendon Valley you can see the last remains of the Airfix site.

**15** Walk under the arches into the beautiful [Henry Prince Estate](#) - don't miss the clock above you. Built in 1936 and named after the council's housing chief. Famously raised here was [Sadiq Khan](#), Mayor of London. His father's 44 bus route passes along Garratt Lane.

**16** Veer left and cross the small footbridge over the Wandle. You need to do a sharp left, but first walk straight on a bit further and see the memorial to [Corporal Edward Foster VC](#) and the pathway along King George's Park named Foster's Way.

**17** You should now be on a path alongside the Wandle with a recent housing development to your right and Henry Prince Estate the other side of the river to your left. A little beyond it was the site of the [Harrison and Barber](#) horse-slaughtering yards, one of the largest in London. Associated industries included a glue, cats-meat and chemical manure factory, creating what must have been a fairly gruesome smell. Just past this, still on the other side, are the remains of [Duntshill mill](#) which was a calico printing works, later producing flock and parchment. More recent industries in this locality were the Kenco Coffee Factory (now a nursery astride the Wandle), Corona Soft Drinks and bizarrely a manufacturer of indoor fireworks.

**18** From Riverdale Drive, veer left into Knaresborough Drive, then left again onto Strathville Road with its pretty pastel coloured houses. Take a right at the bridge, then a left into Penwith Road. The Wandle is largely submerged and inaccessible at this point but plans are afoot to open up this so-called '[Earlsfield Gap](#)'.

**19** At Penwith Road turn right into Garratt Lane again. On the left is The Wandle pub, formerly The Sailor Prince, named after the largely unknown [Prince Alfred](#), second son of Queen Victoria. Opposite this, look out for the ghost-sign on the Cound estate agents office - what 'SPO' stands for is the source of much local speculation. It was a popular cafe for many years and one theory is 'Sausage, Potato, Onion'. Just before the railway bridge, brought back to life with a striking paint and signage job a few years ago, on the right hand side is the much-celebrated [Tara Arts Theatre](#), creating its magic here since 1983.

FOR INFORMATION AND MORE WALKS: [summerstown182.wordpress.com](http://summerstown182.wordpress.com)  @summerstown182

If you enjoy your walk, please consider making a donation to CriticalNHS, sustaining local business by keeping the St George's frontline staff fed [www.criticalnhs.org](http://www.criticalnhs.org)