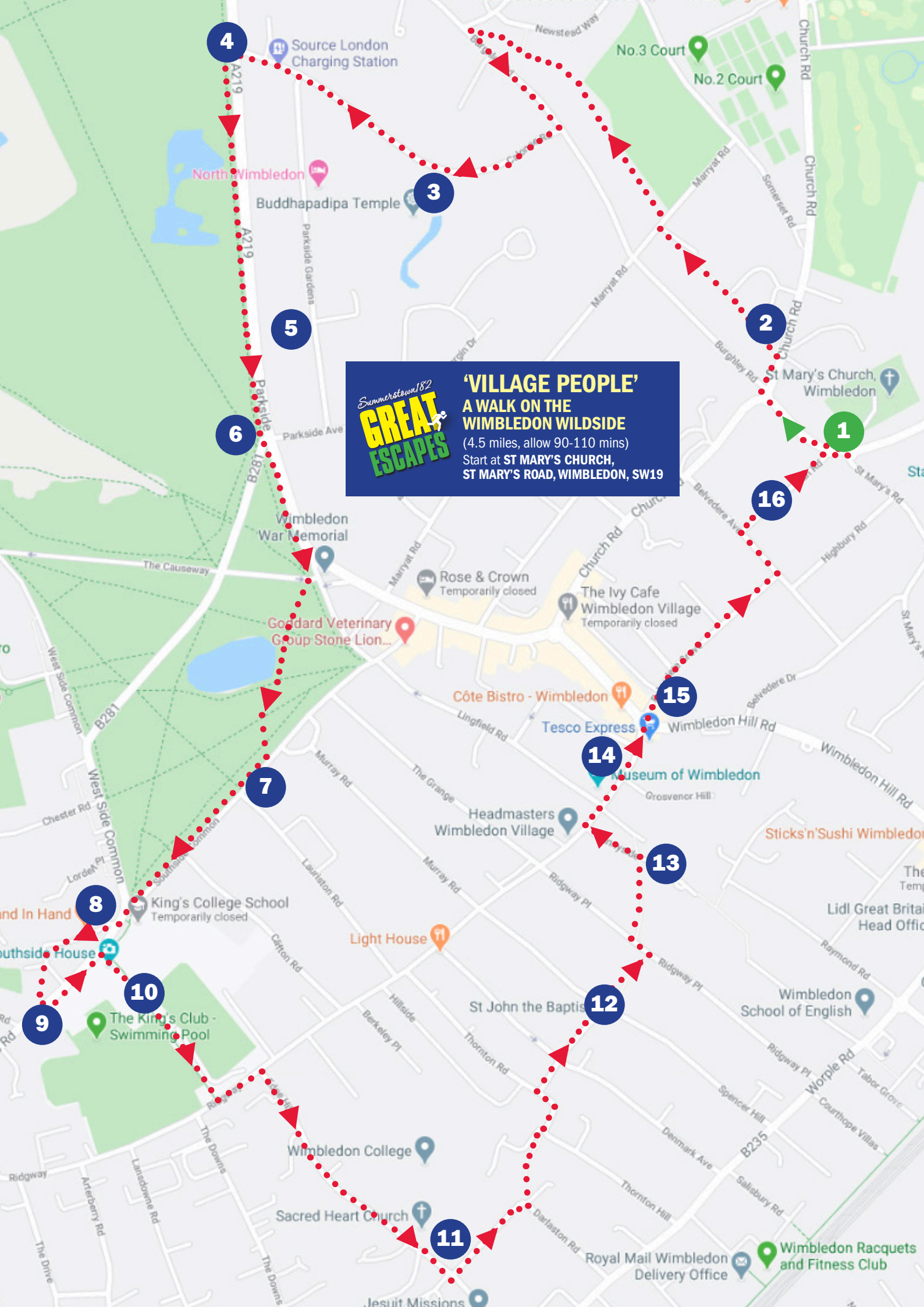



**'VILLAGE PEOPLE'**  
**A WALK ON THE WIMBLEDON WILDSIDE**  
 (4.5 miles, allow 90-110 mins)  
 Start at **ST MARY'S CHURCH, ST MARY'S ROAD, WIMBLEDON, SW19**



# 'VILLAGE PEOPLE' A WALK ON THE WIMBLEDON WILD SIDE

(4.5 miles, allow 90-110 mins)

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**You can still get your fix of Wimbledon this year, thanks to this fantastic tour, a summer classic. This one radiates around Wimbledon Village and whilst you can divert into its many fleshpots at any point, it avoids the main drag and takes you down some routes that are less well-travelled. Wimbledon Common, The Ridgway and Dairy Walk all feature, as do the many noteworthy 'Village People' who have populated them.**

**1 START ST MARY'S CHURCH, 30 ST MARY'S ROAD, SW19** - You will know [St Mary's Church](#) from those dreamy midsummer scenes during the TV tennis coverage when at the end of the day they pan away from the courts to the spire on the hill. The Spencer family owned much of the land around here and Stag Lodge was the gate house to their estate. They inherited from Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, Queen Anne's 'Favourite'. [Sir Joseph Bazalgette](#) the engineer whose drainage system fixed 'The Great Stink' is buried here in a huge mausoleum at the back of the church. With his family of ten children, he moved into a house opposite the Church in 1873. Look out for the huge pyramidal tomb of Count Gerard de Visme of Wimbledon Lodge who is believed to have made a fortune from Brazilian diamonds. Another notable burial is city financier Benjamin Bond Hopkins of Painshill, known as 'Vulture Hopkins'. There are also members of the Spencer and Lucan families. Inside the church there are memorials to Wimbledon champions Kitty Godfree and Lew Hoad. A masterstroke by a vicar in the 50's was buying the field next door for £250 - it raises a fortune through car-parking during the tennis.

**2** Follow St Mary's Road to the roundabout as if heading down Church Road towards the courts. On the other side of the road look for a white wooden turnstile and a narrow pathway called Dairy Walk. This was a path for dairy maids delivering milk to houses in the area, leading from St Mary's Church to Manor Farm. Follow this down into Marryat Close and cross Marryat Road. Acclaimed 60's British film 'Séance on a Wet Afternoon' starring Richard Attenborough was filmed here at No41. Follow another narrow path opposite which runs alongside an area where the [AELTC](#) are building a huge indoor tennis centre. If the path looks inaccessible you can choose to take the road and continue down Marryat Road, then left into Somerset Road and Newstead Way. The path brings you out into Burghley Road.

**3** Take a left, then first right into Calonne Road. Fleeing the revolution, exiled French statesman Charles de Calonne, known as 'Monsieur Déficit' was one of the notable residents of Wimbledon House which no longer exists, but whose extensive grounds we are now circling. Look out for the enormous hedge on the right hand side. Some of the properties in this area are the grandest in south London. On your left you will pass the [Buddhapadipa Temple](#) dating from 1976, the first Thai Buddhist temple to be built in the UK. Inside the temple is a mural telling the story of the Buddha featuring scenes of contemporary life which include portraits of Mother Theresa and Margaret Thatcher. Visitors are always welcome and the small garden with stream and bridges is a great place to meditate.

**4** Turn left onto Parkside with Wimbledon Common straight ahead of you. This long straight road runs alongside the Common heading for Putney Bridge which would have been the main route into London. A lot of expansive houses were built along here in the mid 18th century. Sir Edwin Saunders, Queen Victoria's dentist was one resident and No54 is owned by The Vatican and where the Pope stays on his visits to this country. At No51 [Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia](#) and his retinue sought refuge in 1936 with the Seligman family. A stone bust in the grounds of Cannizaro House is a reminder of his visit. Wimbledon Common is famous for its windmill, early flying attempts, duels, various military drilling and shooting competitions. In the mid-70s Elizabeth Beresford's 'Wombles' were made into a children's TV series and turned a generation on to recycling. An Act of Parliament in 1871 secured its future and scuppered the Spencer family's plans to sell it off for building. A leading mover in this was [Sir Henry Peek](#), the last resident of Wimbledon House, a 100 acre estate on Parkside. His father owned a biscuit factory which as Peek Freans is famous for giving the world the twiglet. Peek made another fortune importing tea. The house was demolished not long after his death in 1898 and all traces of this have now gone though the name lives on in nearby Peek Crescent.

**5** Bear left and either stay on Parkside or you might want to cross and walk on a shady path on the edge of the Common. Either way, overlooking the Common to your left was the Wimbledon House estate, with a garden 'unrivalled in the neighbourhood of London for the beauty and variety of its flowers'. Filled with ornamental features, two enormous lakes and an extensive series of greenhouses and cages containing rare birds and other animals. From 1812 the owner was [Joseph Marryat](#), MP, banker and chairman of Lloyd's. He was also a leading slave-owner with plantations in Trinidad, Grenada, Jamaica and St Lucia and was highly active in defending slavery and opposing leading abolitionists like Wilberforce. Whilst Marryat was busy making a fortune on his plantations, (his son received the equivalent of at least [£8.5million](#) compensation when slavery was finally abolished) his American wife Charlotte lost herself in the garden. She was one of the first women members of the Royal Horticultural Society and lived here till her death in 1854.

**6** Pass the fountain and cattle trough and cross Cannizaro Road. Falconhurst and Lakeswood House look like they might have stories to tell. Just past them a single-storey modernist building at No22 was designed in the 70's by [Richard Rogers](#) for his parents to live. He had hoped 'this was going to be a standardised system to solve the whole of the British housing problem. It didn't!'. At the War Memorial, turn onto the Common. Aim to the left of the lake and where the southern perimeter of the Common meets Lauriston Road.

**7** Look for the blue plaque on the stables of Lauriston House, the last original part of a large house demolished in 1958. It was once associated with [William Wilberforce](#). Originally his Uncle's home, he lived here as a boy after his father died before returning to Hull. Whilst here he was taken to hear [John Newton](#) preach and it was Newton, the reformed slaver who wrote 'Amazing Grace' who later convinced Wilberforce to become involved in the Abolition of Slavery movement. After he inherited Lauriston House in 1777, Wilberforce used it as a country retreat. He sold it in 1786 and lived in Clapham. His name lives on in nearby Wilberforce Way. Its hard to believe that Joseph Marryat, an arch opponent lived just across the Common at Wimbledon House, the two houses almost facing each other.

**8** Veer right and follow Southside, passing King's College School and crossing over into Crooked Billet. If you are a tennis fan, a short diversion to No6 West Side will take you to the house of Spencer Gore, 'First Wimbledon Tennis Champion' in 1877. Other houses along West Side connected with people involved in the slave trade are The Keir and Chester House. You now pass a beautiful tranquil location and two much-loved pubs, The Hand in Hand and [The Crooked Billet](#). Both are said to be haunted, The Crooked Billet's ghost is an Irishwoman who wanders the cellars. Originally a distinctly separate hamlet, this most rustic corner of Wimbledon feels a million miles removed from London. Records indicate the presence of an alehouse here from 1509 and the famous Watney brewing family first established their business here in 1730. The grass area is known as Cromwell's Half Acre. Pass this and bear to the left around the back of Cinque Cottages built by Sir Henry Peek.

**9** Just to the right on the other side of Woodhayes Road is Gothic Lodge. It was the home of engineer [Sir William Preece](#) who allowed Marconi to set up a transmitter in the garden, broadcasting some of the first telegraph messages. It is believed to have been the first house in London to have electric light and a telephone. A plaque commemorates Captain Frederick Marryat, son of James, a novelist and naval commander. He returned in 1826 from the Anglo-Burmese War with an eight year old boy called Sophar. The child was presented to the Duke of Sussex, Queen Victoria's Uncle and grew up in the royal household at Kensington Palace, [Sophar Rangoon](#) who became a tailor, married and had a family, is buried in Lambeth Cemetery. Artefacts brought back from Burma by Marryat are displayed at [The British Museum](#).

**10** Go back past [Southside House](#). Robert Pennington, a friend of Charles II, built this after his son died in the Great Plague as a safe country haven for his family. It is still owned by his descendants. Just past this enter Wright's Alley, imagining the shire horses pulling brewer's drays as they delivered ale to The Crooked Billet. This passage takes you through the school playing fields to the Ridgway, the historic route which connects Wimbledon Village to Kingston. Turn left then first right into Edge Hill.

**11** You are now entering an area strongly associated with The Jesuits, though they have recently ended a 137 year connection with the local parish. Connected closely to it, you will pass Wimbledon College and Donhead School for boys, the Ursuline girls schools are in adjacent roads. Pat Reid who escaped from Colditz in WW2 and invented the board game was educated at Wimbledon College. As you go down the hill, perched almost precariously on the slope is the stunning [Sacred Heart Church](#), founded by Edith Arendrup, a member of the wealthy Courtauld family. Dating from 1887, it is renowned for its music and choral traditions. Take a left into Darlston Road alongside the church and when it turns sharp right, follow a passage way to the left which brings you out on Savona Close.

**12** Do a right then a quick left into Thornton Road. You are quite close here to the site of the original Wimbledon Championships at the bottom of the hill on Worple Road. Turn right into St John's Road which leads you to St John the Baptist Church. A beautiful red brick church dating from 1875, also noted for its fine acoustics.

**13** Go straight across Murray Road and Spencer Hill into another alleyway. Murray Road is named after another resident of Wimbledon Lodge, [General Henry Murray](#) who led a charge at Waterloo. The house was at the end of this road facing the Common, next door to Wilberforce's Lauriston House. The alleyway takes you onto Ridgway Place. There are great views from up here down over Wimbledon town centre with Croydon and the North Downs beyond. Be sure to look around you at the size of some of the chimneys on the houses in this area. Turn left here then pick up the passage way again, following it all the way to Sunnyside. Take a right here look out for a decorative bottle green postbox-like construction, an early [electric transformer box](#) placed by 'The British Electric Transformer Co, Hayes, Middlesex'. If you are heading to Wimbledon Station you could follow the footpath down the hill here via Malcolm Road. But to finish the circuit, go back up Sunnyside and turn right onto Ridgway.

**14** Pass the [Museum](#) on the corner of Lingfield Road. Established in 1916 by Richardson Evans on the top floor of the Village Hall. He was the principal founder in 1903 of the group now known as [The Wimbledon Society](#). Be sure to visit to get some more details about some of the things I've pointed out!

**15** Continue into Wimbledon Village, crossing over a mini-roundabout and passing a drinking fountain, the gift of [Joseph Tynbee](#). A surgeon and philanthropist who lived at 49 Parkside who cured Queen Victoria of deafness. You may want to divert here for a quick walk up the High Street. In which case, look out at No21 for a recent blue plaque above 'Brew' to [Sister Nivedita](#). Educationalist, campaigner and a leading light in the movement for Indian independence, originally from Dungannon, Co Tyrone.

**16** From Belvedere Grove, turn left into Belvedere Avenue and right into Alan Road admiring some of the Arts and Crafts style houses on this final stretch which takes you back to St Mary's Church.

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

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