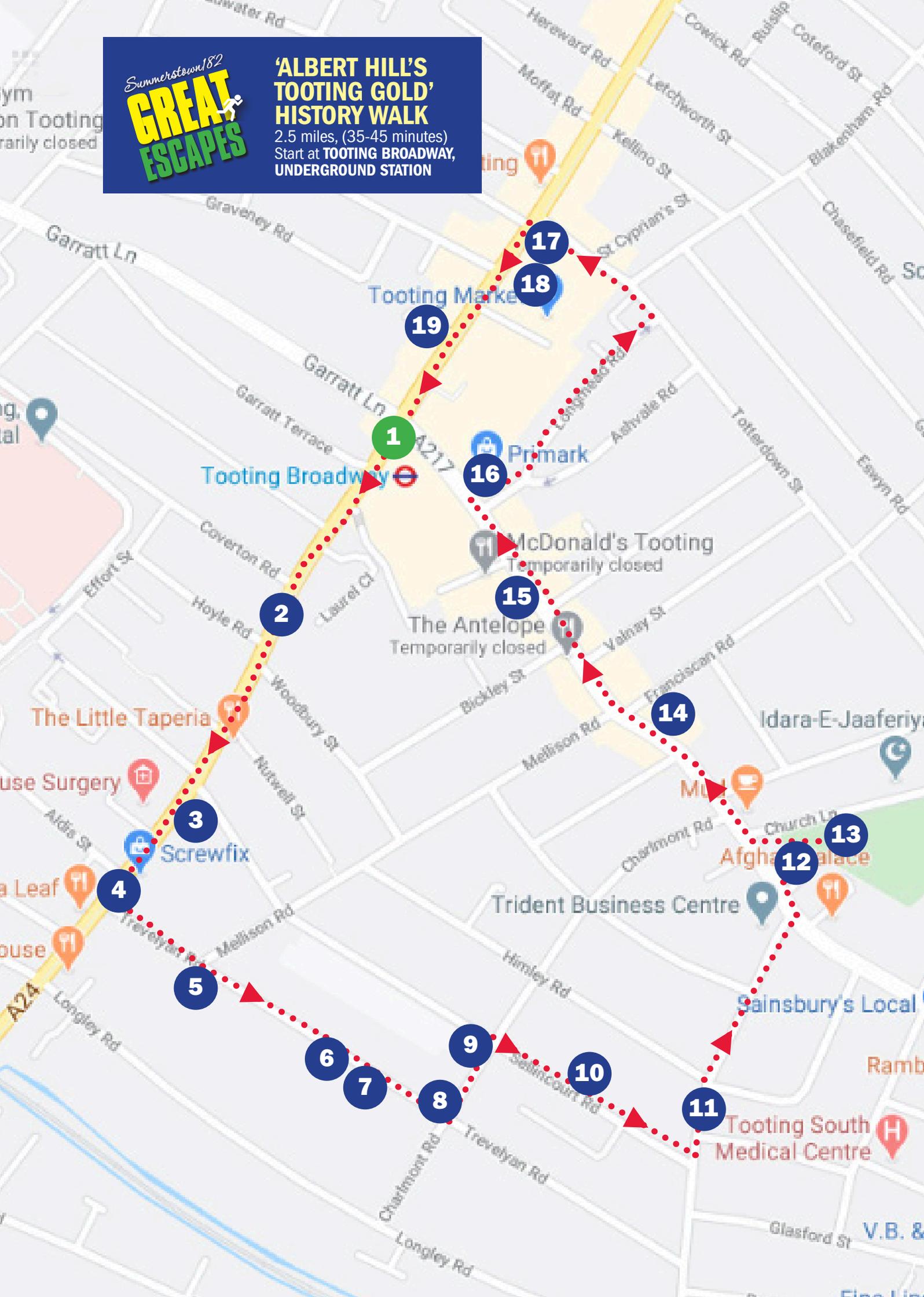




'ALBERT HILL'S TOOTING GOLD' HISTORY WALK

2.5 miles, (35-45 minutes)
Start at **TOOTING BROADWAY**,
UNDERGROUND STATION



ALBERT HILL'S TOOTING GOLD (2.5 miles, 35-45 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.**

One hundred years ago this summer, a railway worker, fresh from the First World War trenches completed an outstanding Olympic Games gold medal athletics double, winning both the 800 and 1500 metres. This was a feat that would not be repeated by a British athlete until [Dame Kelly Holmes](#) in 2004. Between 1907 and 1912 he lived in Trevelyan Road, one of the most quirky, characterful streets in Tooting. Very soon we'll be celebrating his achievements by placing a blue plaque on his home. Albert married and moved away but his family remained in the area for many years. This period was when Tooting was truly experiencing its golden age of transformation from a village to the lively suburb we know today. Explore it for yourself on 'Albert Hill's Tooting Gold' Tour!

1 START TOOTING BROADWAY - The statue of [King Edward VII](#) recognises the great Edwardian age which saw rapid development in terms of the construction of magnificent public buildings and homes. The statue was unveiled on 4 November 1911 by the Mayor of Wandsworth, Archibald Dawnay. Its highly likely that Albert and his wife-to-be Lily were in the tumultuous crowd who witnessed this occasion.

2 Follow the High Street to the right of the station, past the Sainsbury's store in the direction of Colliers Wood. On the opposite side of the road, a series of terraced streets lead down to [St George's Hospital](#) and Medical School as featured in '24 Hours in A&E'. A source of massive local pride, never more so than at the moment. A childhood traffic accident when he was run over by a horse and cart left Albert in a perilous condition in pre-NHS days with his parents struggling to afford treatment. Consideration and care for others marked his character.

3 Just past Sellincourt Road, at a Thai restaurant opposite The Trafalgar pub, a green plaque indicates the site of Britain's first purpose-built cinema, [The King's Hall](#). Also the scene of many great public meetings, later an Irish Dance Club and a car showroom. It opened in 1909 and its inconceivable that Albert and his family didn't see a movie here. In 1916 it screened Geoffrey Malins' 'Battle of the Somme' film, watched in this country by over 20 million people. Hard to believe that by then Albert was there, in France, serving as a wireless operator in the [Royal Flying Corps](#).

4 Take the next left into Trevelyan Road. It's a straight road, about 600 metres long. If you want to envisage the distances that [Albert ran in Antwerp](#) to win his medals, its roughly 2.5 times the length of the road for the 1500 metres which he did in a time of 4 minutes, 1.8 seconds. His time for the 800 metres was 1 minute, 53.4 seconds, a British record. He ran seven races in eight days and also picked up a silver medal in the 3,000 metres team steeplechase. There are some strikingly different styles of houses on this road. It was believed to have been built in 1880 to house servants who looked after the grand homes in neighbouring Longley Road, 'Tooting's Beverley Hills'. This was the home of numerous music-hall stars and successful businessmen.

5 Opposite the junction of Mellison Road, local legend has it that on 1 June 1963 The Beatles stayed in a lodging house at Nos 24-26 whilst preparing for their concert at The Tooting Granada where they supported Roy Orbison. A number of people, some still living locally recall sightings of the Fab Four in the area. The most vivid is Ringo dangling his legs out of an upstairs window. This was the moment Beatlemania took hold and they charted their first Number One, 'From Me to You'.

6 The Hill family moved to No94 in 1907. Albert's junior running career had taken off and he was attracting attention. The London Olympics of 1908 would have fired his imagination. He was the second youngest of four boys and three girls. In the 1911 census just he and his brother Arthur are living here with his parents but his sister Olive was living in a separate part of the house with her husband Arthur. Before this the family lived for a long time in the Southwark area round the back of where the South Bank Centre now stands, near a pub presently called [The Mulberry Bush](#). This was a very overcrowded, industrialised area at the time and coming to Tooting would have been like going to live in the countryside. It was around this time that he became a member of the [Polytechnic Harriers](#) Club on Regent Street and became coached by [Sam Mussabini](#). His protégés including Albert Hill won a total of eleven Olympic medals over five games. A plaque was unveiled at his Herne Hill home in 2012.

7 A few doors along at No100 was the home for a few years of the Hurley family. They were here in 1907 when they 'laid out the pages of the newspaper on the kitchen table'. This was the first edition of the 'Balham & Tooting Gazette' which Alfred Hurley founded and edited for many years.

8 A little further on, on the left hand side, at the junction of Charlmont Road is 'Norfolk House'. The stone carvings on this old shop front were believed to celebrate the local connection with Daniel Defoe. Another theory may be a nod to Lord of the Manor, Philip Gidley-King, one of the first governors of New South Wales, associated with Norfolk Island and buried in St Nicholas Church.

9 Turn left up Charlmont Road. On the left hand side on the corner with Sellincourt Road stood a very grand house called 'The Defoe Memorial Manse' built for Reverend William Anderson, a minister at the Defoe Chapel on Tooting High Street. This church relocated to a new building with a distinctive octagonal roof on Mitcham Road in 1906. Both have long since disappeared.

10 Take a right turn into Sellincourt Road and a little way down on the left at No199 was the home until 1979 of Albert Hill's younger sister Louisa. She died aged 87 and would have been his last surviving family connection with this area. Albert's sister Olive lived on at 94 Trevelyan Road until the 1940s but after his marriage he moved to Herne Hill. With two young daughters, the family emigrated to the United States in 1925 but returned after a year. They emigrated permanently to Canada after the War and that was where Albert died in 1969. Albert had two daughters [Lily and Alma](#).

11 As the bottom of Sellincourt Road, take a left into Bickersteth Road. This area once adjoined [Tooting Bec Golf Club](#), the other side of Mitcham Road. Links Road is perhaps the only clue. Pupils at Sellincourt School were employed as caddies and it was utilised by Prime Ministers, Arthur Balfour and Lloyd-George and local music-hall star [Sir Harry Lauder](#). Albert probably travelled to his work at London Bridge Station from Tooting Junction. For a while he was a ticket collector there though he also worked on bookings and despatch. After retirement Albert continued his day job but coached a number of notable athletes like [Sydney Wooderson](#) and sprinter [Jack London](#), one of the first prominent black British athletes who won two medals at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam.

12 Turn left at the bottom of Bickersteth Road and cross to the other side of Mitcham Road. Continue left and pass No157, Avon Villa (A-Plan insurance), home of prominent horse artist [Sidney Wombill](#), a resident of Tooting for many decades. Opposite this is Iceland, the site of the old Astoria Cinema.

13 A big day for Albert Hill was when he married Lily Wood on 21 July 1912 at St Nicholas Church, with proceedings by the famous Tooting vicar, John Hendry Anderson. Albert's brother Arthur was already married to Lily's sister. The Church has been here since Saxon times, in its present form since 1833. There was an Olympic games that year but Albert's mind was on other things. Look down Church Lane and on the left hand side, the [Idaara-e-Jaafariya Shia Muslim Mosque](#) is in the original old Tooting schoolhouse building dating from the 1820s.

14 Continue down Mitcham Road in the direction of Tooting Broadway. On your right pass Morleys, 'Tooting Harrods' which traded from 1905 until about ten years ago as 'Smith Brothers'. A portrait of founder Mr H A Smith hangs in the back office. This place sold everything and its quite possible that Albert and Lily shopped here for their wedding outfits, perhaps even for some of his sports kit.

15 Across the road from the Library, a famous sporting pub 'The Antelope' once housed a boxing ring and gymnasium. Previously Jack Beard's and The Forresters, it was where Tooting & Mitcham Football Club were founded. Next door, a bomb destroyed a funeral parlour in the Blitz and killed four members of the Knox family.

16 At Primark turn right into Longmead Road. This was the site of the great Tooting [Central Methodist Hall](#) built by [Joseph Rank](#) in 1908, a landmark in many old photos. It was demolished in 1967 to make way for Marks & Spencers. The world famous Markets are worthy of a Tour on their own but pass by and bear left.

17 At the end of Longmead Road, turn left into Totterdown Street. On the corner with Tooting High Street is the Lahore Karahi restaurant, once the main HQ of local undertaker and councillor William Mellhuish. It was thanks to him making a strong case that the Edward VII statue came to Tooting rather than Wandsworth - raise your mango lassi to him the next time you're enjoying a biryani in this fabulous eatery.

18 Left again into Tooting High Street for the last stretch back to where we started. Look out for the Defoe Chapel, currently home to Superdrug, opposite Selkirk Road. This building dates from 1776 but there was one here a long time before that, supposedly where [Daniel Defoe](#) hid from his enemies - there's no proof of that but the story endures and a lot of street names uphold the connection. Even Selkirk Road recalls a real-life castaway called [Alexander Selkirk](#) widely associated with the Robinson Crusoe story.

19 A little beyond that on the other side of the road, Paddy Power beside Lidl is the site of another Tooting Cinema. Remembered in its later years as [The Vogue](#) for its cartoons and 'foreign films'. After the First World War it was christened 'The Victory', one of at least seven cinemas in Tooting in its 1930s hey-day.

FOR INFORMATION AND MORE WALKS: 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