



Summerstown182
GREAT ESCAPES

'PLANET TOOTING' HISTORY WALK
4 miles, (50-60 minutes)
Start at **TOOTING BEC UNDERGROUND STATION**

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Select your own local history walk with one of these downloadable maps, taking in significant features of interest in the **Tooting/Earlsfield/Wandsworth/Wimbledon** area. Summerstown182 'Great Escapes' are just the job for your daily exercise allowance! Multiple flavours to choose from, every one a winner! **Perfect for mind, body and spirit.**



This ultimate orbital tour of Tooting gets you off the bustling shopping hubs into the quieter residential streets where people have settled from all over the world, really giving you a special insight into an area packed with diversity and proud of its outstanding community togetherness.

1 START TOOTING BEC UNDERGROUND STATION - The first wave of migrants made a big impression here. Take a look at St Anselm's Church to your right and imagine the French monks from [L'Abbaye du Bec-Hellouin](#) settling here after the Norman invasion. As you cross Upper Tooting Road, try and picture those Roman legions marching along Stane Street a few centuries earlier. Pass the Wheatsheaf pub and head up Trinity Road and left into Glenburnie Road.

2 Just past Langroyd Road is the old Holy Trinity Church Hall. Its now the headquarters of the Tooting Neighbourhood Centre founded here in 1974 and working for older people in this area and across a number of other London boroughs.

3 Next on your right is Fircroft Primary School, dating from 1896. [Sadiq Khan](#) went to school here and later Ernest Bevin College, just around the corner on Beechcroft Road. There he was taught by Naz Bokhari, the first Muslim headteacher of a British secondary school. Sadiq's family home was on the Henry Prince estate in Earlsfield, about a mile away. The partition of India in 1947 and the end of 300 years of British colonial rule was followed by bloodshed, upheaval and displacement. 15 million people lost their homes, 2 million were killed. Many people from these countries came to Britain in the following decades, many in London ended up working in the National Health Service or like Sadiq's father Amanullah, for London Transport.

4 We are very close to the site of [Springfield Hospital](#). The development of a lively and visible Mauritian community in Tooting may in part be due to an advertising campaign seeking mental health care workers there in the 60s and 70s. Mauritians were renowned for their expertise in this sector and many came to work here.

5 Take the second left into Beechcroft Road. Look to your right down Fishponds Road for a great view of St George's Hospital. Further down on your right is a very pretty church which was a lovely shade of purple a few years ago. Formerly St Peter's Presbyterian Church built in 1895, its now the home of the New Testament Assembly, noted for its gospel choir and music. Many of the [Windrush](#) generation who arrived in London on 22 June 1948 were initially accommodated in a WW2 deep level shelter near Clapham South station, just over a mile away and came to settle in this area.

6 With the huge Telephone and Labour Exchange building in front of you, cross Upper Tooting Road and head right. Be sure to admire Nos 68-72 on the other side of the road. Cake Box and its neighbours are believed to be the oldest surviving original buildings in Tooting. They date from the late 17th century, part of an earlier medieval village established by monks from Bec Abbey. A beautiful old red brick building on your left was the postal sorting office, now the Khalsa Centre Gurdwara (Sikh temple), home of the Tooting Sikh community since 1984. They are active in interfaith initiatives and always keen to invite guests to their ceremonies and events.

7 Take the second left into Lynwood Road. On your left was the snooker club famously frequented by the young Jimmy White. A bit further on is an old Methodist chapel dating from 1912. Its now the home of 'The Church of God of Prophecy' and associated with Karen Gibson, leader of [The Kingdom Choir](#) who sang for Nelson Mandela and at Meghan and Harry's wedding.

8 Take a right into Blakenham Road. On the corner of Derinton Road is the home of CARAS, an outreach charity supporting refugees and asylum seekers in this area. Take the second left into Lessingham Avenue and you are now on the acclaimed [Totterdown Fields Estate](#). These houses were built for the influx of new workers who came to live in this area between 1903 and 1911. In a progressive age, it was constructed as a garden estate in the spirit of William Morris. The streets are all named after places where monastic cells were established in this country by Bec Abbey after the conquest. Turn right into Franciscan Road with a sweeping view down into the Wandle Valley and of Ronnie Lyon's tower in Colliers Wood.

9 A large Italian population in London swelled after the Second World War when many living here were interned. A number of cafes on Franciscan Road date from this time. Italian POWs were held near here in an old hospital called Newlands House. The corner of Lessingham Avenue and Franciscan Road is the geographical centre of the estate and the only provision for corner shops. Take a second right into Cowick Road, then right again into Okeburn Road and left into Chertsey Road.

10 On Church Lane, a recently-built estate now stands on the site of St Benedict's Hospital opposite. The dome which once topped the main building has been preserved in the gardens. Take a right into Church Lane and pass the Idara-e-Jaafariya Mosque, home since the early 70s to Tooting's Shia Muslim community. They are located in the old parish school building which dates from 1827. Like all the Mosques they welcome visitors and their community [iftar](#) is a memorable occasion.

11 St Nicholas Church contains tablets and memorials to the great and the good from earlier ages, many connected to a number of manor houses in the area. Sir John Hebdon was an envoy to the Russian Tsar. Philip Gidley-King was one of the first Governors of New South Wales. The Gassiot family were prominent wine-merchants.

12 Turn left to see the beautiful St Boniface Roman Catholic Church which dates from 1907, though the best time to enjoy it is at Christmas when it's covered in twinkling fairy lights. It's estimated that over fifty different nationalities currently worship at this Church. Before recent migration the dominant nationality was a large Irish community which settled in Tooting largely after the Second World War, attracted by construction work and road-building.

13 Cross the road here and bear right passing Bickersteth Road and the Trident Centre, a lively community hub. Just past Charlmont Road, the Tooting Music Centre recording studio was once above Mixed Blessings bakery. It was frequented in the 70s and 80s by an eclectic mix of famous names, including glam-rockers,

synthpopsters, post-punks and reggae artists. Popular local legend has it that one of these was Bob Marley, who left his mark by scrawling his signature on a wall.

14 Just after the Antelope pub, turn left into Bickley Street. Across the road is the Library and the Somali couple who live on the bench in front of it. They have been here and before that on another one outside TK Maxx for almost six years. Great efforts have been made to house them but they prefer the bench. The crest on the building above them is [Wandsworth Borough Council's coat of arms](#). The tears on the shield represent the sufferings of the 50,000 Huguenot refugees who fled religious persecution in France in 1685. Many settled on the River Wandle, their industry and initiative making an enduring contribution to the development of this area.

15 At the end of Bickley Street turn right into Woodbury Street. In 1996 an IRA gang hiding out in No58 planned to bomb London's electricity supply network. This was foiled by a massive police and security services surveillance operation. At their trial they claimed the plan was to make dummy bombs with icing sugar.

16 Turn left into Tooting High Street and cross over taking the second turn on your right into Tooting Grove. This leads you to St George's. People have come from all over the world to work at this famous London teaching hospital, featured for the last few years on Channel Four's ['24 Hours in A&E'](#). It's a source of great local pride that our MP, Dr Rosena Allin-Khan, born to a Polish mother and Pakistani father was an A&E doctor here and still works occasional shifts. The last census in 2011 showed that just under half the people living in Tooting were born outside the UK. 5.2 per cent were born in Pakistan, 4.3 per cent in India, 2.1 per cent in Ireland, 1.7 per cent in Sri Lanka, 1.7 per cent in Somalia, 1.7 per cent in the Philippines. Over 30 per cent from a multitude of other countries. ['Journeys'](#) a beautiful film made by people from the Furzedown Project, CARAS and pupils from Furzedown Primary School tells some of their stories.

17 Follow the road right into Effort Street, then left round the perimeter of the hospital into Coverton Road. Take a right into Gambole Road and cross Garratt Lane into Khama Road. The colonial age of the missionary was strongly identified in this area and this street was named after [King Khama III](#) of the Bamangwato people in Bechuanaland (now Botswana). Having converted to Christianity in 1860 he allied himself with British colonisers and supported this country in the Boer War. Threatened with having his country carved up and probably racially segregated by Cecil Rhodes, in 1895, supported by the London Missionary Society and the Temperance Movement, he travelled to London with two other Kings to appeal to Queen Victoria. Rhodes stood down, a famous victory for 'The Three Kings'. Turn right into Selkirk Road noting the year 1881 inscribed on many of the houses.

18 At the Selkirk pub, go left into Fishponds Road. Until about 1920 this was Uganda Street, another nod to a British colony. Not long after independence, Idi Amin's expulsion saw 27,000 [Ugandan Asians](#) coming to Britain in the early 70s. One of them was our council leader in Wandsworth, Ravi Govindia. A similar situation occurred a few years earlier in Kenya, another country well-represented in this area.

19 Take the first right into Gatton Road. Part of the stunning red brick Broadwater Road School is a nursery run by the Al Risalah Educational Trust. In 2004 they established Gatton School, the first purpose-built primary with an Islamic ethos. On your left is the Al-Muzzammil Mosque, the first in Tooting, established here in 1972. The green-fingered Imam has just grown some beautiful historic daffodils to celebrate this area's connection with Peter Barr ['The Daffodil King'](#).

20 Look right at the end of Gatton Road for the world famous, award-winning Tooting markets, one dating from 1930, the other 1936. Sadly they are closed due to the current restrictions. They are truly worth a tour in themselves. Newly expanded with recent arrivals and evening opening, complementing a truly global assortment of shops, stalls and eateries. A short film ['Tooting Stall Stories'](#) made a few years ago about the markets, tells you all you need to know about this jewel in Planet Tooting.

21 Take a left into Upper Tooting Road and pass Broadwater Road, home of St Augustine's Church. A vibrant group called Tooting and Balham Community Association (BATCA) collaborate with the mosques and other faith groups and charities to create one of the outstanding highlights of the Tooting calendar, The Community Fun Day.

22 Take a left into Upper Tooting Road. Moffat Road is named after Robert Moffat, another missionary who lived most of his life in Africa. Just past this, a major development is taking place on the site of the old 'Royal Arsenal Cooperative' store. In recent times associated with the Sri Lankan tamil community who came here to escape government oppression and a bloody 30 year Civil War. In 1975 in this building, one of the earliest revolutionary groups supporting the Tamil Tigers and a separate tamil state in Sri Lanka was founded by Arul Pragasam. His daughter Mathangi is better known as the singer 'MIA' - her ['Paper Planes'](#) the soundtrack to the film 'Slumdog Millionaire'. From 1995 it was the home of the Sri Muthumari Amman Temple and its Chariot Festival which for about ten years was a colourful local event. The temple relocated to Croydon after an arson attack on the chariot in 2011.

23 Pass the popular gujurati 'Pooja Sweets and Savouries' renowned for their samosas. Across the road stands the enormous old 1930s Mayfair cinema, now the Tooting Islamic Centre and Balham Mosque. Initially established in a house in Tooting in 1969, then various larger locations in Balham, it relocated here in 1994 in what was at the time a branch of the Bank of Baroda. Catering for 1,000 worshippers, the mosque is very engaged and outward, playing an important role in this area and further afield, whether through food distribution, support and mutual aid. [Visitors are always welcome.](#)

24 Just past the King's Head pub, an archaeological dig revealed the possible site of a medieval butcher's shop. A few streets behind this, 1920s building work uncovered what may have been a Roman mosaic floor. You are back on the old Roman road of Stane Street. On your left is what is believed to be the biggest Chicken Cottage in Europe and the site of the old Classic cinema. Just before Tooting Bec Station, look out for the Arena grocery store which appears to sell every kind of foodstuff from every corner of the world, truly summing up the spirit of Planet Tooting.

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