



'TINY TED'S TOOTING TOUR' HISTORY WALK
2.5 miles, (35-45 minutes)
Start at **TOOTING BROADWAY, UNDERGROUND STATION**



- 1 Tooting Broadway Underground Station
- 2 Tooting Broadway
- 3 Tooting Broadway
- 4 Tooting Broadway
- 5 Tooting Broadway
- 6 Lanesborough Wing, St George's Hospital
- 7 St George's Hospital
- 8 St George's Hospital
- 9 St George's Hospital
- 10 St George's Hospital
- 11 St George's Hospital
- 12 St George's Hospital
- 13 St George's Hospital
- 14 St George's Hospital
- 15 St George's Hospital
- 16 Tooting Leisure Centre
- 17 Tooting Leisure Centre
- 18 Tooting Broadway

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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.**



Over the centenary of the First World War, the extraordinary level of contribution in Wandsworth and Tooting was demonstrated. One figure who represents this had been celebrated here for some time. [Corporal Edward Foster](#) from Fountain Road, awarded the Victoria Cross for great valour at the French village of Villers-Plouich on 24th April 1917. His appeal lies undoubtedly in his ordinariness, a modest, unassuming individual whose great bravery saw attention thrust upon him. He worked as a rubbish collector and inevitably became 'The Dustman VC'. Also inevitably, because of his height, he was known as 'Tiny'. This Walk celebrates someone born and bred in Tooting, who worked in Tooting, died and is buried in Tooting. His one excursion onto foreign fields led to his outstanding act of courage. One hundred years later the tiny village in France [constructed a monument](#) at the place where Ted Foster won his VC. The design replicates one of the pinnacles on the roof of Wandsworth Town Hall. It was there in 2017, in front of family descendants, that a commemorative VC stone was placed. Later that day a green plaque was unveiled outside his old home. We concluded by doing this walk. It's now your chance to salute Britain's Bravest Binman by doing Tiny Ted's Tooting 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 in this area. The statue was unveiled on 4 November 1911 by the Mayor of Wandsworth, Archibald Dawnay. Its highly likely that Ted Foster and his wife Alice 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. This was called Graveney School and Edward Foster attended here, leaving in 1900 to work for the newly-formed Wandsworth Council at their 'Dust Destructor' rubbish incineration facility in Tooting.

3 The roads on the right all lead up to St George's Hospital. These packed terraced streets responded eagerly to local First World War recruitment. Gilbey Road has 98 doors but the Absent Voters roll call of 1918 indicates that [137 men](#) were on active service from this street alone. These were only ones over the age of 21.

4 Opposite the Trafalgar pub is a Thai restaurant on the location of the site of Britain's first purpose-built cinema, [The King's Hall](#) opened in 1909 with seats and standing for over one thousand people. Living just around the corner, its hard to believe Edward Foster didn't visit. A few years later he would have had a choice of seven cinemas in Tooting. It became a car show-room and was demolished about ten years ago but there is a plaque commemorating the site.

5 Cross to the other side of the road and turn into Tooting Grove. Here at No14, Edward Foster was born on 4 February 1886. The house has been demolished but the site was close to an existing building called 'The Little House' which was a pub until about 15 years ago. In the 1891 census his father Charles was a labourer, his mother worked in a laundry. Tooting Grove was a [notorious slum area](#) which deteriorated in the war years and was demolished by the council in the 1930s. It was described by Alfred Hurley as 'Probably the worst slum area in the Borough of Wandsworth, a collection of old and dilapidated dwellings, rat ridden, with broken roofs, and the conditions under which human beings were living in overcrowded and insanitary surroundings were deplorable'. The Foster family had moved here from the Nine Elms area a few years before Ted was born. By great coincidence, the Council have recently named a block of new housing on the Savona estate very near this ['Edward Foster Court'](#).

6 Follow the road round to the right passing St George's Hospital and into Effort Street. Take a left into Coverton Road. A famous resident of this street was the actor George Cole, raised at No88a. At the bend keep straight on a path behind the back of the Leisure Centre. This takes you into a small park called Tooting Gardens. It was once a rubbish facility charmingly called the 'Tooting Slop Shoot'. Follow this round and you emerge in Cranmer Terrace on the other side of the hospital. Tooting Grove once divided the two fever hospitals on the site of St George's; The Fountain and The Grove. [Edith Cavell](#), a nurse executed for aiding the escape of allied prisoners from Belgium in 1915 trained at The Fountain. Nurses' accommodation at the end of Fountain Road is named Cavell House. There is a statue and memorial of her close to Trafalgar Square.

7 Turn left onto Fountain Road. Ted and Alice lived at a number of addresses here after they got married on 8 May 1910 at Christ Church, Colliers Wood, near the big Sainsbury's. In 1911 they were at No48 with Ted's brother Charles next door, at No46. They then moved to No141. From 1915 they settled at No92. Ted would live here until his death in 1946, Alice lived on at the address until she passed away in 1972. Not far from the junction with Pevensey Road, its a hand grenade's throw from the yard where Ted's job was based. A company called FW Surridge had taken on the contract for the Council's refuse service. The main incinerator facility 'The Dust Destructor' was on Alston Road.

8 Continue a short distance down Fountain Road and No141 is next door to the house with a blue plaque to [Sadie Crawford](#) the jazz pioneer. The Fosters lived here prior to moving to No92. Sadie had moved on by that point though they were a very similar age and almost certainly attended Graveney School at the same time.

9 Opposite this is Anderson House. Go through the arch and enter Fountain Road Recreation Ground. This was the site until 1930 of 'The Dust Destructor', dominated by a 153 foot tall chimney belching out soot and smoke for over 35 years. Its 'objectionable odours' were even mentioned in Parliament in 1924. There is extraordinary newsreel footage of it being knocked down online in the [British Pathé collection](#). It opened for business in 1898 on an old clay quarry brickworks. The site was still used for some time afterwards as a base for horse drawn dust-carts. A job 'on the dust' was highly-prized with sons following fathers into the role and the 'Dustmans Day Out' a big Tooting occasion. It was a hard life, the smell, the horses, the constant washing of bodies and clothes. But there seemed to be a real sense of camaraderie and of working together with the added bonus of being able to sell some of the things you might find amongst the rubbish. Foster was wounded again in November and discharged from the army. The Council made sure he got his old job back and then elevated him to the position of 'Chief Inspector of Dust'.

10 Follow the path out of the Recreation Ground into Alston Road. A newspaper report from 1927 shows Foster in his role of 'Chief' standing by a wall that had been struck by a dust cart and tragically fallen onto a young boy and killed him.

11 Turn left and next on your left is Bertal Road. 39 members of the Wandsworth Battalion were killed and 160 wounded in the liberation of Villers-Plouich on the day Ted Foster won his VC. Many are buried there in Fifteen Ravine Cemetery including 17 year old [Alfred Quenzer](#), the son of a German butcher who lived on the corner here at No2 Bertal Road.

12 Take the next right into Rostella Road, named after part of an orchid. Ted Foster loved being in his garden and tending his roses. He would have appreciated the fertility of this area and its previous nursery connections. In fact No48 was on the site of Robert Parker's ['Exotic Nursery'](#) where orchids were once grown. Take a left into Thurso Street. 13 names on the St Mary's Church First World War memorial are from this very small street, including [three Seagar brothers](#) at No8.

13 At the end of this road, the beautiful Smallwood School dating from 1898 looms ahead of you. It made a dramatic contribution to the war effort, a booklet produced in 1916 of 'Old Smalls on Active Service' lists over 400 names. A number had already died including the caretaker [Francis Halliday](#) who lived in the school-keeper's cottage to your left on the other side of the road. Another was [Henry Ollive](#) who had only just turned sixteen.

14 Turn right and follow Smallwood Road to Garratt Lane and [Streatham Cemetery](#). Use the zebra crossing on the right and doubleback to the entrance on the other side of the road on the left. If the cemetery is closed, continue down Garratt Lane back towards Tooting. If its open, you should try and visit Edward Foster's grave.

15 A new black marble headstone was erected in 1997 in front of his son Dennis and a guard of honour from The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment. The grave is No357, Block 15 if you can find it. Turn right at the war memorial, then left at the second big intersection. Its not far from the bee hives, just before the hill. Exit the cemetery through the Broadwater Road Gate in the bottom corner and turn right.

16 Go past Broadwater School on your right and the old St Augustine's Church vicarage on your left, then turn left onto Garratt Lane. On the other side of the road opposite Deepak House was the site of Ted's favourite pub 'The Fountain'.

17 A little further on, Greaves Place on the other side of the road was the site of FW Surridge's main depot until the Leisure Centre was built in the 1970s.

18 Continue down Garratt Lane, round the bend and on the right hand side a blue plaque indicates [the home of Sidney Lewis](#), believed to be the youngest soldier to have served in the British Army in the First World War. He was in the same East Surrey Regiment as Tiny Ted and both joined up in 1915. Sid was 12 years old but claimed he was 19. He fought at the [Battle of the Somme](#) when he was 13. Foster joined the 13th Wandsworth Battalion rustled up by the Mayor of Wandsworth. Their deadliest hour occurred in the advance on the Hindenberg line at the Battle of Arras in the spring of 1917. An attack at [Villers-Plouich near Cambrai](#) was held up by two machine guns in an enemy trench concealed in a ravine. In a moment of madness, Foster and Lance-Corporal Reed, armed with Lewis guns single-handedly stormed the position, allowing the battalion to liberate the village. An extraordinary bond was then formed which has endured to this day. After the War, donations from people in this area helped rebuild Villers-Plouich and the central square was named ['Place de Wandsworth'](#). An informal twinning resulted in numerous visits and exchanges which have been given new life in the last twenty years largely thanks to the efforts of author and council employee Paul McCue. Its just over an hour on the A26 from Calais and anyone from this area who visits Villers-Plouich and Edward Foster's Memorial there is assured of a warm welcome. Back in Wandsworth, Ted is also commemorated with a riverside walk along the edge of [King George's Park](#). It was here in 1923 that he and other First World War veterans met King George V. Ted Foster's Victoria Cross and other decorations were purchased by Lord Ashcroft and are on display in the [Imperial War Museum](#) in Kennington. They are in a case marked with a dustbin lid which you lift up to reveal the medals.

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