



Summer 2018
GREAT ESCAPES

'WANDSWORTH RIVERSIDE' HISTORY WALK
4.5 miles, (50-60 minutes)
Start at **WANDSWORTH TOWN LIBRARY, SOUTHSIDE, GARRATT LANE, SW18**

WANDLE RIVERSIDE (4.5 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.**



Mixing up the old and the brand, shiny new - this fascinating excursion takes you to the mystical, magical place where the Wandle meets the Thames. It includes some breathtaking riverside stretches, sections of Wandsworth's oldest residential streets and most recent developments. Passing some of its most historic pubs and the sites of some of its most notable industries, it finishes at the old Young's Brewery 'Ram Quarter' development. Its not all pretty, this area, but its had quite a life...

- 1 START WANDSWORTH TOWN LIBRARY** - The library which was the old court house and later the museum is close to Southside Shopping Centre. Next to it is a building which as a plaque indicates, was once the [Biograph Theatre](#), London's first licensed cinema, used for a long time as a bottle store by the pub next door.
- Walk a little way back up Garratt Lane and take a left into the Old Garratt Lane Burial Ground, currently undergoing extensive work to connect the site better with the surrounding streets. On your immediate left you might want to say hello to Sigismund Rucker, whose [Putney Lodge](#) house on West Hill became London's second public library. The big Sainsbury's next to this was the Voelker Gas Mantle Works one of many mantle factories in the area, employing a largely female workforce. Follow the main path out into Malva Road and left into St Ann's Hill.
- Cross the High Street opposite the Two Brewers into Fairfield Street. The enormous [Wandsworth Town Hall](#) which was opened in 1937 is to your left. On the corner on the right is an unusual tablet remembering this occasion and specifically '500,000 people waving 50,000 flags for Queen Mary'. Look out for the pinnacles on the roof of the Town Hall, replicated recently in a tribute by a small French village to Wandsworth First World War hero [Corporal Edward Foster VC](#), part of the Wandsworth Battalion who liberated Villers Plouich in 1917.
- Take note here of Wandsworth town centre's notorious much-derided one-way system, instigated as a 'temporary' measure in 1964. Take the second right from Fairfield Street into Tonsley Hill. Typical of the older period houses once lived in by those who worked in the mills and factories, somehow oblivious to all the change around them. Tucked in close to here is 41 Bramford Road where [Tony Blair](#) lived in the late seventies when he was a young barrister. This stretch gives you a residential hit before things get a bit industrial so make the most of it. Follow Tonsley Hill round Fullerton Road with great views of new high-rise buildings on both sides of the Thames. Carry on into Ebner Street and down the hill and right into Old York Road.
- This got really shaken up about 20 years ago when York Road suddenly became Old York Road. Go past the Alma pub, named after a major [British victory](#) in the Crimean War and under the railway bridge. Pass the lovely Bramford Community Garden on your right. Bearing right, cross Armoury Way just before the roundabout and walk straight across past the front of Macdonalds, heading for Jew's Road. Look out for the 'Wandsworth Garage' building on the left and a plaque detailing the historic comings and goings of trams and trolley-bus services in the area.
- At the bottom of this road, turn left into a passage alongside The Ship, a renowned foodie-pub built on top of a sewage outlet. Follow this to the right and onto a riverside path in front of some new developments with great views of Wandsworth Bridge to your right. Covering a huge expanse in this area until 1971 was the mighty [Wandsworth and District Gas Company](#), supplying coal gas in this area for lighting and heating. A fleet of colliers including the famous [SS Wandle](#) which fought off a U-boat in the First World War brought in the coal. Established in 1837 it was the largest employer in the area. Continue along Nickols Walk enjoying the views across the river and the cranes of the Western Riverside Refuge and Recycling Centre which you need to divert round. Take a left into Waterside Way.
- Turn right onto Smugglers Way and follow it past the refuge site. Look for the Natural Wood Floor Company to your left, with a relic from the gasworks on display behind a metal railing. Its a bit of a grim industrial wasteland around here. Echoes of past industries jostling uneasily with major new initiatives and its a constantly changing vista. A little further on, a plaque on your right indicates the site of 'The Causeway' road and 'The Cut', a dock which linked the Thames to the [Surrey Iron Railway](#). It was also known as '[McMurrays Canal](#)' after a paper manufacturer whose mill on Garratt Lane produced the Times and other publications from esparto grass which came through here. The Railway was financed by local businessmen who saw an opportunity to move their produce more efficiently. Nine miles of track from Wandsworth to Croydon opened in 1803 after being initiated by an Act of Parliament. The world's first constructed on iron rails, it had a brief but memorable existence. Drawn by horses it transported coal, building materials, manure, oil, seeds

- everything except people. Beseet with broken rails and superseded by the steam age, it fizzled out in 1846. Every so often one of its stone sleepers gets dug up, there is one in St Mary's Church Summerstown and before the development a cluster were embedded in the wall of the brewery in Ram Street. The best person and place to find out more about it is Eric at the [Wandle Industrial Museum](#) in Mitcham.
- Cross the [Wandle](#) via 'Wandle Creek Bridge'. The river and adjoining channel Bell Lane Creek have formed a small pointed island and 'nature reserve' called The Spit, a great viewing platform, sadly currently closed. Instead enjoy this bit of footage shot there about twenty years ago by the [Wandle Delta Blues Band](#).
 - Follow the riverside path to your right as it curls in front of another recent waterside development. Continue along here with Putney Bridge in the distance, the Hurlingham Club across the river. Just past the water taxi station, dwarfed by all the glass and concrete around it, look out an old white regency building called Prospect House once visited by George IV. Bear to the left at this and head for Point Pleasant, going past an old lighterman's inn called The Cat's Back. There was a lot of heavy industry in this area, particularly associated with a company called APV Holdings who made armaments in the First World War and petrol tanks for Spitfire aircraft in the Second.
 - On your right are Prospect Cottages, the homes of labourers who once worked in the wharves. Take a left into Osiers Road once the site of a fireworks factory. This marshy ground would have been where baskets were once made from the willow-like osier once so common to this area. This road takes you through the new development, past a Sainsbury's then back over 'Wandle Creek Bridge'. This time do a sharp right following the signpost to Wandsworth.
 - You're now back on 'The Causeway', an old route connecting the Thames to the Wandsworth Plain settlement. This is probably the best stretch in terms of giving you a sense of the many layers of industrial activity in this area. The latest intruder is the building of London's 26 mile long '[super sewer](#)'. Near here was the site of the Lower Mill, a corn, oil and later a distillery associated with the Watney brewing family. Wandsworth became the main grinder of flour for London in the early 19th century, the Upper and Middle Mills producing 60,000 sacks of flour a year. Take yourself back to 1829 and [picture this scene](#) from the other side of the Thames. On your left, just after the railway bridge, look out for the bell at the sluice gates, rung to warn of a high tide. On it is inscribed 'I AM RUNG BY THE TIDES'. A stone tablet above it fetchingly lists some of the wildlife that have returned to the area since the river has been cleaned up; salmon, swan, otter, heron, eel.
 - Exit here with the Crane pub on your right. A sign suggests its haunted by 'the ghost of a small boy in knickerbockers'. Behind this is Dormay Road named after another gas factory owner and where it all began for [Silas Burroughs and Henry Wellcome](#), whose factory located here in 1880 developed into the world's largest pharmaceutical company. They ran out of space and had to relocate to Dartford. You now need to do battle again with Armoury Way - a nod to the [iron works](#) on Garratt Lane which made weapons for Waterloo and Trafalgar. This area was called Wandsworth Plain and many slums were cleared from it in the 1930s. A little further to your right, blocks of housing have names associated with some of the [mills in the area](#); Bolting, Middle Mill, Brazil. King George VI opened these in 1938. In the 16th century, Middle Mill which had its own windmill until 1893 produced a scarlet dye for which Wandsworth became famous. Turn left over the bridge and follow Armoury Way to the next lights. Shut out the traffic and picture the giant Wandsworth Gas Company on your left, Youngs Brewery across the road on your right.
 - Cross into Ram Street and the home of Wandsworth's famous [Young's Brewery](#), recently reborn as [The Ram Quarter](#). Take the first right into Chivers Passage and follow the sign back towards the river. You can now follow this along the edge of the development. Its definitely worth diverting into Draper's Yard where there are some good heritage information displays including a wonderful 2017 re-creation of an old photo of Young's staff members' annual Christmas dinner. The Brewery, famous for its continued use of carthorses to make local deliveries has been here since 1832. Although it closed in 2006 after a merger, a microbrewery on the site means its claim to be the oldest continuously working brewery in the the UK has been maintained.
 - Go over a small footbridge onto Wandsworth High Street and cross at Buckhold Road in front of the Southside complex. Turn left and get a good view of the front of the brewery before turning right back into Garratt Lane. Southside has really improved a lot in the last few years, a fairly gentle transformation of the 1970 Arndale Centre which had itself replaced a greyhound stadium and Bazelgette's [storm relief sewer aqueduct](#) which ran across King George's Park.

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