

STREATHAM'S SAINTS & SINNERS (4 miles, 50-60 minutes)



Devised to help everybody through the lockdown, these downloadable maps take in significant features of historical interest for you to enjoy on walks in the **Tooting/Earlsfield/Wandsworth/Wimbledon/Streatham** area. There are now multiple flavours of Summerstown182 'Great Escapes' to choose from, every one a winner! **Perfect for mind, body and spirit.**

A glorious romp round the southern part of Streatham, mixing some intense High Road action with the quieter, quirkier backwaters where we all know the strangest things can happen! You can do a short version of this by peeling off at 10 and returning to St Leonard's via 18. This one is dedicated to all at [The Streatham Society](#) who with their lively meetings, newsletter and stream of informative publications do such a terrific job in keeping the extraordinary history of this area alive.

1 START ST LEONARD'S CHURCH - With its message of 'Faith, Hope and Love' in the heart of Streatham, [St Leonard's Church](#) holds a prominent position at the junction of Streatham High Road and Mitcham Lane. With its distinctive spire, shaded with trees and wrapped with a fine collection of interesting old graves, it has one of the loveliest settings of any church in south London. The names of Streatham's foremost noteworthies stand guard around it; the Drews, the Garrards, the Thrales, the Pratts. And it's a great survivor; it brushed off lightning and the Luftwaffe, but a terrible fire on 5th May 1975 destroyed much of the interior, even the bells. A guided tour with its legendary archivist and historian John 'Mr Streatham' Brown is a must for anyone with the vaguest interest in this area.

2 Cross Tooting Bec Gardens and follow Mitcham Lane past the neighbouring [English Martyrs Roman Catholic Church](#). The building of this in 1892 was funded by a local resident called Robert Measures, renowned for his spectacular orchid collection, based here in the grounds of a large house called Woodlands. The full story of the orchid connection to this area is on the [Loughborough Road History Project](#) blog. Nelly Roberts from Brixton was the Royal Horticultural Society Orchid Artist for an astonishing 53 years. She was discovered by Robert Measures' older brother Richard and his gardener Henry Chapman whose home at Flodden Road was the site of a leading orchid nursery. Robert set about establishing his own collection at Woodlands. Documented in print, the [Woodlands Orchids](#) became internationally known with collectors sent around the world. With 30 glasshouses, Nelly almost certainly painted flowers grown here. The collection was sold off in 1907 and the Measures brothers business which involved the making of girders and ironworks was the centre of a share scandal. Robert Measures was found guilty of falsifying information and in 1911 at the age of 72 was sentenced to seven months in prison.

3 Turn right into Fernwood Avenue which is on the site of Woodlands House. Lined with trees, this narrow road gently curves, offering a peaceful preamble before returning to the madness of Streatham High Road. At the end of the road on the corner, Beclands house dates from 1893 and was the home of Measures' son Herbert. It was later the residence of tennis player [Cyril Gladstone Farnes](#) who represented Britain in the Davis Cup in the 1920s and coached the Queen's father. Opposite this, on the corner of Garrad's Road at No38 is Bishop's House, the official residence of the Anglican Bishop of Southwark. It was previously the location of the home of [Sir George Barlow](#) Governor General of Madras and scene of a Victorian scandal when the children's governess, Miss Page, returned early from St. Leonard's and discovered Lady Barlow in a 'compromising position' with her husband's aide-de-camp, his cousin, Major George Pratt Barlow. They divorced in 1816.

4 Take a left here and follow Tooting Bec Gardens downhill towards the Common. Famously mis-spelt, Garrad's Road opposite is named after [Robert Garrard](#), the Crown Jeweller who lived at Woodfield on the edge of the Common. His grave in St Leonard's churchyard is damaged as thieves thought jewels must be buried alongside him. Known in the 70s as 'Millionaire's Road', Garrad's Road became notorious until about ten years ago for its prostitution and kerb-crawling, many sex workers having moved on there from Bedford Hill. Its believed this was a legacy from the First World War when large numbers of troops were billeted on the Common. Either way its a reputation that has been hard to shake off. In 1989 the local MP raised the issue in Parliament 'Over the past few years, a plague—a pollution—has struck a part of my constituency'. The previous year, 803 prostitutes were arrested and prosecuted in this area.

5 On the other side of the bridge on the right hand side is Tooting Bec Lido. On the left was the [Streatham Park estate](#), home of the Thrales and much-visited by Dr Samuel Johnson. The Streatham Society placed a blue plaque on the site of the original house, which was demolished in 1863, near 'Dr Johnson's mulberry tree'. [Fabulous Furzedown](#) covers the area and is the perfect accompaniment to this Walk.

6 Take a left into Riggindale Road for more tranquility and some beautiful old houses. The Hill Brothers; Henry Ellis Hill and William James Hill, were local speculative builders who worked extensively in the area. Their favourite holiday destination was The Lake District, and as a result many of the streets have Cumbrian names. They often employed a young architect called Frederick Wheeler who designed many of the grand shopping parades on the High Road and Streatham Town Hall, demolished in the 1980s. The Methodist Church at the end of Riggindale Road is an example of their collaboration. No60 was home to William Apdar Jones, a director of the [ldns soft drinks company](#). He died in 1911 the year of a famous strike action by women workers inspired by Mary Macarthur. Just before the church, turn left into Rydal Road. Wheeler lived at No9 'Eversley'. Peter Jones, founder of the famous Sloane Square department store of the same name died at this address in 1905. Another architect who lived in this road at No12 was Edith Gillian Harrison who in 1931 became the first woman Fellow of the RIBA.

7 Turn right onto Ambleside Avenue. Directly opposite you is the home of [Cynthia Payne](#) who shot to fame in the late 70s and over the next decade titillated Middle Britain, with extensive press coverage and a stream of TV appearances. Her life story was the subject of two major feature films. One of which 'Personal Services' was the story of what happened here at No32 Ambleside Avenue, with luncheon vouchers and 'thrupenny bits' being exchanged for well... personal services. She was a popular local personality regularly seen on the High Road where a pub still bears her name. She even stood at a number of general elections for her 'Payne and Pleasure' Party. She was a particularly British heroine, mixing the saucy seaside postcard with suburban homeliness. 'Madame Cyn' and Streatham were for a long time very synonymous.

8 [George Galloway](#) at No34 was probably one of the greatest political orators of recent years and what he had to say to Cynthia Payne over the garden fence would have been worth listening into. Most people know him from his pussycat impersonation on 'Celebrity Big Brother' but he was one of the most controversial and outspoken MPs of his generation, associated with his opposition to the Iraq War. Other famous residents of this road include Paul Merton, Andy Zaltzman, composer Carl Davis and his wife Jean Boht, actress from TV comedy show 'Bread'. Eddie Izzard and Keith Hill MP lived nearby in Ambleside Gardens.

9 Cross Mitcham Lane and continue down Ambleside Avenue directly opposite. Half way down on your left look out for Gleneagle Mews. This once contained stables and the cart horses of traders who worked on the High Road. A Riding School was established here in the 60s and horses were kept until relatively recently. In 1929 it was the location of the mysterious unexplained death of Dr Charles Edmonds. More details in John Brown's 'Fascinating Streatham' available from 'The Streatham Society'.

10 This road veers left at the bottom and passes the hub of the vibrant Somali community who have been in Streatham for almost 30 years, many arriving in the wake of the ongoing civil war which started in 1991. This is the place to be if you want to sample any [Somali delicacies](#) which as a veteran of many school fairs with tasty treats provided by Somali families, I can vouch for. In 1911 another orchid artist and friend of Nelly Roberts, [Minnie Walters Anson](#) had a studio and lived at the Broadway, Gleneagle Road. Previously at 8 Lewin Road, she exhibited widely and was also renowned for her miniatures. You might choose at this point to do a short version of the walk, in which case proceed down here and cross the High Road to 20. Those with energy can save their Somali treats for later and turn right along Gleneagle Road.

11 Don't be fooled by the ordinariness of the houses on this quiet road moving away from Streatham town centre and heading south. Found here living quietly on Gleneagle Road and running a pizza restaurant in Bexleyheath was [Faryadi Sarwar Zardad](#) an Afghan warlord convicted for his crimes in 2005.

12 At the end of the road is the quite stunning Grade II listed [Water Pumping Station](#) on Conyers Road. Constructed in 1888 by the Southwark and Vauxhall Water Company, restored to all its considerable glory in the 1980s.

13 Turn left and where the road halts, go left again and through a passage under the railway line. This leads you onto Estreham Road. Take a right and follow the railway line approaching Streatham Hill station. The third road on the left is Pathfield Road and No19 is the site of the home of [Henry Robertson 'Birdie' Bowers](#). The original house was destroyed by Second World War bombing and the plaque is on a block of flats. As a young man, he served in the Royal Indian Marine. He took many of the photos on the ill-fated Captain Scott 'Terra Nova' expedition and the race to the South Pole. He died there in his tent around 29 March 1912, alongside Scott and Dr Edward Wilson who trained at St George's Hospital. In a letter to Bowers' mother retrieved from the tent, Scott wrote 'I write when we are very near the end of our journey, and I am finishing it in company with two gallant, noble gentlemen. One of these is your son. He had come to be one of my closest and soundest friends, and I appreciate his wonderful upright nature, his ability and energy. As the troubles have thickened his dauntless spirit ever shone brighter and he has remained cheerful, hopeful, and indomitable to the end.' There is another plaque for Birdie Bowers on the side of the Tate Library on Streatham High Road, the site of the school he once attended.

14 Growing up on Pathfield Road was the popular TV actress [Patricia Hayes](#) who lived at No129. She won the RADA Gold medal at the age of 18. Her house is on the corner in the left hand side. Divert down a passageway past her front door and turn right onto Barrow Road. On the corner on the left is Potter Perrin a bathroom store. This area was the site of Hambly House School where Lord Byron is believed to have been a pupil.

15 Streatham Common lies ahead, turn right passing Immanuel Church. Not far from this, the large Sainsbury's store is located in Stephen Wilson's [old silk mill](#) which then became Peter Brusey Cow's 'indian rubber' factory. Yes, the man who invented Cow Gum.

16 Cross onto Streatham Common. Once located a little further south from here was Streatham Lodge, home of banker [William Coulthurst](#) believed to be one of the richest men who ever lived in Streatham. In 1835, as a trustee, he was involved in the £20m compensation payment relating to the abolition of slavery. A debt only paid off by British tax payers in 2015. Have a think about how much that might be today as you turn and walk back along a shady avenue of trees to the other corner of the Common. Not far from here [Francis Barber](#) Close, off Valley Road is named after Dr Samuel Johnson's great friend and heir, born a slave on a Jamaican sugar plantation.

17 On the corner of the Common are two memorials. The distinctive Albert Toft designed figure with head bowed dates from 1922 and commemorates 720 men from Streatham who were killed in the First World War. There are three memorial stones to Victoria Cross recipients. Nearby a stone memorial to civilians killed in War was unveiled in 2006. Many of these would have been victims of the bombing which devastated Streatham in the summer of 1944. The density of its railway lines made it a target, 88 percent of housing stock was damaged and [41 flying bombs](#) landed. One was known to have damaged 1,671 houses. One of the buildings lost was a servicemen's club overlooking the memorial.

18 Continue up the High Road and pass the leisure centre. The original Streatham Ice Rink which opened in 1931 was the largest in Europe prompting the local paper to headline 'Don't go to Switzerland, come to Streatham'.

19 Next on your left is the monolithic Tesco superstore. [Hiram Maxim](#), eccentric inventing genius, philanthropist and bigamist lived on this site at Sandhurst Lodge. Most famous for his machine gun, he also invented the mouse trap, ladies' corsets and hair-curlers. Its estimated that 85% of First World War fatalities were due to machine gun fire.

20 Past the station and over the bridge, the Hideaway jazz venue was the site of the [Empire Cinema](#). Closed in 1932, it was hit by another of those flying bombs in 1944.

21 Take the next right into Stanthorpe Road, then promptly first left into a narrow passage way called Gleneldon Mews. It was a sticky June afternoon when I last passed down this extraordinary roadway. It was alive with industry and activity, like a scene from a bygone age. Clanking, banging and grinding from the numerous small motor workshops on both sides, a man pushing a trolley down the road with what looked like the fully intact carcass of a cow. This was another stable yard and a narrow channel running down the middle of its cobbles once flowed with horse effluent, causing it to be described in 1902 as 'an evil smelling, narrow passage way in wretched condition'. Take a left onto Gleneldon Road. Perhaps all the automobile activity is homage to Edward Butler, a motor engineer who once lived at No129. In 1884 he produced an early three-wheeler, the [Butler Petrol Cycle](#), which some claim was the first British car.

22 Cross over and continue left down the High Road for a moment before finishing your tour with a reflective moment on Streatham Green opposite the Martyrs Church. Here you can admire the exquisite [Dyce Fountain](#), designed by William Dyce, the pre-Raphaelite painter, very much the symbol of Streatham, restored in 2016.

Thanks to Mark Bery for help on this - look out for his fabulous Streatham tweets @markbery31

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