

# Barnet Healthy Heritage Walks

Welcome to Barnet Healthy Heritage Walks. These walks are designed to provide a gentle stroll of about 5 to 10 kilometres or 3 to 6 miles, approximately 5,000 to 10,000 steps, taking in a few buildings and sites of interest, and where possible using green spaces and footpaths.

## Mill Hill Walk

This walk follows Lawrence Street through to Marsh Lane and Highwood Hill, then along The Ridgeway and down Hammers Lane, through Poet's Corner, before returning to Lawrence Street. The tour has eight stops at notable points of interest. Please note that sections of this walk are unpaved and there are also some steep slopes, so the walk may not be suitable for wheelchair users and people with buggies.

We recommend starting the walk on Lawrence Street, Mill Hill. You can reach this point via the 251-bus heading either towards Arnos Grove or Edgware, getting off at bus stops named "Sunnyfield" or "Uphill Road". However, should you wish to get some refreshments for your walk, you can get off the bus at Mill Hill Broadway where there are cafes and shops. There are multiple bus links and a train station here also. Lawrence Street is a 10-minute walk from there along The Broadway, on the north side of the A1 Watford Way beyond the Mill Lane roundabout.

*Starting on Lawrence Street, begin to walk up the hill with houses on your left and fields on your right. To your right, rising up a hill, you will pass Saint Joseph's Gate, now converted into luxury apartments. This is point 1 on your map.*



## Audiotour part 1 – St. Joseph’s Gate

This was originally St Joseph’s College, founded in 1866 at Holcomb House nearby, before relocating here in 1871. St Joseph’s College is notable for being the first Roman Catholic missionary school in England and is the first of several connections with religious institutions that we shall encounter along our route through Mill Hill.

Officially opened on the Feast of St. Joseph in 1873, the college operated as part of Saint Joseph’s Society for Foreign Missions, also known as the Mill Hill Missionaries or Mill Hill Fathers. An influential and energetic English Catholic prelate, the driving force behind its foundation was Herbert Vaughan. Vaughan later served as Archbishop of Westminster from 1892 until his death in 1903 and was elevated to the position of Cardinal in 1893. Among his other achievements, Vaughan was instrumental in starting construction of Westminster Cathedral in central London.

New college buildings were constructed on this hill during the years 1869 and 1873 and the statue of St Joseph atop the Grade II-listed chapel tower became a familiar Mill Hill landmark. Thirteen feet high, the statue was created by Baumeister, of Munich. In the 19th century there were as many as 75 students at the college from all over the world and from as far away as Borneo. The college closed in 2006 after several Catholic missionary societies were consolidated. Before being converted, the buildings were used as a film location, including appearances as Nonnatus House, the East End nunnery at the heart of long-running BBC TV series *Call the Midwife*.

*Continue along Lawrence Street. Before reaching Lawrence Gardens, turn left onto a public footpath down through Lawrence Street Allotments and up a steep, grassy slope on the other side, which will bring you up on to Marsh Lane. Cross safely over the road and continue to your right along Marsh Lane up to Highwood Hill and the Rising Sun Public House which is point 2 on your map. Now pause the audiotour until you reach the Rising Sun on Highwood Hill.*



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## Audiotour part 2 - Highwood Hill

The Rising Sun, a late 17th century public house, once formed part of Highwood House Estate. The pub's location - on the junction of the main route from Barnet to Edgware with the main road from Hendon – made it a welcome stopping point for thirsty or hungry drovers taking livestock to market after plodding their way up Highwood Hill.

In the early 1680's, the inn was on the estate of Lord William Russell, who lived next door at Highwood House. Russell was implicated in the Rye House Plot to exclude Charles II's Catholic brother James from the succession in favour of King Charles's illegitimate – but Protestant - son, the Duke of Monmouth. After escaping from his home here, Russell was caught and sentenced to death.

The pub is said to be haunted by the ghost of Ann 'Nan' Clark, a local woman who, according to local legends, either was murdered by her lover or was herself a murderer. Whatever the true story, 'Nan' Clark lives on for certain in the name of a lane just along Highwood Hill.

Highwood House is a little farther along on Highwood Hill, after turning left out of the Rising Sun towards Totteridge, but the house may be difficult to see from the road. As indicated by the presence of a Blue Plaque, in 1825 the estate was bought by Sir Stamford Raffles. An important figure in the history of the East India Company and British expansion in Malaya, Raffles is renowned as the founder of Singapore in 1819, when he established a strategically important British trading post on the island. He also spent time as lieutenant governor of Java and the surrounding archipelago, during which time he amassed an important collection of cultural objects. On his return to England, he helped establish London Zoo and became its first President. Suffering from ill health, Raffles died in 1826 aged only 45 and is buried at St Mary's Hendon, at that time Mill Hill's parish church (which is part of the Hendon to Mill Hill walk in our Healthy Heritage Walk series). He is commemorated with a memorial in Westminster Abbey.

One of Raffles' neighbours during his short sojourn in Mill Hill was the leading Abolitionist and MP, William Wilberforce who lived from 1759 to 1833. *Continuing a little farther along Highwood Hill you will come to a Blue Plaque near Nan Clark's*



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*Lane that celebrates his residence at Hendon Park between 1826 and 1831.*

Wilberforce owned another inn, the Crown, on his part of Highwood Hill and in a tidy parallel, has a tomb in Westminster Abbey very close to the memorial to Raffles! There will be more about Wilberforce later on this walk.

*Walk back towards the Rising Sun and turn left to continue down Highwood Hill towards Mill Hill Village.* Immediately on the left we find Highwood Ash and Stables, the Grade II-listed former home of Celia Fiennes. Her travels around England on horseback between 1684 and 1703 were intended "to regain my health by variety and change of air and exercise." Her book *Through England on a Side-Saddle* published in 1888 long after her death, is a unique view into late 17th century England. It has been suggested that Fiennes is the "Fine Lady" of the rhyme: "Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross / To see a fine lady upon a white horse...".

*Now cross safely over to the right side of Highwood Hill and continue to walk down the hill away from the Rising Sun until you come to "The Old Forge" on the bend of Holcombe Hill. This is point 3 on your map.* Now pause the audiotour until you reach "The Old Forge".



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### Audiotour part 3 - Holcombe Hill & House

A small terrace of houses at Holcombe Hill includes "The Old Forge." Blacksmiths would have provided an essential service when this was still predominantly a rural, agricultural area, with hay being an important crop until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Horses were, of course, a vital part of the economy, essential for transport and motive power. The earliest known farrier was Charles Balaam in 1821. The last blacksmith, Alfred Matthews closed the forge in 1932. From the mid-1920s Agnes Matthews ran a tea shop that her son later took over.

*To your right, take the steep footpath up to The Ridgeway. Keep walking straight ahead past the Ellern Mede Centre on your right. This centre is part of a charitable organisation working with children who may be missing out on their education because of trauma, bullying, school anxiety or stress in their lives. You will come to Abbots View Court and then the gates to Holcombe House on your right.*

Grade II listed Holcombe House was built in the 1770s for Sir John Anderson, a London merchant, who served as Lord Mayor of London in 1797 – one of several Lord Mayors who lived in Mill Hill during the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Later acquired by Vaughan for St Joseph's College, the Franciscan Sisters of the Regular Third Order took over Holcombe House after the college had departed. The surrounding buildings now include Saint Mary's Abbey, a Catholic convent and school. The foundation stone of the new convent buildings was laid in 1888.

*Continue to walk on The Ridgeway, passing The Mill Field on your right where you have a panoramic view over the west of the borough and over to Wembley. It is thought the windmill that gave its name to this area may have been located here, or perhaps on Holcombe Hill. Mentioned in a survey of the Manor of Hendon in 1321, a mill on this ridge appears to have gone by the mid-1700's. Belmont Mill Hill Preparatory School is on your left; Belmont House was the residence of merchant, Sir Charles Flower, who served as Lord Mayor of the City of London in 1808.*



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*Walk over Hammers Lane and then cross safely to the opposite side of The Ridgeway and continue ahead. Walk past Belmont Children's Farm and Sheepwash Pond on your left; you will also spot two war memorials on your right. Continue until you reach Saint Paul's Church which is point 4 on your map. Now, pause the audiotour until you reach Saint Paul's Church.*

### **Audiotour part 4 - Saint Paul's Church**

This plain white church had a colourful start. It was paid for by local resident William Wilberforce, the anti-slavery campaigner whose Blue Plaque we saw earlier. Mill Hill in the 1820s was in the Anglican parish of Hendon, the church of which is situated some three miles away. It might be thought that the then Vicar of Hendon, the Reverend Theodore Williams, would welcome the addition. However, the Williams family were slave owners and the establishment of Saint Paul's would mean that the vicar in Hendon would have less income from burials, baptisms and weddings. Wilberforce eventually won over the Bishop of London and was able to proceed but sadly, due to unexpected financial difficulties caused by his son's debts, Wilberforce had to leave Highwood Hill and the church was only opened a few days after his death in 1833. It became the church of the new parish of St. Paul's in 1926 and with its restrained interior and exterior designs remains something of a local landmark.

Although never properly large enough for the purpose, St Paul's was also the Garrison Church for the Middlesex Regiment – also known as the 'Die-Hards' after a notable battle in 1811 - whose depot was nearby in Inglis Barracks in Bittacy Hill. The Royal Engineers and Army Postal Unit were also based there. Inside there is a stained-glass window provided by the Middlesex Regimental Association and colours and memorials reflect the military connections. The Middlesex Regiment memorial opposite the church was originally at Inglis Barracks. When the Ministry of Defence disposed of the barracks the memorial was removed to its present location and rededicated in July 2013. Millbrook Park is now being developed on the site of the barracks.

There are fine trees and views over the surrounding countryside from the peaceful cemetery. Burials here include Lady Raffles, Sir Stamford's widow (who lived from 1786 to 1858). You will also find graves of 14 local men who gave their lives in the



First and Second World Wars that are officially recognised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Please visit the church [website](#) for opening times.

*Continue along The Ridgeway on the same side of the road as St Paul's church. You will pass Mill Hill School grounds on your right. Continue to follow the road and wooden fencing round to the left. The fence will become a brick wall. Further along, behind the red brick wall on your left is Rosary Manor, formerly Littleberries which is point 5 on your map. For a better view of the house, cross over the road safely and stand on the green grass with Priory House behind you, on the turning onto Milesplit Hill. Now pause the audiotour until you reach Rosary Manor.*

### **Audiotour part 5 - Littleberries (also 'Littleburies')**

The curious name comes from bookseller George Littlebury, who bought the property in 1691 and rebuilt the house. The building behind the red brick walls across the road was, until recently, the Provincial House of the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, commonly called the Sisters of Charity. The Sisters were the last of the 19th century Catholic institutions to establish themselves in Mill Hill. Buying the house in 1885, additions began almost immediately including a boy's orphanage that remained active until 1971. The sisters recently moved to where you now stand at Priory House. The Littleberries site is being redeveloped into residential flats – Rosary Manor.

Ownership of large tracts of land by the Roman Catholic institutions and Mill Hill School helped Mill Hill Village to escape speculative developers in the 1920s and 1930s. With the establishment of the Green Belt after the Second World War Mill Hill continues to retain much of its historic rural charm in the face of relentless suburban encroachment. Partial redevelopment is now underway farther along The Ridgeway following closure of Inglis Barracks and relocation in 2017 of the National Institute for Medical Research.

*Turning back on yourself, the gates to Priory House on your left, follow the road round to Milesplit Hill in the direction of the Mill Hill Village sign on the small patch of green to your right and the church that lies behind which is point 6 on your map. Now pause the audiotour until you reach Angel Pond.*



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## Audiotour part 6 – Mill Hill Village & Angel Pond

In the early years of the 20th century this part of the village was where the local shops were located. The village green and two duck ponds would have been at the heart of the local community and ducks and other waterfowl are still to be seen.

Angel Pond takes its name from a public house which stood nearby that was demolished in the 1960s. At one time there were said to be no less than eight inns along The Ridgeway!

Started in the late 1880s as a temporary "tin tabernacle", the red-brick chapel in the Perpendicular Gothic style we see on the right was built in 1893. The former Ridgeway Methodist chapel is now a church of The Brotherhood of the Cross and Star. Please visit the church [website](#) for opening times.

*Continue ahead on Miles Pit Hill passing Angel Pond on your left and towards the row of Alms-houses ahead. Thomas Nicoll built the alms-houses facing Angel Pond in 1696, according to the stone inscription that may still be seen on their wall.*

*Follow the road to round to the right, joining High Street. Along High Street, to the left you will pass the 18th-century house named Blenheim Steps (said to be the site of a house named in commemoration of the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Marlborough's victory at Blenheim in 1704). With its bay windows, it served for a time as Mill Hill school's tuck shop until becoming a private house in the 1970's.*

*Continue along High Street, re-joining The Ridgeway. Mill Hill School is on your left, this is point 7 on your map. Now pause the audiotour until you merge onto The Ridgeway.*



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## Audiotour part 7 - Mill Hill School

On the left as you come up to Mill Hill School you will pass a Blue Plaque that marks the site of Ridgeway House, once residence of botanist Peter Collinson (who lived from 1694 to 1768). A successful cloth importer, Collinson used his international business contacts to obtain samples of seeds and plants from around the world to add to his collection and to promote gardening. He financed expeditions by John Bartram that enabled propagation in Britain of many new seeds from around the world. He is said to have introduced 150 new plants and his personal plant collections at Mill Hill became famous. Collinson was a friend to prominent scientists including Hans Sloane (President of the Royal Society and whose collection forms the core of the British Museum), the American scientist Benjamin Franklin (with whom he corresponded about electricity) and the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus. A notable philanthropist, Collinson was one of the founding governors of Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital for orphaned children in central London.

Mill Hill School has named Collinson and Ridgeway as two of its boarding houses; Cedars House is named after trees that he planted. It is said that in the school grounds may be found the first hydrangea and the first yucca grown in Britain.

In contrast with various Roman Catholic institutions that later came into the area, Mill Hill School was founded in 1807 as the Protestant Dissenters' Grammar School, one of several trying to meet the growing need for non-Anglican private schools. It opened in Ridgeway House. The beautiful neo-Grecian buildings were built between 1825 and 1827 to designs by the architect Sir William Tite (later better known as architect of the current Royal Exchange in the City of London). Notable alumni of the school include the broadcaster Richard Dimbleby, Norman Hartnell the fashion designer, biophysicist and co-discoverer of DNA's double-helix Francis Crick and long-term local resident, Patrick Troughton, an actor much loved for his role as the second Doctor Who in the long-running BBC TV series. Lexicographer James Murray (who lived from 1837 to 1915) was working at the school when he became the first editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1879. He kept definitions of words on literally tons of paper slips here on this site!



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*Continue back along The Ridgeway past Mill Hill School, St Paul's Church and Sheepwash Pond. When you reach the Three Hammers public house on your left, turn left down onto Hammers Lane. Continue down Hammers Lane, past the Chalet Estate and Shakespeare Road on your right, until you see the gateway to Cottage Homes also known as Mill Hill Estate on your left which is point 8 on your map. Now pause the audiotour until you reach Cottage Homes on Hammers Lane.*

### **Audiotour part 8 - Linen and Drapers Cottages**

Linen and Drapers Cottages, now simply Cottage Homes owned by the Retail Trust, is a fine example of commercial philanthropy and was opened in October 1898. The 4-roomed red-bricked cottage homes were originally intended for retired shop assistants. More than 100 cottages and flats here were funded by London draper George Marshall of the once well-known national store, Marshall & Snelgrove (later merged with Debenhams); his partner John Snelgrove funded other parts of this communal complex. The administration block building in the middle is Marshall Hall, named in memory of James C. Marshall, President of the Linen and Woollen Drapers' Institution for almost 40 years until his death in 1925 aged 95. The architect was George Hornblower (who lived from 1858 to 1940).

*Now continue over the road along Milton Road and through Poet's Corner, so called because the roads are named after notable poets: Milton, Tennyson, Shakespeare, and Byron. At the end of Milton Road, you will see a footpath over the road which crosses fields where there are often horses grazing. This leads back on to Lawrence Street where we started.*

This is the end of the audiotour.

*To make your way home, you can catch the 251 bus back to either Edgware or Arnos Grove from "Uphill Road" or "Sunnyfield" bus stops. Alternatively, you can continue down Lawrence Street to the Mill Lane roundabout, cross over the pedestrian crossing to your right and continue round to the left onto The Broadway where there are a number of bus routes and Mill Hill Broadway rail station as well as shops and cafes, should you need refreshments for your return journey.*



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We hope you enjoyed this walk. Perhaps you might like to try one of the other walks in the Barnet Healthy Heritage Walks programme? Please visit our website [www.barnet.gov.uk/heritagewalks](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/heritagewalks) to find out more.

If you would like to give feedback or comments or suggestions on the walk, please do get in touch. Details are on the website.

