

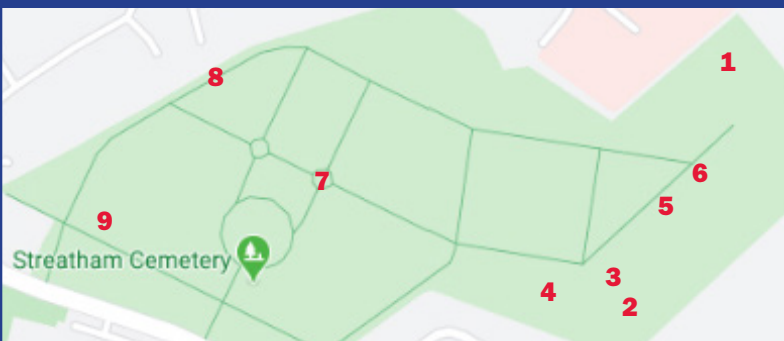


# 'WORLD WAR TWO TOOTING' HISTORY WALK

4 miles, (60-70 minutes)  
Start at **TOOTING JUNCTION BRITISH RAIL STATION**



## SOME OF THE NOTABLE WW2 GRAVES & MEMORIALS IN STREATHAM CEMETERY



- 1 HAZELHURST ROAD V2 VICTIMS
- 2 ALFRED DAVIES
- 3 BERYL TROKE
- 4 PADDY FLYNN
- 5 FIRE SERVICE PERSONNEL
- 6 BERNARD WOODLEY
- 7 WAR MEMORIAL GEORGE GIDDINGS
- 8 CIVILIAN MEMORIAL
- 9 PAULINE GOMPERS

# WORLD WAR TWO TOOTING (4 miles, 60-70 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.**

**Marking the 75th anniversary of VE Day, this walk covers a number of key locations in Tooting relating to the Second World War. For local people, that ended on 8th May 1945 with VE Day street parties like the one in Foss Road on the poster. The walk starts at a poignant place relevant to something that happened a few days before it all began.**

**1 START TOOTING JUNCTION RAILWAY STATION** - Friday 1st September 1939 was a sad day as thousands of young Tooting evacuees boarded trains as part of the first wave of nearly half a million children who left their homes in London for the safety of the countryside. Two days later the announcement was made that Britain was at War with Germany. One famous local boy evacuated was [Michael Aspel](#) who made his journey from Earlsfield Station in Garratt Lane.

**2** Leave the station and head towards Amen Corner, passing [Links Road](#), leading down to an area where Prime Ministers once played golf. Just past the police station, the popular Ramble Inn was once the location of 'The Thirty Club' a meeting place for former members of the Tooting Home Guard. The '30th County of London Tooting Battalion' under Colonel Newman drilled at a hall opposite The Granada, now Boots. They manned anti-aircraft guns on [Tooting Common](#). By coincidence a member of TV's 'Dad's Army', the actor Ian Lavender later lived on Garratt Lane in Earlsfield above a shop called Ace Supplies.

**3** Cross the road in front of a block called Hurley Court and look to your right. The Home Guard were part of the rescue operation here on 7 July 1944 when a V1 flying bomb landed at the junction of Southcroft Road and Salterford Road. One of the victims was a nineteen year old [WAAF](#) called Beryl Troke, killed alongside her mother. This was a very heavily bombed area. In neighbouring Streatham, which the density of railway lines made a target, 88 percent of housing stock was damaged and [41 flying bombs](#) landed. One was known to have damaged 1,671 houses. Other parts of Tooting like the Totterdown estate were completely untouched. Twenty one flying bombs and three [V2 rockets struck Tooting](#), killing over 300 people.

**4** Continue down Mitcham Lane past Bevill Allen Close, St Boniface and St Nicholas Church. The vicar at the time Reverend Neill had a son serving as a padre who was evacuated at Dunkirk. After the Battle of Britain, 57 consecutive days of bombing began on 7 September 1940 as Nazi Germany launched an eight-month-long aerial bombing offensive. More than 40,000 British civilians were killed in the Blitz, 1.5 million Londoners were left homeless, and the city's landscape was shattered. The first local damage was a bomb near here at the top of Church Lane. The offices of the local newspaper, The Tooting & Balham Gazette in Charlmont Road opposite were damaged in October. The paper continued but like all the press was now heavily censored and couldn't give any detail about local incidents. The market, cinemas and many other public buildings were damaged but repaired and life continued.

**5** A little further on from here the modern building to the left of The Antelope pub betrays a Blitz incident on 5 November 1940 when high explosive bombs killed four members of the prominent Knox family who ran an undertakers business here. Their four sons were all on active service at the time.

**6** Cross Mitcham Road in front of The Granada. Presumably to boost morale, a downed German bomber plane was placed in the car-park behind it for the duration of the War. Both the Broadway Palace Cinema next door and the Central Methodist Hall on the site of Primark on the other side were damaged by bombs, enough to make any development of these beautiful old buildings unfeasible and they were subsequently later demolished. On Longmead Road, [Len Jewell](#) recalled surviving a raid by sheltering under the [snooker table](#) in Tooting Conservative Club.

**6** Cross here to Tooting Broadway station. A number of deep level shelters close to Northern Line stations were built between Oval and Clapham South, capable of housing 6,000 people. A water main outside Tooting Broadway station was breached by a bomb on 7 October 1940. Heavy steel flood doors subsequently installed can still be seen on the lower concourse level. That incident and the one a week later at [Balham](#) when a No88 bus crashed into a bomb crater severing a pipe which flooded the station killing 66 people, probably put people off sheltering here. Its featured in the film 'Atonement' where Keira Knightly is one of the victims.

**7** Continue across the High Street into Garratt Lane. Before war was declared, thousands queued along here to get their gas-masks which were distributed at Tooting Baths. Churchill passed down here on the last day of an election campaign in the summer of 1945. Some people threw flowers at his car but he was also heckled at a number of points most notably at [Tooting Bec station](#) where a youth threw a firework narrowly missing his face. Churchill lost the subsequent election to a Labour landslide. The government of Clement Attlee, a branch of whose family had a brewery in Tooting, included the newly-elected MP for Wandsworth, [Ernest Bevin](#), Minister of Labour during the War. Military conscripts diverted to work in the coal industry were known as 'Bevin Boys'. A Tooting school, Ernest Bevin College is named after him.

**8** No934 Garratt Lane was the home of [Sidney Lewis](#), believed to be the youngest serving soldier in the British Army in the First World War. Sid was 12 when he joined up and at the age of 13 fought at the Somme. He survived the war and came home to this house where his parents lived until after the Second World War. Sid was then a policeman working in bomb disposal. A [blue plaque](#) was placed here in 2016, unveiled by his son Colin in front of a crowd of 500 people.

**9** Near the junction with Fountain Road was a Salvation Army Hall and the Fountain Public House, both providing facilities and care for people bombed out of their homes. A service also undertaken by nearby [Fairlight Hall](#) on Fairlight Road.

**10** Take a right into Broadwater Road at Deepak House and after passing the school and Rogers Road, take a left turn through a gate into [Streatham Cemetery](#). (If this gate is shut, enter the cemetery via Rogers Road and Garratt Lane). A young man called Colin Perry who lived in Holmbury Court near The King's Head pub documented the early years of the war in a diary as he cycled around the area. Twenty years later he gave it to the Imperial War Museum and it was subsequently published under the title '[The Boy in the Blitz](#)'.

**11** There are 167 Second World War [military graves](#) in Streatham Cemetery including two 17 year olds. There are countless other civilian 'victims of enemy action'. Alfred Davies was killed on 20 September 1940 whilst 'on duty' at Buckingham Palace. After this attack, the Queen famously remarked '*I am glad we have been bombed. It makes me feel I can look the East End in the face*'. Nearby is the grave of Beryl Troke and her mother from Southcroft Road, one of five Second World War servicewomen buried here. Another significant WW2 grave is that of RAF 'hurricane' catapult hero [Patrick Flynn](#). Also buried here are many victims of the Hazellhurst Road V2 bomb, one of whom [Douglas Kitts](#) was a serving soldier on leave having escaped from a POW camp. Two local members of the famous RAF '158 Squadron' [Bernard Woodley](#) and [George Gillings](#) are also buried here.

**12** In Block 15 look out for a cluster of white headstones indicating a number of graves of fire personnel, killed in two separate bomb incidents in the Blitz. Fourteen of them died on 6 November 1940 at [Henry Cavendish School](#) in Balham, six were killed on 16 November 1940 at [West Hill fire station](#) in Wandsworth. Over 40,000 women in Wandsworth registered for fire-watching. Each street had its own Fire Guard Party as a huge civil defence operation was begun.

**13** Exit the Cemetery and turn right into Garratt Lane. Follow this alongside the cemetery, past the Holboorn Estate almshouses and left into Wimbledon Road. A number of houses on the left were bombed in the blitz. The Wimbledon Stadium site at the end of the road, briefly another refugee centre, was badly damaged in February 1944. Greyhound racing continued there throughout the war. Turn left into Hazellhurst Road passing the tower blocks. Bear round to the left in front of Smallwood School. Opposite this Sutton Courtenay House marks the site of a [V2 bomb](#) on 19 November 1944 which killed 35 people and destroyed 100 homes. Among those killed were six members of one family and 14 children. A [green plaque](#) placed in 2015 commemorates them. It was unveiled by Arthur and John Keeley, two young brothers pulled from the rubble. The event was attended by at least 15 other survivors.

**14** Smallwood School was used as a fire station in the war and was from where a number of dramatic photos of the Hazellhurst bomb were taken. Turn left into Smallwood Road, then right into Pevensy Road. At 26a lived 16 year old [Rose Mangan](#) who remembered the ARP Warden in this area being known as 'Streaky Bacon'. She danced the night away at the Co-op the night before the V2 bomb. On VE Day there were bonfires in the street and all the lemonade bottles exploded in one of the corner shops. St George's Hospital looms on the horizon. It was once the site of two 19th century fever hospitals. Both were badly damaged by V1 bombs. Shortly after the war in the wake of the creation of the National Health Service, a decision was taken to relocate St George's Hospital from Hyde Park Corner to this site. It was another 30 years before it was fully operational.

**15** Cross into Cranmer Terrace then left into Tooting Gardens, the location of a large public bomb shelter in the War. Follow the path through here, bearing right around the back of the leisure centre then into Coverton Road along the side of the hospital. Much-loved comedy actor George Cole spent the early years of his life here at No88a. Turn right into Effort Street and left into Hoyle Road which leads you into Tooting High Street. Cross here and bear right into Nutwell Street.

**16** It was here around lunchtime on 6 March 1945 that another V2 struck Tooting. The lower part of the street still has its original Edwardian houses but the top half close to Jordan Lodge and Gravenel Gardens is completely different. Eight people were killed here including three very young children. The full list of [casualties](#) are here, type '938' in the search to read their names. Tragically the bomb landed on prefabs which had been placed there as temporary housing after an earlier bomb. The local school was visited shortly afterwards by Queen Elizabeth.

**17** Turn left into Mellison Road then cross into Himley Road, passing 'Training Ship Constant' on your left, HQ of the '[Tooting and Balham Sea Cadets](#)', a great organisation for young people in this area for over 100 years. They play a huge role in the annual Remembrance Sunday service at St Mary's Church, Summerstown.

**18** There was another flying bomb incident on Himley Road, on your right hand side where Hillfield Lodge stands after No72. As you walk through these quiet residential streets, consider the fear people lived in at that time from instant death and destruction. Many of them were homes for refugees in the early years of the war as families arrived in London from Belgium, Holland and France. The local receiving centre was Magdalen Hospital in Drewstead Road. Turn right into Bickersteth Road then across into Loubet Street, Right into Byton Road and left into Glasford Street. This takes you back to London Road and a right turn will bring you to Tooting Junction where it all began.

FOR INFORMATION AND MORE WALKS: [summerstown182.wordpress.com](http://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](http://www.criticalnhs.org)