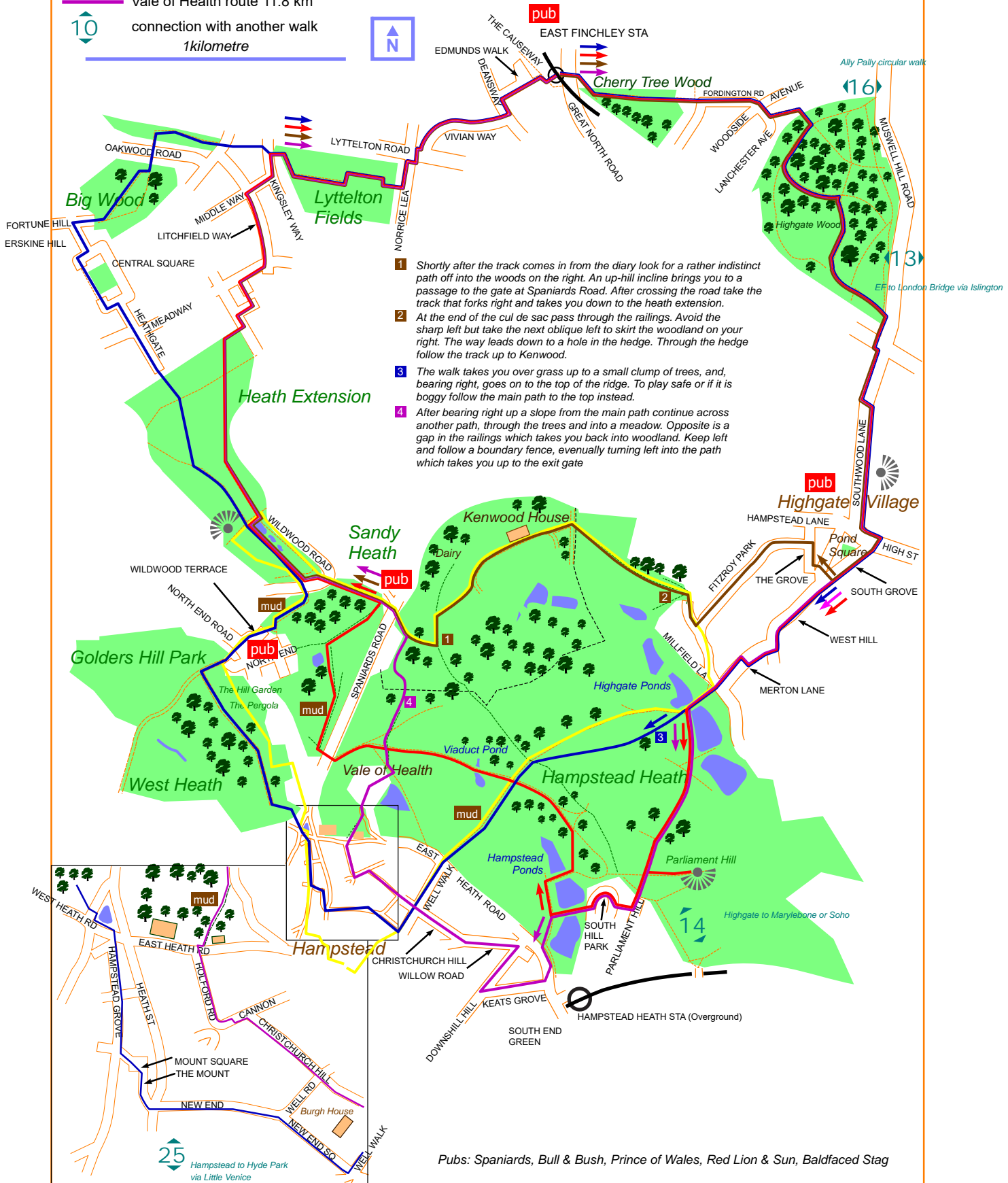


These circular walks use Capital Ring in the north to connect Highgate Wood and Hampstead Heath. There are many possible permutations in the south - some are illustrated here.

EF, Hampstead & Highgate Circular Walks

- main route 11.8 km
- southern route via Parliament Hill 11.2 km
- northern route via Kenwood House 9.4 km
- Vale of Health route 11.8 km

— connection with another walk 1kilometre



- 1 Shortly after the track comes in from the diary look for a rather indistinct path off into the woods on the right. An up-hill incline brings you to a passage to the gate at Spaniards Road. After crossing the road take the track that forks right and takes you down to the heath extension.
- 2 At the end of the cul de sac pass through the railings. Avoid the sharp left but take the next oblique left to skirt the woodland on your right. The way leads down to a hole in the hedge. Through the hedge follow the track up to Kenwood.
- 3 The walk takes you over grass up to a small clump of trees, and, bearing right, goes on to the top of the ridge. To play safe or if it is boggy follow the main path to the top instead.
- 4 After bearing right up a slope from the main path continue across another path, through the trees and into a meadow. Opposite is a gap in the railings which takes you back into woodland. Keep left and follow a boundary fence, eventually turning left into the path which takes you up to the exit gate

Pubs: Spaniards, Bull & Bush, Prince of Wales, Red Lion & Sun, Baldfaced Stag

walk notes

EF, Hampstead & Highgate Walks

These circular walks use Capital Ring in the north to connect Highgate Wood and Hampstead Heath. There are many possible permutations in the south - four are illustrated here. Places I particularly enjoy include the Pergola and Hill Garden, the pond at the Vale of Health, the viaduct pond, Highgate Ponds in the evening, the view from the Heath Extension.

Hampstead Heath

The heath started out as common land and farmland. The original common belonged to the Manor of Hampstead, with commoners gaining rights such as grazing, over time. The manor was inherited and came into the hands of absentee 'landlords' the Maryon family. It passed to Thomas Maryon, who lived in Charlton House (walk 39). In 1829 he decided make money by granting building leases and introduced a bill to Parliament to overturn the restrictions on the land and in doing so he fought dirty. As a result this was strongly resisted by the residents of Hampstead. After several attempts got a bill passed by the Lords but defeated by the Commons. In 1844 he decided to develop the East Park estate and had constructed a road through the estate which remains to this day. It crossed a tributary of the Fleet by a viaduct. The Metropolitan Board of Works was set up in 1855 (despite opposition by the City of London) and when Thomas Wilson died in 1869 the estate passed to his brother John, who was happy to negotiate the sale of 220 acres to the MBW and the estate passed into public hands in 1871. Further tracts of land were purchased over time, including his East Park Estate, tripling the size of the original purchase.

The terrain of the heath is very varied. Sandy Heath was used as a source of gravel and as a result it is much lower than the surrounding land. East Park estate on the other hand was used by Wilson for brick making, and brick fragments can easily be found. The

highest point in North London is at Whitestone Pond. Most of the streams flow south to form the River Fleet but West Heath and the Heath Extension drain north, via Mutton Brook and Brent Brook into the Thames at Brentford.

Highgate Wood

Evidence of human activity and use of wood dates back to prehistoric times. During the Medieval period, the wood was part of the Bishop of London's hunting estate. Between the 16th and 18th centuries the church leased the wood to tenants, who managed it as 'coppice with standard'. Hornbeam was coppiced, being regularly cut and used for fuel, and oak standards were left to grow to maturity, before being felled for construction of ships and buildings. In the 1880s, the surrounding area was being rapidly built-up. Local residents feared that the church would sell off the wood for development.

A high-profile campaign to save the wood was led by Henry Reader Williams and in 1886 the wood was gifted to the City of London and declared "open for the use and recreation of the public forever" 362 moth, 353 fungi, 70 bird and seven bat species have been recorded. At least 28 species of bird regularly breed here, including great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch and treecreeper. There are more than 50 species of trees and shrubs.

