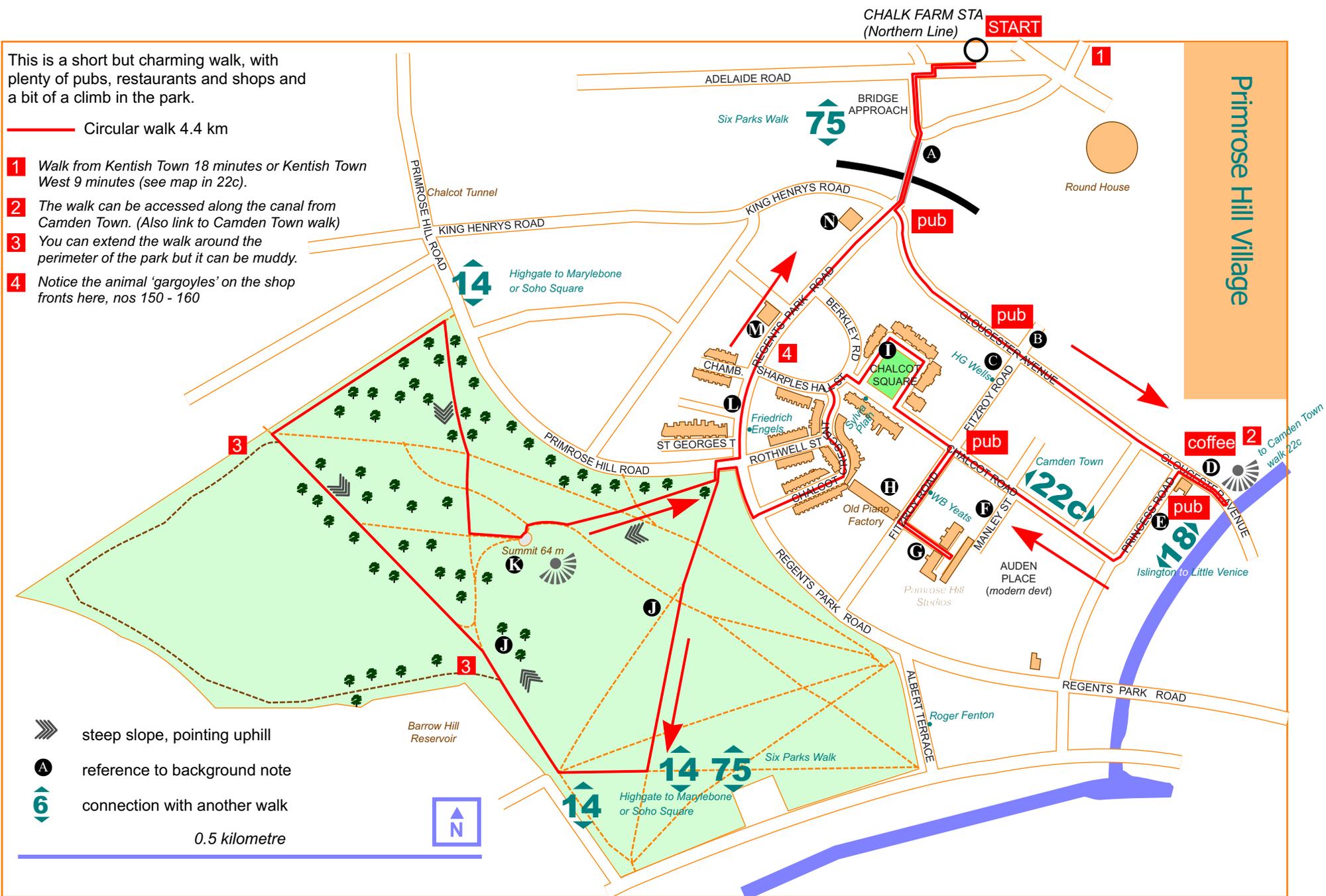


This is a short but charming walk, with plenty of pubs, restaurants and shops and a bit of a climb in the park.

— Circular walk 4.4 km

- 1 Walk from Kentish Town 18 minutes or Kentish Town West 9 minutes (see map in 22c).
- 2 The walk can be accessed along the canal from Camden Town. (Also link to Camden Town walk)
- 3 You can extend the walk around the perimeter of the park but it can be muddy.
- 4 Notice the animal 'gargoyles' on the shop fronts here, nos 150 - 160



Primrose Hill Village

- steep slope, pointing uphill
  - Ⓐ reference to background note
  - 6 connection with another walk
- 0.5 kilometre

## walk notes

*In truth we were looking at two areas side by side. The constrained area, Primrose Hill Village, is primarily residential and appeared in the space of 30 years. It took as its name the name of the distinguishing natural landmark, next door. It has a vibrant shopping street and many fine terraces, although not the most impressive in London; the predominance of residential mixed with artisans' workshops and light industry, gives it a relaxed feel, although has an expensive middle class feel about it and many fine pubs.*

### Primrose Hill

Primrose Hill was part of a vast swathe of land belonging to Westminster Abbey appropriated for Eton College. The College drew up plans to develop the Chalcot Estate, as it was called, for housing as far back as 1822. An economic downturn delayed matters, and instead of building large villas on the hill, in 1842 the hill was granted to the Crown in exchange for property in Eton and Parliament designated the fields of Primrose Hill as a future 'park'. The crown of the hill may have been opened later, in 1857. Meanwhile, neighbour Lord Southampton, having sold land in Camden Town in 1840, turned to his more northerly fields. The area was well defined, by the Regent's Canal (1820), the LNWR (1837), and the new park (1842), and was fully built over by 1875, apart from the land now occupied by Primrose Hill Studios, which followed in 1877. The railway took the land down-market and instead of the

original large villas, terraces appeared and some became multi-occupied and there was a smattering of light industry; even a large piano factory. In later years, it gentrified again and remains so today.

### 📍 Local Station

Primrose Hill's local station opened in 1855 for the North London Railway as Hampstead Road, replacing an earlier station of that name 4 years earlier. Renamed Chalk Farm in 1862, Primrose Hill again in 1950, it closed in 1992. While the island platform buildings of Primrose Hill Station have been demolished, this bridge level building remains.

### 🚂 London & North Western Railway.

The first railway from the north arrived in 1837. Emerging from a tunnel under the Chalcot estate, it crossed over the canal and down to ground level at Euston. In the early days this required motor-drawn cables to bring trains back up the slope, and a large winding engine house was built north of the canal near Gloucester Avenue. Fortunately it was decommissioned before building began on Southampton's estate, but the marshalling yards, engine repairs and through trains on the other side of this wall will have been noisy and sooty. The passenger engine house was immediately adjacent. The North London Railway (1850) was a mixed blessing, providing a convenient station for commuters, but adding to the din.

### 👤 HG Wells

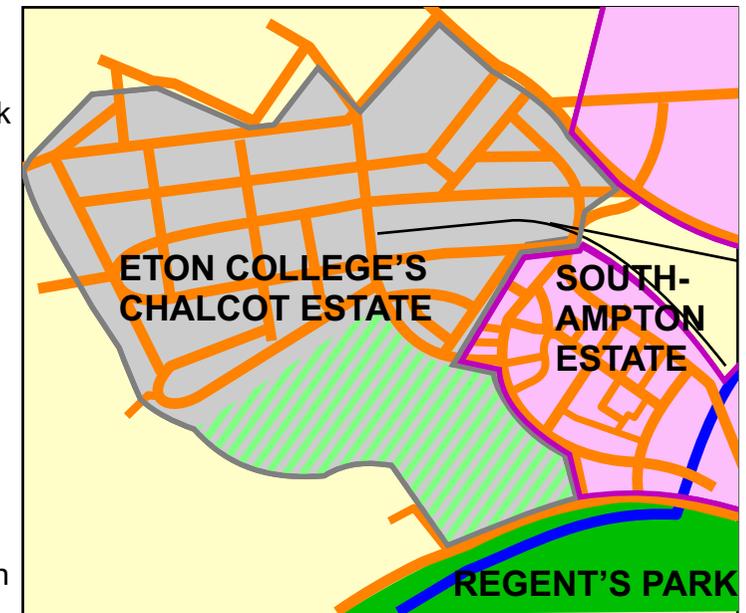
From 1888-90, while teaching in Kilburn, HG Wells moved in with his aunt and cousin Isabel at 12 Fitzroy Road. Later on they moved to 46 down the street until he married Isabel in 1892 and moved south to Wandsworth.

In *The War of the Worlds* (1898), the aliens land in Woking and in Primrose Hill, where they establish their headquarters.

In *The Invisible Man* (1897), the hero, Jack Griffin remembers how, the day before he turned invisible, 'sitting in the sunshine and feeling very ill and strange, on the summit of Primrose Hill.'

### 🚰 The Regent's Canal

The Regent's Canal was built to link the Grand Junction Canal's Paddington Arm →



(opened in 1801), with the Thames at Limehouse. Director John Nash the architect was friendly with the Prince Regent, who allowed the use of his name. The canal was opened in two stages, from Paddington to Camden (with a spur to Euston) in 1816, and on to the Thames by 1820.

The freezing of the canal in the harsh winter of 1962-3 was its ultimate downfall commercially; the Canal froze so hard that no cargo could move on it for weeks. When the thaw came, the freight traffic had been irreversibly transferred to road.

#### 🕒 **The Engineer**

On the sale of the Southampton Estate, this plot was bought by Calvert's, brewers, who already controlled the Chalk Farm Tavern. They built The Engineer in about 1850. There is disagreement as to which engineer the pub is named after, suggesting Stephenson of the LNWR, but some claim it for Brunel. It is now grade II listed. The II\* listed *Camden Incline Winding Engine House* is located nearby.

#### 🕒 **Manley Street, Auden Place**

Here is where some of the original railway workers cottages were built, as evidenced by this small picturesque terrace with raised pavements.

#### 🕒 **Primrose Hill Studios**

These purpose-built studios were almost the last buildings to be constructed and are now listed. In the courtyard, a notice lists some of the artists who worked here and you'll recognise some names - see photo.

#### 🕒 **Piano Factory**

This fine building at 44 Fitzroy Street was originally a piano factory - one of several in the wider area. It is now flats.

#### 🕒 **Chalcot Square**

Chalcot Square was built around 1855-60, the houses opposite in 1849. Chalcot Crescent is attributed to J Burden, the west end of the street around 1850, other parts a bit later. Three terraces, in Rothwell Street and Sharples Hall Street, were built c1862. for Count Richard Rainshaw, Marquess de Rothwell. All these are grade II listed, as are buildings in Chamberlain Street and St Georges Terrace.

The pastel coloured stucco, which I first noticed in Chalcot Square, seems to be spreading and in a wider area could become oppressive.

#### 🕒 **Boundary posts**

Three civil parishes and subsequent boroughs met on Primrose Hill, a little below the summit, namely Marylebone (south west), St Pancras (east) and Hampstead (north). Some stone boundary markers can be seen.

#### 🕒 **The summit**

The hill is 213 feet (65 m) high and has fine views over London. The view is not masked by trees as at Parliament Hill. Primrose Hill has a character all of its own, with its straight radiating paths and old-fashioned lamps. At one time this was a place where duels were fought and prize-fights took place. Apparently Mother Shipton made threatening prophesies about what would

happen if the city sprawl was allowed to encroach on its boundaries.

Magistrate Edmund Berry Godfrey, member of the Peyton Gang, was dumped somewhere here in a ditch in 1678 after being strangled then stabbed. Titus Oates used it to provoke anti-catholic riots.

#### 🕒 **Regent's Park Road**

This is the area's bustling shopping street, with a mix of shops, including food shops, restaurants, a book shop, homewares & lighting, an optician, chemist, Post Office, hairdresser, florist, pet shop and a wine merchants.

#### 🕒 **Chalk Farm Tavern**

Primrose Hill had long been a favourite place for a day out, and the old Chalk Farm Tavern catered for Londoners with pleasure gardens, bandstand and dance floor. When the railway tunnel was being built, it was usually the first resting place for navvies killed in the works. The original building was replaced by a smaller one in 1854, as the area developed and is now occupied by Limonia. Opposite the restaurant, e.g. at number 152, some of the shop fronts have gargoyles in the form of animals.

#### 🕒 **Chalk Farm Garage**

Look out for the sign of the former garage at number 113, which has become something of a landmark. Since then it has had several guises including the headquarters of Bibendum, but it is currently an art gallery.