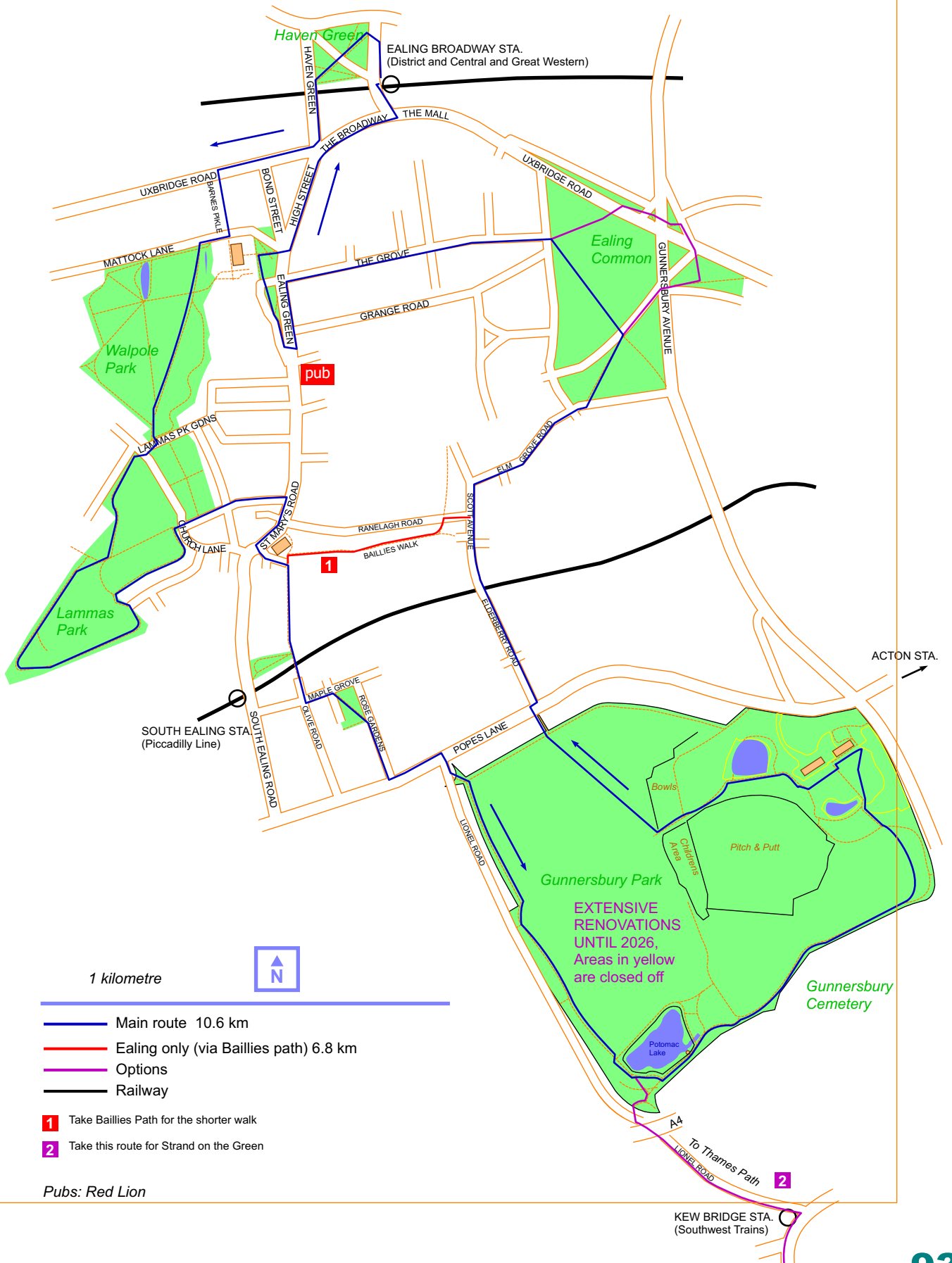


Ealing is a vibrant suburb and contrasts with historic Gunnersbury Park, a former country house set in large grounds and now with a museum. Traffic and aircraft noise can be obtrusive at times.

Ealing and Gunnersbury Park



walk notes

Ealing & Gunnersbury Park

This circular pavement walk of Ealing's Green Spaces includes a diversion to the amazing space of Gunnersbury Park

Ealing

The original village was located along what is now Ealing Green and High Street, with a smaller settlement just north of the Uxbridge Road at Haven Green. The east-west thoroughfare connecting London and Oxford known today as Uxbridge Road wasn't built on. The parish of Ealing was divided into manors, including those of Gunnersbury and Pitshanger. Industry was farming. The parish Church of St. Mary's dates back to at least the early twelfth century. Excavations suggest that a Norman building stood here. The medieval church was pulled down in the late 1720s and a plain and simple Georgian building erected, complete with a new peal of bells. That building, opened in 1740, forms the core of what still stands today. When expansion was necessary around 1860, the architect S.S. Teulon transformed the simple village church into a huge 'Byzantine shrine' by retaining and greatly enlarging it, and decorating it with vibrant colours.

The building of the Great Western Railway in the 1830s led to the opening of a railway station on Ealing Broadway in 1838. In the next few decades, Ealing's population took off as a result of extensive speculative building. These were mostly semi-detached houses, designed for the rising middle class.

Walpole Park

In 1800, the architect John Soane purchased Pitshanger Manor House to build his own country villa. He demolished most of the existing manor house, apart from an extension designed in 1768 by his first employer, George Dance. He created his own home in its place, using it as a showcase for his imaginative style of architecture, with its references to

classical detail and innovative use of light and space.

The Grade II* listed bridge at its northern end and the pond itself were in existence before Soane bought the property and Soane reworked the bridge to give it an appearance of great antiquity to match faux Roman ruins which he built just north of his house. A large antique stone bench on the northern perimeter wall is also listed Grade II.

In 1810 Soane sold the house and by the end of the century it had passed into the hands of the Perceval-Walpoles. It was Sir Spencer Walpole who sold the house to Ealing UDC in 1899 with Middlesex County Council contributing a quarter of the cost. In 1901 the grounds were opened to the public as Walpole Park and the building, with alterations by Charles Jones, became Ealing's Public library.

Lammas Park

The park is named after the original use of the land as lammas land where tenants of the manor could graze their cattle following harvest. In 1881 around 23 acres were purchased by Ealing Local Board when it was feared that it might be lost as open space; compensation was paid to those who lost their rights.

Lammas Park opened in 1883 and was subsequently extended west to Northfield Lane by arrangement with the Elers Estate, and a lodge was built at the new entrance.

Gunnersbury

Gunnersbury is one of the few places in London to have been named after a woman, in this case Gunnhildr, whose manor this was.

The original Gunnersbury House was an imposing mansion built in the mid-17th century for Sir John Maynard, the king's principal serjeant-at-law. Princess Amelia, daughter of George II, made the villa her summer residence from 1762 to 1786.

After Amelia died in 1786, the estate had a number of owners until John Morley

decided in 1801 to pull down the mansion and sell the land off piecemeal. The lots were eventually acquired by just two people, and two separate estates were then established, each with its own new house. Copland, who bought the lion's share, built the *Large Mansion* which was known, with its grounds, as *Gunnersbury Park*. *The Small Mansion* was built virtually alongside on the smaller estate, which was known as *Gunnersbury House*.

In 1835 *Gunnersbury Park* was acquired and then enlarged by the banker Nathan Mayer Rothschild. His nephew Leopold de Rothschild bought *Gunnersbury House* in 1889, recombining the estates, and put *The Small Mansion* to use as a guest house for visitors to Gunnersbury Park, who included Edward VII.

The Rothschilds extended Gunnersbury further, acquiring most of the Old Brentford Common Field to the west, as well as land to the north. An old clay-pit in the south-west, "Cole's Hole" was landscaped to become the Potomac lake, and the tile-kiln beside it modified to become a boat-house disguised as a gothic folly.

In 1925, following the death of Nathan's grandson Leopold de Rothschild, Leopold's wife, Maria, and son Lionel, sold 186 acres of the 200 acre Gunnersbury estate, which was entirely contained within the Brentford Urban District, to the adjacent Ealing Borough Council and Acton Borough Council. The adjacent Brentford and Chiswick Borough Council objected to the sale, as another park would be unnecessary and insisted that the greater part should be used for housing. They opposed the loan of the purchase money to Ealing and Acton from the Ministry of Health. However, civic pride and philanthropy prevailed, and Mrs de Rothschild sold Gunnersbury as a permanent memorial for her husband – under the condition that it was only to be used for leisure. The other 13 acres were used for housing.

The Large Mansion is home to Gunnersbury Park Museum, which displays Ealing and Hounslow's local history collections. *The Small Mansion* is mostly in a state of disuse. The museum is scheduled to reopen in 2017 and the overall 'transformation' is due for completion in 2026.

Ealing Common

From Norman times commoners had rights to graze cattle and fowl on Ealing Common. By the 1840s, when most of the common land in the region had been enclosed, Ealing Common remained as one of a few small remnants. As a result of the 1866 Metropolitan Commons Act, in 1878 Ealing Local Board was able to purchase about 47 acres of Ealing Common from the landowner, the Bishop of London. It was later registered as an ancient common under the Commons Registration Act 1965.

The area around Ealing Common had been gradually built over from the 19th century onwards, with some fine houses and eminent residents, including Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister who was assassinated, and Spencer Walpole, the cabinet minister, both of whom lived at Elm Grove. Only a few houses dating from 1820-1840 survive.

A feature of Ealing Common is the profuse perimeter of horse chestnuts most of which were planted by Ealing Local Board following their purchase of the Common. Since then whole cross-roads were planted up. There are remnants of the 1887 white metal rail and posts on some areas of the boundary and a notable walk on the west side of Hanger Lane north of the junction with Uxbridge Road.

Stretches of the original boundary rails have been lost. The roads are noticeably raised above the level of the open space. In the south corner of the Common there is a hay meadow and during May and September a local farmer takes cuttings.

Ealing Green

Ealing Green, an open green space

crossed by paths with a number of mature trees, had long been the site of the 3-day village fair each June until well into the 19th century. It was the rule of the fair that neither booth nor stall should open business until the ladies of the Manor House, the Misses Perceval, had walked through the lines. This these ladies did for many years, welcoming the showmen with a courteous dignity. Unhappily, ruder times followed, and brought about the downfall of the Fair. The level of behaviour was so low at last that the railings of the Manor House had to be boarded and eventually in 1880 the privilege of holding the Fair on Ealing Green was forfeited. Ealing Green was acquired by Ealing Local Board in 1878, at the same time as their acquisition of Ealing Common, Haven Green and Drayton Green.

Ealing Studios

The site was first occupied by Will Barker Studios from 1902. From 1929 it was acquired by theatre producer Basil Dean, who founded Associated Talking Pictures Ltd. He was joined on the management level by Stephen Courtauld and Reginald Baker. In 1931 they built Ealing Studios, transferring all production there in December of that year. When Dean left in 1938 to be replaced by Michael Balcon from MGM, about 60 films had been made at the studios. Balcon discontinued the ATP name and began to issue films under the Ealing Studios name. In 1944

the company was taken over by the Rank Organisation.

In the 1930s and 1940s, Ealing produced many comedies with stars such as Gracie Fields, George Formby, Stanley Holloway and Will Hay, who had established their reputations in other spheres of entertainment. The company was also instrumental in the use of documentary film-makers for more realistic war films. In the post-war period, the company embarked on a series of comedies which became the studio's hallmark. These were often lightly satirical and were seen to reflect aspects of British character and society. The first was Hue and Cry (1947) and the last Barnacle Bill (1956). The best remembered Ealing films were produced between 1948 and 1955: Whisky Galore! (1949), Passport to Pimlico (1949), Kind Hearts and Coronets (1949), The Lavender Hill Mob (1951), The Titfield Thunderbolt (1953), The Cruel Sea (1953) and The Ladykillers (1955) are now seen as classics of British cinema. The BBC bought the studios in 1955, but later a decision was taken to sell Ealing Studios on the open market with a buy-back clause; the BBC later repurchased the site and sold it on for £1.00 to the National Film and Television School in 1995. It was sold yet again in mid-2000 to a consortium led by Fragile Films' Uri Fruchtmann and Barnaby Thompson, Harry Handelsman and John Kao, with a view to reviving the fortunes of the studio.