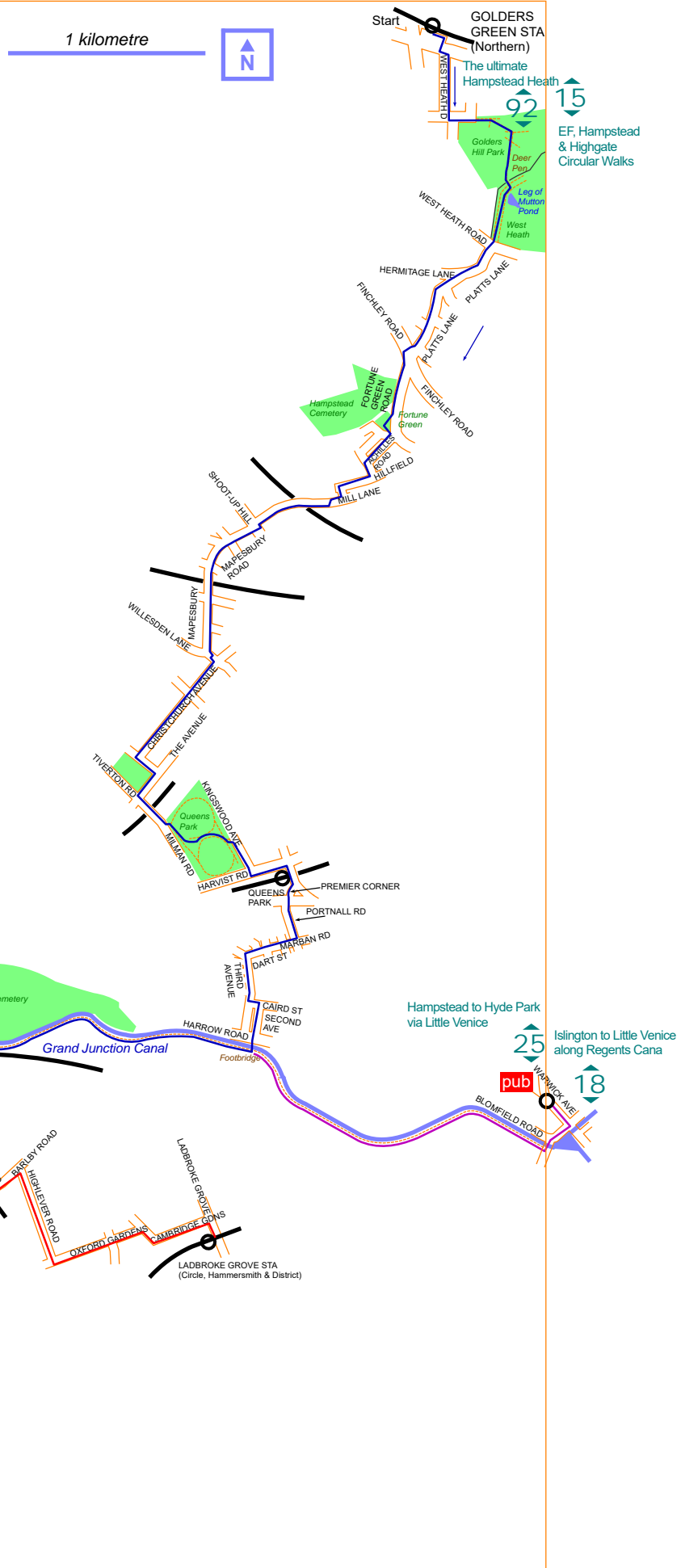
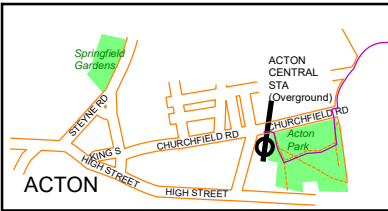


Golders Green to Acton via Grand Junction Canal

This cross London walk isn't especially inspiring but fills a gap in an area otherwise free from walks. Going from Golders Hill Park to Acton is downhill most of the way

- Main route to East Acton 11.25 km
- option to Acton Central (Overground) adds 1.8 km
- option to Ladbroke Grove
- Railway
- ↕ 15 connection with another walk

- 1** Immediately after passing under Mitre Bridge exit the towpath onto the busy main road and turn right. Eventually the road curves right under a railway bridge. Look for an official gap in the fence into Wormwood Scrubs. A little way in the path turns left. Take a diagonal left across the open space to pick up a pedestrian and cycle path on the opposite side.
- 2** Old Oak Common Lane and Acton Lane are busy main roads, which is why this part of the walk is optional.
- 3** For a shorter walk, turn left at the canal and follow the towpath to Little Venice. Cross the canal, turn right, then left into Warwick Avenue 2km



walk notes

Golders Green to Acton

This long distance walk is mainly on pavements but Wormwood Scrubs and The canal can be muddy. There are some boring bits but it's downhill most of the way. To shorten the walk turn left along the canal for Little Venice

Golders Hill Park

In 1767 a colourful and somewhat shady character by the name of Charles Dingley carved out an estate for himself north of Golders Green at Golders Hill. Landscaping by John Coore with advice from Humphrey Repton. By 1897 the estate was put up for auction and after various battles it was bought to prevent developers building flats and opened as a public park. The Victorian pile of a house, on the highest point of the land, was bombed out in the Second World War.

Leg of Mutton Pond

Leg of Mutton pond on West Heath was probably dammed as part of a plan, reported in 1816, to employ the poor; the nearby Sandy Road was sometimes known as Hankins's folly, after further relief work was carried out under Thomas Hankins, surveyor of the highways 1823- 4. The pond was marked simply as a reservoir in 1891.

Fortune Green

Fortune Green was first recorded in 1646. Originally four acres, Fortune Green was a triangular patch of manorial 'waste' where local residents had the right to graze animals, dig turf and play sports.

In 1820 about a third of the land in the north east corner was 'enclosed'. Nine cottages were built for labourers and laundresses, who were allowed to keep drying poles on the Green for fourpence a year. As late as 1870 the Green was still surrounded by open fields but the expansion of London began to encroach. By the 1880s the local railway initiated a boom. In 1891 the Green was put up for sale for development. Local residents formed the Fortune Green Preservation Society to prevent it being sold, and to maintain the residents' rights of recreation. Despite them putting up evidence that the green had been in long-term recreational use the judge allowed the sale to proceed. Undaunted, the Fortune Green Acquisition Society was set up and managed to persuade the Vestry (Council) and London County Council to pay the bulk of the cost of acquiring the Green, together with smaller contributions from various parties.

Queens Park

Queen's Park is a 30 acre park which belongs

to and is maintained by the Corporation of the City of London. The site for the 1879 Royal Agricultural Society of England's annual show, the Kilburn show, was chosen for its proximity to the railway network, Queen's Park Station having opened that year on the main line from London to Birmingham, just in time to facilitate the movement of heavy machinery and stock. The Kilburn show was to be the largest ever held. It saw an entry of 11,878 implements, 2879 livestock entries and over 187,000 visitors. It rained all week, so the site soon became an unattractive quagmire, but Queen Victoria's visit to see the animals and the latest farm machinery rallied the crowds somewhat. Afterwards there was much pressure to transform the showground into residential land, especially as the station had just opened that summer, but 30 acres were saved and repurposed as a public park under the direction of landscape gardener Alexander McKenzie. He created an ornate rectangular park with parterre gardens in each corner linked by figure-of-eight paths, plus plenty of space for lawn tennis and cricket. The park opened in 1887, Queen Victoria's Jubilee year, hence its name, apparently, although how the station was named Queens Park (West Kilburn) in 1879 is a mystery.

The Canal

The Grand Union Canal is the longest canal in the UK at 286 miles. The Grand Junction Canal opened joining Braunston to the Thames at Brentford to improve the communications between Birmingham, the Midlands and London. The Paddington branch (from Bull's Bridge) by which we walk opened in 1801. A popular passenger service from Paddington to Uxbridge ensued for a number of years. In 1929 the Regent's, Grand Junction and two Warwick Canals merged to form the 'Grand Union Canal'. The new company embarked on a large-scale modernisation programme to enable broad-beamed boats to work between London and Birmingham. The ambitious scheme was completed in 1937. Traffic increased in the short term, but after the war the long-term downwards trend was relentless as canalside factories ceased using coal transported on the canal as a fuel or obtained it from other sources.

Today, the Grand Union Canal is alive with pleasure boats, walkers and cyclists.

Kensal Green Cemetery

In 1832 a bill was passed to encourage the provision of more burial grounds outside the city

of London. Seven cemeteries were built over the following nine years which became known as the Magnificent Seven; Kensal Green in 1832 was the first. The others were West Norwood (1837); Highgate (1839); Brompton (1840); and Abney Park (1840), Nunhead (1840) and Tower Hamlets (1841.) These cemeteries were independent of a parish church, were located outside the city in what were then suburbs, and were privately run.

The General Cemetery Company promoted a competition for the design of a new Cemetery at Kensal Green. The brief included two chapels with catacombs, entrance gateway with lodges and a landscaped layout for monuments; the winner was Henry Edward Kendall. However, the Chairman preferred classic to gothic and the Company Surveyor got the job.

Initially the area of the Cemetery was 55 acres, and a further 22 acres were developed on land to the west of the cemetery. The West London Crematorium and Gardens of Remembrance were also developed in the east of this area in 1939 and currently operate separately. The Cemetery has remained in the ownership of the General Cemetery Company and burials have continued in the unused spaces.

Wormwood Scrubs

In the early 19th century the district was open fields and included several areas of common land. In 1801 the original Wormwood scrubs was cut in half by the Paddington canal and over time the north section of the park became developed with buildings, roads and railways. In 1812 an area of 77 hectares known as Wormwood Scrubs was leased by the war office from the Manor of Fulham in order to exercise cavalry horses. In 1879 Parliament passed The Wormwood Scrubs Act, which aimed to create a "metropolitan exercising ground" for the military and to provide the Scrubs for "the perpetual use by the inhabitants of the metropolis for exercise and recreation". Under this act, the military were able to expel civilians from the Scrubs whenever they were training, but allowed civilians free use of the area when they were not. To ensure that the Scrubs were kept as open land for all to enjoy, the act banned the military from building any permanent structures other than rifle butts, one of which survives today as a wall in the Linford Christie Stadium. Wormwood Scrubs remains one of the largest open spaces close to Central London.

Almost 100 species of bird can be seen each year. The areas of scrub provide nesting habitat for birds, including at least four species of warbler: Lesser Whitethroat, Whitethroat,

Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler. Aside from the usual summer warblers, the site also boasts a small breeding population of Meadow Pipit. It enjoys a healthy annual passage of migrants, usually including Turtle Dove, Cuckoo, Yellow Wagtail, Nightingale, Whinchat, Wheatear, Ring Ouzel, Common Redstart, Spotted and Pied Flycatcher. Rarities have included Honey Buzzard, Quail, Great Grey Shrike, 3 Richard's Pipit, Ortolan Bunting, Wryneck and Little Bunting. The site is a nightly roost for up to 5,000 Rose-ringed Parakeet in the non-breeding season.

Butterflies include Small Skipper. Large Skipper, Essex Skipper, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Peacock, Red Admiral, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell. Among other insects are several Bumble bee species, Harlequin and Stag Beetle.

Acton Alms Houses

Famous Goldsmith John Perryn lived for a while in a large house on East Acton Lane. He left a considerable estate to the Goldsmiths Company. In the year 1808 a scheme was drawn up for the erection of almshouses on Goldsmiths' Company property and in 1810 the site at Acton chosen. The original specifications were for Twelve Almshouses built in 1811 the eight additional added in 1838. The best materials were to be used and the standard of workmanship high.

The Almspeople were chosen from the Settled Pension List and were always the oldest on the list. They each received £100 a year in addition to their regular pensions and 1½ or 2 cauldrons of coal. On the annual visitation the Wardens presented the inmates with £1 apiece. After years of lying empty and recent painstaking renovation the Goldsmith's Almshouses have been turned into 20 luxury homes. The chapel has been converted into a two-bedroom dwelling.

Acton Park

The Goldsmiths' Company had grand plans for the laying out of roads, and the construction of large houses on the land bounded by Churchfield Road East, East Acton Lane and Uxbridge Road. However after only building a few houses, the plan was dropped, and sold the site to the local board for Acton park. In 1888 the local board bought 21 acres from the Goldsmiths' Company and 4 acres from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and laid out Acton park, between Churchfield Road East and Uxbridge Road including with sports facilities. The grounds were landscaped in a rustic style by the Cheal family of Gatwick.