

For more information about Islington's heritage, visit: www.islington.gov.uk/heritage

Islington Museum and Local History Centre
245 St John St, EC1V 4NB
T 020 7527 2837
W www.islington.gov.uk/heritage
Islington Museum is open every day 10am to 5pm, except Sundays and Wednesdays.

Cycling is great for your health and a great way to reduce your transport costs. Cycling also helps you to avoid the traffic jams and parking difficulties - it is often the fastest way to reach your destination door-to-door!

There are many cycle routes across the borough, mostly using less busy residential streets. These routes are as direct as the major arterial roads and are much more pleasant and safe.

Islington Council offers free cycle training to everyone who lives, works or studies in the borough. For more information about this, cycle maps of Islington, bike repairs, the London Cycle Hire Scheme, cycle parking and cycle schemes, go to www.islington.gov.uk/Transport/Cycling

ISLINGTON 

Tour of Islington

Seven miles



Learn safe cycling routes and fascinating facts about Islington



Highbury Fields – Highbury – Finsbury Park – Arsenal – Barnsbury – Canonbury – Highbury Fields

 ISLINGTON

Welcome to the Tour of Islington

Welcome to the Tour of Islington, a seven-mile route around the centre of Islington that uses safe cycling routes and has fascinating facts about the borough.

Highbury Fields

Highbury Fields is the largest green space in Islington. For centuries Highbury had been a rural area. With building encroaching on the area in the 19th century local inhabitants sought to have a park created. The 28 acre area was bought by the Vestry and the Metropolitan Board of Works for £60,000, and opened in 1885.

Highbury Clock Tower

This clock tower was erected in celebration of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee (60 years on the throne) in 1897. As its inscription explains, it was paid for by a local resident, Mr Alfred Hutchinson. It was restored to its original red and gold colours in 1997.

Highbury Barn

Highbury Barn started as a tea garden around 1740. However, its popularity was its downfall with tensions running high among local residents and in 1871 the dancing licence for the barn was refused. Some put this down to a risqué group of performers, others to a riotous party of students. Either way, the only reminder of this estate's past is in the name of the area and a set of pillars on the right hand side of the road as you cycle down Highbury Park.

Aubert Park

Alexander Aubert (1730-1805) was a businessman and astronomer. He moved his observatory from near Greenwich to Highbury House in 1788. This was said to be one of the finest observatories in Britain containing a telescope designed by James Short; this was known as "Short's Dumpy". In 1797 Aubert set up a volunteer corps, the Loyal Islington Volunteers, to protect Islington in the case of a Napoleonic invasion.

Highbury Stadium

The site was once the College of Divinity which leased the sports fields to Woolwich Arsenal Football Club when they crossed over the river in 1913. They shortened their name to Arsenal Football Club and changed their kit to burgundy and white. The team played on this site until its move to the new Emirates Stadium in 2007. Visible are the old West (1932) and East (1936) stands which are both listed and have been developed into flats, with the old pitch area as a communal garden.

Gillespie Park

If you get off your bike at Quill Street you can enter Gillespie Park. Walk on the path through the park until you come to the Ecology Centre. Leased from the British Rail's coal and goods yard in 1981, the park is the base for Islington Council's Nature Conservation Team. The team manages the borough's local nature reserves and run events and a volunteer and education programme.

Freightliners Farm

Freightliners Farm is an urban farm providing the opportunity for local individuals and groups to learn about the environment, animal care, horticulture and sustainable practices. Its purpose is to provide an educational and recreational recourse for the community.



Pentonville Prison

Pentonville Prison was built in 1842. It is a good example of Victorian prison architecture employing the "separation system", which meant that each prisoner was unable to have communication with his fellow inmates. The five halls of the prison radiate from one central place so that wardens could view all corridors from one location. The prison allowed for 520 solitary cells. Pentonville Prison became the model for British prisons; a further 54 were built to the same design over six years.

Thornhill Square

George Thornhill developed his estate in Islington in the first half of the 19th century. Work on Thornhill Square began in 1847. In 1906 two houses in the square were demolished to make space for the new West Library. In 1946 the gardens were donated to the public. The gardens contain a native Black Poplar, a tree that is threatened by extinction. Historically these trees were used widely for their timber until they were superseded by faster growing species.

Barnard Park

Barnard Park was developed in the 1960s on an area of Barnsbury that suffered widespread devastation during World War II. The main bombing of the area took place on 4 October 1940; many lives were lost. The park area betrays its past through curiously terminated streets leading onto the park. In 2009 a radar survey in the park revealed the ghostly remains of the Victorian terraces that still lie just below the surface.

College Cross

This street is a fine example of the work of Thomas Cubitt, a 19th century architect, builder and entrepreneur. He developed College Cross in the 1830s on land that used to be the botanic gardens of the Church Missionary College which occupied the area from 1787, hence the street name.

Canonbury Tower

Canonbury Tower dates from the 16th century when it was the country retreat of the Prior of St. Bartholomew. Henry VIII gave the property to Sir Thomas Cromwell. Sir John Spencer lived in the tower during Elizabeth I's reign and then later Sir Francis Bacon is thought to have held masonic meetings in the tower.

The New River

By 1600 the main source of London's drinking water, the Thames and its tributaries, had become heavily polluted. In response Sir Hugh Myddelton brought spring water to London from Hertfordshire: he created a twenty-mile waterway that dropped at just five inches per mile in order to get to the New River Head in Finsbury by gravity alone. This picturesque section of the New River is part of the original open waterway, but is of purely ornamental nature.

Estorick Collection

The Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art is a museum based in a restored Georgian house on Canonbury Square. It is the country's only gallery devoted to modern Italian art. The collection is known for its Futurist works, and figurative art and sculpture dating from 1890 to the 1950s. This is the last stop on the cycle route, so stop off and have a visit, or follow the instructions to get back to Highbury Fields.

Tour of Islington

Seven miles



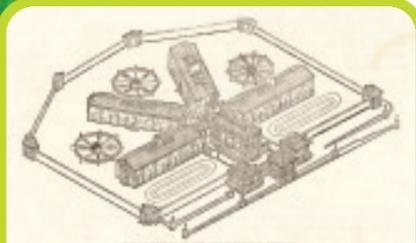
Highbury Fields
Early 1900s



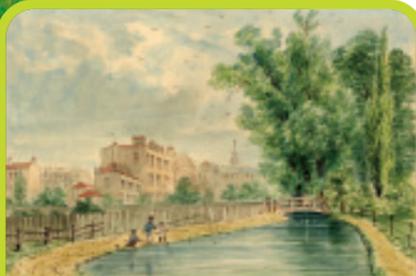
Highbury Clock Tower
1971



Highbury Barn
1775



Pentonville Prison
1840s



New River
About 1800



Canonbury Tower
About 1800



Information about the site is on the reverse