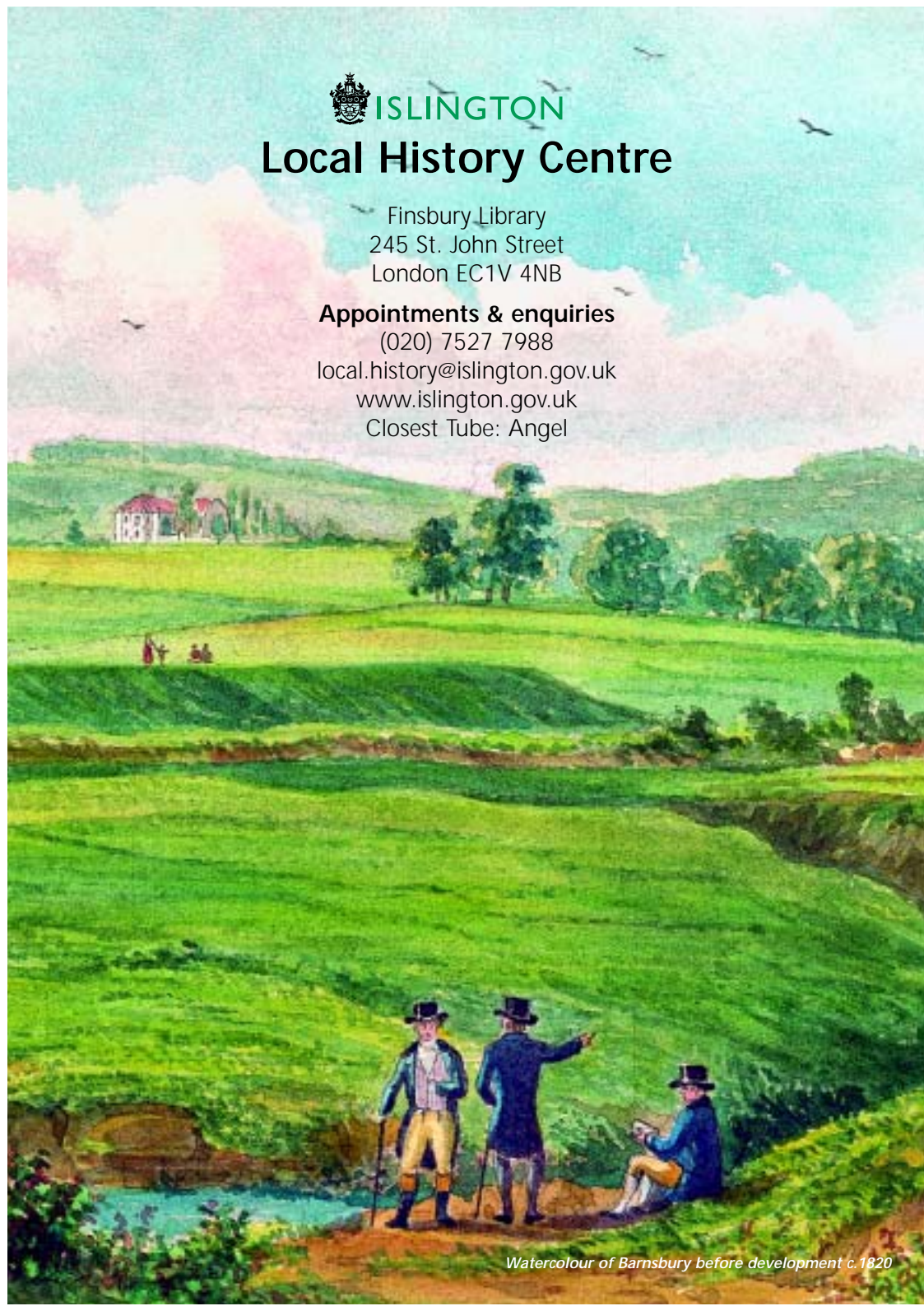




# ISLINGTON Local History Centre

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*Watercolour of Barnsbury before development c.1820*

# Barnsbury Local History Trail



**ISLINGTON**  
Library & Cultural Services



**Turn right (r) out of the library.** West Library, ❶ designed by A. Beresford Pite was opened in 1907, one of five Islington libraries provided by the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Ahead stands St. Andrew's church. It was built by the renowned Islington stonemasons firm of Dove Brothers in 1854. The siting of the church helped to establish Thornhill Square as a smart residential area. **Turn r. into Thornhill Square.**

The Square started to be built in the 1840's. Along with much of Barnsbury, the land belonged to the Thornhill family and parcels of their estate were leased for development through the 19th century. The houses were originally built with conservatories. The gardens were donated to the public by Captain Thornhill in 1946. Before this they were private and only available to residents. When first developed, they were known as the largest green space in Islington. According to a local resident, during the 2nd World War, a barrage balloon was tethered in the gardens.

**As you leave the Square, you'll enter Matilda Street.** As with many of the local street names, this is a Thornhill family name. On the left-hand side (lhs) of the street is a recent development, Bramwell Mews. The courtyard echoes the original layout, as this space was never built on but was occupied by a saw mill and industrial outbuildings. These Victorian remnants were only demolished in 1992.

**From Matilda Street, turn left up Richmond Avenue.** ❷ As you walk up, after crossing Hemingford Road, you'll be unable to miss the Egyptian style sphinxes ❷ & obelisks which adorn the house fronts. These seem to have been erected because of a fascination with all things Egyptian in the mid 19th century. On the left is Richmond Crescent, home to PM Tony Blair and family, until their move to 10 Downing Street! No's 76-86 Richmond Avenue., once known as Gainford Terrace, were the first houses to be developed on the Thornhill Estate. They were built in 1829.

When you reach the top of Richmond Avenue, **follow the road round to the left into Thornhill Road** to see 'The Albion' pub. This was originally a tea-house, named after Thomas Albion Oldfield, who owned a local dairy and fields that were used for cricket matches. Further down this picturesque street is Thornhill School, built in 1881.

We need to **double back along Thornhill Road** and **cross into Cloudesley Road**, land owned by the Cloudesley / Stonefield Estate. Once rich dairy land, building leases were granted in the 1820's and development started. About half way along the road, **turn left (l) into Cloudesley Square.** This was the earliest of the Barnsbury squares, built 1826. On the rhs is a new development, once the home of Dove Brothers., church builders. Ahead of you stands Holy Trinity church ❸ one of 3 Islington churches designed by Charles Barry (1795-1860). It's said to be an imitation of King's College chapel, Cambridge. It was leased to Celestial Church of Christ in the 1980's.

**Walk round the square and enter Stonefield Street. Walk to the end and, after crossing Richmond Avenue., enter Lonsdale Square.**

This unique square was designed in 1835 by Richard Cromwell Carpenter, who became known for almshouse design. Maybe the Gothic look of the buildings hints at this. The land was owned by the Draper's Company, and was known as 'Gosseyfield': in 1818 it was being used as a holding-pen for Smithfield-bound cattle. In the 1950's Lonsdale Square was the site of a protest to protect tenants from eviction by land agents. These days, the square is almost wholly owner-occupied.

**Turn r. down Barnsbury Street.** This was once known as Cut Throat Lane, and was the route across fields to the Workhouse. At the bottom of the street, on lhs, stands the Islington Workhouse site. ❹ The turreted building, now converted into flats, was once the Workhouse Registrar's Office. The picture shows the original extent of this building.

**Cross Liverpool Road and continue into Barnsbury Street.** On the rhs, above the entrance to 41d, is a coat of arms. This denotes the entrance to the Islington Proprietary School ❺ founded 1830. Shareholders were able to nominate scholars (usually their sons!) It was an academic school, with scholarships to Oxford and Cambridge.

**Turn l. into College Cross.** On the site of Sutton Dwellings ❻ once stood the Church Missionary College ❷ built in 1787, hence the street name. It closed in 1915. This ground had once been a Botanic Garden. The land covered by College Cross was owned by the famous architect / builder Thomas Cubitt and was residentially developed in the 1830's.

**Walk to the end of College Cross and turn left. Walk up Islington Park Street** (known in 18th century as Kettle Lane) **and cross Liverpool Road. Walk right, down the road a little way, and then turn l. into Barnsbury Park.**

Barnsbury Park was developed in the 1820's, and featured several large houses. Most are now demolished but a few still stand, including no. 9. When first built, this was the home of the Rev. Daniel Wilson, vicar of St. Mary's, Upper St. In the 1920's the artist Walter Sickert lived there with his wife, painter Therese Lessore. If you walk into Beech Tree Close, or look behind no. 9, you can see the remains of a Victorian industrial chimney, as there were once small industries in the area. Notice the 'Barnsbury Beech', named by 'Trees for London' in 1997 as a particularly old and magnificent specimen! Thornhill Houses ❽ were built in 1902 on the site of 10 Barnsbury Park. ❿

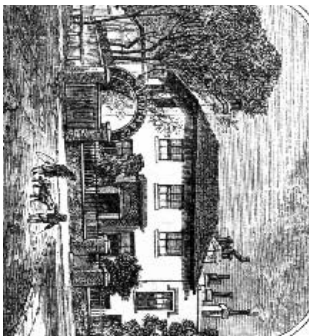
**Turn l. into Thornhill Road.** No. 45 was once the vicarage for Holy Trinity church, Cloudesley Square.

**Turn r. into Barnsbury Square** and Gardens. ❻ In many ways this is one of the most historic of Islington squares as for many years it was believed to be the site of a Roman moated fort. However, the moat probably only belonged to a medieval farm. The square was developed in the 1830's; in one corner lies the picturesque Mountford Crescent, with pairs of grand stuccoed houses and a single house, once St. Andrews vicarage. Further round is Mountford House, built on the moat site. ❿ After grand beginnings, from 1896 it was run as a 'home for destitute boys' for several years. The square declined and Mica House, now apartments, was one of several buildings for light industry built in Mountford House' grounds in the 1930's.

Walk past Mica House to the end of the street and **turn left down Barnsbury Terrace.** You'll come to Lofting Road. This road once housed the North London Synagogue. ❿ Between the 1840's and 1860's, Barnsbury became a popular area for the affluent Jewish community with more than 1,000 people moving from the City and East London. However, by the 1880's, with Barnsbury in decline, most of the community had moved to Highbury, Canonbury and Mildmay. The Barnsbury Synagogue closed in 1958.

**Turn r. down Lofting Road and cross Hemingford Road.** Hemingford Road and the Huntingdon Arms were also named after the Thornhill family's estate lands.

**Enter Bridgeman Road** and the library is ahead of you.



Barnsbury Park



Richmond Avenue



Sutton Dwellings



Holy Trinity Church



Islington Proprietary



Birlington Workhouse



All material from Islington Local History Centre

**KEY:-**

- ① LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE West Library 30th June 1906
- ② WEST LIBRARY READING ROOM c.1908
- ③ RICHMOND AVENUE SPINXES
- ④ RICHMOND ROAD (now Avenue) c.1905
- ⑤ HOLY TRINITY CHURCH Cloudesly Sq.
- ⑥ ISLINGTON WORKHOUSE c.1825
- ⑦ ISLINGTON PROPRIETARY SCHOOL
- ⑧ CHURCH MISSIONARY COLLEGE
- ⑨ SUTTON DWELLINGS FROM UPPER ST., Coronation visit 1953
- ⑩ BARNSBURY PARK SCHOOL, DOMESTIC SCIENCE @ LCC, courtesy London Metropolitan Archives
- ⑪ 10 BARNSBURY PARK c.1880 showing Thomas Turner's photographic business
- ⑫ THORNHILL HOUSES, showing junction of Thornhill and Offord Rd c.1905
- ⑬ THE GARDENS Barnsbury Square c.1908
- ⑭ SITE OF "BARNSBURY MOAT", before development. By F. Shepard
- ⑮ NORTH LONDON SYNAGOGUE, before demolition 1959



West Library



Thornhill Houses



Barnsbury Square Gardens



Barnsbury Park School



Barnsbury Moat



North London Synagogue



West Library



Richmond Road



Church Missionary College