

Beaconsfield New Town - Literary Heritage Walk

40 minutes on pavements

Start on the Town Hall Green, Penn Road, Beaconsfield, HP9 2PP, at the paved seating area with trellis:

This decorative trellis carries images and plaques commemorating two famous children's authors, Enid Blyton and Alison Uttley. Both authors arrived in Beaconsfield in 1938 and lived here until their deaths.

Enid Blyton (1897–1968), creator of Noddy, and the Famous Five, lived at a house called 'Green Hedges' just off the Penn Road, which runs north from the New Town. The house was demolished in 1973, but the area where it stood is named Blyton Close in her honour (*see star on map*). Here she wrote all 21 'Famous Five' books, as well as all the 'Secret Seven' and 'Adventure' series. In the 1950s she created her most successful character, Noddy. His adventures in Toyland sold over 20 million copies.

Alison Uttley (1884–1976) Opposite Blyton's plaque is another to Alison Uttley and an image of her most famous creation, 'Little Grey Rabbit' in her bright blue apron. By the time Uttley arrived in Beaconsfield she was already world-famous and, like Blyton, would become a millionaire through her writing. 'The Squirrel, the Hare and Little Grey Rabbit', published in 1929, was the first of what became a best-selling series of charming country tales. Uttley wrote over 100 books, including adult historical fiction, 'A Traveller in Time' and her semi-autobiographical book 'The Country Child'. Her house, 'Thackers', still stands today at 10 Ellwood Road (*see star on map*). Alison was one of the first women to graduate from Manchester University in 1906 with a degree in physics.

From the Green, walk round to the back of the Town Hall (built 1936) and through the Waitrose car park into St Teresa's car park. You will see St Teresa's Roman Catholic Church to your left:

The church, dedicated to St Teresa of Lisieux, was opened in 1927. In 1939, the west end of the church was completed as a memorial to its most famous parishioner and Catholic convert, GK Chesterton.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874–1936) is today best known for his 'Father Brown' stories, but he was a prolific writer, journalist and lay Catholic theologian. The stained glass window in the new entrance, added in 2001, was inspired by one of his religious poems. Chesterton arrived in Beaconsfield in 1909 and settled in Grove Road, where he later built Top Meadow (*see 31 Wycombe End walk*).

Take the drive to the right of the church to exit onto Warwick Road. Cross over and turn left to walk a little way to the entrance of:

Bekonscot Model Village - Warwick Road, the oldest model village in the world and our town's most famous attraction. It began as the private hobby of Roland Callingham, a local accountant and model railway enthusiast, and proved so popular that it was opened officially to the public in 1929. If you wish to pay for entry to this delightful attraction, look out for the model of Enid Blyton's Beaconsfield house, 'Green Hedges', and its

rescued and restored sundial (installed 2016), as well as an exhibition on her life and work.

From the entrance, continue walking along Warwick Road towards the town shops, turn right at the corner and cross over Penn Road to the bar-restaurant. To its left is a narrow passage way taking you through to a car park and on to Reynolds Road. Turn right and follow the curve of the road to reach Beaconsfield Library:

Beaconsfield Library - Reynolds Road & Sir Terry Pratchett Beaconsfield Branch Library, the County's first purpose built post-war library, was opened in 1957. It is described in Nikolaus Pevsner's Buckinghamshire Buildings as 'well and traditionally built in a pretty 1950s way. It has a friendly interior.' The library was doubled in size in 1966 and the frontage later significantly updated with automatic glass doors. Outside the library is a plaque honouring Sir Terry Pratchett (1948–2015), world-famous fantasy fiction author, born and bred in our town. It was commissioned by Beaconsfield Town Council and unveiled in 2017. Sir Terry is best known for his 'Discworld' series and sold 85 million books worldwide in his lifetime. He was a Saturday boy at the library and, in his Who's Who entry, credits the library with his education – his formal schooling began up

at Holtspur School. He joined the Bucks Free Press as a cub reporter and worked for several years as a journalist before focusing on his writing career.

From the library, cross Reynolds Road and turn left, walking away from the town to find house No.26A. There you will see a small green plaque on a low brick wall dedicated to:

Robert Frost (1874–1963), who was to become America's premier poet. He arrived in Beaconsfield in September 1912 with his wife and four young children and rented a small bungalow at number 26. This was pulled down in the 1980s and two modern houses built: the front door of 26A marks the nearest footprint to the original bungalow. Frost's first published poems were written here, among them 'Mending Wall', 'Home Burial' and 'After Apple Picking'. Another later poem, 'The Road Not Taken', is regularly voted onto America's list of top ten poems. The family moved to Gloucestershire in 1914 and subsequently back to the US after the outbreak of WW1.

Continue on along Reynolds Road from No 26 to where the road curves, pass two turnings right, to reach Baring Road. 200 yards along, after No. 45, take a right turn along a footpath over the railway line to Gregories Road. Turn left towards the shops.

*Diversion: If you wish, cross over Gregories Road soon after emerging onto it, and walk until you see the sign for Gregories Farm Lane (please note this is a private road). At the very end of this lane, two houses, 'Shepherds Corner' and 'Gregories', are all that remain of the old farmhouse, which became the home of: **James Louis Garvin** (1867–1947), an influential editor and political writer of the Observer newspaper 1908–1942 and friend to many politicians, including Chamberlain and Churchill. Gregories Farm and 293 acres of land had been sold for housing development in 1907, soon after the railway arrived in Beaconsfield. In 1921, Garvin purchased the farmhouse and outbuildings, set in 7 acres.*
Continue along Gregories Road towards the town.

Turn left into Station Road, then over the crossing to Boots (where the station master's house once stood). From here, cross the railway bridge again and look down on the station:

The Railway arrived late in Beaconsfield, in 1906, and offered convenient connections to London Marylebone and Paddington. Its arrival sparked the rapid expansion of Beaconsfield New Town as people moved from the city: Station Road and all the shops in Station Parade (opposite the Town Hall) were built in this period. A large hotel, The Railway Hotel, was built in 1910, later named The Earl of Beaconsfield. This was demolished in the late 1970s early 80s to make way for Waitrose supermarket.

Continue over the bridge to reach the Town Hall Green, where you began.