

Beaconsfield Old Town - Wycombe End, Aylesbury End & Environs Walk

45 minutes on pavements & Walkwood (which can be muddy in wet weather)

Start at the Reading Room, 10-12 Wycombe End, HP9 1ND

Using the crossings, cross Wycombe End and then Aylesbury End. In front of you will be:

The Royal White Hart In 1624, Nat Aldridge was fined two old pennies for putting up a sign showing a white hart on 'the Lord's waste' away from his inn. However, the pub sign remains in a similar position today. Inside is a bust of G K Chesterton, a regular customer when he lived in Beaconsfield (see 28 and 31). Part of The White Hart is now a hotel. *Walk to the right of The White Hart and follow Shepherds Lane noting the big archway that would have allowed access and delivery to shops on London End. On the left you will find:*

Free Methodist Chapel The chapel in Shepherds Lane has a plaque reading '1900 Wesleyan Reform Chapel' and was later known as a Free Methodist Chapel. One of the foundation stones was laid in 1899 by Sir Edward Lawson. *Further on the left is:*

Shepherds Lane Cemetery It is here that G K Chesterton is buried. His headstone was designed by Eric Gill, the notorious artist and sculptor. It is here also that Free French sailors who died at Butlers Court (see 33) were first buried. Their remains were later repatriated. *Continue to the road junction with Candlemas Lane. Turn left and follow the lane until you reach the pond:*

Candlemas Pond Possibly named after the annual fair held in the Middle Ages on 2nd February (Candlemas Day), it was from here that a procession would start and process to the church. *Turn right from Candlemas Lane onto Station Road, continue past Davenies School on the right. Cross over Station Road here, continue for 100m and turn left into Grove Road. Walk to the 'T' junction, turn left and cross to the right side to a pedestrian barrier leading to Walkwood. Follow the path, passing the rear of Butles Court School (see 32), until reaching an open space, Walkwood Meadow. This was the site of:*

Gregories A mansion once occupied an area north of the mound at the top of the meadow. The Palladian style house, built in 1704, was occupied by the parliamentarian and statesman, Edmund Burke, from 1768 until 1797. He changed its name to Butlers Court. Burke died at Butlers Court in 1797, his wife in 1812, shortly before the house burnt down in 1813. *Retrace your steps to Grove Road and turn right. Near the junction with Station Road are two houses almost opposite each other:*

Overroads and Top Meadow Both houses were home to G K Chesterton, the writer and journalist. In 1911, he and his wife lived in Overroads, moving to the newly built Top Meadow in 1922, noted today by a blue plaque. Chesterton was a well-known local figure. He died in 1936 and is buried in Shepherds Lane (see 28). *At the Station Road junction, turn right, and opposite will be:*

The National Film and Television School In 1922 this site was a film studio and welcomed many famous screen stars. Britain's first talking movie was shot here. After a mixed history the site stopped film production in 1966. It became the prestigious National Film and Television School in 1971. Many of the School's students have gone on to win awards for their work on famous films and shows, including Wallace and Gromit, Titanic, The Crown series, The Serpent and many more. Renovations and new buildings, including a cutting edge 'digital village', were completed in 2017. *Continue down Station Road and take the next road on the right, Wattleton Road. This road is home to three schools. The Junior School was named after the once Butlers Court Estate, in which it is situated. Passing Beaconsfield High School, turn right into Redwood Place, which leads to:*

Butlers Court Built in 1890 by Arthur Riversdale Grenfell, and named as a tribute to Edmund Burke's mansion of the same name, it was lived in by General Lord Grenfell between 1895 and 1912. During WWII, the house was used as a convalescent home for the Free French sailors (see 28). After the war it was acquired

by the paper research group Wiggins Teape (later Arjo Wiggins). Today the site is part of the Queen's Acre housing development built around the walled garden. *Opposite Redwood Place is Old Lodge Drive. Take this road and turn left at the junction with The Spinney. The road passes behind The Beaconsfield School to join Factory Yard on the right:*

Factory Yard In 1818, Isaac Peet set up a silk ribbon factory employing local women in this yard. The factory closed in 1830 due to bankruptcy. The Misses Du Pre of Wilton Park set up and funded the first girls' public day school here in 1840. A boys' school then joined and a Church School Committee, set up in 1854, then established it as a 'National School' (see 7, *Windsor End walk*). *Continue through Factory Yard until you reach Wycombe End (CAUTION BUSY ROAD). Before turning left to return to the 'four ends', a brief detour right can be taken to see:*

Site of The Old Forge A blacksmith started work here in about 1929, when horses were being shod in large numbers and motor vehicles were few. The rise in car numbers and decline in working horses forced the forge to diversify into wrought iron and decorative items. It closed in 2001 and the business moved to Lillyfee Farm, outside Beaconsfield.

About 50m further west along the A40 a white Boundary stone can be seen on the verge. This marks the distance between London, Beaconsfield, and Oxford. It marked the edge of Beaconsfield. *Return to Factory Yard and continue along the left side of Wycombe End towards the roundabout to:*

The George now known as The Crazy Bear Behind this brick frontage is a medieval and Tudor building, believed to exist at least as early as 1489 as an inn. Today it is a restaurant/hotel. *Turn left at the roundabout back into Aylesbury End to the market square, a public garden, but once the site of:*

Day's Stores, Market House and Fire Station The Market House was part of a block of buildings which also held a grocers and drapers known as Day's Stores. Close by was the fire station. The buildings were demolished in 1952 as trade declined. *To the north of the market square is:*

The Lock Up Once an overnight jail for vagrants and petty thieves, the two storied building was the Estate Office for Hall Barn. It is now offices. *Cross over the road to see:*

United Reformed Church The Bethesda Chapel was the first place of worship on this site, built about 1800. It was replaced in 1874 with the Congregational Church, which had complex affiliations to local shopkeepers. In 1972 the building became the United Reformed Church. *Walk back to the Royal White Hart, cross the zebra crossings on Aylesbury End and then Wycombe End to return to the Reading Room.*