

Kensington is first recorded in the 11th Century Domesday Book when it was called Chenesit. Kensington was dominated by the great houses of its leading aristocrats. In the medieval period the leading landowners were the de Vere's (Earls of Oxford) and the Abbot of Abingdon who built Kensington's parish church in the 12th Century. Following the Reformation in the 16th many of the lands were taken over by Sir Walter Cope. His mansion was bought by the Holland family and part of it survives in Holland Park. Lord Camden was also attracted to the area by its clean air and closeness to London his mansion Camden House has been demolished. The Earl of Nottingham acquired his house from Sir George Coppin and it was this house which was purchased by King William and Queen Mary. The borough gained its sobriquet Royal because Queen Victoria was born in Kensington Palace.

In the 19th Century the area became a fashionable area for the middle and upper classes and the home of many writers. It has an excellent shopping area.

HIGH STREET KENSINGTON UNDERGROUND

became the nerve centre of the Whig political party. The Whigs were an aristocratic party of radicals many of whom originally supported the French Revolution - one of the their most important leaders was Charles James Fox, who entertained his political allies here.

The House was bombed in the Blitz and never properly rebuilt.

Walk across the Park and exit into the Duchess of Bedford's Walk and into Holland Street - you are now in the Phillimore Estate one of the richest in London. At the end of Holland Street turn right into Church Street and visit:

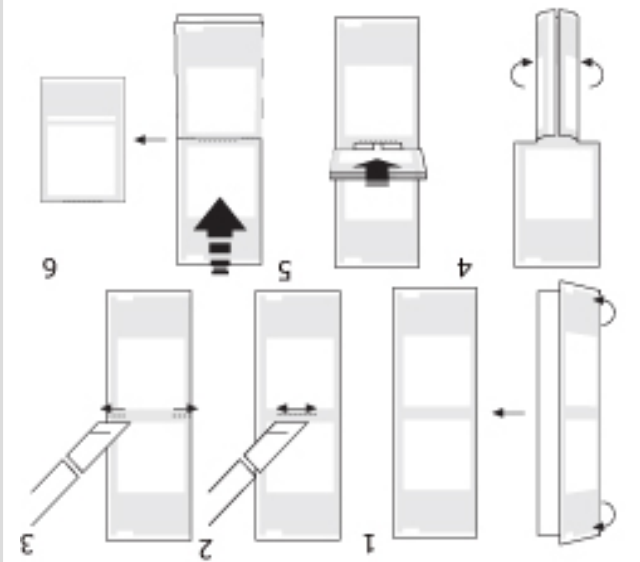
ST MARY ABBOTS

This is a typical Victorian Gothic Revival Church which was rebuilt (1869 - 72) by the great Sir George Gilbert Scott. The Church was founded in the 12th Century by the Abbot of Abingdon. The Abbey had been given land by the local aristocratic landlord Godfrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford. King William and Queen Mary used to worship here.

Turn Right along Kensington High Street, or cross the road to the Park to continue the walk to Kensington Palace.

Kensington Walk

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created on : Fri Oct 19 08:08:26 2007

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 Kevin Flude**

Enjoy the shopping along the High Street and walk westwards. Cross the road and turn right (north) into Argyle Street, turn left into Stafford Terrace and walk to No. 18 which is the Victorian Home of:

LINLEY SAMBOURNE'S HOUSE

An attractive interior cluttered with Victoriana and an authentic 'lived in' feel - the Bohemian home of Linley Sambourne - chief cartoonist for Punch. Open to the general public at the weekends only.

Continue along Stafford Terrace to the Phillimore Gardens and turn left (south) back to Kensington High Street, and continue west along this road to:

COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE

The successor to the Imperial Institute and the British centre of the Commonwealth.

Cross the road to the South side and continue along the road until:

EDWARDES SQUARE

This is one of the oldest squares in Kensington and dates to 1811 - 1819.

Walk back to the High Street, cross the road and retrace your steps along the High Street East) and turn left into Melbury Road, turn right into

Holland Park road, and walk 100 yards westwards until you reach:
LEIGHTON HOUSE
 Built by Royal Academician Lord Leighton with help from his artistic friends. This is a truly stunning Victorian interior tiled with fantastic Islamic tiles and decorated into the 'House Beautiful'. It has a good collection of 19th Century art. Closed on Tuesdays.
 Retrace your steps to Melbury Road and turn left (north)
MELBURY ROAD
 Melbury Road was one of Victorian London's main artists colonies, plaques on the wall identify some of them - 6 Royal Academicians lived here including G F Watts and Sir Luke Fildes. Other residents include the architect William Burges and actor Richard Harris.
 Turn right into Ilchester Place and continue to:
HOLLAND PARK
 Walk across the park to:
HOLLAND PARK HOUSE
 Built, originally by Sir Walter Cope, in the 17th Century, the House came into the possession of the Holland family in the 18th Century where it