

Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood		
1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check
27 th April 2021		
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Highgate Wood and Queen's Wood (East Finchley to Highgate)

Start: East Finchley Underground

Finish: Highgate Underground

Length: 5.5 km/3.4 mi with 144m ascent.

Time: 1 hour 20 mins

Transport: East Finchley and Highgate Stations are in Zone 3 on the High Barnet Branch of the Northern Line. Journey time from Bank is 24 and 21 minutes respectively.

Walk Notes:

This is an undulating meandering route in the Borough of Haringey through a couple of remnants of the ancient Forest of Middlesex, in one of the highest parts of Inner North London.

Both woods are very different in character and feel:

Highgate Wood is only part ancient wood and has been managed for a long time, with several areas having been coppiced and others having been cleared, and it mostly has the appearance of a parkland wood.

Queen's Wood has a wilder, less managed and more challenging feel and consequently features a greater mixture of flora and fauna.

And while Highgate Wood is famous for its bluebell displays in season, these are largely confined to the northeasterly corner of the wood. In contrast, Queen's Wood displays a fine mixture of wildflowers in several parts of the wood, amongst which are bluebells, wood anemones and daffodils.

Both woods feature ancient – possibly pre-historic – earthworks and they also boast cafés for refreshments.

Walk Options:

A Short Walk – of 3.7 km and with half the ascent – omits the more undulating Queen's Wood.

An Extension leads to Finsbury Park along the Parkland Walk, part of a dismantled railway line and now a very charming linear and raised Local Nature Reserve. This adds 3.5 km and is map-led.

Refreshments en route (details last updated 16/04/2021)

The Old White Lion 121 Great North Road, *East Finchley, London N2 0NW* (020 8883 6459, <https://www.theoldwhitelionfinchley.co.uk/>). Located right at the start of the walk, this large gastro pub is open all day every day.

Cherry Tree Café 39 Muswell Hill Road, *Highgate, London N10 3JB* (020 3105 0966). Located 90m off route, 1.5 km into the walk.

The Pavilion Café Highgate Wood Muswell Hill Road, *Highgate, London N10 3JN* (020 8444 4777). Located 70m off route, 2.5 km into the walk. Open 08.30-16.00. In a former cricket pavilion, with a separate kiosk.

Queen's Wood Café 42 Muswell Hill Road, *Highgate, London N10 3JP* (020 8444 2604, <https://www.queenswoodcafe.co.uk/>). Located 3.4 km into the walk. Open 10.00-17.00 Thu-Sun.

Refreshments at the end of the walk (details last updated 16/04/2021)

The Boogaloo 312 Archway Road, *Highgate, London N6 AT* (020 8340 2928, <https://theboogaloo.co.uk/>). Open all day every day.

Holly & Vine 292 Holmesdale Road, *Highgate, London N6 55AT*. Part of The Boogaloo site.

Highgate Café, Food Room, Velvet, Caffé Eraldo, Fonseca's Deli.

The Woodman 414 Archway Road, *Highgate, London N6 5U* (020 8340 3016, <https://www.the-woodman.com/>). Open all day every day.

Café Noir A kiosk right by the entrance to the tube station. Open to 16.30 daily.

Notes

Cherry Tree Wood

Cherry Tree Wood is a 5.3-hectare park in East Finchley in the Borough of Barnet and a remnant of the large medieval wood called Finchley Wood. The wood likely served as a source to fire nearby Roman kilns around AD50-AD160. The first mention of the park though is from the 13th century as the hunting grounds of the Bishop of London. It was later known as Dirthouse Wood because the 'night soil' and horse manure from London's streets was brought to the Dirthouse, now the White Lion pub next to East Finchley Station, as fertiliser for hay meadows.

Highgate Wood

Highgate Wood is a 28-hectare area of ancient woodland in the borough of Haringey, lying between East Finchley, Highgate and Muswell Hill. It was originally part of the ancient Forest of Middlesex. The wood has been managed to varying degrees by humans through the ages. Predominantly consisting of oak, hornbeam and holly wood, it is also home to more than 50 other tree and shrub species which have self-seeded there. Amongst them is the wild service tree, a rare deciduous tree with brown berries, which is commonly taken as an indicator of an ancient woodland.

Prehistoric flints have been found in the wood, and excavations on the ridge at the northern end of the wood established that Romano-Britons were producing pottery from local materials between AD 50-100. An ancient earthwork runs across the wood. This may have formed part of an enclosure for deer during the Medieval period, when the Bishop of London owned the wood. However, it could also be a prehistoric boundary or defensive work.

Previously known as Brewer's Fell and Gravelpit Wood, the wood has long been managed by 'coppicing with standards', meaning that the hornbeams were coppiced for fuel and fencing, while the oaks were grown to maturity for ship building and construction work.

Open 07.30 to dusk.

Queen's Wood

Queen's Wood is a 21-hectare area of an ancient oak-hornbeam woodland in the borough of Haringey, abutting Highgate Wood and lying between East Finchley, Highgate, Muswell Hill and Crouch End. It was originally part of the ancient Forest of Middlesex. Once called Churchyard Bottom Wood, it is said to be the site of a plague pit. The wood was renamed Queen's Wood in honour of Queen Victoria upon purchase by Hornsey Urban District Council in 1898. It has no park or playing fields, and has never been subjected to intensive management of the type practised at Highgate Wood and accordingly there is greater diversity of flora and fauna. The ground flora is particularly rich: it includes a large population of wood anemone, goldilocks buttercup and wood sorrel, yellow pimpernel and square-stemmed St. John's wort. The wood is accessible at all times.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Leave **East Finchley Underground** station onto the forecourt by going down some steps and turning left (signed 'High Road, Buses') and - past the ticket gates - turning right (signed 'Great North Road, Buses'). Cross **Great North Road** at some pedestrian lights and *turn right* towards the railway bridge. In 25m, with **The Old White Lion** pub visible the other side of the bridge, *turn left* this side of the bridge past a concrete bollard towards the entrance of the metal fenced **Cherry Tree Wood** 30m away. There you pass a map (showing two possible routes through the railway-side park) and an info panel and immediately *fork right* along a tarmac, then gravel path close to the railway line, temporarily leaving the **Capital Ring**. A couple of paths join from the left and in 160m you have an open meadow on the left.

In 80m re-enter trees and gently rise through the wood. In 90m, near the top of the rise and almost in the far corner of the wood, *curve to the left* along one of several indistinct paths and then gently descend through the wood towards some fenced sport courts 100m away. You cross an indistinct path close to the first fenced court and keep to the left of the fence along tarmac. At the far end of the fence, *turn right* with it and then *turn left* along a tarmac path towards a café and *turn right* along the main tarmac path past a toilet block. Leave the park in 60m through a metal gate and continue in the same direction along **Fordington Road** at a bend (i.e.: ignore the tarmac Indigo Walk on the left). In 220m at a junction with **Woodside Avenue**, cross this road and *bear right* from the previous direction up **Lanchester Road**. In 50m *turn left* up a wide tarmac path between garden fences with a Capital Ring signpost.

You steadily rise to the wooded area ahead and in 150m cross the dismantled **Finsbury Park – Alexandra Palace Railway Line** on a bridge. In 30m enter **Highgate Wood** through **Bridge Gate**. There is a map on the right and at a four-way junction of broad paths, you *turn left* (60°). In 40m you have a fenced area on the right, the first of several densely packed with **bluebells in season**, and in another 150m **[!]** *turn hard right* at a three-way junction (signposted 'Café, Toilets, Playground'), ignoring the continuation towards **Cranley Gate** and Muswell Hill Road 50m away (the **Cherry Tree Café** can be found on that road, 40m to the right). In 220m ignore **Onslow Gate** on the left and **[!]** *turn hard right* (280°, 'Café, Toilets, Sheppard Cottages') and in 100m – at a five-way junction – by a **Drinking Fountain** on the right, you *bear right* along a broad gravel path (320°). In 65m you have the beginnings of a stream on the left and in 110m, back at the four-way junction by **Bridge Gate**, you *turn left* downhill.

In 60m you pass an info panel on the right on the **ancient earthwork** visible here (a double bank-and-ditches). In 25m cross the stream and re-ascend with the path. In 50m *curve left* uphill with the main path. In 250m, at a crossing of a tarmac lane and by a two-way metal **Capital Ring-signpost**, a right turn leads to **The Pavilion Café Highgate Wood** 70m away, but the route continues ahead ('Finsbury Park 3m'). In 60m **[!]** *turn right*, ignoring the continuation ahead. In 100m you pass the café and a **wildlife information hut** visible away on the right, then a large open area (some cricket and football pitches). The path curves to the left and after 300m – just after a toilet block on the right – you *turn left* at a four-way junction, with **Archway Gate** out of sight away on the right. In 300m at a four-way junction, you *turn hard right* back on yourself (due S) and in 60m come to a fork in the path, with the left fork leading to **New Gate** and onto **Muswell Hill Road**.

Here you have a choice:

For the Short Walk, and an immediate finish at **Highgate Underground**, *fork right* and keep walking along the main path inside the wood. In 250m you go through **Gypsy Gate** onto **Muswell Hill Road** and *turn right* along it past a bus stop. In 70m **Wood**

Lane joins from the left. The direct route to the tube station turns left here and in 15m turns right along a signposted tarmac path. For all tea options and other bus services though, continue ahead to **Archway Road** and *turn left* by **The Woodman** pub.

For the Main Walk, *fork left* and in 50m leave **Highgate Wood** through **New Gate** to cross **Muswell Hill Road** at some pedestrian lights and enter **Queen's Wood** a little to the left. In 60m by **Queen's Wood Café** on the left, ignore a right fork downhill and stay on the level path (signed 'To Connaught Gardens'). In 150m *fork left* and then *fork right* immediately (30°) to start a gentle descent (signed 'To Connaught Gardens'). In 100m cross the nascent **Moselle Stream** (it is a tributary of the River Lea – via Pymmes Brook, and its name derives from 'Mosse-Hill', as also found in 'Muswell Hill') and in 20m **[!]** *turn right* at a four-way junction. You descend into the valley and in 60m cross a path and in another 40m *turn left* at a T-junction of paths. Over the next 40m a couple of paths join from the left and in another 150m you reach an open area by the **Wood Vale Gate** out of the wood into a residential area.

Turn hard right up along the first of two distinct wide paths (240°) back into the wood, gently uphill and **initially along tarmac**. In 250m you pass the **Frogpool** at a multi-path junction and continue in the same direction and in 110m at a T-junction, *turn right* for 10m to an info panel on the clearly visible **earthworks** there (part of a bank enclosure). Re-trace your steps to the T-junction and continue in the same direction up through the wood (110°, signed 'Queens Wood Road and Priory Gardens'; i.e.: *turn left* from the earlier path). You are **back on the Capital Ring** and will now follow its route to the end of the walk. In 150m a path joins from the left and in 40m you continue in the same direction at a crosspaths. In 30m cross **Queen's Wood Road** into the southerly part of **Queens' Wood**.

In 80m you continue in the same direction at a crosspaths and then curve down to the left with the path and – after curving to the right more steeply downhill into the narrow valley – in 100m continue in the same direction at a four-way junction of paths, along the line of a short wall and soon re-ascending, eventually between residential gardens. At the top of the rise, *turn right* along **Priory Gardens**. In 250m *turn left* with a **Capital Ring sign on a lamp post** and up along a steep tarmac path between houses. [The entrance to **Highgate Station** is straight ahead though along Priory Gardens.] In 130m *turn right* along **Shepherd's Hill** and in 50m a right turn downhill is signed for Highgate tube station, 100m away. **All but one of the tea options** are found along **Archway Road** though, the main road ahead.

At the junction with Archway Road, you have a choice:

For the Extension along the Parkland Walk to Finsbury Park, *turn left* along Archway Road and in 50m by **The Boogaloo** on the left, you *turn left* downhill along **Holmesdale Road**. In 25m you pass **Holly & Vine** and in 80m, where the road bears to the right, you *turn left* through some bollards in a fence gap onto the course of the dismantled railway line and *turn right* along it.

For the Main Walk, *turn right* and in 70m – just before some bus stops for southbound services – a stepped path on the right leads down to the tube station entrance. On the other side of the road, you find: **Highgate Café**, **Food Room**, **Velvet**, **Caffé Eraldo** and **Fonseca's Deli**. **The Woodman** pub is on this side of the road, by the junction with Muswell Hill Road. **Café Noir** is right by the station entrance.