



# GROVE PARK

HOME OF THE  
RAILWAY CHILDREN  
HERITAGE TRAIL  
MAP

THE BARING TRUST  
CELEBRATING THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Grove Park  
Youth Club  
Building Preservation Trust

WILLMOTT DIXON  
INTERIORS



# WELCOME

Welcome to Grove Park, Home of The Railway Children (jump to stage 6 of the tour to see why!). Grove Park is an area with a surprisingly rich social, military and literary history. It grew up around the railway station which became one of the inspirations for the world-famous book *The Railway Children* by celebrated children's author Edith Nesbit, who lived just further along the road from the station. The book, published in 1905, has been turned into various screen dramas, plays and a musical and became a big global hit through the 1970 film starring Jenny Agutter and Bernard Cribbins.

**The Heritage Trail starts at Grove Park Station and can take around 1 ½ - 2 hours, depending on your pace. For the optional visit to Elmstead Woods and Grove Park Cemetery at stage 11 please add another hour.**

## 1 GROVE PARK STATION, BARING ROAD

In *The Railway Children*, the family become impoverished when their father, who works at the Foreign Office, is imprisoned after being falsely accused of spying. They are forced to leave their city home to move to "Three Chimneys", a house near a railway station in the country. Grove Park station opened in November 1871, when the surrounding area was nearly all farmland and was part of the new South Eastern Railway from Charing Cross to Tonbridge and the Kent coast. Edith Nesbit moved to Baring Road in 1894 and the Senior Officer for South Eastern Railway William Thomson, who lived on Chinbrook Road, to your right, may have been the inspiration for the character of the railway director in the book.



Grove Park station 1933

## 2 BARING HALL HOTEL PUBLIC HOUSE & BARING ROAD

On exiting the station you can see, across the road, the Grade II listed Baring Hall Hotel public house, built in 1882 to cater for the new and growing artistic suburb, its residents and travellers arriving at the station. (See stage 14 for more detail). The public house and Baring Road were named after one branch of the Baring family that once owned much of the land in the area. In the 18th century the Barings founded the Barings Bank that collapsed in 1995 following corrupt speculation.

Cross the road here and turn right along Baring Road past the shops and the bus garage until you reach St Augustine's Church on the left.



Baring Hall Hotel

## 3 ST AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH

St Augustine's Church was built in 1886 to satisfy community calls for a Church of England place of worship and it marked the arrival of Grove Park as a proper suburban community. The interior is far more striking than the exterior and there is an intricate and beautiful wooden reredos (screen) fashioned by Belgian woodcarvers. Outside of regular services, the church is normally open for public viewing between 10am and 12noon on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu assisted with services at the church in the early 1970s when he lived in Chinbrook Road. Famous visitors to the church have included the local MP Herbert Morrison who, as then Leader of the London County Council, is credited with creating both London's Green Belt protection and London Transport, the forerunner of Transport for London.

Continue for 100 yards until you reach Napier House on the right.

## 4 NAPIER HOUSE ARMY CENTRE

Grove Park played a significant role in both world wars. Napier House was completed in 1938 to house 600 men in two anti-aircraft searchlight units, the 329th and 330th, in the City of London Battalion. The biggest Territorial Army building in the country, it was opened just before the Second World War in 1939 by the Lord Mayor of London who was guided to Grove Park by 16 searchlights lighting up the night sky. In June 1940, the 330th was the first searchlight company to shoot down an enemy aircraft on British soil.

Continue for another 100 yards along Baring Road until you reach the Ringway Community Centre on the left.

## 5 THE RINGWAY CENTRE

In the 1970s, the Grove Park Residents Association, and other south London residents won a fierce battle to defeat plans by the Greater London Council to build the Ringway 2 Motorway. Ringway 2 would have cut a large swathe from Whitefoot Lane across the railway, destroying all the houses in Coopers Lane opposite and the library and green spaces as far as the Dutch House pub on the A20. Two houses that stood here were demolished, but the Grove Park Community Group took over the site, added the prefab buildings and named it the Ringway Centre – in much the same way that Waterloo Station and Trafalgar Square were named after victorious battles!



## 6 THE RAILWAY CHILDREN/EDITH NESBIT

In 1894 Edith Nesbit moved to a big house that stood on a site straddling what is now the Ringway Centre and Stratfield House flats. Her house overlooking the railway line was called Three Gables and in *The Railway Children* the name of the house the children and their mother lived in was called Three Chimneys which also overlooked the railway line. Edith Nesbit was friends with some of the greatest literary figures of the age including HG Wells and George Bernard Shaw. There's more information on the website: [www.thebaringtrust.com](http://www.thebaringtrust.com)



3 Gables designed by Ernest Newton

Exit left from the Ringway Centre and walk about 20 yards until you reach Railway Children Walk. Turn down here until you reach the entrance to the Nature Reserve on the right.

## 7 GROVE PARK NATURE RESERVE & EDITH NESBIT

This six-acre site was made the Grove Park Nature Reserve by Lewisham Council in 1984 and was once private gardens and then allotments until well after WWII. It contains various wildlife habitats of considerable conservation value, supporting a wide range of plants and animals, including a number of rare and endangered species. Walk on the path through the nature reserve to Railway Children Point overlooking the railway. Imagine Edith Nesbit looking out over the railway and the surrounding countryside seeking inspiration for her writing.

To continue the tour go back to the top of Railway Children Walk, turn right and then turn left down Coopers Lane, opposite the Ringway Centre.

## 8 PLAYING FIELDS AND W.G. GRACE

At the junction with Pragnell Road, stand here and look down Coopers Lane across the Library Gardens, past the health club and across the playing fields beyond to Eltham College. The world-famous cricketer W.G. Grace played his penultimate match here in 1914 on the eve of the Great War. He lived just across these fields in Mottingham Lane and legend has it that he died in 1915 during World War I following the stress of a nearby attack from a Zeppelin.

Turn right at the end of Coopers Lane then turn left past the library into Marvels Lane. 100 yards on the left is a former Workhouse.



Grove Park Workhouse

## 9 THE GROVE PARK WORKHOUSE & WORLD WAR I

Opened in 1902 and one of the last Workhouses ever to be built in this country, the Workhouse was originally intended for the poor of Greenwich and the designs were displayed at the 1900 Paris International Exhibition. The War Office commandeered it during WWI as a barracks and HQ for the Army Service Corps and over 250,000 men passed through the area. After the war it became a TB hospital; then, during WWII, a first aid post and auxiliary fire station; then a hospital again, before finally closing in 1993. The main block and gatehouses which you see today were later converted to housing. Grove Park also boasted an aerodrome during WWI, an Emergency Landing Ground for aeroplanes of the Royal Flying Corps located between Grove Park Station and the present-day Knight's Academy secondary school, to the south of Downham Way.

## 10 THE BAUHAUS-INSPIRED GROVE PARK YOUTH CLUB

Continue along Marvels Lane until you come to the junction with Chinbrook Road. Opposite you will see the 1966 Bauhaus-inspired, purpose-built, two-storey educational youth club. It was commissioned by the London County Council (LCC), as one of 14 youth clubs, following nationwide concern over the disaffection of youth, highlighted by The Albemarle Report presented to Parliament in 1960. The youth club was closed by the London Borough of Lewisham in 2013 but is being renovated and reopened by a widespread community campaign led by the Grove Park Youth Club Preservation Trust.

## 11 RIVER QUAGGY AND CHINBROOK MEADOWS

Turn right along Chinbrook Road and at the bottom, turn left into the riverside path following the River Quaggy into the green and spacious Chinbrook Meadows its marvellous colonnade of poplar trees to your left. It is easy to imagine Edith Nesbit being impressed by the steam locomotives surging along the elevated railway embankment to your right, now obscured by trees.

## 12 ELMSTEAD WOODS & GROVE PARK CEMETERY (OPTIONAL)

If you have an extra hour you can carry on through the park up to the top of the hill straight ahead along the narrow path by the railway to visit Elmstead Woods and the impressive Grade 2 listed Grove Park Cemetery. If the day is yours, you could take a picnic and enjoy the surroundings. Elmstead Woods has a wood sculpture park with magical woodland carvings by William Lee sculpted from entire standing trees, which fascinate children and adults alike. (NB: If you do not have enough time for this, you can continue straight to Stages 13 and 14.)

## 13 ARCHBISHOP TUTU PEACE GARDEN AND FINAL STAGE OF WALK

Follow the path along the Quaggy, keep right and turn right over the small footbridge crossing the river. Carry straight on until you reach the Tutu Peace Garden. Desmond Tutu, who lived in Chinbrook Road in the 1970s, was the first black Archbishop of Capetown, a Nobel Peace Laureate and a key figure in the fight against apartheid in South Africa. In front of the Tutu Peace garden is Amblecote Road. Turn left into Amblecote Road and follow it all the way up to the end. Turn left into Chinbrook Road and left again into Baring Road and along to Grove Park Station and the Baring Hall Hotel.

## 14 BARING HALL HOTEL

The Baring Hall Hotel is Grade II listed for its understated Queen Anne style and its significance as one of the first 'improved pubs', that is, providing food, lodging, meeting rooms – much more than your average booze-only, Victorian gin palace. Designed by award-winning architect Ernest Newton, it was commissioned by the social reformer and former Viceroy of India, Thomas Baring, aka Lord Northbrook. The pub has been saved from demolition several times thanks to years of campaigning by local residents and the Grove Park Community Group and now remains at the centre of Grove Park life. We hope you have time to enjoy a drink or a meal here.

We hope you enjoyed the Grove Park Heritage Trail. You can find more information at [www.thebaringtrust.com](http://www.thebaringtrust.com)