

A Walk Around Three Gardens in New Barnet and Barnet Vale



The three gardens (Incredible Edible Barnet Community Garden at St John's United Reformed Church, Highlands Gardens and Greenhill Gardens) are within a 10 minute walk of each other. Most of the walk is easily accessible but some parts of Highlands Gardens are less so.

Each of the gardens have different social histories and provide different habitats for nature. The first two were once part of the Lyonsdown Estate while Greenhill Gardens was part of the Greenhill Estate. Highlands Gardens and Greenhill Gardens are now council owned while Incredible Edible is on church owned land.

New Barnet and Barnet Vale emerged between 1850 and 1900 when the area was transformed from a countryside with grand houses, private estates and farmland into a place with shops, churches, pubs, a town hall, reservoir, gas and water company and a growing number of houses of different styles and sizes.

This period was reported to be a time when it was believed that there was more money to be made out of selling land for property development than there was to be made from farming.

The Lyonsdown Estate, which covered the area within what is now Potters Road, the Great North Road, Greenhill Park, Longmoor Avenue and Pymmes Brook, was sold in its entirety in 1849, to the Great Northern Railway Company who sold on the land they didn't need to the British Land Company. New Barnet Railway Station opened in 1850 and the combination of a railway link into London and homes to buy started to attract people to the area. By 1911, New Barnet was recognised in the census as a separate area with 6,535 residents. The 2021 census recorded Barnet Vale as having 16,869 residents and East Barnet 18,143.

Below we provide further information about the three gardens.

Incredible Edible Barnet (IEB) Community Garden



Founded in 2016 by Wendy Alcock, Incredible Edible Barnet was inspired by the philosophy of the Incredible Edible movement which connects local communities with their food by turning unused public spaces into thriving, accessible community gardens. Originally located behind the Prince of Wales Public House in East Barnet, IEB moved, in 2017, to St John's United Reformed Church, on the corner of Somerset and Mowbray Roads, to develop a community garden on the east side of the Church Hall. More recently the garden expanded into the northern part of the church land and is now home to a variety of animal habitats including bird boxes, bug hotels and small ponds and many different edible fruits and plants. The Church land also has trees with preservation orders.

IEB gardening sessions are held on alternate Saturday mornings from early spring through to late autumn. Occasional social events such as apple pressing, bean events and seed swaps are also organised. Small amounts of produce are provided to the Chipping Barnet Food Bank in Somerset Road. Recent Nature Sightings include: A variety of insects and snails. Plants include herbs, berries, salads and fruit trees.

St John's United Reformed Church



The history of the church goes back to 1870 when, following a petition to the London Presbytery of the United Presbyterian Church, plans were made to serve the growing local community. St Augustine's Presbyterian Church in Somerset Road New Barnet officially opened in 1875, with the Rev. George Drysdale serving as its first minister.

Other milestones include:

1880: New Barnet Congregational Church opened in Station Road, with its first minister Rev. George Twentyman.

1928: Construction of the Church Hall in what was then Plantagenet Road (now Mowbray Road).

1963: St Augustine's and New Barnet Congregational Church in Station Road agreed to join together as one church.

1967: The final service at the New Barnet Congregational Church took place on Easter Sunday. The site was sold for housing, and the proceeds were used to redevelop the St Augustine's site.

1969: The current building on the corner of Somerset and Mowbray Roads officially opened on May 3. It was built directly on the retained lower walls of the original St Augustine's Church.

1970: The distinct, angular modernist building, designed by church member Jon Finlayson ARIBA and noted by architectural historian Pevsner, won a prestigious Civic Trust Award.

1972: The unified congregation became part of the newly formed United Reformed Church (URC).

2017: The Reverend Julian Templeton offered to partner with Incredible Edible Barnet to establish a community garden at the church.

Highlands Gardens



Located close to the A1000 Great North Road, the main entrance to Highlands Gardens is at the junction of Abbotts Road and Leicester Road (there is another entrance on Prospect Road). The Gardens are open daily from dawn to dusk every day and are maintained by the London Borough of Barnet with help from the Friends of Highlands Gardens.

<https://www.highlandsgardens.org.uk/hg/>

GiGL records:

The GiGL (Greenspace Information for Greater London) database lists Highlands Gardens as formal garden of 0.98 hectares and describes it as “A very fine formal park, with a linear water feature of waterfalls and cascades, with a rockery planted to the sides. This lovely park is entranced via an old ‘Lynch’ Gate, and has rose beds, a Pergola and grass areas”.

History

Highlands House was built in 1897 for the stockbroker Joseph Bevan Braithwaite (1855-1934) on land that had probably been part of the Lyonsdown Estate. The house was south facing on high ground that overlooked Leicester Road. Braithwaite, who is thought to have designed the gardens we see today, was an amateur astronomer and he had a copper-domed observatory built at the house with a telescope on rails offering 360 degree views of the sky. During the Second World War, the dome was painted black in order to prevent it being visible to enemy aircraft in moonlight.

In 1930, George P. Howe bought the house and converted it to eight flats that he rented out. East Barnet Urban District Council purchased the gardens which consisted of mature trees, a lawn terrace with a pergola walk on the north side and water and rock features on the western side.

The public gardens were opened in 1931. An aviary by the name of the "Bird World Display Centre" existed on the northern edge of the gardens until the late 1990s.

Around 1951, the house became a family home again after Howe allowed his married children and his grandchildren to live there. By 1972 the house had deteriorated and it was demolished, eventually being replaced by a block of flats known as The Highlands.

The Braithwaite Family

According to our research Joseph Bevan Braithwaite was the grandson of Anna Lloyd, a prominent English Quaker minister. Anna was the granddaughter of Sampson Lloyd, co-founder of Lloyds Bank and niece of Rachel Lloyd who married David Barclay, a co-founder of Barclays Bank. Joseph had a sister, Rachel Barclay Braithwaite.

Many of the people involved in the development of the banking sector were Quakers who, in the 18th and 19th centuries, had strict regulations forbidding marrying non-members and so during the period many marriages were made between different prominent Quakers including some in the Barclay, Bevan, Braithwaite and Lloyd families.

Joseph's middle name reflected ties to the Bevan family who were involved in establishing Barclays Bank. In about 1836 David Bevan purchased the Trent Park Estate as a wedding gift for his son Robert Cooper Lee Bevan on his marriage to Lady Agneta Yorke. In 1838, Robert Bevan financed the building of Christ's Church Cockfosters to provide a suitable place of worship for the district.

Greenhill Gardens



Greenhill Gardens (Greenhill Park, EN5 1AU) is located between the A1000 Pricklers Hill and Greenhill Park Road. The park can be accessed via gates on both roads.

GiGL records:

GiGL lists Greenhill Gardens as a 1.64-hectare public park managed by the London Borough of Barnet and describes it as “a peaceful and pleasant green space adjacent to the busy A1000. Includes many fine trees and one of the best lakes in Barnet”.

It is the remnant of a larger country estate, noted for its fine trees and its large, ornamental lake with a wooded island which is fringed with alder and willow trees. The lake actively supports mallards, mute swans, coots, and moorhens. Siskins (a type of Finch) have also been recorded feeding on alder seeds during the winter. Pipistrelle and noctule bats have been observed foraging overhead. Recent Nature Sightings include Canada Geese, Coots, Grey Heron, Mallards, Moorhen, Pond Turtles, European Peacock Butterfly, Conifers, Horse Chestnut Trees.

History

The following information is based on A History of Greenhill Gardens by Jeff Gale published by the Barnet Museum, and additional research.

What is now Greenhill Gardens was originally part of the Greenhill estate, which in turn was once part of the larger "Pricklers" country estate named after a medieval family called “Prittle” or “Prittle”. In 1558, the Pricklers Estate was sold by the Crown and over the next 300 plus years had a number of different owners.

In 1858 Emma Pedley married Frederick Hasluck in Shoreditch. Their son Lancelot Gerald Hasluck, who was born in 1861 and baptised at Jesus Church Forty Hill Enfield, went on to found the Lancelot Hasluck Trust East Barnet Housing Charity. Frederick Hasluck died in 1877, a year after the family moved into Greenhill Park.

In 1878, an announcement in the Barnet Press relates that Emma remarried: *November 21, at Finchley Congregational Church, by the Rev. Thomas Hill, The Rev. George Twentyman, M.A., B.D, to Emma, youngest daughter of the late Samuel Pedley, Esq. of Stratford, and widow of Frederick Hasluck, Esq. of Greenhill Park Barnet.*

The 1881 census shows them living in Greenhill Park with the three children from Emma’s first marriage.

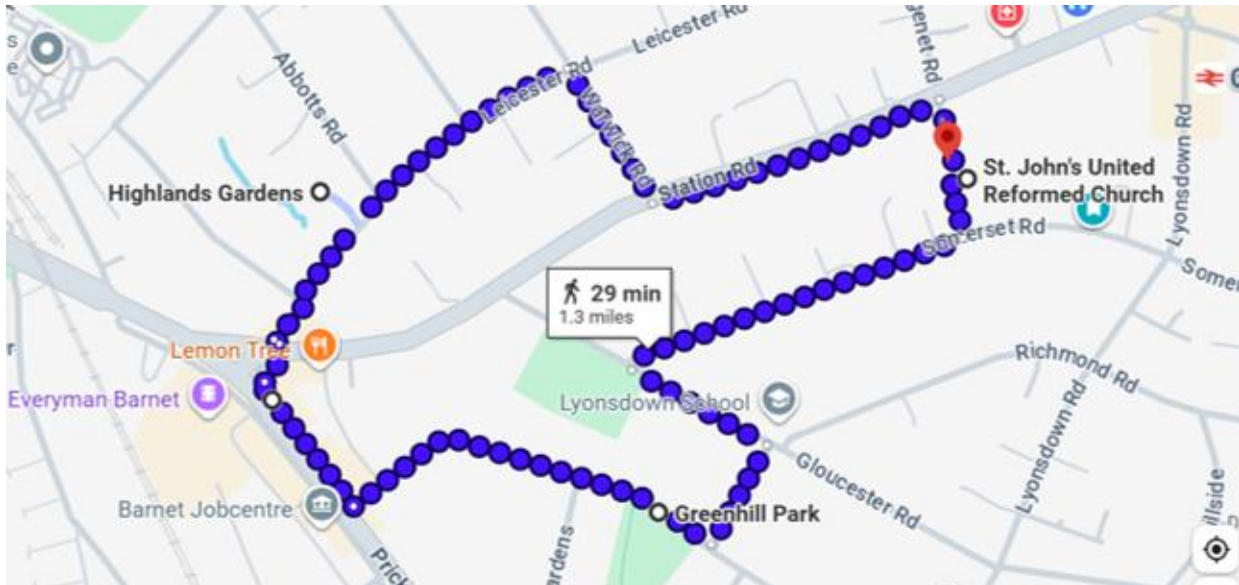
George Twentyman was born in 1840 in Cumberland and the 1871 census shows him to be a boarder at a house in East Barnet Road. The New Barnet Congregational Church had been founded in 1870 with the Reverend George Twentyman as its first minister. The Church building, on the corner of the north side of Station Road and Plantagent Road, was opened in April 1880. In 1911 he was recorded as being a retired Congregational minister still living at Greenhill Park. He died the next year in 1912.

After Emma died in 1926, Greenhill Park was put up for auction. At an informal meeting it was proposed that East Barnet Council should be “urged to take every step necessary to secure Greenhill Park for the benefit of the inhabitants of the East Barnet Valley district”.

The development of the area was of interest to private developers and a matter of debate for existing residents. In 1924, the lake area of what became Greenhill Gardens had been scheduled for social use by the council, but other parts of the estate were not protected from development. By 1929, plots were being sold as individual building sites to local builders and by 1935 houses and flats had been built and a transport café (that became the Hole in the Wall) had been established on Pricklers Hill.

In 1949, due to significantly increased traffic on the Great North Road, the café owner proposed development of a new café and car park on the site of the lake which had been neglected by the council and was described as being “an eyesore and a breeding ground for pests”. Planning permission was refused and in 1951 the council approved acquisition of the Greenhill Park lake and three surrounding acres of land. In 1953 the park featured in an article in the Barnet Press which highlighted “the atmosphere of peace and tranquillity that can be enjoyed in “Greenhill Park”.

Walk Directions



Starting at St. John's United Reformed Church/Incredible Edible Barnet

Walk 1. To Highlands Gardens via Mowbray Rd, Station Rd, Warwick Rd and Leicester Rd

Walk 2. To Greenhill Gardens via Great North Rd and Greenhill Park

Walk 3. To Incredible Edible Barnet via Greenhill Park, Richmond Rd, Gloucester Rd, Somerset Rd and Mowbray Rd

Barnet Green Spaces

The London Borough of Barnet, on the northern outskirts of London, is mainly residential, but it has large areas of green space and farmland. The spread of suburban development into the countryside was halted by the designation of a statutory Green Belt around London after the Second World War, and almost one third of Barnet's area of 8,663 hectares (21,410 acres) is Green Belt.

Most of Barnet lies over London Clay, which is poor for agriculture, and open land is mainly used for activities such as horse grazing, playing fields, parks and golf courses. Features of the traditional agricultural landscape have survived, such as old hedgerows, ancient trees and areas of herb-rich grassland. Some hay meadows have a large diversity of wild flowers, and the London Ecology Unit (LEU)[a] described them as one of Barnet's most important ecological assets.

Barnet has large areas with designations intended to protect them from "inappropriate development", and to "provide the strongest protection for the preservation of Barnet's green and natural open spaces". As well as 2,466 hectares (6,090 acres) of Green Belt, Barnet has another 690 hectares (1,700 acres) of Metropolitan Open Land, which receive a similar level of protection. Watling Chase Community Forest covers 72 square miles (190 km²), extending north and west from Totteridge into south Hertfordshire.

Highlands House



Greenhill Park

