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## Great Bus Journeys of the World No 26

Mike Roden takes the number 13 from Victoria to North Finchley



Early January, waiting at a crowded bus stop on Grosvenor Gardens near Victoria Station. The Scots have a word for the kind of weather that's hanging over London. It's dreich: oppressively damp, cold, dreary and misty. Thankfully the number 13 bus rolls up straight away, and I install myself on the upper deck. Soon we're heading past Jagger's magnificent Artillery Memorial and round Hyde Park Corner.

The statue of Achilles watches us as the bus turns up Park Lane. Unveiled on the seventh anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, this was commissioned by 'the Ladies of England', in honour of the Duke of Wellington. The fig leaf arrived soon afterwards to calm public outrage at the naked statue.

### Luxury

Park Lane – once a simple country road – eventually became one of the most fashionable roads in London. Notable early residents included the 1st Duke of Westminster, the Dukes of Somerset and Disraeli. Many of their houses are now the site of luxury hotels, like the Earl of Dorchester's place we're passing now. The Dorchester is one of the world's most prestigious and expensive hotels. It opened on 18 April 1931, and it still retains its 1930 Art Deco style despite extensive modernisation. It's currently owned by the Sultan of Brunei.

Over to our right is the Animals in War Memorial designed by David Backhouse which was unveiled by Princess Anne in November 2004, on the 90th anniversary of the start of World War 1.

We're near the place where the Tyburn gallows hosted public executions for four hundred years until 1793. You can't miss Marble



Arch of course. In 1827 John Nash's intention was that this would be the state entrance to Buckingham Palace. It's never seemed completely at ease here since it arrived in 1851.

Passing Marble Arch Station the bus stops on Oxford Street outside Primark. When the store arrived here in April 2007, shoppers fought to be the first inside after false rumours of a sale. It is much quieter today. The bus turns left up Orchard Street alongside Selfridge's Food Hall and we're soon on Baker Street. The Wallace Collection isn't far from here, just turn right along Robert Adam Street to find it.

I wonder how many Prêt à Manger customers notice the blue plaque on the wall above the shop reminding them that William Pitt the Younger lived in the building from 1803 – 4. Just after we've crossed the busy Marylebone Road, there's another plaque outside the door of Chiltern Court telling the world that Eric Coates lived there for nine years from 1930. He was of course the man who gave us the stirring Dambusters March and the soporific By the Sleepy Lagoon which has introduced Desert Island Discs since 1942.

### 221B

The highlight of many a tourist's visit to Baker Street appears on our left as we near Regents Park. Since 1990 this once unassuming Georgian town house has been the privately-run Sherlock Holmes Museum. In homage to the stories and by permission of Westminster council it bears the number 221B although it lies between numbers 237 and 241. It'll cost you £15 to take a look inside.

The bus forges onward onto Park Road alongside Regents Park. Like most of the other royal parks this



was part of the vast area of land appropriated by Henry VIII. John Nash – friend of the Prince Regent – was largely responsible for the layout and design of the park, pretty much as we know it today. The great British public wasn't allowed access until 1835, and then only for two days a week.

### Dome

We pass the London Business School, founded in 1964.

Further along Park Road is the London Central Mosque with its prominent golden dome. It was completed in 1977. The main hall can accommodate over 5,000 worshippers.

And now begins the long journey along Finchley Road. We're at the posh end here in St John's Wood. In the thirteenth century the area was farmland belonging to St John's Priory in Clerkenwell. During the Reformation the land was sold off to wealthy noblemen.

Lord's Cricket Ground is named after its founder, Thomas Lord. Originally situated just north of Marylebone Road the ground moved here in its permanent home in 1814. Among a great many claims to fame it is also the home of the world's oldest sporting museum.

Now we see St John's Wood Station which opened in 1939. A plaque on a nearby wall proclaims (a little unspecifically) that the poet Thomas Hood (1799 – 1845) 'lived and died here'. One of his best known poems 'The Song of the Shirt' appeared in Punch in 1843, and depicts the downtrodden drudgery of the life of a seamstress.

Swiss Cottage may take its name from an inn which in 1804 was built on the site of a former tollgate

Left to right: The Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane; William Pitt the Younger; the London Central Mosque, Park Road; Sigmund Freud; artsdepot, Finchley



keeper's cottage in the style of a Swiss chalet. The bus stops just beyond the underground station of the same name. We're on the edge of South Hampstead, with the Central College of Speech and Drama very close by. This was founded by Elsie Fogerty in 1906. Nearby is the Hampstead Theatre, known for its commissioning of new work.

Finchley Road underground station is only a few minutes walk from the house where Sigmund Freud and his daughter came when they escaped from the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938. He spent the last year of his life here. Anna remained there until her death in 1982. She bequeathed the house to become a memorial to her father and it opened as a museum in 1986. The Freuds were permitted to bring all their belongs when they left Austria and at the heart of the museum is Freud's study and his famous couch.

The home of Camden Arts Centre which we pass soon afterwards was originally Hampstead Central Library which opened in 1897 but was replaced by a modern building elsewhere in Swiss Cottage. The Arts Centre took over in 1965 and became a community art college and gallery.

### Uyghurs

We're heading up Childs Hill towards Golders Green. I'd been reading very recently about the detention by the Chinese government of a million Muslims in the north west of the country. Most of these are from the Turkic speaking community of Uyghur people in Xiang province. There are only around 200 Uyghurs living in Britain so it's something of a surprise to see Etles Uyghur restaurant here in South Finchley. The owners of this recently opened venue are Mukaddes

Note: All of the Great Bus Journeys have been cleverly extracted from *Battersea Matters* and can be downloaded from [www.batterseabus.co.uk](http://www.batterseabus.co.uk)



Yadikar and her husband Ablikum Rahman who have lived for many years in this country and already have a restaurant in Walthamstow. The menu covers a range of traditional Uyghur dishes, notably 'big plate chicken' — prepared with fresh hand-pulled noodles, chicken pieces, vegetables and a rich, aromatic gravy. If that's made your mouth water, you know how to get there.

After another ten minutes or so of looking out at nothing but small shops, houses and flats I spot a solid looking war memorial with a four-faced clock tower on top. This was dedicated in 1923 and tells me we're now in Golders Green. I last came this way on the 328 bus from Worlds End in Chelsea, when Golders Green underground station was journey's end for me. This time I carry on along the seemingly endless Finchley Road.

Like most of the towns on the fringes of north London this is essentially a late Victorian suburban development. The large Jewish community took root here after Hitler's rise to power, and by the 1950s the Jewish population had more than doubled. Hoop Lane to the right leads down to Golders Green Crematorium – the long list of famous cremations includes Kingsley Amis, Joyce Grenfell, Irene Handl, Doris Lessing, Peter Sellers and Eric Coates whose blue plaque we saw earlier.

A few minutes later we're in the area known as Temple Fortune. The name probably derives from the Knights Templar who owned land in the area. The arrival of Finchley Road resulted in the usual 19th century development of the area. Since the early twentieth century this has been used as a shopping area by those living in the nearby Hampstead Garden suburb.

We're soon crossing the busy North Circular, and passing over the Dollis Valley Greenwalk, a 10 mile long footpath which mainly follows Dollis Brook and is designed to act as a link between the Capital Ring and the London Loop.

At Allandale Road the bus stops near College Farm. Originally called Sheephouse Farm this was purchased by Express Dairies and run as a model dairy farm. Since then it has had a rather chequered career. Things started to go downhill in January 1898 when the head cowman was shot dead. Despite the arrival of Chief Inspector Harry Moore from Scotland Yard, his investigation here was no more successful than his attempts to track down Jack the Ripper, and Thomas Webb's murder remains unsolved. Over the years much of the land was sold off and the farm became a visitor centre. This had to close in 2001 because of the foot and mouth outbreak and has never re-opened.

Onwards we go along the never-ending Finchley Road, into Church End and past Finchley Central Station. Victoria Park is a popular local amenity with ornamental gardens, playgrounds and a café. Opened in 1902 it was created on the site of Colby's Farm where Charles Dickens was staying when he wrote part of *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

After another ten minutes passing through a mainly residential area, shops begin to appear and the bus arrives at North Finchley Bus station and journey's end. A short walk takes me to the artsdepot (the name looks odd but that's the way they like to write it!). This opened in 2004 and among other things incorporates two theatres and drama, dance and art studios, along with a café and bar. The place is full of enthusiastic and rather noisy dance students, but the excellent coffee and a muffin restore me to life, and I stroll briskly downhill to West Finchley station and thence via the Northern Line to Euston, and onwards to Victoria and home on the 170. And just in case you're wondering the weather was still as dreich as ever.

*london.eater.com/  
2018/2/22/17039556/etles-london-  
first-authentic-uyghur-restaurant*