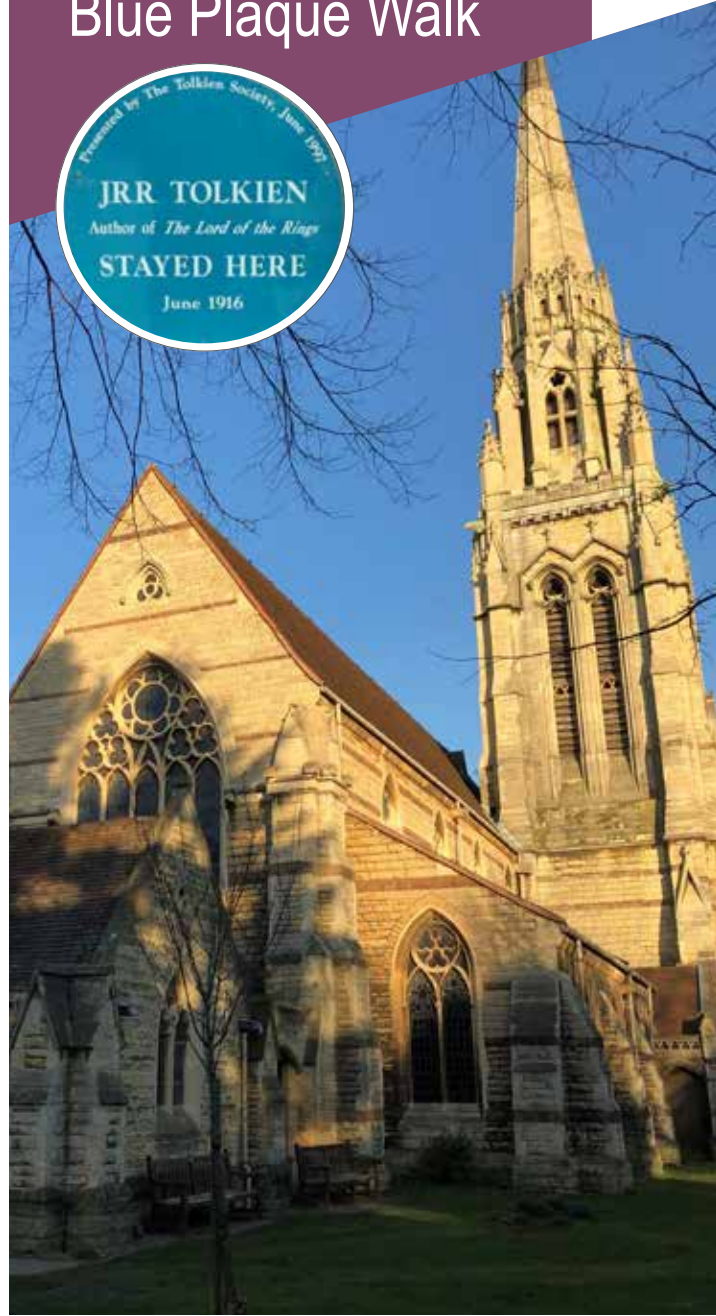


# North Edgbaston Blue Plaque Walk



## In brief

## Walking distance

3.5 miles / 5.6 km

## Category

Easy

Places to eat, drink and relax in Edgbaston: [www.edgbastonvillage.co.uk](http://www.edgbastonvillage.co.uk)

Walk available through the 'Walk Run Cycle' app: [www.walkruncycle.com/birmingham-edgbaston-walk](http://www.walkruncycle.com/birmingham-edgbaston-walk)



## How to get there

Edgbaston is an elegant leafy suburb just one mile west of Birmingham city centre.

## Public Transport

### From City

By bus - using Hagley Road towards Quinton or buses to Harborne.

By train - from New Street travel to Five Ways station.

For more information visit: [www.networkwestmidlands.com](http://www.networkwestmidlands.com)

## By car

Edgbaston Village is easily accessible by car. Car parking is available at pay and display car parks, and there is limited free on-street car parking.

## Walk or Cycle

It is easy to walk and cycle to. Within the Edgbaston Village there are a number of cycle stands.

## North Edgbaston Blue Plaque Walk



Walk developed by Heritage Volunteers from The Arts Society Birmingham Evening and sponsored by Calthorpe Residents' Society and Calthorpe Estates, plus supported by the Local Innovation Fund.



[www.tasbe.org](http://www.tasbe.org)

[www.calthorperesidents.org](http://www.calthorperesidents.org)

[www.calthorpe.co.uk](http://www.calthorpe.co.uk)

April 2019



Edgbaston Village has a wide range of places to eat, drink and relax



Here are some of the places you will see on the walk



Sir Henry Gough Calthorpe - created 1st Baron Calthorpe 1796



Edgbaston Hall, the church and enclosed Edgbaston Park in 1730

Birmingham Botanical and Horticultural Society obtained a lease on land off Westbourne Road and ten acres of the Botanical Gardens were first opened to the shareholders of the Society in 1832.

From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the migration of wealthy manufacturers from the leafy suburb ousted the tenant farmers and allowed the building of large elegant houses on tree-lined streets. No trade or manufacturing was allowed on the estate. However, concessions were occasionally made during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, e.g. for the Royal Institute for the Blind, the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, the Orotory and its school, and land for the Warwickshire County Cricket Club.

Celbdestone in the Domesday book of 1086 is thought to refer to Edgbaston and depicts it as an area of cultivated land of about 250 acres. Edgbaston Church dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and Edgbaston Hall, the manor house, now Edgbaston Golf Club, somewhat later. During the English Civil War, when Edgbaston Hall was the seat of Robert Middlemore, a Roman Catholic and Royalist, Parliamentary troops extensively damaged the church and took over the Hall, which was eventually destroyed. In 1717, the Middlemore line having been extinguished, the lordship of Edgbaston was purchased by Sir Richard Gough. During 10 years at Edgbaston he rebuilt both the Hall and the church. The Hall was tenanted in 1796 by William Withering who became a member of the Lunar Society, a group of eminent men such as James Watt, Joseph Priestley and Matthew Boulton. They were feared by the common people and when celebrating the 2nd anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, were attacked by a mob. The Hall was threatened but successfully defended and the arrival of military support from Birmingham ended the riot. The Goughs married into the Calthorpe family and the Calthorpe Estate continues to dominate Edgbaston to this day, many roads being named after family members.

## A brief history of Edgbaston



# North Edgbaston

## The route

The walk begins on the Hagley Road just off the Five Ways roundabout. As you walk around look for the blue plaques at the locations indicated on the sketch map at the bottom of this page.

Start on Hagley Road the side opposite Morrison's store. From here walk away from Five Ways to Plough & Harrow (plaque 2 at entrance to hotel). For the third Tolkein plaque, cross Hagley Road into Highfield Road and house number 4 is on the right hand side.

**N1, 2 and 4 JRR TOLKEIN (1892 -1973)**  
 - N1 91 Duchess Place/91 Hagley Road (demolished 2019)  
 - N2 Plough & Harrow Hotel, 135 Hagley Road  
 - N4 4 Highfield Road

John Ronald Ruel Tolkein was born in South Africa where his father was managing an English bank. His paternal ancestors had fled Germany in the 18<sup>th</sup> century but the family was very English. Aged 3, while he was visiting England with his mother, his father died and so he went to live with his maternal grandparents in Kings Heath, Birmingham. They later moved to Sarehole, then a Worcestershire village, now in Hall Green where a blue plaque adorns his former home, Sarehole Mill. The marshy area around here features often in his writings as do some of the buildings around his next home in Edgbaston.

Despite her Protestant background, his mother turned to Roman Catholicism and when she died from diabetes aged 34, she left Tolkein and his younger brother under the guardianship of 'Father Francis' (Morgan) at the Oratory. Tolkein was educated at King Edward's School Birmingham and for a short time at St. Philip's. His poor performance in exams was blamed by Father Francis on his infatuation with Edith Bratt who lived in the boarding house in Duchess Road where the boys were staying. A plaque on number 4 Highfield Road (N4) suggests that he moved here for a year immediately following this episode. In spite of his guardian's disapproval, but obeying instructions not to see her again until he was 21, he remained true to Edith, who was 3 years older than he, and eventually married her in 1916. They stayed at the Plough & Harrow Hotel (N2) in June that year before he left to join the war effort. He had deferred enlisting until he had finished his degree at Oxford, where he graduated in 1915 with first class honours in English, but was now called to face action on the Somme. In the second world war, he was recruited as a codebreaker.

Between the wars Tolkein enjoyed academic life at the University of Leeds and then at Oxford where he found time to start writing the fantasy novels for which he is famous. 'The Hobbit' was published in 1937, but 'The Lord of the Rings', which he began as its sequel in 1938, was not completed until 1950 and not published until 1954.

Retrace your steps to Hagley Road and cross back again. A short distance further west is the Oratory.

**N3 Cardinal JOHN HENRY NEWMAN (1801 - 1890)**  
 - The Oratory, Hagley Road

John Henry Newman was a poet and theologian, and an important and controversial figure in the religious history of England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Originally an evangelical Oxford University academic and Church of England priest, he became leader of the Oxford Movement, a group of intellectual Anglicans who wished the church to return to some of the Catholic rituals and beliefs from before the reformation. He and some of his followers eventually turned to and were accepted into the Catholic Church. Newman then left Oxford and was ordained as a priest in Rome. He returned to England as an Oratorian\* and finally settled in Edgbaston where he lived for nearly 40 years founding in 1859 the Oratory School, dubbed the Catholic Eton. Newman was also a literary figure of note. He penned several theological works, but also wrote poetry including 'The Dream of Gerontius' and popular hymns such as 'Lead Kindly Light' and 'Praise to the Holiest in the Height'. Pope Leo XIII created him Cardinal in 1879. Newman accepted the gesture as a vindication of his work, but made two requests: that he not be consecrated a bishop on receiving the cardinalate, as was usual at that time; and that he might remain in Birmingham. He was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010.

\*Oratorians commit themselves to membership of a particular, independent, self-governing local community without actually taking vows, an unusual and innovative arrangement created by St. Philip. In order to be founded, an oratory must normally have a minimum of four members, two being ordained.

Continue walking west to cross Monument Road. There are some cafes and restaurants on this stretch. Cross the main road again at the lights and continue west on the left side of Hagley Road. Number 146 is now an office block and the plaque is missing.

**N5 Sir ROWLAND HILL (1795 - 1879)**  
 - 146 Hagley Road (plaque missing)

Sir Rowland Hill, English teacher, inventor and social reformer, was born in Kidderminster and is best known for the introduction of the postage stamp. He campaigned for a comprehensive reform of the postal system, based on the concept of Uniform Penny Post, and his solution of prepayment, facilitating the safe, speedy and cheap transfer of letters, was to have world-wide benefits for personal and commercial correspondence. The Penny Black stamp appeared in 1840 to coincide with the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday of Queen Victoria.

Previously he was influential in educational reform. His progressive ideas on liberal and scientific teaching were widely admired and numerous educational reformers adopted his methods. He taught at his father's school and established Hazelwood School here at 146 Hagley Road. Unfortunately the blue plaque commemorating the school and Hill's time here, has been missing for some years.

He lived on this site from 1819 to 1827 before moving to London as headmaster of a school in Tottenham carrying on the principles of Hazelwood.

Continue to Rotten Park Road to cross Hagley Road once more. Turn right into Manor Road. Number 6 is on the right and the plaque is by doorway 18.

**N6 Sir GILBERT BARLING (1855 - 1940)**  
 - 6 Manor Road

Birmingham Civic Society's first chairman, Gilbert Barling lived in this house for 15 years up to the time of his death. He was born at Newnham on Severn, Gloucestershire and educated at a boarding school at Weston, near Bath. He matriculated from Queen's College Birmingham in 1885 and went to St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London to study medicine. He became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1881. He was appointed resident pathologist at the General Hospital Birmingham and in 1885 become Professor of Pathology. In 1904 he was appointed Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the newly formed University of Birmingham and progressed to Vice-Chancellor from 1913 to 1933. His association with the General Hospital continued throughout his career and he became its President in 1925.

Distinguished War service earned him the CB (Military) in 1917, CBE in 1919 and also a Baronetcy. In 1936, in recognition of his wide-reaching work for the Hospital, the University and other public service, Barling was presented with the Birmingham Civic Society's Gold Medal.

A short distance around the corner to the right is picturesque St. Augustine's Church which has additional information on Barling.

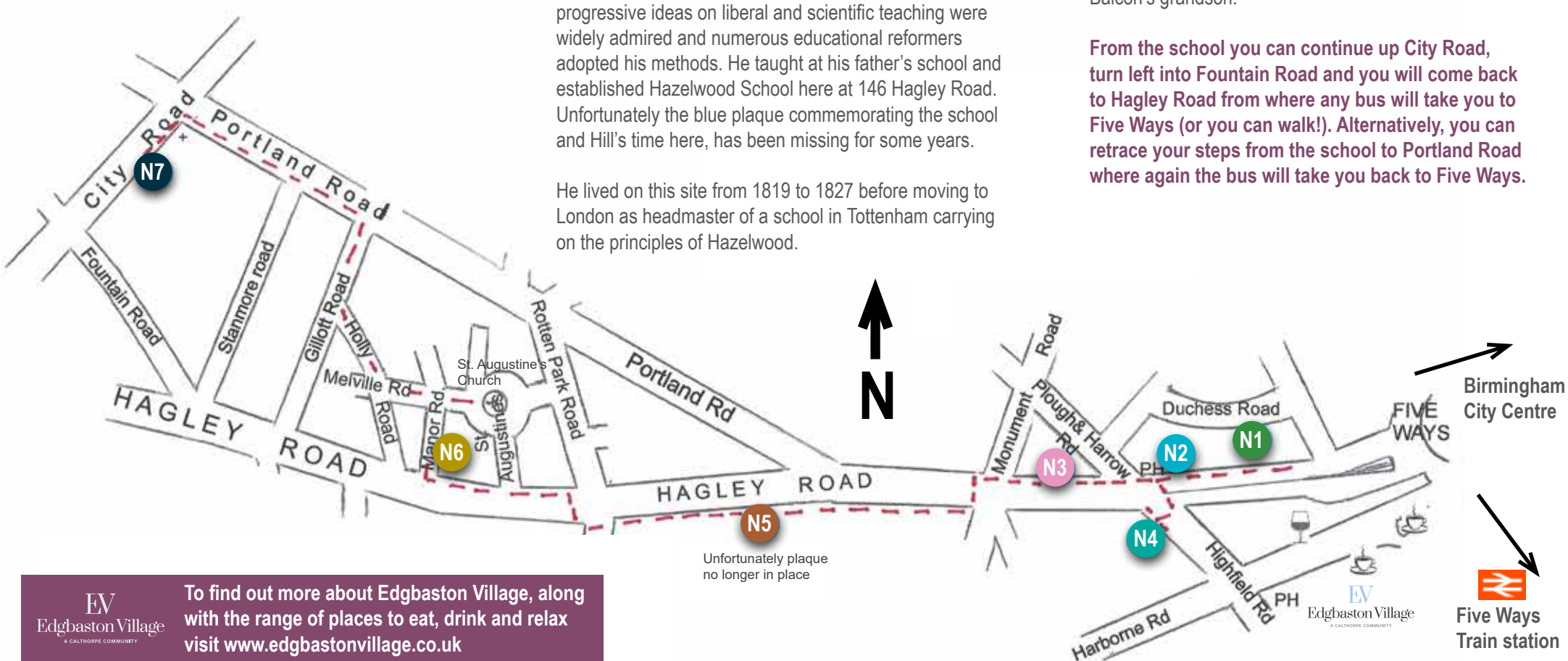
Follow the map from here, walking west on Melville Road, turn right into Holly Road, right on Gillot Road, left into Portland Road and finally left into City Road.

**N7 Sir MICHAEL BALCON (1886-1977)**  
 - George Dixon School, City Road

Born in Birmingham of Jewish parents, Balcon won a scholarship to George Dixon School in 1907 but had to leave in 1913 owing to family finances. He was initially apprenticed to a jeweller, but poor eyesight curtailed this career and also exempted him from active service in the First World War. Instead, he joined the Dunlop Rubber Company in Aston and worked his way up to being PA to the Managing Director. In 1921, invited by a friend to join him in film distribution, Balcon moved to London and started on the path which helped make the British film industry great. He founded the Ealing Studios in London, famous for the Ealing comedies of the 40's and 50's, among them such classics as 'The Lavender Hill Mob' and 'Whisky Galore'. Another blue plaque to Michael Balcon exists on the site of the Ealing Studios today.

In 1950, when working on 'The Blue Lamp', Balcon changed the name of the main character to that of his old school's founder, George Dixon. This film was the pre-cursor of the highly successful TV series 'Dixon of Dock Green'. The acclaimed actor Daniel Day Lewis is Balcon's grandson.

From the school you can continue up City Road, turn left into Fountain Road and you will come back to Hagley Road from where any bus will take you to Five Ways (or you can walk!). Alternatively, you can retrace your steps from the school to Portland Road where again the bus will take you back to Five Ways.



EV Edgbaston Village  
 To find out more about Edgbaston Village, along with the range of places to eat, drink and relax visit [www.edgbastonvillage.co.uk](http://www.edgbastonvillage.co.uk)