As part of its 140th anniversary celebrations in 2000, the Plymouth and West Devon Co-operative Society, working with Plymouth City Council, created the Co-operative Way. The Co-operative Way is a gift to the City of Plymouth and is a fully way marked route which will take you into areas of the city you never knew existed.

This 15 mile circular walking route takes you around most of the north of the city, through areas full of unexpected wildlife and past history you can touch. You will follow streamside paths in nature reserves, spot rare wild flowers and unusual city dwellers and walk the carriageway where Charles I rode to take the salute from his army.

As well as passing through the forgotten estates of some of Plymouth’s former great houses, you’ll gather stories of working communities which have developed hand in hand with the history of the city.

The South West Coast Path national trail has brought thousands of walkers to enjoy its rich history and stunning views but we hope you find the Co-operative Way, the hinterland’s compelling retort, equally fascinating - there’s more nature too!
A guide to finding your way along Plymouth’s Co-operative Way.

Covering 15 miles of varied terrain from busy urban streets to quiet isolated woodland, the Co-operative Way is probably going to take you to areas of the city you have never been before. To help you find your way we have way-marked the route. Look out for the black fingerpost signs and waymark posts in woodlands and parks and Co-operative Way stickers on lamp-posts in the urban areas along the route to make sure you don’t get lost.

KEY

- Co-operative Way
- Detour
- Start and finish points
- Points of interest
- Outstanding views

A 15 mile discovery walk through Plymouth’s natural history and forgotten heritage.
The Co-operative Society

As a worker in Plymouth in the 1850s you would have had a rough time. Your children would not have been entitled to education or healthcare and there was no state benefit - unemployment meant beg or starve. Shopkeepers' scales were weighted against you, and as well as short measures you were sold watered down milk, old meat, coal that wouldn't burn properly and the quarter ounce of tobacco for your pipe might have been adulterated with dried weeds.

In the beginning

Ten Plymouth tradesmen had had enough. In December 1859 six shoemakers, two carpenters, a painter and a stonemason met in a room to the rear of 14 Tin Street (now part of Vauxhall Street) which was the home of shoemaker, Charles Goodanew. They were inspired by the history of the first Co-operative, formed in Rochdale in 1844, which laid down a set of principles which still underpin the Co-op movement today; democratic control; one person one vote; sharing of profits based on purchases; sound working conditions; membership education.

The first steps

By January 1860 the group had grown to 18 and by February, there was enough money in the kitty to start a business. They rented a room at 15 Catte Street, borrowed a set of scales and a measuring jug and spent 2 pounds and 10 shillings on groceries from the wholesale market. The members sold the stock back to themselves bit by bit, banking a little profit in the process. They would tot up the profits quarterly, put a little away in a back-up fund, set some aside for education and divide the rest between themselves. This dividend was calculated based on how much each member had bought from the Co-operative. The more you spent the more you saved.

Growing

The Co-operative way of doing business obviously struck the right chord as the Co-op expanded to include a butchery, a bakery, a dairy and even fuel, mortgages and clothing. In fact, it was so successful that in 1894 an enormous city centre store was opened. Occupying the corner of Frankfort Street and Courtenay Street the building, designed by H. Snell, was an impressive sight. The building included street-level retail outlets with offices and storage space above and a meeting hall capable of holding meetings of the society. Sadly, on 21 March 1941, the first night of the Plymouth Blitz, the building was totally destroyed.
Central Park

In the early 1920s the fields around Pennycomequick were used to stage events such as Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Rodeo Show and the Bath and West Agricultural Show.

1 Home Park History

Plymouth Argyle was first formed in the 1880’s but having no home ground, always played away. After a short period at a site at Marsh Mills the club relocated in 1901 to the old grounds of Devonport Albion Rugby Club at Home Park and in 1903, with the backing of a local businessman Clarence Spooner, turned professional. Argyle played its first home game as a professional team against Northampton town winning 2-0 in front of a crowd of 4,400. Home Park was gradually taking shape and by the 1930s had concrete terracing, player changing rooms and a roof at one end. The Second World War however soon put a stop to this, destroying the grounds during the Plymouth Blitz in 1941. A new two tier stand was built in 1952 with various changes made over the years but by the 1970s Home Park had a 40,000 capacity.

Home Park Today

Home Park has been the permanent residence of Plymouth Argyle since 1903. Before that it hosted more gruesome pastimes. In the 1830’s Home Park was a form of raised enclosure used to host bull baiting, a practise where bulls were staked to the ground on a length of rope and ‘baited’ by specially-trained dogs, with the aim of immobilising the bull. This was not only for entertainment but also a legal requirement as bulls had to be baited before they could be slaughtered for meat. This practise was, thankfully, outlawed in 1835. In more recent times non-sporting uses have extended to include concerts, with the grounds hosting such names as Westlife, Elton John and Rod Stewart.

2 Life Centre

The £46.5 million Plymouth Life Centre sees Plymouth’s largest ever single investment in leisure facilities. Opened in March 2012 the Life Centre is operated in partnership with the Council and underlines the city’s commitment to encouraging healthy lifestyles and attracting more people into sport. The aquatic facilities are the largest of their kind in southern England and were used by a number of international swimming and diving teams in preparation for the London Olympics in 2012. The centre has the only 10-lane, 50-metre competition pool in the South West and one of the best diving pools in the country. The Life Centre was the training grounds of Plymouth residents, Tom Daley and Tonia Crouch whose diving successes enthralled the nation during the London 2012 Olympic Games.
Central Park History

It was here that the area which became Plymouth’s Central Park set its roots. In June 1925 the Council announced its plans to establish a park in this area and it promptly set out to purchase the required parcels of land which comprised largely of farm fields. Whilst the land was being acquired, the Council commissioned landscape architect Mr. Reuben Mawson to produce a plan for the park.

This plan included a boating lake, a 50-metre swimming pool, several play parks, fields for sports such as football and rugby, a large tennis facility, bowling greens and an athletics track. The more ambitious aspects of the plan included a botanical gardens intended to keep the city stocked with fresh flowers and an aviary. The final parcel of land was purchased in 1929 and thus the full 241 acres of Central Park was set out. The park was formally open to the public by the Mayor Mr. Clifford Tozer on 29 July 1931. Whilst much of the Central Park plan was implemented, the work was interrupted by the Second World War and so the botanical gardens, boating lakes and athletics track were never built. Today the park covers 232 acres and is held by the city as a strategically important environmental asset.

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Plymouth Zoo

The field behind Home Park was once the home to Plymouth Zoo. Opened in April 1962, the zoo was immediately popular with local people, attracting huge visitor numbers in its early years. The zoo was backed by the famous Chipperfield circus family, with Jimmy Chipperfield sitting as a director. Given its location the zoo was home to a surprising variety of animals including Lions, Tigers, Elephants, Giraffes, Puma’s and Hippopotamuses. Locals might also remember Percy the Pelican who was given free reign around the zoo and would regularly lead visitors around the site. Sadly falling visitor numbers eventually forced the closure of the zoo which gradually scaled down before closing to visitors in 1978. The animals were sent to various sites around the country and only the bird houses were retained, being incorporated into a skate park by the early 1980’s. Today there is very little to show of the zoo’s physical existence which no doubt helped produce many happy childhood memories. The site is still referred to as Zoo Field locally.
Beacon Park to Ham Woods

1. **The View from the Bridge**

As you cross the bridge over Outland Road you will see the impressive façade of Devonport High School for Girls which was built in 1937. Turning your back to the school and looking right, following the line of the road to the horizon, you will see Cornwall with the tower of Maker church clearly visible. Panning to the left across Home Park and the Life Centre you will see the Naval War Memorial on the Hoe, the Civic Centre and the green roof of the Plymouth Guildhall. If it’s clear you can see ships in Plymouth Sound.

2. **History of Plymouth Albion**

Beacon Park was once home to Plymouth Albion Rugby Club. The club, originally the Devonport Albion Rugby Club, was founded in 1876 when a group of dockyard apprentices started to play in Devonport Park. By 1894 they had absorbed Keyham RFC and moved to Home Park, now home to Plymouth Argyle. When they left Home Park a local businessman used the site to set up a competing club, Plymouth RFC, whilst Devonport Albion took up grounds at the Rectory Fields. When the Navy purchased Rectory Fields after the First World War Albion moved to Beacon Park and absorbed the struggling Plymouth RFC, forming the Plymouth Albion we know today. The new club went on to great things and was a major force in English rugby during the 1920s hosting an extraordinary five national team players. In 2001/02 they were promoted to National League 1 and in 2003 returned home to Devonport where they remain at their current grounds at the Brickfields. The Beacon Park grounds is now long gone the land having been developed for housing but it remains an important part of this national rugby clubs long and varied history.

3. **Beacon Park and the Spanish Armada**

Beacon Down Avenue, Beacon Park Road, Beaconfield Road – these Beacon roads are so named for a reason. An Elizabethan fire beacon was sited here and used to communicate urgent messages, day and night, from the high ground here named on a 1584 map of the area as Penny Cross Beaken. When the Spanish Armada was spotted off the Lizard in 1588 a chain of beacons was lit carrying the news to Plymouth where the English fleet, under Sir Francis Drake, was waiting. The beacon here would have been the penultimate in the chain which alerted Drake to the approach of the Spanish fleet.
If you were walking along Ham Lane in the early 1850s you might have met a young John Chard playing soldiers in these woods. Born in this quiet backwater of Plymouth in 1847, young John found himself in big trouble 32 years later. Having become a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers John was posted to Rorke’s Drift, a small supply depot in Zululand near Durban in South Africa. His orders were to repair a series of bridges. On 19 January 1879, two days after John’s arrival at Rorke’s Drift, the outposts commander, was called away, leaving John as the senior officer of 150 men of the 24th (2nd Warwickshire) Regiment of Foot. This was a shame for John as three days later Rorke’s Drift was attacked by nearly 4,000 Zulu warriors. The battle lasted nearly 24 hours but under John’s brilliant leadership and with the help of the Martini-Henry rifle, the Zulus eventually retreated, leaving an estimated 350 Zulus dead. Astoundingly, only 17 British soldiers lost their lives in the battle. John returned to England a national hero and was promoted to Brevet Major and, along with ten of his men, awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest decoration for gallantry in the British military. Since that day in 1879, no single action in British military history has resulted in the award of more Victoria Crosses with John twice visiting Buckingham Palace to tell his story. John, a life-long smoker, died of throat cancer as a Colonel at his brother’s rectory in Hatch Beauchamp, Somerset, where he is buried. Queen Victoria herself left a single wreath at his funeral with a simple handwritten message ‘A mark of admiration and regard for a brave soldier from his sovereign’. John’s story is told in the rousing 1963 film Zulu, starring Michael Caine with Stanley Baker as Lt John Chard. So when you pass along Ham Lane, think of young John Chard, whose incredible skills as a soldier were honed as a child playing in these very woods.

As you leave Beacon Park and head along Ham Lane you enter what was once the Trelawny Estate but is now the Ham Woods Local Nature Reserve. Ham Woods covers nearly 90 acres (that’s 35 football pitches). Over 200 species of plants and nearly 80 species of birds have been recorded here, making it a great spot to learn more about nature. Ham Lane quickly becomes sunken having been worn down by countless horses’ hooves, carriage wheels, farm wagons, walkers and armies on the march. Apart from the new hard surface, the lane hasn’t much changed since those days.

The artwork you see here is called ‘In Praise of Trees’ and is a stone seating sculpture created by internationally reputed artist Peter Randall-Page. Inspired by a fallen tree which left a large hole in an ancient stone wall, Peter worked closely with the local community to create a piece that had a sense of place within Ham Woods. Carved from local Dartmoor granite and surrounded by an archway built from salvaged slate, the sculpture has an oak seat and is built into the existing wall. It was funded by The Arts Council and Plymouth City Council’s Stepping Stone to Nature project.
Woodland Fort

As you come out of Butt Park look across the road and slightly to your left. You’re looking at Woodland Fort, the first of several of the 19th Century Palmerston Forts that you’re going to come across on the Co-operative Way. Woodland Fort is about half the size of Crownhill Fort, which you will come to shortly, and was completed in 1869 for a cost of £28,000. Its guns were never fired in anger and it was disarmed in the early 1900’s and sold by the MOD in 1920 to a local builder for a mere £600. The fort has spent most of its existence used as barracks for a range of uses including a company of bugle boys, horse guards, civil defence, fire service and during the Second World War, accommodating American soldiers from the First American Army. After the war the fort was taken over by the local council and today is used as a community centre.

The Domesday Book

Following the Norman conquest of England in 1066, William the Conqueror amassed a huge army which he needed to sustain to keep his hold over England and to continue his campaigns in northern France. William relied upon taxes to do this and in 1085 commissioned a huge land survey which set out land ownership and associated assets with a view to understanding the extent of taxes he could raise. Royal envoys were sent out around the country to over 13,000 settlements to collect the required information which was returned to London and entered, by a single unnamed scribe, into the book in a form of abbreviated Latin. Honicknowle was one of those estates, known then as Hanechelole and was recorded as belonging to Count Robert of Mortain. The information contained for an estate in the land survey was considered infallible and there was no appeal against it, leading people to eventually name it the Domesday Book. In his writings Richard FitzNigel, treasurer to King Henry II in 1177, tells us why: ‘The natives call this book Domesdei that is, the day of judgment, for just as no judgment of that final severe and terrible trial can be evaded by any subterfuge, so when any controversy arises in the kingdom concerning the matters contained in the book, and recourse is made to the book, its word cannot be denied or set aside with impunity’. The people of England considered the book so compelling in its contents it was compared to the Day of Judgement described in the Book of Revelations.

Honicknowle to Woodland woods

The woodland here is ingeniously named Woodland Woods and covers an area of around 29 hectares. Recent improvements to the site have been carried out by the Stepping Stones to Nature project and have included improving paths to make them accessible for wheelchairs and buggies, installing new signs designed by Shakespeare Primary school children, picnic tables, an orienteering course, a story-telling chair and seating as well as a range of natural play features designed by Brook Green Centre for Learning. There are two new circular walking routes which take advantage of a wide network of public footpaths.

Woodland Fort

Stephen Wass M.A. (Polyolbion Archaeology)
The Palmerston Forts

In the late 1850s, following improvements in cannon technology, the advent of steam propelled iron-clad warships and the rapid expansion of the French battle fleet, Lord Palmerston, in his second term as premier, became concerned that should the Royal Navy be distracted elsewhere, Britain's existing defences were insufficient if Napoleon III attempted an invasion.

He therefore commissioned an extensive review of English coastal defences. That review concluded that fortification of vital navy dockyards - especially along the south coast - was needed and, with the backing of Queen Victoria, so began what remains the most expensive fixed base peacetime defence system ever built in Britain. However, the Gallic saber-rattling ended following the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian war. This coincided neatly with the completion of many of the forts, leaving Plymouth with terrific fortifications against an enemy which had lost its fizz. Having cost upwards of £3 million Palmerston's forts, became known as Palmerston's Follies.
Invaders Beware!

As you follow the path around the fort imagine yourself as a potential French invader in the late 19th Century. Four fighting levels, 32 gun positions, 6 mortars and a 30 foot dry moat - your life expectancy would have been measured in seconds as you were raked with cannon fire and every loophole spat hot lead at you.

To even get close enough to die in this hell’s ditch you would have had to survive an extensive cannon and mortar barrage, not just from Crownhill’s guns, but those of a chain of other forts whose lines of fire cross-crossed for miles. The area surrounding the fort would have been absolutely clear - there would have been no trees within range of its guns offering any cover. It must have seemed an impossible nut to crack! Although Crownhill’s defences were never put to the test nor its guns ever fired in anger, it is interesting to ponder how many French spies returned home with reports similar to this. Perhaps the effect of those reports on Napoleon III turned his stomach from the fight.

Crownhill Today

Crownhill fort was bought by the Landmark Trust in 1987 and since that time they have transformed the fort from a derelict shell to one of the best-preserved Victorian forts in the country. Today the fort is enjoyed locally with part of the original Officers Quarters available as holiday accommodation and the former Main Magazine employed as a wedding venue. The many original buildings surrounding the parade grounds are now let out to small businesses.

The Disappearing Gun

Crownhill is home to the world’s only working examples of the Moncrieff Counterweight Disappearing Gun. The Disappearing Gun was designed by Sir Alexander Moncrieff and was designed to pop out over a parapet, fire, then use the momentum in its recoil to disappear back behind safety for reloading. However, the slow rate of fire combined with the difficulty in maintaining the complicated counterweight mechanism (which was prone to jamming) meant the guns were not deployed widely. Whilst the Disappearing Gun was found around the world, including Crownhill, Efford, Forder and Staddon forts in Plymouth, they were all dismantled in the early 1900’s.

Crownhill in Use

The Plymouth northern defensive line runs in a distinct arc between the natural boundaries of the Tamar to the West and the Plym to the East. Crownhill fort asserts its dominance on that line, not only by its size, being the largest of the forts by some considerable margin, but by its commanding position, its placement being some distance ahead of the other forts. It is well defended on all sides and when work started on it in 1863, it was at the cutting edge in fortress design and weaponry. Between the wars it housed the Royal Signal Corps and in 1982, as the “HQ” of the Commando Support Squadron Royal Engineers. It saw the dispatch of 647 troops and 1,897 tons of supplies to the Falklands War. The army played the Last Call at Crownhill in 1983.
Seaton Barracks

If you had walked down here in the early 1990’s without communicating your intent you’d have been shot as you would have just walked through the former main gate of Seaton Barracks, home of 59 Commando Squadron Royal Engineers. Military use of this site goes back to the days of Crownhill Barracks which was established around 1892. The barracks themselves were on the western side of Tavistock Road whilst the land which became Seaton Barracks was just a parade ground. By 1900 a series of wooden huts had been built on the eastern side shown on maps as Crownhill Hutments, housing infantry and civil personnel whilst four red brick buildings were established to the west, including married and officers quarters. The western half was renamed Plumer Barracks in the 1930s and in the 1960s was sold off in exchange for more land around the eastern side which by now was named Seaton Barracks. 59 Commando left the site in 1995 and by 2000 the site had been redeveloped as the science and technology park you see today.

59 Commando

59 Commando was made up of volunteers from the Army Royal Engineers. Their main role was to provide combat engineering support which included everything from building (or destroying) bridges and roads to assembling field defences and mine clearance. The combat engineers (or sappers) of 59 Commando went through full commando training including the All Arms Commando Course (The Royal Marine’s eight week course which entitles the use of the coveted Green Beret). 59 Commando left Seaton Barracks in 1995 and is now based in Royal Marines Band Chivenor in Barnstaple where it provides engineer support to 29 Commando.

Western Morning News Building

The unusual looking building to your right here is the former Western Morning News and Plymouth Herald headquarters. The building was designed by British architect Sir Nicholas Grimshaw CBE who also designed the Eden Project and Heathrow Terminal 3. The building was designed to look like a ship with the “bridge” being the board room, the middle decks housing the reporters and the lower deck housing the 41-metre long press capable of printing 60,000 copies per hour. The company has since vacated the building for premises in Millbay nearer the city centre and at the time of writing, the building is for sale.

Bircham Valley

A hundred yards or so into the Bircham Valley nature reserve and you’re in another world. It might be hard to believe that behind a screen of trees is the largest building in the South West, Derriford Hospital, with a busy industrial estate and main road behind you. This valley is the former grounds of Derriford House and the estate planted these woodlands to provide cover for game birds. If you had been walking here 150 years ago you might have had a few warning shots sent your way by an angry gamekeeper. There are still deer in this valley and if your quiet and lucky, you might spot them. As you follow the path, look out for the pond on your right. This pond was created in 1992 in the location of the original ornamental pond of Derriford House. You can still see the original stone wall dam amongst the yellow iris and brooklime.
Forder Valley

1 Forder Valley Nature Reserve
As you go through the kissing gate near the bottom of Novorossick Road, you enter the Forder Valley Local Nature Reserve. Recent improvements to this site have been carried out by the Stepping Stones to Nature project and included upgraded paths, new signage (designed by Leigham Primary School children), a pond dipping platform, picnic table and natural play features. There are also several new circular walking routes in these woods if you wish to explore further.

2 Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway
The Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway, opened in 1823, ran through the Forder Valley. This was a horse-drawn railway and the man behind it was Thomas Tyrwhitt who became secretary to the Prince of Wales and developed a passion for Dartmoor. He founded Princetown (named after his royal boss) and persuaded the government to build a prison there for French prisoners of war to help develop the town. His railway transported raw materials, most notably granite, from Dartmoor to Sutton Pool in Plymouth and sent sand, timber and coal back. The railway operated a turnpike system with anyone wanting to use the railway paying a toll. The line was so popular that branch lines were installed and cattle, pigs and sheep were driven along it. You can still see a few of the stone sleepers along the route of the railway as it runs through this valley. It’s also worth a short detour to see Leigham tunnel which is interesting in its own right.

3 Leigham Tunnel
When building the Plymouth to Dartmoor railway, engineers found that part of the line was far too steep. The only solution was to cut a tunnel through the incline between Roborough and Leigham. That tunnel exits the hillside here in the Forder Valley Nature Reserve and is one of the earliest railway tunnels in the country. If you were here in the 1820’s you would have needed to stand aside for horse-pulled wagons creaking under loads of granite on their way to Plymouth destined for use in the building of Plymouth breakwater, Laira Bridge or taken by ship to the Thames and used to build London Bridge. The iron rails themselves were ripped up for scrap during the First World War and during the Second World War the tunnel was redeveloped as an air raid shelter.

4 Forder Valley Pond
The woodland here was planted in the 1960s with mainly oak, hazel and alder. As you follow the stream through the valley you might see; marsh orchids, ramsons, yellow iris, bluebells and the burnt-looking King Alfred’s Cakes (Daldinia concentrica) - an inedible fungus which can be used as kindling and is home for a variety of insects and caterpillars. When you come out of the trees into the meadow set a course for the pond. Southern hawker dragonflies and demoiselles; emerald, blue-tailed and azure damselflies; pondskaters and water boatmen sculling between the lilies make this pond well worth a more thorough investigation. In spring mating toads join the throng threading their strings of spawn amongst the reeds attracting ducks and heron. The ground between the pond and the road has an important job to do: it’s a flood meadow. If the Forder River bursts its banks, the water floods this area rather than swamping Forder Valley Road. If you are in this area in late spring/early summer, keep your eye out for Bee Orchids which are known to populate the meadow slopes here.
Austin Fort

The Forder Valley Nature Reserve continues to the west of Forder Valley Road and as you follow the path around you will quickly start to climb upwards. This gradual rise is, of course, leading us towards another of the Palmerston forts scowling down on the valley from its commanding position above you.

1. Austin Fort’s Barbed Wire Boundary

Evidence of the fort’s presence is hidden amongst the trees and as you progress, you will eventually come to a low granite post on your right with WD N28 carved onto it. This is one of the original posts which marked the boundary of Austin Fort’s defences. The rusty contraption next to it is a barbed wire tensioner. A handle would have turned the cogs pulling the wire taut. Any invaders trying to break through the wire would have been shot by the riflemen above. You might spot a few of these as you head up towards the fort.

2. Austin Fort Today

Any invading army heading down the Forder Valley would have fallen under the thunderous guns of Austin Fort. Like its big brother at Crownhill it was a strong link in the chain of defences. Austin Fort took more than five years to build, being completed in 1869. Once complete it accommodated 60 men and had placements for 15 cannons and 5 mortars. This guide takes you now on towards Egguckland but it’s worth a short detour to inspect the front of the fort. As you look at it the entrance looks awkward like there is something wrong with it, and that’s because there is! The original entrance has been walled up and a new entrance installed into one of the rooms in the bunker. Standing directly opposite the original entrance you are in the infilled moat and the drawbridge would have gone directly over your head.

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Although the threat of French invasion fizzled out shortly after the fort was completed it remained in military occupation until the Army left in 1958. The fort then stood as an empty shell for the next 26 years until the site was taken over by the local authority in 1984 who firstly used it as the emergency centre for civil defence and later as workshops and storage. In March 2013 the fort was put on the market and is likely to be used as premises for multiple local businesses.
Hollycroft to Hender’s Corner

Hollycroft Woods

Hollycroft Woods is currently owned by the Woodland Trust who acquired the land from Plymouth City Council in the 1980’s. The ground here was once a hundred yards away; the earth shifted to make way for the Parkway was piled here. The Woodland Trust planted what could have been a drab heap of motorway spoil with over 5,000 young trees including oak, alder, ash, lime, beech, hornbeam, hawthorn, cherry and maple.

Pearn Convalescent Home

In the 19th Century deaths amongst the poor being discharged from hospitals were quite common. Having contracted an infection in hospital they were often too weak to fight it. The hospitals themselves were desperate to provide a convalescent service but there was never enough money. The Pearn Convalescent Home was the first such institution in Plymouth. It was built in 1895 by Edwin Alonzo Pearn, a shrewd and wealthy local businessman in memory of his parents. As you head along Eggbuckland Road you will notice this imposing Victorian building with its splendid copper-domed turret which is currently occupied by St. Luke’s Hospice.

The Gleneagle Triangle

The small triangle of land you cross at the junction of Gleneagle Road demonstrates how a modern city road layout follows an ancient blueprint. At this point Eggubuckland Road once kinked around the jutting corner of one of the fields of the ancient Compton Manor Estate; the small traffic island you see today reflects the same boundary which was described in the Domesday book in 1086.

Panorama View

The area of Plymouth you are now in was quite well to do in the mid-19th Century. Doctors, solicitors and other professionals first bought these houses which had views over the shoulders of the larger houses as wonderfully demonstrated in this panorama by Samuel Cook which shows the view from Compton Avenue across to Plymouth Sound. The grand mansions in the foreground stand very much aloof in a city still surrounded by fields.

Sir Leonard

Major General Sir Leonard Rogers KCS IFRSS was born in Cornwall 1868 but spent much of his childhood living in this area before travelling to India in 1893. Rogers became one of the world’s most significant pioneers of the treatment of tropical diseases including cholera, leprosy and snake bites. His work without question helped save millions of lives.

Hender’s Corner

You won’t see the name Hender’s Corner on any maps of the Plymouth area, but it’s the name most locals call the junction between Eggbuckland Road and Mannnamead Road. William Hender was a well-known local nurseryman who held market gardens near this corner in the 1870’s. His nurseries remained here until the 1930s and the name Hender’s Corner was eventually adopted for the end of the tramline running from Compton. Even without any form of plaque the name of the nurseryman lives on.

Plymouth Sound from Mannnamead. Samuel Cook (artist). G. Hawkins (Enographer) © Plymouth City Council (Arts & Heritage)
Thorn Park

The Co-operative Way heads south at Hender’s Corner and very quickly turns down Thorn Park on the right. If you’re interested in churches it’s worth a quick detour here to explore Emmanuel Church a little further down on the left. The church has an unfinished look about it because the funds ran out before the spire was built. The original artist’s impression, complete with spire, still hangs inside the porch.

Thorn Park

Thorn Park is a square surrounded by terraces of splendid bay-windowed Victorian houses. If any male walkers need to spend a penny they will be grateful to George Jennings of London. Hidden in the bushes here is his original one-man, cast iron, Victorian urinal which he designed in the 1850s. Jennings supplied conveniences for the 1851 Great Exhibition in London where 827,000 people paid a penny each to use his loos (hence the phrase to spend a penny). It is important for Jennings memory to point out that Thomas Crapper, often mistaken for having designed the first flushing toilet, was only 15 years old at this point in toilet history. Flushed with the success of his design’s Jennings went on to greater things establishing a successful company that ran well into the 1960s and supplied products all around the world. His pedestal vase toilet even won him a posthumous gold medal at the Health Exhibition in 1884 when, in a test, its flush completely removed 10 apples, 1 flat sponge and 3 crumbled bits of paper from its bowl!

Mutley House

As you leave Thorn Park and cross the road you are entering the former grounds of Mutley House. The original gate piers still stand, as does one of the two lodges to the main house. Mutley Park was the formal grounds to the house and there is a wide array of spectacular trees in this park including a large and very old copper beech, a redwood, some london plane and monterey cypress. Mutley House has long since been demolished but if you stand with the play park to your left, the buildings to your right are built on the former site of the main house. As you leave the park the track you walk down once echoed with the sounds of horses’ hooves and carriages as it is the original wall of the carriageway approach to Mutley House.
The flora and fauna of the Co-operative Way

The Co-operative Way takes you through a variety of parks, nature reserves and green spaces. Each has its individual charm and unique characteristics, from the monkey puzzle and ginko trees of Thorn Park to the bee orchids of Forder Valley. This page will help you identify some of the varied trees, plants and wildlife you might be lucky enough to spot and remember, the flora and fauna you might see will change with each season.

Herb Robert
*(Geranium robertianum)*

You can find this little pink plant growing in hedgerows and verges along the Co-operative Way. Look out for the small, pink five-fingered flowers between April and September. If you crush its leaves in your fingers they produce an odd smell a bit like burning rubber, a scent said to repel mosquitoes, which has led to it being nicknamed “Stinky Bob”.

Lesser Celandine
*(Ranunculus ficaria)*

A pretty little perennial with golden yellow flowers and heart shaped leaves. It flowers early in the year and is a common marker for the arrival of spring. It is considered an invasive species in North America due to its prolific growth and tendency to crowd out other species but is a popular flower in Europe and inspired poet William Wordsworth to write his ‘Ode to Celandine’. Celandine was once known as Pilewort as it was considered a herbal remedy for haemorrhoids.