

Putney's Heritage – a brief visitors guide

Putney has a rich and varied heritage extending from settlements in Neolithic and pre-roman times to the present day. It's location, close to the heart of London and next to the River Thames, makes it an ideal location for both commercial and cultural/leisure activity.

A very brief guide to the key components of the towns heritage are listed below and the reader is encouraged to explore the town in person to fully appreciate its historical and cultural dimensions.

River Thames

Putney sits alongside the River Thames, this arterial route connects with London in one direction and Hampton Court in the other. The Embankment, Putney, is home to several well known rowing and sailing clubs and is part of a popular riverside walk.

Putney Bridge crosses the Thames to Fulham and is the busiest bridge in London. It is the starting point of the annual Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race held around March/April each year and a popular music festival, the Putney Music Festival, is held over the Boat Race weekend (www.wandsworth.gov.uk/putneymusicfestival).

The Putney Bridge of today was a replacement for the wooden toll bridge created in 1729, which provided the only dry crossing between London Bridge and Kingston Bridge. The current bridge, made of concrete and granite, now stands slightly upstream from the old wooden bridge. It was designed by Sir Joseph Bazalgette and opened by the Prince of Wales in 1886 following four years construction.

A regular river taxi commuter service now operates mornings and evenings, connecting with Blackfriars and the City and providing an attractive alternative way to commute!

St Mary's Church

Mention of a church in Putney date back to the thirteenth century, though it is unclear whether this stood on the site of the present church. What is known, from records of the time, is that Oliver Cromwell's 'New Model Army' spent two weeks here in 1647 debating the nature of democracy – 'The Putney Debates' - putting in place a key milestone on the road to democracy as we know it in both England and the United States. A fire around 1970 damaged a major part of the church and it was subsequently refurbished, then expanded in around 2005 by the addition of the new Brewer Building extension, which contains a community coffee shop as well as upstairs meeting rooms that are used by community/voluntary groups, businesses and the church alike. Visit recommended – see the Putney Debates permanent exhibition.

Historic Putney Pubs

A map drawn in 1787 lists many old Putney pubs that still exist today, these being The Fox (and Hounds – Upper Richmond Road), The Spotted Horse (Putney High Street) and The Star & Garter (Embankment) and the Green Man (Putney Heath). Nowadays pubs like the Bricklayers Arms in the Lower Richmond Road add a touch of colour to the plethora of pubs by specialising in real ale and have won several CAMRA awards. The new Boathouse pub in Putney Wharf has stunning riverside views from the roof terrace.

Railway

Putney (mainline) Station commenced operation in 1846 when the new railway line connecting it with Wandsworth, Barnes and Mortlake opened. The present station, created in 1886, replaced its Gothic fantasy predecessor. The impact of the new railway line was to accelerate the population growth in Putney considerably. Two underground stations are also in or near Putney; East Putney tube on the Upper Richmond Road and Putney Bridge tube on the North side of Putney Bridge. Both are on the District Line.

Retail

Putney has an exciting and very diverse range of retail shops, ranging from national chains, mainly in the High Street and The Exchange Shopping Centre, to smaller independents, many of which are in feeder roads to the High Street and on the Upper & Lower Richmond Roads. Specialist shops range from toy and musical instrument shops to custom Mini's, fancy dress and specialist cake decoration. Make sure you raise your eyes above the shop frontages; there are some surprisingly attractive buildings to be seen! See <http://services.putneysw15.com/#Services/List> on the www.putneysw15.com website.

Nightlife/evening economy

Putney has a great reputation as a place to come and relax and meet friends. Excellent and varied restaurants vie for custom with prolific pubs, bars and caf  s both along the High Street and by the waterside. Putney Wharf buzzes in the summertime, the authentic 70's neon disco dance floor of the Fez Club is frequently used by film studios as well as revellers, and the Halfmoon (Lower Richmond Road) is one of South West London's favourite live music venues.

Art, Design and Culture

Putney has strong artistic and cultural links, some of the highlights being:

- **Putney School of art and Design (Upper Richmond Rd)**: very active local art school run by Wandsworth Council
- **Putney Arts Theatre (Oxford Road)**: local arts theatre in former church with strong youth, child and adult theatre groups and following.
- **'Open House'**: annual opportunity to see artists work in the setting of their own homes.
- **'The Putney Sculpture Trail' (riverside)** : officially opened in 2008, the Putney sculpture Trail features near life-size figurative sculptures by nationally recognised sculptor Alan Thornhill. Nine sculptures create a riverside trail extending approx. one mile from Leaders Gardens to Riverside Quarter (beyond Wandsworth Park). The sculpture at the junction of Putney Bridge Road and Putney High Street, 'The Turning Point', shows a route map to the other eight sculptures that comprise the route. See also www.wandsworth.gov.uk/putney for map and further information.
- **Odeon cinema**: Long established part of Putney with special screenings on Wednesdays for the over 60's

Places of Interest

- **Putney Wharf**: cosmopolitan, award-winning wharfside area with caf  s, bars, restaurants and slipway to the river and a visit is recommended.
- **Old Burial Ground**, Upper Richmond Road: Attractive garden area just off the main road
- **Putney Library**: both the original, ornate building and its later extension provide a wealth of local information, as well as free internet connectivity and meeting rooms.
- **Embankment**: pretty riverside walk to Barnes bridge past a number of rowing and sailing clubs.
- **Leaders Gardens (park)**: *charming riverside park with caf  , tennis courts, children's play area and start/finish sculpture ('Exodus') of the Putney Sculpture Trail.*
- **Wandsworth Park**: *large grade two listed riverside park with riverside walk, caf  , tennis courts, cricket pitches, football pitches, two sculptures on the Putney Sculpture Trail (Pygmalion and Nexus), leading to Riverside Quarter development with it's pier and restaurants.*

Famous Figures Associated with Putney

- **Nicholas West** (1461-1533): born in Putney. Educated at Eton and Cambridge. Doctor of Law. Prot  g   of Sir Thomas More. Chaplain to Henry VII. Dean of Windsor 1510-1515. Consecrated Bishop of Ely 1515. One of Henry VIII's ambassadors and advisers. Sided with Catherine of Aragon in royal divorce dispute and died out of favour at Ely.
- **Thomas Cromwell** (1485-1540): born in Putney. Chancellor of England 1533. Earl of Essex. Henry VIII's agent in the dissolution of the monasteries. Lost favour through his part in disastrous marriage of Henry to Anne of Cleves. Executed at Tower Hill.
- **Edward Gibbon**: historian. Baptised at St Mary's, 1737.
- **Samuel Pepys**: mentions St Mary's in his diary for 1667, when he attended a service where he heard a "good sermon" and where "I saw the girls of the school, few of which were pretty".
- **Charles Dickens**: made Putney Church the setting for David Copperfield's marriage to Dora Spenlow.
- **Lord Hugh Jenkins**: Putney MP 1964-1979, Minister for the Arts, lived in Kenilworth Court.
- **Norman Parkinson**: photographer, lived in Landford Road Putney 1919-1936.
- **Gavin Ewart FRSL**: notable poet

Further Putney information can be found at: www.wandsworth.gov.uk/putney