

Albertopolis

A self guided walk around South Kensington



Explore London's quarter for the arts and sciences
Discover why it was created and how it has developed
See some of the capital's most iconic buildings
Uncover remarkable stories of artists, inventors, explorers and spies

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Cover image: Detail of the Royal Albert Hall © Rory Walsh

Albertopolis

Explore London's quarter for science, technology, culture and the arts

Prince Albert and Sir Henry Cole had a vision: an area of London dedicated to science, education and the arts. Over 150 years ago it became a reality in South Kensington.

Fondly known as 'Albertopolis' after its royal patron, the area was designed to celebrate the achievements and grandeur of Victorian Britain.

Albertopolis is still thriving today as the home of many of London's world-class museums, cultural institutes and scientific organisations.



An aerial view of Albertopolis (June 2011)
© Andreas Praefcke via Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

Albertopolis also includes dozens of embassies, hosts hundreds of international students and welcomes thousands of visitors from around the world.



The Albert Memorial at sunset
© Rory Walsh

Explore London's quarter for the arts and sciences on foot and find out why it was created.

Discover more about the great institutions established there. See some of the capital's most magnificent buildings.

Along the way, hear some remarkable stories about diplomats and spies, musicians and artists, explorers and inventors.

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Practical information

Location	South Kensington, Central London
Getting there	<p>Train - Nearest mainline stations are London Paddington and London Victoria</p> <p>Underground - Nearest stations are South Kensington, High Street Kensington and Lancaster Gate</p> <p>Bus - Routes 9, 10, 52, 70, 360 and 452 stop near the Royal Albert Hall and Albert Memorial</p> <p>Bicycle - Several Barclays Cycle Hire docking stations in the area including both ends of Exhibition Road</p>
Start point	Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens, SW7 2AP
Directions to the walk start	<p>From South Kensington Underground station - Take the pedestrian tunnel from inside the ticket hall. At the end go up the steps and turn left onto Exhibition Road. At the top of the road turn left. Use the pedestrian crossing outside the Royal Albert Hall to cross to the Memorial.</p> <p>From High Street Kensington Underground station - Turn right onto Kensington High Street. Find a safe place to cross over and continue along the left hand side. The Memorial is a ½ mile on the left opposite the Royal Albert Hall.</p> <p>From Lancaster Gate Underground station - Cross the main road and go through the gates into Hyde Park / Kensington Gardens. At the main junction of paths bear diagonally right along the path up to a large sculpture. Continue along the widest path up to the Memorial.</p>
Finish point	Royal Albert Hall, SW7 2AP
Distance	2 miles
Level	Gentle - A fairly level route

Terrain

The whole route is on pavements or paved footpaths. Be careful of traffic when crossing busy roads. The route can be very busy especially during weekends, school holidays and tourist seasons.

Suitable for

Families – A busy but safe area. Lots of family-friendly attractions along the route.

Wheelchairs / pushchairs – An entirely step-free route. Please note though that South Kensington Underground station has no lift; there are several flights of steps to street level.

Refreshments

Many places to eat and drink on and near the walk route including cafés in the park and museums.

Toilets

Free public toilets in the museums, many with baby changing facilities. Also toilets in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park (charges apply).

Places to visit

The museums on the route are free to enter (apart from special exhibitions). Visit their individual websites for opening hours and exhibition details:

Natural History Museum - www.nhm.ac.uk

Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum - www.pism.co.uk

Science Museum - www.sciencemuseum.org.uk

Victoria & Albert Museum - www.vam.ac.uk

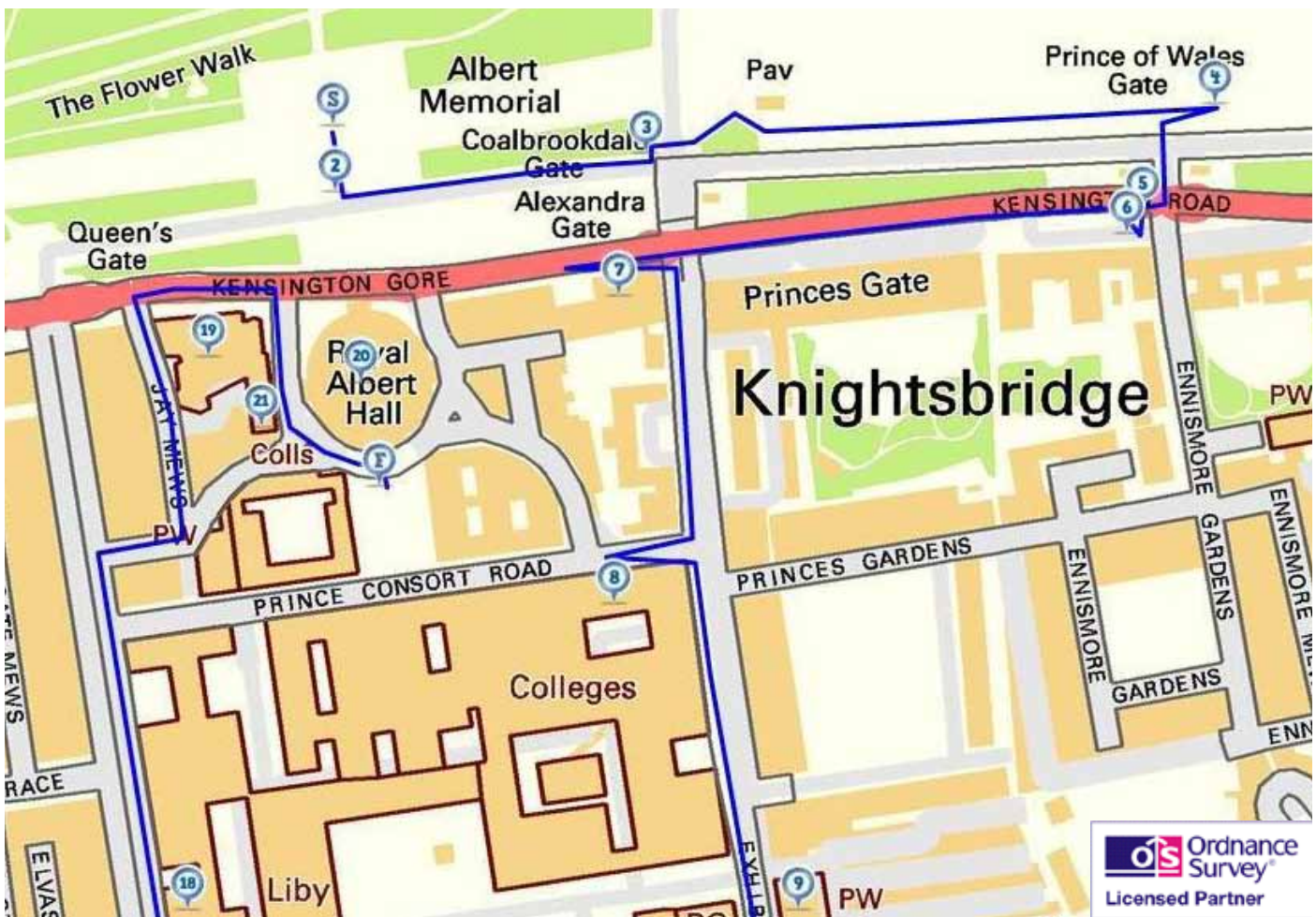
Guided tours of the **Albert Memorial** take place on the first Sunday of each month between June and December. Fee £6, meet at the memorial at 2pm or 3pm.

The Serpentine Gallery and **Serpentine Sackler Gallery**, both in Kensington Gardens, are open Tuesdays to Sundays, 10am to 6pm. Free entry. www.serpentinegallery.org

Tourist information

Many of the museums and attractions have their own Visitor Information points. The nearest Tourist Information office is at Victoria station, opposite Platform 8. Open 7 days a week.

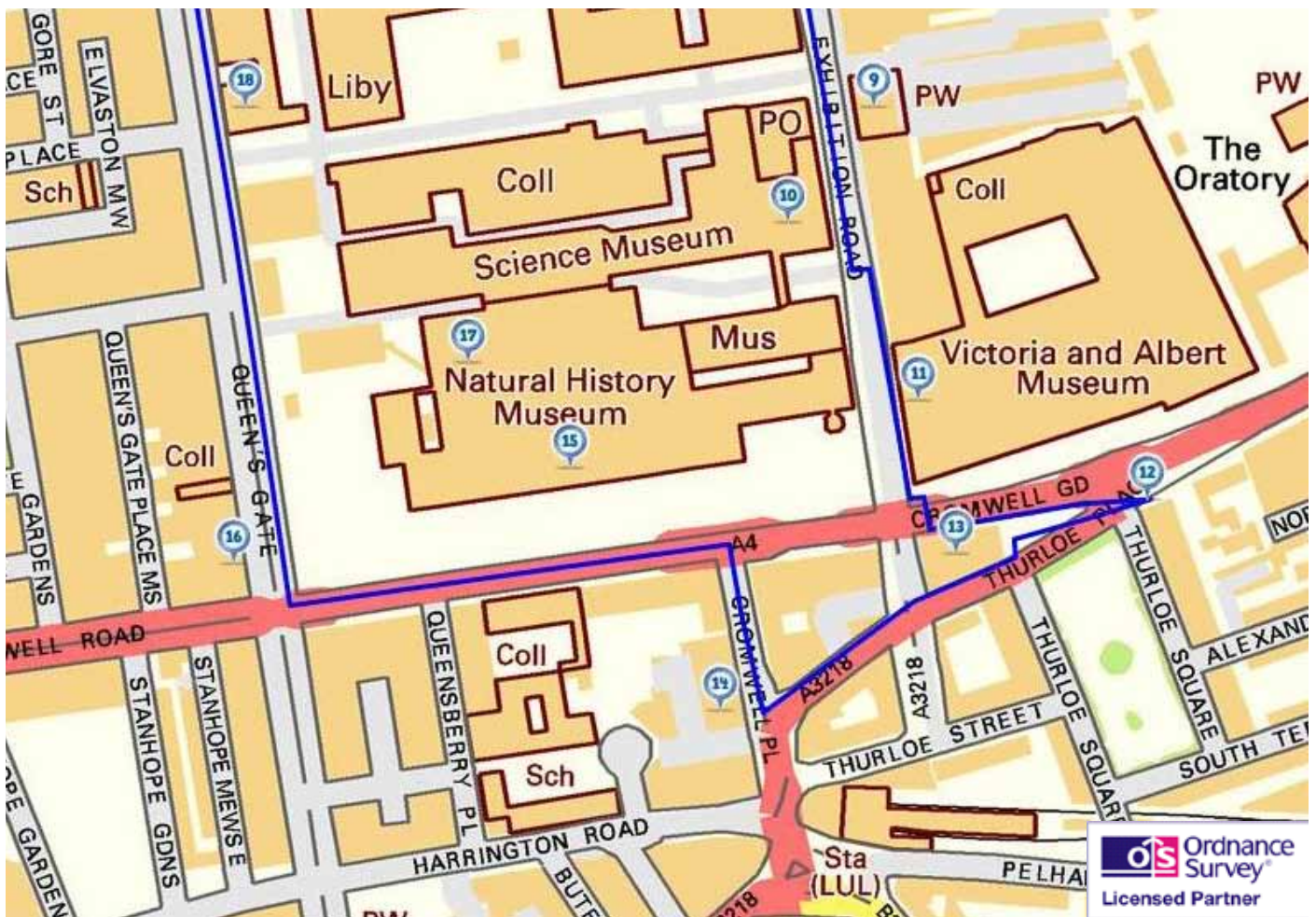
Detail of the start and end of the route



Stopping points

- S.** Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens
- 2.** Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens
- 3.** Coalbrookdale Gate, Kensington Gardens
- 4.** Great Exhibition information board, Hyde Park
- 5.** Princes Gate
- 6.** Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate
- 7.** Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore
- 8.** Royal School of Mines, Prince Consort Road
- ...
- 19.** Darwin Building, Royal College of Art
- 20.** Royal Albert Hall
- 21.** Former Royal College of Organists and the Royal College of Music
- F.** Great Exhibition memorial beside Royal Albert Hall

Detail of the middle section of the route



Stopping points

- 9. Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Exhibition Road
- 10. Science Museum, Exhibiton Road
- 11. Henry Cole Wing, V&A Museum, Exhibition Road
- 12. 33 Thurloe Place
- 13. Aga Khan Ismaili Institute
- 14. View of the Institut Francais, Cromwell Place
- 15. Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road
- 16. Baden-Powell House, 65-67 Queen's Gate
- 17. Darwin Centre, Natural History Museum, Queen's Gate
- 18. 170 Queen's Gate

Directions

These directions are for use with the audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. Welcome to Albertopolis

Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens

Directions 1

Begin the walk from the Albert Memorial in Kensington Gardens. Face the gold statue at the centre of the memorial and listen to Track 2.

2. A man with a vision

Albert Memorial, Kensington Gardens

Directions 2

When you are ready face Prince Albert's statue and turn right. Follow the path towards the set of large metal gates by the road. Take care as cyclists use this gate to access Kensington Gardens. Stop beside the gates and listen to Track 3.

3. The gates to Albertopolis

Coalbrookdale Gate, Kensington Gardens

Directions 3

Go through the gates using the gateway to the left. Look out for cyclists turning on the pathway. Cross over the road at the traffic lights. Take care here as this junction can be very busy. Go through the gap to the café then follow the path with trees on your left and the horse track and road on your right. Continue for about 200 metres until you find an information board and a round plaque in the ground. Listen to Track 4.

4. An exhibition of all nations

Great Exhibition information board, Hyde Park

Directions 4

Retrace your steps a short way to the crossing point by the kerb. Cross the horse ride then South Carriage Drive and leave the park through the gate. Cross Kensington Road here at the traffic lights and turn right. Walk past Kingston House North and stop at the beginning of a terrace of white houses. Listen to Track 5.

5. Upmarket housing

Princes Gate

Directions 5

Go up to the first house, the one with two blue plaques and moulded heads on the wall. Listen to Track 6.

6. Art and ambassadors

Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate

Directions 6

Return to Kensington Road and continue past the terrace. Pass the embassies and go up to the junction. Cross the top of Exhibition Road - take care again as the junction can be very busy. Walk past the statue of David Livingstone and the metal road sign and go up to a red brick building with iron railings outside. Stop by the railings and listen to Track 7.

7. Age of exploration

The Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore

Directions 7

Retrace your steps past the Livingstone statue and head towards the junction. Turn right into Exhibition Road; look up to see the Shackleton statue. Continue past the modern entrance of the RGS. Then turn right into Prince Consort Road. Stop at the junction and look to the left at the grand white building on the opposite side of the road with two statues outside. Listen to Track 8.

8. Mining gold and diamonds

Royal School of Mines, Prince Consort Road

Directions 8

Retrace your steps back to Exhibition Road and turn right. Pass the Imperial College Business School. Stop at the junction with Imperial College Road, opposite a modern church. Listen to Track 9.

9. Newer developments

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Exhibition Road

Directions 9

Continue down Exhibition Road. Pass the tunnel for the Underground station and stop by the entrance to the Science Museum and listen to Track 10.

10. Keeping up to date

Science Museum, Exhibition Road

Directions 10

From the Science Museum, continue a short distance further then look across Exhibition Road at the ornate red brick and yellow stone building which is the Henry Cole Wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Listen to Track 11.

11. An unrivalled collection

Henry Cole Wing, Victoria and Albert Museum

Directions 11

Cross over Exhibition Road to have a closer look at the bomb damage on the V&A. Continue along the left hand side to the junction with Cromwell Road. Cross at the pedestrian crossing and turn left until you are opposite the entrance to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Stop outside the white building, Number 33 Thurloe Square. Listen to Track 12.

12. King Cole and Christmas cards

33 Thurloe Square

Directions 12

Continue along the footpath keeping left and until you reach a gate before a wide track. Go through the gate and turn left over a bridge. Go through another gate then turn immediately left and then fork right following a signpost to The Keyhole. At the top of the hill stop at The Keyhole which is a feature made of large stone blocks. Listen to Track 13.

13. A blend of eastern and western styles

Aga Khan Ismaili Institute

Directions 13

From the Ismaili Centre, keep the traffic lights on your left and carefully cross over the end of Exhibition Road. Continue along Thurloe Place. Note the various cafés, restaurants and shops. When you reach Cromwell Place you should see the Institut Français directly opposite. Listen to Track 14.

14. Little France

Institut Français, Cromwell Place

Directions 14

When you are ready, follow Cromwell Place with the Institut Français on your left. Cross over Cromwell Road at the traffic lights and turn left along the pavement by the railings. Stop when you are opposite the entrance of the Natural History Museum. Listen to Track 15.

15. 70 million specimens

Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road

Directions 15

Continue along Cromwell Road. At the junction with Queen's Gate, use the pedestrian crossings to reach Baden-Powell House. Stop by the statue outside and listen to Track 16.

16. Scouting

Baden-Powell House, 65-67 Queen's Gate

Directions 16

Cross back over Queen's Gate and turn left, keeping the Natural History Museum on your right. Stop by the second set of railings by the sign for the Darwin Centre. Look at the modern glass building and listen to Track 17.

17. A curious egg

Darwin Centre, Natural History Museum

Directions 17

Continue up Queen's Gate. Shortly after the Oman Embassy at Number 167, turn right at Falmouth Gate and into Imperial College Road. Stop by the red brick building, Number 170 Queen's Gate. Listen to Track 18.

18. Cementing a place

170 Queen's Gate

Directions 18

Retrace your steps and turn right to continue along Queen's Gate. See if you can spot three more embassies – Thailand, Bangladesh and Bulgaria. Cross Prince Consort Road then turn right into Bremner Road. At the back of the church turn left into the cobbled Jay Mews. At the end turn right into Kensington Gore. Stop at the junction before the Royal Albert Hall and look up to the right at the dark modern building. Listen to Track 19.

19. Designer dirt

Darwin Building, Royal College of Art

Directions 19

Continue a short distance into the road to the right. Look across the road at the Royal Albert Hall. Listen to Track 20.

20. The hall of arts and sciences

Royal Albert Hall

Directions 20

Carefully cross over the side road. Keeping the walls of the Royal Albert Hall on your left, continue around until you reach the back of a statue at the top of a set of stone steps. Listen here to Track 21.

21. Making music

Royal College of Music and the former Royal College of Organists

Directions 21

For the final stop make your way to the front of the statue to listen to Track 22.

22. An arts and sciences hub

Great Exhibition memorial beside Royal Albert Hall

Directions 22

To return to the museums, go down the steps and turn left into Prince Consort Road. The museums and South Kensington underground station are down Exhibition Road to the right. To go to Kensington Gardens go round to opposite side of the Albert Hall and cross the road.



Scenes from around Albertopolis
Rory Walsh / Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Further information

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints United Kingdom

www.lds.org.uk

The Crystal Palace Museum

www.crystalpalacemuseum.org.uk

Exhibition Road

www.exhibitionroad.com

Goethe-Institut London

www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lon/enindex.htm

Imperial College London

www3.imperial.ac.uk

Institut Français

www.institut-francais.org.uk

The Ismaili Centre

www.theismaili.org

Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle Londres

www.lyceefrancais.org.uk

Natural History Museum

www.nhm.ac.uk

The Polish Club

www.ognisko.com

Royal Albert Hall

www.royalalberthall.com

Royal College of Art

www.rca.ac.uk

Royal College of Music

www.rcm.ac.uk

Royal College of Organists

www.rco.org.uk

Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

www.rgs.org

The Royal Society of Arts

www.thersa.org

Science Museum

www.sciencemuseum.org.uk

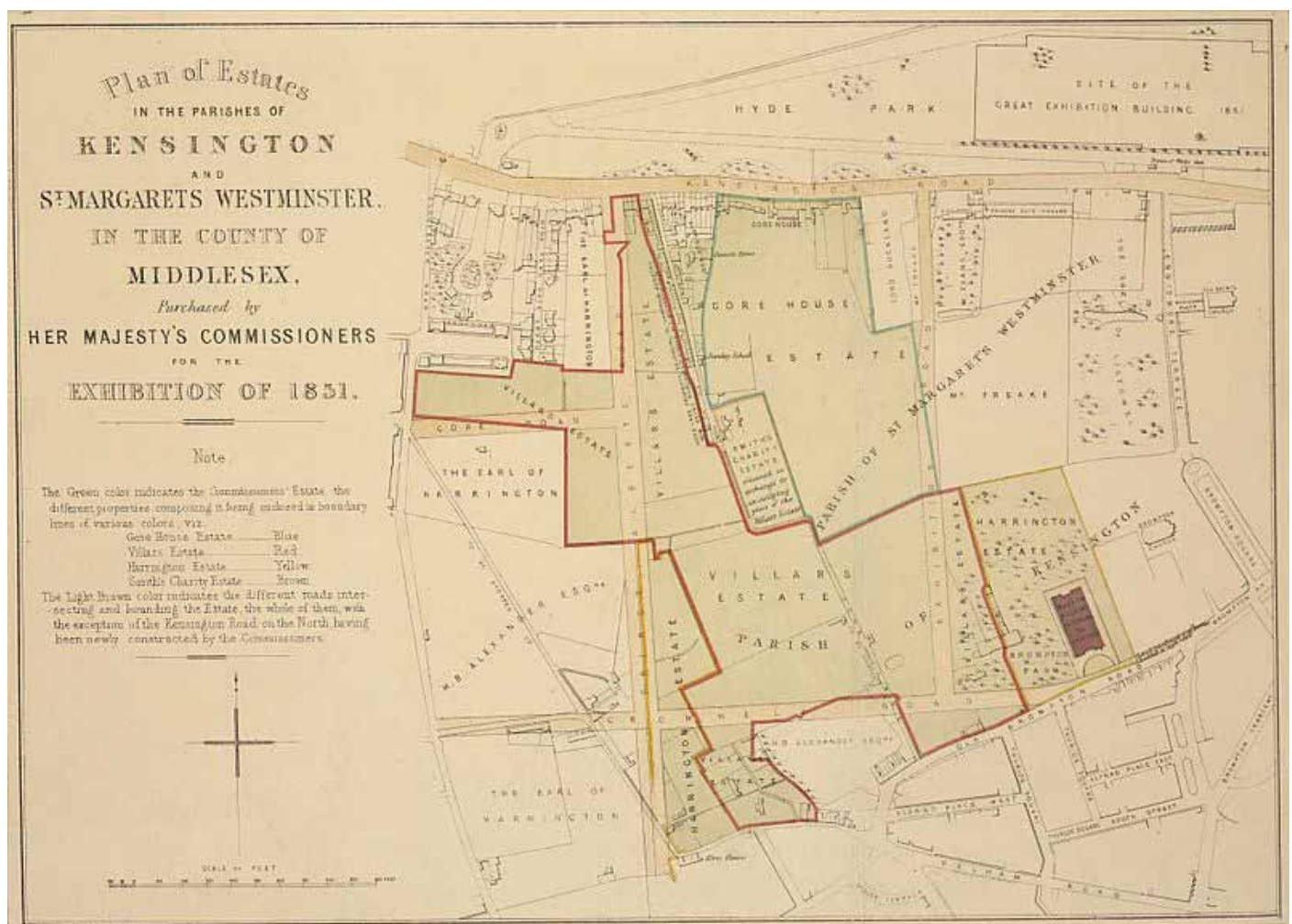
Victoria & Albert Museum

www.vam.ac.uk

Credits

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- **Gary Gray** and **Mike Jackson** for creating the walk, providing photographs and the audio commentary
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'Plan of Estates in the Parishes of Kensington and St. Margaret's Westminster in the County of Middlesex Purchased by Her Majesty's Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851' showing the land plots bought to develop Albertopolis.
Wikimedia Commons (CCL)

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Bees, berries and beans

An edible walk through the London Borough of Hackney

<http://www.discoveringbritain.org/walks/region/greater-london/london-hackney.html>



District 45

Travel back in time to Victorian Deptford

<http://www.discoveringbritain.org/walks/region/greater-london/deptford.html>





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