

# Riots and radicals ramble



Time **1 hour**  
Start **Oval station**  
Finish **Trafalgar Square**  
Miles **2.4**

*Haw thorn* Brian keeps protest alive (left); Imperial War Museum (top); The Oval (above)

This stroll from Kennington to Trafalgar Square is an excellent demonstration of one city's riotous spirit, says **Peter Watts**

## 1 KENNINGTON PARK

This was formerly **Kennington Common**, the starting point of many a protest march and site of a key meeting in 1848 of the Chartists, the working-class electoral-reform movement. Despite fears that the 50,000 Chartists would spark a revolution, the event passed comparatively peacefully. Previously, the land was an execution site – the remains of a gibbet have been found at **St Mark's church** near the station and captured Jacobites from the 1745 rebellion were hanged here.

## 2 DEMONSTRATION ALLEY

Walk along Brixton Road and turn up Kennington Road, at the end of which lies the Imperial War Museum – its grounds once marked the boundary of **St George's Fields**, the site of several demonstrations, including an uprising in support of imprisoned radical MP John Wilkes in 1768, at which the army killed seven protesters. We're not going that far, though. Instead, turn left down Black Prince Road. On this road is the **Beaufoy Institute**, a school founded by reforming MP Mark Beaufoy. Also look out for the extraordinary terracotta relief on the corner of Lambeth High Street – the site of the Doulton pottery factory – one of the most striking sights in London.

## 3 RELIGIOUS REBELLION IN LAMBETH

Head along Albert Embankment towards **Lambeth Palace**, home to the Archbishop of Canterbury. The building was attacked by revolting peasants in 1381, rampaging apprentices in 1640 and Gordon rioters in 1780; the Earl of Essex was also held here after a rebellion in 1601. Here also is the **Lollards' Tower**. This is just a water tower, built in 1435, but it got its name thanks to a rumour that the Lollards – religious dissenters – were imprisoned here, though it was never proven. Next door is **St Mary's church**, now the Museum of Garden History, whose beautiful churchyard contains the grave of William Bligh, who suffered mutiny on his ship, the *Bounty* in 1789.

## 4 THE MILLBANK PRISON

As you cross Lambeth Bridge, look left towards Tate Britain, formerly the site of **The Penitentiary**, designed in 1812 by Jeremy Bentham as a revolutionary octagonal structure. From **the pier**, prisoners condemned to transportation began the trip to Australia. Go right, down the steps to the riverside **Victoria Tower Gardens**, with its two memorials: the Buxton Memorial drinking-fountain celebrates the Anti-Slavery Society,

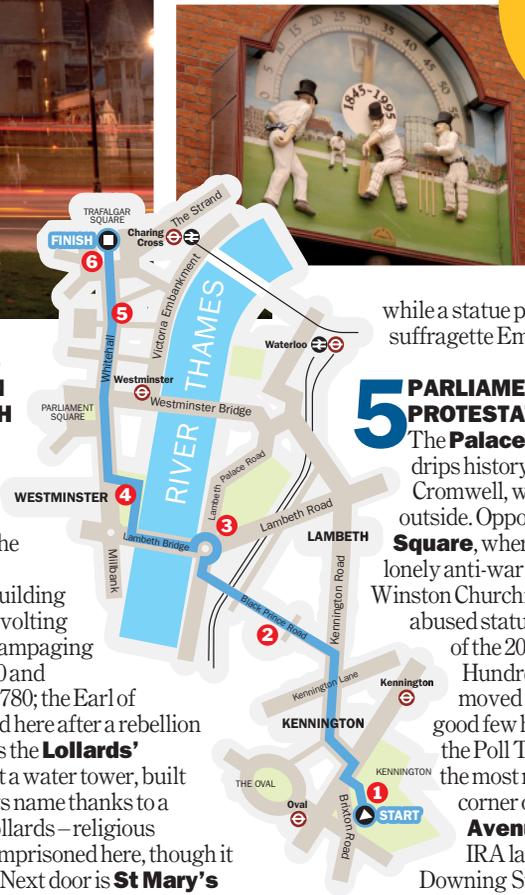
while a statue pays tribute to suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst.

## 5 PARLIAMENTARY PROTESTATION

The **Palace of Westminster** drips history, from Guy Fawkes to Cromwell, with a statue to the latter outside. Opposite is **Parliament Square**, where Brian Haw keeps his lonely anti-war vigil. Beside him is Winston Churchill, whose cheekily abused statue was the iconic image of the 2000 May Day riot. Hundreds of protests have moved down Whitehall, and a good few have turned into riots, the Poll Tax riot of 1990 being the most memorable. On the corner of **Horse Guard's Avenue** is the spot where the IRA launched a mortar at Downing Street in 1991. Nearby is the **McDonald's** that anti-capitalists attacked on May Day 2000.

## 6 BATTLES OF TRAFALGAR

End at **Trafalgar Square**, home of many riots and revolts over the years. It was the site of the original Bloody Sunday in 1887, a left-wing protest that featured speeches from George Bernard Shaw and Annie Besant and ended in a police charge that killed three. Bertrand Russell's radical pacifist group, the Committee of 100, also met here in 1961; Russell, 89, was arrested in the ensuing fracas and spent a week in prison. He's in good company: John Osborne, George Melly and Venessa Redgrave were also arrested at demos in the '60s.



**EAT AND DRINK HERE** Garden Cafe Museum of Garden History, Lambeth Palace Road SE1 (020 7401 8865). Open Tue-Sat 10.30am-4.45pm. Cafe Madeira 46a-46b Albert Embankment, Vauxhall SE1 (020 7820 1117).