

# Introduction

## CHANGING LONDON

Originally published in 1991, *The Green London Way* was the first long-distance footpath encircling London – and one of the first entirely urban long-distance footpaths in the country. In a dynamic city such as London – and London is one of the most dynamic capital cities in the world – it is inevitable that there have been considerable changes since then, and one of the most significant changes has been in our attitude to urban walking itself. What was once regarded as a rather cranky idea has now been enthusiastically embraced – including by some of those who rejected it at the time – and it even has its own celebrity adherents. This acceptance of the value of urban walking in its own right, and not just as a poor relation of a ‘real’ rural walk, can only be welcomed. It marks a change in attitude, an acceptance of a different sort of landscape, and a realisation of the richness that an urban exploration has to offer. It has led not just to an increase in the usage of London’s paths, and therefore to a greater likelihood of their preservation, but also to the opening up of a number of new routes, including some through areas previously inaccessible. This new edition of *The Green London Way* has made full use of these – from the new route down the Wandle in west London through to the New River Path in the east. If there is an attendant danger in this otherwise welcome change, it could be said to reside in the plethora of signage that is now springing up around these routes, a version of the clutter that is now affecting our footpaths in the same way as it has long marred our streets. It is not uncommon for three or four different ‘approved’ routes to be signed along a single path, with the record so far held by a point on the Greenwich peninsula where no less than twelve pedestrian and cycle routes are signed at a single junction. The wary walker would be advised not to rely too heavily on any of them. The turning round of footpath signs to point in random wrong directions is a regular pastime in the capital, as though we were determined to slow the progress of any invader. There is an additional danger – as there is with our rural paths – that signed and ‘major’ routes may come to be seen as the ‘approved’ ones, with a consequent threat to the survival of the great network of minor and often uncelebrated paths that underpin them.

The route of *The Green London Way* is a journey around our social history. It is also intended, however, as a journey around the capital’s natural history – and this is the second area of significant change since the first edition was published. In the twenty years that have intervened we have seen the decline of

a number of species; the willow tit has disappeared as a London bird, the lesser spotted woodpecker is on its way out, and there have been worrying declines in many of our most familiar species: the house sparrow, song thrush, starling, house martin and swift. But there have been gains too; the great spotted woodpecker, the goldfinch and the long-tailed tit are now far more common. There are peregrine falcons nesting in locations right into the heart of London, an even greater number of inland cormorants, and some completely new arrivals – the lesser egret for example. It is in this last category that perhaps the most noticeable change has taken place. Twenty years ago the ring-necked parakeet was a curiosity found in a few isolated locations in west and south east London. Today it is almost everywhere, and for large sections of *The Green London Way* it is true to say that the commonest bird ‘song’ you will hear is the distinctive shriek of the parakeet.

There have been changes in the plant world too, and perhaps the most significant of these has been the increase in our urban fern population. It has taken decades for the impacts of the original Clean Air Acts to work through but today, with the air in the capital far less polluted, both lichens and ferns are far more abundant. Where once a single fern was a rare sight you can now see stretches of wall adorned with a male fern, wall rue, black spleenwort, harts-tongue, polypody, maidenhair spleenwort and more. This is a welcome reminder that legislation can, where there is a will, genuinely reverse environmental degradation. Equally welcome has been the growth of a far more wildlife-friendly approach to the management of open spaces. This means more nature reserves and ecological parks and, even more significantly, a different approach to the management regimes of ordinary urban parks and cemeteries. Twenty years ago, when the greater part of London parkland could have been characterised as a ‘green desert’, an area of uncut grass in a park would generally have been the result of a failure in the mowing regime. Today, as is evidenced along *The Green London Way*, parks all over the city deliberately maintain uncut areas as ‘meadow’, thus simultaneously increasing biodiversity, adding visual interest and cutting costs.

There is also a danger in this change in attitude. It has been particularly manifest in the well-intentioned but largely indiscriminate sowing of ‘wild flower’ seed in order to create an ‘instant’ flora. This has become a lazy and completely misplaced practice. It involves plants that are not local to the area in which they are being sown, and indeed, in some cases plants that are not native to this country at all – witness the amount of Austrian chamomile that has been sown in place of the native version. It involves plants that are not right for the habitat in which they are being planted, and it totally ignores the fact that brownfield sites and other urban spaces have their own rich form of flora which would flourish if only we allowed it to. A striking example of this is to be found along the Greenway and around the Olympic site at Stratford, where artificially sown ‘wild’ flowers now compete with a rich, original flora – and where this form of management seems to be in total ignorance of the fact that in the danewort, or lesser elder, the site already hosted one of London’s specialities. The idea, of course, whether conscious or not, is that wildlife is alright as long as we legitimise it; as long as it is managed and tidy and in the approved places. It is

an idea that has led to such contradictions as the bulldozing of a brownfield site in order to create a ‘nature reserve’ or the damming of the tidal Lea accompanied by the creation of permitted ‘wetland areas’.

But there is a third and final area of change which is perhaps the most significant. It is, of course, the continuing pressure of development, and at a pace which, in London, seems to belie the existence of any national or international recession. Change in a city is not just inevitable but healthy, and it has brought some improvements to *The Green London Way* – such as the opening up of the Royal Arsenal site in Woolwich, where we are now able to walk amongst some of its finest old buildings rather than peer at them through a rusting fence. But what is disturbing is the pace and the scale of the change, with whole new districts hastily thrown up, usually for the benefit of a very restricted section of our society. The result has been a new anonymity, a loss of neighbourhood and local identity and with it, the associated perils attached to the belief that ‘community’ can be created rather than having to grow organically. This scale of development, it has to be said, is more evident in the eastern half of London than in the west. The part of London that suffered most from poverty and deprivation, that endured the greatest concentration of heavy and often unhealthy industry, that was then most battered by wartime enemy bombardment, is now the part of London that is suffering most from dislocating and disruptive development, and from the destruction of existing communities. This is evident along *The Green London Way* in Stratford and around the ‘Olympic fringes’, in East Ham and Beckton and around the site of the old Royal docks, across the North Greenwich peninsula and all along the riverside from Woolwich to Greenwich. Here, in many cases, a sense of specific location has been lost in the creation of hasty placeless spaces that could be, literally, anywhere.

But London survives, as a wonderful mosaic of peoples and places and cultures, of history and natural history, and of an almost inexhaustible store of stories. In the preparation of this new edition, and in the light of all these changes – both for better and for worse – *The Green London Way* has been completely rewalked and revised. As a result of this, several sections of the route have been significantly improved and, to mark the Olympic site and the shift in the focus of London eastwards, the beginning and the end of the overall circuit have been relocated from Finsbury Park to Stratford. With these changes this new edition will, it is hoped, continue to provide a living commentary on London, one of the most splendid and fascinating cities in the world.

## The Green London Way

*The Green London Way* is a long-distance footpath for London. It is a circular route of nearly 110 miles, not around London but through it. It brings the idea of the long-distance way right into the country’s largest city. At the same time it is a route which divides into 18 separate and easily manageable walks, each one with its own distinctive character.

*The Green London Way* links river and canal, towpath and abandoned

railway line, urban footpath and little-known alley, park and common, woodland and heath. It is an introduction to the best and most beautiful of London's open spaces. But it is not intended as an urban equivalent of the rural ramble; it is a mistake to approach even the city's largest and wildest open spaces – Bostall Wood, Wimbledon Common, Horsenden Hill – as a scaled-down version of the countryside. Urban walking is of a different order and requires a different sort of appreciation. Approached without preconceptions this exploration of London offers constant surprises and unexpected rewards, uncovering unsuspected routes and magnificent yet little-known buildings; but more than this, it reveals hidden facets of history and a surprising wealth of wildlife. And even in the most squalid of surroundings there can be a strange beauty that is completely unconventional. *The Green London Way* provides an overview of London's natural history, of its social history, and of the connections between the two. In particular it illustrates the struggles which have taken place, and which continue to take place, to preserve the city's open spaces.

Geologically London is a conveniently distinct unit. It is generally described as a basin, but in diagrammatic form more nearly resembles two soup bowls placed one inside the other. The outer, and higher, rim of these bowls is formed by chalk, which outcrops to the north of London as the Chilterns and to the south as the North Downs, both of which lie well outside the reaches of our route. The inner rim is formed by the well-known London clay, blue or orange, and heavy to work. At its highest points the clay is up to 300 feet thick and forms a ridge which constitutes sections of our route. In South London we follow it from Forest Hill to Streatham; in North London, from Haringey to Hampstead, where it is capped with sandy gravels, and then again when it outcrops at Harrow-on-the-Hill. From these high places London slopes down across the clay towards the river. The Thames today is only a fraction of its former size and during its fluctuations over previous millennia it has cut several much wider valleys which survive in the form of terraces to north and south of the existing river route. These terraces are particularly distinct to the south of the river and are capped with sandy and gravelly soils laid down by water action. These poor acidic soils made them less attractive for agriculture; they thus became common lands and to some extent this helped save them from development. This has given us the long line of heaths and Commons which we pick up on our walks at Blackheath and which stretches all the way from Plumstead to Lesnes Abbey Woods. It was the modern Thames which fashioned the city of London, however, and sections of our walk follow the Thames Path, as well as paths that follow its tributaries – the Wandle, the Lea, the Ravensbourne and the Brent.

Though concealed by so much concrete, the geology and the topography of London still have a striking impact upon its natural history. The oak woodlands of Oxleas or Horsenden are on the heavy clay. There are remnants of heathland flora on the sandy gravels of Hampstead, Bostall and even Blackheath. Walthamstow Marshes survives in the low valley of the Lea, and the wildlife of East London has an estuarine influence as the Thames valley broadens and flattens on its approach to the sea.

The impact of the human species upon this landscape is obvious and the

growth of the city has brought with it development and destruction – and an enormous loss of life forms and their habitats. But there is another side to the picture, which is less often painted. The story of London’s wildlife is an illustration of the tremendous recuperative power of nature. It is demonstrated in almost every street; by the lichen which grows on the pavement, the moss which grows on top of a wall and the wild plants which spring up at the bottom of a lamp-post. If humans built railways, it was foxes which travelled along the embankments. If we built and abandoned a gasworks, then partridge and little owl moved in to nest in the ruins. If old filter beds fell into disuse then in a few years they were colonised by willows, newts and herons. One of the most enduring images of *The Green London Way* is the sight of a skylark singing its heart out above a gas holder.

In addition to this ‘recuperation’, many developments in London actually brought new species with them. One hundred and fifty years ago some of our most familiar species, birds and plants which we take for granted, like the black-headed gull or the buddleia, could not have been seen in London. Reservoirs and waste tips brought the gulls, bomb-sites brought the rose-bay willow herb, power stations gave nest sites for the black redstart, and tower blocks and school belfries, homes for the kestrel. It is significant that the special conditions of London – which might be summarised as its walls and its warmth – facilitated the spread of a whole variety of species from many different parts of the globe. London’s flora, like its human population, is international, and gives the lie to the conservationists’ cliché that ‘native’ is good and ‘alien’ is doubtful.

London has its own selection of rare – or at least unusual – species and many of them are mentioned in these pages: dyers greenweed on Horsenden Hill, danewort along the Greenway, Essex skipper butterflies at Walthamstow Marshes, tropical grass on the Regents Canal. But the common confusion – that what is most unusual is therefore most interesting – should be avoided. *The Green London Way* should also help to increase our awareness and our appreciation of what is ‘common’; of the plants, birds and animals which struggle for survival – and which succeed – all around us.

It is clear that the natural history of London is inextricably linked with its social history. The history of the people who have made, and make up, London is another main theme of *The Green London Way*. For the most part the ‘famous names’ approach, the focus on monarchs and their ministers, has been avoided. It has to be said, however, that this rule has been broken wherever a story has been too good not to tell, or where it has related to an unexpected local connection. The unexceptional Montacute Road near Catford, for example, is cue to the story of the murder of Edward II. The suburban Uxendon Crescent near Preston Road leads into the story of the Babington plot to spring Mary Stuart from prison. And of course the ‘famous names’ have always been admitted where they part of a struggle over rights of access or the ownership of a common. For the most part, however, the focus here has been the lost history of the ordinary people of London. Too often our approach to history, particularly as it is practised in guide books, turns ordinary people into the objects, even the victims, of history. Here they are seen as its makers. In

Newham, for example, the view of the tower blocks leads to an account of the struggles by their occupants: against local and national opposition, they were able to prove that these buildings were unfit to live in, and to bring about the decision to demolish them. Or, on Blackheath, we come across the story of not one but three different peasant uprisings that changed the course of British history. And these stories are not only about struggles but also about a city's ability to celebrate: the great anarchic displays of public exuberance which found expression in the Charlton Horn Fair or in the Garrat mock elections.

There is one particular way in which the lives and efforts of ordinary people have shaped the history of London and which is demonstrated time after time in this book. It is a remarkable fact, and one which cannot be repeated often enough, that almost every park, common, heath and wood of London has had to be fought for at some time in its history. The creation, and the preservation, of London's open spaces is a result of the struggles of the city's people. From Highgate Woods to Norwood Grove, from Wimbledon Common to the Lea Valley, almost every inch of open space has been lobbied over, campaigned about, and demonstrated for – sometimes with a physical battle. The stories of these struggles are some of the most exciting and inspiring of our journey. In Plumstead and in Forest Hill people marched in their thousands to save their commons. In Richmond it was a lone local brewer who took on the courts and the monarchy to re-establish the right of access to the park. In Hampstead fifteen different parliamentary bills had to be defeated in the struggle to preserve the heath. In Streatham local people turned out in secret to tear down gates and fences on the common as fast as the Lord of the Manor could put them up. And in scores of less dramatic cases, local residents set up committees, raised funds, pressurised Councils, challenged developers or contested Enquiries. The open spaces of London today are a monument to their efforts.

This tradition of struggle has been a long one. The earliest account along *The Green London Way* concerns the people of Norwood and Forest Hill, who, in the seventeenth century, marched behind the Reverend Colfe into the City to petition the king for the saving of West Wood. From then on, one account follows another, reaching an apogee in the nineteenth century, the period of London's most rapid expansion. The Victorians were great developers – but they were also passionate defenders of London's open spaces. It was Victorians who were prepared to break the law and to go to prison in defence of Plumstead Common and One Tree Hill, and the Victorians, too, who produced writers with a caustic wit that was frequently brought to bear in books and articles on the subject, and which are often quoted within these pages.

The struggle for London's open spaces is as intense today as it ever was. If, in 1990, the Department of Transport had accepted the recommendations of its own consultants, it would have ushered in the destruction of open spaces on such a scale as to make *The Green London Way* impossible. Walthamstow and Hackney Marshes, the three mile Parkland Walk, Horniman Gardens, Dulwich Park, most of the South London commons and even the leafy suburbs of Kew would all have been covered in tarmac or sliced through the middle for major new road schemes. It was the vociferous, passionate and often imaginative

campaigning of dozens of groups, both local and London-wide, that led to the defeat of these proposals. Yet new road schemes, and new road widening schemes, continue to be put forward. The threat to London's open spaces continues, in the form of big development projects, but also in the more insidious but continuous nibbling away of small sites, with no account being taken of the cumulative impact of these losses. It is as a contribution to the continuing struggles to preserve London as a place fit to live in that this book has been written.

## Using this Book

*The Green London Way* has been written for armchair as well as for active walkers. For this reason, and to maintain a narrative flow, it has been divided into chapters each dealing with a different part of London. The chapters describe one or two walks which are numbered in clockwise order around London, beginning and ending at Stratford in east London. The map which accompanies each walk is intended as an overview and for general context; for full route details the walker will need to refer to the written route instructions. It might also be useful to take on walks a London street map book. As well as being of assistance should any route-finding problems arise, it also allows for the fact that London is a living and therefore an ever-changing city. The street guide would help a walker negotiate a way around temporary closures or any other changes which might have occurred since the time of publication.

The London transport network has undergone further improvement since the last edition – most notably with the expansion of the Dockland Light Railway and the development of London Overground – and every walk now begins and ends at a station. The location of bus, train and underground stations are shown on the maps and set out in more detail in the text. Each walk begins with a section entitled 'Getting started'. This shows how to begin the walk from the nearest public transport facilities and how the walk connects with the previous walk in the circuit. The walk is then described in several stretches, the narrative for each section of the walk being preceded by an introduction, and information on the route, facilities and wildlife to look out for (though it should be noted that these can be subject to fairly rapid change). The 'Looking at Wildlife' section aims to summarise the main natural history features of each section of the walk, and points out particular species of trees, wild flowers, animals, birds or insects to look out for. There will often be further detail on this in the text. But there has been no attempt in this book to help with the identification of animals and plants: it would have been an impossible task, and the reader is referred to the many excellent field guides available for this purpose. Each section ends with information on 'getting home', detailing transport connections from the finishing point of the walk.

With the help of these instructions, and with the text that accompanies each section of *The Green London Way*, the walker and the reader will find themselves exploring new aspects of London and of its life. Savour it. And help to save it.

## About the Walks

The 18 separate walks that make up *The Green London Way* vary from 3½ to 8 miles in length, beginning and ending at points well served by public transport. The one exception to this rule is the Woolwich and the Woodlands walk described in Chapter 2. At 9 ½ to 10 ½ miles, depending on which alternative you use, it is longer than most and is the only circular walk in the book.

It is easy to combine different walks together to make longer routes and instructions are always given to link a walk to the ones before and after it. It should be remembered however that urban walking can be more tiring, though in a different way, than country walking and that longer routes would remove the element of exploration which has been seen as an important part of this book. Although urban walking requires no special equipment, good footwear is important. Most routes cover rough ground and some can be muddy, especially in winter. Stretches of road, or even of tarmac path, can also be very demanding on the feet.

The walks in this book can be undertaken at any time of year. In the preparation of this book they have been walked at almost every time of day and throughout the seasons; in conditions varying from summer drought to deep snow. Like the countryside, London has different atmospheres in different weathers and there are even stretches that have been most enjoyed in the rain. The walks can be – and have been – easily adapted to suit children and to help with this details have been included of some additional attractions to keep them interested along the way.

For help in making a choice of routes, the 18 walks are summarised below.

### WALK 1: STRATFORD TO NORTH WOOLWICH

Stratford town centre, Channelsea Path, the Greenway, Beckton and the District Park, the Royal Docks and Thames riverside, the Woolwich Ferry and foot tunnel.

**Distance:** 7½ miles

**Terrain:** Easy terrain with just a few ups and downs on the Mitchell Walk through Beckton. Very few stretches on roads.

**Main features:** An unusual walk which leads out of Stratford and along the top of Bazalgette's great embanked sewer, then down through Beckton to the riverside and the old Royal Docks. It includes such curious features as the Beckton Alps – an artificial hill built on gas works slag – and a footpath which runs across two sets of dock gates.

### WALK 2: ABBEY WOODS AND SHOOTERS HILL

Woolwich riverside, the Royal Arsenal and Beresford Square market, Plumstead and Winn's Commons, Bostall Heath and Woods, Lesnes Abbey and Woods, Oxleas Wood, Castle Woods and Severndroog Castle, Eltham and Woolwich Commons.

**Distance:** 10½ miles

**Terrain:** Includes woodland paths and can be muddy at times. Little road walking, mostly at the beginning and end, though the closure of access to Woodlands Farm has added a short stretch of road walking in the middle of the walk.

**Main features:** A long circular walk – though it can be shortened at several points. After the initial climb up from the riverside it is almost entirely ‘rural’ and links commons, heaths, a beautiful ruined abbey, a folly and a string of ancient woodlands.

### **WALK 3: WOOLWICH TO GREENWICH**

Woolwich Common, Charlton Park and Charlton Village, Maryon and Maryon Wilson Parks, Gilbert’s Pit, the Thames Barrier, the Greenwich peninsula and the Thames Path to Greenwich.

**Distance:** 7 miles

**Terrain:** Easy terrain with a gentle initial ascent and minimal road walking.

**Main features:** A walk which is particularly rich in history and crosses relatively wild open spaces, attractive parks and an interesting stretch of river. It includes the fascinating but little-known Charlton House, one of best Jacobean houses in Britain, as well as a site of special geological interest, the Cutty Sark and the beautiful buildings of the Greenwich riverside – from a power station to a palace.

### **WALK 4: GREENWICH TO FOREST HILL**

Greenwich and Greenwich Park, Blackheath and The Point, River Ravensbourne and the Waterlink Way, Hilly Fields, Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries, Ladywell Fields, Blythe Hill Fields, One Tree Hill, Horniman Gardens.

**Distance:** 8 miles

**Terrain:** Easy terrain but with several ascents. A few stretches of road walking.

**Main features:** A varied walk primarily linked by a series of south London hills – with panoramic views over the city – with stretches of the River Ravensbourne in between. It includes Greenwich Park and the Observatory buildings, a corner of Blackheath, important in the Peasant’s Revolt, and One Tree Hill, site of one of the most exciting battles to preserve our open spaces. The modern Ladywell Fields provide an excellent example of how an urban river can be ‘renaturalised’, and the route ends beside the Horniman Museum, well worth a visit in itself.

### **WALK 5: FOREST HILL TO CRYSTAL PALACE**

Horniman Gardens, Dulwich Wood and Sydenham Hill Wood, Sydenham Wells Park, Crystal Palace Park.

**Distance:** 4 miles

**Terrain:** Includes woodland paths that can be muddy at times. Minimal road walking.

**Main features:** A short walk starting at the Horniman Museum and including both the beautiful woodlands at Dulwich and the large park built for the old Crystal Palace, best known for its ‘prehistoric monsters’.

### **WALK 6: CRYSTAL PALACE TO BALHAM**

Dulwich Upper Wood, Norwood Park, Norwood Grove, Streatham Common and The Rookery, Russell’s Path and Tooting Common.

**Distance:** 5½ miles

**Terrain:** Easy terrain with two stretches of road walking and some mild ascent.

**Main features:** The high point of the walk is the complex of commons and public gardens around Streatham, including the very attractive Rookery. From here, Russell’s Path, a surprisingly long stretch of urban footpath, leads on towards the wooded sections of Tooting Common.

### **WALK 7: BALHAM TO WIMBLEDON**

Wandsworth Common and the Scope, Wandsworth Cemetery, the Wandle Valley, Wimbledon.

**Distance:** 5 miles

**Terrain:** Mostly easy though some stretches of the Wandle riverside can be muddy at times. Short stretches of road walking at the beginning and end.

**Main features:** Links Wandsworth Common with Wimbledon across the Wandle valley, taking in Wandsworth Cemetery and a long stretch of the newly opened up Wandle riverside. It also incorporates some rich historic connections – such as the story of the Garratt mock elections.

### **WALK 8: WIMBLEDON TO RICHMOND**

Wimbledon, Cannizaro Park, Wimbledon Common, Richmond Park, Pembroke Lodge, Petersham Common, Richmond riverside.

**Distance:** 8 miles

**Terrain:** Varied terrain which could be muddy at times. Very little road walking.

**Main features:** A particularly beautiful walk and one which proves that it is possible to go for miles in some parts of London without ever reverting to a road. It includes the little known gem of Cannizaro Park, the wide – and surprisingly wild – open space of Wimbledon Common and Richmond Park, the beautiful Isabella Plantation, a ‘secret’ vista from the top of King Henry’s Mound and a striking descent to the riverside.

### **WALK 9: RICHMOND TO KEW BRIDGE**

Richmond, Richmond Palace, Thames Path, Old Deer Park and Kew Gardens.

**Distance:** 3½ miles

**Terrain:** Easy terrain with virtually no road walking.

**Main features:** Includes Richmond Green and the remains of the once-important palace of Richmond, followed by a walk along the Thames Path with views of Syon House and Isleworth on the opposite bank and of some of the Thames islands.

### **WALK 10: KEW BRIDGE TO HANWELL**

Waterside Park, Brentford and The Butts, River Brent and the Grand Union Canal, Fitzherbert Walk, Wharncliffe Viaduct and Hanwell

**Distance:** 5 miles

**Terrain:** Some stretches can be muddy at times – especially along the Fitzherbert Walk. Little road walking.

**Main features:** Another particularly good walk which begins on the north bank of the Thames and then runs through the old part of Brentford, including ‘The Butts’. It then follows the River Brent and the Grand Union Canal up as far as the famous Hanwell flight of locks and then back onto the River Brent as far as the dramatic Wharncliffe Viaduct.

### **WALK 11: HANWELL TO GREENFORD**

Wharncliffe Viaduct and Church Fields, Brent Lodge Park, Bole’s Meadows, Perivale Park.

**Distance:** 4 miles

**Terrain:** Easy riverside walking with minimal road walking.

**Main features:** A short walk which continues to follow the River Brent through a string of riverside parks and meadows – including a small free zoo and some surprisingly rural stretches.

### **WALK 12: GREENFORD TO SOUTH KENTON**

Grand Union Canal, Horsenden Hill and Woods, Harrow-on-the-Hill and Northwick Park.

**Distance:** 6 miles

**Terrain:** Varied terrain including ascents and stretches which can be muddy. Includes one central section on roads.

**Main features:** A very attractive walk with some excellent views. Horsenden Hill ranks high amongst London’s open spaces and Harrow-on-the-Hill, whatever you make of it, is unique.

### **WALK 13: SOUTH KENTON TO BRENT CROSS**

Barn Hill and the Fryent Way Country Park, West Hendon Playing Fields and the Welsh Harp Reservoir, Brent Cross

**Distance:** 6 miles

**Terrain:** Can be very muddy in winter and includes ascents. Some stretches of road walking.

**Main features:** A walk which includes two more of the most valuable open spaces in London; the Fryent Way Country Park has the most extensive areas of ancient meadows along the route, while the Welsh Harp Reservoir and its wooded edges are rich in bird life. This is a walk of contrasts, from the quiet open heights of Barn Hill, and its views across to the new Wembley stadium, along little used paths around the reservoir and on to the busy bunker of Brent Cross.

#### **WALK 14: BRENT CROSS TO HAMPSTEAD**

Hendon Park, Brent Park, Brookside Walk, Hampstead Garden Suburb, Big Wood and Little Wood, Hampstead Heath and Hampstead.

**Distance:** 5½ miles

**Terrain:** Varied terrain some of which can be muddy at times. After two initial stretches, virtually no road walking.

**Main features:** An interesting and varied walk that begins at the hideous Brent Cross but soon follows the upper reaches of the River Brent and its tributary, the Mutton Brook, to reach Hampstead Garden Suburb, a fascinating experiment in social engineering. The final section crosses a corner of the heath to reach Hampstead and includes The Hill, perhaps the most beautiful public garden in London.

#### **WALK 15: HAMPSTEAD TO FINSBURY PARK**

Hampstead, Hampstead Heath and Kenwood, Highgate, Highgate Wood and Queens Wood, Parkland Walk.

**Distance:** 7 miles

**Terrain:** Varied and includes woodland and heathland paths that can be muddy at times. A small amount on roads but always interesting.

**Main features:** One of the best walks in the book with two famous urban 'villages', a slice of one of London's largest heaths, the restrained splendour of Kenwood House, two ancient woodlands and a final three mile stretch along an abandoned railway line.

#### **WALK 16: FINSBURY PARK TO CLAPTON**

Finsbury Park, New River Path, Stoke Newington Reservoirs, Clissold Park, Church Street and the 'village' area of Stoke Newington, Abney Park Cemetery, Walthamstow Marshes and the River Lea.

**Distance:** 6½ miles

**Terrain:** Easy terrain with some stretches of road walking but of significant interest in themselves.

**Main features:** A very varied walk including a stretch along the man-made ‘New’ River, bird-rich reservoirs, attractive parks, a historic urban village, an overgrown cemetery and the magnificent Walthamstow Marshes; a unique site in central London and the only extensive marshland on *The Green London Way*.

### **WALK 17: CLAPTON TO VICTORIA PARK**

Millfields, Middlesex Filter Beds Nature Reserve, the ‘Old Lea’ and Hackney Marshes, Wick Woods, Mabley Green, Victoria Park, Regents Canal.

**Distance:** 5 miles

**Terrain:** Easy terrain. Little road walking.

**Main features:** An easy walk which includes a new nature reserve in abandoned filter beds, an attractive riverside stretch, some newly created woodland and East London’s largest park, now being restored to something resembling its grand Victorian original.

### **WALK 18: VICTORIA PARK TO STRATFORD**

Regents Canal and Hertford Union Canal, the Greenway and the Olympic Park, Bow Back Rivers, Three Mills, Mill Meads.

**Distance:** 4½ miles

**Terrain:** Easy terrain although the area around Mill Meads can be muddy and overgrown. Very little road walking.

**Main features:** A fascinating walk leading along east London canals onto a walkway with a panoramic view of the Olympic site. It also includes the Bow Back Rivers, with a particular atmosphere of their own, the fascinating Three Mills site and the Abbey Mills sewage pumping station – the ‘cathedral of sewage’ and one of the most beautiful buildings in London.

### **Keeping abreast of changes: *The Green London Way* website**

London continues to change, and perhaps more rapidly than ever. To mark this new edition, Lawrence and Wishart plan to establish a *Green London Way* web-link where people can send in their comments or other information. To help keep the route up to date, walkers are invited to post any changes they come across, whether temporary or permanent. They are also welcome to point out any errors in the text, to post comments and suggestions, or stories of their walks – or to join in creating a record of all those who have walked the entire circuit.

For more information go to [www.lwbooks.co.uk/books/archive/green\\_london.html](http://www.lwbooks.co.uk/books/archive/green_london.html)