

Leisurely Walks (October 2020 to September 2022)

Here is a record of our leisurely walks in iU3A. There's a link to the detail of each walk at the end of each section. For more recent walks, go to our web page [here](#)

The Covid19 Pandemic interrupted our schedule of Leisurely walks. Hence some of the gaps below.

October 2020



Rotherhithe (October): we started in the heart of Rotherhithe Village with coffee at the Watch House, taken al fresco in the adjoining St Mary's Churchyard gardens. Then leaving behind the narrow, cobbled streets we headed for the river and strolled along the Thames Path admiring the views for a mile or so before turning inland to enter Russia Dock Woodland. We continued on the main path through this extensive area, passing streams, ponds and water birds, and briefly visited the Ecological Park. The high point of the walk was climbing Stave Hill, an artificial hill made by using waste material and rubble. A cast bronze relief map of the former docks stands at the top of the hill. With rain clouds gathering most headed back to Rotherhithe station but some stayed for lunch and more conversation at the riverside Salt Quay pub.

November

No walk.

December

Victoria Park (December): during a brief period of no lockdown or other restrictions the Group managed a walk from Hackney Wick to and around Victoria Park.

January 2021

No walk.

February

No walk.

March

No walk.

April

Shoreditch High Street to Hoxton (April): this was a pleasant typical inner London walk. After leaving Shoreditch High Street Station we walked along Sclater Street, crossed Brick Lane (not so busy these days) and passed St Matthew's Church. We crossed Bethnal Green Road and turned into Columbia Road (the home of Columbia Road Flower Market, also quiet on a weekday), and then walked through the park next to Hackney City Farm and through Haggerston Park. After a short stretch along the canal path we stopped for coffee at the Chalet Café. We then wound our way toward Hoxton Street, which led us through Hoxton Market and to Hoxton station. It was not the warmest day but at least there was no rain.

May

Regent's Park: despite the persistent drizzle, four walkers enjoyed a walk around the delightful flowerbeds and magnificent trees of Regent's Park. We visited the St John's Lodge garden, admiring tulips which seem to be intent on flowering indefinitely this spring. Queen Mary's rose garden was on the cusp of bursting into bloom with a few brave roses already starting to flower. Somehow, in the rain, the Japanese garden looked even more beautiful than usual. The lake provided bird-life entertainment including herons and coots with fluffy chicks.



June



Tower Hamlets Cemetery and Mile End Park — the quiet, shady paths of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park turned out to be perfect for a leisurely walk on a hot, sunny morning. Only five minutes from busy, noisy Mile End Road, we saw almost no-one and heard only birdsong, following the Heritage Trail past monuments and headstones through this nature reserve. There were wild plants flourishing amongst the many old neglected gravestones and lining the woodland paths. The group photo shows us at the highest point, by the Francis Vault, which had been designed with a brick removed from a wall

so that the sun would shine through a wrought iron cross in a door on the western side of the vault at dawn on Midsummer's Day. After an hour or so, we left the cool of the cemetery to join the Ackroyd Drive Greenlink meadows, stopping for coffee outside in the shade at the Bow Brew café, before walking back to the station through Mile End Park.

July

Kenwood — eight of us walked from Gospel Oak station past the Highgate Ponds — Men's Bathing, Boating and Women's Bathing, but no actual bathing, except by dogs, due to the recent torrential rain. We then ascended the hill up to Kenwood House where we enjoyed a coffee break in the sun at the Brew House after appreciating the herbaceous borders in full flower in the kitchen garden. Next came the Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore sculptures before a descent on a narrow path through the woods to the Viaduct, which survives from attempts to develop the Heath before it came into public ownership 150 years ago. We finished by walking down to Hampstead Heath station past the Mixed Bathing Pond and a large circus marquee.

August

Trent Park — 11 walkers followed the London Loop signpost from the car park by Cockfosters station, which avoided the busy Cockfosters Road by means of woods and fields. From the cafe, after walking through woods to the fishing lake and, at the end of a broad path, turning uphill through more woods to Camlet Moat, we stopped for a rest and photograph at the Sassoon Obelisk. From here we came straight down through the meadow and took a path to the Japanese Water Garden. Some of the new buildings (apartments, penthouses and detached houses), near Trent Park House could be seen from here.



Returning to the broad path we retraced our steps to the cafe. Some members decided to return to the station, others thought that lunch in the nearby pub, The Cock Inn, might be a good idea but we changed our minds when we discovered that only two members of staff were on duty. A great discovery, when we had almost given up on lunch, was Miracles Cafe and Restaurant in Cockfosters Parade close to the station. Thoroughly recommended are an HLT (grilled halloumi cheese with avocado, cherry tomatoes, lettuce, herbs and olives etc) and a Lemon Breezer (lime cordial, lemon and mint). Details [here](#).

September



Brixton to Herne Hill. From Brixton station we walked through Windrush Square passing the Ritzy Cinema and Tate Library and noting the various Black History monuments. Then through St Matthew's Churchyard (where John Major married Norma) to admire the newly planted fruit trees in the nearby small Brixton Orchard. There being fewer walkers than usual, we took a short diversion to visit the Brixton Windmill before going on to Brockwell Park Lido for a welcome coffee in the sunshine. We strolled around the park in warm, sunny weather taking in the wildlife ponds and The Walled Garden, which was looking lovely with its hot Autumn colours, then up to Brockwell Hall and views of the London skyline and downhill again for a short bus ride back to Brixton station. Details [here](#).

October 2021

Whitechapel to Wapping: on a glorious day, beautiful blue sky and quite warm in the sun nine of us (including some new group members) set off from Whitechapel station. We walked through the grounds of The Royal London Hospital and continued along Stepney Way to Stepney City Farm, which has a very nice cafe. After fortifying ourselves with coffee and cake we paid a short visit to St Dunstan & All Saints Church to see the stained glass windows and the 10th century Saxon Road (cross). We then walked through Limehouse to join the Thames Path where we stopped for a group photo with Canary Wharf in the background. From there we headed towards Shadwell Basin, Wapping Woods and the ornamental canal. We passed Tobacco Dock and then continued to Wapping. Details [here](#).



November

Kenwood: ten of us enjoyed this leisurely walk in beautiful autumn weather, a straightforward walk over the Heath with a coffee stop outdoors at The Spaniards.

December



Canning Town, East India Dock: 12 walkers took part. We crossed the River Lee from Canning Town station via the red bridge to City Island. Passing the English National Ballet School and the London Film School we came to Orchard Place where a series of panels 'celebrating the rich history of the area' produced by Urban Space management, founders of the Trinity Wharf Centre for creative enterprise, provided very interesting information. The Orchard Cafe, a former shipping container with a taxi and tree on its roof, was our coffee stop and we then went on to Trinity Buoy Lighthouse, unfortunately not open on weekdays so we couldn't see/hear Longplayer, a one thousand year long musical composition. It began playing at midnight on the 31st December 1999 and will continue to play without repetition until the last moment of 2999, at which point it will complete its cycle and begin again. Longplayer is composed for singing bowls — an ancient type of standing bell — which can be played by both humans and machines, and whose resonances can be very accurately reproduced in recorded form. It is designed to be adaptable to unforeseeable changes in its technological and social environments, and to endure in the long-term as a self-sustaining institution.

The Lighthouse is an experimental lighthouse — London's only remaining example — built in 1864. It was never used to aid navigation on the Thames but to experiment and develop lighting

equipment for the Trinity House network of lighthouses, lightships and buoys. It was the place where Michael Faraday worked as Trinity House's Scientific Adviser. In the 1840s he developed the lenses used in maritime lighting, and invented a chimney which solved the problem of condensation from oil lamps seriously reducing the light they produced. We saw more of the container city structures and quirky sculptures and then made our way back along Orchard Place and through East India Dock Nature Reserve with its tidal lagoon and saltmarsh (no birds in sight) to West India Dock Station.

January 2022

Regent's Park: This was a shared walk of 18 walkers and birdwatchers. We met at Great Portland St station and briefly visited the Medicinal Garden of the Royal College of Physicians on the way to St Katharine's, the 200 year old neo-Gothic Danish church. In the church garden we saw the Jelling Stone, which is an exact replica of the runic stone at Jelling in Jutland, Denmark. This is one of the oldest Danish historic monuments and was erected in 980 AD by King Harald the grandfather of King Canute and the first Christian king of Denmark.



Crossing the Outer Circle into Regent's Park we took The Broad Walk to the 'Ready Money' drinking fountain and then walked west towards the lake and eventually to the Winter Garden at the St John's Wood edge of the park. Most members of the group eventually met up at the Rose Garden cafe where the loos were free. Despite the St John's Lodge 'Secret Garden' being marked as closed on its website that morning, a small group, determined to see it, had found that it was open after all!

The following birds were observed: robin, long tailed tit, goldeneye, smew, egyptian goose, red crested pochard, wigeon, red-breasted merganser, mandarin duck, pintail, eider duck, great tit and blue tit. Walk details [here](#).

February



Paddington to Kensal Rise: eight walkers left Paddington Basin following the Grand Union canal path to Kensal Green. En route we visited Paddington's St Mary Magdalene Church to admire the Victorian pictorial ceiling — and shelter from the drizzle. Further along we meandered through the Meanwhile Community Gardens, stopping for coffee (and cake) at a canalside cafe before arriving at Kensal Green Cemetery, the first of The Magnificent Seven. Managing to dodge the puddles, we kept to the central path noting the ornate monuments and some of the many eccentric or famous residents. Passing the Grade 1 Listed Anglican Chapel, we left via the West Gate at Harrow Road for our journeys home.

March

Richmond: a selective group of members enjoyed this leisurely walk. After taking the Overground train round to Richmond from the station it was easy through Richmond Green to reach the Thames Path. We then followed the Path through Buccleugh Gardens and Terrace Gardens for a view immortalised by Turner and Reynolds. Next we entered Richmond Park at Pembroke Lodge Gardens and on to Petersham Park and Petersham Meadows, before picking up the Thames Path again and following it back to the station.

April

Kensington: Four people enjoyed a leisurely stroll and a good chat going around Kensington Gardens. We started at the lovely Italian Gardens and walked down beside the lake and back via the cafe at Kensington Palace. There was plenty to see with the spring flowers looking their best, Henry Moore's arch framing Kensington Palace, the ornate Albert Memorial and of course, the famous statue of Peter Pan which appeared overnight, put up illegally by Barrie himself as a surprise for the local children.



May



Sloane Square: overnight rain having freshened the air, eight walkers kept to the sunny side of the streets through Chelsea discovering Blue Plaques of famous writers' homes and pretty church gardens in Christchurch Street. Crossing the Albert Bridge we walked through Battersea Park, visiting the Old English Garden where both the roses and the sun came out so were glad of the shady paths we then followed beside a lake, glimpsing three terrapins and a heron lined up on a branch overhanging the water. Continuing through the park to join the riverside path going under Chelsea Bridge, we strolled around the new river frontage public park at Battersea Power Station,

having coffee outside at one of the cafes before returning home from the new tube station nearby.

June

Finsbury Park: this was an 'on-our-doorstep' walk and yet a few of the 10 walkers didn't know bits of it existed. Helped by pleasant weather we left H&I station, strolled through Highbury Fields cutting through to the quiet spaces surrounding the Emirates and on to Gillespie Park. We had a quick stop at the Ecology Centre then on to Finsbury Park where we stopped for a coffee. A couple left us there but the rest of us carried on over the railway bridge on to the Parkland Walk. Due to the popularity of this walk during the recent lockdowns the path has been widened but on a midweek day nowadays it's quiet. We didn't go all the way to Highgate but soon turned back to retrace our steps to Finsbury Park and our finish there.

July

No walk.

August

Regents Canal, Islington to Victoria Park: another 'from our doorstep' walk. We set off from Highbury & Islington with a bus down New North Road to Gainsborough Studios where we picked up the canal, following this east and dodging the occasional cyclist, to Victoria Park. We then had a coffee overlooking the pond. That was the end of the official walk but some stayed on to do a little circular stroll on the east side of the park before catching the bus back to Islington.

September 2022



Mill Hill East/Dollis Valley: seven walkers met at Woodside Park station, crossed the bridge and turned into Holden Avenue to see the Belarusian Memorial Chapel which is the first wooden church to be built in London since The Great Fire and the first memorial, outside Belarus, dedicated to the Chernobyl disaster. We had hoped to see inside but unfortunately the priest was unable to let us in as he had Covid. The website shows excellent photographs of the interior.

Then we turned into Holden Road and crossed over to the

footpath signposted Dollis Valley Greenwalk. Following the brook to the Sussex Ring we took an early coffee break at Vero Cafe and then continued our walk through the impressive Fursby Avenue allotments reaching the Dollis Brook viaduct, a 13 arch 60ft high structure completed in 1867, carrying the Northern Line from Finchley Central to Mill Hill East.

A short walk down Dollis Road took us back to the Greenwalk. We continued to a signpost and took the right hand path leading to Holders Hill Road where we turned right and enjoyed lunch at Cake Create opposite the entrance to Hendon Cemetery. Details [here](#).