



## Shorter Walks – October 2018 to Sept 2019



Here is a record of the iU3A Shorter Walks group walks from October 2018 through to September 2019.

Another full and varied programme of walks delivered.

For more recent visits and future plans, go to our [web page](#)

### October 2018



#### Stoke Newington to Olympic Park –

Eleven of us walked the five miles from Stoke Newington to Pudding Mill Station. Our first stop was for coffee in Springfield Park café and then our walk took us along the River Lee Navigation waterway, passing the Walthamstow Marsh Nature Reserve and taking in the Middlesex Filter Beds, which were constructed in 1852 to improve water for East London. We then followed the towpath between the River Lee Navigation and Hackney Marshes and

past the Queen Elizabeth Park. Our walk finished with lunch at the View Tube, a community café with excellent food, on the Greenway.

#### Thames Path – Richmond to Barnes

— A large group of 19 walkers enjoyed fine Autumn weather along the Thames Path. Starting in Richmond (fortunately at Low Tide as the path there floods regularly at High Tide), we were soon glimpsing Kew Gardens on our side of the river whilst enjoying splendid views of Syon House and the historic buildings of Old Isleworth across the water on the north bank. There's quite a rural feel to this stretch of the Thames and cormorants and herons were performing for us for much of the walk. We ended the walk in Barnes village where we were able to eat lunch by the pond on the common, or in the nearby pub.



## November

**Barnes Bridge to Putney —** Bright sunshine, warm breeze, blue skies — what could be better for the 14 walkers than the banks of the Thames on such a lovely day? We even sat outside for our coffee, before moving off alongside the Barnes Wetland Centre and Thames Path to Putney Bridge and into the lovely autumnal grounds of Fulham Palace. Even the secret walled garden had interesting plantation. We almost mislaid one of our walkers in the churchyard, but eventually found him conversing amiably with Palace staff, none the worse for the adventure, so all was well.



**Hadley Wood —** We had the most wonderful walk from High Barnet to Cockfosters in magnificent Autumn sun and almost Autumn colours. There were ten of us who walked through Hadley Wood and passed Jack's Lake, Dr Livingstone's and Fanny Trollope's houses, a 12th century church and medieval alms houses. We had our traditional 'light lunch' at The Cock Inn after.

## December

**Christmas Walk — Regent's Park & Primrose Hill —** An unexpected blue sky and sunshine greeted 25 walkers for our stroll around Regent's Park, after the previous night's torrential rain. We dropped into St John's Lodge's 'secret' garden, still lovely even out of season, then enjoyed the vibrant colours of the winter borders and the artistry of the Japanese garden, before skirting the lake with its thriving birdlife. Past the mosque and along the canal, we managed the climb up Primrose Hill to its never-disappointing views and finally into Lemonia for a well-earned delicious Greek lunch.





**City Walk — Tower Bridge to Blackfriars** — Our group was small but beautifully formed with three new members in the seven walkers. This walk was unusual as it was a 'stopping' walk, passing the ancient Tower of London and modern boats in St Katharine Docks. As we got festive, coffee was a great new find in the Science Museum café at Guy's. A shopping stop in Borough Market for food goodies was followed by the lovely Southwark Cathedral. The rain kept away for the final lap along the embankment to Tate Modern and then on to lunch at a real local, The Cockpit near Blackfriars. Sparkle and good company was the order of the day.

## January 2019



Thirteen walkers enjoyed a walk around **Greenwich Park and Blackheath** on a mild though cloudy day. Emerging from the tunnel at the Cutty Sark we walked along the Thames Path to the strains of Trinity College music students busily rehearsing, then uphill through the park admiring the views of the historic riverside buildings on the way. We diverted around Blackheath sticking to footpaths and imagining how lovely it must have been before the A2 traffic, then back into the

park to check if the Meridian Line was still there (it was) and lunch at the Pavilion restaurant before a downhill stroll back to Greenwich for the DLR. And no mud for the whole walk!

**Regent's Canal.** Our first 'pop up' walk for 2019 had a record number of walkers as 20 of us (including four first-timers) walked from Angel to Limehouse Basin along the Regent's Canal. It was a clear, crisp day with the sun trying to come out and just perfect for walking. The canal path was quiet but the canal itself was quite busy with boats moving around and boat chimneys burning fuel. There wasn't much birdlife on a cool winter's day apart from the usual coots and swans.





**Hampstead Heath.** Under stunningly blue skies fourteen walkers braved a wind-chill temperature of 2°. The early climb up Parliament Hill soon warmed us up and we continued past the sparkling Highgate Ponds, via Kenwood to Jack Straw's Castle where we heard (and finally saw) woodpeckers in the woodland as we approached the Pergola. Irises and even camellias were already in flower, as well as the expected snowdrops. After a diversion to visit the animal enclosure and aviary in Golders Hill Park (discovering that the Ring-tailed Lemur was actually a Coati), the temperature had risen enough for an alfresco lunch.

## February

**Regent's Canal.** In spite of dire weather warnings eight of us set off from Little Venice to walk the canal path to King's Cross. We were extremely lucky: there was only drizzle for a short period and we were quite protected on the path. After a lovely walk, in which we managed to negotiate the several diversions off the path, we stopped for coffee at the Regent's Park boathouse and lunch at King's Place. Walk details [here](#).



**Lee Valley Park, Cheshunt.** A repeat of a circular walk from last September, 16 walkers set off from Cheshunt station on this lovely peaceful walk alongside woods and water. The weather was amazing for February and it was warm enough for us to sit outside for coffee at the white water centre. Plenty of birds were spotted, including herons and cormorants, and one lucky walker saw her first ever kingfisher. The walk ended at Cheshunt where some of us had a bring-your-own lunch in the Windmill pub.

## March

**Bushy Park** — Bushy Park is relatively unknown to north Londoners, and far less manicured than many London parks, with rough grass, streams and large herds of deer. After crossing an expanse of grassland we entered the enclosed woodland garden, for a coffee break, continuing our walk through lovely flowering cherries and spring bulbs. We later discovered the newly restored water gardens, and our final treat was the Silver Birch glade, full of more colourful spring flowers. Following a stream to the Diana fountain we continued through the Lion Gate into the grounds of Hampton Court, where we either headed straight to the station, or had lunch in the Tiltyard Cafe before returning to Waterloo.



**Thames Path** Eight walkers headed off from Richmond station. First we took the Thames Path along a picturesque stretch of the river from Richmond to Marble Hill (with Egyptian geese and one very new gosling), followed by a ferry ride across the river to Petersham, a diversion into Richmond Park with lunch at the Pembroke Lodge, then the Thames Path back into Richmond. We luckily managed to avoid the high tides that had recently flooded the path.

**Highgate to Stoke Newington.** Mud, mud, glorious (!?) mud .... Fifteen of us met up at Highgate Station for our walk to Stoke Newington. The first section along the Parkland Walk to our Finsbury Park coffee stop was uneventful and we sat outside for our break. All went well until we got to the walk along the New River. We had been warned that it would be muddy, and it was! Thick and slippery for half a mile, but we all made it through despite very muddy boots and one pair of torn trousers. Things improved as we walked the second part of the New River and we stopped for lunch at the café in Clissold Park (mixed reviews). The walk ended with a gentle walk down Stoke Newington Church Street and through the Victorian Abney Park Cemetery.





**Forty Hall and Myddelton House gardens.** Definitely a walk for garden-lovers, we were rewarded by a magnificent show of spring flowers in both gardens. From Gordon Hill station we followed a rural stretch of the Turkey Brook past fishing lakes to the Forty Hall estate and coffee. The walled garden was brimming with daffodils and primulas under the blossom of magnolias and cherry trees. But Myddelton House garden's spring meadow was even more entrancing with glorious sweeps of blue camassia dotted with anemones and narcissi.

## April

**Borehamwood.** This was a relaxed 'easy' walk — easy travel, flat terrain and quiet. 14 walkers enjoyed the sunshine (note all the sunglasses) in this rough parkland and although it was quite cold the trees were starting to flower. The circular path ended in 'The Spinney', before a short walk back to Borehamwood High Street for lunch in the Shenley Bakery and Café. The new Station building had only just opened — they must have known we were coming — with sparkly toilets a bonus. Details [here](#).



**Banstead Woods.** The bluebells were splendiferous this year — eight of us enjoyed the seven mile walk around Banstead Woods in lovely rural countryside. It was a real breath of fresh air. The predicted rainstorm didn't materialise so it was perfect walking weather as well. Some of us stayed to a delicious outdoor lunch at the Rambler's Rest.

## May

**Richmond Park.** The azaleas in the Isabella Plantation were more spectacular than any of us could remember. The sun didn't manage more than the odd appearance but the seventeen walkers enjoyed a varied walk, along the Thames Path to the Petersham nurseries (where the wisteria bower made up for the eye-wateringly expensive coffee) then through the western part of Richmond Park via the stunning azaleas, and ending with an al fresco lunch at the lovely Pembroke Lodge.



**Cassiobury Park and Whippendell Woods.** Twelve of us set out from Watford underground station for our walk. After a few minutes we stopped for coffee in the garden of the Cassiobury Park café. We then walked through the park into some of the nature reserve woodlands, across a golf course and through a field before entering Whippendell Woods. There were some slopes, but none too long or steep — it was a beautiful day for walking and we all enjoyed the warm sunshine and blue skies. Coming back, we walked through the nature reserve then along a rural

stretch of the Grand Union canal before stopping at the cafe again for lunch in the garden.

**Dollis Valley Greenwalk.** Summer arrived suddenly after the cold winds and rain, for our last walk in May. Sixteen walkers set off from Totteridge station following the Dollis river (well more of a stream really) and were soon peeling off fleeces as we made our way through the green spaces of Barnet. Before long we were walking through meadows brimming with buttercups and clover and being challenged in butterfly-identification. The convenient Three Hammers pub in Mill Hill produced a decent lunch too. A lovely rural walk for an early summer's day — and so close to home.





**Colne Valley.** Our walk had been postponed from the previous week of rain and wind, but we didn't quite get away unscathed on the day. The shower didn't last long but unfortunately coincided with the path alongside the lake, so the birdlife was less in evidence than we'd hoped. The coffee break at the Visitor Centre was overrun with children but they soon disappeared with their nets for a session of pond-dipping. I don't think we scared them away... After the flat towpath the final uphill trek to the Old Orchard was the usual struggle

— it's quite short but felt surprisingly steep, but we were rewarded by the lovely views and, of course, lunch.

## June

**Chesham.** Yet again the June weather had led us to postpone a walk, but six of us finally made it to Chesham (after the usual complaints about the Metropolitan Line and TfL's alleged 'timetable'). The previous night's rain made for muddy paths, and the narrow tracks through waist-high fields of rape and barley meant parts of the walk were rather soggy, but at least the rain held off. The views across the Chiltern Hills were impressive and again we were butterfly-spotting, Holly Blues we think. The Red Kites of the Chilterns were conspicuous by their absence; we saw only one solitary kite all day. But it was a pleasure to walk with the background music of birdsong rather than traffic or planes.



## July



**Ruislip Woods and Lido.** Ten happy Shorter Walkers 'yomped' six miles around the Ruislip Lido and luckily it was very comfortable weather-wise. We had considered bringing our swimming costumes but it wasn't quite warm enough for us. Unexpectedly, we were given a dousing at the coffee stop as we sat too near the children's water fountains but we easily dried off. We enjoyed the walking through Ruislip Wood, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and national nature reserve, Copse Wood and Park Wood then around the Haste Hill golf course and beside the

miniature railway. Afterwards, a few of the group stayed for a pub lunch.

**Lavender Fields — Banstead to Woodmansterne.** What a wonderful walk with the temperature 6° lower than central London, 80% in the forest shade and a nice breeze. Eight walkers left Banstead and were straight into the woods and golf course and on to the coffee stop in lovely gardens. Then into the Lavender fields that were at their vibrant best. We all even managed to kneel down for the photo and get up. The walk continued through fields of wild flowers with rare chalk habitat for butterflies, that were everywhere. Back into the forest and on to Woodmansterne for a sandwich from the bakery and a welcome drink in the Smugglers Inn. Even the trains to and from were air-conditioned



## August



**Epping Forest —** Eleven of us walked the Epping Forest circuit from Chingford Station. It was a lovely cloudy/sunny day for walking and not too hot. We managed the route in three hours, and with the help of the iFootpath App had no detours, so we were very pleased, particularly the leader. On the way we admired the wonderful trees, which looked very green (especially the hornbeam), Leighton Camp (Iron Age fort), some brilliant butterflies, pretty water lilies, a few horses and riders, and a stray cow. It was wonderfully devoid of other people. The only casualty was some very sore feet.

**Trent Park —** After such awful weather for the past two weeks it was perfect walking weather, sun and nice breezes, for this tried and tested walk. Twelve walkers enjoyed the calm of the woodland and water garden. We noticed the changes brought about for the renovation of Trent Park Mansion, thinning of trees to give a vista from the obelisk and the lake. Ending at the Cock Inn, a favourite of the Shorter Walks Group, the order was for six fish finger sandwiches.





**Stoke Newington to Stratford** — Ten of us enjoyed our late summer walk of five miles from Stoke Newington to Stratford in beautiful weather. We stopped early in our walk for coffee in the sunshine in Springfield Park, then followed the River Lea, passing Walthamstow Marshes to the remains of the Middlesex Filter Beds (built by the East London Waterworks Company in 1852). We then continued along the towpath with views of Hackney Marshes and the Queen Elizabeth Park. Our final stop was for lunch at a community café, the View Tube, where we again sat in the sun.

## September

### **Roding River and Claybury Woods** —

This new walk proved to be very popular with the 15 walkers who set off in blazing sunshine along the nature trail beside the Roding River, which has been left to mature naturally and is abundant with butterflies and dragonflies. There was a lot of scrumping and munching going on — blackberries, sloes and apples, but not the hops. We had our coffee break at the lovely Anglers Rest Café beside a pretty lake, before going on to Claybury Woods. In the dappled shade we met almost nobody else, only realising just how close we were to



central London when, at the end, we saw The Shard and Canary Wharf in the distance. The Friday lunch specials at The Fairlop Oak were enjoyed in the sunshine of the courtyard.



**Hampstead Heath** — We luckily chose the only glorious day in a week for our walk. We set out straight to Parliament Hill and were rewarded with magnificent views. Skirting around the Men's Bathing Pond and the "Boating" Pond, we walked through lovely woodland to Kenwood for coffee, past Henry Moore's "Two Piece Reclining Figure" and Barbara Hepworth's "Monolith Empyrean". We took a circuitous route to West Heath and the Pergola with its lily pond and autumnal garden. Just before our stop at the Golders Hill Park café, we wandered through the small zoo and the stumpy.