



## Shorter Walks – October 2019 to Sept 2020



Here is a record of the iU3A Shorter Walks group walks from October 2019 through to September 2020.

Another full and varied programme of walks delivered.

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

### October 2019



**Windsor and Eton** — Fourteen walkers enjoyed a walk of five and a half miles, avoiding all but the lightest of drizzle, but under constantly cloudy skies. The walk was varied, and included many views of the picturesque Windsor Castle, the Thames riverside path, and the playing fields of Eton (as well as its swimming pool and golf course). Although we'd hoped for a peaceful rural walk the soundtrack was of planes taking off from nearby Heathrow, the not-so-distant rumble of traffic on the bypass and, of course, the screeching parakeets. No matter, we had a dryish

walk in a very wet week and even managed to squeeze in two coffee breaks.

**Hadley Wood** — The skies cleared just in time for our walk in Hadley Wood. The wind had also dropped so, if it hadn't been for the inevitable mud — a lot of mud — it would have been a perfect autumn walk. As it was, the beech trees were starting to change colour, very decoratively, above a carpet of already fallen bronze leaves. We even saw someone we took to be foraging for fungus, although, just as we were about to pick his brains on where to find the ceps and chanterelles, it transpired that he was in fact litter-picking. Oh well.



## November

**Capital Ring** — Six of us walked a six mile route from Preston Road to Hendon Central stations. It was beautiful weather with the autumn colours at their best. The walk took in the views over London from Barn Hill and Gotfords Hill. A bit of urban walking took us to the Birchen Grove garden centre, where we stopped for lunch and avoided buying any plants or Christmas decorations. We then followed the north bank of the Welsh Harp Reservoir (very few birds around at the moment) before reaching Hendon Central and our train home.



**Greenwich and Blackheath** — Thirteen very lucky walkers had a five mile tramp around our usual circuit of Greenwich and Blackheath. We were very lucky as it was quite warm and in spite of predictions we weren't rained on, except for a fine drizzle after lunch. There were magnificent misty views of the Thames and Greenwich and the dramatic autumnal colours. We all managed the steepish climb up to the One Tree Hill vista point (which wasn't in the notes) to enjoy the misty views from there too.

## December



**East Finchley to Woodberry Wetlands** — The sun broke through the early morning mist and provided perfect weather for our post-Christmas five mile walk. After an early coffee break in Highgate Wood, where our group of 21 failed to faze the single barista, we continued through a sunlit Queen's Wood and along the (still pretty muddy) Parkland Walk, into Finsbury Park, finally reaching the New River and the wetlands, glorious in the sunshine. We had lunch outdoors beside the sparkling waters. Could we really be in Zone 2?

**Christmas Walk** — The morning of our Christmas walk dawned grey and wet, but in fact we did manage to stay dry for our short walk around the **Walthamstow Wetlands**. We had the Engine Room café almost to ourselves — just as well since there were 26 of us. The London Wildlife Trust guides helpfully set up their state of the art telescopes for us but, other than a shelduck, it was the usual suspects. A shag turned out to be a cormorant and a scaup just a tufted duck. The newly-refurbished Ferryboat Inn was a pleasant venue for our Christmas lunch. We'll definitely return to the wetlands for a more extensive walk, maybe in sunshine next time.



## January 2020

**Kew to Hammersmith** — At last — a mud-free walk! We had a chilly but mercifully dry and windless walk along the Thames Path with a diversion to Chiswick House. The decorated garden took us by surprise. Intended for Chinese New Year, it was more of a celebration of Disney in plastic. All very odd when juxtaposed with the Palladian delights of Chiswick House. The rest of the walk was more tasteful and gave us many opportunities to daydream about living by the Thames in style. Although we wouldn't, because of the planes. We visited the beautifully preserved 15th century Chiswick parish church and found Hogarth's tomb in the graveyard and finally Kelmscott House, the home of William Morris, before finding a riverside pub for lunch just before Hammersmith Bridge.



## **Alexandra Palace circular** —

Ten walkers joined this local five-mile walk through Alexandra Park, Highgate Wood, and Queen's Wood on a grey day, with the boating lake providing the only colour (see photo). It should have been a walk with far-ranging views but sadly the clouds had descended and we were left guessing at the distant landmarks of London. We encountered the Dulwich U3A walkers in Queen's Wood, straying beyond their usual territory. And we were back to the mud again, but only a short fairly manageable stretch this time.

## February

**River Ravensbourne** — This was an area of London new to most of the 14 walkers. Starting with coffee in Deptford it was not easy to encourage everyone from the cosy Coffee Room and to the first park along the river. We walked through four surprisingly quiet parks that made the sections of busy roads and junctions seem extra loud. The final park, Pool River, had an especially rural feel and led to the lunch stop in Mayow

Park that should have been quiet, but was taken over by local Mums and Babies. Still, nine stayed for the nice food which we ate outside. An interesting new walk with appropriate graffiti and easy travel.



## **Regents Canal, Angel to Limehouse**

— After a change of date and a last minute change of walk, six of us had a really lovely walk from Angel to Limehouse along the canal path. The conditions couldn't have been better after the recent gales and floods as it was fine, cool and a little breezy. The path was quite busy with runners and the usual cyclists and we were impressed with how clean and neat the canal path is looking, with some lovely planting in a few areas. Our usual coffee haunts were closed so we stopped at the

Victoria Park café and admired the

fountain and the ducks. Afterwards we had a delightful lunch in the Yurt Café Limehouse at St Katharine's Precinct.

## March

### **Bushy Park and Hampton Court** —

Our blustery walk in Bushy Park, was full of the promise of spring in the woodlands with carpets of daffodils, camellias and early-flowering cherry trees. En route to the magnificent baroque water gardens, we managed to add a short diversion that avoided the muddy tracks. Unfortunately we didn't manage to repeat our success on the way back. It was something of a nature ramble too, with the usual roe deer and quite a few white (albino?) deer too, as well as an endearing family of Egyptian geese with six fluffy goslings and a glorious skylark in full song.



## July

**Islington to Granary Square** — Six intrepid ladies set out from the Town Hall for a short walk and some socially distanced conversation. We admired the architecture in Barnsbury Square and the bird mural off Caledonian Road before walking past Crumbles Castle in Bingfield Park. Next came the Maiden Lane estate where a kind man warned us against a notorious drugs hotspot but undaunted we marched onward, although we did look carefully round each corner first, and saw .... nothing! Once over the canal we turned into Old St Pancras churchyard to see the Hardy Tree, the Burdett-Coutts Memorial Sundial, and John Soane's tomb (inspiration for the Gilbert Scott telephone boxes). Then into Granary Square to enjoy the flowers on the high walk and to try out the 'all gender' toilets (very clean). From there some of us walked along the canal to Chapel Market while others opted to head off on different routes. Wonderful to walk in company with other people again!



## August



### **Islington to the Hoxton Secret Garden** —

Despite the forecast, we had no thundery showers and the temperature was a welcome respite from the earlier excessive heat and humidity. But who knew what delights were waiting for us, so close to home! In St Mary's Gardens in Hoxton we bought plants and honey, freshly picked beans and garlic and all of us vowed to return. At the Swedish Bakery, Fabrique, some of us succumbed to their vanilla or cardamom buns which we took into the Gardens to enjoy with our coffee. In Haggerston Park we found a banana plant, as well as rose gardens. When we returned via the Regent's Canal the family of swans were once again ready to greet us.

**Angel to The Thames** — A small group of us walked and talked from Islington down to the river in very pleasant walking weather. In Clerkenwell we passed the plaque to the Musical Coalman and wandered round the lovely garden by St John Priory Church. On to Smithfield where we played the xylophone in the Rotunda Garden before visiting Postman's Park with the moving memorial to self-sacrifice by Watts. We crossed the Millennium Bridge in search of shade and found benches suitable for social distancing with a view across the river. Most of us walked back to



Islington via Temple, Lincoln's Inn Fields and Coram Fields while others chose their own route home taking advantage of the flexibility of these walks in London — you're never lost and there is always the bus!



### **Lee Valley Country Park, Cheshunt —**

This postponed walk was lucky to have the only dry day that week. Five walkers left Cheshunt Station and enjoyed an amusing coffee stop at the White Water Centre watching beginners tackling the rapids. This was a real country walk, with few people and lovely scenery. The pace was gentle with some blackberrying and time to sit and enjoy the peace of the lakes where it was even warm enough to shed a layer of clothing. Lunch was rustic 'bring your own' in a forest glade where we enjoyed the sun dappling through the trees. It was a

welcome breath of fresh air.

### **Angel to Woodberry Wetlands —**

We started in Duncan Terrace Gardens and followed the New River Walk up to Clissold Park and the Wetlands. It was a very pleasant walk with few people and the River looked clean and the gardens well cared for. We also saw lots of Moorhen chicks and Mallards. The weather was lovely, considering the extremes of the past few weeks. It was a discovery walk for two of us and we enjoyed a coffee at the wetlands "en plain air". We walked on through Finsbury Park where we either caught a bus or continued back to Angel through Gillespie Park and Highbury Fields.



**Ten City Gardens —** These walks spread over four weeks with just two people and Hazel have been delightful. Each person brought different interests for discussion, plants, history and knowledge about the area. The first day was 35° (95°F), and we took shelter in the shade but had the highlight of finding a lost hawk. The handler was delighted to be reunited and we had a close-up experience. There was just one day of slight drizzle, but afternoons were dry. Two had a drink break at the Barbie Café, otherwise we stopped to enjoy the Salters Livery Hall garden before

concluding with part of the London Wall walk. Although most people knew many of the gardens there was always something new.

## September



### **Finsbury Park to Alexandra Palace —**

Our walk on the last day of September marked a change of season. There was a hint of bronze in the leaves and fungi appearing among the trees. Even the air smelt of Autumn. Our socially-distanced group of six enjoyed a leafy walk along the Parkland Walk, dodging dog-walkers, and through both Queen's Wood and Highgate Wood. The sun didn't manage an appearance, but we did miss almost all of the rain forecast for the morning. The Pavilion café in Highgate Wood was our coffee break, where we dodged a shower to sit in the garden. The walk

ended at Alexandra Palace with its ever-changing panoramic views and yet more tower blocks and cranes.

**Euston to Camden —** A beautiful morning showed the lush green allotments in the former Cumberland Basin (a filled in section of the Regent's Canal) at their best. In contrast the white stucco of John Nash's and Decimus Burton's terraces gleamed in the sun. A leisurely stroll across Regent's Park brought us to Tom Harvey's series of wooden chainsaw carvings. Then it was across the canal to climb the heights of Primrose Hill for spectacular views under a blue sky and a chance to sit and chat before the six of us headed back down to Camden and transport home.

