

# MAP SERIES OF WALKS CONNECTING HACKNEY'S PARKS & OPEN SPACES



© Anne Woollett

*The edges of Hackney Marshes are managed for wildlife, with longer grass, trees and shrubs providing food and shelter.*

## WALK 6: CIRCULAR – HACKNEY MARSHES & ADJACENT GREEN SPACES

**START:** Marshgate Bridge, Homerton Road, E9  
**FINISH:** Marshgate Bridge, Homerton Road, E9  
**DISTANCE:** 7.5 kilometres (4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> miles) approx.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

#### Buses

Start: 236, 276, 308 & W15 to Homerton Road.

Finish: 236, 276, 308 & W15 from Homerton Road.

#### Trains

BR stations: Hackney Wick; Homerton.

**Electricity Generating Station** on east bank of Lea was built in 1901. It used coal brought by barge and stored on the Marshes. Most of the power station and its tall chimney were demolished in 1970, and is now Hackney Cleansing Depot. In front of it a path connects Cow Bridge with Millfields.

**Middlesex Filter Beds.** The water powered mills from C14 to C19. In C19 became Filter Beds to provide clean and safe water for East London. After the plant at Coppermills was opened in 1970s, the Beds became a nature reserve: open at weekends, bank holidays and in summer holidays.

**Hackney Marshes** came into public ownership at the end of C19 when many of the mature trees were planted – planes, ash, and native black poplars (the largest collection in London of this rare and beautiful tree). After World War II, rubble from bomb damaged buildings in City was dumped on the Marshes, raising their level and improving their drainage. Well known for Park football, they are also used for cricket, kite flying, running, cycling, walking and hanging-out. Local community involved in planting and caring for new woodlands. Good views towards West End, City and Canary Wharf.

**The River Lea** is tidal and semi-natural along Hackney stretch. Resident and nesting birds include kingfisher, and others (tufted duck, teal and gadwall) spend the winter here. River acted as boundary from Saxon times. Currently the river marks the boundary between the boroughs of Hackney and Waltham Forest. A source of power for mills and used to transport materials, such as bricks for houses in Clapton, wood, and coal to power station at Cow Bridge. Towpath provides a route for walking and cycling from Bow Locks to Ware in Hertfordshire.

**East Marsh.** Separated from Main Marsh by the River Lea. Edged with trees including mature native black poplars and specimen trees including southern beech, mulberry, prunus, pear, willow-leaved pear. White House public house stood near the bridge until 1917. Anti-aircraft guns operated from East Marsh during World War II. Spitalfields Fruit and Vegetable Market (blue and yellow building) built in late 1980s on railways yards in Waltham Forest (boundary follows path of Lead Mill Stream, which flowed from River Lea to Temple Mills).

**Tree Nursery.** Recently established for community to grow young trees for planting on Marshes and in other parks.

This leaflet was prepared by Anne Woollett, Mike Trier & Gill Jackson for Hackney Parks Forum with funding from Community Chest (SCP). Thanks to Mike Gray.

For copies of the leaflet see

[www.hackneyenvironment.org.uk](http://www.hackneyenvironment.org.uk)

Based on Collins mapping - [www.collinsmaps.com](http://www.collinsmaps.com)

**Wick Woodland** is at a lower level from the rest of Hackney Marshes because no materials were dumped on it after World War II. It is edged with mature trees: plane trees alongside the canal; black poplar and ash along Homerton Road. Football was played here until the late 1980s. In the mid-1990s it was planted with native trees, including black poplar. It is now home to a variety of birds and plants and is managed with the help of the local community.

**Arena Field** lies at the southern end of Hackney Marshes. Trees and bushes near the Lea Navigation Canal are home to many birds, including sparrows. The Channel Tunnel Rail Link between Stratford and Kings Cross runs under its southern end. Arena Field is soon to be lost to 2012 Olympic Games. Across the Canal, Wick Village was built in 1993–1995 after tower blocks were demolished in the 1980s.

**Hackney Wick.** Once a wet and marshy area. From C14 the river was used to power mills, including Temple Mills – named after Knights Templar, who owned land in Hackney. In C19, Hackney Wick became an industrial area with factories (making sweets, paint and surgical goods), distilleries and oil-refineries. With the gradual closure of polluting factories from the 1970s, the river quality has improved and fish have returned.

**Mabley Green.** Laid out mainly for sports, with a few trees round the edge. The pedestrian- and cycle-path, recently completed on the southern and western sides, gives access to Red Path and Hackney Wick. The spire across the A12 is St Mary at Eton. Eton Mission, set up in 1880s, encouraged swimming (in Hackney Cut at 4am when it was cleanest) and football. Because the youngsters were often driven off the Marshes and had their goal posts confiscated, the Mission campaigned for public ownership of Hackney Marshes. In 1894 the Lammas rights were purchased at a cost of £75,000 so the public could use the Marshes for recreation 'in perpetuity'. Near by, at the White Lion public house, running and boxing competitions were held in C19. Kingsmead Estate was built in late 1930s on the Marshes, in spite of considerable protests.

**Daubney Green.** Separated from Main Marsh by the Lea Navigation Canal. Mostly surrounded by housing, including one tower block; the other five were demolished in 1980s and replaced with low-rise housing.

**Lea Navigation Canal** (Hackney Cut) along west edge of Marshes, opened in 1768 to bypass the old River Lea and enable barges to travel more quickly between Lea Bridge Road and Bow Locks; it served many wharves and factories. Area is now mainly residential and Canal is used by leisure craft (canoes, and rowing- and narrow-boats). Some plants (dwarf elder, Russian comfrey) arrived with cargoes on barges. The name of **Cow Bridge** is a reminder of the days when commoners brought their cattle on to the Marshes.

### 3 MABLEY GREEN TO MAIN MARSH AND EAST MARSH.

At Homerton Road turn left, cross road, and go along Trehurst Street. At end, turn left and almost immediately right to enter Daubeney Green. Keep play area and Adventure Playground on right and head for Lea Navigation Canal. Cross Daubeney footbridge **d** over Lea Navigation and continue straight ahead on to grass of the Main Marsh. Turn left and follow edge of new woodland (Jubilee Wood) **e** towards changing rooms. Take path towards red Friends Bridge, with car park, meadow and Middlesex Filter Beds on left. Turn right before bridge and follow tarmac path along River Lea to bridge to East Marsh. When the path turns there is also a lower path along river bank.



Docklands skyline, looking south-west from Hackney Main Marsh

**WALK 6**

**KEY**

- Route of walk
- Other paths
- Steps or other access problems
- Alternative access

0 1/2 mile 1km



### 4 EAST MARSH TO MARSHGATE BRIDGE

Cross bridge on to East Marsh. Turn left and follow the trees round the perimeter of East Marsh, along river bank, blue and yellow of Spitalfields Fruit and Vegetable Market **f**, row of ash trees along Ruckholt Road, and back along the river bank to the bridge. Cross back on to Main Marsh and turn left along higher tarmac path; or along path at lower level and up steps to higher level. Turn right into car park by LB Hackney Depot and walk towards Homerton Road, with Tree Nursery on left. At Homerton Road turn right and follow line of trees back towards Marshgate bridge.



### 1 WICK WOODLAND

Follow towpath under bridge and fork left into Wick Woodland. Bear right and follow path under plane trees **a**. Take first path on left, which snakes through woodland and comes out near steps up to Homerton Road. Turn right and follow the woodland path. Before tall black poplars at end of woodland, make a sharp right turn and fork right down main avenue **b** towards the plane trees along Lea Navigation Canal.



### 2 WICK WOODLAND TO MABLEY GREEN

At plane trees turn left, join the towpath and go under the road bridges. Turn left immediately. At top of slope, turn right and through the gate for Arena Field **c**. For Mabley Green, exit on to Eastway. Turn left and cross Eastway at traffic lights on to Lee Conservancy Road. Fork left on to pedestrian- and cycle-path under road bridge and follow path round edge of Mabley Green to Homerton Road.