

## Shorter Walks – October 2017 to Sept 2018

Here is a record of the iU3A Shorter Walks group walks in our second iU3A year - from October 2017 through to September 2018. Another full and varied programme of walks delivered.

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



### October 2017

**Hadley Wood** — This was a delightful four-mile walk through Monk Hadley and Hadley Wood which we managed to do in two hours. The autumn leaves were in splendid colour and there were a lot of golden leaves underfoot. It was an unknown surprise part of London for many on the walk and the magnificent homes were much admired. We passed the 18th century houses, including David Livingstone's cottage and the fine old church (12th century) of St Mary the Virgin. There were 15 of us on a muggy grey day with some muddy patches underfoot. Most of us stayed for lunch after as always at the Cock Inn.



**Colne Valley** — we got off to a bad start as 'the leader' had the wrong station meeting point but luckily we found each other in time. It was a fine cool cloudy day just perfect for a seven mile walk for ten of us along the Grand Union Canal (with a few detours). The coffee stop was given a zero rating for bad coffee and no loos but we made up for that at the Colne Valley Park Visitor Centre. The canal was very quiet with very few boats moving around. We did see great crested grebe, a cormorant and a possible fleeting glimpse of a kingfisher. Lunch and the views at the Old Orchard were worth the steep climb up the hill at the end. Our bus trip back to Uxbridge even included a scenic trip to Harefield Hospital.

## November

**Trent Park and Enfield Chase** — How lucky we were with the weather: cold but sunny and no wind, perfect for this woodland and open country walk. All 12 walkers kept up a steady pace enjoying the views: it was a lovely morning with still enough leaves to give a golden glow to the woods, lakes and water garden. Coffee in the Animal Sanctuary was an interesting pit stop, and on leaving the park we passed an obelisk that said the gardens were started in 1706. We are indeed fortunate to be still enjoying this lovely space 300+ years on.



## **Capital Ring — Preston Road to Hendon** —

On our return on the train from Hendon to King's Cross, 13 of us all felt as if we had had a good day's walking (6 miles) around part of the Capital Ring. The weather was mild and fine and whilst it was hazy in the far distance, it was nevertheless interesting to see London from Barn Hill and also Gotsford Hill. After some time on the pavements we arrived at Birchen Grove Garden Centre for lunch and some plant shopping. From there we set off again and walked around the Welsh Harp Reservoir — one of our group who is Welsh tried to work out why it was called the Welsh Harp, but without much success! We saw various waterfowl consisting mainly of seagulls but agreed they probably had never seen the sea. From there it was a quick walk to the station and back to London after a most enjoyable day.

## December



**Limehouse to Islington** — A record number of 28 walkers-and-lunchers had a splendid Christmas get-together even if the weather was dull (but mild and dry at least). We began our 5+ mile walk at Limehouse as we meant to go on, at the delightful Yurt Cafe, then walked past Limehouse Basin admiring the yachts and followed the Regent's Canal, pausing for (another) coffee break in Victoria Park. A further hour along the towpath, dodging

increasing numbers of runners and cyclists as we approached Islington, brought us to the Angel and our lunch venue. Côte coped well with our last-minute changes and gave us an excellent lunch. A great end to another happy year of Shorter Walking.

## January

**Hampstead Heath** — On our first winter pop-up walk we managed not only to stay dry and relatively unwind-swept, but also saw blue skies and sun, after days of rain. Starting in Highgate village, we reached the heath via the salubrious mansions of Fitzroy Park. After that it was a game of (largely unsuccessful) 'dodge the mud'. We stopped for a break at Kenwood then braved the muddy slope to reach Spaniards Road and the quieter Sandy Heath. Diverting through a corner of Golders Hill Park we continued through woodland to Hill House garden and the pergola, beautiful even in winter, with early-flowering irises and snowdrops and the sweet fragrance of viburnum and witch hazel. After Jack Straw's Castle we rejoined the Heath and braved the last muddy path before reaching Kenwood House for lunch. A fine start to our 2018 walks calendar.



## January



**Walthamstow Wetlands** — Despite problems on the Victoria Line, all 13 of us managed to meet up for our first visit to Walthamstow Wetlands. After coffee in the new Visitor Centre in the Engine House we had time to explore the restored building before our walk. It was a beautiful winter's day, although the wind was very fresh. The first section of the walk took us to the south part of the Wetlands: we walked between reservoirs and visited the Coppermill

Tower. Reading the timeline set out in the Tower, we saw that a mill on this site had first been noted in the Domesday Book. Some of us climbed the Tower for a view of the Wetlands. Comparing notes on completing this section, we found that 14 species of bird had been spotted, including scaup, grebes, falcon, reed buntings and herons. The second section of the walk was round the Lockwood Reservoir — not so many birds here, but good views of the area. We then returned to the Visitor Centre to warm up and have a welcome lunch.

**Greenwich Park & Blackheath** — Twelve of us started the five mile walk from Island Gardens on the north side of the Thames, admiring the classic view of Greenwich and the Cutty Sark. Once through the Foot Tunnel we followed the Thames Path past the Royal Naval College. We walked uphill through Greenwich Park and out through Blackheath Gate, continuing across the Heath, then around part of the Vale and back to the park to The Pavilion for a very pleasant lunch. We were able to admire the extensive views in sunshine from the Old Royal Observatory. After crossing the Greenwich Meridian Line we continued downhill through the park back to the Cutty Sark DLR station.



## February



**Syon Lane to Twickenham** — A select band of seven set out on this interesting walk along the Thames, passing the historical mansions dating from Tudor times and going under iconic bridges. The historian in the group found much of immense interest and tried to keep us up to speed. This repeat of an earlier walk was relaxed and very enjoyable, with weather

warmer and less windy than forecast; it was a jolly group that, after a good-paced walk, sat down to lunch at the Barmy Arms with welcome fires, hospitality and refreshment. ***“Hours, days and years slide soft away”***

## **East Finchley to Woodberry Wetlands** —

We had perfect weather for our fifth pop-up walk of 2018: cold and dry with bright sun and blue skies. Thirteen of us strode out at a brisk pace through Cherry Tree Wood and Highgate Wood, pausing at the attractive Pavilion cafe for a coffee break. If you add snow to the photo we could almost be a skiing group. More ancient woodland as we traversed Queen's Wood and a steep short-cut to Jackson's Lane before



continuing along the muddy Parkland Walk and through Finsbury Park ending at the Wetlands, which looked perfect in the wintry sunshine. No sign of the Great Crested Grebes sadly, but the usual delicious lunch at the Coal House café.

## March



**Cheshunt to Broxbourne** — Ten of us enjoyed an interesting day in the Lea Valley Park. As we were all female, it was an auspicious start to International Women's Day! After taking the train to Cheshunt, we then walked about five miles alongside the lakes and woods in the Lea Valley Park returning from Broxbourne. With intermittent sunshine on the walk and only a few raindrops, it was good to be out of London. We began by following Hooks Marsh Lake up to

Fishers Green; then past Seventy Acres Lake, the Bittern Hide and on from there to the Lea Valley Canal. It was too far away to identify more interesting birds other than the various ducks but we saw a heron standing silently, and there were several cormorants drying their feathers on a raft. We then followed the Canal for 2.5 miles to the Old Mill Café where we had a delicious home-made lunch. It was not without incident as one lady realised soon after arriving at Tottenham Hale station: she was missing her Visa card — fortunately a kind person handed this in to her local bank during the day so she was able to enjoy her lunch. Then another nameless lady dropped her Senior Railcard at Broxbourne station where a kind chap followed us up to the platform and handed it back! A good ending to a most enjoyable walk.

### **River Lea — Tottenham Hale to Olympic**

**Park** — After the 'Beast from the East' it was great to get out into relatively mild and dry weather for a good walk alongside the River Lea. 12 members enjoyed the surprisingly interesting route with canal boats along the whole way and sightings of herons and cormorants. Listed as 4.5 miles it was in fact 5.6 miles, but everyone was still remarkably lively when we stopped for lunch at The Orbit.

With most of the walk alongside the Walthamstow Wetlands and Marshes it was pleasant and relaxed.



### **April**



**Bushy Park** — Despite the forecast of showers and thunderstorms, twelve walkers had a largely dry but blustery walk through Bushy Park. Our timing was perfect for the spring vistas of daffodils in the woodland gardens and Hampton Court. We heard, then saw, a skylark, quickly followed by a green woodpecker, Egyptian geese and of course, parakeets, a bonus for the birdwatchers. The only downside

was the mud — and the puddles, rather of lot of both. But we managed to reroute to find dry paths, stretching the walk to six miles (and as someone pointed out, ten minutes of mud counts as an extra mile).

**Banstead Woods** — The number of Departure Boards at London Bridge Station has increased several times since this walk was first planned. Consequently, we had half the group outside the barriers and half inside before we all met up on Platform 14. After an adventurous trip to Chipstead in which we had to change our carriage several times with a bemused train driver looking on, we nevertheless had a wonderful walk again around Banstead Woods and the bluebells were magnificent. Last week's cold weather had us wondering if we had the wrong date but a few days of over 20 degrees had them out in force. It was a lovely day and a great walk for 14 of us who enjoyed the hot weather.



## May



**Richmond Park** — Our Shorter Walks annual pilgrimage to the Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park could not have been on a better day. The weather was sunny and warm (a bit over-warm when we occasionally lost the shade of the trees) and the azaleas were at their peak and quite magical. They were so amazing that one walker even decided to forego lunch at the lovely Pembroke Lodge and stayed on to enjoy them. The rest of us, fortified by lunch, had fun

lining up the telescope on King Henry's Mound to spot St Paul's cathedral 10 miles away and argued about where Windsor Castle was, before deciding that 6 miles was quite long enough on a hot day and caught the bus back to Richmond.

## June

**Windsor & Eton** — We had a tricky start, making the train at Paddington by the skin of our teeth. Once past Windsor Castle we were soon at the manicured landscape of the river, which was heaving with royal swans; then we encountered Issue Two: the designated coffee-break pub was closed. But things could only get better and we enjoyed our walk along both banks of the Thames, with some great views of the castle, and through the immaculate playing fields of Eton College. The wild flowers were abundant — as were nettles unfortunately. We even found a pub that was open, after four miles. The tourists had completely taken over Windsor on our return but were conspicuous by their absence on our 5½ mile walk.



**Trent Park** — This walk had to be postponed from May because of the threat of thunderstorms. The weather was more than kind — blue sky, blazing sunshine and a lovely breeze. Through the woodland in full green and over the bright open country, the 11 walkers were in good humour and the pace steady. We ended at one of the Group's favourite pubs, The Cock Inn, where the conversations were lively and wide-ranging and the laughter constant. This was a really enjoyable walk.

**Syon Park to Twickenham** — As a last minute 'stand-in' for the cancelled Ruislip walk this proved to be quite a success. It is a tried and tested route so was relaxed and the JOLLY SIX set off in wonderful hot sunshine with a gentle breeze. After coffee at the Wyvale Café where there was time to look round the garden centre and even purchase a rosemary plant, we were along the river and under the shade of the trees for most of the walk. We made good time but even so the Barmy Arms was full with a wait of over an hour for food. Not being able to wait we adjourned to The Eel Pie Pub around the corner and their shady courtyard, where the food was good and as you can see spirits high. Everyone seemed to enjoy the walk.



## July



**Local Nature Reserves and Parks** — The forecast of 30+ might have put off some walkers but our Intrepid Eight rolled up at Highbury and thoroughly enjoyed the variety of this walk. We began the loop at Highbury Fields, then round to the Ecology Centre and through a delightful covered passage via ponds where local children were learning about Pond Life. Some had not visited the Centre before: it is really worth seeing. Walking through Finsbury

Park we saw the amazing structure for its July Concerts but had to forego our normal cappuccino as the café had no power! Water was much appreciated. Although the New River was sadly covered in green grime, we saw several tiny moorhen chicks which we hoped would survive. Woodberry Wetlands was most interesting and more birds were seen, including cormorants, tufted duck, coot etc. On to the Stoke Newington West Reservoir where we had more refreshments in their well-restored building and by then, after our five miles, we were all feeling rather hot. We concluded our most enjoyable day by catching buses home.

**Ruislip Lido & Woods** — Eight hardy Shorter Walkers set off on one of the hottest days this year for a walk around Ruislip Lido and Woods. Armed with hats, sunscreen and water, we walked across the meadows bordering the much diminished little River Pinn and then through shady woods to the Lido. We had a drinks/ice cream stop there while admiring the crowded beach and families enjoying themselves. We walked around the Lido to Poor's Field then into shaded Copse Wood (an ancient woodland designated SSI) with hornbeam and oak trees. We managed to negotiate the unmarked trail and came back through Ruislip Woods to the River Pinn again. A long cool fizzy drink was enjoyed by most of the group at the end.



## August



**Chesham Circular** — An aim of popup walks being to avoid bad weather, we were dismayed to be greeted by rain as the tube pulled in to Chesham. But within minutes all ten of us were packing away our waterproofs and we stayed dry, apart from one brief shower, all morning. We tackled the rolling Chilterns hills at a good pace and managed to time our arrival at the pub for a coffee break just as it opened. Its London prices took the edge off our delight

though, and there was a momentary panic when one of us mislaid his wallet. Otherwise the walk went smoothly (not counting a minor diversion that required us to climb over a locked gate) and we enjoyed splendid views and beautiful beech woods. We saw a solitary Red Kite — in an area where they should be plentiful. But we saw some friendly llamas too which nearly made up for it. Those of us who didn't speed off back to London even discovered a pub with decent food which had eluded us last time.

**Capital Ring** — Seven of us met up to walk a section of the Capital Ring from Highgate to Stoke Newington — a distance supposed to be five miles, but we all agreed it was over six! We walked along the Parkland Walk (an old railway line), before our coffee break in Finsbury Park, and then followed the New River to the West Reservoir where we were lucky to see a family of swans with seven cygnets, a duck guarding around the same number of duckings (difficult to count as they were all huddled together) and some herons. Lunch was in Clissold Park and a short walk along Church Street took us to Abney Park Cemetery — unknown by a few of the group — a fascinating place where we spent some time.



**Epping Forest** — We really felt we had earned our lunch at Butler's Retreat café at the end of our eight miles hike of Epping Forest. The walk was lengthened by 1.5 miles due to some unfortunate navigational errors in the densely forested Park with a multitude of unmarked pathways. Also, we had the misfortune of disturbing a swarm of wasps who attacked two of us through thick clothing, which was uncomfortable for them. Luckily the first aid kit had antihistamine cream, which provided some relief. Apart from that and a new pair of hiking boots which left one of us limping, it was a lovely fine day with some sunshine and the forest was looking very lush.

## September

**Lee Valley & Cheshunt** — this circular country park walk proved to be delightful. Within minutes of leaving the station the ten walkers were in quiet country parkland with interesting rustic artwork dotted amongst the trees. It being firm underfoot the going was easy, enabling us to take in the lakeland scenery, birds and enjoy the peace. Coffee at the White Water Centre was great and with warm weather we kept up a good pace over the five miles. Sadly we did not spot the otters, but 'bring our own lunch' in The Windmill pub with a cool drink finished the morning off nicely.

