

**Four Rivers Walk.** River Lea / Lee Navigation / Limehouse Cut, Regent's Canal, Hertford Union Canal and River Lee form a four-sided loop, covering a distance of 5.5 miles  
Walk Circular. 6.5 miles. 5 1/2 hrs. From EAT cafe Westfield. Points of interest

### **Three Mills.**

In the 1530s, the mills, tidal not wind, were grinding grain for the bakers and brewers of London. During the 16th century the three mills were reduced to two, House Mill and Clock Mill.

In the 17th century the mills became a major supplier for the many distilleries in London.

House Mill continued to operate until 1940 and the Clock Mill until 1952.

There were four wheels in House Mill and three in Clock Mill together driving fourteen pairs of millstones. Average output of House Mill was about 2 tons of maize and 5 tons of barley per tide rising to 10 and 14 tons respectively on spring tides.

House Mill remains the largest tidal mill in the world, although the water wheels are no longer in operation.

Today the Mill site houses 9 film and TV stages plus 11 theatre spaces.

### **The Grapes.**

Grade II listed, established 1583. Current building from 1720s is situated on the north bank of the Thames with a small veranda over the river. The Grapes survived intense bombing of the area in World War II. Lease owned by actor Sir Ian McKellen (formally with partner director Sean Mathias, now deceased) McKellen popular as Gandalf in Lord of the Rings, also in the Hobbit trilogies.

Famous people associated with The Grapes: Sir Walter Raleigh sailed from The Grapes on his third voyage to the New World. Samuel Pepys' 1661 diary records his trip to lime kilns at the jetty just along from The Grapes. Charles Dickens visited in 1820 and scarcely disguised the establishment in the opening chapter of his novel, *Our Mutual Friend*. Painters, Francis Bacon lived No. 80, Edward Wolfe at 96 and James McNeill Whistler painted a *Nocturne of Limehouse* from the Grapes. Antony Gormley sometimes visits. His sculpture "Another Time" is of a 9ft naked man like figure standing on a 20ft plinth set in the river behind the pub, mysteriously appears to be standing on the water at high tide but is never submerged.

### **River Lea / Lee Navigation / Limehouse Cut**

River Lea with Lee Navigation incorporated in 1767 and Lime House Cut, links Hertford to River Thames.

David Beckham carried Olympic torch on a speedboat via Limehouse Basin, Limehouse Cut, Lee Navigation and the River Lee to the 2012 Olympic opening ceremony.

### **Limehouse Basin**

1820. Built by the Regent's Canal Company. Used by seagoing vessels and lighters to offload cargoes to canal barges. Important cargo was coal to the numerous gasworks and latterly electricity generating stations along the canal, also numerous domestic and commercial outlets. It was the principal entrance from the Thames to the entire national canal network.

The Docklands Light Railway is carried on a viaduct, originally built for the London and Blackwall Railway, along the north side of the basin.

To the east of the canal entrance, behind the viaduct arch is the octagonal tower of a hydraulic accumulator, this regulated the hydraulic pressure of an extensive network supplying power to the coal-handling machinery.

In the 19th century, steam-power gained dominance, and the Limehouse's facilities became too small for the new, larger steamships. Subsequently, the facilities were put to use by the firm of T&W Forestt constructing lifeboats for Royal National Lifeboat Institution. The Basin is currently retained for the use of pleasure craft.

(Limehouse Name from production of lime by heating limestone. Lime used in building mortars and as a stabilizer in mud renders and floors. In agriculture lime is used as a soil improver.)

### **Regent's Canal**

Built 1820. Named after the Prince Regent, son of King George III. Architect John Nash. Links Kings Cross / Paddington (Grand Union Canal) with the River Thames. The main link from London to the North of England. Carried; timber, building materials, coal, fruit, beer, grain and ice from Norwegian glaciers to Carlo Gatti's ice house. A Swiss entrepreneur, 1817/78. First to make ice cream available to the general public. He died a millionaire.

The Grand Union Canal Company ran a large fleet of narrow boats. Business was won on price and speed of delivery from road and rail. Tonnage rose from 9,000 tons in 1931 to 168,638 tons in 1941. Canal was nationalised in 1948 but commercial traffic dwindled. Lorry transport taking back much of the traffic not already lost to the railway. In the harsh winter of 1962-3 Regent's Canal froze so hard that no cargo could move for weeks. By the thaw, most freight traffic had transferred to road, never to return. By the late 1960's commercial traffic had vanished.

**Ragged School.** Ware house built 1872. School from 1876. Largest in London. Now a museum. Ragged schools were charitable organisations dedicated to the free education of destitute children. Founder Dr Thomas Barnardo came to London from Dublin to train as a doctor and then a missionary in China. He found London a city where disease, poverty and overcrowding made educational opportunities for the poor non-existent. At the time a cholera epidemic swept through the East End, leaving over 3,000 dead and many destitute. He gave up his medical training to pursue his missionary works locally and in 1867 opened his first "Ragged School". Ten years later, Barnardo's Copperfield Road Free School opened its doors to children and for the next thirty-one years educated tens of thousands of children. The school closed in 1908 by which time enough government schools had opened to serve the needs of local families.

### **Victoria Park**

Oldest London public park. Opened 1845 for supply of safe drinking water and recreation for poor East Enders. Features in the park:-

Ornamental lake with fountains. Cafe. Toilets

Victoria Model Steam Boat Club, oldest in the world, founded 1904 .

Athletic club, Victoria Park Harriers & Tower Hamlets founded 1926. Cinder running track still exists, Ken and I competed on it !! It is now disused and mostly overgrown.

Burdett-Coutts Drinking Fountain. named after Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1814 / 1906, Victorian philanthropist who sought to rid London of its slums. One of the richest women in mid 19th century. Known as the 'Queen of the Poor' and 'Nursing-Mother of the Church of England'.

She funded Livingstone's expeditions to Africa, helped set up the NSPCC and RSPCA.

First woman given a peerage, 1871. Buried in Westminster Abbey.

Father was Sir Francis Burdett, inventor of the Calculator Engine, an early computer.

Wealth came from her maternal grandfather, Thomas Coutts, banker.

During WW11 the Park was mainly closed to the public and became an Ack-Ack gun site. Also a camp for German and Italian prisoners and air raid shelters for about 1000 people.

### **Hertford Union Canal**

1830 Links River Lee to Regent's Canal thence to the Grand Union Canal. Part of the Grand Union Canal in 1857. Descends 5.8 metres via 3 locks from the Regent's Canal to the Lee, 1.5 km.

### **Olympic stadium**

Construction from 2007 ready for 2012 Olympic Games, Athletics . Now shared with West Ham football club. Original capacity reduced from 80,000 to 60,000.