

Tottenham Hale to Hackney Wick by way of wetland and marshes or Lee Navigation, + extension to Stratford/Olympic Park

- 0** See map 105 for details of the complete Wetlands
- 1** Optionally, from the bus station take a 123 or 230 bus direction Walthamstow /Ilford, to bus stop Walthamstow Wetlands/Ferryboat Inn, to save 0.6km busy road.
- 2** Seasonal routes may be closed from time to time to protect wildlife particularly during migration (spring and autumn)
- 3** This path may be closed Aug-Dec for the wildfowl moulting season in which case take another route.
- 4** On exiting the Wetlands, take the path immediately opposite, up a bank, and continue forward, slightly right. Eventually, after some meanderings you'll join the metalled cycleway

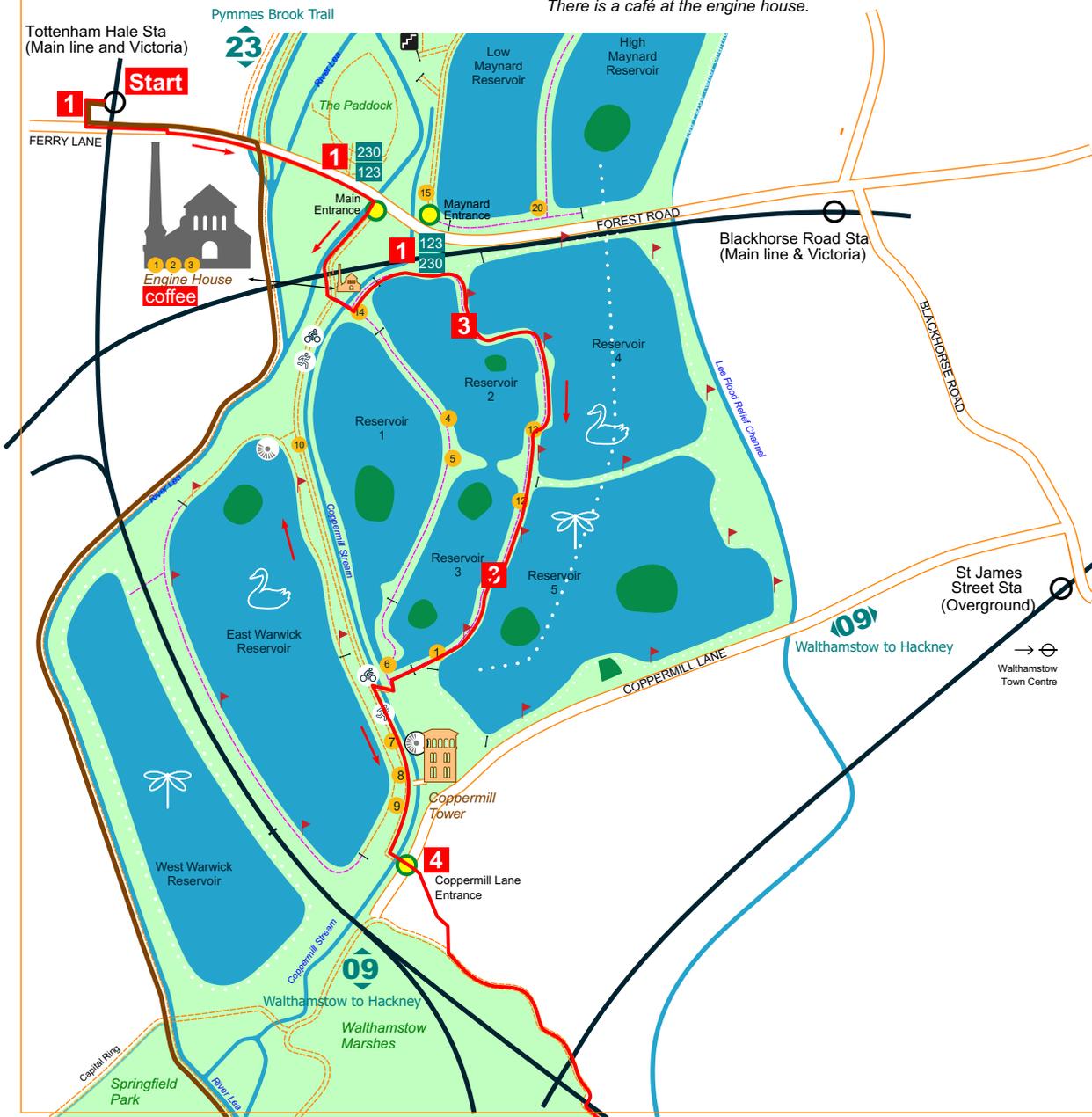
The marshes have a real feeling of open space and are glorious with the Autumn grasses; the wetlands grow better year by year and are worth a detour if you are feeling energetic.

- Walk 2.6 km to exit of Wetlands in Coppermill Lane, 8.2 km to Hackney Wick, or continuing to Stratford 10.3 km
- Walking directly to Stratford is 8.8 km
- Walking Lee Navigation to Hackney Wick directly is 6.8 km, or as the return leg of a circular walk 15 km
- option via fields etc. adds 1 km
- Railway
- 123 Bus stop, route
- 09 Intersection with another walk
- entrance to the Wetlands

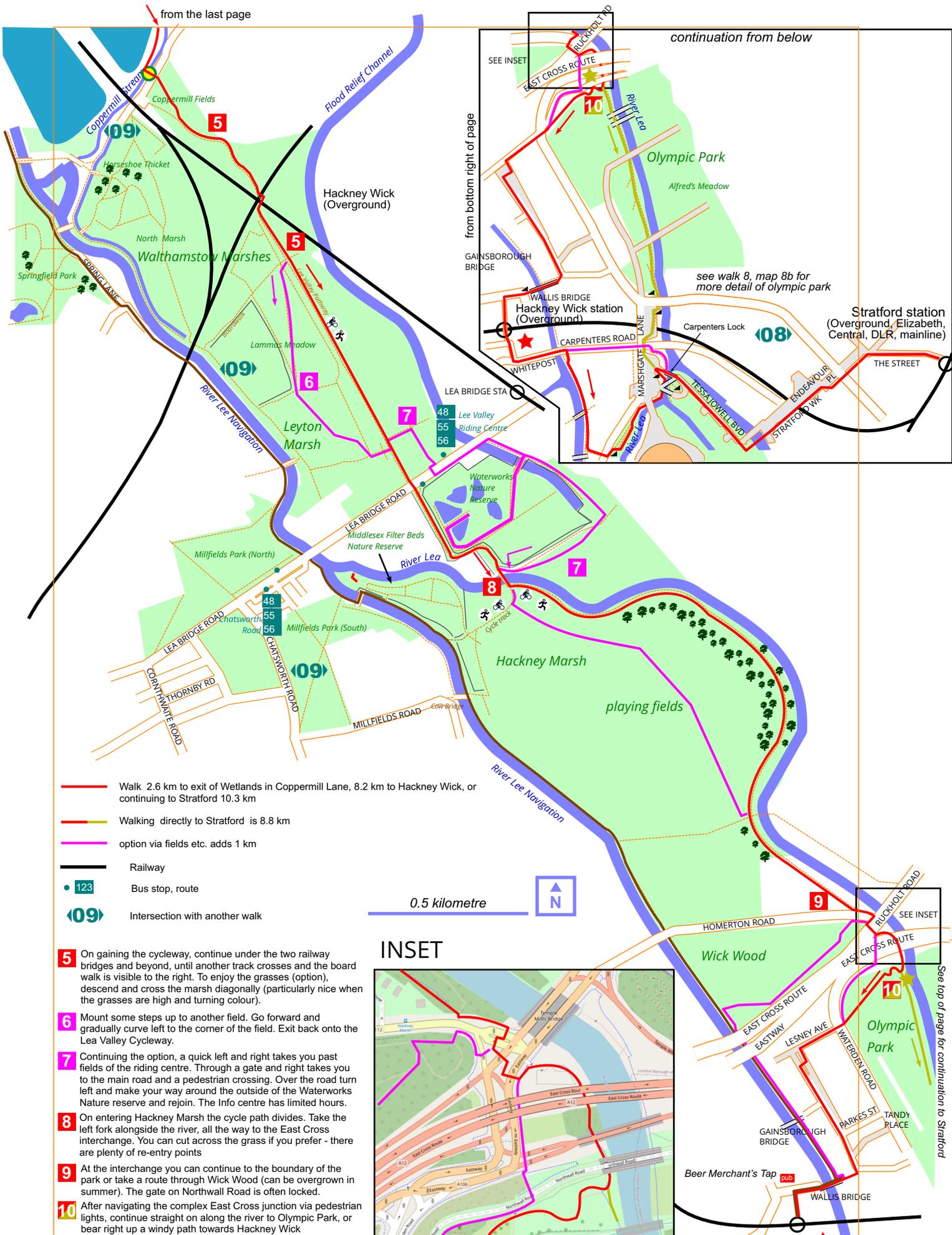
0.5 kilometre



There is a café at the engine house.

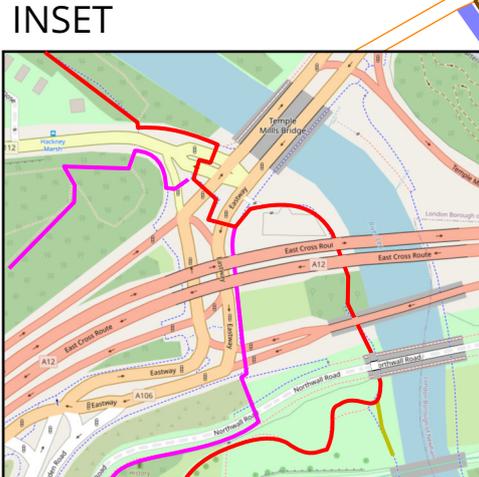


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- 5** On gaining the cycleway, continue under the two railway bridges and beyond, until another track crosses and the board walk is visible to the right. To enjoy the grasses (option), descend and cross the marsh diagonally (particularly nice when the grasses are high and turning colour).
- 6** Mount some steps up to another field. Go forward and gradually curve left to the corner of the field. Exit back onto the Lea Valley Cycleway.
- 7** Continuing the option, a quick left and right takes you past fields of the riding centre. Through a gate and right takes you to the main road and a pedestrian crossing. Over the road turn left and make your way around the outside of the Waterworks Nature reserve and rejoin. The Info centre has limited hours.
- 8** On entering Hackney Marsh the cycle path divides. Take the left fork alongside the river, all the way to the East Cross interchange. You can cut across the grass if you prefer - there are plenty of re-entry points
- 9** At the interchange you can continue to the boundary of the park or take a route through Wick Wood (can be overgrown in summer). The gate on Northwall Road is often locked.
- 10** After navigating the complex East Cross junction via pedestrian lights, continue straight on along the river to Olympic Park, or bear right up a windy path towards Hackney Wick



Hackney Wick (Overground) ★ See top of page for continuation to Stratford

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Notes

The River Lea is London's second river; the boundary between Middlesex and Essex, between Tottenham and Walthamstow.

Coppermill

Perhaps in existence since 1066, a watermill here ground corn in the 14th century. The mill went on to assist in the production of a wide variety of materials including gunpowder (the marsh nearby was then Powder Mill Marsh) paper, leather (presumably grinding bark here to yield tannin) and linseed oil and finally copper, ore being mined and smelted in Swansea before being transported here by water for rolling. The ingots were rolled into sheets that were used for various purposes, including for stamping halfpenny and penny Conder tokens.

The mill was rebuilt around 1806 in London stock brick with Portland stone dressings. Copper rolling and stamping continued until 1857. On closure, the machinery was dismantled and taken back to Swansea.

The mill was acquired by the East London Waterworks Company in 1859 and the Italianate tower was added in 1864 to accommodate a Cornish Bull engine. This and the mill's waterwheels helped drain the surrounding marshes during the construction of the Walthamstow reservoirs. The mill house was finally demolished in 1941.

The East London Waterworks Company

The company was founded by Act of Parliament in 1806 to supply water to the east of London and eventually across the river Lea into Essex.

The water was originally taken from the Lea at Old Ford, although it also acquired waterworks at Shadwell, Lea Bridge, and West Ham.

In 1852, the East London Waterworks Company (ELWC) was granted permission to develop land at Walthamstow for reservoirs and by 1863, the first stage of development was completed with the construction of Reservoirs 1, 2 and 3. Together they occupied just under 18 hectares of land and were all laboriously hand-dug by teams of 'navvies'. In 1866, a drought in London and serious problems with water quality resulting in a cholera epidemic (15,973 Londoners perished and the Company was found guilty of supplying contaminated water), drove the second phase of construction - Reservoirs 4 and 5 were added, followed by the High and Low Maynard Reservoirs in 1870.

In 1887, a Davy compound engine (a new and powerful type of steam engine used widely for pumping during the late Victorian era) was installed at the Coppermill. In 1894, the Engine House was built and remained in service until the 1980s - known initially as Ferry Lane Pumping Station, and later, the Marine Engine House, it was designed by architect H. Tooley. Underneath the building was a network of underground reservoirs, chambers and

pipes that linked the reservoirs and reached as far as Stoke Newington. In 1895, the East and West Warwick

Reservoirs were completed, named after the Countess of Warwick, heiress of the family who sold the land to ELWC. In 1904, a year after Lockwood opened, the Metropolitan Water Board took over following a series of mergers and nationalisation.

In 1951, the Ferry Boat Inn and Coppermill were designated Grade II Listed Buildings for their architectural features and unique place in local history and in 2000, the site was designated part of the Lea Valley Special Protection Area for wildlife - also gaining international 'Ramsar' status as a major part of the valley's internationally important wetland habitat.

In 1975 Walthamstow Reservoirs' importance for London's wildlife was officially recognised for the first time with its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Marine Engine House was decommissioned in the 1980s.

The Wetlands

The 211 hectare nature reserve was created with a £4.4m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £1m from Waltham Forest Council and £1.84m from Thames Water. It is the largest wetlands nature reserve in Europe.

Walthamstow Reservoirs are a key stop-off for migrating wading birds such as green and common sandpipers, and are one of the few places in London you can see common kingfishers. The site also hosts some of the UK's key breeding sites for cormorants and herons.

The ten reservoirs offer a haven for overwintering wildfowl, such as pochard and gadwall, and are regionally important for breeding birds such as grey heron, tufted duck and little egret.

Swifts visit during the spring and kingfisher and peregrine falcon can be seen all year round.

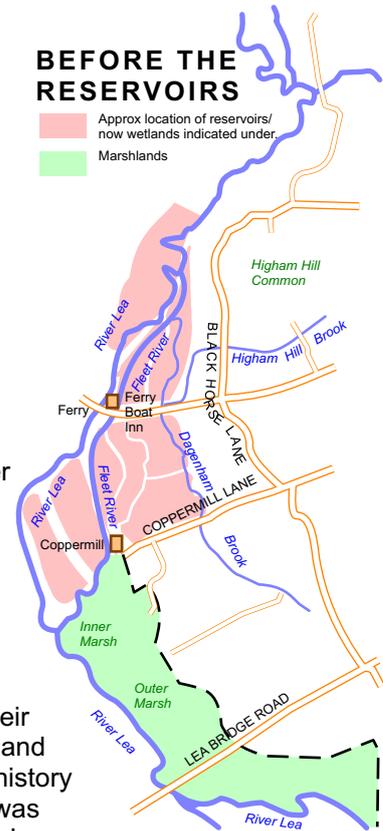
In addition to birds, Walthamstow Wetlands is home to invertebrates such as damselflies, dragonflies, speckled wood butterflies and thick-kneed beetles, and a number of different species of bats and amphibians. Visit

<https://walthamstowwetlands.com/bird-sightings>

BEFORE THE RESERVOIRS

Approx location of reservoirs/
now wetlands indicated under

Marshlands



Conder tokens were a form of privately minted coinage struck by private business owners and merchants in the late 18th century and the early 19th century at a time when there was the shortage of small denomination coins for everyday transactions. By 1795, millions of tokens of a few thousand varying designs were in common use throughout Great Britain.

Walthamstow Marshes

Walthamstow Marshes are one of the last expanses of semi-natural marshland left in London. Extending to 88 acres, they are unique in the Lower Lea Valley as all the other marshes have, at one time or another, been drained, used for gravel extraction, used as dumps or redeveloped completely. In all, 350 plant species have been recorded in the Marshes including Creeping Marshwort, one of Britain's rarest plants. The wetter parts have a beautiful mixed-fen vegetation with large expanses of Sedge, Reed Sweet Grass and Reed Grass that grows to 5 and 6 feet tall. Reed Mace ('bulrush') is found in the Coppermill stream and in drainage channels beside the Sandy Path; Yellow Grass in other channels and streams. Tufted Hair Grass, an indicator of ancient grassland, can be found alongside Marsh Horsetails and Comfrey. The survey of 1981 recorded ten new plants.

Seventeen species of butterfly breed on the Marshes, including an important colony of Essex Skippers. There are dragonflies, damselflies and crickets. Moths found on Walthamstow Marsh include Lime Hawk, Swallow Prominent and Marbled Beauty. Sedge Warblers, Reed Warblers, Reed Buntings and Goldfinches; Greenfinches, Stonechats, Skylarks, Herons, Kestrel and Snipe sweep over the Marshes. There are voles, shrews, harvest mice with frogs in spring and frogspawn in the ditches and reedbeds.

Alliott Verdon Roe

AV Roe began to build a full-size aeroplane with the use of stables at his brother's house in West Hill, Putney, which he tested at Brooklands near Weybridge, recording his first successful flight in 1908. After encountering problems with the management there he moved his flight experiments to Walthamstow Marshes, where he rented space under a railway arch at the western end of the viaduct. Despite many setbacks, Roe persisted with his experiments and there is now a blue plaque commemorating his first successful flight in July 1909 at the site. His aircraft, Avroplane, a triplane, is preserved in London's Science Museum.

Lee Valley Navigation

Work on improving the river's navigability is recorded as early as the fourteenth century and in 1425 there was an Act of Parliament to provide for further improvements. The River Lea Commissioners, who used to run it, date back to this period. As was so often the case, where rivers were improved for navigation, there were arguments between barge owners and mill owners who preferred the available water to be used for mills rather than locks.

The navigation was much used for carrying grain for beer and bread making and those who might lose their livelihoods from the lower prices that became possible as a result of cheaper transport also objected to improvements. Disputes over the right of navigation reached the Star Chamber, a superior court of justice, in 1594, which ruled in favour of the boats.

The canal era was marked by the passage of the River Lea Act 1766 which authorised much more extensive improvement works and the construction of locks, new sections, and the Limehouse Cut, a connecting canal at the southern end. The locks were, of course, single gate locks which relied on a build-up of water and its sudden release to enable boats to pass. The type of lock we know today is a pound lock, with gates at each end, which is far less wasteful of water. Pound locks were introduced to the river Lea in 1771.

Hackney Marsh is one of the largest areas of common land in Greater London, with 136 hectares (336.1 acres) of protected commons. The marsh had been left untouched subject to Lammas rights (land split up into strips and used for producing hay and used only for grazing) which successfully prevented building development.

Fishing was another occupation, along with those servicing them: unsuccessful anglers could fill their creels with fish on return from the Lea enabling them to feed their families and keep their sense of personal pride.

Originally a true marsh, it was extensively drained from Medieval times onwards. A wild almost anarchic area was slowly losing its dark reputation as the Lea's tributaries were drained and access became less of a challenge for those now wandering off the designated paths routes.

In 1893 Sir John Hutton, the chairman of the LCC, declared the marsh an open space for the people of London after mounting pressure from various public groups and the Lord of the manor and those with rights were paid off.

For many this was not for the better as the marsh represented a rural idyl with the central marshes still having a sense of the wilderness about it. Rubble from buildings damaged by air raids during World War II was dumped here, raising the level of the ground. The Lea itself was now controlled by new higher banks and flood relief channels, the marsh was now in name and not in nature.

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