



This walk from DLR George V to Barrier Park has views of the river and the dock - avoid on a very windy day; there is some aircraft noise

— walk 7 km — alternatives
 footpath

- 0** From Victoria Park Gardens to Atlantis Avenue the walk follows the route of Capital Ring; between the locks is a bit primitive
- 1** Sadly it seems the stretch across the locks is to be permanently diverted via bridge. See alternative route indicated
- 2** There is much building going on at Galleons Reach; you may find a temporary diversion

Galleons Reach,
 Royal Albert Dock, Barrier Park

Royal Victoria Gardens

Until 1840s this area was largely marshland, infested with malaria, when it was bought for the railways. (Woolwich extended across the Thames in those days).

North Woolwich station dates back to 1847 when it was opened as the southern terminus of the Eastern Counties and Thames Junction Railway, which ran from Stratford. The station was built just a short walk away from the pier, where customers wanting to travel south of the river could board a ferry.

The Pavilion Hotel opposite the station, was owned by William Holland. In 1850 he began to expand his hotel and lay out the gardens which he opened as the Royal Pavilion Pleasure Gardens in 1851, attracting large numbers of visitors who had come to London to see the Great Exhibition. He staged popular entertainments with trapeze artists, hot air balloons, fireworks, open-air dancing, and even 'monster baby shows' at the hotel.

Although initially hugely successful, by the 1880s the gardens were losing money, and there were proposals for them to be converted to industrial use. Fortunately, a public appeal, led by the Duke of Westminster, was able to raise the money needed to buy the land, and in 1890 it was handed to the London County Council to be newly laid out as a public garden. In 1971 the park became the responsibility of Newham Council. The gardens were restored by the London Development Agency in 2000.

The Royal Group of Docks

The *Victoria* and *Albert* docks were constructed by the *London & St Katharine Docks Company* to accommodate the large vessels that could not be catered for further upriver. A great commercial success, they were London's principal docks during the first half of the 20th century. They specialised particularly in the import and unloading of foodstuffs but also served passengers. The

docks' great size provided a collective span of over 12 miles of quaysides, serving hundreds of ships at a time.

Following the opening of the Royal Albert Dock in 1880, giving the two Royals access to Gallions Reach, the rival East & West India Docks Company responded with the construction of Tilbury Docks further down river. The ruinous competition led eventually to all being taken over by the Port of London Authority in 1909. The PLA went on to complete the 64-acre King George V Dock to the south in 1921 with its own entrance to the Thames, and reserved land to the north for a fourth dock, never built.

As the shipping industry adopted containerisation, traffic moved downstream to Tilbury, the Royal Group finally closing to commercial traffic in 1981. Redevelopment in the late 20th century included the construction of London City Airport between the *Royal Albert* and the *George V* with a single runway and completed in 1987.

Connaught Tunnel

In 1846, a new railway line opened between Stratford and Canning Town, extended to North Woolwich in 1847. (See above)

With the arrival of the Royal Group Docks it was decided to re-route the line through a tunnel beneath the dock channel: the Connaught Tunnel. Constructed by cut and cover and lined in brick, it opened in 1878. About one kilometre long, its central 550-metre section had twin bores, with single, twin track bores at either end. A brick arch invert ran throughout the cuttings and tunnel sections, enabling drainage to the bottom of a pump shaft situated north of the docks and east of the tunnel. An unusual hexagonal pump house was built in brick at the head of the shaft to house the pumps and associated equipment. [This house is to be removed from the top of the shaft, in a way that will allow its re-erection elsewhere, possibly for the use of the SS Robin Trust].

By 1935, the draft, of ships had increased to the extent that the tunnel arch was being struck. The tunnel profile was lowered by reconstructing some 100 m of each single bore tunnel section in a smaller gauge, still adequate to allow clearance for the trains then in use, but allowing the deeper draft in the docks above.

After being incorporated into the North London Line in the seventies, service was finally withdrawn in 2006 when Stratford to Canning Town was taken over by Docklands Light Railway.

It is now going to be reused again, for the Elizabeth Line.

A large concrete base was installed on the dock floor to ensure the safety and stability of the tunnel, installing a 1m thick, reinforced concrete protection slab on the bed of the passageway.

Following installation of the slab, the cast iron linings in the tunnel were removed in stages. The remainder of the brick-lined tunnel was grouted and filled with a low strength foam concrete to ensure the integrity of the existing tunnel. The tunnels were then enlarged to allow Crossrail trains with overhead catenaries to pass.

Barrier Park

Thames Barrier Park covers 7 hectares of green space located on the site of the former PR Chemicals factory. Decontaminating the site took many years. Opened in 2000, it was London's largest new riverside park for over 50 years. The park's design features 32 fountains in a stone courtyard (temporarily closed) and family facilities including children's play and picnic areas. One of the most eye-catching features is the 'Green Dock', a 130 foot long sunken garden running diagonally through the park that is intended as a reminder of the site's dockland heritage. The 'Green Dock' provides a wind protected microclimate for a variety of plants and wildlife. The park is managed by the Greater London Authority.