

walk notes

This walk uses the New River to complete a circuit joining Highbury Fields, Clissold Park and Finsbury Park. Mostly a pavement walk, the first part of the route along the New River can get very muddy.

🕒 Finsbury Park

The land of Finsbury Park lay within a large expanse of woodland called Hornsey Wood. By the mid-18th century a tea room had opened on the knoll of land on which the park is now situated.

Londoners would travel north to escape the smoke of the capital and enjoy the last remains of the old Hornsey Wood. A lake was built on the top of the knoll with water pumped up from the nearby New River. There was boating, a shooting and archery range, and probably cock fighting and other blood sports. In 1841 the people of Finsbury in the City of London petitioned for a park to alleviate conditions of the poor. The present-day site of Finsbury Park was one of four suggestions for the location of a park. The first plans were drawn up in 1850 and ratified by Act of Parliament in 1857. Despite considerable local opposition, the park was formally opened in 1869 with an enlarged lake.

🕒 Woodberry Down

The slopes of Woodberry Down were dairy farmland until the 1820s, when it was opened up by an extension of Lordship Road. The conversion of the disused clay pits below the slopes into reservoirs enhanced the area for housing. St Olaves was built in 1893 to the design of Ewan Christian with some of the proceeds from the sale of St Olaf's, Old Jewry.

By the early C20 this had become "the posh end of Stoke Newington," home to wealthy families. Eventually the sprawl of London caught up; wealthy families moved on and deterioration set in.

The LCC compulsorily purchased all of Woodberry Down in 1934 and after WWII, began the construction of an 'estate of the future'. By 1962, 57 blocks of flats had been erected on 64 acres of land, creating 2,500 homes. With time it developed an array of characteristic inner-city issues. There were few amenities and the flats suffered from poor

maintenance, water penetration and other structural problems.

An ongoing regeneration plan is under way to provide new and refurbished housing. However, in order to fund the project, Hackney council has permitted a high proportion of the properties on the rebuilt part of the estate to be sold at market prices.

🕒 The New River

On 2 May 1612 Sir Hugh Myddelton and King James 1st entered into a partnership for the completion of the project to bring water by a new river from Ware to London. The 62 km New River followed the 100ft contour of the Lee Valley in order to maintain its level. In places the river was channelled underground and in Enfield it was carried above in a wooden aqueduct. The total fall of the original course was only 5.8 metres. The water was brought to the city streets via hollowed-out elm pipes.

Two new reservoirs were subsequently built in 1833 on old brick fields alongside the New River at Stoke Newington, using stone from the old London Bridge to reinforce its banks.

🕒 A coal house was constructed at the same time to store coal for a nearby boiler house and also to use as a kitchen to serve the New River Company director's dining hall. Both the latter are now demolished, but the Coal House is listed and functions as a cafe. By 1848 the NR was supplying 100,000 homes with 24 million gallons of water per day

Between 1852 and 1856 William Chadwell Mylne built new waterworks with filter beds to meet public health requirements. He designed the distinctive-looking 🕒 engine house in the style of a Scottish castle to pump filtered water. The chimney, water tower and roof access were disguised as towers. It included 6 enormous steam beam engines (later replaced) with a combined power of 1000 hp.

In 1902, the Metropolitan Water Act was passed which set up the Metropolitan Water Board to take over all of London's water companies. From 1946 the New River was fully diverted at Stoke Newington and its supply connected to what is now the London Ring Main.

The New River remains an essential part of London's water supply, carrying up to 48 million gallons daily for treatment representing some 8 per cent of London's

daily water consumption.

E Woodberry Wetlands

The reservoirs became surplus to requirements and proposals to fill in the reservoirs in the late 1980s led to the *Save the Reservoirs* campaign. Local residents lobbied local MPs who spoke about the issue in Parliament, protested at the town hall and marched along the route of the New River. Legal challenges were made with the free assistance of helpful lawyers. Presentations and speeches were made to local council meetings, and protests at Thames Water's AGM, for which campaign members became shareholders in order to be able to speak. The filter beds part of the site was eventually lost to development but the rest was saved to create a wildlife wetlands, sailing centre and climbing centre. Thames Water now works closely with London Wildlife Trust, making room for nature and wildlife, and improving public enjoyment and understanding of the natural environment.

F Greenway Close

Clissold Court is a typical series of Art-Deco flats fronting onto the Park (behind a wall), dating from 1936, by Howes & Jackman.

G Stoke Newington

The prefix Stoke (=wood), first recorded in 1274, was used to distinguish the village from neighbouring Newington Barrow. Also used was suffix *Canonicorum*, the place forming a prebend of St Paul's.

The main medieval settlement of Stoke Newington grew up in Church Street around the church and stone manor house on the north side and parsonage and parish pond on the south, stretching eastwards to the London road. There was some building in brick at the church and manor house in the 1560s by William Patten, first recorded lessee of the Manor, but the parsonage, which he also repaired, was of timber, as were most of the houses. Fleetwood House, a large brick house, named after Cromwell's ruthless General and son-in-law Charles, was built earlier for the Coke family at the eastern end of the street, probably in the 1630s and later inherited by Fleetwood from his second wife.

H The old church of St Mary (II*) is the only Elizabethan church in London. It owes its origins to Stoke Newington's 16th century Lord of the Manor, William Patten. In 1563 he decided to rebuild the old parish church,

which had become almost derelict. The main surviving structure from Patten's time is the south aisle which appears to have been designed as a private chapel for himself and his family. The red brickwork on the walls and the arcade separating the chapel from the nave date from then. Anna Barbauld, poet, essayist, literary critic, editor, and author of children's literature, and James Stephen, abolitionist lawyer are buried in the churchyard.

In 1695 Thomas Gunstan, the then lessee of the manor house, obtained permission from the prebendary to pull it down and build several houses, forming Church Row, on the site. (A fine Queen Anne terrace, now under the Town Hall!) He then set about building a replacement to the manor house on land eastwards along Church Street, just west of Fleetwood House, although he died in 1700 before it was complete. Gunstan left his estates to his sister Mary, wife of Thomas Abney, Lord Mayor of London and a founder of the Bank of England, after whom Gunstan's house was then named. Abney House was a red brick building of seven bays, set back from the road behind metal railings and gates, which remain today, although the house was demolished in 1843 when the site was added to Abney Park Cemetery.

The Abney's only surviving child, Elizabeth, died in 1782 and it was under her will that the manor lease was sold for the benefit of dissenting ministers, strengthening the connection, especially with the Quaker movement, for which Stoke Newington was to become well-known.

The Quaker community, made up of a few families, inter-connected by marriage, deeply concerned in philosophical and political issues, mostly deriving their wealth from the City were resident in Church Street. Further prestigious houses were built along Church Street during the 18th century, most notably a group named Paradise Row (1721-64), located on the south side of Church Street opposite Clissold Park. Five of these remain today, all listed. Members of the Quaker Hoare family, bankers and philanthropists, owned several buildings in this row, and at one point these buildings were in partial use for silk weaving, a locally important industry.

Among the wealthy Quakers living in the town

houses on Church Street was John Wilmer, who in 1764 was buried in a vault in his garden with a bell attached to his wrist in case he was not dead.

Samuel Hoare the elder, a merchant of 'ample fortune', occupied Paradise House, the largest in the row, from 1775. His son Samuel the younger, the banker, lived in the row from 1785 until the damp of the New River induced him to leave Stoke Newington in 1790.

The area became notable for its many writers, notably Daniel Defoe author of Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders and Tory editor.

The old rectory, a timber-framed building on the south side of Church Street, was demolished to make way for an elegant **Ⓛ new church (II*)**, designed by George Gilbert Scott. Its fittings and fixtures demonstrate the best craftsmanship of the time and include 1908 reredos, circular font by R. Westmacott, pulpit with reliefs of the heads of Jesus and the four Evangelists, altar-piece with deeply carved Last Supper, organ in the N transept by Gray & Davison (1858), and post-war stained glass with apse windows by Francis Skeat (1957-8) and north transept by Carter Shapland (1960). There are also two early-C20 wall monuments in brightly coloured mosaic designs. The pulpit and font are particularly fine, combining stone and marble elements with rich carved details, of Christ and the four gospel writers in the pulpit and four angels in the font.

It was consecrated in 1858, but the tower and spire were added only in 1890, when Scott's son, John Oldrid Scott, completed the church, also adding a vestry to the north east — where there have been some more recent additions.

Ⓜ Clissold Park

Clissold House (II*) dates back to the 1790's when it was built for Jonathan Hoare. He began to lay out an estate that he called Stoke Newington Park. By 1793 he had built the mansion, then known as Paradise House. It is thought that clay for some of the bricks used to build the house was dug from two pits which are now the Clissold Park lakes. The house has two storeys on the west side but three on the east. The ground on the west was built up so that the house looks like it is perched on top of a small knoll, a fashionable landscape feature at the time. He was soon

obliged to sell for financial reasons and moved across the street to Paradise Row. Subsequently, Reverend Augustus Clissold acquired ownership of the estate through marriage, and changed the name of the estate to Clissold Place.

In the 1880s the grounds of Clissold Place were threatened with development, and two prominent campaigners, Joseph Beck of The City of London and John Runtz of The Metropolitan Board of Works persuaded the Board of MBW to buy the land and create a public park. In July 1889, Clissold Park was opened by the newly formed London County Council. The two ponds in the park are named the Beckmere and the Runtzmere in honour of the two principal founders.

Ⓚ Highbury Fields

In 1794 the hamlet of Highbury consisted of Highbury House and Highbury Hill House, Highbury Barn, a resort and tea-gardens, and the two terraces of Highbury Terrace and Place. The land behind Highbury Place was divided into leasehold meadows, gardens and a nursery.

Development continued apace and in 1885 the Vestry of the Parish of St Mary Islington and the Metropolitan Board of Works shared the cost of £60,000 to buy land for a public park that was to become Highbury Fields. In 1891 additional land to the north was purchased and added to the park.

Aberdeen Park as we know it now was laid out in the 1850s.

Ⓛ Gillespie Local Park

Gillespie Park was winner of the 'London Conservation Area of the Year' award in London in Bloom 2015 and is Islington's largest nature reserve. This 2.8 hectare nature reserve which is home to a wealth of wildlife, including 244 species of plants, 94 species of birds and 24 types of butterflies. It is home to Islington Ecology Centre and Highbury Wildlife Garden. Gillespie Park has separate habitats – grassland meadows, wetlands, woodland, hedgerows – each catering for different wildlife. Meadows, which have nearly disappeared from the countryside, are especially important here.