

— main route 9.2 km

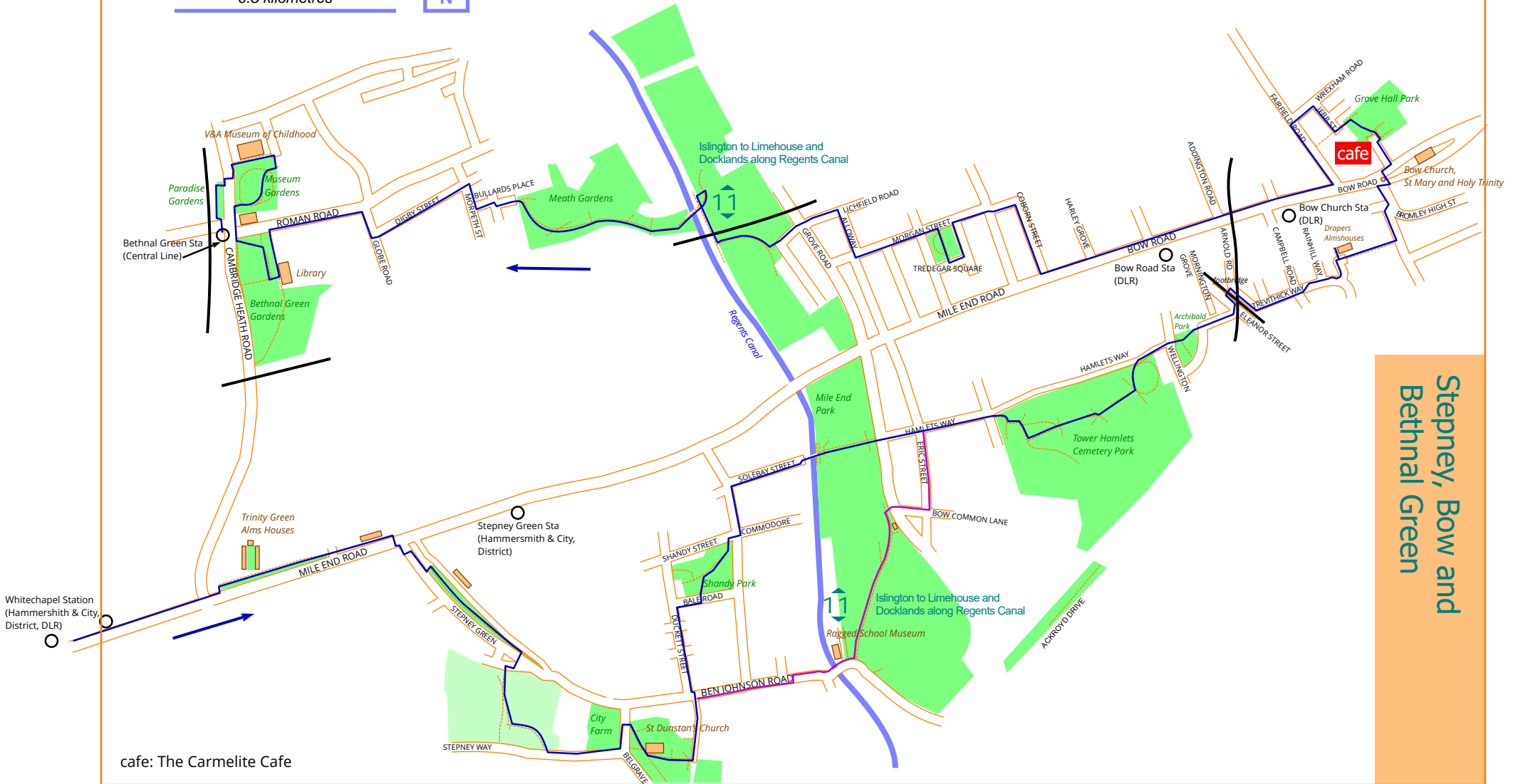
— alternatives

— railway



connection with another walk

0.5 kilometres



cafe: The Carmelite Cafe

Stepney, Bow and Bethnal Green

walk notes

Stepney, Bow & Bethnal Green

There was much bomb damage during the war and slum clearance afterwards. This pavement walk connects some of the elegant past still remaining.

Trinity Green Almshouses

The Trinity Green Almshouses were built in 1695 by the Corporation of Trinity House on land provided by Captain Henry Mudd of Ratcliffe in his will. The almshouses are believed to have been designed by Sir William Ogbourne, and were organised into two rows, with a central green and chapel. They were intended for '28 decayed masters and Stepney Green commanders of ships or the widows of such.' In WWII, the almshouses north of the chapel were destroyed.

Stepney and Stepney Green

In the early middle ages Stepney covered most of the land between the City and the River Lea, down as far as the Thames. Our walk starts across what was manorial wastes (Common land) (see right with walk superimposed) before passing the church. Stepney and Hackney shared a Manor House. Stepney Green is a 19th-century invention. Both the road and its neighbouring common land were formerly called Mile End Green. The green was flanked by fine houses in the 17th and 18th centuries and some of these survive today. No. 37 Stepney Green was built in 1694 and is an outstanding survival of this period. Nos 61-3 Stepney Green were originally part of a terrace of 7 houses.

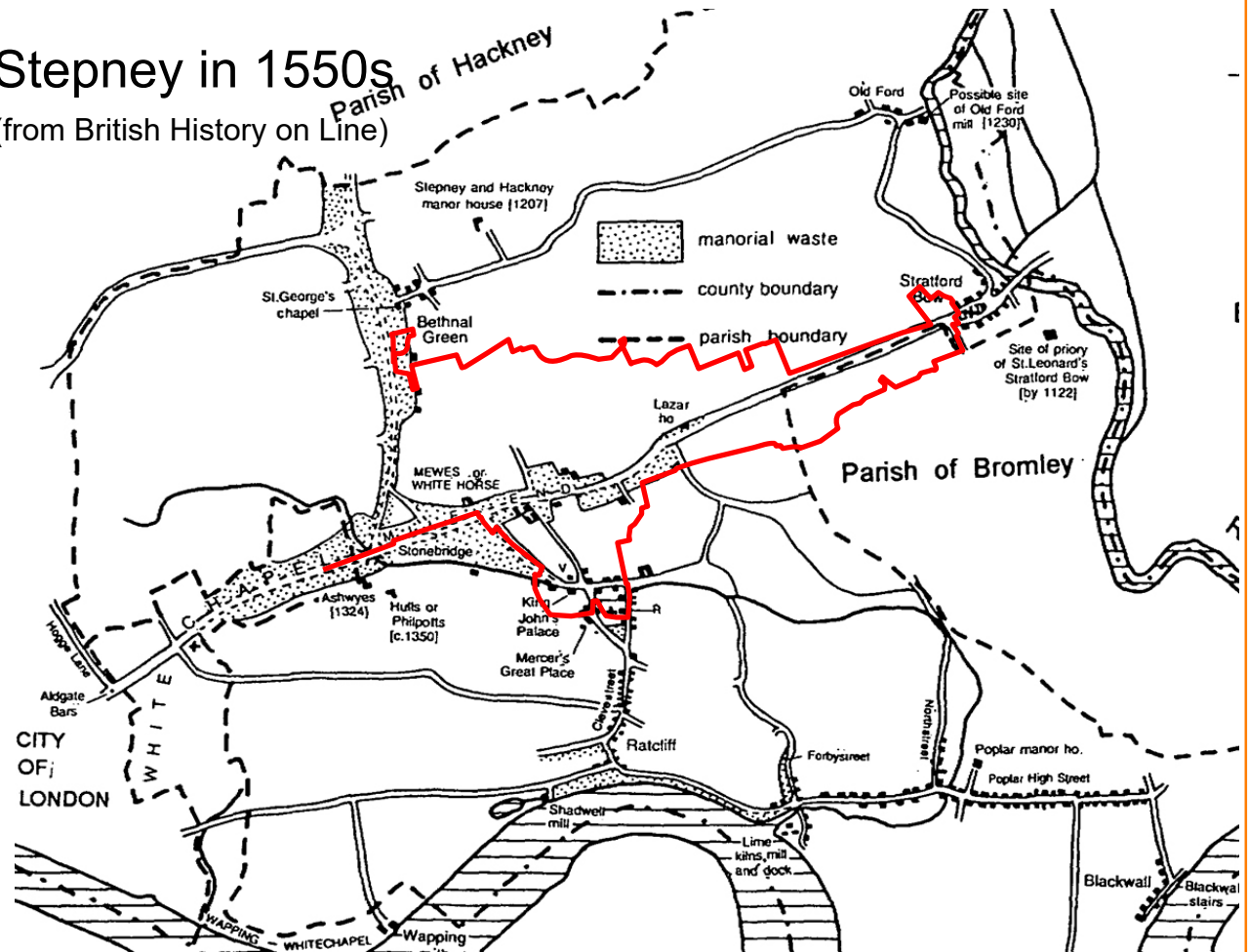
Stepney Green Park was not part of the Common and much of it is on land reclaimed from housing.

Stepney City Farm

The farm was founded in 1979 on wasteland left after a World War II bomb destroyed the Stepney

Stepney in 1550s

(from British History on Line)



Congregational Church. Worcester house (locally known as King John's Palace) was an original building from which ruins remain onsite, and you can also see the remains of the old Sunday school and the Stepney meeting house. Some of the land is temporarily occupied for Crossrail works.

St Dunstons and All Saints

The earliest building arose in Saxon times and it

has been the site of Stepney parish church since the 1200s. Until the early 1300s the church served the whole of Middlesex east of the City of London. Then new churches were built at Whitechapel and Bow. The existing building is the third on the site and was built of Kentish ragstone mainly in the fifteenth century (although the chancel dates from 200 years earlier). A porch and octagonal parish

room were added in 1872. During the nineteenth century the church extensively underwent this sort of treatment so that externally very little of the ancient stonework remains visible.

Ragged School Museum

The Ragged School Museum is housed in a group of three canalside buildings which once formed the largest “ragged” or free school in London. Dr Barnardo gave up his medical training to pursue his local missionary works and in 1867 opened his first “ragged school” where children could gain a free basic education. Ten years later, Barnardo’s Copperfield Road Free School opened its doors in buildings that were originally warehouses for goods transported along the Regent’s Canal, and for the next thirty-one years educated tens of thousands of children. It closed in 1908 by which time enough government schools had opened in the area to serve the needs of local families. The buildings then went through a variety of industrial uses until, in the early 1980s, they were threatened with demolition. A group of local people joined together to save them and the Ragged School Museum opened in 1990.

Mile End Park

See the notes for walk 11

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park

Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, one of London’s ‘Magnificent Seven’ cemeteries, privately run and opened to burials in 1841. (See walk 65 Abney Cemetery, walk 40 Nunhead Cemetery; walk 91 Highgate Cemetery) Burials ceased in 1966, and the site was closed as a Cemetery and re-declared a Park. In the 1990’s additions were made along the Southern Boundary. Scrapyard meadows whose name indicates its former use is now a flower rich meadow. Ackroyd Drive Greenlink

opposite the Leopold Estate acts as a green corridor between the Cemetery Park and Mile End Park. The Park contains several Grade 2 listed monuments and is a site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation.

Bow Church

About the year 1110 a stone bridge was built across the Lea. A community, known as Stratford-Atte-Bowe (after the bow shape of the bridge) grew up by the bridge and near to the Priory of St Leonard. By the end of the 13th century, local people, fed up with having to go all the way to St Dunstan’s Stepney to church petitioned for their own place of worship. In 1311, Bishop Ralph Baldock of London licensed the building of a ‘chapel of ease’ in the hamlet. King Edward III granted a piece of land ‘in the middle of the King’s highway’ and the church was built. The majority of the building that currently stands on the site dates from about 1490 when the earlier church buildings needed major repair. In 1719, Bow Church finally ceased to be a daughter chapel to St Dunstan’s Church in Stepney when it was consecrated as the independent parish of St Mary, Stratford Bow.

In 1829, the church tower was badly damaged in a storm, causing it to collapse. Although it was rebuilt at the time, it was to suffer further damage in the Second World War. In 1896 the chancel roof also collapsed and needed significant restoration work. The church was hit, unluckily, by one of the last bombs to be dropped in the last big Blitz raid in 1941, causing significant damage to the tower and the west side of the church.

The statue of former Prime Minister, William Gladstone was erected with help from Theodore Bryant, one of the owners of the local Bryant and May match factory. This factory was the location for

one of the most famous strikes in the East End in 1888, known as the Match Girls Strike. The former Benedictine nunnery was for a prioress and nine nuns and dedicated to St. Leonard and had been founded by William, Bishop of London, in the time of William the Conqueror.

Grove Hall Park and ‘The Nunnery’

Grove Hall Park is on part of the former site of Grove Hall, which in the C19th was owned by the Byas family and run as Grove Hall Private Lunatic Asylum, established c.1820. Many of the inmates were ex-servicemen. The asylum was purchased for the public and the park was opened in 1909. There is a notable alley of London plane trees, planted c.1909, running east/west across the park. The park was extended in 1930 with the addition of the garden of St Catherine’s Convent, which had been founded at 181 Bow Road in 1866 with the Church of Our Lady with St Catherine’s built as a chapel. The nuns left during the War and the nunnery was later used for artists’ studios and exhibition space. The small memorial garden abuts the park, with the war memorial situated at one end. The Nunnery Gallery is a unique building on the ground floor of a former nineteenth-century convent, surrounded by Bow Arts studios. Presenting a diverse gallery programme, exhibitions aim to appeal to a wide audience with a particular focus on site-responsive work and works that explore the history and themes of the local area. Events accompany all shows, including panels, workshops and film screenings, creating debate and discussion around art in the community.

Tredegar Square

Tredegar Square is a well-preserved Georgian square and now the centre of a conservation area; the south and west sides of the Square were

completed in the 1830s, and the entire square by 1847.

The Tredegar Estate was laid out formally around the square and designed in grand style. The square is surrounded on all sides by three-storey terraced houses with basements. The north side is the grandest with stuccoed and classical decoration and the remaining three sides are plain stock brick.

Ground landlords like Sir Charles Morgan of Tredegar and the Coborn Trustees leased plots to developers and builders who erected houses that they could then sub lease for their own profit.

Construction of the area began to the East of Coborn Road in 1817 and ended with Morgan Street and Grove Road between 1862 and 1889.

Meath Gardens

Meath Gardens was formerly Victoria Park Cemetery established in 1842, with its principal entry at the west via a C19th Gothic portal that remains as the main entrance to the park. The cemetery was closed to burials in 1876 and fell into rack and ruin. The disused cemetery, being privately owned, was exempt from legislation; in 1885 the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, London (MPGA) approached the son of its former proprietor for permission to lay it out as a public garden. Although he agreed to this he required that an arrangement be made to relieve him of maintenance and of payment of rent charges. Bethnal Green Vestry was unable to do this so the scheme was put in abeyance until the new LCC was formed and was sympathetic to the project. The MPGA then raised funds for laying out the grounds. Work began March 1893. It was one of the largest burial grounds that the MPGA landscape

gardener, Fanny Wilkinson, converted into a public garden. She was assisted by 30 unemployed men and the ground proved hard to dig, the work taking a year to complete. The garden was re-named Meath Gardens after the Earl of Meath, who was the Chairman of MPGA and opened in July 1894.

Bethnal Green

Cambridge Heath has no connection with Cambridge but is a local area of gravelly area north of Bethnal Green. Settlement at Bethnal Green was recorded in the 12th and 13th centuries. The green was the village common and the medieval houses, mostly cottages which gave rise to copyhold tenements, clustered around it, chiefly on the north and east. Most of the green itself was preserved by the purchase in 1678, by owners and occupiers of neighbouring houses, of 11 a. of waste east of Cambridge Heath Road and ½ a. to its west to prevent any new building. It was let out as three closes of farmland, and in 1690 was settled in trust for the poor. The purchase apparently succeeded in encouraging gentry, several of whom were said in 1688 to have come to live there since the inclosure. Until the late 17th century Bethnal Green was the smallest and least significant of Stepney's hamlets, often coupled with, and inferior to, Mile End. Huguenot immigration was a striking feature of the late 17th and 18th century, spreading from Spitalfields.

Bethnal Green gained independence from Stepney as its own parish in 1743, by act of parliament. To the east of Bethnal Green, Globe Town was established from 1800 to provide for the expanding population of weavers around Bethnal Green attracted by improving prospects in silk weaving.

V&A Museum of Childhood

In 1851 William Gladstone, later Prime Minister,

suggested a museum be built in Bethnal Green.

Three leading local figures, Sir Antonio Brady, Bethnal Green rector Revd Septimus Hansard and Dr Millar bought the common land and lobbied Parliament for a museum to be built there.

However, the museum would not be built for some time.

The Prince of Wales opened the Bethnal Green Museum as part of the V&A in 1872. Wild had originally designed a garden, clock tower and library amongst other features, however, due to the lack of funds, the final structure was decidedly less grand, the east and west facades being the noticeable remaining original design elements. Female inmates of Woking Gaol laid the fish scale pattern marble floor and F W Moody designed the murals in the north and south exterior walls as educational pieces. Initially the exhibits were made up of collections from the Great Exhibition, South Kensington collections and a loan of 18th century French art from the Wallace Collection. Members of the Royal family began to house their gifts at Bethnal Green.

In 1922 Arthur Sabin became head curator and was instructed to reorganise the museum and he sought to make it more child-friendly. He began to source child-related objects, a project in which Queen Mary joined him, donating many toys of her own. Others became interested and began to donate toys to the museum.

Over the following 23 years, this area of the collection became noticeably popular. To this end, when Roy Strong became director of the V&A in 1973, he instigated changes that resulted in the Bethnal Green Museum re-opening in 1974 as the Museum of Childhood.