

The Black Path

Length of the walk : 30 to 45 minutes each way.

The ground : Firm, level surfaces; steps up and down one railway bridge.

Starting point : Lea Bridge Ice Rink is served by bus routes 48, 55 and 56, and has a car park (which may have restrictions on its use).

Refreshments : the Princess of Wales pub is near the starting point; cafés and shops at the other end of the walk.

Some background : The 'Black Path' has existed since the time Leyton and Walthamstow were small villages surrounded by countryside. It is on the same alignment as, and a continuation of, 'Porter's Way', a route across Hackney from Shoreditch that can still be traced through alleyways and open spaces like London Fields. The two routes meet at the site of a ferry across the River Lea that was closed when Lea Bridge was built around 1757.

The route : looking at the ice rink entrance, turn right and walk parallel with Lea Bridge Road (to your right) to trees (with an electricity pylon beyond). Then turn left (view across the marshes), then right up a slope. Turn left along the raised pathway, then almost immediately turn right with horse paddocks on each side. Cross over the road that leads to the riding stables and keep straight on. At the end turn left and walk with the concrete flood relief channel on your right.

Follow the tarmac track to the right over the flood relief channel. Turn left and climb the footbridge over the railway.

With the footbridge behind you, cross the road. Go straight ahead into a car park, through the middle of which the Black Path is indicated as a cycle track.

Cross the road (Argall Avenue) and keep straight on, along the split cycle and pedestrian track.

After the shared split track bends slightly to the right there are two fences on the right a couple of yards apart. This must be the route of a light railway which connected Walthamstow Council's incinerator and sewage works at Low Hall with the railway line between Stratford and Tottenham Hale.

Follow the split track until it meets a roadway into the industrial units.

At the end of the cycle track is an interpretation board for the Black Path.

Cross the roadway and turn right along the pavement. Pass the entrance to a sports ground, keeping straight on, with a recycling site, Council premises and Barncroft School to your right on the other side of the road.

Next on the right is the proposed site of the Walthamstow Pumphouse Museum, with a collection of vintage vehicles.

Keep straight on into Markhouse Avenue. Do not go to the end but take a left turn into Station Road. Follow Station Road to the end. Keep straight on into St James Street, and under the railway bridge.

Past the station, the main road takes a left turn. Opposite, to your right, is the start of Walthamstow High Street. On the left, at the beginning of Coppermill Lane, is The Mill community centre (where you may perhaps be able to buy refreshments).

You can retrace your steps to the start of the walk.

Alternatively, route 158 crosses Lea Bridge Road at the junction with Church Road, and from there the 48, 55 and 56 routes go back to the ice rink). Other public transport options are a train from St James Street station to Walthamstow Central station, or a 230 bus from the front or any route from the rear of St James Street station, to Walthamstow Central. From Walthamstow Central bus station route 48 will get you back to Lea Bridge Ice Rink.

If you have the time and energy, a walk along Walthamstow High Street will get you to Walthamstow Central rail and bus and Victoria Line tube stations.

