

Chasing the Dagenham Brook

walthamforestwalks

Length of the walk : up to 2 hours.

The ground : Firm surfaces, shallow slopes, crossing many streets but otherwise suitable for wheelchairs and baby buggies.

Starting point : St James Street Station is on a line between Liverpool Street and Chingford. Bus routes 158 and 230 pass the Station.

Return : bus route 158 takes you back to St James Street Station.

Refreshments : there are cafés and shops near the start in St James Street and Walthamstow High Street, and near the end in Leyton High Road.

The route : turn right out of the Station and use the signal-controlled pedestrian crossing to reach the other side of St James Street and Coppermill Lane. Here is the Mill community centre.

Continue along Coppermill Lane and take the 2nd turning on the left, Cassiobury Road.

Follow Cassiobury Road to the end and turn right into Salop Road. Take the first left, Essex Road, under the railway. Go into the park (St James's Park) on the right and follow the avenue of trees, with the railway embankment to your right. The roadway goes past some allotments on the left and crosses over the Dagenham Brook.

Some background : The Dagenham Brook is a very old feature of the landscape, even though it is straight and therefore man-made. It runs along the eastern edge of the Lea valley with a noticeable slope up to higher ground. As an important drainage channel its maintenance was supervised for centuries by the Commission of Sewers for the Levels of Havering and Dagenham.

The Brook can be seen to the right coming from underneath the railway. On the other side it now runs in pipes beneath the ground.

Follow the Brook into the woodland, a managed nature conservation area. Follow the path as it swings to the right away from the Brook and returns to the roadway. Turn right and return to St James's Park.

Make your way diagonally across St James's Park to the right-hand corner, and go out into Essex Road. Turn right and at the end turn left (South Access Road) past the entrance to the Walthamstow Pumphouse Museum (most likely to be open on Sundays).

Turn right (into Low Hall Lane), with the Walthamstow Pumphouse Museum on your right. Take the first right, Brunel Road, and follow this as it swings left. Turn right into Cockerell Road, which crosses the Dagenham Brook.

To the right the Brook is in a concrete channel alongside water tanks. To the left the Brook flows through a narrow belt of woodland.

Retrace your steps back along Cockerell Road.

To your right, unmarked, is the site of Low Hall Manor House, built in about 1344 with a moat. This was replaced in the 17th century by a timber-framed farmhouse which was hit in August 1944 by a V1 'flying bomb'. The Dagenham Brook must have been the water supply for the House and its moat.

Keep retracing your steps, along Brunel Road past the entrance to Barncroft School. At Low Hall Lane turn right, and take the first right, Acacia Road. When Acacia Road turns left, turn right instead and follow this entrance to new housing developments in Luther King Close. Then keep turning left to reach some railings that overlook the Dagenham Brook at a bend.

Retrace your steps, this time keeping right, back through Luther King Close and back out into Acacia Road. This time turn right into Acacia Road, and take the first right, Verulam Avenue. The route swings left with a bend in Verulam Avenue.

It is worth taking a look at Tudor Court, the righthand turning as Verulam Avenue swings left. Tudor Court is a development, designed to look as though it is timber-framed, typical of the 1930s, maintained sympathetically around a green. A real step back into the past.

Follow Verulam Avenue to the main road (Markhouse Road) and turn right. Pass St Saviour's Church and turn right into Theydon Street.

This area was developed into terraced housing by Thomas Courtenay Theydon Warner. The turnings off Markhouse Road show the slope down into the Lea valley floodplain. Warner was probably only able to build here because of improvements to the Walthamstow sewage works, the site passed earlier on this walk and now the Walthamstow Pumphouse Museum.

Turn right into Hibbert Road, then left into Bridge Road.

Railings on both sides of Bridge Road give good views of the Dagenham Brook. If you go a little further along Bridge Road you can see on your right another drainage channel in an attractive setting.

Past the Dagenham Brook turn left out of Bridge Road into Blyth Road. At the busy Lea Bridge Road turn left. High fencing allows little sight of the Dagenham Brook. Cross Lea Bridge Road and turn right. Pass the Hare & Hounds pub, from the 1860s and older than any of the housing nearby.

Turn left into Seymour Road. Follow this to the end and out into the open space (Marsh Lane Playing Fields). At the tree-lined Marsh Lane turn left.

Just before the end of the open space turn right across a car park. At the far corner take the footpath beside the Dagenham Brook. Eventually the path swings left on a bridge over the Brook and then turns right.

(You can end the walk here by taking a left turn away from the Brook and along Ive Farm Lane to Church Road with bus routes 58 and 158, the latter passing St James Street Station where this walk started.)

Otherwise keep on next to the Brook until another bridge crosses the Brook to the right. The path from the bridge leads to Orient Way.

Turn left along Orient Way, which has both a footpath and a cycle path beside it.

At a roundabout keep straight ahead to Ruckholt Road and turn left.

End of the walk : bus route W15 will take you to Leytonstone Station, Whipps Cross, the Bakers Arms, Walthamstow Central, and the High Street about 5 minutes walk from St James Street Station. Bus route W14 goes to Leytonstone High Road. If you go further along Ruckholt Road you reach Leyton High Road with cafés, shops, bus routes 58, 69, 97 and 158 bus routes 58 and 158 (the latter passing St James Street Station where this walk started), and Leyton Station on the Central Line.

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