



Pymmes Brook Trail Jack's Lake to River Lea

Pymmes Brook Trail

This 18.5 km pavement walk down Pymmes Brook from Jack's Lake to the River Lea passes through 5 parks.

Jack's Lake

Jack's Lake is the lowest of three lakes created in the 1880s as estate lakes for Squire Charles Jack, owner of Beech Hill House, although there was probably some form of lake there before then. From Victorian times until the sixties, Jack's Lake was a boating lake, but was left to decline and became very overgrown until Hadley Angling and Preservation Society from 1982 drained and de-silted the lake, cut back the vegetation and stocked it with fish creating the tranquil place it is today.

Oak Hill Park

After passing steeply through an area of housing estates the brook reaches Oak Hill Park. The valley was famed for its oak trees and under the control of Saint Albans Abbey. The descendants of those trees survive in Oak Hill Woods. In 1536 the church lands were sold to create large estates, one of which became Oak Hill Theological College. The Baring family owned the area from the 1860s till 1928 when in 1930 it was sold to East Barnet Council. The park was opened to the public in 1933. Visit Oak Hill Wood nature reserve, a woodland of hornbeam, oak and ash, stunning in autumn as the leaves turn gold.

Arnos Grove

There was a house there called Arnolds. The Arnos Grove estate was owned from 1777 to 1918 by the Walkers of Taylor Walker brewers. Then sold on to Lord Inverforth who sold the southernmost part to Southgate UDC and opened the 44 acres as Arnos Park in 1928. The tube followed in 1932.

Broomfield Park

It is then a short walk to Broomfield Park. John Broomfield was a leather merchant and built the original house in 1550 before selling it on. After many prosperous owners Broomfield Park (54 acres) was bought by Southgate UDC in 1903 and opened to the public. Sadly the house was burned down but the magnificent water features remain.

Millfield House

Millfield House is first mentioned in 1796 when it belonged to John Wigston of Trent Park. He rented it out to the Ambassador of the German Empire. In 1849 it was sold to become a school for London Workhouse children until 1913. It was acquired by Enfield Council to become an arts centre. Go round the front of the house to gain access to the brook and cross to the path on the other side.

Pymmes Park

Pymmes Park dates back to the 1300s when William Pymme after whom the brook is named, built a mansion there. The Cecil family

owned it from 1579 to 1801 and it was bought by Enfield Council in 1899 to provide public open space.

Walthamstow Marshes

After Pymmes Park the walk deteriorates and we diverge from the official trail, eventually to follow the route of the brook, often underground, until it emerges in Tottenham Marshes, a large expanse of rough grassland with wildflower meadows, accessible river channels and scrubland. Humans have been making their mark on the marshes from the mid 19th century but it is now managed by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. The meadows are home to Bee Orchid which flower from May to June as well as the scarce Wall Bedstraw. Buddleia attracts huge numbers of butterflies, including the Painted Lady.

Kestrel can be seen hunting small mammals such as Bank and Field Vole.

The Small Red-eyed Damselfly can be seen from late June to September, perching on floating vegetation along the Lee Navigation. In winter large flocks of Linnet can be seen feeding on the seed heads of Teasel, dock and thistle while Sand Martin visit in summer months. The river channels are good places to look for a darting Kingfisher.

The route meets the Lee Navigation at Stonebridge Lock.