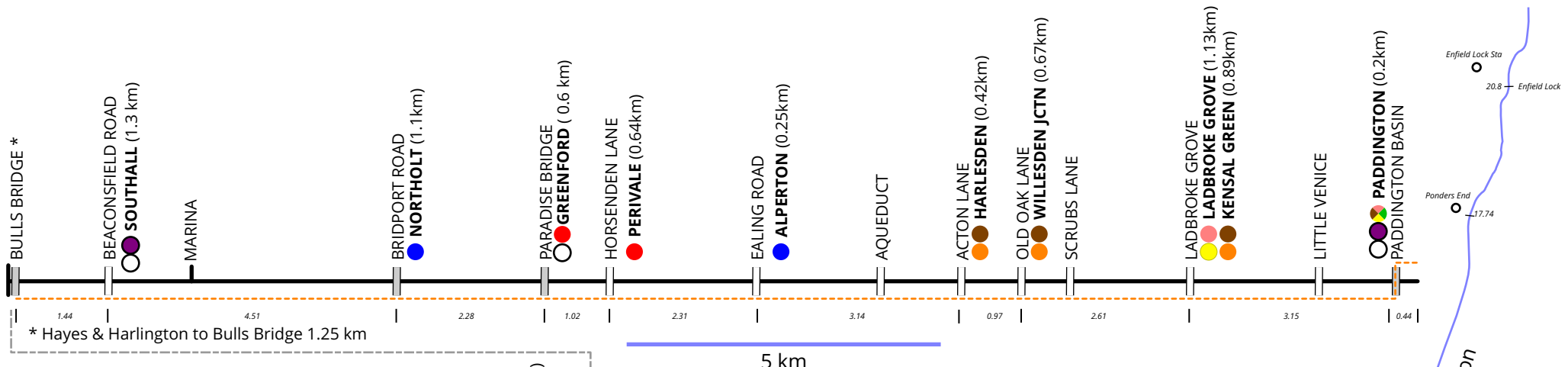
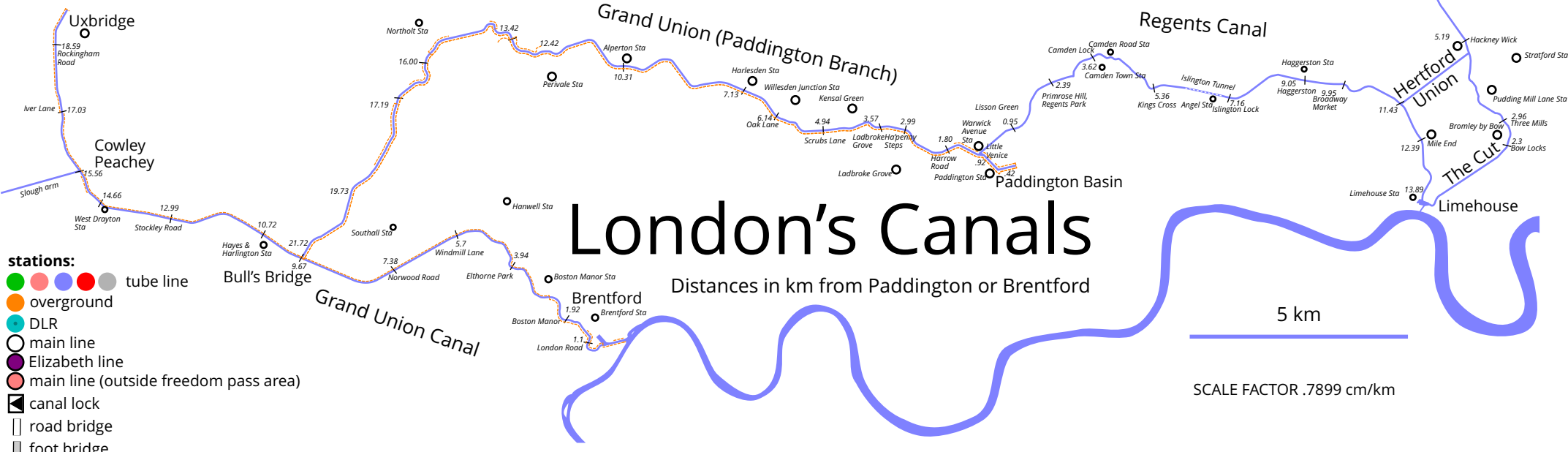
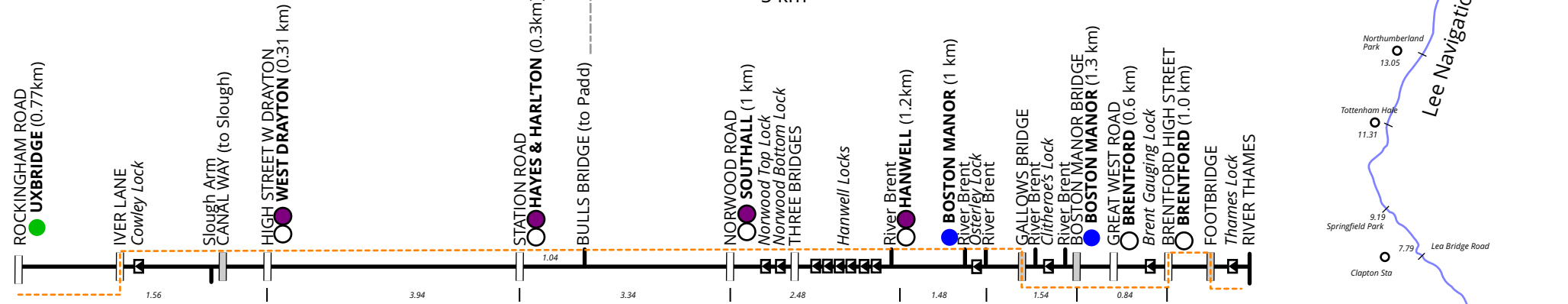


Grand Union (Paddington Branch)



Grand Union Canal

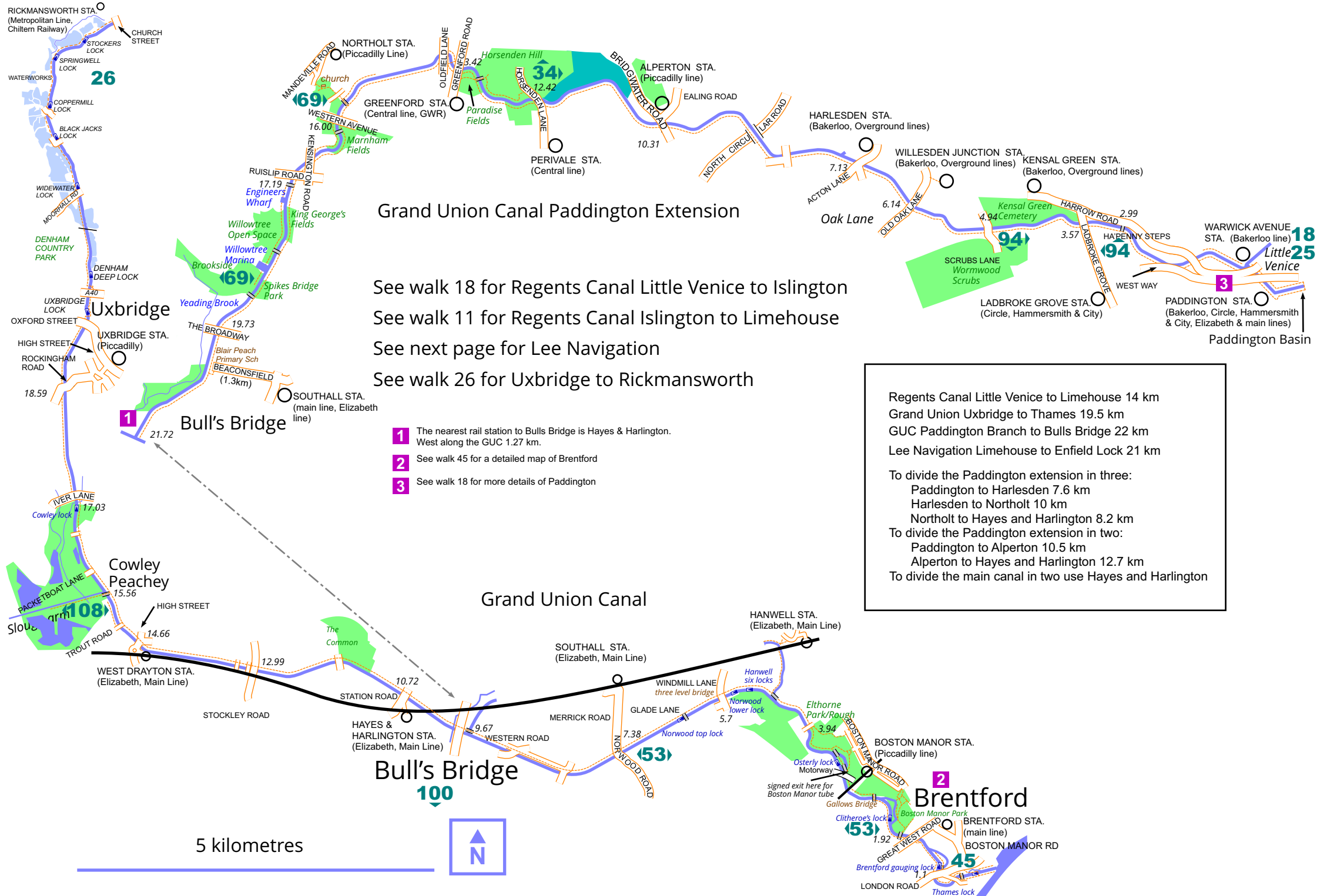


London's Canals

Distances in km from Paddington or Brentford

- stations:
- tube line
 - overground
 - DLR
 - main line
 - Elizabeth line
 - main line (outside freedom pass area)
 - ▣ canal lock
 - ▣ road bridge
 - ▣ foot bridge

SCALE FACTOR .7899 cm/km



Grand Union Canal Paddington Extension

- See walk 18 for Regents Canal Little Venice to Islington
- See walk 11 for Regents Canal Islington to Limehouse
- See next page for Lee Navigation
- See walk 26 for Uxbridge to Rickmansworth

- 1** The nearest rail station to Bulls Bridge is Hayes & Harlington. West along the GUC 1.27 km.
- 2** See walk 45 for a detailed map of Brentford
- 3** See walk 18 for more details of Paddington

Regents Canal Little Venice to Limehouse 14 km
 Grand Union Uxbridge to Thames 19.5 km
 GUC Paddington Branch to Bulls Bridge 22 km
 Lee Navigation Limehouse to Enfield Lock 21 km

To divide the Paddington extension in three:
 Paddington to Harlesden 7.6 km
 Harlesden to Northolt 10 km
 Northolt to Hayes and Harlington 8.2 km

To divide the Paddington extension in two:
 Paddington to Alperton 10.5 km
 Alperton to Hayes and Harlington 12.7 km

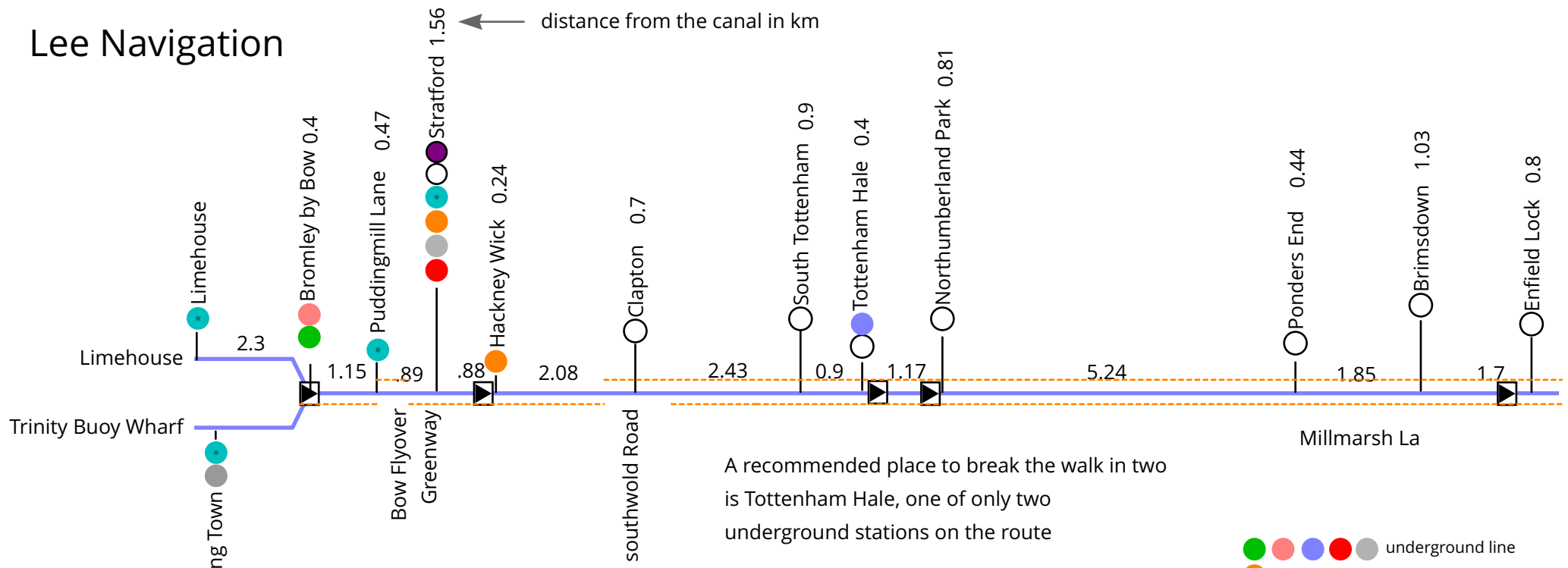
To divide the main canal in two use Hayes and Harlington

5 kilometres



Lee Navigation

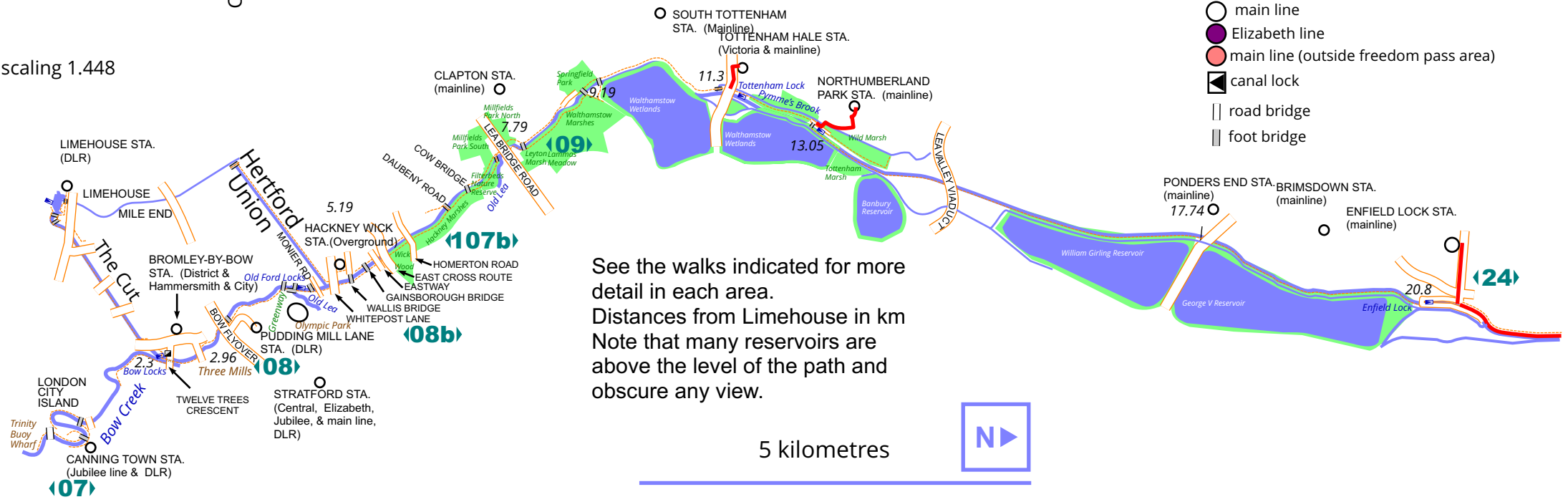
← distance from the canal in km



A recommended place to break the walk in two is Tottenham Hale, one of only two underground stations on the route

- ● ● ● ● underground line
- overground
- DLR
- main line
- Elizabeth line
- main line (outside freedom pass area)
- canal lock
- road bridge
- foot bridge

scaling 1.448



5 kilometres



Water Transport

The rivers Thames and Lea (and I suspect the Colne) were used for transport since Saxon times or earlier. Continual improvements were made, and then, at the turn of the 17th century, London was connected to Birmingham by the Grand Junction Canal. Twenty years later, the Regent's canal was opened, linking this canal near Paddington to the Thames at Limehouse. At the same time south of the Thames the Grand Surrey Canal was constructed but it was unsuccessful and taken over for rail transport.

The Grand Union Canal

The Grand Union Canal is the longest canal in the UK at 286 miles. The Grand Junction Canal opened joining Braunston to the Thames at Brentford to improve the communications between Birmingham, the Midlands and London. It enters the Colne Valley at Rickmansworth but largely remains separate from the Colne.

The Paddington branch (from Bull's Bridge) opened in 1801 and, remarkably, has no locks. A popular passenger service from Paddington to Uxbridge ensued for a number of years.

In 1929 the Regent's, Grand Junction and two Warwick Canals merged to form the 'Grand Union Canal'. The new company embarked on a large-scale modernisation programme to enable broad-beamed boats to work between London and Birmingham. The ambitious scheme was completed in 1937. Traffic increased in the short term, but after the war the long-term downwards trend was relentless as canalside factories ceased using coal transported on the canal as a fuel or obtained it from other sources.

Today, the Grand Union Canal is alive with pleasure boats, walkers and cyclists.

The Regent's Canal

The Regent's Canal was built to link the Grand Junction Canal's Paddington Arm, which had opened in 1801, with the Thames at Limehouse.

Director John Nash the architect was friendly with the Prince Regent, who allowed the use of his name. The Regent's Canal Act was passed in 1812 and the canal was opened in two stages, from Paddington to Camden (with a spur to Euston) in 1816, and the rest of the canal in 1820. The river Brent was dammed in 1835 to form the Welsh Harp reservoir to supply water.

The main centre of trade was the Regent's Canal Dock at Limehouse, a point for seaborne cargo to be unloaded onto canal boats. Cargo from abroad, including ice destined for ice stores, was unloaded there and continued its journey on barges. The most important loads however were of coal from the Midlands, building materials, and foodstuffs. The King's Cross Coal Drops and viaduct, still there today, were built by the merchant and coal mine owner, Samuel Plimsoll, who is better remembered for the Plimsoll line. Plimsoll's coal fed the insatiable appetite of locomotives and London's hearths, and ensured London's streets remained well lit, courtesy of the Imperial Light and Gas. City Road Basin was the second most important traffic centre, handling incoming inland freight, to a large extent.

By the 1840s the railways were taking traffic from the canals and there were attempts to turn the canal into a railway as early as 1845.

In 1929 the the Regent's Canal, the Grand Junction Canal, and the Warwick Canals, merged to form the Grand Union Canal Co.

The freezing of the Regent's Canal was to be its downfall as a commercial venture when the harsh winter of 1962-3 saw the Canal freeze so hard that no cargo could move on it for weeks. By the time the thaw came, the freight traffic had been irreversibly transferred to road.

The site of the former Euston spur can be seen on the left on entering the Regent's Park.

Hertford Union Canal

The mile-long Hertford Union opened in 1830,

linking the Regent's Canal to the Lee Navigation, avoiding Limehouse and the semi-tidal Limehouse Cut. It has three locks. The canal is also known as Duckett's Canal after its original promoter. It was never a great commercial success. Advertised for sale in 1851, no-one wanted to invest in it. So in 1857 the Regent's Canal bought it and absorbed it.

Lee Valley Navigation

In medieval times wheat was transported by barge to watermills on the river Lea. Barley and malt were also taken down the Lea to London breweries. "London manure" (i.e. human waste) and building materials such as timber and bricks were also transported by barge.

From the 12th century onwards various improvements were made to aid navigation between Hertford and London. Work on improving the river's navigability is recorded as early as the fourteenth century and in 1425 there was an Act of Parliament to provide for further improvements. The River Lea Commissioners, who used to run it, date back to this period. As was so often the case, where rivers were improved for navigation, there were arguments between barge owners and mill owners who preferred the available water to be used for mills rather than locks. The navigation was much used for carrying grain for beer and bread making and those who might lose their livelihoods from the lower prices resulting from the cheaper transport objected to improvements. Disputes over the right of navigation reached the Star Chamber, a superior court of justice, in 1594, which ruled in favour of the boats.

In 1738 trustees were given oversight of navigation on the river. The canal era started with the River Lea Act 1766 which authorised much more extensive improvement works and the

construction of locks, new sections, and the Limehouse Cut, which cut out sailing around the Isle of Dogs. The locks were initially single gate locks, which relied on a build-up of water and its sudden release to enable boats to pass. Pound locks, with gates at each end, so are far less wasteful of water, were introduced to the river Lea in 1771.

Further improvements took place in the 19th century, providing links to other canals, and in 1869 the Lee Conservancy Board took over responsibility from the trustees. The Lee Navigation was nationalised in 1948 and control subsequently passed to the British Waterways Board.

Following the construction of the King George V and William Girling reservoirs in the 20th century, the River Lea was diverted eastwards from its original meandering course and shares part of its route with the flood relief channel. (See right).

Bow

Bow gets its name from the bridge across the Lea which was first provided by Henry I's wife to enable her retinue a safer journey between Westminster and the abbey at Barking. It had an unusual bow. Below the bridge became known as bow creek.

