

# Planes, Bikes and Automobiles



This walking and cycling route explores the lives of three famous sons who influenced transport in the country. A.V. Roe who piloted the first UK powered flight, Frederick Bremer the inventor of the first internal combustion engine car and John Kemp Starley, the inventor of the modern bicycle.

The walk begins near Lea Valley and ends in Walthamstow Village, near Walthamstow Central Station.

	Walking	Cycling
<b>Distance</b>	4 miles	
<b>Time</b>	1 hour 30 minutes	30 to 40 minutes
<b>Conditions</b>	Mostly on footway	Mostly on quiet roads or segregated cycle tracks

	Walking	Cycling
<b>Public Transport</b>	The start of this route can be easily accessed by public transport. The 48, 55, 56, N38, and N55 bus services stop near to the start. The end of the route is a short walk from Walthamstow Central Station (Victoria Line and London Overground).	

## Lea Bridge Road area

This route starts at Lea Bridge Station. The station reopened in spring 2016 with services to Stratford and Tottenham Hale, and is built on the footprint of the former station closed as part of Beeching's restructuring of the railways in the 1980s.

On the western side of the railway line is the industrial area of Rigg Approach, the former location of Lea Bridge Stadium which was home to Speedway and Clapton (now Leyton) Orient during the 1930s and 40s.

- 1) If you're cycling you need to be on the westbound side of Lea Bridge Road (heading towards Hackney). You can use the cycle track on the footway all the way.

## The Ancient Lammas Lands

On the left is Lammas Road which gets its name from the ancient Lammas Lands of Leyton. The Lammas Lands were open land on the marsh used for agriculture. Lammas Day (or loaf-day) was 1 August which celebrated the harvest.



Traditionally a loaf made from the new harvest was taken to mass at church. From this day people were able to access common land on Leyton Marshes nearby and graze cattle from August until the following April.

- 2) To continue our journey, head west along Lea Bridge Road until you come to the Lee Valley Ice Centre. There is a crossing just past it that less confident cyclists can use.
- 3) As you walk into the Ice Centre car park a path can be found to the left of the building (with Lea Bridge Road behind you). The stone path continues up the side of the Ice Centre onto the Walthamstow Marsh Nature Reserve.
- 4) You will walk for about 5 minutes on this path until you come to a railway bridge that passes over you and the River Lea. On your way to the bridge look in the field to the right and you might be able to see Bomb Crater Pond made by a V2 Rocket which landed here during the Second World War in February 1945.

### **A. V Roe**

The bridge was built by the Great Eastern Railway Company around the 1880s, and carried their line north out of Liverpool Street via Clapton Station and over the River Lea to link with the existing Lea Valley Line and the Chingford Branch.

On the arches of the bridge you will find a blue plaque commemorating the first all British powered flights completed by A.V. Roe (1877-1958) in 1909. Roe's 'Yellow Terror' tri-plane was assembled under the arches and flew a historic 900 feet across the Walthamstow Marsh.

## Walthamstow Marshes

As you head further north across the marsh keep an eye out for wildlife. The marsh, one of the last in greater London and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), is home to Adders Tongue Fern, Reed Warblers, Herons, Kestrels and grazing cattle.

- 5) When you reach the top of the path it bends to the right. Follow the path round and under the infamous 'headown bridge'. You will come into a small car park and continue out of the car park onto Coppermill Lane.
- 6) Continue straight along Coppermill Lane, you will see reservoirs on your left.

## Walthamstow Wetlands

The reservoirs are soon to be part of the Walthamstow Wetlands Nature Reserve which will open in 2017. The Wetlands will be an urban wetland nature reserve and centre for learning, as well as the largest in London. Our birds can't wait until then, so keep an eye out as you go past for locals and more exotic migrating species.

- 7) Continue along Coppermill Lane past the Coppermill Pub and after a few minutes you will come to St James Street and the start of the High Street in front of you.
- 8) People cycling have a decision to make here – you can either walk with your bike up the High Street and browse through the many market stalls, or turn right into St James' Street. Choose 9a for walking and 9b for cycling.

### Walthamstow Market

Walthamstow Market is, at approximately 1km in length, the longest market in Europe. The market dates back to 1885 when the street market began as Marsh Street, a rural lane, which was transformed into the High Street of the new Victorian urban centre of Walthamstow.

#### 9a) Walking

Continue up the High Street until you get to Willow Walk. Turn right here and walk along Willow Walk until you get to the junction with Selborne Road/Cranbrook Mews under the railway bridge. Cross the road and go under the bridge using the pedestrian underpass and left into Gosport Road.

#### 9b) Cycling

Turn right into St James Street and cycle past the train station (under a rail bridge). The road turns a corner to the left. Follow it round and go straight on at the roundabout. Take the second turn on the right onto Gosport Road.

**10)** Once in Gosport Road turn left into Exmouth Road and continue along the road with the Walthamstow Cemetery on your right. At the end of Exmouth Road the road goes round to the right, through a fire gate and becomes Edinburgh Road. Take the second left onto Albert Road.

**11)** Once in Albert Road, the third road on the right is Connaught Road and the first house on the right (number 1) was the home of Frederick Bremer.

### Frederick Bremer

Frederick Bremer was born in Stepney in 1872 and lived in Walthamstow until his death in 1941. Bremer was a gas-fitter and plumber by trade, but is remembered for building (with assistant Tom Bates) the first British four-wheeled motor car with an internal combustion engine, in 1892, taking his invention onto the roads of Walthamstow.



**Frederick Bremer**

In 1933, Bremer donated his car to the Vestry House Museum, where it can still be seen. In 1965 the Bremer Car completed the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run as car number one. Bremer died in 1941 and is buried at St Mary's Church in Walthamstow along with his wife Annie.

- 12)** Continue along Albert Road until you get to Hoe Street. Cross into Third Avenue or go down to the crossing into Orford Road.
- 13)** Once in Orford Road walk through the new part-pedestrianised area and follow the road round the bend to the left. Round the corner you will see the Nags Head pub on your right and further up on the corner Ancient House.

## The Nags Head

The Nags Head is a locally listed building and was built in 1857 by Francis Wragg as a replacement for the original village inn which stood on the corner of Orford Road and Church End. Wragg ran the local stagecoach service to London and also built the adjacent coach houses for his use.

### **Ancient House**

The original 15th century timber-framed building was allowed to fall into a state of disrepair and at one time it was used as a bicycle shop, it was restored in 1934. On the side of the bow window (added at a later date) a piece of the old wattle and daub walls is visible behind glass. The footway has also been cut away to show the original ground level and to show how much it has risen in nearly six centuries.

- 14)** Straight ahead of you is an entrance to St Mary's Church. Walk through the entrance and continue straight along the path.

### **St Mary's Church**

The original St Mary's Church was a Norman Church built in the 12th century. The Church was expanded in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries and further still in the 18th and 19th centuries meaning the original structure has been superceded. The church was significantly damaged during the Second World War.

On your right you will see Vinegar Alley, which was given its name due to the fact it had trenches of vinegar running down its side during the middle ages. Vinegar was thought to protect people from the plague and part of the churchyard was used as a burial ground for victims.

- 15)** Once you make your way through the graveyard turn left onto Church Hill.

### **John Kemp Starley**

Church Hill was the birthplace of John Starley Kemp. John is one of our less famous sons but should arguably be remembered along with Frederick Bremer and Alfred Hitchcock.

John lived in Walthamstow until he was 15 when he moved to Coventry, where he began producing the Rover Safety Bicycle – a rear wheel drive, chain driven cycle with similar sized wheels which 'set the fashion to the world'. It was the first mainstream



### ■ John Kemp Starley

mass produced cycle and the design of his cycle has been used ever since as the template for normal bicycles. John died in 1901 but not before the now Rover Bicycle Company made the UK's first electric car in 1888.

Soon After John's death in 1901 the Rover group began manufacturing motorcycles, then cars and grew into the successful Rover Group making other British global brands such as the Land Rover.

## What to do afterwards?

Why not go for a wander around Walthamstow Village, or head back to the market? Vestry House Museum (which you passed in Orford Road) is a great place to spend a few hours learning more about the local history – it even has a model of Bremer's car! You can take your first left, Folkestone Road to get back to Orford Road and Vestry House or go straight down Church Hill to head back to the town centre and visit the Market.

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