

Leyton and Leytonstone – A new route



This route takes a trail of discovery through Leyton and Leytonstone past the former homes of our borough’s celebrities and influential people including Harry Beck, David Bailey and David Beckham.

	Walking	Cycling
Distance	2 miles	
Travel time	30 minutes to 1 hour	20 minutes
Conditions	On footways, mostly on quiet roads	Mostly on quiet roads or segregated cycle tracks. Short sections on busier roads
Public transport	The start of this route is Leyton Midland Road, served by the London Overground Barking-Gospel Oak line and the 69, 97, N26 and W16 bus services.	

We start our journey at Leyton Midland Road Station on High Road Leyton. There are a number of shops nearby where you can grab a drink or a snack before you start.

- 1) Turn right out of the station and right again onto Midland Road, walk up and on your left you will see Wesley Road. Turn left to Wesley Road and approximately 25 metres up on your right you will see No.14.

Harry Beck

It's quite right that we started at a Transport for London Station. Henry Charles Beck (1902-1974) was born at 14 Wesley Road. Harry was a draughtsman for London Underground Signals Office. In his spare time he drew a map of the underground network and presented it to his bosses in 1931.

Unfortunately it wasn't immediately popular and not until after a successful trial in 1932 was it promoted by London Underground the following year.



The former home of Harry Beck

He was never officially commissioned to do the work and therefore never paid and in the 1960s amendments were made to it without his involvement including the addition of the Victoria Line.

It wasn't until the 1990s that Harry got the recognition he deserved with a blue plaque here and at Finchley Station near where he lived in his later years. In addition, official versions of the underground map now include 'this diagram is an evolution of the original design conceived in 1931 by Harry Beck' printed on them.

- 2) Continue walking up Wesley Road and turn right at the end onto Leigh Road and then immediately left onto Forest Drive West. The Victorian architecture of Forest Drive West is very typical of the housing stock of central Walthamstow, though larger than most.
- 3) Walk to the end of Forest Drive West and turn right onto Essex Road, go to the end of Essex Road and turn left onto Hainault Road. If you look behind you at this point you can see a great view of the City and the Leytonstone Pentecostal Church. Continue down Hainault Road and turn right onto Woodriffe Road crossing over on the zebra crossing outside Gwyn Jones Primary School.
- 4) Travel all the way down Woodriffe Road and turn right onto Walwood Road. On the opposite side of the road you will see a blue plaque on number 69, the former home of David Bailey.

David Bailey

David Bailey is a world famous photographer. During his illustrious career Bailey is credited along with Terence Donovan and Brian Duffy (collectively known as 'the Black Trinity') of helping create and capture the 'Swinging London' of the 1960s. He captured a number of famous faces in his 'box of pin-ups' of 60s icons including the Beatles, Terence Stamp, Mick Jagger and east end gangsters the Krays.

- 5) Walk along Walwood Road until you get to Fairlop Road.

Fanny Craddock

On the corner of Fairlop Road you will see Fairwood Court where celebrated TV Chef Fanny Craddock was born. In a time when our food tastes were less adventurous Fanny was credited with introducing the nation to exotic 'foreign food' from countries such as France and Italy and inventing the prawn cocktail.

- 6) Carry on down Fairlop Road towards Leytonstone Underground Station. Take your second right, Bulwer Road, then first left, Chelmsford Road. At the end turn right into Fillebrook Road, almost straight in front of you on the left is number 21.

Damon Albarn

Number 21 is the home of our next former resident, namely Damon Albarn. Damon is the singer of the indie pop band Blur. He was born at nearby Whipps Cross Hospital and lived at 21 Fillebrook Road before moving to Colchester with his family. Blur have been performing since the early 1990s selling millions of records and were a pillar of the Britpop movement of the 1990s. Damon has gone on to have both critical and commercial success with a number of other bands including Gorillaz and The Good, The Bad and the Queen.

In 2014, Damon released a solo album called Everyday Robots which is written about his life, including growing up in Leytonstone. It features the song which includes a sample of a Central Line train leaving Leytonstone and children playing in the playground of George Tomlinson Primary School which he attended.

*Chill on the hollow ponds
Set sail by a kid
In the heat wave that hit us all, 1976*

*I felt the percussion
The green man had gone
Half my road was now a motorway, 1991*

*I was by the Black Sea
Two hours in time
Spiny urchins and a new school bell, 1979*

*Changed into lakeside
In January (hollow ponds)
Modern life was sprayed onto a wall in 1993*

*Where the horses and passing trains
A pentangle reveals
In the green woods where you walked with me
Ship on hollow ponds was filled
Up with the dreams we've share on our CDs
Every moment now and everyday
Every moment now and everyday*

Hollow Ponds by Damon Albarn

A Waltham Forest blue plaque was unveiled in October 2014 by Cllr Clyde Loakes. To mark the occasion of his solo album Damon performed secret gigs in the nearby Old Red Lion on Leytonstone High Road (which is about a 10 minute stroll from the end of this walk).

Fillebrook Road

Fillebrook Road is named after the Philly Brook River (one of east London's lost rivers) which ran close to the road until it was piped underground. If you listen carefully on nearby Southwest or Queens Road you can apparently hear the water flowing beneath you.

- 7) Continue right and turn left when you reach Drayton Road, walk a short distance to Grove Green Road and cross over onto the other side using the zebra crossing.
- 8) Turn right towards the bridge, when you walk under the bridge on your left you will see a series of murals dedicated to Stuart Freeborn.

Stuart Freeborn

Stuart Freeborn (5 September 1914– 5 February 2013) was born in Leytonstone and became interested in make-up for theatre and film. He struggled to get into the industry and was ‘found’ while pulling an elaborate stunt dressing as Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie and driving around South London. He was arrested by police but this alerted a studio he had previously contacted for work who then employed him.

He went on to work for Denham Studios working on make-up and hair for Alec Guinness. He is also responsible for the make-up on Stanley Kubricks 2001: A Space Odyssey and Peter Sellars various faces in Dr Strangelove.

He was the make-up supervisor for the Superman films but is most famous for his work on Star Wars. Stuart was responsible for all of the characters including Chewbacca and Yoda (known to be based on himself and Albert Einstein) the Ewoks and the original Jabba the Hutt puppet.



Star Wars Mural

You can get a better view of the mural and a well earned drink from the Heathcote Arms on the other side of the road.

- 9)** Once you've had a rest in the Heathcote continue down Grove Green road until you get to Dyers Hall Road (South) on your left where you will see a footbridge over the A12.
- 10)** If you're walking go up the steps and over the footbridge, you will come out on Norman Road, turn right and a few doors down on the right you will see no. 155. If you're cycling continue down Grove Green Road, turn left at the Cathall Road junction and cycle over the A12.
- 11)** Continue to the first roundabout, turn left into Marchant Road, left again into Mayville Road and at the top of the road turn right into Norman Road. On the left just after the junction with Short Road you will find number 155.

David Beckham

This is the first house of David Beckham, former England Captain and player for Manchester United, Real Madrid, AC Milan, Paris Saint Germain and L.A Galaxy.

- 12)** Once you've daydreamed about being David or Victoria walk or cycle back towards the footbridge passing it on your left and take the first right down Woodlands Road.
- 13)** Take the first left down Granleigh Road, up ahead you will see Leytonstone High Road station where this journey ends.

What to do afterwards?

If the walk has whet your appetite you can walk a little bit further into Leytonstone for a drink and something to eat at one of the many cafes or pubs.

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