

## Deptford Bridge to the mouth of Deptford Creek

The walk is about a mile or 1.5 kilometres with diversions to add. There is a lot for the sharp eyed to see. Remains of the old industrial Deptford, social housing, modern estates, and a landscape that holds significant array of species thriving particularly on the old but also on the edges of places. It goes through the most historic part of the borough, once the playground of royalty and industrialists, now of residential developments.

Starting from Deptford Bridge DLR station which straddles the A2 (the old pilgrim route to Canterbury on which Chaucer's tale is set), the walk heads north towards the mouth of Deptford Creek where the River Ravensbourne joins the Thames.

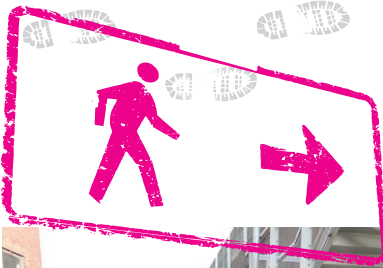
**DISTANCE:** 1.5 km / 0.93 miles    **WALKING TIME:** 45 Min    **WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** Yes  
**STATIONS:** Greenwich & Deptford Bridge DLR    **BUS ROUTES:** 47, 53, 177, 453

### What will you discover?

- History of buildings along the Creek
- The oldest passenger railway in London
- Wildflowers in the area
- Crickets and grasshoppers
- Views from the Creek Road bridge







## Look out for Waterlink Way signs or London Cycle Route 21 which mark the walk...



- 1** You will scarcely realise it but next to Deptford Bridge DLR station is a canalised section of the River Ravensbourne on its final journey to Deptford Creek. Until the nineteenth century it was the first bridge over the Ravensbourne - there were none over the Creek. The A2 is on the old Roman Road and Pilgrim route to Canterbury. It is here that the battle of Deptford Bridge took place and the Cornish rebels were defeated in 1497.

**At Deptford Bridge Station, start walking towards the large red brick building with prominent red pillars.** This is LeSoCo - Lewisham and Southwark College. Ensure you are on the same side of the road as the college, if necessary, cross the road. **Walk past the college.**



- 2 Turn right up Deptford Church Street.** The Creek is just out of sight on your right. Deptford Creek is the navigable tidal section of the Ravensbourne. On a high tide, large vessels were able to bring and take cargo up as far as where Lewisham College is now. The college site was home to a tidal mill and is where the last bakery on Deptford Creek stood until it burned down at the end of the 1960's. The first place you can see the Creek is through the rails at The Big Red Bus restaurant.

- 3 Turn right into Creekside by the Birds Nest Pub.** In the nineteenth century this was called Slaughterhouse Lane. As you walk along you will pass APT, now a haven for artists, which is where the slaughterhouse used to be. Look out for evidence of past uses and old London brick walls, aged granite cobbles and kerb stones as you move down the street.



## Industries of the Past

Creekside was the most industrialised part of Lewisham. Town gas was made here for over a century and there was an electricity generating power station at the mouth of the Creek. There were also soap works, chemical works, manure and sewage works. On the Thames was the Royal Dockyard (Samuel Pepys often walked or sailed here from London as part of his work) and later the Foreign Cattle Market. All the industries based here relied on waterborne trade to bring in the materials they needed.

Keep an eye out for Red Valerian growing on walls, a wildflower that's been spreading in the area over the last 20 years.





Keep an eye out for foxes

## Wildlife

Wildlife is 'on the edge' here. On the edge of the Creek and on the edges of buildings, walls and pavements. Despite this there is a high diversity of species to be seen. Well over two hundred species of wildflower seek a living around Deptford Creek.

Just as we connect with other parts of the world via the Thames, so do many species living in the Creek. Flounder, Goby and Mitten Crab all rely on Deptford Creek's connection with the sea for their lives. Flounder are born in the North Sea and migrate here for their first summer, Goby come here in late summer before heading back to the Thames for the winter. Mitten Crabs are born in salt water, spend most of their lives in freshwater before heading back to salt water to breed.

**4** Just before the railway viaduct on your right is the **Creekside Discovery Centre**. Established by the Creekside Education Trust in 2002, it aims to provide information about the Creek to people of all ages who pass through the Centre. One of the popular public events it organises are the Creek wades. These started in the 1990s and continue today. They provide the opportunity for a river's eyeview of this area. The grounds are managed as a wasteland and support over 180 species of wildflower.



Narrow-leaved Ragwort



Ivy-Leaved Toadflax

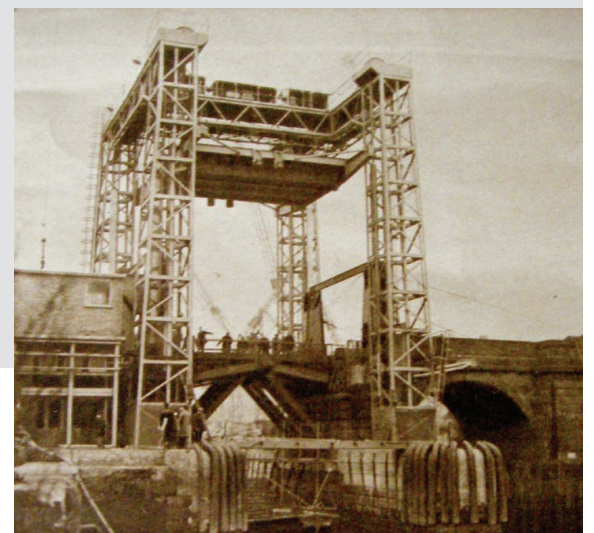
## Wildflowers

In the 20th century the plant called Oxford Ragwort conquered London and became the most common ragwort species to be found in London. Since the beginning of the 21st century a new ragwort species has set out on a similar conquest. Narrow-leaved Ragwort, from South Africa, has spread from the east and has moved right into central London. It can be found on derelict land along Creekside.



**From the Creekside Discovery Centre, turn right up the alley. With the viaduct on your left, follow the path to the bridge** where you get excellent views of the Creek. The railway viaduct is part of the oldest passenger railway in London. Deptford Station nearby is the oldest surviving railway station in London. It was built in 1836, the Creek being bridged in 1838.

Landowners along the Creek held up the progress of the railway for 2 years until the railway company came up with the idea of a lifting bridge to ensure boats could continue to travel up river. It was replaced with the present structure in 1963. This was sealed in the 70s and will never be raised again. Looking south you can see the DLR crossing the Creek on its journey to Lewisham and to the north of the bridge can be seen the Laban Dance Centre.



**5** Heading back to Creekside turn right under the viaduct and almost immediately on your right is the mural 'Love Over Gold'. Members of the band Dire Straits lived on the estate opposite in the 70s and played their first gig at a Crossfields Festival on the open space opposite the mural.



**6** Further up the road on the left is Ferranti Park named after the builder of the first high powered generating power station which stood at the mouth of the Creek. Next to this park is Sue Godfrey Nature Park, 30 years old in 2014. This small nature park supports a high diversity of wildflowers and invertebrates. All the crickets mentioned below can be found here.

Opposite Ferranti Park is the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. If the gates are open you can walk in and up to the edge of the Creek for another peep at the Creek. You will also find a café in the building.



Roesell's Bush-cricket

### Crickets

In the 1990s only one type of cricket could be regularly seen round here and that was Roessel's [pronounced re-zel's] Bush-cricket. Also present but in low numbers was the House Cricket, a species introduced here from Asia as live food for reptiles. Since 2000 two new species have colonised. Long-winged Coneheads and Southern Oak Bush-crickets have become established and the House Cricket population has grown. On an evening stroll down Creekside in late summer and autumn, male House Crickets can be heard 'serenading' to attract female House Crickets.

#### Cricket or grasshopper?

You can almost always tell if you have found a cricket or grasshopper by the length of the antennae. If antennae is longer than the body, it's a cricket. If antennae is shorter than the body, it's a grasshopper. Female crickets also have a prominent ovipositor (a tubular organ through which she deposits eggs) that female grasshoppers do not have.

< House Cricket



Female Cricket Ovipositor

**7** Past Laban, turn right into Copperas Street. On your left is one of the latest high rise developments to be built in the area. New lives, new landscapes. **Continue on to Creek Road.**

**8** Optional route - On reaching Creek Road you can make a short detour by turning right and walking 100 yards up and on to the lifting bridge. From here you get good views up and down the Creek and good vibrations as lorries or buses set the bridge reverberating. On the other side of the Creek is Prior Aggregates the last working wharf on the Creek, which brings sand and gravel from Essex to London. Each boatload saves 40 lorry journeys through London. The bridge you are standing on lifts to let the boats go out on a falling tide.

Cross the road and go to the right of The Hoy (an old pub converted into a sandwich bar) on the marked Thames path and continue on to the river. For the last section you can actually walk alongside the Creek. There are high density residential towers either side and Canary Wharf and the Isle of Dogs lie ahead of you. Follow the path until you reach the mouth of the Creek.



**9** At the mouth of the Creek is a statue to Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia. He had a particular dislike of beards and instituted a tax on them in Russia. He came here to learn about shipbuilding staying at John Evelyn's Sayes Court Estate just upriver.

Looking upriver from the mouth of the Creek can be seen the landing stage of Deptford Power Station. It is here that the coal to fire it was offloaded. The power station itself was demolished in 1992 and the modern estate is built on the land it occupied. Directly by the river was the home of the General Steam Navigation Company. The East India Company had its dockyard in Deptford and it is also where Henry VIII established the first Royal Dockyard in 1513. Downriver the masts of the Cutty Sark at Greenwich can be seen and beyond that the towers of the old Naval College and Greenwich Power Station.

For more guided walks along Lewisham's rivers please visit [www.riversandpeople.com](http://www.riversandpeople.com)