

**u3a Bike Ride
Ride to The London Lighthouse
Tuesday 15th August 2023**

The group of 12 left promptly and made our way along the now well-known route via Loughborough junction and the back of Camberwell to Burgess Park and onward to Bermondsey. This was a route not previously experienced by quite a few members of the group who enjoyed the quiet roads and interesting places we passed.

The Leather Market area is very interesting and the building itself was built between 1832 and 1833 as the proximity to the river made it an ideal site for the tanners. There were approximately 50 'bays' or sales stalls and in 1878 a grand 'London Leather,

Hide and Wool exchange' was added as well as a private Gentlemen's Club on the first floor. It is now a space for studios and offices.



From here we made our way over Tower Bridge, a grade 1 listed combined bascule and suspension bridge built between 1886 and 1894. From there we went down to the riverside where we took our group photo (too much chat when we all met so we forgot to do this before we left Brockwell!) before going to St Katharine's Dock. Several members of the group hadn't been there before and we all enjoyed the sunshine, the chat and the coffee (Tony had an amazing bowl of porridge with fruit and nuts). Our usual route over the Telford Retracting Footbridge was not possible as it was being repaired, in fact it wasn't visible at all (see below). The West bridge was open and served us well.



St Katharine's Dock was built in 1828 as one of the commercial docks that made up the Port of London. It was named after the former hospital of St Katharine by the Tower, built in 12th century. To create the dock 11,300 inhabitants, mostly port workers, were moved from the cramped, insanitary slums and lost their homes. Only the property owners were compensated. It was not the most successful of docks and after being damaged in WWII, it remained derelict until it was sold to the GLC in 1968 and was redeveloped in the 1970's. It is now a thriving housing and leisure development.

We made our way along to King Edward's Park, where some of us shared memories of having lunch post Covid, sitting in our bubbles, spread out on the steps and along the paths. The Thames Path remains closed so we had to use the path by the main road before we could get back down and make our way eastwards to the dock area and along streets named after spices and herbs.

The cycle routes really are imaginative and kept us off some major roads as we cycled towards to the River Lea which we followed all the way round to the Trinity Buoy Wharf, which is directly opposite the O2 centre.

Trinity House was given responsibility for providing navigational lights on the Thames, buoys, lighthouses and lightships. The organisation had its headquarters in a fine building in the city but its workshop was established in 1803 at Trinity Buoy Wharf. After becoming derelict, it was developed in 1998 to provide spaces for the creative arts, including English National Opera and the Princes Trust. It also houses 'The Faraday Effect', one of London's smallest museums. It is an immersive installation, a recreation of Faraday's workshop decorated with antiques, found objects, fishing ephemera, sound recordings, notes and documents.

You can visit the lighthouse (London's only lighthouse) at weekends and see the 'Longplayer' – a unique sound installation which began at midnight on 31st December 1999 and will play without repetition until the last moment of 2999, at which point it will complete its cycle and start again.



After a relaxing lunch, we cycled round to the East India Dock Basin where we saw one of the beacons which was lit for the new millennium and then on to a memorial to the Virginia Settlers who sailed to the Colony of Virginia in 1606.

The plaque was originally in the master's house at Brunswick Dock but the house was damaged in WWII, so it was incorporated into the monument in 1951.

Our route back was only blocked by building works once more and we safely returned via the super cycle highway, Blackfriars bridge and the back of Bermondsey to pick up our outward route along to Burgess Park and home.



Another successful cycle group trip which reminded me of how lucky we are to be able to share this time with such a great group of friends as we cycle our way around the sights and sounds of our city.

True to form, this heron was spotted at East India Dock Basin!



Group leaders: Denise & John Davies

Riders: Denise & John, Andrew & Mary, Irene, Julia, Judy Tony, Caroline, Gisella