

**u3a SIDCUP – RAMBLERS 2 – Lea Valley Walk – Section 4 – 23 May 2023 – leader  
Helen Salmon**

We met up at London Bridge, caught a bus to Liverpool Street Station and then an over ground train to Clapton where we started Section 4 of the Lea Valley Walk

We walked downhill to Millfields Park and crossed the park until we came to the River Lea towpath. Turning right we went under the Lea Bridge and headed along the river. Further along we crossed the bridge and continued south along the water past the wall of the Middlesex Filter Beds Nature Reserve on our left. The filter beds were built in 1852 to supply clean drinking water to London. We continued on towards Hackney Wick with Hackney Marshes on our left. There were many new, nearly new and very old narrow boats on the river. We had to continually sidestep the usual cyclists and joggers on the path to avoid getting knocked over! The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park came into view so we decided to have a lunch break, sitting on benches, next to the river in the sunshine. After refuelling we continued on past the Hertford Union Canal on our right. This is one of the shortest canals in Britain at just over one mile. It connects the Regents Canal with the Lee Navigation and Bow Creek. We then came to the Old Ford Lock and this stretch became quieter. As we passed under the railway bridge I pointed out a large brick building. This is the site of the Bryant and May factory built in 1861. It was made famous by the London Match Girls' strike in 1888 brought on by the appalling working conditions with highly toxic phosphors. *They were so bad the girls were said to glow in the dark!* We then headed across the water and followed the bridge on the right hand side where we became very aware of the traffic. Continuing south we passed under the Bow flyover. The area opened up at this point. The water was on our left and beyond that lots of demolition works being carried out. We made our way towards the bridge and crossed onto Three Mills Island, our final destination. Three Mills is a remarkable collection of historic industrial buildings with the 18<sup>th</sup> century House Mill at its centrepiece. If you are a fan of MasterChef you will have seen the area at the beginning when the contestants walk down the path.