**Lea Navigation Section 4 November 2023**

Wet, wet, wet when we emerged blinking from Clapton overground, having been on 2 trains & 2 tubes. However, the weather behaved the same as the month before over similar area. We began a little further north from the previous finishing point at Lea Bridge. Making our way past some ornamental gates to the side of Millfields Park we hit the canal at the side of last month’s pub lunch. So we were retracing our steps, albeit in the reverse direction. From there we went a short way before a hump-backed, cobbled bridge led us across the “river” (canalised). Narrow boats of a huge variety of styles (some rather less salubriously maintained) flanked out path. Clearly many were occupied with smoke puffing from chimneys. Some had bikes strapped on, since along the tow path this is one of the main travel methods. Some had pets on board, dogs in evidence and a cat-crossing sign. There were Dutch barges, bathyspheres (who deep was the canal?), former iron-works transport, some businesses on-board, but also some neat homely flotations. At this point, the other side of the canal was home to some very gentrified dwellings. Hackney Marshes with their many football pitches was to out left hidden by a bank of trees. We passed the sign for the Middlesex Filter Beds, now a nature reserve, where I had joined on an earlier walk. Under the Homerton Road bridge you come out to “Here East” home to some new offices, bars & restaurants. As on our preliminary walk 10 days before, we stopped for 11-evenses, though by now it was noon. A group of workmen were variously trimming trees & setting up lighting. Setting off again the “White Building” was on the other side of the river, scene of another lunch (pizza & beer), again a previous walk. The Queen Elizabeth Olympic park was now to our right with the Copper Box the closest building and the Orbital in view further on.

At the confluence of the real river and the Navigation stands Old Ford Lock. So I had to have a giggle and a couple of photos. Ahead the red brick former Bryant & May factory stands out, made infamous by the London Match Girls’ strike of 1888. *(Actually the present building dates from 1911, now residential.)* Under the Bow flyover, via a convoluted walkway, then along past some top-end flats. On the other side of the river a vast amount of demolition & land-reclamation was going on with a view to building yet more top-end accommodation. And so to our destination of 3 Mills Island, a truly fascinating place. Now only 2 mills are extant, but all were originally tidal mills. Under the Clock Mill you can still see the water-inlet. Between the previous visit and the current one we saw the 2 extremes of the tidal flow. The other, House Mill has now become school buildings, though visits and a café are open at certain times. Beyond is a film studio, site of “Master Chef”, so many will recognise it.

For me, apart from that highlight, it was good to link up some many of our London walks. Lunch was potentially less successful, since the “Beehive” didn’t serve food, but the barmaid pointed us towards a friendly neighbourhood sandwich bar, so we returned with our baps for a beer.