

# walk 3:

## the north woolwich trail: deep water

Commentary by Mark Hunter

“ North Woolwich: Deep Water is a journey through North Woolwich past and present. Constructed around interviews from both the Eastside Community Heritage archive and the Museum in Docklands oral history collection, this sound walk brings together a wide range of ideas, attitudes and memories through the voices of local people.

You will not hear my voice on these tracks; my aim was to gather the materials and work them into a soundscape that represents itself without my voice intervening. In this way I play the role both of curator - carefully selecting and editing material from the catalogue of the archive recordings, and sculptor - constructing a sonic monument of and to the people featured in the recordings.

The trail is also an investigation into the performance of memory in Newham in 2008. The complex and overlapping contexts of 'regeneration' that are present in the 2012 Olympics and the Thames Gateway development sit in stark contrast to the immediate surroundings of North Woolwich.

The redevelopment zone surrounding North Woolwich offers a very specific narrative of place that, I would argue, does not account for the history or people of the area.

This sound walk is an attempt to map the stories and memories of the local people onto the terrain of North Woolwich, offering an experience where the 'here and now' of the walk is contested by the 'there and then' of the stories you will listen to. ”



Steve Whiting



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- 1: king george v DLR  
Charles Beck
- 2: woodman street  
Gertie Duffy; Victor Pardoe; Alex Collyer
- 3: the royal oak  
Alex Collyer; Doreen Harvey; Roy & Marion Cable; Stanley Morris
- 4: royal victoria gardens  
Owen Macomish
- 5: north woolwich pier  
Roy Cable; Victor Pardoe
- 6: bargehouse road slipway  
George Gibbs; Doreen Harvey; Lottie Lowry
- 7: harland & wolff  
Owen McComish; Roy Cable; E. Glibbery
- 8: bascule bridge  
George Gibbs; Owen McComish; Ada Tebb
- 9: dockside, royal albert dock  
AS Ellis; George Gibbs; Lottie Lowry
- 10: university of east london campus  
Eileen Brome; Paul North; Harold Morison
- 11: cyprus DLR  
Charles Beck

# walk 3: the north woolwich trail: deep water

## 1: king george v DLR station

This station is named after the old dock and is situated on the dockside. The new concrete wall running along the DLR is a physical barrier to dockside access, just as the old dock walls once were. Singer Charles Beck worked as a docker.

## 2: woodman street

This is the heart of North Woolwich: surrounded by water on all sides, when the locks and bridges were open this was effectively an island. Hear Victor Pardoe list the names of the factories and works along the main road, which along with the docks made North Woolwich such a busy place.

## 3: the royal oak

The Royal Oak is one of the last remaining pubs in North Woolwich - go in and have a drink, the landlady is expecting you! There used to be dozens of pubs in the area, serving the thirsty local workforce.

## 4: royal victoria gardens

A popular pleasure garden since 1851, day-trippers would come here by train and steamer to enjoy entertainments here, such as acrobats, hot air balloons, fireworks and dancing. The gardens have more of a park-like feel today, but they are still well used by people of all ages. Owen McComish's story is a memorial to a sad event here over fifty years ago.

## 5: north woolwich pier

Climb the steps to get a good view of the old pier, the free ferry and the Thames across to Woolwich. If you wish you can ride on the free ferry (established 1889); Roy Cable worked as a stoker when the ferry was powered by coal. At low tide you can gain access to the foreshore, and the old railway station here is now a museum, and well worth a visit if it is open (weekend afternoons and school holidays). There is also a half-kilometre long, public foot tunnel here connecting North and South Woolwich which until 1965 were both part of the county of Kent.

## 6: bargehouse road slipway

A ferry has been crossing here at least as far back as the earliest record of it in 1308. The ferryman lived in the Bargehouse which gave the road its name. Children have long played along the Thames foreshore and some have even swum across the Thames, despite treacherous currents. Please take care if you walk down the slipway, it can be very slippery.

## 7: harland & wolff

Galleons Point Estate is a new housing development built on the site of the Harland & Wolff ship repair yard: one of the most important employers in North Woolwich. The original works gates are displayed in Lyle Park, West Silvertown.

## 8: bascule bridge

The Bascule Bridge can lift up to allow access into the dock for larger ships. These locks were the gateway to the tidal Thames and the world. Stand on the steps overlooking the locks to escape the traffic noise. See if you can spot the Gallions Hotel, a listed Victorian pub now surrounded by a new housing development; cruise ship passengers rubbed shoulders with dockers here.

## 9: dockside

Thousands of men would gather at the Connaught Bridge to get a day's work - you can see this bridge today if you look right, towards Canary Wharf; this was called 'going on the stones'. The dockers (in the docks and warehouses), stevedores (who loaded the ships) and crane drivers were employed to move the cargo in what was once the busiest port in the world.

## 10: university of east london campus

The university is on the site of warehouses 5, 7, 9 & 11, where goods from around the world arrived by the ton, ranging from bananas to mail. UEL has 20,000 students from all corners of the world. The Docklands campus opened in 2000 and was short-listed for Building of the Year for its energy efficient design. There are cafés and toilet facilities here.

## 11: cyprus DLR

The end of the trail. The DLR and local buses go from here to North Woolwich and beyond.

