

Leytonstone Heath

Length of the walk : about an hour and a half as a linear walk.

The ground : the route is very difficult for wheelchairs and baby buggies, with rough bumpy grass, and paths which will be muddy except in dry summer weather.

Starting point : Whipps Cross roundabout is served by bus routes 56, 230, 257, W12, W15. There is car parking off Whipps Cross Road (by Hollow Ponds, on the opposite side to the Hospital).

Refreshments : there are a couple of huts on Whipps Cross Road opposite James Lane (about 5 minutes walk from Whipps Cross roundabout) selling hot and cold drinks and snacks. The building from which rowing boats are hired sells ice creams and other snacks when the weather is reasonable.

The route : cross Whipps Cross Road at the pedestrian crossing by the entrance to the Hospital, and head into the trees. Go through a glade and keep curving just slightly to the right of straight ahead, with Hollow Ponds to your right.

As you near a car park, turn right with the open space of Leyton Flats in front of you, the car park behind you.

Find paths through the middle of the open space, slowly getting close to Whipps Cross Road on the right.

A line of trees is in front of you. Head towards the righthand side.

Some background : this is 'acid grassland', with gravel deposits underneath, similar to Blackheath and Wimbledon Common. Areas like this did not have crops grown on them, and were not divided into fields. They were 'common'. Animals such as sheep might be brought here to graze. In the 18th and early 19th centuries it was fashionable for wealthy people to live on the edge of these areas. To the far right, the other side of Whipps Cross Road, was Forest House, and half-right was Walwood House, rebuilt by banker William Cotton about 1818.

A path crosses the line of trees. Alternatively, follow Whipps Cross Road on your right. At the end of the open space keep straight on, joining a wide routeway with three 'lanes' one for cyclists, one for pedestrians and a gravel track for cattle on the left. Go under the road bridge and up the slope on the other side.

At a crossing of tracks carry straight on and under the next road bridge.

Cross at the pedestrian crossing to the other side of the road (Bush Road), turn right and find a gate that is open into Henry Reynolds Gardens on the left.

Before you go into the Gardens you can see Leytonstone House, and 18th century mansion occupied in the middle of the 19th century by the Buxton family which owned the Truman Hanbury and Buxton brewery on Brick Lane, but also campaigned against slavery and for the preservation of Epping Forest as public open space.

Henry Reynolds Gardens was a gravel pit in 1800 and later became the Green Man Pond, used for fishing and sailing model boats. It was overlooked by some large houses including Ivy Bank, home from at least 1881 to his death in 1913 of George Andrew Hutchison, long time editor of The Boy's Own Paper, which was founded by the Religious Tract Society to provide alternative reading to 'penny dreadfuls'.

Go through Henry Reynolds Gardens and out the other side. Turn left to the end of the road (Browning Road) and at the junction cross into the open space. Turn right to follow the road (Bushwood) to your right.

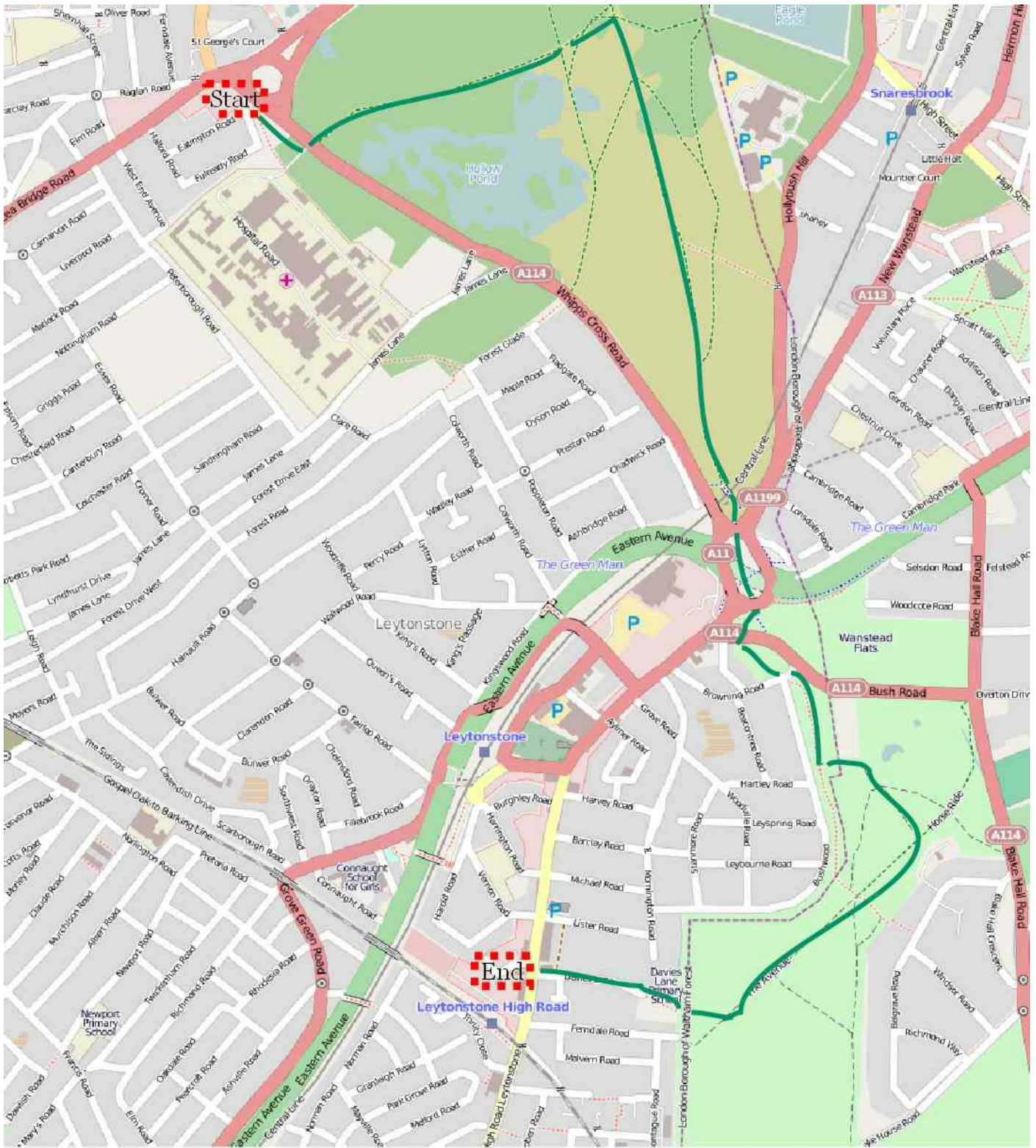
Just before the first turning off to the right from Bushwood (Hartley Road) take a path left into the woodland (Bushwood itself).

When you reach a wooden post with a yellow arrow on a green background (a sign on the 'Green for Gold' route), turn right.

You will eventually reach a wide avenue (with a white block of flats in front of you). Turn right along the Avenue (as it is known). This is part of the landscaping for Wanstead House, a vast mansion now demolished.

Near the end of the Avenue you will see the 3 storey Victorian Davies Lane School. Turn right out of Avenue and cross to the road in front of the school. This is Davies Lane. Follow this to Leytonstone High Road.

End of the walk : The 257 bus route from the other side of the High Road will take you back to Whipps Cross roundabout and the start of the walk. To reach the London Overground station Leytonstone High Road cross the Road, go under railway bridge and turn right. Turn right along the High Road for shops, cafés, pubs and Leytonstone station on the Central Line.



© OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SA

