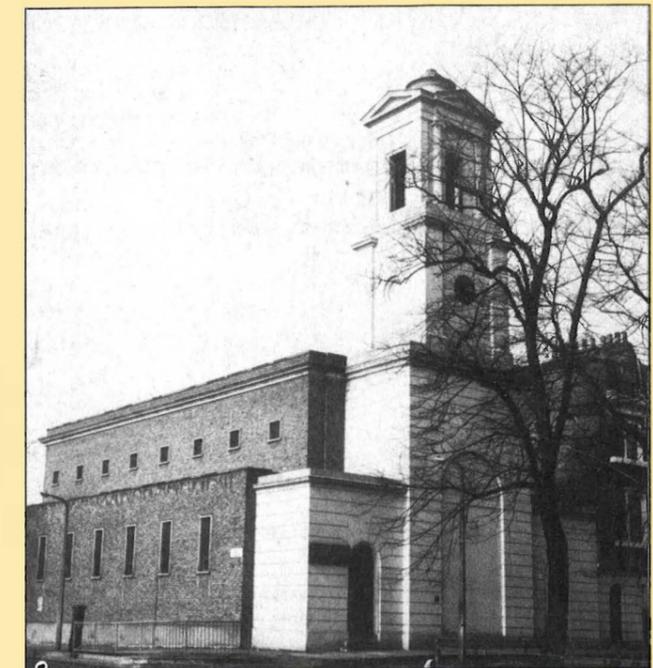
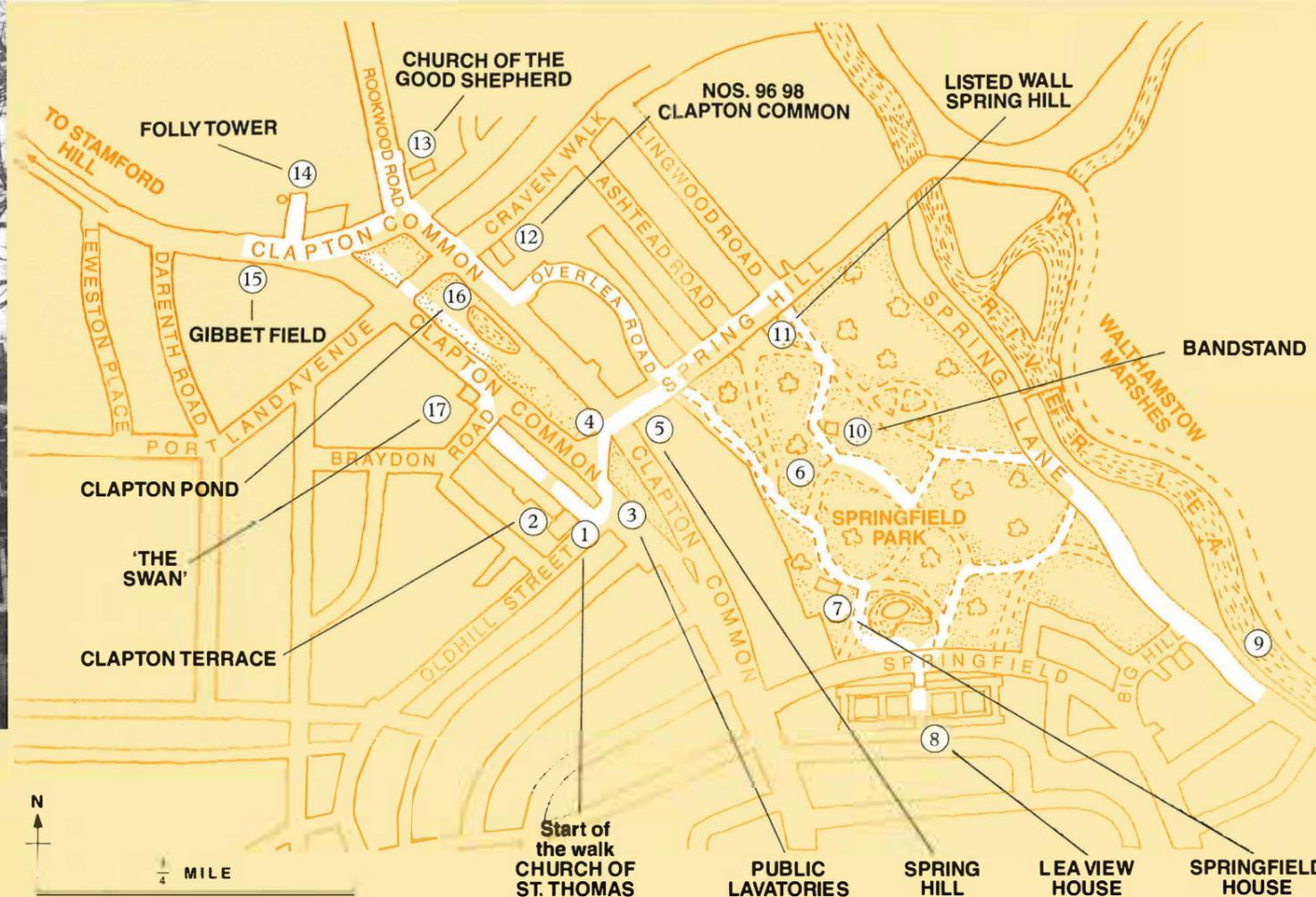


This walk starts and finishes at Clapton Common by the Church of St. Thomas, and explores the area around the common, through Springfield Park and down to the River Lea.

To reach the start of the walk you can take a bus to nearby Stamford Hill or to Clapton Common.

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The Church of St. Thomas

The CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS ① was built in 1770, in association with the construction of CLAPTON TERRACE ②, which adjoins it, and it was intended as a private chapel for the residents of the terrace. The church was enlarged and given a tower and consecrated for public use in 1827. The body of the church was destroyed in the last war and today, the tower and the east end are all that remain of the original building.



View of Clapton Terrace

Clapton Terrace is a very fine group of buildings. The houses farthest from the church were built around 1765 and the group of seven houses near to the church are from the early 19th century. These houses were among the earliest in Hackney which were built specifically as urban terraces, designed to appeal to the resident who wanted city comforts without the discomforts of noise and smell, and they were built as an irregular group, rather than as a composition designed to be considered as a whole.

Crossing Upper Clapton Road on to Clapton Common, you pass by the PUBLIC LAVATORIES ③ which were built in 1931 in rather rustic Tudor style. The interior is noteworthy for its red ceramic tiles and brass piping.

CLAPTON COMMON ④ was formerly known as 'Broad Common'. Its present boundaries were defined by the late 18th century development of its east and west sides. (The former Buccleuch Terrace, which stood on its east side was demolished in 1952 and replaced by the block of flats which now stands on the site.)

The name 'Clapton', originally 'Clopton', is an Anglo-Saxon word, meaning 'farm on the hill'. Across the common, on the corner of SPRING HILL ⑤, is where this old photograph was taken and this point would have been one of the highest in the area.

Now walk a short distance down Spring Hill. The entrance to SPRINGFIELD PARK ⑥ is on the right. Hackney has many superb parks and more parkland than any other London borough with the exceptions of Kensington and Camden. Springfield Park is one of Hackney's best kept parks and commands fine views across the River Lea, the Walthamstow Marshes and the townscape of east London.

Springfield Park occupies the former site of three houses and their gardens, one of which, Springfield House, still remains. The Springfield estate was put up for sale in 1902, and the prospect of it being developed caused such an outcry in the locality that a committee was set up by local residents which, subsidised by the



Corner of Spring Hill



Detail of doric porch, Springfield House

London County Council and other bodies, managed to secure the park for public use. Some alterations were made to turn the estates into the public park – most notably the two houses, Spring Hill House and the Chestnuts were pulled down. The Park was formally opened in August 1905, and two years later additional land was acquired near to the river, which formed Springfield Park as we see it today.

Taking the highest path and a walk through the trees, you will come to SPRINGFIELD HOUSE ⑦, sometimes known as 'The White House' or 'The Mansion'. This was built in the early 19th century. The west elevation of the building is dominated by a central doric porch holding a four panel door. Above, there is an elegant wide patterned fanlight.

Now walk south from Springfield House, past the pond and leave the park via the exit into Springfield. Here you can see the amazing transformation of what was one of the worst estates in Hackney, LEA VIEW HOUSE ⑧. Built in 1939, this was a five storey walk up estate, like many others in the area. It had physically decayed quite badly, as you can see from the photograph. Vandalism was rife, with the tenants demanding to be rehoused. Eventually, the Council were persuaded to take action. The architects, Hunt Thompson Associates were appointed and they set up an office on the estate in order to carry out constant consultation with the tenants. As a result, a shift of opinion occurred. No longer were people trying to leave, but instead they were fighting to get the project completed. Here are some of the ideas which were carried out:

1. The provision of family maisonettes at ground level.
2. The front doors to the dwellings were moved so that they faced the outside of the estate.
3. Lifts were provided to the higher flats, with an entryphone service.
4. A package of energy saving measures was introduced, with the provision of solar heating for south facing maisonettes.
5. The central area was cleared for gardens.
6. Sheltered flats were provided for the elderly and some flats were specifically designed for the disabled.



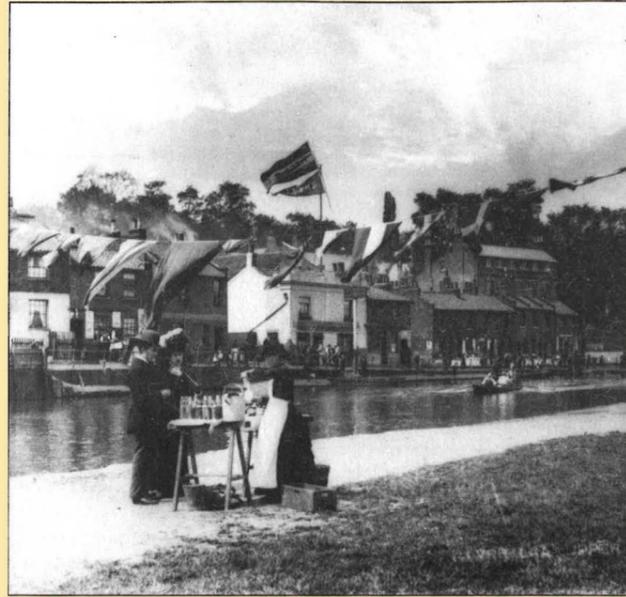
Lea View House (prior to work being carried out)



Leaview House, work completed

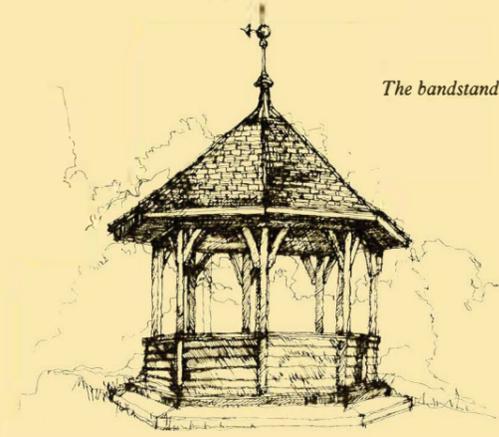
The rehousing and rebuilding work was carried out between 1982 and 1988 by the Borough of Hackney.

If you want to go down to the RIVER LEA (9), you can take the path through Springfield Park. The Lea defines Hackney's eastern border and was a busy navigation route as well as a source of drinking water. The photograph shows an idyllic riverside scene in 1890. Flags may be out for a local regatta and you can see the ferry boat which carried passengers across to Walthamstow Marshes. The Robin Hood pub still stands today, though the houses, which were subject to constant flooding, were pulled down and the new flats which occupy this site were built in the 1930s. New housing has now been built further south along the river.



'The Robin Hood Ferry', 1890

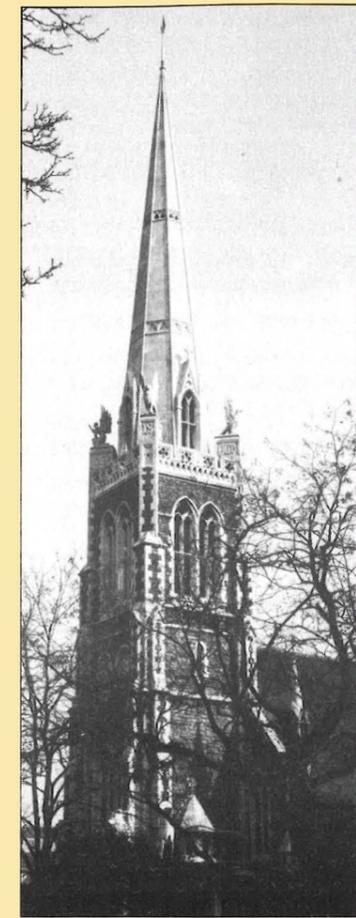
Now return through the park past the BANDSTAND (10). At this point the ground has been hollowed out and refilled on the former site of a clay pit. In the 18th century, parts of the park near to the river were used for manufacturing purposes. The clay was used for making tiles and bricks and there were two calico factories nearby. By the early 19th century, these manufacturers had left this area.



The bandstand

At the other side of the park, turn into Spring Hill. Note the listed WALL (11) which runs down the hill to the lodge. At this point you can return to Clapton Common where the walk commenced, or continue on to the next stage.

Now walk up the hill and continue right into Overlea Road, which has many houses occupied by Hasidic Jews, as do other streets in the area. Back on Clapton Common, NOS. 96 AND 98 (12) are used as schools for the community. No. 98 is an early mid-19th century, three bay villa in London stock brick with stucco frieze and cornice. It has a slated mansard roof, that is a roof with a steep lower slope and a flatter upper portion.



Leave Clapton Common and go north up Rookwood Road to see the CHURCH OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (13). This was built in 1892 as the Church of the Ark of the Covenant for a fringe sect called the Agapemone or 'Abode of Love', whose beliefs and behaviour caused outrage and scandal in the Clapton community at the time.

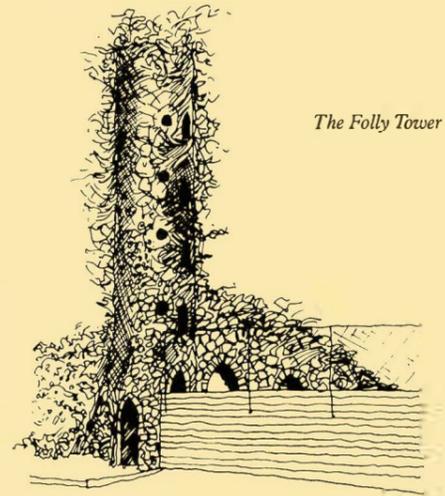
The Church of the Good Shepherd



Detail of wrought iron gates

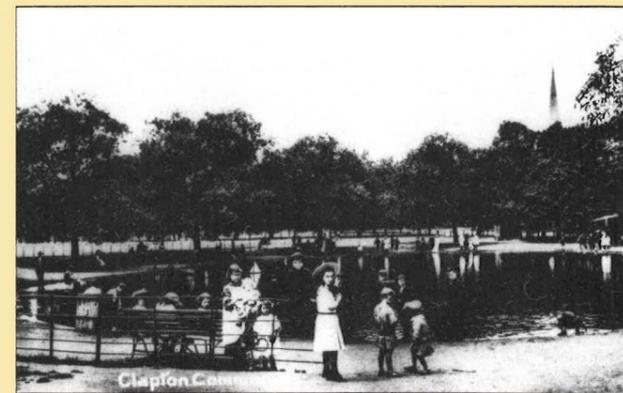
The church was designed by Joseph Morris, who was a member of the sect. It is a square building, in the Gothic style with a projecting west tower and a stone spire. Note the large stone figures which sit at the base of the tall spire. These are symbols of the four evangelists – the lion, the eagle, man and the ox. The church is very highly ornamented as can be seen in the beautiful wrought iron gates between piers with lampholders.

Returning to Clapton Common, note the FOLLY TOWER (14) in the garden of no. 130. This stood in the grounds of Craven Lodge, which was a large house, built in the early 19th century and demolished in 1905, which stood in a vast estate stretching from Stamford Hill in the west to the River Lea in the east. The line of Craven Walk today marks the former boundary of the Craven Lodge estate. The folly tower was built in the early mid-19th century in the Gothic style. Today, the pointed arch openings and ruined wall are obscured by creepers.



The Folly Tower

Now look across Clapton Common, where the line of Lewiston Place and the upper end of Darenth Road and Portland Avenue marks the edge of a field called the GIBBET FIELD (15). In the 18th century, a gallows stood here, near enough to the roads on Stamford Hill and Clapton Common to ensure that its grisly burden was a warning to passers by.



Clapton Pond, 1890s

Now walk back past CLAPTON POND (16). The pond was made at the beginning of the 19th century, and lengthened by 75 feet in 1914 to meet the requirements of the model yacht club. The photograph taken in the 1890s, shows the activity around the pond. At the end of the first World War, part of Clapton Common was used for allotments and after a few years, it was returned to grass, and cattle were allowed to graze there.

Now walk back along Clapton Common, past THE SWAN (17) public house, which marks the site of one of the oldest buildings in Upper Clapton. A building stood here as early as 1765. Formally, it was known as the 'White Swan' and was a country inn with pleasure gardens, catering for Londoners who drove out for the day to 'take in the ayre'. By the middle of the 19th century, omnibuses were plying to and fro from 'The Swan' to 'The Flowerpot' in Bishopsgate and then further on to Oxford Circus. 'The Swan' was also the scene of voting in local and national elections.

From here you can return to the Church of St. Thomas, where the walk started.

This is based on a walk written and illustrated by Rosemary More for the North East Thames Architectural Society in 1985.

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