INTRODUCTION

This walk takes you through Hackney Wick – a place rich in history. A place where inventors, industrialists and sportsmen came and excelled.

Most of the buildings have gone and the stories are now forgotten. Here are some poems to help you imagine what Hackney Wick was like in the time when your great, great, great grandparents were alive!

Yes, this was Hackney Wick, my dears, this was Hackney Wick. Do the rounds and beat the bounds and make the memories stick!

HACKNEY WICK - A LONG, LONG TIME AGO

A stretch of land beside the River Lea, where hunters came to bend the trusty bow, a marshy waste, a world away from town, such was the Hackney Wick of long ago.

A medieval manor on a stream where men might see the silver salmon leap, a patch of scrub in leafy Middlesex, where cattle grazed and shepherds watched their sheep.

Here where the winding river claimed the land the weeping willows once gave welcome shade to country folk who strolled along its banks and fishermen who plied their gentle trade.

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SPORING HACKNEY WICK

We’ve all heard about the famous sporting event that is going to happen in 2012. But, have you heard about Hackney Wick’s famous sporting history?

FIVE OLD ETONIANS & ETON MANOR BOYS’ CLUB

[i] You can’t do away with the Manor Boys For they’ll be needed bye and bye For every one of the Manor Boys Is ready to do or die For they made the name of Hackney As mighty as mighty can be If it wasn’t for the Manor Boys Where would dear old Hackney be? In the workhouse!

[ii] It was in Queen Victoria’s time The Wick was called the Sink. It was a den of vice and crime, of poverty and drink. The college boys of Eton came East to found a club to keep the boys of Hackney Wick from hanging round the pub. The Eton Manor Boys’ Club grew famous in the land. Five wealthy Eton old boys came to lend a helping hand. They built a handsome clubhouse, a sports ground of the best. They planted hope and promise here in the Wilderness. Then remember Eton College and the good deeds that were done but don’t forget the Manor Boys who sported and had fun.

And here is the Eton Manor Boys’ Club’s most famous member.

HARRY MALLIN & THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Harry Mallin was a boxer but the whole world knew his name. The noble art of self defence was Harry Mallin’s game.

When Harry came to Hackney Wick, a hundred years ago, he joined the famous Manor boys and learned to strike a blow.

He learned to stand up in the ring. He mastered many a trick and all that Harry Mullin learned he learned in Hackney Wick.

He fought in two Olympic Games in Belgium and in France He taught the Belgians how to hop, The Frenchmen how to dance. He won the prized gold medal and what did he do then? He went back four years later and he won the gold again.
BODLEY & GARNER, & SAINT MARY OF ETON CHURCH

Bodley and Garner were architects. Their ‘Gothic’ was very slick. They designed Saint Mary of Eton church in the middle of Hackney Wick.

PERCIVAL HOLT & GAINSBOROUGH ROAD
PUBLIC BATHS

WHAT NO BATH!
What shall we do?
No bath and no shower!
Let’s pop down to the public baths and scrub for a happy hour.

Now we’re clean and fit to be seen.
Now we’re ready for laughs.
Thank you Mister Percival Holt for giving us PUBLIC BATHS.

MARK BEAUFY OF WICK HOUSE

Old Wick House was the pride and joy of the Wick in days long gone and there lived Colonel Mark Beaufy in eighteen twenty one.

Mark Beaufy who loved the stars, who fell in love with the moon, who rose up over his garden gate in a beautiful air balloon.

Over his garden gate he rose
In eighteen twenty one and flew high over his wonderful house which now and for ever is gone.

WILLIAM LEONARD, A PIONEER OF PETROL

It was in the eighteen nineties, when cars were an innovation, that William Leonard and his mates brought petrol to the nation.

They called it Carless Petrol which was a funny name for it powered ten thousand motors but was Carless just the same.

ALEXANDER PARKES & PARKESINE

Alexander Parkes was a bit of a lad. His was a soul inspired.
He had twenty children to call him ‘dad’ and a wife who was rather tired.

Alexander Parkes tried hard to invent, all with the best intentions.
The Parkesine fact’ry in Hackney Wick was the site of his grandest inventions.

Alexander Parkes had a very good mind and so said all who knew him.
He invented a plastic called Parkesine and now there’s a plaque raised to him.

The storywalk is circular and starts at Leabank Square overlooking the Lee Navigation Canal.

Yes, this was Hackney Wick, my dears, this was Hackney Wick, Do the rounds and beat the bounds And make the memories stick.

HACKNEY HAWKS & THE HACKNEY STADIUM

‘Make it a date, Friday at eight!’
Hear the engines roar!
The Hackney Hawks are racing again, They are back in the saddle once more.
The Stadium’s packed. The punters gasp. Traxcitement is in the air. The kings of speedway are back on track. The thrills are everywhere.

ARTHUR GREEN & THE ATLAS WORKS

At the Atlas Works, a clever fellow whose name was Arthur GREEN discovered a dyestuff that was YELLOW and called it PRIMULINE.

The dyers who worked in Hackney Wick now and again were very sick. Sometimes the dyers almost died from poisonous fumes in their inside.