

Waltham Forest's Industrial Past

This route begins at Highams Park Overground station and takes you on a trail to discover Waltham Forest's fascinating industrial past. Highlights include visiting the sites where the factories once stood for some of Britain's most renowned manufactures. The route ends at the Vestry House Museum where you can see some of the manufacturer's original collections.

	Walking
Distance	9km
Duration	90 minutes
Conditions	The route is mostly flat with a few uphill roads on even ground.
Public Transport	The route starts at Highams Park Station on the London Overground and ends at the Vestry House Museum. The closet station to the Vestry House Museum is Walthamstow Central which is on the Victoria Line and London Overground. Highams Park Station is on the 212, W16 and 275 bus routes and Walthamstow Central is on the 97, 212, 230, 275, 357, 908, W12, W15 and W19 bus routes.

1) The Elephant & The Tortoise

The route begins at Highams Park Station. Exit the station at the level crossing and turn right onto Larkshall Road. Then head towards Tesco Superstore on Signal Walk.

Outside Tesco you will see the Elephant & The Tortoise steel sculpture standing 4x2m tall commemorating the British Xylonite Halex Factory which stood on this exact site in Highams Park between 1897 and 1971. One of their original trademarks was an etching of an elephant and tortoise walking arm in arm, which the artist used as inspiration for the sculpture. The factory was famous for its production of xylonite, the first artificially made commercial plastic. They famously manufactured table tennis balls and other items such as combs, toothbrushes, cutlery, and boxes and became one of the largest employers in Waltham Forest.



Elephant & The Tortoise steel sculpture



British Xylonite hat brush. Image: http://plastiquarian.com/?page_id=14219

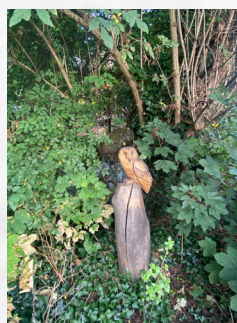
2) Fulbourne Road

Next, take a stroll towards Fulbourne Road to see how its transformed since the 1900s.

From 1908 to 1954, Ensign Camera Factory (known as 'Ensign Works') operated from Fulbourne Road, Walthamstow. By 1949, the company employed around 900 people and claimed to be the biggest camera manufacturers in Europe. In 1939 they introduced the English Ful-Vue box camera, one of the most popular cameras of its time in the UK. The factory was eventually destroyed by enemy bombing during WWII on 24 & 25 September 1940. On the opposite side of the road, the ASEA & Fuller Electric factory stood where ASEA (Great Britain) Ltd and Fuller Electric Ltd manufactured electric motors and transformers from 1919.



Ensign Ful-Vue box camera. Image: Vestry House Museum



Wooden owl sculpture (part of the Highams Park Animal Sculpture Trail) carved from local trees by Marshall Lambert

To get to Fulbourne Road, take a right onto Broadway Road and continue straight on Winchester Road. Halfway along Winchester Road you'll see the magnificent owl street art on River Walk and wooden sculpture calved from local trees camouflaging in the bushes. Continue straight on Winchester Road until you reach the short underpass and continue onto Forest View Road. Then turn right onto Queenswood Avenue and left onto Fulbourne Road.

3) Sutherland House

Next, visit Sutherland House which possess a rich history. Britains Toys Ltd was founded by William Britain Jr in 1907. Britains Toys originally operated in Walthamstow from the North Light Building on Stirling Road where they manufactured lead model soldiers and farm and country village sets. Their success led to the purpose-built Sutherland House, which they relocated to in 1958. Sutherland House provided employment in Walthamstow for over 750 people in its premises and a further 3,000 home workers. Today, Sutherland House operates as a business centre, providing affordable office space, workshops, and studios to the local community.



Factory workers in Britains Toy Factory.
Image: Hulton-Deutsch Collection/
CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images



One of the mini handmade and 3D
printed community food banks in
Walthamstow created by artist
Sean Rodrigo

Continue walking and take a right onto Brookscroft Road. Continue straight past Brookscroft Park and look out for its community library and then continue straight until you reach St John's Church. Then turn left onto Chingford Road, right onto Bedford Road and continue straight until you reach the entrance to Lloyd Park. Enter Lloyd Park and turn right to walk a half circle of the island, bearing right.

Exit the park onto Winns Avenue and look out for the Mini Food Bank Project as you walk past no.172. Then take a right onto Higham Hill Road, left on Higham Street and a final left onto Sutherland Road. Continue straight until you reach Sutherland House and Blackhorse Workshop, an industrial hub still present in Waltham Forest today.

4) Vestry House Museum

Your final stop is the Vestry House Museum, Waltham Forest's local history museum capturing the unique heritage of the local area. Take a stroll around the exhibits and look out for the Bremer car (the first car with a combustible engine, engineered by Frederick Bremer) and displays on local manufacturers which you have learnt about on this trail including British Xylonite, Ensign Works and Britains Toys Ltd.

To get there, head south on Sutherland Road and take a right onto Higham Street followed by a right onto Higham Hill Road. Then turn right onto Forest Road until you reach Fellowship Square (Waltham Forest Town Hall) and take a right onto Hurst Road. Continue straight onto The Drive and then stroll through St Mary's Church active travel corridor until you reach Vestry Road where you will reach your final stop!



Bremer Car. Image: www.bbc.co.uk / Contributed by Vestry House Museum

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Tick them off once you find them

1	Highams Park Station
2	Elephant & The Tortoise
3	Fulbourne Road
4	Sutherland House
5	Vestry House Museum