

London Walking

Simon Pope

Ambling

You'll need to adopt a relaxed gait; toes out, knees bent and holding conversation. Ambling is not for the loner. Family groups or friends with young children do it best. The amble is often an grown-into, as a group of people evolve a pace and style of their own over time, compensating for disparities in age and gait and stride and attention span. The group eventually finds itself walking at a constant pace, suitable for all, old and young, fit and unfit, reluctant and enthusiastic.

Implementing Desire Lines

Running from the North East of Kennington Park, near the corner where Charlie Chaplin once lived, (one of several in this area) from the gate in St. Agnes Place, a clear desire-line leads to the Model House for Families of 1851 on Kennington Park Road. It is particularly noticeable in frosty conditions, 2' wide, green on white.

This path is only one of many acts of resistance to be displayed on this turf. Before its enclosure, Kennington Park was common land, frequented by dissenters and rebels.

Blackbird and Robin

Late at night, especially in the more leafy, residential areas of London, you may hear the plaintive tone of the blackbird or robin. Under normal conditions, you would expect them to be in full song at 5am, but they have been known to start to sing in the very early hours, often as early as 2am, confused by the orange glow in the sky as to whether it is nature's dawn.

Their song can be used to generate a zoned walk: these birds are aggressively territorial and keep strictly demarcated areas for themselves. Listen to them in the early hours of the day, when they might be the only birds singing, and you will be able to hear one local bird and, calling in response, one distant bird.

Rules:

1. Find a local bird. Walk towards it, until it sounds louder than any other bird.
2. Listen as it calls; there will be a distant reply from a neighbouring bird of the same species.
3. Walk towards the neighbouring bird and away from the local one.
4. Keep walking until the neighbour becomes the new local bird.
5. Repeat 1.

Rights to Roam

The campaign for access to open spaces in the British countryside has been active for nearly 120 years. Following industrialization, it was thought that Britain's population should have access to land *"where health may be regained by bracing air and exercises and where the jaded mind can rest in silence and in solitude."* (James Bryce MP, 1892). Movements such as the Ramblers Association, established in 1935, embodied this emerging *Volgsgiest*.

The Ramblers Association

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Crossing the Road

You walk the line, the line between flesh and steel, from the safety of sovereign territory. On the pavement little in the way of harm can be done to you. But all good things must come to an end and you will surely arrive at an intersection with road traffic.

Prepare to cross the cultural divide...

Kerb Construction

All paved surfaces which are flexible, whether of flagstone, gravel or Tarmac need to be edged in some way by a kerb-unit. Where they meet the road, they are within the jurisdiction of the local authorities Highway's Department and are subject to their exacting standards.

AJ McCormack & Son's Web resource at :

<http://home.clarnet/tmac/paving/pavpage/edging5.htm>

details every aspect of Kerb construction .

Refer to **BS7263** for specifications for Precast concrete flags, kerbs, channels, edgings and quadrants

How To Avoid Intake Of Pollutants

Use side streets

Remember that London's roads form a grid-like pattern, running mostly on North-South or East-West axes. This forms an archipelago of street-clusters; regular, quiet ground for you to walk on. If your route follows a main arterial roadway, try to walk on parallel, secondary streets. You will only meet main roads to cross them and will be free from the densities of pollution that can cause you problems

Wear a mask

This is fine as long as it's the correct kind of mask.

Cyclists have been wearing masks for years now, but many find that the heavy breathing induced by both their physical exertion and the extra effort needed to draw air through the filter can result in MORE pollutants entering the wearer's lungs.

Many prefer the 'Surgeon's' type of mask which hooks over the ears and has the advantage over other forms of face mask in that it turns the tables, making the wearer appear to be the exhaler of some rare and virulent disease.

Novelty cartoon character masks cannot be recommended in any circumstance. White collar bank robbery has made such a practice obsolete.

What is Traffic?

A question overlooked by even the most experienced of walker, the Government's '*Let's Decide - Walk Wise*' scheme recommends that you make distinctions between the following for your own safety's sake.

Learn to be aware of the differences between :

- Things that move / do not move
- Things that belong on the pavement / on the road
- Different colours
- Different sizes
- Different shapes
- Various speeds (fast and slow)
- Different directions of movement (near / far, coming / going)
- Different noises

Awareness of your relation to traffic and the environment can be enhanced through :

- Comparison of your size with that of vehicles and road environment (Best done in a car park. Could be done with moving cars, though not recommended).
- Comparison of hard / soft (compare you and a car).
- Moving model vehicles at fast / slow speeds running down slopes of various degrees).
- Listening to sounds, loud / quiet.
- Comparison of how much can be heard by stopping and listening with how much can be heard when moving.

The Rush Hour as Machine for Memory

In contrast to cities such as Los Angeles, where “*History is Myth*”, the twin cities of Westminster and London are cities of memory. While their everyday concerns are for systems, flows and a clean passage-to-exit, they have a need to store traces of human activity ; traces of such things as conversation, reflection, conflict and attrition.

Over time, the City has produced machines to restrict flow and to increase the possibility of sedimentation ; the rush hours are one such instrument by which this is made to happen, in much the same way as the ebb and flow of tides leave debris on the seashore.

For pedestrians, there is a massive deceleration as crowds are forced into ever more confined spaces : roads, bridges, tunnels, stairs, tube trains. Once speed is decreased and proximity is increased, there is a massive potential for interpersonal communication ; a potential that is only rarely realised. The most common form of dialogue is rarely made public however, being conducted in the privacy of each human brain ; a bitter hate campaign.

Looking for Walford

London is nothing in itself, its identity defined through its relationship to other things: to ideas, objects, people, places; often it is the work of fiction that comes to define London with most resonance.

Of all the great works of fiction that have been produced there is one that shines brighter than all literary beacons, stronger than all epics of the big screen. East Enders is the naked 100W bulb of fictive London, burning fiercely in the empty hallway that is quality television drama.

Its audience sees London through the Producer’s eye; a cynical populist filter where public spaces are simplified, made fiction; where representation lords it over tacticity. Cheeky, pale, desperate, salt-of-the-earth, loyal: those described are simple folk who inhabit the pavements and the pubs, the markets, caffs, red buses, clubs and restaurants.

Why cross the river?

To get to the other side

You could be walking to work, meeting a friend, carrying a placard ; sooner or later you’ll find yourself crossing the river. Since tolls were lifted, it has cost the walker nothing to use any of the bridges that cross the river. The same applies to the few foot-tunnels that lie downstream.

The Thames flows roughly West to East ; a natural division ; yet another boundary to be drawn.

Steps And Geology

From the number of stairs and hence the depth of the station, you will be able to work out the geological terrain of London, the deeper stations being on the North side of the River.

Techniques for escaping the City in times of Plague

Extrapolated from Daniel Defoe :

- Travel north with the sun on your back, not in your eyes.
- Walk into the wind and away from infected areas
- Take a tent
- Take a hatchet and mallet to build a shelter
- Take a horse
- Take a gun
- Stay away from itinerant salesmen

Smell

Many London streets have their own particular and persistent smells :

While some are pleasant, for example the smell of cakes in St Martins Street near The National Gallery, others such as the back streets running adjacent to Lower Regent Street and Haymarket stink of stale urine and should be avoided on hot Summer days, even when you are tempted to take a short-cut.

It is also possible to tell the time by the waft of fresh, hot bagels at the top of Brick Lane.

Time on Request

It is still possible, in most parts of 'Inner' London, to stop a passer-by and request the time from them.

Shadow Watching

After dark, watch the play of shadows to check who is nearby.

1. Look ahead to junctions of roads or alleys for shadows cast in your path
2. Look down to your immediate left and right for shadows cast from behind you. Your motion when walking will take you between street lights. As you near one, moving away from another, shadows will appear to duplicate; even your own shadow may seem to be overtaking you at times.

Lists

Lists are invaluable tools for recording change.

In Jeannette Jacobson's compelling 'HAZARD HUNTING-LOOKING FOR TROUBLE' we are implored to "Do A Better Job With A Checklist".

Far from being a simple exercise, list making involves selection and editing at every part of the process. According to Jacobson, "An appropriate checklist provides your focus at the beginning ... and a sense of closure when you finish." It is with this uppermost in our minds that we must choose our checklist:

1. Simple Area Inspection Form

- One column for the location being observed
- One column for what was seen
- A third column for comments or needed action.
- "Simple forms are often most appealing since they seem easier to work with"
- " If you become distracted or interrupted during the walk-around, which is common, you may forget what you've observed. Remember, like the hidden objects in the picture, some hazards are easily overlooked."

2. Customized Checklist

- "It's easy to find a specific safety checklist for a shop, yard, office, warehouse, marine terminal, etc.
- Even complicated operations can be categorized on inspection forms that make a huge task manageable.
- Once you've analyzed your own operation, you'll know which checklists will be most useful for you.

- "Customized checklists are efficient because they do part of the thinking for you - the part that says, "Now, what is it I'm looking for?"; When you're finished, you can feel more confident that your sleuthing has covered all the bases, and you can move on to other important aspects of your job."

3. Scoring System

- "Many checklists provide a place to record Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, or Not Applicable, including room for comments or action items."
- A more complex scoring system is that which can be monitored over time.
- "The most favorable surveys would show high scores, while the lower scores might be cause for probation and more frequent inspections."

Your observations do not have to find their final form in a list. They can be interpreted in many ways. An example of a visual reworking of found notebook lists is Jem Cohen's 1996 video homage to Walter Benjamin, 'Lost Book Found' which projects the precise, time-limited and hungry list-making of a stranger onto the roving, decentred screen of a Manhattan filmmaker-flaneur.

HAZARD HUNTING-LOOKING FOR TROUBLE

By Jeannette Jacobson: <http://www.eig.com/ssus/ssu9610.htm>

Jem Cohen: http://www.wcsu.ctstateu.edu/~mccarney/fva/Jem_Cohen.html

Walkers, Wanderers, Night Walkers, Loiterers

"walker - Some people prefer walker to pedestrian (q.v.) It is short, descriptive of a variety of purposes, including recreation and transportation.

The word walker concentrates on the humanity of people on foot, rather than the bureaucratic and Latinate pedestrian."

[from the "International Pedestrian Lexicon"]

You are defined by the speed at which you walk: Walk slowly in some of London's few Red Light districts and you will soon find yourself embarrassed or rich, depending on how you play it.

You will appear to be acting suspiciously if at any time you contravene the norms of movement or pace in any given area.

The Broadgate office complex demands a very high throughput of bodies; anyone with contradictory habits will immediately come under scrutiny at the multiplexed security desks. Dawdling becomes Loitering when in certain of London's public parks. Loitering in turn becomes cottaging when in certain London public lavatories.

The walker, to remain a walker and to retain the dignity of self-determination, should always be sensitive to the demands of a changing environment. Be flexible, adaptable and versatile and you have it made; nothing to worry about.

Walk In Your Flat

London's inhabitants currently pay on average £0.09 per square foot per day in rent, compared to the average £0.03 that tenants cough-up elsewhere in Britain. At this rate, it makes sense to get as much from your hired floor area as possible.

Once reserved for Rogation Day only, 'Beating the bounds' can be made a daily practice by walking around the internal perimeter of your apartment. Traditionally, this act would have been accompanied by a 'severe thrashing' to reinforce a sense of belonging and responsibility in the participant. Even without such barbarity, the least ambitious walker can still find the motivation to cover most of their floorspace at least once a day given a little focus and direction.

...It's Back!

Published by Ellipsis in 2000, **Simon Pope's London Walking** was written as a *'technical manual'* for walking in the UK's Capital City.

As it said on the cover :

"It is a handbook for survival. Hard fact lies alongside personal commentary. Don't set foot on the pavement without it."

An Invitation from **London Walking wiki**

This text was written in 1999, so you are cordially invited to amend and update it, bringing London Walking into the 21st Century.

London Walking

<http://londonwalking.pbwiki.com/FrontPage>

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