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Rosetta Art Centre, Newham

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Create exists to explore the ways artists can contribute to the lives of people in cities
www.createlondon.org
The theme of this Odd Guide is dirt.

Inside you’ll find five short fictional stories to read with children along the Leaway and at home.

When you see a flag like this you will be able to find the location mentioned on the map.
Dirty Stories with Clean Endings

Mysterious Tales of the River Lea
The Lea Valley is the plughole of London...
Without it, the city would clog up and overflow with rubbish and sewage leaving us wallowing in a great big stinking mess. Everyone talks about the River Thames, but the real hero is the River Lea as it removes all of London's waste and keeps us clean and healthy. As you walk along the Lea Valley, hidden behind bridges and trees, you may catch a glimpse of massive recycling factories, environmental waste buildings and enormous pipes. They all work hard to recycle or remove all of London's unwanted stuff.

But beware dear wanderer to use this Guide wisely, as the history of the Valley is not as straightforward as you might think. Its reputation is built on a long history of strange happenings over many hundreds of years. Tales of unusual monsters, aliens and ghosts haunt these parts. They have become the guardians of the River Lea, protecting the area and improving our environment.

All drawings and paintings were made by children and young people from Rosetta Art Centre.
A. Twelvetrees Gasholders:
Many gas holders were built during the Victorian era to store large volumes of gas made from coal. Most became disused from the second half of the twentieth century.
The Fatwalker Brothers
Many believe that the two shadowy creatures that hover over the gas holders at Twelvetrees Crescent are the ghosts of the Fatwalker Brothers who worked at the old Gunpowder Factory over 200 years ago.

The story of the brothers starts in their hometown of Baltimore in America. They moved away to work in London and met a gunpowder inventor who invited them to work at his factory. They worked happily for many years, helping the inventor to mix chemicals to be placed in rockets that could blow up the biggest of enemy buildings.

One afternoon, one of the brothers overheard the inventor talking about plans to sell the rockets to the British Navy to help overthrow the American Army in Baltimore. Driven by extreme rage, the brothers made plans to stop the inventor’s rockets ever leaving the factory and harming their friends and families. They decided they had to set fire to the factory and destroy all of the rockets within it.
One cold, dark, winters night, they entered the building dressed in black suits, black masks and long black gloves. Creeping around the building they headed straight for the main storeroom five floors deep. When they entered and lit a torch, they were shocked to find the storeroom was empty of rockets and the door suddenly locked behind them. All that was there were two bottles with their names on and a letter from the inventor. They should have remembered how clever the inventor was. He told them in his letter that he had invented a hot, glowing, orange liquid and that if they drank it, they would be kept alive while they were locked in the storeroom. He promised he would return to let them out once the British Navy had beaten the American Army.

In Baltimore, the inventor’s rockets didn’t work, and the Americans beat the British Navy. So pleased were the people of Baltimore that they wrote a national anthem, better known as the song called the *Star Spangled Banner*. The inventor disappeared, leaving the brothers locked in the storeroom forever. Many years later, builders forced open the lock and discovered an empty room with two empty bottles and the letter on a table.
If you are lost between the Lea Valley Gasholders on a bleak London night, you may be encircled by two large, monstrous black ghosts covered in streams of glowing orange liquid. They will stare deep into your eyes, hoping you might be the inventor. Their deafening song will penetrate your ears with the lines from the Star Spangled Banner over and over and over again...

‘And the rockets red glare,
and the rockets red glare,
and the rockets red glare,
and the rockets red glare,'
the bombs bursting in air,
the bombs bursting in air,
the bombs bursting in air,
the bombs bursting in air...

B. East India Dock Basin:
The East India Company used to ship tea, spices and other commodities into London from all over the world in the 19th century. The docks closed in the sixties, and now you’ll find a wildlife sanctuary.

C. Trinity Buoy Wharf:
Used to store and repair buoys and light-ships that aide navigation. Now the area is a centre for the arts and creative industries and London’s only lighthouse has stood here since 1862.
The Ziggurats
The Ziggurats visited planet earth in 1852 in a spaceship that looked like an illuminous green egg. They each had one singular white eye surrounded by a green ring in the centre of their heads. Their black skin was reflective and when they hovered above the Lea Valley their bodies would mirror the waterways and footpaths beneath them. They landed in Trinity Buoy Wharf and floated peacefully above the East India Dock Basin above hundreds upon thousands of local people.

They came to warn humans of the harm they might cause through their inventions and machines. They warned of powerful people who might harm the River Lea by dumping all of their bad waste into it from boats and pipes. As a token of their support and friendship, they magically produced a dazzling lighthouse on the wharf. They told the crowd that if anybody tried to poison the river, then all they had to do was to turn on the lighthouse and they would come to help. They left Earth in the egg and flew at the speed of light. The crowd went home and looked forward to a more peaceful world.

Within five years the evil politicians, businessmen and newspapers had tricked the people into thinking the Ziggurats were dangerous and the lighthouse should be smashed to pieces. Stupidly, everybody agreed and the amazing building was torn to the ground and thrown into the river. In 1866, after people realised how much poison was in the river, another lighthouse was built in the hope that the Ziggurats might see its beam and return to Earth. To this day they never have, but the lighthouse stills shines on to try and get them back. Now people keep the Lea Valley as clean as possible and imagine that somewhere in a green egg, the Ziggurats are watching proudly from space.
D. **Abbey Mills Pumping Station:**
Abbey Mills is a sewage pumping station, nicknamed ‘the cathedral of sewage’ due to its ornate Byzantine style, designed by engineer Joseph Bazalgette in 1868 to draw waste water from the drains of north London.

E. **Lee Tunnel:**
Transports waste from Abbey Mills to Beckton Sewage Works instead of into the River Lea. The tunnel boring machine was named ‘Busy Lizzie’ through a local school competition.

F. **Three Mills Lock:**
Three Mills Lock cuts the river from the tide. It was used in the run up to the 2012 Olympics to freight barges with construction materials to the stadium.
Bizzie
Lizzie
Bizzie Lizzie is a monster that can dig enormous tunnels under the ground. Human in form and the length of ten double decker buses, Lizzie is able to stretch her body to four times her length. Her powerful hands can turn in circles on her wrists, propelling her claws through hard surfaces. Her deep tunnels have been discovered all over the world and are now used by trains and cars.

Like a mole, Lizzie has poor eyesight and avoids the surface of the earth. Her skin is harmed by sunlight and too much air makes her weak. One unfortunate day in 1868, Lizzie got lost and dug straight into Three Mills Lock in the Lea Valley and floated helplessly to the surface. Many hundreds of men kept her afloat with wooden buoys and chains that they made in the nearby factories.
The odd thing about Lizzie was that despite her size, length and pale skin, her eyes were so beautiful that men would stare at her and fall hopelessly in love. For weeks on end, fathers and sons would crowd the embankments and gaze into her eyes. Soon, Lizzie brought London to a halt and the Queen decided that something needed to happen. She called on all of the women in London to march down to the Lea Valley and cut Lizzie free. Hoards of frustrated mothers and daughters slowly and carefully released her. A frail Lizzie found strength from her rescuers and with a flick of her long legs and the turning of her helicopter-like hands, she buried herself below the river-bed and made a tunnel that led out to her safety.

This four-mile tunnel is now used to carry 16 million tonnes of sewage and rainwater. It is known as the Lee Tunnel and runs from the Abbey Mills Pumping Station to Beckton Sewage Treatment Works. On her way to Central London, Lizzie also left two passages we now know as the Woolwich and Greenwich Foot Tunnels. Many believe she spent much time under the city considering which direction to take, leaving a warren of tunnels that later became the London Underground. We know she left London via Kings Cross, because a tunnel was discovered that led to France, which is now used for the Eurostar service.
G. Pudding Mill Lane:
This tiny river was named after a mill house that was shaped like a pudding bowl. When Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park was built, the river disappeared.

H. Olympic Stadium:
Constructed for the 2012 London Olympic & Paralympic Games. Now the home of West Ham United Football Club and the National Competition Centre for athletics.

I. Marshgate Lane:
It was here that a nuclear reactor was built for a university in 1966, and later deactivated in 1982.
The Hundred Mouthed Monster of Pudding Mill Lane
In 1966, when most people were watching football, two famous scientists built the first ever nuclear reactor. What people didn’t know was that one scientist saw the reactor as a machine to make useful energy and the other as a deadly weapon against enemies. One hot summer evening, both men argued and fought over the reactor. The bad scientist snatched the machine from its container and ran down Marshgate Lane. Chased by the good scientist, he turned into Pudding Mill Lane, stopped on a wooden bridge, dangled the reactor over the river, and said he would drop it if his colleague came any closer.

As the angry scientist hung over the bridge, without sound or warning, a ferocious otter leapt through the algae and pulled him and the reactor into the river. Huge bubbles of air and liquid pierced through the green skin of the river and minutes later an enormous explosion erupted, sending a tidal wave down the River Lea and into the River Thames. When the good scientist thought it was safe, he was confronted by a most horrible creature. The nuclear blast had mixed the otter and the bad scientist’s bodies together into a hideous monster with 100 mouths.
For 40 years, the beast lived in the swamped and poisoned river. In 2007, the river needed to be filled in to allow parts of the Olympic stadium to be built over it. Each time a team of builders approached the river, the terrifying beast would leap out of the water and scare them all half to death. Eventually, they tracked down the surviving scientist to seek his help. He told them that both the otter and the evil scientist were once nice, peaceful and hard-working creatures and maybe if they were spoken to nicely then they might listen to him. After an agreement had been made, he led the committee in yellow hard hats to the old river and called out to the monster.

As it rose from the waters, it recognised its old friend and all 100 of its mouths smiled whilst tears fell from its sad, glowing white eyes. After they hugged, the scientist made the beast an offer he couldn’t refuse. He told it—that eventually, Pudding Mill River would disappear due to the building of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Instead of being destroyed by the diggers, the monster would become the official fly-tipping security officer that would scare off naughty builders trying to dump their rubbish. Meals would be provided and a section of the Pudding Mill River would be reserved for it to live in.

The beast said yes, and still lives beneath the waters of the remaining part of the old Pudding Mill River today. If you are ever thinking of dumping your waste in the Lea Valley, then prepare yourself for the scariest telling-off of your life!
D. Abbey Mills Pumping Station:
Abbey Mills is a sewage pumping station, nicknamed ‘the cathedral of sewage’ due to its ornate Byzantine style, designed by engineer Joseph Bazalgette in 1868 to draw waste water from the drains of north London.
Great Stink
Dressed in hundreds of old cloth sacks the monster named Greatstink wades through the sewers and waterways near the Abbey Mills Pumping station. This hideous beast lived in the Thames before any drains existed in London. People say that its ghastly appearance and unbearable smell are due to a lifetime of eating London’s unwanted sewage.

As London grew bigger, Greatstink was undisturbed and lived a quiet life on a diet of poo and wee. The more people pooped and weed, the bigger he got and he grew to the size of two elephants. As he got bigger, his smell got worse and he gained special powers that could submerge thousands of people with a river of snot. It also didn’t matter how many battleships tried to destroy Greatstink, he would crush, smash and shatter them into tiny pieces.
One clever young man from Enfield named Basil Jet, approached the Queen with a cunning plan that might remove Greatstink. He told her that Greatstink relied on eating and drinking all the poos and all the wees from all the Londoners and without this, he would starve. He suggested that the sewage be moved from the River Thames to the River Lea meaning Greatstink would starve. The Queen thought it was a marvellous idea and work began to make miles upon miles of pipes that would direct all of the sewage to the Lea Valley through old tunnels.

Once the work was done, the Thames became cleaner and Greatstink was dying of hunger. The problem was, the River Lea started to clog up because the sewage couldn’t move. Basil Jet had to think quickly and one gloomy London morning, he approached Greatstink and made a deal with him. He said he could find a boat big enough to sail him to a new home, where he could eat poo and wee forever. In return, he must never bother another human again or else they would remove the sewage for good. The starving Greatstink agreed, and the next day hundreds of thousands of people watched as a large ship took him to the Beckton Sewage Treatment Works.
Greatstink still lives there today, eating sewage brought down to him from Abbey Mills in the Lea Valley, but these days his diet of sewage is sometimes interrupted by shopping trolleys, mopeds and car tyres. As you wander around the rivers of London, you can sometimes spot where an unhappy Greatstink has spat these unwanted items into the river. If you are considering driving a stolen moped into the river, the thought of ruining a furious Greatstink’s precious teatime might make you think twice.
A. Twelvetrees Gasholders: Many gas holders were built during the Victorian era to store large volumes of gas made from coal. Most became disused from the second half of the twentieth century. Page 6

B. East India Dock Basin: The East India Company used to ship tea, spices and other commodities into London from all over the world in the 19th century. The docks closed in the sixties, and now you’ll find a wildlife sanctuary. Page 14

C. Trinity Buoy Wharf: Used to store and repair buoys and light-ships that aide navigation. Now the area is a centre for the arts and creative industries and London’s only lighthouse has stood here since 1862. Page 21

D. Abbey Mills Pumping Station: Abbey Mills is a sewage pumping station, nicknamed ‘the cathedral of sewage’ due to its ornate Byzantine style, designed by engineer Joseph Bazalgette in 1868 to draw waste water from the drains of north London. Pages 20 & 34

E. Lee Tunnel: Transports waste from Abbey Mills to Beckton Sewage Works instead of into the River Lea. The tunnel boring machine was named ‘Busy Lizzie’ through a local school competition. Page 20

F. Three Mills Lock: Three Mills Lock cuts the river from the tide. It was used in the run up to the 2012 Olympics to freight barges with construction materials to the stadium. Page 20

G. Pudding Mill Lane: This tiny river was named after a mill house that was once a pudding bowl. When the Olympic Park was built, it disappeared under the main stadium. Page 26

H. Olympic Stadium: Constructed for the 2012 London Olympic & Paralympic Games. Now the home of West Ham United Football Club and the National Competition Centre for athletics. Page 26

I. Marshgate Lane: It was here that a nuclear reactor was built for a university in 1966, and later deactivated in 1982. Page 26

Walking times

- East India to Canning Town: 15 minutes
- Royal Docks to Canning Town: 12 minutes
- Canning Town to Croydon: 17 minutes
- Croydon to Twelvetrees: 3 minutes
- Twelvetrees to Three Mills: 3 minutes
- Three Mills to Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park: 20 minutes

Locations

- A. Twelvetrees Gasholders
- B. East India Dock Basin
- C. Trinity Buoy Wharf
- D. Abbey Mills Pumping Station
- E. Lee Tunnel
- F. Three Mills Lock
- G. Pudding Mill Lane
- H. Olympic Stadium
- I. Marshgate Lane

Public open space
- Rivers and canals
- The Leeway
- Pedestrian route
- Roads
- Underground
- DLR
- Overground
- National Rail
- Emirates Air Line
- Dispenser site

Dispenser site

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Artist Leigh Clarke leading an ink and bleach painting activity at Rosetta Art Centre, Newham
The Leaway will be a new continuous walking and cycling route connecting Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park to the River Thames and Royal Docks. Parts of the River Lea will be accessible to the public for the first time.

At a time of dramatic change in the physical make-up of east London, Create has commissioned three *Odd Guides* to navigate the important contribution the River Lea has made to the lives of Londoners, past and present.

Artists Gayle Chong Kwan, Leigh Clarke and Dash N’ Dem worked with teenagers living nearby to make maps and guides to explore the River Lea.

There are two further *Odd Guides* in the series exploring Nature & Food and Trade & Industry and the *Odd Soundtrack* to the Lea will be available at the end of 2016. Find out more here: www.createlondon.org/the-odd-guides

Find out more about the Leaway route here: www.queenelizabetholympicpark.co.uk/leaway