



# New River Path

An amazing aqueduct



## Let the water lead the way

It isn't new and it isn't a river. The New River is actually a water supply aqueduct built in 1613 to bring fresh drinking water from Hertfordshire to North London.

Since 1992, we've worked with local people and partners to create a 45 km (28 mile) footpath that follows the course of the New River, linking the inner city to the open countryside.

Most of the route winds its way alongside the historic water channel, with some straightened and piped sections between the New River's starting point near Hertford to its original end in Islington. All walkers are welcome – the route is clearly signposted so you can stroll along short sections or stride out and complete the entire stretch.

### Hertfordshire section: 22km (14 miles) 6-8 hour walk

The path starts at New Gauge, Hertford. Follows the Lea River Towpath and then rejoins the New River. This route follows a public footpath that crosses a railway line, please follow all signage instructions. Along the way, you'll see fantastic landscapes ranging from the Lee Valley corridor to Hoddesdon and parts of Broxbourne.

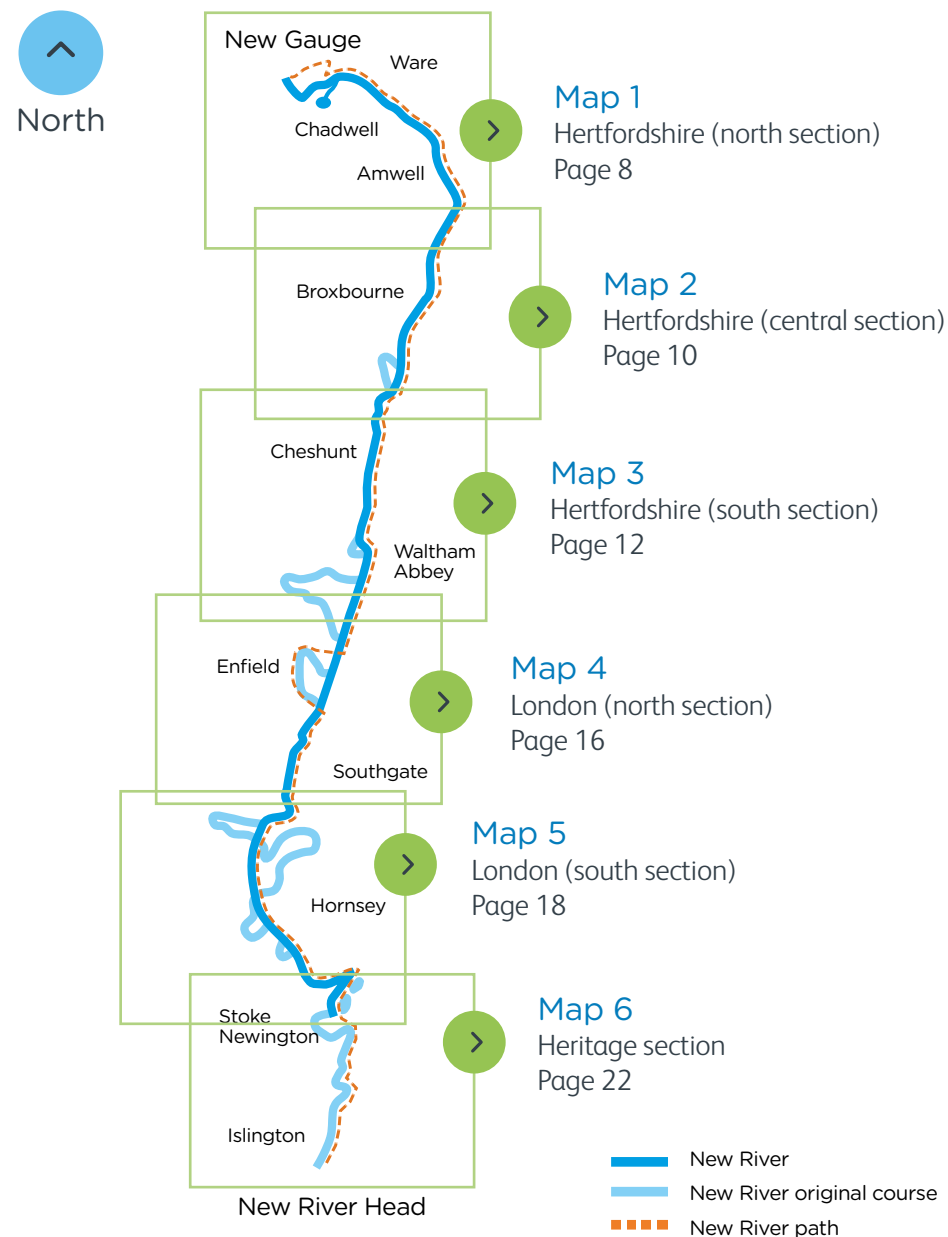
### London section: 18km (11 miles) 5-7 hour walk

From the M25, the New River flows through a backdrop of ever-changing scenes, ranging from city skylines to rural vistas, and finishing with a flourish at the 'Castle', Stoke Newington.

### Heritage section: 5km (3 miles) 1-2 hour walk

Beyond the 'Castle', the path runs through open and on-street spaces to New River Head, following the historic water course and ending at a visitor information point.

Choose your path – do one, do them all.  
You'll find detailed maps on the following pages:



## The story of the supply

Before 1600, London's water supply was from the River Thames, local streams, wells and springs. The water was often contaminated, and it was sold from wooden buckets.

In 1600, Edmund Colthurst had the idea to bring water from the springs in Hertfordshire and Middlesex to London. Permission was granted by King James I in 1604, and Colthurst used his own money to cut a channel from Chadwell Spring. Unfortunately, money ran out and work had to be stopped.



In 1606, a Parliamentary Act granted the Corporation of London the power to make a "New River for bringing water to London from Chadwell and Amwell in Hertfordshire". In 1609, Hugh Myddelton, a goldsmith and merchant adventurer, was given the authority to build the New River over the next four years. He employed Edward Wright, the famous mathematician, to survey and direct the course of the River with Colthurst over-seeing the project.

By 1611, Myddelton realised he, too, would not have the money to complete the project. King James I agreed to provide half the cost of the works on condition he received half the profits and that the New River could be constructed through his palace grounds at Theobalds. It's interesting to note that the King's involvement saw off any opposition by local landowners.

## Labour of love

Over 200 labourers were paid the equivalent of 4p a day to dig out the New River channel. Skilled carpenters received the equivalent of 6.5p a day to wharf the banks and erect bridges. Banks were raised and strengthened with clay to stop leaks. The water was brought to the city streets through hollowed-out elm pipes. The total cost of the construction was estimated at £18,500.

This impressive feat of engineering was completed in 1613 when a formal ceremony took place at the Round Pond in Islington; this is sited near the present New River Head, just below Sadler's Wells.

A play was staged to celebrate the opening which was attended by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London. In 1619, the New River Company was created by Charter with Myddelton as the first Governor.





## The New River today

Every day, Thames Water supplies an average of 2.7 billion litres of water to nearly ten million people across London and the Thames Valley. To this day, the New River is an essential part of this, providing around 8% of London's daily water use.

To meet rising demands, its carrying capacity and sources of supply have significantly changed over the years. The original water sources at Chadwell and Amwell Springs were supplemented by the 1738 Statute that allows up to 102 mega litres to be taken daily from the River Lee. This level of supply was doubled in the mid-1800s, when new pumping stations were built to abstract water from deep wells along the New River.

The twists and turns of the New River have also changed as time has passed, with many bends straightened by construction of new river channels or pipeline sections. It's also shorter and now ends at Stoke Newington, a total length of 24 miles. This reduced length was offset by increasing the water channel to 2.5 metres deep and 6 metres wide. The water level in the New River is regulated by sluice gates to meet the needs of the pumping stations and reservoirs. And a set of boreholes built in the 1990s mean that surplus treated water can be stored in the chalk aquifer and then pumped into the New River when extra water is needed.

## A word of thanks...

The New River Path was developed over 12 years at a cost of over £2 million, with £1.3 million invested by Thames Water. It's been a massive job, and it couldn't have been done without the help and support of many organisations

including; Groundwork, London's Waterway Partnership, Countryside Agency, New River Action Group, Friends of New River Walk, schools and communities, and all the local authorities along the route.

## ...and a polite reminder

The grassed riverside path is only to be used by walkers, with a few hard surface sections that are accessible to wheelchair users. Please remember:

- Keep to the path
- Don't feed or touch wildlife
- Keep dogs on leads and scoop their poop
- Take litter home
- Follow all instructions when crossing the railway
- Sometimes sections of path are closed for maintenance



# Path map 1








Hertfordshire section (North)

-  New River Path
-  Pumping Station
-  Bus Route
-  Railway Station
-  Underground Station
-  Public House
-  Route feature



# Path map 2

Hertfordshire section (central)

-  New River Path
-  PS Pumping Station
-  Bus Route
-  Railway Station
-  Underground Station
-  PH Public House
-  Route feature










Map 1



Map 3

# Path map 3

Hertfordshire section (south)

-  New River Path
-  PS Pumping Station
-  Bus Route
-  Railway Station
-  Underground Station
-  PH Public House
-  Route feature



Map 2

Map 4



# Route features

## Hertfordshire section

See Maps 1-3 for location of features.

**1 New Gauge:** starting point of the New River. The Gauge building, constructed in 1856, regulates a statutory maximum water intake from the River Lee of 102 mega litres a day.

**2 The Meads:** area of unique flood meadow, principally owned by Thames Water, being managed for nature conservation. The combination of ditches criss-crossing the area, floodwater and grazing, managed since medieval times, has created a rich wetland habitat.

**3 Chadwell Spring:** original source of the New River in 1609, although an initial channel was started in 1604. The spring yields up to 4.3 mega litres a day with water rising in a 30 metre circular basin, known as the 'banjo'; on the perimeter is a stone monument inscribed with historic dates and river distances.

**4 Marble Gauge:** structure erected in 1770 to control the water taken from a former intake from the River Lee. Nearby is the prominent timber clad White House Sluice.

**5 Broadmead pumping station:** Grade 2 listed building, constructed in 1885.

**6 Amwell End pumping station:** built in 1868.

**7 Amwell Hill pumping station:** Grade 2 listed building, constructed in 1847.



**8 Amwell Islands:** attractive small lake feature with two islands; on one is a stone monument that has an inscribed poem, dated 1818, and entitled Amwell; on the other is sited a pedestal monument dedicated by Robert Mylne to Sir Hugh Myddelton. Opposite is Emma's Well which is thought by some to be the site of the former Amwell Spring.

**9 Amwell Church:** high above the River a large tomb of the Mylne family is located in the Parish Church grounds. Both Robert Mylne and his son William Chadwell served as the engineer to the New River Company from the late 1700s until the 1850s. Together they were responsible for many of the major changes to the operation of the New River.

**10 Amwell Marsh pumping station:** built in 1884.

**11 Rye Common pumping station:** constructed in 1883.

**12 Hoddesdon pumping station:** built in 1886.

**13 Broxbourne pumping station:** Grade 2 listed building, constructed in 1886.

**14 Turnford pumping station:** constructed in 1850. Nearby the Turnford Aqueduct was constructed by Chadwell Mylne in 1855.

**15 Theobald's Park:** the area of former royal hunting park adjacent to the New River with prominent Grade 2 listed building on the higher ground.










## London section (north)



# Path map 5

London section (south)

-  New River Path
-  PS Pumping Station
-  Bus Route
-  Railway Station
-  Underground Station
-  PH Public House
-  Route feature



# Route features

## London section

See Maps 4 and 5 for location of features.

**16 Maiden's Brook:** following the construction of the 'Artificial Recharge Scheme' (see 'Operation' page), two thirds of the New River's water is diverted here, in tunnel to the Walthamstow Reservoirs. Nearby the Docwra Aqueduct, built in 1859 to replace a long loop through Whitewebbs Park, carries the New River in 2 large pipes over the brook. Further downstream is Hoe Lane pumping station, built in 1880.

**17 Whitewebbs Park:** here an alternative path link to the Enfield Loop is waymarked; this follows the former 'Whitewebbs Loop' where traces of the original channel are still evident.

**18 Enfield Loop:** the horseshoe loop of the New River through Enfield Town was bypassed around 1900 following the laying of 3 cast iron pipes between Southbury Road and Bush Hill. The redundant watercourse has recently been restored and water levels to the cut-off loop maintained by Thames Water. The path follows this attractive original route.

**19 Clarendon Arch:** at Bush Hill a lead-lined wooden aqueduct originally carried the New River over Salmon's Brook; this was replaced by a brick arch in 1682. Although this construction was replaced by a clay embankment the historic arch can still be viewed from a visitor point recently created by Thames Water. Downstream is Highfield pumping station, built in 1885.

**20 Wood Green Tunnel:** between Bowes Park and Hornsey the New River flows through the Wood Green Tunnel. Built in 1859, this tunnel and the raised channel to the north of Bowes Road made the loops through Edmonton and Arnos Park redundant reducing the river's length by nearly 1.5 km. Over the tunnel entrance, on vacant Thames Water land, a new community garden has been created by local residents in partnership with Haringey Council. To the south the path is passes through a series of open spaces above the tunnel.

**21 Hornsey waterworks:** the treatment works was constructed in 1850. Recent improvements to the filter beds enable up to 60 Ml to be taken from the New River for treatment and distribution locally through the north London supply network. The redundant Hornsey pumping station, built in 1903, has been retained for use as an art gallery.

**22 'The Ladder':** between Wightman Road and Finsbury Park the New River is crossed by a series of side roads. This attractive section, known as 'the ladder', has been bypassed at the request of the Council; here, the path is routed along local roads.

**23 Stoke Newington reservoirs:** the East and West reservoirs, fed by the New River, were constructed in the 1830s to meet rising demands for water. Today the River only flows into the East Reservoir where it is stored and then piped to Walthamstow for treatment. The West Reservoir has been developed into a water sports centre and the former Castle pumping station, built in 1855, converted into an indoor climbing centre.

# Path map 6

Heritage section

-  New River Path
-  PS Pumping Station
-  Bus Route
-  Railway Station
-  Underground Station
-  PH Public House
-  Route feature





# Route features

## Heritage section

See Maps 6 location of features.

**24 Clissold Park:** until the New River was straightened and piped in the 1860s it flowed in open channel from the 'Castle' and through Clissold Park. Today the Park's ornamental water filled loop, raised embankment and a former sluice house still identify the original course of the River.

**25 Petherton Road:** originally the New River flowed openly along Aden Terrace and through the middle of Petherton Road. During the 1860s the watercourse was culverted and later developed as a central green space.

**26 Canonbury:** from St Paul's Road the New River openly flowed through Douglas Road, Canonbury Grove and Astey's Row, with housing being developed alongside in the early 1800s. By the 1890s this section was covered over and the water piped to New River Head. The redundant water channels were retained as attractive features until covered over and developed in the 1950s as a series of public gardens.

**27 New River walk:** adjacent to Canonbury Grove is the only remaining section of original New River channel; here, the watercourse has been desilted and the old wooden sides (revetments) carefully restored. Nearby at Astey's Row, a newly created open area has a map of the New River and an inscription taken from the New River Company seal etched into the walking surface.

**28 St Peter's Street:** below Essex Road, from Astey's Row to St Peter's Street, the New River was always in tunnel and then in open channel, until 1870, through the middle of Colebrooke Row and Duncan Terrace. At Duncan Street the Regent's Canal was constructed in tunnel below the New River. Two hundred metres off the direct Path route is located, at Islington Green, a statue to Sir Hugh Myddelton.

**29 Sadler's Wells:** at City Road the New River crossed and flowed through Owen's Row, under St John's Street, alongside the original Sadler's Wells Theatre and into New River Head. This open channel was covered over in 1892 and the water piped to New River Head.



## A site worth seeing

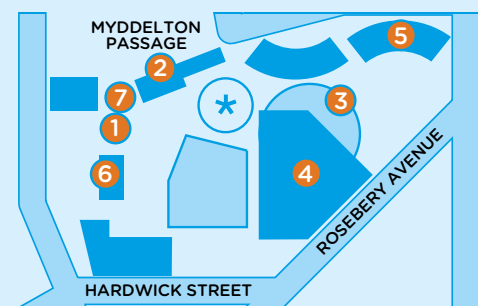
The New River Head site is of national historic importance as it's delivered a public water supply for nearly 400 years. The site was originally developed as the terminus of the New River, "bringing in a freshe streame of running water" from Hertfordshire. This end point was originally a small reservoir called the 'Round Pond' – elevated so that water could be piped by gravity to houses in the City and surrounding areas. In the early 1700s, this circular basin was extended, and a larger outer reservoir built, known as the 'Inner' and 'Outer' Ponds. In those days, the water was sent along 400 miles

of connecting elm pipes. But these were changed to iron ones in the 1820s and we now use blue plastic MDPE (medium density polyethylene) pipes to supply water.

The New River flowed in an open channel into the site until 1892, when it was put into pipes and covered. In 1946, the water supply to the New River Head was cut short at Stoke Newington so it ended at the East Reservoir. But the site has kept its links with London's water supply through the London Ring Main and the Rising Groundwater Scheme.



You are welcome to visit the site, please enter through Myddelton Passage.



Opening hours:  
8am to 4pm  
(7pm in summer).

- 1 Windmill base:** listed Grade 2, built in 1708, to pump water to an 'Upper Pond', now the covered reservoir at Claremont Square.
- 2 Engine and pump house:** listed Grade 2, built in 1768 to house steam engine pumps.
- 3 Inner pond:** remaining revetment is the only fragment of the original 'Round Pond'; listed Grade 2.
- 4 New River Head building:** listed Grade 2, built in 1919 on part of former 'Round Pond', until 1993 was Thames Water offices and still incorporates the relocated New River Company's 1693 Oak Room, Grade 2.
- 5 Laboratory building:** listed Grade 2, constructed in 1938, was used for testing water quality.
- 6 Ring main compound:** This houses the deep shaft and pumps that raise treated water from the Thames Water Ring Main tunnel below. The 2.5 metre diameter tunnel, a major part of London's water distribution network, circles London [80 km] and connects with water treatment works to the west of the capital.
- 7 Borehole:** part of a scheme to reduce rising groundwater under London by taking water from the aquifer and transferring it by pipe to Stoke Newington East Reservoir.

To find out more about other Thames Water historic sites, visit [thameswater.co.uk/livewild](https://thameswater.co.uk/livewild)

