

Unlock Walk No. 22 – Barriers and Bridges
A Walker's Eye View
David Harvey
Photographs by Andrew West



Unlock's 22nd walk was one of the best. We saw a cross-section of life in the inner city with a tremendous range of peoples, housing, workspace and inspiring Christian mission. We started at Paddington Green Police Station and met the first of the “barriers” – the Westway. In fact it was so much of a barrier that we failed to see beyond it and walked the wrong way down Edgware Road! After putting that right and going through the contrasting areas of Lisson Grove and St John's Wood we came to Little Venice.



What a gem that is, with its colourful boats and gardens. Coming away from the canal and crossing the railway – two more barriers, we found the Open Door Friendship Centre set in a large estate of flats and offering the bridge of Christian friendship to the Muslim community. On through an area of mixed housing and passing under the Westway again, we came to Notting Hill and Portobello Road – a kaleidoscope of sights, smells and colours. The last section took us along leafy roads and past the three transport “barriers” again as we walked into Paddington Station, under the Westway for the third time and along the towpath back to Little Venice, and so back to Paddington Green.



Lasting Impressions:

- The food smells. Round almost every corner we met a tantalising new odour.
- The churches. At least two, St. Francis and St. Paul's were revived from churches that had been forced to close due to lack of numbers and are now growing.
- The vibrancy of life in the city. The food in the markets looked wonderful, the shops were buzzing and the new developments around the canal inspiring.



Pause for thought

- Of course, there is still much need. There was graffiti, some run down housing and a vast mission field with few resources.
- The posh developments and fancy canal boats do little to generate long-term employment and affordable housing for the vast majority of people.



Some surprising encounters:

- We (strangers to the area) were asked the way to "Alfie's" in Portobello Market, and having just passed it, were able to assist!
- We met a nurse from Sheffield (where we come from) working in the Open Door Friendship Centre.
- It's lovely passing walkers in both directions and we met some old friends (one twice as we went round in opposite directions).



Well done Unlock!