**SSW2: Stratford to Newbury Park, Wednesday 25th May 2022**

8 walkers, 7.8 miles – leader Pete Colley

The sun was out and the station stayed open for the second of the Stratford Social Walks series.

A stroll between the Victorian terraces of Stratford and Maryland took us to the birthplace of "heavy metal legends", Iron Maiden. We headed on through Forest Lane Park, past West Ham Cemetery and on to Forest Gate. Over the verdant pastures of Wanstead Flats, the southernmost part of Epping Forest, we passed the tranquil lakes of Wanstead Park, crossing the peaceful River Roding and the not so peaceful North Circular into Ilford.

Valentines Park is one of East London's (hidden) gems - it looked immaculate, thanks to Dave Williams' litter picking efforts earlier in the week, as we visited the Rose Garden and the Long Water. Unfortunately, the Walled Garden was closed - I wholeheartedly recommend dropping into the Gardener's Cottage Cafe on a sunny day. We saw ourselves out over the cricket pitch which used to host Essex county cricket games and zig-zagged our way through to Newbury Park station, a winner of a Festival of Britain award in 1951 - they saw things differently back then...

Given the lack of anything much at all at our destination, the walk-weary group managed three stops on the Central Line to Wanstead, where Dave Williams had kindly kept our seats warm at The George, an extremely pleasant Wetherspoons. (Apologies to Gavin for the accidental pint theft...)

A big thank you to all who took part in the second of eight Stratford Social Walks this spring/summer. Looking forward to seeing you (and others) on the next instalment.

Photographs by Gavin Fuller