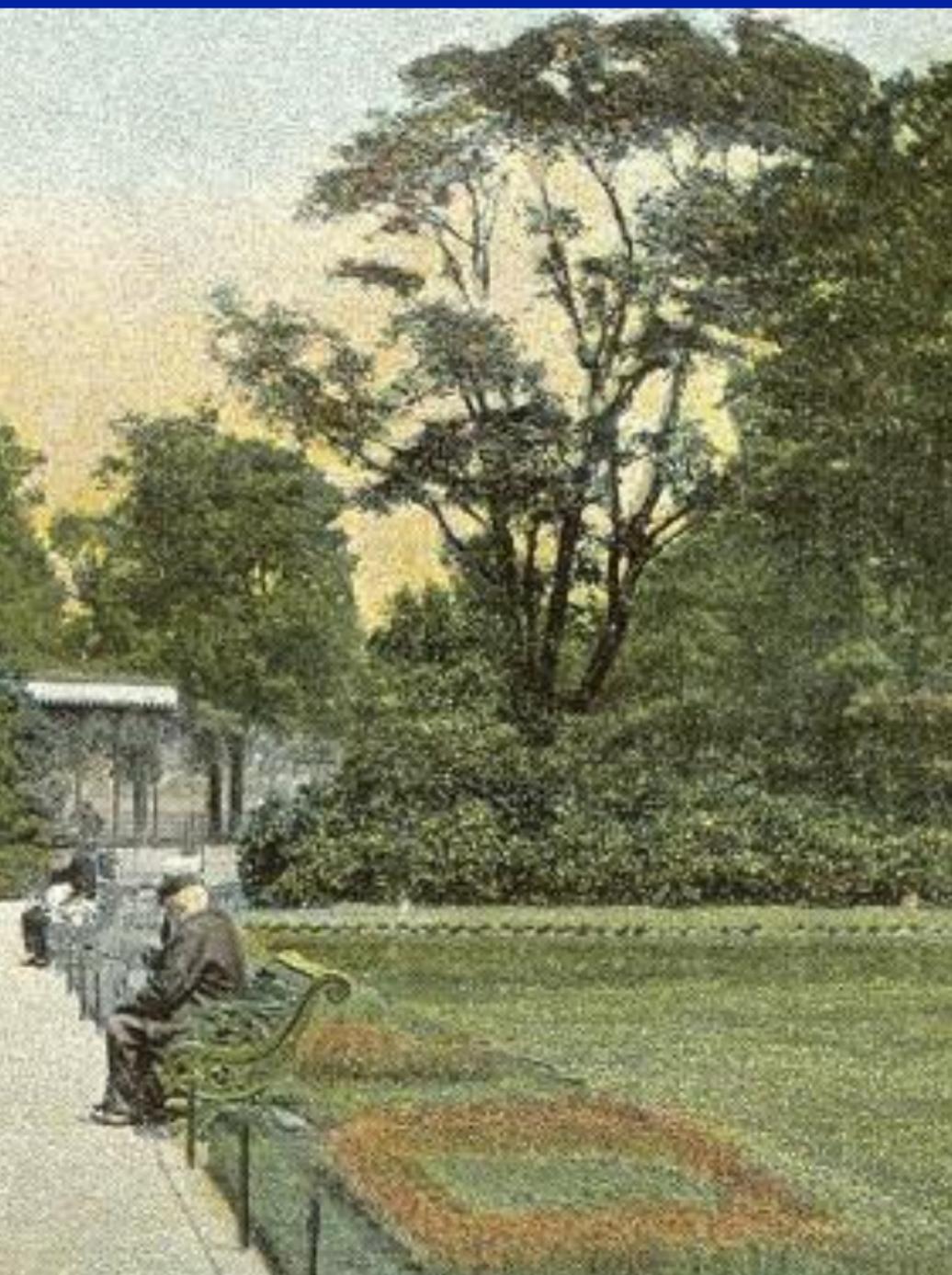




# History Trail

WEST HAM PARK WALKS

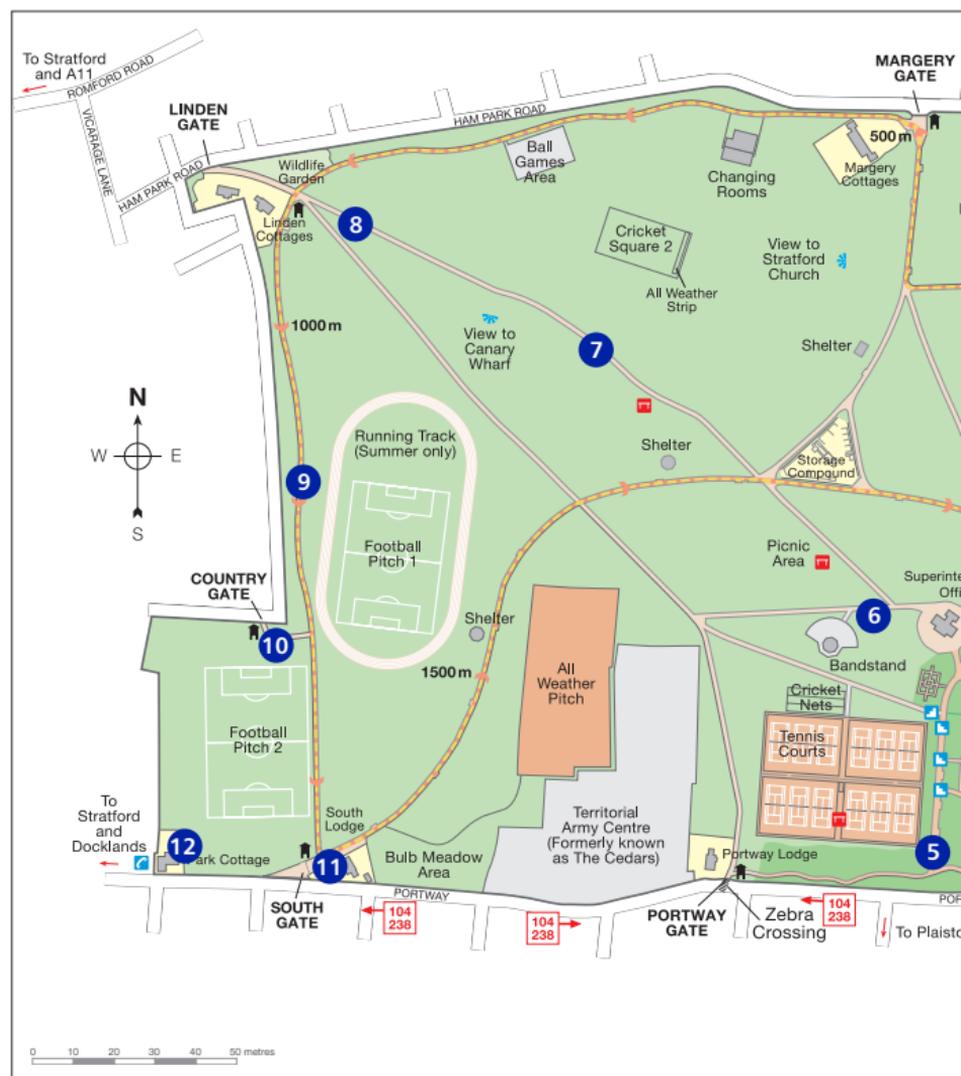


# History Trail

West Ham Park has a rich and diverse cultural history spanning back over 400 years.

In 2004, English Heritage awarded the site Grade II status on their Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest.

This leaflet outlines the brief history of the Park and special buildings and artefacts of historical and cultural importance. Use the map below to locate the points of interest.



Please note that this trail is suitable for wheelchair users



Dr. Fothergill

Documents relating to the Park date back to 1566, when the site was originally part of the Upton House Estate. Early records show that the estate was much smaller than the present Park, but in 1559, William Rooke inherited and enlarged it to 28 acres, and then sold it to the Smythe family in 1666, who remained the owners until the mid-eighteenth century.

In 1752, the estate was bought by Admiral Elliott, a successful naval officer, who sold it ten years later to Dr. John

Fothergill, a physician and Quaker. When Fothergill bought the Upton Estate, as it was then called, in West Ham, he enlarged it to about 80 acres, larger than the present West Ham Park and embarked on plant collection and soon became a world famous botanist. Fothergill would often waive medical fees from wealthier patients preferring payments in rare plants instead. A greenhouse and hothouses, then less common than now, were added and many more species flourished on the open ground. As a significant figure in local history, Fothergill Close in Plaistow was named after him.



Fothergill died in 1780 and for the next six years Upton House, now renamed Ham

House, remained in the hands of his executors.

In 1786, another Quaker, James Sheppard, bought the estate and when he died in 1812 it passed to his son-in-law, the banker Samuel Gurney. Later, his sister Elizabeth Fry and her husband lived from 1829 to 1845 in another house on the estate, Upton Lane House, which is currently the location of the Territorial Army (TA Centre).



*Edward VII,  
Stratford*

In 1842, royalty visited the estate, when Elizabeth Fry entertained Frederic William IV, King of Prussia. The public house in Stratford, now known as the 'Edward VII' was originally called the 'King of Prussia' in memory of this, but changed its name at the start of World War One.

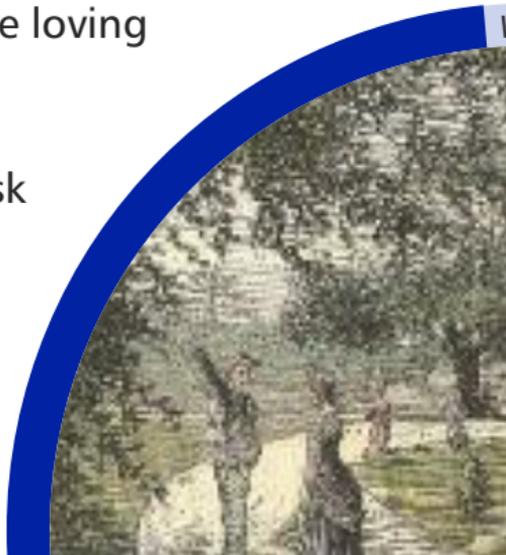


*Memorial Obelisk,  
Stratford High Street*

In 1911, the TA Centre was leased to the Territorial Force Association of Essex County and became the headquarters for several of the local volunteer and

TA units, which was ironic as it was once the home of peace loving Quakers!

After Gurney's death in 1856 a memorial obelisk and fountain was erected in Stratford High Street. The Gurney family continued to live at Ham House but by



the late 1860s it was clear that they wished to sell the estate.

A petition of inhabitants of West Ham and Stratford was received by the City of London (the City) on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1873 asking for assistance in the purchase of the Park for preservation as an open space. The City agreed to grant the sum of £10,000 for the purpose. Mr. John Gurney, a grandson of Mr. Samuel Gurney, was at that time the owner of the Ham House Estate, which was 77 acres in extent and valued at £25,000. He and other members of his family jointly contributed £10,000, the City duly paid £10,000 and the remaining £5,000 of purchase money was prescribed locally.

West Ham Park was officially opened on 20 July 1874. The ceremony was performed by the Lord Mayor of London Sir Andrew Lusk, and as a band played in the background, deeds of title were presented declaring the Park '*open public grounds and gardens for adults, children and youth*'. The City undertook to maintain the Park forever at its own expense.

Today, the Park continues to be managed by a Committee of fifteen managers, of whom eight are appointed by the City, one by the Parish of West Ham, two by the London Borough of Newham and four by the heirs-at-law of the late John Gurney Esq.

There are a number of buildings and artefacts in West Ham Park which have special

Nest Ham Park





*The Stone Cairn*

historical importance, follow the trail to view some of the highlights.

**We begin at the Cairn ①**. The stone Cairn

located on the Garden flagpole lawn was constructed with material said to be from the original house and Fothergill's Rock Garden. The position of the Cairn is said to be close to the site of Upton House Estate.

The ***Ginkgo biloba* ②** situated close to the Cairn was planted by Dr. Fothergill in 1763. Fothergill positioned the tree next to the Ham House for shelter and if you look closely at the trunk you will see that one side appears to be flatter. It is said, that the Ginkgo is one of the oldest in Great Britain.



*Ginkgo biloba*

**Take the path towards Fothergill's Rock Garden ③**. In 1766, it was thought that Dr. John Fothergill introduced one of the first Rock Gardens to the UK. The Rock Garden, which can be seen today, is thought to be inspired by the original, using a similar layout, position and plant choice.



*Fothergill's Rock Garden*

Fothergill built up an extensive collection of rare and interesting plants. Fortunately, during his lifetime he commissioned several famous artists to draw, paint and record his plants, trees and shrubs. After his death, Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia, purchased the collection and took them to Russia where for a long time they remained forgotten. In the 1980's the Chief Curator of the Komarov Botanical Library in St Petersburg discovered the pictures still within their original wrapping. The paintings still remain in St Petersburg today.

Painting by one of Fothergill's most famous artists, George Ehret



**Follow the pathway** which leads to the **Bridge 4**. A natural stream was channelled to create a large pond in the Ornamental Gardens.

However, over time the stream dried up, although the bridge still remains intact.



*The Bridge*

# History Trail



*The Terrace*

The pathways around the Ornamental Gardens have not changed in layout or design since the days of Fothergill. The view along the **Terrace 5** is a

good example of a vista which has remained for centuries.

The two Coade Stone Urns, which can still be seen today, are made from artificial stoneware, which was popular from 1769 to 1833 throughout London's building boom. During this period, ornate features to decorate Georgian houses were high in demand.

The **Bandstand 6** was erected in the 1960's, but replaced a succession of earlier structures dating back to the early 1900's. Throughout history, in the absence of television and radio, park bandstands were hugely important in the local community for social gatherings and were one of the few sources of public entertainment. You can pick up a free City of London summer programme listing all the events at the Bandstand from the Playground Office and leaflet dispensers located at notice boards.

Follow the avenue which leads to Linden Gate. The **Cricket Square 7** can be viewed to



the right of the path. Cricket has been played in the Park since 1874. West Ham Park is the only public space in Newham to maintain two cricket squares, one of which is dedicated to youth matches. The Park hosts a free cricket clinic with Essex Cricket Board every year in July.



*Cricket Square*

The **peripheral areas** ⑧ of the Park which originally stretched as far as Romford Road, were often used for farming. Many households who occupied the land were self sufficient, keeping sheep, cows, chickens and kitchen gardens. Continue on the path to Linden Cottages which replaced earlier properties damaged in the War. This site is thought to be the location of some of the early farm houses which were built in the area.



*Flock of sheep in West Ham Park c.1890*



*Farm buildings on the site of West Ham Park, c.1871*

Children's entertainment on "The Bandstand"



Take the pathway which leads towards South Gate, in this area you will see our **Football Pitches 9**. Sporting events were a popular pastime for many who worked in the heavy industries in the East End. By the 1920's, football had become such a popular local sport that over one hundred clubs were playing in the Borough. Upton Park Football Club was an amateur club in the late 19<sup>th</sup> early 20<sup>th</sup> century and represented Great Britain in the 1900 Olympics, in which they won. Despite the similarity of the name of Upton Park Stadium the club had no connection with West Ham United (then known as the Thames Ironworks). Upton Park played their home games at West Ham Park which attracted large crowds, which may have influenced the Thames Ironworks to move to the area from Canning Town where football was not as popular.

Another local link to the area's significant sporting history is the origins of **Edward Temme Avenue, near Country Gate 10**. The road was named after a Stratford born swimmer Edward Harry Temme, who belonged to Plaistow United Swimming Club, founded in 1920. Temme went to the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin to compete in water polo and was also the first man to swim the English Channel in both directions.



*Edward  
Harry Temme*

Continue on the pathway to **South Gate, Park entrance 11**. There are seven public entrances in West Ham Park. The double wrought iron gates at South Gate, Margery and the Main Gate are typically Victorian in style, and have been preserved over many years to maintain their original layout and design.



*South Gate*

In the far south west corner of the Park, lies **Park Cottage 12**. Of the eight staff lodges in the Park, the oldest two are East Lodge and Park Cottage which was originally a school house. Both were built in the



*Park Cottage c.1880's*

1880's, the remainder were added in the late 1940's and 1950's to replace earlier properties damaged during the War.

We hope you have enjoyed this step back in time.

**End of History Trail.**



## WEST HAM PARK

West Ham Park is one of a number of parks, gardens and open spaces around London owned and managed by the City of London as part of its commitment to sustaining a world class city. Each open space is a unique resource managed for the use and enjoyment of the public and for the conservation of wildlife and historic landscape. A full list of sites and visitor information can be found on our website at: [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/openspaces](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/openspaces) or by contacting the City Corporation's Open Spaces on 020 7332 3505 for general enquiries.



**For further information please contact:**

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Would you like to be more involved with the Park, go to our "Friends of West Ham Park" website [fwhp.co.uk](http://fwhp.co.uk)

Whilst in the Park, do not hesitate to approach any of our staff, who will be happy to assist you.

If you require this leaflet in another format please contact 020 8472 3584



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