

Woolwich Wanderings. A Photo Journal.

Duncan 

Before I start with my activities I feel that I need to explain my journey to Woolwich and in turn to this project with Lizzie. I am now in my early 50s and have recently changed careers. I am currently at the start of my teaching career in a school in Welling. I was brought up in West Yorkshire and lived there throughout my childhood. My parents were from the area and as a family we enjoyed walking in the Peak District, Yorkshire Dales and the Pennine Hills. Walking has always been a part of my life and I equally enjoy urban and rural routes. I find it amazing when you come across things you would never have seen through other transportation options. I am naturally inquisitive and spend lots of my walking life backtracking after running out of paths or on finding barricaded routes. To me (but not my family) this adds to the experience.

I moved to the SE London area through work and lived in a village near Dartford called Wilmington from 1997 to 2020. It was here that my children were born and raised and still an area I regularly visit for walks and runs. I have worked in South and East London throughout my time in the area. Mainly Lewisham and Newham with some other Boroughs thrown in. In 2019 my wife and I decided we wanted a change. Despite working in London for most of our adult lives we had never lived there. My daughters were soon to both be at University and so the school commutes were short lived. We wanted to live somewhere accessible to the City and our friends in Wilmington, but that also allowed access to green spaces. Woolwich and Plumstead seemed more accessible and down to Earth than Blackheath or Greenwich and so our search began. We are currently on a journey to renovate a house in Plumstead. It feels never ending at times and the pandemic hasn't helped with this. Hopefully we are nearing the end of this.

I have enjoyed exploring the area with our beagle, Coco, and hope to meet more of our neighbours when restrictions ease. I read about Lizzie and this project on social media. It felt a good way to get involved in the community and find similar minded people. Having received the pack I had to decide on a week to log. When I received the pack I was engaged in teaching from home. Prior to Christmas I had commuted to and from school by bike. I would walk the area during evenings and weekends. However when schools shut for the Christmas break there was no sign of when they would return. The new normal of working from home set in. I was now missing my daily cycle and so for my own sanity would get out for a walk when I finished work in the late afternoon. I log all my cycles, runs and walks on Strava (other than popping for a pint of milk or similar). I use a GPS watch for this and a side effect of this is that my steps are counted daily. Each day I hit my target I get set a slightly higher target for the next day automatically. You may notice my walks get longer by a small amount each day.

So I now have my pack and at the same time the return to school is announced. I decided to keep my step streak running and log seven days of the last weekend before resuming in classroom teaching followed by the first week back in school. Instead of cycling to work I decided to walk instead. So this journal will cover the 6th to the 12th March 2021.

Saturday 6th March

Two walks today. In the morning I took Coco out to explore a bit. We walked up to Winn's Common and made our way down the steps to Rockliffe Gardens. I love the desolation of Winn's and the

constant flow of runners and walkers around the perimeter. Rockliffe is another favourite local place and I am amazed at how little it is used.

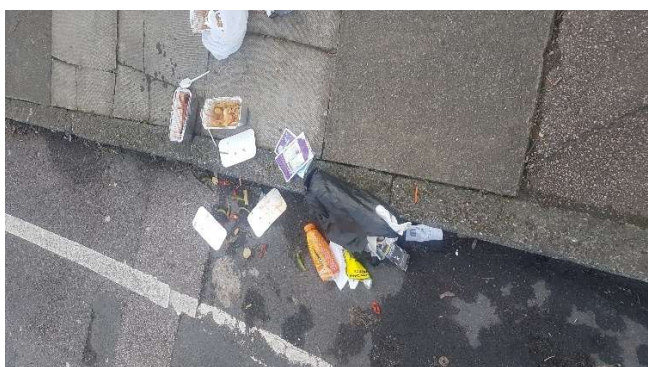


I would often drop into East Wickham open space but was out to explore today as it was just me and the dog. I hate the amount of barriers in London and there are great areas of open space blocked for access. The area between Shooters Hill Road and Plumstead is one of them. You have to walk the streets around the edge of Welling to get from the garden centre in Shooters Hill to Plumstead if you want to avoid the climb. There is a cable tied shut gate that could lead you there which clearly has been disputed over time.

So Camdale Road and straight over to Edison Grove and the first backtrack of the week. Well it looked like a path on Combeside but was only an access route to back gardens.



So first mistake dealt with and I walked all the way around the block and back onto Highmead. I then turned into Welton Road and passed the parade of shops. I passed one of my pet hates, car door litter. There was most of an uneaten Chinese along with a parking ticket from the previous evening in Bexley along with empty fag packets and general rubbish. Essential journeys only?



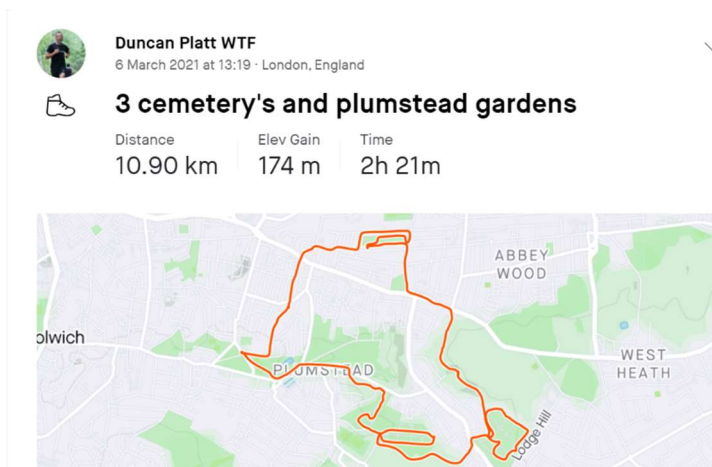
So on with the walk. I soon reached Flaxton Road and walked to the end for my second U turn. I turned left and realised that the land of opportunity towards Shooters Hill was inaccessible. So up High Grove and into Dot Hill and Shrewsbury Park. One of my favourite viewpoints of Woolwich and home to some spectacular trees. Woolwich has some of the finest tree specimens in the area. We are so fortunate with our Woodland and so here is a Shrewsbury Park specimen.



I left the park and went down Plum Lane and took the steps at the bottom before crossing Plumstead Common Road towards the adventure play area. Why is this road so awkward to cross! Another pet hate, lack of zebra crossings and lack of 20mph enforcement. I appreciate I may sound a lot like a certain Mr Meldrew now. It will get worse before it gets better.

I returned home via the green chain walk and passed the bowls club before emerging onto Plumstead Common and passed the Old Mill pub. A quick 7km walk.

Part 2 of Saturday was an opportunity to explore the cemeteries with my wife. The dog had been exercised and I had wanted to explore the amazing looking graveyards on the Borough. Next pet hate about to reveal. Why won't Greenwich allow dogs in cemeteries? Please deal with those who litter, don't clear up or hang small gifts in trees and don't exclude the majority law abiding citizens.



This walk started with a Northern approach towards the Thames. I had seen that Plumstead Gardens was being smartened up. I vaguely knew where it was but had never been in. We found out why as there was only one open gate on Church Manor Way. We walked all around it before gaining access. We then walked all around it and almost swam through a flood at the Western end to find the gate to Brookdene Road padlocked shut. More swimming past the cannabis user in the all weather court and we escaped the way we had entered. It is great that the Council appreciate the effect of open space on locals and I applaud them with their endeavour to return areas like the Gardens to their former greatness. So past St Nicolas Gardens and turn left for Bostall Hill. Into Bostall Woods and we make our way towards Welling. We stopped by the end of Waterdale Road to clear up what the owners of an impromptu picnic should have done. Two bags of fizzy drinks, wine bottles, spirits and snacks later and we continue the walk. We were thanked by dog walkers in the woods.

We emerged from the woods for a lap of Plumstead cemetery. A spectacular gatehouse and chapel in the middle. Also some great views as a result of its elevated position. Another bonus for my wife were the public toilets.



Plumstead completed so time for Woolwich. We crossed by the Foresters pub and walked up to East Wickham open space. Another great desolate area! We emerged by the allotments and Camdale Road. Then into Woolwich cemetery. At the entrance were a load of headstones. We were informed that if you don't pay the annual upkeep then the headstones are removed. Over 50 and still learning things each day. We did a lap of the cemetery and found a gate above William Barefoot gardens. No time today but another exploration into the bank for future.



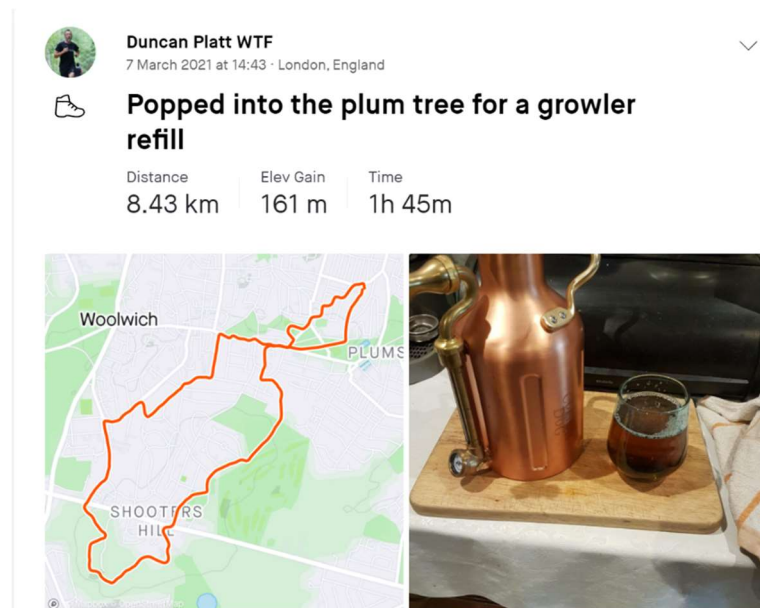
We left as we entered and finished the day of death with Woolwich Old Cemetery. I had seen the chapel from Rockliffe gardens and was keen to explore. It didn't disappoint and we found the mass grave from a passenger boat disaster at Thamesmead along with a Platt family grave. Included at the site was one for my daughter Elizabeth's namesake. Apparently they lived at 2, Wrotesley Road. The cemetery was rich with armed forces graves and reminded us of the part Woolwich has played in our nations defences. No photos but have you ever seen a tree grow around a watering can? Yes fully encased.



The walk finished via Revell Rise and the steps to the Kings Highway. Across the top of Winn's and around the top of the Slade ponds to Plumstead Common. My wife picked up a sausage roll and a

cake from the new owners at the Pantry and we went home for a coffee. Nearly 11km at a much gentler pace.

Sunday 7th March



Following a run in Wilmington in the morning I had to squeeze an afternoon walk in as the weather was lovely. It was also an excuse to fill our growler. I love pubs and pub walks. Especially on Sundays. However lockdowns have prevented much of this and during the first one I invested in a growler for storing beer. There is a wonderful micropub in Plumstead called the Plum Tree. I rang Nick to check he was open and ordered my three pints. We walked up with the dog and crossed the common to the micropub. We deposited the growler and explained we would be back in an hour for it to be delivered to the nearby junction.

So we walked along towards Woolwich and turned left into Wrotesley Rd. No harm in seeing where your daughter lived before her death. From there we cut round the back of Herbert and dropped down Paget Rise. We love the houses on Herbert Road and can see how grand the area must have been once upon a time. At the end of Herbert we turned left and took in Red Lion Lane. This is another great road of varying house styles and converted old pubs. The access is awful but you understand why the houses are so expensive. At the end of Red Lion we climbed the steps to Castlewood and looped around the bottom of Severndroog Castle. The trees here are also amazing and I took a few snaps.



The redwood is in my top 3 trees of Greenwich. Not sure exactly where as there are many more to see. So through Jack Wood and into Crown Woods Lane. Across past the water tower. (Again no easy crossing point. Please TfL or Greenwich Council).

Down Cleanthus, and across Eaglesfield Rec before passing the tennis club and turning into the top of Shrewsbury Park. Below are the views I was talking about.



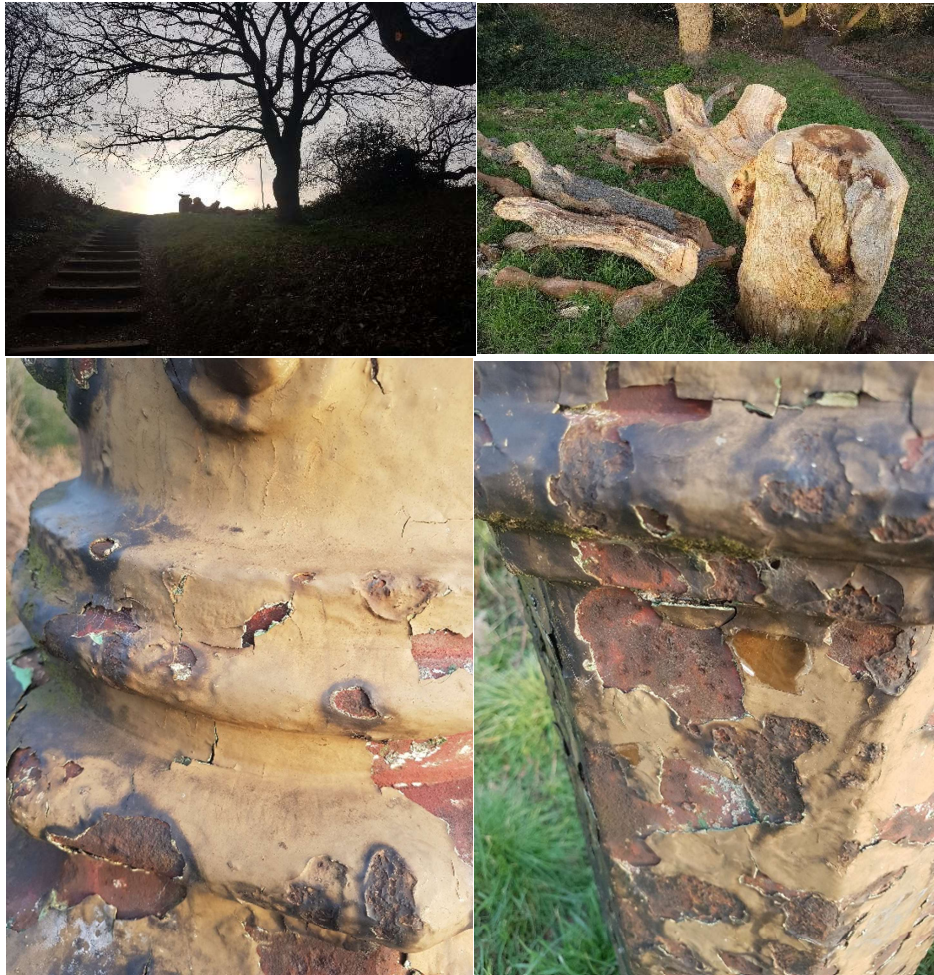
Finally past the allotments and drop off the Green chain walk into Admaston Road and the growler collection point. We went home via the splendid daffodils and crocuses by the bowls club and cut down Heavitree and Leghorn to return to Plumstead. 8.5km and a well deserved beer.

Monday 8th March

First ever walking commute. As is the norm for the week I will have a short walk to Welling via either Woolwich Old Cemetery or Rockliffe Gardens and then East Wickham open space. I then pause the GPS and continue it after work with a longer walk home.



The walk home was via Lodge Hill and then a proper exploration of Winn's common.



So the steps up to Winn's common. There was an old tree at the top (dead) when we first came. This has been chopped down and left in place and makes for a great photo. The close ups are of an old lamppost along from this that is no longer functional. I love the years of wear on the paint and the rust coming through. Hopefully it continues to evolve for the next 50 years.



In a very hidden wood on Winn's common I found this display board for the Woolwich Union workhouse. If you follow the Green chain walk and drop into the woods you will find it.

The pictures below are of the amazing walls in the area. Some have been incorporated into new buildings. These are all around the surgery in Tewson Road. I love to see how an area develops over time with a mixture of old and new.



10.3km today at better than average pace.

Tuesday 9th March



Duncan Platt WTF

9 March 2021 at 07:45 · London, England



Second walking commute of the week

Distance	Elev Gain	Time
13.61 km	203 m	2h 8m



A longer walk than yesterday as the weather was glorious. Another spectacular view at sunset in Shrewsbury Park. Also the steels for our extension are coming along well. I left Welling and headed for Danson Park. The park is lovely and I enjoy the ha-ha behind Danson House. There is a great ha-ha in Woolwich as well along to the hospital. They are walls hidden on one side and favoured by Victorian landscape designers for the wealthy. From there I took the path along the A2 which I wouldn't recommend. Even during restrictions the fumes from the Kent bound lane were awful all the way along past Falconwood. I explored Sheperdleas wood before crossing Rochester way and coming home via Oxleas meadows and Jack Wood and finally Shrewsbury Park for the views.

13.6km and a very reasonable pace.



Wednesday 10th March



Duncan Platt WTF

10 March 2021 at 07:54 · London, England



Day 3 commute walk

Distance

11.71 km

Elev Gain

150 m

Time

1h 54m



11.7km today and an explore around Abbey Wood. From school I went through Stevens park and made my way to Brampton Road. From here it is a pleasant walk to Bostall Heath and then down some steps (pictured) to Abbey Wood. I am amazed by the sheer quantity of steps in the area. It is almost worthy of another project. I cut through the estates of Abbey Wood and found one of those urban gems. A full garden of dwarves! I particularly like the horses heads to frame the picture. From there I joined the Ridgeway and made my way home to Plumstead. The ridgeway is a real gem. It is the path on the Southern section of Sir Joseph Bazalgette's giant sewer that transformed the sanitation of early London. One end is the Abbey Wood sewage works and the amazing Crossness engines.



Thurs 11th March



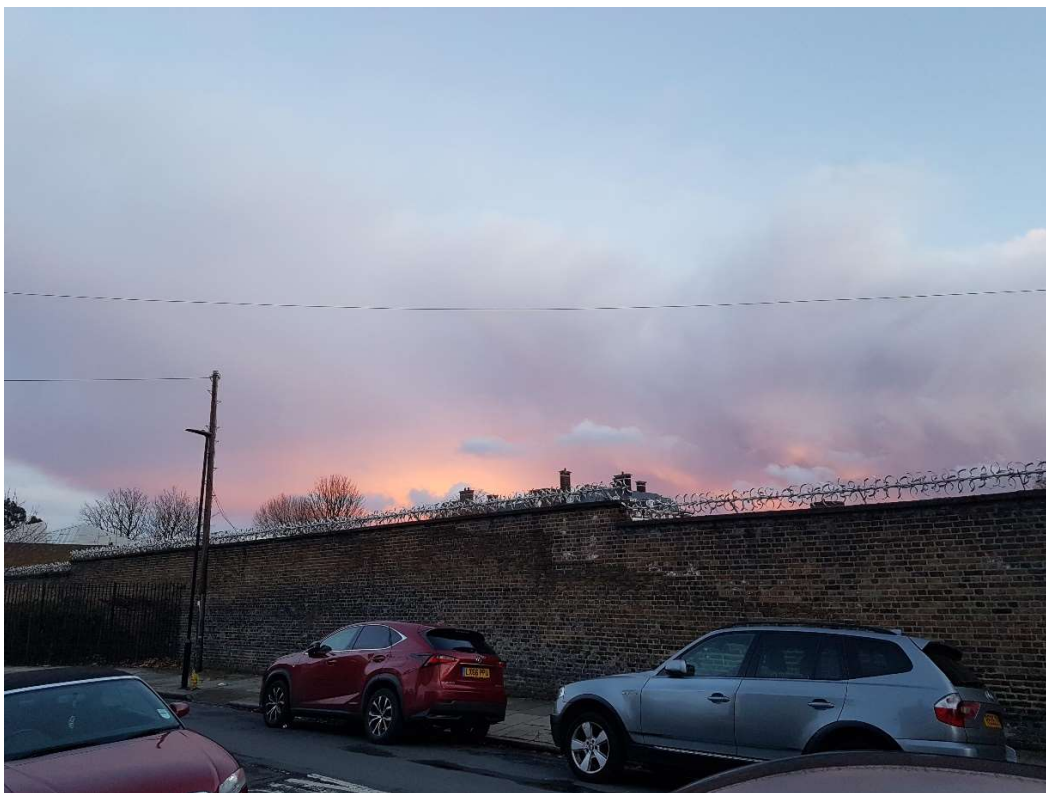
A more interesting walk in. There was a storm overnight and Camdale Road had taken a beating. The first photo is a garden wall reduced to horizontal state. I was amazed how it remained almost intact and also that the vehicles had a very luck escape. The second photo is of the bizarre set of rules that exists at the entrance to East Wickham open space. Maybe Conservative councils? No metal detectors, golf or model planes. Perhaps it was a random banned activities generator. The last one is of the great angry sky and the devastation present on the horse field.



The walk home was via Welling and Shooters Hill, before Jack Wood and Severndroog castle. The spring blooms were photo worthy.



Finally along the edge of Woolwich Common to the corner of Ha Ha road and returning via the Green chain walk. The final picture is of the still angry sky behind Plumstead Manor school. Not sure why the top of the wall is more Belmarsh prison than Plumstead Manor school.



13.75km today. Not a bad effort for approaching the end of the week.

Friday 12th March

The end of the week. 12.5km to finish off. Another standard commute in. The return trip was an extended version of Thursdays. From Brampton road I headed left towards Lesnes Abbey. The ruins are lovely and it is a very well used park. The café is often queueing.



The photos are of Fountain pond in Lesnes Abbey Wood. The abbey is well documented but I love this little pond in the woods. The paths around it have recently been upgraded. From there I took the elevated walkway that is Abbey Way and followed this down to Southmere Park and Lake. This setting was made famous in the film of “The Clockwork Orange” by Kubrick. I enjoy the fountain and the brutalist architecture. The area is being renewed and I look forward to the new Library area.



So the end of an eventful week and a really interesting set of memories. I have walked the same number of miles as my age in years which is maybe interesting.

Hopefully whoever reads this will find fascination in some of the things that amaze me each day. And maybe some will share my grumpiness around the issues we have to face each day around access to the countryside and strange rules.