

## Introduction

Ealing Green lies at the centre of Old Ealing and retains many buildings of historic interest alongside replacements and additions through the time up to the present day. During the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Ealing was a rural retreat of the aristocratic and wealthy. With the coming of the railway in 1838, the old estates were sold off and Ealing was transformed into a middle-class suburb, a character this area retains to the present day. Ealing Green was declared a Conservation Area in 1968, and the boundaries were extended in 1977 and 1982.

This walk covers the lost Grand Estates and landscape in the area from Pitzhanger Manor to St Mary's Church and back again.

*Our walk starts at **Pitzhanger Manor House and Gallery (1)**.* This Grade I listed building is the sole survivor of the old estates. Originally a 1605 manor house, it was rebuilt by Thomas Gurnell and enlarged by George Dance in about 1768. It was bought in 1800 by Sir John Soane (George Dance's pupil and architect of the Bank of England), who demolished all but the south wing and completed a virtually new house by 1803.

Pevsner describes the house as having a grand Ionic order of Portland stone intended as a quotation from the antique. The figures on the frontage are of Coade stone. The kitchens were in a separate block to the north. Soane designed an ornate entrance arch with an eccentric mix of materials – ribbed red brick, flint and stone - leading to a sweeping carriage drive. Soane sold the house in 1811. It was bought in 1844 by Sir Spencer Walpole to house his five unmarried sisters-in-law, daughters of the assassinated Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval. Before his death, Walpole had sold the Manor and its park to the Ealing Local Board for £40,000 provided that the sisters could remain in residence until their death. The estate was acquired by the Ealing Board in 1901 following the death of the last sister in 1900 at the age of 95. Together with a north wing added in 1940, the Manor served as Ealing's Central Public Library until 1985, when the library moved to the then new town centre precinct (now Ealing Broadway Centre). The north wing was converted into an art gallery in 1995. In 2019, Pitzhanger Manor House and Gallery reopened after a comprehensive restoration project, which has returned the principal rooms to their original Soane splendour, removed the Victorian infill to expose the magnificent north front of the house and upgraded the gallery so that it may mount major exhibitions. A new colonnade connects the House and Gallery.



Pitzhanger Entrance Arch (2020)  
Photo: Angelo Hornak  
© Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery Trust

Our next location is **Walpole Park (2)**. This was the 30 acre grounds of Pitzhanger Manor, designed by John Haverfield of Kew for Soane. The designs included the Serpentine lake and its bridge. Soane also erected fanciful classical ruins which were removed in 1820. The two (originally four) cedars of Lebanon on the lawn behind the house probably pre-date Soane. The walled kitchen garden and a section of the Mattock Lane wall survive from the 18th Century.

To the north of the rear lawn and beside the Mattock Lane wall can be found a plaque to Charles Jones, the first Town Surveyor who transformed Ealing by introducing drainage and street lighting, designing many buildings and acquiring Walpole and Lammas parks for the community.



Memorial to Charles Jones

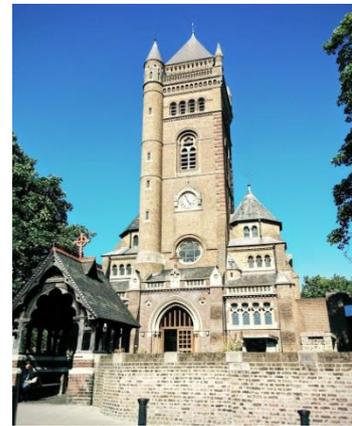
*Walk south through the park* to exit by the south gate, turn right, then first left with Lammas Park on your right. This was acquired by the Ealing Local Board in 1881. Lammas comes from 'Loafmass Day', a harvest festival on August 1<sup>st</sup> marking the start of grazing on open common land until February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Continue into Church Lane where numbers 15-17 and the well preserved number 1 are early 19th Century.

Emerge into St Mary's Road from Church Lane. This is the historical heart of the medieval village of

Great Ealing but by the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, buildings had stretched towards the Uxbridge Road, the main route to London. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Great Ealing became a rural retreat for the aristocratic and wealthy because of its proximity to London and the court at Kew, good air quality and water supply. Up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, Ealing was simply a large village with some comfortable country houses and schools on its fringes and only a little suburban development, like the stuccoed terrace in Ranelagh Road and the (older) Church Lane cottages. It was administratively linked to Brentford until the Ealing Local Board was established in 1863, and urban development began to surround the old village. Growth was rapid: in 1841 Ealing had 608 inhabited houses and 9 under construction; 20 years later this had risen to 1861 inhabited houses and 1007 under construction. Ealing became the first Borough in Middlesex in 1901.

The coming of the Great Western Railway irrevocably altered the character of Ealing. The main line from Paddington to Slough and the West Country opened in 1838 with Haven Green Common (later called Ealing Broadway) the first stop. The Uxbridge Road, the commercial centre, developed to the north of the village, but the estate owners were quick to recognise the potential of their land and began to sell the royal and noble residences which gave way to spacious, upper middle- class suburbs. This was a deliberate policy and, to dissuade the working-class from moving out to Ealing, no third class tickets nor early morning (working men's) trains to Paddington were available until as late as 1876.

Opposite the end of Church Lane is the parish church of **St Mary (3)**, originally built in 1737 to replace the medieval church which had collapsed. Apparently, the prominent local, Thomas Gurnell who was a Quaker (and whose son later rebuilt Pitzhanger), when asked to make a donation, said it was against his religion to contribute to the upkeep of Protestant churches but he would contribute 100 guineas to the demolition of the old church. The replacement was considered to be a Georgian "brick box", not nearly grand enough for burgeoning Victorian Ealing, and in 1866 S S Teulon set about transforming it in a Byzantine style into what Archbishop Tait described as "a Constantinopolitan basilica". He did so with gusto, retaining the nave walls but adding a chancel and then a western porch and tower (1874).



The galleried interior was restored and considerably brightened by H S Goodhart-Rendel in 1955 and restored again to its original colour scheme in 2004 (recognised by a Civic Society design award). There are several older monuments inside, and John Horne Tooke – politician and philologist (1736-1812) - is buried in the churchyard. The church is listed at Grade II.

The southernmost boundary of the old Ealing village is **St Mary's Square (4)**, which has Georgian terraces on 2 sides and the old fire station (now a private house with the red doors the only reminder of its fire station past). This was first built in the 1770s and all firefighting equipment was held here until the new fire station was built behind the Town Hall in 1888. This one was then rebuilt as a sub-station for the South Ealing Volunteer Fire brigade, who manned the manual engine until 1908. There was a stable yard for the fire engine horses just round the corner in South Ealing Road, which became a dairy and then in 1929, a Morgan car agent/workshop. Sadly this has now been lost to a small terrace of undistinguished modern housing overlooking the car park. To the north of the square is Aberdeen House, a family butcher (Morse) until the 1980s when it became an antique shop, now replaced by a travel agent. At the rear there was a slaughterhouse (not used for many years).

*You can at this point make a small detour* down Church Gardens to the south of the church where at the end there are some attractive Tudor style, half-timbered almshouses built in 1900 to replace earlier almshouses in the Mall (and since extended at each end).

Across the roundabout is the late Georgian Westfield House. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century this was the last dwelling south on this side of the road - the rest were farms and market gardens all the way down to Brentford.

Behind the church was Rectory House (1698-1852), a moated house which became Great Ealing School, established in 1698, a boarding school for 300 pupils. In the early 1800s, Louis-Philippe, later to be the French king, taught maths and geography while in exile. Among the distinguished pupils of the school are Thomas Huxley (who was born in a large house behind Morse the butchers), the biologist father of Aldous, William Makepeace Thackeray and Cardinal Newman. The school stayed there until 1846 when it was forced, by dry rot, to move to The Owls, across the road. The estate was bought in 1852 by the Conservative Freehold Land Society for housing development (Ranelagh Road etc.) and some of the garden was taken to enlarge the churchyard. Development was slow (perhaps because it was too far from the railway station) but was underway by the 1870s, although there were still gaps in the roads in the 1890s.

*Now walking north* up St Mary's Road, numbers 72 and 74 on the west side, set back from the road behind high walls, are detached houses that replaced the 1727 workhouse on this site, built for 55 inmates though quite quickly expanded to 175 occupants sleeping 3 to a bed. It was demolished in 1839.

Rounding the curve in the road, you come to the **New Inn (5)**. In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century this was a coaching stage-post to the West Country and also ran coaches to London in the early 1800s with a half-hourly service recorded in 1826. The present building was erected to celebrate Victoria's jubilee (see historical plaque on wall). William Cordar, the murderer of Maria Martin in the Red Barn, was caught near here by the Bow street runners. St. Mary's Place adjoining was partially developed in the mid-1850s, probably with smaller cottages, on the site of the stable yard for the New Inn. By the end of the century, the maps show pretty well the present pattern, with front gardens. Also here was the Hall of Variety or Assembly Rooms, a wooden building with walls of overlapping timber. This was the solitary venue for public entertainments in the parish until 1887. A corridor connected it to the New Inn. The theatrical connection remained until the 1980s through the New Inn's upstairs theatre.



*Continuing north* up St Mary's Road, **Ealing Court Mansions (6)** on the corner of Beaconsfield Road was built as an industrial school for girls in 1867, founded by Lord Shaftesbury. Homeless and destitute girls were taught domestic service. It was converted into 10 flats when the school moved in the 1930s and again converted, into 15 flats, in 1992.

We soon reach the Castle Inn, another coaching inn doing a brisk trade in its heyday (and now). Opposite lies Warwick Road, called Guys Lane on early maps and one of the oldest streets in the area. It was probably built for access to an ancient mansion of Hickeys-upon-Heath on Ealing Common (later Elm Grove, the home of Spencer Perceval).

To the north of Warwick Road lies the campus of **The University of West London (7)**. The university is the latest incarnation of an educational facility on this site, which started as the location of a technical college in 1929. The present corner building is "Festival" architecture designed by Middlesex County Council in 1953. It acquired and expanded into the Girls' County School, at the rear, in 1966, and was granted Polytechnic, then University, status in the early 1990s, when it was home to Thames Valley University. As the University of West London, it has expanded physically and raised its profile to become a successful and thriving modern university.



To the north, see an old wall, the only remains of a vicarage which had been on this site since 1315. St Mary's Vicarage was rebuilt in 1902, was demolished in 1969 and replaced by the current YMCA building in 1982.

Once more on the west side of the road, we reach Cairn Avenue. Cairn Avenue and the adjoining cul-

de-sac Nicholas Gardens were built on the site of The Owls, built in the 1850s to house Great Ealing School. The present housing development dates from 1934 on the closure of the school and sale of the site.

The east side of St Mary's Road, from Warwick Road to The Grove (originally Love Lane) was the site of two large 18<sup>th</sup> Century estates, Ealing House (40 acres) and Ealing Grove (27 acres), with the Red Lion pub standing between. These originated in an estate of 1593. They seem to have been owned by various London merchants and in 1775 Ealing Grove was sold to the Duke of Marlborough, who in turn sold it to the Duke of Argyll. The house was converted into an Italianate villa and, in about 1800, was described as a 3-storey classical mansion of 9 bays, with a pedimented central projection, set among trees. Land was sold off in the 1820s and the house demolished in the early 1830s when Park, Acacia and Ness houses were built, each with intricate iron balconies and porches and neo-Grecian gateposts. Davisons off-licence, formerly Cobbins, was built, along with the nearby cottages, in 1824. Cobbins was a well-known local family and a Cobbins was Mayor in the 1930s. Originally it was a grocer, then wines and beers were imported, bottled in the cellar and sold in the shop. There were stables at the rear and sheds for the delivery carts. A 3-storey house adjacent to the shop actually fell down and was not replaced. The shop is now a kitchen fittings supplier.

Ealing House was used by Byron's widow to found an industrial boys school, Byron House School, under the Ragged School Trust. It was put up for sale in 1859, and Charles Jones designed the Ealing Congregational Church, now Ealing Green (Methodist) Church, on the site of the house.

**The Red Lion (8)** has the nickname of Stage 6, as it was the watering hole of the great and the good from the heyday of Ealing Studios such as Alec Guinness, Sid James and others. The Studios have five stages – hence 'Stage 6'.



Returning to the east side of the road, opposite the Red Lion on the corner of Disraeli Road is The Lawn, an early Victorian house with coach house, since converted to flats and all sadly neglected.

Moving north, we reach the famous **Ealing Studios (9)**, occupying the site of another large house standing in 3 acres of land, West Lodge, adjoining Walpole Park on the whole of its western boundary. In 1904 it was offered to Ealing Corporation for less than £5000, but was bought by W G Baker, pioneer of the film industry, and he built "glasshouse" studios in the grounds. Basil Dean acquired the estate in 1931, along with the White House, visible fronting Ealing Green and the defining image of Ealing Studios to this day. Dean built the present Ealing Studios to a design by the architect Robert Atkinson, later to be taken on by Michael Balcon. The studios are best known for the series of classic Ealing Comedies produced here in the post-WWII years, including *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, *Passport to Pimlico*, *The Lavender Hill Mob* and *The Ladykillers*.



The BBC owned and filmed at the Studios for forty years from 1955 until 1995. Since 2000, Ealing Studios has resumed releasing films under its own name, including the revived *St Trinian's* franchise. In more recent times, films shot here include *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Theory of Everything* and many more. Some interior scenes of the British period drama television series *Downton Abbey* were also shot here. The studios are today home to a number of film-related businesses and to the Met Film School London.

Ealing Green now follows the line of the old village of Ealing from which a variety of Georgian early 19<sup>th</sup> Century houses survives – we pass the Grade II listed **Willow House, Wrexham Lodge, Morgan House, Pine Cottage and Thorpe Lodge (10)**. Down a short alleyway is the Welsh Presbyterian Church (1908). Next is Kingdom Hall, the former 1861 girls' school. Its origins go back to 1712 when it was the first school in Ealing. It closed in 1926, became a place of worship and has recently been sensitively renovated. The roadway to the left which now leads to the entrance to Ealing Studios

originally led to West Lodge. On its left are Forge Cottages, where once stood an old forge.

To the north of the roadway stands Walpole Court, which replaced the Flextol Engineering Company factory (producing power tools) in the late 1980s. The site had previously been Rock House or Rockwork Gate House which appears on the 1809 maps. Walpole Court served as offices for many years before conversion to flats.

*Cross over a small roadway* leading to Walpole Park to see St Mary's House, built around 1710, in 1 acre of grounds. In the 1890s, a Dr Phillpots, brother of the novelist Eden Phillpots, lived there. The Post Office purchased it for a telephone exchange in 1902 for the sum of £2842.10.00 plus £20 for fixtures and fittings, and sold off the garden and stables, possibly to Will Barker. Demolition was considered in the 1950s but was averted. A new telephone exchange was built at the rear, creating an unusual architectural hybrid, and continues in use to this day, with a Post Office Sorting office behind.

Next pass **Ealing Green College (11)**. This was built by Middlesex County Council in 1913 as the Boys' County School, with a dignified front in early 18<sup>th</sup> Century style (Pevsner). Additions were made in 1936, 1961 and 1964 and it has remained in educational use.

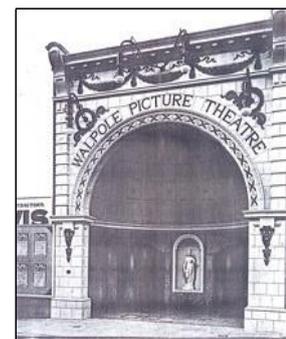
This was the site of The Hall, which was probably built by Jonathan Gurnell, owner of Pitzhanger estate, and his daughter lived here, next door to her family, until her death in 1795. In 1844 it became the home of Spencer Horatio Walpole who was three times Home Secretary in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and chairman of the Great Western Railway Company. He moved to The Hall after marrying Spencer Perceval's daughter and after his death in 1898, The Hall became the first Technical Institute in Ealing. It was demolished in 1913.

The 4 acre **Ealing Green (12)** was the site of an annual, 3-day summer fair in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century but this was abolished by the Local Board in 1880 because it was becoming "too unruly".

To the north of Pitzhanger were 9 acres of Ashton House which stretched from the High Street to the Uxbridge Road. In 1846 the west side of the site was divided into building plots and let on 99-year leases. The Uxbridge Road sites were developed first and completed by the 1860s, with the houses on Mattock Lane to follow - number 20 was built in 1865. In 1851 the last owner, Ibbotson, moved out of Ashton House and it was used as a school. The remaining land was sold in the 1860s and Bond Street was under construction when the house was demolished.

As you will see, the site is once again undergoing major redevelopment to create Filmworks, a residential and leisure activities led development, to include a new cinema for Ealing after an absence of 12 years. One benefit of the new development is that the facade of the **Walpole Picture Palace (13)**, currently somewhat forlornly mounted on the wall of 2 Mattock Lane, will be restored and displayed in a more prominent position within the public realm. The Walpole Picture Palace was in Bond Street from 1912-1972, in a converted ice rink.

(Facade may be inaccessible due to construction work.)



Walpole Cinema, Bond Street

Our walk ends at **Barnes Pike (14)**. This curious name means a path which once formed the western boundary of a small field, or pike, owned by a Mr Barnes.



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Walk Route

