

Preface to the 2020 edition

These walking notes around the centre of Ealing were originally compiled by John Foster White in 1970 (based partly on the research notes of the late H G D Holt held in Ealing Library). In 1976 he updated his notes to reflect the rapidly changing face of Ealing as it entered the last quarter of the 20th Century, and again in 1986. These original notes are available on the Ealing Civic website as updated in 2009.

The notes were again updated by Ealing Civic Society in 2016, when they were used as the basis of a Civic Day guided walk and also provided to Historic England who made them available on an app covering several areas of London. Sadly, that app is no longer available, so the Society has again updated the walk and provides this version as a two-part self-guided walk.

John Foster White had long standing connections with Ealing and the Civic Society. He was remembered by Joy Anthony – herself one of the original members of the Society's Executive Committee – as someone "who seemed to know every church in the country, and its history". She also remembers him as being "very witty". He was well known in the literary world as a director of the publishers MacDonald & Co. and was, for example, closely associated with the success of the work of the author Catherine Cookson. He contributed an epilogue to her 1986 pictorial memoir Catherine Cookson Country, a quote from which was used in an obituary for the author in the Independent when she died in 1998.

The notes start with a brief history of Ealing, from Saxon times through to the Victorian railway age and onwards to its current status as the London Borough of Ealing. The walk itself starts at Haven Green, moving northwards up Haven Lane and eventually to the top of Castlebar Hill via Brentham Garden Estate. Additional notes on St Peter's Church, on the corner of Mount Park Road, are provided by the Reverend Richard Hayes, vicar of St Peter's from 1982 to 1991. The walk then takes participants south again, past Ealing Abbey to the Town Hall and Christ the Saviour Church on New Broadway, before heading down through Walpole Park, onto Ealing Green and finally to St Mary's Church in South Ealing.

The original author ended with a fitting quote from John Betjeman, with the hope that...

"... some of you have been able in the course of our progress through the Queen of the Suburbs to:

*... Regain your boyhood feeling
Of uninvaded calm:
For there the leafy avenues
Of lime and chestnut mix'd
Do widely wind, by art designed,
The costly houses 'twixt."*

Ealing Civic Society in its turn hopes that these notes will once again be of interest to Ealing residents, whether those who recognise the Ealing of 40 or 50 years ago, or as newer arrivals who would like to know more about our local history and heritage.

Acknowledgements: original text by John Foster White, updated (2009) by Greg Birdseye; further updated by Robert Gurd and Paul Fitzmaurice with illustrations by Historic England (2017); slightly revised and updated version by Ann Chapman, (2020). © Ealing Civic Society 2020

Introduction (1986)

Ealing is one of the ancient parishes of Middlesex and its origins Saxon or even earlier. Considering its “genteel” image during the past century, there is some irony in the most likely derivation of its name being from the people of Gilla (one with a loud voice) with Yelling as one of its recorded medieval spellings. For a long time it was called Great Ealing, as distinct from the nearby hamlet of Little Ealing (still identifiable south of the present Northfields Station).

The modern centre is the stretch of the London-Uxbridge road known successively as The Mall, The Broadway, New Broadway and more recently the award winning Ealing Broadway Centre, designed by Keith Scott of Building Design Partnership. The old village (conservation area) lies to the south and extends approximately from Ealing Green to the Parish Church, on the road to Middlesex’s somewhat woebegone county town of Brentford.

Ealing, like many another Middlesex parish, was already developing by the 16th Century as a centre for market gardening and dairy produce to supply the needs of an expanding metropolis 6 miles to the east. In the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries it became increasingly a place of fashionable residence: agreeably rural but conveniently near to town.

Amongst the worthies who lived here at various times were the Princess Amelia (at Gunnersbury, later a Rothschild property, now a museum); Queen Victoria’s father, the Duke of Kent (at Castle Hill Lodge: we pass the site on Castle Bar Hill); Henry Fielding and, later, Lady Byron (at Fordhook, which stood NW of Ealing Common Station); Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister assassinated in 1812 (at Elm Grove – its site, SW of Ealing Common marked approximately by the Perceval Memorial Church, All Saints, by W A Pite 1903-5). More recently, the site has been marked by a Civic Society green plaque.

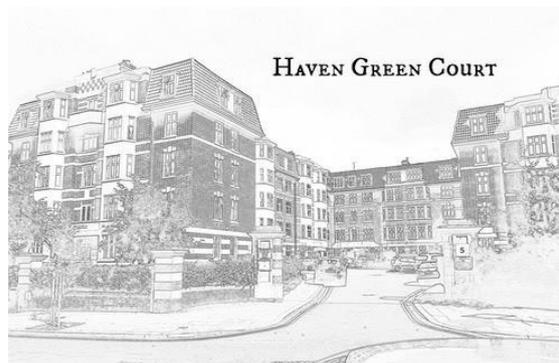
Successful private schools were established, the most famous being Great Ealing School (1698-1908) whose famous pupils included Cardinal Newman, W M Thackeray, Captain Marryat, R Westmacott and W S Gilbert. Both the future King Louis Philippe of France and T H Huxley’s father were assistant masters there; and Huxley himself was born in Ealing in 1825. And so indeed, on 8th August 1876, was Charles Hamilton, better remembered as Frank Richards and the creator of Billy Bunter – also marked by a plaque, in the Ealing Broadway Centre.

The suburban growth of Ealing really began, however, after the coming of Brunel’s Great Western Railway in 1833. The old village spread northwards to meet the trains. From the 1870s (and especially after the arrival on July 1st 1879, of the District Railway with a commuter line right through to the City) growth was even more rapid, and Ealing swarmed affluently up to the northern ridge of Castle Bar and Hanger Hill.

In 1801 the population was 2,500, but when Ealing became an Urban District in 1894 it was 30,000. In 1901 Ealing was the first Middlesex town to be incorporated as a Borough. By 1911 the population was 61,000 and by 1965 it had reached 183,000. At this point the Middlesex Borough became a London Borough, and as this brought within its boundaries the former neighbouring Boroughs of Acton and Southall, the total population of Municipal Ealing is now over 300,000.

It was during those last decades of the 19th Century that Ealing came to be known as the “Queen of the Suburbs”, a description still used in the Official Guide in the 1940s. With two World Wars and a changing social scene, it has gradually ceased to be the retreat of retirees from the Indian Colonial Service and other colonial administrators. Their children and grandchildren have followed the usual pattern of moving further out (or in), but it remains inherently respectable and is still possessed of considerable charm and a creditable degree of local awareness as reflected in the work of the Ealing Civic Society and many other local associations. In 1976, it was noted that property values are reckoned among the highest throughout suburban London, and that remains the case in 2020 with the anticipated coming of Crossrail.

Our walk starts opposite the station on **HAVEN GREEN (1)**, formerly The Haven, which was also the name of a house replaced by the dominant Haven Green Court which can be seen on the north side. Haven Green is an old open space. Many of the fine trees here and throughout the town we owe to a remarkable man, Charles Jones (1830-1913), architect, Local Surveyor for 50 years, whose memorial is in Walpole Park (see walk part 2). Walk northwards up the east side of Haven Green, pausing to take in the wonderfully restored Grade II listed chemist at number 36. From here, walk along the north side towards Haven Green Court (1937-8). You will pass some altered early 19th Century survivals (Numbers 20-24) with recessed bays.



Returning along the north side of Haven Green, take the fourth left up **HAVEN LANE (2)** with reconstructed Victorian cottages, The Haven Arms, The Wheatsheaf (one of many still extant Ealing pubs listed in Mason's 1853 Directory), and Avenue Cottages (1873). All of these buildings are locally listed.

Turning into **WOODVILLE ROAD**, you are leaving the Haven Green conservation area and entering the Mount Park conservation area, first designated in 1991 (two of Ealing's 29 conservation areas, with a rich assortment of 19th and early 20th Century residential development as well as industrial and transport heritage and remnants of ancient villages). Here we enter a residential area developed in the 1880s, extending well to the north and still retaining a lot of its original character. At the junction of **ASTON ROAD (3)**, note the Grade II listed iron ELB (Ealing Local Board) Transformer (1895), preserved and converted to a light standard.



On the corner of **MOUNT PARK ROAD(4)**, we find St Andrew's United Reform Church, built in 1886-7 and enlarged in 1892, in Gothic style of red brick with stone stripes and with a small tower over the porch. The church was further extended and modernised in 2010.

Continue to walk northwards to the top of Mount Park Road, where you find **St PETER'S CHURCH (5)**, listed Grade II*. The church was begun in 1892 by Sedding and Wilson. Sedding prepared the plans in 1889, but died before Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein laid the foundation stone on May 31st 1892. The work was therefore implemented by his pupil and successor in practice, H Wilson.



The West Front of St Peter's Church

St Peter's is a striking, highly original Perpendicular design of Box Ground stone and cream coloured brick. The roof slopes up from the aisle walls, broken only by arcaded turrets, the latter an extension of the bulky nave piers. Its greatest feature is the huge recessed West Window, and to get its full effect you should walk to the chancel steps before looking back. There is stained glass by Kempe in the south aisle, south chapel and south transept. Animal carvings in the choir include an elephant, giraffe, lion, bear, camel and perhaps a donkey. The south chapel altar reredos and wings are by Leonard Shuffrey, a local resident who we shall meet again.

The 1898 painting in the south transept (Jesus before Pilate) was hung in memory of the artist Edward Fellows Prynne (1854-1921). Twin spirelets are present at the west end, but the east tower was never built; the erection of flats (St Peter's Way) would seem to make this, all other factors apart, a finally lost dream. Patronal symbols, keys and a fisherman, can be seen on the porch of the adjoining vicarage.

Now cross to **MONTPELIER PARK (6)** on the site of the Princess Helena College. (Founded in 1820, it moved here from Regents Park in 1832, and then moved again to Hertfordshire in the 1930s.) Montpelier Park conservation area has many locally listed buildings around the park, with mainly Victorian, inter-war and post-war architectural character. The broad winding roads following the rising topography convey a sense of the original spaciousness of the townscape, augmented by the large number of fine mature trees, both street trees and those within Montpelier Park as well as in the large gardens.

Walk in a straight line across the park and exit into **MOUNT AVENUE (7)**, opposite numbers 33-37. These three houses are Grade II listed and are a pleasant reminder that Mount Avenue was a pre-suburban country lane linking Castle Bar and Hanger Hill. Devon Cottage (number 33) of 1796 was once used as officers' quarters when the Duke of Kent held Castle Hill. Its neighbours are basically the same, but have been altered over the years. There used to be a block of wooden barracks to the rear. These houses and in particular Devon Cottage made a brief appearance in the Ealing Studios film *The Magnet* (1950). The boy is played by a very young Edward Fox (billed as William Fox), better known for his role in *Gandhi*.

Turn to the right along Mount Avenue and then left down Brentham Way to the **BRENTHAM GARDEN ESTATE (8)** (subject of another walk available on the Ealing Civic Society website).

This co-partnership venture of 1901-13 contains over 500 houses, mostly of the "cottage" type, with the latter part of the estate laid out by Parker and Unwin who designed numbers 1-7 WINScombe CRESCENT. The Brentham Garden Estate was the first garden suburb to be built on 'co-partnership' principles and as an inspiration for the later, larger and more famous Hampstead, it has made a mark on 20th Century domestic architecture, town planning and social housing. In 1969 it was designated a conservation area and the Brentham Society was formed to support and maintain the character of the area.

The Labour, Co-operative, Arts and Crafts and Garden City movements are all part of the Brentham story. The suburb was designed to a plan by the leading garden city architects Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, with houses, mostly in the Arts and Crafts style, by George Lister Sutcliffe and Frederic Cavendish Pearson. The Brentham Club, listed Grade II, bears a Civic Society plaque to local Fred Perry who played tennis there.

Now walk to **WOODFIELD ROAD (9)**, which has one pleasant group (numbers 2-14) suggesting the early 1900s. The Pevsner guide to north west London describes these houses as having a "quiet Queen Anne style", referring to the asymmetrical fronts and white-painted woodwork.



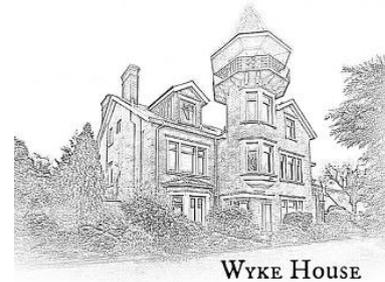
The Brentham Institute (1911)

At the end of Woodfield Road, turn right on to Mount Avenue once more, now with houses on the left suggesting the 1860s and 1870s (can it be Dante who gazes down from a medallion on numbers 18-20?) to the road junction at the summit of...

CASTLEBAR HILL, which we follow west past the site of the Castle Hill Lodge estate where Edward, Duke of Kent, lived for some time before his marriage (in succession to Mrs Fitzherbert, longtime

companion of King George IV). Later he tried unsuccessfully to promote a bill in Parliament for its disposal by lottery, and then died (January 23rd 1820) the day after it was finally offered for sale by more orthodox means. The actual house, by Wyatt according to a contemporary writer, stood where St David's Home for disabled ex-servicemen is now.

Opposite, **Wyke House (10)** (probably late 1880s) is faced with York stone, and has a balconied, cone capped, octagonal turret to make one think of Mr Charles Addam's (of the Addams' family fame on TV and in *The New Yorker*). The turret is best seen when you turn into Edgemoor Road.



KENT GARDENS (to the north west) marks a boundary of the "high class residential area" planned by Henry de Bruno Austin, in 1860. Only twenty houses were built before he went bankrupt in 1872. All have now gone. We turn left up...

EDGEHILL ROAD (11), where Thorncote, surely the most attractive Victorian house in North Ealing, suggests a flight from Bedford Park while architect and artist T A Greeves, co-founder of the Bedford Park Society, wasn't looking! It was built in 1888 by Leonard Shuffrey, sometime President of the Incorporated Institute of British Decorators and an early member of the Architectural Association (in 1871 he was a fellow student there of Aston Webb). Shuffrey lived at Thorncote till his death in 1926, and the house stayed in the family till the 1950s.

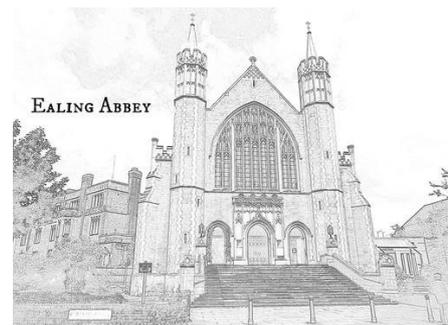


Ingleside next door (now much altered) and The Coach House opposite are also by Shuffrey, the latter now converted into a private house. Other more recent changes and rebuilds on the west side of the street are sadly diluting the pleasant character of this street.

Edgemoor Road takes us into the fifth conservation area on this walk, Grange and White Ledges, developed by the mass builder Wates between 1966 and 1968. The estate combines an effective mix of low and higher rise buildings, and sensitive landscaping incorporates many preserved mature trees. At the end of the road, we reach...

ST STEPHEN'S ROAD. Look west to St Stephen's Church, designed by J Ashdown in 1875, with a prominent spire by Sir A Blomfield from 1891, now converted into flats. We turn east past the Lakeside development again by Messrs. Wates, largely on the site and grounds of The Grange, which was itself the successor to an earlier house once lived in by General Elliott, later Lord Heathfield, the hero of the Siege of Gibraltar, 1779-1783.

At the end of this road, we cross **CASTLEBAR ROAD** into **CHARLBURY GROVE**, with Edwardian houses, and so approach **EALING ABBEY (12)**. The Benedictines came here from Downside in 1896 and purchased Castle Hill House (now demolished), a property earlier associated with the military Wetherall family and Scott's publisher, Archibald Constable. The new monastery also served as a parish. In 1916 it was made into a Priory, and in 1955 it became the first Abbey in Greater London since the Reformation.



The church (St Benedict) was begun in 1897 by F A Walters, architect of Buckfast Abbey. Work continued until 1935 but never included the "five-bay choir with flanking towers as at Exeter" shown in Walters' plans. The turreted west front was added by his son E J Walters. The east part of the nave was bombed during the Second World War; then rebuilt, lengthened, and a crossing, transepts and

central tower base added by Stanley Kerr Bate who had succeeded to the Walters practice. The abbey was not, however, completed until 1996-98, when the Monks Choir beyond the crossing and Lady Chapel were added to the designs of Sir William Whitfield.

The style is Perpendicular with an East Anglian flavour. Inside, the nave is agreeably spacious with lofty arcades but no clerestory (the clerestory is the upper part of the nave, choir and transepts, containing a series of windows). The west window is by Burlison and Grylls and the war memorial window by Bucknall and Comper. Further details may be found in the Abbey Guide.

In 1902 the Benedictines founded the adjoining St Benedict's School for boys, now an independent co-educational day school with over 1000 pupils from nursery to sixth form, its variegated buildings extending north and east and including some very modern additions.

BLAKESLEY AVENUE takes us to the foot of Castle Bar and a grass triangle, formerly called Tortoise Green and an ancient knurled oak at the west end, with a nice group of houses from the 1850s, but, sadly, all too many flats on the site of the lost (1964-5) Castle Bar House and its pleached lime walk.

From here, a short walk down the remainder of Castlebar Road returns you to your starting point at Haven Green.

