

## EALING WALKS: SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

Ealing is one of the ancient parishes of Middlesex and its origins are Saxon or 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 Brentford.

Ealing, like many another Middlesex parish, was already developing by the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> 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); 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 (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 8<sup>th</sup> August 1876, was Charles Hamilton, better remembered as Frank Richards and the creator of Billy Bunter.

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 of the District Railway in 1879, 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

The two walks around North and South Ealing respectively 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) and updated at different times including these most recent versions. Ealing Civic Society hopes that the walks, and these supplementary notes, will once again be of interest to Ealing residents and visitors to the area who would like to know more about our local history and heritage.