

Southall is a busy but not attractive place ... though in some directions there are green fields, shady lanes and pleasant walks.

JAMES THORNE — 'Handbook to the Environs of London' (1876)

Southall unlike its close neighbour, Norwood, has never enjoyed a particularly good press. Writers over the last century have tended to enthuse over Norwood's rural character, with its handsome houses set around the well-wooded village green, while Southall has been dismissed as flat and dreary, disfigured by brickfields, gasworks, factories or housing estates. Taken at face value, these descriptions still hold true, but what most critics seem to have overlooked is that the rumble of the railway, the omnipresent view of the gasholder and the large Asian community are as much part of Southall's history as the quiet walk beside the canal, or birds singing in the trees on Norwood Green. The overall picture cannot be said to delight the eye, and town planning leaves a lot to be desired; but in view of the heavy industrialisation and dense population, it is a wonder that any green space survives today, let alone a 16th century manor house. While Southall will never be a place of beauty, it has a character and atmosphere quite different from anywhere else in the borough, which compensates for her blemishes.

The contrast between Southall and Norwood has not always been so apparent of course: for all their modern differences, the two villages shared the same rural background until the 19th century. The link between them goes back as far as Saxon times, when both settlements were part of a large gift of land in Hayes which the Saxon King Offa of Mercia presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Norwood was evidently far more important than Southall in those days, for this was the name given to the 'Precinct' which was separated from the Parish of Hayes in 832 AD. It comprised all the land

between Yeading Brook and the River Brent — roughly the same area covered by Southall and Norwood today. A chapel-of-ease was later built at Norwood to serve the local population, but the Precinct remained under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Hayes Parish for more than a thousand years.

Although both names are Saxon in origin ('Northuuda' meaning the 'north wood' and 'Suhall' the 'south corner'), Southall is not mentioned until 1198, long after the Norman invasion. Both Norwood and Southall had manor houses, but their early history is a little vague. The original manor house of Southall probably stood to the north, somewhere near the junction of today's Dormer's Wells Lane and Telford Road, while Norwood's is thought to have been on Frogmore Green. Until the 16th century, the Archbishop of Canterbury leased the manors to various noblemen or well-to-do commoners. The most noteworthy of these were the Shoredych family, who had made their fortune as goldsmiths, and the Chesemans: Edward, who was Keeper of the Wardrobe to Henry VII; and his son, Robert, who was one of the esquires sent by Henry VIII to meet his fourth bride-to-be, Anne of Cleves, on her arrival from Dusseldorf. Robert Cheseman became the first lay Lord of the Manor in 1543, when Henry VIII sold him the manors of Norwood and Southall after receiving them from the Archbishop of Canterbury in exchange for lands in Kent.

The great house at Dormer's Wells later passed to Lord and Lady Dacre, but it gradually declined in importance once Francis bought the manors in 1602, as he preferred to live in his own house on Southall Green, which we know as the Manor House today. By this time, most of the land in Norwood Precinct had been brought under the plough, and its woodland cleared for pasture. The few hundred inhabitants lived on scattered farms and in clusters of cottages around the church at **Norwood Green**, the new manor house on **Southall Green**, and at **Northcote**, where quite a large settlement had grown up around the inns on the high road from London to Oxford. The Civil War made little impression on this rural way of life, and local residents do not seem to have taken much part in the battles raging round them.

The Awsiters remained the biggest landowners in the district throughout the 17th century, but their standing in the community was slowly undermined by the son of one of their former stewards, Christopher Merrick, whose large estate at Northcote is still preserved as **Southall Park**. In 1698, his heir and nephew, Francis Merrick, put Southall on the map by obtaining a charter from William III to hold a weekly market on his land — a privilege usually reserved for the Lord of the Manor. The modern **Southall Market** is on the same site today. By the middle of the 18th century, the Awisters were in severe financial difficulties and sold the manorial rights to the Childs, the wealthy banking family who then owned the great mansion of **Osterley** which Sir Thomas Gresham had built on the southern border of the Precinct in the 1570's. George Villiers, the 5th Earl of Jersey, inherited the manors together with Osterley when he married Robert Child's granddaughter in 1804.

Great changes were to occur in sleepy Southall before the manors changed hands for the last time, some fifty years later. The census for 1801 records a population of 697, but the earlier opening of the Grand Junction Canal from Brentford to Uxbridge, swiftly followed by the arm from Bull's Bridge to Paddington, soon encouraged more and more people to settle on the Southall side of the canal. Farmlands began to give way to brickfields and the first of many cottages were built for the labourers. Work was also to be found at Northcote where the inns were doing a brisk trade serving coaches on the Turnpike road. The last of the open fields and common land were enclosed by a local

act in 1809, and development intensified when Bull's Bridge became the chief depot for the Great Western line from London to Maidenhead, which cut through the middle of Southall. Once the level crossing opened in 1839, the first factories soon appeared and by 1858, when the manors were sold to the banker, Charles Mills, the population was approaching 4,000. Manorial rights had long since ceased to be of much significance, however, and the following year the Precinct was finally made independent of Hayes, and the Parish of Norwood became legally responsible for its own affairs.

The year 1859 also marked the opening of the bridge at Southall Station and the goods line to Brentford docks, which attracted more industry to the area. The gasworks opened in 1868 and helped to light many of the new roads between the railway and the Uxbridge Road. Local stock bricks were in great demand during this period of expansion, but the brickfields began to decline towards the end of the century. One of the last projects they helped to build was Otto Monsted's huge margarine factory which is still a local landmark, although now occupied by other firms. The one artistic note in Southall's industrial history was provided by the Martin Brothers, who produced their distinctive salt-glazed stoneware at a disused soap factory in Havelock Road from 1877.

The powers of the parish vestry were usurped by Norwood Local Board in 1891, and the Urban District of Southall-Norwood followed three years later. By 1901, when electric trams first ran along the Uxbridge Road from Acton to Southall, the population had reached 13,000 and was to double again in the next decade. The transition from country to industrial town was almost complete in the southern part of the parish, but above the Uxbridge Road, the fields of Waxlow and Dormers Wells Farms still stretched away to Northolt and Greenford. The population continued to grow during the First World War as work was available in the many local factories which had turned to producing munitions. This created a serious unemployment problem after the war until normal business was resumed, and development of the farmlands in the Mount Pleasant and Allenby Road area began to relieve some of the acute housing shortage.

Southall had a population of almost 50,000 when it became a Municipal Borough in 1936 and the name 'Norwood' was finally dropped from the official designation. The charter of incorporation was one of the few granted during the short reign of Edward VIII and the Southall mace is something of a rarity for bearing his royal cypher. The railway, gasworks and factories survived repeated attacks during the Second World War and overcrowding remained the most serious problem in the aftermath, despite a clamp-down on new industries. The sudden influx of immigrants from Commonwealth countries during the 1950's is said to have begun with an ex-soldier from India who sought out his former British officer in Southall after the War and, with his help, managed to find a job in a local factory. He was soon joined by various friends and relatives who, having no immediate claim to Council housing, bought their own homes, set up shops and so began to change the face of Southall yet again.

Immigrants represented about one fifth of the 57,000 people living in Southall when it became part of the London Borough of Ealing in 1965. Today, the figure is more like 50% of a total 65,000, and in the 1982 Borough Plan, Southall is described as a 'specialist centre for Asian goods and services'. The older residents are slowly coming to terms with their new neighbours and although relations between them are not entirely cordial, none of the racial tension in Southall to hit the headlines in recent years has been instigated by the local population. It will take a generation or two to solve all

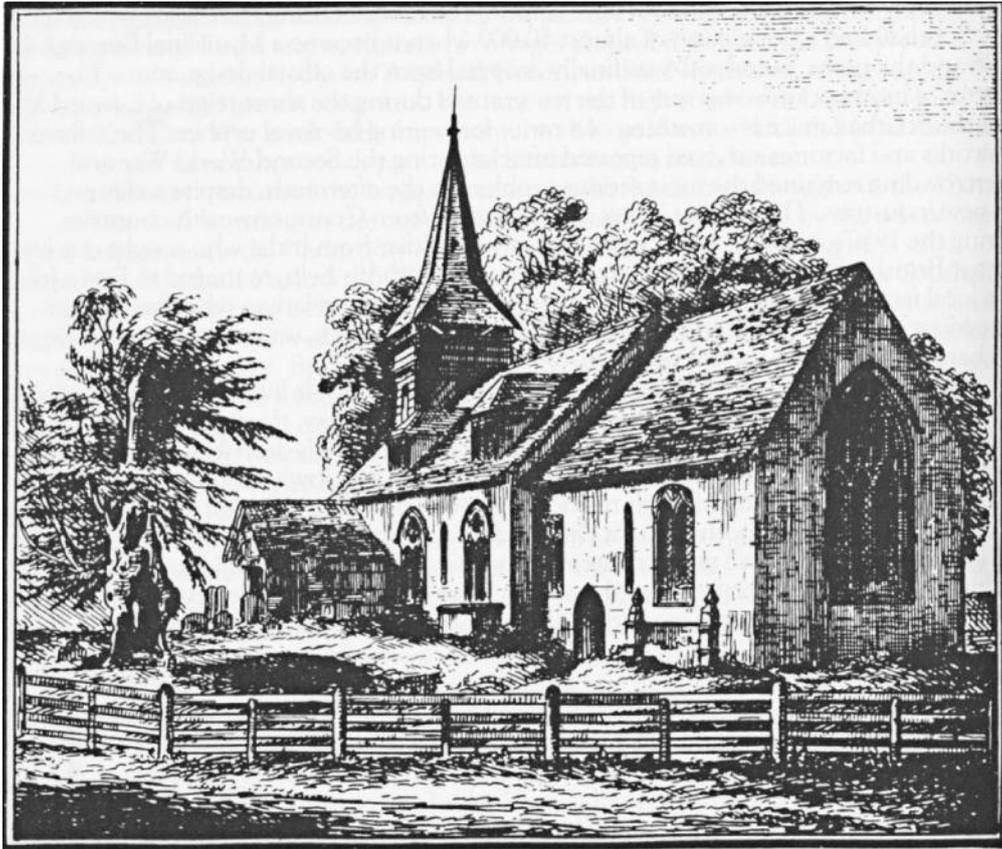
the problems of a multiracial society, but the fact that the old St. John's Church and the new Hindu Temple stand side by side in King Street, shows that a good start has been made.



The chapel-of-ease which served the tiny population of Norwood Precinct before the Norman invasion, probably stood on the same site as the present **Church of St. Mary** at the eastern end of **Norwood Green**. The basic structure of the church dates from 1439 when the Archbishop of Canterbury gave money for rebuilding the chapel, but traces of the 12th century building it replaced were found in the walls during more recent renovations.

The wooden porch was added in the late 15th century but was extensively rebuilt after the Parish of Norwood was established in 1864, when many changes were made to the church to celebrate the independence it had been trying to achieve for over 200 years. The records show that when Cromwell appointed commissioners to enquire into the state of ecclesiastical benefices in 1650, they suggested that 'Norwood, being distinct in all duties and parish business from Hayes, should be made a parish church entire of itself. So much for their recommendation!

The parish registers began in 1654 and the account book which Christopher Merrick presented to the churchwarden in 1676 for listing charities and gifts to the Precinct, can be seen in Southall Library. It records his own contributions of a new pulpit and pew for the minister, and a later entry illustrates how the Merricks had eclipsed the Awsiters: they were given the first pew next to the chancel while the Awsiters had to take second place — although both had paid for the new pews to be built!



A late 18th century engraving of St Mary's Church, Norwood Green.

The red-brick tower was built in 1896 and most of the stained glass is 19th century except for the window in the south wall of the nave (showing the baby Jesus clutching a windmill) which was made in the late 1500's. The font is the oldest item in the church and has been in use since 1439. The small **churchyard** is very pleasant to wander through, but most of the people connected with Southall's early history are commemorated inside the church. A 16th century funeral helmet and sword distinguishes the tomb of Edward Cheseman and his son Robert, who both died in the same year as the kings they served: 1509 and 1547 respectively.

The gallery which Francis Awsiter donated to the church in 1612 was removed during the 19th century restorations, but the quaint inscription on his memorial brass still acts as a reminder of his generosity:

*His soul ascended is,
His body here remaynes;
The churche enjoyes his costs,
The parish had his paynes.*

Dr. John Awsiter, the last member of the family to hold the title 'Lord of the Manor', is also buried in the church. According to the inscription on his monument, he claimed to be the discoverer of the

beneficial effects of sea-water to which Brighton and other resorts owed their prosperity during the Regency period, but he obviously made no money from the idea.

The Merrick family is well represented by a floor slab to Francis Merrick's father who died in 1663, and a life-size effigy of his son and successor, 'John Merrick of Norcut', who enjoyed the privileges granted to his father by William III until 1749. John Merrick had no sons, and the estate passed to his grandson, Francis Ascough, who, according to his monument, lived at 'South Hall' until his death in 1788. His own son, George Merrick Ascough, died a mere 11 years later, but his memorial shows that by then the family home was called **Southall Park**.

As the northern part of Southall has been partly covered by walks in the chapters on Hanwell and Northolt, the routes that follow are concentrated in the area below the Uxbridge Road. Years ago when the railway first split the town in two, locals would say they were going 'over the Green' when they walked south of the railway, or 'over the trams' to the High Street. Our walks all begin at the church on Norwood Green, so these phrases don't really apply — but I thought I would mention it anyway!

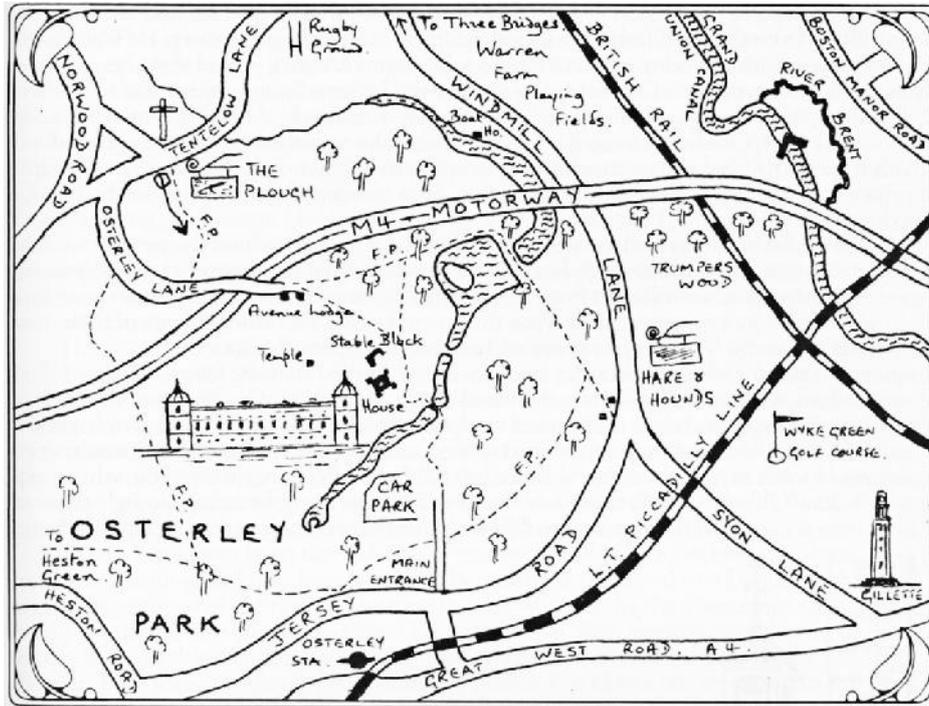
Route One (Norwood Green and over the fields to Osterley Park — just over 1½ miles)

The area around the church looks much as it did in the 18th century. Except for the additions to **Vine Cottage** on the corner of Osterley Lane and the construction of **Norwood Terrace** before the First World War, very few changes have been made in this corner of the old village. Next to the church stands the former **Free School** founded by Elisha Biscoe in 1767. Biscoe succeeded his father as steward to the then Lord of the Manor, Dr. John Awsiter, and left a large amount of money to see that the education of local poor children continued after his death. The school in fact survived until 1950, a remarkable memorial to Biscoe's philanthropy, and his name has also been given to one of the modern flat-blocks nearby, Biscoe House. **Norwood Lodge** and **Cottage**, on the opposite side of the road, were built in the late 1800's, and the old bowling green which once belonged to The Plough is still being used by **Norwood Green Bowling Club**. **The Plough** is the oldest pub in Norwood and incorporates the timber-framed building of a 17th century inn — although the first alehouse on the site was probably built much earlier.



A painting of The Plough in 1899 with Biscoe School on the left.

Our walk begins down the little lane between The Plough and the bowling greens, which leads across **St. Mary's Avenue** to the fields of Osterley Farm. From here a track through the cultivated farmlands takes you into foreign parts . . . over the borough boundary into Hounslow! Only a small section of Osterley Park falls within the borough but its past owners have been amongst the biggest landowners in Southall and it holds a very important place in Ealing's history. The walk through the open fields may get rather muddy in winter, but you can always walk up **Osterley Lane** instead, to where the track meets the road near the bridge over the M4 Motorway. Despite the noise of aircraft and traffic, you still manage to appreciate the rural atmosphere, and the urban sprawl of Southall seems very far away. Once over the motorway, the lane leads past Osterley Farm to the lodge-houses at the entrance to **Osterley Park**.

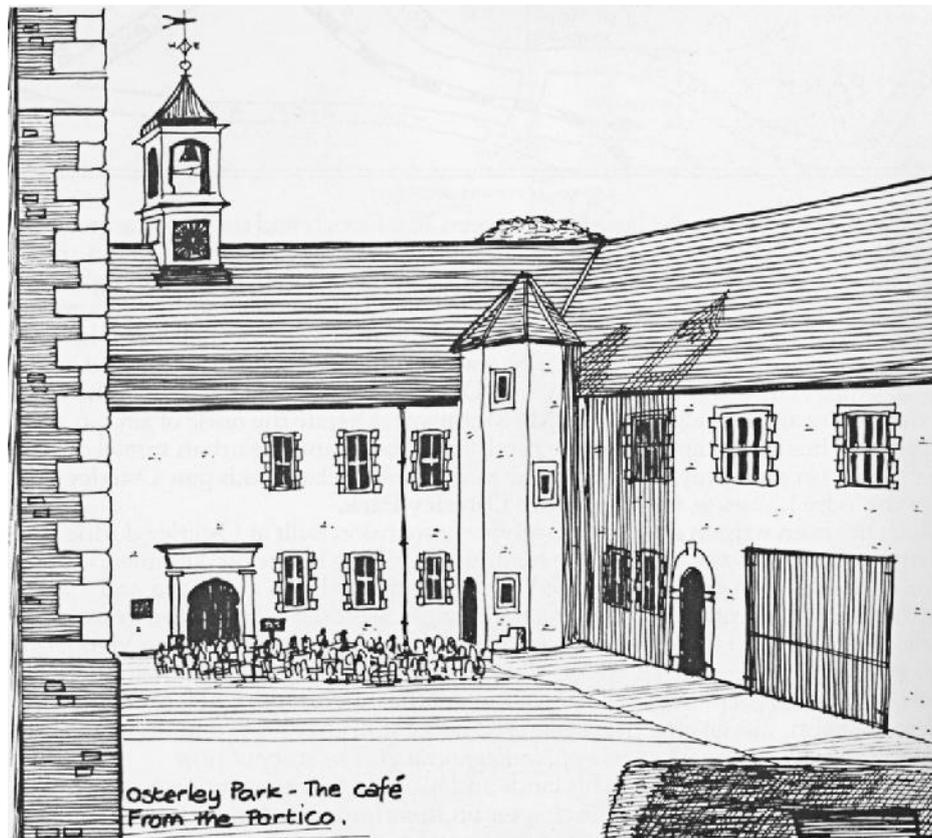


Much has been written about the magnificent mansion built at Osterley during the 16th century, but there was a thriving community here long before Sir Thomas Gresham came on the scene. John de Osterley owned land described as being in Heston and Isleworth in the 13th century, and a 'capital messuage' was built on the 500-acre estate in the early 1400's. By 1465 there were at least fifteen other dwellings besides the Manor House, which was granted to the Abbess of the Order of Bridgettine Nuns at Syon towards the end of the century. Following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, Osterley, like Syon, was given to the Duke of Somerset and, after his execution in 1552, passed to his deadly enemy, the Duke of Northumberland. The story of how Northumberland came to lose both his lands and his head (not to mention his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey!), is told in the chapter on Brentford; but during these troublesome times, the manor reverted to the Crown.

Osterley was bought by Sir Thomas Gresham in 1562, shortly after he had received his knighthood from Queen Elizabeth. His was no 'poor boy made good' story. He was born the son of a wealthy London merchant (and future Lord Mayor), passed into the Mercers' Company after a Cambridge education and became 'kings's merchant' to Edward VI, and later Queen Elizabeth's ambassador at Brussels. After the death of his only son in 1564, Gresham devoted a large portion of his wealth to building the **Royal Exchange** in the City and to creating a 'faire and stately building . . . a house beseming a prince', at Osterley — or so the cartographer, John Norden, described the finished product.

Queen Elizabeth was evidently equally impressed when she visited the newly-completed house in 1576, although her stay there was not entirely uneventful. She was 'greatly disquieted' when villagers from Heston and Norwood pulled up the new fence around the park as a protest against what they considered were infringements of their Common rights. Sir Thomas obviously wished to make up for this spot of unpleasantness, for after Her Majesty had casually remarked that she felt the large courtyard would be more handsome if divided by a wall, Gresham waited until she had

retired for the night and then summoned workmen from London to put things to rights. Next morning, the transformation elicited several snide comments from the Queen's courtiers — some saying it was "no wonder he could so soon change a building, who could build a 'Change", while those who knew of his family problems, said smugly that "any house is easier divided than united". The Queen however, appeared well pleased.



The site chosen by Gresham for his new house was close to the original manorial dwelling. This is now incorporated in the large building known as the **Stable Block**, where the path from the lodges emerges. The central part was probably always used for stabling, while the left wing provided the main living accommodation and the right was used for storing grain. Sir Thomas lived here while waiting for his new mansion to be built and his first guest was an unwanted one. She was Lady Mary Grey, sister of the unfortunate '9-day Queen', and was kept under virtual house arrest here for offending Queen Elizabeth by secretly marrying the Queen's Royal Sargeant, or porter, without first obtaining permission. Her husband, Thomas Keys, enjoyed far less comfortable accommodation in the Tower and eventually died there — after which his poor wife was graciously allowed to go free! The Stable Block has now been converted into a tea-room and on summer afternoons you can enjoy an excellent cuppa in the courtyard, with various home-made cakes and biscuits.

The Osterley House you see today is a much altered and enlarged version of the one built by Sir Thomas Gresham. After his death in 1579, the property was neglected by his widow who bequeathed it (together with Boston Manor) to Sir William Read, her son by her first husband. The house later passed out of the family and through various ownerships until it was bought by Nicholas Barbon in 1683. He was a builder and speculator and was responsible for much of the rebuilding

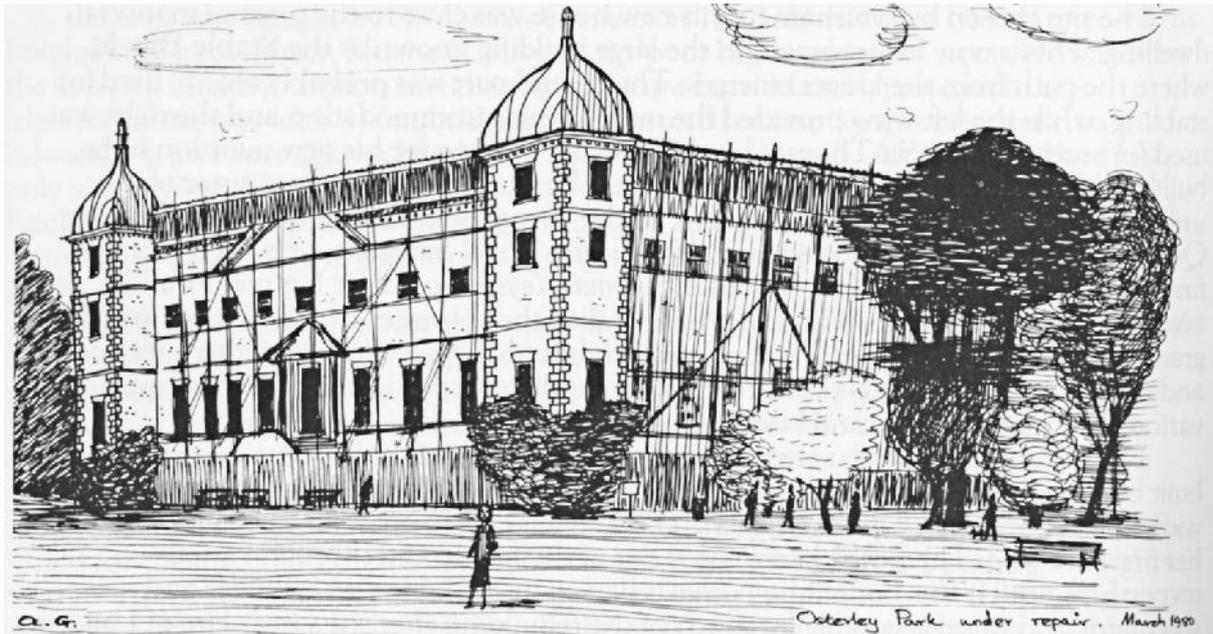
after the Great Fire of London, as well as being the first to introduce fire insurance to England. He probably made a number of alterations to Osterley before it was sold to Sir Francis Child in 1711.

Francis Child was born the fifth son of an obscure Wiltshire clothier, but these humble beginnings did not deter him from becoming apprenticed to a London goldsmith and taking control of the firm by the time he was 39, when he then began to concentrate on the profitable side-line of banking. During the Civil War, wealthy men deposited their money with a goldsmith for safekeeping over a fixed period, and the goldsmiths would then lend out some of this money at interest. Francis Child was the first to abandon his original trade and apply himself exclusively to banking — thus becoming known as the father of the profession. Some of the early clients of **Child's Bank** read like a history book: Charles II, Nell Gwynne, the poet Dryden, the Duke of Malborough, Samuel Pepys and later King William and Queen Mary. It is thought that he bought Osterley for the sole purpose of storing some of the bank's money in the extensive vaults under the courtyard, for he preferred to live in his house at Parson's Green, where he died in 1713.

Osterley passed to his son Samuel whose widow, Agatha, had inherited by 1756 —the year John Awsiter was forced to sell his manors of Southall and Norwood. She no doubt bought the manorial rights for their son, named Francis after his grandfather, who came of age the same year. It is to this Francis Child that we owe the present appearance of Osterley. He commissioned Robert Adam to remodel the house, adding the Hall and side passages onto the original courtyard and completely encasing Gresham's building in new walls around the four corner towers. Sadly, Francis died before his plans were completed — leaving his young fiancée some £50,000 better off, and Osterley and the bank to his brother, Robert, who thus became the new Lord of Norwood and Southall.

Robert Child lived only fifteen years longer than his brother; his early demise at the age of 43 is said to have been hastened by the elopement of his beloved only child, Sarah Anne, with the Earl of Westmoreland — although father only had himself to blame if there is any truth in the story behind their marriage. It seems that Westmoreland, aware that Child had rather grand ideas of a match for Sarah Anne, asked what he would do if he were in love with a girl against her father's consent. Perhaps Robert had partaken rather liberally of the after-dinner port, for he replied very rashly: "Why! Run away with her, to be sure!". The Earl's nickname was not 'Rapid Westmoreland' for nothing, which is how Sarah and her lover came to be wed in an alehouse on Gretna Green, and why the heartbroken Child changed his will so that his fortune was to be left to the second son or eldest daughter of Sarah Anne's future children — thereby ensuring that Westmoreland would not benefit financially from the runaway match.

Osterley thus passed in due course to Sarah Sophia, Lady Westmoreland's second child, who married George Villiers in 1804, the year before he added the 5th Earl of Jersey, to his title of Lord of the Manors. In 1858, Villiers sold Norwood and Southall to Sir Charles Mills, a senior partner in the banking firm of Glyn, Mills & Co. which later merged with Child's Bank to form the bank we know today as Williams and Glyn's. Osterley however remained in the family until 1949, when the 9th Earl of Jersey gave the house and grounds to the National Trust. During the First and Second World Wars, the Home Guard was stationed in the grounds, and many young recruits had their first taste of army life in the Osterley training camp. Today the park is maintained by the Department of the Environment, while the house itself is administered by the Victoria and Albert Museum.



Unlike the mansions at Gunnersbury and Boston Manor, Osterley still boasts much of its original decor in an excellent state of preservation, and contains all the furniture that was designed by Adam to stand in the principal rooms at the time. The house is thus a marvellous example of how the gentry lived during the 18th century. I am not going to attempt to describe the various rooms as the guidebook on sale at the door gives far better information than I can do justice to here, but I hope that this brief background to Osterley's past owners encourage you to look around their home because it really is worth a visit. Extensive renovations are still being made both inside and out and it is hoped that when these are completed, the upstairs apartments will also be open to the public. The house is open for viewing every afternoon from Tuesday to Sunday, and Bank Holiday Mondays — opening times are listed at the back of the book. There is an entrance fee for the house, but the grounds are free and open all year round. You can visit Robert Adam's semi-circular Garden House (near the old kitchen gardens behind the stables), or just wander by the lake, admiring some of the huge cedar trees which were planted by Robert Child to celebrate the birth of his daughter, Sarah Anne.

Had the 1962 proposal to build a World Exhibition Centre within the grounds of Osterley Park been successful, much of these beautiful gardens would today lie beneath exhibition halls, car-parks, flats and hotels. Osterley's proximity to road and rail links with Heathrow made the Park a prime site for a scheme; but thanks to vigorous local opposition the application was turned down and the £20 million plans were later adapted to form the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham.

If your walk has made you thirsty for something stronger than tea, a footpath to the east of the main drive to the car-park, takes you via a pleasant route to the Hare and Hounds in Windmill Lane. The 18th century inn was rebuilt in 1904 and offers good beer, snacks and a small children's playground beside the beer-garden. Wyke Green nearby, takes its name from a medieval sub-manor of Isleworth which was taken over by the Earl of Jersey in the early 18th century. Wyke Garden Cottage, near the path to Osterley, was once part of Wyke Farm and was being restored by a market gardener in 1981. The farmlands used to extend to Wyke House in Syon Lane which had been restored by Robert Adam, but the house was allowed to deteriorate in modern times and after being set fire to by

vandals, was declared a dangerous building and demolished in 1977. As the house stood in the Green Belt, Hounslow Council had intended to leave the grounds as 'open space', but an application to build a housing estate on the site was accepted in 1982 so we can expect a 'new look' for the area in the near future. Wyke Green Golf Course behind the Hare and Hounds, formed part of Southall Sewage Farm in the 19th century . . . and on that high note, we end this walk!

Route Two (Norwood Green to Southall Park via the canal and King Street — 3 miles)

This 'City Tour' is not recommended for those who like talking to the trees as most of Southall's historic sites lie in the busy, built-up area of King Street and Southall Green. The walk begins and ends in greener pastures however, and can always be combined with the weekly shopping as the main streets are alive with sound and colour, even on Sundays.

East of the church, the 19th century cottages in Tentelow Lane give way to more modern houses and shops. Some years ago, Tentelow Lane yielded evidence of Southall's earliest residents when workmen, digging a deep trench for the main drainage system, found the 35,000-year old bones of a mammoth. Flint implements buried near the skeleton indicated that the animal was probably killed by paleolithic hunters. Cars and lorries are the most dangerous beasts you have to contend with in the lane today, however, but you can avoid the worst of the traffic by turning left into **Minterne Avenue** which, like the large field opposite, was open grazing land for horses and cattle until the area was built up during the 1940's. The many different styles of houses in **Melbury Avenue**, to your right, skirt the sports-field of the George Tomlinson First and Middle Schools and around the corner, you will find the British Waterways maintenance yard and the bridge over the canal at **Norwood Top Lock**. This is the last of the eleven locks up from the Thames and the start of a long lock-free pound to Cowley, near Uxbridge.



A typical scene at Norwood Top Lock in the old days.

In 1911, the first aeroplane ever to land at Southall made an impromptu descent into one of the fields behind the lock (now part of Ealing Borough nurseries), when a Bristol-Biplane, competing in the 'Standard Flying Race', developed engine trouble soon after take-off. Repairs took two days to complete but, to the crowds who gathered to watch, this strange new-fangled machine was no doubt just as much a source of wonder on the ground as in the air. The Martin Brothers were quite possibly among the first on the scene of this historic event, as their pottery was then one of the few

buildings in **Havelock Road**; but before you reach the site, both the towpath and Havelock Road rise sharply over the old **Maypole Arm** of the canal which was built in 1913 to serve Otto Monsted's margarine factory, half a mile away. The Quaker Oats factory took over the arm after Monsted's closed and it remained very busy for years, but today its only use is as a winding-hole for boats on the Grand Union. It is possible to walk the length of the bramble-strewn towpath but there is no proper exit from the nicely landscaped section at the other end (unless you fancy crawling through a hole in the fence!), so I suggest you continue along the main towpath towards **Wolf Bridge**.



Charles Martin, the reluctant salesman, in the Holborn shop.

A little further on, a modern council estate now stands on the canal bank where the Martin Brothers had their pottery. Just before the first of the houses, you will find a very pleasant grassy field with benches overlooking the canal, where you can digest your sandwiches and the story of Southall's most celebrated citizens. Wallace Martin founded the firm at Fulham in 1872, but after he was joined by three of his younger brothers, they began to look for larger premises. The derelict soap factory they discovered in Southall seemed ideal, and they moved all their equipment here by barge in 1877. For all their talent, they never became rich and most of their wealthy sponsors were repaid with samples of their work — which is how some of the great collections of their pottery came to be formed. Wallace was the chief designer in the team; Walter worked the wheel and specialised in the chemical aspects of the business; Edwin decorated the finished items; and Charles was a very bad salesman. He managed a small shop for their wares in Holborn but never sold very much as he was so fond of the pieces he was reluctant to part with them! His death in 1910, followed by Walter's two years later, made things very difficult for the remaining brothers — especially as Walter had left no record of the special chemical formulas he had used to produce their characteristic salt-glazed stoneware. Edwin gave up his fight with cancer not long afterwards, and although Wallace continued to do modelling, there was no more firing until his death in 1923. You can see a wide range of their work at Southall Library, where a permanent exhibition is maintained; and a Martinware fountain is still in use in the grounds of the Manor House.

Havelock Road now disappears from view until you rejoin it via the **Church Path**, which you will find by leaving the canal at **Wolf Bridge** and turning right into the little lane just beyond **Wren Avenue**. The original Church Path ran from the Uxbridge Road to St. Mary's at Norwood, but the railway altered its course higher up and drastic changes are about to occur on the remaining section when the long-planned relief road to King Street is finally completed in 1983. The new road will run parallel with the path as far as Bridge Road, diverting most of the traffic from the town centre. At the time of writing however, **Bixley Field**, as the allotments to the right of the path are called, has not yet been poisoned by exhaust fumes, so let us talk of cabbages and kings . . . the allotments, you see, were once part of the brickfield that stretched all the way to the Martin brother's pottery, and it was in this vicinity (in 1826) that the Earl of Jersey granted the architect, John Nash, a licence to dig the brick earth which supplied him with most of the bricks for remodelling no less a royal residence than Buckingham Palace! 'Bixley', incidentally, comes from an old Saxon name meaning 'a box-tree clearing'.

As one of the oldest roads in the parish, **Havelock Road** also has an interesting past. It was called Fedder Lane until the 1850's, when it was renamed after a man who would perhaps not be as popular in Southall today: General Henry Havelock, one of the heroes in the Relief of Lucknow, the battle which terminated the Indian Mutiny. If you look east down Havelock Road as you leave the Church Path, the neatly landscaped lawns of the new **Havelock First School** mark the site of **Southall Greyhound Stadium** (1933-77); and the Council estate further to the right was once **Langdon's Farm and Nursery**. The estate was built in 1953 and all the roads are named after members of the successful Mount Everest Expedition. The western end of Havelock Road, which you now turn into, has not been modernised to quite the same extent. The houses in Church and Marlow Roads were built in the late 19th century with local stock-bricks, and **Havelock Road Cemetery** was consecrated by the Bishop of London in 1883, when the tiny churchyard at Norwood was finally closed for burials. Opposite the cemetery, a row of old labourers cottages has been replaced by **Havelock Court**, but the buildings once used as a dairy depot for Norwood Farm are still standing, although they now belong to the **Sikh Gurdwara**, established in 1967. Ten years later, the Sikh Temple also took over the old Gaswork's stables next door which have been converted into the **Sira Guru Singh Sabha Library**. The welcome sight of the **Havelock Arms** at the end of the road, brings you to King Street, formerly called Denmark Terrace.

King Street has developed a definite eastern flavour in recent years. Sarees are now displayed in the shops on the corner of **Western Road** where Platt's the grocers stood at the turn of the century, and the ordinary stores seem very pale and uninteresting compared with the spicy aromas and exotic fruits and vegetables to be found in their Indian counterparts. Why not try some of the delicacies on display? Most shops have a restaurant section, or you could make your selection and picnic on the lawns of the Manor House nearby. The **old St. John's Church**, on the opposite corner of Western Road, was built in 1838 when the expanding population was beginning to outgrow St. Mary's. All the costs of the church, St. John's School (which then stood behind the church) and the vicarage were met by Mr. Henry Dobbs, who owned the vitriol factory on the canal bank. The church was made a sub-parish of St. Mary's in 1850, but by 1910, the building had become too small for the large congregation and so the **new church of St. John** was built across the road in **Church Avenue**, in the grounds of what was once a large mansion called **Elmfield House**.



Platts the Grocers in King Street, circa 1903.

The shops fronting the cemetery in King Street were built on the site of the old parsonage, which was demolished when a new vicarage was built in Church Avenue in 1929. The Rev. J. Jackson and his wife lived here from 1887 until his death in 1895, and it was perhaps to keep herself busy after her husband died, that Mrs. Edith Jackson started writing her *Annals of Ealing* which is such a valuable source of reference for local historians today. The old church is now used as a meeting place for various groups, including Asian Christians, while the former **St. John's Hall** next to it has been **The Hindu Temple** since 1979. St. John's Hall opened in 1893 and, like so many other buildings in the parish, was built by A&B Hanson, a family of Danish origin who started their firm in the old Workhouse during the 1850's and grew into one of the biggest building contractors in the country. Two marble plaques in the new St. John's commemorate members of the family from 1817-76, but little remains of their building yard in Featherstone Road, which closed down in 1977.



A view of King Street in 1911 showing the old St John's Church.

Most of the shops between the Temple and Featherstone Road were built in the early 1900's, although a pair inscribed with the date '1897' stands out from the others. A pond and the stocks used to stand on the corner of Featherstone Road, which is named after one of the old farms that once lined the western side of The Green. The farmhouse was pulled down in the 1870's and replaced by a rather grand residence, **Featherstone Hall**, known locally as 'Welch's Folly' because the high wall that its owner built around it, included the odd feature of a series of windows. The **Dominion Cinema** and adjoining shops were built on the site in 1934 by A&B Hanson, and the cinema was opened the following year by Gracie Fields. Indian films have been shown here in recent years, but it is now closed and a new Community Centre is planned to open on the site in 1985. Before crossing over to the Manor House, we make a swift diversion down **Featherstone Road**.

Cleo Laine, the well-known jazz singer, spent most of her childhood in one of the group of 3-storey houses on the right hand side of the road. Two of the houses are now used by the Sikh Missionary Society and Southall Youth Movement. The **Featherstone Arms** has hardly changed since it was built in 1832 but the 18th century **Workhouse** taken over by A&B Hanson is in the process of being demolished to make way for the new **Health Centre**. On the opposite corner stands the 1901 **Drill Hall**, but it is many years since it was used for army purposes. **Featherstone First and Middle Schools** nearby were built in 1895 and 1901 respectively — the former has been considerably modernised, but the old Boys' School (which replaced St. John's School) still provides a solid Edwardian backdrop for the **War Memorial** dedicated to past pupils.

Back to **The Green** again, and the **Victory** (called the King of Prussia until 1914) which was rebuilt during the 1930's. **St. Anselm's First and Middle Schools** incorporate the iron building which served as the original St. Anselm's church from the early 1900's until the new **Church of St. Anselm** was built higher up on the opposite side of the road in 1967. Before the iron church was erected, mass was said in the old tithe barn attached to the Manor House. This was demolished, together with four cottages, when The Green was widened after the First World War. The **Manor House** has been much altered since it was first built early in the 16th century under the name of '**Wrenn**'. Francis Awsiter made various improvements when he bought the house in 1587 (the date said to be carved above one of the windows — although I have never been able to find it), and substantial changes were made during the 18th and 19th centuries. The timber-framed house is nevertheless unique in Middlesex, and certainly one of Southall's most interesting features.

The house was not included in the sale of the manors to Agatha Child in 1756, and remained in the Awsiter family until it was bought by William Welch in 1821 — sometime after he had acquired the lease of the Merrick's market. (Alfred Welch, of Featherstone 'folly' fame was probably his son.) The most noteworthy of its subsequent owners was William Thomas, inventor of the lock-stitch sewing machine, who, throughout the winter of 1885, daily provided up to 100 dinners for children whose fathers were out of work because the extreme cold had forced the brickfields to close. The Council bought the Manor House in 1913, and it is now used as offices for the **Southall Chamber of Commerce** who have paid for much of the restoration work, including the fire-place in the central hall attributed to Grinling Gibbons. The very plain **War Memorial** which stands outside is not, in local opinion, considered a fitting tribute to the hundreds of Southall people who lost their lives in the two World Wars; but I am sure everyone will agree that the well laid-out gardens around the Martinware fountain, make a pleasant break in this rather long walk.



Southall-Norwood Hospital, on the corner of Osterley Park Road, was established in 1934 in a large 19th century house called 'The Chestnuts'. The dilapidated **Century Cinema** opposite, was rebuilt during the Thirties on the site of Southall's first electric cinema, The Gem, which opened amidst great excitement in 1910. Until the 1960's, some of Southall's finest mansions were still to be found on this side of the road, all built on the old **Southall Green Farm** which had extended as far as the railway. **The Grange** and a cherry orchard have given way to the 7-storey Phoenix House and Southbridge Way (which originally led to the Western Iron Foundry); a very old house called **The Romans** (thought to have been named after a 16th century family, the Romaynes) became the new cinema and small trading estate behind it; while **South Lodge**, owned by Mr. Baxter, a former chairman of Southall-Norwood Urban District Council, was sold on his death and the new **St. Anselm's church** now stands on the site. Incidentally, the intriguing little house between the church and the entrance to the trading estate, is the electric generator which once provided power to the estate.

The **Three Tuns** on the eastern side of The Green was built in the early 1800's, and it's nice to see plants, instead of the usual litter, filling the old stone drinking fountain for cattle and horses which stands outside the shops nearby. Turning into **Osterley Park Road**, you will find **Southall Library** on the left-hand side. It was built in 1905 and paid for by the Andrew Carnegie Trust. In recent years, the interior has been remodelled to make the most of space and natural lighting, and the beautiful collection of work by the Martin Brothers (ranging from buttons to clock-cases) is well displayed in an upstairs room — a visit is highly recommended. The **Hortus Cemetery**, built in 1944 at the end of the road will soon lie on the other side of the new by-pass, but it will still be possible to walk left along the Church Path to **Bridge Road**, or Merrick Road as its new name is going to be. The path comes up behind the old **Maypole Institute** to your left, **Otto Monsted's** former margarine factory

on the right, and the matching red-brick facade of what was once the Maypole shipping siding, straight ahead — all built by A&B Hanson.

Otto Monsted learnt all about the manufacture of margarine in his native Denmark, before starting his first business near Cheshire in England. Demand for his product became so great, that he planned a new factory in Southall and purchased a 70-acre site from the Earl of Jersey and the GWR. His factory opened with a formal Dinner and Ball for his hundreds of new employees in 1895, and this genuine concern for the happiness of his workers was maintained, with good results, until the firm closed thirty years later. Times had changed: road transport had taken over from rail and the cost of bringing the huge production department in line with modern packaging requirements proved too much. **Walls** now own the front portion of the factory; **Quaker Oats** built on some of the land at the back; and the rest houses a variety of other business concerns. The Maypole Institute, which was built in 1910 as a social club for employees, became a temporary military hospital during the First World War, and now serves as **Southall Community Centre**. Some of the lime trees which were planted on both side of Bridge Road when it was first built as a private road to Monsted's, still survive outside 'The Limes', a very pleasant-looking old people's home which replaced the bowling green and tennis courts of the Institute in 1966.

The Maypole shipping siding was the first section to be axed when the factory announced its closure in 1925, but after years of neglect it has come to life again since the **GWR Preservation Group** established the **Southall Railway Centre** here in 1981. Members have already done wonders towards achieving their aim of recreating the Victorian age of steam, and visitors can see some of the GWR locomotives they have painstakingly restored from scrap to mainline working order, on Bank Holidays and the last Sunday in every month from April to October. A lot of work has also been done on converting the old goods depot to a typical Victorian railway station. Although the gas lamps and wrought-iron work have yet to come, the benches and signal-box look as good as new on the platform where roller conveyers once carried boxes of margarine from Monsted's factory. The arched wall round the siding has weathered well and could still be described as 'one of the finest examples of brickwork in the country', which was the accolade paid to the Hansons when they built it in 1922, to an award-winning design in the 'Architects' Journal'. New members of the GWR Preservation Group are always welcome, and £1 shares can be bought in the locomotives to help towards restoration. The hope eventually to link their 400-ft of track to the adjacent British Rail line, so maybe passengers will steam down to Brentford once again.

Directly opposite the Church Path, a **footbridge** leads over the railway to **Park Avenue**. From the top you can see Southall's 19th century station, with the 320ft high gasometer and castle-like water tower of the gasworks in the distance. Just after the gasometer was completed in 1932, it helped raise funds for the Southall-Norwood Hospital when, for a fee of sixpence, people could climb or take a lift to see the view from the top. The gasworks closed in the early 'seventies with the changeover to North Sea Gas and the site is rapidly being reduced to rubble, while work has recently begun on a £1 million conversion of the water tower into flats and bedsits. Another sign of the times is evident in **Villiers Road** (to your right from the footbridge), where the pink corrugated walls of the Mangat Hall stand out against the former Congregational Church, which became the **Guru Granth Gurdwara** in 1969. The 1931 foundation stone of the original church can still be seen near the main entrance.



View of the gasworks and water tower from the station bridge in 1951.

About 100 yards further along Park Avenue, the **Church Path** reappears as one of the entrances to **Southall Park**, where the tennis courts mark the site of the Merrick family's mansion. During the 1830's, the house was bought by Sir William Ellis, then superintendent of the newly-built St. Bernard's Asylum and one of the great reformers in this branch of medicine. After his death, Southall Park was used as another of the private mental homes that were a feature of the parish during the 19th century; **Vine Cottage** in Park View Road (now a Youth Centre), an old house called The Shrubbery further to the north, and Featherstone Hall made similar profitable side-lines for the medical staff at the county asylum. Southall Park was burnt down in a disastrous fire early one morning in 1883, and never rebuilt. The estate was later bought for a public park and footpaths now criss-cross through the trees planted by its earlier owners. You could end your walk here in one of the rose-gardens if you cannot bear the thought of any more sight-seeing but, having come this far, I shall just round off the 'City Tour' with a quick trip down the High Street.

Trinity Holy Church, opposite the lodge-house at the Uxbridge Road entrance to the Park, was built in 1890 on land donated by the Earl of Jersey, and was one of the few buildings in Southall to suffer damage during the Second World War. Further down the High Street stands the **Red Lion**, first built c.1650 and still going strong. The entrance to **Southall Market** lies just beyond the pub, and the traditional livestock sale is still held every Wednesday, with a general shopping market on Fridays and Saturdays. They are very tame affairs compared with the days when Southall was second only to Smithfield for the sale of fat cattle, after William Welch had purchased the lease on Merrick's charter in 1805. Some of the market atmosphere still prevailed in the 1920's, with cattle arriving in droves and gypsies trading horses outside the **White Hart** across the road, where there was a blacksmith's forge in the yard. The modern and rather forbidding **Police Station** on the corner of North Road was



then a simple cottage known as 'Police House', but the cottages behind the shop fronts leading down to the **Three Horseshoes** are the same as when they were first built, together with the pub, in the 1850's. The **George and Dragon** had been serving pints for about 200 years before the **Town Hall** was built in 1897, and perhaps the chap who later added the glass canopy and public convenience to its front, had had a few before doing so. A **Fire Station** was also tacked onto the Town Hall in 1901 (for a mere £175) but its modern counterpart now has premises a few doors down and horses no longer have to be rounded up from the fields to pull the fire-engine. Around the corner in South Road stands the distinctive Chinese-style **Liberty** cinema, complete with dragons. It was rebuilt during the 1930's on the site of the old 'Paragon Palace' and is to change its name yet again in Spring 1982, when it becomes the **Liberty Market Hall**.

Route Three (Norwood Green to Bull's Bridge via the canal — 2 miles)

This walk makes an excellent excuse for a pub-crawl on a fine weekend. You could begin with a quick one at **The Plough**, and then set off across the Green towards **Norwood Road**. Few of the ancient elms remain which once lined the 'Dutch Canal', but the Green still has a leafy appearance and, recently, more trees have been planted along the edges. The pond itself became more insanitary than picturesque over the years and was filled-in during the 1930's. Cricket has been played on the Green for over a century and the area is very popular with horse-riders. Norwood Green was declared a Conservation Area in 1969, but rather too late for most of the 'gentlemen's residences' which gave Norwood such a respectable air during the 19th century. Housing developments have replaced **Bridge Hall** (on the site of Norwood Close flats) and its neighbours, **Norwood House** and **Norwood Court** (built by Josiah Wedgwood), in Norwood Road on the western side of the Green; to the south, in Tentelow Lane, the lovely old **Rectory** was destroyed by a flying bomb in 1944, and **The Cedars**, another fine old Georgian mansion which stood nearby, was rebuilt as an old peoples' home in 1963. The northern side of the Green has been more fortunate however, and several of the original houses are still standing in Norwood Green Road.

Tucked away behind a screen of trees near the church, lies **Norwood Hall** — built c.1813 for a London cabinet-maker, John Robins, who was also responsible for erecting four almshouses (rebuilt 1962) near Frogmore Green. Most of the houses north of the Green (as far as Poplar Avenue) were built on the orchards and meadowland of Norwood Hall when the estate was broken up during the 1920's, and the Hall itself has been used as a Horticultural Institute since the 1950's. Between the Hall and the red-and-blue pantiled St. Mary's Church Hall, stand a tall pair of 3-storey houses, **The Grange** and **Friar's Lawn**, which are said to have been built by Isambard Brunel while overseeing the construction of the GWR through Southall. For more detailed information about these and other buildings in the area, I recommend the excellent booklet produced by members of the **Norwood Green Resident's Association** to celebrate their Golden Jubilee in 1982.



The tree-lined 'Dutch Canal' on Norwood Green at the turn of the century, with The Grange and Friar's Lawn in the background.

Further up Norwood Road, the red-brick police station on **Frogmore Green** was built in 1890 on the site of the old Manor Farmhouse, and some of the farmland has been preserved in **Wolf Fields**, the quiet little park to the left of **The Wolf**. The giant-sized cricket bat displayed outside the pub, was the much-prized trophy in the annual cricket match between regulars of The Wolf and The Lamb. Known locally as the **Battle for the Bat**, the custom began about 1901 and drew large crowds to Norwood Green every August bank holiday. Results of the matches are recorded on the bat from 1938-63, the last year the game was played. The Wolf won on that occasion but there is talk of a revival of the match, so perhaps the bat will be transferred to The Lamb sometime in the future. The Wolf is a cosy little inn, filled with photographs of forgotten cricket-teams and pictures of the pub in days gone by, and it seems just as popular with locals today as it was with canal boatmen in an earlier



age.

The terraced cottages between the pub and **Wolf Bridge** were the first Council houses in the parish. They were built by A&B Hanson in 1920 and over a thousand more were to follow before the outbreak of the Second World War. **The Lamb** has a beer-garden overlooking the canal, but the towpath is on the other side of the bridge, down the stepped cobbled path once used by barge-horses to turn the boats around. Once under the bridge, you will be walking along the southern border of the borough which the canal follows all the way to Bull's Bridge. On the far side of the canal, the long wharf beside **Southall Timber Yard** played a more active role when Henry Dobbs' vitriol factory stood on the same site, soon after the Grand Union opened in 1798.

Adelaide Dock, further up the towpath was built in the 1850's for the steam-powered Norwood Flour Mills, the first big factory in the district. The dock, with the gasometer towering in the distance, has been disused for years but is to receive a new lease of life in Summer 1982, when it becomes a centre for the **Colne Valley Passenger-boat Service**, presently based at Bull's Bridge. The company's traditional canal-boat has been converted to carry up to 70 people on pleasure trips between

Rickmansworth and Brentford, and down the Paddington Arm. Eventually they hope to run public day-trips from Adelaide Dock, similar to the ones that set out from Coldharbour Lane Bridge in Hayes throughout August and September.

Well-kept gardens, many with trees overhanging the water or towpath, line both sides of the canal until the **Old Oak Tree** welcomes you to **The Common**, just beyond Regina Road bridge. Here, the view of the pretty pub next to the village shop, with the open green of the large recreation ground beyond, contrasts sharply with the messy dumping ground on the North Hyde side of the canal, where no advantage seems to have been taken of gardens on the water's edge. Further up the towpath, some of the little terraced cottages (one has the interesting inscription 'Industrious Cottages') date from the early 19th century, when brickfields lined the canal banks from Southall to Northolt and many homes were built for the labourers on what was then **Glebe Farm**.

The towpath joins the road after **Western Road bridge**, where you will find the **Grand Junction Arms** the pub on this walk, so make the most of their sunny beer-garden. **Bull's Bridge** now lies straight ahead with the British Waterways repair yard across the water at **Willow Wren Wharf**. Houseboats, various pleasure-craft and the more traditional canal boats are moored in what used to be the Grand Union Canal Carrying Company's narrowboat lay-by, made famous by the women who 'manned' and the boats during the Second World War. The peaceful scene is very different from the old days when dozens of working boats with smoking chimneys waited for the loudspeaker call, "All captains to the office for orders", while women washed clothes in the wash-houses and children and animals rushed about.

The 13-mile long lock-free Paddington Arm begins under the white-washed bridge, but if you cross over and follow the old wooden signpost towards 'Birmingham' for a short way, you will find a group of canal cottages and the old siding, known as **Sleeper Depot**, which the GWR built to receive materials by boat from Paddington and Brentford in the 1830's. Most of the timber for sleepers on the London to Maidenhead line was brought here to be treated, and huge tanks were built for soaking the wood in creosote. The first locomotive to use the line was also taken to West Drayton by canal boat. Bull's Bridge depot gradually declined in importance once the railway from Southall to Brentford was opened in 1859, but the wharfs and sidings continued to be used until well into this century.

If you are still bouncing with energy or just want to clear your head after the last few pubs, it is only about a mile up the **Paddington Arm** to the Uxbridge Road and the burnt-out shell of the **Hamborough Tavern**, which is in the process of being reconstructed after the 1981 riots. There is not a lot to see on the way: beyond the old toll-house (the present headquarters of Colne Valley Passenger Boat Services) the towpath winds through scrubland, under the railway, and past the sites of Southall's early industrial development to some pleasant terraced houses at **Bankside**. Today, only the iron towpath bridges over a series of private docks, long since filled in, show where the coal-boats once gained entrance to the Gasworks, and Kearley and Tonges jam factory — known as the "jam 'ole" by boatmen. Still, if it's fresh air you're after — there's plenty of it!