

Edmonton

Heritage Trail

Edmonton makes a significant contribution to the London Borough of Enfield's rich mix of history. By following the trail map you will be able to see Edmonton's heritage come alive by discovering more about the many interesting people who have lived here over the years. Although Edmonton Council merged with Enfield and Southgate in 1965, the area still retains a strong identity of its own. The Council is keen to promote and protect the rich heritage which helps to make Edmonton the diverse area it is today.

UPPER EDMONTON

Upper Edmonton started life as a hamlet centred on the intersection of Fore Street, Silver Street and Water Lane (Angel Road). By the early 19th century it had extended along Fore Street until it formed a long straggling settlement stretching from the Tottenham boundary to just south of the Boards' Lane (Brettenham Road). By the mid-1860's further development was closing the gap between Upper and Lower Edmonton.

Life was Hard

A report by the General Board of Health (1850) on sanitary conditions in Edmonton showed a very sorry state of affairs. Pymmes Brook was little better than an open sewer and there was an outbreak of typhus in a common lodging house in Orchard Street (Raynham Road). The 1851 census reveals evidence of gross overcrowding.

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act led to the setting up in 1837 of the Edmonton Poor Law Union to administer poor relief in Tottenham, Hornsey, Edmonton, Enfield, Cheshunt and Waltham Abbey. To replace parish workhouses, the Edmonton Union Workhouse was built in Silver Street in 1842. Many of its buildings survive as part of the North Middlesex Hospital.

Arrival of the Railways

The railway arrived in 1840 with the opening of the first section of the Lea Valley Line from Stratford to Broxbourne, with a station in Water Lane (Angel Road). The trains were not popular at first because the station was badly sited and the trains were slow and expensive. People preferred the horse buses. In 1845 there were buses every 15 minutes along Fore Street, going alternately to Bishopsgate and Holborn.

In 1872 the direct line from London to Enfield Town opened, with a station at Silver Street. It was well sited and moreover, offered exceptionally cheap workmen's fares. A horse tramway along Fore Street opened in 1881. It was re-constructed and electrified during 1905, lasting until 1938 when trolleybuses took over.

The first sign of suburban development was the sale of Snells Park in 1849. Building accelerated after 1872. The last major development was the Dysons Estate (Middleham Road etc.), built in the early 1930s. By then Upper Edmonton was more or less fully built up.

Entertainment

In 1888 the Theatre Royal was built on the south side of Angel Road. Despite the name, it was a low-class establishment specialising in cheap melodrama. It was converted into a cinema and re-named the Hippodrome in 1919, surviving until 1947. A new super-cinema, The Regal, was built at the junction of Silver Street and Fore Street in 1934. Audiences began to decline in the 1960s and the cinema closed in 1972. It became a bingo hall for some years before being demolished in 1986 to make way for a supermarket.

LOWER EDMONTON

Lower Edmonton was the principal settlement in Edmonton and the religious and administrative centre of the parish. Parts of the ancient parish church of All Saints, in Church Street, date back to Norman times.

The Edmonton enclosure map of 1801 shows Lower Edmonton well established. The centre was where the main Turnpike Road widened out

to form Edmonton Green. The settlement extended northwards along the Hertford Road to just north of the junction with Town Lane (Town Road). Southwards, there was patchy development along Fore Street stretching just beyond the junction with Knight's Lane. Westwards, Church Street was built up to a point just beyond All Saints Church and there were a few houses in Church Lane and Milestone Alley (Victoria Road).

The Influence of Transport

By 1826 Edmonton had good transport facilities with horse buses running at half hourly intervals to London. The Eastern Counties Railway opened a branch line from Angel Road to Enfield Town in 1849 with an intermediate station at Edmonton Green.

But fares were high and ran a roundabout route via Stratford to an inconvenient terminus at Shoreditch. Some large villas were built in Church Street and development along Fore Street had almost reached Boards' Lane (Brettenham Road), virtually closing the gap between Upper and Lower Edmonton. Lower Edmonton station (now Edmonton Green) was opened in 1872. From 1874 the trains ran to and from a new city terminus at Liverpool Street. The line was electrified in 1960. The tramway was converted to trolleybuses in 1938 and replaced by diesel buses in 1961.

Influx from the Inner Suburbs

The later years of the 19th century saw a vast working class influx into Edmonton from the overcrowded inner suburbs, attracted by the cheap workmen's fares. By 1914 large areas had been built on.

There was extensive development along the Hertford Road and the Bounces Road and Bury Street areas were largely built up. There was also considerable development on the Victoria Road area. The first part of Edmonton Town Hall was finished in 1884 and was extended in 1903. The same year saw the opening of a swimming pool adjoining the Town Hall in Knight's Lane. The public library service started in 1893 in one room of the Town Hall and a purpose-built library opened in Fore Street in 1897.

Shopping facilities were greatly augmented by an East End style street market that grew up around Edmonton Green in the late 19th century. The Edmonton Empire, a music hall, opened on New Road Hill in 1908. Marie Lloyd gave her last performance here in 1922, collapsing in the wings and dying a few days later. The building became a cinema in 1933, closed in 1968 and was demolished in 1970.

After the Wars

After the First World War, Edmonton's first council housing estate was built to the west of Victoria Road. There was also much private house building, particularly in the Church Street area, eventually closing the gap between Lower Edmonton and Bush Hill Park. By the late 1930's the area was more or less fully developed.

The early post-Second World War years saw much of Edmonton in a run down state. There was also an acute housing shortage. Edmonton Council's response was a massive programme of redevelopment that culminated in the total rebuilding of the Edmonton Green Shopping Centre from 1968. Although Edmonton Council merged with Enfield and Southgate in 1965, the area still retains a strong identity of its own.

To download a copy of the Edmonton Heritage Trail leaflet visit www.dugdalecentre.co.uk/page/enfield-local-history-factsheets

Heritage Trail Plaques

1 St. Alphege's Church, Hertford Road

Built 1959 to the designs of Sir Edward Maufe, architect of Guildford Cathedral. Combines Modernist, Scandinavian and traditional styles. Includes sculpture by Estcourt J Clack.

2 The Crescent

An impressive terrace built in the mid 1820s. The pediment is decidedly off centre. In front of the houses there were originally two porter's lodges, railings and a gravel carriage drive. Monmouth Road landscaped green space is at the south end.

3 Edmonton Green Station

Opened by the Great Eastern Railway in 1872 as part of its direct line to Enfield via Bethnal Green and Hackney Downs. At platform level it retains its original canopies with the ridge and furrow roof characteristic of Great Eastern suburban stations of this period. The name changed from Lower Edmonton Station in 1992.

4 Edmonton Girls Charity School, Church St

A delightful building from 1784, still retaining a statue of a girl in the school uniform. It ceased to be a school in 1904. The school forms a group with Nos. 20 and 22 (a terrace of c. 1800) and No. 24, an 18th century brick cottage.

5 Lamb's Cottage, Church Street

Late 17th or early 18th century cottage with 19th century alterations. The last home of the writer Charles Lamb (1775-1834) and his sister Mary (1764-1847). An English Heritage plaque also commemorates this association.

6 The Charles Lamb Halls, Church Street

Formerly The Charles Lamb Institute built in 1908 as a stonefaced building in collegiate Tudor style. Now occupied by the New Covenant Church.

7 All Saint's Church, Church Street

The ancient parish church of Edmonton. Dates mainly from the 15th century, but the south wall contains some Norman fragments discovered during restoration in 1889. The north side was refaced in brick in the 18th century. It contains many monuments from the 16th century to the early 19th century. In the churchyard are the graves of Charles Lamb and his sister Mary.

8 Salisbury House, Bury Street West

Late 16th century timber-framed building with jettied storeys and brick chimney stacks. Rescued from near ruin by the former Edmonton Borough Council and opened as an Arts Centre in 1957. Contains panelled room and 17th century fireplace wall paintings.

9 Edmonton Cemetery, Church Street

Opened in 1884. Note the former superintendent's house and the chapel. There is a particularly poignant memorial to the victims of the Dunholme Road air disaster of 1938.

10 Millfield House Arts Centre

A late 18th century house, once the home of Robert Mushet, a metallurgist employed by the Royal Mint. Between 1849 and 1913 it was used by the Strand Board of Guardians as a workhouse school. After being used to house Belgian refugees. During the early part of World War I, it became a hospital for epileptics in 1917. After the closure of the hospital in 1971 it was converted into an Arts Centre. The building has an unusually impressive staircase. There is an early 19th century entrance lodge and an 18th century brick boundary wall.

11 Pymmes Park

Edmonton's oldest public park. During the late 16th century. Pymmes was owned by the Cecil family and Robert Cecil (later 1st Earl of Salisbury) spent his honeymoon there. Edmonton Council took a lease of part of the estate in 1897 and opened it to the public immediately. The freehold was acquired in 1899. A belated official opening was staged in 1906. The house, parts of which probably date back to the time of the Cecils, was destroyed during World War II but the Tudor walled garden has survived.

12 Angel Place

A fine Georgian terrace dating from c 1780. Note the fine doorcases. A blue plaque commemorates the 'site of the Angel where met the Stamford Hill Green Lanes Turnpike Trust 1713-1826.' The former Angel public house was demolished for road widening in 1968.

13 Former Central Library, Fore Street

An impressive building of 1897 in the Flemish renaissance style. Built to the designs of Maurice B. Adams, a pupil of Norman Shaw. The library moved to the former Cooperative building in South Mall of Edmonton Green in 1991. Now Mevlana Rumi Mosque and Dialogue Centre.

14 St. Aldhelm's Church, Silver Street

Built in 1903 to the designs of William Douglas Caroe. A fine example of Art Nouveau gothic.

15 North Middlesex Hospital, Sterling Way

The building incorporates part of the former Edmonton Union Workhouse originally built in 1842.

Other commemorative plaques

A Gladys Aylward (1902-1970).

67 Cheddington Road, the home of the missionary.

B Aylward School, Windmill Road

Gladys Aylward, missionary to China was a pupil at this school.

C On side of 37 Church Street

Site of the offices of the Edmonton Local Board of Health (1850-1884).

D 3 Keats Parade, Church Street

On this site formerly stood the cottage in which the poet John Keats served his apprenticeship (1811-1815) to Thomas Hammond, a surgeon of this parish.

E 133 Chichester Road, Edmonton

Home of Charles Coward (1905-1976). Rescuer of prisoners from Auschwitz lived here 1945-1976. Has an English Heritage Plaque.



Enjoy Enfield

BE PART OF SOMETHING GOOD

Edmonton Heritage Trail

