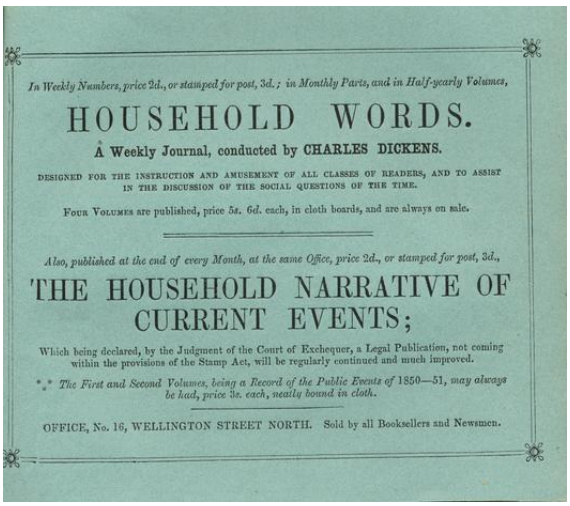
NOTTING HILL HISTORY TIMELINE
3 **A TALE OF TWO CITIES** LATE 19TH CENTURY

Tucker's Cottage the oldest house in Kensington Potteries 1855

'In the new suburbs carved out by the middle classes to escape from the noise, smoke, dirt, and crowding of the central areas of Victorian London, poor and squalid enclaves could frequently be found. They were not there by accident. The comfortable suburb and the meaner suburb within it were mutually interdependent. The Potteries, Notting Dale, Jennings Buildings (off Kensington High Street), and Kensal New Town were four substantial communities of poor people which served a definite economic function in west London; and between these slums and the neighbouring middle classes a sort of bi-lateral trade in goods and services sprang up. The poor communities provided a constant and convenient pool of labour to meet middle class demands for various services. Indeed, much of the character of these settlements was determined by the economic functions they performed. In effect, they were all economic satellites of affluent west London…

'The proximity of wealth and leisure probably accentuated the poverty and hardship. The rich and poor communities interacted on a daily basis and were to some extent interdependent. The presence of wealth had a marked effect on the way of life of the poorer residents: it undoubtedly increased their consciousness of their own poverty through a sense of relative deprivation and at the same time profoundly influenced the ways in which the poor earned their scanty bread. Most women's work was in the service sector, and for the men the proximity of wealth and an expanding middle class suburb increased the scale of employment opportunities within existing occupations. This suburban growth, which is often thought to have further divided England's 'two nations', here brought the opposite ends of the social spectrum into frequent and varied contact.' Patricia Malcolmson *Getting a Living in the Slums of Victorian Kensington* 1975

1850 Notting Dale first hit the headlines in the mid 19th century when the area was featured in the first issue of Charles Dickens's *Household Words* journal. Although the article wasn't written by him, the coverage put the Dale on the Dickensian slum map. The assistant editor WH Wills wrote in his 'Health by Act of Parliament' report: 'In a neighbourhood studded thickly with elegant mansions, viz Bayswater and Notting Hill, in the parish of Kensington, is a plague spot, scarcely equalled for insalubrity by any other in London, it is called the Potteries. It comprises some seven or eight acres with about 260 houses, if the term can be applied to such hovels, and a population of 900 to 1,000. The occupation of the inhabitants is principally pig-fattening; many hundreds of pigs, ducks and fowls are kept in an incredible state of filth. Dogs abound for the purpose of guarding the swine. The atmosphere is still further polluted by the process of fat boiling.' At the time of the Irish famine WH Wills concluded, probably a bit sensationally, 'in these hovels discontent, dirt, filth and misery are unsurpassed by anything known even in Ireland. Water is supplied to only a small proportion of houses. There are foul ditches, open sewers, and defective drains, smelling most offensively and generating large quantities of poisonous gases; stagnant water is found at every turn, not a drop of clean water can be obtained – all is charged to saturation with putrescent matter.'



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1855 As the Metropolitan Local Management Act established civic vestries, Kensington's population had shot up to 40,000 from less than 10,000 in 1801, and was about to quadruple again in the next 50 years. According to the Kensington Vestry sewer committee minutes, only 7% of the 4,500 total slum population (of the Potteries, Notting Dale, Kensal New Town, and Jennings Buildings on Kensington High Street) admitted to keeping pigs, but it was estimated that around a quarter were casual pigkeepers; 11% were brickmakers and by far the majority were unskilled. In each 19th century census around 40% of the local slum inhabitants were labourers, the rest were shopkeepers, shoemakers, tailors, marine store dealers, beer-sellers, flower-sellers, hawkers, rag and bone men and street musicians.

The first medical officer of health for Kensington, Dr Francis Godrich, found the Potteries to be 'one of the most deplorable spots not only in Kensington but in the whole Metropolis'; and set about evicting the pigs. But his attempts were thwarted by local resistance, ranging from physical obstruction to legal technicalities. At one point a lawyer even argued that the pigkeeping 'islanders' were there first and the respectable area was a nuisance to them. The Vestry itself hampered the progress of Dr Godrich's inspection team to prevent the pigkeepers becoming a charge on the poor rate, in the historical parish tradition. Then there was the legacy of Samuel Lake to contend with. According to Mary Bayly's *Ragged Homes and How to Mend Them*, 'great efforts were made to get rid of the swinish multitude altogether, but the shrewd chimney-sweep Lake seems to have foreseen this evil day, and 'for the purposes of pigkeeping' had been inserted in the very leases which the people were able to produce. Nothing but a special act of parliament could remedy the existing evil.'

The *Ragged Homes* sketch of 'Tucker's Cottage, the oldest house in Kensington Potteries' in 1855, depicts a quaint and at the same time foreboding row of tumbledown shacks with particularly rickety fences, a manure heap, a donkey, chickens and some fairly innocuous looking pigs. In the accompanying account of life there, Mrs Tucker described a typical day illustrating the socio-economic realities, the community spirit and the efficient recycling system of the time: "We most of us keep a horse, or a donkey and cart, and we go round early in the morning to the gentlefolk's houses and collects the refuges from the kitchens. When we comes home we sorts it out, the best of it we eats ourselves, or gives it to a neighbour, the fat is boiled down, and the rest we give to the pigs… When they have lots of company they gets a deal of refuge… When the families goes out of town the servants is put on board wages, and they scrimps and saves everything, we ain't wanted to call then 'cause there's not a scrap left for us, oh no, we ain't no use then."

In *Notting Hill in Bygone Days* Mrs Swindler recalled the rural scene more fondly: "On the outskirts of the Potteries village fields reached almost to the door. Allotments and small market gardens lay all around, and a narrow stream on the north side of St Katherine's Road (now Wilsham Street) had to be crossed in order to reach the mothers' meeting." Florence Gladstone added: 'Mrs Swindler's little son used to take crusts to feed the baby pigs and the geese met with on the way.' As the *Ragged Homes* philanthropist Mary Bayly began the first Mothers' Society meetings on Sirdar Road, she found the pigkeepers, though simple and uncouth, hard working, honest and, for the most part, sober. By then, however, the brickmakers were another matter. In *Bygone Days* the Notting Dale brickmakers were down as 'chiefly Irish of a low type', and seem to have been distinguished by their drinking capacity. Previously the Irish and British factions in the Potteries were lumped together, but in the first sign of racial disharmony in the area another local woman said: "Now pigkeepers is respectable, but them brick people, some of them bean't no wiser than the clay they works on."

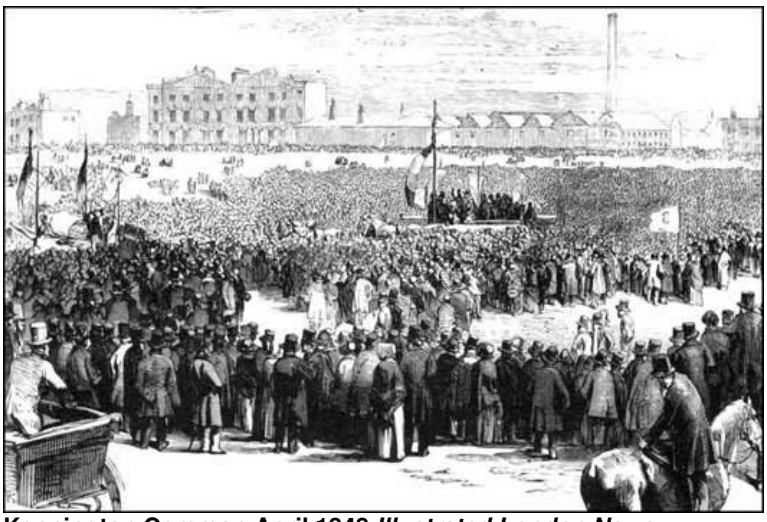
Brickmaking was comparatively well paid work at £3 a week for a family, but it was necessary to drink around seven pints after work to replace body fluids. In 1859 an 'anti-strike' advertisement in the *West London Observer* called for a 12 hour day, rather than the normal 14 to 15 hours, and a cut back from producing 8,000 bricks a day to 6,000: 'In allusion to the hours of labour, while it is true that the masters do not compel the men to work inordinate hours, yet it is obvious that they excite their men to as many hours of labour as they well can bear, for their own interest, as the more bricks produced in the fine weather of the season, the more profit to the employer, the horse having in 12 hours produced as much clay as the men can manufacture in 14 or 15 hours. 'Anti-Strike'… carefully avows… that the brickmaker gets through the enormous quantity of 8,000 bricks per day! That day is, in fact, nearly a day and a half of time… briefly and truly, the brickmaker cannot produce in a fair day of 12 hours labour more than 6,000, and to perform this the rapidity of the motion must be continuous.' As a brickmaker put it more succinctly, the horses in the chalk and pug mills worked less hours and had more breaks than the men.

Feargus O'Connor

After Lord Holland, the Duke of Wellington would come up against another Napoleon of Notting Hill before he died; Feargus O'Connor, the Irish 'Lion of Freedom' Chartist leader. Of all the local little Napoleons, Feargus has the best claim to the title – as the leader of a revolutionary force numbering tens of thousands opposed by the Duke of Wellington, a charismatic/mad cult hero, and an original resident of the Notting Hill village. His uncle was a French revolutionary general in Napoleon's army. Feargus O'Connor was born into as stately a pile as Lord Holland in County Cork, but ended up in a humble west London lodging-house. Although Karl Marx didn't think much of him, Feargus's lieutenants, George Julian Harney and Ernest Jones attended the second congress of the Communist League, and Friedrich Engels wrote for his newspaper, the *Northern Star*.

As the Whigs' 1834 Poor Law amendment enforced harsher conditions in workhouses, Feargus O'Connor trailblazed the People's Charter; calling for universal suffrage, annual parliaments, secret ballots, equal constituencies and the end of property qualifications for MPs. In 1837 he founded the populist radical paper the *Northern Star* in Leeds, started veering towards 'physical force' Chartism, and was duly imprisoned for seditious libel. At the time of revolutionary torchlight meetings and the 1839 Monmouth uprising, Thomas Carlyle wrote: 'Chartism means the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad, the wrong condition therefore or the wrong disposition, of the working classes of England. It is a new name for a thing which has had many names, which will yet have many more.'

In the wake of the 1848 Paris revolution the Chartist movement was revived with Feargus O'Connor, by then MP for Nottingham, at the helm. A march on Parliament was planned from Kennington Common to present the Chartist petition, but the London revolution didn't come to much due to the post-Gordon riots counter-insurgency measures of the Whigs under Lord John Russell (Lord Holland's protégé). With 15,000 special constables appointed (including the future Louis Napoleon III) and 8,000 troops under the command of the old Duke of Wellington, the proposed procession was called off. The nearest we got to barricades was clerks blocking up the windows of the Foreign Office with copies of the *Times*. The last Chartist petition was presented to Parliament by Feargus and the movement fizzled out. In *The Age of Reform* Llewellyn Woodward describes Feargus O'Connor as 'the ruin of the Chartist movement', and his life as 'a debased and exaggerated version' of the Irish leader Daniel O'Connell.



Kennington Common April 1848 *Illustrated London News*

If the 1848 Chartist uprising had followed the pattern of events around Europe, the next stage of the revolutionary plan was to be a rally in the Notting Hill Hunting Grounds of North Kensington. Thanks to the Duke of Wellington's policing operation this area would not be known for political activity until the arrival of this century's Tory leader David Cameron. After bringing the country to the brink of revolution, Feargus O'Connor lived out his days, 'demented and impoverished', at his sister's house, known at the time as 18 Notting Hill (formerly Portobello Lane, subsequently Albert Place and now Pembridge Road). As the Kensington Gravel Pits hamlet became Notting Hill High Street in the mid 19th century, the area sounds like a hotbed of radical activity revolving around the Chartist brush shop on the corner of Church Street, Feargus's lodging-house and the Prince Albert pub at 11 Pembridge Road.

September 10 1855 In spite of his sad demise, Feargus O'Connor had a good send-off; his final funeral march was reputedly 50,000 strong. After a public collection for his funeral, the procession went from Russell Square to the Prince Albert Chartist pub at Notting Hill Gate, then by way of Westbourne Grove, Royal Oak and Harrow Road to Kensal Green cemetery – as Portobello Road and Ladbroke Grove didn't reach that far yet. The *Kensington Gazette* reported that 'friends and supporters of the deceased in his early political movements mustered in strong force at the Prince Albert, Notting Hill, and followed the corpse two abreast to the cemetery where an oration was delivered over the deceased's body by a working man.' This was Ernest Jones, with whom Feargus founded the Chartist Co-operative land company, an unsuccessful attempt to set up rural workers' colonies, and *The Labourer* magazine.

Feargus O'Connor's obelisk memorial near the main entrance to the cemetery is inscribed with: 'While philanthropy is a virtue and patriotism not a crime will the name O'Connor be admired and this monument respected.' In the words of the 1950s *Kensington News* editor Barbara Denny, the report on his inquest in the first local paper the *Kensington Gazette* 'distinguished him from all the other poor Irishmen who perished in the backrooms of Notting Hill's sleazier streets.' Although Feargus outlived the Duke of Wellington, he lost out to him again from beyond the grave when the pub at 179 Portobello Road was named in honour of the national hero rather than the local rebel. The Walmer Castle pub on Ledbury Road, and Walmer Road, were also named in Wellington's honour after his residence in Kent. Worse still, Pembridge Road is now known in political terms for hosting the residence of the Tory shadow chancellor George Osborne.

Finch's Duke of Wellington pub sign

However, as the Duke of Wellington pub (better known as Finch's) first opened, a part of Notting Hill was successfully occupied by a Bonaparte. Following a brief political career in the second republic of his cousin Napoleon III, Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte moved to 118-20 Westbourne Grove (then 6-8 Norfolk Terrace), on the corner of Chepstow Road. There Napoleon's nephew confined his world domination enterprises to the study of languages, and his excursions to walking his dog along Portobello Lane. After living on Westbourne Grove for 30 years, Louis Lucien joined Feargus O'Connor at Kensal Green and his house became known as Bonaparte Mansions. A hundred years later, the old Artesian pub on Chepstow Road was renamed the Prince Bonaparte bar after him. His wife, Princess Clemence Bonaparte stayed on in Notting Hill, later living in Powis Square, until her death during the first world war. In another foreign dictator link, shortly before the second world war, the Arthur Stores' press on the site of Bonaparte Mansions published Wyndham Lewis during his pro-Hitler phase.

Louis Lucien Bonaparte

At the other end of Chepstow Villas from the Bonapartes, the blue plaque on number 39 commemorates the stay of the exiled Hungarian 1848 revolutionary nationalist, Louis Kossuth. Across Portobello Road from him is the Notting Hill Dickens house at number 52; the early 20th century home of Charles's grandson Henry, the local Tory councillor and alderman, and his daughter Monica, the author of the World War 2 nurse novel *One Pair of Feet* (filmed as *The Lamp Still Burns*) and the TV series *Follyfoot*. Although Notting Hill doesn't feature in Charles's novels, and admittedly almost any other area of London has better Dickensian links, there is a local Dickens tale of two cities to be told. As well as frequenting Holland House and featuring Notting Dale in *Household Words*, Charles Dickens appeared at Campden House; acting in

Wilkie Collins' play *The Lighthouse* in 1854; and at the original Notting Hill Arts Club (founded by John Gielgud's grandfather Arthur Lewis) at Moray Lodge, on the site of Holland Park School. Along with William Makepeace Thackeray (of *Vanity Fair* fame), he was one of the Moray Minstrels who met there for 'billiards, singing and to go to Bohemia for the night.'

Charles Dickens

Dickens is believed to have also trod the boards of the Victoria Hall (now the 20th Century Theatre) on the corner of Portobello Road and Westbourne Grove, and is said to have researched opium smoking for *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in the Paul Smith clothes shop on the corner of Kensington Park Road. To the north, Dickens attended soirees at Kensal Lodge, the house of William Ainsworth Harrison who wrote the Dick Turpin novel *Rookwood*, and the Kensal Green funerals of Mary Hogarth and William Thackeray. Both of his main illustrators, 'Phiz' Hablot K Browne and George Cruikshank, have North Kensington memorials; the blue plaque on 99 Ladbroke Grove commemorates the residency of 'Phiz' and Cruikshank has a pedestal at Kensal Green. Dickens wrote about the cemetery, where a number of his associates including Wilkie Collins are commemorated, and was reported walking through Kensal New Town.

But Charles Dickens's best connection with Notting Hill would come in the 20th century, through his housing reformer grandson Henry. In Norland Town in the 1850s the sluggish housing market compelled the developer Charles Richardson to sell the brickfield behind St James's Square (now Gardens) to the tenant brickmaker William Morrison, who completed the proposed middle class Norland quarter. On Charles Richardson's insistence, St James's Square was blocked off from 'that notorious place of ill-fame, Notting Dale', by building across the planned Union Street (Sirdar Road). Florence Gladstone felt that this road could have opened up the slum ghetto. Charles Richardson duly went bankrupt and ended his days presenting patent medicine shows in Glasgow.

The mean streets beyond St James's Square; St Katherine's Road (originally Cobden Terrace, now Wilsham Street), Crescent, William (now Kenley Walk) and George Street (which became the most notorious, Bangor, and then Becher when it was renamed after the Hippodrome racecourse manager); would surpass the Potteries for 'insalubrity' as the Notting Dale 'Special Area' slum. In honour of Charles Dickens's grandson's efforts to improve local housing conditions, the site is now occupied by the Henry Dickens Court estate – which was opened by him and the Queen Mother in 1953. The blocks of the estate are named in honour of Charles's literary London slum work after his characters; Estella, Agnes, Dora, Florence, Marley, Carton, Copperfield, Dombey, Pickwick, Dorrit, Barkis, Nickleby and Oliver.

1857 Notting Hill in the 1850s had a similarly bad press to the coverage the area would receive in the 1950s. Ladbroke Gardens was known as 'Coffin Row' because 'the windows had that ghastly form', and 'Goodwin Sands' after the dangerous sandbanks off the Kent coast, while Elgin Crescent was nicknamed 'the Stumps'. According to the *Building News*, 'the whole estate was as a graveyard of buried hopes'; and Notting Hill was once again described as a wasteland, 'where few would care to dwell in that dreary desolation, with the wind howling and vagrants prowling in the speculative warnings around them.' In *Bygone Days* Florence Gladstone recorded dark recollections of 'houses without roofs, or with holes for windows, black holes which seemed like staring eyes to the frightened child who hurried by.'

The ‘Old Inhabitant’ mournfully concluded on the area that ‘sad tales could be told of not a few who sank their all in bricks and mortar; lawyers and moneylenders have in time past reaped a rich harvest at Notting Hill, but many a hard-working man, falling into their hands, has been ruined.’ In the *Building News* 1857 property update, ‘on some parts of the Nottinghill estates a large number of houses have been erected; many of them are now fit for occupation, others are in progress, whilst on other portions numerous buildings appear to have remained some time in carcass only, and abandoned in various stages of advancement, apparently for want of funds to complete them.’ As the Ladbroke estate was compared with a Crimean warzone, Clarendon Road was named after the Earl of Clarendon, the foreign secretary at the time of the Crimean war. Lansdowne Crescent, Road, etc, were either named after the Whig politician or the dowager marchioness who was Queen Victoria’s mistress of the robes.

1860 ‘Beyond the colony of the pigkeepers at the end of Pottery Lane’, the ‘Old Inhabitant’ anonymous vicar historian wrote of an outpost alongside the Counter’s Creek boundary stream (by then the Common Sewer) and the West London Junction Railway line; where Latimer (formerly Boundary) Road was coming into existence (as Latymer Road, named after the 17th century philanthropist Edward Latymer): ‘But what a place it was when I first discovered it – comparatively out of the world – a rough road cut across the fields the only approach. Brickfields and pits on either side, making it dangerous to leave on dark nights. A safe place for many people who did not wish everybody to know what they were doing.’

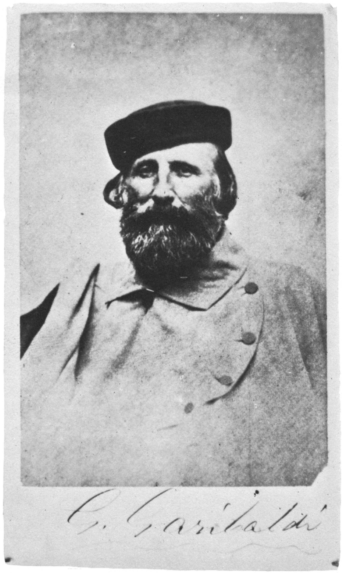
Latymer Road Mission Ragged School

Latymer Road first made the news with the 1860 ‘Death in a London Bog’ of Frances Dowling, ‘a poor woman’ who suffered the worst fate that could befall anyone in the area. ‘In returning to her home about 11 O’clock, she had missed the crossing place and stumbled into one of the miry pits.’ Her cries for help went unheeded, as women screaming in drunken brawls was a common occurrence in the vicinity of the Latymer Arms inn. This horrific incident was used to launch an appeal that led to the founding of the Latymer Road Mission Hall and Ragged School. The building (now on Freston Road) duly appeared in the middle of a ‘primaeval swamp, blossoming in broken bottles, pots and pans.’ It was originally accessed by a narrow track lined with white posts and two pathways; one from the Lancaster Tavern at the junction of Lancaster Road and Walmer Road, the other seems to have become Blechynden Street.

At the beginning of the 1860s the latest map showed Ladbroke Grove as Ladbroke Road (after spells as Ladbroke Place, Lansdowne Terrace and Road) reaching as far as Lancaster Road, the isolated two-street Potteries, the Notting Barns and Porto Bello farms, and Porto Bello Lane joining the path from Notting Barns at the Porto Bello (now Ladbroke Grove) bridge over the Great Western Railway line. Beyond that the future had arrived in the form of Kensal New Town (originally spelt Kensall), the area’s first proper urban slum; and the site of the first Notting Hill race riot which was about to happen nearly a hundred years before Notting Dale’s. Although Kensal was a separate entity to Notting Hill, and wasn’t even in Kensington at this point (up until 1900 the parish, which seems to have originated as Kingsholt, was a detached part of Chelsea); and the cause of the riot wasn’t so much racial conflict as a more complex mix of religious and political differences.

The Kensal Rows – West, Middle, East and Southern – appeared in the mid 19th century in the wake of the Great Western Railway, as an industrial slum island between the railway line and the canal. As Isambard Kingdom Brunel was buried at Kensal Green in 1859, Irish GWR navvies were settling alongside the line in Kensal New Town. At the time of a particularly wet summer, which meant even harder times for brickmaking families, as Florence Gladstone put it, ‘racial jealousy under the guise of religious feelings’

developed between the British and Irish inhabitants. By 1860 Kensal was twice the size of the Potteries and Anglo-Irish cultural animosity was boiling over in the slum cauldron – due to political events in Italy. Echoing the 'No Popery' of the 1780 Gordon riots, when British volunteers were fighting for the 1848 Italian revolutionary nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Irish were provoked by the question, "Who are your for? The Pope or Garibaldi?" The ensuing riot in Middle Row sounds more like a traditional punch-up between the gangs of Kensal New Town, at least compared with the New York Draft riots of the time (featured in *Gangs of New York*). Nevertheless it took 300 policemen to pacify in a military style operation. The police lined up to charge along the canal towpath on the site of the Job Centre.



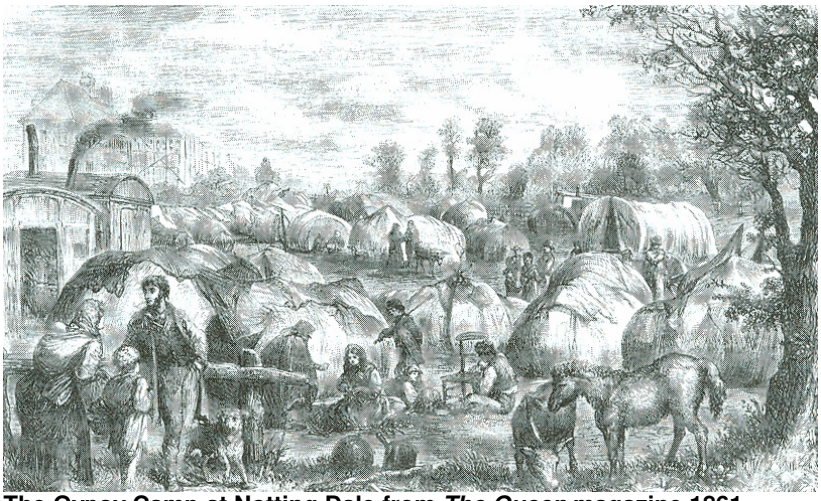
Garibaldi

As 'comparatively out of this world' as the Potteries and Latymer Road, Kensal was isolated from respectable society by the industrial means of canal, railway and gas works, rather than service ghetto planning, and also retained some rural vestiges. The village had its own rowdy market on Wedlake Street (until a chapel was built on the site by the local vicar), market gardens and some pigkeeping, but was more renowned for dogs. The chief exponent of the Kensal dog-fancying trade was Bill George, a former prize-fighter whose 'Canine Castle' on Kensal Road was frequented by aristocrats. As well as the first Notting Hill riot, Kensal produced the first local bar boom which included the Portobello Arms (halfway along Kensal Road, the first and only Portobello pub for a hundred years), the Lads in the Village (now the Village Inn), the Friend in Hand, Prince of Wales (Chilled Eskimo), Jolly Carpenters, and the notorious Beehive on the site of Trellick Tower. In another Nottingham-Notting Hill link, there were Robin Hood and Foresters pubs in both Kensal and Notting Dale; the Kensal Robin Hood and Little John was to the east of Trellick, and the Dale had a Garibaldi pub on St Ann's Road.

Kensal was also noted for gypsy fairs and trotting matches but was mostly known for fighting. The canal towpath was the venue of regular pitched battles between the Victorian slum gangs of Kensal, Notting Dale, Harrow Road, Queen's Park and Lisson Grove. To the west, Little Wormwood Scrubs hosted Sunday morning bare-knuckle bouts; one of which resulted in a local gypsy being tried for murder but found innocent. This was also the site of Notting Hill Carnival precursor fairs with roundabouts and drinking booths. According to Florence Gladstone, 'in the summertime the proceedings every Sunday evening were so disorderly that respectable people could not walk in that direction. It was only after the Wormwood Scrubbs regulation bill was passed in 1879 that this corner settled down to an orderly existence.'

The rapid suburban growth of the late 19th century brought with it improvements such as proper roads, pavements, sewers, the filling in of 'the Ocean' and the eventual eviction of the pigs, but also thousands more people. As the old Dickensian London slums off the Strand around Drury Lane, St Giles in the Field and the Clerkenwell Little Italy were cleared, and with other slum dwellers being displaced by railway demolition or fleeing the gentrification of the rookeries at Notting Hill Gate, Kensington High Street, Chelsea, Paddington and St John's Wood, all of the Notting Dale area to the west of the Potteries (St Clement's ward) became a large scale urban slum. Alongside the Hammersmith and City line, James Whitchurch began building semi-detached upper middle class villas on Lancaster Road and Silchester Road. Ironically, after the overground tube line went through in the 1860s, the rest of the Lancaster/Silchester development had to be scaled down to lower middle class. These railway streets;

Manchester Road, Mersey, Martin, Lockton, Hurstway, Barandon, Blechynden and Testerton Streets; would maintain some respectability for almost a hundred years – though respectable working class suburb was as good as it was going to get – before becoming the most notorious Notting Hill slum of all.



The Gypsy Camp at Notting Dale from *The Queen* magazine 1861

1862-3 In the final stages of urbanisation, the Notting Dale gypsies were integrated into the community by a combination of do-gooding and health restrictions. 50 gypsy families settled in permanent accommodation and took the oath; signing a missionary pledge to abstain from drunkenness, swearing and fortune-telling. These reformed gypsies sold their horses, stopped speaking Romany and acquired hawkers' licenses. As church and school tans were established, Gypsy Smith became 'the gypsy preacher' and 35 gypsy couples were married. The main Notting Dale gypsy families were the Hearns, Kimbers and Wests. According to *Gipsy Life: being an account of our gipsies and their children: with suggestions for their improvement* by George Smith, of the men 'who put on a show of work at all', this added tinkering, chair-mending, skewer and scissor-grinding, horse and donkey buying, bootlace, needle and more flower selling to the local labour pool. Gypsy women probably brought in more money telling fortunes and selling flowers, combs, brushes and lace.

The sketch in *The Queen* magazine from 1861 of one of the last gypsy camps in Notting Dale depicts the modern world encroaching in the form of building development on a laid back scene of chair-bottoming and needlework. The 1870s 'gypsy street' in Mary Place by the Potteries was described by George Barrow as another local carney-carnival influence; 'chock full of crazy, battered caravans of all colours… dark men, wild looking women and yellow faced children.' The local king of the gypsies, Mesach, Thomas or Old Hearn, was said to be a 90 year old veteran of the Napoleonic wars, who had travelled the country chair-bottoming before settling in a comfortably converted advertising van between two trees in Mary Place. The local travellers' tradition (said to date back to the middle ages) continues to this day along Latimer Road under the Westway roundabout.

Gypsy encampment Latimer Road *London Illustrated News* 1879

With the inevitable decline of pigkeeping and brickmaking, a new employment trend developed in the slums of Notting Hill that would define the area for years to come. When women found themselves faced with the choice of the Workhouse in Mary Place or the clothes business, the next chief local industry became laundry work. As the profession grew from small in-house hand laundering establishments to industrialised factory-size steam laundries (the most famous of which was on Silchester Road), Notting Dale and Kensal became known as 'Laundry Land' and 'Soapsuds Island'. The White Knight laundry on Kensal Road still survives to this day. To get through the gruelling 12-14 hour shifts (from 8am to 10pm) women relied on stimulants and children were either locked in or ran wild.

The combination of the increase in laundry work for the folk on the hill and the irregular employment of the men in the slum areas created 'a blurring and sometimes a reversal of marital roles', as Patricia Malcolmson put it in *Getting a Living in the Slums of Victorian Kensington*. In Agnes Alexander's *Some Kensington Problems*, with women the principal wage earners, Notting Hill became 'infested with a contemptible set of men… loafers or worse.' The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws was told that 'the best ironer gets the worse husband', and 'it is well known amongst the poor that men move to North Kensington for the purpose of being kept by their wives.' From the male point of view, there was a local saying that 'to marry an ironer is as good as a fortune.' In Kensal two thirds of the male population were said to be supported by their wives.

The 1860s sexual revolution in Notting Hill and the vibrant local pub scene were inevitably accompanied by a proliferation of churches, chapels, convents, tabernacles and missions of all religious denominations. In the battle for the souls of the inhabitants of the Notting Hellmouth, the dark forces of drink, untidiness and inactivity had arrayed against them all the existing philanthropic ideas of the time; and some new ones, including the first mothers' society, workmen's institute and playgroup/crèche. Lord Shaftesbury opened the Norland and Potteries Ragged School on St James Place in 1858, the Salvation Army campaigned from their Norland Castle on the corner of Norland and Queensdale Roads (formerly a Baptist chapel, the site is now occupied by a Sikh temple), and the Temperance or Rescue Society anti-drinking crusade acquired two 'skeleton-houses' on Portland Road. These became the Workmen's Hall 'pub without drink', which featured an Eddystone lighthouse model to guide drinkers to rescue. There, under the administration of the *Ragged Homes* author Mary Bayly and her husband Captain Bayly, the likes of Jimmie the Devil, the tall pigfeeder who had been a hard drinker 'from 16 to 60', and Taylor the Navvy were rescued; in the latter's case, to the extent of becoming 'the navvy preacher'.

Religious solace could also be found at St Clement's Church on the corner of Sirdar Road and Treadgold Street, the Notting Dale Chapel and school on Walmer Road, the West London Free Tabernacle on St John's (Penzance) Place, built by 'the butcher evangelist' Henry Varley, the Primitive Methodist chapel on the street called Fowell (after the landowner) on the site of the Lancaster West estate, the Anglican-turned-Wesleyan Methodist church on Lancaster Road, the Shaftesbury City Mission on Portland Road, Plymouth Brethren meetings in Clarendon Place, and Bishop Tait conducted an open air service in 'Moore's Field' behind 125 Latimer Road 'from the wash-mill mound of the disused brickfield.' The most controversial local church, of the renegade Anglican Henry Marchmont on Kensington Park Road, burnt down under suspicious circumstances in 1867; and the replacement was taken over by the Presbyterians. According to Florence Gladstone, the site of the church hall was occupied by 'a very undesirable music palace called Kensington Hall.' The All Saints church mission hall, at the north end of Kensington Park Road, later became the Notting Hill synagogue.

The next major influx into the area, and prominent local feature of the next hundred years, was nuns. The pioneering convent on Pottery Lane, which catered to the spiritual needs of the local Irish and Italian communities from Drury Lane and St Giles, was soon accompanied by St Francis of Assisi church and school. Alongside the church became known as 'the Devil's Alley' gambling and fight venue. 'The Pope of Notting Hill', Cardinal Henry Manning established St Mary and the Angels church on Westmoreland Road, and the Franciscan convents of the Poor Clares of Ladbroke Grove, St Charles Square and Portobello Road. The latter incorporated a children's home next to the Portobello farmhouse, which duly made way for the Little Sisters of the Poor old people's home. In *Old London* Edward Walford recounted how the nuns sustained themselves with 'the scraps left by the paupers whom they support by going round to the doors of London houses for broken victuals. Upwards of a hundred poor persons are daily supported by the sisters in this benevolent manner.' In *Bygone Days* Florence Gladstone noted 'nuns in black and white habits sauntering about the beautiful trees in the garden behind the white brick building.'

1864 The painting of the Portobello farmhouse, shortly before its demise, shows the country lane winding its way up the hill, with only the churches of All Saints to the east, St Peter's further up Kensington Park Road, and the Campden Hill water tower for company. **1866** Just two years later, in the earliest local photograph the Kensington Park Hotel pub appears at 139 Ladbroke Grove, 'beyond the limits' of the Hipp Estate at 'the central point of North Kensington', looking much the same as it does in the 21st century. It's probably not that different inside either, but at this point there were still hayfields beyond the Ladbroke Grove railway bridge. Where the first KPH photograph was taken from, on the Barclays bank corner of Lancaster Road, was the site of a circus run by the prize-fighter Tom Sayers. Further along Ladbroke Grove at the junction of Cornwall Crescent there was the boxing booth of Tom King and Jem Mace.

Ladbroke Grove railway bridge and the KPH in 1866

After the world's first underground railway line between Farringdon and Paddington opened in 1863, work continued on the feeder-line to complete the first great metropolitan railway journey of the world, to Hammersmith, in 1868. The underground overground line split from the Great Western Railway at the Portobello Junction, where Westbourne Park station was established (originally as the Green Bridge Lane station), and proceeded via the arch over the Portobello stream and marshland to Ladbroke Grove station (originally Notting Hill, then Notting Hill and Ladbroke Grove). A second bridge across Ladbroke Grove was built after the first collapsed, then the line went on through the Whitchurch estate, beyond the current Latimer Road station to Kensington Junction, which was known locally as 'Piggery Junction'.

At the time of the Portobello farm painting, another successful road protest was celebrated with a jubilant procession through the Notting Hill tollgate across Pembridge Road as it was opened for the last time. The local protest against the toll system included an irate road user's letter to the *Kensington Gazette* in 1854, exclaiming: 'The extension of London is looking to the west, its more rapid progress is impeded by the tolls… An obstruction to intercourse between the gentry and the traders… I regard the keeper of the tollgate as a legalised highwayman, he lays hold of your bridle, pats your horse and puts on the stance of a regular brigand telling you to stand and deliver.' Shortly before the abolition of the Notting Hill gate, the

hated traffic regulation was immortalised in the Notting Hill Gate Circle, District and Metropolitan lines underground railway station.

Up the hill successful upper class building development continued unabated on the rest of the Ladbroke estate, in Pembridge Square and the Holland Park streets. But even these genteel areas received some bad press. Jane Ellen Panton, the artist WP Frith's daughter who lived in a Pembridge villa, wrote in *Leaves from a Life* that Notting Hill had 'an evil reputation for crimes of garrotting' and 'dense black fogs'. Holland Walk, formerly Lord Holland's Lane, was already being described as 'a dark sink-hole' and a 'rendezvous for the obscene' in another footpath right of way dispute. At Notting Hill Gate another slum developed south of the road in the streets known as 'the Racks' (after the original field); Uxbridge, Newcombe, Calcott, Hillgate/Dartmoor, Farmer and Jameson. The main employer here would be the Dunhill cigarette factory on Uxbridge Street. As the Swan inn on Church Street became a gin palace, the Coach and Horses on Notting Hill High Street turned into a coach station. By then there were pubs either side of Notting Hill Gate tube station, the Hoop, HH (Henry Hobson) Finch's pub on the south side, and the Devonshire Arms on the corner of Pembridge Road.

The Earl of Lonsdale as top Finch's

The first pub on Portobello Road, the Sun in Splendour at number 7, probably opened in the early 1850s and was noted for its rising sun cornice – until 1900, when it was blown down in a storm killing a passer-by. The Earl of Lonsdale, at the Westbourne Grove (originally Archer Street) junction, could have preceded it and would become more celebrated as another Finch's and Henekey's in the 20th century. Between the pubs a row of country-style cottages soon sprang up. On the south-west corner of Portobello and Westbourne Grove, the non-conformist hall turned into the Victoria Hall (and later the Bijou and the 20th Century) Theatre. Across Westbourne Grove, Bolton's brickfield, formerly the site of youth fights between Hammersmith and Paddington gangs, became the Bolton Mews slum. Going down the lane as it became a road in the late 1850s, the Portobello fashion scene was founded by William Gough's drapers shop at numbers 146-50, and the site of the Electric cinema was originally occupied by a timberyard.

The first house to built beyond that, 223a Portobello Road, was known as 'the Folly' (hence Folly Mews) as it stood alone and unfinished. Then the house became a laundry, the first shop on the stretch, and a Marks & Spencer penny bazaar. Next up were two small country inns, the short-lived Ben Jonson (named after the Elizabethan comedy writer) and the original Warwick Castle at number 225, on the corner of Westbourne Park (originally Cornwall) Road opposite a cattle pond. By the 1870s the lane was a road, lined by almost continuous rows of houses and shops up to the railway bridge; and Portobello had succeeded the earlier local market on Norland Road, with its 'general London notoriety' already established for 'cheery cries, surging crowds and heavily laden stalls.'

The local MP Sir William Bull (the grandson of the Ladbroke estate architect Thomas Allason) wrote of the early market in *Some Recollections of Bayswater 50 Years Ago* for the *Bayswater Chronicle* in 1923: 'Columbus discovered Porto Bello in 1502. We discovered Portobello Road about 370 years later. Carnival time was on Saturday nights in the winter, when it was thronged like a fair from Cornwall Road to Bolton (Lonsdale) Road. The people overflowed from the pavement so that the roadway was quite impassable for horse traffic which, to do it justice, never appeared. On the left-hand side (the east side) were costers' barrows, lighted by flaming naphtha lamps, in the side-streets were side-shows' – including vendors of patent medicine, conjurors and itinerant musicians.

Portobello market also featured in the poem 'Celestial Beauty' by Evelyn Underhill (who lived at 50 Campden Hill Square), where 'in the lamplight sepia pavements shine, and the blue naphtha flames upon the stall.' According to the unreliable 1977 *Portobello Guide* notes by Craig Sams: 'By 1860 the Portobello market was already known as a colourful place. Here soldiers would bring their booty back from foreign plunder. The officers would sell their fine looted objets d'art while the seamen peddled less exotic items from the same conquering expeditions. The triumphal processions from Greenwich docks would stop at Trafalgar Square to bask in national recognition before carrying on by oxcart to Portobello to get on with the serious business of transforming the fruits of conquest into hard cash.' Craig Sams' hippy Portobello mythology also includes a totally made up medieval market on 'Nuttynghull Street'.

To the east of the lane, the Portobello New Town estate between the farm and Lonsdale Road (Colville ward) was destined to much the same fate as the west when the land was acquired, from Mary Anne and Georgina Charlotte Talbot, by the Reverend Samuel Walker. The area was advertised at the 1854 auction at the Mart as: 'important freehold land, and the capital farm residence and building at Portobello, in the parish of Kensington, between the Harrow and Bayswater Roads, upon the Great Western Railway and the canal, and within view of Kensal Green cemetery. Particulars of above 30 acres of very valuable meadow land, divided into numerous lots, of about one acre each, presenting unusually eligible and rich sites for the erection of houses and gardens, with ready access to all parts of London, also the handsome and substantial farm residence with numerous capital buildings, gardens, yards and paddocks, adjoining of above 12 acres, being part of the unsold portion of the Portobello estate.'

The centrepiece All Saints church appeared in 1855, originally as St Ann's on St Columb's (now Talbot) Road, but plans for a spire to rival Salisbury Cathedral's were scrapped when Walker encountered 'pecuniary difficulties'. As the church was left for six years boarded up and overgrown by weeds, next to a pond and gypsy camp along a path leading through the fields to Kensal Green, it acquired the nicknames 'Walker's Folly' and 'All Sinners in the Mud'. The first stretch of the path would become All Saints Road. The surrounding brickfield area was developed in the 1860s as another upper middle class quarter by the Tibbet or Tippet brothers. But the Powis and Colville squares more or less immediately declined with the coming of the railways and the end of the carriage trade. The Powis and Arundel street names are derived from the other titles of the Talbot Earls of Shrewsbury.

In the 1880s the original upper class residents of the squares failed to renew their leases, and by then some houses were already sub-divided into flats and maisonettes. Powis Square's multicultural reputation was founded by 'the Wren College' for the Indian civil service of Messrs Walter Wren and his partner Gurney. Due to the coaching school, which occupied several houses, and the accompanying 'Oriental' (Asian) boarding houses, the square acquired the nickname 'Little India' (some time before it became known as a West Indian area). In the early 20th century the first prime minister of India no less, Jawaharlal Nehru, lived off Ladbroke Grove at 60 Elgin Crescent. The first celebrated black local was the butler of Florence Gladstone's father. The scientist Dr John Hall Gladstone (apparently no relation to the prime minister) lived at 17 Pembridge Square, where according to *The Times* 'his negro butler was a famous institution.'

1869 'Fades into twilight the last golden gleam thrown by the sunset on upland and stream; Glints o'er the Serpentine – tips Notting Hill – dies on the summit of proud Pentonville.' 'Carols of Cockayne' by Henry S Leigh. As the property speculating Cornish vicar Samuel Walker died a more or less broken man, with his fortune shrunk from £250,000 to £70,000, 'the old tin Tabernacle' (the forerunner of the current Talbot Tabernacle) was established in Powis Square as a non-sectarian church. With the local horse population dwindling, the new inhabitants of the Portobello Road cab and omnibus mews streets (Archer, Vernon, Bolton, Colville, Lonsdale, Dunworth, Elgin and Silvester) became 'chiefly labourers, horsekeepers and horsefeeders, with a shifting mass of those sorry folk who have come down and down in the world till their home is a loft in some mews patronised by cabmen.' Florence Gladstone added in the 1920s, 'all the elements were present for the development of the degraded conditions of today.'

Luke Fildes' harrowing painting of Victorian slum poverty 'Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward' depicts a dole queue outside a police station, where claimants had to register to get tickets to the workhouse, first sketched in 1869 'somewhere near the Portland road.' The local 'branch of the Kensington Workhouse', more commonly known as the Mary Place Workhouse, occupied the site of Avondale Park Gardens off Mary Place behind the Notting Dale police station on Sirdar Road, the other side of 'the Ocean' (Avondale Park) from Portland Road. Luke Fildes lived up the hill in Holland Park. 'Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward' got Fildes commissioned to illustrate Charles Dickens's last great unfinished novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Some years before in 1865 *The Notting Hill Mystery* by Charles Felix (pseudonym) was published.

Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward somewhere near the Portland road by Luke Fildes 1869

1870 A house on Ladbroke Grove was advertised as 'most conveniently situated and especially deserving of the attention of gentlemen engaged in business in the City, the facilities afforded by the Hammersmith and City Railway in connection with the whole Metropolitan system, affording the means of speedy access to all parts of London, Ladbroke Grove station is within a few seconds' walk of the property.' **1871** When the ordnance survey for the 1871 map concluded Notting Hill was more or less there as it is today, whereas beyond the Ladbroke estate North Kensington remained almost entirely rural. North of the Hammersmith and City Railway Electric Telegraph line and Notting Hill station (now Ladbroke Grove), the only buildings apart from the farms were the Notting Barn Lodge (on the site of Portobello Green), the Latimer Arms, North Pole and Rifle Pavilion pubs, the West London Iron Works, Walmer House, Silchester Nursery, 50 or so villas and a few terraces on Silchester Road, Terrace and Mews and Latimer Road.

South of the line there was still a vacant plot buffer zone and Portobello Road only extended a few houses beyond the Duke of Wellington (Finch's) pub. The modern Ladbroke Grove-Notting Hill area consisted of around 20 villas on Lancaster Road, the Lord Elgin's Tavern (earlier the Elgin Arms) on the corner of Westbourne Park (then Cornwall) Road, the Poor Clares' convent on the other corner, the Arundel Arms (later the Blenheim and the Gate) on the site of the E&O restaurant, the Warwick Castle (now just the Castle) pub and a lone Portobello terrace opposite the site of Tesco's. As the population of Kensington increased by 80,000 in 20 years, to 120,000, the ordnance survey couldn't keep up with the rapid building boom times. Yet the 1871 map best captures Victorian Notting Hill and the area's severe class division; with the densely packed Potteries rookery (then with a population of 2,144), bounded by the Kensington Park Brewery, the Notting Dale Chapel on Canterbury (Bomore) Road, the brick field (plot 58) and the site of 'the Ocean' sewage lagoon (plot 76), and the developing Notting Dale 'Special Area' slum (population 2,815), alongside the upper class Ladbroke estate; in cross-section with the still secluded farms.

1871-3 Dr Francis Godrich reported in 1870 that 'the Potteries are in a more cleanly and healthy condition, principally owing to the improved drainage afforded by the Metropolitan Board of Works.' The following year, as the ordnance survey map came out, Godrich was succeeded as the Kensington medical officer by Dr Thomas Dudfield, the pigs' nemesis. Having found the Potteries' swinish multitude of 2,000 being overtaken by people, Dudfield's more robust 1870s campaign extinguished the last rural resistance to urbanisation; including a pigkeeper's pathetic plea to a journalist, "Pigs, sir? What harm can pigs do?" After 'the Great Pig Case' quarter sessions finally ruled the practise of pigkeeping a nuisance in a built up area, part of the Potteries was certified and duly demolished. As the last of the pigs were evicted from Notting Dale in the late 1870s, Dr Dudfield's sanitary inspection team went back into the area to root out the dealers in the noxious effluvia known as 'wash'. After that sporadic pigkeeping revivals died out by the end of the century.

To the north of the Potteries, the 150 acre Notting Barns farm (St Charles ward), with 'an ancient brick building surrounded by spacious barns and outhouses', came into the possession of Colonel Matthew Chitty Downes St Quintin of the lancers regiment in the late 1850s. St Quintin proceeded to build a well-to-do estate, originally as the Portobello Park, featuring Cambridge and Oxford Gardens, Basset, Chesterton and St Mark's Roads and St Quintin Avenue. The Notting Barns farmhouse was demolished in 1880 to make way for the Adelaide House French laundry. The remaining 130 acres to the east became the down-market Golborne semi-slum of the previously upper class developer Charles Henry Blake. At one point Colonel St Quintin threatened to deny Blake access, 'unless arrangements were come to regulating the

class of houses to be built.' Golborne Road, originally Britannia Road, then Golbourne, was named after the Paddington vicar Dean Goulbourne, not after a stream.

The Hammersmith and City line revived the building development to finish off the urbanisation of North Kensington, and briefly redressed the gender employment imbalance. However, the railway also ended the property speculators' middle class dreams for the remaining area south of the line. The initially fashionable Westbournia area to the east went out of style as the Westbourne Park railway station opened in 1866. From the grand villa beginning of Tavistock Terrace and Great Western Crescent, the Tavistock Crescent and Road extensions into the last vacant plot declined into another railway slum area destined for late 20th century notoriety.

Thomas Hardy

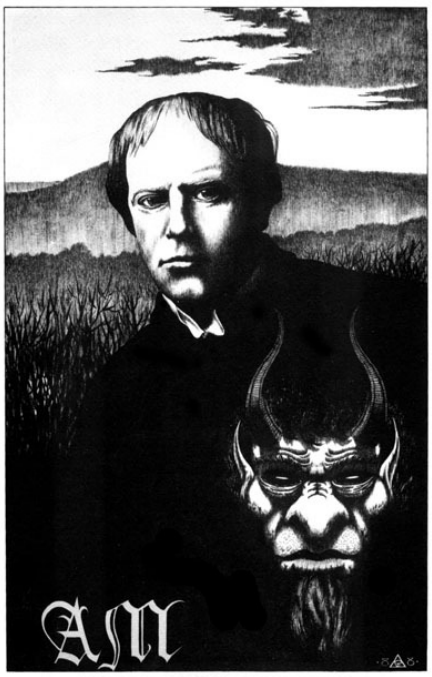
As the last few plots of rural Notting Hill were built over, Thomas Hardy took lodgings at 16 Westbourne Park Villas when he was working as a church draughtsman. From this decidedly urban setting alongside the railway lines just outside of Paddington, Hardy made his first tentative literary steps, and pursued the Orsett Terrace lady's maid Eliza Nicholls (who is thought to have influenced the 'Sue Bridehead' character in *Jude the Obscure*, recently played by Kate Winslet). After attending a Charles Dickens lecture, he tried his hand at journalism, deserted Eliza – for literary glory and/or her younger sister – and hit the depths of despondency sketching St Stephen's church from his window. Hardy recalled his Westbourne Park years as mostly depressing but also an inspiring time when 'a sense of the truth of poetry, of its supreme place in literature, had awakened itself in me. At the risk of ruining all my worldly prospects I dabbled in it.'

Thomas Hardy only managed four years of the 'rayless grime' between 1863 and '67 before returning to Dorset – which he contrasted with the 'crass clanging town' in the sonnet 'From Her in the Country'. Yet, like Dickens, he maintained a strong local connection. **1874** After finishing *Far from the Madding Crowd* on Porchester Road, he married Emma Gifford on Elgin Avenue. The great west country writer signed the register as 'Thomas Hardy of Westbourne Park, London.' Whenever he reappeared in the madding crowd after that he stayed locally; off Westbourne Grove at 18 Newton Road, where he wrote the London social life comedy *The Hand of Ethelberta*, and 20 Monmouth Road when he was writing *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, 5 Campden Hill Road after *The Woodlanders*, and 5 Upper Phillimore Place.

As Thomas Hardy was working his way up the hill in 1874, the greatest local author, Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born into the estate agent family on Campden Hill at 32 Sheffield Terrace. Then GK spent his formative years, from 1877 to 1901, reading Thomas Macaulay histories at 11 Warwick Gardens in West Kensington. Violet Hunt, the Noting Baroness, was born into the Campden Hill Pre-Raphaelite scene, the daughter of the landscape painter Alfred and Mrs Hunt, the model for Tennyson's 'Margaret', who lived at Tor Villa (the former residence of Edward Lear, of *The Owl and the Pussycat* fame). Violet had her first affair with the older painter George Broughton, after being half seriously proposed to by Oscar Wilde. Her archetypal arty Notting Hill society has been described as 'having a certain Bohemian flavour, it nevertheless dressed for dinner.'

1880 In this 'murky modern Babylon', Henry James (who Violet Hunt also attempted to have an affair with) pondered as *The Bostonians* came out, before he moved to 34 De Vere Gardens (south of Kensington Gardens): 'It takes London to put you in the way of a purely rustic walk from Notting Hill to Whitehall.

Frequently have I wished that, for the sake of a daily luxury and exercise made romantic, I were a government clerk living in snug domestic conditions in a Pembridge villa.' In Henry James's *Wings of the Dove* novel, the house of Pearl Craigie, 56 Lancaster Gate 'had figured to her, through childhood, as the remotest limit of her vague world.' Michael Faber's 2002 novel *The Crimson Petal and the White* is set in late Victorian Notting Hill around the house of 'William Rackham' on Chepstow Villas.



Arthur Machen

The original weird Bohemian/gothic Notting Hill writer was Arthur Machen, who lived on Clarendon Road in the 1880s. Machen wrote the horror fantasy novels, *The Great God Pan*, *The Hill of Dreams* and *The Three Imposters*. He became best known during World War 1 when his shortstory *The Bowmen* gave rise to 'the angels of Mons' legend, in which celestial archers bolstered the British ranks. Arthur Machen was also a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn, who met at 36 Blythe Road in Hammersmith, along with Aleister Crowley and WB Yeats. At the same time the notorious Russian occultist Madame Blavatsky was staying round the corner from him at 77 Elgin Crescent. In his *Far Off Things* autobiography, Arthur Machen recalled drifting around the Notting Hill area and the phantasmagorical impression that Kensal Green cemetery had on him:

'I would sometimes pursue Clarendon Road northward and get into all sorts of regions of which I never had any clear notion. They are so obscure to me now, and a sort of nightmare. I see myself getting terribly entangled with a canal which seemed to cross my path in a manner contrary to the laws of reason. I turn a corner and am confronted with an awful cemetery, a terrible city of white gravestones and shattered marble pillars and granite urns, and every sort of horrid heathenry. This, I suppose, must have been Kensal Green: it added a new terror to death. I think I came upon Kensal Green again and again; it was like the Malay, an enemy for months. I would break off by way of Portobello Road and entangle myself in Notting Hill, and presently I would come across the goblin city; I might wander into the Harrow Road, but at last the ghost-stones would appal me. Maida Vale was treacherous, Paddington false – inevitably, it seemed my path led me to the detested habitation of the dead.'

1889 The Kensal Green funeral of the Dickens protégé William Wilkie Collins, of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* first detective novel fame, occasioned the first local case of fan mania with women in black fighting over wreaths at his graveside. **1891** George Gissing, who lived on Wornington Road, across Ladbroke Grove from the cemetery, featured a Great Western Railway trainspotting scene at Westbourne Park in his *New Grub Street* novel. Notting Hill features in three of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* detective mysteries. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles* 'Seldon' is 'the Notting Hill murderer'. In *The Red Circle* 'Inspector Gregson' treats a woman suspect 'with as little sentiment as if she were a Notting Hill hooligan.'

Kensington Baths and Washhouse Silchester and Lancaster Roads junction

After further sanitation campaigns, the Kensington Baths and Washhouse opened at the junction of Silchester and Lancaster Roads in 1888, the year of Jack the Ripper. By then the Latimer Road Board School was catering for over a thousand pupils, after the original Ragged School had opened in the 1860s for a hundred. Notting Dale also hosted the Blechynden Street Ragged School known as 'Brown's School', the Crescent Street Hall School, and St Clement's National School, nicknamed 'The Penny Board School', which became the Sirdar Road LCC School. The first pupils of the latter, who were reputedly bribed to attend with sweets, were described as 'extraordinarily rough, ragged and undisciplined.' The Salvation Army Hall on Portobello Road was originally another Ragged School, superseded in 1876 by the Notting Hill Board School on Portobello and Lancaster Road (which became the Portobello, the North Kensington and Isaac Newton School and now course centre). Colville School on Portobello and Lonsdale Road began as the Buckingham Terrace School in 1879 to cater for the Bolton Mews slum kids.

After the Harrow School Mission was founded on Latimer (now Freston) Road in 1884 by old boys of the Harrow public school, the Rugby boys' club was set up on Walmer Road in 1887 by the Rugby public school old boy Arthur Walrond. On Kensal Road the Cobden Working Men's Club and Institute was named in honour of Richard Cobden, the early 19th century anti-corn law campaigner. In Powis Square in 1888 Lord Shaftesbury, the Tory social reformer who brought about the end of child labour, laid the foundation stone of the Tabernacle (which replaced the original tin Talbot Tabernacle) and opened the lecture hall. In the mid 1880s Lord Shaftesbury reported to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, that 'many of the suburbs are now being overcrowded just like the centre of London; for instance, Notting Hill is beginning to be overcrowded like the worst parts of London, and it is very hard indeed upon those populations, because these people come down into districts where the demand for labour is not very great, and make the demand for labour so very little that they are half starved.'

Duke of Clarence and Avondale

1892 After 'the Ocean' pit and the old pottery field were acquired from the Adams family, the area was landscaped by 'private munificence' into a recreation ground and gardens featuring a mortuary chapel.

Then the Vestry named it Avondale Park, in honour of the Duke of Clarence and Avondale. This was Albert Victor, the son and heir of the future king Edward VII (then the Prince of Wales); now better known as Prince Eddy, the Jack the Ripper suspect who died shortly after the 1888 prostitute murders in Whitechapel (as alluded to in the masonic Ripper films *Murder by Decree* with Christopher Plummer as Sherlock Holmes and *From Hell* starring Johnny Depp). Prince Eddy was also involved in the gay Cleveland Street scandal, but that doesn't necessarily rule him out as a Ripper suspect.

1893 The surrounding Notting Dale slum area was described in the *Daily News* as a 'West End Avernus', after Lake Avernus, the entrance to hell in classical mythology. JMW Turner's painting of Lake Avernus at the mouth of the underworld, featured in JG Frazer's 1890 ritual study *The Golden Bough*, was inspired by Virgil's tale of Aeneas visiting the grotto of the Sybil at Cumae in the bay of Naples. The Sybil says: 'First take my counsel then securely go; a mighty tree that bears a golden bough grows in a vale surrounded by a grove, and sacred to the queen of Stygian Jove, her netherworld no mortals can behold, till from the bough they strip the blooming gold.' The *Daily News* (which was founded by Charles Dickens and counted GK Chesterton among its contributors) illustrated a season in Notting Hell with drawings by *The Strand* magazine's H Robinson of a tinkering gypsy, children queuing at a soup kitchen, and an old man sitting in a chair on his doorstep. The sketches were captioned: 'In the avernus of Notting Dale, the area around Pottery Lane and surrounding streets, a few gipsies still lingered with their vans and tinkers yards, children often depended on charity soup kitchens for their one hot meal of the day and old men, dying of consumption, sat out on chairs at their doors.'

The report concluded on Bangor, Crescent and Kenley Streets and St Catherine's Road, that there was nothing 'more hopelessly degraded and abandoned than life in those wretched places.' Some years before the birth of Peter Rachman, the process of Rachmanism was already at work in Notting Hill with large properties intended for respectable middle class families converted into common lodging houses. Especially in the case of Bangor and Crescent, in Florence Gladstone's words, 'whole streets were not inhabited by the class of people for whom they were designed.' In the first Notting Hill prostitute scandal, a London City Mission report in 1891 of 300 'fallen women' around Bangor Street led to more bad press in which the area was called 'a disgrace to Christianity and civilisation.' In the wake of the 1893 *Daily News* coverage, reporting several brothels in the area – backed up by the vicars of St Clement's and St James's, the chairman of the Vestry Works and Sanitation committee, George Nelson Watts, wrote to the editor complaining about the 'assumption that the Vestry of Kensington are indifferent to the state of the poor people inhabiting what is known as the Potteries district, Notting Dale.'

The Vestry blamed the 'schemes carried out by the late Metropolitan Board of Works under the powers conferred by the Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Act', for attracting 'many of the waifs and strays of people driven from other districts'; along with 'the vicious proclivities and evil habits… of constant recurrence in houses occupied by the lowest classes… largely brought about by the dirty and careless or mischievous habits of the people themselves.' After a public meeting and site inspection, the Vestry sanitation committee found 'no evidence in support of the allegations that many of the houses are 'brothels of the lowest kinds.' That many unfortunate women reside in the area would appear to be certain, but that they ply their trade to any large extent 'at home' is to say the least of it doubtful.'

Florence Gladstone stated that greater than 'the evil of these licensed lodging houses', accommodating over 700 people at 4 to 6d a night, was 'that of the furnished rooms let from the evening until 10 the next morning at 10d or a shilling a night.' In *Some Kensington Problems* Agnes Alexander added that where 'the street doors are open day and night inevitably leads to moral shipwreck.' As Kenley Street (the formerly respectable William Street) became renowned as Notting Hill's first notorious redlight district in the early 20th century, the Michael Palinesque urban missionary CS Donald observed: 'The inflow of certain submerged and criminal types mostly concentrated in streets of furnished rooms which were often alive with vermin. Disorderly houses were not infrequent. Dissolute half-clad girls smoking in lice-ridden rooms are not pretty sights, which I have seen when visiting. The latter end of the lower class prostitute is pitiable. They disappear into the abyss or become toothless old hags. As Booth (Charles, of *Life and Labour of the People of London*) says, it is the only profession where novices get the highest pay.'

1897 At the end of the 19th century Edward Walford summed up the new Notting Hill area in *Old London*: 'As soon as ever we quit the precincts of Kensington proper, and cross the Uxbridge Road (Holland Park Avenue), we become painfully conscious of change. We have left the 'Old Court Suburb', and find ourselves in one that is neither 'old' nor 'court-like'. The roadway, with its small shops on either side, is narrow and unattractive, and the dwellings are not old enough to have a history or to afford shelter for an anecdote. About the centre of this thoroughfare, at the spot whence omnibuses are continually starting on the journey eastwards towards the City, stood till about the year 1850, a small and rather picturesque

turnpike-gate, which commanded not only the road towards Notting Hill and Shepherd's Bush but also that which branches off to the north and north-east in the direction of the Grove of Westbourne.

'What rural ideas and pictures arise before our mental eye as we mention Notting – possibly Nutting – Hill, and the Shepherd's Bush and Westbourne Grove! We fear that the nuts, and the shepherds, and the nightingales which, so lately as the reign of William IV, sang sweetly here in the summer nights, are now, each and all, things of the past.' Walford concluded that 'much of the district through which we are about to pass bore rather a bad character for thieves and housebreakers, and was somewhat noted for its piggeries and potteries, but these have all been swept away by the advancing tide of bricks and mortar.' This was, however, just the end of the beginning of the Notting Hill bad housing story. **1898** John Reginald Halliday Christie, the cause of the worst local housing story of them all, was born in Halifax.

All Saints Road