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London Borough of Enfield Local History Sheets.

Lower Edmonton a history



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

The Edmonton enclosure map of 1801 shows Lower Edmonton as a well established settlement. The centre was where the main turnpike road widened out to form Edmonton Green. Salmon's Brook, after winding its way eastwards from Bush Hill, crossed the Green, spreading out to form a large pool. Northwards, the settlement extended 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).

By 1826 Edmonton had good transport facilities with horse buses running at half hourly intervals to London. The Eastern Counties Railway opened a branchline from Angel Road to Enfield Town in 1849 with an intermediate station at Edmonton Green. The effect of this line was fairly limited, as fares were high and the trains ran by a roundabout route via Stratford to an inconveniently sited terminus at Shoreditch.

The 25 inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map of 1867 shows a limited amount of growth. Some large villas had been built in Church Street and ribbon development along Fore Street had almost reached Boards' Lane (Brettenham Road) virtually closing the gap between Upper and Lower Edmonton. A report by the General Board of Health (1850) on sanitary conditions in Edmonton had a great deal to say about public health problems in Upper Edmonton but rather less to say about Lower Edmonton. There had been an outbreak of typhus in Church Lane and there were problems caused by bad drainage in Barrowfield lane.

In 1872 the Great Eastern Railway opened the present Lower Edmonton station as part of its direct line from London to Enfield Town. The former station continued to be used for rush hour workmen's trains until 1939. From 1874 the trains ran to and from a new City terminus at Liverpool Street. The new line offered exceptionally cheap workmen's fares. Additional transport facilities were provided in 1881 with the opening of a tramway along Fore Street and the Hertford Road.

The latter years of the nineteenth 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 over. There was extensive ribbon development along the Hertford Road and the Bounces Road and Bury Street areas had been largely built up. There had also been considerable development on the Victoria Road area.

The first part of Edmonton Town Hall was completed in 1884 and considerably 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. In 1897 a purpose-built library was opened in Fore Street. Shopping facilities were greatly augmented by an East End style street market which grew up around Edmonton Green in

the late nineteenth century.

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

The tramway was converted to trolleybuses in 1938 and these, in turn, gave way to conventional diesel buses in 1961. The railway line from Liverpool Street to Enfield Town was electrified in 1960.

The early post war years saw much of the area in a run down state. There was also an acute housing shortage. Edmonton Council's response was a massive programme of redevelopment. This continued after the merger with Enfield in 1965, culminating in the total rebuilding of the Edmonton Green Shopping Centre from 1968.

The Lower Edmonton area today has a very mixed appearance. The remains of the old village in Church Street rub shoulders with Victorian workmen's cottages and tower blocks' from the nineteen sixties.

Further Reading

Fisk, Frederick - The history of the parish of Edmonton. Tottenham. 1914.

Palmer, Alfred - Old Edmonton. Edmonton. 1936

Robinson, William - The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Edmonton. London. 1819

Sturges, George W. - Edmonton Past and Present. Edmonton. 1938/41