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Winchmore Hill a history



This district originated as a remote woodland hamlet in the parish of Edmonton. The extensive woodlands formed the basis of a major local industry. The oak woods (parts of which survive in Grovelands Park) were regularly coppiced. The oak bark was carefully stripped and sold for use in tanning. Some of the timber was sold as firewood, while the rest was burned to produce charcoal. The woods were owned at this time by the powerful Cecil family.

The Edmonton enclosure map of 1801 shows a well established settlement centred on Winchmore Hill Green. There was already a certain amount of ribbon development along Hoppers Road, Middle Lane (Station Road), Winchmore Hill Lane (Church Hill), Middle Chase Lane (Wades Hill) and Vicars Moor Lane. The nearest church at this date was All Saints Church, Edmonton. However there had been a Quaker community in Winchmore Hill since 1688, the present meeting house in Church Hill dating from 1790. There was also a congregation of Independents, the direct ancestor of the present United Reformed Church in Compton Road. The Church of England eventually in 1828 built St Paul's Church in Church Hill, originally a chapel of ease to All Saints, Edmonton but a separate parish after 1851.

Grovelands originated as a private estate. The house was built in 1797 to the designs of John Nash for Walker Gray, a Quaker brewer from Tottenham. The grounds were landscaped by Humphry Repton. After Gray's death the property was acquired by John Donnithorne Taylor, whose family continued to live at Grovelands up to World War I. Part of the estate was purchased by Southgate Council in 1913 to become a public park. The house became a hospital in 1916.

The rest of the estate was sold for building.

The early railway lines had little effect on Winchmore Hill. Prior to 1871 the nearest railway stations were at Lower Edmonton and New Southgate. Winchmore Hill's chief link with the outside world at this time was a horse bus which ran to and from Bishopsgate via Hedge Lane, Silver Street, Tottenham, Stoke Newington, Dalston and Shoreditch. In 1869 the Great Northern Railway began work on a branchline to Enfield via Palmers Green and Winchmore Hill. The line opened in 1871. Extra transport facilities came in 1907 with the opening of an electric tramway along Green Lanes.

Initially there was relatively little building development (The Taylor family of Grovelands with their massive landholdings were able to operate a private green belt policy). In the mid eighteen-nineties some houses were built in Middle Lane (Station Road). By 1914 much of the Highfield Estate and the Eaton Park Estate had been covered with middle class housing. A new shopping parade (The Broadway) had been built in Green Lanes beside the tramway. A new parish church, Holy Trinity, was built in 1908 at the junction of Green Lanes and Queen's Avenue to serve the vastly expanded suburb. To the north, on the Enfield border, Grange Park was developed with its own railway station, opened in 1910. Plans announced in 1909 for the development of a large part of Winchmore Hill Wood as a Woodland City did not materialise and the area was eventually built up on rather more conventional lines in the late nineteen-twenties. After the development of the Broadfields Estate on Wades Hill (sold for building in 1931), Winchmore Hill was more or less fully built up.

From the mid-thirties onwards the changes in Winchmore Hill have been fairly minor. The tramway gave way to trolleybuses in 1938 and these in turn gave way to conventional diesel buses in 1961. Railway electrification, originally promised by the Great Northern Railway in 1904, finally materialised in 1976. Building work was mainly confined to small in-fill developments and closing the gaps left by World War II bomb damage.

Further Reading

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